

STRETCHING YOUR FAITH • MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE GRADUATES

AUGUST 2005

# Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness



GOD'S  
SPECIAL-  
NEEDS  
CHILDREN

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## Forward in Christ

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WITH OUR FATHERS;  
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NOR FORSAKE US.  
*1 Kings 8:57*

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AUGUST

**WHAT'S INSIDE** by Julie Wietzke

North American outreach is all about telling more people about Jesus. But sometimes sharing your faith can be hard. Maybe you're afraid that you'll be ignored, or, worse yet, laughed at. Maybe you're scared that you'll be asked questions that you can't answer. But you need to go outside of your comfort zone in order to help others—and to help yourself. Pastor John Eich urges all of us to "Get out of the boat" (p. 12) and try new things, always trusting that God will guide us and be with us.

Sharing your faith is also something that you shouldn't put off. You never know when your or your neighbor's time of grace will come to an end. In "A letter to friends" (p. 16), Roger Grossenbacher uses a personal story to urge us all to use the time now to witness to Christ.

Pastor John Parlow continues to provide ideas on how to share the message of Christ with 21st-century sojourners. This month he encourages us to listen to those who cross our paths and to get back to the basics of Christianity (p. 33).

For more tips on sharing your faith, go to the North American Outreach Web site, [www.wels.net/nao](http://www.wels.net/nao).

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**PIETISM**

I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Prof. John Brenner for his articles on Christian piety [Jan.-April]. In a clear and precise way, these articles deal with what is perhaps the most important issue facing the Lutheran Church in our day and age.

Having experienced firsthand some of the disastrous results in the pietism of the so-called Church Growth Movement with its downgrading of the historic liturgy, I cringe when I see what at times appears to be similar tendencies within our own church body.

*Donald Bren  
Lewistown, Montana*

**PASTORS' WIVES**

I just wanted to voice my astonishment to "God bless the pastor's wife" [May].

I am truly surprised (maybe ignorant) to hear how some pastors' wives might feel how they are underappreciated, scrutinized, and underpaid. Trust me it is not only pastors' wives who might feel this way. All of our lives are touched in similar ways. There are many laypeople that have to endure the same behaviors in their lives too. . . . So please do not feel that you are alone as a "pastor's wife." We should all be praising the Lord for where he has us serving in life.

*Tera Lasalle  
Kanata, Ontario, Canada*

**THRIVING CONGREGATIONS**

On furlough in February and March, my wife and I had the privilege of visiting more than 25 WELS congregations and schools. We noticed that, in almost every case, they are engaged in new or expanded efforts to share the gospel! One congregation is sending its pastor to learn Spanish so it can reach out to Hispanics. Another congregation's members read Bible verses at home, which are credited as miles to send Barnabas the Mission-

ary Bear to encourage missionaries and their flocks. One congregation hosted a soccer camp for migrant workers' children. . . . It also seemed that nearly every congregation or school is involved in some form of building project.

When we sit in our apartment in Sweden and read the news about the synod's disastrous financial situation [April], we could easily get the impression that WELS is falling apart and in its death throes. Our visits left a totally different impression. I do not mean to downplay the crisis situation in synodical finances. . . . This certainly needs to concern and trouble us all. That's why it was such a joy and relief to see firsthand that the Lord clearly is blessing the work being done in our congregations.

*John Vogt  
Gothenburg, Sweden*

**CHRISTIAN FREEDOM**

In the article, "I'm not hurting you, am I?" [May], I found the list of examples Thomas Jeske used to illustrate "victim-less crimes" potentially confusing. While some of the examples listed are clearly sins, others may not necessarily be. For example, it is clear that if "lovers move in together but do not get married" a sin is being committed. However, the example of "the congregation decides not to donate to tsunami relief" cannot automatically be put into the same category. What if the congregation, after prayerful consideration, has indeed made a God-pleasing decision not to donate because of extenuating circumstances?

Jeske's overall point that we want to make our day-to-day decisions out of a heart of love for God, ourselves, our fellow Christians, and our unbelieving neighbor is certainly worthy of personal reflection. . . . However, Jeske could have gone even further to address the Christian freedom we enjoy, to discuss how some actions may or may not be sinful depending

upon the motivation of the heart, and to remind us all that God will still forgive us even when we have not properly exercised our freedom in Christ.

*Kathy Parra  
Tucson, Arizona*

**TEACHER AND STAFF MINISTER TRAINING**

It was probably for rhetorical purposes (it's a nice transition between paragraphs) that Pastor Gurgel in "Be prepared to give an answer" [June] said that teachers and staff ministers need "an equally thorough knowledge of the Scriptures"—equal, that is, to that of pastors. But the truth is, in terms of their preparation, a teacher or staff minister is not simply a pastor minus the Greek and Hebrew—which is what the article implies.

A teacher's or staff minister's training in the Scriptures is not as thorough as a pastor's. Nor does it need to be. This does not disparage our teachers or staff ministers in any way. It simply acknowledges that the scope of a teacher's or staff minister's call is different from a pastor's, and that you can study more Scripture in eight years of training than you can in four.

*Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.  
St. John's, Antigua, West Indies*

**PICTURE MIX-UP**

Thank you for the article on the Augsburg Confession [June]. However, Elector John never cut as dashing a figure as the picture bearing his name. The middle picture is actually a portrait of Charles V, and the bottom picture is a portrait of Elector John.

*Jonathan Schroeder  
Sharpsburg, Georgia*

*Thanks for your sharp eyes.—ed.*

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*.

# No more dents in the deer

*... the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:21-23*

Stephen H. Geiger

**B**road plains to the north. Similar sights to the south. In the west, a setting sun.

Toward the east, a car rolling smoothly into colors most brilliant, rays lighting trees and grass, and a lone deer in the ditch.

Its appearance was sudden, reaction swift. A car swerving to the left. The animal moved. A steering shift to the right, but a bit too late. The left corner of the car clipped the back end of the deer.

The car slowed. Inspection revealed special blessing. Hardly a dent. But still, there was a dent.

To one's shame, how quickly the human heart can become angry. Why did this have to happen? Why couldn't I have missed it completely? Why me?

Sometime later one thinks of the deer. He probably lived, but the dent must have been great. Might we imagine him wondering the same? "Why did this happen? Why me?"

## Life is full of groaning

Deer are different from humans. God has given creation, including its animals, to humans for our responsible use. Yet, in one special way, we and creation are much the same. We groan. We hurt. We get dents.

"The whole creation has been groaning." Humans were the cause. Disobeying God was the crime. Ever since, life hurts. Humans hurt. Creation hurts. Together we groan.

Have you had any hurts recently? Has health abandoned you? A friend betrayed you? An accident damaged

you or someone you love? Has loneliness weighed on you? A dashed hope saddened you?

Life is full of dents. And groaning.

How easy to get angry at God. We dare to imply that God is to blame. "Why isn't God doing anything to stop this? To fix this? Why isn't God . . ."

How God should direct just anger at us! We dare to accuse the only one innocent. Let us then remember that the hurts of life that pain us are nothing compared to the terror an insulted God should rain down. What groaning that would bring.

## God will bring an end to our groaning

How amazing that God describes something so different. He speaks of an end to the groaning. He speaks of humans waiting to be freed from bodies of pain. He speaks of people considered dear sons of the Almighty.

How can this be?

One willingly made the groanings of humanity his own. He lifted our misdirected anger in the midst of our hurts and carried it to the cross. He experienced groaning unimaginable as God let loose justice for all of our wrongs. Jesus satisfied God's justice. God now announces that you are innocent. In Jesus you have never grown angry about a dent. In Jesus you have never grown angry when something has gone wrong. In Jesus you have a Savior.



To find such joy and peace in him is to know of eventual release. In Jesus we long for the day when we will be free of these bodies now subject to decay and hurt and dents.

Creation looks forward as well to this day. Its exact future form may to some degree remain mysterious. But, without a doubt, both the groans of creation and those of God's children will come to an end.

Though for now, the groaning goes on.

With God's help our moans need not sound in a heart full of anger. Instead they can linger in a heart full of joy that can't wait to escape on that day very near, a day of no more dents for humans and no more dents in the deer.

*Contributing editor Stephen Geiger is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.*

# The big picture

Thomas J. Jeske

It's August, it's hot, and it's dry. Here in a prairie state, a traveler struggles for a sense of the big picture.

The Great Platte River Road has been used hard for hundreds of years by men and women, boys and girls who had places to go. Most traveled toward the frontier. Others moved away from it and the losses they'd experienced there. Ox carts, we're told, traveled two miles per hour on average. There were gullies and bluffs and riverbanks to negotiate. Even on the level, there were seas of grass six feet and higher running away from you to the horizon. Add in weather. The summer and winter seasons are often downright brutal.

Interstate 80 is now the traveler's reference point, its west-east blue line helping the map reader in the passenger seat to get a sense of the big picture. It can be a long way between exits, sometimes rest areas are nowhere to be found, and to the untrained eye there seems a dismaying sameness to it all.

Christians are familiar with another journey with difficult-to-read reference points, one which requires daily checking of the big picture to fight off the urge to go back the other way.

This is the human experience—to live and move through life's different seasons: birth, growth, fear, loss, love, work, play, and death.

Add the unfriendly "geography" of the American cultural landscape, and a group like our church body seems so frail, scattered, and inconsequential.

A young traveler, writing her experiences in a diary, might choose descriptors such as

- threatening circumstances,
- demanding bursts of very hard work, followed by
- dismaying sameness.

Have you come to dislike the threatening circumstances, the relentless competition between church bodies? Disagreements about what direc-

tion is best? Is your congregation dismayed after a long stretch with an apparent lack of progress? Another report about the tough financial shape the synod is in?

Christian, if this August finds you down in the dumps . . . if the synod convention wasn't all seashells and balloons . . . if the people around you don't seem particularly attractive, clever, or inspiring travel companions . . . if it's mighty hard today to see the big picture, read on:

"I believe that there is upon earth  
a little holy group and congregation of pure saints,  
under one head, Christ,  
called together by the Holy Spirit  
in one faith, one mind and understanding,  
with manifold gifts,  
yet agreeing in love,  
without sects or schisms.

I am also a part and member of the same,  
a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses,  
brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Spirit  
by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God,  
which is the beginning of entering it.

For formerly, before we had attained to this,  
we were altogether of the devil,  
knowing nothing of God and of Christ.

Thus, until the Last Day,  
the Holy Spirit abides with the holy congregation,  
Christendom,

by means of which he leads us to Christ  
and which he employs to teach and preach to us the Word,  
whereby he works and promotes sanctification,  
causing it daily to grow and become strong  
in the faith and its fruits which he produces."

*(Apostles' Creed, Third Article, Large Catechism,  
Dr. Martin Luther)*

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





at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: Faith healing

**The Bible says several times that “your faith has healed you.” Does this mean that God will heal me if I believe? If God doesn’t heal me, miraculously, does that mean that I don’t have enough faith? I believe that Jesus did miracles as stated in his Word. I believe that Jesus can do miracles and that he can heal me miraculously today, but for some reason I do not believe that Jesus will heal me. Any advice?**

When Jesus says, “Your faith has healed you” (Matthew 9:22, for example), that doesn’t mean that if we have a certain “amount” of faith God must heal us. That would subtly change the biblical definition of faith. Faith would no longer be simple trust in God’s mercy to us in Jesus. Instead, faith becomes a meritorious work by whose quality or quantity we earn answers from God.

If the quality or quantity of our faith was prayer’s real power, that would flip upside down God’s role and our role in prayer. The key power in prayer would no longer be God, but it would be our faith, together with our will as expressed in our requested answer. God’s role in prayer would be the equivalent of a divine vending machine. We insert the required faith and make our “willed” selection. Then God has no choice but to give us what we want.

Certainly we don’t want to downplay at all that the prayer of one righteous in Christ is “powerful and effective” (James 5:16). Yet we also know that we are to ask “according to his will” (1 John 5:14). Only where God has already clearly revealed his will to us in Scripture do we not need to add—in attitude if not in express words—“your will be done.”

This point is important to remember when praying for healing from a physical disease. Nowhere has God promised that he plans to heal us of all diseases this side of heaven. Rather, God may have his good and loving purpose to allow the disease (or another problem) to remain.

Paul’s situation in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 is a powerful example of this. Paul had some kind of unidentified problem, which he calls a “thorn in my flesh.” Paul earnestly prayed to God to take it away. Certainly he trusted in his Savior and in his Savior’s power to heal him. Yet God told Paul that it would be better for him to continue to struggle with that difficulty.

So too it may often be for us. There’s never any doubt that God always has the power to heal us of any disease or problem. But in his wisdom and love, he may not choose to do that.

Still, we haven’t explained Jesus’ words, “Your faith has healed you.” Here is the simplest explanation that is in harmony with other clear Scripture. In those cases where Jesus did heal someone of a particular disease, what would have happened if that person had instead walked away from Jesus in unbelief? That person would have forfeited the blessing Jesus fully intended to give. However, by coming to him in faith, that faith “healed” him because it laid hold of the Savior’s powerful mercy and found his willingness to answer that request just as asked.

The key, as always in Scripture, is not so much the faith itself, but the object to which that faith clings. Faith doesn’t “make” God do anything. Faith is the receiving hand of trust into which God lays the blessings he knows are best for us.

*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](http://www.wels.net), jumpword “qa”, for more questions and answers.

# CONNECTING

with **SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN**

To God, we must seem like children with autism.

Dan P. Krueger

**A**s Jesus sometimes used the lives of the handicapped to demonstrate the relationship between God and man, so dealing with my five-year-old son's autism reminds me how I am, by nature, far from God. Caring for my son reminds me how complete is God's power to save.

Autism and other related disabilities change your way of life. I suppose our condition is similar to families who care for children with cerebral palsy or for elderly loved ones with Alzheimer's disease. The needs of the disabled become the focus of daily life. In the same way, our needs and spiritual disabilities are daily in God's focus.

**To God, we must seem like children with autism. Here's how:**

**We are abnormal.** Children with autism often live in their own little world. They make strange motions and express themselves with strange noises. For example, my son "kisses" me by grinding his chin into my forehead. They seem oblivious to obvious dangers like speeding cars.

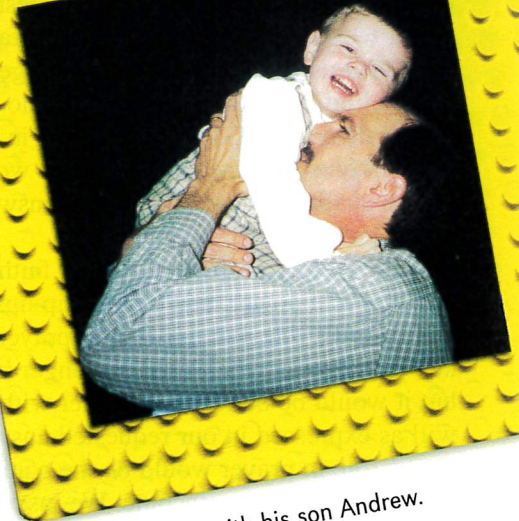
In God's eyes we live in a strange world of sin. We do and say things

that are inexplicable and offensive. We seem driven to walk a path that leads to hell no matter how much we are warned.

**We scream and shout in reaction to our environment.** The autistic reaction to frustration caused by miscommunication with others is often an angry tantrum.

Although we "normal" people can understand the world around us, we too often react harshly when the world doesn't agree with us. "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 4:1,2).

**We injure ourselves to block out the noise or pain.** The mind of a child with autism is often bombarded by the sights, smells, and emotions around him. A grocery store can be full of thousands of minute details his mind tries to process all at once. It's not unusual for such a



Dan Krueger with his son Andrew.

child to repeatedly slam both fists to his head in response. I'm not sure if it's out of frustration or just a way for the brain to focus on something it can readily interpret, such as pain.

How easy it is for us to turn to drugs, alcohol, perversion, and excess when dealing with emotional pain in our lives. Some do it to block out their disappointments and some because of the sensation their body craves.

**We obsess on the meaningless.** For years my son has enjoyed standing on end in symmetrical

patterns and then, with his head to the cold hard floor, eyeing each block from different angles. (Heaven forbid if you should knock one of those blocks over.) It makes no sense to me.

Just so, it makes no sense to God for us to be constantly worrying about the future or living as though the universe belongs to us. "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:13,14).

**We don't communicate.** As a toddler, my son refused to speak even a single word for a reward. If he had said "up," I would have gladly and joyfully whisked him off his feet. If he had said "candy," I would have quickly put a piece into his hand. But his mind couldn't see the need to use words.

Do we, as children of God, speak to our Father in prayer? Too often, we don't. Don't we know how easy it is, how much we can benefit, or how quickly our heavenly Father will respond?

**We don't respond.** A child with autism only thinks in concrete terms and the world around him is confusing. Consequently, he doesn't respond to people, even people who love him.

As children with a sinful nature, we only think in selfish terms. The world around us is full of temptations, and we tune out God's voice.

**As our perfect heavenly parent, God cares for his disabled children.**

**He longs to take away the imperfections.** Even before our son was diagnosed, we longed to take away whatever was causing his distress. This wasn't so we could get a good night's rest or sit through a meal without screams and tears. We wanted him to enjoy life, to appreciate and explore all it had to offer.

In the same way, our heavenly Father longs to take away the effects of sin in our lives. Ultimately, he wants us to experience the joy of perfect love in perfect communion with him in heaven. He wants us to experience never being lonely and never having to say "I'm sorry."

**He works at it every single day.** To treat autism you have to be as relentless as it is. Treatment is most effective when the child is young, and your window of opportunity seems very short. We try to keep our son engaged and learning every waking hour. We keep a daily log of his behaviors and activity in hope that we will find a clue as to what works and what doesn't.

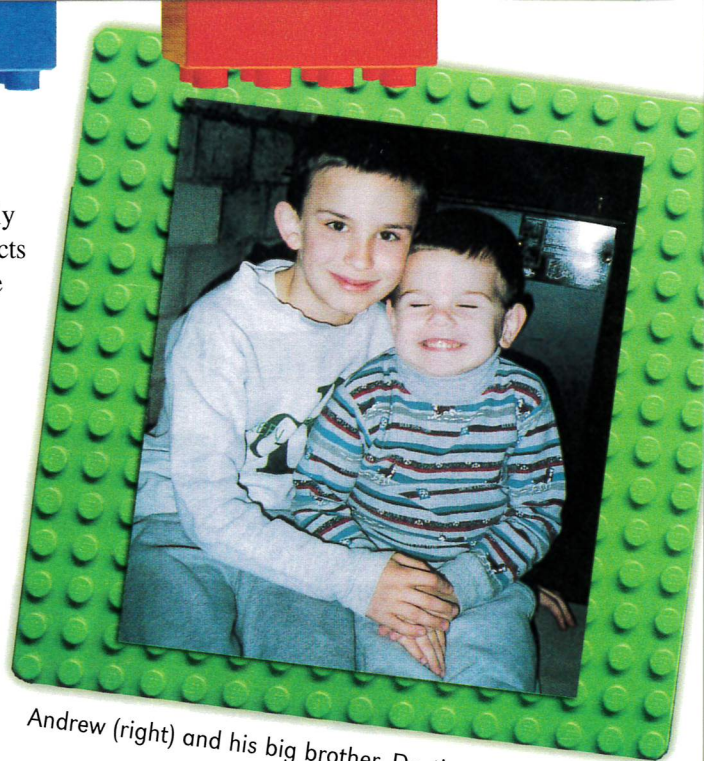
God is relentless in caring for his children. He knows our struggle is constant, and our life lasts only for a little while. His angels are always on duty, and his Spirit is always at work within us.

**He commits everything to the cause.** Learning that your child has autism creates a feeling of urgency and a commitment to do everything in your power to fight for this child.

Hasn't God felt this as well? Wasn't this part of Jesus' motivation as he strode to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? When the lash was digging into his flesh and when he was gasping for breath while on the cross, he was fully committed to fight for his children.

**He provides the cure.** Here's where the comparison to earthly parents doesn't fit. We experiment with different treatments and can only dream of providing a solution.

For God, the cure is already working and invigorating our bodies with new life. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were



Andrew (right) and his big brother, Dustin.

dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4,5).

As Jesus said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

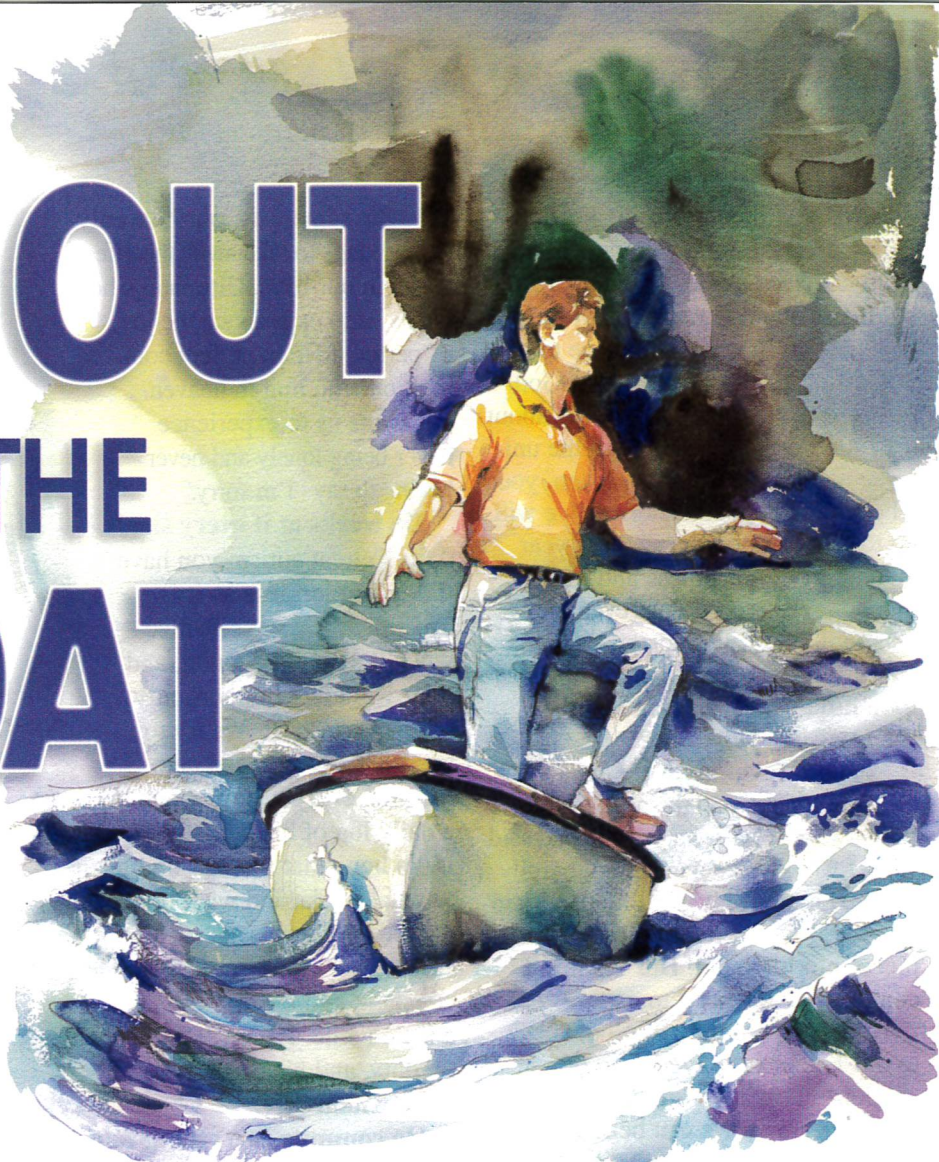
This new life is not just a feeling or wishful thinking: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

Nor is it a remedy that might wear off: "For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Corinthians 5:4,5). Though the disease of sin still has its effect, one day God's children will finally be free of it.

I'm thankful that God sees my natural, abnormal condition and lovingly cares for me until he can remove my disability forever.

*Dan Krueger is a member at Mt. Zion, Kenosha, Wisconsin.*

# GET OUT OF THE BOAT



How do you stretch the faith God has worked in you by his gospel? Get out and exercise it.

John L. Eich

I finally did it after a year. Even though I wasn't really happy about it and was limited without it, I didn't want the discomfort of changing. I was afraid . . . afraid of getting sick, afraid of not being able to adjust, afraid of being joked about by my kids, afraid of . . .

## Maintaining the status quo

That kind of thinking often holds us back, doesn't it? The child afraid of taking off the training wheels doesn't learn to ride a two-wheeler. The teenager sad to be a "wallflower" is still too afraid to ask for a dance. The adult unhappy at his job is too afraid to look for another one.

That kind of thinking hampers our Christian life as well. "I know I should talk to my friend about

Jesus, but . . ." "I know I should change, but . . ."

Although we may be unhappy or everything isn't good where we are, we are used to being there. We know what life is like there. We've learned to accept it. Besides, the unknown is terrifying. Maybe we'll get in over our heads. Maybe something will happen that we can't handle. So fear freezes us.

Picture yourself in that storm-tossed boat of Matthew 14. Twelve veteran sailors are struggling to keep the boat afloat. Imagine the size of the waves, the force of the wind, the lightning exploding in the water around you, the sea spray stinging your face. Then picture Jesus calling Peter to stretch his faith and come walking to him on the water. What would you choose—the water or the boat?

By comparison the boat is safe and secure—even though it is sinking.

Now, we all have our own, self-made boats, places where we'd rather stay than listen to God. Our boats can be our excuses not to change, excuses like "When my boss is more supportive, then I'll work harder" or "When my spouse is more cooperative, I'll work on being a better partner." Our boats can be our own laziness. "I'd help, but I'm too busy . . . too tired . . . don't know enough." We end up staying put. So we don't grow.

## Going outside of your comfort zone

That thing that I didn't want to do but I finally did? I got my first pair of bifocals. Wow! Now I can read again. I've adjusted to

them easier than I expected. My fears disappeared like a puff of smoke. But it took being pushed out of my comfort zone to find something better.

Isn't that how it is with our faith? We need to be pushed and stretched out of our comfort zones. That's where the growth is. God asked many Bible heroes to do the impossible—to kill giants, to stand in fiery furnaces, to sit with hungry lions, to step out of the boat and walk on a storm-tossed sea. But they never did it alone. God was always there with them.

I believe that God's general method for growing a deep, adventuresome faith in us is by asking us to get out of the boat and live his words of promise. God uses real-world challenges to strengthen our ability to trust him. The call to be stretched in our faith often involves crisis, opportunity, even failure, generally fear, sometimes suffering, always the doing of something we haven't done before. But there is no other way to find out that what we have been reading in the Bible is true—other than to try it.

### Fixing your eyes on Jesus

Most baby eagles don't want to leave the nest. So the mother eagle dismantles the nest until the eaglets fall out. Then, flapping their little wings like crazy, they learn to fly and become among the most majestic birds in the sky. All the while the father eagle is soaring just above to catch them on "eagle's wings." That's how our God often works with us.

God helps us have enough faith to be stretched.

A Sunday school class was asked to go home and count the stars in the sky as part of the next lesson. Students came back with various numbers. Some said 100, some said 1,000, and some

said a "gazillion." Finally the teacher asked a little boy who had said nothing, "How many stars did you count?" He replied, "Three." The rest of the kids were laughing, and the boy was embarrassed. The teacher asked how he only saw three. He said, "I guess we just have a small backyard."

## Faith gets bigger as we feed and exercise it more.

That's often our problem when it comes to faith—we have a small backyard. We have a little, narrow view of God, and so we don't really trust that he can do everything. Our faith needs to be strengthened through his Word and sacraments. Faith gets bigger as we feed and exercise it more. As we worship our faith gets bigger. As we fix our eyes on Jesus, we become more convinced that everything is possible for us because we have a God who does the impossible every day.

We are what we think, and we think what we focus on. That's why Isaiah writes, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you" (26:3). As we focus on Jesus, the beginning and goal of our faith, we find ourselves thinking and then acting more confidently and more faithfully.

### Acting on your faith

Faith is not only having the assurance and conviction that God can accomplish great things through us but also acting on that conviction.

On another occasion when Jesus told Peter "Put out into deep water," Peter hesitated. But then he said, "Because you say so, I will let down the nets" (Luke 5:4,5). Peter had little faith that there were fish in that water; his years of fishing experience told him that. But because Jesus asked him to launch out deeper, he did.

We may face things that we don't like to do or that we think can't be done. But Jesus says, "Do it for me! Go next door to your neighbor whose dog chews up your newspaper and tell him about God. Open up your home to a struggling Christian and get to know him or her. Teach a Bible class. Start acting like the husband/wife/parent God wants you to be."

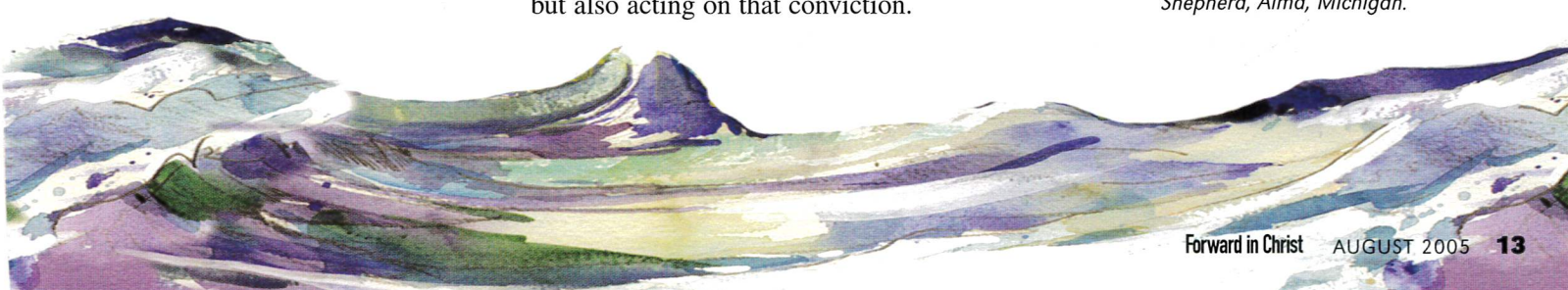
Remember God's promise to Joshua? "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (1:9). Joshua had never led such a large group of people. He had never conquered an entire country before. But God enabled him to "walk on water" and conquer the land of Canaan. He makes the same promise to us.

What storms are threatening us? What winds are we straining against? What nests are we too comfortable in? We will only grow as we are stretched.

The Lord knows that we're weak and imperfect. He knows that we're probably going to get caught up in "circumstances." When we do, we will take our eyes off him and fearfully glance at the threatening waves. But the important thing with God is that we obediently try.

Besides, he's always within arm's reach to catch us.

*John Eich is pastor at Good Shepherd, Alma, Michigan.*



# LUKE: THE TRU

**NO BIBLICAL WRITER  
HAS SURPASSED LUKE  
IN EXPRESSING HIS  
CARE TO GET THE  
FACTS RIGHT.**

Theodore J. Hartwig

“ON BYWAYS  
WITH THE  
BELOVED  
PHYSICIAN”



In today's world, Satan seems to have been totally unleashed. Saving faith surrenders to the noon-day devil of spiritual lethargy. Rebellious atheism, the insidious spawn of material affluence, runs rampant as never before.

In these times perilous to faith-life, we, like Theophilus for whom Luke wrote his two books, need to know the certainty of what we have been taught. We need constant assurance that God's Word is truth, and no biblical writer has surpassed Luke in expressing his care to get the facts right. He is a superb model of the trustworthy historian.

Yet even Luke has suffered more than his share of onslaughts from those who practice so-called higher criticism of the Bible. Blinded by the reasoning that natural events must have natural and verifiable causes, they reject miracles as unhistorical. They discard the first two chapters of Luke's gospel as legends. They label Luke as careless with facts and so much in love with miracles that he dragged them into his work to brighten the story. They are not able to think of a God exalted above their laws of cause and effect. They cannot conceive of a God superior to their own reason and intellect.

Primarily missing in all this criticism is historical insight. They look into the deep well of the past and there see no authentic images of the past but reflections of themselves.

#### **Luke checked his facts**

What more compelling witness to his integrity as a reliable historian could Luke furnish than the preface

at the beginning of his gospel. Such a preface is unique to this writer in all of Scripture. It confronts us with a choice. Take Luke at his word or call him the ultimate impostor. If, then, the preface is open to doubt, the entire book falls under a cloud.

So what did Luke write in his preface? And how, without fanfare, does his care as a meticulous historian show up throughout his writing?

In the gospel's preface, Luke first speaks of having consulted numerous documents with recollections of what Jesus said and did. Among these sources, the gospels of Matthew and Mark were probably available to Luke. And there were other documents, now lost. The four gospels preserved for us were so superior that all other contemporary records quickly fell into disuse and oblivion. As for that large quantity of still extant literature with fantastic tales about the infancy, youth, and later ministry of Jesus, some of it written to deceive, some to entertain: all of this fiction belongs to a later date, after Luke's death.

Besides naming written sources for his history, Luke's preface also refers to oral ones. From Acts we know that Luke spent about two years in the Holy Land while Paul was held in prison at Caesarea. This gave Luke opportunity to interview eyewitnesses to Jesus' life. In 1 Corinthians, dated about a year earlier, Paul writes that the risen Lord appeared to 500 followers, most of whom were still alive (15:6). Among these eyewitnesses, one could single out Peter and John,

# STWORTHY HISTORIAN

as well as Jesus' brother James, now a pillar in the Jerusalem congregation. Other possible interviewees would be Mary Magdalene and Joanna, wife of Herod's steward (Luke 8:3).

Certainly Luke's prime witness for the gospel's first two chapters would have been the mother of Jesus. According to ancient tradition, she was 14 years old when Jesus was born. If so, she would have been in her 70s when Luke could have interviewed her. Bear in mind that Luke carefully notes twice (Luke 2:19,51) that Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart, thus fixing them on her memory.

Eyewitnesses, then, together with written records, were Luke's major human sources for all of the gospel and for much of Acts. With so much information available to him, Luke as a bona fide historian also writes that he checked the facts over against one another to make sure that he had it all as it happened. He certainly was no conduit for unsubstantiated rumor, nor was he a peddler of tall tales.

## **Luke rooted Jesus' life in history**

As led by God's Spirit, Luke furthermore exhibits his eminence as a historian by connecting gospel events with notable contemporaries. Zechariah and Elizabeth are associated with the reign of Herod the Great. The Roman census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem occurred in about the 23rd year of Caesar Augustus's reign. John the Baptist's ministry began in the 15th year of Augustus's successor Tiberius. Con-

temporary historical records fix the time and administration of all these men with much accuracy. Therefore, the time of Jesus' birth and beginning of his ministry, when he was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23), get a firm historical footing.

Later, the mention of Gallio as governor of Greece when Paul was at Corinth (Acts 18:12) has made it possible to date the years of Paul's mission journeys with great precision.

Unlike other persons venerated as divine, Jesus of Nazareth does not float in limbo. His life is firmly rooted in history. As Paul tells Governor Festus and King Agrippa, the events of the gospel were "not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). They happened out in the open.

## **Luke added facts not in other gospels**

The mark of the historian shows again with meaningful additions of information found only in Luke. John the Baptist's call to produce fruits of repentance does not stop there as in Matthew and Mark. Luke records advice for producing such fruits given to John's questioners (3:10-14).

Another addition occurs when the imprisoned Baptist dispatches two of his disciples to inquire of Jesus whether he was the Christ. In Matthew 11, the disciples are told to remind their master of Jesus' miracles as proof of his identity. In Luke 7, the conscientious historian calls attention to miracles Jesus did in the presence of John's disciples. Thus they were equipped to be eyewitnesses of what they should tell John.

A different kind of addition occurs in Luke 4:40 where he says, "When the sun was setting," Jesus healed all the sick that people brought to him. Why this apparent irrelevancy of the setting sun? Earlier in the chapter we discover that it is a Sabbath day which had begun with Jesus teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. Now we have come to the end of the Sabbath, which extended from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Anyone familiar with Sabbath rules would know that the Jewish-amended Sabbath law restricted walking distance from home to 2,000 steps. So if people needed to come with their sick from any distance at all, they would have to wait until the sun was setting. Then the restrictions were off. People could walk as far as they pleased. The setting sun a minor detail? Not at all for people familiar with contemporary Sabbath restrictions.

The setting sun is not only a meaningful addition, but also a witness to Luke's precision as a writer. Without interrupting the narrative to justify the addition, Luke knows that people familiar with life and culture in the days of Jesus will understand. He displays the qualities of a highly polished writer.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

*Theodore Hartwig, a professor emeritus at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.*

*This is the second of an eight-part series on Luke. To read the other articles in the series, go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "ficarchive", and search by the author's first and last name.*

Dear Friends,

Today I lost a friend, Hosmer Auger. I called him Hoz. He was 91 years old, and, hopefully, at some level he knew and believed that Jesus had died for his sins.

I met him 33 years ago. He was one of my customers. He was a hard sell, but he turned out to be a good customer and a close friend.

About 20 years ago, Hoz moved. Even though we still got together regularly, we most often talked by phone, sometimes two to three times a week — often for more than an hour. Hoz was probably the greatest conversationalist I've ever met.

But this letter is not about how great a conversationalist he was. It's about Hoz's relationship with Jesus. Hoz never had a relationship with Jesus until maybe the very end. I say "maybe" because I will not know until I get to heaven. Hoz was an agnostic. Over the years we talked some about what I believed, and I shared my faith with Hoz. The problem is, I probably did not have enough of those conversations with him, and I feel guilty about it.

During one phone call, I realized that Hoz was having a heart attack. I told him to call 911. Later, I visited him at the hospital, and a pastor was there. The pastor told me that he would bring Hoz to church on Sundays. Hoz and I talked about those times he went to church, but since he was not very interested in spiritual matters, I usually had to mention it first.

After his heart attack, I brought him a book that explored the validity of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ's life; but he never read it. He was just not interested.

Then, four days before his death, he said, "Roger, I want you to come and see me because I have some questions."

We spoke about how every week at church the pastor talked about some part from the Bible. Then he said, "Roger, I know you are a good Christian, and I want to talk to you about the Bible. Isn't the Bible just folklore?"

I told him about the validity of the Scriptures and how these witnesses to Christ's life and miracles died for what they saw and believed. I asked, "Would anyone die for folklore?"

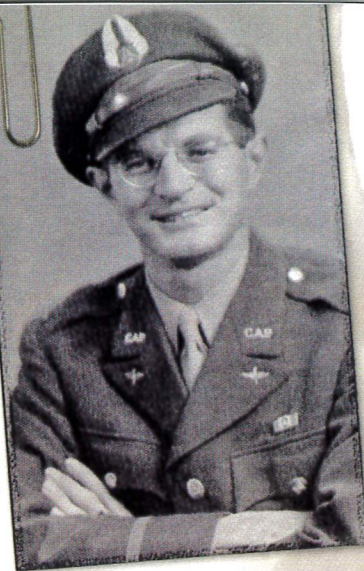
Then I told Hoz about the beautiful way God had redeemed the world that had fallen into sin by sending his Son Jesus to pay the price for all of our sins. I told him that having faith in Jesus as your Savior is all that you need to go to heaven. I told him how I had been praying for him for years to know Christ.

His eyes were so bad he could not read anymore, so I promised to send him the audio version of the book on Christ. The next morning I called and told him I had ordered the CD and it would arrive on May 5.

Hoz died at 3 A.M. on May 3.

The question for you and me is: "Do you have a friend that you have witnessed to over the years and are wondering if you have done enough?" Or, "Is there a friend you have never witnessed to and are thinking about sharing your faith?" Now is the time. A "May 3" is waiting for all of our unchristian friends, and we need to share God's great gift of Jesus now.

Should I have tried harder or more often to share my faith with Hoz? Was my last conversation with Hoz enough for him to trust that Jesus was his Savior? I won't know until I get to heaven.



Hosmer "Hoz" Auger

Roger Grossenbacher  
member at Apostles, San Jose, California





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

## From Promise to Glory



\$49.99

*From Promise to Glory—An Overview of the Bible* is a course that leads class members through the Bible in 16 lessons. I was skeptical at how effectively the Bible could be covered in just 16 lessons. But authors Tim Gumm, Randy Hunter, and Robert Koester do an excellent job of combining many Bible lessons into one, using fluid transitions. For example, the first lesson deals with the main topics found in Genesis 1-11. In less than five minutes the students hear the stories of Creation, the Fall and Promise, Cain and Abel, the flood, and the Tower of Babel.

The strength of this series is that the presenter can adapt the course as he wishes. The authors have developed the series so that lessons are to be presented by using a PowerPoint-ready computer, an LCD projector, and set of speakers. Presenters can also add the following options to each lesson:

- “What’s in It?”—gives hands-on experience in working with the Bible accounts.
- “What’s the Big Picture?”—shows the big picture in each section.
- “Where’s the Promise?”/“Where’s the Fulfillment?”—shows how the lesson connects with the promise of the Savior or the fulfillment of Jesus’ coming.
- “During the Week”—gives activities to do throughout the week.

Another excellent option is entitled “Learning Activities.” The authors state, “The premise for this option is that learning requires the learner’s own

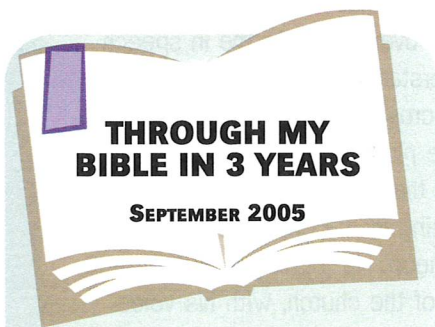
involvement. The best way to involve a learner is to get him or her active.” This option does exactly that by providing a wide range of fun and serious activities.

This Bible overview series would be effective for teenagers to adults. Because of the variety of activities, the presenter can choose the best activity for each age group. The series is also flexible in regard to the size of the group. In the introduction of the leader’s guide, the authors give some great suggestions on how to use the series. The variety of activities lends itself to fitting the needs of the students’ many learning styles.

*From Promise to Glory* is a fantastic tool in presenting the major events of the Bible.

Jeffrey Inniger  
Risen Savior, Milwaukee

*Editor’s note: This Bible study course costs \$49.99 and includes the Leader’s Guide and a DVD or VHS tape. Two different student lesson booklets are available for \$5 each.*



## THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

SEPTEMBER 2005

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. 2 Thessalonians  | 15. Jos. 22        |
| 2:13–3:17           | 16. Jos. 23        |
| 2. Joshua 1         | 17. Jos. 24        |
| 3. Jos. 2           | 18. Galatians 1    |
| 4. Jos. 3, 4        | 19. Gal. 2         |
| 5. Jos. 5, 6        | 20. Gal. 3:1-18    |
| 6. Jos. 7           | 21. Gal. 3:19–4:7  |
| 7. Jos. 8           | 22. Gal. 4:8–5:1   |
| 8. Jos. 9           | 23. Gal. 5:2-24    |
| 9. Jos. 10          | 24. Gal. 5:25–6:18 |
| 10. Jos. 11, 12     | 25. Proverbs 1     |
| 11. Jos. 13:1–15:12 | 26. Prov. 2, 3     |
| 12. Jos.            | 27. Prov. 4, 5     |
| 15:13–17:18         | 28. Prov. 6, 7     |
| 13. Jos. 18, 19     | 29. Prov. 8        |
| 14. Jos. 20, 21     | 30. Prov. 9        |

## Obituaries

### Henry G. Meyer 1907-2005

Henry Meyer was born Dec. 21, 1907, in New Ulm, Minn. He died May 6, 2005, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1939 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Moberg, S.D.; Zion, Elroy, and St. Paul, Millersville, Wis.; and Zion, Fort Morgan/Trinity, Hillrose, Colo.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Irene. He is survived by one son, one daughter, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

### Paul R. Hanke 1922-2005

Paul Hanke was born Nov. 26, 1922, in Whitehall, Wis. He died May 10, 2005, in Belle Plaine, Minn.

A 1947 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.,

he served Christ, Big Bend, Wis.; St. Peter, Monticello; St. Peter, St. Peter; and The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, all in Minnesota.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Fern, and one son. He is survived by two sons and one daughter.

### Hilda M. Meinel 1910-2005

Hilda (nee Beckmann) Meinel was born July 30, 1910, in Johnson, Neb. She died May 10, 2005, in Jefferson, Wis.

She served St. John, Jefferson, Wis.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Fred. She is survived by one son, one daughter, and one grandson.

**Correction:** Martin Lopahs did not graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as reported in the June obituaries. He graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

# WHATEVER

## The heart of a child

An autistic child reminds us what truly matters when we praise God.

Jessica Stege

Children are a special blessing from God. Each one is unique. Alex was one of those children who appears different—maybe even strange—to people at first glance. When taking a closer look, though, Alex has a heart of gold. He may not be like “other people,” but he shows that he enjoys life even with his disability.

**It was a normal school day, and I was going to church to practice accompanying the song the kindergarten class would sing in church in a few days.** Alex walked in with the rest of the class, but there was something about him that made him stand out.

He was no taller than the other children. He stood about three feet tall but walked with a bit of a limp. His blonde, wavy hair was combed, neatly framing his face, but his eyes were dazed.

He was seeing what every other child in his class was seeing, yet he seemed to stare more intently. He was unfocused and jittery, not quite sure of what he was supposed to do.

The normal chatter of five-year-olds was interrupted by his sudden outburst. His shrill, high voice echoed in the empty church. No apparent reason was evident for his cry, but the cause was soon revealed. Alex had seen me practicing on the piano and was enthralled.

While the rest of the class lined up in the front of the church, he came over to me and looked wonderingly with his large blue eyes. Within a few seconds, he reached out to the piano hesitantly and played one of the keys. He looked at me again with a grin and widened eyes that showed his fascination. The teacher came over and pulled him away to line up with the other children.

**I found out later that Alex was autistic.** It was unusual that he even approached me. Usually he was extremely cautious and distant from social interaction with others. For reasons that only God knows, Alex stepped out of his shell for that short moment in time.

The curious, bright-eyed boy was full of surprises. Instead of staying in the lineup with the rest of his classmates, he walked around the front of the church and let his eyes wander to gaze upon all the new sights. Though he was not focused on the song, he joined in on parts he recognized and danced around with great excitement in his accomplishment. His speech was slurred, and the pitch of his voice was higher than the notes he was trying to hit. But that didn't matter. He was praising God in the best way that he could.

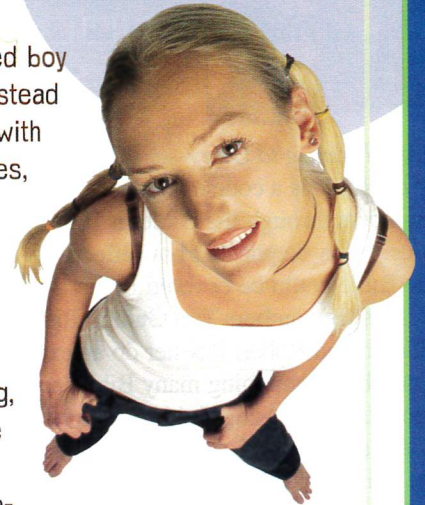
Alex would walk clumsily over to talk to me in speech that I did not always understand, but his body language helped get his message across. His shrieks of laughter and cries of “Look!” as he plunked on the piano and clapped my hands told me that he was thrilled to be there.

When it came time to sing in the church service, Alex still did not stay in the lineup. He joyfully wandered and danced around the front of the church, with his voice sounding every few phrases.

To people in the church, his behavior might have looked like that of an unruly child. To me, and especially to God, it was an act of praise. Alex could take the simple things in life and find pleasure in them.

He could use his disability as a gift to praise God and to remind me what truly matters—not the manner of praise, but the heart that gives it.

Jessica Stege, a member at Riverview, Appleton, Wisconsin, will be a freshman at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



## Members contribute towards Walking Together

In mid-April, materials, including a video and brochures, were mailed out to all 1,259 WELS congregations, encouraging them to hold a Walking Together Sunday on or around May 1. The service was intended to inform members of the work that WELS carries out as a synod and to celebrate what has been accomplished up to now by the grace of God.

As of mid-June, love for Christ compelled offerings of nearly \$522,000 among WELS members. About \$404,000 of that amount was given through 423 congregations, and there are high expectations of hearing from most of the others. The remaining gifts came from individuals.

WELS has received plenty of helpful feedback about the service. A large majority of the 70 people polled online said that they either learned from the service, were motivated by the Christian message, or both. A number of bloggers contributed their input<sup>1</sup> as well on the WELS Weblog, [www.wels.net/imprint](http://www.wels.net/imprint).

"It is our powerful and loving God who has blessed our humble efforts to remain faithful to the true Word! Let us rejoice at how richly and broadly

he has expanded our efforts! We truly have a treasure in our church body," wrote a blogger identified as "Naomi."

Another blogger, a pastor's wife named Shanna, wrote, "Personally, I enjoyed hearing an example of the Holy Spirit working . . . that is always very encouraging."

"I've been a WELS member all my life," said Ron Roth, administrator of the Commission for Communication on Financial Support and director of Walking Together Sunday. "I've served as a parish pastor for 24 years and as a synod administrator for 17 years. I still have those 'Oh, wow!' moments when I learn something new about our synod's ministry.

"I pray that our Walking Together Sunday emphasis has been an 'Oh, wow!' experience for all of us and that we will be moved to support his work of the Lord in thankfulness and joy!"



In honor of Walking Together Sunday, members from St. Peter, Savanna, Ill., walked from the church to the river front green space where some of them had helped plant trees the day before (pictured above). By walking together and working together they hoped to demonstrate their partnership in carrying out the mission of the church.

<sup>1</sup>Direct link: [www.wels.net/wordpress/archives/2005/05/09/walking-together-Sunday-your-reaction/](http://www.wels.net/wordpress/archives/2005/05/09/walking-together-Sunday-your-reaction/)

## ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

The day the students came back from Christmas vacation, we were beginning a new novel in literature class. The novel is categorized as "gritty realism," which means that the author talks very openly about pressures that teenagers face. In order to introduce the novel, I asked the kids in my first section to name some of these pressures as I wrote them on the board. They covered all of the general pressures like smoking, drinking, gambling, cheating, stealing, drugs, etc. We then discussed how we as Christians deal with these temptations and contrasted that to the way the world deals with them.

After that class hour, the next group of sophomores came in. We had a few minutes to kill before the bell rang, so I asked some of them what they had done over Christmas vacation. Immediately a student who sits in the back of class raised his hand and, with a concerned look on his face, pointed to the board and said, "Is that what the last section did over break?"

*Tutor Hannah H. Scharf  
Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wisconsin*

## DEFINING RELIGION

**Righteousness: the essential perfection of God. The righteousness of the law is the perfect obedience which God's law demands. The righteousness revealed in the gospel is the righteousness won by the perfect obedience and innocent suffering and death of our Savior. God credits this righteousness to us, and we receive it by faith (Romans 1:17, Romans 3:21-24).**

## Seniors serving seniors

With nearly 1,800 members and 60 active chapters from the West Coast to the East, the OWLS have been serving its Savior since 1984.

The OWLS? Yes, the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors. It started with a group of seniors gathering in Prairie du Chien, Wis., to draw up bylaws and establish its mission: to give older WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod members a continued sense of involvement and purpose in church-centered work during their maturing years, and to provide for their growth, development, and happiness in a God-pleasing manner.



Jeannie Blaschke, a volunteer from Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, makes a "Fourth of July delivery" to Lorraine Hofmann in a nursing home.

The OWLS is closely associated with the Commission on Special Ministries. In addition to its members volunteering for projects such as Prison Ministry and Builders For Christ, last summer the OWLS committed \$50,000 to help WELS Civilian Chaplaincy in Europe bring the gospel to military personnel and civilians.

The OWLS also recognized another mission area: nursing home ministry. In February 2003, Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, Wis., began developing a ministry to seniors who were in nursing homes or homebound. When OWLS administrator Lester Ring was looking

for a meeting place for a committee working on a similar ministry plan, Mt. Calvary seemed like the ideal location. Special Ministries lay leaders Paul and Joyce Garness and Pastor Edward Ungemach of Mt. Calvary joined the OWLS committee. After a few months of learning and visitations, several other area congregations (Immanuel, La Crosse; St. Matthew, Stoddard; First Lutheran, La Crosse; Christ, West Salem; and St. Paul, Onalaska) got involved.

The program fosters one-on-one fellowship and spiritual growth between volunteers and seniors who are homebound or living in nursing homes and assisted living centers. Volunteers make at least weekly visits and build lasting friendships with the residents. "Many of these people are not being visited by others or have needs so challenging that another friend becomes something of a respite for both the resident and their family members," Garness shares.

The committee prepared 52 devotions on separate cards that the volunteers read to the residents and leave for them to re-read and pass on to others. The committee also put together a pamphlet of guidelines for starting and sustaining visitation ministry as well as training individuals for it.

The OWLS aren't only reaching out to other WELS seniors. "They know that American communities are filled with homes and institutions of aging people who need to learn about the Savior's love and they want to do something about it," observes Carl Ziemer, administrator of Special Ministries. "Lay volunteers are tasting the joy of gospel proclamation and it shows! More and more of them are lining up to join in serving seniors with God's Word of life!"

*Want to learn more about developing a nursing home ministry? Get sample devotions and guidelines by writing to OWLS, P.O. Box 84, New Ulm, MN 56073.*

## Reflecting diversity

When members of Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis., were doing outreach work in 2004, they discovered that the neighborhood was changing—more Hispanics were moving in.

Even though Risen Savior is also concentrating on reaching out to the African-Americans who live in the area, the congregation knew that it couldn't let this opportunity go by.

"The vision of Risen Savior is to reflect the diversity of its neighborhood," says Ken Fisher, pastor at Risen Savior. "The congregation felt that if the neighborhood changes, our congregation will change with it."

To reach out to these Hispanics, Risen Savior called Germán Novelli as an evangelist. Grants from the Board for Home Missions and the Milwaukee chapter of WELS Kingdom Workers helped fund this effort.

Novelli was a journalist and served in the ministry in Venezuela. He came into contact with WELS through our mission in Puerto Rico and entered into fellowship in 2003. Now he is continuing his theological studies through the WELS Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Training Team.

Novelli will be leading worship in Spanish, providing religious instruction to school families, and conducting Bible studies in people's homes.

"I am glad for this wonderful opportunity to serve Christ," says Novelli. "It is so good how some people have opened their homes to gather their neighbors and hold worship services. It is a great blessing of God to me."



Evangelist Germán Novelli (left) greets worship attendees at Risen Savior.

## District news

### Michigan

The Michigan District held its **104th Pastor-Teacher-Delegate Convention** on June 7-9. The theme of the convention was "I am not ashamed of the gospel." The primary focus of the convention was to prepare the district's delegates for the synod convention in July. The delegates were assigned to serve on the same committees that they would be serving on at the synod convention.

### South Atlantic

On June 12, **Christ, Keystone Heights, Fla.**, dedicated its new church building as well as installed a new pastor, Martin Scheele.

**Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.**, recently purchased a portable building to enhance its outreach ministry.

### South Central

A Life in Jesus in Art camp and a water sports camp were held at **Camp Shiloh, Pittsburg, Texas**, in July to nurture WELS youth as well as to reach out to the community with the gospel.

### Minnesota

The **National WELS Handbell Festival Concert** was held at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on April 10. More than 200 ringers from WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod congrega-



**Minnesota**  
On May 11, five international students from Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School (MVL), New Ulm, Minn., received the sacrament of baptism and confessed their faith as they were confirmed as members of St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn. Pictured are: Carrie Pfeifer, MVL administrator; Pastor Timothy Smith; Xavier Ho; Shaun Chang; Jenna Park; Yesol Jang; Emily Im; Pastor Don Sutton; and Staff Minister Todd Wendorf. All five students are planning to return to MVL next school year to continue their Christian education.

tions throughout the United States participated. The concert was presented under the theme, "Thine Is the Glory."

**Salem, Woodbury, Minn.**, dedicated a new two-room addition to its church on April 24. The space will be used for its preschool program, which began in February.

The journalism class at **West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.**, took third place in the *Star-Tribune* and Minnesota State High School League Best Newspaper competition.

### Happy Anniversary!

**SC**—Ascension, Sarasota, Fla, celebrated the 25th anniversary of **Jane**

**Wade's** teaching ministry on Feb. 13.

**MN**—Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., celebrated anniversaries for a number of its professors at the close of the school year: **Susan Haar** and **John Micheel**, 40 years; **Paul Bases**, **Kurt Heyer** and **William Pekrul**, 25 years.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MI—John Eich; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; SA—Chris Kruschel; SC—William Gabb.

**Correction:** Southern Lutheran Academy is located in Mulberry, Fla., not Melbourne, Fla., as was reported in the June issue.

## World news

**Biblezines used to reach teens**—In an effort to reach Generation Y, Thomas Nelson Bibles is producing Biblezines, or Biblemags—biblical text in magazine format—for teenagers. Its most popular Biblezines—*Revolve*, *Refuel*, *Magnify*, and *Becoming*, geared toward teen girls, boys, children, and young women, respectively—have sold more than 1 million copies so far. Its next project, *Real*, targets urban youth.

Most Biblezines use text from the New Century Version translation, which is known for its easy-to-read language. These versions of the New Testament feature articles like "Extras: Girls, Cash

and Cars," "Top Ten Ways to Make a Difference," and "Radical Faith: How to Live What You Believe," along with devotional guides, beauty tips, and music reviews.

**News briefs**—The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy announced that the nation's teen pregnancy rate fell nearly 30 percent in the 1990s and is expected to plummet in 2005. The teen rate hit its peak in 1990 (117 pregnancies for every 1,000 women ages 15 to 19). By 2000, data showed a 28 percent decline to 84 pregnancies per 1,000 women, based on the most recent statistics available. [*LifeWire*, May 26, 2005].

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops voted in June to retain 10 familiar words in the Catholic Mass—"Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again." The bishops' doctrine committee wanted the refrain dropped from use in U.S. churches because it does not conform with new worship guidelines issued by the Vatican and does not speak of the congregation's participation in the Mass.

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.

# MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE GRADUATES

Two hundred one people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 14. One hundred forty-two were in the teacher track or the staff ministry program. Fifty-nine completed the preseminary program.



Julie K. Ahlers ★  
Tirana, Albania



Jennifer L. Anderson ★  
Neillsville, Wis.



Brent J. Archer ✨  
Beecher, Ill.



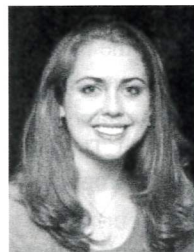
Gerald P. Arnold Jr. ■  
Woodstock, Ga.



Jeremiah W. Backhaus ■  
Kenai, Alaska



David A. Backus ■  
Hemlock, Mich.



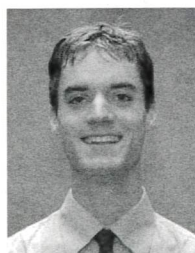
Mary M. Balza ★  
South Haven, Mich.



David J. Barkow ■  
Green Bay, Wis.



Diana M. Barnes ✨  
Lomita, Calif.



Thomas J. Barthel ■  
Shirley, Wis.



Noah M. Bater ■  
Lansing, Mich.



Bethany J. Bauer ★  
Lake Mills, Wis.



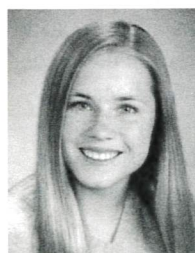
Michal M. Bauer ✨  
New Ulm, Minn.



Jonathan G. Beilke ★  
New Ulm, Minn.



Sarah K. Beilke ★  
New Ulm, Minn.



Angela E. Berg ✨  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



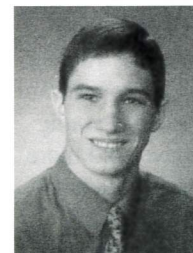
Elizabeth S. Bertolus ★  
Watertown, Wis.



Kelly M. Bertoni ★  
Watertown, Wis.



Cara A. Biebert ★  
Inver Grove Heights, Minn.



Nathaniel J. Biebert ■  
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- ✨ Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education



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**Melanie J. Brunk** ✨  
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**Michael A. Cavalea** ■  
Belgium, Wis.



**Catherine A. Cox** ◆  
Appleton, Wis.



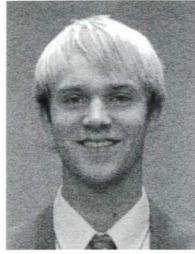
**Audra E. Davis** ★  
Lake Mills, Wis.



**Sheena R. De Frain** ★  
Phoenix, Ariz.



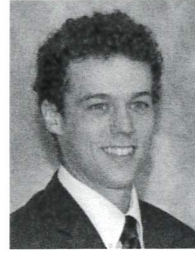
**Andrew S. DeGier** †  
La Crosse, Wis.



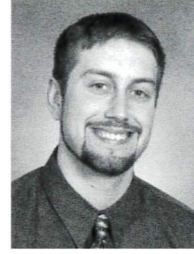
**Abram J. Degner** ■  
St. Peter, Minn.



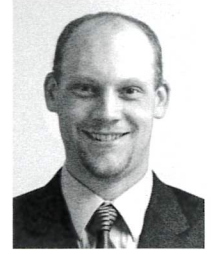
**Isaiah W. Degner** ■  
St. Peter, Minn.



**Maurice J. Dermé** ■  
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Sullivan, Wis.



**Tony P. Drkula** ✨  
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**Lydia M. Eberhardt** ✨  
Sheboygan, Wis.



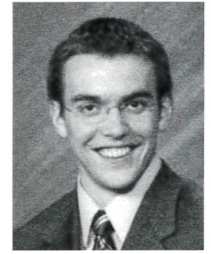
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**Charlotte L. Edwards** ★  
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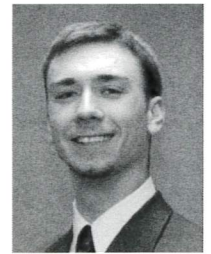
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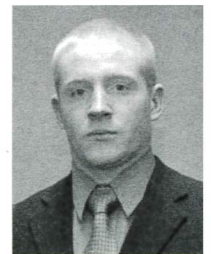
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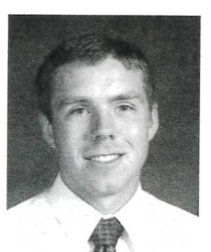
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**Rebecca L. Janke** ★ Iron Ridge, Wis.



**Matthew R. Kanzenbach** ☀ Watertown, S.D.



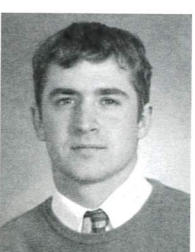
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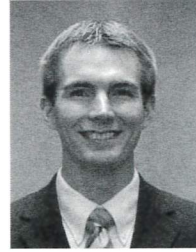
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**John E. Martin III** ☀  
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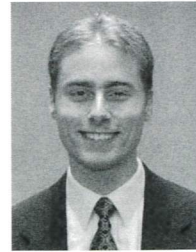
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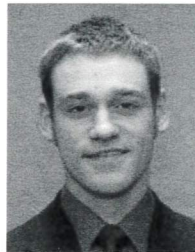
**Melissa S. Naumann** ★  
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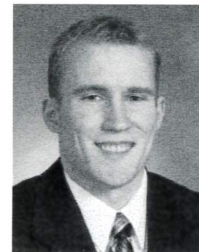
**Hannah L. Neubauer** ★  
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**Robert R. Neumann** ■  
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**Joshua R. Odell** ■  
West Bend, Wis.



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**Mark R. Parsons** ■  
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**Alissa L. Pfeifer** ★  
Lake Mills, Wis.



**Souksamay K. Phetsanghane** ■  
St. Petersburg, Fla.



**Joshua L. Pickart** ✨  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



**Ahnsharee B. Pieper** ★  
Campbellsport, Wis.

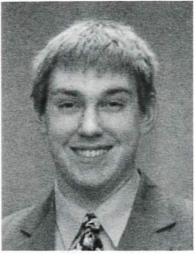


**Glen A. Pufahl** ✨  
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**Rebekah A. Rimpel** ★  
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**Jennifer S. Robinson** ★  
Mishicot, Wis.



**David R. Rosenau** †  
Benton Harbor, Mich.



**Jonathan P. Ross** ☼  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**Teri K. Rust** ★  
Salem, Ore.



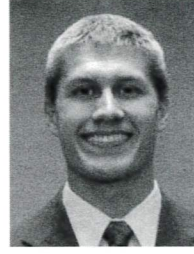
**Rebecca A. Ryan** ★  
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**Erin R. Sankey** ☼  
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**Benjamin P. Schaefer** ■  
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**Kirk D. Schauland** ★  
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**Luke D. Scherschel** ☼  
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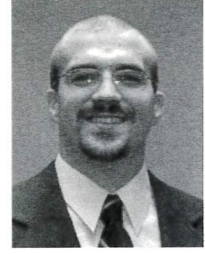
**Aaron J. Schleusener** ☼  
Utica, Neb.



**Amber D. Schlomer** ☼  
Gillette, Wyo.



**Silas J. Schmitzer** ■  
Jenera, Ohio



**Kevin P. Schnake** ■  
Findlay, Ohio



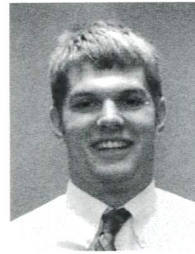
**Andrew B. Schroeder** ■  
Hemet, Calif.



**Nathan L. Schultz** ☼  
West Bend, Wis.



**Paul E. Schulz** ☼  
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**Aaron D. Schumann** ■  
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**Rebecca L. Seehaver** ★  
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**Rachel J. Seelow** ★  
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**Andaiye U. Smith** ★  
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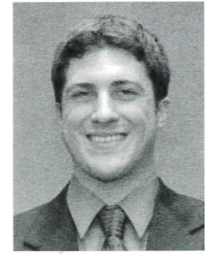
**Brent W. Sorn** ☼  
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**Matthew J. Sprunger** ■  
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**Emily R. Stoering** ★  
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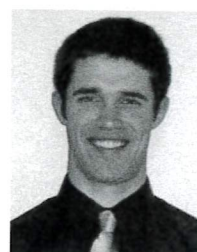
**Andrea L. Stuebs** ★  
Platteville, Wis.



**Adam S. Thoma** ■  
New London, Wis.



**Mark W. Tiefel** ■  
Mequon, Wis.



**Nathaniel T. Timmermann** ■  
Janesville, Wis.



**Olga V. Tkachenko** ✨  
Ternopil, Ukraine



**Jeffrey P. Ulrich** ■  
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**Rachel A. Underwood** ★  
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**Elizabeth R. Varnum** ★  
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**Joshua M. Vick** ✨  
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**Matthew T. Vik** ■  
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**Rebekah R. Wahl** ✨  
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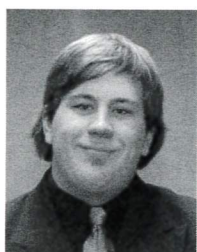
**Kristi N. Wainwright** ★  
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**Rachel L. Waldschmidt** ★  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



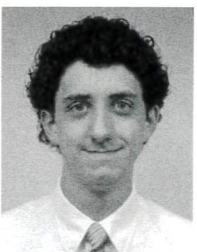
**Christian J. Walz** +  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Brian S. Weinkauf** ■  
Mukwonago, Wis.



**Ian M. Welch** ■  
Beaver Dam, Wis.



**Michael G. Wendt** ■  
Jackson, Wis.



**Tiffany S. Wendt** ★  
Aurora, Neb.



**Aaron J. West** ■  
Indian Ridge, Tenn.



**Rebecca L. Westendorf** ★  
Mequon, Wis.



**Greta M. Westphal** ★  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



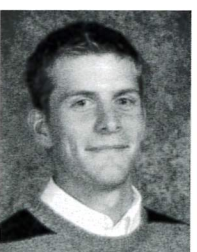
**Jeffrey W. Wetzel** ✨  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**Nathaniel J. Winkel** ■  
Arvada, Colo.



**Timothy A. Wrobel** ✨  
Appleton, Wis.



**Joel R. Zahn** ★  
Wrightstown, Wis.



**Rachel E. Zahn** ★  
Howell, Mich.



**Joshua M. Zarleng** ■  
Mequon, Wis.



**Tyson J. Zarnstorff** ✨  
Anchorage, Alaska

- Bachelor of Arts
- + Seminary Certification Program
- ★ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- ✨ Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education

## Call assignments

On May 14, the Conference of Presidents assigned 109 new and previous teacher and staff minister candidates out of the 116 who were available for assignment to any location. Eighteen May 2005 graduates deferred assignment, choosing to pursue further education or other areas of service. Four declined assignment. Due to marriage plans or living in specific locations, 70 new and previous candidates are available for calls from congregations through their district presidents. Additional calls/assignments have been made since May 14. To see a list, go to [www.mlc-wels.edu/News-Events/2005calls.htm](http://www.mlc-wels.edu/News-Events/2005calls.htm).

### Teachers

- Archer, Brent J.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Barnes, Diana M.**, to La Crescent Christian Childcare Center, La Crescent, Minn.
- Bauer, Michal M.**, to St. Peters, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.
- Beilke, Jonathan G.**, to Zion, Torrance, Calif.
- Berg, Angela E.**, to Precious Lambs Preschool, Strongsville, Ohio
- Bertolus, Elizabeth S.**, to Timothy, Saint Louis Park, Minn.
- Biebert, Cara A.**, to Little Lambs Child Development Center, Cheyenne, Wyo.
- Blum, Pamela J.**, to Good Shepherd, Saint Peters, Mo.
- Breitkreutz, Craig R.**, to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
- Breitkreutz, Lisa A.**, to California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.
- Buschkopf, Rachel L.**, to Divine Savior, Doral, Fla.
- Davis, Audra E.**, to Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.
- DeJarnett, Lisa R.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
- DeRuiter, Michael P.**, to St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.
- Dirksen, Amy G.**, to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.
- Ebeling, Elizabeth E.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Eberhardt, Lydia M.**, to Petra, Sauk Rapids, Minn.
- Elisseev, Petr L.**, to St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.
- Evanson, Stephanie A.**, to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.
- Finkbeiner, Ryan B.**, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
- Fritz, Naomi R.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Fry, Laura M.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
- Garbow, Keturah E.**, to Zion, Columbus, Wis.
- Giddings, John A.**, to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
- Glodowski, Adam M.**, to Nebraska LHS, Waco, Neb.
- Gronholz, Amanda M.**, to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
- Gunn, Abigail M.**, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
- Heldt, Kimberly S.**, to Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis.
- Hering, Rachel A.**, to Grace, Kenai, Alaska
- Hoppe, Kurtis B.**, to First, Elkhorn, Wis.
- Horton, Jacqueline I.**, to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
- Hulse, Ryan M.**, to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.
- Jaeger, Ryan A.**, to St. Mark, Mankato, Minn.
- Janke, Jennifer M.**, to St. John, Montello, Wis.
- Janke, Rebecca L.**, to Nozomi (Hope), Tsuchiura City, Japan
- Kanzenbach, Matthew R.**, to St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb.
- Kirchner, Alana J.**, to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
- Kneser, Christine E.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
- Koch, Katie E.**, to Brooklyn Bridge Preschool, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
- Kock, Seth L.**, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.
- Koepke, Dania J.**, to Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis.
- Koepsell, Amanda S.**, to Peace, Granger, Ind.
- Krieger, Joel D.**, to Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Laabs, Naomi E.**, to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.
- Lange, Elise C.**, to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
- Lindloff, Jennifer S.**, to Emanuel, New London, Wis.
- Malkuch, Rachel J.**, to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
- Mantey, Jessica M.**, to Hope, Manhattan, Kan.
- Marquardt, Anne E.**, to Christ the Lord, Houston, Tex.
- Martinez, Jessica R.**, to St. Philip, Milwaukee
- Mathwig, Peter A.**, to St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis.
- Mattes, Dane C.**, to Our Savior, Longmont, Colo.
- McEachern, Timothy J.**, to Southern Lutheran Academy, Mulberry, Fla.
- Miller, April L.**, to Mt. Calvary, Flagstaff, Ariz.
- Miller, Kristine K.**, to Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash.
- Mischke, Darik K.**, to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.
- Moak, Sarah R.**, to Faith, Antioch, Ill.
- Moll, Amy L.**, to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
- Muchka, Richard C.**, to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.
- Naumann, Meagan K.**, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.
- Naumann, Melissa S.**, to St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.
- Neubauer, Hannah L.**, to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.
- Ody, Renee E.**, to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
- O'Laire, Sandra L.**, to Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.
- Pagel, Stephanie S.**, to Divine Savior, Doral, Fla.
- Pautz, Amy L.**, to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee
- Petermann, Katherine D.**, to Lakewood (ELS), Lakewood, Wash.
- Priebe, Benjamin J.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Pufahl, Glen A.**, to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
- Reils, Rebecca L.**, to Zion, Clatonia, Neb.
- Rimpel, Joshua T.**, to Living Word, Mission Viejo, Calif.
- Ross, Jonathan P.**, to California LHS, Wildomar, Calif.
- Sankey, Erin R.**, to Divine Savior, Doral, Fla.
- Schapekahn, Jason L.**, to St. Philip, Milwaukee
- Scharrer, Anna R.**, to St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.
- Schauland, Kirk D.**, to St. John, Pardeeville, Wis.
- Scherschel, Luke D.**, to Zion, Toledo, Ohio
- Schleusener, Aaron J.**, to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
- Schlomer, Amber D.**, to Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis.
- Schultz, Nathan L.**, to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.
- Schulz, Paul E.**, to St. John, Watertown, Wis.
- Schwartz, Angela R.**, to Lambs of Grace Child Development Center, Charlotte, N.C.
- Seelow, Rachel J.**, to Emmaus, Phoenix, Ariz.
- Sorn, Brent W.**, to Parkland (ELS), Tacoma, Wash.
- Stephens, Amy C.**, to Trinity, Jenera, Ohio
- Stoering, Josiah D.**, to Immanuel, Sault Sainte Marie, Mich.
- Tkachenko, Olga V.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Trimmer, Aaron J.**, to St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio
- Varnum, Elizabeth R.**, to Salem, Owosso, Mich.
- Wahl, Rebekah R.**, to Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.
- Westendorf, Rebecca L.**, to Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Westphal, Greta M.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Wetzel, Jeffrey W.**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee
- Wisniewski, Michael C.**, to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.
- Wrobel, Timothy A.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Zahn, Rachel E.**, to Bloomington, Bloomington, Minn.
- Zarnstorff, Tyson J.**, to Grace, Lowell, Ark.

### Staff minister

**Meyer, John A.**, to Ascension, Plymouth, Minn.

- ✦ Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education
- ✦ Bachelor of Science in Education—Staff Ministry
- Staff Ministry Certification
- ◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY**

**Pastors**

Fleming, Roger W., to retirement  
 Gaulke, Wallace E., to retirement  
 Gieschen, Norbert A., to retirement  
 Habermann, Elwood C., to retirement  
 Henderson, John A., to retirement  
 Mumm, James M., to retirement  
 Roth, Ronald D., to retirement  
 Sievert, David R., to retirement

**Teachers**

Aufdemberge, Mary A., to retirement  
 Behnke, Robert H., to retirement  
 Brooks, Janet M., to St. John, Baraboo, Wis.  
 Burgess, Rachel, to Shepherd of the Hills, Inver Grove Heights, Minn.  
 Corona, Arlene E., to retirement  
 Corona, Frank J., to retirement  
 Cortez, Theckla F., to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.  
 Fischer, Sharon E., to retirement  
 Fricke, Rebecca L., to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.  
 Hartwig, Joan, to St. John, Maribel, Wis.  
 Herkstroeter, Shawn L., to Abiding Word, Houston, Tex.  
 Kiebusch, Roberta J., to retirement  
 Lenga, Nissa, to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee  
 Manthey, Muriel A., to retirement  
 Marquardt, April D., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.  
 Mastrocola, Christine, to Christ, Big Bend, Wis.  
 Mildebrandt, Cynthia, to Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa, Calif.  
 Moore, Sarah A., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.  
 Nurnberger, Patricia, to retirement  
 Oakley, Darlene A., to retirement  
 Pearson, Bonnie L., to St. James, Prairie Du Sac, Wis.  
 Popke, Judith A., to retirement  
 Rust, Anne K., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.  
 Saeger, Deborah L., to Faith, Oregon, Wis.  
 Scharlemann, Melinda, to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.  
 Schaumberg, Dale J., to retirement  
 Schaumberg, Sue A., to retirement  
 Schmidt, Lynn R., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.  
 Schultz, Daniel D., to Huron Valley LHS, Westland, Mich.  
 Schwartz, Bethany A., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee  
 Snyder, Patricia A., to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.  
 Sonntag, Robert L., to retirement  
 Tess, David, to St. Lucas, Milwaukee

Wade, Kristen M., to Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio

**Staff minister**

Smalley, Duane E., to Divine Peace, Renton, Wash.

**Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary assignment**

Hoppe, Christopher M., to St. John, Frontenac/Immanuel, West Florence, Minn.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

Wonewoc, Wis.—St. Paul School (125). Aug. 14. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. and 7:30 P.M. Dinner and fellowship to follow the 10:30 A.M. service. 608-464-3212.

Marshfield, Wis.—St. Peter (125). Aug. 14. Services, 9 A.M. and 1:30 P.M. Dinner served between services. 715-384-3822.

Yakima, Wash.—Grace (100). Aug. 14. Service, 3 P.M. Meal to follow. 509-453-9755.

Lake Elmo, Minn.—St. John (150). Aug. 21. Services, 10 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. Dinner served between services. Fellowship to follow afternoon service. 651-342-8002.

Benton Harbor, Mich.—Good Shepherd (50). Aug. 28. Organ recital, 3 P.M. Reception to follow.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Atonement (75). Sept. 18. Services, 8:15 & 10:45 A.M. Meal to follow. 414-871-3744.

Lansing, Mich.—Emanuel First (150). Sept. 18. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. 517-485-4118.

Eldorado, Wis.—St. Peter (100). Sept. 18. Service, 10 A.M. Catered dinner to follow. RSVP by Sept. 11, Linda Jahn, 920-922-4706. Dedication of new church. Service, 2 P.M. N7987 Town Hall Rd. Pie and ice cream social and Builders For Christ construction video to follow.

Brown Deer, Wis.—St. Mark (40). Sept. 25. Service, 10 A.M. Potluck to follow. 414-354-7980.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Milwaukee Campus Ministry and Wisconsin Lutheran Student Center (40). Oct. 9. Service, 6:30 P.M. Catered dinner served 4:30-6 P.M. Dessert reception to follow service. Dinner cost, \$10 per person. RSVP, 414-963-2047 or paula@wlsc.org.

Lomira, Wis.—St. Paul (150). Oct. 16. Services, 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. Catered dinner, 11:30 A.M. Adults, \$9.25; children 4-9, \$4.75; 3 and under, free. Light luncheon to follow afternoon service. Wendy Zahn, 920-387-3785.

**COMING EVENTS**

Creation seminar—sponsored by Lutheran Science Institute. Aug. 6, 1-4:30 P.M. Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis. www.lutheranscience.org.

Lutheran Pioneer national trips—Bike trip, Aug. 7-13. Richard Bartel, 262-694-8939. Canoe trip, Aug. 12-14, Dale Lorfeld, 262-673-3777.

Day in the Sun—fellowship and outreach event sponsored by St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis. Aug. 13. Buttermilk Creek Park, South Park Ave. Activities, 12:30 P.M. Worship service, 6:30 P.M. Cheryl Retzlaff, 920-251-2811.

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.

Life-a-thon—Sept. 10, 9 A.M.-noon. Annual walk-run supporting the pregnancy counseling centers operated by WELS Lutheran for Life, Metro-Milwaukee. Held at NPH Christian Books & Gifts, 1250 N 113th St, Milwaukee. Peter Georgson, 414-727-8176.

WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall conference—Sept. 10. St. John, Lomira, Wis. 920-269-4788.

Waukesha Chapter Lutherans for Life annual life banquet and silent auction—Sept. 25. Auction, 3 P.M. Dinner, 4 P.M. Country Springs Hotel, Waukesha, Wis. Kathy Gates, 262-513-9590.

A day at the Seminary—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary. Oct. 1, 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. Worship, 9 A.M. Lee Abraham, 414-453-3320.

**NAMES WANTED**

Pinehurst, N.C.—David Schmidt, 910-868-1907.

Texas A&M University, College Station, Tex.—Beautiful Savior, Caleb Schoeneck, 979-693-4514.

West Point, N.Y.—Donald Tollefson, 908-876-5429.

**GUEST PREACHER NEEDED**

Mountain Home, Ark.—Trinity, Aug. 7 & 28. Dave Kapler, 870-424-2888.

**POSITIONS AVAILABLE**

RV couple—to live at Camp Shiloh in northeast Texas. Housekeeping, yard work, light maintenance work, and office work. One to six months during all seasons of the year. RV space with full hookups provided. Dan Schmeling, 903-855-1800.

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

**Picture this**



After 51 years of teaching, Beverlee Haar, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., retired at the end of the 2004-05 school year. As a surprise, her students threw her a retirement party complete with T-shirts listing Haar's "Top 10" sayings on the back. Pictured are Haar (center) with her students.

*Submitted by Angela Berg*

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

**POTLUCK POLL RESULTS**

Thank you to our readers who responded to our May Potluck Poll question: "What is your number one reason for reading *Forward in Christ*?" Although the answers varied, it was clear that most respondents read *Forward in Christ* to be inspired and strengthened in their faith. Here are just a couple of the responses we received:

"My number one reason for reading *Forward in Christ* is that it is refreshing to read inspirational articles that are well-grounded in Scripture without attempts to meld worldly philosophies in the message of God's love and plan for salvation."

*Lawrence Palubecki  
Green Bay, Wis.*

"My number one reason for reading *Forward in Christ* is for the feeling of connectedness it gives me with the rest of the synod beyond our local church."

*Theresa Ensminger  
Johnson City, Tenn.*

**GOD'S POSITIVE ANSWERS**

<b>You say</b>	<b>God says</b>	<b>Bible verse</b>
"It's impossible."	"All things are possible."	Luke 18:27
"I'm too tired."	"I will give you rest."	Matthew 11:28-30
"I can't do it."	"You can do all things."	Philippians 4:13
"I feel all alone."	"I will never leave you or forsake you."	Hebrews 13:5

*Selected from the newsletter of Trinity, Wabeno, Wis*



Are you going on vacation and want to find a church for your Sunday worship? Are you moving to a new area and need to find a new church home? Maybe you just want to find directions for the upcoming church softball game. The WELS Web site offers visitors the ability to find the location of WELS organizations along with easy directions, thanks to a new provider. The new provider is Locator Search, a company owned by a WELS member. Although WELS saves about \$5,000 a year using the new provider, the site, [www.wels.net/locator](http://www.wels.net/locator), has gained some new features. Where there used to be three search categories there are now 10. Listings are also displayed with photo of the church and either a WELS or an Evangelical Lutheran Synod logo.

# Serving the Lord in a truck



**E**ven before Paul Arndt could drive, he dreamt of being behind the wheel.

After years of farming and operating a semi truck, driving has taken on new meaning for Paul and his wife Laila. Instead of hauling a load of goods down the interstate, the Arndts use their truck to move called workers.

**Their story began in 1997 when a volunteer canceled at the last minute from moving a called worker.** The Arndts stepped in, rented a trailer, and assisted with the move. Thousands of miles and one trailer later, they have moved more than 75 pastors and teachers and their families. With Paul driving and Laila navigating, they see their volunteering as a wonderful way to spend time together and to use their God-given abilities. "We have been farmers for over 50 years, and when you are a farmer you see the Lord's hand in everything. The Lord has blessed us in so many ways. This is the one way we can give back," says Laila.

Just how much they give back is apparent when you learn that the Arndts do not accept payment for their services. All of their costs, including hotels, gas, and meals, are absorbed by the couple. To offset some of the expenses, the couple tries to pick up a commercial load when time permits. Otherwise, all they ask is that a congregation makes a donation to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D. As

firm believers in Christian education, supporting their area Lutheran high school is just one more way the Arndts assist in the Lord's work.

**With so many trips back and forth across the country, the Arndts are bound to have a few interesting stories.** "We have seen the Lord's hand so many times while we've been on the road. He has helped us through small accidents and in seemingly impossible traffic," Laila notes.

Paul tells of a time they were driving through Utah during a Fourth of July weekend and suddenly had a flat tire. "Through the entire state of Utah we couldn't get a signal on our cell phone" he explains. "Somehow, when the flat tire occurred, our phone had a signal, and we were able to have someone come out and fix it."

Laila laughs too at the number of times congregation members have lightheartedly threatened to let the air out of their tires so that they wouldn't take away a beloved pastor or teacher.

But when a pastor or teacher does need to move, they often call the Arndts. During his ministry, Pastor David Neumann and his family have moved eight times, several of those times by the Arndts. He recalls being moved both by national moving companies and by Paul and Laila: "Of all of our moves, the ones that were done by Paul resulted in absolutely no damage to our belongings."

On a more serious note though, Neumann adds, "The Lord has blessed the synod by giving us people like the Arndts. I've always known them to be God-fearing and humble people."

Although physical ailments curbed their activities in 2004, the Arndts say that they will continue to use their truck to help WELS called workers until the Lord doesn't allow them to anymore. With a number of trips already scheduled for the summer and fall, Laila says, "It is enjoyable to work with other WELS families and share your faith with other WELS members. The Lord has blessed us in so many ways."

*Abby Janssen is assistant editor of Forward in Christ*

*In their estimation, the Arndts have moved more than 75 WELS families. However, Laila admits, "My biggest regret is that I never kept a diary." We would like to help the Arndts put that diary together. Was your family moved by the Arndts? Send your messages to [fic@sab.wels.net](mailto:fic@sab.wels.net), and we will pass them along to Paul and Laila.*





# Wandering

Telling Christ's story to the spiritually wandering people in the 21st century involves listening to those who cross your path and getting back to the basics of Christianity.

John M. Parlow

**F**all is in sight. The anticipation of a new school year wells up in the hearts of young children. A renewed hope pulses through every football team. New families move into the neighborhood.

There will be many opportunities for you to share the message of Christ with 21st-century sojourners, many of whom are carrying a backpack of guilt, biblical ignorance, and spiritual cancers. Here are two reminders as you seek to tell Christ's story.

### **Become real friends**

In these postmodern times when "truth" is loosely defined, many believe that every person's perception is valid. With that belief comes an openness to explore and investigate the worldviews of others.

Christ's storytellers need to demonstrate a real ability to listen to the spiritually wandering people who cross their path. Before people ask, "What have you to say?" they may ask, "Why should I even listen to you?" Ask questions, listen intently, and discover where they are spiritually. Invest time in a soul. Asking people for the "why" of their beliefs can open the door for you to tell them about the "Who" of your salvation.

Check your dogmatic smugness and religious elitism at the door. It is the soul you are trying to win, not an argument! Let Paul's words echo in your ears before you open your mouth: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

### **Dumbing down is not watering down**

The professor's words hit me right between the eyes: "Much of current sermonizing sins in that it takes for granted everyone still knows all that needs to be known about the basics of Christianity." I remember when a young college graduate stopped me after a service and asked, "You know, that book 'Ephesians' you referenced on the PowerPoint screen? Can I get it at Barnes & Noble?" I'm sure I'm not the only one who has made the mistake of assuming too much.

Any sermon, class, or personal discussion needs to reflect the reality every Jeopardy contestant knows when the category "Bible" appears on the board—we not only live in a land that is unbiblical but "ill biblical." The basics have become unmined treasures.

Reaffirm the key tenets of Christian belief. Start by focusing on the only one that matters. Christ is not the "elastic" Jesus proclaimed by the politically correct, who stretches to fit all lifestyles or beliefs.

Nevertheless, defending the exclusiveness of Christ will require more than just reciting John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life." It will mean demonstrating that Christ embodies God's message as opposed to being a mere messenger. The good news as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15 is not an idea but a person: crucified, buried, and risen again. Put simply, the Bible is chiefly not about what to believe or how to live but in whom one will trust. That makes our message simple but not watered-down.

Salvation is found in a personal relationship with Christ Jesus. He is the foundation on which you set the basic building blocks of the faith.

**[Christ Jesus] is the foundation on which you set the basic building blocks of the faith.**

Communicating God's message to 21st-century listeners involves navigating a hazardous path, one with both opportunities and obstacles. God has placed us in a monumental period in history. If our conversations go too far and deep, they may fail to connect with listeners outside. If they ring hollow with watered-down pleasantries, they may be unable to guide people faithfully to the real Christ.

Fall is in sight, and so are people spiritually doomed by the first "fall." Go tell the story.

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

*This is the last of a series about how to minister to Gen-Xers and Mosaics. To read the other articles in the series, go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "ficarchive", and search by the author's first and last name.*

**I**t all happened so suddenly. I was driving along, and then I was standing in the presence of light . . . light like I had never seen before . . . light so bright that my expensive Ray-Ban sunglasses did nothing. The sound was awesome . . . the sound of the best choir I had ever heard.

Where am I? Can it be a church? God knows I had not been there in a long time, but I don't remember the church so bright and the choir, well, let's just say . . . it never sounded like that.

Where am I? I remember that I was driving along Interstate 95, and my cell phone rang. Now I am standing in this awesome light with choir music. I want to go but can't.

Then without warning a thunderous sound startles me . . . a sound indescribable . . . and I hear a voice say, "Why should I let you into my heaven?"

Whoa, dude! Back off . . . heaven? Then I realize I am standing in front of the throne I learned of in catechism class . . . God's judgment throne. What did pastor tell us to say? What am I supposed to say? I don't know what to say. All my excuses for not going to church or reading the Bible don't seem to matter when standing in the presence of the Lord God Almighty.

"Lord, can I have a minute?" I stut-tered. There is no answer.

Let's see. I can't say that church was boring or the Word seemed old-fashioned . . . no . . . that doesn't seem right to tell God now. Let's see. I guess telling the Lord that Pastor didn't understand me won't work . . . I really never talked to him much. Telling God that my fellow church members were strange . . . doesn't seem all that right at this moment. Telling God that he asked for too much of my money . . . won't work as I stand here in his presence.

# WHY SHOULD I LET YOU INTO MY HEAVEN?

A modern-day parable turns your thoughts to the one thing needful.

Jeffrey D. Wegner

Let's see . . . I know. Lord, my parents made me go to church when I was younger, but when I grew up, I . . . no, that won't work either. Lord, there were no people my age at church . . . no, that won't work. All the things that made me angry about the church and my parents and my pastor . . . well . . . they seem so insignificant now. I can ask for a second chance . . . no, I remember hearing that there were no second chances . . . I think. So . . . what do I say?

I know. I will tell the Lord I was a really good person . . . except for the time I took . . . and the time I talked about . . . and the time I got drunk. That answer will not do. I haven't been all that good.

Wait Lord, I had to work when it was worship time. My boss would never give me time off for church . . . of course, I never asked him.

Wow. All the reasons and excuses that had always sounded so good when my guilt got to me . . . they don't work. I could rattle off all my excuses to anyone who would listen. I remember once when I told the pastor and the elder that the church really didn't care about me . . . they just wanted my money. I told them, and when they left I knew I won that round. But now, standing in front of God's throne, . . . I . . . I . . . I think that I lost the argument. The Lord is waiting for my answer, and . . . I have none. What should I say?

I know. I will just ask for a second chance. God must be like my grandfather;

he'll give in. I will smile nice when he asks for my answer. I am a good-looking guy. I did well in catechism. My grandmother and parents go to church all the time . . . I can use them. Maybe God will use their actions for me. I just know that God would never send me to hell. He knows that I tried hard and meant well.

God is still waiting for my answer . . . what will I say?

**Now that you've read this little parable . . . what did you think?** Too cute or too much law? I say it is all law, and that is why you should read on.

In preparing for the church's annual meeting, I looked over the list of members who did not grace the doors of our church in the past year. I wondered, sadly, what they would say if called to account at God's throne. I have visited inactive members, and they have excuses without number for not attending church. Their reasons are just that—just excuses. However, as we stand before the throne of God's grace on the Last Day, there will be no excuses.

Think of your entry to eternity. No reasons, no excuses, no anger, no money, nothing of your own will help you. God will not care that you were upset with the pastor. God will not care that you had to work or that you did not agree with a certain decision. God will not care about your toys, your computer, your bank account, your lawn, or your diet. God will not care how sorry you felt for yourself or even how you thought no one cared.

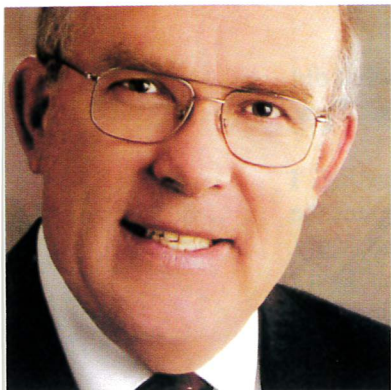
But God does care about you and your soul. God cares that you continue to grow in his Word. He cares what you do in your life. God cares and wants you to be with him in eternity forever according to his promises.

I pray that as you see yourself in this picture before the throne of God in those first seconds into eternity, you will be able to express your personal relationship with your Savior. You will be able to answer with all boldness

and confidence something like this: "I should be in heaven because of the undeserved love and grace of my Savior, Jesus Christ, who lived on this earth, suffered and died, and shed his blood for a miserable sinner like me. Because of him I deserve to be in your heaven, God."

**I should  
be in heaven  
because of the  
undeserved love  
and grace of my  
Savior, Jesus  
Christ.**

*Jeffrey Wegner is pastor at Good Shepherd, South Attleboro, Massachusetts.*



*Carl R. Jungel*

## Divine providence

**D**ivine providence—ever heard of it? It's often a reference to the guiding and sustaining hand of God. Divine providence gets the credit for great weather for a summer vacation. Divine providence, some claim, was behind finding a new job or a new home. It might be an admission that very little, if anything, happens in our lives by chance. Fate has nothing to do with it. Divine providence does.

But does the idea of divine providence adequately explain God's goodness in our lives? Divine providence is only meaningful and understandable if we see God's grace behind it. Divine providence isn't capricious, treating us whimsically. God's grace—his undeserved love for us through Jesus—explains the way God in his providence guides and sustains us.

In God's grace we can also become part of God's providence for others, providing them with more than a glimpse of his grace. The gift of faith treasures God's gifts of grace. A further gift of God's grace, as a fruit of that faith, leads us to provide resources to others for proclaiming peace through Jesus. For example, Paul urges Titus and the people he served to provide everything Zenas the lawyer and Apollos the missionary needed for their outreach efforts (Titus 3:13).

It's not that God needs our guiding and sustaining hands to sustain his providence. He can do very well without us. Furthermore, God can provide for the extension of his kingdom without us.

We, however, have a great need to give. Any part of God's gifts to us that we return to him acknowledges that

everything we have is rightfully his. Also, we return gifts to God with the understanding of how undeserving we are of everything we receive from him. Anything we provide for the work of the Lord is a free response to God's gifts to us, especially his pardoning grace in Christ.

Proclaiming peace through Jesus is an opportunity that God gives us to thank him. It continues to be the theme chosen by our synod to focus our attention on sharing Jesus with North America and the world. Its special emphasis this year, "Every Soul's a Treasure," reminds us how precious every soul is in the sight of God. Every person is someone for whom the Savior died, someone he wants to enjoy the pardon and eternal peace won by his death.

Proclaiming peace through Jesus is the reason we unite as a synod to prepare future called workers. We prepare them and then send them out to proclaim the peace. Preparation without proclamation falls short of God's directive to go into all the world, preaching the gospel. Preparation without proclamation is like writing a love letter and never sending it. Our called workers go out to preach the gospel and to be catalysts in preparing all of us to proclaim peace through Jesus.

God provides peace through Jesus freely. Jesus did it all as a gift of God's grace. God, in his divine providence, continues to provide the material things we need so that we proclaim peace through Jesus to others. Divine providence by God's grace enables us to be part of his providence for others.

# Lessons from the Creed

How does our heavenly Father take care of us?

Charles F. Degner

“Don’t worry. Everything is going to be okay. Dad’s here!”

Have you ever heard those words spoken in your family? Not every father lives up to the billing of the superhero who comes to the rescue. At the same time fathers are good to have around, aren’t they? God made them to provide for their families and to protect them from danger.

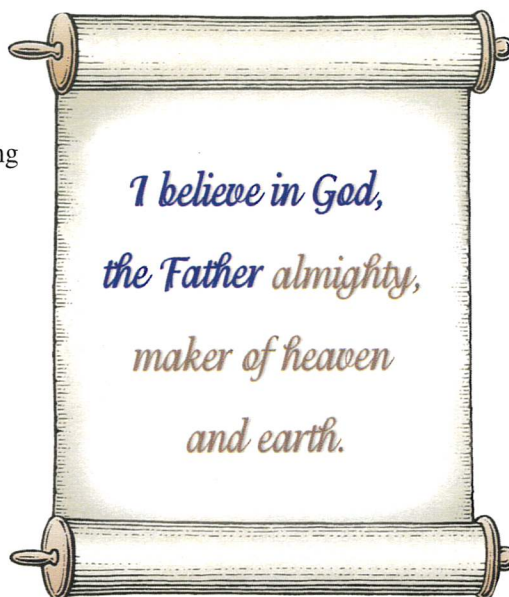
In Matthew 6, Jesus uses the name God twice and the name Father 12 times. That is not surprising, because the content of this chapter is about God taking care of us and providing for us. That’s what fathers do. That’s what our heavenly Father does, too.

## The heavenly Father knows his children

Our heavenly Father has abilities that make him the perfect Father. He sees things that are hidden and secret. He can even look into our hearts (v. 1-8, 16-18). On the one hand, this makes us uncomfortable, because it means that our Father sees even our secret sins and our sinful desires. There is nothing that is hidden from God our Father!

On the other hand, this comforts us. If our Father couldn’t see these things, how could he protect us from them? Our Father also sees the good desires and the longings of our new man (Psalm 38:9). He hears even the prayers we pray in secret (v. 6).

Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father in heaven” (v. 9). Picture in your mind a king in ancient times, sitting on this throne. A servant is



crawling up the steps on his knees to beg a favor from the king. At the same time, a five-year-old child runs into the throne room, jumps on the king’s lap, and says, “Daddy, help me with my new toy!” Which of the two are you before God’s throne? Are you a beggar, or are you a beloved son or daughter?

## Because God is our Father, we do not have to worry.

Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father,” because we are God’s children through faith in Jesus. God sent his Spirit into our hearts so that we can pray, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:16).

## The heavenly Father provides for his children

Because God is our Father, we do not have to worry. We stress out

over those things that are out of our control. We worry about things that aren’t important (v. 19-24). Anything that can rust or rot shouldn’t worry us. Why be concerned about money? Money isn’t our God. Our Father is our God, and he knows what we need.

Why worry about the future? It is in our Father’s hands (v. 25-33). The sparrows do not worry about their food. The flowers of the field do not care how they are clothed. If God feeds them and clothes them, why should we worry about these things? Why should we even worry about our life? Worrying may shorten our life, but it cannot add even an hour to its length. Our times are in our Father’s hands (Psalm 31:15). Worrying shows a lack of faith on our part, and it calls for repentance (v. 30).

One of our popular proverbs says, “Take one day at a time.” That is good advice, because all our tomorrows are in our Father’s hands (v. 34).

So don’t worry. Everything is going to be okay. Your heavenly Father is here.

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*This is the fourth of a seven-part series on the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed. To read other articles in the series, go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword “ficarchive”, and search by the author’s first and last name.*



*Gary S. Baumler*

## The bright ones

**H**ow bright are you? Are you really smart, have a high IQ—or not?

“Why,” you might ask me, “are you asking such inane questions?”

I’m asking because I want you to think about that word “bright” and what it means that prominent atheists today now want to be called “brights.” They want us to believe that they reject any idea of God and the supernatural because of their superior intelligence. Smart people don’t fall for such superstitious thinking.

By inference, you and I aren’t very bright at all, because we believe in God—and not just any god, but the God who created everything, who redeemed fallen humankind, who is triune, whose Son died on a cross and rose again from the dead, who actually cares about each one of us.

Don’t you wonder how smart you have to be to call yourself a “bright”? Will a 135 IQ do it? Does it take special insights? Is there a worldly wisdom that trumps all other? At what point do you “know” there is no God?

From a strictly non-theological point of view, why would anyone arrogate to himself such clairvoyance? Considering that human knowledge is said to double every 17 days, just how bright can anyone be? Considering that we human beings are limited to sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell, how do we determine that nothing exists beyond those senses? Or we might ask God’s question of Job: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” (Job 38:4).

Although I don’t doubt in the least the intelligence of many atheists, I wonder how bright a person is who concludes the following:

- Everything that exists came into existence by itself or always existed in some material form.

- The intelligent design of our world came about strictly by chance.
- There is no absolute standard of good.
- Because I can’t measure something with my senses, it cannot exist.
- The eyewitnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ must have lied.

All right, now I’m moving away from the “strictly non-theological.” However, that underscores the beauty of God’s revelation. He made himself known to us through his Son, Jesus—in the flesh. As John said it, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). God has not just shaped this world’s history; he has made himself a part of it.

Still, we shouldn’t be surprised that intelligent people are atheists. Nor should we assume that we are brighter than they because we believe. No, true brightness comes from God, and “the true light that gives light to every man” came into our world, but “the world did not recognize him” (John 1:9,10).

As Paul points out, “The foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:25). But “God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

I admire really bright people, but the only brightness I boast of is the light of Christ that shines in my heart. As for atheists, they need to listen to Solomon: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7).

*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

When you want to be close to someone, you share yourself with that person. God wants to be close to us, so he shares himself with us. He does it on every page of Scripture. He tells us what's on his mind and what he has done, is doing, and plans to do for us. To draw close to God, we need only to open his Word and let him speak to us.

In many of the psalms, God brings himself near to us. Look at Psalm 22. Here Jesus shows us what was on his mind during his crucifixion for our salvation. Written 1,000 years before Christ came, it tells the story of the cross from

the perspective of Jesus' heart. Today, it still tells us what he was thinking and feeling on that most horrible and wonderful day.

When you read it, you cannot help but feel close to Jesus as you witness the agony of hell that he endured for us as the wickedness of men became the tool of the Father to satisfy his wrath and justice. No other psalm points more fully to the crucifixion of Christ or is quoted in the New Testament as much as this one. Get close to Jesus by reading Psalm 22 and meditating on its every word.

## Featured verses: Psalm 22

<sup>1</sup>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? . . . <sup>7</sup>All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: <sup>8</sup>"He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." . . . <sup>14</sup>I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. <sup>15</sup>My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. <sup>16</sup>Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. . . . <sup>21</sup>Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. <sup>22</sup>I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. <sup>23</sup>You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! <sup>24</sup>For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. . . . <sup>27</sup>All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, . . . <sup>31</sup>They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—for he has done it.

## Points to ponder

- For what two reasons would Jesus have quoted verse one verbatim when he was on the cross?
- How does this psalm tell us what God is doing today as much as what he did for us 2,000 years ago?
- In what ways do you think Psalm 22 helped Jesus during the 33 years before his crucifixion?

## Treasures to share

- Have a family devotion in which you read through the psalm. Remind each other of places in Jesus' passion where these verses were fulfilled.
- Try to create artwork that depicts Psalm 22 on paper, canvas, or in three dimensions.

## Other Old Testament Scripture that tell of Christ's passion

Isaiah 53, Psalm 69, Zechariah 3:9, Isaiah 50:6, Psalm 118:22

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Find this article and possible answers online. Go to [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), jumpword "fic", and click on "Songs for the heart." Answers will be available after Aug. 5.



# But he seemed so strong

The worm of sin can cause even the strongest Christians to fall.

**H**eating with wood, it's said, is several times more efficient than any other means. You get warmth not only from burning the wood but also by cutting down the tree, cutting up the tree, splitting the wood, loading it in the truck, unloading the truck, stacking it, carrying it into the house, and hauling the ashes out.

## A tiny worm can bring down a tree

We supplemented the heating of our home with a fireplace at one time. One morning I picked up the ax and headed out into the alder forest. Trees were growing close together, which forced them to grow straight and tall. The few limbs they had were at the top. This made ideal firewood. I could choose from a variety of sizes—from six inches in diameter to twice that size. A fair number of them were dead, owing to the competition for sunshine. I was after the dead ones because they were dry and ready to use yet were still solid all the way into the roots.

I leaned on one of the smaller ones, and, to my surprise, it fell over. I thought, "This is very strange.

What is going on here?"

Kneeling down, I began

to examine the tree and its roots.

The tree was still solid, but it had come apart right at the ground level. Poking around, I found the reason. There was a white worm, smaller than my little finger, in the roots. It had been digesting the wood, and the entire area at ground level was mush.

The scene suggested a lesson about life. This tree, which was six or seven inches in diameter, more than 30-feet tall, and rock-solid, was destroyed by a soft little worm.

## A "small" sin can bring down a person

We have all known individuals who seemed to be solid, stalwart Christians, but one day they just fell over. Their lives collapsed in confusion, and their families were devastated. But their downfall did not develop in a day. Some "worm" of sin had been gnawing at the roots of their lives for a long time, sometimes without any outward signs of trouble ever being detected.

However, there are major differences between men and trees. Some wise person has observed that a man cannot keep birds from flying over his head, but he can stop a bird from building a nest in his hair. Worms or birds—the lesson is the same. We are not helpless like trees. "In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Hebrews 12:4).

Bob Gove

Neither does God abandon us in our natural weakness. He is always faithful to help us. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

No Christian gets up one morning and says, "I guess I will go do a real bad sin today. Maybe I'll rob a bank." It is always a gradual slide. It starts when we take our eyes off the Lord Jesus. We can dispose of the "worms" of sin when they first hatch. But if we allow them to consume our minds, we will fall under the slightest pressure.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

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