

GOD'S RESCUE MISSION • THE GRACE OF GIVING

MARCH 2006

Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness



THE KING WE
NEEDED

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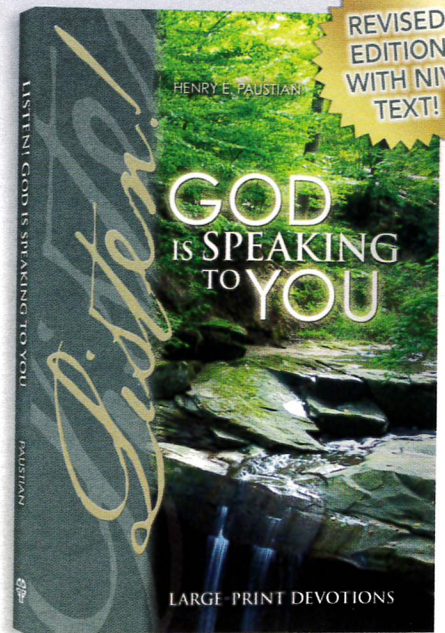
Regardless of the times, God's form of communication does not change. He comes to you in his Word to convey the most important message of all. In the popular devotional *Listen! God Is Speaking to You*, author Henry Paustian uses Scripture to address a variety of circumstances that affect people at various times in life, especially as they grow older. Each devotion features gospel comfort, scriptural applications, and a short prayer to help readers handle tough life situations such as aging, living alone, failing health, and changing priorities and responsibilities.

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Lent is a time to remember that God sent exactly the leader we needed: Jesus, the Sacrifice.



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Forward in Christ

✠ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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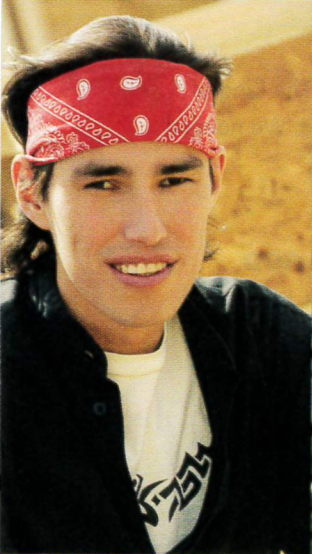
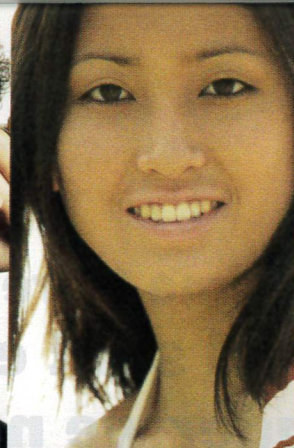
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**Every
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a missionary!**

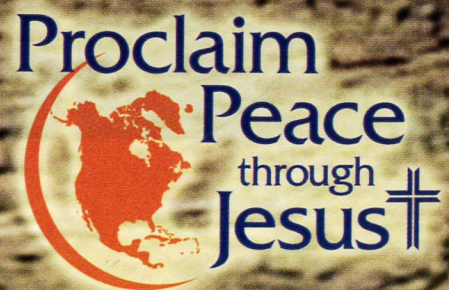
**“How beautiful are the feet of those who
bring good news!”** *(Romans 10:15)*

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MAY THE LORD OUR GOD
BE WITH US AS HE WAS
WITH OUR FATHERS;
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US
NOR FORSAKE US.
1 Kings 8:57

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MARCH

WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

Instead of talking about what's inside the magazine this month, I want to take some time to focus on you, our readers. We value your opinions and count on your input to make Forward in Christ the best magazine it can be. Here are just a few ways that you can get involved:

- Write a letter to Feedback. Let us know what you think about a specific article or about the magazine in general.
- Participate in our Potluck poll (p. 27). This creates content for future issues and gives you a chance to share your thoughts.
- Take our online quiz at www.wels.net/jumpword/ficquiz and test your knowledge on justification. Questions will relate to a series of articles by Pastor Jon Buchholz (p.14).
- If you have a story to share, send it in. You can find guidelines for submitting an article at www.wels.net/jumpword/fic. Send articles to Forward in Christ magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net.

Thanks for reading Forward in Christ each month. Let us know what you think!

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FREEDOM FROM FORMALISM

After reading Paul Kelm's article, "Freedom from formalism [Dec. 2005], I felt both offended and disappointed. Offended that my preference for the traditional, formal, liturgical worship services is being associated with those with dead faith or "better suited to a museum than a marketplace." . . . My disappointment in the article stems from a lack of any editorial comment by *Forward in Christ*.

Mark S. Waldek
Greenfield Center, New York

Thank you for your response. We're sorry that you are disappointed with us. We are listening, and your response helps us to be more sensitive to your concerns and those of others in the future.—ed.

It appears to me that "Freedom from formalism" takes a swipe at tradition.

My dictionary defines tradition as "the handing down of . . . beliefs from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or practice." Is that not what we want to do with our Lutheran Christian beliefs and practices? Is not that the reason we have our grade schools, high schools, prep schools, college, and seminary? Was not tradition involved in teachings God gave to Moses and Aaron?

Marcus Nitz
Placentia, California

BLESSINGS LANE

Just read [Gary Baumler's] final "Blessings Lane" article [Dec.]. Another good article as usual. Please accept my thanks for Gary's many years of dedicated service. He has truly been a blessing to our beloved WELS and beyond. May God continue to bless him in his retirement.

James Lillo
Anchorage, Alaska

I just finished the December issue of *Forward in Christ*, and I want to reply to the article written by editor Gary Baumler, titled "Blessings Lane." Many of the changes and improvements over the years in the monthly magazine have been under his guidance. I have often used featured articles as themes for Bible studies. I have also frequently sent excerpts from articles to many people who may benefit from their message. I am sure each issue must contain at least one article that can apply to every reader. . . . May God bless [Gary's] retirement on Blessings Lane.

Duane Timm
Pompano Beach, Florida

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*.

SYNOD EXPENSES

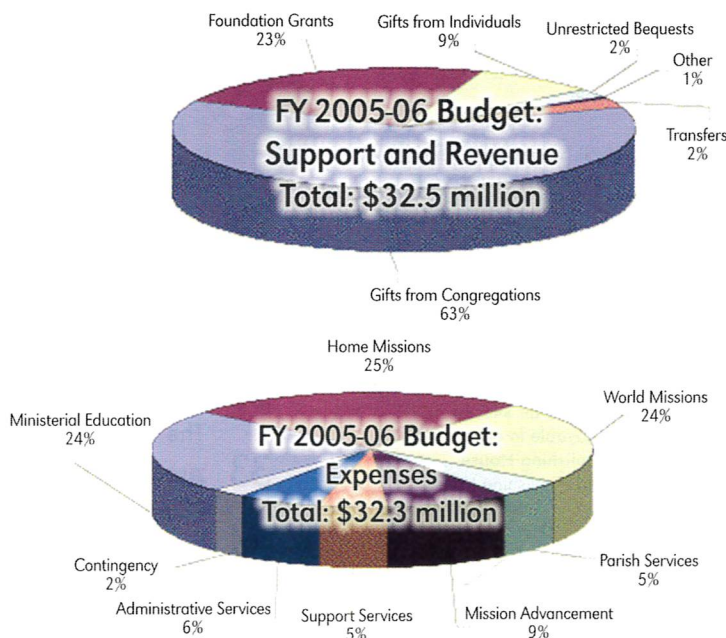
I am writing regarding the pie charts that correspond with "WELS continues to work through financial difficulties" [Dec. 2005, p. 20]. They present a confusing picture of the synodical expenses. According to this chart, 41% of synod revenue goes for ministerial education. What people don't always realize is that this 41% includes tuition and fees that the schools collect from their students. . . .

As one who serves in ministerial education, I find it frustrating that we continue to present these charts in a way that is at best confusing.

John Schuetze
Mequon, Wisconsin

Todd Poppe, WELS' chief financial officer, responds: I agree with Prof. Schuetze. For some time, the Synodical Council has been wrestling with the confusion caused by including tuition in both the support and expense budget. In November 2005, the Synodical Council formally addressed the issue by modifying the budget to exclude tuition from both the support and expense budget. Unfortunately, this action did not occur before the deadline for the December issue. These charts reflect the action taken by the Synodical Council at its November 2005 meeting.

Although the Synodical Council supported and encouraged excluding tuition from the budget, it also urged caution—caution that we do not allow the change to cause us to lose sight of the financial condition of our ministerial education schools.



The mark on our forehead

For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities . . .

“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the Lord. Isaiah 59:12,20

Peter A. Panitzke

“Sweetheart, you have something on your forehead.” You rub and rub. “Still there.” You lick the tip of your finger and rub some more. “Still there.” Finally, you make a beeline for the nearest restroom to remove that stubborn mark.

On Ash Wednesday, many Christians purposely put a mark on their forehead. The smudged ashes form a confession that there is a stubborn mark that will not be removed by any human effort, a stubborn spot that our God clearly sees.

A sign that we are sinners

Our problem is that we can forget the spot is there. That’s why I appreciate this Old Testament lesson for Ash Wednesday. Like a good friend who tells me about a stain I can’t see, the lesson calls my attention to the stubborn stain of sin that corrupts me and everything I touch.

God sees our “offenses.” This word refers to our rebellion against God. These are the sins that no one else may see. Who sees the thoughts that we have as we brush our teeth in the morning? Who sees the worry that we have about food and clothing and car payments and medical bills? Who sees the envy? Who sees the bitterness? Who sees our lack of trust in God’s care? God does. “Our offenses are many in [his] sight.”

But Lent is that special time of year when, in our personal devotions and in our special midweek worship services, we focus on our sinfulness. “We acknowledge our iniquities.” We can-

not deny them. So we may put a smudge of ash on our forehead to say, “What God sees, I too see. Your Word reveals my many offenses to me.”

A sign that our Redeemer saved us

Often that smudge of ash is shaped in the form of a cross. It also becomes a confession of what the Lord foretold through Isaiah, “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins.”

In Old Testament Israel if you became poor and were sold into slavery, the redeemer was your closest relative who had the responsibility to redeem or buy you back from slavery. I imagine that you appreciated that closest relative so much more after he served as your redeemer.

So too during Lent we gain a new appreciation of our Redeemer. God became our brother to buy us back from our slavery to sin. Jesus came to remove the spot that we could not.

He comes “to those in Jacob who repent of their sins.” He comes to those who confess, not only by a smudge of ash on Ash Wednesday but also by the daily sigh of repentance, that they are in need of rescue. He came for those who join in confessing, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15).



That mark on our forehead? We are glad to wear it. It is a sign that we are sinners. It is a sign that our Redeemer came to save us.

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

Your Redeemer lives!

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

A man had the following disclaimer printed in the newspaper: “I will not be responsible for anyone not having a merry Christmas.” Christmas is a time for joy, and if people didn’t have a merry Christmas, it sure wasn’t his fault!

Easter Sunday is the one day, even more than Christmas, that ought to leave people filled with joy. Yet every year some go away from church on Easter Sunday with no more joy in their heart than when they came in. But is that God’s fault? Maybe God needs to publish his own disclaimer: “I will not be responsible for anyone not having a happy Easter!”

To explain, he could announce two additional disclaimers:

1. “The views that have been expressed are not necessarily those of the management.”

Some people don’t have a happy Easter because they accept the views of much of the religious world today. Karl Barth, a prominent theologian, was once asked by a reporter from *Christianity Today* if the resurrection of Jesus was a real event. He replied, “Did you say you were from *Christianity Today* or *Christianity Yesterday*?” That’s what much of the world today believes. They think that Jesus never actually rose, and so the concept has no significance for anybody today.

God wants you to know that the views that some express are not necessarily those of the management! He tells us in his Word, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:20), and he tells us the significance of that fact when he says, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

So if you go to church on Easter with the attitude that much of the religious world has—that the resurrection of Jesus is only a myth—you’re

going to leave church no happier than when you came in. But if you go fully convinced that Jesus rose from the dead, you’re going to leave reassured that your sins have been forgiven. You’re going to have a happy Easter even if you didn’t sing your favorite hymn or even if the sermon wasn’t a real “grabber.” You will have a happy Easter because you will have been reassured that your Redeemer lives!

2. “We are not responsible for lost or stolen articles.”

The real joy of Easter stems from things like the assurance of our forgiveness and the hope of eternal life. Yet for so many the highlight of Easter will be dinner with the family or looking for Easter baskets filled with jellybeans. Many lose the real happiness that they should be

experiencing on Easter because they focus their celebration on what the world considers Easter to be all about.

If Jesus’ resurrection is not the center of your Easter celebration, you’re going to walk out of church no happier than when you walked in. You will have let the world steal your joy. But if your trip to church is the top priority in your Easter celebration, you’re going to have a happy Easter even if you have to wait in line for two hours at the restaurant or if somebody ate all your black jellybeans. You will have been reminded that your Redeemer lives!

God wants you to know right up front: “I will not be responsible for anyone not having a happy Easter!” If you don’t have a happy Easter, it is not God’s fault. He has provided all you need to have a happy Easter in the reassurance: “He lives!”

[God] has provided all you need to have a happy Easter in the reassurance: “He lives!”

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



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Faith

We stress that God gives faith. It's my sinful nature's fault if I reject God's grace but the Holy Spirit's work if I come to faith. Since the Holy Spirit gives faith, wouldn't it be the Spirit's work how large my faith is? If I'm struggling, and I perceive my faith as being weak, wouldn't it be the Spirit's fault?

You're right that faith in Jesus is part of God's gift of salvation no less than Jesus' cross and empty tomb (Ephesians 2:8,9). Scripture credits us with neither a positive "decision for Christ" nor a lesser resistance. Nothing in us makes the difference between becoming a believer and remaining an unbeliever. God's grace doesn't stop short at our hearts, as if he only offers salvation but is unable or unwilling to win hearts to receive it!

You're also right that the same Spirit who brought us to faith is responsible for strengthening faith. He nourishes our faith by using the same gospel in Word and sacraments by which he brought us to faith.

But that does not mean that it's the Spirit's fault whenever we struggle with weak faith. As you mentioned, our sinful nature is the enemy of the Spirit's work in our hearts. While in conversion the Spirit won the battle, that doesn't mean the war is over. Far from it! "The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other" (Galatians 5:17). Our sinful nature lost control of our heart in our conversion, but it hasn't lost any hatred for God. It hates nothing more than the gospel.

Of course, our sinful nature isn't alone in this hatred. When we struggle with weakness of faith, we often find an unfortunate convergence taking place. Our sinful nature is feasting on the decadent distractions of the devil and the world, while the new self the Spirit created in us is living off the spiritual equivalent of stale bread and

water! Whenever I neglect the Spirit's means I am starving my new self.

Is the Spirit to blame for that? Picture it this way. I am a houseguest, and my host sets a continual banquet of the finest foods before me morning, noon, and night. But in stubborn arrogance I turn up my nose at what is offered. Is my host at fault for his generosity? Hardly!

Day after day, the Spirit spreads before me the rich banquet of the gospel. Yet so often I refuse to taste anew my Lord's goodness. It is hardly his fault when I stagger about in spiritual hunger with a weakened immune system that vainly seeks to ward off the twin infections of doubt and temptation! Don't blame the generous host for his guests' crude immaturity! How often don't we despise the Spirit's goodness by naive neglect or mindless mouthing of God's priceless food for our souls!

But don't forget that the Spirit created a new self within us! Our new self has the Spirit's power to delight in using those means. And as we use them, we can also pray that our use always remains the joyfully ravenous eating and drinking of famished souls. There alone is food and drink that truly satisfies (Isaiah 55:1).

So now what? Eat up, dear Christian! Every day the Spirit spreads before us the richest of fare in which our souls can delight. In the eternal blessings of our baptism, in the extravagant bounty of the Supper, and in the endless buffet of the Word, we find everything that we need for faith to grow up strong. Bon appetit!

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

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



The King we needed

The King of kings could have
come with all the trappings
of power and glory, but he
knew what we needed.
We needed a sacrifice.

Jonathan E. Schroeder

George Washington knew the power of appearances. The man so noted for truthfulness wasn't afraid of using appearances to massage the truth a little.

George Washington dressed the part as a national leader

It was a few years after the end of Revolutionary War. General Washington had led the Continental Army to victory over the British. Because of that, the United States revered him as a national hero. No one else stood a chance during the first presidential election.

After his election as the first president of the United States, Washington pledged to visit every state in the country. The presidential entourage crossed the country, one town at a time. While he was traveling on the tour, Washington rode in a carriage. But he never entered a town that way. He knew the power of appearances. When they approached a town, the carriage stopped and the show began. The carriage was replaced with Prescott, Washington's white parade stallion, fitted with a leopard-skin blanket and a gold-rimmed saddle. The horse's hooves were painted black and polished to a high shine.

He would then mount his horse and make a grand entrance into the town as the great General Washington, hero of the nation. His favorite greyhound ran along beside him. He named the dog Cornwallis to remind everyone that he had won the Revolutionary War by bringing the British general with the same name to heel.

He went to such lengths because he understood the problem of leading the United States. His greatest challenge as our nation's first president was to hold together a ragged band of states—to build one nation out of many disunited parts.

The truth, however, was different from the appearance. Washington was no longer the young and vigorous conquering general. He was an old man more accustomed to riding in a carriage than on a parade stallion.

But for our country to stand together, they needed to stand behind someone. They needed a leader to follow. So Washington dressed the part. He put on all the trappings of power and glory and gave them the leader they needed. They needed to see General Washington, the hero of the Revolution, the one person that made them all Americans. Washington dressed the part, and they followed.

Washington's actions made sense. He covered his weaknesses. He projected an image of strength. Why would a leader ever do the opposite? Why would a leader intentionally look weak? Why would a leader want to look powerless, worthless, and inconsequential? That doesn't make sense.

Jesus dressed the part as the world's Savior from sins

So why did Jesus do it? Two thousand years ago the Son of God decided to enter our world. Like Washington approaching a town on his tour, the Son of God had to decide what kind of an entrance he would make.

The Son of God could have come with power and glory and majesty. But he knew we needed a different kind of

leader. So Christ took off the trappings of power, took off all the glory that was his, and came into this world looking like nothing. He took off the purple of empire and the crown of majesty. He put down the scepter of authority and the sword of judgment.

He knew we needed a different kind of leader. The world's Savior did not come in glory and majesty, but in a feeding trough for cows, wrapped in the strips of poverty, and huddling in the helplessness of infancy.

Jesus dressed the part. . . . He wore a crown of thorns and bore the wounds of the whip.

Why would God do this? In fact, why would God become human at all? Well, because God can't die. God became a man so that he could. God had to wrap himself in humanity because one day that baby would rise from his wooden manger and climb a wooden cross. Jesus wrapped himself with humanity because one day Jesus would wrap himself in our sin.

The King of kings could have come with all the trappings of power and glory, but he knew what we needed. We did not need a conquering general. We did not need a powerful monarch. We needed a substitute. We needed a sacrifice. We needed peace with God that could only come at a steep price.

So Jesus dressed the part. The immortal God took on mortal flesh and blood that he would give and shed. There was no leopard-skin blanket and gold-rimmed saddle, no parade stallion fit for a warrior; he came on a donkey saddled with sweaty shirts,

his betrayer running alongside.

He wore a crown of thorns and bore the wounds of the whip. He put a cross on his back and his hands beneath the nails. The only royal trapping that remained to mark this regal person was the sign fastened above his head. So wrongly intended, so rightly written, the sign read: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

He had come to be the price of our peace with God. So he dressed the part. Jesus took off the power and the glory that were his and put on the sin and the shame that were ours. Then, dressed in the shame and guilt of sins that we committed but he now called his own, he died.

We dress the part as forgiven children of God

He died, but he didn't stay dead. Jesus rose from the dead, and because he did, everything is different. Those sins he pulled off of our back are paid for in full, forgotten forever. Our guilt is gone; our eternity is certain.

We are forgiven children of God, and Jesus made sure that we can dress the part, too. In the place of those sins, Jesus wrapped us up in righteousness. Far better than gold-trimmed saddles and leopard-skin blankets, we have been wrapped in the holiness of the son of God himself. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Lent is a time to remember that God sent exactly the leader we needed: Jesus, the Sacrifice, the Victim, the Atonement, the one person that makes us all reconciled with God. We needed a Savior who could live for us and die for us, who could suffer for us and rise for us. He is exactly the leader we needed. He is what brings us all together; he is what makes us all children of God. He dressed the part, and we will follow.

Jonathan Schroeder is pastor at Faith, Sharpsburg, Georgia.

As the world became busier, more hectic, and more

The other day I bought my wife Aimee a personal digital assistant (PDA) in the hopes that she would find it as helpful as I find mine. I told her, "I think that they are nice. You can watch movies, listen to music, read books, keep track of finances, make out shopping lists, get directions, look up Bible passages, and still keep track of addresses and appointments."

Now most of these are just selling points, but the main reason I spent the cash was so that we could keep track of each other's schedule. Until now, Aimee kept track in her head, and I kept track in my PDA. Aimee doesn't read PDA; I don't read minds. I think you can see the difficulty.

She had this. I had that. But unless we actually talked about it, neither of us would know. For the most part our primitive system worked. And with little interrogation I admitted that my wife did not really need a personal digital assistant—although it is pretty cool.

Impersonal world

I am amazed at the families of five or six or even 10 that can actually get their children and themselves to the right places at the right times. Jordan has preschool. Kendra has ballet. Jackson has soccer, youth group, and another club sport league game. Mom is going to the store, and Dad has to work late.

Since family activities have migrated away from the family farm to the city and now even out of the county and the state, communication

must be brought to a whole new level. You can't just leave a note on the family chalk board or keep it in your head. You have to know whose tournament is where, who is driving the carpool, and what time the meetings start—and not just for you, but for the whole family.

I guess we shouldn't be surprised that families are overwhelmed and that we are seeing special TV segments about organization on *Oprah* or the *Today* show. It seems like half the articles in *Real Simple* or the Saturday edition of the newspaper are about communication and family organization. People, even our kids, are busy.

I think people long for personal contact—we just don't always know it. It is strange, but as we have "mastered" communication, personal communication has suffered. Our front porches where neighbors could sit and catch up are gone, and photos on the refrigerator are in. Personal letters are nearly extinct as we plunk out e-mails to our friends. Remember when Christmas cards were once a formality for friends who talked? Now the updates they contain are among the few ways we know what is going on in each other's lives.

We have a personal God

Although the world has become less personal, Jesus is not hands off, but hands on!

Jared J. Oldenburg



crowded, God became even more personal.

Personal God

It's nice to know that in these times of less personal and more sterile contact, Jesus was and continues to be a personal God. When you take one of those jobs that move you away from your family or when your kids finally move out, Jesus reminds us that we are not alone. He is always with us. Although we may feel overwhelmed with work, school, sports, and clubs, the Lord reminds us that he has all our schedules and activities in his care. Although the world has become less personal, Jesus is not hands off, but hands on!

I think that it is amazing that as the world became busier, more hectic, and more crowded that God became even more personal. Galatians tells us, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman . . . to redeem those under law" (Galatians 4:4,5). He became one of us. He walked like us, he ate like us, he lived like us—except he alone was perfect.

Jesus was busy, but never too busy for people. How many times do we have examples of Jesus taking time out of his busy schedule to be with someone? Even though it seemed a bother to his friends, he asked kids to sit on his lap and bless them. When his friend Lazarus died, he didn't just send a card. He traveled to Lazarus's home and wept with his sisters. When he traveled, he talked to the "not to be talked to" and touched the "not to be touched." He reminded believers that their sins were forgiven.

Wouldn't you have loved to be there to witness such compassion and to hear the sweet sound of forgiveness from your very Savior's mouth? You can. Even now, 2,000 years after Jesus walked the earth, we can witness his miracles in the pages of Scripture. By picking up and reading his Word to ourselves and our families, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith in those very miracles of compassion, forgiveness, and resurrection. As God's people we can assure each other of Jesus' forgiveness just as if he spoke the words to us himself.

And there's more. It's a miracle that through contact with water and his Word, God brings our babies into his family. God mixes physical with spiritual to doubly assure us that he has washed our sins away and that through our baptism each of us is connected to Jesus' death and resurrection.

So often we distance ourselves from Jesus, but he just as often comes to us to remind us of our forgiveness. When we are sure we are lost and troubled by our guilt, Jesus makes us more positive of our forgiveness and heals our broken heart with his personal assurance of forgiveness found in bread and wine, body and blood of his Supper.

That's personal. That's hand's on. That's your forgiving God at work. God paid for your sins in a very personal way and through his Word and sacraments he still connects with us in very personal ways.

I know that this school year is busy and schedules are full, but make the time to learn more about your personal God. Join a Bible class, start reading the Bible, or share the message of Jesus with your busy kids.

Just don't do it with an e-mail.

Jared Oldenburg is pastor at Light of Life, Covington, Washington.



Jon D. Buchholz

FAITH:

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are personally justified, as we are given the gift of faith.

GOD LOVES ALL PEOPLE. Jesus died for all people. God's verdict of "not-guilty" stands for all people.

But not all people are going to heaven.

For a person to go to heaven, he must be brought by the Holy Spirit to repentance and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15). This grasping of Christ's completed work through faith we call subjective justification or personal justification.

But what is faith? Saving faith is not mere knowledge of facts. Satan and his demons know all the facts about Jesus and his completed salvation. The apostle James says, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder" (James 2:19).

Faith begins with genuine sorrow over sins. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

Faith is implicit trust in the promises and actions of God. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). "The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6).

Faith lays hold of the completed work of Christ for comfort and the certainty of salvation. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned" (John 3:18). "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is not the product of human reason, intellect, or will. Faith is a gift from our gracious God: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8,9). Yet, while faith does not start as an act of will on our part, it engages and involves a believer's mind, assent, and will.

The Holy Spirit works faith, without any cooperation on our part. "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Romans 9:16).

Faith is produced in human hearts by the Spirit working through his instrument or means of grace. This instrument is the gospel, coming to us verbally in the spoken and written Word of God and both verbally and tangibly in the sacraments. “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Faith doesn’t create anything new. Faith doesn’t cause something to happen. Faith doesn’t make our salvation. That already exists because of Jesus. This is easily illustrated by the following example. A sports fan may say, “I believe that my team will win today.” The person’s belief doesn’t cause the team to win. What about when the team wins, and another fan refuses to believe it? That fan’s erroneous belief doesn’t change the reality of what happened. Whether you believe it or not the victory is a fact.

In the same way, Christian faith doesn’t cause someone to be saved. Faith simply grasps—trusts—something that already is in place. Faith grasps the objective reality of God’s completed salvation in Christ. Faith receives the truth and takes personal ownership of God’s forgiveness found only in the Savior. The only causes of our salvation, according to Scripture, are the grace of God and the merits of Christ. There is nothing inside any of us, including faith, which is a cause of salvation.

Can’t I choose to believe? No, faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is not something that any human being can come to on his own. In the 16th century Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) taught falsely that an unbeliever has a free will and must choose to accept Jesus in faith or reject him. Faith, according to Arminius, is an act of the will, the result of man’s rational decision. This unbiblical teaching

was the precursor of decision theology, which is widespread today.

Martin Luther recognized that an unbeliever does not have a free will, but that his will is enslaved in sin. He confessed in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.” Faith must come from God, because in the bondage of our will we can’t come to faith on our own.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are personally justified, as we are given the gift of faith. Faith lays hold of Christ. Faith grasps Jesus’ completed work of redemption. Faith trusts that reconciliation between God and mankind has been accomplished by the Savior. Faith makes God’s universal verdict of “not-guilty,” mine. It’s the same for everyone else that believes. We simply lay hold of the righteousness of Christ and appropriate it as our own.

Scripture speaks abundantly of the sinner’s personal justification through faith, which appropriates the righteousness of Christ. “A righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, 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). “‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:3-5).

Why is a sinner found righteous before God through faith? Only because sinners cling to what Christ has done; they believe it. We don’t have faith in works, we don’t have



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION (OR PERSONAL JUSTIFICATION)— the grasping of Christ’s completed work through faith.

MEANS OF GRACE— the instrument through which the Holy Spirit produces faith in human hearts. This instrument is the gospel, coming to us in word and sacrament.

FAITH—

- Saving faith . . .
- is a confident trust in God’s truth, not a mere knowledge of facts.
- is grounded in continuous repentance, but not an excuse for sin.
- is the spiritual hand that holds onto Christ, the cause of salvation, but not a cause of salvation in itself.
- is entirely the work of God, without our cooperation, and not the product of our own thinking or choosing.
- is created through God’s tool—the gospel in word and sacrament.

faith in feelings, and we don’t have faith in faith. Christian faith holds onto Christ. Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) wrote, “Faith is the unique means and instrument through which we lay hold on the righteousness of Christ, receive it, and apply it to ourselves.”

The world’s redemption was complete at Calvary. The general justification accomplished in God’s great exchange at the cross provides the object for justifying faith, which personally grasps the objective truth.

Jon Buchholz is pastor at Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona.

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

Next month: Comfort for sinners. Justification assures us that we are forgiven and right with God.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT JUSTIFICATION?

TAKE OUR ONLINE QUIZ AND FIND OUT. GO TO WWW.WELS.NET/JUMPWORD/FICQUIZ, CREATE AN ACCOUNT, AND TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

A RESCUE MISSION

Christ has saved the world, and he gives all his followers both the privilege and the responsibility of participating in his rescue mission.

Daniel H. Koelpin

Rescue. Few words inspire more of a sense of drama and excitement. Rescue efforts are motivated by love and concern for the endangered. Rescue efforts almost always involve sacrifice and personal risk. They usually include an urgent race against time, and there is a sense of tremendous joy and fulfillment when the missions are successfully completed.

Rescue stories are regular fare for the news of our day-to-day lives. Brave firemen, dedicated police officers, loving mothers, focused American soldiers, adept paramedics, skilled surgeons—all of them are ordinary people doing extraordinary things to find a lost child, deliver a helpless victim, protect the weak from harm, or save a life.

The rescue motif is reflected as well in the great stories of literature, the action films of cinema, and in endless hours of television drama. Whether we're considering the rescue of soldiers in warfare, the public from criminals, people from their own vices, children from abuse, trapped animals, downtrodden nations from oppression, or those dying from hunger and disease, rescue is a major theme of life itself.

God planned the ultimate rescue mission

No rescue is more worthy of our attention and praise than the spiritual and eternal rescue that God provided for fallen mankind. It began in eternity when God saw the human race condemned to endless suffering for sin and he decided on an action plan for humanity's deliverance. The preparations for this rescue were laid out over thousands of years. Then, when everything was ready

and the time was right, God sent Jesus, his very Son, to rescue us. He was the only one who could deliver us. Only he could live the life of perfection we could not live. Only he could pay the price for sins with his suffering and death, a price we could not have paid. When Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), the rescue mission for the spiritual and eternal deliverance of mankind was accomplished.

No other plan exists. Only Jesus is the Savior of all people everywhere. God says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The basis of salvation is also clear: "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24).

Although Jesus provided for the salvation for all men and women, people who didn't know about it still needed to hear and believe that God had delivered them. So the rescue operation of God continued. Jesus sent his messengers to inform others of the good news that they had been rescued from death and hell. He sent his Spirit to enable the unbelieving to believe. From house to house, from city to city, from region to region and country to country, from one century to the next, the rescue operation of God continued.

God included us in the rescue

That rescue effort has reached all the way to us. God saw to it that someone was involved in our rescue.

**Each moment
thousands slip
into a Christ-
less eternity.**

It may have been a loving parent, a concerned grandparent, a dedicated pastor or teacher, a faithful spouse, a committed friend, a co-worker, or a next-door neighbor. Whomever it was, the Lord moved someone to be concerned that we heard and believed.

We can think about it for an eternity, but we'll never understand why such grace has been given to us. We believe in Jesus. The Bible makes it clear that none of us deserved it. But for the grace of God, how greatly different our lives might have been! We might have been born in a land where superstitious fears pervade every facet of life, or a country where people in ignorance serve cruel idols, or in a region of the world where Christians are openly persecuted for their beliefs.

Do we think often enough about what being rescued means? We have been saved from an existence without Jesus, suffering without relief, an eternity without hope. We have been delivered from a guilt that would have driven us to despair. We have been released from the power of selfish living and sinful appetites and freed to live lives of meaning for our Maker. We have been liberated from the fear of death so we can actually see death as the gateway to life eternal. An eternity of thankfulness and praise is a fitting response for such a great deliverance!

We can partner in the rescue effort

One of the surest indications that we understand and appreciate our own rescue is by realizing that others are in need of that rescue as well. When we ponder what being rescued has meant for us, we are moved to want it for others. Love makes that desire even more urgent. Not too long ago a man in California tried to rescue his family who had been buried in their house by a mudslide. The man clawed away at the mountain of dirt with his bare hands to the point of exhaustion. It seemed that his efforts were futile, but what else could he do? His family needed rescue.

If there was some way that we could transfer the same sense of life-and-death urgency, the determined efforts, the teamwork so evident in earthly rescues to the church's work of getting the message of Christ's deliverance to a dying world, we would have a better perspective for reaching more of the world's spiritually dying. Those billions facing the prospect of eternal death without Christ are in the gravest danger. They may not consider themselves to be in danger. They may not look like they need help, but they badly need the rescue that only Christ can provide for them.

If you were in a burning building, wouldn't you want someone to rescue you? Yet each moment thousands slip into a Christless eternity. Yes, Christ has saved the world, but he gives all his followers both the privilege and the responsibility of participating in his rescue

mission. While we have time, energy, and resources, Jesus asks us to get involved. "Christ's love compels us, because . . . one died for all" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

We can partner in this rescue mission by being aware of the lost all around us and making it a priority to reach out to them. Each day the Lord may bring to us someone needing spiritual and eternal rescue. They may be in our family or extended family, in our workplace or the school we attend, even in our neighborhood or at a social gathering. We may not ever go to another country as a foreign missionary, but every member of our church is still a missionary, an important person in God's ongoing rescue operation.

Dan Koelpin, administrator for the Board for World Missions, is a member at Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

The third phase of North American outreach, "Every Member a Missionary," is gearing up. Learn more on p. 23.

WHATEVER

The rain in our lives

Why does God allow trouble in our lives?

Sarah Ehinger

People like to compare life to a lot of things. Maybe you've heard of life referred to as a journey, and we travel along life's path. Most of us have experienced hardships or struggles along this path. We describe them as stumbling blocks. Maybe you're fighting with a friend or struggling with grades in school. Perhaps a loved one has died or been diagnosed with an incurable disease. Then to make things worse you look outside to see that your plan of going to the amusement park with your friends has been foiled by rain.

Struggles or hardships in our lives often times are things that we may just want to get over and forget, like the rain when it wrecks our plans. But instead why not compare these struggles to that same rain?

It's nice when things are going well in life. You're getting along with your friends, school is going well, and your family is healthy. It makes life so much easier when everything seems to be going your way or at least nothing is going wrong. During these times—when the sun is shining in your life—you feel wonderful. But unfortunately for most of us, we put God in the back seat when things go well.

But sometimes when it rains, it pours. It comes down so hard and for so long that it might seem like the storm will never end. Homes and properties may be damaged, and a few inches of rain water might flood your basement. At times everything seems to be crashing down at once, and you wonder what good could ever be made of it.

So why compare these times in our lives to rain? What does rain do? Why does God send rain to the earth?

Rain washes the dust and dirt from everything. Rain waters the crops and plants of the earth. Rain refreshes the earth.

The hardships in our life are the same as rain. God doesn't tell us life will always be fair. Our feelings may be damaged by the storm, and our hearts may be flooded with a few inches of rain.

It is during these times that we need to remember what God's Word does tell us. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28).

No matter how much rain we get in our life it will still have its benefits. The rain of life draws us back to God. When we pray to God and confess our sins, the rain of life prepares us to hear God's Word so that it may shine in our lives.

But most importantly, the rain of life drives us back to God's promises so he can refresh and rejuvenate our souls. That helps our faith to grow. Peter tells us in his inspired word from God, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

So let us praise the Lord even in times of trouble. For he allows the storms to come, and he promises that if we trust in him he will also use them for good in our lives.

Sarah Ehinger, a junior at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan, is a member at New Hope, Toledo, Ohio.



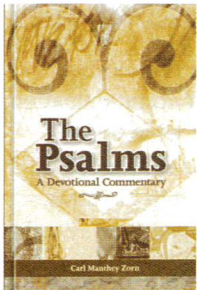
of life

Booknook

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

The Psalms: A Devotional Commentary

Editor's note: Because of the content of this book, we asked both a pastor and a layperson to review it. Read on...



\$29.99

Carl Manthey Zorn (1846-1928), a parish pastor in the Missouri Synod until he retired in 1911, wrote *The Psalms: A Devotional Commentary* in German. The translator of this

volume has accomplished the almost impossible task of presenting this book in such a way that it seems to have been written in English.

Zorn clearly lived in the gospel and shows that in his writing. He enters into the thought of each of the psalms and makes it plain for the reader. The reader will delight to see familiar psalm verses set into their context. I highly recommend this book because of the author's clear and simple writing style.

A definite advantage is all the hymn verses that Zorn inserted into this devotional commentary. Nearly every hymn verse that Zorn originally quoted in German has been given with the English translation of *Christian Worship* or of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, and these have all been identified.

I found three drawbacks in this book:

- Some of the paragraphs are too long and should have been divided; no paragraphs should be longer than a page.
- The binding should be better for a book in regular use; however, that would certainly increase the cost of this book.
- The source of the quotes from Martin Luther should be given.

This book is meant to be used for daily devotions and could be read aloud

to a group. A reader could decide to read a psalm a day, which would generally not be burdensome. The book averages just under five pages per psalm.

*Pastor James Langebartels
Christ, Imlay City, Michigan*

Though Carl Manthey Zorn died in 1928, his experiences mirrored a path that many Christians today still follow, and his book is definitely worth reading.

The book is laid out in an easily understood structure. Each of the 150 psalms is presented in bold text, generally preceded by its historical setting. The psalm is split into sections and is supported by numerous Old and New Testament references, as well as commentary from the author and quotations from other Christian leaders, including Martin Luther.

One of the underlying themes of this commentary is the direct connection of the psalms with Christ. The author's commentary on how Christ was present not only in the psalms' prophecies but also throughout the Old Testament was enlightening to me. Texts such as Isaiah and Psalm 22 are frequently quoted throughout the gospels and the rest of the New Testament as testimony that Christ is our Savior and fulfillment of the law. Zorn's commentary has given me a deeper understanding of how the Bible is tied together as a single story by Christ's presence from the beginning.

The psalms are a truly a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Though frequently quoted, the psalms are rarely fully understood. Zorn's commentary is a great tool to begin your study!

*John Schlaack
Christ, Imlay City, Michigan*

Obituaries

Alfred G. Gresens 1916-2005

Alfred Gresens was born May 23, 1916, in Marathon, Wis. He died Dec. 10, 2005, in West Salem, Wis.

He served Our Savior, Wausau; Garden Homes, Milwaukee; and St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis.

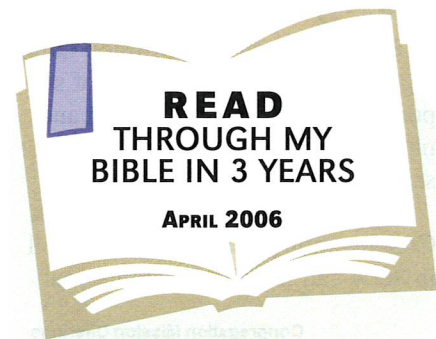
He was preceded in death by his wife, Irma. He is survived by one son and three grandchildren.

Bernard G. Kuschel 1915-2006

Bernard Kuschel was born Sept. 6, 1915, in Town Brazeau, Wis. He died Jan. 1, 2006, in South Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1942 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Holy Cross, Daggett/St. Mark, Wallace, Mich.; St. Paul, North Fond du Lac, Wis.; St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.; and Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Diana; two sons; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.



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|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Numbers 33-36 | 17. Mk. 8:27-38 |
| 2. Mark 1:1-15 | 18. Mk. 9:1-29 |
| 3. Mk. 1:16-34 | 19. Mk. 9:30-50 |
| 4. Mk. 1:35-2:12 | 20. Deuteronomy 1 |
| 5. Mk. 2:13-3:6 | 21. Dt. 2 |
| 6. Mk. 3:7-19a | 22. Dt. 3 |
| 7. Mk. 3:19b-35 | 23. Dt. 4:1-40 |
| 8. Mk. 4:1-20 | 24. Dt. 4:41-5:33 |
| 9. Mk. 4:21-34 | 25. Dt. 6 |
| 10. Mk. 4:35-5:20 | 26. Dt. 7 |
| 11. Mk. 5:21-6:6a | 27. Dt. 8 |
| 12. Mk. 6:6b-30 | 28. Dt. 9:1-10:11 |
| 13. Mk. 6:31-56 | 29. Dt. 10:12-11:32 |
| 14. Mk. 7:1-23 | 30. Dt. 12, 13 |
| 15. Mk. 7:24-37 | |
| 16. Mk. 8:1-26 | |

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:

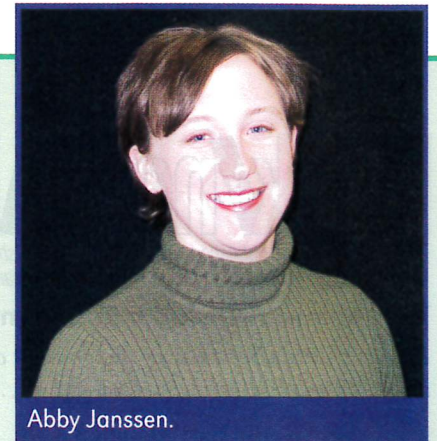
The right fit

When Abby Janssen’s husband Corey noticed a job posting on the WELS Web site, the Lord already knew how events would unfold in this young family’s life. Seeing a position that would allow her to use her past experiences in a Christian environment, Corey encouraged Abby to apply. “I never felt ‘called’ to be a teacher, nor did I marry a pastor and become a preacher’s wife,” Abby reflects. “Yet, when I got this job offer I felt like I had been called and that somehow I was doing the best possible thing—using my talents to help further the work of the church.”

Now as a communication projects manager for WELS Communication Services and an assistant editor for *Forward in Christ*, Abby is the full-time worker in the family. Corey cares

for their two young children and works part-time playing church organ. Switching roles took a little adjustment, but it has been a blessing to the family.

The Janssens moved to Milwaukee from Matteson, Ill., about 40 minutes south of Chicago. But Abby is no stranger to Wisconsin. She grew up in Manitowoc where she attended Manitowoc Lutheran High School and then went on to graduate from Alverno College in Milwaukee in 1998. She spent a year teaching high school English in Osaka, Japan, traveled in Europe for a time, and then settled in the Chicago area working for Oak Park Hospital as the marketing communications coordinator. From there she went to Mintel International Group in Chicago and was the U.S. direct marketing manager. When her first child was born three years ago, she split her time between being a stay-at-home mom and working at the local Borders bookstore.



Abby Janssen.

Looking forward to welcoming a new WELS director of communication, Abby is excited to see what her role will be in his strategies for the synod. But whether working with *Forward in Christ*, *Mission Connection*, synod reports, or news releases, she has already seen the many ways she will be able to serve in her new position. “When I started my job [in June], it just felt like the right fit right away. Sure there was a learning curve, but I didn’t feel like a fish out of water like I have in some jobs. God truly does put you where he wants you.”

Congregation Mission Offerings remains level

In 2005, Congregation Mission Offerings, the single largest source of support for the worldwide mission and ministry of WELS, remained at the same level as 2004—\$19.5 million.

After growing in the early 2000s, Congregation Mission Offerings fell in 2004 and remains level this year

(see chart). In order for the synod and its congregations to maintain ministry, offerings need to grow by five to six percent.

“We give thanks that the Lord’s people shared their wealth with his church,” says Dave Liggett, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving.

“But we plead with our Lord to give us the strength to raise our Congregation Mission Offerings by 10 percent or more in 2006 to support ministry carried out by the synod on behalf of its congregations and members.”

Congregations are still submitting their commitments for the 2006 Con-

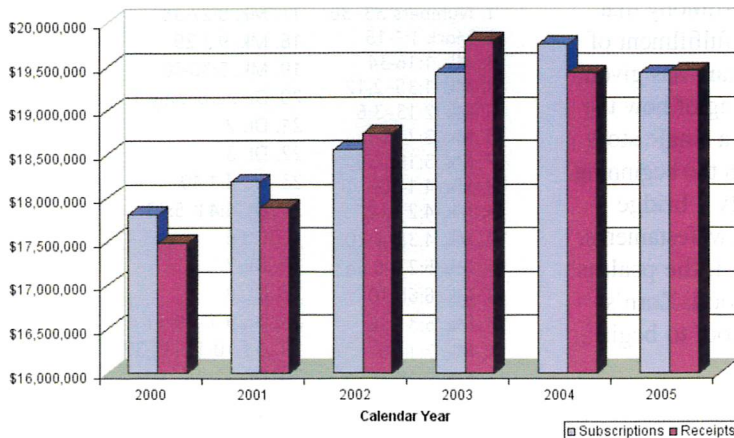
gregation Mission Offerings.

Congregation Mission Offerings accounts for more than 60 percent of the synod’s revenue. “Congregation Mission Offerings is the main fuel tank that runs this engine called the synod,” says Liggett. “It’s the congregation’s way of saying we’re interested in not only doing work locally but also worldwide.”

Other sources of synod revenue include gifts from individuals, foundation grants, and bequests (see charts on p. 6). All of these sources put together fund the synod budget, which for fiscal year 2005-06 (July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006) is \$32.3 million. Almost 75 percent of this budget goes to support Home and World Missions and Ministerial Education.

For more information about Congregation Mission Offerings, contact the Ministry of Christian Giving, 1-800-827-5482.

Congregation Mission Offerings



Connecting to WELS world missions

When my pastor prays for a world missionary in Africa or I read a blurb in the bulletin about a church in Asia, these missions seem familiar to me. No, I haven't traveled there. But I can formulate pictures of these distant places in my head and I somehow have a sense of their foreign cultures.

Where do these pictures and this knowledge come from? Years ago at my Lutheran elementary school a missionary showed a slide show from Africa. In college I learned of the mission in Thailand. These experiences gave me a sense of pride in WELS' mission work.

The goal of the World Missions' Promotions Center is for more WELS members to see how the gospel is spreading around the world, thus increasing the awareness and support of world missions. This support comes in the form of prayer, service, and finances.

In July 2003 the center began with funding from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for its initial two years. It now operates under the Board for World Missions. By planning tours for world missionaries, administrative committee members, and lay mission workers to visit congregations, schools, and

organizations, World Missions hopes to help the 1,200 WELS congregations feel connected to missions in 23 countries.

Missionaries were previously responsible for setting up presentations while they were home on furlough. Now Julie Majerus, the center's project manager, plans tours, targeting certain

areas so that congregations can share the speaker's travel expenses. This method has the added bonus of helping churches who couldn't previously afford to bring in a missionary. It also optimizes efficiency as a speaker presents at 10 to 15 sites on the 7 to 14-day tour. The center, located in Wauwatosa, Wis., also helps by providing presentation training and assistance and generating promotional materials. Although the center's focus is to form larger tours, it also accommodates individual requests for mission festivals and rallies.

Since the center's start, 38 major and 75 minor tours have been completed, reaching 41,280 souls through the 563 presentations. "Concentration on involvement from local contacts will allow the program to expand and reach more individuals," Majerus says. "Working together, hearts will be moved to support outreach to the lost in foreign lands."

For more information on the center, go to www.wels.net/wmspeaker or e-mail wmspeaker@wels.net.

Laura Warmuth



Missionary Robert Wendland (far right) talked about his work in Malawi, Africa, with the Saturday Kids' Club at Christ, Denver, Colo.

Never too old to serve

Seniors for Christ, an active ministry at Our Savior's, East Wenatchee, Wash., is made up of retired members who have a strong desire for Bible study and Christian service. Group members bring together a long history of Bible study and Sunday school teaching, making the discussions lively and interesting.

Each month, the group corrects tests that are forwarded by WELS Prison Ministry. WELS chaplains furnish study booklets and Bibles to people serving time in the nation's penal system. When the prisoners finish the Bible study, they answer the questions on the included test and mail it to WELS Prison Ministry. Seniors for Christ corrects some of these tests and offers encouraging words.

Many prisoners know little about the good news of the Savior. Through these

materials, they learn about the grace of God and how Christ suffered on the cross for their sins. Many prisoners include comments on their tests about the effect the study booklets have had on their lives. In the comments that Seniors for Christ write to the prisoners, they share the gospel and encourage prisoners to continue studying the Bible.

Many people use age as an excuse to cease taking an active part in the work of the church. But as Seniors for Christ proves, there is always something that can be done.

"This group of active WELS seniors is making a huge contribution to North American gospel outreach!" says Pastor Carl Ziemer, administrator for WELS Special Ministries. "Instead of glumly concluding 'There is nothing I can do,' they are bringing Jesus



Seniors for Christ proves that you are never too old to serve. Pictured are: (clockwise from left) Lena Hopfer, 93; Clara Jaquish, 91; Gladys Mueller, 90; Lois Fogelstrom, 78; and Walt Sheppard, 82.

to precious souls who happen to live behind bars."

WELS Prison Ministry offers additional programs that share the gospel with those "behind the walls," including making cards and bookmarks and the pen pal program. For more information, call 507-354-3130 or e-mail welspm@newulmtel.net.

Walt Sheppard

Amazing challenges, amazing blessings in India

“At the present time, we have more open doors than we can possibly handle,” says Mark Krueger, friendly counselor to India.

Krueger is referring to the amazing growth that the mission field in India is experiencing. The opportunities in India are so plentiful that the WELS Board for World Missions has decided to call a third counselor to the area.

never replaced. For the past three years we have only had two WELS counselors to India.”

“I know it’s hard for many to understand that with missionaries returning from some fields in recent years due to budget stringencies, that we are actually adding a counselor in India,” says Dan Koelpin, administrator for World Missions. “Yet this was a strategic decision by the board to invest manpower where the Lord appears to be blessing the efforts and withdrawing resources in those areas where, in spite of dedicated and faithful work, the progress has been very slow. At a time of limited resources it is wise stewardship to follow the Lord’s leading.”

India, the fourth largest WELS mission field, is still a young church. As a result,

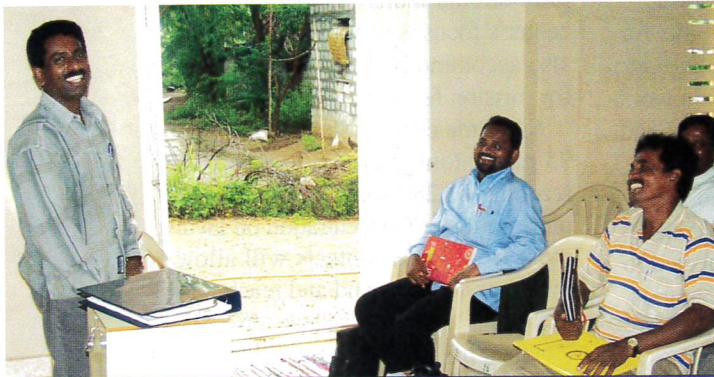
much of the WELS counselors’ time and effort is spent advising national workers and partnering with national pastors in the administration and supervising of congregations. Currently each counselor advises 60 congregations that are scattered over an area more than 750 miles long. This is in addition to teaching seminary classes, doing humanitarian aid projects, participating in publi-

cation and translation work, and performing other administrative duties.

Perhaps nothing shows the need for more manpower better than the Lutheran Seminary in Guntur, India. Currently 75 men are training to be national pastors at the seminary and preseminary. Potential students are turned away because there are not enough instructors to teach all of the men who hunger for God’s Word. Instead, they are asked to wait two or three years until a space opens for them.

Additionally, congregations who have been abandoned by other church bodies and Christian groups have asked the national church in India, Christ Evangelical Lutheran Ministries, to send them workers. Many of the 117 national workers are serving two or more congregations. One man conducts services in five different congregations every Sunday!

“India is nothing short of amazing,” states Pastor Michael Duncan, chairman of the WELS Committee on India. “It’s amazing to see men travel on a train eight to twenty-four hours one way to attend seminary sessions. To see the joy on the face of an adult just baptized with tears of happiness streaming down their face. It’s all amazing. Amazing challenges, yes, but even more amazing blessings.”



Pastor Prabhudas (left), a national pastor in India, teaches a seminar to students in Huzunagar.

With an additional counselor, the immediate thought is that the India program is expanding. However Krueger is quick to point out that “five years ago India had three full-time resident counselors and there was talk about calling a fourth. However, due to circumstances in India and budget constraints in WELS, when one of the WELS counselors took a call in the States he was

In the news



The living nativity at **St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn.**, was featured in *The Free Press* in December. Members at St. Paul dressed up as shepherds, angels, wise men, Mary and

Joseph and acted out the Christmas story many times over a three-day period. The paper quoted St. Paul’s pastor, Gary Wong: “[The Living Nativity] benefits us, and it’s really our gift—we used to bill it as our live Christmas card—to the community.”

Untangling the Web

The Internet has become a vast maze of information. Knowing where to look for strong Christian content can make the journey easier.

The WELS Web site, www.wels.net, has a new look. Larger pictures, easy-to-find daily devotions and prayers, Imprint blogs, church spotlights, and coming events all are highlighted on the home page, along with easy navigation to thousands of other pages on the site. The redesigned home page, with its focus on devotions, prayers, and other scriptural content, emphasizes that Jesus is first in WELS. A new search engine, which uses Google technology, will help visitors find information more efficiently. If you haven’t seen the WELS Web site yet, check it out.

New life in the United States and in the Lord

One day David Nitardy came home from the funeral home that he owns in Fort Atkinson, Wis., to find a photograph of four orphan brothers from Kazakhstan lying on his chair. He and his wife Liz had been planning to adopt an American baby girl when Liz received an e-mail from a gentleman looking for a home for the boys. Although the man who sent the e-mail had already adopted 18 children and couldn't take them, the Lord put it in the Nitardys' hearts to adopt the brothers. The young couple couldn't help but notice that in appearance the boys could have been their biological children.

It was the fall of 2004 when they decided to adopt the brothers and during the summer of 2005 they found themselves in Kazakhstan. "We were treated like royalty," Liz remembers, "because in Kazakhstan no one could fathom adopting even one child. The economy is depressed and so are the people." Igor (Russell), Ilya (Norman), Alexander (Paul), and Vladimir (Daniel) had been living in a children's home ever since their father died and their mother had been

deemed unfit. Russ, the oldest at 13, told a worker at the home that if they could find a home for his brothers, but the family didn't want him, that would be okay.

But the Nitardys did want Russ . . . and his brothers. In the five months since the boys arrived in the United States, their new mother says, "They have grabbed onto their new life with the ferocity of a pit bull and show no fear with new or unfamiliar things." Aside from Michael Jordan and Spiderman, everything is new to them. Soap

dispensers. Mailboxes. Owning things. They used to wear clothes for 10 days in a row and wash their own socks and underwear at night. They have quickly learned a new language and are all doing well in school at St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

From basketball teams to paper routes, the Nitardys feel privileged to present new opportunities to their sons. But their greatest privilege has been to see four faiths start and grow. Russ wonders why God doesn't talk to him like to Moses or Joshua. Paul eagerly

brings home hymns from school for his mom to play on the piano. Daniel confidently states that Christmas means baby Jesus. And after a typical quarrel in the car, Norm suggests that praying might help.

While learning to live together hasn't always been easy, the Lord's blessings have been great. Seeing the boys forgive and hearing their prayers take on deeper thought are evidence of the Lord's work in their hearts. With God's guidance this new family will continue to grow closer to each other and their Savior.



(l to r) Uncle Paul Nitardy, David, Liz, Norman (11: an explosion waiting to happen and a version of compressed joy), Russell (13: a responsible and dependable father figure), Daniel (5: a good-natured kindergarten who emulates his brothers), Paul (9: an intellectual and inventive boy), Grandma Phyllis and Grandpa Russell Nitardy at the boys' baptism at St. James, Cambridge, Wis., on Sept. 25, 2005.

Third phase of North American outreach set to start

In an effort to help WELS members remember that we are all missionaries—here on earth to bring others to Christ—the third phase of North American outreach will follow the theme, "Every Member a Missionary."

This doesn't necessarily mean you have to go overseas.

"God has placed each of us exactly where he wants us. So bloom where you are planted," says Dan Koelpin, administrator for the Board for World Missions and director of this phase. "Recognize that God is giving you a world of opportunity right where you are."

Telling others about Jesus is at the core of the synod's four-year North American outreach emphasis, which was designated at the 2003 synod convention. The third phase will build on the previous phases—"Every Church is a Mission Church" and "Every Soul's a Treasure"—all under the overall theme, "Proclaim Peace through Jesus."

Resources are being developed that will help congregations and WELS members study the third phase's theme and prepare themselves for outreach. They include materials for several worship services that can be held through-

out the year including an Evangelism Sunday, a Recruitment Sunday, and a Mission Sunday. Other materials consist of devotional resources for mission training of families, stewardship resources, witnessing tools, examples of outreach possibilities, and links to other ideas for mission outreach. A CD containing these resources will be mailed to all congregations in early April.

For more information about the North American outreach emphasis, go to www.wels.net/nao or contact 414-256-3233.



Let your light shine

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

Where do pastors come from?

The place where pastors begin to grow is the Christian family. A high proportion of pastors come from the families of pastors and teachers, but God does raise pastors from anywhere.

Jake Brug was a humble, unassuming man who lived for his church and his family. Jake's parents were immigrant farmers from Russia. After hard travels and some wandering, they settled near Bay City, Mich., where they raised sugar beets. Jake was one of eight children. Like his brothers and sisters, he had no formal education beyond eighth grade but worked hard helping his parents on the farm.

Jake became a barber who married a beautician. Jake and Jean had two children, John and Kathy. John was born

while Jake, serving as a marine during World War II, was on his way to the invasion of Okinawa. Jake did not see his firstborn until nine months later. After the war Jake and Jean returned to Bay City. They were active at St. John. Following a bout with breast cancer, Jean died at the young age of 32.

Jake raised his two young children alone. They attended St. John's school in Bay City and Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw for high school. John became a pastor, and Kathy became a Christian day school teacher.

John had one son, Paul, and Kathy had three sons, Tim, Tom, and Andy. All four grandsons of Jake studied to

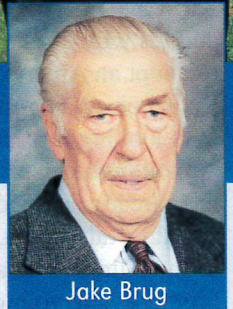
become pastors. The youngest, Andy, graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May 2005, where his Uncle John was one of his teachers.

Jake passed away in March 2003. The Lord gave him the privilege of enjoying the graduations, ordinations, and installations of his son and all his grandsons except Andy. Quite a legacy for this humble Christian man who lived and shared his faith in whatever way he could.

Irene Brug



Jake Brug's son and four grandsons in May 2005: (l to r) Pastor Andy Glende, Pastor Tim Glende, Prof. John Brug, Pastor Paul Brug, Pastor Tom Glende.



Jake Brug

Nebraska District reaches out through technology

The congregations of the Nebraska District are working together to use technology to reach more people with the gospel as well as to bring the district closer together.

Through the use of a video server, congregations and WELS members are able to access live worship services, sporting events at the two area Lutheran high schools in the district, circuit and district meetings, and much more—all from their computers.

The idea began in 2002 when Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb., was expanding. Parents whose children stayed in the dorms wanted to see worship services and sporting events, but weren't always able to travel to the school. The school built a video server out of spare parts and broadcasted for the first time in November 2003.

Things snowballed from there. St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb., began using that server to broadcast its worship services

live as well as to archive past services for anyone to access at anytime.

Several at St. Mark realized that the cost of keeping up and further improving this system was too much for them to maintain. They proposed to the 2004 Nebraska District convention that the video server and its outreach potential be a district project. The convention voted to provide guidance and funding for expansion. A new video server was purchased, and a district technology committee was formed.

Now the Nebraska District has several congregations broadcasting video worship services as well as both area Lutheran high schools in the district showing sports, concerts, and delegate meetings online. Videos of circuit and district meetings and presentations are also available for download at www.welsne.org.

"Over the vast amount of real estate that makes up the Nebraska District,

we're trying to bring WELS members together through technology," says Greg Boggs, technology committee member.

Future plans include working with a Colorado congregation to present live worship services for the Mountain time zone, putting together interactive Bible studies and Catechism lessons, augmenting congregation Web sites with more video clips, putting together a travel video pack to send to congregations to film special events, and continuing to examine how to use technology to reach out with the gospel.

"Through this technology, we are privileged to bring the message of our Savior to people in the remote areas of our district, our country, and the world," says Pastor Joel Frank, the Nebraska District president. "The responses of gratitude have made it all worthwhile."

For more information, e-mail techcommittee@welsne.org.

District news

Minnesota

St. Peter, Monticello, Minn., celebrated the installation of Pastor Darren Green on Dec. 18.

The varsity football team from **St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.**, won the Tri Metro Conference championship with a 10-1 record and took second place in the Section 4AA in November.

The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn., received a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Authority to build an eight-unit apartment building. The Faith Apartments will primarily be the home for people with developmental disabilities. The association also opened a new building for From Home to Home Thrift Store in February. The store is also located in Belle Plaine, and its profits support The Lutheran Home campus.

South Central

Beautiful Savior, College Station, Tex., held its annual International Student Christmas Eve Dinner on Dec. 24. More than 90 people enjoyed the dinner, and at least 60 stayed for the service afterward. Many attendees had been in America only

World news

Post-hurricane donations highest in nation's history—The outpouring of donations to the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina and two sister storms is the most generous in American history, according to the University of Indiana's Center on Philanthropy.

Americans have donated about \$2.97 billion to families affected by hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma (which according to the center is a low estimate). That surpasses the \$2.8 billion donated after the terrorist attacks of 2001.

WELS members have donated \$2.1 million to the WELS Committee on Relief following the hurricanes. (This includes a \$225,000 match from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.)

Supreme Court rules on assisted suicide—In a 6-3 ruling, the U.S. Supreme

a week, and many more were celebrating their first Christmas in America with the congregation. Guests, almost exclusively graduate students from Texas A&M University, represented six countries.

Southeastern Wisconsin

Beginning in January, **Time of Grace Ministry, Milwaukee, Wis.**, began providing closed captioning on its television program. This will better serve those who are hearing impaired and is in compliance with Federal Communication Commission requirements.

The varsity football team of **Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee**, won their second straight WIAA-Div. III state football championship in November. The team was also conference champion with an undefeated record.

Happy Anniversary!

WW—St. Paul, Bloomer, Wis., recently recognized the 50th anniversary of Sunday school teacher **Richard Marquardt**. Marquardt, a lifelong member of the congregation, was also instrumental in helping start the elementary school at St. Paul.

Arizona-California



Pastor Scott Martz of Lamb of God, Ahwatukee, Ariz., and a board member of Arizona Lutheran Academy, recently spearheaded a campaign to raise funds for the Kment family to purchase a van with a wheelchair lift for their eighth-grade daughter, Becky. Martz has been instructing Becky at home since the family had no way to transport her. On Jan. 1, Martz presented a check to the family for more than \$40,000. Pictured are: (l to r) Lisa Kment, Becky Kment, Dan Kment, and Pastor Scott Martz.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Fred Casmer; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.

Court ruled in January that Oregon's assisted suicide law is not barred by the Bush administration's interpretation of federal drug laws.

Oregon became the first state to legalize doctor-assisted suicide in 1997. In November 2001, former Attorney General John Ashcroft rewrote regulations under the Controlled Substances Act, which made it illegal for Oregon doctors to prescribe drugs to assist in a patient's death. In the January ruling, the Supreme Court rejected this challenge to the Oregon law.

Says WELS Pastor Robert Fleischmann, national director of Christian Life Resources: "The ruling should compel Christians to work harder in providing quality and loving care at the end of life. In doing so the goal

is to not only communicate that suicide is contrary to God's will, but is also undesired because of the more positive care alternatives."

[*Lifewire*, Jan. 17, 2006]

News brief—In December, Pope Benedict XVI urged Methodist leaders of the World Methodist Council to endorse the Joint Declaration, a 1999 Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America agreement on how humankind achieves salvation. No decision has been made at this time by the World Methodist Council.

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

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Buske, James G.**, to Lighthouse Youth Center, Milwaukee
- Ewings, Jerry**, to Lord Of Love, De Forest, Wis.
- Kaminski, LeRoy L.**, to retirement
- Lindeman, Loren L.**, to Living Water, Wind Lake, Wis.
- Pratt, Christopher K.**, to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.
- Strackbein, John T.**, to Holy Cross, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Teachers

- Burow, Amanda**, to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee
- Degner, Mandy L.**, to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
- Fischer, Robert O.**, to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.
- Leerssen, Merry L.**, to Salem, Loretto, Minn.
- List, Lance R.**, to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
- Meyer, Kristi**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
- Wilson, David G.**, to Peace, Livonia, Mich.

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.
- Novi, Mich.**—Good Shepherd (25). May 7. Service, 4 P.M. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 248-349-0565; pastor@welsnovi.org.
- Wonewoc, Wis.**—St. Paul school (125). June 11. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Lunch & fellowship, 11:30 A.M. 608-464-3212.

COMING EVENTS

Choir tours:

- **Reach the World**, a mixed choir of WELS members from Tucson, Ariz.
 - March 4—Rock of Ages, Payson, Ariz.
 - March 5—Peace, Cottonwood, Ariz.
 - March 10—Grace, Tucson, Ariz.
 - March 19—Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
 - March 25—Immanuel, Lakeside, Ariz.
 - April 1 & 2—Cross of Christ, Kingman, Ariz.
 - April 2—Green Valley, Henderson, Nev.
- **Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.**
 - March 1—Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash., 7 P.M.
 - March 2—Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash., 7 P.M.
 - March 3—Grace, Portland, Ore., 7 P.M.
 - March 4—Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif., 7 P.M.
 - March 5—St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif., 7 P.M.

- March 6—St. Peter, Modesto, Calif., 7 P.M.
- March 8—Apostles, San Jose, Calif., 5 & 7 P.M.
- March 9—Gethsemane, Los Angeles, Calif., 7 P.M.
- March 10—California LHS, Wildomar, 11 A.M. & Reformation, San Diego, Calif., 7 P.M.
- March 11—Summerlin, Las Vegas, Nev., 6 P.M. & March 12, 8 A.M.
- March 19—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 3 P.M.
- **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.**
 - April 5—Grace, Milwaukee, Wis., 7 P.M.
 - April 12—Crown of Life, West St. Paul Minn., 7:30 P.M.
 - April 13—St. John, Tappen, N.D., 7:30 P.M.
 - April 14—Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D., 1 P.M.; Zion, Mobridge, S.D., 7 P.M.
 - April 15—St. Martin, Watertown, S.D., 7 P.M.
 - April 16—Our Savior, Brookings, S.D., 9:30 A.M.; Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb., 7 P.M.
 - April 17—Christ Our Redeemer, Aurora, Colo., 7 P.M.
 - April 18—Mountain Valley, Eagle, Colo., 7:30 P.M.
 - April 19—Fount of Life, Colorado Springs, Colo., 7:30 P.M.
 - April 20—Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo., 7 P.M.
 - April 21—St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D., 7:30 P.M.
 - April 22—Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D., 7 P.M.
 - April 23—St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn., 10:30 A.M.; St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 3 P.M.
 - May 24—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 7:30 P.M.

- **Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.**
 - April 12—Good Shepherd, Downers Grove, Ill., 7 P.M.
 - April 13—Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn., 7 P.M.
 - April 14—Ascension, Mitchell, S.D., 7 P.M.
 - April 16—Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn., 6:30 A.M.; Saint Mark, Mankato, Minn., 9 A.M.; Saint Paul, Tomah, Wis., 7 P.M.
 - April 17—St. John, Watertown, Wis., 7 P.M.

Chorale concerts:

- **Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale**, March 26, 7 P.M. Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.
- **Cascade Lutheran Chorale**, April 2, 4 P.M. Grace, Portland, Ore. Joy Williams, 503-493-0465.
- **Lutheran Chorale**, April 30, St. John, Lannon, Wis., 3 P.M., and St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., 7 P.M.

Lutheran Pioneers—Pinecar Derby. April 8. Onalaska, Wis. www.lutheranpioneers.org.

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

Synod Partnership Sunday—April 23, 3 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Thomas Trapp, 608-257-1969. www.wlchapel.org.

Lutheran Pioneers & Lutheran Girl Pioneers national conventions—April 29. The Plaza, Eau Claire, Wis. Contact lgp@charterinternet.net or visit www.lutheranpioneers.org.

Pastors' Wives Renewal—June 9-10. Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn. www.wels.net/jumpword/bps-cad.

College course—"What is a proper defense of creation?" June 12-30. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Limited enrollment. Middle and high school teachers of science preferred. Dr. Paul Boehlke, paul.boehlke@wlc.edu.

NAMES WANTED

Past Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chorus members—to participate with the present choir in a concert celebrating the 75th anniversary of its founding. Rehearsal held the day of the concert—May 24. Participating choir members and instrumentalists will receive copies of the music several weeks before the event. Contact Prof. James Tiefel before April 23, tiefelj@wls.wels.net.

Soliders at Fort Knox, Ky.—Paul Horn, 270-351-2391; revhorn@yahoo.com.

Alumni, parents, or friends of students—from University of Wisconsin-Madison and Calvary Lutheran Chapel (1920-1964) or Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel (1964-2005). 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.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Full-time manager—Arizona Lutheran Retirement Center, Phoenix, Ariz. Independent living apartment complex for WELS seniors. Duties include living on site in the manager's house, light maintenance work, and organizing fellowship activities. Bob King, 623-878-7255.

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

Picture this



Dave Reinemann and Tanya Tranberg, teachers at Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis., took several Northland students to the Dominican Republic for a week in the summer of 2005. Reinemann and a recent graduate of Northland held a baseball camp (complete with a daily Bible study) for 40 boys, and Tranberg and four current students and two 2005 Northland graduates taught vacation Bible school in four different locations.

Submitted by Henrietta Jakubowski



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.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

While we were setting up for the Christian Woman Today Spring Retreat sponsored by Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis., a man peeked in the ballroom at the Olympia Resort and asked what was going on. After he heard our reply, he said, "I thought women were supposed to be moving forward and not retreating." It sure gave our committee a chuckle.

*Maureen Sertich
Elm Grove, Wisconsin*

POTLUCK POLL

The Bible—both the Old and the New Testament—are full of miracles. Whether it's God parting the Red Sea for the Israelites (Exodus 14:10-31) or Jesus healing Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56), God's miracles show his power and his compassion. **What's your favorite biblical miracle? Why?** Send your answer by April 10 to Potluck Poll, *Forward in Christ* magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. The first 20 people to respond will receive a WELS Web site bumper sticker. We'll print the results in the June issue.

GOD'S POSITIVE ANSWERS

You say

"Nobody really loves me."
"I can't manage."
"I'm afraid."
"I can't go on."


God says

"I love you."
"I will supply all your needs."
"I have not given you a spirit of fear."
"My grace is sufficient."

Bible verse

John 3:16
Philippians 4:19
2 Timothy 1:7
2 Corinthians 12:9;
Psalm 91:15

Selected from the newsletter of Trinity, Wabeno, Wisconsin



The Lord has called us all to be generous, abundant, and cheerful givers.

Dave Liggett

EXCEL in the grace of giving

At the synod convention this past summer a friend said “Dave, you sure have a big job in front of you as the WELS director of Christian Giving.”

My response was “It is not about me. It is all about we pastors, we called workers, we lay leaders and we members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We are the ones the Lord has called to do his work and give to make it possible.”

God called all of us to give on the same day the Lord called us to faith in Jesus as our Savior. Ever since that day the Lord has given us the “grace of giving.” He provided the model for our giving in his own action of giving his one and only Son to be our Savior.

As the WELS director of Christian Giving, I plan to carry out this ministry in the same way I did when I was a parish pastor and then a WELS gift planning counselor specializing in current gifts. I believe that before I can even begin to encourage others to be generous, abundant, and cheerful givers I need to be one myself. My wife and I have found it a joy to be able to be part of the Lord’s action on this earth through our financial offerings to the local congre-

gations I’ve served, the two Lutheran high schools our congregations were affiliated with, and our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As we look back over our 34 years of married life, we are amazed at the amount of money the Lord has compelled us to invest in his work. Not a dime of those funds is missed. Instead we are filled with joy that even while serving in the public ministry we can be generous, cheerful givers to the Lord’s work.

During the next three months, *Forward in Christ* will feature a series of articles by people who are deeply involved in the stewardship of the treasure or money God gives. They are people who have been compelled by a love for their Savior.

Next month a lay couple will share its perspective. The adult lives of this husband and wife have found them actively involved in the grace of giving. They are abundant donors to their local congregation, local Lutheran high school, the synod, and its affiliates. They clearly understand that the Lord has given them everything they possess.

In May a parish pastor will write about his efforts to encourage all those he serves to exercise their “grace of giving.” He will discuss

how he is blessed to have congregation members who serve as “living lessons” in Christian giving. These members encourage him and each other to excel in the grace of giving.

A gift planning counselor who specializes in estate planning will write the final article in the series. He will share ways in which we can encourage the grace of giving in our relatives and friends who inherit resources from others. He will also talk about the tremendous message we deliver, even after our death, when we designate an abundant, overflowing portion of our estate for the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

We, that is, all of us as members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, have been called to give for the Lord’s work here on earth. May this series of articles help to encourage each of us to “excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Dave Liggett, the WELS director of Christian Giving, is a member at Immanuel, Farmington, Wisconsin.

This is the first of a four-part series on stewardship.

Truth in Love Ministry, an outreach to Mormons, has had many opportunities to sow the seed of God's Word.

THE JOY OF SOWING

Mark J. Cares

What do a student at Brigham Young University, a Mormon middle-aged woman, and a Christian pastor in Sri Lanka all have in common? All three have given Truth in Love Ministry, an outreach to Mormons, the joy of sowing.

Sowing and reaping

In John 4, Jesus uses the imagery of sowing and reaping when talking about spreading his Word. He talks about the sower and the reaper being glad together (John 4:36). It's easy to identify with the reaper's joy as God allows us to witness a new believer's joy. What joy it is to see the beaming face of a recently baptized adult. What a thrill to watch people rejoicing as they first realize that they are forgiven in Christ.

The joy of the sower, however, is not so apparent. The seed is sown, but the harvest may be in the future. Someone else may reap where another has sown the Word. Nevertheless, there is real joy in sowing too.

Sowing the seed among Mormons

Over the last few years Truth in Love Ministry has been sowing the seed through its Web site. Countless people have visited the site and contacted the ministry. Some have made repeated contacts. They are like the three people mentioned above.

We have exchanged dozens of e-mails with that student as he struggled to know biblical truth. He even attended a WELS church. But as the time approached for him to go on his Mormon mission, he broke off contact. More than likely, we won't know until eternity if the seed of God's Word will take root in his heart. But we sure had the joy of sowing it.

And the woman? We are still corresponding with her. Countless hours have been spent on the phone and through e-mail. That's been necessary because leaving Mormonism can be a long and painful process. Feel the pain behind her words: "Without a rule book and lists of things we must and mustn't do, in Christianity I feel naked and uncovered and lacking and lost." But also share her joy as she writes: "Church today was wonderful. I am learning and really enjoying the freedom I feel to just take it all in and enjoy the moments. I don't feel like I was ever worshipping before."

We don't know what will happen with her. She had an appointment to meet with a WELS pastor in her area. Unfortunately, she did not keep the appointment. She is promising to keep the next one. Whether she does or not, only the Lord knows. But he has already allowed us to experience the joy of sowing his Word.

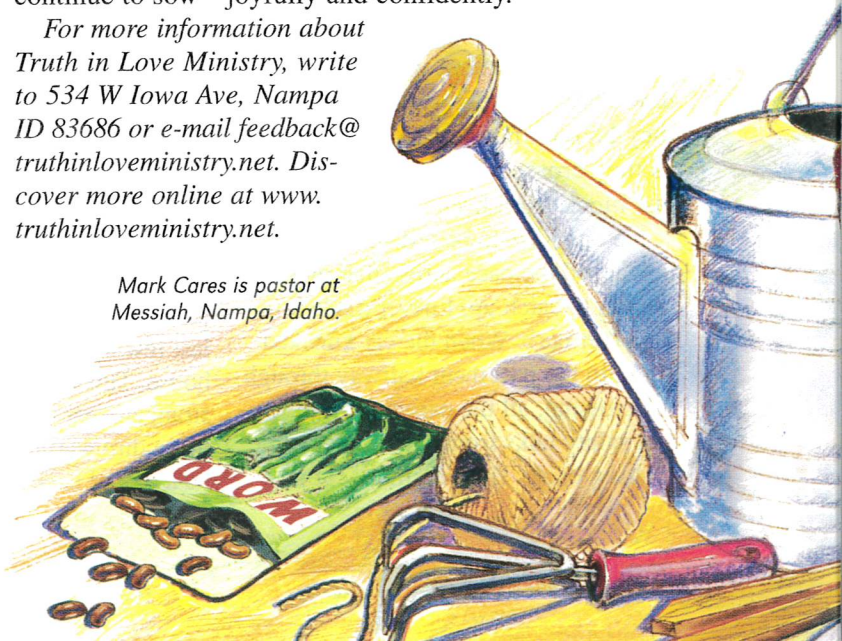
What about the pastor in Sri Lanka? One day recently, he sent us an e-mail. "While I was traveling in the train, the person next to me, an American, was reading a book called *Speaking the Truth in Love*. Quickly I borrowed it from him and started reading it. . . . We pray that one day the Lord would bring you here and use you to minister and teach the Mormons." We have sent him materials to help him in his outreach. Again, only the Lord knows what will happen. But it sure has been fun helping to sow the seed in Sri Lanka.

These are just three out of dozens of opportunities the Lord has given Truth in Love Ministry. All create a new appreciation for the work of sowing.

Like the sower in Jesus' famous parable, we have learned that we don't have to be stingy with the seed. We can scatter it liberally, trusting that the Lord can cause it to grow in the most unlikely places. Knowing that, we continue to sow—joyfully and confidently.

For more information about Truth in Love Ministry, write to 534 W Iowa Ave, Nampa ID 83686 or e-mail feedback@truthinloveministry.net. Discover more online at www.truthinloveministry.net.

Mark Cares is pastor at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.





LOOK

A childhood memory illustrates how important it is to clearly understand what God is saying.

Stephen L. Merten

It was a slushy, gray, mid-winter afternoon the day I died on my walk home from kindergarten.

"CHILDREN ARE KILLED WHEN THEY ARE HIT BY CARS!"

I can still vividly remember the corduroy coat I wore, the rubber-buckle boots two sizes too big, and the streets filled with ankle-deep, half-melted snow. My older brother and sister, who had been given the task of taking me home after school, had grown impatient with me, the dawdling five-year-old. It seems they had not noticed my absence as they crossed the street on the last block from home.

No one likes to be left behind. I quickened the pace across that intersection to catch up. I never made it to the other curb. When the car knocked me onto the pavement halfway through the crossing, all the parental warnings and safety talks from my teacher came rushing back. The one that echoed

most loudly was, "Look both ways! Children are killed when they are hit by cars!" Of course, I assumed the death part of the warning applied to every instance of coming in contact with a car in motion.

So I thought I was visited by death. The young couple in the car must have been in a panic. The driver who could not quite complete his stop ever so gently nudged my young frame to the ground with his front bumper. But other than a few bruises, there were no real injuries. Still, in my mind, a law of nature was a law of nature, and I was sure those warnings from adults must have been some of those absolute laws of nature. Being touched by a moving car meant instant death to any child.

It seemed odd to be dead and yet be conscious of the shaken young couple picking me up and driving me those last few hundred yards back to the house. This action of getting into a stranger's car touched on another of those dire warnings, but it seemed to be a day of exceptions. Somehow I

was still alive and wondering about what other primal laws of nature could occasionally be bent. I guessed that things said by adults were filled with hidden meanings.

"WHEN YOU EAT OF [THIS TREE], YOU WILL SURELY DIE!"

I later wondered along that same line of thought one morning in Sunday school. Though there was no car involved, Adam and Eve had committed one of those actions that caused instant death. It was clear from my lesson that God had told them that on the day they ate from the forbidden tree they would die. As my Sunday school teacher went on to tell the story, she reached the part of the two falling for the very thing they had been warned about. "Aha!" I wanted to yell. Now we would get to a good part of this lesson. Now we would hear about death and destruction. They ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and now God would have to carry out the death threat.

BOTH WAYS

Then, to my disappointment, the lesson continued without any divine demolition. Instead of death, I remember hearing about how God made them clothes to wear. I was happy about this; I didn't like that picture of hinted nakedness on the cover of the lesson. Next God told them not to work in his garden anymore. But neither seemed like much of a penalty to a five-year-old.

What on earth? Where was the death? That day of disobedience ended as well as thousands more before Adam and Eve died. The teacher mentioned something about "spiritual death." As far as I could tell, it was not much of a punishment. This seemed to confirm my suspicions that adults—and now even God—did not mean exactly what they said. Can we take God at his word? I wondered what other future disillusionment awaited me. But soon my brain reached the limits of my attention span, and other distractions occupied my five-year-old mind. I shelved my doubts for a later time.

EXAMPLES OF NOT RECOGNIZING GOD'S VOCABULARY

Looking back, the key to understanding God's declarations was contained in my central question: Can we take God at his word? It is the "his word" of that question that matters. When God says "death," he was not talking about some loss of pulse or brain function. That would be a small penalty compared to eternal obliteration. Adam and Eve stepped out of living as eternal beings at that first disobedience.

"His word" means that God uses God's vocabulary, not our limited vocabulary born of limited experiences. God meant. "You cross that line and you are dead to me! You are not my children. You will not live with my friendship, parenthood, or love now and forever." As awful as Hiroshima, 9/11, or the Holocaust were, this was infinitely worse. All of humankind plunged into eternal death!

Look both ways when you cross. Know that God means what he says.

The mistake of not taking God at "his word" goes beyond the wandering thoughts of a five-year-old. Whole church bodies make the mistake of not recognizing God's vocabulary. Take for example the word "Israel." Some read prophetic references to God redeeming Israel, and they jump to the idea that it is the country of Israel, specifically those of Jewish ancestry. Instead one should look at who Israel was when the Lord speaks about Israel—namely God's chosen people. Today, who are God's chosen people? The answer is all that believe.

Another example of not using God's vocabulary is misunderstanding the 1,000-year reign of Christ spoken of in Revelation. Some want to turn this

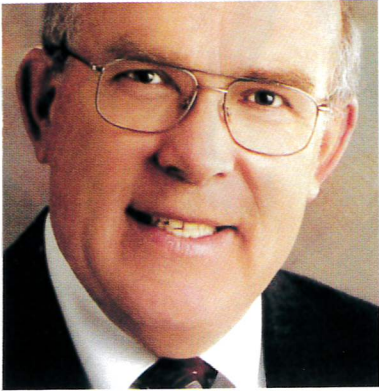
into 1,000 physical years and a physical reign on earth. Many made that same mistake during Christ's ministry when they looked for him to become a political king. But 1,000 spiritual years is not limited to the calendar years we use but rather is a period of time going from the time of redemption to God's return on judgment day.

God is also not taken at his word when some take the book of Revelation and turn it into something shallow like a political history book. They try to pin all the beasts and threats revealed to John into present-day countries and armies. But the beasts and threats are not political, historical characters; they are spiritual. Isn't a spiritual attack ultimately more dangerous than a threat from a political enemy? These examples sound a bit like the confusion of a five-year-old that could only picture physical death rather than a spiritual annihilation.

Ever since the awful first disobedience, ever since humankind has left the Garden of Eden, we travel on the way to our Father's house. That journey home includes crossing a lot of streets filled with dangers to our faith. Included with those dangers is allowing "his word" to be trivialized by those who make it less than spiritual. Look both ways when you cross. Know that God means what he says. We can take him at "his word."

Steve Merten, a science teacher at West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minnesota, is a member at Mt. Olive, Delano, Minnesota.

The warmth of God's love



Carl R. Gungl

March isn't an easy month to endure. The white blush of winter is now dirty brown, like a little boy's unwashed face. While, from time to time, there is a premature hint of warmer weather to come, the chilling breezes still freeze solid. It's cold! Cold on the inside, dirty brown on the outside. Mortals can adopt an attitude to match—cold and ugly.

Where can one find an antidote to the cold and ugly? What can generate warm, attractive feelings? Human warmth and attractiveness often disappear as quickly as candy is eaten and flowers fade. If there is to be a real and lasting antidote to cold and ugly winter it needs to be found in the warmth of God's enduring love. It's found in the reminder that every soul is a treasure to him, purchased not with gold, silver, or diamonds, but, as Luther says, "with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death" (Second Article).

Every soul's a treasure is the constant theme of WELS world missionary activity. World Missions seeks to bring real warmth—the love of God—and enduring wealth—the rich treasure of God's forgiveness—to treasured souls everywhere.

I'm reminded of a mission visit in Siberia a number of years ago. It surely could not be described as warm—it was early December and the temperatures reached -40 degrees. There wasn't much wealth evident either. It had been a disastrous year for Siberian agriculture. Half of the potato crop, the essential ingredient of the Siberians' daily diet, had failed.

On Sunday morning, right in front of me in church, sat a young girl. Her name was Jane. Because she could speak English fluently, I asked if she would answer a few questions as I took some video footage of her.

My first question was, "What's it like living in Siberia?"

"It's great," she said.

"What?" With the temperatures averaging -40 degrees and half of their vital food supply ruined, how could it be great?

Looking at things from a human perspective, I almost missed her heavenly answer. "He loves us; Jesus loves us." Her answer revealed the real warmth and wealth in an otherwise cold and bleak Siberian winter. God's love sustained her. She knew what everyone needs to know—that her soul was a treasure to her dear Lord and Savior.

Most of the time, it's not nearly so cold here, and conditions aren't as poor as in Siberia. But here, as everywhere, it is the warmth of God's love, the wealth of his gracious gifts to us, that tempers the cold of winter and temporizes late winter's bleak scene. It also warms our hearts to share the wealth of God with an otherwise cold and impoverished world.

Every time I return from a mission trip, I'm newly impressed with the wealth of America. But as we use our God-given worldly wealth to proclaim the gospel everywhere, the greatest treasure we bestow is the gospel itself. We do want to care for the physical needs of those less fortunate. We do that through the WELS Committee on Relief and the Humanitarian Aid Committee. Our gifts for these helping agencies, thank God, spring from truly thankful hearts, grateful for God's love for us. Yet inwardly we desire to help those less fortunate even more. We want them, with us, to know what a treasure their souls are to God.

Isn't that the kind of warmth and beauty we all really need in March?



I rejoice at the name of Jesus

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

With all the redeemed, we rejoice at the name of Jesus for his death on a cross. That same name also shapes our attitude for service.

Paul E. Zell

Much of the second chapter of Philippians is a hymn—a masterpiece of praise. It's the apostle Paul's *Ode to Joy*. Yet while Beethoven's symphony praised the Creator "who must dwell beyond the stars," Paul lauds the name of one much nearer and dearer. Jesus came to serve us in humility, Paul joyfully sings, and Jesus will come to us again in glory.

Humble slave

Jesus is God. "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). Yet he chose not to parade around as "God from God, Light from Light" as we confess in the Nicene Creed. He emptied himself, "taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." Such was Jesus' choice not only in life. "He humbled himself," Paul chants, "and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

The Roman orator Cicero called crucifixion "so nefarious a deed, no fitting word can possibly describe it." He advised fellow citizens not even to think about the cross, that "worst extreme of the tortures inflicted upon slaves." Yet for Paul the very opposite holds true. In this epistle he meditates on the unthinkable: that Jesus, true God, willingly suffered the punishment of the cross in the place of sinners. Paul dwells with eyes of faith on the astonishing: that Jesus, true man, chose the death we deserved. Paul happily hears the words of the prophets completely fulfilled: "By his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Glorious Lord


With all the redeemed, Paul rejoices at the name of Jesus for his death on a cross. Then the conductor quickens the tempo: "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place." Jesus was raised from death and brought to the right hand of the Father. The cellos and violins lead us on: "And gave him the name that is above every name." Brass and woodwinds pipe in: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

Even the clashing cymbals join the symphony. When Jesus returns, Satan and his wicked legions must grovel before Jesus. With terror they will acknowledge his victory, even as the chorus of the faithful swells louder and louder: "And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This humble, glorious name of Jesus shapes your attitude for service, Paul sings. God "works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13). Such heavenly motivation! Like Paul we hold on to the word of truth, rejoicing at the name of Jesus that Scripture so beautifully proclaims. Like the Philippians we "shine like stars in the universe" (2:15), reflecting the light of his name to all who are still in darkness.

A life so lived in the name of Jesus is our *Ode to Joy*.

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



 A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John T. Ban".

Lent and Lutherans

As long as I can remember, I have gone to church on Wednesdays during Lent. I remember singing for Lenten services, the dark somber church, and the penitential purple of Lent. At times I welcomed Lent because it meant the end of a cold winter. I remember walking on sidewalks where thin ice formed over pools of melted snow after the sun dropped below the horizon.

I did a little research about Lent and discovered that it grew out of a time of preparation for Easter observed by the ancient church. It seems to have grown from just a two-day observance to 36 days by the fifth century and eventually to 40 days. It becomes 40 days today by skipping the Sundays in the count; Sundays are always days commemorating the Lord's resurrection.

As a Lutheran, I recall the special emphasis on the Lord's suffering and death. Each year I heard the combined gospel accounts of what Jesus endured for me and for all sinners. I still hear it. That story is not the same old, same old for me. Yes, at times, I drift away, and my mind wanders to something else. But Lent and its story of Christ are important.

Unfortunately, as with everything else, someone spoils it. The world spoils Christmas with its commercialism and somehow inserts an Easter bunny into the celebration of Christ's resurrection from death. Lent too gets spoiled. Some go from the wild parties of Mardi Gras to a kind of austere self-denial during Lent. Once Easter comes, then it's okay to return to the wild parties. Maybe they believe that Lent is a time to make up for or atone for all the sins of the rest of the year by sober behavior and sacrifice.

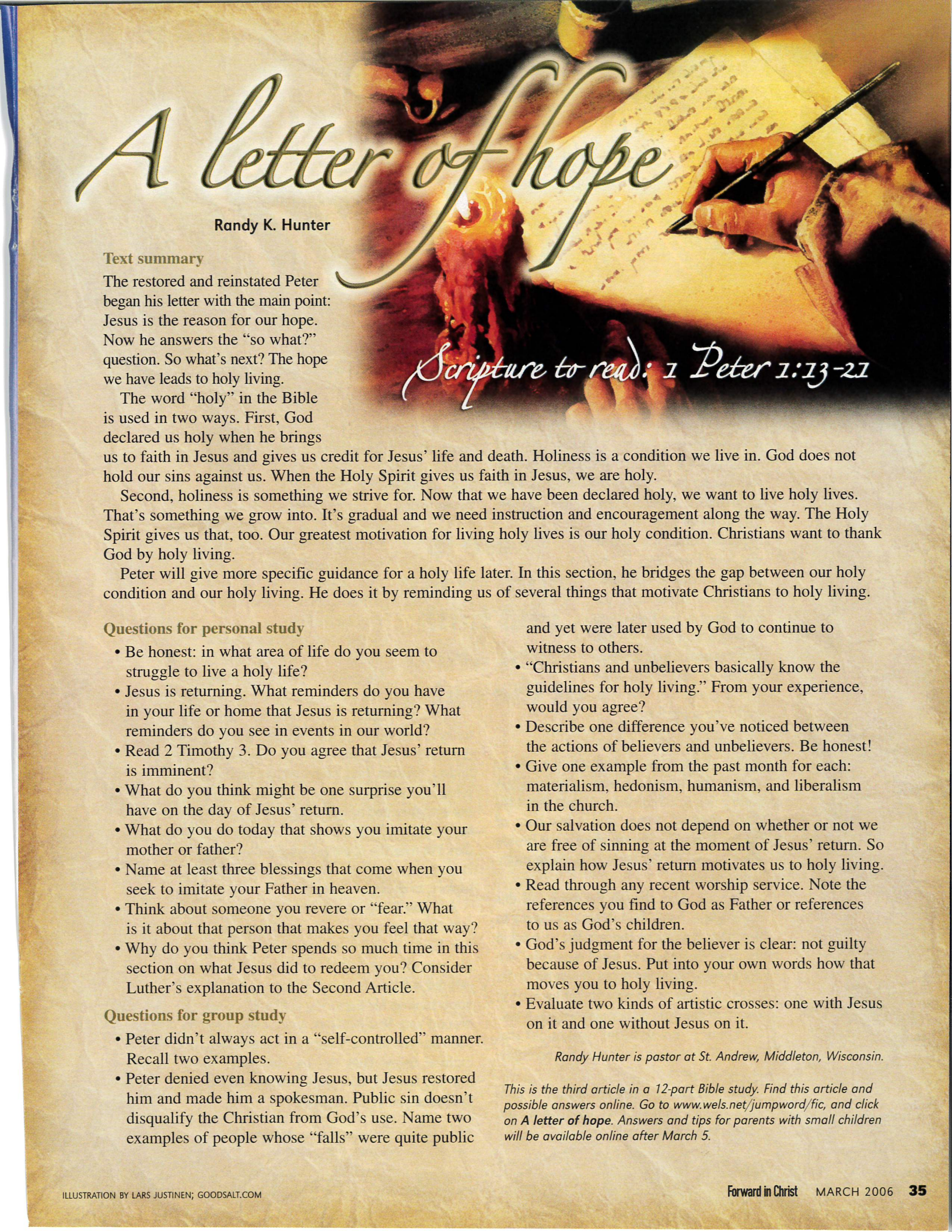
But that's not helpful. Instead Lent is power—spiritual power. The season of

Lent gives me and all of us one more opportunity to remember Christ crucified—the central message of Lent in our Lutheran churches. Each Wednesday I come to church and renew my faith through the message of Jesus' suffering and death. The apostle Paul wrote that the message of Christ crucified is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" and that the message of Christ is "a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Corinthians 1:24 & 2:4).

When we hear the story of Christ's passion, it's not just a reminder of something we once learned. It's not just a refresher course on Jesus. Nor is it a familiar story we like to hear again and again, like the stories we tell and retell to our children and grandchildren. No, God imparts his power through the gospel. As Lutherans we understand that God promises to work only through the gospel. God assures us that through that means and that means alone the Holy Spirit works to strengthen faith, to comfort us, and to give us power to live as disciples of Jesus.

This season of Lent has been part of our Lutheran practice for a long time. Perhaps we have taken it for granted and sought new and different ways to gain purpose, strength, and direction. Yet those before us have used the season as an opportunity to open their hearts to the message of Christ crucified. They received God's power through the gospel.

It's not a bad idea. In fact, Lent still can be 40 days of real spiritual power. During these days we focus our attention on what Christ did for us. We leave behind all we do for God—remembering that even all our best is nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)—and discover once again that being a Christian and being a Lutheran is finding power in Christ crucified for us all.



A letter of hope

Randy K. Hunter

Text summary

The restored and reinstated Peter began his letter with the main point: Jesus is the reason for our hope. Now he answers the “so what?” question. So what’s next? The hope we have leads to holy living.

The word “holy” in the Bible is used in two ways. First, God declared us holy when he brings

us to faith in Jesus and gives us credit for Jesus’ life and death. Holiness is a condition we live in. God does not hold our sins against us. When the Holy Spirit gives us faith in Jesus, we are holy.

Second, holiness is something we strive for. Now that we have been declared holy, we want to live holy lives. That’s something we grow into. It’s gradual and we need instruction and encouragement along the way. The Holy Spirit gives us that, too. Our greatest motivation for living holy lives is our holy condition. Christians want to thank God by holy living.

Peter will give more specific guidance for a holy life later. In this section, he bridges the gap between our holy condition and our holy living. He does it by reminding us of several things that motivate Christians to holy living.

Questions for personal study

- Be honest: in what area of life do you seem to struggle to live a holy life?
- Jesus is returning. What reminders do you have in your life or home that Jesus is returning? What reminders do you see in events in our world?
- Read 2 Timothy 3. Do you agree that Jesus’ return is imminent?
- What do you think might be one surprise you’ll have on the day of Jesus’ return.
- What do you do today that shows you imitate your mother or father?
- Name at least three blessings that come when you seek to imitate your Father in heaven.
- Think about someone you revere or “fear.” What is it about that person that makes you feel that way?
- Why do you think Peter spends so much time in this section on what Jesus did to redeem you? Consider Luther’s explanation to the Second Article.

Questions for group study

- Peter didn’t always act in a “self-controlled” manner. Recall two examples.
- Peter denied even knowing Jesus, but Jesus restored him and made him a spokesman. Public sin doesn’t disqualify the Christian from God’s use. Name two examples of people whose “falls” were quite public

and yet were later used by God to continue to witness to others.

- “Christians and unbelievers basically know the guidelines for holy living.” From your experience, would you agree?
- Describe one difference you’ve noticed between the actions of believers and unbelievers. Be honest!
- Give one example from the past month for each: materialism, hedonism, humanism, and liberalism in the church.
- Our salvation does not depend on whether or not we are free of sinning at the moment of Jesus’ return. So explain how Jesus’ return motivates us to holy living.
- Read through any recent worship service. Note the references you find to God as Father or references to us as God’s children.
- God’s judgment for the believer is clear: not guilty because of Jesus. Put into your own words how that moves you to holy living.
- Evaluate two kinds of artistic crosses: one with Jesus on it and one without Jesus on it.

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

*This is the third 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 March 5.*

Are you living in the entryway of your faith? Then it's about time you did a little exploring.

THE MANSION

Reynold Heuer

of your faith

There was a man who lived in a large and luxurious home. The house had dozens of royally appointed bedrooms, bathrooms around every corner, and a library full of first editions. There was a media room with its own theater-size screen; a kitchen any chef would give his right arm for; a den with comfortable leather chairs; and a playroom complete with a billiard table, arcade games, and a dance floor. The dining room could seat 30 people, and there was a fireplace in nearly every room.

As you came into the front door of the home, you entered a huge foyer adorned with tapestries and paintings. At the far end of the foyer was a grand staircase leading to the upper floors.

Living in the entryway

But in the foyer, tucked into the corner behind the front door, was a cot. Beside it were a few small cardboard boxes that held some tattered clothes and a few cans of beans. A lone candle stood on a box beside the cot, and on the cot was a single moth-eaten blanket.

You see, even though the owner of this tremendous home had dozens of rooms to explore and enjoy, he chose to live on a cot in the foyer. There was no good reason for him not to enjoy his entire home. It was his to discover and use as he saw fit. Yet he lived in one cramped little corner, sleeping on a cot.

"What a foolish man!" you might say. "Why, if that were my house I'd be enjoying every part of it!"

Do you really think so? Would it concern you if I said that we all have a little of this man within us?

Living in the mansion

This man had all the benefits of having a roof over his head, a safe place to sleep, and a grand kitchen where he could prepare his meals. He had all that house, but none of the enjoyment, excitement, and adventure that would be associated with such a fine home. The halls of this home never rang with the laughter of friends or the music of fellowship. A Christian who does not explore God's Word is like this man, living in one small corner of the entryway to his faith.

We, like this man, know that there is so much more to life and faith than living at the entry. But, also like him, we often do not take the opportunity

to seek out the riches of God's Word or discover the nooks and crannies of our home, finding wisdom and even greater faith at every turn. We become comfortable living in the entryway and ignore the great gifts that lie beyond the flickering light of our little candles. We miss the opportunity to invite others in to share our riches. We have no desire to explore, to share, or to enjoy.

Are you living at the entryway of your faith? Have you gone only as far into your rich home of belief as necessary to keep the rain off your head? Isn't it about time you did a little exploring? There are ample opportunities for exploring God's Word all around you. Study guides, pamphlets, and Bible studies at your church are just a few. Explore! Enjoy! Pack up the cot, toss out that old blanket, and start looking around the home you've been given.

Rennie Heuer is a member at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.