

FORWARD IN CHRIST



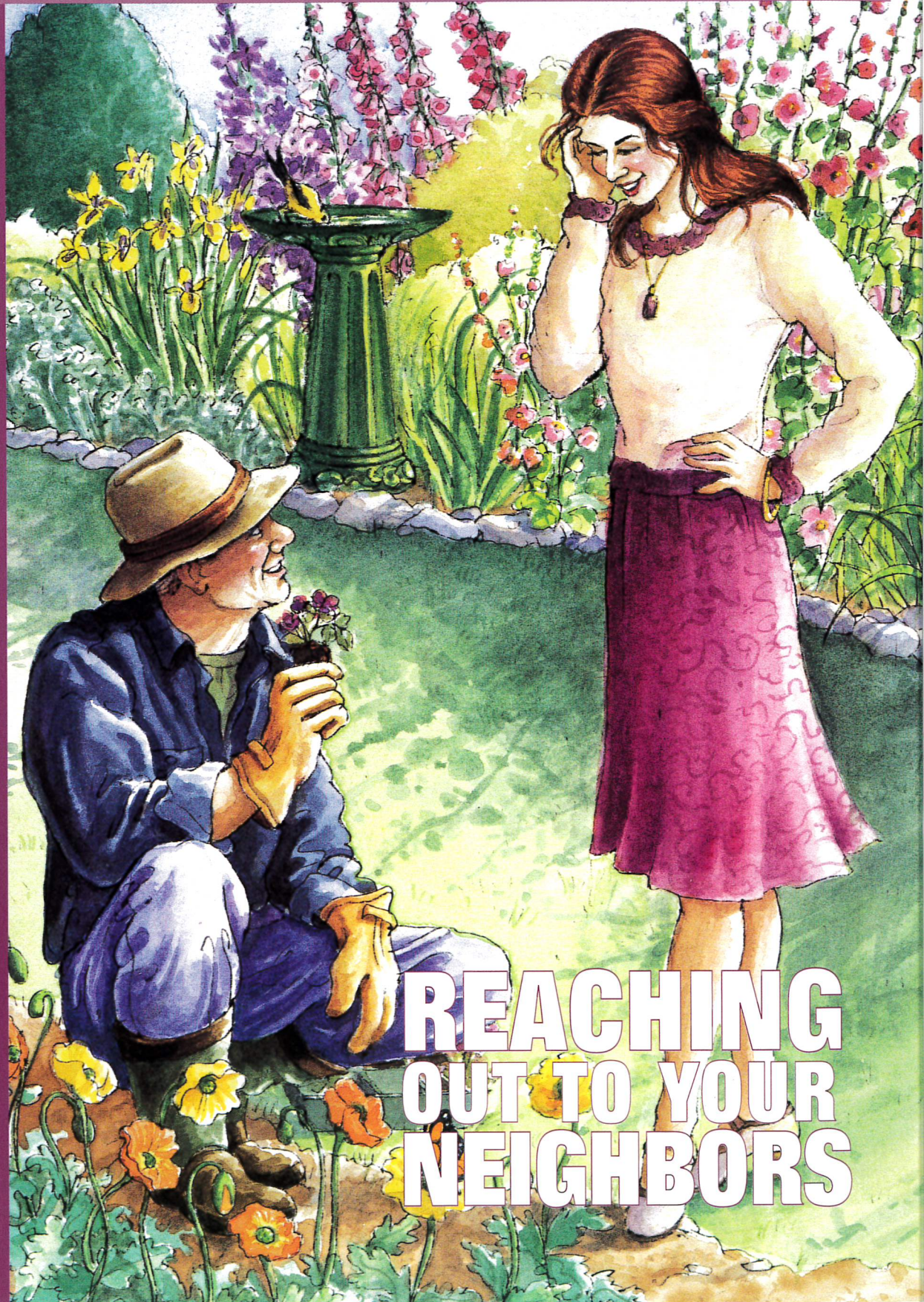
May 2004

The Word from the WELS

I miss you,
Mom

Pizza
evangelism

Intolerance
of tolerance



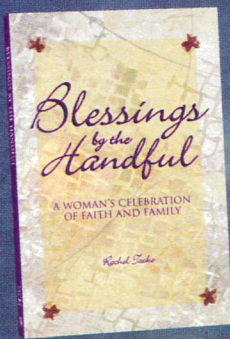
**REACHING
OUT TO YOUR
NEIGHBORS**

**GREAT
GIFTS!**

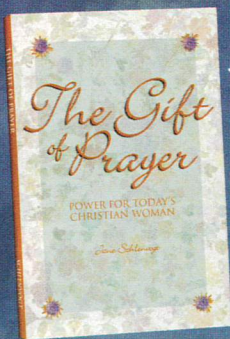
What enlightens today's *Christian woman?*



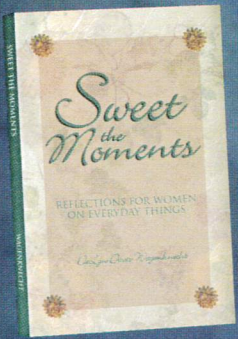
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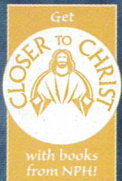
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A letter to a confirmand

“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Revelation 2:10

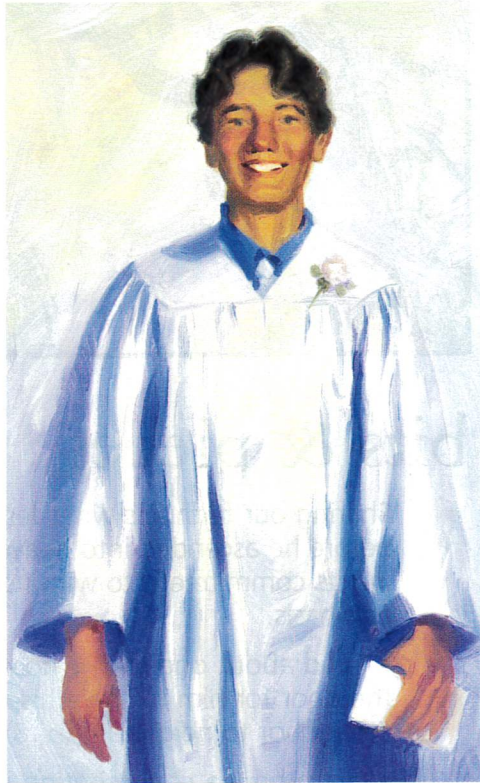
Thomas A. Westra

I remember when I first held you in my arms. You were so tiny and helpless. The journey of your life had just begun.

Your mom and I were filled with hopes and dreams about where that journey would take you. We hoped that your life would be filled with happiness and that during the sad times God would be near you. We hoped that God would give you faithful companions who would share in your happiness and sorrow. Most of all, we hoped and prayed that your earthly journey would end with you standing before our Lord Jesus, and that he would place on your head the crown of life.

That’s why we brought you to Baptism just a few days later. We gathered with family and friends who shared our hopes and dreams for you. We gathered with a congregation of God’s people who joined their hearts with ours in praying for you. We knew that God was taking you as his forgiven and dearly loved child and promising to be with you always.

At your baptism, God made some wonderful promises to you. He promised to forgive all your sins, to be with you always and guide you with his Word, to work the circumstances and happenings of your life in keeping with his good plan for you, and to bring you safely home to be with him in heaven. At your baptism God was saying, “I want to be with you forever.” Today, on your confirmation day, you are saying, “God, I want to be with you, too . . . forever.”



I remember teaching you to say the name “Jesus” and sitting with you on the edge of your bed as we spoke to him together at the end of the day. I remember taking you to Sunday school for the first time and leaving you with a wonderful, dedicated lady whom I trusted to bring you closer to Jesus. I remember the sacrifices your mom and I made so that you could attend a Christian elementary school. I remember the Scripture verses, Luther’s explanations, and the hymn verses we sat and memorized together. Now you stand before the congregation confessing your faith, and I am overwhelmed with thankfulness for what the Lord has done in you.

I remember my confirmation day and how nervous I was answering the pastor’s questions—questions that seemed so easy in the classroom, but now much more difficult standing in front of the congregation. I remember how confident I was in my promise to God and how certain I was that I would remain faithful to Jesus. Looking back, I see all those times I disappointed him, betrayed him by my words and actions. All those times I willfully went my own way instead of his way. All those times I said, “Jesus, you stay at home tonight. I don’t really want you to be a part of what I’m going to be doing.”

You and I fail Jesus, but he doesn’t fail us. The same Jesus who came to you in Baptism will continue to come to you in his Word; in the pastor’s announcement, “I forgive you all your sins;” and in his body and blood given with the bread and wine. Through these means he will keep you close.

And so I thank God today that the same Lord Jesus who wrapped his loving arms around you at your baptism is wrapping his arms around you now and will keep holding on to you. And I thank God today that when Jesus places that crown of life on your head, I will be there too, and we will be with the Lord forever.

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

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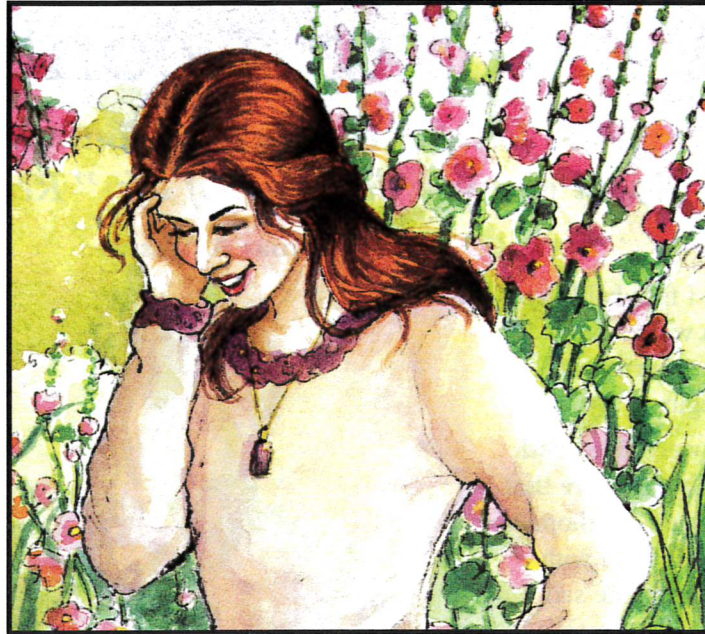
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"Fred . . .
would you
mind if I
asked you
a question
about reli-
gion?"

8

bits & pieces



Sharing our faith. It's what Jesus commanded us to do before he ascended into heaven. It's what WELS is renewing its commitment to with its North American outreach emphasis.

- Read about one man whose Jewish neighbor opens the door for him to share his Christian faith with her in "Neighbor to neighbor" (p. 8).
- Learn how a congregation in South Dakota is sharing its faith through a second location and a campus ministry in "Getting to know . . . Prince of Peace, Yankton, S.D." (p. 14).
- Consider why sharing your faith is often more difficult than sharing other good news in "Pizza evangelism" (p. 18).
- Check out how Emmanuel, Las Cruces, N.M., is using a Christian bookmobile to reach out to its neighbors in a "Where are they now?" news article (p. 25).



Would you be surprised to hear that almost 17 percent of Internet users have severe problems with on-line sex? It's a problem with which many Christians are struggling. What are the warning signs of an on-line sex addict, and how can an addict get help? Find out in "One click away" (p. 10).

—NRB

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When a non-Christian neighbor inquires about religion, a door is opened for sharing the gospel.

Frederick A. Kogler

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Thomas Thomas

PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

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I cried because of Parkinson's for the first time in 1992. I am still crying.

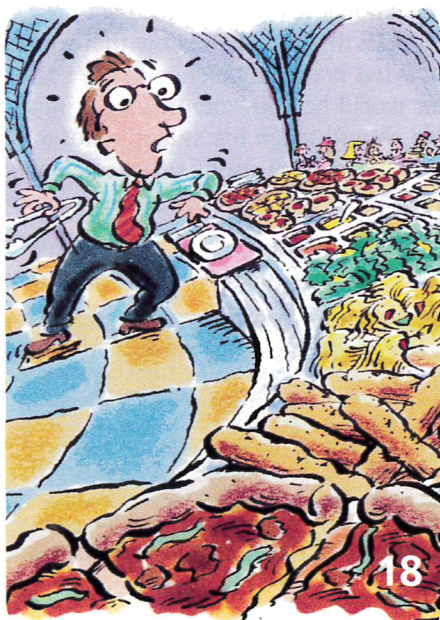
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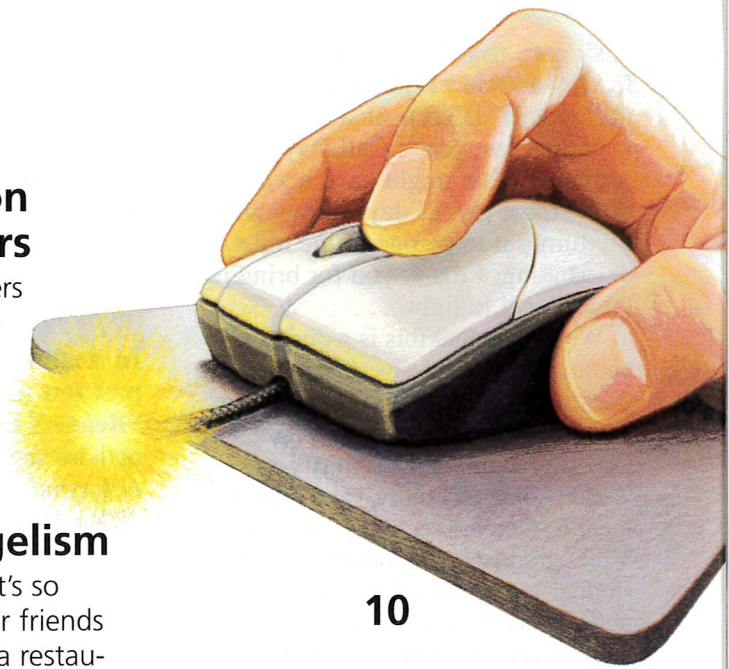
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Jesus ascended to heaven to prepare a place for you and for me.

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Let there be light



A sincere thank you to Ben Wink for his article “When there is no divine call” [Feb.] As a mother attending last year’s Call Day and watching what might have been one of the most joyous days in my child’s life turn out to be one of the most devastating, I thank you for bringing this subject to light. . . .

We realize that this is a divine call and that this is not a perfect world. It does seem, though, that these young people should be prepared long before Call Day that this possibility could well become a “reality,” and prepare them to face the secular job market. Many graduates are looking at large student loans and other financial obligations. It only seems fair that they become prepared for the fact that they need to seek other employment. Our daughter has been blessed and is now teaching in a private preschool.

Ben, don’t give up faith. The Lord will lead you where he wants you!

Pam Kolb

Prairie City, South Dakota

Thanks to Ben Wink for his article on reactions from a graduate who did not get a call [Feb.] I was encouraged from reading his article to take more time to pray for called workers.

Ben—please know that many of us care and can say with confidence that God will work according to his will in his “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

L. Voss

New York

Re: The letters and referenced articles regarding worship style [Nov. 2003-March 2004].

If the music I hear and sing in church sounds good and gives God the glory, I don’t care who wrote it or when.

Our congregation is blessed with a contemporary music group with about 30-35 voices and several musical instruments. Age varies from fourth grade to 65 years old (that’s

me). We will keep singing praises to our Lord as long as he allows us to. This group normally only sings one song for a given service, and the liturgy is usually right out of *Christian Worship*, accompanied by the organ.

Jack Ruppel



Waukesha, Wisconsin

In reading *Forward in Christ* the past few months along with the “Readers forum” comments about articles suggesting alternative forms of formal worship [Nov. 2003-March 2004], there is a sense of intense emotions being stirred up.

Fellow brothers and sisters, remember the Master’s prayer for us: “May they [believers] be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you [the Father] sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23).

He also prays that we would be united in him “so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (v. 21). Be wary of that which would deny our Master’s prayer. Forms of traditional worship or forms of alternative worship are pleasing to our Lord when we “worship in spirit and in truth.” It is not the worship form that the Lord is concerned with, but with what is in our hearts, souls, and minds.

Brianna Ross



Seward, Nebraska

The March issue of *Forward in Christ* states that WELS received a request from LCMS for doctrinal discussions [but that the request was declined]. It also states that the WELS president longs for the day we can re-establish fellowship. Isn’t this an oxymoron? Certainly it is contradictory or incongruous.

Dennis W. Moench



Omaha, Nebraska

I do not find it helpful to divide scientific investigation into “human science” and “divine science” [“A Lutheran view of science,” Jan.]

All truth is divine in that it has been established by God.

Temporal or natural truth is learned by experience, reason, and scientific methodology.

Spiritual truth is revealed in the Bible (John 18:37). It is affirmed by experience, reason, and science.

When “human” or natural truth conflicts with spiritual, biblical truth, the science or reasoning is either flawed or incomplete.

Gilbert Holtz

Fishers, New York

When I read “A Lutheran view of science” [Jan.], it made me feel vaguely uneasy. I am getting the message that learning and teaching what creation scientists have discovered are not all that important in a Lutheran science class.

True, people will not learn the way of salvation from a study of science, but they may learn something about the greatness of the Creator. Though the farmer doesn’t put power in the seed to germinate, yet he removes rocks and prepares the ground.

So a Christian science teacher will remove the rocks of false science by demonstrating that true science will agree with Scripture 100 percent of the time. He will be able to demonstrate this to a greater degree if he keeps himself abreast of the latest work of creation scientists and is able to pass this knowledge on to his students.

He will be able to show that much of what is called science in the secular world has no scientific backing. He should teach his students not to fear that observations of true science will ever contradict the Bible.

Herb Kluth



Prior Lake, Minnesota

Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3862; <fic@sab.wels.net>. Letters between 100 and 250 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters can be acknowledged or used. Writers’ views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.



Can you dig it?

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

Last November, CNN and a group calling itself “Rock the Vote” sponsored a debate for Democratic presidential candidates. During the debate, Brown University freshman Alexandra Trustman had something to ask the participants. “It’s not quite ‘boxers or briefs,’” she said (an allusion to the question that candidate Bill Clinton famously chose to answer). “But—Macs or PCs?”¹

You’re wondering how a student at an elite university comes to ask such a dumb question. That’s easy. An executive at CNN told her to. He thought the question would test whether the candidates could connect with today’s tech-savvy young people. In other words, the executive thought he understood college students better than college students do.

CNN later apologized, saying that the executive “clearly went too far.” Perhaps they also understood how ridiculous we old-timers look when we attempt to instruct our young people in the fine points of hipness.

As a professor, I spend my entire ministry these days with college students. And I’ve learned to distrust any statement that begins, “Young people today are . . .” That’s especially true when the speaker comes from my own, arrested-development, Baby Boom generation, which can’t seem to understand that the world has changed since 1972.

The truth is that “young people today” are many things. Some come to Martin Luther College burning with intellectual curiosity. Some don’t. Some have already developed a real servant’s heart and a fine work ethic. For others, that takes time. Some distrust authority. Some trust certain kinds of authority—“the experts,” for example—far too much. And yes, some live for video games and VH1.

But most do not. When their elders assume that they do, they rightly feel patronized and insulted.

It makes me especially uneasy when someone in our church body tells us that we need to change this or that “for the sake of our young people.” It happens, for instance, in discussions of worship style. Whenever it does, my mind goes back to 1987.

I was a vicar then, and one of my assignments was to tabulate the results of a survey we took after trying some new worship music in our congregation. The comments on one survey read, “I am sad and offended that you would change these songs that I have been singing since I was little. I was raised doing it the old way and it’s too late for me to change now.”

How old would you guess the author of those remarks was? Sixty-five? Seventy-five?

He was 18 years old.

If I were permitted just one generalization about the wonderful young people I see at Martin Luther College, it would be this. Not only do they have less life experience, and thus a smaller store of accumulated wisdom, than their elders. They also realize it. They want to be heard. They appreciate respect. But they’re in no hurry for their elders to step aside so that they can take over and lead. They would much prefer that their leaders lead, at least for now.

Let’s not let them down.

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

¹Source: “Youth Debate Failed to ‘Keep It Real’” by Jonah Goldberg, *Jewish World Review* on-line, Nov. 14, 2003.

I’ve learned
to distrust
any statement
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“Young people
today are . . .”

Neighbor to neighbor

When a non-Christian neighbor inquires about religion, a door is opened for sharing the gospel.

Frederick A. Kogler

The other day as I was working on my lawn, my neighbor Sarah walked up and engaged in some small talk. After we talked about her husband, Sam, and her son, Hal, she confessed why she had come over: "Fred, I know you know that I'm a Jewess, but would you mind if I asked you a question about religion?"

Seizing the moment

I had waited for this opportunity for years. Here was an answer to my prayers. A million thoughts screamed through my brain, and I prayed, "Lord, give me the words." Sarah and I had talked many times, so we were comfortable with each other. But, during the eight years we have been neighbors, she had never asked about religion.

"Fred," she said, "every time we see you and your wife drive off on Sunday mornings, we comment about it. Hal wonders where you go. I've told him you're a retired pastor and that you go to church. The last time, he asked if there was somebody in your church who made you go, because you never miss. I told him you were a very spiritual person and that you went to church because you wanted to. Then he asked if only retired pastors were spiritual. I didn't know how to answer him. So I said I'd ask you. Now you know that we're Jews, but we don't go to our synagogue much, so maybe I'm not as good at explaining things to Hal as I could be. I want to know if you think a person can be spiritual without being a Christian."

When one is in a conversation with Sarah you do a lot of listening. That day it was like a kettle boiling over. The words just spilled out. When she stopped to catch a breath, I said, "Whoa, Sarah! You're going too fast for me. C'mon, let's sit down on the porch so I can relax, and let me think about your question."



I added, "Let me get something to drink. I'll be right back."

I returned from the house with a can of Coke for each of us. I also had a paperback edition of the New Testament. Sarah looked at the little blue book as though it was a loaded handgun. I quickly put it down and out of sight.

Laying the foundation

We sat down on the porch steps, and I asked: "Sarah, how old is Hal anyway?"

"Six," she replied.

"Where does he go to school?"

"Kraft Elementary."

We both began to relax as this loving mother eagerly explained how her only child had so many questions about life, and we turned our discussion to her questions about spirituality and religion.

I started with Genesis and shared with her how when the Lord created man, he not only gave him a body and mind but a living soul as well. So, mankind is naturally spiritual. Then I referred her to Psalm 139:14: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (KJV).

We then talked about how hard it was to know about God and what he said in the Scriptures. I said it was hard to remember all the details, and that's why it is so important for her son to begin learning from God's Word while he is young. I reminded her that God knows how hard it is for us, and that's one of the reasons he has given us his written Word. We can go back to his words and read them over and over again. I explained: "That's why our children memorize Bible passages."

Then she said, "Fred, I know what you're saying is true because I learned the Torah when I was a kid." She recited the first verse of Genesis in Hebrew.

I pressed on: "Sarah, do you mind if I share with you something about what I believe?"

She said, "Go ahead," and added, "You know I started this anyway."

Sharing the message

After defining the difference between spirituality, religion, and denominations, I began to tell her more about my faith perspective: "To me the Bible is like a very important two-page letter. The first page is the Old Testament, and the second page is the New Testament. The Old Testament speaks about the promised Messiah, and the New Testament tells how God kept his promise by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, as the Messiah."

Then I asked Sarah if she practiced eating the Passover meal.

She said, "Yes, it's always a big deal for our family. We go through the whole ritual that I learned from my mother."

I asked, "Do you see how those things are spiritual without being Christian?"

"Yes," she replied.

I went on: "The big difference is that the New Testament tells everyone who reads it that Jesus came as that promised Messiah, and when he did he brought the freedom from sin, death, and spiritual destruction that is pictured by the freedom that was gained through the Exodus for the Jewish people in Egypt. When Jesus died on the cross, as the lamb of sacrifice pre-figured, he paid for the spiritual freedom everyone needs by shedding his blood."

Letting the Spirit work

Sarah was quiet now and deep in thought.

I worried about whether I had said enough.

Then she carefully spoke: "You know, Fred, there is so much to learn

in life, and I've never heard the explanation that you just gave. Please forgive me if I seem ignorant about this."

I assured her, "There is a lot to learn, and that's why I brought this copy of the New Testament out here. Let me read one passage from it to give you an idea of what I mean." I opened to John 1:41: "The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah!' (that is, the Christ)."

"The New Testament," I continued, "tells us that Jesus is the Savior, promised of old—a promise carried by the chosen people of God, the ancient Jews."

I gave the New Testament to Sarah, and as I did, I said, "Tell Hal that Pastor Kogler is not only a spiritual person like everyone else, but he believes that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the Savior of the world. That's why he goes to church every Sunday. He wants to learn more about Jesus and to worship him. It may seem like a fine line to hold to, but it is much more than a difference of opinion. It is what God says in his Word. That's why he gave us this book to read."

By this time Sarah's husband and son had made their way over.

Sam broke in, "Hey, what's up you two?"

Sarah immediately responded, "Oh, nothing, we're just talking religion."

Sam said, "Oh, boy, I'm going to stay out of that." Then he turned to me, somewhat defensively, "I don't have time for this religion stuff. I still work and have a business to run. I leave that stuff up to Sarah."

As the family left, Sarah had the New Testament in her hand.

I prayed: "Holy Spirit, please go to work here."



Fred Kogler, a retired pastor, is a member at Emanuel, St. Paul, Minnesota.

One click away

Any Internet user is only one click away from a potentially

It was a dreary afternoon, so John decided to do some research for work using his home computer. His family was away for the afternoon, so it was a wonderful opportunity to get some work done. As his search began, he was excited about the fact that he was quickly finding the articles he needed for his project through various Web sites.

Then an unexpected, unsolicited pornographic site popped up before his eyes. John was now “one click away” from making a critical decision—the decision to delete or open the pornographic site. He thought, “Why not? I don’t have a problem with pornography.” His addiction was about to begin.

The facts

Like John, many men and women find themselves unconcerned about a problem with Internet addiction—whether it’s chat rooms, messenger services, cybersex, or pornography. A recent survey showed that 19,542,710 total unique visitors per month visited the top five pay-porn Web sites, and there were 98,527,275 total unique visitors per month visiting the top five free-porn Web sites. Almost 17 percent of Internet users have severe problems with using sex on the Net.

The Internet is a powerful communication tool that as a tool is not inherently good or bad. It is, rather, the content offered by its creators and the way Internet users respond to these messages, images, and sounds that result in “good” or “bad” outcomes. However, a rapidly increasing number of people find that using the Internet

for sexual purposes is fraught with risks and that it interferes with many aspects of their lives, including family, work, and finances.

Why the Internet for sexual activity?

With all the various forms of media available in our sinful culture, what is it that attracts people to the Internet to engage in sexual activities in such a high-tech fashion? Five factors play a part in making the Internet appealing for someone seeking sexual arousal and fulfillment—accessibility, isolation, anonymity, affordability, and fantasy.

No one can be guaranteed that he won’t get hooked into the sin of Internet pornography.

The 10 criteria that determine problematic, addictive Internet sexual behavior are:

1. Preoccupation with sex on the Internet.
2. Frequently engaging in sex on the Internet more often or for longer periods of time than intended.
3. Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop engaging in sex on the Internet.
4. Restlessness or irritability when attempting to limit or stop engaging in sex on the Internet.
5. Using sex on the Internet as a

way of escaping from problems or relieving feelings such as helplessness, guilt, anxiety, or depression.

6. Returning to sex on the Internet day after day in search of more intense or higher-risk sexual experiences.
7. Lying to family members, therapists, or others to conceal involvement with sex on the Internet.
8. Committing illegal sexual acts on-line (for example, sending or downloading child pornography or soliciting illegal sex acts on-line).
9. Jeopardizing or losing a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of on-line sexual behavior.
10. Incurring significant financial consequences as a result of engaging in on-line sexual behavior.

If you can relate to one or more of the 10 criteria listed, you are in a real struggle with sin that can quickly escalate. If you are dealing with three or more of the criteria, you are dealing with a major problem. This is not something that you should ignore. The sooner you act to make changes in your life, the easier it will be for you to overcome the problem. Addiction is not terminal. With the proper spiritual and psychological help, you can overcome this behavior.

The addict’s belief system is one with its own momentum. The system plays a major role in how the addict deals with addictive behavior. Each of us has a belief system that is the sum of assumptions, judgments, and myths that we hold true. It contains potent family messages about our value or

dangerous situation. Thomas Thomas

worth as people, about relationships, our basic needs, and our sexuality. An addict's belief system contains certain core beliefs that are faulty or inaccurate, and, consequently, provide a fundamental momentum of problematic behavior and addiction.

Simply put, these are the four core beliefs of an addict:

1. I am basically a bad, unworthy person.
2. No one would love me as I am.
3. My needs are never going to be met if I have to depend on others.
4. Sex is my most important need (for an alcoholic, it would be the alcohol).

Generally, addicts don't perceive themselves as worthwhile human beings. Nor do they believe other people would care for them or meet their needs if everything was known about them, including the addiction.

Our core beliefs are formed as we are growing up and are primarily developed within our families. Healthy families have the capacity to organize and reorganize as they grow and change. Children are supported and nurtured. In unhealthy families, children are abused and neglected. When nurturing and support are absent, children begin to make assumptions about who they are and whether they are worthy and loved or not. As a result, they begin to develop the core beliefs mentioned earlier.

Getting help

Recovery from problematic sexual Internet behavior or sexual addiction is possible by reversing the alien-

ation that is integral to the addiction. All forms of addiction are vicious because they reinforce the inability to trust others, coupled with fear, judgment, and ridicule. Yet without the help of God's Word and others, you cannot regain control, because the addiction feeds itself.

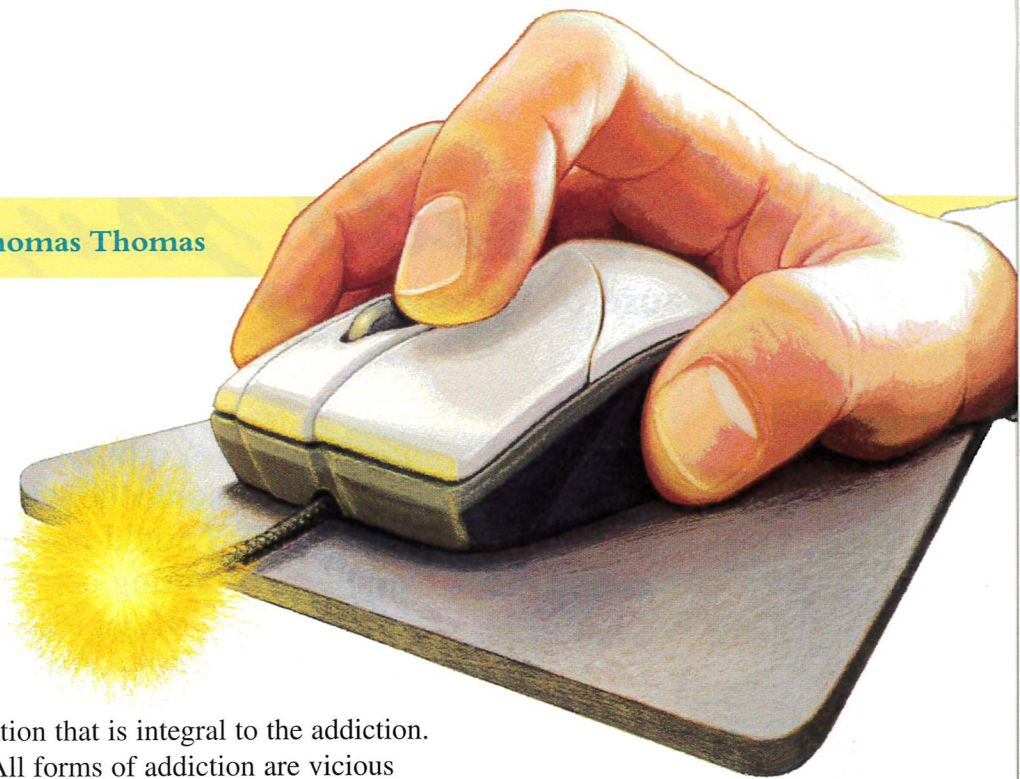
The first step is to set new boundaries that may seem somewhat restrictive, yet are necessary to begin your recovery process.

1. Get into the Scriptures. Make God your first order of business each day. Seek Scripture that will assign you accountability for making God-pleasing choices. Seek the renewed comfort of forgiveness in Christ.
2. Get professional help—individual and group Christian therapy are available.
3. Reduce your computer access. If your computer is in a relatively private setting in your home, move it to a place that is more visible to others.
4. Don't go on-line unless others are at home.
5. Set limits as to how long you will be on the computer.

6. Get a sponsor who can track your Internet Web site visits.
7. If using your computer at work, leave your door open.
8. Use screen names and e-mail addresses that actually identify your real name.
9. Confide in other people about your problem. Find someone whom you trust and can talk to when you are feeling vulnerable.
10. Find sites that will assist you in your recovery as opposed to sites that undermine you.

No one can be guaranteed that he won't get hooked into the sin of Internet pornography. Any of us can be "one click away." God gave us the Internet as a gift to communicate with others. Let us all respect and value that gift.

Thomas Thomas is a counselor in Appleton, Wisconsin, at Christian Family Counseling, a division of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service.



I miss you, Mom

I cried because of Parkinson's for the first time in 1992. I am still crying.

Rhoda Strobel

No one ever told me that you could mourn someone who is still alive. I never thought I could possibly miss someone who was sitting across the room from me.

Having a loved one die over a span of years due to a gradual, debilitating disease is a little like watching an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. That's definitely my mom sitting there . . . but she sure doesn't act like my mom anymore. She doesn't look much like my mom. Often, she doesn't sound like my mom, either. Whose cruel joke is this, anyway?

Twelve years ago, my mother was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. I'll never forget the day she found out. She had been having some pain, numbness, and decreased mobility in her left arm. We went from thinking it was just a muscle strain to the reality of Parkinson's disease. That's quite an emotional leap.

You know that feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when you have the realization that your life is about to change forever? I had that.

The first step is denial. Yes, I believed that she had the disease. But, in my heart, I knew that her case would be different. It wouldn't kill her. It wouldn't progress. She would beat it. So, okay, we can handle this. At least we know what's wrong. At least there's a pill for that. At least its progression is gradual. At least . . .

I cried because of Parkinson's for the first time in 1992. I am still crying. Parkinson's is a gradual decline, but every step is a loss. Every step brings with it grieving. I miss my mom. This was hit home to me as I looked at an old family photo album. Who was that healthy, active woman in that picture? Oh yeah. That is what Mom used to look like. I had forgotten. *I had forgotten.* It wasn't until that moment that I realized how far this disease had already brought us.



Rhoda and Lois Strobel in 1968 and today.

Over the years, Mom has lost most of her short-term memory and has struggled with increasing confusion. Early in the progress of the disease, we were getting ready for church, and she called me to come help her. I found her trying to put her pantyhose on. She couldn't remember how.

Now as any woman will tell you, it takes a little skill to balance on one foot while wiggling into the first leg and to repeat the procedure on the other side. However, for most women who have put on pantyhose hundreds of times, that action is "muscle memory." It's like forgetting how to breathe. What must that feel like?

So, what do you do when you find out you have a disease whose symptoms are not yet obvious, but which will eventually be hard to hide? When my mom got home from work that first day after the diagnosis, I remember asking her if she had told her co-workers. She said something to the effect that it didn't really come up.

How do you bring that up in casual conversation? How do you explain that your independence, mobility, and very life are going to be dragged out of you over a long period of time by a debilitating, unforgiving disease? We're good Germans. We just don't talk about things like that. Well, I'm a good German who also happens to be a member of the body of Christ. All the parts of that body work together to survive!

We are called to mirror Christ to the world. How can we equip one another and strengthen one another if we have no idea what is going on

in each other's hearts? We run past each other's lives from one item on our calendar to the next without stopping to remember that we are all on this journey together. "I was just diagnosed with Parkinson's disease." Is that so hard to say? Or is it just too hard to hear?

After my mom was diagnosed with Parkinson's, I wanted to talk to people about it. I wanted those I loved to tell me it was going to be okay. However, I wasn't sure how to bring it up, either.

One of the best ways that we can mirror Christ to others is to listen. Don't be afraid to listen to someone's heart. We always feel that we have to "fix" things. What we need to do is listen and encourage with God's sure and faithful promises. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). What comfort these passages and others like them have given me in the last 12 years.

An old friend once said to me, "You have every right to hold God to his promises to you." I can't begin to express the joy and relief of finally taking all that pain and heartache off my shoulders and putting them onto his. I often say, "Lord, I know that you are in control of everything that is happening here. You've promised me that it's all going to work out.

Help us all to be strong through our hardship and to learn from it."

Even if you are a family of devout Christians, though, you will all mourn differently. You will not agree with the way the other members of your family are handling their pain and loss. Some will handle it with humor, some with depression, some with denial. These are all valid, and they are all okay. The best thing you can do is to withhold judgment, understand and accept your differences, and allow each family member to grieve in his own way.

I'm not a Pollyanna. I still cry, I still hurt, and I still lose my patience with God's plan. I started mourning the loss of my mother 12 years ago. But I know that the same God who allowed this disease to enter our lives also gave me those emotions. I am going to feel this. But I'm going to do it with him! Being a Christian doesn't mean that I don't feel grief. It means that the grief will not have victory over me. It will not be a hope-less grief, but rather a hope-filled grief.

I give my gracious God all thanks and praise for giving me his promises and the certainty of heaven. What more do I need? I know that someday my mother will be whole again. As a very dear friend has often reminded me, "We're not in heaven yet." But, thank the Lord, I know it's coming. I know that I will attain the prize and that I will join my mom for eternity. "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home."

Rhoda Strobel is a member at Faith, Sussex, Wisconsin.



PRINCE OF PEACE YANKTON, SOUTH DAKOTA

One family. Two locations.

Nicole R. Balza

“**P**ortable,” said Larry Kruger when asked what one word best describes his congregation. It’s not the type of word you’d normally associate with a WELS church. Yet, it fits when describing Prince of Peace, Yankton, S.D.

Portable location

Prince of Peace was established in 1972. Membership dropped in the 1980s, so a retired pastor served the congregation part time. In 1997, Home Missions decided to “restart” the congregation, offering some financial subsidy and the opportunity to call a full-time pastor.

God blessed the congregation with Steve Geiger as that pastor. Geiger’s God-given energy, enthusiasm, and mission-mindedness helped the congregation steady itself and begin to look to the future.

When Prince of Peace realized that an increasing number of members lived 25 miles away in Vermillion, S.D., members decided to open a second location in Vermillion. This second location, named Christ Our Savior, would also help members reach out to a new community. The first services in Vermillion were held at the National Guard Armory. Soon services moved to the University of South Dakota’s Continuing Education Center. At this location, Christ Our Savior can also serve the university’s students.

Portable ministries

Prince of Peace and Christ Our Savior operate as one congregation in two locations. Sunday worship, Bible class, and Sunday school take place in both places—in the morning in Yankton and in the evening in Vermillion—but Prince of Peace and Christ Our Savior share a church council, which includes members from both locations.

“We’re one family,” says Kruger, “but it is nice to have a choice of locations and times to attend.”

The congregation likes to operate outreach events at both locations, but staffing for these events is often shared. For example, each year a Christmas for Kids, Easter for Kids, and vacation Bible school program is



Steve Geiger, pastor at Prince of Peace and Christ Our Savior, gives a short message on this radio station every Friday morning.

usually offered at each location. A teacher from Prince of Peace, though, may also teach at Christ Our Savior. This partnership strengthens each program and allows the congregation to reach out to more community members.

Another shared ministry is broadcast over the local top 40s radio station every Friday morning when Geiger goes on the air with the station’s disc jockey.

“I take key thoughts from that week’s sermon and develop a theme in a way that non-Christians can understand,” explains Geiger. “It’s increased our community awareness. Plus, when members hear me on the radio, they can very naturally start conversations with their co-workers about their faith.”

Portable service

With a communicant membership of 64, each member is an important part of the church family. Members look out for one another and take care of each other during times of crisis. They also all pitch in to help with the work of running the congregation.

“I am currently the president of the congregation, as well as serving as an elder on the church council,” notes John Flack. “I also am financial secretary and participate in many of the outreach activities the church holds each year.”

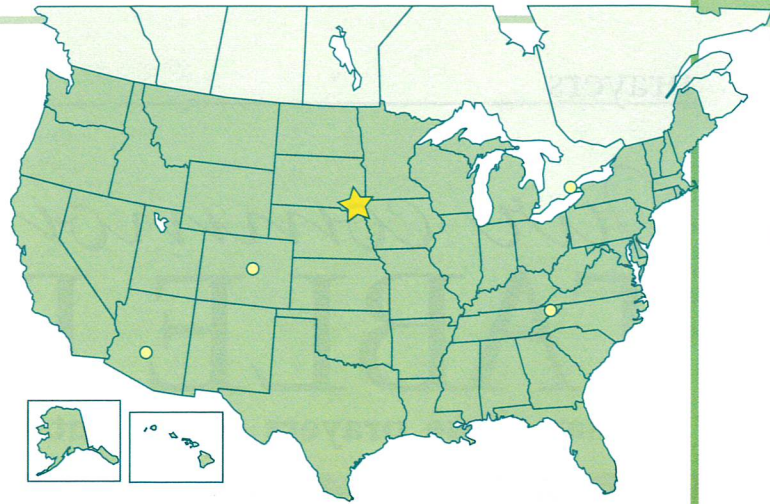
“Since our church is small,” explains Adeline Creviston, “we all take turns cleaning the church and mowing the lawn. My husband serves on the

church council, is church treasurer, and does many other things that need doing. I teach Sunday school, play the organ for services, and also do many other things that need doing.”

It’s that type of attitude that fosters a family feel. Geiger puts it this way: “Members have a beautiful awareness of each other and a willingness to act on each other’s behalf without even thinking about what that will mean for them personally.”

Portable members

They also help take care of students attending the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. Christ on Campus, the student group that serves these young adults, offers a Thursday night Bible study that attracts between 10-12 participants each week, including both WELS and non-WELS students. Sometimes Christ on Campus joins forces with the WELS campus ministry in Brookings, S.D., for joint activities such as bowling or volleyball.



★ Featured congregation ○ Congregation already featured

QUICK FACTS

Prince of Peace/Christ Our Savior,
<www.jesusedforme.com>:

- includes 86 baptized members.
- averages 40-45 worshipers at Prince of Peace each week and 20-25 worshipers at Christ Our Savior.
- regularly uses WELS Kingdom Workers volunteers for community outreach projects.
- was assigned a seminary vicar for the 2003-04 school year thanks to funding help from its sister congregations in the Dakota-Montana District.

Portable opportunities

“There are so many opportunities we haven’t even touched,” notes Geiger. To help the congregation take advantage of these opportunities, Geiger began leading a group of members through leadership training in March.

“Our members are gifted and willing to serve, but we struggle with how to follow through on new ideas,” Geiger explains. “This year-long leadership training program will provide a scriptural foundation for our desire to lead well, plus some of the practical tools needed to serve as good leaders.”

Recently all members participated in a spiritual gifts inventory. Once the congregation’s leaders are equipped with the tools needed to lead effectively, Geiger expects that the congregation will “look at the spiritual gifts available in the congregation, brainstorm projects that would allow those gifts to be used, and let the leaders run.”

“The opportunities are endless,” concludes John Flack. “There are always new people to reach out to with the gospel.”

Nicole Balza is a senior communications assistant for Forward in Christ magazine and WELS Communication Services.



Nicci Hein and her two daughters were baptized at Christ Our Savior, Vermillion, S.D., on Nov. 10, 2002.

“It’s nice to meet with other Christians who believe the same things I believe and who are my age,” says WELS student Molly Kuxhaus. “It’s a nice break from the otherwise secular school surroundings.”

Following the lead of Prince of Peace and Christ Our Savior, this campus ministry is not afraid to

try something new as outreach opportunities arise. For example, when Taiwanese students at the university were looking for ways to improve their English-language skills, Christ on Campus dove right in and began offering English-as-a-second-language classes. Campus ministry students served as language partners for the Taiwanese students. Optional Bible studies were offered, and soon the Taiwanese students were more interested in the Bible classes than in the English classes.

Because of the nature of a university, though, the students are always changing. So, attendance at Bible studies and other events fluctuates.

Our common TABLE PRAYERS

Paul E. Eickmann

We say these prayers often, but have we considered what they mean?



“Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed.”

Many Lutheran Christians pray these words at mealtimes. Families may say them together, and individuals may pray them silently when they eat alone. Before congregational meals we are often invited to ask the blessing and give thanks in the words of “the common table prayers.”

Asking a blessing

“Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest,” we pray. A plaque in some Christian homes announces, “Christ is the head of this house.” It includes a line calling him “the unseen guest at every meal.” When they ask the Lord to be

their guest, Christians confess that they believe his promise, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Jesus our Savior, true God and true man, is always present among us.

“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them,” the Lord also promised (Matthew 18:20). To come together in the name of Jesus means to gather around his Word. When we ask him to be our guest, we affirm that we are ready and willing to hear him. For many Christian families, couples, and singles, a mealtime is the best opportunity for family or personal devotions. In our table prayer we repeat the invitation the Emmaus disciples gave their risen Lord. After spending hours in the Scriptures with Jesus, their

hearts burned within them and they wanted to hear more. “Stay with us,” they prayed (Luke 24:29). In other words, “Be our guest.”

Still another promise of Jesus comes to mind. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). The risen, glorified Jesus, our ever-present guest, is the constant host of a heavenly banquet. On the menu he offers forgiveness for every sin, limitless love for every sinner. And, as an earthly host might say, “Keep your forks. Dessert is coming.” When our Lord returns to claim the church as his bride, he promises a joyful, eternal wedding feast in the Father’s house.

The rest of this prayer brings us back to our earthly tables again: "And let these gifts to us be blessed." What is it that enables our minds and bodies to do their work? Of course, we need the food and drink God gives to fuel brains, muscles, and every organ. Too easily we forget that bread alone cannot keep us alive.

Satan tempted a hungry Jesus to trust in food. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "tell these stones to become bread" (Matthew 4:3). The enemy wanted God's Son to depend on food for his human body.

Jesus trusted in the Word and will of the Father who had brought him into the wilderness. He answered the tempter from Scripture: "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

The powerful Word of God preserved his people Israel in the wilderness—remember the manna. The Father's Word sustained his Son's body for 40 days without food. Our almighty Creator could do the same for us.

Yet ordinarily God nourishes us with the food he brings forth from the earth (Psalm 104:14). From heartbeat to heartbeat our Creator and Preserver also enables our bodies to use the food he provides. The glorified Son, ruling over everything, constantly works for and in each one of his creatures, "sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Hebrew 1:3). If the Lord Jesus was not present with his blessing, the food on our tables could nourish us no better than stones.

Giving thanks

After a meal, guests thank their host and hostess. Christians give thanks to their divine provider. Many use the first verse of Psalm 106 and Psalm 107, where we encourage each other:

"Oh, give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endures forever" (KJV).

Following Jewish custom, Jesus regularly raised his eyes to heaven and gave thanks before meals. He did so before he fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two small fish (John 6:11). He knew that the Father had provided enough. He gave thanks before he broke the bread for his own new covenant meal. When he sat down to supper with the two disciples at Emmaus, he gave thanks, broke the bread, and began to give it to them. By those marks they recognized their risen Lord (Luke 24:30,35).

Most Christian families formerly gave thanks at the end of a meal. Today we often hear both prayers at the beginning. Are we following the custom of the Lord Jesus? Or did this change perhaps take place to allow the children to be excused while the adults lingered a little longer over their coffee?

In the psalm verse most commonly used for giving thanks, both the King James and the New International Versions print the name of the LORD in capital letters. Here the Hebrew text has YHWH (Jehovah or Yahweh, original pronunciation unknown), the proper name of the true God. The Lord himself explained the meaning of his name to Moses in Exodus 3:14,15, where he calls himself "I AM." He was/is/will be always the same God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He stands by his covenant, faithful to every word of his promises.

Why do we thank him? He is good, for his mercy endures forever.

Our recognition of his goodness is based on his mercy, the key word in this part of our thanksgiving prayer. The Hebrew word translated mercy in the KJV is translated love in the NIV, sometimes also unfailing love (e.g., Psalm 33:5). It emphasizes God's goodness and undeserved love as being steadfast, constant, enduring. "A faithful Shepherd is my LORD;" therefore, I can be confident of his unfailing love. Most of our tables groan under a burden of food, but even if they held only one piece of bread or a single potato, Christians could confidently say, "I shall not be in want" (Psalm 23:1).

Psalms 106:1 and 107:1 do not actually mention food. The same verse opens and closes Messianic Psalm 118. Israel thanked God for his salvation, promised in the Christ. Christians today thank God for keeping his promise, opening heaven, and giving us his own Son. The people of Israel worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord with the last part of this verse when Solomon dedicated the temple (2 Chronicles 7:3). There God lived among his Old Testament people. With the same words we thank the Lord Jesus for remaining our guest today. "Every good and perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

Believing prayer is never a mere prelude to "Please pass the potatoes" or a pro forma sequel to "That's enough for me, thanks." In our common table prayers we ask for uncommon gifts and confess amazing truths. Mealtimes offer occasions for us to count our numberless blessings and to give God thanks from the heart.



Paul Eickmann, a retired pastor, is a member of Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.

Pizza evangelism

Ask yourself why it's so easy to talk to friends about a great pizza restaurant, but it's so hard to talk to them about your great Savior.

Jim R. Woodfin



As is our custom, we were looking for a place to eat lunch on our way home from church. The usual, “Where does anyone want to eat?” was answered by the usual chorus, “I don’t know, where do you want to eat?”

The usual, “I don’t care as long as it’s edible.”

The usually usual, “Whatever.”

And the random, “How about . . .” (buffets . . . burgers and fries . . . Chinese . . . Mexican), ending in the frustrated driver’s unilateral choice du jour—as usual.

This time, before the driver could set a course for whatever was handi-

est, a new “whatever” unexpectedly inserted itself into the mix. Someone spotted a sign that said, “Pizza buffet, all you can eat for \$3.” The decision was unanimous.

An amazing meal

We walked into a lively and welcoming atmosphere. A prominently displayed sign read, “If you don’t see what you want, tell us what it is and we’ll make it for you.” We paid our \$3 each and with eyes wide and appetites a-tingle, pushed our trays down the long serving line, shoveling our plates full as we went.

And I’m not talking about pepper-

oni with cheese or cheese without pepperoni. The steaming festival of culinary temptation that stretched out endlessly before us presented not only the standard pizza choices, but a creative and tasty assortment of toppings not commonly associated with the pizza experience.

In reference to the “Tell us what you want and we’ll make it” sign, I asked one of the smiling servers what would happen if I wanted a licorice and squid pizza with chocolate sauce and sprinkles. Without losing the smile, he said, “You might have to wait a few minutes while we run down to

the supermarket to get the ingredients.” I believe he meant it.

The plates rapidly became mountainous symbols of pizza-piggy appetites gone berserk. And yet that wasn’t the whole of the matter. Garlic bread and dinner rolls and pasta drenched in thick sauce and make-your-own salads with a choice of dressings and toppings were included in the “fit-for-a large-famished-omnivorous-creature” feast.

Even more than that, the operating mantra was clearly, “Eat! Eat! Eat! We live to feed you, don’t disappoint us.” And the result was enthusiastic encouragement for seconds and thirds . . . whatever a person could handle without becoming a colorful exploding display of gluttony gone to the limit.

To put the icing on the cake—so to speak—there were sticky, gooey, incredibly tasty desserts and a huge-screen TV displaying in-your-face football or auto racing and a side-room arcade for the kids.

We’re talking \$3 here—\$3! So tell me, is that an experience and a participation opportunity you would not want to tell everyone about?

An amazing message

For several weeks “pizza for pennies” worked its way into my every conversation. Singlehandedly, I have probably increased the customer base of the establishment by several leaps and a couple of substantial bounds.

Okay, now that I have wiped the sauce off my chin, let’s get analytical. The pizza place was not paying me to advertise their business, so what incentive was there for me to share my experience with others? Why should I care if someone else was given the opportunity to enjoy the same thing I did? Why shouldn’t I have smugly kept my secret and let

others find the mother-of-all pizza bargains on their own? Why was it so easy and natural to talk about it with enthusiasm and with a genuine desire for others to be a part of the great and happy pizza pigout?

“If bargain pizza rates a rave review, why not even more so the free Bread of Life?”

The answer is that I found something too good to ignore and too good to keep to myself.

All right, then, here’s the crux of the matter. Why should sharing the gospel be any more difficult than sharing information about bargain pizza—or about a new movie you’ve enjoyed or a good book recently read or a piece of music that hits you right in the sweet spot?

The keys here are “experience” and “enthusiasm.” When you have had a wonderful experience, enthusiasm is a result, and enthusiasm naturally fosters the burning desire to share it.

Have you ever heard a person say, “This is so great that if I don’t tell someone about it I’ll burst”? Shouldn’t the same apply to sharing the gospel—the greatest good news mankind can ever hear? Shouldn’t all who have eaten of the lifegiving feast of salvation naturally and eagerly share the experience with everyone?

Isn’t there something fundamentally wrong with our finding it difficult to insert Jesus and eternal matters into everyday conversation, although we easily speak of lesser passing pleasures to friend and stranger alike?

Isn’t it a puzzle as to why anyone who has tasted the ultimate soul food—God’s love-driven offer of salvation and eternal life—would not be so filled with enthusiasm on the subject that in some way it would always be spilling out?

Isn’t it a mystery that although we often are so full of God’s Word and love and grace in our heart that we have to tell someone about it or burst, that we frequently opt for burst?

“Of course,” is surely the appropriate answer to all of the above. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if there were such a succinct, all encompassing remedy? I certainly am not qualified to fire the silver bullet even if there was one. I won’t even try to load the gun. But here’s an idea. Whenever an opportunity to share the gospel presents itself, why not think about pizza, a good movie, or other things you could comfortably share, and then ask yourself, “If bargain pizza rates a rave review, why not even more so the free Bread of Life?”

“I found this great pizza place . . . let me tell you about it!”

“I had this great experience. God showed me the way to eternal life . . . let me tell you about it!” (Check out John 1:41,45,46 for a quick reference on this.)

Try it and let personal experience and enthusiasm make evangelism and witnessing, whether it is door-to-door, on the telephone, or a one-on-one personal conversation, as natural as—and a lot tastier than—spreading the word about bargain pizza.



Jim Woodfin is a member at Lamb of God, Madison, Alabama.

WHATEVER

Help for the brokenhearted

A teen writes her pastor to let him know that his **sermon** touched her **heart**—and her **soul**.

Melissa Jacobs

Pastor, I just wanted you to know that I really liked your sermon last Sunday, "Help for the brokenhearted." I'm sure you noticed me crying through the whole thing and even now thinking about the message God had that day makes me bawl. It's just that it was exactly what I needed to hear.

Friends at school, teachers, my parents, anybody I talk to—I come across to them as this "extremely happy, smiley, always-cheering-other-people-up" kind of person with no problems and so many great things happening—which is mostly true. But all that stuff doesn't matter when I'm sad, feeling lost, confused, frustrated, angry, lonely, empty, overwhelmed, and I have no idea exactly why I'm feeling this way. I really have a lot of great things going on in my life, especially right now. But for some reason at the end of the day, when I'm alone, I'm extremely sad.

I know that all your sermons have a positive ending and gospel to them, but that last sermon was just so perfect for me right now. No matter what problems I am facing in my life, big or small, I always need to remember to turn to Jesus for help, because he knows my pain and struggles, and he's always here for me.

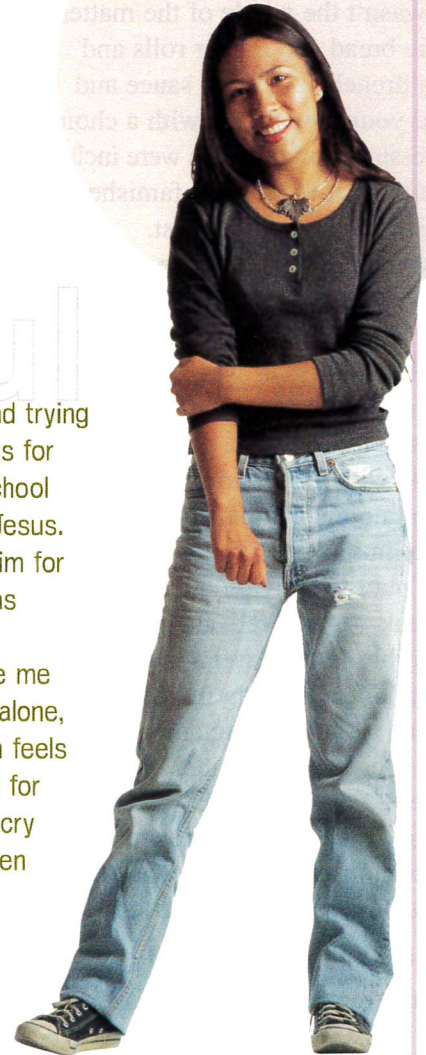
Sometimes we get so wrapped up with what is happening in our lives that we forget who gave us life. We forget about Jesus and that all our strength comes from him. I've just been so

busy with my life and trying to help and do things for other people and school that I forgot about Jesus. I forgot to turn to him for guidance when I was feeling this low.

Your sermon made me realize that I'm not alone, even though it often feels like it. Jesus is here for me, listening to my cry for help! I've forgotten the last couple of months to turn to him when feeling this sadness.

So, I just wanted to tell you that your sermon was moving to me and hit me so hard. I felt like God was talking directly to me through you! I've never had such a powerful spiritual moment as I did last Sunday. Thank you.

Melissa Jacobs, a junior at Shasta High School, Redding, California, is a member at Mount Calvary, Redding.



message

The intolerance of tolerance

Frederick J. Toppe

We have been hearing that we are to be a nation of tolerant people. This means that we should accept how other people live. "It's their choice," we hear, "who are you to tell someone else that what they are thinking or doing is wrong? Who are you to try to force your values upon anyone?"

So we're supposed to shut up and make no judgments about other people's behaviors. We are not to comment on their sexual preferences, nor are we to condemn their religious beliefs, to speak against their words of blasphemy, to express any outrage about their living arrangements, to try to convert them to our faith.

Those who are not actively supporting homosexual rights are called homophobes, and homophobes are the real sick people. Those who speak against the teachings of other religions and denounce them as false are called bigots, as bad as anything from the McCarthy era or even from the Nazis.

Should we not be able to expect that as they want tolerance for their views, so they should give us tolerance for our views? Why does their cry for tolerance leave them so intolerant of us?

In truth, everybody draws lines. The most liberal and progressive community comes out in force against someone designated as a sexual predator who is being moved into their neighborhood. The most enlightened society still bristles at anything it perceives to be racism or sexism and passes endless laws to make sure the right morality is being maintained. Everybody agrees that some things should not be tolerated, but the battle in our time is, as it has always been, what should be included on our lists? And which side should the institutions of society support?

We know what side we must be on, where we must draw the lines for our own

behavior. It is not society that is to define how we live, but our God and his unchanging Word. If following the Lord and his truth in our world means that we are stigmatized as intolerant, we will accept such labeling as the persecution of the faithful that Jesus tells us will always be our lot. Nor will we ever see it as intolerance when we persist in trying to call people without Christ from what they believe and how they live to what we believe about our Savior and how we have life only through him. We love them enough to be intolerant of a faith and a life that are sending them to hell.

But we also know that we must be careful how we come across in a society quick to look for what it sees as intolerance. The harsh posters and shouts that come from conservative Christians picketing abortion clinics or gay parades do nothing to attract people to God's truth. Nor should it seem as if all the church is interested in is trampling on people's rights. Our goal is to call to them to join us in trusting our God and his ways rather than trusting the latest fads of our society. Peter writes, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Peter 3:15,16).

Must Christians be tolerant? Not as our society defines the term. But we must be loving—and that is a far greater challenge. We must love this world as our God loves it, even while he condemns the world for its rebellion and sin. Let us be loving and tolerant even of those who choose to be intolerant toward us.

Frederick Toppe is pastor at Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Everybody
agrees that
some things
should not be
tolerated, but
the battle is,
what should
be included
on our lists?

CHARIS sponsors Church Door Symposium

CHARIS, the institute of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, exists to “provide a platform for the study and discussion of issues facing the Church.” On March 1 and 2, 65 WELS members came together at CHARIS’s first annual Church Door Symposium to study and discuss “Leadership in the Church.”

Eight speakers and two panels presented ideas about biblical leadership from a variety of perspectives. Topics included “Developing future lay leaders,” “New Testament pastoral leadership,” and “Leadership for WELS women.” Garden Homes, Milwaukee, and St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis., served as examples of congregations developing strong lay leaders. Pastors and laypeople from these churches explained how they have worked to develop lay leaders and how that has benefited the leaders themselves and their church bodies.

Attendees grappled with the many facets of church leadership, and, although they may have left with as many questions as they came with because of the complexity of the subject, many noted that they benefited from taking part in the discussion.

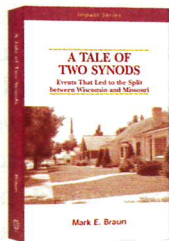
“The symposium helped me look at how others are tackling the concept of developing leaders in their churches,” reflected Steve Geiger, pastor at Prince of Peace, Yankton/Christ Our Savior, Vermillion, S.D. “It gave me encouragement to continue pursuing leadership development.”

Each year CHARIS plans on hosting a similar Church Door Symposium that will focus on one particular aspect of the Church and the challenges it faces in society. To learn more, go to <www.charis.wlc.edu>.

Booknook

A look at new books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit <www.nph.net> or call 1-800-662-6022.

History of “the split”



\$16.99

Written as the doctoral thesis of WELS Pastor Mark Braun, *A Tale of Two Synods—Events That Led to the Split between Wisconsin and Missouri* represents an ambitious attempt to examine

the histories, personalities, changing theologies, and complex (and sometimes subtle) doctrinal disagreements that caused these synods to break fellowship in 1961.

The Wisconsin Synod, in the 1800s, was more liberal and less articulate or consistent in its theology than the Missouri Synod. Relying on and learning from Missouri, Wisconsin grew more conservative, virtually mirroring Missouri by the start of the 20th century. Soon, however, Missouri’s theology started to “drift.” This led to disagreements over issues including the military chaplaincy program, the Boy Scouts, fellowship with other churches, and the Doctrine of Holy Scripture.

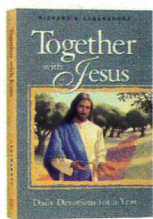
A highlight of this 350-page book is its unique in-depth perspective by pastors who were active in the ministry as the events took place. Braun’s painstaking solicitation of this first-hand information brings life to the issues. These memories, tempered by time, help the reader better understand not only the substance of the doctrinal disputes but also the frame of mind and emotions that played a part in splitting these former “sister synods.”

This book will be most enjoyed by pastors, synod professors, and others who have a fairly detailed knowledge of and interest in church history and theology. The book may be a little harder to digest by the average layperson. Those readers would benefit if someone edited it down considerably, better identified key people (especially in the first 30 pages), and eliminated the numerous footnotes written in German.

Greg Galler

Salem, Stillwater, Minnesota

Versatile devotion book



\$15.99

Together with Jesus by Richard E. Lauersdorf is a book of 366 short, daily devotions that help the reader leave behind the distractions of everyday life and focus on “the one thing needful.”

The author, drawing on his experiences in 42 years of ministry, uses everyday objects and activities as starting points—weather, gardening, a popular TV show, a cell phone, even the frosting on a birthday cake. Each one-page entry begins with a Bible verse, continues for two to three paragraphs of reflection, and concludes with a prayer. Entries follow the seasons of the church year and are dated by day and month, i.e., May 13, but not by a specific year, so that the book can be used again and again.

The daily readings and prayers use various approaches, including thanksgiving, praise, and concern, in language that is clear and easily understood. Each day, Lauersdorf presents law and gospel, our guilt and God’s grace. The reader will find daily comfort in the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus.

This book is well suited for individual or family use, as an opening devotion before a meeting, or as an evangelism tool for new Christians. The tone of mature reflection and the large print make the book especially attractive to seniors. It would make a fine gift for grandma or grandpa, who already have more than enough cologne and neckties.

Janet Klann

Shepherd of the Valley, Surprise, Arizona

Strengthening Christian marriages —

One hundred couples trekked across the Midwest and wound their way up the bluffs to the Eagle Ridge Resort in Galena, Ill., on Feb. 20. Fantastic vistas. Romantic setting. Awesome accommodations.

Couples of all ages arrived—from young, engaged couples to senior citizens. Some eager; some apprehensive. We would all examine our marriages over the next two days. What would we find?

The members of WELS' Commission on Adult Discipleship are serious about strengthening Christian homes—starting with the backbone of the home, a strong Christian marriage. So the commission asked Randy Hunter, pastor at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., to facilitate a seminar that would help couples grow.

Hunter created a safe environment in which to examine and strengthen marriages. He gently led us through non-threatening discussions and practical interactions based on five topics: conflict resolution, forgiveness, emotional intimacy, physical intimacy, and spiritual life.

Although marriage is a very personal thing between a husband and wife, small-group bonding became

a powerful resource. In groups of six, Christian couples—unified through the Word—shared, empathized, and encouraged one another.

Free time for a “date night” was woven into the program. Couples were encouraged to plan a special night to practice what they had learned—perhaps enjoying a romantic dinner at an area restaurant or just spending private time focusing on each other.

As with all positive experiences, the retreat came to an end much too quickly. But the ending was powerful—a worship service of praise and thanks to our gracious God for the wonderful gift of marriage.

Yes, many would have liked time to discuss issues in greater depth, to solidify new Christian friendships. Yet, everyone left with tools to continue what was begun at the retreat—glorifying our Savior-God in our marriages. A never-ending privilege.

Owen A. Dorn

Editor's note: Adult Discipleship is planning both a regional and a national marriage retreat for winter 2005. For more details, go to <www.welsmarriageretreat.org>. Questions? Call 414/256-3278.

District news —

Western Wisconsin

On Oct. 26, 2003, **St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.**, celebrated the dedication of its addition and remodeling project. During the project, the congregation held worship, classes, and office hours at a local mall. This gave St. Paul the community exposure needed to “reach out with the love of Jesus, one heart and home at a time.”

Southeastern Wisconsin

In November 2003, Fox 6 news channel in Milwaukee presented **Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.**, with a National Homeland Security Award. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School hosts a weather station at its school that broadcasts over the Internet and to Fox 6. The school is now certified to use the weather station as a way to tap into weather data and broadcast it nationally in the event of a future homeland security breach.

South Atlantic

Mighty Fortress Retirement Community, Beverly Hills, Fla., designed specifically for WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) seniors, is starting phase one of its plan, which includes building residences, apartments, and a community center. Mighty Fortress Retirement Community is an association of 12 WELS and ELS congregations in Florida and Georgia.

Happy Anniversary!

AZ—Marilyn Consoer, a member of First, Prescott, Ariz., recently celebrated her 60th year as a church organist.

NW—On March 21, members of First German, Manitowoc, Wis., celebrated the anniversaries of these teachers: **Darla Sonntag** (40 years), **Richard Siegler** (25 years), **Nona Korte** (25 years), and **Nancy Ollendorf** (25 years).

On March 28, the **Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale** held a 40th anniversary concert at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: **AZ**—Paul Gunderson; **NW**—Joel Lillo; **SA**—Christopher Kruschel; **SEW**—Scott Oelhafen; **WW**—Martin Baur.



On Feb. 20-22, Owen Dorn and his wife, Bonnie, attended the Commission on Adult Discipleship's marriage retreat in Galena, Ill.

Looking back

In this, the magazine's 90th anniversary, we bring you articles and news from previous issues.

From the Oct. 23, 1960, issue—

After a mission trip to Japan to evaluate the WELS mission work going on there, Edgar Hoenecke wrote:

“Mito is a promising mission area, as we soon learned from Pastor Poetter’s statistical report and the visits we made with him.



Edgar Hoenecke (front, left) and members of the mission congregation in Mito, Japan, in 1960.

You will recall that our Executive Committee for Japan and the Board for World Missions endorsed the plan of our missionaries to concentrate as much as possible at the beginning on the Ibaraki Prefecture, of which Mito is the capital. . . .

“Mito lies in the heart of the Kanto Plain with fertile farmlands surrounding it on all sides, while the other great source of Japan’s food supply, the Pacific Ocean, is only six miles to the east. It is a busy place and has a good educational system. . . .

“Japan is hard put to produce enough food to satisfy her almost 100 million people, and must regularly rely on imports from other countries. Her farmers have become some of the world’s best, and her per-acre yield is possibly the highest in the world; and yet, there is always a shortage because only one-eighth of her land is arable.

“She has need of other food, also, spiritual food, and the Bread and Water of Life in Christ the Savior. Would that she were to develop a real hunger and thirst in this way, now that so many of her people after the War have become disillusioned with the old superstitions of Buddha and the Emperor-worship of Shintoism, instead of lapsing into cynicism and atheism!

“With a total population of 94,206,756, Japan today has a total of only 884 male Protestant missionaries, and 530 single ladies who are engaged in mission work. There are 3,549 Japanese Protestant pastors. The ratio of all Protestants workers to the population is 1 to every 21,000! This prefecture has a population of almost 2,500,000. Pastor Poetter is the only Lutheran missionary in the entire state!”

Editor’s note: The WELS world mission field in Japan now includes nine organized congregations, 451 members, four WELS missionaries, and five national pastors.

Family shares partnership

Ron and Dorothy Siemers recently joined together with family members to become WELS Mission Partners. This partnership allows the family to support a specific world mission field financially and spiritually. Here Ron explains how their partnership was formed:

Q How did your family decide to become Mission Partners together?

A I was aware of the importance of Mission Partners, and I decided to ask my oldest son and two oldest daughters whether they would help support a mission as a family. They all agreed.

Q How did you decide with which mission to partner?

A This was very easy because we have known Pastor Charles Flunker [a missionary in Dourados, Brazil]; his wife, Beth; and their children since 1968 when he was our vacancy

pastor at Lincoln Heights in Des Moines, Iowa.

Q How has this partnership been a blessing to you and your family?

A It’s an inspiration just to know the Flunkers, who are so dedicated to mission work. It’s also a blessing that we can help their cause in Brazil and are communicating with them on a regular basis. We will see them on furlough this summer. [Missionary Flunker] is giving his presentation on the Dourados mission at our son’s congregation, Trinity, Nicollet, Minn., and at our congregation, Acension, Rochester, Minn.

In the meantime, Flunker is keeping the Siemers informed about his mission work via e-mail. Here is an excerpt from his December 2003 update:

“Here in our Christian family in Dourados we could ply you with statistics proving the blessings of

the Lord, but we prefer to think about those individual trophies of grace that gladden our hearts and lighten our days: the woman who looked like an unlikely prospect when brought to church by her neighbor, but who turns out to be a real jewel in the Lord’s kingdom and in service to the congregation; the evangelist-in-training who shows such a wonderful talent and courage for reaching out with the Word; . . . the grandfather who, when being instructed, said, “If I had only learned all this 30 years ago!” and is now working so hard to reach out to all his children and grandchildren.”

For more information about Mission Partners, contact the Commission for Communication on Financial Support, 1-800-827-5482, or visit <www.wels.net/mpg>.

Where are they now?

In *Forward in Christ* magazine, we report the news but aren't always able to follow up. "Where are they now?" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

In the April 2002 issue, we introduced you to the Christian bookmobile at Emmanuel, Las Cruces, N.M.

Here's a recap:

Purchased from a public library, the bookmobile began taking Christ-centered materials into the area around Las Cruces in October 2001. Donations from WELS members helped the outreach program get started. The bookmobile made its rounds twice a month, stopping at senior centers, lower-income apartments, a gas station, post offices, and members' homes.

"It's been a tool for sharing God's Word with more new people in a month than we usually meet in a year of conducting regular worship services," said Pastor Curt Backhaus.

So, where's the bookmobile now?

It's hard to keep track. Residents of Las Cruces, N.M., are accustomed to seeing the bookmobile coming down the road . . . but look! Now it's gliding down the street in community parades with members handing out candy and invitations to visit Emmanuel. Onward it goes: a thousand miles onward with 12 students from Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, to assist three mission congregations with Christmas for Kids programs.

"This winter," adds Backhaus, "you'd find the bookmobile parked 65 miles west of Las Cruces in Deming, where Emmanuel has started a preaching station to reach winter visitors who drive in with their RVs, as well as the locals."

The bookmobile has clearly expanded its outreach efforts. Last school year it made regular visits to a local homeschool co-op, where Emmanuel loaned out books and taught Bible stories to some 80 children. In the summer, 43 children participated in a Christian reading program that mirrored the public library's summer literacy effort. The bookmobile has allowed Emmanuel to meet and serve 200 families with God's Word on a regular basis.

When Emmanuel was in the process of becoming a self-supporting congregation in 2003, they had to make some cutbacks, including dropping some regular bookmobile stops. However, by concentrating on the subdivisions near the church and continuing the summer reading program and door-to-door canvassing work, they now hope to do an even better job of identifying and witnessing to the unchurched.

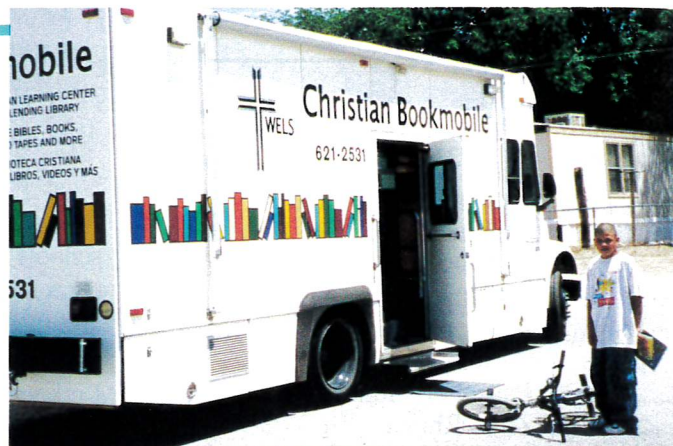
"The bookmobile has been a good way to meet new people and has given

our congregation a sense of mission and a good community identity," Backhaus says, "but it has not been that productive in bringing new members into our church." Almost all of the bookmobile's patrons consider themselves Christian and already have a church home.

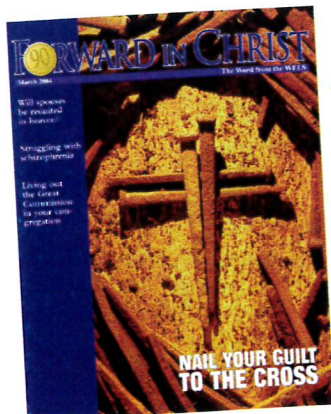
The bookmobile is helping God's children grow in their faith and understanding of the Word, though. When people come to the bookmobile for children's books and videos, inspirational fiction, and books on Christian living, Backhaus makes sure they leave with something "meatier" like devotionals and books on Christian teachings.

"The true measure of [the bookmobile's] success won't be tallied until God shows us in heaven what he did through the Word we shared," Backhaus reflects.

Laura Warmuth



This bookmobile operated by Emmanuel, Las Cruces, N.M., has put over 3,000 Christian books and 1,400 Christian videotapes into circulation.



A GIFT FOR ANY OCCASION

Looking for a low-cost gift for a relative, friend, or neighbor? Feed their souls as well as their minds with *Forward in Christ* magazine. This \$14 gift is good for every month of the year:



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June—Help a bride and groom grow in faith. Give them a gift subscription to FIC as a wedding present.

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Obituaries

Robert L. Otterstatter 1931-2004

Robert Otterstatter was born May 25, 1931, in Tomahawk, Wis. He died Feb. 7, 2004, in Tulsa, Okla.

A 1952 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.; St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.; and Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.

He was preceded in death by one sister and two brothers. He is survived by his wife, Elaine; two daughters; three sons; 13 grandchildren; and two brothers.

Herbert C. Winterstein 1941-2004

Herbert Winterstein was born June 3, 1941, in Saginaw, Mich. He died Feb. 22, 2004, in Monroe, Mich.

A 1967 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Faith, Monroe, Mich.; Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.; and the Japan mission field.

He is survived by his wife, Erika; two sons; three daughters; one brother; two sisters; and eight grandchildren.

Quentin T. Albrecht 1926-2004

Quentin Albrecht was born Oct. 27, 1926, in Faulkton, S.D. He died Feb. 17, 2004, in La Crosse, Wis.

A 1947 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served in Snoqualmie, Wash.; St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.; and St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

He was preceded in death by an infant son and a brother. He is survived by his wife, Ardelle; one son; five daughters; 13 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; four brothers; and two sisters.

2003-2004 WELS school statistics

According to the WELS Parish Schools mission statement, "WELS schools exist to educate children, strengthen families, and serve the church with the power of teaching that is deeply rooted in the Bible and fully expresses the love of Jesus." In 2003-04, WELS was blessed with 13 new early childhood ministries and one new Lutheran elementary school. However, the overall enrollment of Lutheran elementary schools has steadily decreased in the past 20 years, with a 14 percent decline from 1993-94 to the present.

The Commission on Parish Schools is concerned about this trend and is working to reverse it. One part of its plan is promoting Challenge 2010—its vision for where it would like WELS schools to be by the year 2010. They express that vision this way: "If it pleases God, by 2010 stronger WELS schools will be of greater benefit to the faith, education, and lifestyle of an increasing number of students, to the health of their families, to the Great Commission ministry of their congregations, and to their communities through witness and service."

If you are interested in learning more about Challenge 2010 or the commission's emphasis on positioning Lutheran schools for outreach, contact Jim Brandt, administrator of Parish Schools, at 414/256-3221 or <jimbr@sab.wels.net>.

High schools

24 schools
5,607 students
480 teachers

Elementary schools

357 schools
27,297 students
1,893 teachers

Early childhood education

364 schools
252 with an LES*
112 without an LES (free standing)
8,103 students
459 teachers

Breakdown

of students who attend Lutheran elementary schools:

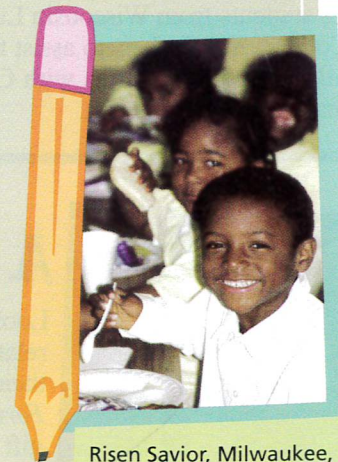
5% 1,394 are mission prospects

8% 2,243 are members of other WELS/ELS congregations

8% 2,279 belong to Christian congregations not in our fellowship

79% 21,381 are members of the sponsoring congregation

*LES=Lutheran elementary school



Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis., opened its school in August 2003, with an emphasis on outreach to its community.

New law changes hospital visits

If you're hospitalized and want a visit from your pastor, you can't expect medical personnel to take care of letting him know anymore.

That's the upshot of part of a new federal law known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which makes it illegal for healthcare providers to release information about a patient's condition without consent—and threatens violators of the law with expensive fines. No longer are hospitals able to inform “just anyone” how a particular patient is doing. In fact, in some cases they won't even confirm or deny that an individual has been admitted.

This new law has a significant impact on pastors and their members. Unless a patient personally informs his pastor—or at least makes sure that a friend or family member does—he might never know anything about that mem-

ber's condition. Also, if a friend tells your pastor, “Jane was admitted to Community General the other day—you should go visit her,” there might still be problems. If the pastor calls Community General and the patient has no request that he be informed on file, he will quite likely not be told anything.

There have been instances already where a pastor calling about his member has been told, “Mr. Smith is no longer a patient here,” and the pastor assumed that Mr. Smith has been released. The pastor tries to get a hold of Mr. Smith elsewhere, but is unsuccessful—only to find out that the hospital meant “Mr. Smith died.”

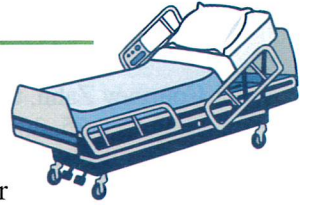
So, let your pastor know yourself or through a trusted intermediary if you are hospitalized. And, if the hospital asks you whom you want information shared with, don't forget to list your pastor.

One other thing to keep in mind—it's not always clear

to a pastor what information about a member's condition that member wants shared. I've always appreciated it when a member has said, “You can tell people this, but not that.”

This isn't just a legal or logistical matter, but a spiritual one, too. Being able to share the comfort of the gospel of Jesus Christ with his people when they need it most is not just part of a pastor's call, it's also one of his privileges and greatest joys. And it's not just pastors. As a community and the body of Christ, your brothers and sisters also have Christian love, support, and comfort that they will be happy to give. That's what it means to be the family and flock of God.

Jeff Samelson



Todd Poppe hired as WELS' Chief Financial Officer

Delegates to the 2003 synod convention resolved that a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) needed to be hired to oversee WELS' finances. The search began immediately following the convention in August and ended when Todd Poppe accepted the job on February 26.

Poppe, a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Public Finance Officer, and Certified Government Finance Manager, was the vice president of finance and CFO of Milwaukee Area Technical College until he began his position at WELS on April 5. He is also the recipient of many awards for excellence in financial reporting.

Poppe notes, “My job is to support and serve those carrying out our Lord's Great Commission by

ensuring that all WELS members and decision makers are fully informed of and understand the financial position of WELS; by identifying, developing, and implementing strategies that reduce or control costs while improving effectiveness; and by advising on financial and operating implications of WELS initiatives.”

He has used his talents to serve the church for many years at his home congregation of Bethlehem in Menomonee Falls/Germantown, Wis. Currently Bethlehem's vice



The Poppe family (from left): Nicholas, Todd, Sara, Dawn, and Jason.

president, Poppe has also led Bethlehem's planned giving committee and parent/teacher association.

He and his wife, Dawn, have three children—Sara, 15; Jason, 13; and Nicholas, five.

“God has his plan”

For Courtney Zahn, the memories surrounding Oct. 25, 2003, are a bit blurry. “I know we were going to the mall,” she says, “but I don’t remember why.” Along with Becky Emmrich and Erika Brunner, two other Martin Luther College students, Zahn was headed to a mall in Mankato, Minn., when a car accident left her unconscious and with serious brain hemorrhages.

Temporarily paralyzed and put into a coma—for fear that she might have undetected injuries—Zahn was then hospitalized for 10 days. “I was like a two-year-old in a 21-year-old body,” she recalls, “totally dependent on my parents and nurses. I lost a lot of cognitive function and was intellectually struggling.”

After her release from the hospital, Zahn returned home to Georgia and was admitted to the Center of Rehabilitation Medicine in Atlanta for another 17 days. There she underwent extensive therapy while her brain continued its slow recovery process. She also spent time reflecting on God’s plan for her life.

“I will never know why God allowed the accident to happen. But it has allowed me many opportunities I wouldn’t have had otherwise. In the hospital, I was able to share my faith. I would correct the staff when they told me I was lucky; I told them that I preferred the word ‘blessed.’ ”

During her recovery, Zahn took the opportunity to serve at her church, Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga. She accompanies the choir, plays organ, and co-leads the teen group along with various other volunteer activities. She is also the aide for a fifth-grade classroom, an experience that is making her more confident in her career decision.

Yes, Zahn still wants to be a teacher—although she will not be returning to Martin Luther College due to the distance from home and the health issues she still faces. “My memory was and still is a huge deficit,” Zahn says. She also has lingering problems with balance and mobility.

Currently Zahn is finishing a couple of correspondence courses



A serious car accident changed the course of this Martin Luther College student’s life.

through Martin Luther College—classes she was taking the semester of the accident. In fall 2004, she plans to enter North Georgia College and State University to work toward a degree in general and special education.

No matter where her life may lead, Zahn knows that the Lord is in complete control. “God has his plan. It might be different than ours, but we need to go with his and trust his will.”

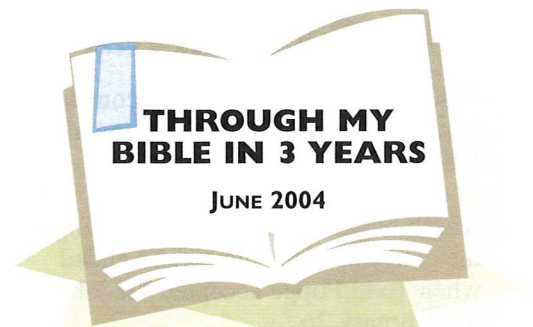
Elizabeth Hudock



Untangling the Web

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

- Looking for a WELS church near your vacation hotspot? Check out WELS’ church locator at wels.know-where.com/wels/.
- Are your unchurched friends asking you questions about Christianity after viewing *The Passion of the Christ*? Direct them to www.whataboutjesus.com, WELS’ Web site for those who want to learn more about Christianity.
- Interested in a new way to reach families in your congregation? Check out www.fifthpew.com, the Web site for WELS’ award-winning television show that entertains audiences while teaching them biblical lessons that they can easily apply to their lives.



THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

JUNE 2004

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ezekiel 22 | 16. Ps. 84 |
| 2. Ezek. 23 | 17. Ps. 85 |
| 3. Ezek. 24 | 18. Ps. 86, 87 |
| 4. Ezek. 25, 26 | 19. Ps. 88 |
| 5. Ezek. 27, 28 | 20. Ps. 89:1-37 |
| 6. Ezek. 29, 30 | 21. Ps. 89:38-52 |
| 7. Ezek. 31, 32 | 22. Ezekiel 33 |
| 8. Psalm 73 | 23. Ezek. 34 |
| 9. Ps. 74 | 24. Ezek 35:1-36:15 |
| 10. Ps. 75, 76 | 25. Ezek. 36:16-38 |
| 11. Ps. 77 | 26. Ezek. 37 |
| 12. Ps. 78:1-39 | 27. Ezek. 38 |
| 13. Ps. 78:40-72 | 28. Ezek. 39 |
| 14. Ps. 79, 80 | 29. Ezek. 40:1-47 |
| 15. Ps. 81-83 | 30. Ezek. 40:48-41:26 |



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Albrecht, Lyle E., to retirement
Allwardt, William H., to retirement
Cherney, Kenneth A. Jr., to St. John, St. John's, Antigua, West Indies
Gunn, Jeffrey W., to South Mountain Community, Phoenix, Ariz.
Kom, Mark C., to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Purdue, Guy R., to Our Saviour, Westland, Mich.
Zeitler, John C., to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.

Teachers

Bowe, Keith R., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee
Hasley, Karen J., to Our Savior, Strongsville, Ohio
Kannas, Christa J., to St. Martin, Watertown, S.D.
Kolosovsky, Carol J., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Kolosovsky, Gail S., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Kuckhahn, Susan M., to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.
Paul, Michele M., to Christ Our Redeemer, Aurora, Colo.
Roecker, Darrell F. Jr., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee
Rupnow, Jason R., to St. John, Peshtigo, Wis.
Scherschel, Rachel L., to Eternal Love, Appleton, Wis.

The synod administration building will be closed—May 31. Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888.

RESULT OF COLLOQUY

Donald Bren, formerly a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has successfully completed the steps of colloquy, including attendance at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's summer quarter. He is now a member of the WELS ministerium as a "pastor—retired."

Wayne D. Mueller,
 First Vice President
 Peter Naumann,
 Dakota-Montana District President
 Prof. Richard Gurgel,
 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

ANNIVERSARIES

Oak Grove (rural Juneau), Wis.—St. Peter (125). May 2. Service, 10 AM. Dinner to follow.
Danube, Minn.—St. Matthew (100). June 12. Service, 6:30 PM. June 13. Service, 9:30 AM and 2:30 PM. Dinner and fellowship between services.
Fairfax, Minn.—Emanuel (125). June 13. Service, 10 AM. Catered meal to follow. 507/426-7819.
Trumbull, Conn.—Christ Redeemer (25). June 13. Service, 9:30 AM. Picnic to follow. Katy Bomann, 203/268-2218.
Freeland, Mich.—St. Matthew (125). June 13, Aug. 1, & Sept. 12. Service, 9 AM. 989/695-9758.
Fox Lake, Wis.—St. John (100). June 19. Pig roast and campfire, 4 PM. Tickets required. June 20. Outdoor service, 9 AM. 920/928-3250.
Saginaw, Mich.—Bethany (50). June 20. Service, 10:30 AM. Lynn Schroeder, 989/793-7747.
Tyler, Minn.—Immanuel (125). July 11. Service, 10 AM. Catered dinner to follow at Legion Hall. RSVP, Jane Johnson, 507/247-5414 (evenings).
Sparta, Wis.—St. John school (100). July 11 & Aug. 22. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Lunch and tours to follow. 608/269-4966.
Aberdeen, S.D.—Trinity church (50) and school (25). July 17. Service, 5 PM. Fellowship to follow. July 18. School service, 9 AM. Meal and program to follow. Church service, 3:30 PM. Supper to follow. 605/225-1750.

COMING EVENTS

Graduation dates—

- **Martin Luther College**—May 14. Commencement concert, 7:30 PM. May 15. Graduation day concert, 9 AM. Graduation service, 10 AM. Call service, 2:30 PM.
- **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary**—May 20. Call service, 10 AM. Concert, 7:30 PM. May 21. Graduation, 10 AM.
- **Luther Preparatory School**—May 21. Concert, 7 PM. May 22. Graduation, 10 AM.
- **Michigan Lutheran Seminary**—May 28. Concert, 7 PM. May 29. Graduation, 10:30 AM.

Retreats, conferences, or conventions

- **Regional men's Bible study retreat**—May 1, 8:45 AM-2:30 PM. California LHS, Wildomar, Calif. King of Kings, 714/530-6584.
- **WELS Church Librarians' Organization conference**—May 15. St. John, Lannon, Wis. Marilynne Lemke, 262/251-4145.
- **WELS/ELS couples retreat**—May 21 & 22. Lake Louise Inn, Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada. Jack and Stephanie Korfman, 780/460-5410.
- **Confessional Christian Worldview Seminar**—June 6-12. Schwan Retreat Center (ELS), Trego, Wis. Learn about popular cultural and religious trends from a scriptural, conservative Lutheran perspective. 800/577-4848.
- **Lutheran Women's Missionary Society National Convention**—June 24-27. Sioux Falls, S.D. Hosted by Minnekota Circuit, 414/321-6212.
- **Christian Educators for Special Education**—20th anniversary summer conference. Aug. 20, 8 AM-3:30 PM. Klemmers, Milwaukee. Members, \$20; non-members, \$30. Register to CESE, c/o Diane Kratz, 891 W Creekway Ct, Oak Creek WI 53154.
- **Youth Ministry conference**—Sept. 17-19. Holiday Inn Select Hotel & Conference Center, Naperville, Ill. \$135/person. 414/256-3274.

District conventions

- **Arizona-California**—June 14-16. Arizona Golf & Conference Center, Mesa, Ariz. Kenneth Pasch, 480/986-0466.
- **Dakota-Montana**—June 15-17. Great Plains LHS, Watertown, S.D. Stephen Geiger, 605/665-4793.
- **Michigan**—June 8-10. Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich. James Seelow, 989/781-0980.
- **Minnesota**—June 8-10. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Michael Hatzung, 651/777-5771.
- **Nebraska**—June 14-16. Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb. Gary Bode, 712/276-3241.
- **North Atlantic**—June 15, 16. Shenandoah University, Winchester, Va. Jeffrey Wegner, 508/761-5051.
- **Northern Wisconsin**—June 13-15. Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis. Ronald Szep, 920/788-4408.
- **Pacific Northwest**—June 10, 11. Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash. Jon Buchholz, 253/839-0731.
- **South Atlantic**—June 7-9. Holiday Inn, Indian Rocks Beach, Fla. Robert M. Krueger, 865/966-3112.
- **South Central**—June 7, 8. Calvary Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas. Christopher Goelzer, 210/682-6898.
- **Southeastern Wisconsin**—June 8, 9. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Robert Pasbrig, 414/259-8122.
- **Western Wisconsin**—June 6-8. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Mark Johnston, 715/635-7672.

Piano teachers workshop—June 18, 9 AM-3 PM. St. Andrew, 6815 Schneider Rd, Middleton, Wis. Registration, \$20 (includes lunch). Karen Hunter, 608/836-7497.

Northwestern Publishing House New Music Reading Workshop—will look at the newest worship resource, *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*. Workshop fee, \$35/person, includes lunch. Register, 800/662-6093 ext. 5763.

- June 19, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw.
- July 10, St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
- July 11, St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
- July 17, Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
- July 31, Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis.

AVAILABLE

Paraments—four free sets in purple, green, white, and red. One fitted 6' x 2' altar covering, white with lace trim. Lois Wright, 231/264-5754.

NEEDED

Guest preacher—July 11, 18, & 25. St. Paul, Amherst, N.H. Joel Petermann, 603/880-8574.
Chalice and flagon—for small WELS congregation in Hot Springs Village, Ark. Art Schupmann, 501/922-6661.

NAMES WANTED

Hickory, N.C.—John Qualmann, 828/684-7035.
Caddo Mills, Texas—starting up a preaching station. John Hering, 972/494-4911.
Women—serving as spiritual leaders in WELS congregations. WELS Women's Ministry Committee. Peg Raabe, 414/256-3278.

SERVICE TIMES

Mercer, Wis.—Zion, Hwy. 51 S. Starting May 2, Sunday worship, 9 AM. Mark Wenzel, 715/776-6742.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Preschool worker—for Little Lambs Child Development Center, Good Shepherd, Cheyenne, Wyo. Full-time volunteer or paid worker for summer preschool program, June 7-July 30. Erin Lowrey, 307/635-2257.
Part-time relief staff—for New Beginnings, a home for mothers in Denver, Colo. This Christian individual or couple will help run the home when house parents take time off. Annual salary, furnished one-bedroom apartment, and a benefits package available to qualified applicants. Applications will be considered from anyone willing to serve from three months to three years. Good opportunity for a retired person or couple looking to serve God as an integral part of this vital ministry. Doug or Charlene Bode, 303/364-0890.
College-aged students—for Camp Shiloh, Pittsburg, Texas. Groundskeeping, light housekeeping, kitchen help, and lifeguard work. May 30-Aug. 14. Dan Schmeling, 903/855-1800.
Summer paid staff—at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. June 1-Aug. 18. Counselors, head lifeguard, adventure coordinator, and junior staff director. A rewarding job for those who love working with kids and enjoy the outdoors. Jason Wiechmann, 920/787-3202.

CORRECTION: On p. 26 of the April issue, artist Glenn Myers' name was spelled incorrectly. We apologize for the error.

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

We are the aroma of Christ

What an honor to be “the aroma of Christ” to God.

Paul E. Zell

Fragrant flowers have long beautified the worship life of the church. The pungent aroma of incense and the sweet scent of candles have frequently played a part as well. But the aroma of the believers themselves bearing witness? The scent of Jesus’ disciples serving their Savior? Yes, Paul appeals to our olfactories as he describes the smell of those who proclaim the truth.

The smell of death

God “through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of [Christ],” Paul writes. Christ’s saving love compels us. We have to let people know what we have learned—that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). With Paul we say that “the wages of sin is death,” but then we joyfully fill the breeze with the announcement that “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Sadly, some will wrinkle their noses and turn away from the message. Refusing to admit their sins and resenting the mention of death and hell, they may even reject the messenger. But don’t let that take you by surprise. To the nostrils of “those who are perishing,” we who proclaim God’s law and gospel are “the smell of death.”

Paul makes a fleeting mention of the Roman triumph to illustrate his point. After victory on the battlefield the conquering heroes paraded through city streets. Cheering spectators tossed floral blossoms on their

path and burned incense in their honor. To their captives, these aromas were “the smell of death.” Once the procession ended, the defeated prisoners of war expected to be executed by the sword.

The fragrance of life

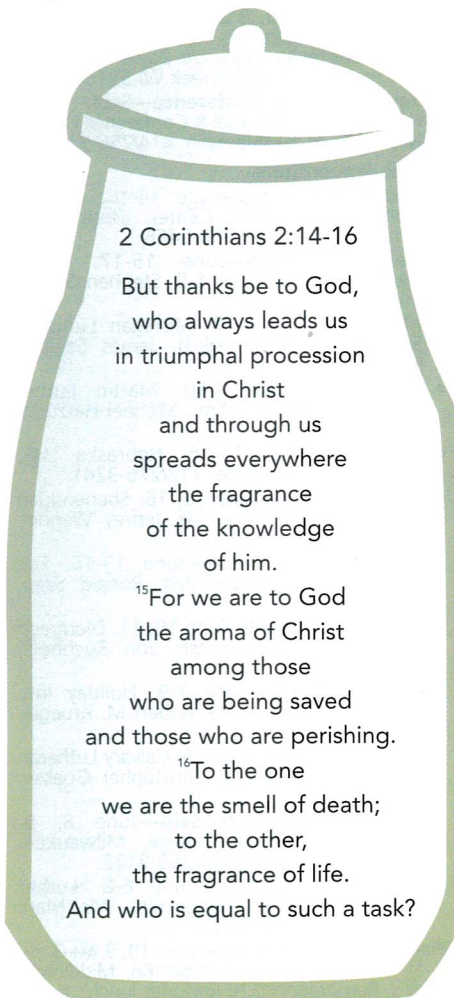
Yet to the victors, the very same fragrances meant a new life. Rescued from their enemies, they anticipated many years of peace and prosperity. Those who are being saved through faith in Jesus Christ have a similar response.

To Easter worshipers, the lilies in the sanctuary give off a delightful aroma, but the preacher of resurrection certainty radiates a fragrance even more satisfying. To early-morning workers, the coffee in the break room has a pleasing scent, but the friend who reminds his believing co-worker about Jesus’ love smells even better. To youngsters in the Christian school, the whiff of crayons and paste may leave a lasting impression, but their teacher bears the aroma of the Savior whose love endures forever.

There is more. At Christ’s baptism his heavenly Father made the striking statement, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Jesus’ innocent life and his guilt-bearing death lifted the aroma of a sweet-smelling sacrifice, perfectly acceptable to his Father’s discriminating nostrils. For the sake of his Son the Father has declared sinners forgiven and has given them his guarantee of eternal life.

Now we get to carry that good news to the world. As we do that, we know that whatever our listeners’ response might be, “we are to God the aroma of Christ.” What a surprising honor! What a gracious privilege! “Thanks be to God” for calling and equipping us for such fragrant service!

Paul Zell is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.



It's all about Jesus

Mark J. Lenz

If a movie or television program proves popular, it often spawns a sequel. The theme, the plot, and the characters leave people begging for more. The book of Acts is a kind of sequel. In writing his

Gospel, Luke carefully investigated everything about Jesus' life and wrote an orderly account for a man named Theophilus. It apparently left Theophilus begging for more.

- Like any good sequel, the book of Acts begins with an incident only briefly mentioned at the end of Luke's Gospel. What is this incident? See Luke 24:50-53. In his Gospel, Luke demonstrated Jesus' compassion for all sorts and conditions of people. In Acts, Luke continues this emphasis by showing that Jesus is the Savior of all.
- In Acts 1:8, Luke records words of Jesus that serve as the theme of his book. From where would the apostles receive power to do the Lord's work? What would it mean to be Jesus' "witnesses?" If Jerusalem is the beginning and the center of their work of witnessing, how would you label the concentric circles spreading out from there? What does this suggest about the assignment Jesus has given us today?
- Luke outlines his book by placing summarizing statements at six significant points. In each case, how do the following verses summarize the contents of the preceding chapters: 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20, 28:31?
- Read 2:5-11. What in the account of the first Pentecost testifies that Jesus is the Savior of all? Read 2:17,38. How does Peter's sermon underscore this?
- To whom did Peter preach the sermon recorded in 3:12-26? To whom was Stephen speaking in chapter 7? To whom did Philip proclaim the gospel according to 8:5? With whom did Peter share the gospel in 10:34-43? With whom did the scattered believers share the message of Jesus according to 11:19-21? What do these incidents suggest regarding the all-inclusiveness of the gospel?
- As you scan chapters 13 and 14, identify the countries and cities in which Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel. In what type of assemblies did they concentrate their efforts? When their message was rejected, to whom did Paul and Barnabas turn? See 13:46-48.
- In chapter 15, what conclusion did the council at Jerusalem reach regarding the Gentiles?
- Why is it significant that Paul crossed over to Macedonia (on the continent of Europe) to preach the gospel? See 16:6-10.
- Read 16:11-33. List the life circumstances of the various Philippians who came to believe in Jesus as a result of Paul's work.
- Paul brought the message of the gospel to all sorts and conditions of people in small communities and in large metropolitan areas. Scan chapters 17-19 and list the cities and countries to which Paul went.
- In speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, how does Paul summarize the work he has done? See 20:21. What was the task Jesus had given Paul? See 20:24.
- Some have thought the last verse of Acts (28:31) to be somewhat anticlimactic. What happened to Paul, they wonder. Was he released from prison? Was he executed? Why, however, is this verse a fitting conclusion to a book that speaks about Jesus as the Savior of all?

Mark Lenz is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

Find this article and possible answers on-line. Go to <www.wels.net>, jumpword "fic," and click on "It's all about Jesus." Answers will be available after May 5.

Fulfiller of promises

Mighty Savior

Merciful Savior

Son of God

Savior of all

Liberator

Righteousness of God

Bringer of joy

Mediator with the Father

Sacrifice for sin

Word of life

Faithful witness

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Question: What does our church body believe about capital punishment? What does Scripture tell us?

Answer: It's important to begin with this principle: life's beginning and end are in God's hands. "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up" (1 Samuel 2:6).

However, just as God uses parents as his agents to begin life, so God at times uses his governmental agents to end life. Government is "God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:4).

That's why, earlier in that verse, Paul tells us that government doesn't "bear the sword for nothing." That reference to "the sword" teaches our point. One form of execution practiced by Rome was beheading with the sword. Paul confirms that governments have the right to carry out a death sentence as they do, for example, when premeditated murder sheds another's blood. That's a New Testament application of an Old Testament principle: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6).

Despite Scripture's clarity, many denominations decry the death penalty. If they give biblical evidence to support this, usually two points are made. Some point to the Fifth Commandment: "You shall not murder." They claim governmental killing implicates us all as murderers. A second line of argument often references Jesus' words in Matthew 5:39: "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Others quote Paul in Romans 12:19: "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath."

Is the Fifth Commandment a categorical rejection of capital punishment? Consider what God inspired Moses to write in the very next chapter: "Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:12). Certainly, we don't live under the mandates of the civil laws and penalties God gave to Israel. Yet comparing these two portions of Exodus clearly indicates that the Fifth Commandment doesn't annul the death penalty.

The abuse of any responsibility does not cancel its legitimate use.

Similarly, nowhere does the context of Matthew 5 or Romans 12 indicate that Jesus or Paul is conducting a seminar on judicial sentencing. Both are instructing Christians in their personal lives to be on their guard for a spirit of revenge against personal enemies. It's fascinating again to note what Paul writes just after urging us to "leave room for God's wrath." He immediately moves on to God exercising his just wrath through government! While personal vengeance is always sin, God's own vengeance working through government isn't.

Many Christians also argue against capital punishment for "logical" reasons. They claim it doesn't serve as a deterrent, that falsely accused persons have lost their lives, and that the penalty is primarily used against the poor and minorities.

Nowhere does Scripture state that the chief purpose of capital punishment is deterrence. The most clearly stated purpose is to apply just punishment against someone who's already killed another. It does deter absolutely that person ever taking another life.

As for the other reservations, the abuse of any responsibility does not cancel its legitimate use. As Christians we must speak out against any careless or prejudicial application of capital punishment while defending its legitimate use.

We end where we began. In all of this, God's concern is clear. Life is a God-given time of grace in which unbelievers are to learn a Savior's love, and believers are to live and share their faith. Capital punishment is an expression of God's serious concern about unauthorized tampering with anyone's time of grace.

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

Have a question you want answered? Send it to Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>. Look on-line at <www.wels.net>, jumpword "qa," for more questions and answers.

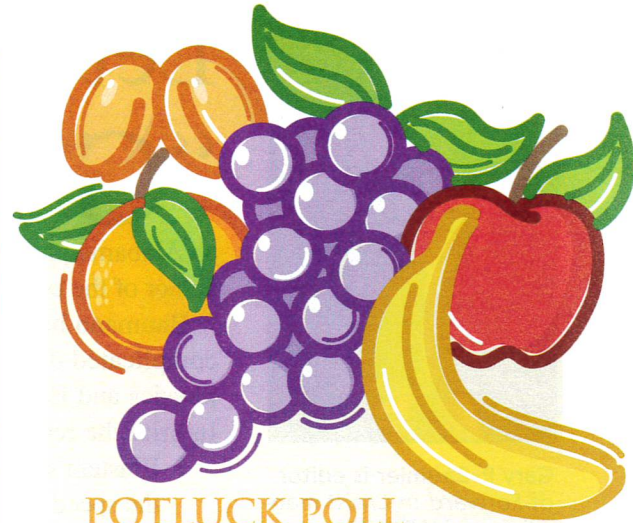
Picture this



On April 1-4, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., performed "The Ransom of Red Chief" for more than 2,000 grade school children. Each year Martin Luther College presents a children's theatre production for both Lutheran and public elementary school students.

Here (from left) Dan Kleist, Angela Berg, and Jessica Manthe rehearse for their performance of this classic O'Henry story.

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.



POTLUCK POLL

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22,23).

What fruit of the Spirit do you pray for most often? Send in your answer by June 10 to *Forward in Christ* magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>. We'll print the results in the August issue.

GREATEST SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES

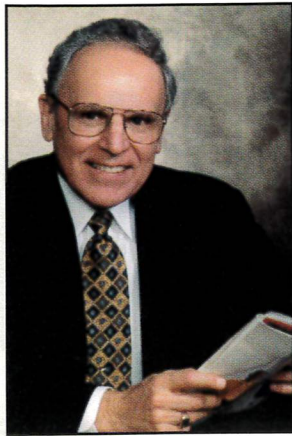
A survey of *Discipleship Journal* readers ranked areas of greatest spiritual challenge as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. MATERIALISM | 5. (TIE) ANGER/BITTERNESS & SEXUAL LUST |
| 2. PRIDE | 7. ENVY |
| 3. SELF-CENTEREDNESS | 8. GLUTTONY |
| 4. LAZINESS | 9. LYING |

Survey respondents noted that temptations were more potent when they had neglected their time with God (**81%**) and when they were physically tired (**57%**).

Respondents reported that resisting temptation was accomplished by prayer (**84%**), avoiding compromising situations (**76%**), Bible study (**66%**), and being accountable to someone (**52%**).





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

When we look for God in the properties of light energy, we are likely to be blinded and not see the real meaning of God as light.

Let there be light

“God is light,” declares the apostle John (1 John 1:5).

God really is light, suggests an Alabama physician, Dr. T. Lee Baumann, author of the book *God at the Speed of Light*.

Baumann bases his conclusions on some complicated deductions from quantum physics and Einstein’s theory of relativity. In brief, he reasons*:

1. Einstein’s theory says that time stops at the speed of light. Therefore, light can travel the entire universe with no lapse in time. “In a sense,” Baumann says, “light can be everywhere in the universe at once.” Everywhere—like God.
2. It follows, too, that light can be in the past, present, and future simultaneously. Always present—like God.
3. The energy potential of light waves is infinite say physicists. Unlimited power—like God.
4. Light alters its behavior in ways that can best be explained as if it were conscious. Conscious—like God.
5. People who experience near-death episodes see a bright light. Might they be seeing God?

Baumann’s ideas intrigue me, and they certainly work as an analogy for God. But has he discovered scientifically what the apostle John has said? In a word, “No!”

For starters, Baumann is observing the properties of what God has created. “Let there be light,” said God at the beginning of his creation. He didn’t say, “Let there be God.” He already existed—uncreated. Any God-like properties in light are God-created properties. Thank God that his creation reflects his glory.

John said, “God is light.” Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Jesus said also, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Jesus did not say that when you look at light you see God or him or yourself.

God in his glory shines as a bright light. Heaven will need no sun because the glory of God gives it light. Jesus in his glory as God shines as a light, as at his transfiguration. You and I are light when in our actions and our witness in faith we reflect the glory of God. The light that shines in the day from the sun and at night from the moon and stars, and can be blocked out by clouds, is not the glory of God. The closest it gets is a reflection or a representation of his glory.

A Christian might nearly die, be revived, and speak of seeing a light. So, too, might any non-Christian or atheist. But the only ones who have the promise of God’s light are Christians. Although that light reminds us of God, or as an atheist might say, “a guide,” it is not God.

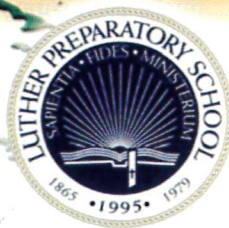
When we look for God in the properties of light energy, we are likely to be blinded and not see the real meaning of God as light. Read in 1 John and see that God’s being light is directly connected with the truth and ultimately with the forgiveness we enjoy in Christ. Read John’s Gospel and see how he connects Jesus’ light with the life that Jesus brings, the eternal life that we enjoy by faith in him.

So, let us marvel at the light that is one of the more mysterious and glorious elements of God’s creation. Let’s even see in it a statement of the glory of God. But for the light that is God, let us look to Jesus.

Gary P. Baumler

*Reported in Religion News Service by Greg Garrison, 3/9/2004.

NORTH AMERICAN OUTREACH



Preparing students to proclaim God's Word to the world.

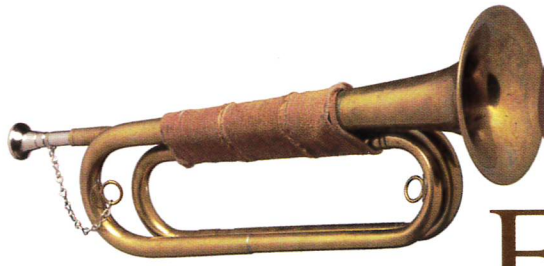
Focusing ministerial education on North American outreach is one of the continuing goals of our schools. The faculty of WELS ministerial education schools are intent on providing what the church needs for the days ahead: men and women with a passion for the lost and a zeal for proclaiming the gospel.

Students at Michigan Lutheran Seminary and Luther Preparatory School participate in Project Titus and Project Timothy, respectively. These programs provide age-appropriate tastes of gospel outreach in congregations and missions around North America and the world.

Similarly, students at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary are provided opportunities to participate in outreach experiences appropriate for their level of training.

Through the gospel proclaimed at our ministerial education schools, the Lord equips his people to take his saving Word to the world.





Going on ahead

Jesus ascended to heaven to prepare a place for you and for me.

Eric S. Hartzell

Few slept much along the Canadian River the night of April 21, 1889. The next day at noon the bugles would blow and men and women would charge across the river into Oklahoma territory to claim land for themselves and their families. Men guarded their horses in the night and spun bullets into their pistols. They talked in low, tense tones by their campfires. Children and wives looked to their fathers and husbands. They waited and watched. "Get us a good place with some water! A little creek maybe. And some trees where there will be shade and lumber. And some bottom land where we can grow our food."

The sun finally rose on April 22, 1889. The bugle sounded, and the mob charged for the fords of the river.

Those riding on ahead, with family left behind, had one thought: I'm going to secure a good place and then return to my family and bring them to be with me.

Ascension Day is when our Lord plunged across the river on his charger to find a place for you and me. He has left us for a while. In our Ascension Day observance we see him go again. He told us all, "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2,3).

We already hear about the place he has found for us. The apostle John in his vision tells us, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of

fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse" (Revelation 22:1-3).

Our minds have trouble imagining it. As we wait for Jesus to return, we might even suppose that it isn't all that good a place. When it seems to us that he is delaying, we may be tempted to think that he won't come. His bugle call of coming sometimes seems a remote possibility. Or we don't think of it at all.

But he is coming again. "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). That is the ascension angels' promise.

"How long, O Lord?" must also be our question as it is the martyrs' in heaven.

The apostle John, who saw the land from his Revelation vision, languished on Patmos as the waves lapped monotonously at the shore. He believed. "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

We say it too.

Jesus himself is excited about the day. He knows we are waiting at the river. He knows that it hasn't entered into the minds of man what God has prepared for those he loves. He has already prayed, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24).

One day soon he will come.

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

