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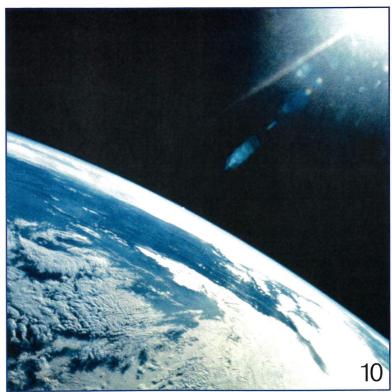
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CORBIS





Forward in Christ

The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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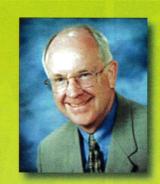
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WHAT'S INSIDE by Julie Wietzke

What struck me about our cover story this month is the idea that God's work will get done-with or without us. I never thought about it that way. God doesn't need us to spread the gospel to all nations.

But that doesn't mean that he doesn't want us to help. David Valleskey reminds us that it is God's will that we join him and that God's love for us is our motivation (p. 10).

Several articles this month show how God's love motivated others:

- A group of young professionals start a church in Chicago, not only to serve themselves but also to share the love of Christ with the community (p. 12).
- A staff minister tells the awesome experience of sharing the gospel with a woman in Grenada and then watching her grow in faith and share her faith with others (p. 16).
- A WELS member uses his love for basketball as an outreach tool by combining basketball fundamentals with the gospel (p. 22).

Opportunities are out there for all of us to share our faith. Let's jump in and join our God in proclaiming the gospel to all the world.

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A letter of hope Randy K. Hunter

REACHING OUT IN GERMANY

As a 1999 Martin Luther College graduate teaching for the fifth year in the school of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Germany (ELFK), I was surprised to read in "Open doors around the world" [Nov.], that Germany is just now being explored for more teaching opportunities.

This school is maybe a lesser known project in the WELS circles, but if it were not for the prayers and the tens of thousands of dollars donated by WELS members, schools, congregations, and Sunday schools, we would not be able to share the Word of God with 120 children every day, many of whom do not come from Christian families. In the land of Luther, one has forgotten what Christian education means. The experiences of the last four years have made me also come to appreciate my Martin Luther College education all the more.

May God continue to bless the Dr. Martin Luther Schule and find Christian men and women from the ELFK who will teach from a Christian perspective.

> Maria Reese Zwickau, Germany

FREEDOM FROM FORMALISM

In the article "Freedom from formalism" [Dec.], one misses a definition of the term "formalism." To say that "formalism turns worship into 'going to church'" hardly helps without further explanation. The symptoms listed describe spiritual maladies of the heart rather than formalism.

Among suggested evidences of formalism mentioned in the article are "meal-time prayers that are just a checkered flag launching a race to the potatoes." If that happens, the problem is with the heart not with the form of the prayer. A family may pray "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest" at the start of every meal

with as much reverence as one in which family members take turns saying a prayer in their own words.

Prayers being composed as one is speaking, whether in a family setting or in public worship, may in fact have an adverse spiritual effect on the hearer if they are not done well. I much prefer having a pastor regularly use one of the Prayers of the Church from our hymnal rather than hearing him struggle with trying to find the right words in a prayer he is making up as he goes along. Making regular use of the printed prayers in our hymnal is not formalism.

One of the forms that our family has used throughout my life is the singing of the hymn "Now the Light Has Gone Away" at the close of our evening devotion. I have sung that hymn thousands of times. My parents sang it with the family when I was growing up, my wife and I sang it with our children, and she and I continue to sing it. Still today words like these touch my heart: "Jesus Savior, wash away all that has been wrong today; help me ev'ry day to be good and gentle, more like thee."

Formalism is a spiritual malady. It's a matter of the heart, not a matter of forms. A heart transformed by the gospel can and will use forms and rites and rituals to the glory of God and for personal spiritual edification.

> Victor Prange Tucson, Arizona

ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE

After serving in cross-cultural ministry for more than 30 years, I appreciated what Mark Birkholz had to say about welcoming sinners into our congregations [Dec.]. However he failed to mention the debt of love we owe to those sinners. "Acceptance" without love is nothing more than polite tolerance. Those outside the kingdom need more than that if we are to bring them in and keep them.

It is indeed difficult to love others as Christ has loved us. But without that goal, who's even trying?

> Rolfe Westendorf Milwaukee, Wisconsin

LUTHERAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ABROAD

I so appreciated Mr. Brandt's review of Martin Luther's attitude toward Christian education for children ["Passing the baton of faith," Oct.]— "to bring up children in the training and instruction of the Lord." As a church body, we have maintained this commitment by zealously providing Lutheran elementary schools wherever and whenever possible.

This article, however, has crystallized a question that has been in my mind for many years, namely, why do we as a church body not as zealously promote the establishment of a system of Lutheran elementary schools in our world mission fields? Surely, what is important for American Christians is no less valuable for our foreign brothers and sisters in Christ. I wonder if we wouldn't have stronger pastors, evangelists, and lay leaders in our sister synods if they could have had the advantage so many of our called and lay workers have in being schooled from earliest years in biblical doctrines.

Would this not enable us to form strong national churches earlier and move our expatriate missionaries on to new fields sooner, thus maximizing our outreach into the fields ripe for harvest?

> Karla M. Jaeger Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Send your letters to Feedback, Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 200 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.

Self-imposed slavery

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 1 Corinthians 9:19

Peter A. Panitzke

In the TV drama *Prison Break* a man tries to rescue his brother from execution. Because he designed the prison, he knows how to lead his brother to freedom. But to lead his brother to freedom, he first has to give up his own freedom.

Prison Break illustrates Paul's approach to ministry. He had tasted freedom. He was free from guilt because "the LORD has laid on [Jesus] the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). He was free from the fear of death because "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

To share his freedom Paul made himself a slave to everyone

So he gave up part of his freedom. He was free to receive support from the Corinthians. He gave up that freedom and made himself their slave. He would accept no support so that first-century Corinthians would not lump him together with all the traveling philosophers of that day.

He gave up part of his freedom by acting like a Jew when he lived in the Jewish culture and like a Gentile when he was in the Gentile culture. Jesus had freed him from any obligation to obey the Old Testament food laws. But he made himself a slave to the Jews by obeying those laws in their presence. He was free to continue in the Jewish customs. But when he was in a Gentile crowd, he gave up those comfortable Jewish customs. He became their slave by living like a Gentile (as far as God's law allowed) so the Gentiles would

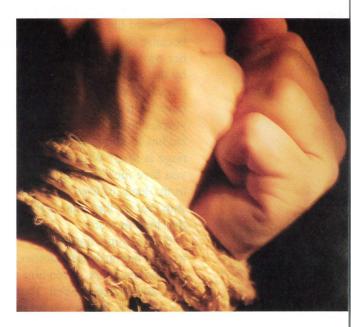
not feel obligated to obey Jewish customs. He put the needs of others before his own. His self-imposed slavery had a clear goal: "To win as many as possible."

I pray that we will do the same

Through faith in Jesus, we enjoy the same freedom from guilt and fear that Paul did. We are not obligated to follow the customs of those around us. But my comfort and what I might enjoy are of secondary importance. Primary is the question: What can I do to win those around me for Christ?

I have freedom to wear whatever I want. If it were a matter of my personal comfort, jeans and a sweatshirt would be my daily attire. But I make myself a slave to the people I meet. Will a casual look make the people I'm going to see that day more comfortable? Or should I dress more formally? What will best serve the needs of those I'm seeking to draw closer to Christ? I am free, but I make myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible.

Our God has given our congregations freedom in the way we worship and carry out our ministries. But the question is not: What makes us comfortable? We give up our freedom and make ourselves slaves to win as many as possible. What is the culture of the people we are trying to win for Christ? What can we do, as far as God's law allows, to make



someone outside the church feel comfortable in our worship or through our ministries?

These are tough questions. Each may answer differently. But our goal is the same: we make ourselves slaves to win as many as possible.

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

"Do you love me?"

Paul T. Prange

That a moment it is when Tevye sings the words, "Do you love me?" to his wife, Golde, in Fiddler on the Roof. He has just heard his daughter, Hodel, tell him that because of love she plans to marry a man of her own choosing rather than his. Stunned by the change from traditional arranged marriages, Tevye wonders how his life would have been different without his wife of 25 years, chosen by his parents. He turns to her. He has to know. How important to their marriage is love? With his musical question, "Do you love me?" he acknowledges an important truth: deeds of love are necessary in a relationship, but no less vital is the embodiment of that love in words.

Golde points out that for 25 years she has washed her husband's clothes, cooked his meals, cleaned his house, given him children, milked his cow, and shared his bed. That's not enough. To his poignant, "Then you love me?" Tevye needs

to hear Golde's superbly understated, "I suppose I do." He is satisfied.

Some people turn this around: "Don't just say you love me; show it!" They look for acts of selflessness as evidence of love. Wives discern whose priorities husbands have first on the todo list. Husbands realize when wives are putting a relationship with another human being ahead

of the marriage relationship. God tells us, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

But in addition to loving deeds, we long for loving words. We recognize that something is wrong when the groom turns to the bride and says, "There, I told you I love you. If anything changes, I'll let you know." There may have been an era when frequently saying "I love you" was unnecessary, even in the family. We do not live in that era anymore.

No human marriage, arranged or otherwise, is perfect. No greeting card or chocolate, flowers or diamonds can cause perfect love. But when love is alive and growing in a marriage, it is an excellent picture of our relationship with God.

God satisfies our longing for deeds that show us love. He created this world for us, he sent his Son to save it from sin, and he sends his Holy Spirit into us individually by baptism and the Lord's Supper. "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). When this old world starts getting us down, he doesn't stop showing us love. Then he sends fellow believers with words of consolation and comfort.

God satisfies our longing for words that express love too. When we realize how we hurt those whom we love, he promises us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. When we do not feel like we are forgiven, he comes again with his

When love is alive

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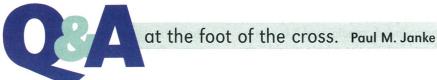
ship with God.

powerful Word. Even if we have heard it a hundred times before, it's important to hear it again: "Your sins are forgiven."

God satisfies our longing for action and words by sending the Word made flesh, who is the embodiment of love. Regardless of the state of our marriages, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16a).

Tevye and Golde's song ends in a line of duet: "After twenty-five years, it's nice to know." Our song of God's love continues to eternity. It's nice to know.

> Contributing editor Paul Prange, president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan, is a member at St. Paul, Saginaw.



TOPIC: Habitat for Humanity

What is Habitat for Humanity? Is it a program that I can be involved in as a WELS member?

Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1976 by former Alabama businessman Millard Fuller and his wife, Linda. Since that time Habitat has constructed approximately 200,000 houses for about 1 million residents—a wonderful accomplishment!

Habitat for Humanity's mission is "building and renovating houses so that there are decent houses in decent communities in which people can live and grow into all that God intended" (Preamble, National Covenant of Habitat for Humanity).

Habitat calls itself "a non-profit, ecumenical, Christian housing ministry" (www.habitat.org). Fuller has also developed "the theology of the hammer," which he explains in a book by the same name (Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 1994).

Since it is the desire of Habitat to partner with churches, including WELS churches, to build and renovate homes, it is important to evaluate Habitat's ministry before entering a partnership.

There is no doubt that a concern for the poor can be a response to God's love for us in Christ. The apostle John wrote, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:17,18).

However, confessional Lutherans will have legitimate concerns about the theology and ministry of Habitat for Humanity. The first concern is that Habitat's ministry is a social gospel ministry. Its highest priority is to improve people's circumstances on this earth. Fuller credits Walter Rauschenbusch, who has been called "the father of the social gospel movement in America," with shaping his thinking. In his book, Fuller includes the following quotation from Rauschenbusch: "The non-ethical practices and beliefs in Christianity nearly all center on the winning of heaven and immortality. On the other hand, the kingdom of God can be established by nothing except righteous life and action" (pp. 21,22).

This concept of the kingdom of God conflicts with our confession that "God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word" (The Second Petition, Luther's Small Catechism). It also raises questions about the nature of the church's mission. Jesus said that his mission was "to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). He gave us our mission when he commanded, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ..." (Matthew 28:19,20).

Another concern is Habitat's desire to be an ecumenical organization, that is, an organization with "a concern to reunite the divided Christian family" (p. 80). But this reuniting is not done on the basis of a careful study of the Scriptures. In his book, Fuller approvingly quotes the slogan, "Doctrine divides, service unites" (p. 80). He says unity comes about when people of diverse religious beliefs work together to build homes for the poor. "Maybe, just maybe, God wants to use 'the theology of the hammer' as a means to draw his divergent family closer together" (p. 79). This statement and others like it come close to making the building of homes for the poor a means of grace.

Since devotions, prayers, and dedication services are common at Habitat sites, there is also the potential for involvement in expressions of church fellowship that are not based on agreement about what the Bible teaches.

To register these concerns about Habitat for Humanity is not to say that we are free from caring for the poor. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). However, we want to help the poor in a way that enables us to remain clear about the church's mission and about the importance of sound doctrine.

Paul Janke, pastor at St. Peter, Modesto, California, is guest writing for Q&A at the foot of the cross this month.

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

It is no secret to most readers of Forward in Christ that WELS is going through tough times.

No money for this. No money for that. Underfunded budgets for our ministerial education schools. Virtually no new mission starts. Recalling of missionary after missionary.

At such a time as this it is good to remember Jesus' promise, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). "This gospel of the kingdom." That's the good news about Jesus Christ, who was born, lived, died, rose, and ascended, who sits at God's right hand and is now ruling the universe for the benefit of his Church, and who will come again as Judge.

This gospel of the kingdom "will be preached"—a

David J. Valleskey

translation of a Greek word that literally means "heralded, publicly announced, proclaimed." It will be heralded "in the whole world," the entire inhabited earth, as a "testimony," a witness, "to all nations." "Then," and only then, when all of God's elect have been gathered from all of the nations through the worldwide testimony of the gospel of the kingdom, "the end will come" and eternity with Jesus will begin.

God's work will get done. It's as simple as that. It doesn't all depend on us. In fact, it doesn't depend on us at all. God will see to it that his work gets done. So we don't have to get all stressed out. God is in control.

Trust him

Come along with me on a quick journey through the last 2,000 years of church history. Every age underscores this truth that God's work will get done.

At his ascension Jesus assured his disciples: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). What an incredible promise, especially since at the time Jesus' followers numbered only

in the hundreds and still didn't fully understand why Jesus had come. For them the "gospel of the kingdom" had some-thing to do with "restoring the kingdom to Israel."

Well, what happened? On Pentecost, 3,000 came to faith. Then it's 5,000. After that Luke, the sacred historian, loses count. He simply says, "The word of God spread" and "the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly" (Acts 6:7). Then, through the preaching of Philip, the gospel of the kingdom was spread to Samaria. From there, particularly through the missionary journeys of Paul, it was proclaimed throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire, all the way from Jerusalem to Rome, a distance of more than 1.400 miles!

Undoubtedly the gospel traveled even farther than that during the apostolic age. Ancient tradition tells us that the apostle Thomas traveled as far east as India with the gospel. The gospel probably reached "the farthest bounds of the West," Spain, through the preaching of Paul.

God's work got done in spite of the opposition of Satan's allies false doctrine from within and persecution from without. During the 300 years following the birth of Christ, Roman emperors instigated no less than 10 major persecutions against

the church. Thousands upon thousands of Christians were martyred.

God doesn't depend on us to get his work done. But our love for souls will move us to join our Lord in the marvelous task of proclaiming the gospel to all nations.

During this same time period numerous false teachers arose from within the ranks of the church, men like Arius, who denied the divinity of Christ and attracted a large following. But God preserved his truth, and his work got done. His elect continued to be gathered through the heralding of the gospel of the kingdom. The number of professing Christians grew from 3,000 on Pentecost to an estimated 1 million by 100 A.D., 20 million by 300 A.D., and 43 million by 500 A.D.*

Then, in the 600s, Muhammad came. Through his conquests many formerly Christian lands embraced the religion of Islam. Yet by 1000 A.D., the number of professing Christians had grown to an estimated 50 million and by 1500 to about 81 million.

When the church was in danger of losing the gospel because of the false teaching of work-righteousness emanating from Rome, God raised up Martin Luther to restore the simple message of the gospel of the kingdom: salvation through Christ's work alone, received by faith alone.

God's elect continued to be gathered. It is estimated that by 1900, 558 million were professing Christians. That number jumped to 1.2 billion in 1970, 1.4 billion in 1980, and 2 billion in 2000.*

Persecution and false doctrine continue, as does massive indifference and defections from Christianity on the part of nations who have had the gospel for ages. Yet God's work continues to get done. Today we see the spread of the gospel in places like Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

God's work will get done, and it will continue to get done until, as Jesus says, it has been "preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations." God's work will get done. Trust him.

Join him

But the same Scriptures that encourage us to trust God that his work will get done also invite us to join him in that work. The same Jesus who said, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations," also urges us, "Preach [herald or announce] the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

[God's work]
will continue to
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"preached in
the whole world
as a testimony
to all nations."

Why, we might ask, since the work will get done with or without us? Especially in these days of financial stringencies, wouldn't it be more prudent to "hunker down," circle the wagons, and take care of ourselves? Why not simply trust that God will get his work done but then let someone else join him in that work?

For one thing, it is God's will that we join him. "Preach the good news to all creation," says Jesus (Mark 16:15). "If you love me," Jesus tells us, "you will obey what I command" (John 14:15).

Our love for souls will also move us to join our Lord in the marvelous task of proclaiming the gospel. Souls without Christ die forever. Can we, therefore, "whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high, can we to those benighted the lamp of life deny?" (*Christian Worship* 571:3).

But above all, God's love for us in giving us his Son for our redemption motivates us to join him in heralding the gospel of the kingdom to the world. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we"with all our flaws, with all our many failures—"should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1)! It is that magnificent love of God that will continuously propel us as individual Christians, as congregations, and as a church body, to join our God in proclaiming the gospel to the nations. This we will do through our fervent prayers, our generous offerings, and our personal witnessing, all the while calmly trusting that God will get his work done.

God's work will get done. Trust him. And then joyfully join him.

David Valleskey, former president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, is a member at Beautiful Savior, Carlsbad, California.

*The World Christian Encyclopedia, Oxford University Press, David Barrett, ed., 1982, p. 796



A small group in a big city works to become the church community that many people in the area long for.

Abby L. Janssen

Crossroads Church Sundays - 10:00 AM www.crossroadschicago.org

CHICAGO

portunit

hey knew they needed something, but what exactly? Sitting at a restaurant in Chicago in 2003, a group of young, mostly single, professionals talked with area pastors to figure out exactly how to meet their spiritual needs. Their faith in Jesus was important, but connecting with others was difficult. They, along with their friends, were struggling to find a church in their backvard and weren't succeeding.

In a city of nearly three million people, Chicago is a rung for many people climbing the career ladder. Many live in the heart of the city, relying on public transportation and the comforts of easily accessible amenities. Unfortunately, a church is not often on that list of amenities. WELS churches, for the most part, have dotted suburban Chicago but have not penetrated the city limits.

Seizing the opportunity

The meeting at the restaurant was about to change all that. Pooling its resources and expertise, a core group of WELS members worked together to develop and begin what would eventually be known as Crossroads.

The group called its ministry "Crossroads" for many different reasons. "We want our ministry to be a crossroadsa center of activity," says Wendy Greenfield, one of the ministry's core members. "When people move to Chicago they are generally at a crossroads in their life. The name also reminds us of the day-to-day crossroads that we encounter and the opportunity to follow the cross."

In trying to capture what was needed spiritually in Chicago, Crossroads members talked to their friends, co-workers, and neighbors—people like themselves.

They found people trying to find a church that provided authenticity, a chance to meet others who shared their values and morals, and opportunities to serve and be inspired.

Based on that feedback, Crossroads decided to start small with a monthly Bible study called Quest. Crossroads invited different WELS pastors to lead discussions about topics that were of interest to its members. The group also planned monthly social activities, which provided a unique outreach effort. "When we met one-on-one with people, we just asked them to bring their friends and get involved," says Greenfield. "We really wanted to make everyone feel a part of this. When people have some ownership, they are more likely to work hard to make it successful."

Realizing that potential members often visit a Web site before going to a church or Bible class, Crossroads also launched www.crossroadschicago.org. It has since found that roughly one-third of its new contacts had connected with Crossroads online, often being referred by a friend or family member. Its Web site also allowed members who frequently travel for work a way to stay connected.

Taking it to the next level

As Crossroads grew and developed, members shared the wish of having regular church services. According to Southeastern Wisconsin District President David Rutschow: "Crossroads put together a ministry plan outlining its goals for the next two to two and a half years. It had secured financial commitments that made it selfsupporting and not needing any synod funding. It also built into its budget a large amount for outreach." Those financial commitments included a gift of \$25,000 from

the Siebert Lutheran Foundation. Congregations like St. Mark, De Pere, Wis., and St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., also provided counsel and financial support.

Rutschow adds, "Crossroads has the promise of being the first congregation established by WELS in the city of Chicago."

Crossroads holds its Bible studies in a party room of a condo building and its church services in an elementary school auditorium. Greenfield notes, "We knew that our demographic didn't have to worship in a traditional building, so it made things, logistically, a little easier."

Pastor Mike Borgwardt was installed to serve as Crossroads' full-time pastor in July 2005, and the congregation began organized church services in October. Since then, more than 200 people have attended services, with about 80 people attending regularly. "We get a lot of new people every Sunday," says Borgwardt.

Reaching out to the community

Outreach continues to be an item on Crossroads' agenda. "We sent out two mailings when we began our services, and we still have people who say 'I came because I got your mailing,' " notes Greenfield.

Borgwardt adds, "I just got a call today from someone who said 'I've lived in Chicago for three years and didn't know you guys existed,' so there is still work to be done."

"We also want to reach out to the unchurched and have one-on-one relationship building become second nature to us. As a congregation, we want to build connections to the community," says Borgwardt. "We are working on ways that we can share the love of Christ with the community."

If not you, then who?

Located in the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago, Crossroads, in just a short time, has become the church community that many people in the area were starved for.

"Crossroads has a culture that makes greeters unnecessary," says Greenfield. "Our members are genuinely interested in each other and enjoy meeting new people. We help foster that culture by doing a few simple things to encourage socializing. We always have food, and, before our church services, we open our doors and hang out on the front steps."

Borgwardt mentions, "We've had others say the one thing that struck them right away was how friendly the place was. Another thing people comment on is that we are very 'come as you are,' and casual while still being reverent and respectful."

In many churches the bulk of church work can fall to a few people, often older, more established members. But



A core group of young professionals began Crossroads in 2003. Six are still with the ministry today. From I to r: Pastor Mike Borgwardt, Hillary Brands, Wendy Greenfield, Tara Tesch, Rick Brands, Melissa Gotstein, and Dave Weihing.

that's not the case at Crossroads. "We tell people, 'If not you, then who?" " says Greenfield.

"The stereotype is that Gen-Xers tend to be apathetic, but that's not what I've found," adds Borgwardt. "I've found young people who want to be involved and have been waiting for the chance. Here, everybody as to help out, or it's just not going to work."

The road ahead

That's not to say Crossroads doesn't face challenges. Rutschow points to a recent newspaper article on couples choosing to stay in Chicago after having children rather than moving to the suburbs. "That could be a future challenge for Crossroads—how they reach out to families."

Another is whether the congregation can maintain its momentum and become a completely member-supported congregation. "Our goal is to become self-supporting within two years," Borgwardt says. "In the meantime, we'll continue to rely on gifts from others to supplement the offerings of our members. That will enable us to meet our outreach goals and keep building community within our very mobile membership. Ultimately, of course, it's our Lord who gives us success. We just want to be as wise and faithful as we can be with the great opportunities he's giving us."

"Another outgrowth of this effort might be that Crossroads would prove to be a model for other major metropolitan areas like Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C., that, historically, WELS has not gotten into," says Rutschow. "It's a ministry that has really been blessed."

Abby Janssen is assistant editor for Forward in Christ.

JUSTIFICATION: COMPLETED AT THE CROSS

The verdict rendered at Calvary declared the world free of guilt, righteous in God's sight, and worthy of eternal life.



It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, famous or living in obscurity. It does not matter whether you want to meet your Maker or not. You have an appointment set for you by the Almighty, and that appointment must be kept.

How will you stand before God on that great day when heaven and earth will be destroyed, when the elements will melt with intense heat, and when the living and the dead are summoned to appear before the judgment seat of Christ? How do you presume to enter the presence of the all-seeing God, who knows the darkest secrets of your heart? On that day when billions will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever, how do you hope to gain entrance into eternal bliss?

You will appear before God in one of two ways. You will stand before him clothed in rags, tattered and filthy—rags that reek with the stench of guilt and are inadequate to cover the shame of your nakedness. Or you will stand before him clothed in beautiful garments of brilliant white, fragrant and lovely—a beautiful robe of righteousness that covers all guilt and hides all shame.

A verdict that declares us "not guilty"

"Justification" is the term Scripture uses to describe God's action of declaring sinners righteous in his sight. Justification is God's verdict that declares a sinner "not guilty" of his sin. By this verdict, God has declared you to be sin-free, beautiful, and righteous in his sight.

Justification is necessary because in your natural state you stand opposed to God, hostile to God, separated from God, and burdened with the guilt of your sin. For you to be acceptable in the eyes of God you must be guilt-free and righteous. Anything less renders you incapable of standing before a just and holy God, who demands perfection. Every sin must be removed, and all guilt must be absolved. In place of guilt there must be innocence. In place of sin there must be righteousness. Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

A verdict that changes our relationship with God

How can you go from being wicked in God's eyes to being righteous in God's eyes? Where can you obtain the righteousness that God in his law requires—a righteousness that avails before God and is acceptable in God's sight? You cannot pay for your own sins to remove your own guilt. You can't offer God your own righteousness. All your righteous acts are like rags of uncleanness (Isaiah 64:6). The law of God has enslaved a fallen world in disobedience (Romans 11:32). Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin (Romans 3:20). The righteousness you need to stand before God cannot come from within yourself; it must come from without.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been revealed, to which the law and the prophets testify. "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:21,22). God gave his only begotten Son to live, to die, and to rise again for sinners.

It's important we understand that the words "for sinners" do not mean only "on behalf of sinners," but "in place of sinners." Christ is your proxy. Jesus took your place under God's law (Galatians 4:4,5), and he fulfilled it perfectly, without sin (Hebrews 4:15). We call this work of Jesus his "active obedience." Jesus then offered his innocent life as the payment (atonement) for the guilt of sinners. This great transaction took place on the cross. God removed the guilt of the world's sin and replaced it with the righteousness of Christ.

The justification of the world came through a legal verdict that was rendered when Jesus died and rose again. It didn't change human nature, but it did change the relationship or status between God and a world of sinners. The verdict rendered at Calvary declared the world free of guilt, right-

eous in God's sight, and worthy of eternal life—all for Jesus' sake. The guilt of the world was placed on Jesus, and the perfect obedience of Jesus stands in its place as righteousness for all.

A verdict that we don't participate in

Justification was completed at the cross! This is called "objective" or "general" justification. We call justification objective, because the reality of God's verdict takes place completely in the realm of God, entirely apart from human involvement. Man has nothing to do with it, and man's subjective perception or opinion does not change it. It is general or universal, because it applies to all people of all time. Jesus is the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world (John 1:29). "The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Romans 4:25).

Lutheran theologians have always maintained that there are two causes for man's salvation: the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ. Neither of these two causes has anything to do with the participation of sinful human beings. Both causes exist completely in God's sphere.

From the cross Jesus cried triumphantly, "It is finished" (John 19:30). What is finished is his life of active obedience and his passion and suffering—all his work of bearing and atoning for the sin of the world. This truth of Jesus' completed work stands as an objective truth—a realitywhether a human being believes it or not. There is nothing that any human being can do to change what happened outside Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago. No doubt or disbelief can change the fact that the lifeless Lord Jesus Christ came back to life on Easter Sunday and left behind an empty tomb. Jesus' triumphal cry from the cross, "It is finished," stands forever as the objective declaration that Christ's work of salvation is complete.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

JUSTIFICATION-

God's action of declaring sinners righteous or "not guilty."

OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATIONthe reality that God's verdict takes place completely in the realm of God, entirely apart from human involvement; often used as a synonym for "general justification."

GENERAL JUSTIFICATION the truth that God's verdict of "not guilty" applies to all people of all time.

ACTIVE OBEDIENCE—
the teaching that Jesus took
your place under God's law
and fulfilled it perfectly,
without sin

ATONEMENT—
payment. Jesus offered his
innocent life as the payment

This rock-solid reality of Jesus' completed work is the anchor of your faith and the certainty of your salvation. It means the difference between glorious success and abysmal failure on that day when you must stand before God. In the righteousness of Jesus, clothed in his obedience, you will stand before God beautiful, pure, righteous, and ready to receive your inheritance in heaven.

Jon Buchholz is pastor at Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona.

This is the first of a five-part series on justification. These articles are taken from essays that were presented by Pastor Jon Buchholz at the 2005 synod convention.

Next month: God's personal touch. We'll consider the importance of faith, which grasps God's completed justification in Christ.

It's because of

A story about how a rough character in a rough neighborhood came to faith reminds us that God can and does turn anyone around.

Erik B. Landwehr

he moment will live on, seared in my mind. It floods back to my conscience every time that I get lazy in evangelism or get pharisaical in my thoughts: "That person won't believe. Don't waste your time."

There she sat, alone on the soccer field. Suzanna Cadette: mother of four boys by the time she was 22, dealing with a difficult relationship, living in a broken-down ghetto, unemployed, with little hope for any kind of a future. I had seen the way she talked to other people. She

> was a rough character in a rough neighborhood. I was a frightened minister thousands of miles away from what I considered "normalcy."

So there I stood, watching her from our ministry center veranda, scared and timid, yet knowing that I needed to talk to her. So with no small bit of trepidation and a big push from the Holy Spirit, off I went to the soccer field. I sat next to her and said something like, "Suzanna, your children have been coming to our study center and to Sunday school and church a few times. They are learning about the Bible and Jesus. Do you want to know some of what they have been learning?"

To my surprise, she said, "Sure. I'd like that." So we set up a time for an informal Bible study.

Sitting on overturned five-gallon buckets in front of her one-room home, with the Rastas and "bad boys" wandering past and smoking weed, we started studying the Bible. Sometimes one or two of Suzanna's friends would



Bobby and Suzanna on their wedding day.

be there studying with us, sometimes not. Sometimes Suzanna would be there, sometimes not.

After a time, my wife, Staci, and our pastor's wife, Karla, started doing the Bible study. The classes moved to our ministry center at Trinity.

Staci remembers asking Suzanna where she would go after she died. The answer: "I am going straight to hell. I have not been a good person."

God apparently did not want that to be the final answer, because he kept working on her.

As the Word worked, changes began to take place. Suzanna moved out on her boyfriend once, twice, and the third time for good. Then the Bible classes continued in the countryside where Suzanna and two of her boys had moved in with her mother.

Next was a job. Joel Jaeger, pastor at Trinity, lined up a housecleaning position for Suzanna. There she met Bobby Nnabue, a Nigerian national and member at Trinity. Love blossomed, wedding plans were made, and the couple was married on Easter Sunday in 2001.

Somewhere along the line, the Holy Spirit had brought Suzanna from death to life. Still growing in her newfound faith, Suzanna was confirmed as a member of Trinity a year after the wedding. The two children still living with Suzanna had a Christian father figure that they could emulate. The family was regularly attending worship.

It was a fairy tale ending . . . until the sickness came.

At first, the doctors could not figure it out. After months of tests, visits to specialists, and much pain, the diagnosis was lupus. First was the weight loss, then the hair loss as the doctors struggled to find the right mix of medication. The final blow was the loss of her kidneys. They just stopped working. Now, instead of working at her job, Suzanna spent three days a week at the dialysis center in the hospital.

The burden of a sick wife took a tremendous toll on Bobby, the children, and the family finances. Other men encouraged Bobby to leave her. "Her sickness is not your problem. Her children are not vour children. Just go." However, Bobby stood devoted to his wife. He will always be a model to me of how a Christian

husband should be committed to his wife. Bobby basically sold himself into indentured servanthood to pay off some of the hospital bills. He took a large loan from a businessman, promising to pay it back by working off the debt. Fortunately, Trinity and the WELS Committee on Relief were able to help release him from a sizeable portion of that debt.

Through this all, I kept arguing with God. "What are you doing!? Things were going so well. Suzanna is so young in faith. You promise that you will not snuff out the smoldering wick, so fix things . . . please!"

God did fix things, but not how I would have imagined. He didn't fix Suzanna's body, but he strengthened her spirit so she became a missionary to the hospital. Every nurse, every dialysis patient, every friend of hers heard Suzanna talk about her church and, more importantly, about her Savior. As we'd visit her at home or in the hospital, Suzanna would say, "People ask me, 'How can you smile and be happy with so many things going wrong with you?' I tell them, 'Because of Christ. I know that I am going to die, but whenever God takes me, I am going to heaven because Jesus died for me.' "What a tremendous change.

Suzanna made her last trip to the hospital in early July 2005. It didn't seem to be anything major. The hospital staff kept her overnight for observation and then took her to dialysis early the next morning. She passed



away silently before they even had her hooked up to the machine. At age 29, her body simply gave out.

Near Vigie Beach a mound of sand with a rough cross and a few decayed flowers adorns the spot where Suzanna's body lays. She is dressed in her best white dress—the one she wore for her wedding and for her confirmation. Her soul now resides with her Savior, adorned in a beautiful white dress that was not purchased with money, but with Jesus' blood.

It's an incredibly humbling and awesome experience to be an integral part of someone coming to faith, growing in that faith, sharing that faith, and then finishing the race of faith to join Jesus. Whenever I think of Suzanna I am reminded of just how powerful the Word of God is. God can and does turn anyone around. Every soul is a treasure.

I will also remember just how privileged we are that God allows us-no matter how timid, weak, and doubtful we may be-to be involved in the whole process. I will never forget Suzanna's smile or her confession: "It's because of Christ."

With that said, I should get to work. I am quite certain that God has a few more "Suzannas" out there for me to find.

> Erik Landwehr is a staff minister at Trinity, Castries, St Lucia, West Indies.

WHATEVER

Procrastination

I can't think, "I'll live for God later; I don't have to do it now." I need to seize the opportunities I have right now.

Mandy Behm

Picture this. You wake up late, hurry to take a shower and get ready, and then realize that a project you had due isn't done, or you didn't study for that test. You may think, "Why didn't I do this last night?" or "Why do I always procrastinate so much?"

That's exactly what I was thinking one Sunday. I realized that I needed to do three more service hours for a school project. I panicked. I had to get this done. Not getting it done would mean failing this semester of Religion class. I was reading through a list of suggestions that I was given, and I came upon "clean up a grave site." I thought, "I can do that in one day. No problem."

My mom took me out to Sacred Heart Cemetery, where both of her parents are buried. While I was cleaning off the graves, picking leaves up, and trimming grass, I read the inscriptions to keep my mind occupied.

One particular grave marker caught my eye. The inscription told me that this boy had died at the age of 19. That started me thinking. This boy must have had goals in life, future plans, friends, maybe a girlfriend. He may have been a wonderful musician, a great basketball player, or an amazing student. College, careers, marriage, and everything that I am thinking about now probably ran through his mind at some point. He could have thought, "I can do that later" and never had the chance to.

This made me realize that I can never be sure when God will take me home.

God has put me on this earth for a purpose. He has blessed me so richly and has given me so much to use in my future.

I'm planning on attending college, getting married, and having children. I would love to be an actress, a writer, or a missionary. But I know that God has my future planned out, and if he chooses to take me home

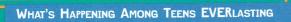
sooner, I will be so much happier than I am now.

Although I don't know what God has in store for me, I know that he wants me to witness. God tells us in his Word that he has prepared works in advance for us to do. Once those works are finished, he will take us home. But we can never know when the works God has prepared for us are completed. Whether at my job, my school, or anywhere I might be, I can tell others about God's saving truth.

"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). The entire reason we are living is to spread the gospel, and we may not get that chance later. I can't think, "I'll live for God later; I don't have to do it now." I need to seize the opportunities I have right now. While my music, dance, or academics may seem like the most important things in my life at this moment, I can not lose sight of the greater purpose God has for me.

As I was finishing up my service hours, I was understandably relieved that I would not be failing Religion class. But, more importantly, my outlook had changed. I now know that I can't take my life for granted. The time God has given me is precious, and I need to use it to his glory. I won't put off living for God, because my life is one project I don't want to mess up.

Mandy Behm, a senior at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wisconsin, is a member at Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wisconsin.





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



\$4.99 each

Precious passages

Although "Precious Passages" is a series of little books measuring only 4" x 6" each, it delivers an enormous amount of inspiration in its compact pages. Each book, written by a different author, expounds on selected portions of Scripture.

Eric S. Hartzell titles his book, *Psalm 51: God's Repair Manual*. King David was the blessed and admired leader who penned this psalm after being confronted and convicted of his sin of lust. Hartzell reminds us "but just as the whole world is allowed to see David's sin, so the whole world is allowed to know his repentance too." A sampling of a few of the thought-provoking chapters in this book are "Need for Repairs," "Coming Clean," and "Finding Peace."

Paul C. Ziemer delves into Mark 15 titling it, Aweful Judgment—Awesome Grace. Although the crucifixion was almost 2,000 years ago, the author's handling of this portion of Scripture transports us back to Jerusalem and the crushing realization of our personal accountability in nailing Jesus to the cross. "We tend to forget the blood that stained the real cross. We are inclined to pretend that God never found our fingerprints at the murder scene." Interwoven throughout this

handling of Mark's gospel account are also the awesome reminders of God's grace that soothe our burdened hearts: "To our astonishment, we hear the verdict—on us and the whole world—not guilty!"

These lightweight books are a convenient size to take traveling. They fit easily in a purse, briefcase, or backpack and their easy-to-read format with short chapters make them perfect to read on a lunch break or in a spare moment. This series of books is sure to strengthen the personal walk of its readers. It also would be a perfect way to share the good news with someone as a gift.

Robyn Smith Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah

Editor's note: There are four more books in the "Precious Passages" series besides the two reviewed above. They are Luke 2: The Glory of Bethlehem by Brian Keller; Luke 15: You Are God's Treasure by Norman Burger Jr.; Luke 24: My Redeemer Lives by Paul Prange; and John 11: Death Is But a Sleep by Mark Lenz. You can purchase the entire set for \$23.95.

Obituaries

Lester A. Found 1916-2005

Lester Found was born Dec. 31, 1916. He died Dec. 4, 2005, in Milwaukee, Wis.

He served St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.; St. Luke, Kenosha, Wis.; and Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.

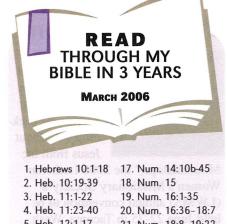
He was preceded in death by his wife, Edna; a grandson; and a great-granddaughter. He is survived by one son, two daughters, and three grandchildren.

Herbert R. Grams 1922-2005

Herbert Grams was born Feb. 13, 1922, in New Ulm, Minn. He died Nov. 27, 2005, in Appleton, Wis.

A 1948 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served St. John, Wood Lake, Minn.; St. Luke, Kenosha, Wis.; Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.; Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Marian; one daughter; three grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter.



1. Hebrews 10:1-18	17. Num. 14:10b-45
2. Heb. 10:19-39	18. Num. 15
3. Heb. 11:1-22	19. Num. 16:1-35
4. Heb. 11:23-40	20. Num. 16:36-18:7
5. Heb. 12:1-17	21. Num. 18:8-19:22
6. Heb. 12:18-29	22. Num. 20
7. Heb. 13:1-8	23. Num. 21
8. Heb. 13:9-25	24. Num. 22
9. Numbers 1, 2	25. Num. 23, 24
10. Num. 3, 4	26. Num. 25, 26
11. Num. 5:1-6:21	27. Num. 27, 36
12. Num. 6:22-7:89	28. Num. 28, 29
13. Num. 8:1-9:14	29. Num. 30
14. Num. 9:15-10:36	30. Num. 31
15. Num. 11, 12	31. Num. 32
16. Num. 13:1-14:10a	rith others. General

Meet the editorial staff—uncut

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

Under the influence

"In my public elementary school education it was stressed that everyone you meet has some influence on you, and I tend to think of things that way," notes Paul Prange.

There is no doubt that Prange may influence you as flip through the pages of *Forward in Christ*. Prange, president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), is the newest contributing editorialist to join the staff.

Prange, the oldest of five children and the son of a pastor, says that one of the most surprising aspects of his pastoral ministry is where he's been. "In the family I was adopted into, everyone values parish ministry very highly. You serve there because that's where the life and health of the Church is. I thought I would stay in the parish my entire ministry. But now I've been at a school longer than at a parish."

His teaching ministry is also where he met his wife. "When I was a tutor at MLS, Leanne (nee Larson) was assigned as a teacher to Bethany, Saginaw. I was directing the mass choir at the joint Reformation festival, and she was singing in it. Our eyes met during 'The First Song of Isaiah,' and the rest is history." The Pranges have been blessed with three children, Anna, 13; Maria, 11; and Joel, 10.

When asked to describe
himself in three words, Prange
replies, "Lutheran, husband, father." But
when he posed the same question to his
family, Anna answered, "Loving and
reckless driver," causing the family to
dissolve in fits of giggles. The reckless
driver comment refers to the encounter
Prange had with a deer in 1998 while
driving to New Ulm, Minn. Prange
claims that it was the deer's fault.

Although Prange says that he is a person without intense hobbies, he



Paul Prange and his family pose for a photo while traveling in Alaska. Alaska was the last stop on Prange's quest to see all 50 states.

does enjoy reading, singing, and, most recently, doing sudoku puzzles. An avid traveler, he has been to all 50 states and spent a sabbatical year in East Fork, Ariz., on the Apache reservation.

Prange hopes "that people grow in faith by reading my editorials. Nothing is more important to me than using the Word of God to create and strengthen faith in Jesus our Savior."

Shout Jesus from the mountaintops



The Cascade Mountains and the picturesque Northwest will provide the backdrop for "Shout Jesus from the

Mountaintops," the 2006 Lutheran Women's Missionary Society's (LWMS) annual convention to be held June 22-25 in Tacoma, Wash.

The three-day event provides the opportunity for thousands of WELS members from around the country to hear about the mission work of our synod firsthand from those in the fields. Workshops include presentations by current and former world and national missionaries, spiritual growth sessions, and ideas of how to share your faith with others. General sessions will intro-

duce attendees to mission work in their own backyard, including outreach to Muslims and Hispanics. World missionaries will share the strides that are being made in other lands and the future of their work.

LWMS President Sarah Malchow notes, "The convention theme, 'Shout Jesus from the Mountaintops' reminds us that we all have the privilege and responsibility to proclaim the gospel wherever we are."

The convention will open with music of the Apache musicians from Arizona and close with mission-minded women, men, young people, pastors, and teachers raising their voices in praise to the Lord in a communion worship service.

In addition, attendees will be entertained by musical groups, skits, and displays. Free time to explore the Tacoma area, including Mt. Rainier, is also part of the weekend's events.

Says Malchow. "To raise your voice in praise and thanks to God with nearly 1,500 other dedicated WELS men and women and to witness the procession of mission flags reminds us that we are not alone in laboring in the fields."

If you have not received a registration packet, contact your LWMS reporter or your pastor to obtain one. For more information about the convention and the Tacoma area, visit our Web site, www.lwmsconvention2006.org, or contact Pam Muske, conventionpublicity@lwms.org; 509-826-2311.

Ruth Hardison

WELS Archives work continues despite inadequate housing

History without documentation is only legend. Without documentation the lessons of history are lost, and the fullness of God's past grace cannot be seen.

Likewise, a church body without a preserved history is like a person with amnesia. It has no sense of identity and is in danger of losing its reason for existence. The Bible often reminds us to remember our past and reminds us that our future is based on what God has done for us in the past. Preserving our history also allows us to learn from past mistakes and successes. It gives us an appreciation of the struggles and hardships that those who went before us endured to preserve God's truth.

Regrettably, WELS is in danger of losing that sense of identity and the link to the past. The WELS Archives currently consists of less than 2,000 square feet below the chapel at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. The 2,000 linear feet of shelves housed within that space are overflowing. In short, the archives have run out of space in its current location.

In addition to running out of space, the archives' current home is also a potential disaster zone. During the remodeling of the chapel at the seminary, a construction worker had to cut a heating pipe in the archives. The workday ended before the worker was able to complete the project, so the pipe was sealed with duct tape. During the night, the weather turned cold and the heat came on, and steam filled the archives. Fortunately, before much damage could be done, smoke detectors went off, and the fire department arrived. The steam was shut off, the carpets and walls dried out, and materials, thankfully, were preserved. A blessing indeed, yet it underscored the need for a true archival facility.

In 2000, an effort was made to move towards a permanent facility. A portion of the WELS Forward in Christ Thank Offering from that year was designated to fund construction of a 10,000-square-



Inadequate storage space is hindering archivers' ability to preserve the synod's rich history.

foot space adjacent to the seminary library to house a new WELS Archives. Unfortunately, not enough gifts were given to fund the project. Funds that were collected were used to upgrade the heating, air conditioning, and cooling system and to remove asbestos in the archives area of the seminary.

Even though space is at a premium, the work of the WELS Archives continues. Using a \$15,000 grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and a \$3,000 grant from the WELS Historical Institute, four students from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary spent the 2004-05 school year cataloging the archival history and artifacts of the former Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Mobridge, S.D.; and materials from the WELS President's Office. Through this work, a portion of the WELS Archives was made accessible to researchers.

Archival quality materials and artifacts continue to be donated to the WELS Archives through the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library. However, it is the prayer of those involved with the archives that gifts will be given so that a more suitable, permanent home can house our collective history for generations to come.

For more information, contact the seminary library at 262-242-8113; library@wls.wels.net.

Alan H. Siggelkow

Mission Partners to tour Apacheland

The WELS Ministry of Christian Giving is sponsoring a trip to Apacheland in Arizona and Mexico through its Mission Partners program. Coordinated by Gift Planning Counselor Dennis Kleist, the tour will visit a number of mission fields during nine days beginning April 29.

Mission Partners is an ongoing way of personally being involved in one of more than 60 WELS mission and ministry projects across the United States and around the world. Its goal is to connect people and congregations to missions that they are specifically interested in and to raise awareness of the missions.

This is the second trip that the Ministry of Christian Giving has sponsored, but it hopes to do more in the future. Says Kleist, "We use former missionaries as tour guides so that they know the culture and can help explain the purpose of the mission."

Those who travel on a Mission Partners trip often go back to their districts and do presentations to seek support. "Trips like these enable laypeople to see firsthand the missions they are supporting and then take that experience and excitement back to their congregations and community," says Kleist.

The trip to Apacheland and Mexico can accommodate 25 to 30 people and will include visits to Arizona missions in San Carlos, Bylas, Peridot, East

Fork, Whiteriver, Dove Mountain, and the Mexican mission in Altar/Caborca. In addition, participants will have time for sightseeing.

If you are interested in supporting the work in Apacheland and Mexico or want more information on the trip (including pricing), contact Dennis Kleist, 920-735-4929. The deadline for reserving a place is Feb. 24.



WELS members can support missions through Mission Partners tours

Path to Victory Basketball Camp scores big————

When most kids hear the word "basketball," they don't associate it with the Bible. Yet many young basketball enthusiasts in Wisconsin and New Mexico experienced the sport side-by-side with the Bible at the Path to Victory Basketball Camps this past summer. More than 270 students in grades one to eight attended the camps held in Slinger and Hartford, Wis., as well as in Farmington, N.M., and its nearby Navajo reservation.

Tim Mueller, a public school physical education teacher and coach, had been running summer basketball camps for several years when he decided to try using them as an outreach tool for his home congregation, St. Paul, Slinger, Wis. Since the church didn't have a gym at the time, Mueller proposed a combined-congregation effort and held the camps at Peace Lutheran School in nearby Hartford.

"Basketball camps are attractive to students of all ages," Mueller says, "and I wanted to be able to encourage the students' spiritual growth, not just their physical skills." By combining basketball fundamentals with the gospel message, Mueller was able to teach the students about God's

Tim Mueller (right) and a boy who came to the Path to Victory Basketball Camp in New Mexico with no knowledge of who Jesus was. The boy left after the camp knowing about Jesus and with a Bible for himself and one for a friend.

saving grace and profound love.

After a few years of running camps in Hartford and then at the new gym at St. Paul, Mueller was asked to "take the show on the road." Dale Mueller of WELS Kingdom Workers suggested that the Path to Victory Camp be used for mission outreach in New Mexico, specifically on the Navajo reservation. Dale accompanied Tim, his family, and Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School student Jamie Cooper, as they presented the basketball camp in Farmington, N.M., and in Upper Fruitland on the reservation. The project was locally organized by Pastor Jim Fleming of Christ the Rock, Farmington.

BASKETBALL CAMP

Some of the participants had never seen a Bible before the camp. On the Navajo reservation, a woman dropped off her visiting grandson and said, "He doesn't know anything about Jesus!" The children participated in daily devotions, where they heard the gospel message and how the basic teachings of the Bible relate to basketball as well as life in general. Each child received a New Testament Bible and a Path to Victory Basketball Camp t-shirt. Additional

Bibles were available for students who wanted to share them with friends.

Tim concludes, "I think the camps are so successful because we take a popular activity and incorporate God's Word. Since the parents come to watch the activities, we also get to know them and serve them spiritually as well."

Tim has put together a "how to" manual for beginning Path to Victory camps. The information can be found on www.stpaulslinger.org.

Kim Mueller

Member visits focus real treasure

During the Lent and Easter seasons, the Conference of Presidents is encouraging congregations to participate in "Real Treasure Visits," an every member Bible study on personal priorities that was directed by last summer's synod convention.

"During this time of the year we're sensitive to the tremendous treasure that God gave us in the death and resurrection of his Son," says President Karl Gurgel. "It's a perfect time for us to reflect on the worth of that treasure."

This hourlong Bible study is meant to be a one-on-one encouragement. This will allow for more open discussion and personal reflection. "It's an opportunity for brothers and sisters in Christ to sit down with one another and talk about God's view of our life, his goals for our life, and what really is important," says Richard Gurgel, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., and author of the Bible study.

The study is being presented in a trickle-down approach. Already this past December President Gurgel began presenting the Bible study to the 12 district presidents and their wives. Each district president is meeting with one pastor and spouse from each of his district's circuits, who will in turn share the study with the rest of the pastors and spouses in the circuit. Finally, pastors at the local level are urged to share the study with leaders in their churches, who can assist in discussing it with fellow members. It's hoped that all these visits can be completed by June.

"It is a huge job," says Douglas
Engelbrecht, president of the Northern
Wisconsin District. "Take a congregation of my size for example—
1,500 souls. To talk personally to
each individual in the space of six
months will be very hard to do. But

on a Christian's

it's worth the effort."



Although the Bible study discusses

finances, the goal is not about raising money. "I think the ultimate goal is to help us, who have so many material resources, not to get caught up in living as if that's what it's all about," says Richard Gurgel. "The real danger is not unmet budgets but hearts that get focused on that which cannot satisfy."

"This was not a high pressure type thing where someone came in with a clipboard and said, 'Can I put you down for a thousand dollars,' "says Engelbrecht of his visit with President Gurgel. "We talked about the gifts that God has given us, particularly the gift of a Savior, and how all our life was to be lived to his glory in thankfulness for his goodness to us."

Seven short devotions and a guide for discussing stewardship with children are among the resources that will be left behind to reinforce the Bible study's message.

Says President Gurgel, "I would like to personally encourage all of our members to take this opportunity to realize what a significant treasure we already have and how that can influence the way we use all the other treasures in our life in a soulsatisfying way."

For more information, go to www. wels.net/jumpword/realtreasure. If you have questions about the "Real Treasure Visits," talk to your pastor or your district president.

Walking Together Sunday to focus on Martin Luther College

Walking Together Sunday, an annual event to celebrate what we, by the grace of God, are able to accomplish as a synod, will focus on Martin Luther College in 2006. Churches are encouraged to participate in the service on May 7 or on another Sunday during the Easter season.

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., has assisted the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving in developing some of the materials for this year's service. These include a short video and brochures. A sermon theme based on Ephesians 4:11-16 and litany and hymn suggestions will also be provided.

In early 2006 each church should receive a packet of materials that includes the video, sermon guide, litany master copy, enough brochures for the congregation, an instructional memo, and pieces necessary for gathering a freewill offering. Samples of the materials are available for download at www.wels.net/jumpword/ walkingtogether.

During Walking Together 2006, the first \$800,000 of gifts will go towards the synod's operating fund (like last year), and anything more will go directly to Martin Luther College.

"This year's Walking Together Sunday is intended to remind us how Martin Luther College affects our lives as members of WELS," says David Liggett, administrator of the Ministry of Christian Giving. "The pastors, teachers, and staff ministers who serve our congregations receive much of their training at Martin Luther College."

The college, along with the synod's other ministerial education schools—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.; Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.—are at a critical



Martin Luther College, a focus of Walking Together Sunday 2006, trains men and women for WELS teaching and preaching ministries.

phase financially. In the past, WELS budgetary funds and student tuition covered costs. Today, however, costs have outstripped available budget support.

Members contributed generously to support synod work in 2005. Walking Together 2005 brought in about \$993,000 as of mid-December, with just over 75 percent of all WELS congregations participating.

"Walking Together Sunday gives each of us, as members of WELS, the opportunity to express our thankfulness for the many ways the blessings of 'walking together' come true in our lives. David writes: 'It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes' (Psalm 133:2)," says Liggett. "Our Walking Together thank offering is a way in which we can say, 'Thank you,' for the oil of fellowship we enjoy in WELS."

For more information, contact the Ministry of Christian Giving, 800-827-5482.

Adam Goede

Martin Luther College

On Dec. 15, 2005, 26 students graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Graduate assignments are listed on the Bulletin Board (p. 26).

- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- ▲ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Early Childhood Education
- Bachelor of Science in Staff Ministry



Lacey L. Bitcon ▲ San Jose, Calif.



Jason L. Burgstiner � Rincon, Ga.



Patrick C. Cortright Franklin, Wis.



LeeAndra F. Dodge • Appleton, Wis.



Bethany A. Baur

Brillion, Wis.

Rakel Edvardsen Aalgaard, Norway



Mallory L. Ehinger • Toledo, Ohio



Cindy M. Ewings • Lake Mills, Wis.



Megan L. Favorite Eagle River, Wis.



Terry L. Friedrichs ■ Hanska, Minn.



Anne K. Hagglund • Forest Lake, Minn.



Rebecca A. Hahn New Ulm, Minn.



Leah J. Krohn Ripon, Wis.



Kristen M. Laete 🛦 Spokane, Wash.



Crystal M. Mielke Loveland, Colo.



Stephanie N. Miller • West Salem, Wis.



Rachel L. Myers ■ Watertown, S.D.



Justin M. Ohm New Ulm, Minn.



Cory D. Olson • Ames, Iowa



Mary R. Potratz + New Ulm, Minn.



Alanna M. Preuss • Redwood Falls, Minn.



Nicole A. Reed • Milwaukee, Wis.



Jacob R. Schable A Montello, Wis.



Zachary P. Seeger • Manitowoc, Wis.



Rick L. Springstroh ■ Appleton, Wis.

District news

Arizona-California

East Fork Lutheran High School, Whiteriver, Ariz., held its annual Great Western Shootout basketball tournament the weekend of Dec. 9-10, 2005. WELS area Lutheran high schools from Washington, California, Arizona, Nebraska, and Colorado all converged on the site of the first WELS world mission for a weekend of fun, fellowship, and basketball. Students were also able to tour Ft. Apache, see the site of the first mission station, and attend church.

Dakota-Montana

Apostles, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, held an open house on Nov. 6, 2005. A Service of Dedication and Thanksgiving was held in the afternoon with the theme, "How Lovely is your House, O Lord." Nearly 16,000 postcards were sent out to the community to publicize the event.

Nebraska

Hope, Manhattan, Kan., dedicated its new facility on Oct. 24, 2005. It is the congregation's first permanent building and serves as a house of worship and an early learning center.

Daniel Lor, a member of Rock of Ages, Kansas City, Mo., has been assigned as a vicar to the Hmong Outreach Mission field in La Crosse, Wis. Lor, along with his three brothers, is studying for the ministry

through the Pastoral Studies Institute program at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. He will continue his studies with pastors in the Western Wisconsin District as he reaches out to the Hmong people in the area.

South Atlantic

Victory, Jacksonville, Fla., dedicated its new building on Nov. 20, 2005. The 7,600square-foot building sits on six acres in southeast Jacksonville.

The church building project for Saving Grace, Mobile, Ala., is back on schedule. The congregation is now looking at a church completion date of mid May. The church's earlier construction was leveled by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla., hosted a crew from WELS Kingdom Workers after Hurricane Wilma struck. The workers helped clean up at Hope and Ocean Drive, Pompano Beach, Fla.

Happy Anniversary!

MN-St Paul, Arlington, Minn., cele-

Pacific Northwest



At the Pacific Northwest WELS/ELS Pastor Teacher Conference, Pastor Emeritus Ulrik Larsen (front row, second from left) joins his former science student, Professor Martin Sponholz (front row, center). Sponholz, a science professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., was the lead presenter for the conference. They are flanked by their former students who attended the two-day event in September 2005.

> brated the 50th anniversary of the laying of its cornerstone on Sept. 18, 2005.

> SA—Ocean Drive, Pompano Beach, Fla., celebrated its 40th anniversary on Nov. 20, 2005. The congregation has decided to rename itself Pompano Lutheran Church to better reflect its renewed commitment to its mission of serving God and its local community.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ-Fred Casmer; DM-Wayne Rouse; MN-Jeffrey Bovee; NE-Donald Wichmann; PNW- David Birsching; SA-Christopher Kruschel.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

My two-year-old granddaughter, Holly, is quickly mastering the subtle and sometimes quirky nuances of the English language. She is also becoming more aware of herself, while not surrendering any consideration for the number-one person in her life, her mommy.

One Sunday morning, Holly was reminded by my daughter that they would soon be going to church. Delighted by the news, Holly reacted with her usual wide-eyed, open-mouthed gasp of excitement. She immediately blurted out a hopeful question, "Mommy, are we gonna sing "Holly" lujahs?"

Surprised, and tickled by her daughter's enthusiasm for worship, her mommy responded, "Yes, Holly, we're going to sing hallelujahs."

After a short pause, the unselfish little toddler issued a follow-up question, "Are we gonna sing "Mommy" lujahs, too?"

> Gary Aita Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

DEFINING RELIGION

Worship: the paying of homage to someone or something greater than ourselves. Christian worship is directed always and only to the Triune God. Public worship in the Lutheran Church involves not only prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to God, but also listening to the reading and proclamation of God's Word and receiving the sacraments.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Brown, Gary A., to retirement

Doebler, Brian C., to Immanuel, Fort Worth, Tex.

Hieb, Glen R., to Our Savior, Strongsville, Ohio Meier, Donald W., to retirement

Miller, Scott J., to Immanuel, South Lyon, Mich. Schewe, Mark H., to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.

Seiltz, Nathan C., to Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash.

Teachers

Jeffers, Brenda L., to St. Thomas, Goodyear, Ariz. Price, James K., to Siloah, Milwaukee Seehaver, Rebecca L., to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.

Wessel, Mary E., to St. John, Sparta, Wis.

Staff minister

Holden, Jace C., to St. Mark, Salina, Kan.

Martin Luther College assignments

Hahn, Rebecca, to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz. Miller, Stephanie, to Grace, Falls Church, Va. Seeger, Zachary, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee

ANNIVERSARIES

Manitowoc, Wis.—First German (150). April 9. Service, 3 P.M. Dinner, 5 P.M. RSVP, 920-684-0101, ext. 111.

Marinette, Wis.—Trinity school (50). May 7. Service, 9 A.M. Catered dinner and program, 11:30 A.M. RSVP, Kenneth Kasten, 715-732-2956. Tickets needed.

Kenosha, Wis.-Friedens (150). Sept. 17. Services, 8 & 10:15 A.M. Brunch, 9 A.M.-1 P.M.

COMING EVENTS

Women's retreats:

- WELS/ELS Ladies retreat, Jan. 13-15. Spring Hill Suites, Sarasota, Fla. Retreat. \$75. Lodging, \$89. Judy Becker, 941-355-6591.
- God's Gift of Renewal, Feb. 11, 8 A.M. St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis. Registration fee, \$15. Includes presentations and lunch. Lynn Garvey, 262-626-4749.
- Pathways to Christ, March 17-19. La Sure's Hall & Hawthorn Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. www.martinlutheroshkosh.com.
- Christian Woman Today, March 24-26. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.
- Pastors' Wives Renewal, June 9-10. Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn. Valerie Johnson, 612-378-1346; www.wels.net/jumpword/bps-cad. Deadline, May 1.

District youth rallies:

 Northern Wisconsin—June 15-18, Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, Wis. www.nwdcyd.org.

- South Atlantic-June 19-23, Unicoi Lodge, Helen, Ga. Brent Bitter, 904-642-8900. July 20-22, Southern Lutheran Academy, Mulberry, Fla. Jon Enter, 561-
- Minnesota—July 9-11, Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge, Grand Rapids, Minn. Ron Siemers, 507-232-9868.
- Western Wisconsin-July 20-22, Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, Wis., www.diedforme.com/youth_rally.htm.
- Pacific Northwest-August 8-11.

Watch for more information: www.wels.net/ jumpword/bulletinboard.

Choir tours:

- · Reach the World, a mixed choir of WELS members from Tucson, Ariz., will tour Arizona and Nevada. Feb. 18 to April 2.
- Martin Luther College will tour western states—Nevada, Ütah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and California. Feb. 25 to March 12. Home concert, St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., March 19, 3 P.M.

For a complete listing of concert dates, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/bulletinboard and click on Concerts/Music Workshops.

Mission and Ministry workshops-Feb.7-9. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. John Stelljes, 414-477-7607.

Dedication—Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center. Feb. 26 (not Jan. 29). Services, 8:30 & 11 A.M. Building tours, 9:45 A.M. and 1 P.M. Noon lunch. 608-257-1969.

National Men's Rally-March 4. St. Paul, Muskego, Wis. Register by Feb. 28. Brian Arthur Lampe, 414-422-0320, ext 119.

Church Ministry workshop—March 4, 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. Belle Plaine, Minn. Registration, \$15, includes dinner. Paul Schmeling, 715-425-6598.

WELS Regional Handbell festivals—April 1-2, Trinity, Brillion, Wis.; April 22-23, Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.; or St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn. Each festival will conclude with a Sunday concert, 2 P.M. Kim Pilz, 608-372-9512.

Cascade Lutheran Chorale spring concert— April 2, 4 P.M. Grace, Portland, Ore. Rehearsals, Jan. 29, Feb. 12 & 26, and March 12 & 26. Joy Williams, 503-493-0465.

WELS Conference of Staff Ministers-April 21-22. Apostles, San Jose, Calif. Kristen Koepsell, 608-831-8540.

Christian singles seminar—April 29. Milwaukee, Wis. Full day of sessions geared towards singles, evening banquet, and dance. Sponsored by S.H.A.R.E. Doris Collins, 262-534-7852.

Apacheland and Mexico Mission Partners tour-April 29-May 7. Visit our missions in Apacheland, Phoenix-Santo Tomas, Tucson-Dove Mountain, and Mexico-Mission to the Children. Includes worship services and visits with missionaries. Also Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest, and more. \$915 land/\$1,289 air from Milwaukee, Wis. Registration deadline, Feb. 24. Sponsored by WELS Ministry of Christian Giving. Dennis Kleist, 920-740-5899; dennis.kleist@sab.wels.net.

WELS Church Librarians' Organization meeting—May 6. Christ, Baxter, Minn. Registration, \$10. Bev, 218-746-3732.

Walk in the Shadow of St. Paul-trip hosted by St. Peter, Appleton, Wis. May 30-June 8. Trip includes Greece, a Greek Isles cruise, and Rome. rvash@new.rr.com or thegorskes@new.rr.com.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society national convention—June Tacoma, Wash. Hosted by Evergreen and Cascade Circuits. 414-321-6212.

Class reunion-Martin Luther Academy classes of 1975 & 1976. July 8-10. New Ulm, Minn. Doug Weishahn, 402-484-5557.

NAMES WANTED

Alumni, parents, or friends of students-from University of Wisconsin-Madison and Calvary Lutheran Chapel (1920-1964) or Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel (1964-2002). 608-257-1969.

Truman Lake, Mo. (communities of Warsaw, Clinton, and Osceola)—Loren Fritz, 816-380-4800.

Evansville, Ind.—Paul Horn, 270-351-2391; revhorn@yahoo.com

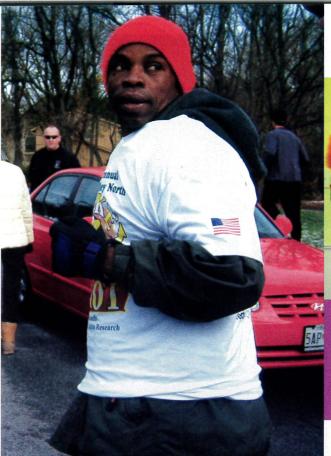
WELS members in the U.S. Army stationed at Fort Drum, N.Y. (10th Mountain Division) and Binghamton, N.Y., area—Cross of Christ, Liverpool, N.Y., Jeremiah Gumm, 315-622-2843; pastorgumm@yahoo.com.

Corpus Christi, Tex.-Chris Horn, 806-898-0855. Gethsemane, Sunday worship, 9:30 A.M.; Bible study, 10:45 A.M.; and Wednesday Bible study, 7 P.M. Church, 361-854-8481.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Assistant Professor in Sociology—Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn. Responsibilities: teach a variety of courses at lower and upper division levels, oversee practical and independent studies, direct and advise sociology majors, and provide leadership for newly established sociology major. Application review begins Feb. 1. Submit a letter of interest, including qualifications, areas of specialization, curriculum vitae, statement of teaching philosophy, and three current letters of recommendation to: Academic Search Committee, Bethany Lutheran College, 700 Luther Drive, Mankato, MN 56001; ptbooker@blc.edu. Visit Bethany's Web site, www.blc.edu, for more information.

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.



Always giving of his time, Atam Sunday participated in a Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving Day to raise money for Crohn's and colitis research at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland Medical Center.

FAITH IN ACTION

Nigerian refugee Atam Sunday has an attitude that draws people to him. "While he is very orthodox and a deep thinker, he's also just fun to be around. The kids tease him and love him," says Kevin Mau, pastor at Atonement, Parkville, Md., where Sunday is a member. "He has a true Christian joy about him." Here are some examples of his faith in action.

- In February 2005, Sunday returned to Africa. Because his life is still in danger, he flew into neighboring Benin and crossed the Nigerian border at night to visit his relatives. "He took four full suitcases and returned home with the clothes on his back," says Mau. But his kindness didn't come easy.
- Without a driver's license, Sunday leaves for work at 5 A.M. If he misses just one of his buses, he will not get home until 10 P.M. "We were talking about how long and hard his days can be," said Mau. "Atam told me, 'When those kind of things happen, I know the Lord's going to give me people to meet.' To him, it's an adventure."

Read more about Atam Sunday's life and how he affected the congregation in Parkville, Md., on p. 28.

Picture this



Members of the Walker family from Prince of Peace, Flower Mound, Tex., are spreading the gospel through a puppet ministry program. Founded in 2001, the four siblings have grown their program to include three spouses. Pictured (from I to r): Travis and Amy David; Kurt Walker (a member of Our Savior, San Antonio, Tex.); Amanda and Jon Walker; and Tyron and Amanda Singh. The family performs 12 to 18 times a year at different church and community events.

Submitted by Susie Kreienbrink

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.

The Lord's will

Yesterday I found out that where I work, my dedicated services are not needed anymore. It happened so quickly and now I don't know where to go next. I could toil or fret

... but this was the Lord's will.

Yesterday my brother was swiftly taken to his eternal home much sooner than anyone had planned. It seemed so sudden and tragic as his loving family and friends waited behind, starving for answers,

. . . but this was the Lord's will.

Today we carry out our daily routines. Some of us go to work, some of us receive further education, and we all support each other's efforts. We will all return home safely

... if it is the Lord's will.

Today I must take the opportunity to share the good news of salvation through Jesus, because yesterday has already past and tomorrow is too late. I must tell my children and others throughout the day about the Lord's love and how we must use our time of grace. May the Holy Spirit work through me to share the good news

... as it is the Lord's will.

Tomorrow I may find new work, I may move to a new city, I may meet new friends, and I may have other things I need to get done. I'm so busy that I don't even know where to start. But I do need to recognize that none of this will happen

... unless it is the Lord's will.

Tomorrow I will put aside the tasks, I will put aside the education, I will put aside my grief, and all my other plans. For tomorrow, I get to see my brother without the sorrow. For tomorrow, I will see the Lord face to face and I will praise his name forever, because tomorrow I will spend eternity in heaven. And tomorrow will come

... when it is the Lord's will.

Submitted by David Koch

Linda R. Buxa While generously helping a Nigerian

refugee, members of a Baltimore-area congregation receive the greater blessing.

tam Sunday doesn't know how old he his—38, maybe 39. Born in northwest Nigeria, where birth certificates are not issued, he had to choose his own birth date: Feb. 28. Raised in a one-room shack with no electricity or running water, he received little education. He was, however, taught about Jesus. That faith carries him through persecution and hardship.

His native oil-rich area is controlled by Muslims. Because Christians are persecuted, Sunday's life was in danger, and he fled to a refugee camp. He emigrated to the United States in 1999.

When he moved to the Dallas area, he took classes and joined Calvary, Dallas. With limited education, Sunday barely eked out a living. When his half-sister in Baltimore suggested he might find work there, he moved in summer 2003.

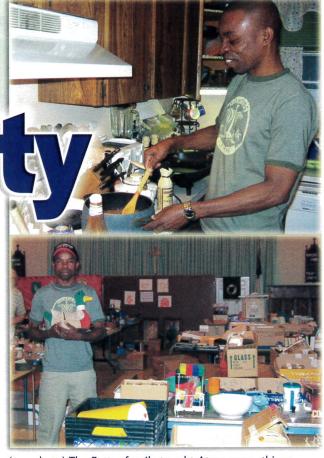
In November 2004 he returned to Nigeria to meet Ereka, the bride his parents had chosen for him. After they were married in the Benin Refugee Camp, Atam returned to the States. Ereka later escaped the refugee camp and now lives with friends while she waits to join Atam.

This is where members of Atonement, Parkville, Md., come in. Since Atam arrived in Baltimore, the congregation has become his family.

Kathy Potter's family gives Atam rides home from church, celebrates holidays with him, and helped him find a place to live. "We have two teenage children," she said, "It's such an amazing opportunity for them to help him and to see how he lives, how he's so satisfied by basic things."

"Basic" is an understatement. Atam, who is on refugee status with a valid green card, earns \$8 an hour. He struggles to make ends meet and once passed out at church from lack of nutrition. To his relatives in Nigeria, though, he is rich. So using what little he has, he shares with his family while saving to bring Ereka here.

To get Ereka's paperwork started, Atam needed \$1,700. This is practically impossible for him, so members held a yard and bake sale last August. After reading about Atam in a local newspaper, even non-members donated items. "The amount of stuff was incredible," said Joyce Albaugh, one of the organizers.



(top photo) The Potter family taught Atam many things, including how to make American sloppy joes.

(bottom photo) The members of Atonement, Parkville, Md., put together a rummage sale in 2005 to help Atam raise money to bring his wife to the United States.

Some of the furniture and household goods were set aside to help Atam and Ereka set up their home. At the end of the day, the sale netted \$1,756.96. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans matched \$1,700.

Now that part of the financial hurdle has been cleared, members are helping him over the legal one. They are petitioning Congress on his behalf. While they hope this goes quickly, because of 9-11 and the tightening of immigration, it could possibly take another year.

While the Sundays have received tangible blessings, the members have received immeasurably more. "He is a priceless blessing for us," says Potter. "Americans have so many material things that we take for granted. Atam praises God for little things. We couldn't have duplicated this lesson any other way."

Kevin Mau, Atonement's pastor, agrees. "It's heartwarming to see a congregation accept someone from another cultureand to love that person as a brother in Christ. One of the blessings the congregation received is seeing his faith work in the middle of adversity . . . and also to see that joy is a choice."

That's a lesson we all need to learn.

Linda Buxa, a member of Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage, Alaska, lives in Waldorf, Maryland.

Read more about Atam Sunday and his faith in action in Potluck on p. 27.

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Jesus has freed us from self-centered thinking and feeling.

Paul E. Kelm

If we have the Christian freedom to drink alcohol, what's to stop us from getting drunk? If there aren't church rules governing dating, what will keep teens from experimenting with sex? How will churches keep Christian liberty in worship from degenerating into tasteless, even Christless, emotionalism? For that matter, if we don't have to do good to be saved, will people do any good?

The means of grace strengthen our new man

In the first half of Romans 6 Paul answers those questions with baptism. In baptism we died to sin with Jesus and have been raised to a new life in Jesus, the apostle says. He wraps up his case in verse 14: "Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace." In the second half of Romans 6 Paul adds that Jesus has freed us from slavery to sin so that we could "wholeheartedly" choose righteousness.

Paul doesn't ignore our sinful nature's capacity for deceiving and misleading Christians into sin. Read Romans 7. But the apostle points out that trying to prevent sin with religious law backfires. The law only "arouses sinful passions" (v. 5) and "produce[s] in me every kind of covetous desire" (v. 8). Legalism doesn't trust the gospel to work. It only tries to curb human nature with rules and duties, rather than strengthen new life in Christ with the truth and power of the gospel.

Christian freedom needs to be coupled with love

Freedom is not the right to do whatever you want to do. It's not doing what you feel like, when you feel like it. When cynics wanted to turn liberty into perversion in Corinth, St. Paul wrote: "Everything is permissible for me"—yes—"But not everything is beneficial . . . I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). The Christian asks not merely, "Can I?" but "Why would I?" Christians ask, "How will this benefit me as a believer in Jesus?" and "How will this glorify God?" Why would I do what is not beneficial and what does not glorify God?

There's another question, "What will happen to my freedom in doing this?" Though Jesus has freed us from the necessity of keeping the law, moral right and wrong haven't changed and neither have the devastating consequences of sin. When a free person

chooses sin, he risks losing his freedom. Sin enslaves, especially sexual sin, the apostle demonstrates. The power to abstain from sexual sin lies in the gospel truth that "you were bought at a price," that "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). The gospel frees so we do not return to the slavery of sin. Why would we sin and choose slavery again?

Freedom is not indifferent to the hurts and needs, the fears and weaknesses, of others. While insisting on the Christian's freedom, Paul couples that freedom with patient Christian love: "'Everything is permissible'but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others" (1 Corinthians 10:23, 24). Our Christian freedom is lived out in a relational context. Love voluntarily yields rights for the sake of those who might be hurt by the exercise of our rights. Faith seeks what's best, not what we could get away with. Hope finds ways to champion, encourage, and develop brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sometimes all we think about is ourselves. Jesus has freed us from self-centered thinking and feeling. Christian freedom is all about others.

Paul Kelm is pastor at St. Mark, De Pere, Wisconsin.

This is the last of a six-part series on Christian freedom. To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/ficarchive, and search by the author's first and last name.



Each of us needs to be for our loved ones and to be

ence the slow passing of a generation. Her father died when all three of her children were in high school. It was sudden—a heart attack while he slept. It was hard to believe that 16 years had passed so quickly.

Her mother continued to live in Ellen's childhood home, the last two years of which were particularly difficult. Mother fell on some ice the previous winter and broke her hip. She could no longer climb the stairs to the familiar master bedroom. The family converted her downstairs dining room into a bedroom and added a handicapped access shower to the powder room on the first floor.

Then Mom started to become forgetful and occasionally disoriented. The doctor suspected a mild stroke. It seemed too dangerous to let her live by herself any longer. Ellen and her husband wrestled with the issue of different living arrangements for Mother. Should they move in with her? Should she live with them? Was an assisted living center or nursing home arrangement a better option?

Willing to demonstrate love

The dilemma Ellen faced is not unlike one facing an increasing num-

ber of people. With advancements in health care and healthy living and an increasingly-older population, today's seniors occasionally need help to get through the day. Ellen, however, was unlike most people—she saw this "dilemma" as nothing less than an opportunity to return the love she already knows.

You see, Ellen lived next door to Ann, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. For more than 10 years, while her children were in grade school and just getting into high school, she watched Ann's husband, Jack, lovingly care for his wife.

Every day Jack would take Ann for a walk. He would run errands and get groceries. He did the laundry and insisted on hanging the clothes out to dry whenever he could because he knew that was what Ann liked.

As her own children grew, Ellen engaged their help in mowing their neighbor's lawn, shoveling the snow, and bringing treats and an occasional meal to them. Ellen's daughter stopped by once a week to give a full report on her school activities. It kept Ann connected with the outside world and kept Ellen and her family connected in practicing love.

Ann died two years before Ellen's father passed away from his heart attack. Though Jack remained independent until his death five years later, Ellen made sure he was always taken care of and well fed, and that his yard was kept neat, even if she had to do it.

Ellen's family didn't know it at the time, but all this was a training exercise for what was to come. When it was time for Ellen to care for her mother she could not imagine it as anything less than an opportunity to demonstrate the love she learned from her neighbor and from God.

Willing to bear burdens

Her attitude sharply contrasts with society's attitude that uses the word "burden" in a derogatory manner to describe the sacrifices people make to care for aging or disabled family members.

Jesus once said that "because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). Today an increasing number of grown children grumble about the changes in their busy lives that take place when caring for aging parents. Conversely, parents do not wish to become "burdens" on their family should the maladies of old age require more attention.

Scripture is far from silent on this point. We are told, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). Where in Scripture does it say it is bad or wrong to be cared for by others when it becomes necessary? Where in Scripture does it say it is worse for us to carry the burdens of others than to be free of burdens?

The reality is that the fabric of the family is strengthened by its ability to carry burdens. Scripture, in fact, calls for us to help those who need help (Matthew 25:35ff). Ellen learned from God and from her neighbor that burden-carrying is



ready and willing to care cared for by our loved ones.

a wonderful thing. She had no false illusions that it would always be easy, but she lived the reality that caring for others, and in particular for her mother, was the right thing.

Although society understands the value of life by its productivity, the Christian faces the challenge of caring for life because it is life. Life is a blessing given by God. As a blessing it is entrusted to us as stewards. We watch over it, care for it, protect it, and never forget it comes from God.

Willing to accept help

The story of Ellen is also a story of Ellen's mother. Independence can be difficult to give up. We enjoy doing our own thing. But even as children of God, we are not immune from the daily consequences of a sinful world. Health does diminish, and our freedom and independence erode with time.

For years Ellen's mother cared for others. She raised a family, doted over grandchildren, and helped in everything at the church. Now she had to learn to be cared for. The transition was not easy. It is especially difficult for a parent to be cared for by her children. As parents we see it as "our role" to care, coddle, cuddle, and protect our children. We don't think of it happening the other way around.

Ellen knew this would be a difficult time. She got her first hint when her father was still alive. Ellen and her husband took her folks to dinner for their wedding anniversary. When it came time to pay for the meal, a small skirmish took place as Ellen's parents wanted to "help out" with the cost. It was then that it hit her. She experienced what she called "the parenting complex."

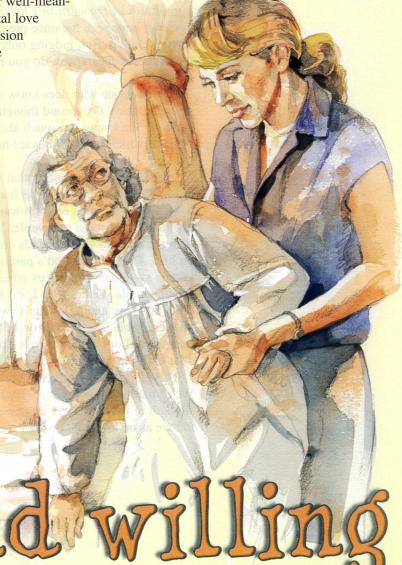
This happens to all parents, and it comes from years of providing loving care. At the time of this dinner celebration. Ellen realized that she and her husband were married for more than 20 years, she had raised three children, and she worked in a nice paying job. Pretty much an independent person! Yet, to her parents she was still their little girl. To her parents, the thought that someday Ellen might have to wipe their noses or clean their bottoms was unthinkable. Why? Because in our well-meaning practice of parental love we get lost in the illusion that parents only care for their children.

Ellen's mother learned a valuable lesson—that is, the time may come for children to care for their parents. She had to face the loss of some of her independence. She had to be willing to accept help from someone she once helped. In so doing, she gave Ellen a wonderful blessing with the opportunity to practice what she had learned.

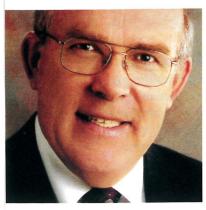
Each of us needs to be ready and willing to care for our loved ones and to be cared for by our loved ones. Yes, there are difficulties and challenges during a Christian's journey on earth. Yet, as we learn from Scripture, it is that kind of sacrificial love that earns God's praise and approval.

Robert Fleischmann, the national director of Christian Life Resources, is a member at St. Paul, Slinger, Wisconsin.

This is the last of a four-part series on end-oflife issues. To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/ficarchive, and search by the author's first and last name.



ready



(a) R. Sungel

Loved by God

The treasure those closest to us. God treasures them too. To him every soul is a treasure. We think so too, don't we?

We tell those closest to us that we love them. As the old saying goes, "I love them so much I almost told them once." We even show that those closest to us are treasures. Won't we, again this year, give our wife, husband, mother, or sweetheart a valentine?

But sometimes it's not so easy loving those closest to us. I can, quite easily, hide my faults and failures from most of you. You may only know me from my picture in Forward in Christ, or you may have seen me once preaching in your church. But, judging only from those guest appearances, do you really know me?

Ask someone who does know memy wife, Barb. On second thought, don't ask her! She knows too much about me, some of which I wouldn't want her to tell you.

It's those things about us that we hide from others that make us hard to love. God, who sees and knows all, should find us most unlovable. Yet, being lovable to God depends entirely on him. That's what God's pardoning love is all about—loving us when we are unlovable. That's why Jesus lived, died, and rose again, loving us with an unquenchable love. Once for all times he removed our sin and made God's dear children a treasure to God.

This isn't without effect in our lives. We're pardoned by his love. By the strength of his love we're empowered to love as he loved us, loving even the

unlovable. We can love our father, mother, wife, husband, son, daughter, brother, and sister, despite their imperfections. The list is endless.

Don't look too far for others to love. Look rather at the special souls God has already made a treasure for you. Through birth God gave you children, parents, perhaps brothers and sisters, a whole family to love. In marriage God made the two of you one, making each soul a treasure to the other.

It's wonderful that, by the grace of God, you see all lost souls as treasures. Your Savior does too and wants the same from you. But may you and I never lose sight of the treasure of souls he's already given us—those closest to us. Thank God that they are redeemed by the blood of Christ, just as we are. In his sight, their imperfections are washed away. Can't we close our eyes to those faults and consider them forgiven, just as God sees us forgiven? That's what seeing every soul as a treasure can do for us.

I'm sure there are many redeeming qualities about those closest to you in your life. But the fact that they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus and, in love, he has given them to you to love, ought to make their souls a special treasure for you and me.

And so, this Valentine's Day, tell them you love them. But most of all tell them God loved them first and best, and that's what makes them a treasure to us.

9 rejoice/ when you are like-minded

Philippians 1:27;2:1-4

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then . . . I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel . . .

^{2:1}If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Paul urges Christian unity, rejoicing when together we defend the gospel and take care of each other.

Paul E. Zell

houghts about the brothers and sisters at Philippi put a smile on Paul's face.

Persecuted by their neighbors, the Philippians found comfort in God's grace. Rejected even in their own families, they were drawn to the Lord by the Spirit's gift of faith. Aware that Paul was wearing chains, they felt such tenderness and compassion that they sent one of their own hundreds of miles to care for him.

The heart of the apostle was warmed by what he heard from Philippi. Yet he knew the Lord could do much more. "Make my joy complete," he urged, "by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."

Standing firm in the faith

Opponents of the gospel had always made their presence felt in Philippi. Fortunetellers branded Christian preaching as bad for business (Acts 16:16-21). Jews were appalled that the church failed to insist on circumcision (Philippians 3:2-6). Their attacks could have splintered the Philippian congregation.

Yet Paul trusted what the gospel does. Preaching Christ crucified binds the redeemed to one another. Proclaiming the resurrection of the body and the sure hope of heaven assembles believers in a united front against every foe. In view of the gospel's power Paul envisioned the Philippians standing "firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith."

Superstition still has plenty of advocates. Experts on matters of faith and values still insist on more than a "saved by grace alone" plan. Their arguments can be so persuasive, that you or I alone might give in.

Yet like-minded Christians stand firm in the faith. In our congregations we treasure the preaching of the cross, the empty tomb, and heaven's bliss. Our hearts and minds are united by Christ's body and blood given in bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the gospel's strength, we contend for the faith in a way that would make Paul's joy complete.

Looking out for one another

When we gather around Word and sacrament, the Holy Spirit also turns our minds to one another, but not for personal advantage and never at the expense of others. God's threatening laws chase self-seeking ambitions away. The tender love of Jesus gives us a new way of thinking that cheerfully accepts the apostle's plea: "In humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Does a mother need a helping hand? Does a child need a grown-up who will listen? Does a husband need encouragement? Does a neighbor need a visit? Does a congregation need a member with a servant's heart? The gospel compels us to take such questions seriously, and it moves us to act.

Like-minded Christians look out for one another. What once filled Paul with joy still gladdens the heart of the Lord Jesus.

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



Choices

We all make choices. We choose what to do with our time. We choose the clothes we will buy and wear. We choose the color and make of the car we drive. We choose whether or not to pay for a high-speed Internet connection or stay with dial-up. Sometimes we even choose what color our hair should be.

These choices all come because of what we consider to be important. For me it's not important what color my hair is. It can be gray; that's okay. For others, gray is definitely not okay. Choices flow out of the value we attach to things and activities. I may even choose to go to a basketball game if I think it is important enough. I've attended my share of them, especially when my kids were involved. Then basketball games were very important. So I went.

On Sunday morning, I think that it is important for me to be in God's house. So I set the alarm, get up, dress, and go. It's interesting because that choice comes from a change in me that I could not choose myself. My sinful self would rather sleep, eat a leisurely brunch, and spend my money on some personal project or hobby. But God changed that when he called me by the gospel and made me his. Now, by God's grace, I value the time I spend in church.

God has opened my eyes to see the value of Jesus and the value of the gospel. Luther's Small Catechism says that the Holy Spirit has "enlightened me." I still wrestle with my sinful self, and Jesus and the gospel sometimes take a back seat. I still want to devalue them, and sometimes my choices show that. Then I need to repent—turn away from what has displaced my Savior and revalue him as my dearest treasure.

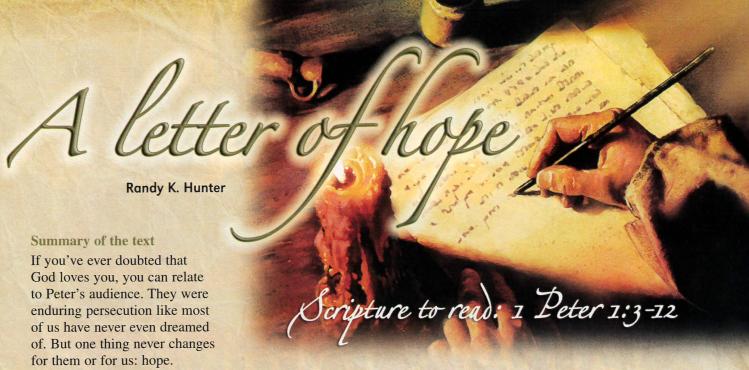
One of the battlefields where my sinful flesh fights with my faith is at the

collection plate. I want to be like the Macedonian Christians who gave themselves "first to the Lord" and then proved it by their "rich generosity" (2 Corinthians 8:2-5). But I also have all these bills to pay and the new things I want. It all costs money. So I wrestle with these issues and try to balance them in a way that shows what I value. I don't always succeed, but at times the Holy Spirit helps me to do more.

One of the first letters I received as editor of Forward in Christ came from a pastor who wondered if we have forgotten what is important. He cited the trouble that some congregations have with their finances. Some are not able to match the opportunities with enough resources to meet them. The synod, too, faces financial challenges. He suggested that the solution was repentance. He wondered if we have spent too much time trying to serve two masters-God and money-and too little time and attention on the one thing needful.

Is it that simple? I know dedicated people who value the truth we possess. They are not shy about what they value; they demonstrate it by their choices. They give generously. I also know that God has not given everyone the same resources. But could one solution to our financial problems be to ask God to forgive the selfish choices we have made? Repent of our fascination with the glitter of this world and return to the eternal treasure of Jesus and his Word? Then through that process recover the strength and resolve to do a better job of proclaiming his truth?

It's a question I have. I can't answer it for anyone else but me. Yet it's a question I can raise for us all to think about.



God hasn't promised us an

easy life. He has promised us hope for this life and for eternal life. Peter calls this life, "a little while." Twenty years or 80 years may not seem like "a little while." But compare it to eternity. See why Peter calls it a little while?

This hope is ours only because of God's choice. We have a "new birth." Birth is never the choice of the baby . . . but of the parents. By God's choice we have new life, a new inheritance, and new power. Those treasures never fade. "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun" (*Christian Worship* 379:4).

So Peter begins, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." There's nothing left for us to do but join in and praise him.

Questions for personal study

- To paraphrase Dante, "Life without hope is hell." Can you think of anyone who lives like that?
- Peter wrote that our hope is "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."
 What does such a living hope mean for you each day?
- "Everything in life comes down to this question: 'Did Jesus rise from the dead?' "Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?
- Why do you think Peter emphasized the inheritance with the words "never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you?"
- You are "shielded by God's power." Think of one thing in your life right now that makes you glad you are "shielded by God's power."
- God never wastes a hurt. Think about a trial you have endured. Determine at least one way the ordeal has equipped you to help others.
- There is nothing you can do to make God love you any more than he already does. Many Christians miss this. Consider several reasons why. What helps you remember this?

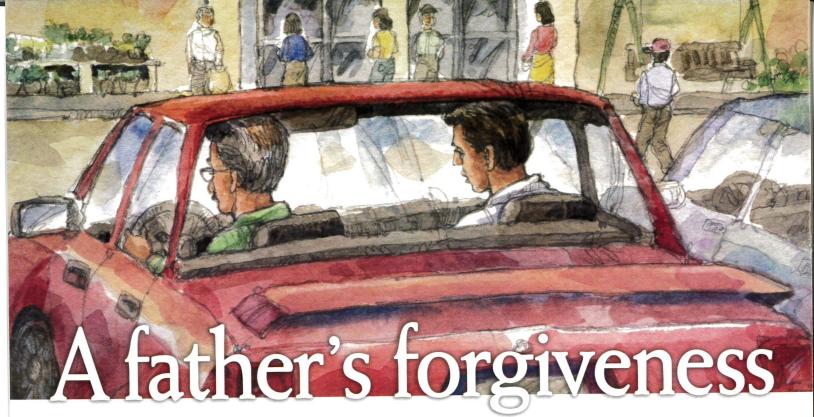
Questions for group study

- Peter writes about our "new birth." Name some things about birth that make it an especially appropriate picture of our life with God.
- Whether you're 20, 40, or 80, you don't know when you'll stand before God's throne. You do know that without Jesus there's no hope. Because we have new birth we have hope. Tell how that hope affects the way you think about the day of your death.
- Name as many differences as you can between an inheritance you receive on earth and the inheritance kept in heaven for us. Are there any similarities?
- Most of us don't have to endure suffering for a long time. Some do. List things you have observed about Christians who endure great difficulty for a long time.
- Peter writes that "now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials." Offer several interpretations for "a little while."

Randy Hunter is pastor at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin.

This is the second article in a 12-part Bible study. Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.wels.net/jumpword/fic, and click on A letter of hope. Answers and tips for parents with small children will be available online after Feb. 5.





An apology to my earthly father taught me a lesson about my Heavenly Father's forgiveness.

James A. Aderman

Like the prodigal son, I rehearsed what I would say to Dad. I talked through my confession endless times. Each time I honed it, until I said exactly what I wanted to say. Then I'd change my mind and start the process afresh.

When my father was dying of pancreatic cancer, I trekked the 200 miles to visit him in northern Wisconsin as often as I could. Those five months from diagnosis to death provided time for us to talk about the things I had put off discussing: how important Dad was in my life, that I loved him, and my gratitude that he introduced me to Jesus.

The issues I found hardest to talk about with Dad, however, were the ways I had sinned against him during my near half century of life. There were no glaring problems in our relationship—just plenty of room for thoughtless words and loveless actions of a typical son.

The time for apology arrived when Dad and I were alone waiting in the car outside of Kmart while Mom picked up a couple of items. Choking back my tears, I said, "Dad, I want you to know that I am sorry for any way that I have sinned against you, for any way that I have ever hurt you."

I expected that he would say something like, "Jim, thank you for that. You were long ago forgiven for whatever you've done." But I also prepared myself in case Dad would bring up a time I had hurt him and we never resolved it. At least, then, we could deal with my sin.

I never expected what happened next. He changed the subject. It was like I had said, "What about them Packers?" or "Some weather, huh?"

I let him finish and tried again. "Dad, I don't think you heard me. I want you to know that I am sorry for any way that I have sinned against you, for any way I have ever hurt you."

Dad seemed non-plussed. If I had spoken to him in Swahili, his expression would have been identical. My words hadn't made sense to him. That's where the conversation ended. My mother returned to the car. We never had one-on-one time after that.

A few weeks later our heavenly Father welcomed Dad home. When Mom and I could talk privately, I mentioned that conversation. I said, "It was as though he couldn't figure out what I was talking about." "I don't think he could," she said.
"He told me about your apology. And he asked, 'Why would Jim say that? I can't think of anything he's done wrong.' "It was as though the teenage thoughtlessness, the young adult self-ishness, the career-driven passion that often trumped our relationship never happened. He had forgotten it all.

Easter assures us that our sins against our Father also are forgotten. In the risen Christ, our God promises, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). Drowned in the depths of the sea, he says of our sins: cast as far away as east is from west. Like the father of the prodigal, our Father welcomes us back with no hint of any hitch in our relationship.

Yes, repentance for sins is part of Christian living. But even before we confess, we know the outcome: God has forgiven us. So thoroughly has Jesus washed us of imperfection that our Father chooses not to recall a single sin. Ever.

My father taught me one last lesson. When our Father forgives, he says, "I can't think of anything you've done wrong."

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.