

SEMINARY GRADS • STRUGGLING WITH CHANGE • SINGLE PARENTING

JULY 2004

# Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness

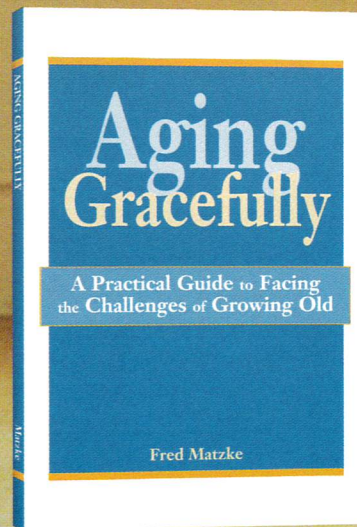


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—Psalm 90:10 (NIV)

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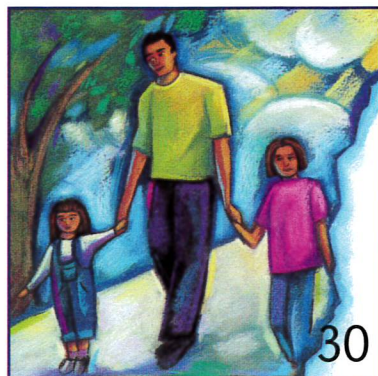
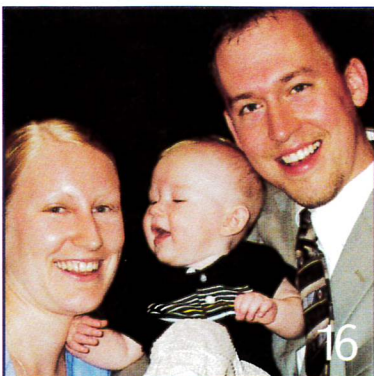


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“Only a promise from our Father can give us the peace we need.”



BRICE PHOTOGRAPHY



## Forward in Christ

† The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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MAY THE LORD OUR GOD  
BE WITH US AS HE WAS  
WITH OUR FATHERS;  
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US  
NOR FORSAKE US.  
*1 Kings 8:57*

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

*Forward in Christ* magazine  
WELS Communication Services  
2929 N Mayfair Rd  
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398  
Phone: 414-256-3210  
Fax: 414-256-3862  
E-mail: fic@sab.wels.net  
www.wels.net

**EDITOR**

Rev. Gary P. Baumler  
garyb@sab.wels.net

**SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANTS**

Nicole R. Balza  
nicoleb@sab.wels.net

Julie K. Wietzke  
juliew@sab.wels.net

**SEMINARY CONSULTANT**

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

**ART DIRECTOR**

Paul Burmeister

**DESIGNER**

Carianne Ciriacks

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## WHAT'S INSIDE

Wow. Instead of wondering what's inside, you might be wondering what happened outside (and all throughout) the magazine. Yes, we have given *Forward in Christ* a new look. We've also reorganized our pages, working to make the magazine easier to maneuver. We even added a new column, "From the President's Office," where you can read a monthly message from Pres. Karl Gurgel.

But even with all these outside changes, one thing remains the same: the timeless message our stories offer about God's grace. This month read about the peace we receive through Jesus' promises to us (p. 10). Work through a Bible study that looks at Jesus, the righteousness of God (p. 35). See how WELS members are sharing God's grace, whether it's new pastor graduates being assigned to the full-time ministry (pp. 16, 17, 20-22) or parents nurturing the faith of their children (p. 24).

But remember: don't keep the timeless messages and lifetime benefits to yourself. Share this magazine with others. And let us know what you think so we can continue to improve our look and keep offering articles that will inspire and inform WELS members and nonmembers alike.

JULY

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**GOD'S WORK AS CREATOR**

The author's explanatory note [Readers forum, April] about "Stop! Look! Listen" [Jan.] suggests that the statement "God creates me crippled" "leads to accusing God of being malicious in his actions."

Doesn't this explanation need correction? When Moses complained that his tongue was slow, the Lord asked him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11). God's good world has been terribly blemished by sin and sin's effects. Yet it remains his world, under his wise and generous control.

A pastoral application: how does God comfort parents blessed with a handicapped child? God gave his own Son for us all; surely with him he will also give us every other good gift (Romans 8:32). Like our healthy offspring, our physically and mentally handicapped children are God's creatures and his good gifts to us, our families, and the church.

Reason stumbles and calls such a God malicious. But in the "natural processes" that "put us together," faith recognizes the Creator's fearful and wonderful ways.

*Paul Eickmann  
Watertown, Wisconsin*

**CHRISTIANS PICKETING ABORTION CLINICS**

I was happily reading "The intolerance of tolerance" [May] by Frederick J. Toppe until I came to the following: "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 them to join us in trusting our God and his ways rather than trusting the latest fads of our society."

I found these statements to be vaguely upsetting. I agree that some picketing done by Christians is harsh and a turn off to some, but so what? Although I have never personally picketed at an abortion clinic, I feel there is nothing in it that is against Scripture.

Another item that is disturbing is Toppe's insinuation that "all the church is interested in is trampling on people's rights." Infanticide may be legal, but since when does that make it a right? Abortion is legal in this country only because members of the Christian majority continuously act in ignorance, indifference, and a downright non-Christian manner in electing pro-abortion politicians. If these so-called Christians actually voted according to God's Word, abortion would not be in existence in this country.

My same sentiments apply to Toppe's use of the words "fads in our society." I think the use of the term "fad" to describe the unhindered slaughter of more than 40 million of my generation is a bit insulting, especially when one has lost family members to the horror of legal infanticide.

*Kristin Dunlap  
Pensacola, Florida*

*We did not feel that Toppe was condemning all picketing, inferring that the church is interested in trampling on people's rights, or identifying abortion as a fad. Rather, he was concerned about how society reacts and whether we are giving a good gospel witness.—ed.*

**TREND IN FIC'S CONTENT**

First of all, I express my appreciation as well as the appreciation of my congregation members for your devotional magazine. Its arrival is eagerly anticipated on a month-to-month basis.

I seem to recall not all that long ago that there was always something

in each magazine that encouraged its readers to share the magazine as a witnessing opportunity. But I've noticed a somewhat disturbing trend in the magazine's content as of late (especially in its devotional articles). There seem to be fewer references to the basic message of sinners having offended a holy God and his love in the absolute forgiveness procured through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Just glancing over the May 2004 issue, I counted about seven references that might lead to a clear[er] understanding of sin and grace for a non-Christian reader. Although the articles are great for those who already belong to the Lord through Spirit-given faith, I wonder how many non-Christians would benefit from the material. Not only that, but even a "mature" Christian needs to read now and then that despite his sinfulness, if he gets killed by a truck on the way home from the store, he will walk into Jesus' arms for eternity because Jesus paid for his sins completely.

Yes, Jesus is with us each and every day, and it's encouraging to read about other believers' experiences in this regard. But the basic message of our atonement for sin through the perfect life and innocent death of Christ is simply one that never gets "old." Nor do we ever grow "above" it. It is still the reason any of the authors take the time out of their busy schedules to pen articles for this publication. It is the only clear message that will make a real impact on any non-Christian who happens to thumb through it.

*Joe Christina  
Holmen, Wisconsin*

Send your letters to "Feedback," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222; 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 received can be acknowledged or used. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

# Celebrating freedom

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:1-4*

Thomas A. Westra

One would be hard-pressed to find another nation whose people have enjoyed the freedoms, prosperity, and security we enjoy as United States citizens. This year, especially, we are reminded that those freedoms do not come without a price.

But as I join my fellow Americans on this Independence Day, how will I celebrate in a uniquely Christian way? I may stand with my hand over my heart, eyes fixed on the stars and stripes, singing the national anthem. I may fire up the grill and spend time with family and friends. I may gaze at the fireworks lighting up the night sky. But what will be my distinctive role as a follower of Christ in the celebration of my nation's birthday?

## Pray for our nation

Paul shows the way as he encourages us to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Pray for our leaders—our President, senators, representatives, judges, and law enforcement officials. Ask God to impress on them their sacred responsibility and to give them wisdom and understanding, conviction and courage. Ask God to help our service men and women do their duty with honor, compassion, and courage, and to keep them safe from all danger. Ask him to comfort their loved ones who anxiously await their return. Thank God for the blessings he has showered on our land.

Our nation needs our prayers like never before, for there is another war here at home. The taking of human life at its beginning, the widespread teaching that man is nothing more than a highly developed animal and death is part of the survival of the fittest, the graphic and demeaning images of human sexuality, the breakdown of the institution of marriage—all are evidence of the battles taking place around us.

## Share God's Word

Jesus charged us with being the salt of the earth. As Christian citizens we are to pray for and work for the good of our society. Take part in civic affairs. Vote. Speak up. Serve when asked.

Above all, share the gospel. Paul says we are to pray for those in authority so that we may lead peaceful and quiet lives. This pleases God, who wants all to be saved. When a good government makes possible a stable society, then we have more opportunity to spread the good news of the Savior.

No matter how nice a house we live in, how secure we may feel in our job, how content and happy we may appear to be, if we are filled with guilt over our sins, if we do not know the peace of forgiveness in Jesus and his cross, if we do not have the hope of eternal life in his



name, we are not free. His cross was our independence day. His death liberates us from our death. Freedom from sin's punishment and from the fear of death—that's real freedom. It did not come without a price. Jesus paid it.

God has given us temporal freedom, prosperity, and security, so that we can tell the world of an eternal freedom—one that Jesus earned for us. Let's not miss the opportunity!

*Contributing editor Thomas Westra is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

# The Lord is on your side

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

A little boy was sitting with his mother and baby sister in church one morning. His sister was wailing away, disturbing everyone. The boy leaned over and whispered, "Mom, is it true what you said about Brittany being sent down from heaven?"

His mother replied, "Yes, that's true."

The boy answered, "Well, the way she cries all the time, it's no wonder God threw her out!"

Rest assured, God does not throw babies out of heaven because they cry all the time. And God does not throw grownups out of heaven because they cry all the time, either. Although, when you think about it, it's surprising that God doesn't throw the whole lot of us out of heaven for fussing and crying so much, because there isn't a one of us who, at times in our life, hasn't had the tendency to cry, complain, or get upset over the way things were going. It's human nature, but it's not God-pleasing behavior!

That's where your study of God's Word can help. If you are reminded in Scripture of God's purpose, power, and promise, you will be led to say throughout your life: "Be still, my soul, the Lord is on your side."

If ever you doubt that the Lord is on your side, consider God's purpose in everything he does, including the trials and tribulations he sends your way. His purpose is to strengthen and shape you into being a stronger Christian. The road through Gaza was much more direct than the path through the Sinai Desert. But God, in his infinite wisdom, knew that the Israelites would never make it to the Promised Land if he took them by the short route. So God sometimes takes us by the longer route in life. But his purpose is the same: to strengthen and shape us so that we can reach the Promised Land.

**When you are tempted to get upset with the Lord, go to the Scriptures and be reassured.**

If you ever doubt that the Lord is on your side, consider his power. When you feel like crying and complaining to God because of the way things are going in your life, when you think that things are going so badly that there's no point in going on, consider what God can do. The Bible is full of miraculous displays of God's power. Reread them. Then, instead of despairing, consider that power and say to yourself, "Be still, my soul, the Lord is on your side . . . and there's nothing the One who could part the Red Sea can't do to turn my life around!"

Consider the promises of God: "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20) and "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5). There should never be a time when you think that the Lord has somehow forgotten or forsaken you. The promise of God's presence may not be as visible as the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud that accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt, but that

promise is just as sure. He is always there!

No, thank goodness, God doesn't throw adults out of heaven for crying, complaining, or getting upset with the way he handles things. However, when you are tempted to get upset with the Lord, go to the Scriptures and be

reassured of his loving purpose, almighty power, and comforting presence. Instead of crying, complaining, or getting upset, say to yourself: "Be still, my soul, the Lord is on your side. . . . He'll get you through."

*Contributing editor Doug Engelbrecht is pastor at Trinity, Neenah, Wisconsin.*





at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: Holy Communion

**Who can administer Holy Communion? \* Ordained pastors only? Staff ministers? Can a female administer the Sacrament to other females? What is permissible? And—a better question—what is beneficial?**

The ministry of proclaiming the gospel is entrusted to every Christian. Ever since baptism made us full “sons” of God (Galatians 3:26-28) with all the privileges that entails, the keys of the kingdom of heaven belong to each one of us. God calls every royal priest to declare his praises before the world (1 Peter 2:9).

But that doesn’t mean we should all rush forward to the pulpit or altar on Sunday morning to preach or administer the Lord’s Supper. One priest publicly serves other priests only when given the privilege to do so through a call to public ministry (Hebrews 5:4). It is typically our pastor whose call is so defined that his tasks include public preaching and administering the sacraments.

Yet here we must remember that the Sacrament’s validity does not depend on the person who administers it. The Sacrament is valid because Christ promised that when we eat and drink the Supper according to his institution, his true body and blood are received with the bread and wine. We do not believe that ordination imprints some kind of “indelible character” on a pastor, giving him special power to administer the Sacrament.

Therefore, any man whom the royal priests of God call to that task can administer the Lord’s Supper. That is true whether that request comes through a formal call (such as pastors, staff ministers, principals) or informal call (elders and other lay leaders). In all those cases, Christ’s promise assures us that the Sacrament is as valid as if Christ were administering his own Supper. The call of the congregation simply gives one royal priest the privilege to administer that sacrament on behalf of his fellow royal priests.

But you’ve asked another question. Before addressing whether a female could administer the Sacrament to other females, let’s state clearly why we don’t typically see a woman administering the Lord’s Supper. Certainly it’s not because a sacrament administered by a woman would be invalid. Every Lord’s Supper administered according to Christ’s institution is valid whether the administrant is male or female.

But there’s another biblical principle to consider. God gave us clear instruction that public ministry duties that include the exercise of authority over both women and men are the responsibility of the men in the congregation (1 Timothy 2:11,12). Certainly administering the Sacrament exercises the same level of authority as preaching the gospel from the pulpit. Both are rightly reserved for any male whom the royal priests call to carry out those ministry tasks.

However, if those gathered were all women, it would not be wrong for a woman to administer the Lord’s Supper. That sacrament would be just as valid as any sacrament administered by a man.

Yet as you mention, an equally important question to ask is whether this would be beneficial or wise. Such a practice as described above, even as rare as it may be, may trouble consciences that have not sorted through the biblical principles outlined above. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we don’t blindly press ahead with everything permissible. We also ask what is most beneficial to all whom we love as family in our risen Lord.

*Contributing editor Richard Gurgel, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.*

*\*Note: “Administering Holy Communion” consists of presiding over the distribution, including consecrating the elements, distributing them, and speaking the blessing.*

Have a question? Send it to “Q & A,” *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Look online at [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword “qa,” for more questions and answers.

# PEACE THROUGH JESUS

Our peace is constantly challenged by the tragedies of living in this world. But we can use Jesus' promises to drive anxiety and disappointment out of our hearts.

Donald W. Patterson



**I**t was late May, and I was taking my five-year-old son to the closing ceremonies of his first year of little league baseball.

His T-ball team had finished the season with two cherished wins and many learning experiences. At the last game, the coach emphasized that all the players should be at these ceremonies in full uniform so the league officials could pass out the trophies.

### The peace of a father's love

When we arrived we could see a table standing over home plate all decked out with beautiful, shiny trophies. As we walked in, my son said, "Dad, look! There's my trophy." I was excited for him. All eight teams lined up on the infield with coaches doing everything possible to contain them. The air was thick with anticipation.

Then the league officials began to pass out the trophies. The coach of the first place team called up his players and handed each one a trophy. Then the second place coach called up his team, and they proudly walked back to their places with their trophies. The other teams were getting pumped up. They couldn't wait to get their reward too.

But instead of calling the other coaches to hand out trophies, the master of ceremonies began calling out the "all-stars," two players from each team. One by one each "all-star" received a trophy. When they were done, all the trophies were gone.

Finally, the other coaches were called forward. As they called each child forward, they handed him a little brown medal on a ribbon. Those little guys were totally puzzled. As it dawned on each one that the medal was all he was getting, the tears began to flow. Kids were crying everywhere as they dismissed us. My son was crying too. He didn't really want to leave because he just couldn't believe he wasn't getting a trophy.

As I dragged him from the field, my son asked through his tears, "Daddy, why didn't they give us a trophy too?"

I didn't have an answer that a five-year-old could understand, and I was frustrated that for a few dollars saved, so much pain was caused. I said, "I don't know, Son. I just don't know." My mind raced to find a solution to the problem as he continued to cry.

Then it hit me. I knew where the trophy store was. I knew, too, that those trophies only cost about \$10. So I knelt down by my son, and, as I dried away his tears, I said,

"Hey, you had a great season. You worked hard at practice, and you did everything your coach asked you to do. I am going to get you a trophy for having a great season. What do you think about that?"

A grin slid across his face. "Can we go to McDonald's?" he asked. My promise had covered his disappointment with the peace of a father's approval and love.

### The peace of our Father's promises

This story is a microcosm of the life of a Christian in a fallen world. We are often left standing incredulously on the sideline wondering what just happened to us and why. After working hard for many years at a corporation, we stand bewildered when our position is eliminated and our pension is cut in half as we receive our walking papers. Friends let us down. Transmissions go out on our cars. And every life around us, including our own, will end in death. How are we supposed to have peace when life is so replete with hurt and disappointment? It's not enough to say, "The sun will come out tomorrow," or "Chin up. Grin and bear it." All earthly answers do not satisfy. Only a promise from our Father can give

us the peace we need. That's exactly what he gave us in Jesus.

Take yourself back to Maundy Thursday. Jesus was telling his disciples some disappointing news. He was going to be handed over to the Romans and tortured to death. They did not understand his words. Their spiritual "five-year-old" minds were just too small. How could any of these things be good? The only thing they could do was grieve. Then Jesus told them what I told my son that day: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

How did he give them peace that night? He gave them peace by giving them promises of good things from him. Jesus would be giving them the good things the world could not and would not give. Just a few moments earlier he had promised them a place in heaven: "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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). Their place in heaven was the same as that trophy I promised my son. It gave them peace to drive out their sadness and disappointment.

We have that same promise from Jesus. He has promised a place in heaven for each of us. It's our trophy. We just have to wait for it. It isn't in front of us, but it is definitely ours because he promises it to us. The promises of Jesus are enough. He wants

those promises to give us peace. When we believe the promises of Jesus, we don't need the world's trophies any more. We have our own from his grace. In a sense we can relax and say to our Savior, "Can we go to McDonald's?"

If you recognize that your peace is constantly challenged by the tragedies of living in this world, run to the Word and find the promises of God. Write each of them down on a card and meditate on them. They will restore your peace. Jesus intended that by faith we use his promises to drive anxiety and disappointment out of our hearts.

### Sharing our Father's peace

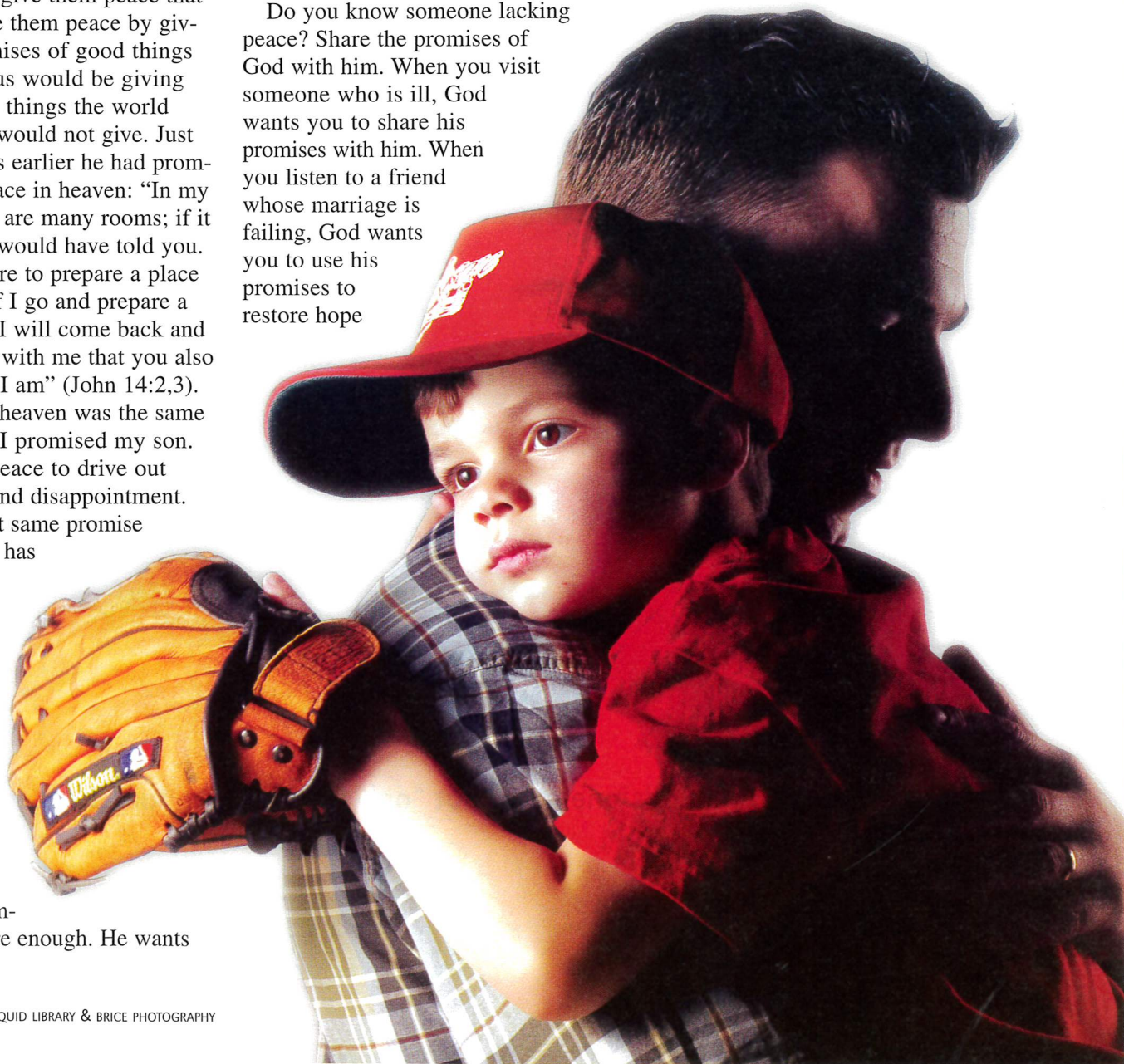
Do you know someone lacking peace? Share the promises of God with him. When you visit someone who is ill, God wants you to share his promises with him. When you listen to a friend whose marriage is failing, God wants you to use his promises to restore hope

and peace to that shattered soul. A Christian treading water in the wake of losing a spouse needs the life preserver of God's promise of heaven for him and his departed loved one.

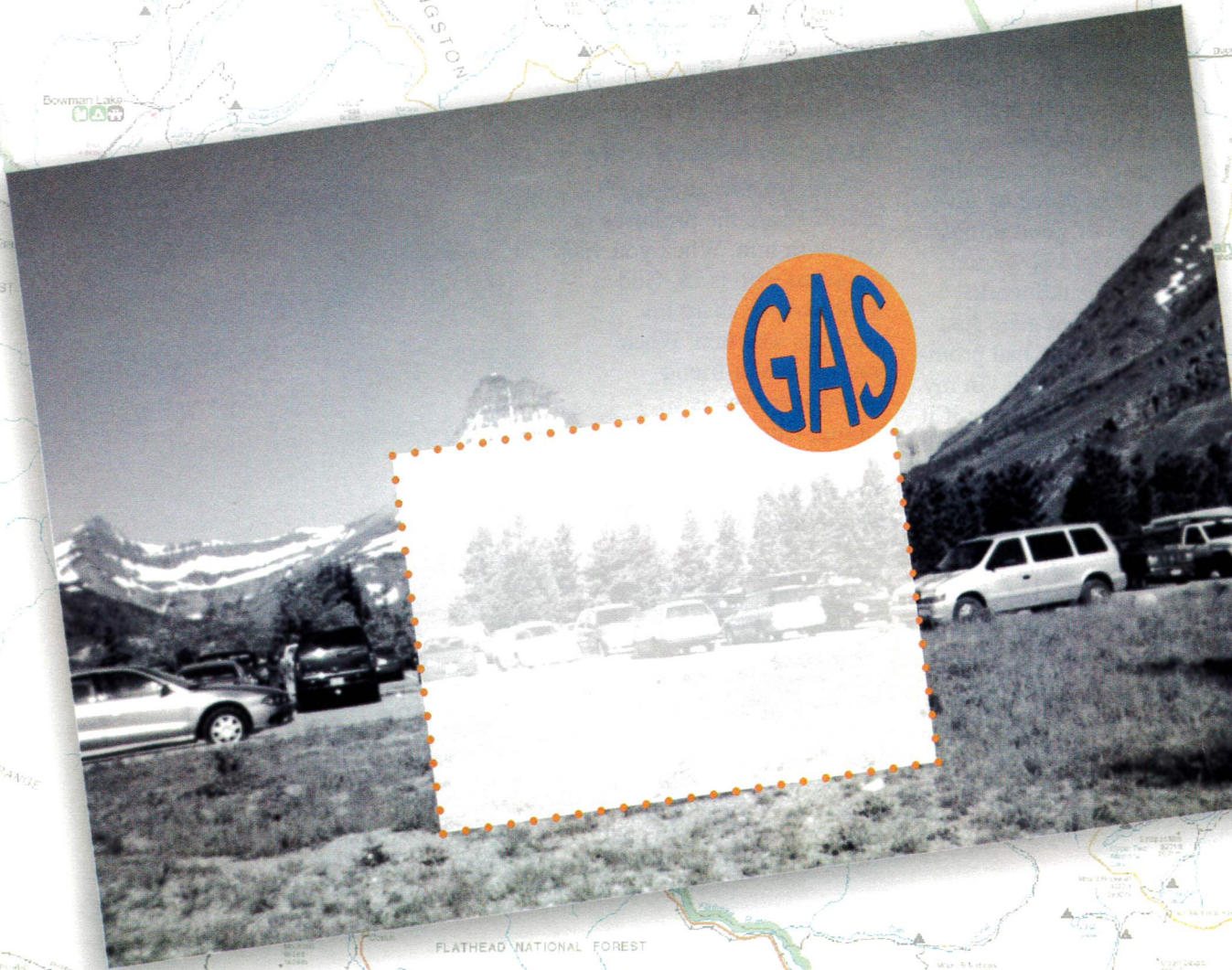
"Peace I leave with you." What was the peace Jesus left with us? It is the peace of his promised mercy, grace, and eternal life. These promised blessings restore our hearts each time we meditate on them in the midst of trial. Cling to this peace, and share it with those who need it!

*Contributing editor Donald Patterson is pastor at Holy Word, Austin, Texas.*

*This is the first of a four-part series.*



# A panoramic view of life



A vacation photo reminds one man that “only what’s done for Christ will last.”

Carl R. Henkel

To any other person, it looks strikingly similar to all the other pictures in the stack: cars and trees in the foreground and mountains in the background. One of dozens of breathtakingly beautiful vacation photos from Glacier National Park.

But for me, there's something very special about this snapshot. It's not what is in the photo. It's what is not in the photo.

**Thirty-two years ago, I worked in Glacier National Park.** I spent a glorious summer managing a cute little gas station up on the knoll, right behind Many Glacier Hotel. I was the sole employee, but I had plenty of business and lots of company.

It was a fabulous summer filled with the most wonderful memories. There could be no finer way to enjoy a summer and to get paid besides. What a life!

What is not in this recent vacation photograph is that picturesque little filling station. It should be there. It has to be there. It used to be there. It would always be there. But all that remains today is a slight indentation in the ground. No one else looking at the picture would ever know.

I asked a few employees who had worked in the park for several summers about the missing gas station, but not a single person even remembered it being there. All I got were blank stares and patronizing looks.

As I pondered that desolate little spot where my tiny service station once stood, it occurred to me that this is much more than a picture of a missing building. This is a panoramic view of life.

**A few fortunate folks may leave a mark where they have walked or worked, but the overwhelming**

**majority of us, and what we have said and done, will be not long remembered, but soon forgotten.**

Placards and plaques may announce "George Washington slept here," and a road sign may alert us to the fact that "Lewis & Clark camped here," but no one could care less if Carl Henkel worked here. The disconcerting reality is that most of us will be forgotten by the generation that follows us. "Only one life, t'will soon be past. . . ."

As I paused on the parcel of land where my modest station once stood, that which I had often thought and frequently spoken suddenly became incredibly real: "Only what's done for Christ will last."

## Do you hope to be remembered beyond the grave?

**Leaving one's mark on a piece of soil soon becomes meaningless. Leaving Christ's mark on another human heart will never stop blessing.** Time will quickly forget our meanderings through life, but those who believed the love of Jesus that we shared with them will live forever in glory.

Solomon looked back at all the things he had done, all the money he had made, and all the possessions he had accumulated, and declared it all "meaningless." He regarded his life of indulgence and pleasure as noth-

ing but wasted time on earth. Yet God graciously allowed him the honor of touching human hearts until the end of time through his divinely inspired Proverbs.

Do you hope to be remembered beyond the grave? Frankly, that is not of any great consequence. What is important is that we leave a mark in the name of Jesus Christ, who has left his mark on us. What is vital is that we share the life of Jesus with family, friends, and neighbors now, so that his love may live in them into the future. What is important is that we share now with others the mark of his bloodstained cross, so that they may wear, into eternity, the glorious crown of his righteousness.

I dare say, no one will ever remember your conversations about the weather or about the new baby or about the summer you worked in a gas station. What they will remember is the love of Jesus they see in you and the life of Jesus they learn from you. What they will remember are the times you talked to them about your faith in Jesus and shared with them his invitation to believe. That will last all the way into heaven.

I plan to keep that special vacation photo on my desk for a long time. To others it'll just be another pretty picture. But to me, it will serve as a constant reminder of how unmistakably true it is, that

"Only one life, t'will soon be past;

Only what's done for Christ will last."

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

# When Christ's GRACE MOVES HEARTS

For the heart set free in Christ, that voluntary act of sitting down and carving out a generous portion of a paycheck is God's grace in action.

Wayne A. Laitinen



**A**s the Confirmation Sunday sermon was winding down, our photographer entered the back of the sanctuary. He quietly laid his camera case down and took a seat next to the deacon. I was impressed. Not every professional photographer wore a suit and tie. In years past, some of them waited outside and had a smoke until the service ended. This man sat and listened . . . all the way to the “Amen.”

Then, to his amazement, the men sitting next to him took the offering plates, walked to the front of the church, and began passing them down the pews. Without flinching, each person took the plate and put money into it before passing it to the next one. From the envelopes of the elderly to the coins of the children, almost everyone took part in this ritual of self-denial.

**I never knew what a profound impact the offering had on our guest, until the confirmation pictures were over and the two of us were alone.** As he was packing up his tripod, he stopped. "I have to ask you a question."

"Sure," I said as I descended the chancel steps.

"Am I to understand that this church is supported only by the money people give each week?"

"Right."

"You mean that these people just volunteer their money?"

"That's right."

"And you're able to pay all your bills?"

"Sometimes the budget gets tight. But we've been around for almost 50 years."

"Well . . . how do you do that?"

"I don't. God does."

"Well, yeah, but . . ."

"No, I mean it. People give just out of love for their Savior."

He stared at me pensively over his half-packed equipment.

"Do you know what they do at the synagogue?"

"No."

"When you want to join the synagogue, they send a trustee out to your house. He looks at last year's 1040 to see what your income was. Then he takes 10 percent of that amount and divides it by 12. Each month you get a bill in the mail." (By now, I was beginning to understand how strange he felt when the offering plates were passed.) "That pays for the

synagogue, the synagogue school, the Jewish Community Center, and everything."

"Oh," I said, with a wide-eyed stare.

"And do you know what happens if you don't pay your monthly bill?"

"I can't imagine."

"They turn you over to the bill collector."

"Ouch."

## **Before a person can give, he must first receive God's grace.**

**Some of us have lived our lives under Christ's forgiving blood—almost from cradle to grave.** As such, we may not be able to remember back to the day when Christ's grace did not move our hearts to generous acts of charity. When a heart has been so warmed by Christ's forgiveness that individuals, without bribes, without threats, without any worldly enticements, voluntarily set aside a significant part of their income to say, "This does not belong to me, but to the one who purchased me with his blood!"—that is a startling trumpet-blast of grace!

The trumpet of grace rings in the ears of the lost when they see us do what no ordinary human being would do: empty our pockets into an offering plate without the promise of rewards, public recognition, goods, or services. But this extraordinary self-denial is ordinary to those who daily say "no" to themselves and "yes" to Christ in confession and absolution. The startling boast that God will preserve me, even if I give him a large part of my income each week, puts into action

my confession, "I believe in God, the Father almighty . . ." We know that uplifted and empty hands are a fitting sacrifice for those whose hearts brim to overflowing after sitting at Jesus' feet for the 20-minute sermon. The body and blood of God, which seals to us the inexhaustible riches of heaven, cannot be purchased with silver or gold. Yet our silver and gold (and all we have) are laid at his glorified feet without a bill, without a reminder, without the threat of a collection agency.

In fact, if a heart needs to have the church treasurer examine its 1040 Form before it gives, it should not give at all. Before a person can give, he must first receive God's grace. But for the heart set free in Christ, that voluntary act of sitting down and carving out a more generous portion of his paycheck is God's grace in action. My Jewish friend would be just as dumbfounded to watch such a person write out a check for his Savior as he was when he watched the corporate sacrifice at the offering plate.

These rituals of the heart are common only among Christ's redeemed.

Those who do not yet understand his grace look at our church; its beautiful stone buildings—old and new—; its people, pastors, teachers, ministries, programs; and as they add up the astronomical earthly cost, they ask Christ's bride, "How do you do it?"

Her clarion call is always the same, "I don't. My bridegroom does."

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

*Wayne Laitinen is pastor at St. John, New Ulm, Minnesota.*

# A powerful lesson

My first experience at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's call assignment service was not what I expected.

Nicole R. Balza

I was confused. Where were the drum rolls, the shouts of excitement that signaled something special was happening?

Instead, it was quiet. And hurried. No time to absorb or reflect.

Emotion overcame me, yet no one else seemed to feel it.

**President Gurgel stood at the front of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's auditorium, in front of 37 graduates and their loved ones, and read off the list of assignments for this year:**

"Nathan Berg, St. Paul/Peace, Cataract, Wis., Western Wisconsin District. Aaron Boehm, Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz., tent ministry, Arizona-California District. Luke Boehringer, Michigan Lutheran Seminary tutor, Michigan District. . . ." and on and on.

President Gurgel was changing the life of each of these men and their families, but no one in the auditorium seemed to realize that. I felt like I was watching someone read the weather forecast: "Tomorrow it will be partly cloudy and 70 degrees, and there is a 100 percent chance that Nathan Berg will serve St. Paul and Peace in Cataract, Wis."

Whoa! Wait a minute, here! It can't be that simple. . . . Can it?

**And that's when I realized—it is that simple.** To those listening to the calls, this was not mind-blowing information. Important, yes. But not mind-blowing. Each graduate had spent years preparing for this—the day when he would receive his first assignment into the pastoral ministry.

"I'm feeling a mix of emotions," graduate Rob Guenther told me before the service. "Two emotions are primary for me right now—

awe and gratitude. . . . But another emotion is there as well. I have peace. Surprisingly, I'm not that anxious or nervous. I have confidence that wherever I receive my call—or even if I don't receive a call to serve in the full-time public ministry—that it is God's will. This is the situation in which HE has placed me. No matter what happens, I know that God is working the events in my life for the good of his church. That brings amazing peace to me at a time that seems so up in the air."

The funny thing is, before the service, I didn't really believe him. Oh, I didn't think he was lying, but I thought he might be covering up his true feelings—the nervousness, the anxiousness, the fear.

As I sat through the service with Guenther and his family, though, my skepticism was erased.

And Guenther wasn't alone in the peace he was feeling. All around me graduates were hearing their futures announced, smiling, and then turning their attention back to President Gurgel as he continued down the assignment list.

**No, Assignment Day at the seminary was not what I expected.** There were no drum rolls or cries of excitement. What I found, instead, was peace. The peace that comes from strong faith in

a gracious, wise God. A powerful lesson from a group of men who hadn't even received their diplomas yet.

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



Rob Guenther, a 2004 seminary graduate, was assigned to serve Gethsemane, Raleigh, N.C. Wife Becky and son Josiah joined him at the call assignment service.

## MORE ABOUT THE DAY

Graduates and their guests began arriving at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at 9 A.M. on Thursday, May 20, for Assignment Day. The auditorium filled quickly, and the worship service began at 10. After Prof. Richard Gurgel's sermon, President Karl Gurgel announced the graduates' calls. By 10:50, the service was over and Seminary President David Valleskey announced that each graduate should now meet with the president of the district he would be serving.



# One step closer

WELS continues to take steps in training men from different cultures for the ministry.

Julie K. Wietzke

**L**eonard Freeman, an African-American, wanted to do more than serve on committees and read the Scriptures at church. He wanted to preach and share the gospel full time. So at age 49 he decided to take the next step and become a pastor.

**This May, Freeman graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and received his first call into the public ministry.**

It wasn't easy. Freeman spent three years in a distance-learning program to prepare him for entrance into the seminary. Then he attended the seminary full time—including summers—for four years, when he hadn't been in a classroom setting for more than 30 years.

Now he's ready to take the next step: serving the multicultural congregation of Hope, Toronto, Canada.

"I just thank God for the opportunity and for giving me the strength to finish," says Freeman. "I can truly get on my knees and say, 'Lord, we've finished the first leg of the race. Now the second leg begins. You've said you would always be with me and never leave me. So let's go!'"

**Training men from different ethnic backgrounds is an important step for WELS.**

"We need to have pastors from different cultures and backgrounds in order to share Christ effectively because they look right, taste right, see right, speak right, and know what their people really need," says Pheng Moua, pastor of Immanuel Hmong, St. Paul, Minn. "If you are [of a culture] you know [people from that culture] from the inside out. You know them from left to right and up and down."

Moua and Jay Lo graduated from the Asian Satellite Seminary Program in 1999. These men also received degrees from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary this May.

"Before I study to be a pastor, I talked to many people and they discouraged me not to study because what I work for will not be credited . . .," says Moua. "[I said] 'I know that I am not going to receive any fancy degree, but by trusting in God and his guidance, I'm willingly and faithfully study for the ministry.' Now I am glad that it is finally been recognized and credited into the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary."

Ger Yang, the first Hmong ministry student, received a posthumous degree. Ger died while doing mission work in Thailand in 1995. His son, Boonmee, accepted his degree and a round of applause in appreciation of his father's work.

**WELS continues to take steps to train more men from different ethnic backgrounds to be church leaders and pastors.** Fidel Dazen, an Apache, will graduate from the seminary next year. Xiaohua Yu from the People's Republic of China studied at the seminary for the past year and hopes to return in the fall. Twenty men (mostly Hmong) are in various stages of the Asian Satellite Seminary Program. Programs in the Caribbean and in our Apache mission in Arizona offer courses for lay leaders and called workers. The Board for Home Missions is working to identify, recruit, and train Hispanic leaders.



Jay Lo, Leon Piepenbrink, and Pheng Moua at the seminary graduation service in May. Piepenbrink, the Hmong ministry coordinator, coordinates the training of Hmong church leaders and pastors and helps with outreach to the Hmong community.



Leonard Freeman. Freeman said he wouldn't have been able to become a pastor without the support of his wife, Maxine. "This is strength. This is backbone. This is encouragement," says Freeman of his wife. "This is being a wife," says Maxine.

The Pastoral Studies Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has been formed to oversee nontraditional seminary training and to look for flexible solutions for training called workers from different cultures.

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

# WHATEVER

## Letting go of the wheel

Leaving high school behind and moving forward can be scary.

Matt Eich

I've got this shirt. It's been hanging on my bedpost all school year, and I haven't touched it. Maybe a little fear, a little anxiety plays a part in that, but nevertheless, there it hangs. That same old, red, ratty T-shirt has been there since October.

**One month until camp.** The dedicated few get home from work, take off their grass-stained shoes and grease-stained T-shirts, and put on their running shoes and their own ratty T-shirts. Wind sprints and bench presses. After the self-inflicted brutality, what's for dinner? All the stuff they hate to eat but know they need. They're in bed before most kids go to see the Friday night movie. Tomorrow is Saturday—more time for sprints.

All that commitment. Most of those dedicated few have had summers like that since playing in Saturday football leagues or after-school basketball tournaments. There's no sacrifice involved because those summers are all they've known—it's who they are. But what if that changes?

Life is full of changes, but just a few are truly life-affecting, faith-challenging changes. They bring stressful situations where we don't know what will happen next. Sometimes they're charged with exciting possibility, and sometimes we want to fight them. They can sneak up on us or loom darkly over the next decision. But in every change lies opportunity—an opportunity to show trust.

**Most changes in our life are uncontrollable.** We know the big one is coming, but we don't know where it's going to go. This is where we have the opportunity to toss anxiety, fear, worry, or whatever mind-numbing care up to God and say, "Here, you handle it."

That's terrifying. I never thought it would be—I don't think any of us do. We know it would be great to just let God take care of everything for us, but actually letting go of the wheel . . . oh man, that's tough.

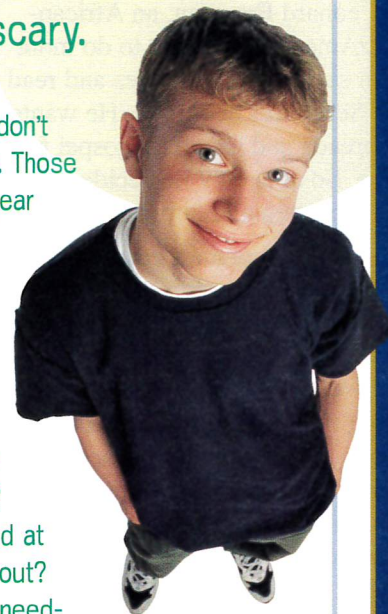
But here we are, getting ready for another school year

of twists and turns and we don't know where it's going to go. Those of us going to college this year have a full taste of those twists. Apartments are hard to find. Funds for them are even harder. Are we going to find any friends in the world we know so little about but are tossed so abruptly into? Are we going to be any good at the career we're learning about? Let go of the wheel of your needless worries—"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:27)—and be filled with the confidence and self-assurance that the Creator of the universe has got your back.

**There's a whole lot of change in that ratty old shirt of mine.** It's a shirt from the 1984 football state championships that's been passed along to my high school's seniors to wear underneath their pads. I bet there are 17 guys reading this right now who remember that worn, half-cut, red cheesecloth thing that they got to wear their senior year and how much it meant. They're probably remembering how they had to give it away, too. That's why it's been sitting on my bedpost. When I give it away, it won't be mine anymore. No more summers of sprints and weightlifting. No more games on our high school football field. It's changing who I am.

Giving away that shirt is a scary change for me, but it's time to let go of the wheel. Who wants to go for a ride?

Matt Eich, a member at Good Shepherd, Alma/St. Louis, Michigan, is attending Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

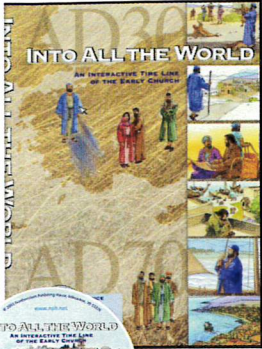


# Book/nook

A look at new books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net) or call 800-662-6022.



## A must-see CD



\$39.99

A few years ago NBC's slogan for its Thursday night television line up was "Must-See TV." Unfortunately, other than a few laughs, there wasn't a lot of substance for daily life in those comedies and dramas.

Northwestern Publishing House's *Into All the World: An Interactive Time Line of the Early Church* is certainly a "Must-See CD." This computer program takes you through a timeline of 40 years to see how the gospel spread during the early history of the Christian Church. It uses the four elements of New Testament study—people, place, time, and books—to help you visualize this tremendous growth.

I suggest you begin your journey in the section entitled "About this Program." From here you will see the seven reference sections to help navigate your way through the program. Some of the highlights include suggestions for personal Bible study, teaching resources and maps, and

beautiful photos that take you to some of the historic biblical places in Asia Minor and Greece. A section on New Testament chronology helps to show how the timeline was constructed and some of the special issues or questions that can arise from putting the chronology together.

*Into All the World* can be used in a variety of ways. It would make an excellent curriculum for junior or senior high youth Bible classes or as a supplement to *Christ-Light®*. Some of the seventh- and eighth-graders in my classroom noticed how easy it was to work through Paul's journeys and the Book of Acts. They gained a greater appreciation of the growth in the early Christian Church.

This CD could also be used as part of an adult Bible class series or as a gift to a person who is new to the faith or to a member who wants a different approach to working through the New Testament.

James Hussman

Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wisconsin

*Editor's note: Two more books are available in NPH's God's People series: Noah: Obedient Builder by John A. Braun and Jonah: Reluctant Preacher by John A. Miller. Each 42-page book costs \$6.99. Or, you can subscribe to the entire God's People series and save 10 percent off the cover prices.*

## ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Joey, my little brother, started Sunday school right after his fourth birthday. He came home so excited to tell us what he did on his first day. He talked about his story and what he learned about Jesus. He said they colored pictures and sang songs. My mom asked him about the new friends that he had made. He talked on and on about a little boy who kept jumping around and making noise. Mom asked, "What was the little boy's name?" Joey hesitated for a while and answered, "Behave!" Joey said that was what his teacher kept calling him.

Jeanette Wysocki

## THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

AUGUST 2004

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Nehemiah 12    | 17. Haggai 1        |
| 2. Neh. 13        | 18. Hag. 2          |
| 3. Psalm 90       | 19. Zechariah 1, 2  |
| 4. Ps. 91         | 20. Zech. 3, 4      |
| 5. Ps. 92, 93     | 21. Zech. 5, 6      |
| 6. Ps. 94         | 22. Zech. 7         |
| 7. Ps. 95, 96     | 23. Zech. 8         |
| 8. Ps. 97, 98     | 24. Zech. 9, 10     |
| 9. Ps. 99, 100    | 25. Zech. 11        |
| 10. Ps. 101       | 26. Zech. 12, 13    |
| 11. Ps. 102       | 27. Zech. 14        |
| 12. Ps. 103       | 28. Malachi 1:1-2:9 |
| 13. Ps. 104       | 29. Mal. 2:10-3:6   |
| 14. Ps. 105       | 30. Mal. 3:7-4:6    |
| 15. Ps. 106:1-33  | 31. James 1:1-18    |
| 16. Ps. 106:34-48 |                     |

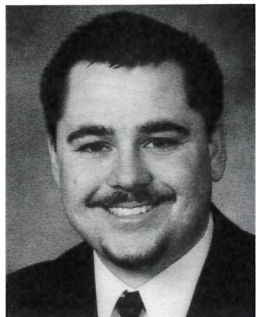
## Untangling the Web

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

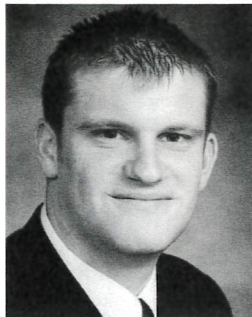
View WELS' church directory, the *Yearbook*, online at [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "yearbook." The *Yearbook* is a compilation of contact information for all WELS church, school, administration, and parasynodical organizations. It can also help you get in touch with called workers, even those who have retired. Wondering about a church's service times? Check the *Yearbook*. This online directory is updated once a month. To order a hard copy, contact Northwestern Publishing House, 800-662-6022.

## Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduates

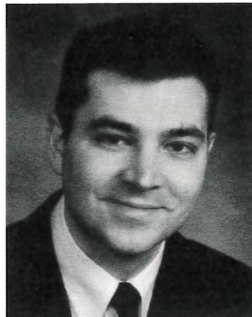
At the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduation service on May 21, 37 graduates received diplomas for successfully completing their seminary studies.



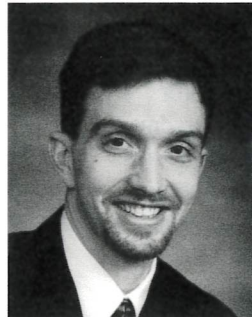
Nathan H. Berg  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



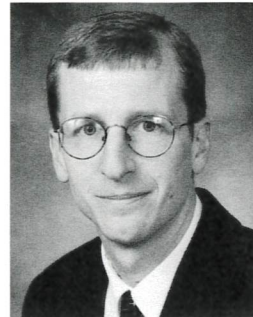
Aaron D. Boehm  
Saginaw, Mich.



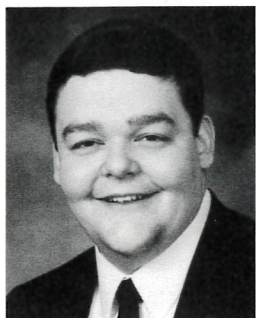
Luke J. Boehringer  
Watertown, Wis.



Nathanael J. Bourman  
Rochester, Minn.



Patrick L. Brown  
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



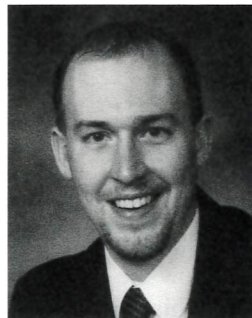
David M. Endorf  
Juneau, Alaska



Jonathan I. Enter  
Nicollet, Minn.



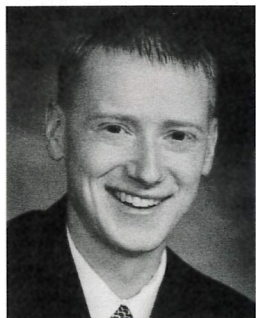
Leonard C. Freeman  
Memphis, Tenn.



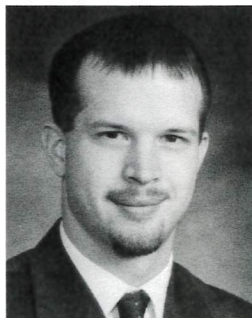
Robert J. Guenther  
Bellevue, Wash.



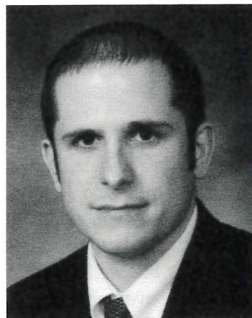
Seth P. Haakenson  
Sierra Vista, Ariz.



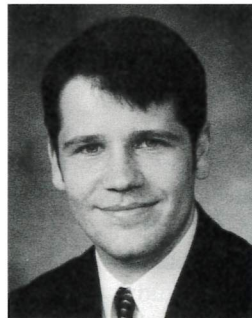
Paul W. Horn  
Wauwatosa, Wis.



Mark R. Jacobson  
Milwaukee, Wis.



Wade R. Johnston  
Livonia, Mich.



Paul M. Kuckhahn  
Gibbon, Minn.



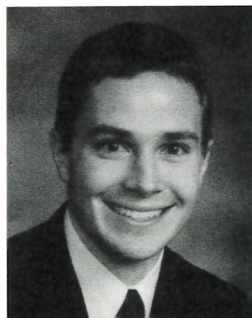
Harmon E. Lewis  
Durand, Mich.



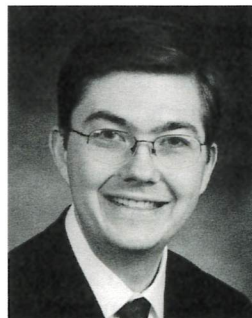
Daniel M. Lindner  
Beaver Dam, Wis.



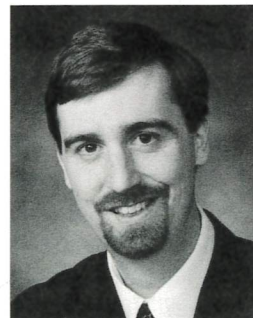
Jay Lo\*  
Cottage Grove, Minn.



Jeremy J. Mattek  
New Ulm, Minn.



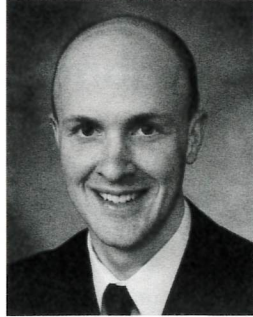
Thomas L. Meissner  
New Orleans, La.



John H. Meyer VI  
Atlanta, Ga.



Daniel E. Moll  
Milwaukee, Wis.



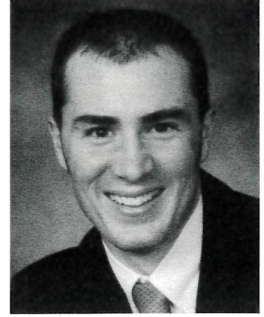
William A. Monday  
Cincinnati, Ohio



Pheng Moua\*  
North Saint Paul, Minn.



Aaron T. Mueller  
Ixonia, Wis.



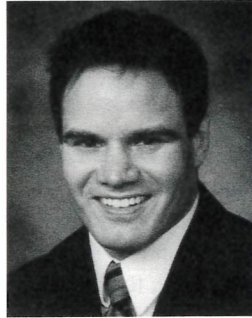
Joel D. Neumann  
Rapid City, S.D.



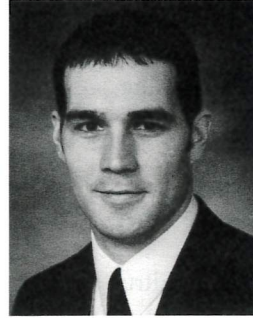
Jason D. Oakland  
Winthrop, Minn.



David S. Olson  
Evans, Ga.



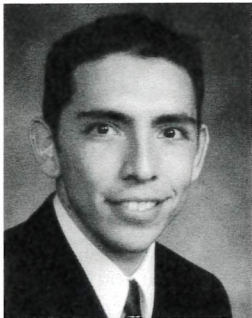
Gregory J. Pope  
Racine, Wis.



Andrew P. Retberg  
Saginaw, Mich.



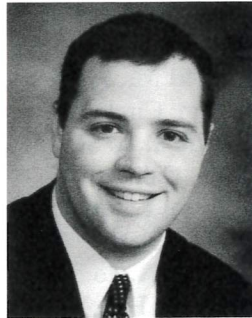
David M. Ruddat  
Manitowoc, Wis.



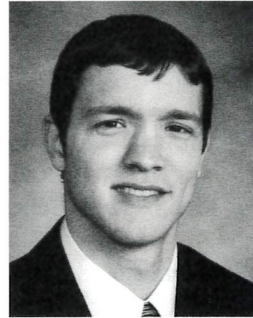
David J. Salinas  
North Hollywood, Calif.



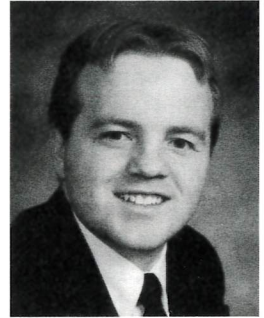
Jeremy A. Schulz  
Cottage Grove, Wis.



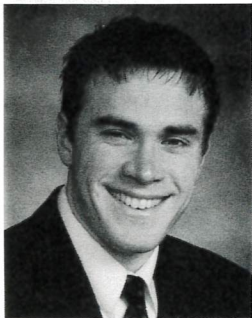
Scott A. Schwertfeger  
Mankato, Minn.



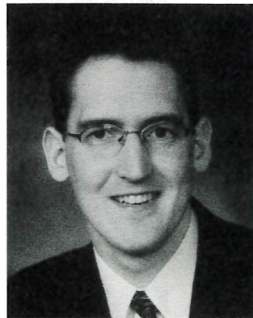
Joel P. Stuebs  
Platteville, Wis.



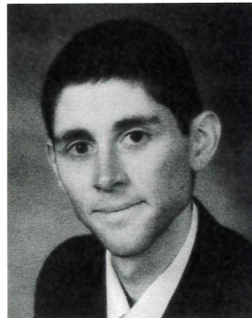
Peter A. Sulzle  
Wautoma, Wis.



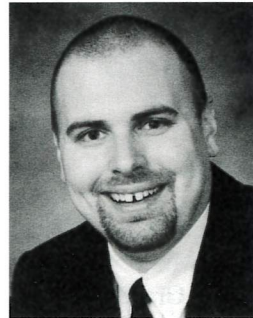
Nathan O. Sutton  
New Ulm, Minn.



Steven T. Wall  
Eagle River, Alaska



Robert C. Weiss  
Appleton, Wis.



Scott E. Wolfram  
Watertown, Wis.



Ger Yang\*  
St. Paul, Minn.

\*Three graduates of the synod's Asian Satellite Seminary Program, which works under the auspices of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute, were also awarded diplomas. Jay Lo and Pheng Moua have been serving as pastors in the Hmong community in the St. Paul, Minn., area, since 1999. Ger Yang, the first graduate of this program, died in 1995. His son, Boonmee, received his diploma on his behalf. (For more on these men, go to p. 17.)

## Assignments

At the call assignment service held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., on May 20, 44 men received assignments. Thirty-seven of these men graduated in 2004. Three were assigned from the class of 2003 and four from the class of 2002. Three from the class of 2003 and one from the class of 2002 were reassigned to their present fields.

- Berg, Nathan H.**, to St. Paul/Peace, Cataract, Wis.
- Boehm, Aaron D.**, to Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
- Boehringer, Luke J.**, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
- Bourman, Nathanael J.**, to Abiding Faith, Fort Worth, Texas
- Brown, Patrick L.**, to Shining Mountains, Bozeman, Mont.
- Buske, James G.**, to Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash.
- Carr, Michael T.**, to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.
- Enderle, Jeffrey D.**, to Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb.
- Endorf, David M.**, to Saint John St. Peter, Cleveland, Wis.
- Enter, Jonathan I.**, to Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla.
- Ericson, Nathan R.**, to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.
- Freeman, Leonard C.**, to Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- Guenther, Robert J.**, to Gethsemane, Raleigh, N.C.
- Haakenson, Seth P.**, to Santiago, Dominican Republic
- Heffner, James J.**, to Trinity, Morenci, Mich.
- Horn, Paul W.**, to Faith, Radcliff, Ky.
- Jacobson, Mark R.**, to Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
- Johnston, Wade R.**, to Christ, Saginaw, Mich.
- Kuckhahn, Paul M.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
- Lewis, Harmon E.**, to Saving Grace, Mobile, Ala.
- Lindner, Daniel M.**, to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.
- Mattek, Jeremy J.**, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee
- Meissner, Thomas L.**, to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
- Meyer, John H. VI**, to Jordan, West Allis, Wis.
- Moll, Daniel E.**, to Gethsemane, Tigard, Ore.
- Monday, William A.**, to Faith, Excelsior, Minn.
- Mueller, Aaron T.**, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
- Neumann, Joel D.**, to Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich.
- Oakland, Jason D.**, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.
- Olson, David S.**, to Shepherd of the Hills, Greeley, Colo.
- Pope, Gregory J.**, to Trinity, Manitowoc, Wis.
- Retberg, Andrew P.**, to Salem, Scottsdale, Ariz.
- Ruddat, David M.**, to Trinity, Terry/Salem, Circle, Mont.
- Salinas, David J.**, to St. John, Victorville, Calif.
- Schmidt, Jason L.**, to Our Savior, South Shore, S.D.
- Schulz, Jeremy A.**, to Faith, Tacoma/South Hill, Wash.
- Schwertfeger, Scott A.**, to St. Jacob, Grass Lake, Mich.
- Stuebs, Joel P.**, to Emmanuel, Stratford, Wis.
- Sulzle, Peter A.**, to St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D.
- Sutton, Nathan O.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Wall, Steven T.**, to Zion, Hokah/Immanuel, Ridgeway, Minn.
- Weiss, Robert C.**, to King of Kings, Little Rock, Ark.
- Westphal, Erich W.**, to Christ, Zumbrota, Minn.
- Wolfram, Scott E.**, to Christ, Juneau, Alaska

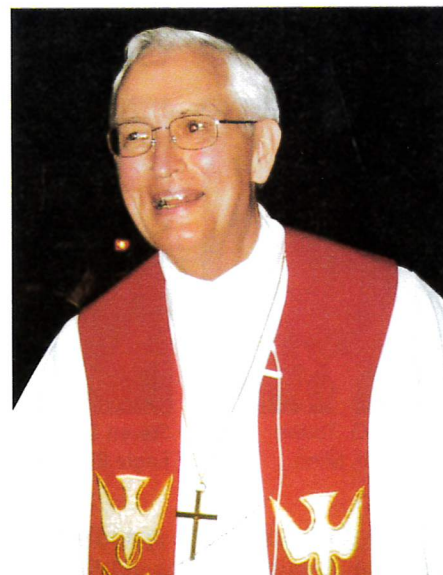
## Seminary president honored

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President David Valleskey presided over his final seminary graduation service on May 21. Valleskey, who served at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for 20 years (the last eight as president), is retiring from full-time ministry this summer.

In his graduation sermon, Valleskey emphasized that God's Word is the tool of a pastor's trade. His final message to his students encouraged them to "Use [the Word] boldly. Use it confidently. For God's Word always works."

After the service ended, James Mattek, the chairman of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Governing Board, wished Valleskey God's blessings on his retirement. "We thank the Lord for the blessing of David Valleskey," Mattek said. "He has been a faithful pastor, an effective professor, and a good administrator."

Valleskey and his wife, Janice, are moving to San Marcos, Calif., to spend more time with their family. Valleskey will continue to work on WELS projects, including leading a tour to Greece this fall that will follow Paul's New Testament journeys.



Seminary president David Valleskey led his final graduation service this year.

## Peace on the Reservation

Peaceful is not a word that you would use to describe the San Carlos Apache Nation in Arizona. Adults and children alike deal daily with poverty, broken families, alcohol and drug addictions, and cultural superstitions.

Fourteen-year-old Karlanda Thompson wrestled with these issues as well. Her friend, Royden, saw her struggle and told her that she had to go to the mission school (Peridot Lutheran School, Peridot, Ariz.), "the only place where you're going to find true peace." (Royden himself had begun attending the school only a year earlier.)

Karlanda did come—with her questions and her quest for peace. She didn't know much about Jesus, but she wanted to learn.

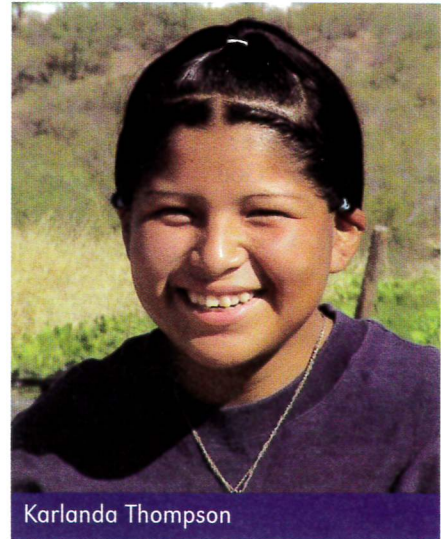
Only a couple months after she began attending, Karlanda wrote this essay:

*Never alone*

*God, you know I'm new at this praying. I mean it's all so brand new, so special. I know you forgive my sins for*

*Jesus' sake [and] that you sent him to earth as my Savior, but the things I'm learning about you now are like opening a treasure chest. You know what I mean, God, real treasures, not just stuff. I'm discovering how much you love me, how real you are, and how I can trust you to help me with my problems. I'm finding out how exciting it is to follow you. And I'm learning so much about prayer. Pastor showed me a Bible verse that says you want me to talk to you about everything. You really care about what matters to me, and I never need to feel alone because you are watching over me. Thank you, God, for inviting me to talk to you. Help me use this prayer diary to write down some of my prayers so I'll remember them and see your answers and I'll know that I'm never alone.*

Four months later, Karlanda dropped out of the eighth-grade at Peridot because of family difficulties. But according to Peridot's principal,



Karlanda Thompson

Martin Plocher, she has her Bible, and she has the true Word.

"It's why we're here," says Plocher, "even if it's a brief encounter. She had time to spend with her Lord and time to learn and to know that people really cared about her. The Word will continue to work in her life as she looks to her Savior for answers."

And for peace.

## Looking back

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

### From the March 15, 1970, issue—

*Pastor Waldemar Hoyer, who took a year off from his congregation in Rochester, Minn., to serve as a civilian chaplain in Vietnam, writes:*

"So that everyone would know whose business I was about, I took the silver chaplain's cross which I had on my lapel for my chaplaincy work at Rochester and placed it on my cap. I was here for Christ, to be His arms, to be His hand, to be His voice, to be His feet, to comfort and encourage the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, especially those in the Wisconsin Synod, and to spread the Good News to all people.

"Before I wore the cross, I was just another American in Saigon. No one knew why I was here and

certainly not the Vietnamese. . . . But now, with the cross on my cap, I can walk the streets of Saigon with the comfort and courage of one who comes in the name of the Lord. . . .

"The GI's know who I am. They address me as chaplain or sir. They often step to one side and let me go first into the bus or chow line. In a chow line at Bien Hoa, a GI had already paid for my meal when I got to the cash register. . . .

"The bus was filled when I went to Long Binh for a Communion service. I got up and offered my seat to the GI who came into the crowded bus. After the argument was lost, I sat in my seat for Christ, and the GI stood for Christ all the way to Long Binh. . . .

"The approach which I am using with good success is through the military chaplains. They know the men and the units, and they furnish

me with transportation. Last week at Long Binh I was trying to find John Hartwig of the 12th Ave. Gp. With the help of three chaplains taking me to three areas I was able to reach my man. . . .

When John Hartwig was called to the orderly room, he was as amazed as he was pleased to find a pastor from his church visiting him. 'It's like a visit from home,' he said.

"So far I have met 27 of our men personally and written to 200. . . . Eleven thousand miles from home these servicemen are truly grateful to the Church that cares enough about them to send a pastor to serve them in the name of the Savior."



## Faith stepping stones

A father tucks his two-year-old into bed. He leans over and whispers, "God bless you, Kayla."

"God bless you, Daddy," Kayla lisps back.

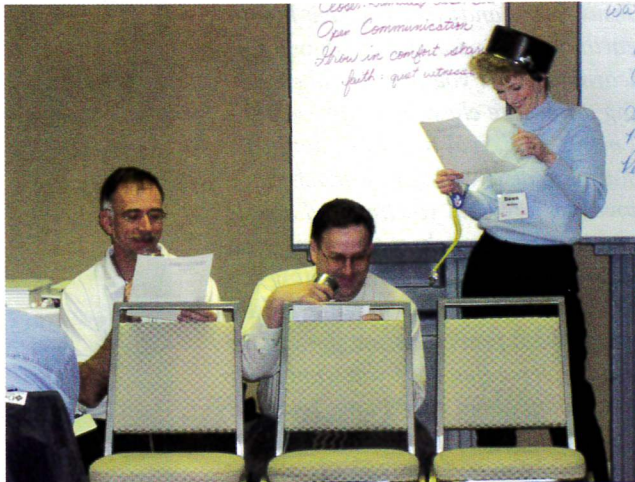
It's a sweet picture, right? Yes, but it's more than that. It's the first of three "Faith Stepping Stones" that Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Inc. (WLCFS) believes can help Christian parents nurture the faith of their children within their own homes.

Each "Stone"—or component of the program—includes information about a child's physical, emotional, and spiritual development and teaches parents a particular faith practice that can nurture their child's faith. These faith practices include:

- Parents blessing their babies each night before they go to bed (Stepping Stone 1: Raising a Healthy Baby).
- Parents using simple prayer techniques with their toddlers (Stepping Stone 2: Raising a Healthy Preschooler)
- Parents sharing the day's highs and lows with their children, opening up caring family communication (Stepping Stone 3: Entry Into School).

WLCFS's goal is to train congregational leaders how to teach each Stepping Stone so that leaders can go home and conduct their own Faith Stepping Stone seminars with parents from their congregations and their communities. Each Stone can be taught in three 90-minute sessions or one day-long course.

WLCFS held its first training seminar on May 8 in Brookfield, Wis. Family ministers Thad Jahns,



Presenters Thad Jahns and Gene Martens used games, skits, and music to engage participants of the first Faith Stepping Stones seminar. Here one group acts out a skit reinforcing the message that parents are models for their children and need to take good care of themselves.

of St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., and Gene Martens, of Bloomington Lutheran, Bloomington/Living Hope, Shakopee, Minn., led the seminar. Forty people participated, including pastors, teachers, staff ministers, preschool directors, and laypeople.

Don Wilke, chairman of Living Word, Waukesha, Wis., attended the May 8 training session with several other members of his congregation. "We learned about a very simple, yet effective, program that would involve parents in the daily faith education of their young children," says Wilke. "We were impressed with the program and plan on implementing it in our congregation."

Two more training seminars are planned for this fall. For more information, visit [www.wlcfs.org](http://www.wlcfs.org) or call 888-685-9522.

As for Kayla? Her "daddy," Dan Nommensen, says, "Blessing your child is not hocus pocus. When I bless Kayla, I am asking the Lord to keep my daughter in the faith forever. It's another tool that I can use to demonstrate my love for Christ and for my child, based on the love that Christ showed for me."

## Obituaries

### James R. Schierenbeck 1950-2004

James Schierenbeck was born August 15, 1950. He died April 15, 2004, in Franklin, Wis.

A 1972 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served St. John, Milwaukee; WELS Commission on Worship; and WELS Communication Services.

He is survived by his mother; his wife, Linda; three daughters; and two brothers.

### Alila C. Kionka 1924-2003

Alila Kionka (nee Wiechmann) was born Aug. 24, 1924, in Gwinner, S.D. She died Nov. 15, 2003, in Watertown, Wis.

She attended Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., and taught at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., for 28 years.

She is survived by her husband, Edward; three sons; four daughters; 17 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; one brother; and one sister.

### Frances A. Hoeneke 1912-2004

Frances Hoeneke (nee Redeker) was born Jan. 4, 1912, in Salt Lake City, Utah. She died April 4, 2004, in New Ulm, Minn.

A 1932 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught in New London, Wis.; Saginaw, Mich.; and New Ulm, Minn.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Roland. She is survived by three daughters, eight grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.

### Franklin H. Dorn 1917-2004

Franklin Dorn was born Feb. 7, 1917, in Jerome, Idaho. He died April 21, 2004, in Shasta, Calif.

A graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill., he served four Missouri Synod congregations before joining WELS and serving Mt. Calvary, San Jose, Calif.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy; one son; and one granddaughter.



## District news

### Northern Wisconsin

For the first time, the **Lutheran Pioneers** and the **Lutheran Girl Pioneers** held concurrent conventions. The joint effort on April 23-24 at the Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton, Wis., was organized to allow convention-goers more opportunities for networking and for shared interests in their mission to guide youth to realize the joy of a Christ-centered life.

### Happy Anniversary!

**NW**—On April 23-24, members of the **Lutheran Girl Pioneers** celebrated the organization's 50th anniversary in Appleton, Wis.

**SC**—Members of Living Word, Hot Springs Village, Ark., celebrated **Arthur**

### Southeastern Wisconsin



On May 1, Risen Savior, Milwaukee, dedicated its school building. The school, which opened in fall 2003, met at a rented facility until its own building was finished. Here one student enjoys his time at the new school.

**Schupmann's** 50th anniversary in the pastoral ministry on Feb. 7.

**SEW**—The Board for Parish Services honored **David Kehl**, administrator of the Commission on Adult Discipleship, for 25 years in the pastoral ministry on May 24 at Atonement, Milwaukee.

**WW**—On May 16, members of St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis., celebrated the anniversaries of two teachers: **Carol Gronholz** (38 years) and **Ken Ottenbacher** (36 years).

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: NW—Joel Lillo; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.

## World news

**National religious behaviors examined**—An annual survey of U.S. religious behavior by Barna Research Group showed an increase in behaviors outside the church while activities within the church remained stable.

Forty-four percent of adults reported reading the Bible during the past week, up from 36 percent in 1999. Participation in small groups for prayer, Bible study, or spiritual fellowship (excluding Sunday school or other church classes) increased from 12 percent in 1994 to 18 percent in 1999 to 20 percent now. Eighty-eight percent prayed to God (other than at church), up from 77 percent in 1999. Geographically these numbers jumped the most among those living in western states.

Religious behaviors that remained flat over the past decade include church attendance (42 percent in 1994 to 43 percent in 2004), volunteering to help a church (25 percent in 1994 to 24 percent in 2004), and attending adult Sunday school (21 percent in 1994 and 2004).

The findings, based on telephone interviews with 1,014 adults nationwide in late January and early February, have a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

[From "Religious activity increasing in the West," Barna Research Group, Ltd., Ventura, Calif.; www.barna.org; March 1, 2004.]

**Religious radio stations on the rise**—The number of religious radio stations is increasing, according to a recent Arbitron report.

In 2003, the number of religious stations grew from 1,843 to 1,965, a more than six percent increase. This total constitutes 14 percent of the 13,898 radio stations in the United States.

Arbitron, a New York-based media and marketing research firm, defines religious stations as those featuring gospel and "contemporary Christian" music as well as non-music stations that focus on "teaching programs."

**Number of those claiming no religion growing**—The number of "nones," those who claim no religion in public opinion polls, has more than doubled in a decade.

These nearly 30 million people have grown from eight percent of the U.S. population in 1990 to more than 14 percent in 2001, according to religion experts who compared results of the National Survey of Religious

Identification, conducted in 1990, and the American Religious Identification Survey, which in 2001 sought to update the earlier poll.

Nearly half of nones "agreed strongly" that God exists. "It is more accurate to describe them as unaffiliated than as non-believers," said Ariela Keysar, study director of the American Religious Identification Survey.

Through the poll, much information was gathered about nones, including the following statistics:

- Young people are more likely to profess no religion.
- More are single (29 percent) than the adult population as a whole (20 percent).
- Fifty-nine percent are male.
- Those with "no religion" constitute the largest group in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming. The percentage of adults who adhere to "no religion" is below 10 percent in North and South Dakota, the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

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

## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

**Bauer, Thomas E.**, to Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.  
**Borgwardt, Wayne M.**, to Thoughts of Faith (ELS), Ukraine  
**Dietrich, Joseph M.**, to Trinity, Abita Springs, La.  
**Goehring, William C.**, to Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.  
**Kemnitz, Timothy J.**, to Mt. Olive, Lincoln, Neb.  
**Kruck, Keith C.**, to retirement  
**Rahn, Kenneth D.**, to retirement  
**Schreiner, Keith W.**, to Zion, Russell/Christ, Marshall, Minn.  
**Sorum, E. Allen**, to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.  
**Wagenknecht, Steven W.**, to Grace, Casa Grande, Ariz.  
**Wendt, Theodore L.**, to Emmaus/St. Mark, Chicago  
**Ziebell, William W.**, to Zion, Russell/Christ, Marshall, Minn.

### Teachers

**Adickes, David M.**, to retirement  
**Avery, Christopher J.**, to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.  
**Beach, Julie A.**, to St. John, Dakota, Minn.  
**Behrens, Ella L.**, to retirement  
**Beyersdorf, Scott D.**, to Siloah, Milwaukee  
**Birsching, Sheryl A.**, to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.  
**Braun, Mary L.**, to retirement  
**Brooks, Jenny E.**, to Fairview, Milwaukee  
**Buch, Marcus F.**, to retirement  
**Burmeister, Paul R.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee  
**Chepyator, Kayla**, to Hope, West Chicago, Ill.  
**Falck, Kari A.**, to Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.  
**Fenske, Janet C.**, to retirement  
**Frisque, Joyce I.**, to retirement  
**Fritze, Paul J.**, to retirement  
**Gilbert, Gerhard N.**, to retirement  
**Greenfield, Sandra L.**, to retirement  
**Gronholz, Carol A.**, to retirement  
**Gustafson, Rachel C.**, to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.  
**Hafermann, Bethel M.**, to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.  
**Helke, John C.**, to retirement  
**Hintze, Annmarie Y.**, to Fairview, Milwaukee  
**Homan, Bonnie L.**, to St. Luke, New Lisbon, Wis.  
**Isch, John R.**, to retirement  
**Johnson, Daryl R.**, to Trinity, Brillion, Wis.  
**Karnopp, Albert I.**, to Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M.  
**Kieselhorst, Jerome N.**, to retirement

**Knudsen, Beverly J.**, to retirement  
**Krause, Carol J.**, to retirement  
**Kren, Marcie V.**, to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.  
**Kutz, Mark P.**, to St. John, Dakota, Minn.  
**Luetke, Norma J.**, to retirement  
**Manthe, Raymond C.**, to retirement  
**Markgraf, Dale E.**, to retirement  
**Meyer, John E.**, to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.  
**Moldstad, Joslyn**, to Peace, North Mankato, Minn.  
**Naujock, Gail D.**, to retirement  
**Nuncio, JoAnna**, to Christ, Grand Island, Neb.  
**Oldfield, John E. Jr.**, to retirement  
**Ottenbacher, Kenneth A.**, to retirement  
**Pagel, Paul O.**, to retirement  
**Petrie, Khrista J.**, to Gloria Dei, Belmont, Calif.  
**Root, Cheryl A.**, to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.  
**Rundgren, Dale R.**, to Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Rupprecht, Beth A.**, to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.  
**Ruzek, Chad**, to Princeton, Princeton, Minn.  
**Schadt, Janice M.**, to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.  
**Schleusener, Lynelle**, to Divine Savior, Doral, Fla.  
**Schneck, Bryan A.**, to Faith, Anchorage, Alaska  
**Schultz, Roland R.**, to retirement  
**Schulz, David E.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee  
**Sonntag, Darla J.**, to retirement  
**Stangl, Ryan J.**, to Michigan LHS, Saint Joseph, Mich.  
**Stern, Hannah H.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.  
**Tischer, Judith A.**, to retirement  
**Utz, Lois M.**, to retirement  
**Vathauer, Windred H.**, to retirement  
**Vetting, Elizabeth A.**, to St. Matthew, Port Washington, Wis.  
**Westendorf, Christina**, to Holy Trinity, Okauchee, Wis.  
**Zoellner, Amy L.**, to Living Hope, Shakopee, Minn.

**Staff Minister**  
**Anderson, Duane D.**, to retirement

### ANNIVERSARIES

**Newburg, Wis.**—St. John school (100). July 11. Service, 9 A.M. Dinner to follow. 262-675-6852.  
**Freeland, Mich.**—St. Matthew (125). Aug. 1 & Sept. 12. Service, 9 A.M. 989-695-9758.  
**Saginaw, Mich.**—Bethany (50). Aug. 8. Service, 10:30 A.M. Family picnic to follow. 989-793-7747.  
**St. Paul, Minn.**—Divinity (50). Aug. 8. Service, 9:30 A.M. Outdoor fellowship to follow. 651-776-1786.

**Fox Lake, Wis.**—St. John (100). Aug. 15. Services, 8 & 10 A.M. 920-928-3250.

**Loretto, Minn.**—Salem (100). Sept. 19. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Catered meal, 11:30 A.M. 763-498-7281.

### COMING EVENTS

**OWLS Annual Convention**—Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors. July 13-15. Airport Hilton Hotel, Grand Rapids, Mich. Lester Ring, 507-354-4403.

**Worship Conference**—July 22-24. Green Bay, Wis. Emphasis on contemporary and blended worship. www.charis.wlc.edu/cac. 920-336-2485.

**Single Parenting Retreat (ELS)**—July 30-Aug. 1. Schwan Retreat Center, Trego, Wis. 800-577-4848.

**Fall Family Camp**—Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis., Sept. 3-6. Enjoy a weekend with your family that features cooked meals, outdoor activities, and Bible study. 920-787-3202.

**WELS North Atlantic District Labor Day retreat**—Sept. 4-6. Camp Taconic, Hinsdale, Mass. Worship, recreation, and programs for all ages. Meals included. Judy Becker, 518-210-5590.

**WELS South Atlantic District Labor Day retreat**—Sept. 4-6. F.D.R. State Park, Pine Mountain, Ga. Tracy Heinitz, 770-985-5983.

**Family ministry training**—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service. Sept. 17, 9 A.M.-4 P.M. Holiday Inn Select, Naperville, Ill. Cost, \$89/person (includes meals & materials). 888-685-9522 (ext. 209).

**Reunion**—(35th) Michigan Lutheran Seminary class of 1969. Sept. 24-26. Chicago, Ill. Esther (Brassow) Huebner, 410-203-2020.

### POSITION AVAILABLE

**Executive administrator**—Full-time. For LACE, a WELS-related agency that makes property and construction loans to WELS congregations. Duane Anderson, 920-674-6007.

### NAMES WANTED

**Military bases in Colorado Springs, Colo.**—James Seiltz, 719-599-0200.

**Hickory, N.C.**—John Qualmann, 828-684-7035.

**The Villages, Fla.**—The Open Bible. Don Meier, 352-728-8492.

**Caddo Mills, Texas**—starting up a preaching station. John Hering, 972-494-4911.

### YEARBOOK CORRECTION

**Retired pastor:** Luther T. Weindorf, 1710 N 33rd Place, Mount Vernon WA 98273-8943; 360-424-4394.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@sab.wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. An updated bulletin board is available at www.wels.net, jumpword "bulletinboard."

## Picture this

This year's Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduates Jason Oakland and Paul Kuckhahn attended school together for 19 years. Oakland and Kuckhahn attended Immanuel Lutheran School, Gibbon, Minn. (1983-1992); Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minn. (1992-1996); Martin Luther College, New Ulm (1996-2000); and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. (2000-2004). Oakland, a lifelong member of Zion, Winthrop, Minn., was assigned as pastor of Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis. Kuckhahn, a lifelong member of Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn., was assigned as a tutor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Says Kuckhahn of their relationship: "Throughout our schooling (especially early on), we really had a healthy rivalry, and we pushed each other academically. I didn't really know that Jason wanted to be a pastor until probably the end of our Junior year. I had been planning on being a pastor since grade school, but when a classmate whose father wasn't a pastor also looked at his gifts and saw that he could use them to serve the Lord, it helped me reassess why I wanted to be a pastor as well. I think we have both been an encouragement to each other simply by our continued study for the ministry. On top of all that, it doesn't hurt to have someone with whom to carpool back to Minnesota!"

*Submitted by Paul Tessmer*



Jason Oakland (second from left) and Paul Kuckhahn (holding basketball) and the rest of the "B team" (1988) at Immanuel Lutheran School, Gibbon, Minn.



Jason Oakland (left) and Paul Kuckhahn on the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary campus.

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

## Did you know?

Here are some little-known facts about the important role Lutherans played in the early history of the United States.

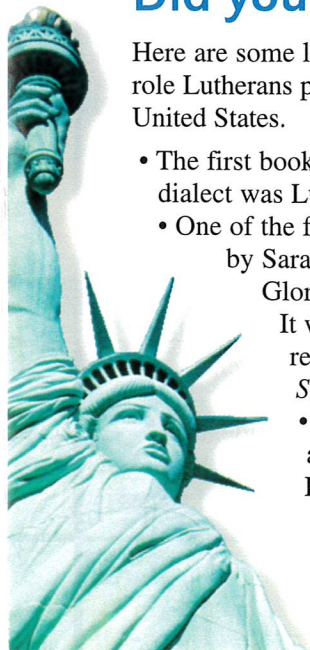
- The first book translated into an American Indian dialect was Luther's Small Catechism.
- One of the first "Stars and Stripes" was made by Sara Austin and the Ladies Aid Society of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Philadelphia.

It was presented to John Paul Jones and received the first salute granted to the *Star Spangled Banner* in Europe.

- The Statue of Liberty was made by a French Lutheran, Frederic Auguste Bartholdi.

- A Lutheran pastor, Frederick A. Muhlenberg, was the first speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. With John Adams, he signed the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights.
- It was illegal to hold Lutheran services in New York until 1664. The only worship services permitted in the colony were those of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Lutherans in New Netherland were granted legal toleration only when the English took over the colony and renamed it New York in 1664.

[Taken from *The Northwestern Lutheran*, July 1986]



# ST. PAUL MAUSTON, WISCONSIN

“It’s mostly kids”

Gary P. Baumler

About 10 years ago you had to watch carefully to see the children in worship at St. Paul, Mauston, Wis. Few families in the congregation had children. Attendance each week averaged 173 people.

### A new look

Today, children abound. “It’s mostly kids,” says church secretary Terri Pfaff. And the average attendance is 300, up 73 percent.

What happened? Pastor Paul Steinberg, who served St. Paul for the last seven years, would say that the congregation was “refurbished—refurbished for North American outreach.”

Founded by a circuit rider over 125 years ago, St. Paul had settled in as a typical, solid WELS congregation. It served its people with God’s saving Word, enjoyed fellowship, and paid its bills—but it was gradually declining in membership. “Then in 1993,” reports Steinberg, “[members] began to study their mission as they looked toward building.”

With its building complete in 1995, the congregation began to serve the community in new ways. It paid off its building debt in 2004, 11 years earlier than projected. It added a Monday service and a Saturday informal GIFT (Growing In Faith Together) service. “We have the same message as before,” says Steinberg, “but we changed the way we do things to match the community culture.”

One important change was adding JAM sessions. No, members didn’t gather a group of musicians to improvise music. They gathered children after school (JAM=Jesus in the Afternoon for Me) to learn about Jesus, while also serving the parents, who pick up their children at five o’clock. St. Paul put one ad in the newspaper for its JAM session, and 20 unchurched children came the next week.

One of those children was Becky. She learned the stories of Jesus for the first time and brought the message home. In class she told Steinberg that she knew Jesus had given her eternal life. Just months later Becky was hit by a truck, and the Lord called her home. Steinberg visited the family and gave the Lord’s comfort at her funeral. He also baptized her mother, aunt, sister, and brother; and in JAM session



After school, these children attend St. Paul’s JAM sessions, where they learn about their Savior.

the next year taught another dozen or so children that Becky knew.

St. Paul also conducts a time-release Bible study for teens. Of the 15 attending this spring, 10 were non-members. Two summer vacation Bible school programs, one in the evening and one week-long daytime class, plus Sunday school, help fill out outreach to children.

The community has noticed St. Paul. People comment about the beautiful building, the church where so much is happening, the JAM sessions, the beckoning signboard. It helps being located directly across from the public middle school and brand new high school.

### New adjustments

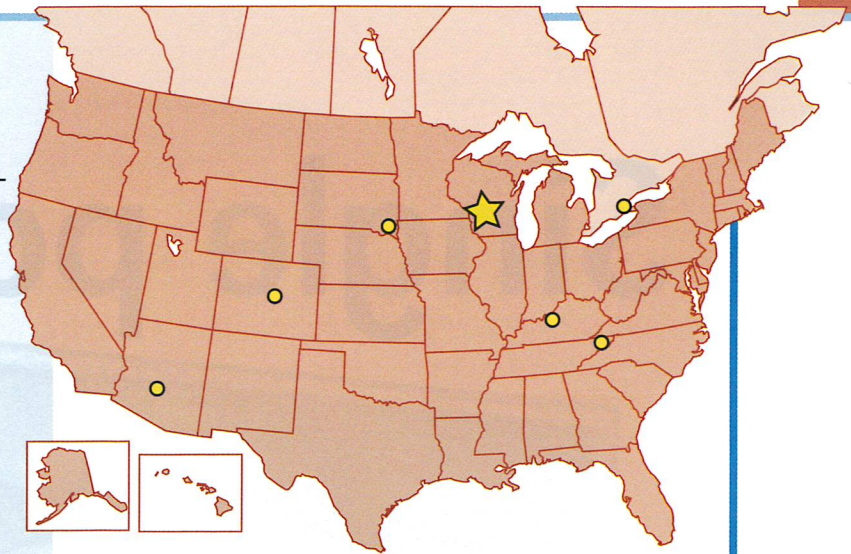
Not all the changes have come easily. In some ways, as Steinberg explains, the members had to become “comfortable with not being comfortable,” as the growing presence of unchurched parents and children had its effect.

Church Council President Bob Storandt identifies communication as a current challenge. “As we have grown, we now have four weekly services spread across

three different days. It can get to be like four small congregations. We continually strive to find better ways to keep everyone informed—and—to get all the inputs.”

Steinberg explains the transformation:

“St. Paul is a congregation very similar to many that saw their children dwindling and their church alive but aging and fading in spiritual activity. It is not in a booming suburb or town. It is in a community and county that has the highest unemployment in the state. Yet, it found ways to meet its community, and it was able to do much more than it ever thought. It learned that having God’s true Word may mean that some will reject your message, but it doesn’t mean that all will or that there aren’t many ways to try to reach them.”



★ Featured congregation    ● Congregation already featured



St. Paul’s young people lend a hand planting shrubs and a tree for a new church at Risen Savior, Orlando, Fla., in spring 2003.

The spirit of God’s blessings on its outreach shows. Pfaff typifies the congregation as “open and friendly, giving and willing.” People readily volunteer for a wide variety of tasks, using their talents from wood-working and masonry to bus driving and providing teaching activity materials. A “large and talented choir” enhances its worship, and a WOW (Women Of the WELS) group is thriving.

St. Paul does not have its own elementary school—yet, but while members talk about starting one, they provide full tuition for about 25 of their children to attend St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis. Parents operate a church-owned bus to transport the students.

### New life in Christ

God’s blessings prevail through his Word. The congregation rejoiced at 30 baptisms last year alone. And it celebrates each soul won for Christ.

One such soul was Tom. Steinberg tells his story:

## Quick facts

St. Paul, <[www.stpaulmauston.com](http://www.stpaulmauston.com)>:

- has been part of a dual parish with St. Luke, New Lisbon, Wis., for 100 years. This year their shared pastor, Paul Steinberg, took a call to another parish. Each congregation is now getting its own pastor.
- has 681 baptized and 550 communicant members. St. Paul and St. Luke (212 baptized, 169 communicants) comprised the largest dual parish in WELS.
- is also served by a semi-retired pastor, Joh P. Meyer. With getting its own pastor full time, it will discontinue the vicar position it created last year.
- is already discussing plans for more building.

“Tom’s favorite passage from the Bible was a law passage in Revelation. He knew he was a sinner, and he was fairly certain he wouldn’t make it to heaven. He died in a car accident four years after I met him—but one year before the accident he told me in my office that he was still certain he was a sinner but just as certain that Jesus had paid for all of his sins and that he was going to heaven.”

Storandt observes: “God has blessed us with so many things. Foremost we have a Savior to watch over us. For the most part we all have adequate food, a secure place to live, and freedom. Our congregation has grown and is able to continue to spread God’s Word. These are all things we need to remember not to take for granted.”

Let’s all remember.

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

# Single parenting



Single parenting is difficult, but there is hope.

Dan Loe

**D**ivorce runs counter to what God wants for marriage and causes hardship. But it can be even harder when a marriage has ended and someone unexpectedly becomes a single parent.

**When “Tom” began counseling, he was already over the shock of his wife abandoning their 10-year marriage and their two grade-school-age daughters.**

“I had no idea, though, how I was going to parent two young daughters on my own,” Tom recalls.

He was thankful for the support of family and friends but needed to talk through the challenges of single parenting. Accepting the responsibilities and challenges of single parenting and making his kids his top priority was something that Tom credited to his

faith. Tom spoke of the sacrifice that Jesus had made for him by his death on the cross and how that moved him to sacrifice his time, money, and energy for the sake of his children.

Tom knew that his daughters were even more confused than he was as to why their mom would leave so suddenly. Tom initially used his counseling sessions to increase his skills at being an effective listener, so his daughters could talk openly about their confusion and hurt. Tom did not want their hurt to turn into revenge or hatred, so he worked on being truthful and accurate when answering his daughters’ many questions, yet he avoided being critical of their mother.

Tom spoke of other practical strategies and goals that he was working on,

growing more confident of the positive impact they would have on his daughters. He described how taking one daughter along to the grocery store provided individual time to “just talk.” Both he and the kids now look forward to critiquing certain TV shows, “providing another opportunity to just talk.” Tom involved the kids in deciding what things had to be done every day in the house and what could wait until the weekend.

“My weekly planner became like my best friend,” said Tom as he described how he established new routines for making time for his kids and other important things.

**“Betsy” had hoped for sole legal and physical custody of her children, as she was now committed to protecting them from the years**

**of verbal abuse that she endured from her ex-husband.** As far as she knew, her ex-husband was still using drugs and alcohol, but the court mandated that the kids leave with their dad for unsupervised, day-long visits every other Saturday.

Betsy was thankful that her counselor suggested that the kids wait inside the house for their dad to get them. This gave Betsy the opportunity to observe her ex-husband. So far, every time he seemed to be sober.

Betsy would pray throughout the day that God would send his angels to protect the kids and help their father make appropriate decisions about what they were going to do. She was careful not to pry when the kids returned home. The kids often described having fun with their father. They were glad that they had a regular chance to see the "other grandma and grandpa."

Betsy shared with her counselor how she wished that nine-year-old son Troy could spend more time with his dad doing "guy stuff." After some careful thought, Betsy asked two young men from her church that she was able to trust to act as Christian "big brothers" to Troy.

**"Marcy" suspected that "Steve" was having an affair.** Once the truth came out, Steve made it clear that he wanted a divorce. The two spoke to the kids together. Steve was honest with them, even asking for their forgiveness and pledging to them that he would still be involved in their lives. He immediately moved out, and the divorce was finalized quickly.

Marcy was in tears the day that she called and requested an appointment for counseling. Steve had picked up the kids for his first visit with them. Marcy was feeling hurt and sad.

During the initial appointment, tears again came, but Marcy knew that she had to work through her loss and grief and at the same time implement appropriate boundaries between her and Steve. Marcy had few, if any, doubts that Steve would continue to

be a good father. She knew that she had to accept that her kids would one day meet Steve's new lady friend and that this woman would have at least some influence on their lives.

Counseling helped Marcy grow in her confidence that because of Steve's long-term commitment to being a good father, he would not allow his lady friend to be a negative influence in their lives. Although Marcy had been betrayed and the trust that she had for her husband was gone, she learned that she could still trust Steve as a good father.

**Tom, Betsy, and Marcy all faced different challenges in dealing with their former spouses.** In order to be successful single parents, they needed to face those challenges realistically, keeping the well-being of their children in the forefront.

Not all children growing up in a single-parent family experience negative consequences, and not all single-parent families are the result of divorces. In any case, focusing on the weaknesses and problems will not help the single parent and children build a successful family life. Single parents can use several strategies to increase their likelihood of success.

- Pray without ceasing for each of your children.
- Seek out Christian parents from your congregation to act as mentors. These mentors can provide valuable experience, insight, feedback, and support.
- Make the family your highest priority.
- Rely on God for patience, wisdom, and strength.
- Encourage open communication by talking daily with your children about faith, salvation, and trust in God.
- Learn and practice home management skills to coordinate schedules.
- Recognize the challenges of being a single parent without self-pity or bitterness.

- Make time for meeting your own physical, spiritual, emotional, and social needs.
- Do what you can to maintain former family traditions and actively work toward building new family traditions.
- Actively encourage appropriate involvement, when possible, of the non-residential parent in your children's lives.
- Learn to have a positive attitude toward parenting and life in general.

Single parents can talk to their pastor about organizing a network of supportive single parents within their congregation. Many large congregations use creative approaches to make it clear to single parents that they are important members of congregational life.

Single parents can be encouraged by remembering how Jesus empathizes with them in their times of weakness (Hebrews 4:15). As God reminded Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Although single parents face unique challenges, ample evidence shows that they can succeed in parenting and that their children will not only grow in Christian faith but also become responsible members of society. Like all of us, single parents can rely on the Lord's promises for guidance, wisdom, and strength as they carry out his admonition, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

*Dan Loe, a member at St. John, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a therapist in New Ulm at Christian Family Counseling, a division of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Inc.*

*This is the second of a four-part series on "Life after divorce." To read the first article, "Picking up the pieces," by Joan Dickerson, go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "fic," and click on "online archive."*



*Carl R. Gungel*

## Freedom's price

“Give me liberty or give me death.”

Do most Americans feel that strongly about freedom? Would they agree with Patrick Henry's famous words regarding liberty? Are they willing to die for it? Or does freedom not mean that much to many people today?

Until recently the Fourth of July may have meant little more than friends, food, and fireworks. Then came 9/11, and everything changed. With liberty threatened, freedom meant a whole lot more to us. Many more were ready to die to preserve freedom for themselves or even to win it for others.

Recently I returned from a mission trip to Nigeria. On the way to the airport for the trip home, our van was stopped more than 20 times at police and military checkpoints. Policemen and soldiers, with guns at the ready, approached our van. We needed their permission to proceed. In one traffic-crowded town, within clear sight of the police, two young men forced their way into our van. They insisted our driver pull over and they forced him out of the van, demanding money before we were allowed to continue our trip.

On the way home from the airport in the United States we weren't stopped once. Even the security checks at the airport were done in a non-threatening way. Designed for the protection of our liberty, they have become an acceptable part of travel today—actually a symbol of the freedom we desire to defend.

But that's not our greatest freedom. It hardly compares with the freedom for which Christ died to set us free. Sin held us captive. We transgress God's clear commandments. For every intentional or unintentional sin, death—the wages of sin—held us captive. Eternal death would have been our penalty. But “Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1).

Maybe you've read about a former professional football player who gave up a lucrative contract to enlist and fight for freedom. He, along with many others, lost his life, seeking to win freedom for others. As precious as the sacrifice of our soldiers is, it hardly compares with what Jesus did and the freedom he won for us. By his innocent death, he freed us from death, sin's eternal penalty. Forgiven by his grace, we will forever celebrate our freedom in heaven.

What about now? Is it too soon to begin celebrating this freedom? The verse from Galatians 5 goes on, “Do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

Some in Galatia were insisting on circumcision, one of the laws from which God set us free. It's slavery to insist on anything that God does not require or does not forbid. Christian freedom is too precious a commodity, won at too high a price, to ever give it up.

To illustrate, before leaving for Nigeria, I was told that it would be important for me to wear a clergy collar. I've never worn one. I don't own one. But I did wear a borrowed one. Innumerable times it got us through the checkpoints.

God doesn't tell clergy today what to wear. He doesn't prescribe for us our liturgy or our food. In Christian freedom, he permits us to make many such decisions. He only wants us to guard our Christian freedom carefully, not using it to indulge our sinful nature or to offend others.

Christ has set us free eternally. Let's also appreciate the earthly freedom he gives those of us living in the United States. And, thanking him for it, let's use it to proclaim true freedom to others, too.



# We preach Jesus Christ as Lord

What qualifies someone to preach God's Word?

Paul E. Zell

Wouldn't a superhero do a better job in the pulpit than a sinful human being?

## Why preach?

After Paul left Corinth, false teachers came and gathered a following of their own. These "super-apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11) attacked Paul's character. Worse yet, they stirred up suspicions about his preaching.

So why did Paul continue to preach? Because in his mercy, God had called him to do so. God also equipped Paul, giving him the holy law to afflict the sinner's conscience and the holy gospel to soothe it. Even if some criticized Paul's preaching, the apostle was bound to do it. He was accountable "in the sight of God" (4:2).

That's why "Pastor Petersen" preaches, too. Prior to Sunday morning, he pores over God's Word. He ponders the needs of his sheep. He measures his words carefully as he writes, rehearses, and delivers his sermon. Pastor Petersen is bound to preach; the God who called him holds him responsible.

## Why preach Christ?

Paul's opponents in Corinth succeeded at promoting themselves. With their "superior" style they gained recognition and money for their efforts.

So why did Paul continue to preach Christ? Because from personal experience he recognized Christ as ruler over death and the grave and as provider of peace with God. Paul knew that there was no better way

to serve the Corinthians than by telling them about the Lord.

That's why "Pastor Paulson" preaches Christ, too. He is aware that a well-crafted mix of funny stories and flattering statements from the pulpit might build his own reputation and even raise church attendance. But the faithful preacher recognizes himself as a sinner miraculously rescued by Christ. At his baptism he was snatched from eternal darkness and brought into the sunshine of God's glorious grace. With Paul, he realizes that God "made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of

Christ." Pastor Paulson has no choice but to reflect that light to his listeners.

## Why this ordinary preacher?

But wouldn't a fellow with extraordinary abilities preach more effectively? The "super-apostles" at Corinth had a knack for public speaking. Polished professionals, they made sure their listeners were aware of their talents and training.

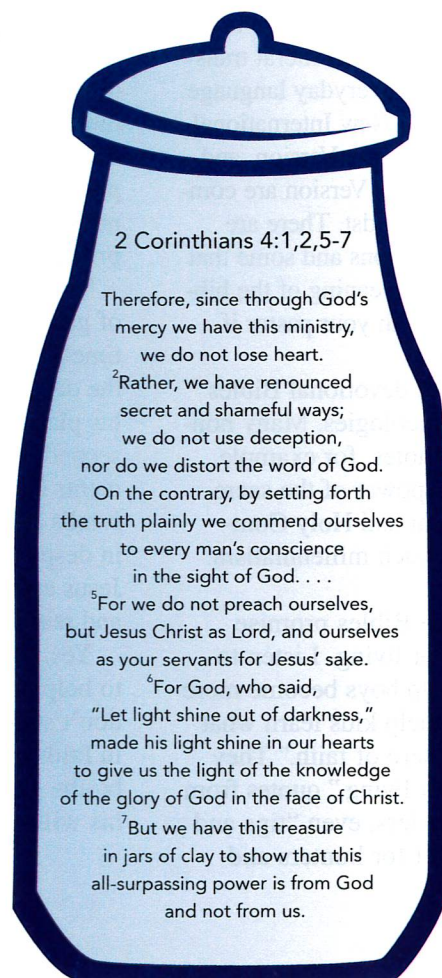
By comparison, Paul seemed so ordinary. As a carrier of God's message he was merely a clay jar—unimpressive, inexpensive, fragile. "But we have this treasure in jars of clay," Paul observed, "to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." The precious news of Christ means forgiveness for the unforgivable, love for the unlovable, eternal life for the dying. God bypassed the superheroes and summoned "clay jars" like Paul to carry this mighty message to the world. That way the honor was God's and not the preacher's.

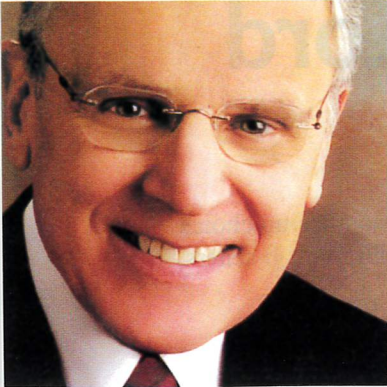
That's why "Pastor Philips" knows that he can preach, too. Years from now he won't be listed with Christianity's all-time-greatest preachers. Yet like Paul he will "preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23) at every opportunity. Through God's Word his listeners will see Christ as their sparkling treasure. So Pastor Philips won't lose heart.

Faithful preachers know that the Lord is glorified through their preaching.

*Contributing editor Paul Zell, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Grace, Milwaukee.*

*This is the sixth of a seven-part series.*





*Gary S. Baumler*

## “Gotcha!” Bibles

One hundred twenty-eight: the number of English Bibles listed in the recent *Retail Partner: Bible Buyer's Guide* put out by Navpress—128 different English Bibles! That's good news. It means that countless numbers of people are still buying and reading God's Word.

But why so many different Bibles? A quick review reveals Catholic and non-Catholic Bibles; children's, men's, and women's Bibles; study Bibles; devotion Bibles. There are an *Adventure Bible*, a *Policeman's Bible*, a *Super Heroes Bible*, *The 2:52 Boys' Bible* (based on Luke 2:52)—even a *Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible*. The latest are the so-called Biblemags for teenage girls (*Revolve*) and boys (*Refuel*).

Whoa! Where are we going here? What does this mean? It means . . .

- Many different English translations are available: from simple children's language to somewhat stilted literal translations to idiomatic everyday language to paraphrases. The New International Version, the King James Version, and The New King James Version are commonly used in our midst. There are other useful translations and some that distort the original meaning of the biblical text. Check with your pastor if you have questions.
- Study Bibles and devotional Bibles reflect various theologies. Many non-Lutheran study notes, for example, deny the gospel power of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Some teach millennialism. Be careful.
- Increasingly, the Bibles promise specific helps for living. Listen to the hype: “to help boys become more like Jesus,” “to help kids learn what it takes to be a hero of faith.” They offer “recipes for living,” quotes from inspirational leaders, even “tips and codes of conduct for hunters and

fishermen.” Notice how they turn the attention on us and not on our Savior. They sell the Bible as a “How to . . .” book instead of a “How Jesus did . . .” book. The emphasis is misplaced.

- Now come the latest Bibles—what I think of as “Gotcha!” Bibles, the Biblemags. Research shows that teens don't read the Bible because it's too big and too intimidating. So the publisher removes that hurdle by making the Bible look like an entertainment magazine and offering quizzes; dating hints; advice about sex, drugs, suicide, tattoos, and “How to Get Along with Your Mom.” All of that alongside a modern and easy-to-read (loose) translation of the New Testament. So, young teen, now we gotcha—you'll read the Bible.

At least we hope you will. If the Biblemag gets you to read God's Word, that's good. The other things can be good, too. Teens need all the sound Christian, biblical advice they can get on the issues they face every day. But caution is in place. Those extra-biblical features are not the Bible and should not be the primary reason for getting the book.

The Bible is much more than a book of good advice for teens. It is more than a timeless magazine on important issues of the day. It is God's Word, revealing to us his plan of salvation from creation to the second coming of Christ. It is two testaments that converge at the cross of Christ. It tells about life, for sure, and leaves us in despair for our very souls. It tells about Jesus and brings us the joy of forgiveness and real life, eternal life, in him.

Yes, the Bible has many directions to help us live our lives of faith, but we don't start there. We turn to that when in faith and thankfulness worked in us by the gospel we find our joy in doing his will.

# It's all about Jesus

Mark J. Lenz

**G**od says, "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). How can I ever hope to be as holy as God? God is perfect. He never makes mistakes. I am sinful. I have not even begun to do what he demands.

Take heart! The holiness God requires he has provided in Christ. Christ is the righteousness of God, and God has declared us righteous for his sake. The three letters of Paul we will study in this lesson emphasize this wonderful truth repeatedly.

**Romans**—Paul had a strong desire to visit Rome because from there the gospel could spread across the empire. In preparation for this trip, Paul wrote the letter to the Romans.

- Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel (1:16,17)?
- See 3:21-28. How do people become righteous before God? In what ways does Paul demonstrate that this is all God's doing?
- Since we have been justified through faith, what blessings are ours (5:1-5)?
- Read 5:18,19. What was the result of Adam's disobedience? Christ's obedience?
- How is Christ "the end of the law" (10:1-4)?
- In view of God's mercy in Christ, list the things we will want to do (12:1,2,9-21).

**1 Corinthians**—Many problems arose in the congregation in Corinth. In dealing with these problems and questions, Paul always directs his readers back to Christ and the cross.

- Read 1:18-25. How do Jews and Gentiles, respectively, react to the message of the cross? How do those "who are being saved" view the same message? Why (2:14)?
- How does Paul deal with each of the following problems and issues seen in the congregation in Corinth? Divisions in the church (3:21-23)? Immorality (5:6-8; 6:18-20)? Lawsuits among believers (6:9-11)? Marriage and related matters (7:23,24)? Food sacrificed to idols (8:4-6)? The rights of an apostle (9:12,22,23)? The Lord's Supper (11:27-29)? Spiritual gifts (12:12,13,27)? The resurrection of the dead (15:12-19,55-57)? What is the common denominator in how Paul deals with each of these problems?
- When you compare the opening verses of Paul's letter (1:1-3) with the closing verses (16:22-24), what can you conclude about the purpose of the entire letter?

**2 Corinthians**—While Paul was working in Macedonia, Titus arrived with the good news that the Corinthians had repented. With joy in his heart, Paul penned 2 Corinthians as preparation for another visit to Corinth. He includes a defense of his ministry and a request for the Corinthians to join the Macedonians in collecting an offering for the saints in Jerusalem.

- Explain what Paul means by saying that Jesus is always "Yes" (1:18-22).
- Read 4:5-7. Identify the "treasure" and the "jars of clay." What is Paul's point?
- Read 5:14-21. What is the purpose of our lives? What is the ministry of reconciliation?
- What is the motivation for generous giving (8:9)?
- How did Paul come to understand the purpose of his sufferings and weaknesses (12:9-10)?

**Conclusion:** Because we have been declared righteous in Christ we want to express our gratitude to God by living holy lives for him. The Ten Commandments serve as our guide. As you read through them, think about specific ways you will strive to live a holy life today.

*Contributing editor Mark Lenz, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.*

Find this article and possible answers online. Go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "fic," and click on "It's all about Jesus." Answers will be available after July 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

# Getting my hands dirty

It's easy being like the Pharisees, living by the motto, "Whatever you do, don't get your hands dirty!" But we need to follow Jesus' lead and reach out to our neighbors, even when it gets messy.

Laurie Biedenbender

Once upon a time we had some neighbors who looked like drug dealers. They came and went at strange hours with scary friends. Their little girl and boy showed up at our house in mid-December without coats or shoes. They didn't repair their screen door or cut their grass. They once made a bonfire of an old snowmobile in their front yard. Strange but true.

During Holy Week our kids wanted to invite them to our Easter service. I have to admit, I was skeptical. They'd never accept our invitation, I thought. They barely returned our hellos. I don't remember my exact response, but chances are, I pursed my lips and said, "We'll see."

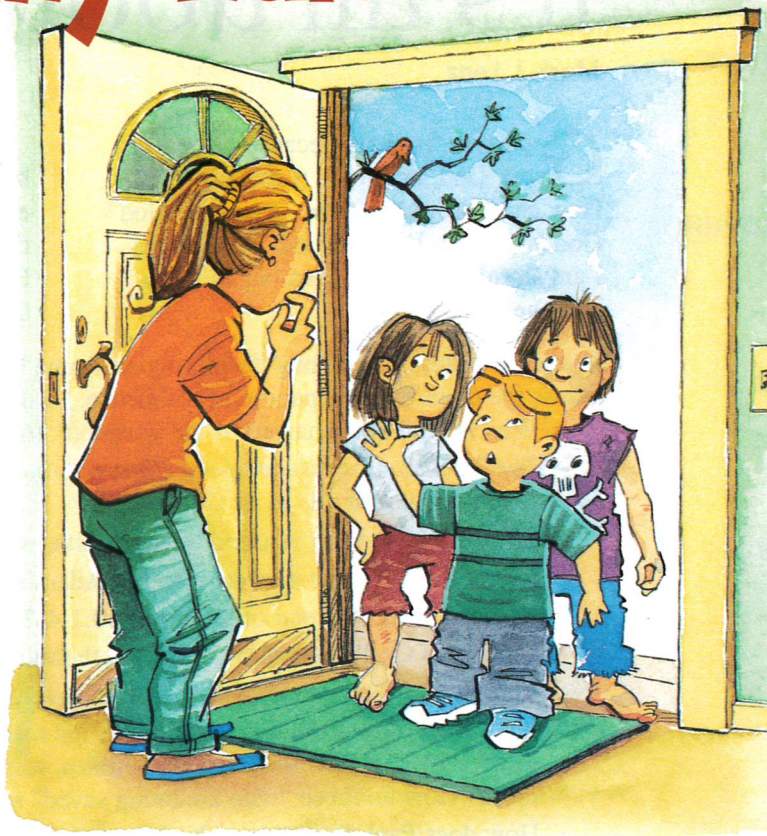
## Have I mentioned yet that I have a whole peck of Pharisee in me?

I was being just like the Pharisees, living by the motto, "Whatever you do, don't get your hands dirty!" Don't help that paralytic—it's the Sabbath! Don't talk to that woman—she's a "sinner!" Don't, don't, don't—you'll be unclean!

It's not that I didn't care about our neighbors. It's not that I forgot they have immortal souls. It's just that I didn't want to get my hands dirty.

## Jesus didn't live by that motto.

Right in the middle of some fancy-schmancy dinner party, he let a harlot cry all over his feet and then immodestly loosen her hair and dry his toes.



He touched the lepers, healed on the Sabbath, and made noontday conversation with someone who was not only a Samaritan but also a woman, and not only a Samaritan and a woman but also a loose woman.

Jesus got his hands dirty. His ministry was messy. He hung out with the wrong people, went to the wrong parties, and networked with guys who wouldn't advance his career at all.

Maybe we need to get our hands a little dirty too. You know, mix it up. Work a little harder at getting to know folks outside our church, even if they don't repair their screen door, even if they don't take their kids to swimming lessons—or the shoe store, for that matter.

Maybe we need to invite more unbelievers and barely-believers into our schools instead of worrying about keeping our little WELS thoroughbred children pure. (Of course, we never say it like that, but sometimes isn't that what we mean?)

Maybe we need to start simply—like with our neighbors.

## Oh yeah, about our neighbors.

They looked like drug dealers, but it turned out they were actually . . . drug dealers! Caught red-handed, according to the papers. They were thrown into jail, and their little shoeless children went to a foster home.

Now I'm praying that someone in prison ministry will gift them with the gospel—because I know that I didn't. I'm praying that the foster parents will take those kids to a Christian church—because I know that I didn't.

While I'm at it, I'm asking God to help me be a little more willing to get my hands dirty. That's what Jesus did—he got dirty . . . and bloody . . . and naked . . . and dead—because he loved all of us dirty, rotten sinners.

*Laurie Biedenbender is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm, Minnesota.*