

DOUBTING GOD • HOW TO REACH GEN-XERS AND MOSAICS

MAY 2005

Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness

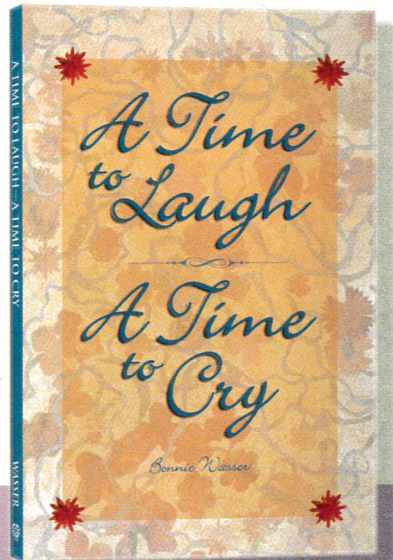
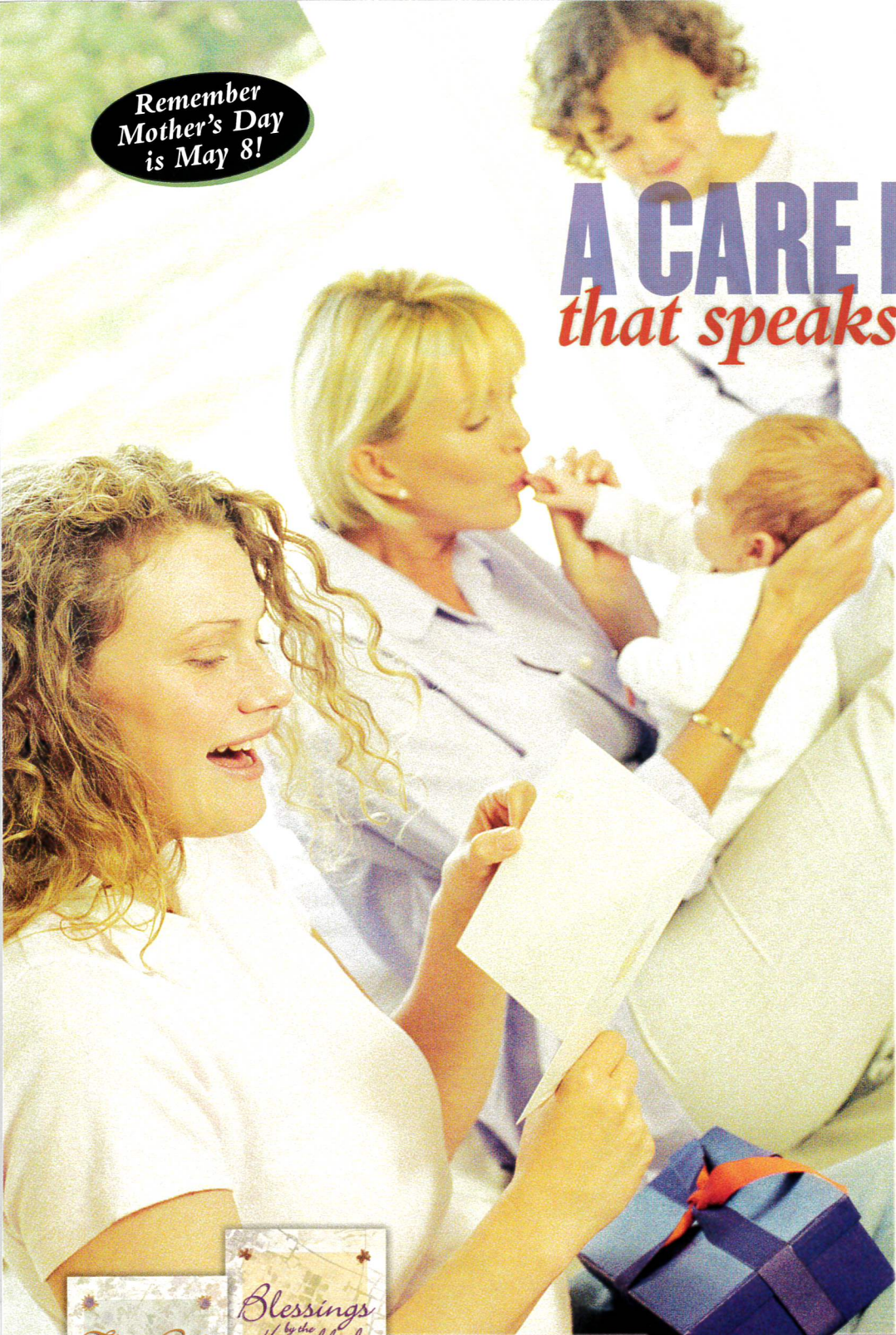


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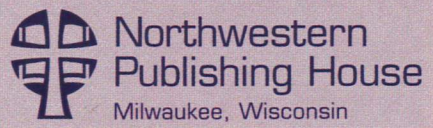


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“I have not been
alone for 57 years.”



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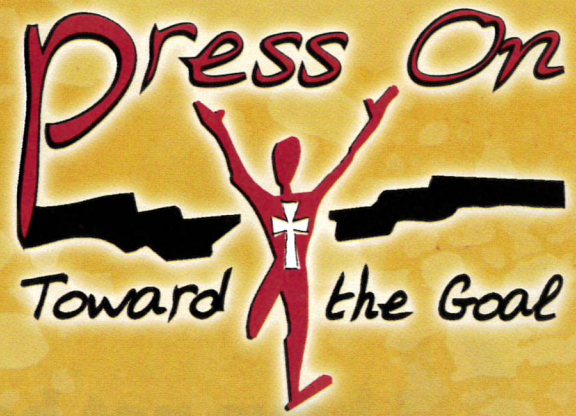
Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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2005 WELS National School Leadership Conference



June 28-30, 2005 ————— Lake Lawn Resort, Delavan, WI

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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

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ON AUDIO

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WHAT'S INSIDE by Nicole Balza

Doubting God. Just typing those words makes me a little nervous. What usually happens when you doubt someone's abilities? They have to prove themselves to you. So, my human nature says that if I doubt God, the proverbial lightning just might strike so that God lets me know in no uncertain terms that he exists—and is all-powerful.

But let's be honest. We all doubt God to some extent. Our sinful nature rebels against the idea of believing in God. Who hasn't thought to himself: "What if God doesn't exist?"

The key, according to Prof. Richard Gurgel, "is not to 'try harder' to believe. Rather, it is to take our eyes off ourselves and our hearts . . . and then do what the author to the Hebrews urges us all to do, 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.' "

Read Gurgel's entire article about doubting God on p. 9. Then flip to p. 33 for Charles Degner's Bible study on the first article of the Apostles' Creed. The topic this month? "I believe." Degner reminds us that "Jesus' compassion is greater than our doubts, and that even if we believe only a little, he will still save us." What a comforting thought!

MAY

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ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Re: "Play us another hymn, Jimmy" [Feb.]. Music does have a powerful effect for patients and their families as they face Alzheimer's. Volunteering at two area hospitals and nursing homes, my harp playing provides soothing music to individuals—the opportunity to "reconnect" with their Savior. Many of these folks do not seem to be in touch with the everyday events around them. However, when I play familiar hymns such as "Amazing Grace" or "I Love to Tell the Story," they are singing right along with me.

*Elaine Stindt
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

I am an 80-year-old woman who has the beginnings of Alzheimer's. I try to take care of myself, but no one knows what the agonies of Alzheimer's can do. How precious are those words and melodies that I learned as a young child in Sunday school.

*Martha A. Breitreutz
Belview, Minnesota*

PIETISM IN AMERICA

In the recent articles about Pietism, John Brenner writes on a topic that has diffused throughout many modern Christian denominations. He explains that pietism is a threat to true biblical doctrines and Christianity. I commend Brenner on his scholarly assessment of this false belief.

However, in his third article ["Pietism in America," March], Brenner gives a historical account of the origins of the idea of pietism, and he refers to many of the early revivalists in the Great Awakenings as the source of this falsity. I would hesitate to point to these men as the source of this movement. While there are many doctrinal differences in the precepts of the Methodists, Calvinists, etc., that are perturbed from scriptural teachings, many of these denominations were founded by men who (as far as I am aware) taught that salvation is found in Christ by faith alone. While

these denominations today might preach ghastly, abhorrent ideas, many of the founders of these different groups would probably retch at the way their initial teachings about the gospel have been warped.

*Paul Keller
Eagle River, Alaska*

CELEBRATE EASTER IN LENT

I, too, have pondered the illogic of treating the Sundays in Lent as Lenten days ["Celebrate Easter in Lent," March]. However, the "customs" of Lent are carried too far when the author speaks of "sermons emphasizing the price Jesus paid for me on Wednesdays" and "sermons emphasizing the results of that victory for me on Sundays." People who come only on Sunday, but not on Wednesday, also need to ponder the "price Jesus paid for me." And it wouldn't hurt them to sing a "slower Lenten hymn" on Sunday, either.

The "customs" of Lent are good, but don't let them dictate.

*Raymond A. Schultz
Mankato, Minnesota*

Mark Cares certainly has a right to celebrate Easter during Lent if he desires, but he has no right commending this practice to other WELS congregations with inaccurate scholarship and quotes taken out of context. . . .

Cares says, "Lent wasn't even observed for centuries" and quotes *Christian Worship Manual* to make his point: "It was not until the seventh century that in Rome the Wednesday in the seventh week of Easter marked the beginning of the season." The author of this manual's point is that for several centuries Christians in different locations observed the somber season differently.

Cares wrote that the Church excluded Sundays from the Lenten season and wanted the Sundays to remain "little Easters." This does not present an accurate picture of the situation. What was removed from Sunday was the rigor of the

Lenten fast; people could eat what they normally ate. The somberness of the season was not removed. . . .

The impression should not be given that Lent is a somber season only because it is connected to the Savior's Passion. The Lutheran Church did not retain Lenten somberness for this reason. The common Lutheran practice of reading the Passion History in midweek Lenten services has fairly recent origins. For centuries before and after the Reformation, the account of the Savior's suffering and death was reserved for Holy Week. Rather, Lutherans saw cause for somberness and quietude in the gospels selected for the Sundays in Lent.

A look at the gospels read in our WELS churches on the Lenten Sundays reveals that all but one in the entire three-year cycle of readings tells of Jesus going into battle, taking a stand against his enemies, and forecasting his death. . . . It is that focus that has led the Church to a somber Lenten mood for so many centuries.

With one more quotation from *Christian Worship Manual*, Cares encourages us to celebrate Easter during Lent: "The entire Christian year will have its greatest significance, however, when the overriding importance of Easter and its season is emphasized." The author of the manual is encouraging WELS congregations to celebrate Easter in Easter, recognizing that many congregations fill the Easter season with less important worship themes. The manual does not suggest that the church celebrate Easter in Lent.

*James Tiefel
Mequon, Wisconsin*

Send your letters to "Feedback," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 250 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

Go down to the river

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. Psalm 46:4

Peter A. Panitzke

Our family doesn't fish. We canoe or kayak just enough to say we did. Yet, a river is often in our family vacation pictures. We'll hike along a river. We'll stop to see waterfalls. We'll picnic beside a stream. I'm not sure what attracts us to rivers. A river just invites us to sit and relax.

Perhaps that is what attracts me to this verse: "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells." This verse invites me to come and sit by the river. Relax and be refreshed.

This psalm refreshed Martin Luther as he experienced the turmoil of the Reformation. Perhaps we do not face the kind of challenges he faced, but the need for spiritual refreshment remains.

During May, many churches observe Confirmation Sunday. Our young people promise to be faithful even to the point of death. But young people enter a world of spiritual turmoil that threatens to engulf them. I've been told that nationwide fewer than 10 percent of young people are active in a Christian church. The generation confirmed this month has a very different view of the world than older generations. Their experiences and expectations are different. How will the Church serve this new generation? How will the Church help this new generation reach its classmates and friends? Will the Church entrust her leadership to this new generation?

Yes, even a happy, hopeful day like Confirmation Day can cause spiritual turmoil.

But all of our churches will observe another special day this month. We celebrate the day that Jesus fulfilled his promise in John 7:37,38: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive."

Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on his Church on Pentecost. The Spirit is a refreshing stream that comforts us in the midst of fear and questions about the future. This river gives us the promise that the Church is "the holy place, where the Most High dwells." Older generations can't stand in judgment over younger generations. All are equally guilty before God. Yet the Church remains "the holy place." The Spirit flows out of God's Word and sacraments to assure each of us from every generation: "You are redeemed by the blood of Christ." In the Father's sight we are holy. For Jesus' sake, we have a right to be here in God's holy place.

The Most High dwells with his Church. No challenge is too high for the Most High to overcome. How will we help today's confirmands be faithful to Jesus? What changes will be necessary in the way the church functions if the church is to serve a largely unchristian society? We don't have all the answers, but the Most High does! He promises to dwell within his



Church. With that in mind, we need not fear the future. Instead, we can eagerly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as youth and elder alike seek new ways to serve God and each other in the future. The future is bright for God's Church because it is where "the Most High dwells."

When filled with fear and concern, go down to the river. Let the Spirit refresh you with his promises and prepare you for greater service.

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

I'm not hurting you, am I?

Thomas J. Jeske

Blood splashed the sidewalk in front of the convenience store. I wondered about the victim. Have you ever heard of victim-less crime? In a victimless crime, supposedly no one is traumatized; nobody is required to clean up a mess. Maybe no one even knows. Should anything count as a crime if it has no consequences?

I wouldn't exactly call it a crime . . .

- The retired couple gambles an afternoon away at the casino.
- A high school junior calculates how much body to reveal in her prom outfit.
- The pastor hangs up on a homeless veteran.

All my friends are okay with it . . .

- Putting gay rights in the same category as the American civil rights struggle of the 1950s and '60s.
- Prioritizing Sunday worship lower than a sports practice.
- A husband lingering over the swimsuit issue.

I'm not hurting you . . .

- Friday evening we watch a movie with a brutal murder.
- The congregation decides not to donate to tsunami relief.
- Lovers move in together but do not get married.

Ever said, "What I choose to do is my own business . . . besides, I'm not hurting you." Hmm. Consider this, Christian. When you think, talk, or act, there are likely to be four persons involved.

God

God says: "You are answerable to me, since I made you. You are accountable to me, since I redeemed you. I am responsible for you, since I adopted you and made you a Christian."

Me

My desires are okay as long as they remain desires and not actions. What I permit myself to think about—pictures, scenes, shows—register with me. My conscience knows. I have to live with myself and these imprinted influences today.

"... and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Romans 13:14).

Christian, you are in charge of you. What you harbor in your heart may repel God's Holy Spirit.

My fellow Christian

God has not left any of his children alone. One of the lovely benefits of the Christian faith is its fellowship of other believers. The Church is a living thing. So what affects me, a part of the Body of Christ, is going to affect my fellow Christian. What I say will never be just words without weight, sounds without meaning, ideas without import. What I think, say, and do will be considered by my sister and my brother.

My neighbor, the unbeliever

One of Satan's temptations is to make me imagine that in certain situations I am anonymous: surfing the Web, on a business trip, in line at the stadium, on a vacation.

"What I do only affects me and no one else."

But my neighbor is here. The unbeliever sees me. My neighbor, the doubter, draws his conclusions about life and about Christianity in part from me: "So that is how a Christian lives."

Test yourself. Use this little template when you are weighing an idea, an action, or a failure to act: What message am

I sending to my God? To my own conscience? To my fellow Christians? To my unchurched neighbor?

Victimless crime is a myth.

Face your victims; do not harden your heart by believing the Liar. Get to know page 154 in the front of our hymnal, *Christian Worship*. Read through that page-and-a-half before worship begins next Sunday. Repent of sin, Christian, instead of defending it. And do not return today to what caused the hurt, shame, and guilt yesterday.

Forgiveness is real because Jesus is real. It is his blood that splashes the pavement before us.

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

Victimless crime is a myth. Face your victims.



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Doubting God

Recently, I find myself doubting God; not only doubting that he will work everything out for the good of those who love him, as promised in Romans 8, but also doubting his existence. This terrifies me, because I'm afraid I will fall away from him because of this doubt. I know that God promises that he will not give us temptation beyond what we can bear, and I am desperately trying to trust that and not let my emotions dictate my beliefs.

I am also going through a very difficult period in my life right now, and I know that probably has something to do with my doubts of God, but I was just wondering if there were any other Bible passages dealing with doubt that I have not thought of, or any words of comfort or wisdom you might have for me.

Please remember, first of all, that you are not alone in such struggles with doubt. Such doubts strike all of our hearts—especially at difficult times in our lives. What is more, the hardest thing for a believer to believe is that he believes! We should not be surprised at this, since the sinful nature that clings to us refuses to trust in God and would indeed love to cancel out God's very existence, if it could.

But thank God that he answers prayers such as a doubting and struggling father once expressed to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

As we recognize how frail and feeble our faith often is, the best thing for us to do is not to "try harder" to believe. Rather, it is to take our eyes off ourselves and our hearts (we'll just find more doubts!). Pray for God's strength in the midst of your doubts, and then do what the author to the Hebrews urges us all to do, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Focus your attention on how amazingly much God loves you in Jesus. Indeed, Paul urges us to contemplate "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18).

When doubts and fears seem to want to snatch us out of Christ's loving hand, then remember also these comforting words that the Savior spoke: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27,28).

If maintaining our faith was something we had to come up with ourselves, then our doubts would truly have to terrify us. But as we take our eyes off our doubts—and even off our faith—we see him who saw fit to provide the power of his Spirit to bring us to faith through the gospel. Through that same gospel, his Spirit also supplies the power to preserve us in faith in him. "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Let me encourage you to stop "desperately trying to trust" as if staying in the faith depended on your ability to beat back your doubts. Turn your eyes to the cross of your Savior where you find him who loves you and has freed you from your sins by his blood (Revelation 1:5). At his cross and empty tomb you will find God's powerful answer to your doubts.

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.



A STRANGE TIME

Being a widow is a new experience for me. As I struggle through a range of emotions, I find that I am happiest when I keep my mind on God's blessings rather than on my feelings.

Pearl Rainwater

How does a first time widow make it through the first year of holidays? Believe me, only by the grace of God. It is truly a strange time.

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows" (Psalm 68:5).

My husband died suddenly in July. A couple of months were a blur, but then came my November birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, and what would have been the 58th anniversary of our marriage.

I've tried new experiences to change the "we always did it this way." For my birthday, a friend and I went to the local Tulalip Casino. The food was good, too many people all over, too much noise, and two old ladies ready to go home by 5 P.M.

Turkey Day I tried sitting at a different place at the table. That worked pretty well, except tears showed up along with "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest."

There was no going to church at Christmas, though. I couldn't face singing the hymns we had sung together so many times and places. I have this thing about not blubbering in

front of people. I can just hear my grandma saying, "Stop that now. Crying doesn't fix a thing."

On New Year's Eve we same two old ladies ate out, looked at each other, said, "Happy New Year, and let's head home."

On the day, January 5th, that would have been our 58th wedding anniversary, my family kept me busy, and God sent me extra strength to remember where my husband was and to get on with life.

Now with the holidays all over, I have more mundane details of everyday life to keep me busy. New jobs I never had to do before. I need to get my little red car through emission testing, rake leaves, work on tax forms, keep the wood for burning going, and shop for groceries. Can you believe I haven't done grocery shop for years and years? I don't know where anything is.

"What is troubling you?" She said, "I am indeed a widow; my husband is dead" (2 Samuel 14:5).

I am not sure how to do this. I have not been a widow before. I have not been alone for 57 years. We were married shortly after the beginning of World War II. My years with my husband were the best. From age 18 years to 76 years covers a good share of my life. So! What do I know? My days now have no schedule, no "to do" list, but God fills my time with new experiences and fun things. I have come to understand what is important and what isn't. I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home. We are just passing through this life. Everything here is temporary, so why get into a snit over stuff?

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

My North Dakota grandma raised me, and she taught me well. "Quit your fussing around and get on with life." Friends tell me to take one day at a time. I do that because looking back can bring memory tears and looking ahead is a blur. I am thankful

for family and friends. It is in times of grief that we need each other. Real fellowship comes about when we can speak to each other about what is going on in our lives, and God seems to give us those people who will interrupt their lives to be with us and listen.

"All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him" (Song of Songs 3:1).

Can you believe it has taken me six months to realize that I no longer need a king-sized bed? I sleep on one side, and a stuffed moose sleeps on the other (a gift from my husband). I think I'd rather have a rocking chair and a TV in my bedroom. Moose can sleep at the foot of the bed or during the day.

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there" (Philippians 3:20).

I now count months instead of days. As I write this it has been six months since July 20, 2003. That was the day my soul mate made his final journey. He left his hometown of Marysville, Wash., and traveled to his new hometown of heaven. When we would go on a vacation he always complained that he had to carry too much baggage. On this trip he did not carry a thing. All his lifelong "stuff" was left behind. All he took was God's love. There he found joy in greeting old friends and family. He could sit among the trees and hear the angels sing around the throne of God. I just bet that they sang his favorite song, "How Great Thou Art."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

I have come to realize that a part of grief is often self centered. "I feel-sorry-for-myself time. I am lonesome. I miss you. I don't like this. I want things just like they used to be." Notice all the "I" centered thoughts? Because we are human we feel this way. Christ carried all our sins to the cross. When he felt forsaken and all alone he cried out to God. We can learn from him.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful" (Colossians 4:2).

I have started myself a self-help program. Around my house I have seven antique clocks that chime. Old clocks do not keep perfect time, so the bong can come any time. Whenever I hear a chime I say, "Thank you, dear Lord." I try to think of different things to thank God for. This keeps my mind on God's blessings instead of my feelings. Sometimes a chime will come when I am having a teary time. Then I giggle to myself and say, "Okay, God, you caught me this time."

I am not sure how to do this. I have not been a widow before.

"Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life" (Jude 1:21).

My hidden, secret hope is that God does not plan for me to live until I am 90 years old. That is so long to wait for that last adventure. A lady I knew, whenever you asked her how she was, would answer, "I am one day closer to heaven." Time is in God's hands, but each day we can say that we, too, are one day closer to heaven.

"O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in your mercy grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest in peace at last. Amen" (*Book of Common Prayer*).

Pearl Rainwater is the author of Grandma Speaks, Grandma's Voice, and Grandma Remembers from Northwestern Publishing House. These books are now out of print.



Good fruit for

The way we treat our neighbors is a fruit of faith

We often think of worship and service to God as something higher, something above and beyond our daily work and daily activities—generous offerings, great gifts, many years of service, and expensive memorials with large, inscribed plaques. When God speaks of worship and service, he tells us about our daily life and the way we treat our neighbors.

Jesus teaches us that to be at peace with God, we need to be at peace with our neighbor.

Doing a few token good deeds here and there really isn't going to make much of a change in you. Yet when God works a change in your soul and in your life, it brings a shower of good deeds that serve your neighbor and glorify God. When Jesus teaches about righteousness, he talks about our whole lives. He isn't concerned one bit with the "letter of the law," but with the "spirit" in which we keep God's commandments. We reflect our love for God in love for our neighbor.

Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). The Pharisees and Scribes were the most outwardly righteous people of their time, and when Jesus said this, it must have surprised his hearers.

The Pharisees and Scribes lived by the book, and they even wrote a book of their own about how to keep the commandments in exact detail. They wrote little rules around each commandment to make sure they would keep each commandment fully. Yet their rules were all for show—only for appearance. They made rules, and then they found ways around keeping their rules. Their bitterness against Jesus and their refusal to listen to him showed what was really in their hearts.

Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. This is what we see in his teaching as he applies the law to the thoughts of our hearts. "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Matthew 5:21,22).

It's quite easy to keep the commandment, "You shall not murder." Don't take a gun and shoot people. Don't grab a knife and stab anyone. Quite easy. What is hard is controlling the kind of thoughts that can lead to murder. Anger that moves you to shoot somebody is no different from anger against someone that burns for years and years. Anger involves wishing ill on someone or thinking only the worst of someone. Anger toward a neighbor makes us subject to the judgment of God. God cares about the action and the thought.

A fruit of anger that we might consider minor is still a fruit of our anger. "Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matthew 5:22). "Raca" was an Aramaic word that meant about the same as "air-head" or "Hey, stupid!"

Is Jesus making a new rule about what specific words we should or shouldn't say? Not at all. He's simply pointing to the rotten fruit on a rotten tree. He wants to transform us



our neighbors

and a reflection of our love for God. Paul C. Stratman

all the way from our roots, and then our fruits will be good, too.

As Lutherans, we've been taught that righteousness is a matter of faith, not works, but our works—what we do and say—still show what's going on inside us. The pious words we say on a Sunday morning don't erase the hateful words we say at other times. God wants all of our hearts and minds to be turned toward him and guided by him. Jesus shed his own blood to cover our sin and make us children of God. That goodness, poured out on us, moves us to live as God's children, bringing fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness! When the good fruit isn't there, it tells you that the roots aren't there, either.

Your neighbor is not God. But love for God is shown by love for your neighbor, and unfinished business with your neighbor is no different from unfinished business with God. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23,24).

In the Old Testament, the sacrifices and offerings were sacramental. God used them to point to Christ, who was the Lamb of God yet to come. He used the sacrifices and offerings to connect the people to his forgiveness. It made little sense for a person to come to the temple and offer his best to God, celebrating

repentance and forgiveness, while still living unrepentant and at odds with a neighbor.

Many teachers have applied these words to the way we receive the Lord's Supper. If you are coming to God's altar to receive the "pledge of [God's] forgiveness" with the hope of being "restored to live a new and holy life" (*Christian Worship*, p. 36) but live with anger toward your neighbor—still comfortable doing something God forbids—you're not really celebrating and receiving forgiveness but mocking it. This is why the Bible tells us to examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's Table, so that we do not receive Christ's body and blood to our own condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:28,29).

"First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come . . ." (Matthew 5:24). Repent, and be forgiven. Live free without being chained to your anger. Live free without being held back by sin that so easily entangles, and run the race marked out for you with your eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1).

Be at peace with your neighbor. Be at peace with God. Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer that we really can't pray "forgive us" unless we first forgive others. We can't be enlightened spiritually if we are always calling others "stupid." Jesus calls us to follow him, to love from the heart, and to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). When our goodness comes from the root, and our roots are sunk in the solid ground of the Word, drawing the living water from Jesus, we will produce good fruit, transformed and powered by him (Psalm 1). We need to be connected to him. Then righteousness will bring forth righteousness. Goodness will bring forth goodness. All to God's glory!

Paul Stratman is pastor at Trinity, Winona, Minnesota.

All finger pointing does not need to be rude or sinful. In fact, the Bible recommends certain types of finger pointing.

Mary Tuma

When pointing isn't rude



Ever been the red-faced parent of a child engaging you in finger pointing as he exclaims, “Look at that fat lady!”

Or tried to get to the bottom of a finger pointing sibling fight? “He started it.” “No I didn’t! She started it.”

Then there is the “look at me” finger pointing: “Mommy and Daddy, watch me ride my bike!”

In time, we learn that pointing is rude. It’s disrespectful. It’s irresponsible. It’s narcissistic. But for adults, disrespect, irresponsibility, and narcissism still can hold appeal. So, rather than give up pointing, we refine it, sharpening it like a favorite pencil. Routed into the shavings are childish boldness and naiveté. What

remains is a subtle, more sophisticated pointing device honed to overwrite our bad behavior and showcase our success. We say things like, “At least I’m not a murderer like John Allen Muhammad.”

Or, “So what if I cheat on my taxes? Look at Halliburton.”

“Look at me” finger pointing becomes a “Humvee.”

Finger pointing crosses all cultures, crosses all time. It’s at the root of the attack on the World Trade Center. It drives North Korean Kim Chong-il’s pageantry. It was in the Garden of Eden when Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. It’s with us as we sit in a crowded restaurant visiting with friends over lunch or in the solitude of our bedroom as we review

the events of our day waiting for sleep. Our behavior becomes the weft; our finger pointing becomes the warp as the loom of our mind weaves a flattering tapestry of self.

Biblical condemnation of finger pointing that judges others or boasts is a familiar Christian theme. Less familiar and even less practiced, however, is the first type of finger pointing that the Bible promotes. Paul writes, “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (2 Corinthians 11:30).

“Point to my weakness?”

“Be vulnerable?”

“Share my failures?”

Being vulnerable and sharing failure is uncomfortable. But to be an effective Christian witness, we must be



willing to show our failures and our ongoing struggle. We must admit that we are forgiven sinners, thereby bringing hope to a broken life. By revealing our “clay feet,” we destroy the unspoken message that it is something in us that qualifies us to be Christian. When tempted to point to ourselves for success, we can recall Paul’s words: “. . . what do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Paul models this demeanor when he says, “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15). By sharing our struggles, unbelievers will come to see that it is not our person or circumstances that make us Christian but rather the one we put our hope in.

Paul frames this idea further when he writes, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). By acknowledging that we overcome temptation through no strength of our own, we are better able to engage in the second and greater biblical finger pointing—to point unbelievers to our true strength, Jesus Christ, and the transforming power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In our Christian walk and witness we should follow the example of John the Baptist when he said, “[Jesus] must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

How do we do this? Next time someone compliments you, temper your response with appropriate comments about your past and present struggles. For example, if someone says, “Wow, you have patience with your children that I don’t have with mine.” You can reply, “Thank you, but it wasn’t always that way. I used to yell and get angry. But now I say a silent prayer asking Jesus to help me remain calm. And sometimes I

When Jesus gives us victory over a struggle in our life, it can become our mission field.

still forget to pray and end up yelling and getting angry. Would you like to know more about how prayer helps with parenting?”

Or if someone confides in you about a difficulty she is currently faced with that you may have faced in the past, share how you successfully overcame it. Example: “John and I are really having a hard time in our marriage. Divorce looks like the only solution.” Your reply: “Yes, a successful marriage is difficult to achieve. Randy and I went through some hard times a few years ago. Would you like to know how the Bible helped us overcome the problem?”

With such an approach, you will find your confessed failure opens up a dialogue for witness. When Jesus gives us victory over a struggle in our life, it can become our mission field. Jesus established this precedent when making reference to Simon Peter’s future denial of him: “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31,32).

As with Peter, our area of struggle becomes a bridge between weaker brothers and us. This approach is particularly effective when recovering Christian addicts minister to practicing addicts of alcoholism,

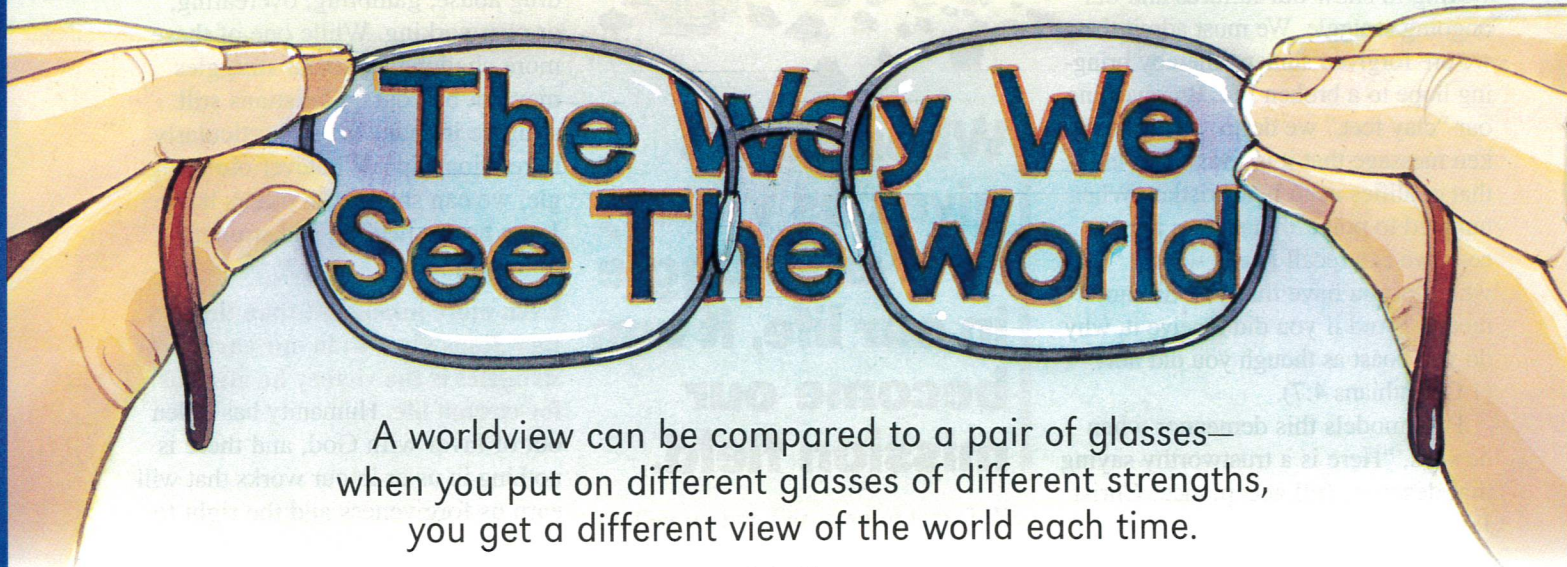
drug abuse, gambling, overeating, or overworking. While one of these more challenging social struggles may not be yours, Christians still struggle in many ways, particularly in relationships. Whatever our struggle, we can share with others how Jesus brings healing and strength to overcome.

Even more important than the victory Jesus gives us in our earthly struggles is the victory he gives us for eternal life. Humanity has fallen out of favor with God, and there is nothing in us or in our works that will earn us forgiveness and the right to live in heaven. In Isaiah, our hopeless condition is described: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (Isaiah 64:6)

The familiar quote from John announces the victory we have in the completed work of Jesus on the cross: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16-17). The Bible’s central message is that we have to be covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who was the perfect sacrifice for restoring humanity’s broken relationship with our Holy Father.

As a Christian witness, are you ready to allow your false, flattering tapestry of self to unravel and to point perishing humanity to your failures? Are you ready to then point them beyond you to a relationship with Jesus Christ, the only source of victory and salvation for this world and the next? Don’t be afraid to do some Christian finger pointing.

Mary Tuma is a member at St. Paul, Platteville, Wisconsin.



A worldview can be compared to a pair of glasses—when you put on different glasses of different strengths, you get a different view of the world each time.

David C. Thompson

“My courses were very difficult for me at first,” explained the college student to the pastor, “but things have gotten better now.”

When the pastor asked for more details, the student explained that she was being taught a definition of the family contrary to what she had learned at home and in church. But then she was administered an assessment in one her courses. It came back stating that she needed to be more “tolerant” and “respectful” of views other than her own. Assuming that this assessment was developed by professionals with no agenda, she concluded she should comply. And she did. That’s why things had gotten better. What she did not realize was that she was buying into the worldview known as postmodernism.* Even more disturbing and hidden from her was that her Christian faith was being undermined.

What is a worldview? It is closely related to the term “philosophy,” or even “religion.” A worldview can be compared to a pair of glasses—when you put on different glasses of different strengths, you get a

different view of the world each time. The worldview a person “puts on” gives him a certain perspective. It determines how one thinks, what he believes about nature, how he views issues like abortion, what he thinks about the supernatural, whether or not truth can be known, who Jesus of Nazareth is (or was), where truth comes from, what man’s nature is like.

In short, a worldview determines how one sees every aspect of life. Thus, there is a biblical or confessional Lutheran worldview. Putting on biblical or Lutheran “glasses,” and keeping them on, would give a truly objective and truthful view of life. Here are some examples of how the biblical worldview differs from others.

Marriage

The Christian worldview sees marriage as a divine institution between a man and a woman that is to last until death parts them.

The postmodern worldview says marriage is a creation of culture, not God, so no definition of marriage (like the Christian one) is superior to any other (like same-sex mar-

riages). All marriage arrangements, therefore, need to be respected.

These two worldviews also differ on the sanctity of marriage—Christianity claims marriage has real transcendent value since it is a creation of God. Postmodernism recognizes no such value.

The person of Christ

The biblical worldview confesses Jesus to be true God and true man.

The Islamic worldview says he was a prophet, but nothing more than a man. Postmodernism would say that all views of Christ are equally valid since truth is culturally determined.

Nature

The confessional Lutheran worldview sees man below God and yet above nature (Psalm 8). Pantheism, popular in radical environmentalism, blurs God, man, and nature together, thus making trees and animals our “brothers” and all equally divine. The evolutionary worldview, on the other hand, claims all that exists can be explained without reference to God, making nothing sacred. In both pantheism and evolution, man is no more valuable than grass.

Sin and salvation

Christianity views man as totally depraved, incapable of anything good, and redeemable only by an act of God from outside of man—the all-sufficient work of Christ. All other worldviews fall short of this understanding of man and God's real solution.

The worldviews of Catholicism and evangelicalism see man capable of some good (earning grace, making the right decision, choosing Christ). Thus man's work obscures the work of Christ; justification is no longer central.

According to the pantheistic worldview, sin is not something committed against a real God who is above nature (like teaching or living contrary to God's Word), nor is it seen as an act done against man (like hating, abortion, adultery, etc.). Rather, sin is viewed as an act against nature—cutting down trees, building new subdivisions, and drilling for oil in the Alaskan wilderness. Man must fear, love, and trust in nature above all things, for nature is God.

Postmodernism merely regards sin as something constructed by society—each culture defines sin for itself.

Essential truths about false worldviews

Here are some essential truths to keep in mind about false worldviews. First, they are always deceptive. They sound good, beneficial, and even necessary. They may even promote many legitimate truths or causes that Christians can agree with to some degree—concern for the environment, world peace, use

of scientific inquiry, respect for others, etc.

But in all these worldviews there is always something lurking below the surface. A false worldview's legitimate aspects should never be used to justify the worldview as a whole or overlook its false teachings.

It's a battle to constantly keep the biblical worldview "glasses" on.

Second, even if false worldviews do not directly undermine the essential teachings of Christian salvation, they always contradict at least some biblical truth or fact. The bottom line is that the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible is undermined and the foundation has been laid to doubt and room made to deny other truths of the Bible, including the central, all-pervasive biblical teaching of salvation by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. In other words, adopting a false worldview can easily become a slippery slope.

Finally, it's a battle to constantly keep the biblical worldview "glasses" on. Satan and the world are encouraging us to try on—and keep on—other "glasses" that distort the truth.

Scripture directs the Christian that no one take him "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

The Christian Church must not only believe and confess what is true, but also reject what is false, like deceptive worldviews. However, the Church cannot uphold the one and avoid the other without a clear understanding of both. For that reason the Church must always remain vigilant and pray for wisdom in order that it will be able to discern what is of Christ and what are the empty and deceitful worldviews of Satan.

David Thompson is executive director of Schwan Retreat & Conference Center (ELS), Trego, Wisconsin.

The Schwan Center is holding its annual Confessional Christian Worldview Seminar June 26-July 2, 2005. Numerous false worldviews will be explained and compared to the biblical worldview. For more information, visit www.schwancenter.org or call 800-577-4848.

***POSTMODERNISM: a societal shift in attitude beginning in the mid- to late-20th century away from the "Enlightenment" reliance on human reason, scientific proof, and acceptance of objective truth to a belief that truth is relative and determined by the community to which one belongs and by that community's experience and feelings.**

WHATEVER

Jesus is by my side

Through the good and bad, fun or boring, easy or tough times, Jesus is here with me.

Lydia Rose Eiche

Though we may not always feel it or realize it, God is always with us. When good things happen or bad things happen, God says, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

People think that when bad things happen that God is absent. "Where are you, Lord?" we cry out. "Why don't you care?"

But God is here and God does care.

The Lord says in Matthew 10:29-31: "Not one [sparrow] will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. . . . You are worth more than many sparrows."

When loved ones die, the people left behind wonder why. We wonder if God has left us to our own devices. No. God is not gone. God is here. God is with us always, no matter how old we are and no matter where we live. God has a good and perfect will for every one of his children.

We never doubt that God is present at a happy occasion, like a wedding or a birth. We know God is happy for us, we know God is with us. When good things happen, God celebrates with us. I know when my cousin Nate was born we were all so happy. God and the angels rejoiced when Nate was born and then baptized into God's family.

But life isn't always happy. Difficult and sad times come into our lives, too. Even though I knew that my godmother and teacher, Jane Kulow, was dying, I never suspected that it would happen so quickly after her retirement from teaching. That Saturday my mom had gone to see her and she seemed okay. They talked and laughed together. Miss K was even making plans to see me dance in December. But then we heard in church that evening that she was in the hospital.

Mom gave me the choice to stay home or go to the hospital. I went to the hospital to see her, and I'm glad I went to say goodbye. An hour after we left her, Jesus took her to heaven.

I cried every time I thought about Miss K for a long, long time. The only way I got through the day was through the caring of my friends and family and knowing that God was catching every single one of the tears that I cried (Psalm 56). I trusted God's promise that he would never leave me or forsake me.

Faith isn't easy, but the Holy Spirit strengthens us, God's Word comforts us, and through the arms of friends and family, Jesus holds us. I am God's child, and he loves me. He'll guide me through the tough times, lead me to praise him, and bring me into his glorious light (1 Peter 2:9).

This life is not the end. Life will be fun, there will be adventures, there will be rocks, and there will be mountains and valleys. In 1 Peter we read that we will have grief and suffer trials, but it is so that our faith is strengthened and that God is glorified. And our faith is worth more than any gold. I will see Miss K again. I will meet my Uncle Paul, who died before I was born. Jesus will be by my side through this life for as long as he wants me here. Through the good and bad, fun or boring, easy or tough times, Jesus is here. He says so, and I believe him.

Lydia Rose Eiche, a seventh-grader at St. Paul, Muskego, Wis., is a member of St. Paul, Muskego.



Child

Obituaries

Kenneth E. Moeller 1929-2005

Kenneth Moeller was born March 9, 1929. He died Jan. 18, 2005, in Tucson, Ariz.

A 1950 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served St. John, Baraboo, Wis., and Good Shepherd, Tucson, Ariz.

He was preceded in death by a granddaughter. He is survived by his wife, Ruth; three sons; three daughters; and 12 grandchildren.

Ferdinand W. Schultz 1928-2005

Ferdinand Schultz was born Sept. 13, 1928, in Kenosha, Wis. He died Feb. 9, 2005, in Juneau, Wis.

A 1949 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served Trinity, Franksville, Wis.; St. John, Goodhue, Minn.; St. John, Caledonia, Minn.; and St. John, Juneau, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Helen; three sons; two daughters; and 12 grandchildren.

Dorothea A. Wolf 1915-2005

Dorothea Wolf was born Jan. 15, 1915. She died Feb. 9, 2005, in Sun City West, Ariz.

She served Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.; St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.; and St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.

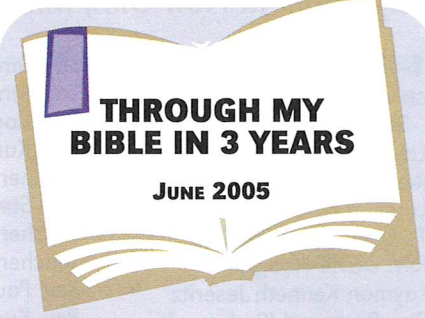
She was preceded in death by three brothers and five sisters. She is survived by 14 nieces and nephews.

Edward C. Renz 1921-2005

Edward Renz was born June 3, 1921. He died March 8, 2005, in Mequon, Wis.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Redeemer, Scottville, Mich.; Arlington Avenue, Toledo, Ohio; Grace, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Palos, Palos Heights, Ill. He also served as a civilian chaplain for WELS in Germany.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth.



**THROUGH MY
BIBLE IN 3 YEARS**
JUNE 2005

1. Acts 7:44-8:4	16. Ex. 8
2. Ac. 8:5-25	17. Ex. 9
3. Ac. 8:26-40	18. Ex. 10, 11
4. Ac. 9:1-19a	19. Ex. 12:1-36
5. Ac. 9:19b-31	20. Ex. 12:37-13:22
6. Ac. 9:32-42	21. Ex. 14:1-15:21
7. Ac. 9:43-10:33	22. Ex. 15:22-16:36
8. Ac. 10:34-48	23. Ex. 17
9. Ac. 11:1-18	24. Ex. 18
10. Ac. 11:19-30	25. Ex. 19, 20
11. Ac. 12:1-24	26. Ac. 12:25-13:12
12. Exodus 1, 2	27. Ac. 13:13-43
13. Ex. 3:1-4:17	28. Ac. 13:44-52
14. Ex. 4:18-6:9	29. Ac. 14:1-12
15. Ex. 6:10-7:25	30. Ac. 14:13-28

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

My husband and I and our five-year-old son, Landon, share a house with my sister and her husband, Richard, on Cape Cod. Richard is a landscaper. Dinner conversation often centers around the lovely gardens he tends for estates he works on.

Recently Landon and I took an airplane trip to see his grandma and grandpa in Minnesota. It was Landon's first flight. He gazed out the window for a long time at the fluffy white clouds beneath the wings of the plane. Then he turned to me and said, "God sure has good landscapers."

Julie Potter

Untangling the Web



Wondering how to introduce Jesus into everyday conversations?

Interested in witnessing tips?

Looking for uplifting stories about real people who are witnessing their faith? Subscribe to *Proclaim!*, the North American Outreach e-newsletter that will be delivered to your e-mailbox twice a month. Go to www.wels.net/jumpword/proclaim.

Visit www.wels.net/nao for more North American Outreach information.

- Find articles about congregation, partnership, and individual outreach ministries going on right now throughout WELS.
- Watch the *Proclaim Peace through Jesus* video.
- Share your outreach stories.

FLOOR COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

The 58th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is meeting July 25-29 in New Ulm, Minn. Delegates have been assigned to the following committees.

1—ELECTIONS

CHAIRMAN:

Teacher Richard Cody
Layman Robert Babione
Rev. Mark Falck
Layman Earl Hagstrom
Teacher Steven Hahnke
Rev. David Haugly
Layman Kenneth Jeseritz
Rev. Raymond Kimbrough
Layman Larry Lutz
Teacher Ron Martinson
Layman John Nass
Layman Robert Nelson
Layman Lyle Plagenz
Layman George Schaser
Rev. Allen Tetzlaff
Teacher Lyle Timm
Rev. Rick Tuttle
Layman Wilbert Zautner
Layman Richard Zell

2—MINISTRY DIRECTION

CHAIRMAN:

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Layman James Burmeister
Layman Mark Dimke
Layman Harvey Dunn
Layman Richard Fischer Jr.
Teacher Paul Frisue
Teacher Terry Greening
Rev. Mark Guthmiller
Layman Richard Guthmiller
Rev. Mark Haefner
Layman Ron Hillmann
Layman David Hinrichs
Teacher Craig Hirschmann
Layman Jim Holm
Layman Michael Kettenacker
Rev. David Leistikow
Rev. Mark Lenz
Rev. Kevin Mau
Teacher Kenneth Nolte
Layman Gerald Pepke
Rev. Herbert Prah
Teacher Phillip Rehberger
Missionary Nathan Seiltz
Rev. Kristian Taves
Layman George Thompson
Teacher Frederick Uttech
Teacher Barry Wierschke
Teacher Kurt Wittmershaus
Rev. Larry Zahn

3—CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS

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Rev. Robert Balza
Layman Arlan Beyer
Teacher Steven Biedenbender

Layman Bob Bren
Layman Mark Burger
Rev. Roger Grosnick
Rev. Kurt Grunewald
Teacher John Kaesmeyer
Rev. Steven Kahrs
Teacher Kenneth Kasten
Teacher Russell Klatt
Rev. Paul Lindhorst
Rev. Kurt Lueneburg
Rev. Kenley Mann
Rev. Daniel Marshall
Layman Patrick Mulrain
Rev. Michael Nitz
Teacher Paul Pappenfuss
Rev. Wayne Rouse
Layman David Rude
Layman Jim Rupp
Layman Marvin Ryer
Teacher Jay Schwall
Layman Ivan Schneiderei
Layman Edwin Schufletowski
Rev. Ethan Steinbrenner
Layman William Strutz
Rev. Joel Thomford
Layman Herm Weissmann

4—PROCLAIM

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Layman James Armbruster
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Layman Harry Channing
Layman Christopher Chase
Layman Jim Ebert
Layman Ralph Fink
Teacher Steven Gauger
Layman Don Gillund
Rev. Ronald Gorske
Teacher Donald Gurgel
Layman Edward Haffner
Layman Craig Halverson
Layman Don Jenders
Teacher Macord Johnson
Teacher David Knittel
Layman Dennis Krueger
Rev. John Kuske
Layman Joel Leerssen
Layman Neil Lillo
Rev. Mark Lindloff
Layman Fred Lintelmann
Layman John Marr
Layman Jim McCawley
Rev. Dallas Miller
Layman Patrick Miller
Teacher Patrick Miller
Layman Mark Nitz
Layman James Penske

Layman Joseph Price
Layman Bryan Purchatzke
Rev. Kevin Raddatz
Layman Gary Reif
Layman Alvin Resoft
Teacher Reginald Riesop
Layman Harold Rix
Layman Harold Rose
Rev. Roy Rose
Layman Barton Rouse
Layman Mark Santelman
Teacher Robert Sawall
Layman Thomas Schindler
Teacher Ronald Schmidt
Layman Lee Schnabel
Rev. Thomas Schultz
Layman Clifford Schwartz
Rev. Paul Schweppe
Rev. Randall Siegel
Layman Arthur Sievert
Layman Walter Stepper
Layman Conrad Sterkel
Layman Richard Stueve
Layman Ardell Tesmer
Layman Norm Trier
Teacher Scott Uecker
Rev. Paul Vander Galien
Layman Raymond Vasold
Layman Robert Veers
Layman John Ward
Rev. Richard Warnecke
Rev. Donald Wichmann
Teacher John Wesenberg
Teacher Michael Wiechmann
Layman Steven Zeitler
Layman James Zessin

5—PREPARE

CHAIRMAN:

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Layman John Bock
Layman Philip Boll
Rev. Marc Frey
Layman Warren Hartman
Rev. Thomas Hartwig
Layman Myron Hinrikus
Layman David Koester
Teacher Tim Kuehl
Rev. David Laabs
Layman Dean Mitzner
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Rev. Michael Neumann
Layman Marvin Oby
Layman Frederick Panning
Rev. David Rosenbaum
Layman Jerry Schieber
Teacher James Schmidt
Rev. John Schroeder
Rev. Andrew Schultz
Teacher Thomas Schwartz

Teacher Dennis Steinbrenner
Teacher Dale Stelter
Layman Lloyd Thede
Layman Aaron Trimmer
Layman Erv Uhlman
Layman Matthew Whitaker
Layman Robert Wilcott

6—PROMOTE

CHAIRMAN:

Teacher John Barenz
Rev. Ronald Ash
Rev. David Bostedt
Teacher James Brohn
Layman Rodney Bubolz
Teacher Steven Bunde
Layman Bradley Clark
Layman Tom Denney
Layman Matthew Dobberstein
Layman Charles Ellingboe
Layman Kenneth Forfinski
Teacher James Grunwald
Layman Andrew Hartmann
Teacher Daniel Kell
Rev. William Kirchner
Layman Kurt Kopplin
Layman Harvey Larsen
Rev. Philipp Lehmann
Layman Matthew Murphy
Layman Al Miller
Layman Chad Oppenborn
Layman Eldon Redlin
Layman Gary Sackett
Rev. Wayne Schoch
Teacher Steven Toth
Layman Brian Treptow
Teacher Tim Voigt
Teacher Allan Wrobel

7—PROVIDE

CHAIRMAN:

Rev. David Kolander
Rev. Brian Adams
Rev. Andrew Bauer
Layman Dennis Bishop
Rev. Robert Bitter
Layman Norman Blattler
Layman Chris Bradshaw
Layman David Brandt
Layman Robert Cook
Teacher James Dretske
Layman Dale Foster
Rev. Bryan Gerlach
Rev. David Gray
Layman Ed Groeschel
Rev. Richard Gurgel
Layman Edwin Gutermann
Rev. David Haberkorn
Layman William Hayes
Rev. Philip Hoyer
Teacher Paul Kaiser

Rev. David Kastenschmidt
 Missionary Jud Krohn
 Rev. Arnold Kunde
 Rev. Jon Ladner
 Layman Ronald Manthe
 Teacher Jonathan Meyer
 Rev. Thomas Mielke
 Layman Hugh Moses
 Teacher Kurt Mueller
 Rev. Mark Panning
 Layman Barry Price
 Rev. Dave Reichel
 Teacher John Roekle
 Rev. Paul Schaefer
 Layman James Schall
 Teacher Blair Schaper
 Rev. Thomas Schmidt
 Layman Brad Schmugge
 Rev. Gerald Schroer
 Layman Hadley Seeklander
 Rev. Roger Sloan
 Layman Ron Sprengeler

8—SUBSIDIARIES

CHAIRMAN:

Layman Jerome Brooks
 Layman Roy Anderson
 Layman Paul Bauer
 Rev. Paul Cole
 Rev. David Cooper
 Layman Roddy Guyton
 Layman Milton Hepner
 Layman Albert Hoberg
 Layman Orville Horsch
 Layman Alan Kolb
 Teacher Mark Loersch
 Layman Kenneth Maves
 Rev. Scott Mosher
 Rev. Tom Naumann
 Rev. Mark Neitzel
 Teacher Dale Oechler
 Layman Eugene Olson
 Rev. Terry Reich
 Layman Roger Riehl
 Layman Peter Shay
 Teacher Kurt Steffen
 Teacher Philip Zahn

9—MEMBERSHIP

CHAIRMAN:

Teacher Thomas Welch
 Rev. Roger Carter
 Layman Jim Gaugert

10—STEERING COMMITTEE

Three district presidents
 (to be determined)

11—SPECIAL REPORTS

CHAIRMAN:

Rev. Charles Westra
 Rev. Matthew Arnold
 Rev. Michael Bater
 Teacher Steven Bremer

Layman Norm Charlson
 Layman Richard Colton
 Rev. Matthew Crass
 Layman Steven Danekas
 Layman Mark Gengenbach
 Layman Lyle Guggisberg
 Layman Daniel Heins
 Teacher Ryan Hill
 Rev. Adam Horneber
 Layman Jesse Huggins
 Teacher Gene Jaeger
 Teacher Lance Johnson
 Rev. Jerry Kassebaum
 Layman Robert Kaylor
 Layman John Ketola
 Rev. Craig Korth
 Layman Wayne Kuerschner
 Rev. John Kurth
 Teacher David Lecker
 Teacher Frederick Lohmiller
 Layman Gregory Lurvey
 Teacher Merlin Meitner
 Rev. John Miller
 Layman Al Mork
 Layman Earl Nelson
 Teacher Larry Numerich
 Rev. Richard Pamperin
 Rev. James Panning
 Rev. Norman Paul
 Layman Jim Plumlee
 Teacher Chris Poetter
 Rev. John Quandt
 Teacher Robert Rebers
 Teacher Kurt Rosenbaum
 Layman Peter Sauer
 Rev. Ron Siemers
 Rev. Stephen Soukup
 Layman Jeff Stellick
 Teacher Doug Stubalt
 Layman Larry Tiedemann
 Teacher Eric Troge
 Teacher Daryl Weber
 Missionary Ernst Wendland
 Rev. Jonathan Werre
 Rev. James Westendorf
 Layman Kent Yunker
 Rev. Michael Zuberbier

12—CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

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Rev. Richard Schleicher
 Layman James Erdmann
 Layman Rich Glasser
 Rev. Robert Hankwitz
 Rev. Robert Hellmann
 Rev. Bruce Janisch
 Rev. Andy Krause
 Rev. Philip Krieger
 Teacher Paul Lange
 Teacher John Lau
 Rev. Martin Lopahs
 Rev. Mark Mammel
 Layman Raymond Marten

Layman John Meiselwitz
 Teacher Ronald Ohm
 Layman Lyle Ostermeier
 Rev. James Phillips
 Teacher David Ring
 Teacher David Schroeder
 Layman Mitch Slater
 Layman Galen Sommer
 Teacher John Stark
 Layman Matt Steger
 Layman Quinten Sulzle
 Rev. Ralph Waack
 Rev. Rodney Warnecke
 Missionary Robert Wendland
 Rev. John Zickuhr

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OFFICERS:

Rev. Karl Gurgel,
 president
 Rev. Wayne Mueller,
 first vice president
 Rev. Thomas Zarling,
 second vice president
 Teacher Steven Lemke,
 secretary

DISTRICT PRESIDENTS:

Rev. Paul Janke,
 Arizona-California
 Rev. Peter Naumann,
 Dakota-Montana
 Rev. John Seifert,
 Michigan
 Rev. Larry Cross,
 Minnesota
 Rev. Joel Frank,
 Nebraska
 Rev. Joel Petermann,
 North Atlantic
 Rev. Douglas Engelbrecht,
 Northern Wisconsin
 Rev. Theodore Lambert,
 Pacific Northwest
 Rev. John Guse,
 South Atlantic
 Rev. Vilas Glaeske,
 South Central
 Rev. David Rutschow,
 Southeastern Wisconsin
 Rev. Herbert Prah,
 Western Wisconsin

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 Arizona-California
 Mr. Seth Hansen,
 Dakota-Montana
 Mr. Mark Bannan,
 Michigan
 Mr. Arvid Schwartz,
 Minnesota
 Mr. Kurt Austad,
 Nebraska

Mr. Rodger Anderson,
 North Atlantic
 Mr. Ronald Rathke,
 Northern Wisconsin
 Mr. Peter Dorn,
 Pacific Northwest
 Mr. Dale Anderson,
 South Atlantic
 Mr. Robert Timmerman,
 South Central
 Mr. John Oswald,
 Southeastern Wisconsin
 Mr. David Steinert,
 Western Wisconsin
 Dr. John Freese,
 teacher-at-large
 Rev. Jon Bitter,
 pastor-at-large

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION:

Rev. Donald Sutton,
 chairman, Board for
 Ministerial Education
 Rev. Peter Kruschel,
 administrator, Board for
 Ministerial Education
 Teacher Dan Johnson,
 area Lutheran high
 school representative
 Rev. Theodore Olsen,
 president, Martin
 Luther College
 Rev. Paul Prange,
 president, Michigan
 Lutheran Seminary
 Rev. Mark Schroeder,
 president, Luther
 Preparatory School
 Rev. Paul Wendland,
 president, Wisconsin
 Lutheran Seminary

HOME AND WORLD MISSIONS:

Rev. Mark Cares,
 chairman, Board for
 Home Missions
 Rev. Harold Hagedorn,
 administrator, Board
 for Home Missions
 Rev. Philip Koelpin,
 chairman, Board for
 World Missions
 Rev. Daniel Koelpin,
 administrator, Board
 for World Missions

PARISH SERVICES:

Rev. Joel Leyrer,
 chairman, Board
 for Parish Services
 Rev. Bruce Becker,
 administrator, Board
 for Parish Services

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FLOOR COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

OTHERS:

Rev. Gary Baumler,
director, Communication
Services
Rev. John Braun,
vice president, Northwest-
ern Publishing House
Mr. Jon Flanagan,
director, Benefit Plans
Rev. Robert Pasbrig,
chairman, Committee
on Constitutional Matters
Mr. Todd Poppe,
Chief Financial Officer
Rev. Ron Roth,
administrator, Commission
for Communication on
Financial Support
Mr. Martin Spriggs,
Chief Technology Officer
Rev. Warren Widmann,
director, WELS Spiritual
Growth Project

NOMINATIONS

These candidates have been chosen by the Synod Nominating Committee to be presented to the delegates of the 58th biennial WELS convention. The delegates will elect one man for each position. Each candidate's district is in parentheses, and incumbents are noted by an asterisk (*).

SYNODICAL COUNCIL

TEACHER-AT-LARGE:

John Freese,
Wauwatosa, Wis. (SEW)*
Kurt Rosenbaum,
Sarasota, Fla. (SA)
Dan Schmeling,
Scroggins, Texas (SC)

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Milwaukee, Wis. (SEW)*
Jon Hein,
Summerville, S.C. (SA)
Joel Schroeder,
Lenexa, Kan. (NE)

TEACHER:

David Hackman,
Greenfield, Wis. (SEW)
Phil Kuske,
Jenera, Ohio (MI)
John Lau,
Onalaska, Wis. (WW)

LAYMAN:

Eugene Baer,
Waukesha, Wis. (SEW)*

Fred Krumm,
Allegan, Mich. (MI)
Scott Severson,
Menomonee Falls, Wis. (SEW)

BOARD FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION:

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New Ulm, Minn. (MN)*
Earle Treptow,
Denver, Colo. (NE)
Mike Woldt,
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TEACHER:

Robert Erdmann,
Milwaukee, Wis. (SEW)
Gerald Kastens,
Watertown, Wis. (WW)
Daryl Weber,
Germantown, Wis. (SEW)

LAYMAN (1 OF 2):

David Bergemann,
Farmington Hills, Mich. (MI)
Christopher Joch,
West Bend, Wis. (SEW)
Bill Schmidt,
Watertown, Wis. (WW)*

LAYMAN (2 OF 2):

Hogey Holtz,
Saginaw, Mich. (MI)
William Pollman,
La Crescent, Minn. (MN)
John Spaeth,
Jenera, Ohio (MI)

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN

SEMINARY GOVERNING BOARD:

CHAIRMAN (PASTOR):

Jonathan Schultz,
Calgary, Alberta,
Canada (DM)
Norman Seeger,
Sioux Falls, S.D. (DM)
Thomas Westra,
Fairfield, Ohio (MI)*

BOARD FOR WORLD MISSIONS:

LAYMAN:

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Benton Harbor, Mich. (MI)
Randall Kastner,
River Hills, Wis. (SEW)
David Sauer,
Excelsior, Minn. (MN)*

LATIN AMERICA ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE:

PASTOR:

Tim Flunker,
Green Bay, Wis. (NW)
Tim Otto,
Phoenix, Ariz. (AZ-CA)
Andrew Schroer,
Edna, Texas (SC)

LAYMAN:

David Balza,
Ft. Myers, Fla. (SA)
Dale Laine,
Menomonee Falls, Wis. (SEW)
Carl Toepel,
Sheboygan, Wis. (NW)*

NATIVE AMERICAN

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE:

LAYMAN:

Vernon Caulk,
Tempe, Ariz. (AZ-CA)
Ed Holzhueter,
Watertown, Wis. (WW)
Steve Schemn,
Pella, Iowa (MN)

AFRICA ADMINISTRATIVE

COMMITTEE:

PASTOR:

Howard Mohlke,
Norfolk, Neb. (NE)
James Ruppel,
Ellensburg, Wash. (PNW)
Kevin Schultz,
Orleans, Ontario,
Canada (NA)*

TEACHER:

Peter Buege,
Garden Grove,
Calif. (AZ-CA)
Jeff Dorn,
West Bend, Wis. (SEW)*
Jeff Roloff,
Sioux Falls, S.D. (DM)

JAPAN EUROPE ASIA

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE:

LAYMAN:

Jim Hoble,
West Bloomfield, Mich. (MI)
Don Jakober,
Aberdeen, S.D. (DM)
Craig Ruschmeyer,
Cottage Grove, Minn. (MN)*

SOUTHEAST ASIAN ADMINI- STRATIVE COMMITTEE:

PASTOR:

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Pewaukee, Wis. (SEW)
John Quandt,
West Des Moines, Iowa (MN)
Mark Wagner,
Grafton, Wis. (SEW)

LAYMAN:

Walt Lill, Tempe,
Ariz. (AZ-CA)
Eugene Ludwick,
Calgary, Alberta,
Canada (DM)
Mark Schulz,
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Brownsville, Wis. (SEW)
Geoff Kieta,
Muskegon, Mich. (MI)
Joel Leyrer,
Wauwatosa, Wis. (SEW)*

LAYMAN:

Ron Drecktah,
Wausau, Wis. (WW)
Art Naujock,
Livonia, Mich. (MI)
Bob Stasny,
Wausau, Wis. (WW)

COMMISSION ON WORSHIP:

CHAIRMAN:

Mark Bitter,
The Woodlands, Texas (SC)*
Aaron Christie,
Antioch, Ill. (SEW)
Wayne Laitinen,
New Ulm, Minn. (MN)

COMMISSION ON SPECIAL MINISTRIES:

CHAIRMAN:

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Canton, Mich. (MI)
Kenley Mann,
Zillah, Wash. (PNW)
Randall Ott,
Greenleaf, Wis. (NW)

BOARD OF APPEALS:

PASTOR:

Robert Green,
Temple, Texas (SC)
Robert Gurgel,
Milwaukee, Wis. (SEW)*
John Paustian,
West Bend, Wis. (SEW)

TEACHER:

Rodney Bollinger,
Oak Creek, Wis. (SEW)
Karl Grebe,
Upland, Calif. (AZ-CA)*
Richard Huebner,
Greenville, Wis. (NW)

LAYMAN:

Ken Gosch,
Aberdeen, S.D. (DM)
David Nommensen,
Palmyra, Wis. (WW)*
Michael Schilling,
Watertown, Wis. (WW)

KEY TO DISTRICT ABBREVIATIONS:

AZ-CA—Arizona-California; DM—
Dakota-Montana; MI—Michigan;
MN—Minnesota; NA—North
Atlantic; NE—Nebraska; NW—
Northern Wisconsin; PNW—
Pacific Northwest; SA—South
Atlantic; SC—South Central;
SEW—Southeastern Wisconsin;
WW—Western Wisconsin

Meet the editorial staff—uncut

Ever ask yourself, "Who are these people who write for Forward in Christ magazine? Through this series you can find out. Read on:

Pastor Charles Degner grew up on a dairy farm in Ixonia, Wis., where his father used to tell him he could be anything he wanted to be when he grew up.

"But as you think about this," his father said, "remember that Jesus told us that the fields are white for the harvest."

Degner's pastor took him to football games at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis., the WELS college that prepared men to enter the seminary. His pastor also told him from first grade on that he should think about being a pastor.

Degner heeded God's call to the ministry, serving first in Prior Lake, Minn., and now in St. Peter, Minn. He enjoys gardening and bow hunt-

ing. His wife, Linda, is a teacher and complements him well.

"She is a good mirror for me for my preaching . . . especially law and gospel," Degner says. "Her love for souls exceeds my own." They have six children.

Ministry to the sick and dying holds a special place in Degner's heart. "The angels get to come and take people to Abraham's side," he reflects, "but God gives me the privilege to comfort them with the Word and hold their hand while they are dying."

Degner is a self-proclaimed plodder. "I'm like an old plow horse," he says. "I may not be the fastest in the world, but I keep going till the work is done."

He says that the biggest challenge to his ministry is to keep on preaching the gospel even though so many people want nothing to do with it.



Charles Degner and his wife, Linda

"I really believe that we have to work hard to keep from being discouraged in our ministry, both as pastors and as congregations. Only God's Word can keep us going. 1 Kings 19 has been a source of great comfort and encouragement to me. You only fail when you don't try anymore."

Over the next few months, Degner will be writing about the Apostles' Creed and hopes to guide readers' thoughts down paths they have not yet explored.

Bible study behind bars

"Here in jail . . . the fruits of the Spirit take hold in the hearts of men and the Lord brings up from the ashes of failure, humiliation, and loss of family and friends, men that have been convicted. . . . Here the refining fire of a loving God is implemented, and daily the Lord's love for us shines through."

These words were written by Peter, an inmate of Waukesha County Jail, in response to a request in *Forward in Christ* for stories about Christians letting their lights shine. A faithful Bible study attendee, Peter wanted to share the great displays of faith that he witnessed in prison.



Volunteers for the Waukesha jail ministry have learned that God's Word works.

Four WELS congregations—Trinity, Grace, and Mount Calvary, all in Waukesha, Wis., and Christ, Pewaukee, Wis.—work together to reach out to inmates of Waukesha County Jail and the Waukesha Huber Facility (a work-release jail). When Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries asked Mount Calvary member David Kapanke to spearhead this program, he doubted its success. But he and other volunteers learned that God's words will work in hearts, despite human limitations.

"If anyone thinks he can't deal with murderers, rapists, pedophiles, druggies, and prostitutes, he can relax," shares Kapanke. "He doesn't have to; God will."

Picture Kelly . . . her tiny frame shaking with rage . . . wet hair dripping on her blue prison dress . . . eyes wide with fury. She feels victimized. Her eight children are dispersed to different

families. Nothing you say could calm this woman's fears. So let Jesus speak. "Do not worry," he says (Matthew 6:25). Although Kelly left that Bible study upset, she agreed to let God take care of her worries. Just months later she sat in church with all her children.

"So many people come with doubts about how God feels about them," Kapanke says. "When they hear what he says in places like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Psalms, it relieves their anxiety. They start to trust in him and not in themselves."

Miracles happen every day. A former Satan worshiper quotes Hebrews to a Bible study leader. The father of a pedophile victim forgives the accused perpetrator after hearing God's Word. A prisoner obsessed with his condemnation dances for joy at the news of free salvation. "He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains" (Psalm 107:14).

One believer at a time

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep" (John 21:16). This is the story of how God works among his family of believers to find the other sheep, how God causes his church to grow one believer at a time, and how God worked to make that happen in one physically and developmentally challenged person's life.

The date was set and the bulletin insert pronounced it: "Today in the late service we welcome Sandy Poskie into our midst by adult confirmation."

Sandy's story starts when her parents passed away and she finished high school. Sandy went to live in her first group home. Over the past 30 years, Sandy has lived in seven group homes. Each time she has adjusted to new living conditions, routines, and people. In all this, Sandy has been able to keep her job at Handishop, a sheltered workshop.

Sandy lived in one group home managed by Lutheran Social Services. Although Sandy was raised Catholic, she was taken to St. John's in Sparta, Wis., and began to attend the Jesus Cares Ministries Bible class, which is designed for people with developmental disabilities. But God had other plans for Sandy. That group home closed and Sandy moved into a private home with Lucy Johnson. Some of her friends from Handishop attended the Jesus Cares Ministries Bible class at St. Paul in Tomah, Wis. Her friends invited her to attend class with them, but Sandy never came.



Jean Buch (left) led Sandy Poskie (middle) in Jesus Cares Ministries Bible classes and confirmation instruction. On Feb. 13, Don Buch (right), pastor at St. Paul, Tomah, Wis., confirmed Sandy.

Summer came and Lucy took Sandy to the county fair. While touring the fair buildings, Sandy ran into David, one of her coworkers. Guess where they met? Right in front of the St. Paul Lutheran Church fair booth. David was a member of St. Paul and also attended the Jesus Cares Ministries Bible class held there.

It just so happened that Lucy's brother, also a St. Paul member, was manning the booth. While Lucy and her brother talked, David shared with Sandy the poster and pictures of the Jesus Cares group at St. Paul. Before Sandy left, Lucy's brother signed Sandy up for an evangelism visit from a member of the St. Paul evangelism team. That member referred Sandy to Jean Buch, the lead volunteer and teacher for the Jesus Cares Ministries Bible class. Lucy agreed to transport Sandy to the classes, held twice a month.

Sandy was faithful in attending the Bible class. Then Jean started confirmation instruction with Sandy in June 2004. Jean used special confirmation lessons to help teach Sandy about God's Word.

On Feb. 13, Sandy was confirmed at St. Paul, Tomah. Pastor Don Buch examined Sandy, and she knew all the answers to the questions and all the responses to her confirmation vows.

The Lord has seen Sandy through times of difficulty, but he brought Sandy to St. Paul just at the right time. God made all the pieces fall into place, as he causes his church to grow one believer at a time. Will you be part of God's plan in finding the next believer?

Jesus Cares Ministries is a ministry of The Lutheran Home Association in Belle Plaine, Minn. For more information, call 888-600-8542 or e-mail info@ltha.org.

*William Truebenbach,
Jesus Cares Ministries
program coordinator*

A WELS pastor visits

In early March, Pastor Paul Ziemer traveled to Kuwait on behalf of WELS' Commission on Special Ministries to minister to as many American soldiers as he could. In addition to ministering to WELS people in the military, Ziemer worked to establish relationships that will enhance the synod's ability to serve WELS troops in the future.

While in Kuwait, Ziemer published an online journal on the WELS Web site. Here is one of his journal entries. To read more, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/kuwait.

It is not inexpensive to travel back and forth to the Middle East. Nor is lodging cheap. Then, there is the matter of risks that are taken.

Some would ask why we do this. If we cannot have military chaplains, why do we not just offer ministry-by-mail to our deployed people in the Armed Forces and let it go at that?

Face-to-face ministry to the military is critical, in my opinion, because ministering to the military is a personal matter with me. I believe that it is very personal to many other people in WELS also. The notes I get from moms and dads, wives and children, grandparents—they underscore the point. Ministry to the military is personal to those who love people in the military!

Next to these words you will find a picture of Jake and Ryan. I cannot tell you their last names or what unit they are with. Family and friends will recognize them quickly, however. They would be able to tell you that these brothers served in the infamous "Triangle of Death." Other WELS

people served with them. We pray they all make it back home safely. Already too many from their battalion have returned with flags draped over them.

I once had Jake and Ryan in a catechism class. I saw



soldiers in Kuwait

them win blue ribbons at a county fair. I cannot be satisfied with merely sending off printed devotions and offering prayers from afar.

So far I have not been able to grab these brothers by the hand or greet them with a hug. I have not been able to offer them the comfort of Holy Communion. Security restrictions have kept me from reaching them. Those same restrictions have kept me from reaching many others. So have terrorists' threats.

But that doesn't mean we will stop trying. That doesn't mean we will stop trying again—and again. It doesn't mean we won't be planning more trips and more ministry efforts.

We wait for the time when security levels will be lowered. We pray for the time when fear and death is no longer such a part of military life.

I thank God for allowing me to serve for a brief time as a civilian chaplain in the Middle East. I pray he will allow me to return soon to do it again.

For me, it's personal.

Ziemer plans on returning to Kuwait as soon as the security level drops to the point where he can gain the necessary clearances. The WELS Military Services Committee is actively discussing plans to serve troops in the Middle East on a regular basis. Ziemer notes, though, that "future personal ministry to the military in the Middle East is dependent on the security level that is in place at any given time and on our ability to fund the ministry."



Brothers Jake and Ryan are just two of the many WELS soldiers serving in the Middle East.

District news

Arizona-California

East Fork Lutheran High School, Whiteriver, Ariz., was preparing to close its doors in December 2004 because of a lack of funds. People's hearts were moved to support this ministry, though, so the school is continuing to share the gospel with 150 Apache students each day.

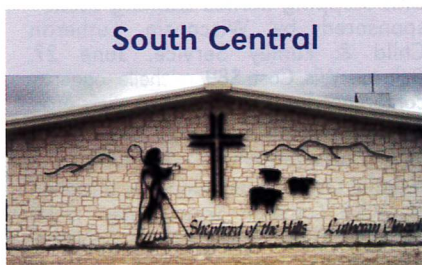
Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev., was blessed with more than 300 first-time visitors to its church during the last five months of 2004.

St. Peter, Clovis, Calif., is partnering with Wachong David Thao to share the gospel with the Hmong population in nearby Fresno. Thao and five other Hmong men are attending classes through WELS' Pastoral Studies Institute directed by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Worship and Bible study for Hmong adults and children are being directed by Mike Engel, pastor at St. Peter.

St. Andrew, Sacramento, Calif., is also ministering to the Hmong in its area with the help of Wachong David Thao, who met with many Hmong families in Thailand recently. When these Hmong families moved to Sacramento, St. Andrew was able to minister to them in their new homes.

Minnesota

A one-act play performed by **St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.**, was honored on Feb. 11 at Minnesota's one-act play festival. One of only seven schools chosen to perform



Shepherd of the Hills, Fredericksburg, Texas, dedicated this outdoor work of art on Dec. 19, 2004. Congregation members want everyone who sees their building to know three things: that they are a church, what the name of their church is, and that they have a loving Savior who cares for his sheep. Member Bruce Drake designed the artwork.

at the festival, St. Croix's play received the highest award given and was chosen to receive the Wells Fargo "Spotlight on the Arts Award."

On Jan. 7, the faculty and students of **St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.**, dedicated the school's new chapel.

Nebraska

On March 6, members of **Valley Lutheran Church, Sheridan, Wyo.**, received word that their request to organize and build their own church was approved by the Board for Home Missions. Valley has 63 baptized members who currently worship in a local middle school.

Northern Wisconsin

A troupe of puppeteers donated about 50 marionettes, stages, props, equipment, and scripts to **Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.** The high school presented its first performance using the marionettes at their annual Winterfest. The school plans to offer future shows to the public as an outreach effort.

Southeastern Wisconsin

The varsity cheerleading team at **Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.**, won the Wisconsin Division III Championship for the second year in a row.

Amy Nass, varsity cheerleading coach for Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., was named the Wisconsin Cheerleading Coach of the Year.

Happy Anniversary!

DM—Members of **St. Peter, Goodwin, S.D.**, honored Ethel Propst for the 40 years she served as church janitor.

SC—On March 20, members of **Divine Peace, Garland, Texas**, celebrated the congregation's 10th anniversary. On March 27, they dedicated their seven-rank pipe organ.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Fred Casmer; CA—Hermann John; DM—Wayne Rouse; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Donald Wichmann; NW—Joel Lillo; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Borgwardt, Michael J.**, to Crossroads, Chicago, Ill.
Gabb, Mark D., to St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.
Heiderich, Daniel F., to Rock of Ages, Madison, Tenn.
Kolb, Timothy A., to Bethany, Saginaw, Mich.
Neumann, David M., to retirement
Schultz, Clark R., to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
Strawn, Robert A., to Beautiful Savior, Bella Vista, Ark.
Winters, Richard A., to retirement

Teachers

- Cereske, Alfred E. Jr.**, to retirement
Eldred, Linda, to Good Shepherd, Cheyenne, Wyo.
Hagedorn, Jill, to First, La Crescent, Minn.
Johnson, Joshua A., to Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
Leyrer, Tamara J., to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Luehring, Shaun C., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
Mundt, Andrew A., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Palmer, Aaron J., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Rodewald, Karen L., to Abiding Peace, Simpsonville, S.C.
Roesselet, Kevin J., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Ross, Michelle L., to Christ, North Saint Paul, Minn.
Schmugge, Lisa A., to Bethany/St. John, Saginaw, Mich.
Schneck, Deanna C., to Faith, Anchorage, Alaska
Schulz, Rebecca S., to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Sielaff, Ann L., to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
Storm, Jay S., to St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.
Walker, Joel D., to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.
Washburn, Benjamin B., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
Welke, Dawn M., to St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.
Whitney, Daniel E., to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.

Staff minister

- Yerks, Troy D.**, to Trinity, Bay City, Mich.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Winona, Minn.**—St. Matthew school building (50). May 7. Service, 6 P.M. May 8. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Fellowship between services. Catered meal to follow second service. RSVP, 507-452-2085.
Bay City, Mich.—Bethel School (125).

- June 5. Service, 9:30 A.M. Picnic to follow. Clara Schultz, 989-893-1609.
Millville, Minn.—Trinity (140). June 12. Service, 10:30 A.M. Potluck dinner to follow. 507-753-2576.
Tacoma, Wash.—Faith (75). June 19. Service, 3 P.M. Reception to follow. 253-537-2919.

COMING EVENTS

- Reach the World choir tour**—WELS contemporary choir composed of members from congregations around Tucson, Ariz. www.reachtheworldchoir.com.
 • April 23—California LHS, Wildomar, Calif., 2 P.M.
 • April 24—Our Shepherd, Lancaster, Calif., 10 A.M.
 • May 1—Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz., 6:30 P.M.
 • May 7—Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz., 3:30 P.M.
 • May 8—First, Prescott, Ariz., 9:30 A.M.
 • May 8—Hope, Chino Valley, Ariz., 2 P.M.

Commencement events

- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.**—May 19. Graduate call service, 10 A.M. Concert, 7:30 P.M. May 20. Graduation, 10 A.M.
Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.—May 13. Concert, 7:30 P.M. May 14. Concert, 9 A.M. Graduation, 10 a.m. Call service, 2:30 P.M.
Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.—May 14. Graduation, 1 P.M.
Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.—May 27. Concert, 7 P.M. May 28. Graduation, 10:30 A.M.
Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.—May 27. Concert, 7 P.M. May 28. Graduation, 10 A.M.

Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.—Family Fest, June 17-19. Single Parent Family Camp, July 8-10. Fall Family Camp, Sept. 2-5. Jason Wiechmann, 920-787-3202.

Confessional Christian Worldview Seminar—June 26-July 2. Schwan Retreat & Conference Center (ELS), Trego, Wis. Cost, \$379/person. 800-577-4848.

Faith Stepping Stones training event—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service. June 27. Delavan, Wis. Cost, \$89. michelle_eggert@confencedirect.com or www.wlcf.org.

Pioneer National Camp—July 10-16. Gary Vanderheyden, 715-479-1811.

National OWLS convention—Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors. July 12-14. Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, Wis. Lester Ring, 507-354-4403.

Contemporary worship conference—Aug. 5-6. St. Mark, DePere, Wis. 920-336-2485 or www.stmark-depere.org.

Christian Life Resources national convention—Nov. 5. 8 A.M.-5 P.M. Dinner, 6:30 P.M. Four Points Sheraton, Milwaukee. 800-729-9535 or www.clrevents.com.

NAMES WANTED

- Vacaville, Calif.**—Armed forces personnel traveling through or stationed at Travis Air Force Base. St. John, Vacaville, Calif. Sunday worship, 10 A.M. Scott Stone, 707-469-1546.
The Villages, Fla.—The Open Bible (The Village Lutherans). Don Meier, 352-728-8492.
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.—Paul Meier, 203-378-1270.

GUEST PREACHER NEEDED

Missoula, Mont.—Mount Zion, July 10 and 17. Justin Cloute, 406-549-5337.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

- Biology professor**—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Must be WELS or ELS. Ph.D. preferred. Send resume, credentials, and VITA to Dr. John Kolander, Wisconsin Lutheran College, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226; john_kolander@wlc.edu.
Business manager/treasurer—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Responsibilities include budgets, accounting, treasury, buildings and grounds, information technology, human resources, risk management, and auxiliary. Send resume to David L. Martin, 11831 N Seminary Dr 65W, Mequon WI 53092; martind@wls.wels.net.
Preschool teacher—to assist director. Bethany, North Fort Myers, Fla. Janis Visaggio, 239-995-5437.
Theatre professor—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Teach Principles of theatre design: scenery and lighting, Stagecraft, Theatre management, and Costume history/design. Responsibilities include scenic design and construction, technical aspects of productions, and supervision of the scene shop and student workers. Desired candidate should have a terminal degree. Equivalent professional experience may be considered. Send VITA and letters of reference to Prof. Jan. Nelson, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226.
Summer paid staff—Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. June 5-Aug. 17. Counselors, head lifeguard, adventure coordinator, and junior staff director. Jason Wiechmann, 920-787-3202.
Volunteer health care staff—Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. RNs, doctors, or EMTs to work as health care directors for one week or half-week summer camp sessions. Jason Wiechmann, 920-787-3202.

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".

Crossword puzzle

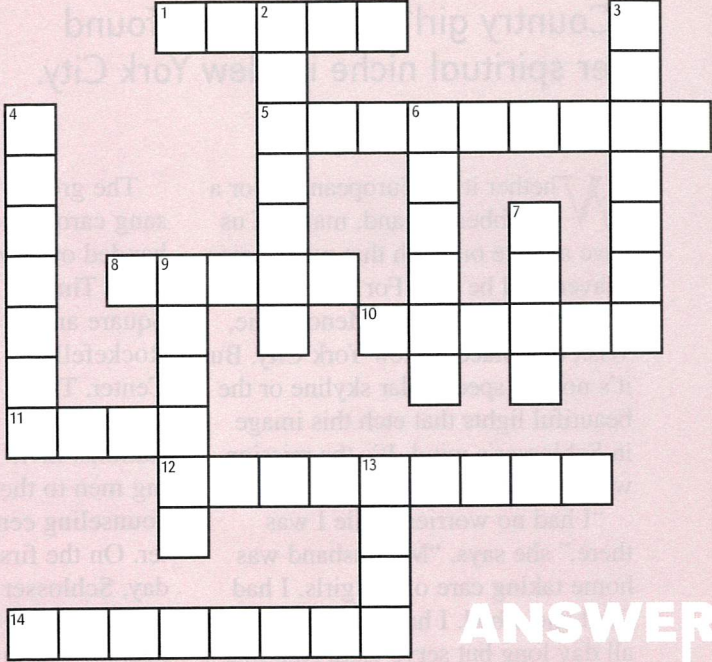
Test how well you know the women of the Bible. For more biblical crossword puzzles, visit www.wels.net/jumpword/crossword.

Across

- 1. A seller of purple cloth; Paul preached to her in Philippi
- 5. Married to Uriah, but committed adultery with King David
- 8. Daughter-in-law of Naomi; she stayed in Moab
- 10. Jesus raised her brother, Lazarus, from the dead
- 11. First wife of Jacob; he did not love her as much as he loved her sister
- 12. Mother of John the Baptist
- 14. Wife of Ananias.

Down

- 2. She led Israel to victory against the army of Jabin
- 3. In Joppa Peter raised her from the dead
- 4. Wife of King Ahab; she had Naboth killed to get his vineyard
- 6. Mother of Samuel
- 7. Great-grandmother of David
- 9. Second wife of Jacob; the wife that Jacob loved the most
- 13. A prophetess who thanked God for Jesus when he was presented in the temple



ANSWERS

Picture this



On May 24, students at Hope Christian School, Milwaukee, will perform a "Wild, Wild West" concert. The first-graders pictured here enjoy wearing these hats as they perform partner dances during music class. Students are learning about pioneer folk songs and dances from the Old West in preparation for their May performance.

*Ruth Balza
Fourth-grade and music teacher at Hope*

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.

POTLUCK POLL

What is your number one reason for reading *Forward in Christ* magazine?

Send in your answer (be specific!) by June 10 to *Forward in Christ* magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. The first 10 respondents will receive a *Forward in Christ* pocket calculator. We'll print the results in the August issue.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Sapphira (Acts 5) 12. Elizabeth (Luke 1:57-66) 11. Leah (Genesis 29) 10. Martha (John 11:1-44) 8. Orpah (Ruth 1) 5. Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) 1. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Anna (Luke 2:36-38) 9. Rachel (Genesis 29) 7. Ruth 6. Hannah (1 Samuel 1) 4. Jezebel (1 Kings 21) 3. Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43) 2. Deborah (Judges 4) |
|--|---|

DOWN

ACROSS

New York City: heaven on earth?

“Country girl” Pat Schlosser found her spiritual niche in New York City.

Laura C. Warmuth

Whether it’s a European city or a Caribbean island, many of us have a place on earth that we imagine heaven will be like. For Pat Schlosser, a member of St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis., that place is New York City. But it’s not the spectacular skyline or the beautiful lights that etch this image in Schlosser’s mind. It’s the mission work that she was a part of.

“I had no worries while I was there,” she says. “My husband was home taking care of the girls. I had food and a bed. I had nothing to do all day long but serve God. And that’s what I imagine heaven will be like.”

Schlosser, a rather reserved registered nurse, admits that she was not a likely candidate for a New York City adventure.

“I’m a country girl, and Eau Claire, Wis., seems big to me,” she says. “But like everyone else—life changed for me on Sept. 11.” So, the week before Christmas in 2001, Schlosser left her shopping undone to travel with 14 other WELS Kingdom Workers to New York City. She has returned six times.

On the first trip, the group went to help Sure Foundation, a WELS mission church in Queens, set up a grief and crisis counseling center and prepare for Christmas. From the raw grief in the eyes of a young fireman, to the Ground Zero workers who refused to go home while their buddies were still buried in dust, the need for comfort was everywhere. Although they received some training from the Red Cross and WELS counselors, Schlosser learned to trust in God and let her responses flow from her heart.

The group sang carols and handed out flyers at Times Square and Rockefeller Center. They visited fire stations, inviting men to the counseling center. On the first day, Schlosser panicked when she found herself lost at the Wall of Memories, but by midweek she was dancing to the music of street musicians while handing out flyers.

The few flyers that made it back to the counseling center made the efforts worthwhile. One woman who came in with a tattered flyer and tears in her eyes left with a Spanish Bible and subway fare (from volunteers’ purses) for the ride to church on Sunday. Another woman had been looking for “the rich man handing out \$100 bills,” but left with the much greater gift of God’s love.

Schlosser returned to New York City for the first anniversary of Sept. 11 and later to prepare for an Easter for Kids program. On three other trips she worked with Sure Foundation’s Art in the Park program. Her home congregation donated mission money from vacation Bible school one year and sent three teens to help the following year.

“By the third year we had a following of kids like the Pied Piper’s,” Schlosser recalls. She also remembers a homeless man on a nearby park bench singing the words to their theme song, “God is So Good.”



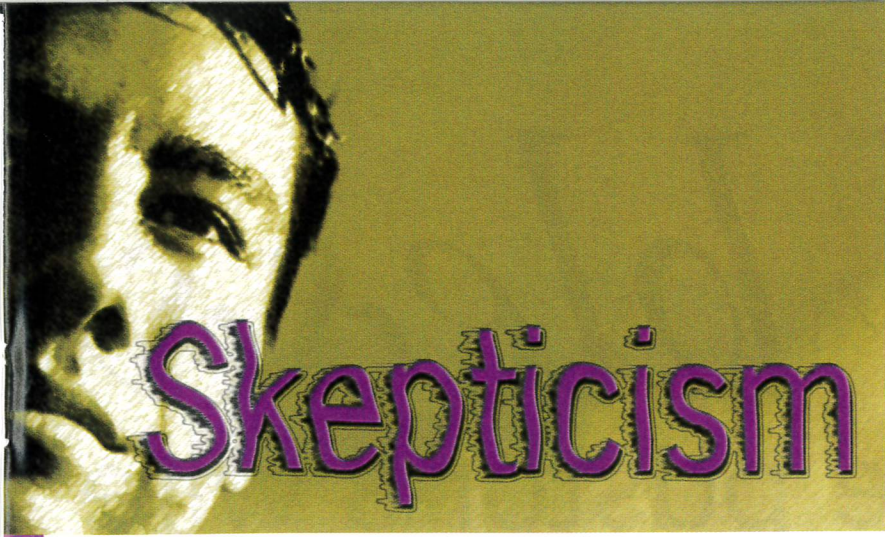
Pat Schlosser with one of the firemen she met in New York City. She was privileged to ring the fire station’s bell in memory of lost firefighters on the first anniversary of Sept. 11.

Schlosser grew to love the mission atmosphere, where every member is active and necessary for the church’s survival and growth. She was excited to bring her husband and two daughters to meet her New York City family in August 2003—which happened to be during the citywide blackout. Accepting bottled water from the Red Cross in Central Park, she thought, “What a humbling experience to be on the receiving end of aid.”

Schlosser’s seven trips to New York City have changed her life and touched many others. “I just want people to realize how easy it is to follow God’s call,” she says. “There are plenty of people stronger and more talented than I am, but God used me. Once you have had that incredible high you’ll want to go over and over again.”

Laura Warmuth is staff writer for Forward in Christ

Do you know someone who lives his faith in an extraordinary way? Send us a note that includes your name and contact information; the person’s name and contact information; and how this person serves God in extraordinary ways. Send the note to Forward in Christ, Attn: Stories of faith, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net.



The United States' two youngest generations harbor a great amount of skepticism while yearning for an authentic truth.

John M. Parlow

There seem to be as many labels for the people born since 1961 as there are books and articles written about them. These labels include "Generation X" or "13th Gen" (1961-1981) and "Millennials" or "Mosaics" (1982-2000).

Labels are inevitable, I suppose. Regardless of what you call them, these are generations dearly loved by a Savior who was sent to seek the lost.

Understanding these generations

But how do we reach the two youngest generations of Americans? The key is understanding that they are not "you" 25 years ago. There has been a shift in our culture. Just turn on your TV, and you will be hit with a wave of its reality.

One result of this shift is a loss of sure footing for many. America's two youngest generations harbor a great amount of skepticism. Our recent history hasn't helped. Many point to President Richard Nixon as a reason you can't trust politics, to the NASA space shuttles Challenger and Columbia as evidence that you can't trust science or technology, to President Clinton for the reason you can't trust words, to Enron and Global Crossing for the reason you can't trust the business world, to Pastor Jimmy Swaggart for the reason you can't trust organized religion, and to O.J. Simpson for the reason you can't trust the legal system.

And yet for all their skepticism, Gen-Xers and Mosaics are looking

for the same thing all of us yearn for: authentic, relevant, practical truth. A truth—characterized by genuine love—that we can bank our lives on as well as our families and relationships.

We can help people see the connections between truth and life that Jesus makes.

Reaching these generations

"I really appreciate the work Pastor Steve puts into his message," Stone said to the Klugs. "He's the first guy I can listen to for more than three minutes. As a kid all I remember was hearing the preacher say over and over again, 'You are sinners who don't deserve anything, but . . . Jesus died for you.' Okay, but so what? What does that look like for me on Monday in my cubicle or Thursday night out on the town? This guy really makes you think about your relationship with God. And he doesn't stand there and preach at you. He's up there, talking to you like he's a friend who sitting in my family room."

"We thought you might like to come and check him out," Connie said. "Bill and I think he connects the Bible with real life."

Connecting Jesus with truth

Christianity isn't abstract doctrine. The Son of God became fully human to bring truth to life. He saved us from sin now, not just for eternity. We can help people see the connections between truth and life that Jesus makes. We need to offer Gen-Xers and Mosaics a truth that works in the maze of relationships, one that provides strength under pressure and soothes the pain of daily life.

Emphasize the sense of meaning and purpose that comes with faith in Jesus. We have a place in the family of God. We have a purpose for existing in this world. We are not adrift in the cosmos; we are on a pathway that has been laid out for us by God.

Gen-Xers and Mosaics need the tools to help them deal with their families and friends. They need mentors who can model for them what healthy adulthood is like. They need to see authenticity and transparency in Christian relationships so they will know how to relate to others. They need to know that they can find the answer to all these wants and needs in the Rock of their salvation, Jesus—even as culture shifts.

John Parlow is pastor at St. Mark, DePere, Wisconsin.

This is the first of a four-part series about how to minister to Gen-Xers and Mosaics.

God bless the pastor's wife

The life of a pastor's wife requires an attitude of service—and a healthy sense of humor.

Laurie Biedenbender

Thirteen-year-old Chad was camping with a church friend and his friend's parents when he got an earful. As the campfire popped and sparked, the parents started telling Chad about their life "before"—the alcohol, the living together, the pregnancy—the empty life they'd had before becoming Christians.

"Why are they telling me this?" Chad wondered to himself.

The answer came. "We want you to know how important your family has been to our lives. When we joined your dad's church, we not only heard God's Word from his pulpit, we also saw God's Word in action in your family."

Chad listened, humbled and embarrassed, as they talked about his parents, his home, his upbringing—little things he'd taken for granted, but this observant family had not.

When he told his parents about the conversation back in his own kitchen, his dad turned to his mom and said an interesting thing: "This isn't about me. It's about you. You're the one who sets the tone in our house. You're the one who keeps things going."

The story is true, although the names and details have been changed to protect the humble pastor's wife who would never have passed on the tale without my prodding.

In fact, every situation you'll read here is true, but the pastors' wives I talked to were ever so reluctant



ILLUSTRATION BY ED KOEHLER

Here's to the pastor's wife who is expected to play piano,

to call attention to their role. As one said, "We just do what every member should do."

Here's to pastors' wives

As Mother's Day approaches, let's take a moment to pay tribute to that special member of the congregation, the highly visible, highly valuable, underappreciated, and underpaid pastor's wife.

Here's to the pastor's wife who's supposed to know the answer to everything: "What's your husband preaching on? Who's teaching the preschoolers today? What's your husband got scheduled Tuesday at 8? What does your husband think about the Christians being persecuted in the Sudan? Where's the creamer?"

Here's to the pastor's wife who is staff minister and church secretary spun into one, though neither the budget nor the church yearbook mentions her.



Here's to the pastor's wife who has to wrestle with two preschoolers and a baby single-handedly every Sunday morning—and still be expected to explain that slightly obscure reference from Isaiah her husband mentioned in the sermon.

Here's to the pastor's wife named Linda who is willing to answer to "Beth," Beth being the name of the previous pastor's wife.

Here's to the pastor's wife who understands there are times when the congregation comes before the family, and she and the kids should just eat the roast and mashed potatoes by themselves.

Here's to the pastor's wife who listens to every sermon a few times before Sunday morning and uses just the right tone to say, "Honey, nobody says 'as it were' and 'if you will' in real life."

Here's to the pastor's wife who plays shock absorber, taking in her

husband's moods and learning when she should ask and when she should just let him stew.

Here's to the pastor's wife who accepts the snubs and sneers of parishioners who are angry at her husband for reasons she'll never know.



Here's to the pastor's wife who can't go grocery shopping without running into a member who makes small talk while taking an inventory of her cart. ("She had three boxes of Tuna Helper!")

Here's to the pastor's wife who learns to hang her underwear behind the sheets on the clothesline.

Here's to the pastor's wife who has to tell her children at bedtime, "Daddy's busy with the building project. But you might see him Friday night if you happen to wake up from a bad dream around eleven. And don't forget, he'll be speaking to all of us Sunday morning!"

Here's to the pastor's wife who knows everyone is screening her teens for tattoos, purple highlights, extra piercings, or anything they perceive as smacking of sin.

Here's to the pastor's wife who can ignore the stares while gently guiding her teens to adulthood.



Here's to the pastor's wife who is expected to play piano, direct choir, teach Sunday school, head up Ladies' Aid, and drive the bus to the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society conference in Des Moines—and says yes.

Here's to the pastor's wife who says no.

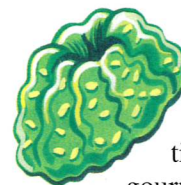
Here's to the pastor's wife who walks out of her bathroom wrapped in a towel, only to find herself face-to-face with the chairman of the building and grounds committee, who has dropped in to check the parsonage thermostat.

Here's to the pastor's wife who endures the vintage 1972 orange kitchen in the parsonage because she's afraid that if she asks for new paint, she'll be considered materialistic.

Here's to the pastor's wife who works a day job, even though she's not a teacher or a nurse, and is unfazed when a member says, "I was so surprised to find Pastor home all by himself making his own lunch."

Here's to the pastor's wife who practices friendship evangelism in the health club hot tub. ("My husband? Oh, he's pastor over at Divine Word. You should stop in some time.")

Here's to the pastor's wife whose Sunday supper is interrupted by three phone calls, each of them announcing a different death in the congregation.



Here's to the pastor's wife who learns to appreciate Jell-O in its various manifestations, who can make a gourmet dish with a can of cream of chicken soup and a package of angel hair, who doesn't mention to the church kitchen ladies that their famous "St. Matt's Easter Brunch Eggs" is right out of Betty Crocker, and who learns to make *kuchen und krumkake* just to fit in.

Here's to the pastor's wife who feels underqualified, guilty even, trying to be the Superwoman she feels the congregation expects.

And here's to the pastor's wife who loves her role and her congregation, would never complain, and can only say, "Thank you, Lord, for this life."

Here's to you, pastors' wives. God bless you this Mother's Day. And, by the way, your *apfelkuchen* smells delicious.

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

direct choir, teach Sunday school, head up Ladies' Aid . . .



Carl R. Gungl

What is it with flowers?

What is it with flowers? Flowers on a hospital night stand, flowers as a hostess gift, flowers for Valentine's Day, your wedding day, the anniversary of your wedding—what is it with flowers?

We know, ultimately, it's not the gift but the giver that's important. But when the gift is flowers, why do they brighten someone's day, gladdening someone's heart? What is it with flowers?

It might be the fragrance. But then, again, maybe not. Some people have an allergic reaction to flowers. On Easter Sunday, with the chancel filled with lilies, one of my first vicars felt his face flush and his throat grow dry. He could hardly speak—on Easter Sunday. The sweet fragrance of lilies sickened him.

If it isn't the fragrance, could it be their colorful brightness? Yes, it's possible. Experts tell us certain colors produce a positive response in certain individuals. But what about those who are color blind? What is it with flowers for them?

Could it be the new life they symbolize? As every farmer and home gardener knows, the growing cycle adds a spring to a person's step. A seemingly lifeless seed, buried in the earth, gives birth to new life. A seed dies, Jesus says in John 12:24. But, in dying, it gives birth to many seeds, all of which may grow, producing fruit and flowers.

Jesus, in using this picture, was speaking about the saving effects of his death. "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). He was lifted up from the earth, hung upon the cross, buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Because of it all, we follow him, rising from death in the earth, like the flowers, to shine brilliantly in heaven above.

God's creative genius, from dead seeds, produces living flowers. God's gracious genius, from a single seed's death—his own dear Son—produces much fruit, the potential for a happy, eternal life for everyone through faith in him.

As long as the earth endures, the Lord says, seedtime and harvest will not cease. And so flowers, visually, display the faithfulness of our God. Hope for the sick, God-blessed love between man and woman, all are visual flowers, the fruit of God's love for us. That's what it is with flowers. They can well be symbols of God's fruitful, enduring love for us.

So much we touch turns to dust and ashes. Our best laid plans often, sadly, go astray. Consequently, our days, at least in our minds, can be dark and dreary.

Children die in the prime of life. The golden years are hardly that for many seniors. Breadwinners stand in bread lines, depending on public charity. Family budgets, church and synod budgets, too, show red ink.

We all could use some cheering. Flowers might do it. But, once again, it's not the gift but the giver. And the giver here is God.

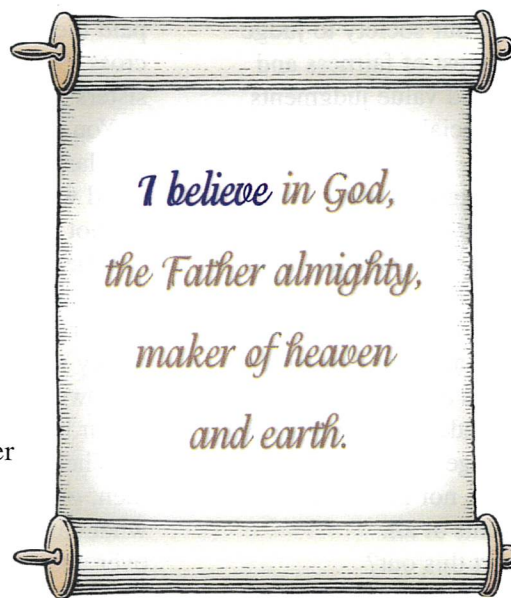
"Consider how the lilies grow," Jesus once suggested. They're more splendid than King Solomon, in all of his regal robes, ever was. And, added Jesus, making his applications for us, "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!" Read it all in Luke 12:27-29.

That's what it is with flowers. They're small, temporary symbols of the greatness of God's enduring, loving care for us. That's what it is with flowers.

Lessons from the Creed

What does it mean to have faith?

Charles F. Degner



The Apostles' Creed was not written by the apostles but is a summary of what the apostles taught. It apparently developed as part of the confession made when someone was baptized. It shows how important it is for Christians to confess their faith to one another so that they can be confident that they share the same faith.

A definition of faith

The word "creed" comes from the Latin word "credo," which means "I believe." What does it mean to believe or to have faith? Hebrews 11:1 gives us a definition of faith: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Doubt is not being sure of what we hope for. Unbelief is being certain that what we do not see does not exist. Faith has a home in our new man. Unbelief and doubt reside in our old Adam. Faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Unbelief comes naturally, because we were born with it (Ephesians 2:3). As our faith increases, our unbelief and doubts decrease.

Faith and doubt collide

In the story of Jesus' healing a demon-possessed boy in Mark 9:17-29, Jesus rebuked his disciples as an "unbelieving generation." Later, he tells them that this kind of demon can only be driven out by prayer. The disciples failed to heal the boy because they gave up too soon.

They didn't persist in asking the Lord to heal this boy. Trusting in God means that we do not give up on him or his promises.

As our faith increases, our unbelief and doubts decrease.

The father of the child in the story also showed a lack of faith, or the presence of doubt, in his heart. When the disciples could not help him, he brought his son to Jesus. He said, "But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

The unbelieving old Adam in us likes the word "if." The word "if" hints that not all things are possible, as Jesus says. The word "if" says that either God can't help us, because he isn't really almighty, or God won't help us, because he doesn't care about us. Notice that

when the devil tempted Jesus (Matthew 4), he used the word "if" in all three of his temptations.

When Jesus challenged this man to believe in him, the man bared his soul to Jesus and offered a simple prayer: "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief." We know exactly how the man felt. We believe in the forgiveness of sins, but our heart sometimes doesn't feel forgiven.

We trust that God will provide for us, but we worry about our futures. We look forward to Jesus' return on the last day. Yet, we are afraid at the same time. The faith of our new man and the doubts of our sinful nature are incompatible roommates in the same heart.

What did Jesus do? Jesus healed the boy. He responded to the man's faith, and not to his unbelief. It is comforting to know that Jesus' compassion is greater than our doubts, and that even if we believe only a little, he will still save us. At the same time, we want to grow every day in our faith by learning more of Jesus and studying the Word. It's a lot more fun to believe than it is to doubt.

Lord, I believe. Help me overcome my unbelief!

Contributing editor Charles Degner is pastor at St. Peter, St. Paul, Minnesota.

This is the first of a seven-part series on the first article of the Apostles' Creed.



Gary S. Baumler

Judge not

“You’re just being judgmental.” Those words can quickly stifle any meaningful conversation about values. It is taboo in our society to judge others. In the interest of fairness and tolerance, we forbid value judgments about lifestyles, social action, creeds.

“Do not judge.”

I have been struggling lately to wrap my thoughts around that charge. Isn’t that exactly what Jesus said (Matthew 7:1)? Still, the spirit in which it is applied often excuses everything that seems un-Jesus-like. Besides, even accusing someone of being judgmental is a judgment. And those who are first to condemn judging are often the first also to judge me and my values.

It isn’t possible, nor is it wise, to make no judgments at all.

So, can we sort this out?

I judge, correctly, that it is unsafe to run into a burning building, but I can’t judge the father who rushes in to save his child trapped there. I judge that murder is wrong, but I cannot judge what is in the heart of every person who has ever killed another human being. The Lord Jesus has ordered me to beware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15), which demands judging their teachings, but he doesn’t say that I need to become a crusading zealot to comply.

Clearly, some judging is good and necessary, but not all. What are some things Jesus has done to help us understand? He judged the unbelieving Pharisees publicly—called them hypocrites. He judged the money changers in the temple, chasing them from the premises for their acts of desecration. But he also associated with known lowlifes: crooked tax collectors and adulterers. When asked to judge a real-life case of adultery, he said, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:1-11). Neither did he condemn the woman but told her to turn away from her sin.

Most important, Jesus did not condemn us either for our sins. How easy

that would have been for the Son of God! Instead, following the plan of his Father, he took our sins on himself and paid the penalty for them on the cruel cross. Now he calls us his brothers and sisters. Now he calls us his friends.

You need to ponder long and hard on that last thought if you want to understand what it means for us Christians to “not judge.”

When Jesus says “Do not judge,” he is warning against hypocrisy. He is calling for love. He follows up by telling us to pay more attention to the “plank” in our own eye than the “speck of sawdust” in our brother’s eye.

Whether we judge or not is a matter, then, of spirit. We must watch out for what can harm us. Scripture warns us over and over again to avoid teachings that can undermine the gospel and wreck our faith. We must identify those who bring unbiblical and extra-biblical teachings into the church and avoid them. We must not sit silent while the unbelieving world insists that we not judge their tenets of unbelief.

But I sometimes see another spirit that surfaces between us and our brothers and sisters in Christ, a spirit of distrust and suspicion. It’s a spirit that assumes the worst instead of the best, that looks first to find fault, that likes to ask what you are trying to hide. It’s a “judgmental” spirit, the kind our Savior warns against. You will see it spring up in congregations, between congregations, and on the synodical level.

Where I see that spirit, I hear Jesus saying, “Do not judge.” Rather, remembering from where we have come, let’s proceed always in love. Let our mindset be one of forgiveness, not vindictiveness. Let us not constantly be looking to identify the faults of others around us, but let’s work ever harder to address our own faults. Let’s come together and get on with the Lord’s work.

*A song for
the heart
that is . . .*

lonely

*anxious about
finances*

*frustrated with
the wicked*

*anxious about
the future*

feeling guilty

fearful of death

*seeking purpose
in life*

*longing to be
close to Christ*

*seeking Christian
friendship*

peaceful

joyful

*thankful for
God's Word*

Songs for the heart

Donald W. Patterson

Have you ever watched as a loved one tolerated a chronic pain for weeks without going to the doctor, then once he finally did go, his problem was easily solved? After your loved one finally got relief, he was probably embarrassed that he waited and suffered so long.

People are sometimes the same way about their guilt. They put up with guilt over sins for years without getting help. Some folks won't look for help because they don't think there is any out there. Others think that confessing their sin will just make matters worse. Ignorantly, they think that living with their guilt is not really as bad as letting it out of their heart to deal with it. So, they silently suffer in fear that their secret

will someday be discovered. They wish they could go back and change things. But they can't. They desperately want peace, but it eludes them. They need to go to the heavenly doctor and let him cure them of their sin once and for all. Instead, they suffer and hide in their shame.

They are not alone. Shakespeare said it long ago, "Conscience makes a coward of us all." If your heart is suffering from guilt over sins, there is a Psalm for you. It is Psalm 32. David wrote it, probably after Nathan confronted him about Uriah and Bathsheba. In this Psalm he leads the guilty soul to contrition over sins and faith in God's forgiveness. The result is a heart set free.

Featured verses: Psalm 32

¹Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ²Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. *Selah*

⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

⁸I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. ⁹Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. ¹⁰Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.

Points to ponder

- When you read verses 1 and 2, what do you find is the only way to get resolution for your guilt?
- How does knowing Jesus Christ personally get rid of the guilt the way that David describes?
- Look at verse 3. What are the results of harboring guilt in our souls?
- How does Jesus lead his church to relieve sinners of guilt the way Psalm 32 describes?
- In what way are we like horses and mules if we will not come near to God to confess our sins?
- How can we help each other learn to trust God enough to receive his unfailing love?

Treasures to share

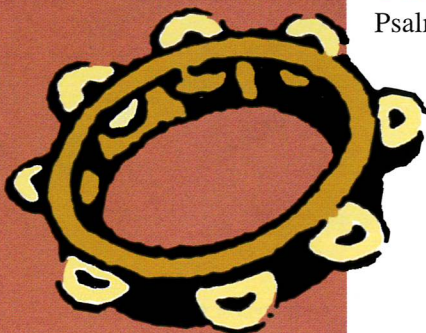
- Memorize Psalm 32 and quote it to yourself each morning as you get out of bed.
- Get with a friend and compare Psalm 32 to Romans 4:4-8. What lessons for peace are there?

Other Scripture verses about God's remedy for guilt

Psalm 51, Romans 8:1, 1 John 1:8-9, Psalm 103, John 20:19-23

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

Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.wels.net, jumpword "fic", and click on "Songs for the heart." Answers will be available after May 5.





God uses mothers to prepare their children for life eternal and life on earth.

Daron J. Lindemann

An old Spanish proverb observes: "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy."

So, thank you, mothers. On behalf of all clergy, thank you.

The life of a mother

We pastors wake up every day ready and willing to do what we've been trained to do: serve our flock. You wake up every day ready and willing—even though you've had no formal training whatsoever—to take care of your little lambs, your straying sheep, your fickle flock.

We use some time each day to prepare a sermon for our congregation on Sunday. You preach every day—most often without much preparation—when you juggle the kids and the dog and the cell phone and use the other hand to pack lunches and fold underwear and wipe runny noses. And you do it all never thinking of what you'll get out of it, never hoping for recognition, never waiting for a paycheck. Your sermons tell of Christ-like love, humility, and generosity. They say lots about Christian perseverance, hope, and faith.

We put on our robes to cover up out-of-fashion ties so that our congregation focuses not on us but Jesus. You take off your make-up and any veneer of self-righteousness so that your children see you as you really are. Sometimes you holler. Sometimes you cry. Sometimes you laugh. Sometimes you scold. Sometimes

you kiss boo-boos. Sometimes you hum or pray or sing. And your children see Jesus. In you.

We teach our congregation once, maybe twice, a week about the goodness and guidance of Jesus. You teach your children about Jesus with every decision they see you make, every TV show they notice you watch, every Bible passage magnet they read posted on the refrigerator, every voice inflection they hear you use when you're talking about the weird neighbors, every prayer you say with them at bedtime, every one of their "why" questions you answer with a hint of God's handiwork.

A noble calling

Ours is a noble calling, mothers. God puts us both—clergy and mothers—in a certain place, for a certain time, with certain opportunities, to use certain gifts. Our assignment from God is the same: to prepare for this life those whom God gives to us, by first preparing them for eternal life. We take hands by first shaping hearts. You, mothers, are very dear to those under your care. Probably more dear than you know.

So, on this Mothers' Day we clergy just want to say, "Thank you, mothers," for helping to make our job so much easier. And, if you have an extra minute and you don't mind, would it be possible for a few hundred people from our congregation to live in your house for a while?

Daron Lindemann is pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Prayer: Gracious God, when we think of or look at our mothers, let us remember you and your gracious providing with appreciation that encourages mothers in their special calling. Give all mothers a renewed vigor to be faithful in the role you have given them and to be successful in preparing children for eternal and earthly life. Amen.

