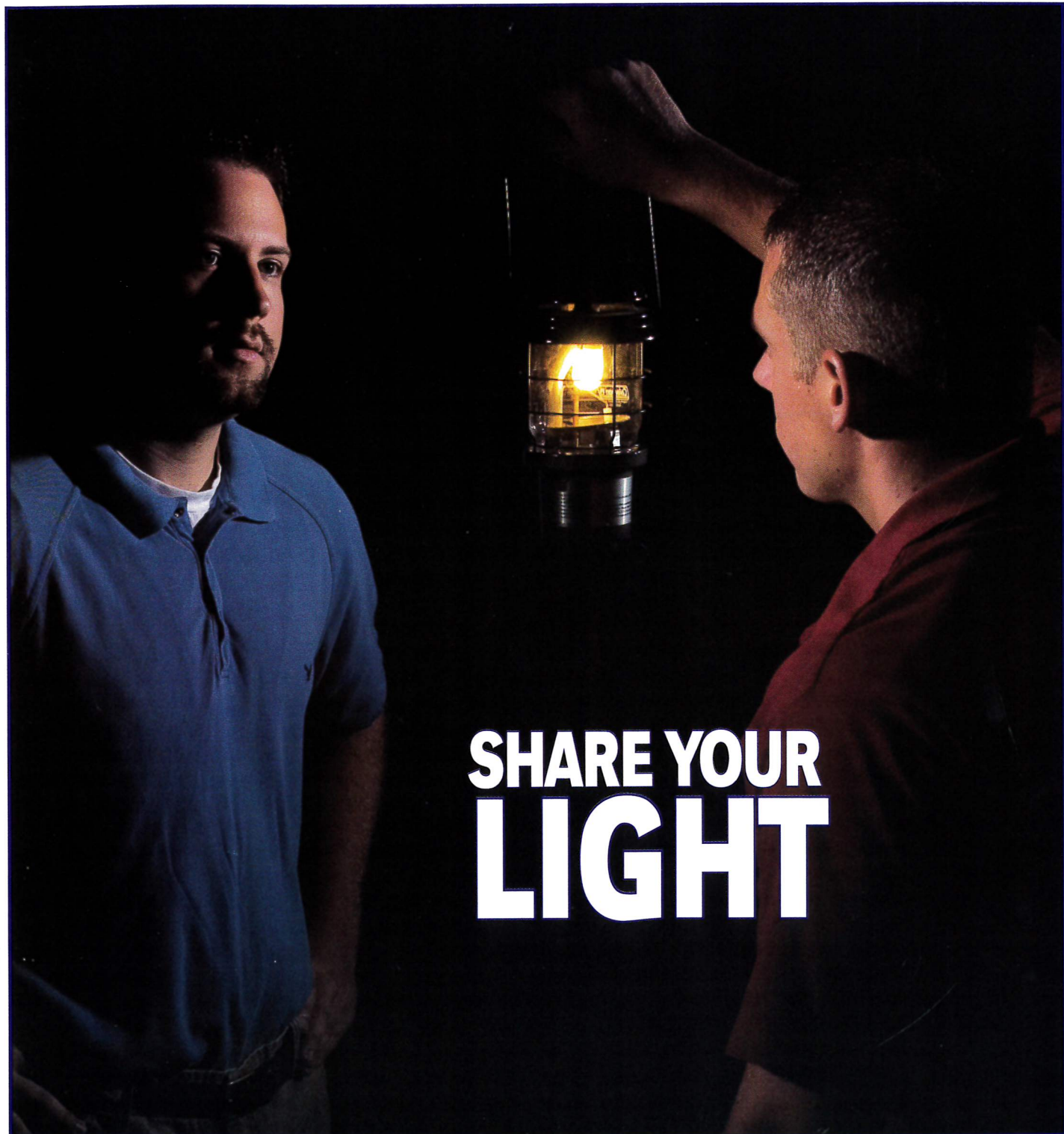


BLENDING FAMILIES • WHY WORK HARD? • A DISABLING ATTITUDE

SEPTEMBER 2004

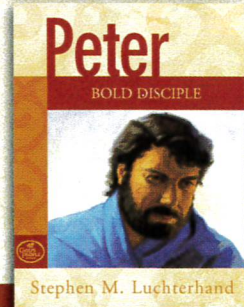
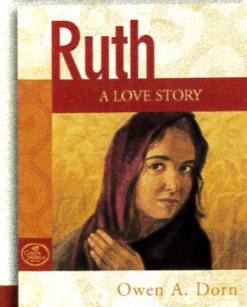
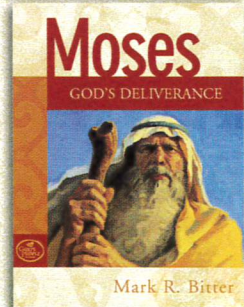
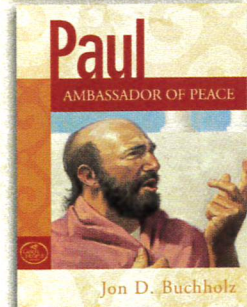
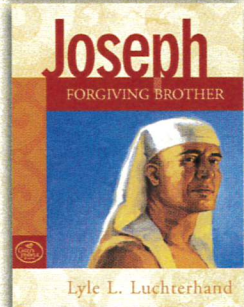
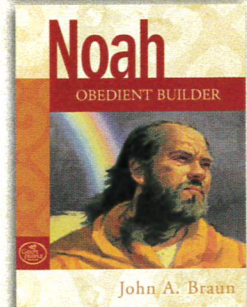
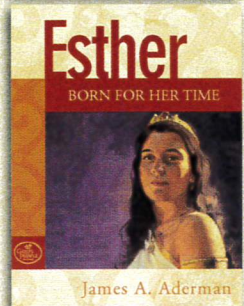
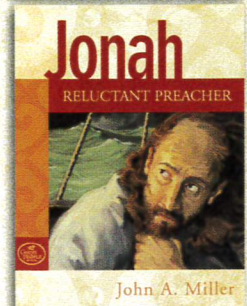
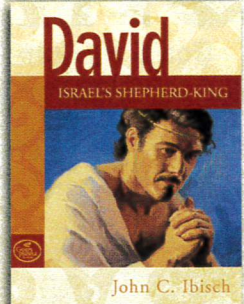
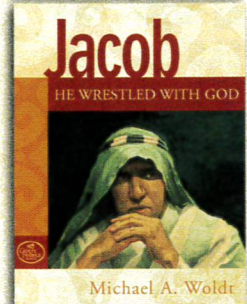
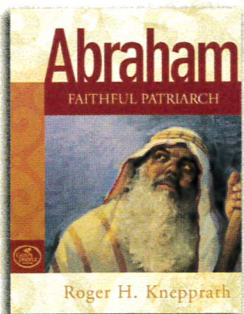
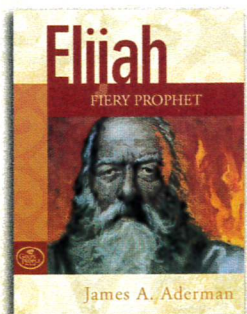
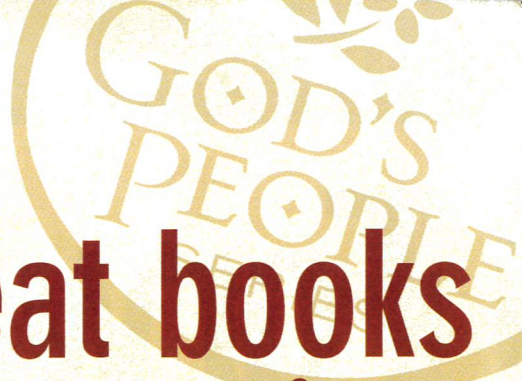
Forward in Christ

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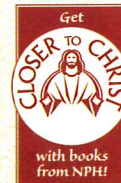
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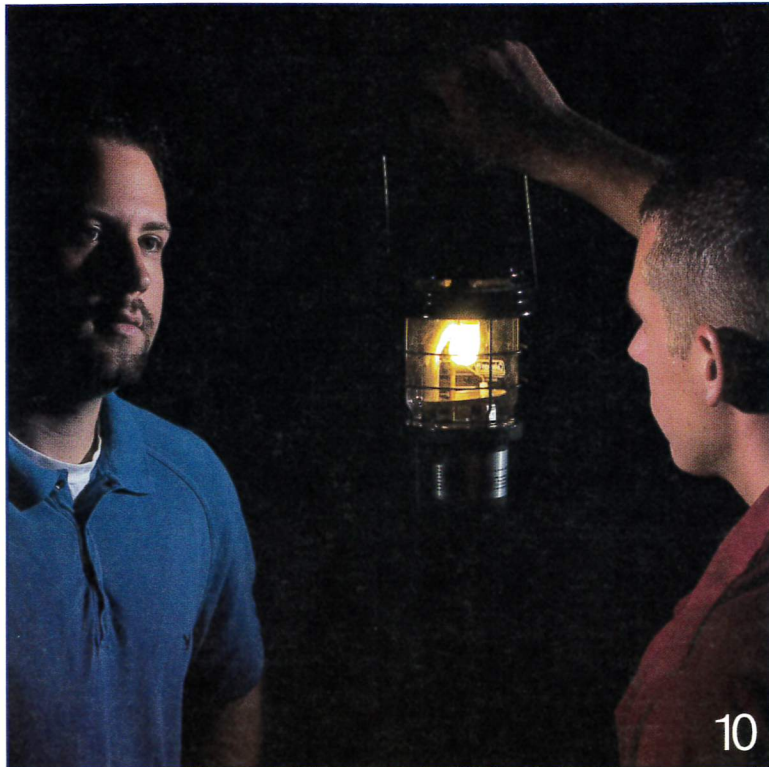
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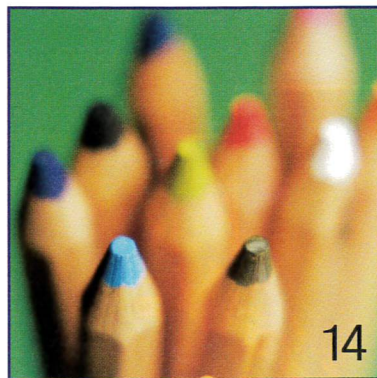
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“Jesus said, ‘Let
your light shine.’”



BRICE PHOTOGRAPHY



Forward in Christ

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Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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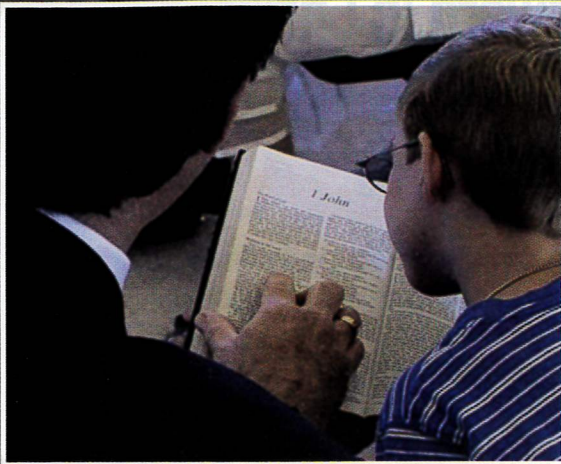
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From the security of our homes and congregations across all of North America and beyond, we are given opportunities each day to tell more and more people about Jesus . . .



Beginning this September, your congregation will have the opportunity to invite a special Visitor to join you for worship, for Bible study, or for a leadership meeting. The purpose of this visit is to encourage each individual member of WELS to find new ways to tell more people about Jesus—in their homes, in their communities, and together with others in WELS. Watch for and welcome your Visitor! He wants to share with you the joy of finding unique ways of reaching out to others who need the peace you have through Jesus.



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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

COMMUNICATION PROJECTS MANAGERS

Nicole R. Balza
nicoleb@sab.wels.net
Julie K. Wietzke
juliew@sab.wels.net

STAFF WRITER

Laura C. Warmuth
laurachristine@wels.net

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

ART DIRECTOR

Paul Burmeister

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

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SEPTEMBER

WHAT'S INSIDE

The inside—and outside—of *Forward in Christ* magazine have been dramatically affected by a man whose name appears in small type in each issue. His name is Paul Burmeister. Unless you read closely, though, you may not realize that he is the magazine's art director. That's the way Paul is—humble, unassuming, thoughtful.

At the monthly meeting to decide on artwork for *Forward in Christ*, Paul usually gives his opinions last. He lets everyone else contribute first and often doesn't even volunteer his ideas until asked. When he does speak, though, everyone listens.

Paul first served *Forward in Christ* (then *Northwestern Lutheran*) with the October 1995 issue. This issue is his last. During that time the magazine's appearance has changed in many ways, and Paul has played a major role in those changes.

Now Paul will play a role in shaping the lives of young artists at Wisconsin Lutheran College, where he has accepted a call to serve as an art professor. He is leaving his position as Northwestern Publishing House's art director, but not before leaving his mark on many WELS products. He won't tell you that. But I will.

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PURPOSEFUL LIVING

How absolutely sad is the negative treatment of Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* by Richard Gurgel ["In the cross hairs," April].

To completely ignore this book for Christian reading is to rob one's spiritual growth and impede our ability to live in God's purposes, which, as Rick Warren writes, are "worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism." How remarkable that these five activities are straight from Acts 2 and are a part of my congregation's mission statement: "to reach out and bring others into the family of God with us and nurture Christian development through worship, education, and fellowship that we may be a caring community, serving one another and the world with Christ's love."

Christians need to read with a critical mind, but the criticism of *The Purpose Driven Life* and disregard for this book plays right into Satan's hand. Christians constantly need to remember that "It All Starts with God" (first chapter of the book), and "You were born by his purpose and for his purpose." Our response to God's love and salvation is to serve and live Christ's command in Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples!" Warren promotes this "purposeful living" in his book. More WELS members would do well to heed this message based on God's Word.

*Debra A. Fingles
Warner Robins, Georgia*

In fairness to the author, Gurgel did point out the positive features of The Purpose Driven Life. But he also warned about the imbalance he found between law and gospel.—ed.

CHRISTIAN GIVING

My appreciation for *Forward in Christ* deepened when I read

Wayne Laitinen's article about Christian giving ["When Christ's grace moves hearts," July].

Recently, I received a copy of [a Christian magazine]. An article in that publication entitled "Funds in the Sun" prompted a letter to the editor of that publication expressing disappointment because of the following quote: "It's important that you pay yourself first. Even if you can afford to save only \$25 a paycheck."

The article made no mention of our responsibility as Christians to help fund the work of our churches through our regular salaries, or for that matter, through estate planning.

How refreshing, therefore, that Laitinen's article so tactfully and fully described our privilege and responsibility as Christians to help support the work of the church.

I am an expatriate living in the United Kingdom. Most of my extended family and friends are not accustomed to going to church, let alone giving gratefully to support a church. The article provided further insight into the example I live when the firstfruits of my labors are given to support the operation of the church, not grudgingly, but happily.

Thank you for continuing to cover issues in your magazine from a biblical perspective.

Sandra Parker

SELF-INJURY

Thanks for the article on self-injury ["Self-destruction," June]. Please allow me to briefly share my story as one who used to self-injure.

When I began self-injury, it quickly became an addiction because it gave the illusion of control, a way to express the pain of self-hatred that I didn't know how to handle. I entered a hospital program specifically for self-injurers. Weeks of psych-ward hospitalization and months of medications helped—to a degree. But I continued to push others away and turn to

self-injury to deal with my inner turmoil.

More than a year later in a Bible study, the question was asked, "Why do we keep the Commandments?"

My answer since confirmation was, "To give thanks to God for saving us from sin and damnation." Absolutely! But my pastor told me more that day: "Because we can."

Christ won salvation from sin and hell, and the gospel also proclaims what that means: freedom. Through baptism, "our old self was crucified with [Christ] so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (Romans 6:6,7). This doesn't mean a sinless life, but it does mean new life in Christ and the power "to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live instead self-controlled, upright, and godly lives" (Titus 2:12). To one dealing with addiction, this was nothing less than freedom from slavery. I have now enjoyed this freedom for more than five years.

I share this to bring glory to God and encouragement to others, for as shameful as self-injury is, where the gospel wins out and bears fruit, there is no shame. Glory be to God for his grace in the life of this sinner!

*Daniel Dexter
El Paso, Texas*

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Our work fits into God's plans

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. . . . That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes 3:9-11,13

Peter A. Panitzke

Why celebrate Labor Day? I am not against taking the first Monday of September off. But my question is more basic. Why celebrate Labor Day when there seems to be no purpose to our labor? Why should we work so hard?

Is our work meaningless?

This is not the question of a slacker. King Solomon asked it long before us. King Solomon built houses, planted vineyards, and built water systems. He was not looking for an easy way out. But in Ecclesiastes he looked at life “under the sun” and concluded, “Meaningless! Meaningless! . . . Everything is meaningless” (1:2).

We work hard. We gain possessions. For what? We all die. And we will leave the fruit of our hard work to someone else. “What does the worker gain from his toil?”

There is another thing. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die” (3:1,2). God has already made his plans. We can't change them. So why work so hard?

God makes our work meaningful

Solomon gives us the answer. God “has made everything beautiful in its time.” By God's grace we know the purpose behind God's time setting. God's purpose for this world is that he wants “all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

We may not understand why he grants outward success to our labors one year and causes us to experience financial disaster the next. But we do understand this: the God who sets the times sent the promised Savior for us and works out everything for the good of his church. Because of that, we know that everything is beautiful according to God's plan.

The goal of our labor is not to change God's beautiful plan, but to be a participant in that plan. We labor to fulfill the plan that our loving God has already determined—to use the fruits of our labor to provide for ourselves, for others, for our church. Knowing we are part of his master plan gives us satisfaction in our labor.

In contrast to “time” is “eternity.” “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.” We may not understand God's timing in this world, but we do know that the monotonous cycle of events of this world will end. We do know that there is something better to look forward to. Something that is lasting. We labor, not to earn heaven, but because we are children of God already. “The gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). Eternity is ours through faith in Jesus.

God in his grace even promises to remember our work in eternity.



The saints in heaven “rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (Revelation 14:13). Our work fits into God's eternal plans. He will remember it. That makes our work meaningful.

Until eternity comes for us, enjoy the work God has given you. Enjoy your part in his plan. This is his gift to us this Labor Day.

Contributing editor Peter Panitzke is pastor at St. Paul, Muskego, Wisconsin.

Terror and the Christian

Thomas J. Jeske

The human heart knows something: “If I can frighten you, I gain an advantage. Perhaps I’ll knock you off-stride long enough to take what I want from you.” Century after weary century, humans have been coming up with ideas to terrorize each other. Each of us has some sad experience with threat, fear, and extortion.

Enemies of democracy know something: violence gets attention. Car bombings! 9/11! Even we who have become used to bullets and bombs dropped from a mile above are aghast at a beheading. The intention is to demoralize, to intimidate, to make the heart sick.

Christ’s church knows something: the great enemy of the people of God, an angel who despises authority, is a killer. His weapon? He lies. His proper name, Satan, means the “Accuser.” He accuses us Christians day and night before God’s throne.

Certainly terror is a well-worn volume on Satan’s shelf, a familiar tool in Satan’s bag.

Where is God during all this terror? His goals are well-known: “. . . not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Is it a shock to learn that God also uses terror to accomplish his goals? Listen:

Now repentance consists properly of these two parts: one is contrition, that is, terror smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin . . . and the other is faith, which is born of the gospel, and for Christ’s sake forgives our sin, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terrors. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance. (Augsburg Confession, article 12)

God strikes my conscience with the self-awareness that sin has infected and contaminated me. Sin consigns its host to the devil. Surely to publish such a message seems a strange work for the God who loves me. And

it is! It is an alien work, yet a work that needs to be done before the Holy Spirit can do his proper work. That proper work is to win me to faith with the good news of Jesus—forgiveness free and forgiveness full.

Here’s where the famous Lutheran distinction between God’s law and God’s gospel helps us. God’s law message, called “the knowledge of sin,” is meant for the person proud in his sin. God’s gospel, however, in which the spotlight shines on Jesus, is for the person alarmed by his sin. The Commandments (“Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not lie,” “Remember the Sabbath,” and the others) actually serve God’s saving purpose. They

- shake man’s certainties,
- demolish his self-defense, and
- leave him all alone before the Holy One.

“The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror. The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around you” (Isaiah 28:19,20). God’s approach is “that every mouth may be silenced and the whole

world held accountable to God” (Romans 3:19).

God desires a change of mind in his sinful human creatures. God and Satan are at war—for glory and for citizens of their kingdoms.

God’s commandments are intended to bring terror. To weaken an enemy’s will is not necessarily a bad thing. For the boy or girl, man or woman who feels his sin and desires consolation, now comes a delightful surprise. God’s other message, the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, brings just the opposite: forgiveness, comfort, and deliverance from terror.

Contributing editor Tom Jeske is pastor at Living Hope, Omaha, Nebraska.

Is it a shock to learn that God also uses terror to accomplish his goals?



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Makeup of the invisible church

I know WELS doesn't teach that we're the only ones going to heaven. We believe the invisible church is present in all Christian denominations. However, do we teach that WELS is the only church teaching the Bible as it should be? Does this mean we have a higher percentage of "members of the invisible church"?

I'll begin by heartily seconding your opening statements. Belonging to a church body that delights in every word of Scripture sometimes leads others to caricature us as believing that we're the world's only Christians.

Yet every Sunday we confess in the creed: "I believe . . . in the Holy Christian Church." Wherever the Spirit leads souls to despair of their own righteousness and cling solely to the righteousness won by the life and death of God's eternal Son made flesh, there are believers.

That doesn't mean it's superfluous which church body we belong to. Error has a corrosive effect on faith. Therefore, the doctrinal confession of any denomination is crucially important. That's why we look for a church body willing to listen to every word from God.

To answer your question more directly, I'm convinced that our church body accurately proclaims all of Scripture's doctrines. But we aren't alone in that. Worldwide, 18 other church bodies join us in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. However, compared to thousands of denominations worldwide, our fellowship is very small.

That leads to your final question. Does faithfully teaching all of God's Word translate directly into a higher percentage of members of the invisible church?

This isn't a matter of a cold mathematical formula. We can't take a denomination's total membership, multiply by its error quotient, and then divide by two (the hypocrisy factor) to render the number of believers.

Jesus warned us that hypocrites may be found wherever the visible church is at work. Wherever Jesus plants his wheat, the devil sows his weeds

(Matthew 13:24). We aren't immune to Satan's sowing.

Indeed, there are unique temptations toward hypocrisy aimed squarely at members of orthodox churches. The devil loves to urge us toward arrogance—boasting about correct faith rather than thanking God for saving faith. Similarly, he's even happy if we give lip service to our church's orthodoxy as long as we simultaneously block those teachings from taking root in our hearts and producing fruit in our lives. Heaven isn't ours simply because Luther taught justification correctly or because WELS clings fiercely to that saving truth and to every other doctrine.

But that doesn't change the devastating effects error has wherever it's taught and defended. Believing what is false never strengthens faith. False doctrine is like gangrene (2 Timothy 2:17) or cancer. Even a little is dangerous. Left to fester unhindered, error works to destroy spiritual life.

Therefore, although we cannot draw precise mathematical conclusions, the more false doctrine a church body tolerates, the greater the danger to souls under its care. Every false doctrine is like another cloud hindering believers from being warmed by the Son's saving beams.

Pray for the spiritual welfare of souls fed a jumble of truth and error! Thank God for his grace that has given our denomination the determination to cling to all of God's truth—how amazing in a "spiritual" world that sneers at a concern for sound doctrine and calls it nothing but irritating fussiness. Most of all, pray that God's truth may continue to fill our hearts with comforting peace and our lives with abundant fruit.

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

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, jumpword "qa," for more questions and answers.



Sharing our light with the world

We were doomed until the good news saved our lives. Our lives now—individually and collectively—need to reflect the power of Christ’s good news.

David D. Sellnow

I sat on the hillside at the local high school’s track and field invitational. Behind me sat students from an area Lutheran high school, intermingled and interacting with peers from public schools. These teens were abuzz with conversation, but not about the jumps or hurdles or races taking place. They talked about body parts and bodily functions. They made coarse jokes. They engaged in crude flirtation. It seemed the church kids were doing their best to show they weren’t too religious. They were fitting in.

I’m sure those young Christians have had better days as witnesses for their Savior. I know I’ve had days when I’ve done much worse. (Lord,

remember not the sins of my youth . . . nor the malaise of my middle age!) As salt of the earth and light to the world, all of us could be much more flavorful and lots brighter.

Every day, everywhere

Jesus commissioned us: “Go into all the world and [proclaim] the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Did he mean that to apply in the bleachers at hometown sports events, in the aisles at the grocery store, on the assembly line in the factory? He certainly did not mean for faith to be hidden from view in everyday venues. People don’t “light a lamp and put it under a bowl.” Jesus said, “Let your light shine” (Matthew 5:15,16).

Often we think of evangelism and outreach as activities of the church, done with planned and programmed methods. But God urges us to see gospel proclaiming as a gospel-believer’s way of life.

When a man freed from demons begged to travel with Jesus, he was redirected: “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19). When Christians were under attack for their faith, Peter counseled them to speak of Christ nonetheless: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter

3:15). Our witnessing is not limited to special, occasional, institutional efforts. Each of us has opportunities to “proclaim [the Lord’s] salvation day after day” (Psalm 96:2).

All talk, no action?

I’ve been rather taken aback by the avalanche of emphases concerning North American outreach. I was secretary for the convention committee that brought forward that resolution. We proposed it as a simple idea: If we are not mission-minded in our own neighborhoods and towns, we are not likely to be zealous about missions on the other side of the world either.

Well, now North American outreach has been publicized dramatically. There have been press releases and video vignettes and magazine articles (like this one). There were district conventions this summer, following up on the theme. We have been talking about church work profusely. At my district’s convention, I counted 449 pages of print put in our hands. There was a book of reports, and there were reports on the reports.

We are having convocations and publications and programs to emphasize outreach, but are we doing much actual outreach? Personally, individually, are we talking about Jesus? We don’t want merely to be “playing church,” discussing amongst ourselves the importance of preaching the gospel. We need indeed to be speaking good news in Christ to one another and to all around us.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis imagined a demon’s glee at getting a Christian focused on church fervor rather than spiritual substance: “Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity, he is ours—and the more ‘religious’ (on those terms) the more securely ours.”

Balancing inreach and outreach

It is a far-reaching undertaking that Jesus has assigned to us, to “go into all the world and [proclaim] the good news to all creation.” It cannot happen if we are selfish.

Are we sometimes selfish with the gospel? Do we seek to insulate ourselves from the world more than prepare to bring testimony to the world? If you counted up all the dollars and hours we expend as congregations and area associations and as a synod, it would be interesting to see how much of our attention is given to edifying ourselves and how much is truly devoted to reaching the world.

**Jesus said,
“Let your
light shine.”**

Please don’t misunderstand—we are charged by God to be faithful in proclaiming his name in the assembly of believers and to be diligent in teaching our children the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord. I am not suggesting that we do less inreach to our own members. But if we spend 90 percent or more of our time and efforts on those who are in the church, are we giving a proper balance of our attention to those who are without hope and without God in the world? Carrying out Christ’s commission in your congregation might include taking an honest look at your budget and your schedule, and asking if you can do more to seek the salvation of those who are lost.

When the world comes to us

Sometimes the lost come looking. Some persons wander into your sanctuary on Sunday morning seeking . . . something . . . exactly what they have no way of knowing. How do we react when there are guests in

our midst? Is the world welcome within our walls?

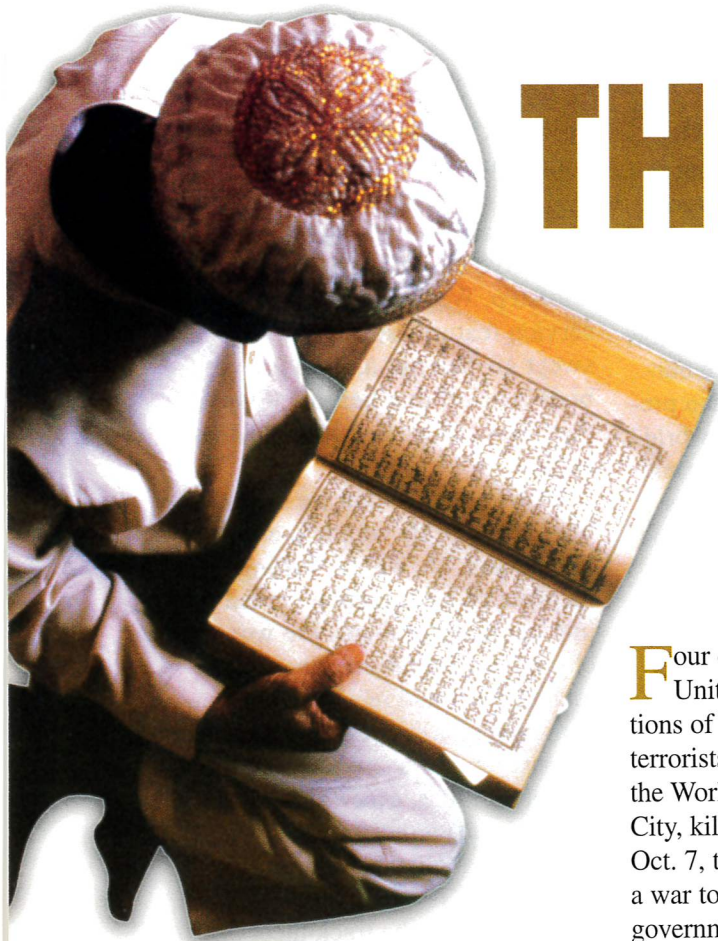
If we are ready to go with good news to all, we will also be ready to receive all who arrive on our doorstep. We will make sure every service features strong law and sweet gospel, not assuming everybody’s heard that before. (Even if they have, they need it again and again.)

We will realize that we are united by Christ, not by common ethnicity or customs. We will be willing to incorporate and accept all creation into our congregations. We won’t cluster in a corner exchanging German potato salad recipes when newcomers might have entirely different interests and tastes. We will be aware that at all times, everything we say and do sends a message to those around us about what Christ means in our lives. That is true not only on the sidelines at the track meet but especially in the hallways of the church building.

Powerful news

In the NIV translation we commonly use, Jesus said, “*Preach* the good news.” But don’t think in terms only of sermons. We are to proclaim Jesus like heralds making an announcement, like messengers broadcasting vital information that everybody needs to hear. It’s news we know, because we were personally affected. We were doomed ourselves until the good news saved our lives. Our lives now—individually and collectively—will reflect the power of Christ’s good news. We are sinners reclaimed to give praise to God. We give that praise in the way we speak on the street, as well as the way we conduct ourselves and our ministries in our congregations.

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



THE MENACE OF ISLAM

The greatest menace of Islam is the deadly threat that it poses to the eternal life of every one of its adherents.

John F. Brug

Four events in late 2001 reflect the United States' conflicting perceptions of Islam. On Sept. 11, Islamic terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, killing thousands of people. By Oct. 7, the United States had launched a war to destroy the Islamic Taliban government of Afghanistan and the al-Qaida camps that it sheltered. On Nov. 13, the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp honoring the Islamic festivals associated with Ramadan and the Hajj. On Nov. 19, President Bush hosted an Islamic festival at the White House.

The first two events suggest that Islam, or at least a portion of Islam, is a threat to the American way of life, a menace to be opposed by military force. The third and fourth events suggest that Islam is a peaceful religion that can co-exist comfortably with Christianity and the American way of life. Which perception is closer to the truth?

In this article we will analyze the chief beliefs of Islam as a religion, with little attention to Islam as a militant movement of conquest and domination. Even a brief examination of the basic beliefs and practices of Islam makes it clear that Islam and Christianity are mutually exclusive. Aside from some agreements on prin-

ciples of moral law and on some of God's attributes, Islam and Christianity are incompatible in almost every aspect of their beliefs.

God vs. Allah

Though Allah is the Arabic word for "the God" and can be used by Arabic-speaking Christians to name the true God of the Bible, it is clear that Allah and the God of Christianity are not the same God. In some ways Allah is much like the God of the Bible. He is recognized as the only God. He is the creator of the world—all knowing, all powerful. He is the judge who places the good in paradise, the wicked in hell. "Merciful" and "Forgiving" are included among his 99 names.

Overall, we could say that Islam has the best view of God outside of Scripture, but the Qur'an's description is only a weakened version of what Scripture has already revealed about God. Moreover, there is a critical, deadly omission. Allah is not a loving father. He has no son. Allah is bound by no law nor by any promise. Allah is a forgiver, but he is no Savior. He has no gospel, but only law for those who follow him.

Muslims state clearly that those who worship Jesus as God are not worshipping the same God that Mus-

The incompatibility of Islam and Christianity is illustrated by this comparison of the chief prophet of each religion.

<u>JESUS</u>	<u>MUHAMMAD</u>
God-Man	Man
Sinless	Sinner
Prince of Peace	Warrior
Spiritual kingdom ..	Earthly kingdom
Died	Died
Rose again	Remained dead
Living Savior	Dead lawgiver

lims worship. Muslims emphatically reject the deity of Christ and condemn *shirk* (associating anyone with Allah) as the most deadly sin. To worship the Trinity is the greatest of all heresies. Islam is completely incompatible with the words of Jesus, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Jesus vs. Muhammad

Muslims honor Jesus as the second greatest prophet after Muhammad. They accept Jesus’ gospel as true, but they claim that Christians corrupted the Bible so that we no longer have Jesus’ original gospel.

In some ways the Muslim Jesus is even superior to Muhammad. The Qur’an mentions Jesus nearly four times more often than it mentions Muhammad. His virgin birth was a miracle of God. Jesus was sinless as all prophets are. He did miracles as other prophets did. He will return to kill the Antichrist, kill the swine, break the cross, preach Islam, get married, and be buried with Muhammad. He has a role in the final judgment.

But the significance of all this is obliterated by two critical Islamic errors: Jesus is not God, and he did not die for the sins of the world. In fact, most Muslims believe Jesus was not crucified at all. Sura 4.157 of the Qur’an says, “Because of their saying: ‘We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah’s messenger’—they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them.” Among the Muslim alternatives to Jesus’ crucifixion include the following: Judas was crucified in his place, Simon of Cyrene was crucified for him, Jesus recovered and went to India where he died at age 120. The Jesus of Islam is a Muslim prophet, not the Son of God nor the Savior of the world.

No savior and no way of salvation

The Muslims’ watered-down

understanding of sin makes the Islamic belief in salvation by works plausible. People do not have original sin, especially no inherited guilt. Morally, a person is born as a blank book, more good than evil. What people need to be saved is moral guidance not rebirth. Sin is forgiven when evil is balanced by enough good. To help us achieve the correct balance God may even charge us less than our sins deserve and he may give us extra credit for our good (an “arithmetic of grace”). On the one hand, this makes it possible for a Muslim to say, “It feels good to know you are accomplishing your salvation.” On the other hand, a Muslim can never feel sure of his salvation, because he can never be sure that he has been credited with more good than evil.

Islam offers no savior and no salvation.

Observing the elaborate ritual of the Five Pillars of Islam (Confession, Ritual Prayer, Charity, Fasting, and Pilgrimage) provides Muslims with a system for obtaining enough credit to merit salvation. Death in jihad*, which some call a sixth pillar of Islam, is another source—for many, the best source—for obtaining merit. Islam is much like the rules and regulations of the Pharisees (though most Muslims would be horrified at the notion that their religion is an offshoot of Judaism).

Paul’s assessment of Pharisaic Judaism as found in his letters to the Romans and Galatians can be applied also to Islam: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the

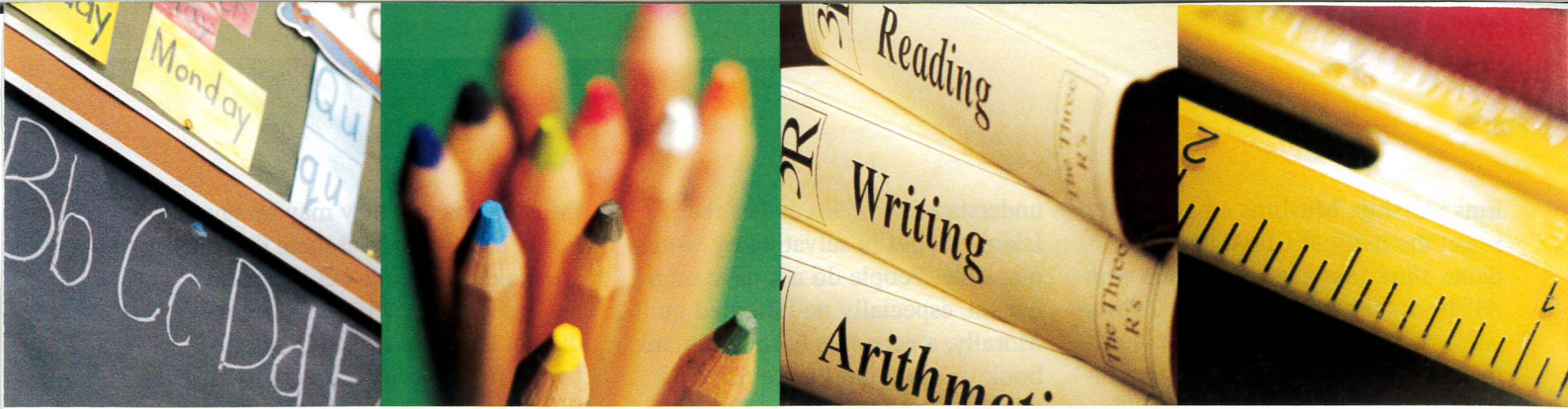
[Muslims] is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” This adaptation of Romans 10:1-4 to Islam is especially appropriate because the very name “Muslim” is a claim that the adherent of Islam is a person who submits to God’s will. Paul says that no one who rejects Christ, no one who is seeking salvation through his own works, is submitting to God. He is following his own way—a way that leads to destruction.

Not all Muslims are terrorists or defenders of terrorists. Not all Muslims condone spreading Islam by war. But Islam offers no savior and no salvation. Every Muslim is an enemy of the cross. The greatest menace of Islam is not the threat that it poses to innocent life by means of militant jihad but the deadly threat it poses to the eternal life of every one of its adherents.

John Brug, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member of Calvary, Thiensville. This summer he taught a class on Islam at the seminary.

This is the second of a three-part series. To read the first article, go to www.wels.net, jumpword “ficarchive.” Search the title, “The rising crescent.”

**Arabic for “struggle,” either personal or in armed conflict; sometimes interpreted as “holy war”*



Challenge 2010

A ministry plan for stronger WELS schools. Laura C. Warmuth

Challenge 2010 vision: If it pleases God, by 2010, stronger WELS schools will be of greater benefit to the faith, education, and lifestyle of an increasing number of students, to the health of their families, to the Great Commission ministry of their congregations, and to their communities through witness and service.

As I entered Jim Brandt's office, my eyes turned quickly to the poster on his bulletin board. Brandt is the synod's administrator for the Commission on Parish Schools. The center bubble of the poster reads, "WELS Schools: Strategies Leading to Actions." Surrounding that theme are lists under the headings "outreach," "learning," "family," "leadership," "service," "partnership," and "faith." Priorities. All lined up like canisters on a counter. All focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The poster, I learned, outlined a ministry plan called Challenge 2010. In a word, Challenge 2010 is a vision: a vision of stronger WELS schools by the year 2010. What started out as a way for two new administrators (Jason Nelson* and Jim Brandt) to focus their work for Parish Schools has turned into a well-organized plan that is inspiring and assisting WELS schools in their ministries.

Outreach

Although outreach is only one aspect of Challenge 2010, it, in

particular, has caught the attention of many congregations. Brandt explains that using WELS schools for outreach is the centerpiece of Challenge 2010, because outreach preparation includes learning, family, leadership, service, partnership, and faith. In other words, when a school is putting its best foot forward for Christ, effective outreach will result. Several tools are available through Parish Schools to help schools with their outreach.

Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA), Phoenix, Ariz., used a new Parish Schools ad campaign to bring together schools of its association and strengthen their outreach efforts. These new marketing materials can be customized for any WELS school. "Knows names of all seven continents," reads one ad picturing a grade school geography student. "Knows her purpose on this earth," it continues. Picturing a student in a high school hall, another ad reads, "Knows the caloric intake of a typical adult. . . . Knows that faith alone sustains us."

Learning

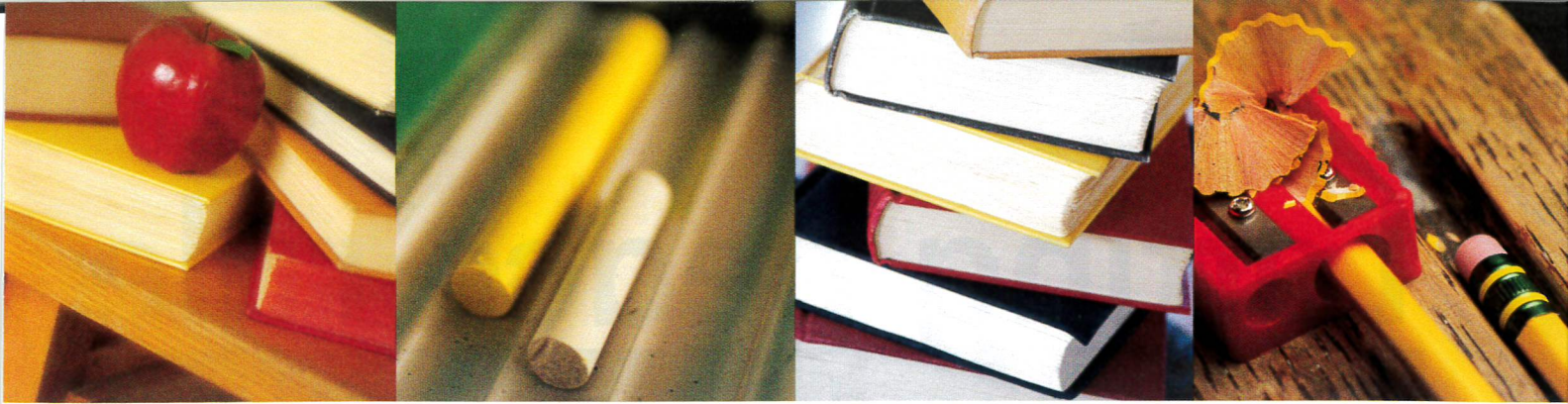
What's a school for after all? Learning. Among the goals in this area are monitoring trends in culture and education, sharing the best practices in WELS schools, and encouraging teacher licensure.

By June 2005, after field tests are completed, WELS schools will be eligible to become nationally accredited. WELS Schools Accreditation exists already as a system of school standards and is in candidacy with the National Council of Private School Accrediting Associations. Twenty-nine of our schools are participating already in field tests.

"This is a way for schools to verify quality education and remove stumbling blocks that might deter prospect parents from enrolling their children," says Brandt, "thus preserving an opportunity to share the gospel."

Family

WELS schools take their job of teaching the gospel seriously. They also emphasize that parents are the primary educators of their children.



Challenge 2010 seeks to strengthen this partnership with parents and reach out to entire families, especially families of new students. “As leaders in the Parish Services office, we do a lot of listening to teachers and schools . . .” reflects Brandt, “but we feel that parents are left out of that equation.” That is why Parish Schools is seeking to establish a national advisory panel of parents. Not limited to parents with children in WELS schools, the panel would help schools understand the perceptions and concerns of today’s parents.

Leadership

One concern in the area of school leadership is the expectations set for young principals. Almost 42 percent of WELS principals do not have previous teaching experience (compared with 12.6 percent for all private schools and .7 percent for all public schools). Still in the idea stage is a pilot project of assigning Martin Luther College graduates with leadership gifts to principal internships before they are assigned as principals.

Recently, Parish Schools identified 10 young male teachers with gifts for leadership and took them to a five-day leadership conference to help prepare them for potential service as principals.

Service

Following Jesus’ example, Challenge 2010 encourages teachers and students to have the heart of a servant. Whether it’s a teacher coaching community soccer or students volunteering at the library, service is an expression of love that everyone can understand. And it is an essential part of outreach. By serving others in Jesus’ name, schools build a positive

image in their communities as well as relationships that may lead others to Christ.

Partnership

From enhancing learning, ministering to families, and developing leadership, Parish Schools realizes that it cannot do everything alone. In its efforts to serve WELS schools, it is assisting the Commission on Youth Discipleship with the first Youth Ministry Conference this September in Naperville, Ill. It is also supporting Martin Luther College in its effort to develop a master’s program for teachers and principals.

Faith

Even with all these priorities in line, the goal of stronger WELS schools cannot be met without this final element: faith. Its rightful place is first in line because without faith in Christ, outreach loses its purpose, leaders have no vision, and teachers lack motivation. Parish Schools is developing three faculty Bible study series (one is already available) designed to draw teachers into God’s Word so they can, in turn, pass on their enthusiasm for Christ to their students.

Centered on Christ

Clearly, Parish Schools takes its mission to assist our churches’ schools very seriously. In recent years, enrollment in WELS schools, and therefore the number of schools and the need for teachers, has declined. Although the Great Commission to spread the gospel is always motivating, these trends add urgency to that call. As the fourth largest private school system in the United States, WELS is a significant group of educators with a message that most schools lack. That

message must be the appeal of our schools. That message makes our schools strong. Challenge 2010 seeks to strengthen WELS schools through that very same message: Jesus saves.

Laura Warmuth is a part-time staff writer for Forward in Christ.

**Parish Schools administrator Jason Nelson resigned for health reasons. Jim Brandt is the current administrator, and Jeff Inniger is the associate administrator.*

Tools for
strengthening
your school

- **Heart of Leadership**—A video series that teaches school leaders to recognize the needs and opportunities in their communities and helps them develop a mission and vision for their school (#38-8060).
- **Positioning Lutheran Schools for Outreach**—A step-by-step guidebook for developing a mission mindset, putting it into motion, and establishing principles and policies for your school (#38-8061).
- **They Called Him Teacher**—A faculty Bible study series that uses Jesus’ ministry as an example to inspire WELS teachers (#38-8063).

Order at www.shopwels.net or by calling 1-800-662-6022.

For more information, check out the Parish Schools Web site,
www.wels.net/cps.

Letting peace rule



God wants us to make peace a priority, and he applauds us when we let his peace drive out anything that upsets it.

Donald W. Patterson

There once was a Little League baseball game that had no peace. There were no fights on the field and no animosity between the coaches. Most of the fans were supportive to the kids coming out of both dugouts. But there still was no peace.

You see, one father couldn't stop yelling at everyone on the field. When his team was up to bat he would tell every player how and when to swing. He yelled at the coach on third because he thought the coach had missed a chance to send a runner home. On almost every pitch he would shout something at the umpire. Everyone was annoyed with him. After four guel-

ing innings, he was finally stopped when he loudly cursed the umpire for calling a third strike on his son. The umpire motioned for him to leave the park.

As the man started for the parking lot, the entire crowd broke out in spontaneous applause. They were so happy that the umpire had restored the peace.



The importance of letting peace rule

We hire umpires to keep the peace in and around our baseball diamonds. When they do their job, we are thankful and content.

Did you know that Jesus has given us an umpire like that for our souls?

When he brought salvation to us, he brought an umpire and hired him to keep our hearts safe. That umpire is peace. When we were brought to faith, we received peace with God and peace in our lives. Peace, that calm assurance that everything is okay right now and that everything is going to be okay in the future, is a fruit that the Holy Spirit gives us to enjoy. As a fruit for the soul, it tastes good and refreshes us. When we don't have it we miss it and want it back. That's why the apostle Paul wrote, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace" (Colossians 3:15).

When Paul says, "Let peace rule," he means "Let it be the umpire in your soul." But how does a Christian let peace be the umpire in the soul? The Christian is supposed to stay in the peace that Jesus has given him. If something is upsetting that peace, he has to address it. When he addresses it in a timely way, he experiences the happiness and contentment that God intended him to have. The peace of God is the umpire. Those things that upset Christian peace have to head for the parking lot.



How to let peace rule

Sometimes a family member keeps everyone in constant turmoil because she cuts down and criticizes everyone else. When you realize that her peace of knowing she is a loved child of God is slipping away, you will have to speak to her to restore the peace. The umpire (peace) forces someone to move.

Sometimes peace in the heart makes one be silent. Let's say your son is doing his best to please you by cleaning the garage as you had asked. After four hours he announces that he is done. When you inspect the garage you see several things he missed. You still have a dirty garage, but you also have a son with a peaceful heart. Do you correct him and crush his spirit about what he has done? Probably not. Sometimes it is better to let him have the peace of your gracious approval than to have the turmoil of doubt about your acceptance. Let peace rule, and when he's heading down the street with his friends, finish the garage with a thankful heart that he did his best. Next time clean the garage with him and show by example what you were looking for. Silently you will lead him in the right direction.

When you let peace rule, sometimes it will make you leave. Maybe you had a difficult experience with your pastor. You were hurt by the way he handled or didn't handle you. When you brought it to his attention,

he apologized. You forgave him too. In the days that followed you tried to keep peaceful thoughts about the situation, but each time you went to church you could not concentrate. There was no more to be said, but there was still no peace. That might be the time to talk to your pastor about finding another church in our fellowship where you can let peace rule in your heart. Never leave without speaking to him and never leave the church of your beliefs, but do consider that peace must rule. God said so. Sometimes the key to finding peace while staying is discovered when we consider leaving—but don't.

When Paul says, "Let peace rule," he means "Let it be the umpire in your soul."

Maybe my church is tackling a big issue regarding its ministry. People in leadership are putting in a lot of time and work trying to solve whatever challenge is before them. As they work toward a solution, they head in a direction in which I honestly disagree. What do I do? I ask myself, "Is there a way I can keep peace in my heart and peace with the leaders and still talk to them about my feelings?" In Christ there is a way. I just have to find it, because I am committed to letting peace rule our hearts instead of just getting my way. I don't want to get my way in church business while destroying the peace in church relationships. After all, the church is Jesus' body. Who am I to dismember it over matters of Christian liberty?

Letting peace rule in our hearts will also lead us to repentance. When we sin, we have guilt. If we do not repent for that sin, the Holy Spirit will gently remind us that it is still there to be dealt with. Our peace is upset by the knowledge of sin in our lives. We need to let peace rule and confess it right away. We can't wait like King David did after sinning with Bathsheba. Otherwise, our hardened hearts could cause several casualties before we finally seek the peace of forgiveness in Christ.

When we let peace rule, it also leads us to forgive others. Bitterness over being hurt leaves us in constant turmoil. There is no peace. Jesus wants us to run to him in prayer and beg for his forgiveness to flow through our hearts to others. He also wants us to meditate on his forgiveness so he can teach us how to forgive. When we let peace rule, then peace will not let unforgiving thoughts sit in the grandstands of our hearts and heckle those who have hurt us. He sends those thoughts away and replaces them with Christ's peace.

Remember how the crowd applauded the umpire that day he sent the cantankerous father to the parking lot? They applauded him for making peace a priority. God wants us to make peace a priority too, and he applauds us when we take him at his word and let his peace drive out anything that upsets it. We were called to peace. Let the peace of Christ rule!

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

This is the third of a four-part series on "Peace through Jesus." To read the first two articles, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "ficarchive," and search by the keyword phrase "peace through Jesus."

WHATEVER

My disabling attitude

I treated church and my spirituality as just another event to schedule into my student planner. But I'm fortunate to be able to attend church and praise God with such ease.

Stephanie L. Woldt

On Wednesday night, the last place I wanted to be was in church. After a long day at school taking multiple tests and running miles upon miles at cross-country practice, I just wanted to go home. However, ever since I started working Sunday mornings, I promised my mom that I would attend church on a weeknight.

As I was passing by the religion team room at school, I noticed the sign in the window that read, "Unable to attend church this Sunday?" Sure enough, a WELS church in a neighboring community had a Wednesday night service at 6:30 P.M. I decided to go, simply because I wanted to prove to my mom that I could handle a job, school, and sports while still making time for church.

I was almost to the church when I noticed a man in a wheelchair slowly moving down the sidewalk. It was awfully cold outside for him to be out, but I did not give it much thought.

As I reluctantly entered the church and took a seat in the back pew (like any normal WELS member), I looked at my watch. I silently moaned when I saw that the communion candles were lit. I estimated that I would be home in an hour and a half, taking into account communion and the drive home. It would be a challenge for me to eat supper, do my homework, watch TV, and still get to bed at a decent time. Plus, I still had to start my Honors English assignment! My day could not have gotten much worse.

Soon, however, my negative attitude began to change. The same physically challenged man that I had seen on my way to church had just wheeled his way to the end of my pew. It was such a struggle for

him to even reach a hymnal. As I rolled my eyes when the pastor motioned for the congregation to rise, he remained in his wheelchair. What he would have given to stand up just once! As I quickly went to communion hoping no one noticed that I was underdressed, he inched his way up to the front of the church.

I felt guilty for being so shallow. I realized that I took nearly everything in my life for granted, physically and spiritually. I could walk and run and never considered what my life would be like if I could not. I treated church and my spirituality as a burden and just another event to schedule into my student planner. I was ignorant to the fact that I was fortunate to be able to attend church and praise God with such ease.

I didn't even know who this man was. He may not have been permanently handicapped. Perhaps he was only recovering from knee surgery. But the lesson that he taught me would have been the same. As I reached to help him put away his hymnal, he whispered, "Thanks." I realized that I should have been thanking him for making me realize how disabling my attitude was.

Stephanie Woldt, a member at Word of Life, Appleton, Wisconsin, graduated from Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, and is now a freshman at Marquette University, Milwaukee.

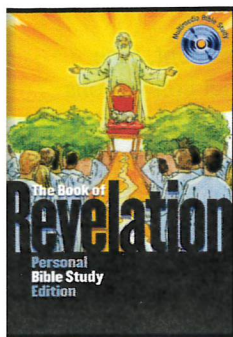


commitment

Booknook

A look at new books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit www.nph.net or call 800-662-6022. Note: These reviews are not meant to represent the opinions of WELS or Forward in Christ.

Individual Bible study CD-ROM



Northwestern Publishing House has released a new CD-ROM titled *The Book of Revelation, Personal Bible Study Edition*. It is a multimedia Bible study designed for individual study at home.

The CD-ROM includes 50 original illustrations, explanations, outlines, and interactive elements. It also gives explanations and answers to questions when appropriate.

The CD-ROM is a good learning tool because it allows the user to see, hear, and interact with the lesson, which involves multiple senses and leads to better retention. A professional reads each section with emphasis and vocal variety. I found it helpful to follow along in my Bible. It would have been

nice to have the text on the screen. You can move at your own pace and repeat sections where there may be some confusion. The pictures and illustrations are of high, professional quality.

The interactive elements consist of multiple choices, clicking and dragging a word to the right sentence, and following a ball or arrow. When the arrow stops at an illustration an explanation box pops up.

The main menu consists of icons without chapter numbers. When you stop after completing a section, it's best to write down the next icon to press to avoid confusion when you resume.

This CD-ROM should be a welcome addition to the library of any lifelong Bible student who wants to grow in the Word.

Herman Harstad

Woodlawn, West Allis, Wisconsin

Group Bible study CD-ROM

The Book of Revelation, Group Bible Study Edition CD-ROM contains four user files:

- A file with interactive graphic features that highlight the main points of each chapter.
- A leader's guide in Adobe Acrobat format that explains how to use the computer graphics as a learning aid.
- The People's Bible study guide written by Wayne Mueller, saved as both an Adobe Acrobat file and a rich text file. These guides don't directly correspond with the other material, but they are provided for the teacher to use or adapt as additional study aids.

All illustrations are high quality, in the same style used for NPH's *God's Promise* CD-ROM. The unique fea-

ture of using pictures to outline the book will help students remember the main points. The graphics and corresponding questions help visualize and enhance understanding of difficult material. These are learning aids and do not replace the need for the teacher and students to prepare for class. The emphasis still remains on the study of the biblical text.

The leader's guide is very important. The interactive features use a combination of mouse clicks and numbers on the keyboard. Without the leader's guide, teachers would find it difficult to discover all the valuable learning aids. Once you become accustomed to navigating through the program, however, it becomes much easier.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

OCTOBER 2004

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Psalm 119:1-24 | 18. 2 Chronicles 1, 2 |
| 2. Ps. 119:25-48 | 19. 2 Chron. 3:1-5:1 |
| 3. Ps. 119:49-80 | 20. 2 Chron. 5:2- |
| 4. Ps. 119:81-104 | 6:11 |
| 5. Ps. 119:105-128 | 21. 2 Chron. 6:12-42 |
| 6. Ps. 119:129-152 | 22. 2 Chron. 7, 8 |
| 7. Ps. 119:153-176 | 23. 2 Chron. 9, 10 |
| 8. Ps. 120, 121 | 24. 2 Chron. 11, 12 |
| 9. Ps. 122, 123 | 25. 2 Chron. 13, 14 |
| 10. Ps. 124-126 | 26. 2 Chron. 15, 16 |
| 11. Ps. 127-129 | 27. 2 Chron. 17, 18 |
| 12. Ps. 130, 131 | 28. 2 Chron. 19, 20 |
| 13. Ps. 132 | 29. 2 Chron. 21:1- |
| 14. Ps. 133, 134 | 22:9 |
| 15. Ps. 135 | 30. 2 Chron. 22:10- |
| 16. Ps. 136 | 23:21 |
| 17. Ps. 137, 138 | 31. 2 Chron. 24 |

People will appreciate this product to help them learn more about this often misunderstood portion of God's Word.

Benjamin Wessel
Woodlawn, West Allis, Wisconsin

Editor's notes: The minimum Windows system requirements for the Revelation CD-ROM include: Windows 98 or higher, Pentium 266 or better, 64 MB of RAM, 8x CD-ROM or faster, 20 MB of free hard drive space, and 1024 x 768 resolution monitor. Each Revelation CD-ROM costs \$39.99.

NPH is offering a new traditional children's Christmas service, God's Love in the Manger, by Paul Huebner. The \$49.99 service kit includes copy masters of the service; a leader's guide that includes a service banner design and song accompaniments; a CD with vocal and accompaniment tracks, text files of the service, MIDI files of song accompaniments, and graphic files of the service logo and banner design; and a sample bulletin cover.

2004 DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

District convention news

Pastors, teachers, and laypeople in each of the 12 districts of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod met in June to worship and study God's Word, discuss district and synod issues, and enjoy time with fellow Christians. The synod's four-year North American Outreach plan was presented and endorsed at these district conventions.

Two committees that were created at the 2003 synod convention, the Prep School Study Committee-2 and the Staff Ministry Study Committee, presented their reports (see p. 22). Delegates had the opportunity to respond to these reports and ask questions of the committees' members.

The Committee on Constitutional Matters proposed a change in election procedure for the synod's president, vice presidents, and secretary (see p. 23). The committee sought feedback about the proposal from the district conventions so that a final proposal can be made at the 2005 synod convention.

Delegates also elected district officers. Continue reading to find out who is representing you during the next two years.



Courtney Livingston, a member of St. Martin, Watertown, S.D., appeared at the Dakota-Montana District Convention dressed as the Reformation's Frederick the Wise. Livingston invited delegates to "Marty's Party," an event hosted by St. Martin to help community members get to know more about the congregation and what Lutherans believe.

Dakota-Montana

President: Peter Naumann

First Vice President: Douglas Free

Second Vice President:

Jonathan Schultz

Secretary: Stephen Geiger

Highlight: Paul Wendland, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, presented "The Changing Face of the Field Before Us and the Mission/Ministry Needs of the Church." The essay read, in part: "I do believe that God always blesses the church in any particular area with the people and gifts he needs to get his job done. And I believe that when God's people get together, remember who they are in Christ, consider the reason why they've existed, and reflect upon the situation into which God has placed them, they themselves will be able to figure things out just fine. The love of Christ will lead them."

Arizona-California

President: Paul Janke

First Vice President: Steve Degner

Second Vice President: Gene Sims

Secretary: Kenneth Pasch

Highlights:

- The convention began with a church service celebrating the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Arizona-California District.
- The four non-Tucson WELS congregations near Tucson asked and received permission to form a new circuit named "Chiricahua Circuit."

Michigan

President: John Seifert

First Vice President: Paul Naumann

Second Vice President: Carl Otto

Secretary: James Seelow

Highlights:

- Delegates approved adopting a new mission, Crown of Life, Cadillac, Mich., as a districtwide project. The mission will be supported by congregational offerings throughout the district.
- Delegates requested a change to the synodical bylaws to require districts to have annual conventions, rather than biannual conventions. Delegates believe that this will ensure broad, timely, grassroot participation in issues and decisions.

Minnesota

President: Larry Cross

First Vice President: Charles Degner

Second Vice President: Joel Luetke

Secretary: Michael Hatzung

Highlights:

- Eric Raasch presented information on the district's newest mission, which is in Spirit Lake, Iowa. The

story of the congregation's progress and growth inspired delegates. This mission is a daughter of Shepherd of the Lakes, Fairmont, Minn.

- Pastors Loren Steele and Jay Lo encouraged delegates to reach out to those around them with the gospel message, even to people of cultures with which delegates may not be familiar.

North Atlantic

President: Joel Petermann

First Vice President: Donald Tollefson

Second Vice President: Kevin Schultz

Secretary: Jeff Wegner



The North Atlantic's retiring district president, Walter Beckmann (left), shares information with the newly-elected district president, Joel Petermann. Petermann has served St. Paul, Amherst, N.H., since 1996.

Highlights:

- Walter Beckmann announced his retirement after 21 years of service as the district's president. Beckmann is the only president the North Atlantic District has ever had. He encouraged the district to continue to seek a vari-

ety of ways for creative outreach in keeping with the synod's emphasis on North American outreach.

- A five-part history of the North Atlantic District was presented to commemorate 40 years of outreach in this area.

Northern Wisconsin

President: Douglas Engelbrecht

First Vice President: David Sternberg

Second Vice President: Ross Henzi

Secretary: Ronald Szep

Highlights:

- Word of Life, Appleton, Wis., was accepted into district membership.
- Delegates voted to support a Mission Partners project from within the district with excess district funds. The Hmong training program in Appleton, Wis., was the project chosen for 2004.

Nebraska

President: Joel Frank

First Vice President: Philip Zarlring

Second Vice President: Mark Voss

Secretary: Gary Bode

Highlights:

- The convention celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Nebraska District.
- Synod First Vice President Wayne Mueller led delegates in worship and Bible study under the convention theme, "Great Expectations for Your Congregation."

Pacific Northwest

President: Theodore Lambert

First Vice President: Thomas Unke

Second Vice President: Jon Buchholz

Secretary: Scott Mews

Highlights:

- Randy Hunter, pastor at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., led the convention in three sessions devoted to the subject "Diverse Families, One Ministry." He challenged delegates to consider how their congregations serve the assortment of people and situations that make up congregational life today and then to assess how their congregations meet the biblical goals of Christ's mission.
- The district is evenly divided between those who favor maintaining both prep schools as they are and those who endorse closing one prep school

or changing it to some form of an area Lutheran high school.

South Atlantic

President: John Guse

First Vice President: David Priebe

Second Vice President: Larry Zahn

Secretary: Robert Krueger



The South Atlantic District's officers (from left): Robert Krueger, Larry Zahn, Dave Priebe, and John Guse.

Highlights:

- Victory, Jacksonville, Fla., and Open Bible, The Villages, Fla., were received into voting membership of WELS.
- Missionary Pieter Reid described the Lord's work in Indonesia. Despite political uncertainties in this country, God has provided firm footing for his Word to go forward in Indonesia.

South Central

President: Vilas Glaeske

First Vice President: Donald Patterson

Second Vice President: Mark Bitter

Secretary: Christopher Goelzer

Highlights:

- Delegates adopted the Synodical Council's six-year ministry plan that includes a 6.8% budget increase. They encouraged the Conference of Presidents to "develop an adequate plan to implement and execute the funding of the 2005-2011 ministry plan" and to give "ongoing quarterly reports to the synod regarding the progress of this ministry plan and its funding."
- In the conclusion of his report, District President Vilas Glaeske said, "There are those who would say that [carrying out an ambitious ministry plan to preach the gospel] boils down to money. If money is given we can do the work. If money is not

given we can't keep doing even what we have been doing. . . . I am convinced the problem is indifference. Too many of us sit back and say that it is someone else's responsibility. No! Each of us needs to say, 'It is my responsibility. I need to be in

Bible class regularly, and I need to encourage my fellow members to do the same.'"

Southeastern Wisconsin

President: David Rutschow

First Vice President:

James Huebner

Second Vice President:

David Kolander

Secretary: Robert Pasbrig

Highlights:

- Emmaus, Chicago, Ill., was welcomed into the district. This former Evangelical

Lutheran Synod congregation is now served by WELS pastor Ted Wendt.

- Delegates supported forwarding a sixth option to the Prep School Study Committee-2 to consider. This option involves maintaining Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., and developing a hybrid area Lutheran high school system including Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich. These hybrid schools would take on an additional mission and purpose for ministerial education. The committee also suggested that an Endowment Funds Director develop funding programs to support Luther Preparatory School and the hybrid area Lutheran high school system.

Western Wisconsin

President: Herb Prahl

First Vice President: Mark Lindner

Second Vice President: Steven Staude

Secretary: Mark Johnston

Highlight: Mission Counselor Wayne

Schulz gave the keynote address, "Every Congregation a Mission." He stressed a shift in mindset from "doing church" to "being the church." Each circuit was asked to appoint a person to promote mission-focused discussions throughout the year to encourage members and instill a sense of accountability for reaching out to North America.

Prep School Study Committee-2 presents initial report



The Prep School Study Committee-2 presented its initial findings to the district conventions this past June.

The 2003 synod convention authorized this 15-person committee. The committee's goal is "to evaluate the work of the system in relation to the continuing purpose and objectives (a) of the synod, (b) of the Ministerial Education area of ministry, and (c) of the two preparatory schools themselves" (*Proceedings*, 2003, pp. 54, 55).

In its report, the committee shared statistics it had gathered and trends it had noticed about the synod's schools.

It also shared five possible options to consider concerning the two WELS prep schools—Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich. These options include

- funding two existing prep schools (status quo);

- funding one prep school but not the other;
 - funding one prep school, and changing one or more area Lutheran high schools into hybrid schools (taking on extra mission and purpose for ministerial education);
 - funding one prep school and changing the other prep school into a hybrid (taking on a broader purpose besides ministerial education); or
 - keeping the two existing prep schools but decreasing subsidy and increasing designated support.
- The report highlighted two challenges facing the committee:

- Will synodical offerings increase enough to keep both schools open and well funded? And, if resources are available, what is the best use of these resources?
- If funding were discontinued for one prep school, would sufficient numbers of students be recruited from other sources?

The committee surveyed district convention delegates to learn their thoughts and opinions. A final report and recommendations will go to the Board for Ministerial Education in early 2005 and then to the synod convention in the summer of 2005.

The first Prep School Study Commission was formed in 1987. Its report to the 1989 synod convention called for preserving the prep school system in some form, modifying the current system by amalgamating Martin Luther Prep School and Northwestern Preparatory School, and working to recruit more called worker prospects from our area Lutheran high schools.

To read the supplemental report that the Prep School Study Committee-2 gave to the district conventions, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "rttd."

Staff ministry program reinstated



The Board for Ministerial Education presented the final report of the Staff Ministry Study Committee, which included the recommendation to reinstate the undergraduate staff ministry program at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

The 2003 synod convention authorized a committee to study the program and report about its viability after a moratorium had been placed on admitting new students to the undergraduate staff ministry program during the 2003-04 school year. The moratorium was placed because of budget pressures and the concern that graduates wouldn't be assigned.

After research on the program, the Staff Ministry Study Committee recommended to the Conference of Presidents and the Board for Ministerial Education

that the undergraduate staff ministry program be resumed. In April, the Board for Ministerial Education voted to reinstate the program.

The committee's 100-page report includes results from more than 450 surveys sent to pastors, laypeople, and staff ministers. It also includes reports on financial and placement considerations and information from a panel discussion with current staff ministry students.

Besides recommending that the moratorium be lifted, the committee urged "that further action be taken to promote and strengthen this vital gospel ministry." This includes sharing information about working models in congregations that successfully use staff ministers. The committee also encouraged further study of a number of issues, including the role of female staff minis-

ters, congregations' attitudes about staff ministry, and the certification of staff ministers.

"We've only scratched the surface in using staff ministers in our congregations," says Dr. David Wendler, vice president for academic affairs at Martin Luther College. "With our emphasis on North American outreach, staff ministry is an area that can have a major role in a congregation's evangelism and outreach efforts, whether it's relieving the pastor of some work or being the main focus of the staff minister's work."

New students are being accepted into the staff ministry program for the 2005-06 school year. Slight changes are being made in the curriculum in response to survey results.

To read the entire report of the Staff Ministry Study Committee, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "adhoc."

Election process studied

2004 DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

The Committee on Constitutional Matters proposed bylaw revisions to the district conventions for the process of electing the synod's four executive officers.

A memorial to the 2003 synod convention that suggested changes to the process prompted 2003 convention delegates to ask the committee to study how the synod president, two vice presidents, and secretary are nominated.

The committee offered changes to the process, including that

- the synod Nominating Committee will nominate candidates for these offices. The Nominating Committee will solicit suggestions of names to consider from synod members. (At the convention, delegates can also add names to the ballot of people willing to serve.)
- the names of these candidates will be published in *Forward in Christ* before the convention.

Currently delegates nominate people for the different offices during the synod

convention, and those with the most votes become candidates.

These changes seek to answer several expressed concerns about the election process, including that

- delegates (half of whom are laypeople) do not have enough information about the candidates to make informed decisions.
- nominees do not have enough time to consider the call. Since this election involves a divine call, currently nominees are contacted before their name is put on the ballot to determine if they will accept the call if elected. They have only a short amount of time to decide.
- the present system is rushed.

Delegates at the Dakota-Montana district convention rejected the proposal because of another concern. "We felt at this point that this offering from the committee didn't give us enough safeguard against electioneering," says Pastor David Reichel, chairman of the Dakota-Montana district committee studying the proposal.

Pastor Robert Pasbrig, chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Matters, agrees that campaigning for or against candidates is an issue.

"We do need to deal with the overwhelming fear of electioneering," says Pasbrig. "But we need to handle it as Christian brothers. We need to discourage electioneering rather than trying to take away the temptation but still needing to deal with all the other problems."

The Committee on Constitutional Matters is considering reactions from the districts before preparing its final report. So far, six districts have reacted favorably, and one district negatively. The final report will be voted on at the 2005 synod convention and, if passed, will change the election process for the 2007 synod convention.

To read the Committee on Constitutional Matters' report, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "rttd," and look in the *Administrative Services report*. You will also find a link there to the *WELS Constitution* (see Section 2.80, p. 13 for current election procedures).

Six-year synod ministry plan announced

2004 DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

The Synodical Council's report to the districts included a chart demonstrating WELS leaders' plan to increase the budget by 6.8 percent each year for the next six years and to apply the new resources directly to the work of sharing the gospel. The chart covers fiscal years July 1, 2005-June 30, 2011. It calls for 3.8 percent ministry growth beyond the 3 percent average cost of living increase.

Although this type of increase may be considered aggressive, leaders are confident that it is also attainable. "As soldiers of the cross, we must not shy away from efforts that demand sacrifice," says Synod First Vice President Wayne Mueller. "As

we view this plan, as in all other things, we must look to God. Men can only propose. God will dispose according to his power and love."

The plan also details what each area of ministry will focus on in the next six years:

- World Missions: Indigenization, cross-cultural efforts, and Multi-Language Publications production.
- Home Missions: A strong emphasis on partnering with existing congregations for mission openings and cross-cultural work.
- Parish Services: Member retention, school outreach, and personal witnessing.
- Ministerial Education: Teacher sabbaticals including urban settings, Pastoral Studies Institute expansion, student field experi-

ence including urban settings, and alternate forms of service.

- Administration: Continued emphasis on spiritual growth, stewardship education, and response; establishment of endowments for missions and ministerial education; and improved communications and fiscal and technology management.

Both the financial and the ministry components begin with a North American outreach emphasis and move increasingly to global outreach as the plan progresses.

For more information, view the chart online at www.wels.net, jumpword "rttd." Click on "Six-year ministry plan."

WELS' reality TV

"These are real-life stories in a form people can watch and learn from," says *Walk In My World's* producer, Joel Hochmuth.

WELS' newest video news magazine, *Walk In My World*, is now available. The format is fresh, contemporary, and professional. Through a series of mini-documentaries, WELS teens and their parents discuss issues that they've confronted and how they've dealt with those issues. The first video features four 10- to 15-minute segments: "Living for God in an Ungodly World," "Dealing with Divorce," "Following God's Plan with the Opposite Sex," and "Coping When Trouble Hits Close to Home." Teens and their parents share their stories in an honest, straightforward way.

"I think it's important that we start a dialogue to break the ice on issues that many Christians are dealing with but not talking about," explains Hochmuth.

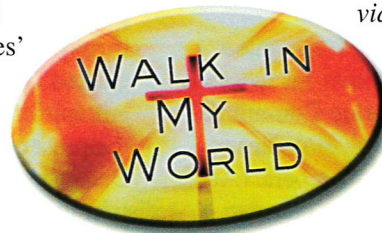
Ashley Spaude, a Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School student, watched *Walk In My World* at school. She notes, "It was a great experience to relate to other teens' problems and how they deal with them, how they can use their faith in God to help them through things."

The Commission on Youth Discipleship and WELS Communication Services' collaboration, along with a grant from the Publication Coordinating Commission, made the video and

its accompanying Bible study materials possible. A second grant has led the Commission on Youth Discipleship to begin planning the next video in this series. Each *Walk In My World* video segment is designed to be part of an hour-long Bible study used in teen Bible classes, Lutheran high school classes, family Bible studies, and for community outreach.

To order, contact Northwestern Publishing House, 800-662-6022; www.shopwels.net (order #38-3089).

Each package comes with a video, CD-ROM, and binder containing student lessons and a leader's guide.



In the vanguard for WELS schools

If you attended any parades this summer you may have seen Jeff Inniger trekking along beside the Lutheran Vanguard, supporting this WELS high school marching band. Now, Inniger is working in the "vanguard" for Lutheran schools: the Commission on Parish Schools.

As the new associate administrator for Parish Schools, Inniger serves alongside Jim Brandt, who was called as the administrator when Jason Nelson resigned for health reasons.

Coming from St. Paul, Appleton, Wis., Inniger served there as principal for 11 years. He graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College in 1978 and served his first 11 years as fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at St. John, Caledonia, Minn. He also served as principal and upper-grades teacher at St. Paul, St. James, Minn., for four years.

Inniger and his family moved to New Berlin, Wis., this past June. His wife, Tracey, had been teaching at Mt. Olive in Appleton. Their son, Ben, attends Bethany Lutheran College. Their daughter, Becky, recently graduated from Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton.

"I'm thrilled that the Lord led me to accept this position," says Inniger,

"and I'm very excited to serve the church in this way." Although he will miss the daily contact with students, he is looking forward to rubbing shoulders with many teachers. Inniger's first goal is to "learn the ropes as soon as possible so I can assist our schools in developing plans for improvement." He will be taking the lead in developing the accreditation process for schools, which is one priority of Parish Schools' Challenge 2010 program to build stronger WELS schools.

Inniger's previous experiences in the classroom and the principal's chair have given him valuable insights into the challenges WELS schools face. He is eager to share the knowledge that he's been blessed with during his ministry and excited for God to develop his talents as an administrator.



Jeff Inniger and his wife, Tracey; son, Ben; and daughter, Becky.

Using technology to communicate

When I became pastor of St. Paul, Arlington, Minn., in 1998, I couldn't help but notice 10-year-old Jennifer Jahr.

Jennifer was diagnosed at birth with a severe case of cerebral palsy. Her mother, Jodi, told me that the doctors have always encouraged her with the news that what Jennifer was incapable of physically, she would be able to compensate for intellectually. As I have gotten to know Jennifer, I believe this to be true even though Jennifer is unable to communicate in a conventional manner.

I began Jennifer's confirmation instruction in October 2000. We would meet at her home where I would read through the questions and discuss applications with rhetorical questions.

About halfway through the course I began showing the lessons on a wall using a projector and a laptop with PowerPoint. Through eye contact and other responses on Jennifer's part, I was pretty sure she was comprehending what I was sharing even though I had no concrete way of knowing for sure. Jodi and I talked about incorporating a tool called a DynaVox that Jennifer used in the public school system, but it seemed that every idea was thwarted by some glitch in technology.

I continued meeting with Jennifer until July 2003. By that time we had covered the entire catechism.

After completing the classes, I hoped to incorporate the features of the DynaVox with my computer and a PowerPoint presentation to demonstrate to the congregation that Jennifer was ready for confirmation. A congregation member programmed portions of Luther's Catechism into the DynaVox so Jennifer could select answers to specific questions.

As things turned out, just when we had a presentation worked out, the DynaVox went kaput. Not, however, before questions we had written up for the "public" examination had been asked and recorded on videotape. We showed a segment of the video to our elders, who recommended that Jennifer be confirmed. On March 28, we showed a segment to the congregation. Then, Jennifer was confirmed and received her first communion.

Jennifer's circumstances and limited abilities challenged us, but through persistence and God's grace, we had a special service that caused more than a few to express their joy with tears.

Bruce Hanneman

For more on how Jennifer uses the DynaVox, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "dynavox."



Jennifer Jahr and her pastor, Bruce Hanneman, on her confirmation day.

Looking back

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

From the Feb. 19, 1978, issue—

First WELS Lutheran high school west of the Missouri River

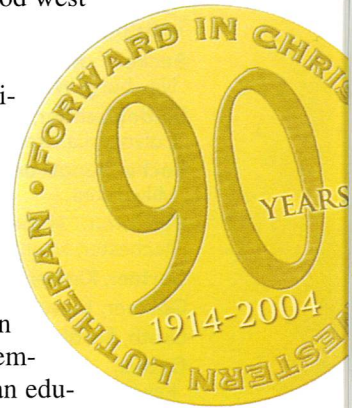
"The first area Lutheran high school of the Wisconsin Synod west of the Missouri River opened in September at Garden Grove, California. The Reverend Milton Burk serves as principal and 10 students are enrolled in its ninth grade.

"With the opening of California Lutheran High School on September 11, 1977, Christian education on the secondary level became a blessed reality in California. Though extending over 1,200 miles, individuals and congregations scattered throughout California have given their support to this venture.

"The temporary facilities of the California Lutheran High School are located on the property of King of Kings Lutheran Church in Garden Grove. The portable classroom unit provides two classrooms and an office. Presently land search is underway in the Corona area (20 miles south of Ontario and 30 miles east of Garden Grove).

"The Reverend Mr. Burk not only serves as principal but is also the only full-time faculty member. . . . Plans for the '78 school year include the calling of additional faculty and the addition of the tenth grade. . . ."

FYI: In the 2003-04 school year, eight full-time faculty members, two tutors, and two part-time instructors taught 128 students. Now located in Wildomar, Calif., California Lutheran High School is one of six WELS area Lutheran high schools west of the Missouri River.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Beckmann, Walter F., to retirement
 Bruemmer, Darryl G., to retirement
 Herman, Edgar M., to retirement
 Humann, James E., to retirement
 Johnston, Mark J., to Malawi mission
 Kaiser, Howard W., to retirement
 Kelm, Paul E., to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.
 Nitz, Marcus C., to retirement
 Schroeder, Lynn A., to retirement

Teachers

Becker, Rebekah J., to St. John, Newburg, Wis.
 Biedenbender, Jonathan, to Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, Wis.
 Boche, Jonathan, to Hope High School, Milwaukee
 Bourman, Hope R., to Resurrection, Rochester, Minn.
 Gartner, Kimberly S., to Grace, Lowell, Ark.
 Gartner, Steven J., to Grace, Lowell, Ark.
 Groth, Sarah A., to St. John, Maribel, Wis.
 Gudex, Melissa J., to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
 Handy, Kristian A., to First, La Crosse, Wis.
 Hassler, Karl D., to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
 Horn, Katherine L., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee
 Hussman, Renee A., to Fairview, Milwaukee
 Jeske, Yvonne M., to retirement
 Kampman, Kristin M., to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
 Klug, Kirstie D., to Zion, Columbus, Wis.
 Koester, Michael J., to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
 Kohls, Sarah S., to Prairie, Gibbon, Minn.
 Leisering, Jason, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee
 Loersch, Patricia E., to retirement
 Mays, Darlene R., to retirement
 Meyer, Kristal A., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
 Parks, Candy L., to St. Matthew, Marathon, Wis.
 Punzel, Janelle M., to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
 Schmidt, Carol A., to Lord of Life, Thornton, Colo.
 Seelow, Patricia J., to Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich.
 Snyder, Jenell D., to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
 Umphrey, Miranda, to Mt. Olive, Mankato, Minn.
 Vanderheyden, Patricia, to St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.
 Voigt, Melissa, to Saint Peter, Saint Peter, Minn.
 Wittig, Debbie A., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.
 Woldt, Jon D., to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
 Zibrowski, Craig S., to Mt. Olive, Mankato, Minn.

ANNIVERSARIES

Beaverton, Mich.—Good Shepherd (25). Sept. 12. Service, 3 P.M. Meal to follow. Chad Wright, pastorwright@ejourney.com.
 Grover, S.D.—Emmanuel (120). Sept. 12. Service, 10:30 A.M. Catered meal to follow. 605-532-5241.
 Freeland, Mich.—St. Matthew (125). Sept. 12. Service, 9 A.M. 989-695-9758.
 Watertown, Wis.—St. Mark (150). Sept. 18. Service, 6 P.M. Sept. 19. Services, 7:30, 9, & 10:45 A.M. Sept. 19. Archeology speaker. Service, 3 P.M. 920-262-8500.
 Loretto, Minn.—Salem (100). Sept. 19. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Catered meal, 11:30 A.M. 763-498-7281.
 Oak Grove (rural Juneau), Wis.—St. Peter (125). Sept. 19. Service, 10 A.M. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 920-386-4619.
 Topeka, Kan.—Beautiful Savior (25). Sept. 19. Service, 2 P.M. Joel Pankow, topekawels@hotmail.com.
 Phoenix, Ariz.—Deer Valley (25). Sept. 25. Service, 6 P.M. Sept. 26. Service, 9 A.M. Luncheon to follow at Iron Works Bellair, 11 A.M. Tickets available. 623-581-1198.
 Madison, Wis.—Our Redeemer (50). Oct. 3 & 24 & Nov. 21. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. 608-274-6608.
 Newburg, Wis.—St. John school (100). Oct. 17. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Brian Mensching, 262-675-6852.
 Saginaw, Mich.—Bethany (50). Oct. 31. Service, 10:30 A.M. Meal to follow. 989-793-7747.

COMING EVENTS

Life-a-thon—Sept. 11, 9 A.M.-noon. Annual walk-run supporting the pregnancy counseling centers operated by WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee. Held at NPH Christian Books & Gifts, 1250 N 113th St, Milwaukee. Peter Georgson, 414-727-8176.
 Science hall dedication—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Sept. 11, noon. 414-443-8846.
 Church grand opening—Sept. 12. Open house, 2-5 P.M. Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev. Matthew Vogt, 702-253-7087.
 Family ministry training—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service. Sept. 17, 9 A.M.-4 P.M. Holiday Inn Select, Naperville, Ill. Oct. 23, 9 A.M.-4 P.M. Holiday Inn Neenah Riverwalk, Neenah, Wis. Cost, \$89/person (includes meals & materials). 888-685-9522, ext. 209.
 Christian women's retreat—Sept. 24-25. Grace, Lowell, Ark. Harriet Johnson, 479-659-0905.
 WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall conference—Sept. 25. St. John, Pardeeville, Wis. Janice Wardle, 608-429-2013.
 Regional women's retreat—Oct. 1-3. Massanetta Springs Conference Center,

Harrisonburg, Va. Lynnette Hupman, 703-361-1419.

"A day at the Seminary"—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary. Oct. 2, 8 A.M.-1 P.M. Worship, 9 A.M. Eunice Heckendorf, 262-677-2498.

Choirfest—hosted by The Lutheran Festival Chorus of Chicagoland. Oct. 9. Concert, 7 P.M. Christ the King, Palatine, Ill. Clay Horath, 708-672-4512 or Sonja Hummel, 708-672-1032.

Martin Luther College Ladies Auxiliary annual meeting—Oct. 13. 9 A.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Theckla Schultz, 507-354-2568.

Run for the prize 5K run/walk—sponsored by Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. Oct. 16, 10 A.M. Dave Braun, 800-688-8151, ext. 210.

Marriage enrichment retreat—Nov. 6 & 7. Heidel House, Green Lake, Wis. \$250/couple, including housing, meals, and materials. Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, 888-685-9522, ext. 201.

Sunday school teacher and superintendent conference—Jan. 22, 2005. 9:30 A.M.-3 P.M. St. John, Baraboo, Wis. Cost, \$10/person. Jerry Kastens, 920-261-3511.

Christian Woman Today spring retreat—April 8-10, 2005. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen, 262-784-0412.

NAMES WANTED

The Villages, Fla.—The Open Bible (The Village Lutherans). Don Meier, 352-728-8492.

Vacaville/Travis Air Force Base, Calif.—Scott Stone, 707-469-1546.

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

Women—serving as spiritual leaders in WELS congregations. WELS Women's Ministry Committee. Peg Raabe, 414-256-3278.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Development Director—Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis., 715-359-3400.

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."

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

—1 Corinthians 3:7

Picture this



(From left) Mikhayla Kleich, Makala Bethel, and Samantha Kleich are busy planting and watering tomatoes in the garden at Redeemer Learning Center in Tomahawk, Wis. Teacher Sarah Warmuth started gardening with the kids in her summer program as a fun way to teach them about God's creation. It's also a sneaky way to get kids to eat their vegetables. "When they grow it themselves," Warmuth says, "they're more likely to try new things!"

Send pictures to "Picture this," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

**Hail, wind and rain!
Loud blowing snowstorm!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Flowers and trees!
Loud rustling dry leaves!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
He has done marvelous things.
I, too, will praise him with a new song!**

—Christian Worship 247



Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.

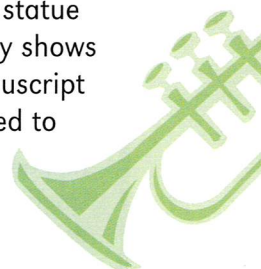
—Martin Luther

This month in history

On Sept. 14, 1741, George Frideric Handel completed his famous oratorio, *Messiah*. He had begun composing the 260-page work only 24 days earlier and become so absorbed in his work that he never left his house and hardly took time to eat.

A friend who visited him found him sobbing with emotion. "Whether I was in the body or out of my body when I wrote it, I know not," Handel said.

Handel died just eight days after his final performance of *Messiah* in 1759. His statue at Westminster Abbey shows him holding the manuscript from *Messiah*, opened to "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth."



Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

—Psalm 98:4-6

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER

EL PASO, TEXAS

Two become one

Nicole R. Balza

“Just the fact that we have everything to offer anyone who comes through our doors that speaks English or Spanish is a real highlight and a blessing from God,” says Jim Connell, pastor at Christ our Redeemer, El Paso, Texas. Connell works mainly with the congregation’s Spanish-speaking members. Dan Baumler, Christ our Redeemer’s second pastor, focuses on ministry to English-speaking members.

Making the commitment

Not long ago, each pastor operated out of separate churches in different areas of El Paso. In 2002, the two congregations—San Juan and Victory in Christ—decided that their ministries would be strengthened by merging. In July 2002, the congregations merged their budgets. In September, they began combining their ministries. A unifying factor has been the new facility that they were able to build together.

“The new building, dedicated April 27, 2003, has created excitement and given us the extra room we need,” explains Baumler. The joint dedication service brought together more than 240 worshippers—a real blessing for a congregation with 213 baptized members.

The merger has not been without challenges, though. Connell explains, “When we have one congregation with two ministries going on in different languages, it is difficult to build relationships and rapport. Why? Well, the times of the services—English at 10 and Spanish at noon—do not lend themselves to ongoing relationships. Then there is the language barrier itself. While everyone wishes they could communicate and may try to communicate with hand signals, it just is not the same.”

Baumler agrees. “We struggle now and again getting people to understand we are one congregation and not two. We try to overcome that through occasional joint worship services and a variety of fellowship events.”

Developing unity

One of those fellowship activities was a bilingual women’s event held in March. The theme, “Chocolate,” was one that spans across both cultures. English-speaking and Spanish-speaking members shared a lunch, devotion, and discussion breakout time.



Dan Baumler, one of Christ our Redeemer’s pastors, welcomes member Fred Becker. Christ our Redeemer has such a reputation for friendliness that a Midwest visitor dubbed it “the hugging church.”

“There was a really positive response,” shares Karen Baerbock, who helped coordinate the event. “All the women who attended participated, and the discussions were great.”

Baumler observes, “The next Sunday you could visibly see the unity strengthened.”

A bilingual church newsletter produced by laypeople in the congregation also helps strengthen the bond. One feature in particular focuses on getting to know one Spanish-speaking member and one English-speaking member each month.

Youth in the congregation help cross the language barrier, because many are bilingual. Teens from both cultures make up Christ our Redeemer’s youth group, FROGS (Forever Rely On God’s Salvation). Between eight to 10 teens are weekly supporters of FROGS, but that number grows to as many as 25 when special events take place.

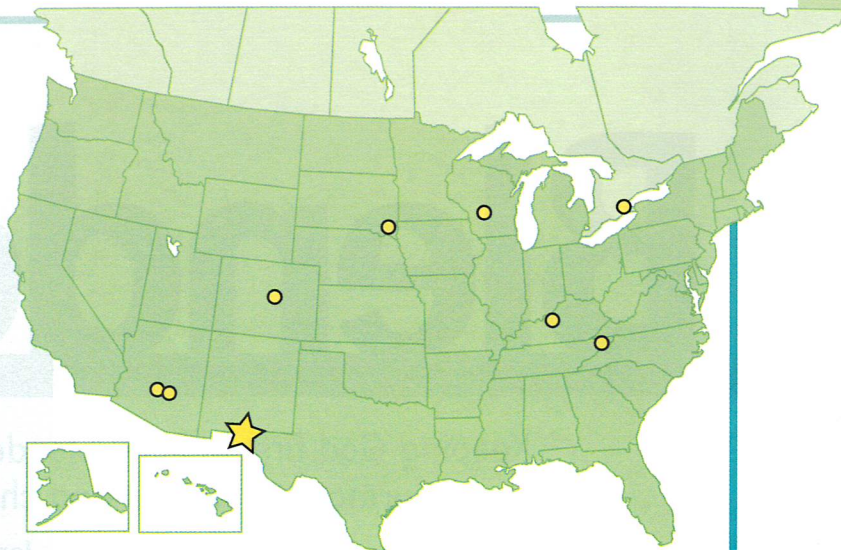
Finding common ground in God’s Word

One clear advantage of merging has been the opportunity to provide a wide menu of Bible studies. This fall Christ our Redeemer is offering nine different studies—seven in English (three of which are led

by laymembers) and two in Spanish. This is in addition to the Bible information classes that are taught in both languages.

"I love how many Bible studies are offered and how many people take advantage of them," says member Daniel Dexter. "We are blessed to have as many as 50 percent or more communicants in Bible studies in a given week. Our strength as a congregation is directly related to how many of us are in the Word, directly related to how many of us know why we believe what we believe and are competent to confess that and eager to share that."

"We're all spiritually alive by the power of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace," explains Baumler, "and Christ our Redeemer's members are not afraid to show it. We take seriously 'love your neighbor.' It's not a feely thing. It's all about action."



★ Featured congregation ● Congregation already featured

Quick facts

Christ our Redeemer, 915-857-9152:

- is *Cristo nuestro Redentor* in Spanish.
- is in an area that is 79 percent Hispanic.
- averages 140 worshipers per week—45 at the Spanish-speaking service and 95 at the English-speaking service.
- has an average of 74 adults per week attend a Bible study.
- is planning a Hispanic outreach campaign for this fall that will include TV ads inviting people to classes on parenting, marriage enrichment, spousal abuse, and chemical dependency.



Christ our Redeemer offers separate services in Spanish and English.

Putting their faith into action, members are inviting friends and relatives to join them on Sunday mornings. The Holy Spirit is using these personal invitations, along with door-to-door evangelism and vacation Bible school outreach, to grow this church.

"Everyone is excited and upbeat about our church and the new people who are coming in," says Connell. "For the English service, there is nearly a new visiting person or family each Sunday. That rarely happened in their former building. For our Spanish, there has been a new visitor at least once a month. Again, a rare occurrence at San Juan."

As visitors enter Christ our Redeemer, they encounter members who "go out of their way to greet each other and to welcome visitors," says Baumler. "Not one visitor has ever complained about feeling unwelcome."

When Dexter first visited, he found that "the church as a whole received me in love and treated me in a way

that said, 'You are family. You have a place here. Let's grow in God's Word together.' That wasn't just how they treated me," he says. "That's how they treat everyone."

Dexter continues, "We want to keep growing, keep reaching more souls with God's Word—and we want to maintain this family atmosphere through it all. Celebrating Christ's love for us and therefore our love for each other is how we have maintained that family atmosphere even as the Lord has added many new faces."

Recognizing the blessings

New faces. A new building. A new congregation. The merging of two cultures and two languages. Quite a bit of change for the members of Christ our Redeemer. Yet, Connell emphasizes, "From the beginning we have looked at our merging as a marriage. We were two small congregations trying to do large congregation ministry efforts. Combined we have strength in unity and in numbers. We now have more teachers, more students, more voices, more participation, and better attendance. What a blessing!"

Nicole Balza is a communication projects manager for Forward in Christ and WELS Communication Services.

Blended

Keeping God first helps a blended family surmount conflicts and challenges.

Jeanelle Herrel

“Do I have to call him Dad?”
“Why do we have to leave our house and move into their house?”
“How can she tell me what to do when she’s not my real mom?”

Sound familiar? It probably does if you or someone you know is part of a blended family. In our society, blended families are becoming increasingly common. Today more than 33 percent of all U.S. children are expected to live in a stepfamily before age 18. Trends suggest that within the next five years, 50 percent of American families with children under the age of 18 will be blended families.

Meet a blended family

“Tom” and “Marcia” shared with me their frustrations and concerns over their newly blended family.

Although they had many frustrations, they also had several strengths. First, they agreed to glorify God in their marriage and in raising their children. Second, they were committed to facing the conflicts and challenges in their newly formed family. Finally, they agreed to look at the misconceptions and false beliefs they have about blending their families.

Glorifying God

Both Tom and Marcia came into their marriage with a considerable amount of hurt and shattered trust. However, they shared their faith in Jesus and knew that forgiveness and letting go of their individual pain from their former marriages was a must.

They also recognized that their ability to forgive would strengthen their new family. Their godly example of forgiveness was passed on to their children by role modeling, by communicating genuine forgiveness with one another, and by the way they spoke about their former relationships within the newly formed family unit.

In counseling we explored many ways to make their new blended family a family that glorified God and put him first in their marriage. Regular Sunday church attendance was the norm for Tom and his two boys. As the spiritual leader in their new family, Tom felt strongly that this would continue and that the children would attend Lutheran elementary school. Marcia’s three children had attended church fairly inconsistently and had attended the local public elementary school before their families joined together.

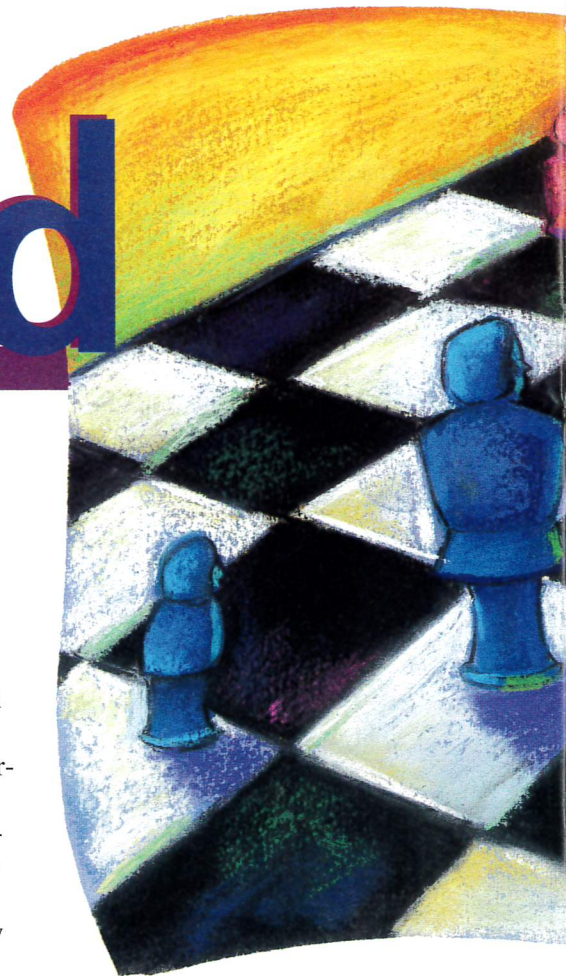
To resolve this issue, we gathered the family together to talk about feelings concerning church attendance and the change from one school to another. By talking about the loss they felt by leaving their friends and familiar school, Marcia’s children began to accept the changes more readily. They saw that their parents, by choosing to commit themselves to one another in marriage, were working towards pleasing God in their marriage, as well. This meant obeying the Ten Commandments and honoring one

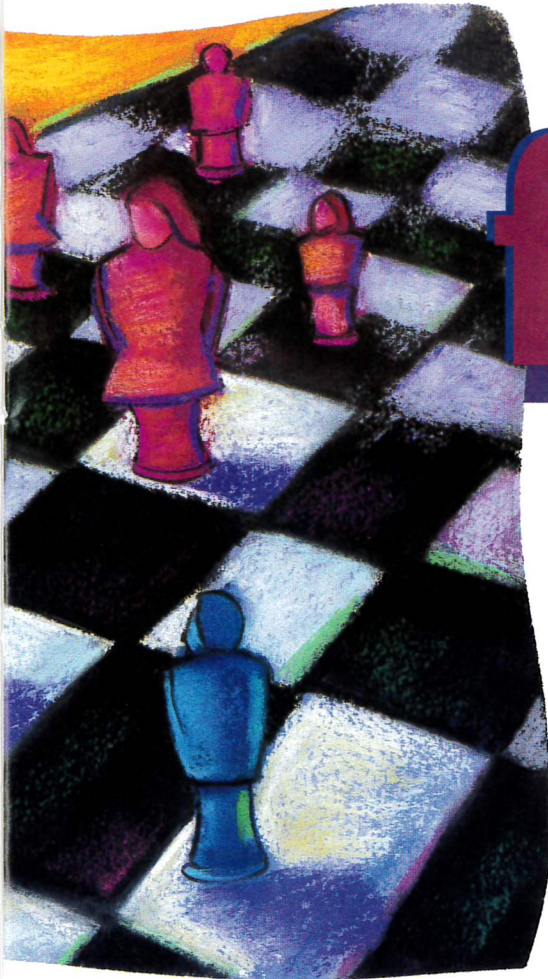
another in their marriage and family. We looked at specific passages where God’s Word talks about godly marriage and glorifying God in families.

Tom and Marcia made regular family devotions and family meetings a priority. Here the children could talk openly about their feelings and about the changes that they were experiencing, without being judged or condemned for negative feelings. Here the family could also talk about the importance of making their home one that glorifies God.

Challenges and conflicts

Tom had always been the primary disciplinarian with his boys and expected to fill this role with Marcia’s children as well. However, Marcia was much more lenient in her parenting style. Her three children had difficulty adapting to the idea of Tom parenting them. “He’s not my dad, so why should I have to listen to him?” This caused conflict within the family unit, as well as resentment and bitterness between Tom’s and Marcia’s children.





families

Exploring the ways that Marcia related to her children helped Tom identify with her children so that he could relate to them in ways in which they felt understood. In counseling, we talked about communicating honestly, openly, and with empathy and understanding. Tom had to look at his own communication patterns and change how he related to Marcia's children. Marcia also had to look at her relationship with Tom as the head of the family. She had to tell her children about the role that God gave Tom as the head of their family and how they were to honor him in that role.

Discussing the children's feelings of fear and confusion helped them to work together as a team rather than against one another. This helped them avoid a common mistake and a source of conflict in blended families—parents disagreeing and not sharing a united front when parenting.

Tom and Marcia decided to face their challenges head on through constant interaction and communica-

tion with each other and their children through family game nights and outings. They also were involved in their children's lives.

This formed a deeper level of trust, understanding, and love within the family.

Common misconceptions

Tom automatically believed that his two boys should accept and love Marcia just as they loved their own mother. In counseling, we looked at this more realistically and agreed that Marcia was not the boys' mother, both in their relationship with her and in how she parented them. Tom began to understand that it was not realistic or appropriate to expect Marcia to fill his boys' mother's shoes. He also began to recognize the importance of sustaining the relationship between his boys and their biological mother. This helped the boys trust Marcia more as well as reinforced the importance of their relationship with their biological mother.

Tom and Marcia expected their children to like one another and automatically get along. This was the furthest thing from reality—step-siblings often resent one another and their relationships with the other parent. Developing household rules such as “We agree to respect each family member” and “Each family member agrees to clean up after him- or herself” helped eliminate power struggles between the siblings and promoted sibling harmony.

Believing that everything should just run smoothly with everyone in harmony with one another was another misconception. In reality, each person within the new family unit was adjusting, and each person had a different way of adjusting. Tom and Marcia had to understand each child individually, recognizing each child's individual fears and feelings concerning their newly formed family. Trust began to grow, and the children's fears began to subside.

Putting it all together

When Tom and Marcia were able to explore their hidden fears and discover where they felt inadequate, they both were able to change the things that were not working in their family and strengthen the things that did work. When they followed through with their commitment to glorifying God in their marriage, they discovered that God richly blessed them, their children, and their lives as he so graciously promises in his Word for all who love him and are faithful to him.

Jeanelle Herrel, a member at Trinity, Marshfield, Wisconsin, is a therapist at the Eau Claire office of Christian Family Counseling, a division of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Inc.

This is the last of a four-part series on “Life after divorce.” To read the other articles, go to www.wels.net, jumpword “ficarchive.” Search the keyword phrase “life after divorce.”



Carl R. Gungel

Challenge 2010— a vision for all of us

WELS has a long history of promoting the Christian education of children. When many of our earliest churches were founded, a school was established right alongside them.

At the end of 2003, WELS congregations maintained 359 Lutheran elementary schools with an enrollment of 28,202. However, just 10 years ago, about 3,500 more pupils were in our schools.

This drop in enrollment is a concern. Although smaller family size would account for some of it, synod leaders are looking for other reasons. We're concerned about strengthening any agency that can assist us in the religious instruction of our children.

Though enrollment is down, school buildings haven't been downsized, and well-trained, willing teachers are available. The extra space in our schools may be viewed as a wonderful outreach opportunity. This is part of what Parish Schools calls Challenge 2010 (see p. 14).

Here is the vision: "If it pleases God, by 2010, stronger WELS schools will be of greater benefit to the faith, education, and lifestyle of an increasing number of students, to the health of their families, to the Great Commission ministry of their congregations, and to their communities through witness and service."

Our first concern is the faith of our children and the spiritual health and well-being of our member families. But as we and our congregations are involved in the Great Commission, proclaiming peace through Jesus, we are concerned about children and their parents without a church home in our communities. Could our Lutheran elementary schools be a spiritual haven, pointing them to heaven through Jesus, the friend of little children?

We realize, though, that Christian education outside the home is not an end in

itself. It was never meant to supplant parents in providing Christian education in the home for their children. Since none of us is immune to the godless pressures of society, Satan, and self, we and our children need all the Christian encouragement we can get, starting in the home.

Martin Luther realized the importance of the home in providing Christian instruction for children. Remember his words that introduce each of the six chief parts of the Catechism: "As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household"? Luther was simply applying the God-inspired words of the apostle Paul: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

It begins at mealtime or bedtime—teaching our children to pray, seeking God's guidance, thanking him for his care. It continues through the day as our children see and sense the direct influence God and his ways have on our way of dealing with them. It all can come together, daily, in family devotions, where Scripture is applied to the lessons of the day and prayers raise all eyes heavenward. Sundays are the culmination of what took place in the home during the week. Instruction in a Christian school is a consistent supplement of what already was begun at home.

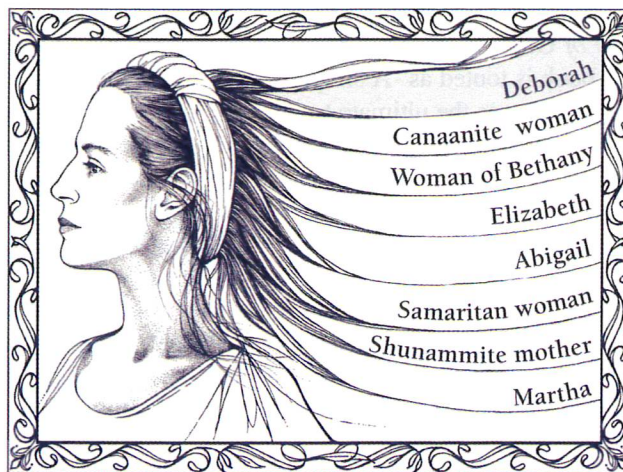
Challenge 2010, then, is for all of us, whether we have children or not. It exhibits a godly concern for the Christian education of children, our own as well as others'. It is centered in the home and radiates from there to the school, church, and community.

Let our godly motivation be the earnest words of Jesus in Matthew 19:14: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Women of faith: Deborah

Deborah's courageous faith teaches us to trust God when all seems lost.

Philip L. Kieselhorst



An important component of faith is courage—trusting God's strength when we have none. It takes faith with courage to hand over the controls to God. It takes faith with courage to trust God's promises when all seems lost.

When all seemed lost for Israel, God awakened a woman with exceptional courage. Her name was Deborah.

Courageous faith trusts God when all seems lost

The situation could not have been much worse. After the glory days of Ehud, "the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (Judges 4:1). They "chose new gods" (5:8). Morality and any semblance of civilized society crumbled to the point that "village life in Israel ceased" (5:7).

This provided Israel's enemies with an opportunity. A Canaanite army led by Sisera attacked and soundly defeated Israel. Israel lost faith, lost the war, and lost heart.

Then the Lord told Deborah to do the impossible. He told her to instruct Barak, a soldier from Naphtali, to gather a small army and attack Sisera's mobile army of 900 chariots!

Courageous faith trusts God when all seems lost. Deborah was certain that the victory would belong to Israel. She saw the conclusion before the event because she trusted what God had told her, even though it seemed

impossible. She even predicted that God would give the honor for this victory to a woman.

Courageous faith follows God anywhere

It's one thing to say "I believe nothing is impossible for God." It's another to follow God when he asks you to do the impossible.

It takes faith with courage to follow Jesus today.

Deborah did not hesitate to go to war with the army (4:10). She had no qualms about ordering the attack when it looked like a sure disaster. "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" (4:14).

The battle was a disaster, but not for Israel. "The heavens poured, the clouds poured down water" (5:4), rendering Sisera's lethal weapons useless. Sisera's warriors were swept away when the Lord marched against them.

Sisera fled on foot. But he met his doom when he underestimated

the strength of another woman, Jael. "She shattered and pierced his temple. At her feet he sank, he fell . . . dead" (5:26,27). Through two courageous women, the Lord delivered Israel from cruel oppression.

Courageous faith marches on

It takes faith with courage to follow Jesus today—to speak against popular "new" gods, to love someone as Christ loved you, to follow Jesus into death.

But hasn't Jesus gone ahead of you? Hasn't he marched to Calvary and swept away all of the lethal sin that would have destroyed you? Hasn't he crushed Satan's head? Hasn't he risen with invincible strength? All is not lost—all is won! Jesus is your strength. Jesus is your Savior from cruel, eternal oppression. Take courage in his mighty acts. Believe and follow him! "March on, my soul; be strong!" (5:21).

"May they who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength" (5:31).

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

This month's reading: Judges 4, 5



Gary S. Baumler

The probable God

My head hurts! Well, at least I think it ought to hurt after trying to digest the reasoning and the mathematics behind Stephen D. Unwin's *The Probability of God*.

Unwin's book is touted as "A simple calculation that proves the ultimate truth." But if you've ever struggled with the study of probability, you might sense that it's not a simple matter at all. And whether he has proven anything close to "the ultimate truth" is suspect.

Nonetheless, I have read Unwin's every word with the eager enthusiasm that many of us have for finally being able to "prove" that God exists. Think how that can help in discussions with the skeptics!

The promise was more exciting than its fulfillment.

Let me try "simply" to explain.

An early observation by Unwin struck me: "A God invoked by clever logic or science does not lead us necessarily to the God of faith." In other words, a God proved by science can be disproved by more advanced science. Similarly so with clever arguments. Then he proposes to prove God's existence "by the immutable laws of probability theory."

I sense an oxymoron in his proposal, but let's go with Unwin here. What does he conclude? According to his calculations, there is a 67 percent probability that God exists. For himself, he adds in a 28 percent faith factor (that's not asking too much faith), and he is 95 percent sure that God exists (the missing 5 percent accounts for the doubts that beset all of us).

We can feel happy that his calculations were positive on the side of God. However, his math is not as pure as would seem. After he has provided a probability formula to use, he has to choose subjects such as "the existence of goodness" or "the presence of evil in the world" as evidences to fit into the

formula. Then he has to assign a probability number for each piece of evidence as it relates to the proposition that God exists.

So, his immutable math is subject to an arbitrary choice of what constitutes evidence and an even more arbitrary choice of a probability factor of what the evidence proves. He has to assume probabilities to get a probability. It's hard to see how such an approach gets us any further than "clever logic."

Still, even if we accept Unwin's math and reasoning and find comfort in the 67 percent and 95 percent figures, what is the ultimate truth he offers?

His ultimate truth is that a single God exists in whom people can believe. This God is found in all monotheistic religions. Furthermore, he insists, there is "no legitimate base for human conflict" about this God. In other words, he insists that we cannot claim that the truth of God is any more precise than what he has found.

The immutable laws of probability theory, it turns out, lead us where all natural knowledge of God must lead without further revelation—namely, to a god made in man's own image, a god without any sure promises and immutable truth. Unwin's ultimate truth is the vague proposition that God is, but it cannot tell us who God is and what he's done.

Probability notwithstanding, we opt instead to turn to God's revealed truth in the Holy Scriptures. There God reveals himself to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. There we see the God of justice and love, the God of our salvation. We hear again the wonderful good news of how God gave his own Son to live and die for us, earning heaven for us. In that good news, we have the ultimate truth, the only truth that will turn hearts from unbelief to saving faith.

Probability, move aside. The Savior has come.

Fulfiller of
promises

It's all about Jesus

Mighty Savior

Mark J. Lenz

Merciful Savior

“**W**ould you say a prayer for me, Pastor? God will surely hear you before he hears me.” Sometimes people think of pastors as having a special “in” with God.

The letters of Paul to pastors Timothy and Titus dispel this notion by insisting that there is only one mediator with the Father—Jesus Christ our Savior.

Son of God

1 Timothy: Paul had told Timothy to care for the church at Ephesus while he went to Macedonia. When Paul realized he might not return to Ephesus any time soon, he sent a letter instructing Timothy about his work there.

- What problem did Timothy need to deal with in Ephesus (1:3-7)?
- How had the Lord shown his grace to Paul (1:12-16)?
- List the comforting truths you find in 2:4-6.
- Why do you suppose the qualifications for overseers and deacons in 3:1-10 are so stringent?
- How was Timothy to deal with the problem of false asceticism (extreme self-denial) that had appeared in Ephesus (4:1-5)?
- A pastor is to minister to all sorts and conditions of people. In 5:3-6:10 discover six categories of people and how Timothy is to think of or deal with each.

Savior of all

Titus: Paul left Titus in Crete to establish the church and deal with problems there. Titus, a Gentile convert, had been Paul's associate for many years and was well qualified for this work.

- When you compare the qualifications for elders in Titus 1:6-9 with those in 1 Timothy 3:1-10, what differences do you notice?
- Why would the actions of some in Crete contradict their claim to know God (1:10-16)?
- How could not only slaves, but also each of the other groups of people mentioned by Paul in 2:1-10, make “the teaching about God our Savior attractive”?
- Titus 2:11-14 and 3:4-7 beautifully summarize Christian doctrine. Discover what these verses teach about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the vicarious atonement, universal grace, salvation by grace, justification, sanctification, heaven, and the return of Christ.

Liberator

Righteousness
of God

2 Timothy: Paul had been arrested again and imprisoned in Rome. He felt certain that his condemnation and execution would happen soon. This second letter to Timothy serves as a last will and testament in which he seeks to strengthen Timothy for the difficult task ahead.

- Why did Timothy not need to be timid in carrying out his work (1:7)?
- Why could Timothy unashamedly join Paul in suffering for the sake of the gospel (1:8-12)?
- Why, in seeking to encourage Timothy, does Paul refer to a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer (2:1-7)?
- In order to be a “workman who does not need to be ashamed,” what advice does Paul give Timothy (2:14-16, 22-26)?
- What can Timothy expect as he seeks to live for Jesus (3:12)?
- What purposes do the Scriptures serve (3:15-17)?
- What charge did Paul give Timothy (4:2)?
- What was Timothy to do when people in the future would “not put up with sound doctrine” (4:3-5)?
- Identify the images Paul uses to describe the end of life (4:6-8). What certainty do all believers have?

Bringer of joy

Mediator with
the Father

Sacrifice for sin

Conclusion: How do these epistles reveal that ministry is all about Jesus, our mediator with the Father?

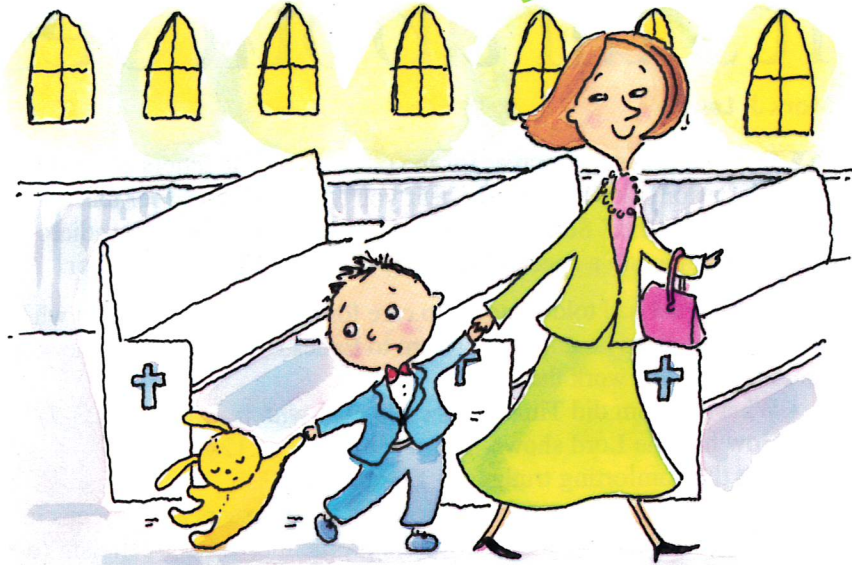
Word of life

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

Faithful witness

Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.wels.net, jumpword “fic,” and click on “It’s all about Jesus.” Answers will be available after Sept. 5.

MY "DRUG" PROBLEM



Being "drug" to church was the most important gift that my God-fearing parents gave to me.

James A. Schneck

When I was young, I had a "drug" problem.

It began at a very early age—in fact, at the time I was born. Born in sin was an understatement. I was a miserable infant, screaming to get what I wanted and keeping my parents up at night. But my parents did what was best for me—they drug me off to church to be baptized. Oh, I cried, even screamed, when that cold water hit my head, but it was for my good.

When I was a little older, my parents drug me off to church for worship. I told them that I would much rather be playing, but to no avail. They made me sit in the pew and held me tight when I tried to run. When I made a commotion, my father drug me off to the narthex to be disciplined. Then he drug me back inside the church and made me sit on his lap and listen to everyone sing hymns. Oh, I heard those hymns so many times! They burned themselves into my mind until I could sing them in the car, at the table, or in the grocery cart.

When I was old enough to be left alone, they drug me to Sunday school and left me with an old woman I didn't know. I ran out the door, and the pas-

tor caught me and drug me back. I finally gave up and went with the program. Once I learned the ropes, it wasn't so bad. I knew every Bible story word for word because I had heard them so often. When I got home, Mom drug my memory work out and started practicing with me. That stuff so filled my mind that I can remember it to this day.

When I turned five, my parents drug me off to Christian day school. Boy, was that tough. Homework like you wouldn't believe and catechism instruction and Bible history to boot! I whined, I cried, but to no avail. I was so happy to graduate—I thought. But then my parents drug me off to Lutheran high school. All the regular stuff and religion on top. Every day I was drug off to chapel by my teacher, and no way could I come in late.

Then they discovered I could sing. Yes, it was low and loud, but it was on key! My parents drug me off to choir. And if my time wasn't full enough, Pastor drug me down to his office to talk about teaching Sunday school and vacation Bible school, and counseling at summer camp. He wouldn't take no for an answer.

Well, I finally grew up, too old to be "drug." Now I was on my own. But it was too late—I had developed a habit. I found that I enjoyed singing hymns. I remembered those Bible passages—and found opportunity to use them. I wanted to be a camp counselor and Bible study leader. And strangely enough, I wanted to become a Christian day school teacher! I couldn't help it. My faith had become such an imbedded part of my life that it felt the most natural course to take. I would feel a huge emptiness without it. I now view my "drug" problem as a great blessing and the most important gift that my God-fearing parents passed on to me.

Did you have a "drug" problem when you were young? If so, thank God for the training and nurturing given by your parents and church! Do you have children now? It's time you started them in building habits of worship and service to their Lord. They may not like it—they may resist—they may even resent you for it. But one day they will look back and thank God for the blessing of dedicated Christian parents.

Jim Schneck is the principal at St. John, Mukwonago, Wisconsin.