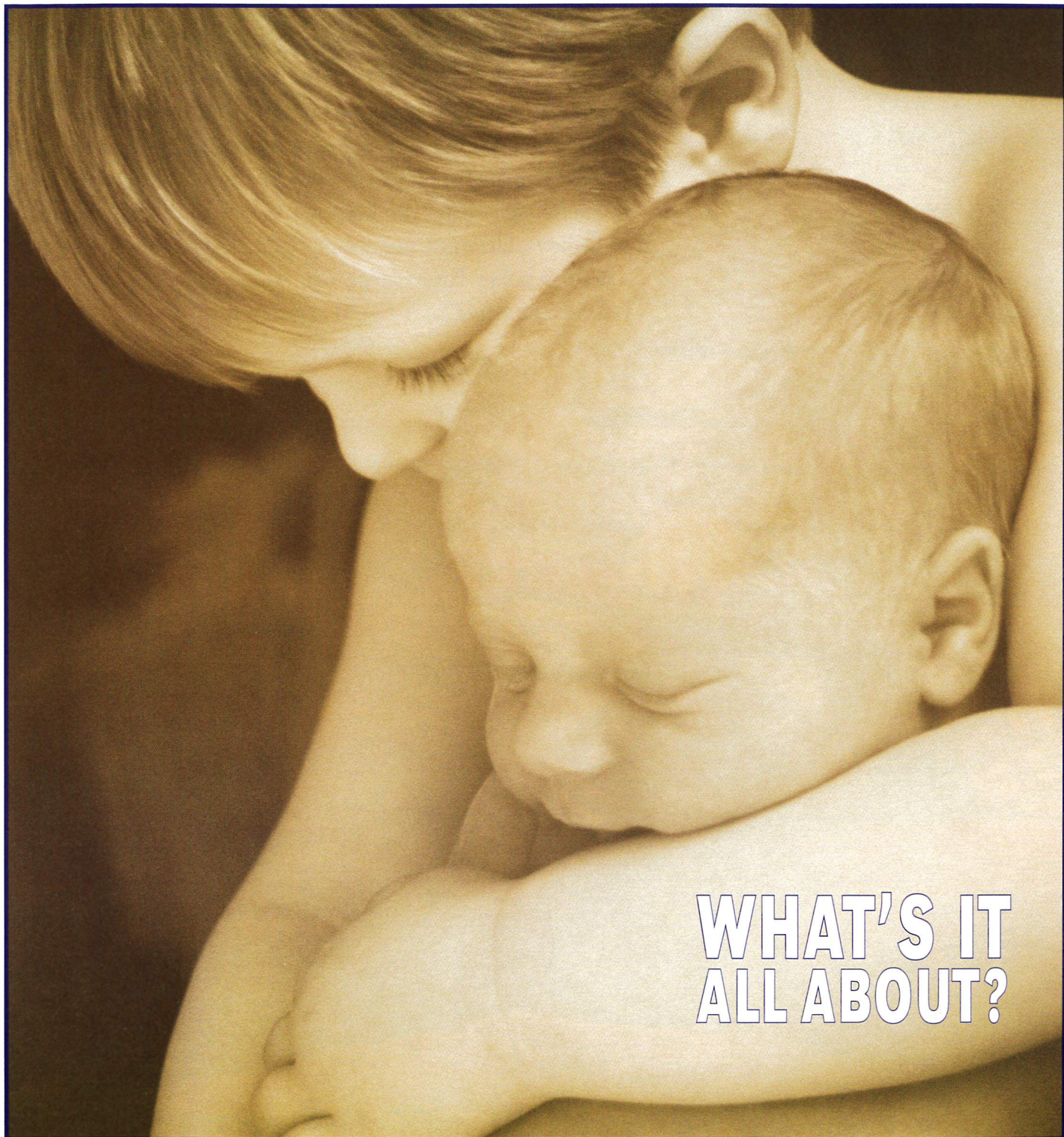


WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES • PREDESTINATION

JUNE 2005

Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness

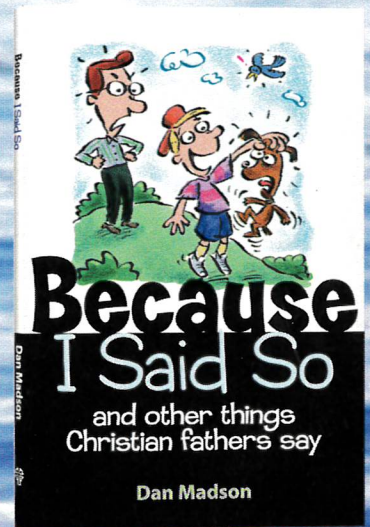


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really all about.”



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Forward in Christ

† The official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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works!

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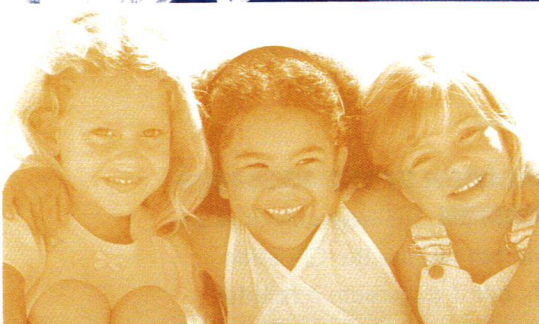
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The Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD) is a unit of the WELS Board for Parish Services and as such, exists to encourage and assist WELS congregations and parents as they nurture youth in the Word from birth through high school.

Joel A. Nelson, *Administrator*
Robert Mateske, *Administrative Assistant*

 **Youth Discipleship**
A ministry of WELS Parish Services



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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WHAT'S INSIDE by Nicole Balza

June is known as the month of weddings, making it the perfect time to reexamine God's plan for marriage and the roles that he expects husbands and wives to fill. Victor Vieth takes a humorous—yet thoughtful—approach to his responsibilities as a husband in "Sharing spaghetti" (p. 14). Ruth Westendorf offers us an honest look at the struggle that she's had to fulfill her responsibilities as a wife in "Following God's plans" (p. 16). Although it may be tempting to read one and not the other, I think that it is only after you read both that God's plans for Christian marriage really come together.

I also want to call your attention to President Gurgel's article, "Be prepared to give an answer" (p. 32). This is the first of a three-part series that President Gurgel will be writing in his monthly column, "From the President's Office." The series is going to highlight three of the key strategies that are being used by WELS leaders to carry out the synod's North American Outreach emphasis. More about these strategies will also be covered in next month's "News," which will give you a sneak peek at the major issues being discussed at this summer's synod convention from July 25-29.



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TSUNAMI

I appreciated “Tsunami mystery” [March]. Why did God allow the tsunami to happen? Several great answers were given. The Bible makes it clear that victims in tragedies aren’t any worse sinners than anyone else. When the wall of bricks (not water) fell down and killed 18, Jesus said, “But unless you repent, you too will all perish” (Luke 13:3). Sometimes God allows tragedies because in his love he wants all of us to repent and trust in him. As author Chris Pluger wrote, “The angels in heaven rejoice over one such sinner who repents” (see also Romans 8:28, 2 Peter 3:9, Hebrews 12:10). God remains a God of love. Period.

*Keith Tullberg
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

PIETISM

In reading *Forward in Christ* this year I have noticed a renewed emphasis on the dangers of pietism. Prof. Richard Gurgel suggested it was a major weakness in Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life* [April 2004]. Prof. John Brenner’s series [Jan.-April 2005] reviewed its development and then concluded that nearly everyone in the Evangelical community is guilty of it. I understand the dangers of pietism (which is not to be confused with sincere Christian living) and its history in the development of Lutheranism. But my question is this: Are we guilty of it when we generally suggest everyone else is?

*Jason Nelson
East Troy, Wisconsin*

COMPLIMENTS

I look forward to each issue of *Forward in Christ* and read it from cover to cover. Our women’s mid-week Bible study group uses the interactive Bible studies, retrieving back issues from the archives. Now in the March issue, you have included “Bits o’ the Bible” (Bible trivia would be a mis-

nomer, indeed). What fun! Please make it a regular feature!

*Neola Raasch
Baxter, Minnesota*

GOD’S PLAN

“A peek at the plan” was an excellent article [April]. It was timely. My congregation members wrestle with this topic. It addressed various sides of the topic of “trying to figure out God’s plan for my life.” It was very succinct and sound. The illustration at the end of the article was memorable and to the point. I plan to send a copy of the article to my local Evangelical Free Church pastor. His church would not agree with this article, and I hope it might start a good dialogue between us.

*Christopher Doerr
Waupun, Wisconsin*

UNBAPTIZED BABIES

Thank you for tackling the difficult topic of where unbaptized babies spend eternity [“Question & answer,” April]. Prof. Richard Gurgel’s article showed thoughtfulness and was careful not to step beyond Scripture.

I have [a] concern about the article, however. . . . Your article seems to make a distinction between the power God’s Word has by itself and the power God’s Word has in baptism. Where in the Bible does it say that babies are brought to faith more effectively through baptism than they are through God’s Word apart from baptism? What did Jesus do with babies? He “blessed them.” He spoke gospel promises to them and counted on that to work faith in the babies’ hearts, even though it wasn’t baptism.

Your article gives the impression that the Bible doesn’t say how babies can be saved before they are baptized, that the only sure way to save babies is through baptism. If parents use the gospel in their home and around their baby and the baby dies before baptism, why should the pastor’s funeral sermon not say,

“You told your baby about its Savior many times daily in your home. You will see your baby in heaven”? Wouldn’t that statement be scriptural? Luther says in the Large Catechism section on baptism, “But where the name of God is, there must also be life and salvation.”

*Christopher Doerr
Waupun, Wisconsin*

Prof. Richard Gurgel responds: Luke 18 clearly displays infant faith, yet we don’t know precisely what Jesus did when he blessed those infants. Certainly the article didn’t intend to deny that the same gospel powerfully works in both baptism and the spoken Word—Christian parents will apply both “from infancy” (2 Timothy 3:15). However, we must be cautious lest we speak of the spoken Word working faith in an almost mechanical fashion.

I appreciate the thorough, faithful presentation about unbaptized babies. I find comfort about the fate of deceased unbaptized babies when I consider this verse from Scripture: “Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost” (Matthew 18:14). And unlike the situation with adults, God is the only one making decisions about the way unbaptized infants will go.

*Earl Reichert
New London, Wisconsin*

CORRECTION

In the editorial “I’m not hurting you, am I?” (May, p. 8), the sentence “My desires are okay as long as they remain desires and not actions” should have been printed with quotation marks followed by “Or not?” It was meant to indicate what a person might be incorrectly thinking.

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*.

Success

God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Psalm 46:5

Peter A. Panitzke

There are two graduations in my household this spring. Our daughter graduates from college and our son from high school.

In this verse from Psalm 46, God the Holy Spirit makes a promise that every graduate will be successful.

But what is success?

Success can be a moving target

As a new grandfather, I am reminded that success is a moving target. For my new grandson, success is finally getting out that burp so he can relax for a time. But soon the target of success moves. Success will be rolling over, then crawling, then walking.

That's the trouble with success. It is always moving. We accomplish one goal, and then it is on to the next. A student may be successful in high school or college, but then the next challenge is to succeed in business. Yesterday's successes are great, but there is always more to do.

Finally, God may humble me in the future as I age. I may become like my new grandson, with success measured in the ability to recognize the face of a loved one or to be able to stand another day.

Success can be enduring

One measure of success doesn't change throughout the years. True success is glorifying Jesus in this life and forever in the next.

If this is the measure of success, then the promise of our psalm assures us that we can all be successful: "God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day."

"God is within her." This promise is given to God's church. If you are a member of God's church, you are

never alone. God is within you. He assures you that he "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). His power is at work within you!

Therefore, you cannot fall. That doesn't mean that every business adventure will prosper. That doesn't mean that your health will never fail. But it does mean that your labor in the Lord will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). The Lord always knows your efforts. God will use our outward successes and failures to glorify his name.

"God will help her at break of day." This promise also sustains us when success in this world seems to be slipping away. Sometimes we will be like a watchman on the city walls of ancient Jerusalem. We will peer into the night and hope for daylight and safety to come quickly. Hold on. The day is coming when you will see God's help. This confidence will be seen by others. God will be glorified even in those darkest times just before the dawn.

That is true success: to let your confidence in the Lord be evident in this life and to receive the crown of eternal life.

This success is available to every graduate this spring. Sadly, many will focus on some moving target of success. They will not see that real success is staying connected to Jesus.



This is my prayer for the graduates in my household and for all of us. Cling to the promise that God gives his church. To be successful, remain a part of that church. Spend time strengthening your relationship with Jesus. Know his forgiveness and his love. Then face your future with this confidence: "I will not fail. God will be with me. He will be glorified in my life, and he will keep me unto everlasting life."

That's ultimate success.

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

“How awesome is this place!”

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

After a long, dry sermon, the minister announced that he wished to meet with the church board in the sacristy following the service. The first man to arrive in the sacristy was a stranger.

“You must have misunderstood my announcement,” the minister said. “This is a meeting of the board.”

“I know,” the man said, “and if there is anyone here this morning who was more bored than I was, I would like to meet him!”

Granted, some sermons, to quote an old John Denver song, “are diamonds and some are stones.” But a person should never come away from God’s house feeling bored. Whether the preacher left you spellbound or just plain left you after the first paragraph, whether the organist sounded like E. Power Biggs or like he was playing in the cracks between the keys, a Christian ought to go home from church every Sunday saying as Jacob did, “How awesome is this place!” (Genesis 28:17).

Why did Jacob say that? Bethel^{*} was just a pile of stones in the middle of nowhere. There were no hymns, there was no organist, no choir. Jacob left Bethel saying, “How awesome is this place!” because there he realized that he was in trouble, and there he heard God’s promise of forgiveness.

At Bethel, Jacob, having had to flee a father whom he had deceived and a brother whom he had swindled out of a birthright and who wanted to kill him, realized just how much in trouble he really was and how much he needed God’s help.

Where else but in God’s house will you learn how much trouble you are in as a sinner and how much you desperately need God’s help? Don’t count on anything making you aware of that in a world that can’t determine right from wrong. You’ll only hear that in God’s house.

So whether the sermon was a diamond or a stone, whether the soloist carried you to new

spiritual heights or couldn’t carry a tune in a bushel basket, you and I should be able to leave our Bethel and say, “How awesome is this place!” because there, by the confession of our sins and our exposure to the Law of God through the Scriptures, we once again are reminded how much trouble we are in without our Lord.

When Jacob lay down his head on that pile of stones in the middle of nowhere, he had a dream. In that dream he saw a stairway that went from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. Through that dream God showed Jacob that, despite all his foolish and sinful actions that left him hightailing out of town with nothing but the clothes on his back, God’s promise was still there. Is it any wonder he exclaimed, “How awesome is this place!”? There, at Bethel, he heard God’s promise of the Savior.

Where else will you hear that but in your Bethel? Where else will you find the peace of knowing that, no matter what stupid and sinful things you have done to deserve God’s wrath and punishment, the promise is still there . . . the promise that for the sake of the bitter sufferings and death of your Lord, God will remember your sins no more.

So whether the sermon was one that piqued your interest or one that made you only peek at your watch, whether the worship raised you out of the pew for a “Praise the Lord” or just barely raised your head out of the hymnal, you should never go away from church feeling like you just attended a meeting of the bored. Like Jacob, you should always be able to say when you leave your Bethel, “How awesome is this place!”

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

^{*}Bethel means “house of God.”

You should never go away from church feeling like you just attended a meeting of the bored.



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Predestination

I don't see how the doctrine of election is a comforting doctrine to us Lutherans when we can never be sure that we have been predestined until after we have died. Any insight?

You are correct that we cannot peer back into eternity—before the creation of the world—and see God calling our name as he elects in the gospel of Christ those who will be his. God has not given us such knowledge. Neither can we gaze ahead into the glories of heaven and see ourselves basking in the eternal light of the Lamb. That, too, is veiled from our eyes.

However, that does not mean we cannot find any comfort from the doctrine of election until we find ourselves in heaven for eternity. Nothing that Scripture reveals is useless, or God would not have revealed or inspired it. That assurance we have in 2 Timothy where Paul tells us, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (3:16). The fact that the apostles so often address their words to “God’s elect” tells us that this doctrine is “useful” for our comfort already now.

Although we cannot peer into eternity in either direction, we can find comfort in the doctrine of election when we see God doing in our lives right now what he has promised to do for his elect. Look at Romans 8:29,30: “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Some theologians have called this the beautiful, unbreakable “golden chain” of our election. Notice that it begins in eternity before time began with our election, and it ends for all eternity in the glory of heaven.

Now it is true that I cannot peer into eternity at either end—that God has hidden from us. Yet, notice that we can see God doing in our lives precisely what he promised to do for those he predestined in eternity and will glorify for all eternity. He has called us to faith in his Son’s life, death, and resurrection for us. He has taught us to trust that since he has declared the world not guilty (justified) in his Son, he has most certainly justified us.

That is the key to our comfort in election! Because these are “unbreakable links” in the “golden chain” of our election—forged in the grace of God to us in Jesus—what God is doing in our lives right now is evidence of what he did for us in eternity. It is also evidence of what he will do for us in all eternity.

Allow me to translate the Greek of Romans 8:30 literally: “Those God foreknew, those very same ones he called. Those he called, those very same ones he justified. Those he justified, those very same ones he glorified.” The inspired words of Paul weave an unbreakable chain of God’s grace to us from eternity, through time, and into eternity.

Marvel in the grace of God to you in the gospel of Christ right now. And then marvel still more as it opens up an eternal vista of mercy and grace that extends from eternity to eternity. There is our comfort!

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.



What's

New church members and their sick baby

What's it all about? What's with North American outreach? How are you supposed to reach people, anyway?

Maybe I've gotten ahead of myself.

What's it all about? What's so special about Easter, anyhow? Isn't it the same songs and the same sermon?

Once in a while something happens that makes all of these questions become clear. We get to see the results of God's master plan, a plan that he drafted in the sealed backrooms of eternity. We don't get to see the plan. We may not even know how we fit into the plan. But by seeing the results, we understand for a brief moment what it is all about.

I'd like to share one of those moments with you.

Four years ago, a young family visited Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa. I remember it vividly, as we don't have many people just walk in the front doors for no reason. I stood after the worship service visiting with the McGlothlens—Scott, Roxanne, and baby Jack. As I remember, they showed up because of Jack. They figured that it was time to start finding out what it was all about. They would find out, all too quickly.

It took some time, but after a year and a half, Scott and Roxanne completed a Bible introduction class. During this time, Jack and Scott were baptized. Scott and Roxanne were confirmed in spring 2003 and received into membership.

Over the next year and a half, their attendance was sporadic. On occasion, I'd get Scott to invite me as his guest to the "Y" so I could "teach him" how to play basketball. Once in awhile, I'd do him the same favor on a golf course. Occasionally, we'd get the families together for a barbecue. Of course, I loved the occasions when they would show up for worship on Sunday. They were around just enough to know that God was there if they ever needed to know what it was all about.

In September 2004, Scott and Roxanne went to the hospital one night, excited at the prospect of coming home with their second child. Things didn't go according to that plan. Baby Ross had a severe case of hydrocephalus—water on his brain. There appeared to be no brain activity. The doctors expected Ross to live for a couple of days—at best.

I remember going to the hospital that night wondering how I was supposed to comfort this family when the pit in my own stomach was deep and pained. I think I shared

it all about?

help a pastor remember what it's truly all about. **Andrew D. Fix**

with them the story of Jesus and the little children. Jesus loves baby Ross, and he loves Scott and Roxanne. We prayed for strength and for comfort in Christ's rich love for us. We even prayed for a miracle.

Often the Lord says no, but not this time. After a C-section and a baptism the next day, Ross had surgery to install a shunt, which would relieve the water pressure in his head and allow some brain material to begin to grow. He exceeded all expectations and came home some weeks later. We thanked God.

A month later, Ross's wound became infected. For a month he battled spinal meningitis. The shunt was removed, and pressure was once again allowed to build up as Ross and his antibiotics fought his infection. Thankfully, he pulled through. An adjustable shunt was put in, and Ross was off again.

Throughout this difficult time, it became obvious that God was working great things. Scott came fairly regularly to church on Sundays. (Roxanne needed to stay home for the most part with Ross.) Scott also began regularly attending Bible class, and he asked questions—a wonderful thing for all of our regulars to hear. Scott and I had some deep discussions late at night in his garage, and Roxanne joined us from time to time. I thought I was beginning to get what it was all about.

Yet just when you think you understand what it's all about, the Lord lets you know that you know nothing if you do not understand Easter.

Late Super Bowl Sunday, Scott called to tell me he was at the hospital again. Ross had passed away suddenly. As I drove through the ice and snow, I couldn't have cried any harder or felt more helpless. How do you become a pastor to people who have become friends?

I sat in that little room in the ER for an eternity. Scott and Roxanne cried. I cried. All I could tell them was that I didn't know what to tell them, other than God is somehow, somehow loving them through all of this. I assured them that Ross was in heaven as surely as he was baptized in front of them five months before. We went to see Ross for the last time and prayed for the strength of faith that comes from knowing God gave up his one and only Son for us. Then I drove them home, praying that God would keep them close to him.

Over the next days, we met for devotion and prayer. We put together an obituary that focused on the hope for

a heavenly reunion. We worked through the hymnal to pick verses for Ross's funeral folder. I can't imagine a tougher thing to go through. From a pastor's point of view, this is the toughest thing I've been through spiritually. I can't begin to imagine what it's been like for Scott and Roxanne.

It's now the day after Ross's funeral. I sit here scribbling on some paper, humbled to the point of tears. These two young Christians—whom I was so worried about—are at peace. They made it through Ross's funeral, beaming from the power of the hope God has sealed for them in Christ. I can't believe I didn't understand what it's all about.

Sometimes we think that we get it. Sometimes we think that we know what it is all about. It's about planning North American outreach. It's about changing our worship—or keeping it the same—to attract and keep new people. It's about buildings or starting preschools, shoring up backdoor losses, or using a new teaching technique. Sometimes it is about these things, but not today, not here, not now. God needed to back me up and show me what it's really all about. It's about Christ's resurrection, and it's never been so clear or so dear.

Scott and Roxanne will appreciate Easter more than anyone this year. They are beginning to see what it's all about, in far greater ways than I can imagine. I thank God for teaching all of us through this.

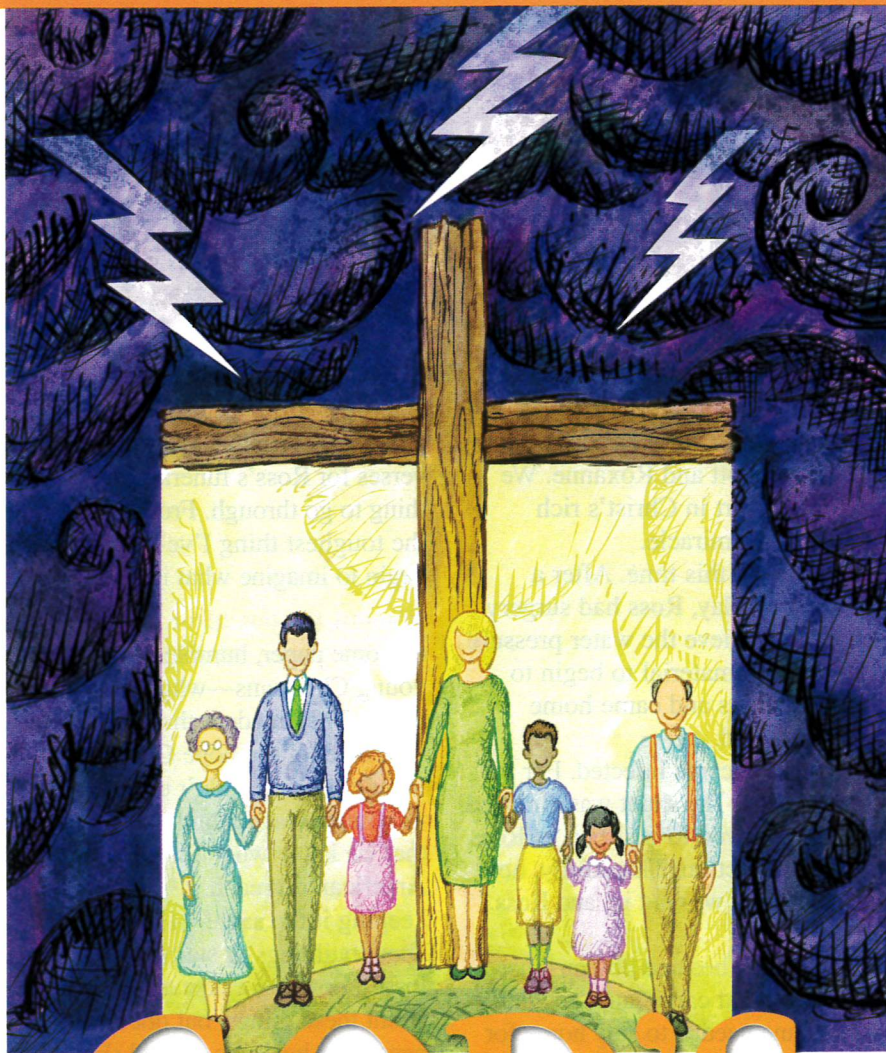
I am always grateful for the education I've had, especially our wonderful seminary. I handled the Word there for three years and fell in love with what was on the pages. Yet there is only one Teacher, and he is not confined to Mequon, Wis. He teaches us all through his Word in our lives, wherever we are.

Here's what I've learned. It's not about me. It's not about us. It's about him. It's about being asked why we insist on looking for the living among the dead. It's about the excitement you hear from the angel as he tells you, "He is not here! He is risen!" It's about heavenly mansions and angelic choirs. It's about reunions and joy that is not fickle. It's about our God, for whom nothing is impossible. And it's about the power of Christian hope as it is richly poured into hearts.

That's what it's all about. Pass it on.

Andy Fix is pastor at Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa.

For more, see "I want you to see" (p. 27).



GOD'S lightning rod

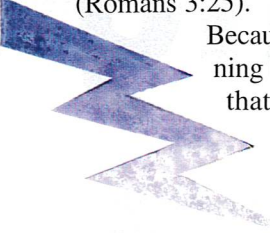
Christ's cross serves as our lightning rod. Spread that news to everyone you know. Mark J. Cares

"Im stepping back so I don't get hit by the lightning bolt when it hits you!"

How many times haven't you thought that or even said it when someone said something outrageous about God in your presence? Obviously, we don't really think a lightning bolt will strike that person dead. But that imagery does highlight one important aspect of sin—namely, that it angers God. Sin is not just a spiritual cancer wreaking havoc on the human race. It's not just a crime against God's law. Sin is also a personal affront to God—an affront that angers God tremendously.

How greatly sin angers God can be seen at Christ's cross. There Jesus atoned for our sins. Many people, however, have lost sight of what that word "atone" means. Atone means to appease a person's wrath. On the cross, Jesus appeased God's anger over our sins.

In other words, Christ's cross serves as our lightning rod. There Jesus attracted all of God's anger to himself. Wave after wave of God's anger washed over Jesus. Lightning bolt after lightning bolt struck Jesus. The Father didn't hold anything back. He unleashed all his pent-up anger on Jesus. This is how Paul put it: "God presented him as a



sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Romans 3:25).

Because all of God’s lightning bolts hit Jesus, all that remains for us is the glow and warmth of his love. What a wonderful Savior we have!

But not just us! “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Jesus intended his cross to serve as the ultimate lightning rod for all people.

Most people, however, don’t know that. The same situation existed with real lightning rods. For many years, people didn’t know that lightning rods could protect buildings. It wasn’t until the time of Benjamin Franklin that people began to be aware of its importance. Franklin stumbled upon the principle of lightning rods while he was researching lightning with his kite and key experiments. It is said that Franklin almost became obsessed with spreading the news of their benefits. He rankled at the thought of buildings unnecessarily burning down because of lightning strikes. He proclaimed the virtue of the lightning rod far and wide.

Are we as committed to spreading the news of the much more important lightning rod of Christ’s cross?

Friends, please pause and give that question serious thought. In the last analysis, each person has to answer that question for him or herself. Ask yourself: Have I shared that wonderful news this past week? If not, can I remember the last person to whom I introduced the Savior? How distant a memory is that?

Here are even more sobering questions: Did I even think about sharing my Savior this past week? Was I actively looking for opportunities to tell others this good news? Or was this

another week that I didn’t even give it a thought? How many such weeks have there been like that? Do I even sometimes conclude that others, and not I, should be talking about Jesus?


As I said, only you can answer for yourself concerning your personal commitment to getting the Word out. But, as we look at our church body as a whole, there are some troubling signs.

How about a goal of talking to one new person a week about Jesus?

At the 2003 synod convention, WELS President Karl Gurgel pointed out some of those signs: “Although the number of people who don’t know Jesus in our communities continues to rise, there are indicators that suggest there may be more we can do to reach them with the Word. On average over the past five years, 34% of our congregations have had no adult confirmations during the year and another 14% have confirmed just one adult each year. In 2002, 450 of our congregations had no adult confirmations” (2003 *Proceedings*, p. 17).

Another troubling statistic was recently reported to the Synodical Council by Pastor Harold Hagedorn, the administrator of Home Missions. He reported that in a decade’s time, the number of home missions directly supported by the synod shrunk from 150 to 85, with more shrinkage in sight. It has also been reported that our membership has declined each year since 1991.

At the very least, such information should cause us to stop and think—and evaluate. How actively do we share with others the wonderful news of God’s lightning rod? In our congregations, is there often more talking with



each other about doing outreach than talking with unbelievers as we do outreach? Is North American Outreach in danger of becoming an empty slogan?

I can only imagine the joy Ben Franklin had when, after a lightning storm, he would look over Philadelphia and not see many burning buildings—because they were now protected by lightning rods. But I don’t have to imagine the tremendous joy of seeing people, who have spent their entire lives fearfully looking over their shoulders to see when the lightning bolts would hit them, suddenly standing tall and confident because they now are standing next to the lightning rod of Christ’s cross. I don’t have to imagine that joy, because that is the joy God allows us to experience as we tell others about Jesus. That, my friends, is a joy that can’t be beat.

The key to experiencing that joy lies not so much in the area of methodology—of knowing and using certain outreach techniques. Those are fine to know, but they aren’t the key. Much more important is having the right attitude—of having a passion for the lost. Passionate people always find a way to get the message out to people and across to people. Once that message is out, the Holy Spirit wonderfully takes over and uses it to bring some people to faith.

Friends, let’s recommit ourselves to getting that message out. Tomorrow, talk to that neighbor or coworker about God’s lightning rod. Then next week, talk to somebody else. How about a goal of talking to one new person a week about Jesus? Does that sound too aggressive? I don’t think the Lord would say so. After all, he came to be “the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). In passionate gratitude, let’s tell the world this great news of God’s lightning rod—one person at a time.

Mark Cares is pastor at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.



Sharing

We had been dating long enough to know that this was serious. As a sign of our deepening affection, Lisa invited me to her apartment for a romantic evening. Knowing I loved the movie *Lady and the Tramp*, Lisa prepared a candlelit spaghetti dinner.

There was only one problem. Like the movie, the dinner table had just one plate of spaghetti and two forks. Apparently, Lisa intended we would eat off the same plate. I had not come from an eat-from-the-same-plate, drink-from-the-same-cup kind of family. When I tried gently to suggest the hygienic benefit of two plates, Lisa pointed out that I didn't have any problem kissing her. If I could run the risk of germs when our lips met, certainly I could run a similar risk through the sharing of spaghetti.

She had a point. It was the first of many lessons on the road to discovering my Christian responsibilities in loving a woman.

As Christ loved the Church

The apostle Paul tells husbands to love their wives "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). He goes on to say "husbands ought to love their wives as their own

bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28). If Christian men must emulate Christ's love for the Church in their marriages, they must examine the conduct of their Savior.

First and foremost, **Christ gave his life for the Church.** In the same way, husbands must protect, defend, and support their families in every way possible. If need be, husbands must be willing to die for their wives and children.

Second, **Christ took great pains not to insult or hurt his Father's Church.** When he saw his Church abused, our Savior burned with a righteous anger as he turned over the tables of the moneychangers. In the same way, husbands must not abuse or abandon their wives and children. Sadly, two million American women are beaten and approximately 1,500 die each year at the hands of their spouse. Many other men hurt their wives and children by simply walking out.

Third, **Christ loved his Church by enriching it with the gospel.** A husband who loves his wife and children will sit beside them in church and Bible class and will otherwise set an example by living a spiritual life. He will do this not because anyone pestered him to do so, but because he loves his family enough to spend this life and eternity with them.

Fourth, **Christ loved the Church by becoming a servant.**

Our Savior walked dusty roads, slept on the ground, touched the flesh of lepers, and washed the feet of sinners. In the same way, Christian husbands will give of themselves selflessly to their wives and children.

As depicted in the media, the secular view of love is when a man takes a woman to bed. Jesus, though, teaches us that love is not taking a woman to bed. It's getting up with her. Christian love for a woman is found in the small acts of our daily routine. Loving your wife means changing diapers, taking the kids to school, mowing the lawn, going to work every day, and never tiring of saying "I love you." It means holding her when she tears up and not getting frustrated when she doesn't know why she cries.

That the seemingly mundane acts of married life are pleasing to God was not lost on Martin Luther, who said that Christian faith "opens the eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties in the Spirit, and is aware they are all adorned with divine approval as with the costliest gold and jewels."¹ Luther called marriage a "training ground for faith, hope, love, patience, and prayer."²

Fifth, **Christ loved his Church by showing tenderness, patience, and forgiveness.** It would have been easy to lash out at disciples

spaghetti

Victor I. Vieth

who repeatedly failed to understand the true purpose of Christ's mission or to give in to them when they urged Jesus to send the crowds away. It must have hurt him when the disciples bickered over who was the greatest or when they complained about putting oil and perfume on Christ's body. Instead of lashing out, though, Jesus patiently and lovingly showed them the proper way to live. He taught them to repeatedly forgive their neighbor and reflected this commandment by repeatedly forgiving them. Christian husbands must reflect the Savior's tenderness, patience, and forgiveness in their marriages.

When your wife wants to adopt an abandoned, floppy-eared hound dog with an unusually large nose, loving her means joyfully welcoming the animal into your home—and not complaining about the canine hair on all your suits.

When your wife paints the parlor red, loving her means waiting for the color to grow on you.

When your wife scratches the car driving down a ramp, loving her means pretending the scratch gives the car character.

Sixth, **Christ loved his Church by having fun.** Christ ate, drank, attended wedding receptions, enjoyed music, and otherwise entertained himself and his followers. In the same way, Christian husbands love their wives by having fun together, even to the point of silliness.

Lisa and I used to take turns hiding a rubber frog in the other's suitcases, dresser drawers, clothes, and other unsuspecting places. We've also been known to impersonate Johnny Cash and June Carter and to chase each other up the stairs. Although these antics cause short-term embarrassment for our children, I suspect that they will one day realize how much fun their parents were having.

Work in progress

I typically end my morning prayers by asking God to help me live that day as a Christian. Yet, as surely as the night will come, there will be the realization that, once again, I fell short of the mark. Nowhere are my shortcomings more evident than in my responsibilities to my wife.

I have not always been there when she needed me. Even when I have been there, I often say or do the wrong thing. I can be impatient, angry, and self-centered. I am, in every sense of the word, a sinner. I live with myself because I have no other choice. Lisa lives with me because, in Christian love, she sees past my many foibles and failings and believes that the Holy Spirit is working overtime to make something out of the clay that is her husband.

In one of his songs, country performer Alan Jackson teases his wife, "Just be patient, I'm a work in progress" ("Work in Progress,"

Alan Jackson). Though meant lightheartedly, these lyrics strike at the heart of the Holy Spirit's work in Christian husbands. Although the devil and his band of demons persistently hiss at us to run something other than a loving household, the Holy Spirit will ultimately prevail. Indeed, through prayer and diligent study of the scriptures, we will improve day by day.

While dining recently with Lisa at a Mexican restaurant, our waiter brought us some chips and two saucers of salsa. This meant, of course, that we could freely double dip without worrying about passing on germs. Unfortunately, Lisa finished her salsa first and asked to share mine. Though it took some effort to resist the temptation I succumbed to so many years ago, I eventually honored her request.

You see, loving your wife means sharing salsa, spaghetti, and life.

Victor Vieth is a member at St. John, Lewiston, Minnesota

¹*Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. by John Thornton and Susan Varenne, p. 249.

²*By Faith Alone*, Martin Luther, ed. by James Galvin.

forgiveness in their marriages—and be willing to share their spaghetti.

Following



God's plans

Why submission isn't a burden for me anymore.

Ruth Westendorf

“**W**ives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord”
(Ephesians 5:22).

There it is, in black and white, God's instruction for me. I've tried ignoring it, explaining it away, and outright rejecting it, but it's still there. Finally, though, I think that it's starting to get through my thick skull—it's what God wants. And that's a good thing.

Here's the usual scenario: I'm home all day, keeping the house running, taking care of the kids, paying the bills, and basically making sure our lives keep running smoothly. Then my husband comes home, listens patiently to my list of trials from that day, and proceeds to tell me what I'm doing wrong and what I should be doing instead.

How incredibly frustrating! As if he could fix in two seconds what I've been struggling with all day! The nerve!

Is he right? Probably. Am I going to admit it? No way!

It's a good thing God is there, steadily pointing me back into his Word, back to his instructions. Without the Holy Spirit, we'd be doomed. Dead-locked. No way was I giving in. But God puts things back in perspective.

What's important here? My pride? My "rights"? Having things my way? Or living my life God's way, accepting the amazing blessing he's given me of a man who cares enough about me and the kids to listen to my problems and try to help?

It's funny how much your perspective can change when you start to think of things from a biblical perspective. When you put God's will in the center of your life and get rid of "me, me, me," things come into a much clearer focus.

One of the main ways this has become clear to me is through thinking about how I talk about my husband. When I'm talking to my girlfriends, am I building him up or cutting him down? I have to admit that a good part of the time I'm complaining. But that's not so bad, right? I'm just letting off a little steam; it's not really hurting anyone.

But is it? Besides being gossip, those words solidify my tense, frustrated feelings and, to be honest, make them stronger. Unfortunately, when I do this my friends will usually be nice and supportive, which only makes me feel more justified in my self-righteous indignation.

There's also the fact that what I say affects what they think of him. Proverbs 31:23 reads, "Her husband is respected at the city gate." Since this is in the middle of a list of attributes of the Wife of Noble Character, it's safe to assume that this is something for which the wife is responsible. Obviously, my husband is not likely to be respected if I'm constantly griping about him to my friends.

Now, instead of going to my girlfriends with my frustrations about my husband, I go to God in prayer. It's amazing how those complaints suddenly don't feel so valid in the light of God's will, and I begin to see where my failings lie. It's no

longer about how bad my husband is, but about how I can better fulfill God's command to love. The Holy Spirit brings me back on track, pulling my mind away from myself and back to Jesus (the real center of the universe, not me).

For an example of perfect submission, look to Christ.

Some of you may be reading this with the stereotype in mind that "submissive wife" equals "cowering slave," but that's not the picture the Bible paints for us. In Proverbs 31, God shows us a portrait of the Wife of Noble Character. Verse 25 reads: "She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come." Hardly the downtrodden, browbeaten person feminists would like us to envision! Obviously, there are sinful, abusive husbands, and unfortunately there probably will be until Jesus returns. But for most of us this isn't an issue. In fact, for those of us blessed with Christian husbands, we have the reassurance of knowing that just after God urges us to submit to them, God writes to husbands to be considerate and loving to their wives.

Notice here that God doesn't say, "If your husband is loving and considerate, submit to him." Just because your husband may not be doing God's will is not an excuse for you to disobey God's will, too. Each of us should be working to keep God's commands, regardless of how difficult our particular circumstances are.

For an example of perfect submission, look to Christ. He didn't just do what God asked of him because it seemed good to him. Think of his

prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew that the events of the next day would be harder than anything anyone else in the world had ever faced; he was sweating blood at the prospect of it! But even then, facing death—the most cruel, painful death imaginable—he submitted himself to God's will. He could have backed out at any time and decided it didn't make sense to go through all of that just for a bunch of rebellious, ungrateful sinners. He could have stood up for his "rights" and declared that it wasn't fair for everyone else to get the blessing while he went through the pain. But thank God that he did not. Thank God that Jesus submitted his will to his Father's, to fulfill the plan God had drawn out for him before the creation of the world.

The Bible says that we, too, are part of God's plan, and that our place in it was mapped out before time began. Ephesians 2:10 reads, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." When Jesus saved us, it wasn't so that we could go on living as we always have, but now with the safety net of forgiveness under us. No, we have been saved to live a new life, to fulfill the part in God's plan that he created us to do. That means submitting our individual wills to God's, following his plan, not ours. Part of God's will is that wives submit to their husbands—even if it doesn't make sense or seem "fair" or impinges on our "rights." It's what God wants. After what he's given us, how could we refuse?

Ruth Westendorf is a member at Trinity, Neenah, Wisconsin.

WHATEVER

Adrenaline rush

How often do our spiritual lives travel the same path as a marching band competition?

Amy Vogt

“Drum major, is your band ready to take the field?” These words send an electric-like charge throughout the band. I, as well as every band member on the field, straighten up as a rush of adrenaline floods through us. This is it, the moment we have been working hard for all season. The announcer continues after the drum major salutes: “Wisconsin Lutheran Viking Marching Band, you may take the field for competition.”

The level of excitement rises, and my heart skips a beat as the crowd cheers. The drum major climbs the podium and begins the count off. A moment's hesitation and then the band members take the first step-off together as one. On the field, we all hit our spots to create impressive pictures. We perform the music that we spent hours memorizing and perfecting. We pull together and make the marching show the best we can make it.

Then, almost too quickly, the show ends. We stand tall in the final formation as the exhilaration starts to drain away. After the drum major salutes again, we march past the stands to deafening applause, but once we pass the gate, the excitement is over and the adrenaline is down again. Next weekend, we start all over again.

Life is full of highs and lows. How often do our spiritual lives travel the same path the marching competition did? When things are going well in life, spiritual life soars. We think that our faith is pretty good. We sit proudly in church, thanking God for our strong faith. Reading the Bible and prayer can wait. Bible study is boring or sleep is just as important as hearing our pastor's latest sermon. But as life coasts back down, sometimes even lower than before,

our spiritual lives need God's help. All of a sudden, we look to the Bible for advice and pray to God for help. Our faith doesn't seem as strong now that we are at a spiritual low. Like a roller coaster, our faith cruises up and rockets down.

Obviously, we take faith for granted. Our religion teachers have told us over and over again about God's grace and Jesus' love. Having faith in Jesus' death for us, we should be eternally grateful, not this up and down stuff. So what can we do?

Romans 12:1 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Like the adrenaline caused by excitement, the Holy Spirit rushes through Christians because of Jesus' love. The excitement caused band members to do their best. The Holy Spirit overflows Christians and compels them to please God. As forgiven children, we get to show the adrenaline rush caused by the Spirit. James 2:22 suggests, “You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.”

Anything from church offerings to helping neighbors to just a simple smile helps others and glorifies God. As the band stepped-off together as one, imagine the difference Christians can make if we all “step-off” together. Let's get going. Onward, Christian soldiers!

Amy Vogt, a freshman at VanderCook College of Music in Chicago, is a member of Grace, Waukesha, Wisconsin.



eternally

gratefully

Obituaries

Martin C. Lopahs 1918-2005

Martin Lopahs was born March 15, 1918. He died March 9, 2005, in Muskego, Wis.

A 1943 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. Paul, Round Lake Park, Ill., and St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Verona; one son; three daughters; 15 grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Ruth E. Arndt 1913-2005

Ruth (nee Reiter) Arndt was born Oct. 15, 1913, in Wabasha, Minn. She died March 25, 2005, in Grand Rapids, Mich.

A 1932 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served St. Martin, Winona, Minn.; St. John, Montello, Wis.; Mt. Lebanon,

St. Matthew, and Siloah, all in Milwaukee; and St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Emanuel, and one son. She is survived by one son, one daughter, eight grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

Renata Beschnett 1903-2004

Renata (nee Wiechmann) Beschnett was born Jan. 25, 1903, in La Crescent, Minn. She died Nov. 12, 2004, in Mankato, Minn.

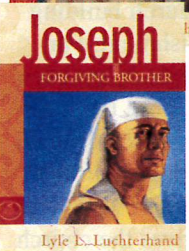
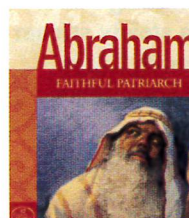
A 1922 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served schools in West Bend, West Salem, and Madison, all in Wisconsin.

She was preceded in death by her husband, William. She is survived by two sons, two daughters, 12 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

Booknook

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

New books in God's People series



Lyle L. Luchterhand

\$6.99 each

Two new books in the God's People series have been released—*Abraham: Faithful Patriarch* by Roger H. Knepprath and *Joseph: Forgiving Brother* by Lyle L. Luchterhand. Previous books in this series include *Elijah: Fiery Prophet*, *Jacob: He Wrestled with God*, *Jonah: Reluctant Preacher*, *Noah: Obedient Builder*,

Paul: Ambassador of Peace, and *Ruth: A Love Story*. Each book costs \$6.99. If you subscribe to receive the entire series, you can save 10 percent off the cover price. To order, contact Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022 or www.nph.net/books/gp.

Untangling the Web



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THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

JULY 2005

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Acts 15:1-12 | 17. Acts 22:17-29 |
| 2. Acts 15:13-34 | 18. Acts 22:30-23:10 |
| 3. Acts 15:35-16:5 | 19. Acts 23:11-35 |
| 4. Acts 16:6-15 | 20. Acts 24:1-21 |
| 5. Acts 16:16-40 | 21. Acts 24:22-25:12 |
| 6. Acts 17:1-15 | 22. Acts 25:13-27 |
| 7. Acts 17:16-34 | 23. Acts 26:1-18 |
| 8. Acts 18:1-17 | 24. Acts 26:19-32 |
| 9. Acts 18:18-28 | 25. Acts 27:1-20 |
| 10. Acts 19:1-20 | 26. Acts 27:21-44 |
| 11. Acts 19:21-41 | 27. Acts 28:1-16 |
| 12. Acts 20:1-16 | 28. Acts 28:17-31 |
| 13. Acts 20:17-38 | 29. Amos 1, 2 |
| 14. Acts 21:1-16 | 30. Amos 3, 4 |
| 15. Acts 21:17-36 | 31. Amos 5, 6 |
| 16. Acts 21:37-22:16 | |

An anchor in Malawi

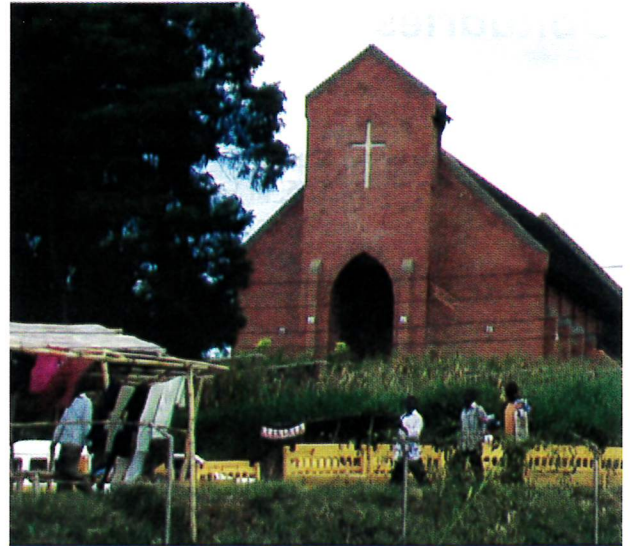
“If you build it, they will come.”

The old line from *Field of Dreams* is bearing true in Blantyre, Malawi, at Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Church. On Feb. 20, the congregation dedicated its new church building. Since then, “there has been a steady stream of inquiries into the church,” says Missionary Mark Johnston. “Baptisms and adult confirmations are witnessed by the congregation almost on a weekly basis.”

Building any new church building is an exciting accomplishment. For Beautiful Saviour, though, it has even more importance. Until now, the Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Malawi has not had a church building in the downtown area of this major Malawian city. Having one now gives the church legitimacy. Ron Uhlhorn, a former missionary in Blantyre, explains, “The new building establishes a physical

presence for the Lutheran Church in Malawi. It now acts as an anchor for the other congregations in the church body. Establishing a church in the city creates a type of headquarters for the Lutheran Church.”

About 65 Malawians attend Beautiful Saviour for worship services each Sunday, and each one stays for Bible class afterwards. Throughout the week, other Bible classes take place. The new building also houses a reading room, which visitors use to read Christian books, periodicals, and other materials. It was through this



Beautiful Saviour is the first church building of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Malawi in the downtown area of Blantyre, Malawi.

Christian reading room that Beautiful Saviour originally began. The reading room opened in January 2000.

In February 2002, worship services began, and Beautiful Saviour was established.

The new building has opened up new possibilities for the Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Malawi. Beautiful Saviour is now appearing on TV Malawi. Johnston says, “Through interviews and panel discussions, we are proclaiming God’s truths in Jesus to every Malawian with a TV. Many of the 15-minute programs are shot on location in or around Beautiful Saviour.”

Having a church in downtown Blantyre also offers the Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Malawi the opportunity to attract more members who are well-educated and who can support the work of the church. This diversity will strengthen the church body and improve its chances for successful survival without WELS’ help in the future.

WELS missionary shares God’s Word with Muslims in Malawi

Mark Johnston, a missionary in Blantyre, Malawi, shares the story of one family that has joined Beautiful Saviour, Blantyre, since its new building has opened. Stevie Shonga was Muslim, as was his wife and two small children. One day I parked in front of Stevie’s vegetable and fruit stand. When I returned, Stevie approached me on wanting to talk more fully about Christianity. (He had met one of our missionaries in Zomba, Malawi.)

Stevie was faithful in coming to Bible information class. He would then take the lesson home and relay the Bible story and divine truths to his wife and other Muslim friends. After the lesson on baptism, Stevie wanted his entire family baptized on the next Sunday, but he didn’t show. He had malaria. Stevie came to my office in church on Monday, still sick. He pleaded for baptism then and there. He didn’t want to wait another day.

Stevie continues his lessons and continues to be first a student of the Word, then a teacher. He has missed very little church.

As I write this, I hear the mosque chanting the call to prayer for the Muslims. When I hear the call, I respond with a prayer for the Muslims. May the only true God use Stevie and others to bring them to Jesus, not only as a prophet, but as their personal Savior from sin.



Stevie Shonga and his family.

International wedding gives opportunity to share the gospel

"As I say my prayer before worship," shares Glenn Schwanke, campus ministry pastor at Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Mich., "I often pray that the Spirit blesses the word proclaimed, just as he did on the first Pentecost."

On March 5 Schwanke had a special opportunity to proclaim the gospel when he performed the wedding of Mohan Rajinikanth and Mahita Kadmiel, both graduate students from India. The service was held at Peace, his congregation just down the road from the university, where a wide variety of international students from China, Singapore, several African nations, Britain, Australia, and other countries, already attend.

Raj (as the groom is known) is a non-practicing Hindu, and Mahita has some Christian background and has been baptized. The couple had been attending Bible classes and desired a Christian wedding. With nearly 50 foreign students in atten-

dance, Schwanke preached a straightforward law and gospel message about Christ's love from 1 Corinthians 13. The gospel also reached the couple's extended families in two Indian provinces via Webcam.

The chapel was filled with women wearing saris and men in Nehru jackets (typical Indian dress). The wedding party, however, dressed in Western attire. At the reception, Mahita's brother followed an Indian custom of giving the groom's ear a good tug. This signifies, "You better take good care of my sister . . . or else!"

Some of the students at the wedding had been to campus ministry events before, and others have inquired since. From "Seeker" Bible study where students delve into Scripture to answer tough questions to "Soup and Scripture" where a home-cooked meal prefaces Bible study and games, opportunities to study God's Word abound on campus. The 50 to 60 WELS students at the university



Glenn Schwanke (center) with Mahita Kadmiel and Mohan Rajinikanth. Family and friends at home in India heard the gospel message Schwanke proclaimed at the wedding via satellite video.

serve as witnesses, bringing roommates and classmates to activities.

Their daily witness as well as events such as this wedding are great examples of how world mission work can occur at home through campus ministry. "We proclaim the wonderful works of God," Schwanke remarks, "and these international students take the good news back to their homelands."

New Bible history curriculum available

A letter from a friend is a special form of communication. It is personal and shows a level of caring. In many ways, God's Word is a letter to each one of us. The characters in the stories share their experiences with us as we read these "letters." That concept is followed through in JCM Publications' new Bible history curriculum, *Dear Christian Friend*.

Each *Dear Christian Friend* lesson includes a letter written by a biblical character from that week's story. Students have the opportunity to then write a letter back to the biblical character, reflecting the important points of that week's lesson. Because the curriculum was designed for adults who have developmental disabilities,

all the letters include pictures that represent the important words in the letter. These word pictures, known as rebuses (see below), help the students understand and follow along with the story.

With 14 Old Testament lessons and 22 New Testament lessons, this new curriculum explains the essential truths of God's Word through a variety of learning techniques. Each teacher's guide comes with a lesson overview, optional presentation ideas, application, sample activities, song ideas, copymasters, crafts, and a devotion. Students' lessons include a memory verse, song idea, prayer, and rebus-illustrated Bible story.

Jim Esmeier, director of JCM

Publications and the Wisconsin Lutheran Special Needs Resource Center, explains, "We created the curriculum because of the need for high interest, low vocabulary Bible history lessons for adults with developmental disabilities. We also wanted vibrant artwork and to make the lessons highly visual. That's why each lesson is explained in rebus form."

Those who lead WELS Bible classes for adults with developmental disabilities have found the lessons easy to use and to adapt to their particular situation.

For more information, contact the Wisconsin Lutheran Special Needs Resource Center, 877-505-3675 or www.jcministries.org. Both JCM Publications and the Wisconsin Lutheran Special Needs Resource Center are ministries of The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn.



God



land



water



grows



grass



trees



flowers

Joint TV ministry effort airs in Florida

Nine congregations in central Florida have banded together to support Time of Grace Ministries. Time of Grace is an outreach ministry founded by a group of WELS businessmen in 2000. Each week Time of Grace shares the gospel via a half-hour television program that is broadcasted from St. Marcus, Milwaukee.

Mark Jeske, pastor at St. Marcus, delivers each week's message in a conversational style that is designed to relate the importance of God's Word to the lives of his viewers. Since its first broadcast in Milwaukee in November 2001, Time of Grace has grown to include viewers in many other areas across the United States, including Texas, Virginia, Wyoming, and Arizona.

In the summer of 2004, members of nine congregations in Florida decided that they would like Time of Grace to be shown in their area. Their reasoning was both outreach- and inreach-minded.

First, having Time of Grace air in their area would be a non-threatening way for members to share their faith. Danielle Cast, a member of Crown of Glory, Orlando, explains, "Telling people about Time of Grace is an easy way to introduce Jesus to people. I can just tell my neighbor to turn on the TV to get a flavor for where I go to church. That's much easier than persuading my neighbor to actually come to church with me, especially because so many people are afraid or reluctant to come."

Because Central Florida—Orlando, in particular—is a popular vacation destination, other outreach possibilities existed. If Time of Grace aired on Sunday mornings, many Christians searching for a church service could find a biblically sound one, right in the privacy of their hotel room.

TIME OF GRACE[®] MINISTRY

Members also were interested in having Time of Grace air in their area for their own spiritual welfare. Some wanted to be able to watch Time of Grace as they were getting ready to go to church.

Others who could not physically get to church wanted to be able to participate in worship through Time of Grace's services.

Jim Johnson, executive director of Time of Grace, worked with these nine congregations to buy the appropriate air time and advertise the program. On Easter Sunday, March 27, the first episode of Time of Grace aired in the greater Orlando area.

Although it's too early to have feedback about outreach prospects, WELS members who are tuning in to Time of Grace are finding it to be a blessing in their lives. Todd DeNoyer, pastor at Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla., says, "Members are excited to be a part of this, and they have been watching Time of Grace before they come to church in the morning. Our next step is to prepare business cards to hand out to family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers." These cards will advertise Time of Grace's services on one side and information about an area WELS church on the other side.

Plans are also in the works for the area WELS churches to produce 30-second trailers that will air during Time of Grace's broadcast. These trailers will let viewers know more about the WELS churches in the area and will advertise events that the community will be invited to attend.

To learn more about Time of Grace, visit www.timeofgrace.org or call 800-661-3311.

World news

New pope sets course—On the second day of voting by the College of Cardinals, 78-year-old Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger emerged from the Vatican as Pope Benedict XVI. Described as a preeminent theologian and scholar, Benedict gave early signals that he would follow much of the agenda of his predecessor Pope John Paul II, with an emphasis on ecumenism and world peace.

Communion wafers stir eBay interest—Less than a week after the first Communion wafer supposedly blessed by John Paul II closed on eBay at \$2,000, a second wafer hit the online marketplace with a starting bid of \$196 but was soon withdrawn.

According to the Associated Press, neither wafer was actually sold, due in part to objections from Roman Catholic leaders.

Restrict indecent material in media say Americans—Seventy-five percent of Americans favor government restrictions on media content during hours when children are most likely to be watching, according to a survey released by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Over 1,500 adults interviewed March 17-21 also supported steeper fines for indecent network programming (69%) and extending the same rules to cable television stations (60%).

Opinion varied, however, on what was the greater danger: government imposing restrictions on the entertainment industry (48%) or the harmful content (41%).

Briefs—Wiccan Cynthia Simpson lost her appeal to be on the list of religious leaders who offer prayers at government meetings in a Virginia county.

The Oregon Supreme Court on April 14 invalidated the marriages of 3,000 same-sex couples in the state when it declared their licenses, issued contrary to state law, invalid.

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

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who live their faith. May they inspire you to let your light shine even brighter. If you have an example to share, send it to us at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Making the most of every opportunity

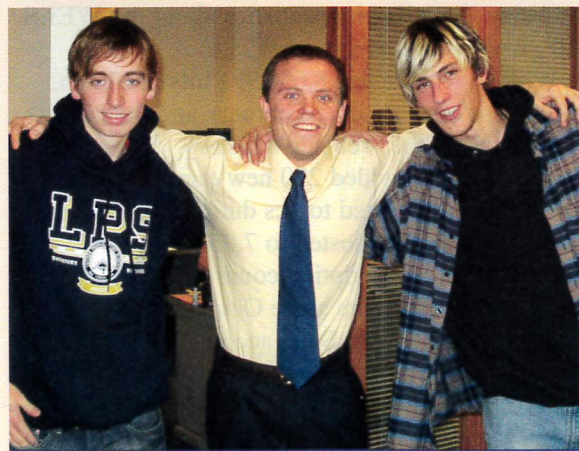
Stefan Gulch was a smart kid. Warm-hearted. Sensible. His mother says he was interested in "the whole range of life and the world." He came with a group of 14 other German highschoolers to visit Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis., in October 2004. Scott and Cindy Krause, Stefan's host parents, were impressed with his fluency in English as well as his friendly personality.

From family movie nights to afternoon motorcycle rides, Stefan fit right into the Krause family. Although he only stayed for three weeks, his mother wrote to the Krauses that "when he arrived back home in Germany, his thoughts and feelings were still with you and the U.S.A."

Stefan has recently been in the thoughts of the Krauses and many others who got to know him during his visit. Just before Christmas Stefan was in a car accident and died of head injuries shortly thereafter.

At the funeral, Stefan's friend, Felix, read an e-mail from Cindy Krause. "The words touched the bottom of our souls," Stefan's sister, Bianca, shares. Cindy had written how her family had grown to love Stefan and that from their conversations she felt that he was a Christian and was now in heaven.

Stefan belonged to a Protestant church in Germany, but he did not speak as if church was a high priority in his family. As part of the Krause and Luther Prep families, though, Stefan saw that faith could be part of daily life. "He went to church with us and was part of our dinner prayers," Cindy recalls. "Several opportunities to witness came through our political conversations." Both professors and students at Luther Prep were constant witnesses to their faith. And even though their chaperones discouraged it, many of the German students still chose to attend chapel services at Luther Prep.



Stefan (left) and his friend, Felix (right), pose with Prof. Michael Seifert, who teaches German and religion at Luther Preparatory School.

Each night when he came home, Stefan excitedly told the Krauses of his day's adventures: touring Miller Brewery and Harley Davidson or visiting an Amish village and the big city of Chicago. Glad for the time they came to know Stefan as a Christian, the Krauses hope that they can one day visit with him again in heaven.

In the news

The *Oshkosh Northwestern* featured **Nathan Ericson**, pastor at Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis., and campus pastor at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and his "plans to jumpstart a long-standing campus ministry" in an April 8 article. According to the article, *The Rising Son* (the former University Lutheran Chapel) has been around for 30 years but was seeing declining interest. Ericson and the Northern Wisconsin District Mission Board hope to spark new interest. Ericson is quoted as saying, "[*The Rising Son*] is a place for students to get away from campus life and to build relationships with other Christians."

James Neujahr, band director for Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., and director of the Lutheran Vanguard of Wisconsin, was highlighted in the March 20 edition of *The Post-Crescent*. The article shared some of his accomplishments, including having the Fox Valley Lutheran symphonic band be the first Lutheran school to play at the Wisconsin Music Educators Association Conference in Madison.



DEFINING RELIGION

Sacrament: a sacred act, instituted by Christ for his church, in which an earthly element is used together with God's Word as a means of offering, giving, and sealing to us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Only Holy Communion and Baptism fit this definition. Marriage, however, does not. God instituted and gave marriage not only to the church, but to human beings in general. In addition, God has attached no promise of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to marriage.

WELS news briefs

Commission on Parish Schools

414-256-3221; cps@sab.wels.net

EduTech 2006, held June 26-29, 2006, on the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, combines the best of the national teacher's conference with the essential technology instruction of WELS Tech. EduTech's focus will be to strengthen education in WELS churches and schools by sharing the latest theories and practical approaches to teaching and learning; to show teachers, pastors, and lay-people how technology is an integral part of ministry in the 21st century; and to equip attendees with the knowledge to use technology to expand their ministries. For information on the conference, visit www.wels.net/jumpword/edutech.

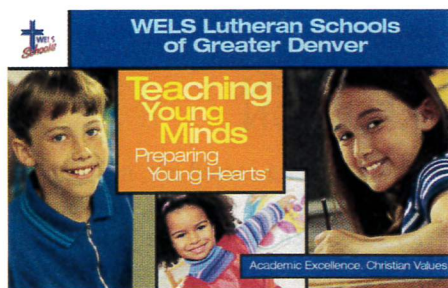
Parish School statistics from the 2004-05 school year are now available.

	SCHOOLS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
Early childhood ministries	383*	501**	8,449
Lutheran elementary schools	354	1,918	26,632
Area Lutheran high schools	25	490	5,805
Preparatory high schools	<u>2</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>721</u>
TOTAL	505	2,696	41,607

*259 are part of Lutheran elementary schools; 124 are freestanding.

**288 also serve Lutheran elementary schools; 213 only serve early childhood ministries.

The number of students enrolled in Lutheran elementary schools for the 2004-05 school year has decreased by 665. Students enrolled in early childhood ministries have increased by 346. For more 2004-05 school-year statistics, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/schoolstats.



During the 2004-05 school year, about 50 schools are using **marketing campaigns** that were developed by Parish Schools. These advertising materials—for elementary schools and high schools—are personalized to the school and include posters, brochures, banners, postcards, and print ads. Zion, Rhineland, Wis., used the materials this past winter. At its open house in February, 20 families, mostly non-WELS, attended, and five new children registered that day. Twelve schools participated in a campaign in Milwaukee. Almost 500 people attended the February open house, 241 of them non-WELS. Forty-two students are expected to enroll in fall. Marketing materials for early childhood ministries are being developed and will be available later this year. For more information, go to www.wels.net/cps.

Commission on Adult Discipleship

414-256-3278; cad@sab.wels.net

One hundred twenty-five couples attended the second **WELS National Marriage Retreat**, held Feb. 11-13 at the Heidel House Resort, Green Lake, Wis. Due to the great response, the Commission on Adult Discipleship will be repeating this same retreat Nov. 4-6 at the same location. The commission will offer a 2006 WELS National Marriage Retreat in Atlanta, Appleton, Minneapolis, Flint, Milwaukee, Washington D.C., Phoenix, Tampa, Omaha, Seattle, Anchorage, Houston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Commission chairman Randy Hunter will help couples talk, laugh, learn and connect as they apply practical biblical principles. Couples will be able to register by mid-summer for any location at www.welsmarriageretreat.org.

Board for World Missions

414-256-3233; bwm@sab.wels.net

At the urging of the Synodical Council to do everything possible to implement a program to promote Muslim outreach throughout WELS congregations, the Joint Mission Council endorsed the plan of the **Muslim Task Force** to hire a part-time pastor-coordinator to mentor a former Muslim presenter-trainee for speaking in WELS congregations. Joint funding for these part-time positions is coming from the Committee on Mission Expansion and from Home Missions.

About 650 members of **Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria** attended the ordination of six pastors in December 2004. New outreach has begun in Port Harcourt by one of these newly ordained pastors.

Technology

414-256-3250; cto@wels.net

Did you know the following statistics about the **WELS Web site, www.wels.net**?

- The WELS Web site had 8,650,991 hits in March, a 25 percent increase over February and the highest traffic month in the Web site's history.
- The Topical Q&A added 290 new questions and answers on faith-related topics during March, bringing the total answers posted to 7,058.
- The Call Report subscription count is 3,746, including 311 new subscribers since October 2004.
- There are 1,234 @WELS.net account subscribers enjoying free Webmail service.
- The WELS Web log (blog) Imprint had 2,940 visitors during March.

These updates are from the offices of the synod administration building at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

New publication and Web site offer parenting support



Northwestern Publishing House and WELS Parish Services have partnered to offer a resource that will encourage and strengthen Christian parents as they deal with the challenges of raising children.

Called *Parents Crosslink*, this resource comes in two parts—a quarterly eight-page publication

and a companion Web site, www.parentscrosslink.net.

The publication will include in-depth research articles, a question and answer column, seasonal articles, biblical articles, and activities. Combining practical insights and scriptural applications, these articles will give parents the help they need for raising children in the secular world.

The Web site will expand on the issues covered in the publication by offering

- chats with the authors,
- discussions on topics that were covered in the issue, and
- more information in general.

The Web site will also offer

- parenting tips,

- open discussion boards for parents to talk to each other,
- prayers,
- questions and answers,
- devotions, and
- archived articles from *Lutheran Parent*, a former Northwestern Publishing House parenting publication.

One goal of *Parents Crosslink* is to offer parents opportunities to com-

municate with each other. “The model [for parenting] that people are using today is a peer model. Parents are learning how to parent from each other,” says Kenn Kremer, editor of the *Parents Crosslink* publication. “If we can keep [parents] in Scripture—keep that as the light shining on the decisions they make—I think we have a much better chance of developing a whole generation of good solid Christian parents.”

Dr. Joel Nelson, administrator for Youth Discipleship, agrees. “Our goal is to share information but also to create a community where parents can learn and grow.”

The autumn issue of *Parents Crosslink* was sent in bulk to congregations in May. This free issue introduced congregations to the publication. A grant is funding the start-up of the Web site, which will debut in August.

For more information or to subscribe, call Northwestern Publishing House at 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8. Bulk subscription prices range from \$2 to \$3 per issue, depending on the number ordered.

Parents Crosslink
The Apple Doesn't Fall Far from ... Me
Joel L. Nelson

Parents are, almost always, the single most significant determining factor in the development of their children.

Linking parents to each other and the cross www.parentscrosslink.net

District news

Minnesota

On April 17, **Bethlehem, Lakeville, Minn.**, dedicated its worship facility.

Nebraska

After nine years in rented facilities, members of **Christ the Rock, Farmington, N.M.**, dedicated their new church on Feb. 27. The new facility allows Christ the Rock to combine with the Navajo outreach that is being done in the area.

Pacific Northwest

Evergreen Lutheran High School,

Des Moines, Wash., took third place in the State Knowledge Bowl for B-sized schools.

South Atlantic

Ninety-five kids from 12 WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregations and schools attended the district's annual Sports Fun Weekend on March 18-19 at **Southern Lutheran Academy, Melbourne, Fla.** **Northdale Lutheran School, Tampa, Fla.**, hosted the event. Some students came from as far away as Atlanta, Ga., and Falls Church, Va.

Happy Anniversary!

SA—Trinity, Abita Springs, La., celebrated its 100th anniversary on April 17. Originally affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Trinity joined WELS in 1970.

NW—On April 17, members of St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis., celebrated the 25th anniversary of Linda Quint's teaching ministry.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Donald Wichmann; NW—Joel Lillo; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Christopher Kruschel.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Allard, Anthony A., to Grace, Sioux City, Iowa
Dolan, Timothy D., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Hohenstein, Lloyd A., to retirement
Leyrer, Peter J., to Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn.
Oblender, Wayne C., to First, Aurora/St. Mark, Sutton, Neb.
Schultz, Donald G., to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
Scheele, Martin J., to Christ, Keystone Heights, Fla.

Teachers

Anderson, Quin A., to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Birr, Becky D., to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
Borck, Hollie E., to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.
Butzow, Michael L., to Michigan LHS, Saint Joseph, Mich.
Guelker, Brigetta K., to Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif.
Hagenow, Jason K., to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Hill, Scott R., to Our Saviour (ELS), Lake Havasu City, Ariz.
Hurley, Patrick K., to Hope, Milwaukee
Inniger, Tracey J., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee
Kastenschmidt, Edith, to Hope, Milwaukee
Kelley, Jason W., to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.
Kerr, Lisa, to Fairview, Milwaukee
Kleman, Judith A., to Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio
Krueger, Connie M., to Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio
Leonard, David D., to St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis.
Lepke, Josh P., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Loescher, Cliss H., to Christ, Cambridge, Minn.
Meihak, Alan D., to Northdale, Tampa, Fla.
Ninke, Karen A., to St. James, Portage, Mich.
Nolte, Alan J., to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
Otto, Laura A., to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.
Pantzlaff, Kathleen R., to St. John St. James, Reedsville, Wis.
Riediger, Susan M., to St. John, Dakota, Minn.
Rockhoff, Deborah J., to Messiah, Wichita, Kan.
Rust, David M., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee
Scharf, Angela R., to Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash.
Schultz, Deborah K., to Emanuel, Tawas City, Mich.

Scott, Lynette, to Apostles, Billings, Mont.
Shonts, Lynn M., to Salem, Ann Arbor, Mich.
Smith, Nancy J., to retirement
Strasser, William A. Jr., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
Wade, James A. Jr., to Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio
Westendorf, Katherine, to retirement
Wilke, Russell A. Jr., to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.
Wilson, Diane K., to St. Peter, Fort Collins, Colo.
Zeamer, Gerald G., to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Bay City, Mich.—Bethel School (125). June 5. Service, 9:30 A.M. Picnic to follow. Clara Schultz, 989-893-1609.
Eagan, Minn.—Beautiful Savior (30). June 5. Service, 9 A.M. Potluck and fellowship to follow. RSVP, 651-452-2114.
Burr Oak, Wis.—Christ (150). June 12. Services, 10 A.M. & 2 P.M. Catered meal between services. RSVP, 608-857-3504.
Kenai, Alaska—Grace (25). June 12. Service, 11 A.M. Dinner and program to follow. RSVP, Tom Schmidt, 907-283-6297. Information or help in securing accommodations, Mark Burdick, 907-283-4232.
Millville, Minn.—Trinity (140). June 12. Service, 10:30 A.M. Potluck to follow. 507-753-2576.
Tacoma, Wash.—Faith (75). June 19. Service, 3 P.M. Reception to follow. 253-537-2919.
Lansing, Mich.—Emanuel First (150). July 3. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Daniel Buske, 517-669-5478.
Marshfield, Wis.—St. Peter (125). July 10. Service, 9 A.M. Aug. 14. Services, 9 A.M. & 1:30 P.M. Dinner served between services. 715-384-3822.

COMING EVENTS

Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.—Family Fest, June 17-19. Single Parent Family Camp, July 8-10. Fall Family Camp, Sept. 2-5. 920-787-3202.
National Lutheran Women's Missionary Society Convention—June 23-26. Bloomington, Minn. Hosted by St. Croix and Minnesota Valley Circuits. 414-321-6212.
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@conferencedirect.com or www.wlcf.org.
Lutheran Pioneer national trips—Camp, July 10-16, Gary Vanderheyden, 715-

479-1811. Bike trip, Aug. 7-13, Richard Bartel, 262-694-8939. Canoe trip, Aug. 12-14, Dale Lorfeld, 262-763-3777.

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

Youth rallies

• **Sandusky, Ohio**—July 13-16. Cost, \$200 per person. Jeff Bovee, 507-354-6744 or www.stjohnsnewulm.org/youth/youthrally.htm.
 • **Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.**—July 17-20. Cost, \$162 per person. Matthew Bown, 920-787-3202.

WELS North Atlantic District Annual Labor Day Retreat—Sept. 3-5. Camp Taconic, Hinsdale, Ma. Worship, recreation, and program for all ages. Meals included. Judy Becker, 518-210-5590.

WELS South Atlantic District Annual Labor Day Retreat—Sept. 3-5. F.D.R. State Park, Pine Mountain, Ga. Tracy Heinitz, 404-680-1723.

NAMES WANTED

Travis Air Force Base, Vacaville, Calif.—St. John, Vacaville. 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.
Plainview, Minn.—Christian Christenson, 507-753-2576.

GUEST PREACHER NEEDED

Olympia, Wash.—Messiah, July 31, Aug. 7 and 14. Joel Nitz, 360-923-1961.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Business manager/treasurer—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Responsibilities include budgets, accounting, treasury, buildings and grounds, information technology, human resources, risk management, and auxiliary. Visit www.wels.net, jumpword "bulletinboard", for more details. Send resume to David Martin, 11831 N Seminary Dr 65W, Mequon WI 53092; 262-242-8103; or martind@wls.wels.net.
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.

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".



Kim Lemke (left) and Melanie Sosinski (below) are teaching English as a second language to children in Wuhan, China, with Friends of China USA. Lemke is a 2004 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, and Sosinski is a 2004 graduate of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Here they are pictured with some fourth-grade students at Christmas. Friends of China USA has three other teachers in Wuhan as well as teachers in five other cities in China. For more information about the program, contact Shannon Bohme at sbohme@hotmail.com.



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.

I want you to see

"I know my time with you was short
 And filled with troubles of all sort,
 But, Mommy and Daddy, you need to see
 How very much you mean to me.
 You probably think of what you could do
 In that life, to pull me through.
 Mommy and Daddy, please won't you see,
 You did it all—you baptized me.
 Because of this, you'll never believe
 This place in which I get to live.
 Mommy and Daddy, I get to see
 All of the angels—they're singing with me.
 There are so many mansions in bold array,
 Homes where all God's saints will stay.
 Mommy and Daddy, I want you to see
 This one here is just for me.
 Yet the greatest thing, I have to say,
 Is the One who shines like a bright summer day.
 Mommy and Daddy, Someday you'll see
 My glorious Jesus, he's right here by me.

Because of him I've no more pain,
 There's no more tears and no more rain.
 Mommy and Daddy, I know you can see,
 Your Brother Jesus who is loving me.
 There's something more you must know—it's from him,
 For you to remember in times that are grim.
 Mommy and Daddy, you must always see,
 That my Savior Jesus—he died for me.
 And not just for me, that would be far too small,
 He looks down from here upon you all.
 Mommy and Daddy, both of you two,
 He's your Savior too, he died just for you.
 And best of all is his Easter grave,
 It proves that to death we're no longer enslaved.
 Mommy and Daddy, I want you to see,
 Our Risen Lord—who will raise you and me.
 Now frolic I must, in heavenly play,
 There's just one final thing I have to say,
 Stay close to Jesus, and someday you'll be
 Right here in heaven with him and with me."

Andy Fix is pastor at Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa. He wrote this poem for a couple in his church whose baby boy had recently been taken to heaven. To learn more about this young family, read "What's it all about?" on p. 10.

PRIVILEGED to serve



Daniel Dexter (left) with the Flores family, whom he met while canvassing. Says Dexter, "This picture is what serving is all about—the people I get to serve and the Savior I get to share with them."

Daniel Dexter is grateful for the opportunities he has to serve his Savior.

Nicole R. Balza

he received a job there as a weather observer.

Once in El Paso, Daniel began to attend Christ Our Redeemer. He notes, "As service opportunities opened up for me, it became more and more obvious that the Lord had set me in a ministry that was well suited to both my strengths

and my weaknesses. He put me in a situation where I can grow and serve and thrive—despite what I thought was best."

Dexter's job as a weather observer offers him a unique opportunity to serve his Lord. Dexter says, "When there is no significant weather, the job involves about two minutes of work an hour. . . . Usually I am just babysitting a computer. This gives me time for Bible study for personal growth. It allows me time to study and write and prepare Bible studies that I teach. Here at work is even where I learned to play the cello, which I love to contribute to the worship service. I am blessed with a job that allows me to both grow and serve—and with a schedule flexibility that gives me 40 hours and still leaves open all the days and nights that I need to be involved at church."

"Daniel never puts in less than 20 hours a week doing church work, and usually it is 25-30 hours a week, sometimes 40," says Dexter's pas-

tor, Dan Baumler. "We truly have a volunteer staff minister. But the key to all of this is the love for his Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ's love truly compels Daniel."

Dexter echoes the same sentiments, saying, "My boast is not that I do all these things; my boast is Christ, and that because of him, I get to do all these things."

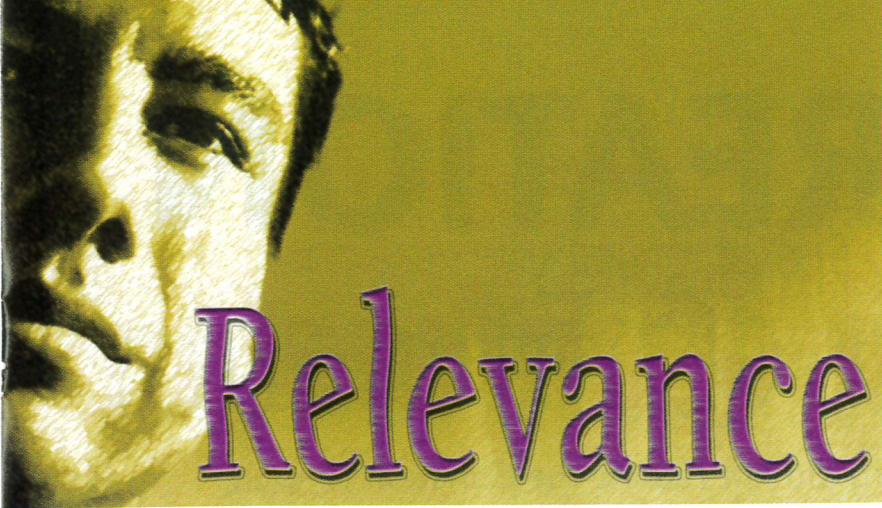
When asked why he spends so much time in service to his Savior, he explains, "It is a privilege to do so. Ephesians 2:10 says it well: 'We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.' . . . From one perspective, we may look at the work of the church as what we have to do, things that need to get done. But let us remember that just as salvation is God's gift to us, so also are these service opportunities. Service then is a high privilege, and what has to get done we see as that which we get to do."

Reflecting on all that he "gets to do," Dexter says, "All of these joys are 'was and is.' Not only did they bring joy at the time, but they become part of a treasure chest full of the joys of serving Christ, ours to enjoy at any time, even as God continues to add to it with more opportunities prepared in advance for us!"

Nicole Balza is assistant editor of Forward in Christ

Reading down the list, I expect that I must be reading a compilation of all the volunteer activities available at Christ Our Redeemer in El Paso. But no, this is only a list of the activities that member Daniel Dexter volunteers his time to carry out. Evangelism chairman. Teen Bible class teacher. Education Committee member. Instrumentalist. Choir member. Teen and junior youth group co-leader. Sunday night Bible study leader. Door-to-door law/gospel presenter. And the list goes on. If Christ Our Redeemer needs a volunteer, Dexter is likely to offer his time and talents. Yet, this is not the life that Dexter was expecting.

Twice Dexter, a lifetime WELS member, attended college to prepare for full-time ministry as a pastor. Both times circumstances in his life pulled him away from his studies. Ultimately, Dexter completed training to become a weather observer. A Wisconsin native, Dexter moved to El Paso in 1998 when



Relevance

Sony or Microsoft can help you focus people's attention on the Son, just as the illuminated stained glass of the Middle Ages did.

John M. Parlow

Remember when you had to make sure you shook the aluminum pan as you watched the Jiffy Pop popcorn expand the foil? Remember organizing your vinyl 45s? Remember when you had to physically change the TV channel? Do I have to remind you of the Polaroid Instant Camera craze?

Now we have microwaves, iPods, TV remotes, and video phones. As that philosophical giant Bob Dylan sang, "The times, they are a-changin'."

Ministering to America's youngest generations

Although the spiritual needs of today's people haven't changed, the culture in which they live has, and that presents new challenges and opportunities. This is especially true of the two youngest generations of Americans—Generation X (1961-1981) and Mosaics (1982-2000), groups some refer to as "the Emerging Ones."

They are more affluent, more technologically advanced, better educated, less churched, and more ethnically diverse than any other generation in recent memory. Many view life inclusively, shedding loyalties held by their parents and redefining truth subjectively. At the same time, many exhibit the characteristics that older Americans value, such as teamwork, conservatism, volunteerism, and moral conduct. But most of this emerging community does not know Jesus, and that's a problem.

Communicating visually

"I think Jill is just like the mother-in-law in the drama."

"You're right," said Mark. "Jill kind of expects to get her way all the time. She doesn't really care about

other people's needs, but . . . she's working on it."

"I think we all need to. I think that was the point of the drama," Jim replied. "That's why I think Pastor Tim uses the video dramas and movie clips. They make his messages more relevant."

Today's hearers greatly resemble Jesus' audiences on the hillside.

PowerPoint technology, video clips, dramas . . . you may not be comfortable with these tools yet, but they can be instrumental in communicating Jesus' message to a culture that has shifted to the visual. This technology is the stained glass of the 21st century, and it's not going to fade away.

So let it shine. If you had a message so important that it could radically change someone's eternity, how would you communicate it? Your answer depends on your audience. Today's hearers greatly resemble Jesus' audiences on the hillside. Jesus gave them (and us) stories. We need to communicate to the audio-video crowd in kind.

Holding people's attention

One of the seismic shifts in our culture has occurred in communication. We now live in a narrative and experiential culture. Witness the heightened interest in reality shows and sitcom

series DVD sales. A sermon written in the first person, a personal testimony of God's power in everyday life, or an appropriate video clip can help us more effectively communicate the greatest story every told.

"But that sounds like entertainment!"

That's right, we want the service to "hold people's attention" (what "entertainment" means). Shouldn't we be willing to use technology's advancements to help focus people's attention like a laser on the Savior's truth and forgiveness? Delete everything that might distract our computer-savvy, spiritually-hungry listeners! A sermon delivered in a monotone voice, a spectator-oriented worship format, a poorly played hymn, or a sticky chair can be a distraction for the most faithful worshiper. Sony or Microsoft can help you focus people's attention on the Son, just as the illuminated stained glass of the Middle Ages did.

It's late in life's night, and many are spiritually channel-surfing through life. Check your approach. Are you boldly leading people into the 1950s or seeking better ways to teach timeless truth to today's people so that all may share tomorrow's eternity? In a world characterized by the paradox of more information and less wisdom, are you willing to think outside the box in order to share the Savior who will raise us from the box?

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

This is the second of a four-part series about how to minister to Gen-Xers and Mosaics. To read the first article in the series, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "ficarchive", and search by the author's first and last name.

THE CREATION of the Augsburg Confession

The assembly at Augsburg did not reunite the Christian Church,
but it did create a faithful interpretation of Bible teaching.

Richard D. Balge

This June 25 marks the 475th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. Seven German princes and the senates of two cities, with John the Steadfast of Saxony leading the way, presented this fundamental Lutheran document to Emperor Charles V in 1530. Eleven days after the event, Luther wrote to a colleague, “I am tremendously pleased to have lived to this moment when Christ, by his staunch confessors, has publicly been proclaimed in such a great assembly by means of this really most beautiful confession. And [so the word] is fulfilled: ‘I spoke of your testimonies in the presence of kings.’ What follows will [also] be fulfilled: ‘And I was not put to shame’ (Psalm 119:46)” (*Luther’s Works* 49:354f).

The Diet at Augsburg

Early in 1530, Emperor Charles V summoned the representatives of the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) to meet at Augsburg in the spring. Charles’ agenda for this diet (“assembly”) included dealing with “errors and divisions concerning the Christian faith.” He assured that all opinions would receive a charitable hearing. However, once the diet began, papal representatives persuaded him to give up his attempt at neutrality and refuse to make any concessions to the Lutherans.

Several of Luther’s Wittenberg co-workers, including Philip Melancthon, attended as theological counselors to their prince, Elector John of Saxony.

As an outlaw under the ban of the empire, Luther himself could not safely attend a meeting outside his home territory. From late April to early October, he stayed at Coburg Castle, several days by horseback from Augsburg.

Preparation of a confession

Although he was not on the scene at Augsburg, Luther did play a major role in the formulation of the Augsburg Confession. He had been involved in drafting three earlier statements of doctrine that Melancthon drew on in writing the document. From Coburg Castle Luther wrote his colleague 20 letters of advice and encouragement. He personally approved Melancthon’s next-to-last draft before the Confession was actually presented to the emperor before the diet.

Luther expressed his overall satisfaction with Melancthon’s work in a letter to Elector John: “I have read through Master Philip’s Apologia, which pleases me very much; I know nothing to improve or change in it, nor would this be appropriate, since I cannot step so softly and quietly” (*Luther’s Works* 49:297f). To his colleagues at Augsburg he wrote: “. . . More has happened [at this diet] than could have been expected. For instance, you have given to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s: perfect obedience to Caesar by appearing [at the diet] . . . and to God the precious sacrifice of the confession . . .” (*Luther’s Works* 49:375f).

The chief articles of faith

In the Confession, after an introduction addressed to the emperor, there are 21 “Chief Articles of Faith.” These set forth Lutheran teaching, with biblical support, in a positive way. Many of the articles relate to justification by faith alone, the teaching on which the church stands.

Article IV, “Of Justification,” rejects human powers, merits, and works as grounds for justification. People “are justified as a gift [Latin: *gratis*] on account of Christ’s sake through faith.” Article V, “Of the Ministry,” says that this faith is generated through the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Article VI, “Of New Obedience,” says that “this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits.”

Article XX, “Concerning Faith and Good Works,” is the longest of the positive articles. Perhaps its first sentence signals why that is the case: “Our people are falsely accused of prohibiting good works. . . .” The accusation was—and still is—based on a mistaken understanding of what justification through “faith alone” means. Although good works are not meritorious and do not earn forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, who generates faith, also motivates good works and enables us to do them.

There are seven articles “In Which an Account Is Given of the Abuses That Have Been Corrected.” They deal with withholding wine from communicants in the Lord’s Supper, the

marriage of priests, the mass, confession, the distinction of foods, monastic vows, and the church's power.

For some years after the event, the words "Augsburg Confession" did not refer to a document. Rather, it referred to what the laymen—the Lutheran princes—did at Augsburg. These secular rulers, royal priests of God by baptism with responsibility for the spiritual as well as the physical welfare of their subjects, made a clear, scriptural, public confession of faith in the Imperial Diet.

The Pontifical Confutation and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession

The Augsburg Confession made a favorable impression on several Roman Catholic princes. The emperor and his papal advisors, however, immediately commissioned three theologians to prepare a rebuttal. On their fifth attempt, the theologians finally produced a document that was brief enough and moderate enough to suit Charles.

The Confutation ("refutation") was read aloud to the Lutherans with the demand that they answer in two weeks' time. The task of responding fell to Melanchthon. He was not provided with a copy of the Confutation, unless he and his cohorts would agree not to reproduce it or write against it—only to accept it. This, of course, they could not do.

Melanchthon, working from memory and a few notes (which did not always agree with the notes of his coworkers), presented an "apology." This was an expansion, defense, and explanation of the Augsburg Confession. In its finished form, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession became one of the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The emperor refused to accept the apology. Melanchthon worked during the winter of 1530-31 to improve it, after receiving a "bootlegged" copy of the Confutation.

Outcome of the diet

On Sept. 22, the diet heard the emperor's verdict that the "views and confession of the elector of Saxony and his associates . . . have been refuted and rejected on the basis of the gospel and the Scriptures with sound reason" (*Luther's Works* 47:24fn). The Reformation party had six months to return to the Catholic Church. There were to be no more Lutheran publications and no more new Lutheran congregations. Meanwhile, Charles V would try to persuade the pope to convene a "general Christian council." The diet adjourned on Nov. 19.

The Lutheran rulers, with their theologians, had done all they could—short of denying the truth—to avoid a break with Rome. What Charles V could not imagine and would not willingly tolerate had occurred: the Holy Roman Empire was divided in religion.

To this day, confessional Lutheran candidates for the ministry vow to uphold the Augsburg Confession, along with the other Lutheran confessions, because it is a faithful interpretation of Bible teaching. Some who bear the name "Lutheran" but do not share that conviction have found it possible to declare pulpit and altar fellowship with those who do not hold to the Bible doctrine that is set forth in the Augsburg Confession. "Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word" (*Christian Worship* 203:1).

Richard Balge, professor emeritus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville, Wisconsin.

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession (LU-150722), translated by Glen Thompson, is available for \$6 from Northwestern Publishing House. A 13-lesson Bible study kit on the Augsburg Confession (LU-221137), written by Donald Thompson, is available for \$49.99. Contact Northwestern Publishing House at www.nph.net or 800-662-6022.



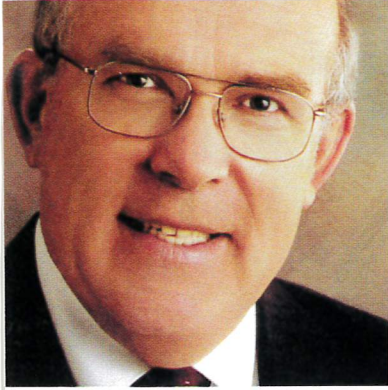
Philip Melanchthon—theologian and author of the Augsburg Confession.



Electoral John of Saxony—Luther's and Melanchthon's prince and confessor of the faith expressed in the Augsburg Confession.



Emperor Charles V—called the diet at Augsburg to dissuade the reformers.



Carl R. Sumpf

Be prepared to give an answer

Eight to 12 years to train a pastor? Nearly that long to prepare a teacher or staff minister for service in our synod? Does it have to take so long?

We've long believed that thorough training is essential for those who serve us full time with the Word. We desire that our pastors are conversant in the original languages of the Bible—Hebrew and Greek. They learn exegesis, as it's called, allowing Scripture to explain Scripture, using the languages in which God first inspired the words.

Teachers and staff ministers, without the languages, need an equally thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. So, in addition to all the normal subjects of study for their chosen fields, courses in biblical interpretation and teaching are essential. To be prepared to be a Christian teacher or staff minister requires a great deal of study.

This kind of preparation for ministry is costly. Tuition and room and board at Martin Luther College costs students nearly \$12,000 per year. The synod contributes about \$8 million more per year to maintain our complete worker training system. But we have long felt that the cost is worth it to prepare full-time workers for the Lord's service.

Yet, despite these well-prepared future workers, the rest of us still may not be fully prepared. At least not as Peter sees it. The Lord, through Peter, speaks to each one of us: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

There's an old story about one of the evil angels suggesting to Satan how he might still snatch the victory away from Jesus. In military terms, it would be to convince all the regular soldiers to lay

down their arms and let only the officers fight the battle.

It's no way to win a war or to defeat Satan. Against strong opposition, we need all the warriors we can get. There are only 1,307 pastors, 3,875 called workers—counting every pastor, teacher, and staff minister. But aren't there 400,000 WELS members? Wouldn't it be great if all of us could be enlisted to fight the battle, to feel comfortable giving an answer to others about the hope we have?

Just remember, though, it's not our speaking that gets the job done. God's Spirit is at work whenever the Word is spoken. Our words, repeating his Word, are the Spirit-empowered ammunition in this battle. The Word is what the Spirit uses to bring us and others to Jesus.

We do indeed need well-trained called workers to lead us into battle against satanic forces. Eight to 12 years of preparation is a good start in preparing for this important work.

However, on the scattered battlefields of our life, each one of us needs to be thoroughly prepared to be a soldier of the cross. Because of the critical nature of the battle against the forces of evil, our preparation can't stop when we are confirmed. Since the battle is ongoing, our preparation needs to be too.

We're grateful for all the assistance our called workers give us in preparing for life's spiritual battles. Training them is worth the effort and expense. But training all the rest of us is worth it too. Then we can all be prepared to give an answer and to proclaim peace through Jesus.

Preparing God's people to proclaim peace through Jesus is one of the four key strategies developed to carry out our synod's mission theme, "Proclaim peace through Jesus." Watch for upcoming articles on the other key strategies.

Lessons from the Creed

What is God really like?

Charles F. Degner

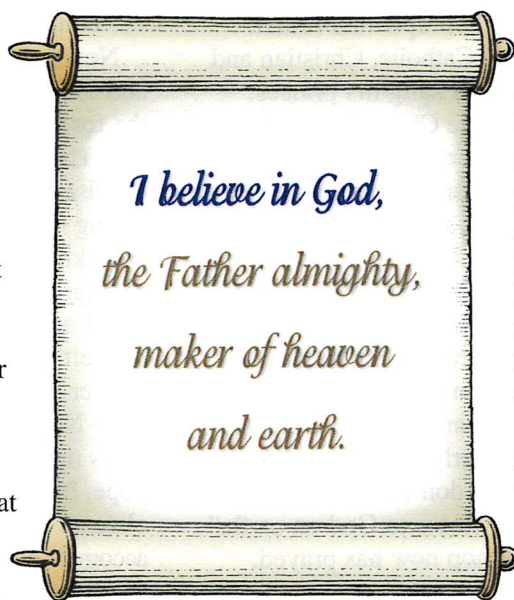
If God were like me, I wouldn't need him. I could just believe in myself. Humanism today puts man in the middle and God to the side. The *Humanist Manifesto* states: "Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement." There isn't much room for God in that statement, is there?

Ancient cultures invented gods that were often very "human." The gods of Greek mythology were petty and jealous of human achievements. The affairs of the gods were often just that, affairs. The Canaanite gods were adulterous and incestuous. It's hard to imagine that people could believe in such gods!

A God worthy of our faith

Our God is bigger than life. He is worth believing in. He is without human limitations or imperfections. The Bible says that God is eternal (Jeremiah 10:10), which means he has no beginning or end. God knows and sees everything (Psalm 139:2-4). God is present everywhere (Psalm 139:7-10). God is able to do anything (Job 42:2, Luke 1:37). God is holy, without sin or any fault (Leviticus 19:2). How can we grasp such a God or understand his ways? Our God is such an awesome God that he is truly worthy of our faith, of our believing in him!

We believe in God, though we have never seen him. God gave the children of Israel a visible symbol of his presence in a cloud of fire and smoke, which led Israel through the desert (Exodus 33:14). God was not



contained in the cloud any more than he can be contained in temples made by man (1 Kings 8:27).

We can only really "see" God in the face of Jesus.

Moses wanted more. He asked to see God's glory. He wanted to see God face to face (Exodus 33:18). God told him that no one could see his face and survive (Exodus 33:20). Unholy people cannot stand before a holy God. Instead, God allowed Moses to see his goodness. He hid him in a cleft of the rock, covered him with his hand, and let him see his back in passing. Even this caused Moses' face to radiate with God's reflected glory (Exodus 34:29,30,33). What an awe-inspiring God!

"Seeing" God

But what is the LORD our God really like? Exodus 34:6,7 tells us: "And he passed in front of Moses,

proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.' "

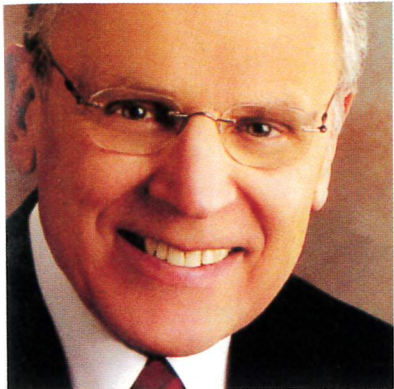
God is perfect in his love and mercy. He abounds in it. He is slow to become angry. God is also perfect in his divine justice. He must punish sin. But how can he be both at the same time? How can he be forgiving and punishing, merciful and vengeful, compassionate and just?

The answer lies in the cross of Jesus. At the cross, God's mercy and God's justice met. At the cross, God punished the sins of the world, and God forgave the sins of the world. That is why we can only really "see" God in the face of Jesus. In Jesus, God has revealed his glory to us (John 11:40, 12:27-29), but in a way that gives us comfort and not terror.

LORD, show us your glory in the face of Jesus until in heaven we can see you face to face! Until then, we believe in you. Help us overcome our unbelief!

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

This is the second of a seven-part series on the First Article of the Apostles' Creed. To read the first article in the series, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "ficarchive", and search by the author's first and last name—Charles Degner.



Gary S. Baumler

The pope has died

Four to five million people spent hours in line to file past his body and pay their last respects, and 1.1 billion people claimed him as their spiritual father. Catholic and non-Catholic, Christian and non-Christian alike sang his praises. Even English Prince Charles's wedding was postponed one day for his funeral. Only a few detractors were to be found. The world had lost a truly great man.

I'm speaking of Pope John Paul II and the days following his death. Some clearly have overdone their adoration for him. A Mexican immigrant, after he had seen John Paul in person on one of the pope's 104 trips abroad, said, "Holy God came to us today." Similarly, a 44-year-old Ohio woman opined, "I don't know if you're going to get any closer to God on earth." And one archbishop now has prayed, "From heaven may he look over us always and help us to cross the threshold of hope."

That kind of awe begs questioning. However, much of the hundreds of tributes paid by religious and political dignitaries around the world were right on. This pope was a man of "transparent integrity," "unselfish compassion," "love and courage," "friendship and understanding." He was a champion of world peace, human freedom, morality, justice, and life. He loved the youth, the poor, the suffering. He is credited with helping cause the fall of communism, defending human rights, opposing anti-Semitism, serving the cause of Christian unity. He has been called "The Gladiator" and "The Great."

All of this and more John Paul was and did. Now, our attention is drawn quickly to a new pope with these questions foremost:

- Will he consolidate the power of the church in Rome?
- Will he give more power to the people and the lower clergy?

- Will he address the issues of poverty and human rights?
- Will he focus on the secular culture and politics?

Now, think about all of these things and of what is missing. Christ is not in the forefront. The atonement is not obvious. The church's mission as given by the risen Savior is missing. It would be wrong to say that our Savior was not at all acknowledged. *Time* magazine, for example, drew attention to the pope's belief and commitment, as John Paul himself put it, that "Jesus Christ is the answer to the question that is every human life." Nevertheless, in over 100 pages of news releases and articles about the dead pope, he is glorified and Christ is but an obscure afterthought. The pope's earthly accomplishments are touted, and the gospel of full and free forgiveness in Christ is never clearly articulated.

But, the pope is dead, and the new pope will barely have begun when you read this. Actually, what I have observed is not so much about the pope. It's about humankind and the kingdom of God. We, by our very nature, want heaven restored on earth, assuming heaven in heaven will naturally follow. We want a charismatic leader who will establish peace on this earth. We want a Millennium, a return to Eden's paradise. We want political solutions to spiritual issues. To the end, even Jesus' closest disciples expected Jesus to establish an earthly rule. It took Pentecost and the Holy Spirit to show them the truth.

So John Paul II came about as close as a mere human being can come to giving the people what they want. He exercised enormous political influence and moral courage. Now he's dead, and the world is still a mess.

Only one has died and risen and provides true peace forever.

*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

I recently was visiting a faithful Christian brother in the nursing home who knew his days were numbered. As he thanked me for the message of the gospel, he said, "Most people don't realize that in the game of life they are only about two moves away from where I am."

How insightful. People try not to think about death most of their lives. But make no mistake, unless the Lord returns soon, we will all die. Because we often die slowly, many of us will be forced to think about death long and hard for some time. When we do face death it will be cold and lonely. To embrace your own death is surely the most emotionally debilitating experience. Part of the reason is that no one can share those exact emotions with you. They are solely yours.

When we are sinking deep into these lonely emotions, it helps to know that someone is living through it with you. Jesus is that someone. He faced death for everyone. Now he lives with us as the one who overcame death for us.

In his wisdom, Jesus has also preserved for our encouragement many psalms that David wrote when he was afraid that he was going to die. Psalm 55 is one of them. David wrote this psalm when threatened by his son, Absalom. As you read selected verses from it, notice how David touches the emotions that we have when we face death. Also, look for his example of what to do when you are in the deep dungeon of the fear of death.

Featured verses: Psalm 55

⁴My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me. ⁵Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. ⁶I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest—I would flee far away and stay in the desert; ⁸I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm." . . . ¹⁶But I call to God, and the Lord saves me. ¹⁷Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. ¹⁸He ransoms me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me. . . . ²²Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. ²³. . . But as for me, I trust in you.

Points to ponder

- What terrors of death assail you?
- Describe the emotion that would make you want to be a dove.
- How can you trust and have fear all in the same hour?
- What cares plague us when we are facing death?
- What was it that led David to trust in the Lord?
- How do we learn to trust in God even when death is near?

Treasures to share

- Think of someone in your church who might be experiencing the loneliness of facing death. Take this psalm to him or her and read it out loud.
- Make a list of all the cares you have when you think of your own death and then cast them on God one by one.

Other Scripture verses about God's comfort in the face of death

Psalm 23, Psalm 69, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5, Romans 8:31-39, 2 Timothy 4:6-8

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 June 5.



NURTURING our children's faith

If you have ever grown vegetables, you know about pulling weeds. A hoe works great for eliminating weeds between rows of plants, but you can't avoid the part where you get down on your knees and attack the weeds with your bare hands. If you wait too long, the weeds can be much bigger than the plants you are trying to nurture. If the weeds are thick, it is easy to uproot the very plant you are working so hard to help.

Many times I have realized a split second too late that I had a valuable plant in my grasp instead of a weed. In my zeal to eliminate a threat to that plant, I become an even more deadly enemy. Mixed emotions run through my mind as I look down at an uprooted plant. I scratch a hole in the soil and carefully replant it, knowing full well that it is a futile gesture. The plant will be wilted and dead when I look at it the next day.

Are you a parent or a role model and teacher to some young person?

Do you have a friend whose life has some moral "weeds" growing in it? Or maybe it's someone who doesn't know the Savior, and you are anxious to plant and nurture seeds of the gospel in his life. Perhaps you can see a parallel between the weeding story and some of your attempts at "straightening out" someone.

It takes work to establish credibility with a person, including your child—to build a bridge of communication

Our heavenly Father models proper Christian parenting for us.

Bob Gove

so that words of advice or correction will be accepted gracefully. But it is so easy to destroy the foundation of that bridge, bringing down what you so carefully erected. You know that you can help that person with the challenges he's facing—if he will only hear what you have to say. But a word that came out too harsh, too condescending, or too self-righteous has turned him off. The good that you intended has turned bad.

It's bad enough when this happens with a friend. We can hope that maybe he will listen to someone else. However, we are the primary guides for our kids. It is crucial that we say the right stuff to them in the right way the first time and every time so that they will hear it.

The apostle Paul says, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians


6:4). The Amplified Version says it like this: "Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger—do not exasperate them to resentment, but rear them tenderly in the training and discipline and admonition of the Lord."

This is not to say discipline has no place in the rearing of children, but discipline needs to be administered with love.

What a wise, loving, and tender heavenly Father we have! It is so important that our children acquire an accurate perception of what he is like. In this regard, fathers are so important. Fathers are "God figures" in the minds of little kids.

This thought scares me to death. Do my kids think that God is like me? Heaven forbid! But it is true. If we want children to have an accurate idea of what God is like, we fathers must conduct ourselves in the godliest way we can. Of course, that means first that we know what God is actually like and second that we have Christ formed in us (Galatians 4:19).

Through Baptism and the Word, God has planted the gospel in our children. It is producing a tender shoot of faith that needs to be nurtured. But weeds are also growing that need to be pulled. Let's always look to our heavenly Father for the wisdom and skill to do this correctly. Even more important, let us be comforted by his wonderful forgiveness and then model it for others.



Bob Gove is a member at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.