

APRIL 2006

Forward in Christ

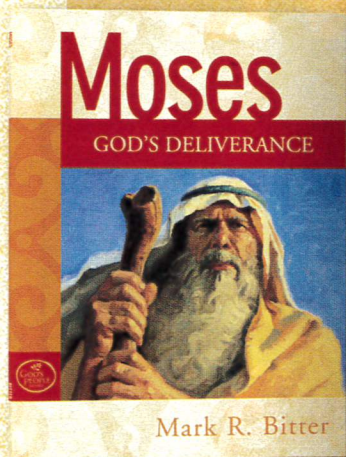
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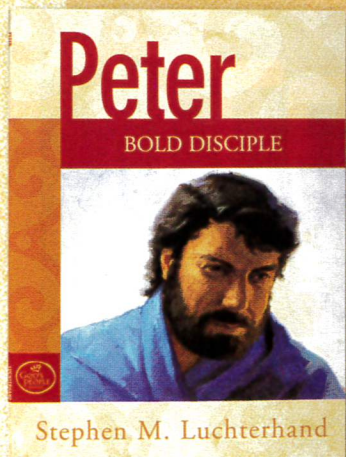
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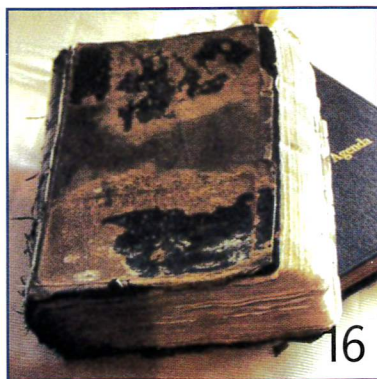
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from the
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FRONT



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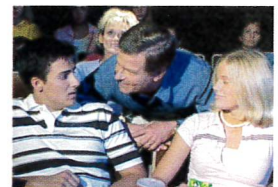
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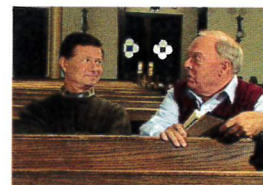
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WITH OUR FATHERS;
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US
NOR FORSAKE US.

1 Kings 8:57

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Forward in Christ magazine
WELS Communication Services
2929 N Mayfair Rd
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398
Phone: 414-256-3210
Fax: 414-256-3862
E-mail: fic@sab.wels.net
www.wels.net

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Rev. John A. Braun
braunj@nph.wels.net

MANAGING EDITOR

Julie K. Wietzke
julie.wietzke@sab.wels.net

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Abby L. Janssen
abby.janssen@sab.wels.net

STAFF WRITER

Laura C. Warmuth
laurachristine@wels.net

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

ART DIRECTOR

Karen Knutson

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

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ON AUDIO

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WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

We're starting a new series on ministerial education this month. The first article, "Following a path" (p. 12), gives you an overview of our ministerial education schools. In upcoming months, recent graduates from around the world will be writing about their ministry and how their education helped prepare them for touching the world with the gospel.

Even though the 2005 hurricane season is long past, we continue to hear updates of the reconstruction of New Orleans and the preparations being made for the 2006 hurricane season. FIC assistant editor Abby Janssen flew to New Orleans in January so she could bring you the news on what is happening with Crown of Life, our WELS church in New Orleans. Even though the church was devastated by the hurricane and flooding from the broken levees, the hearts and the souls of congregation members were not. The catastrophe actually brought the congregation closer together. Don't miss "A bigger picture" (p. 16). If you want to hear a podcast interview with Pastor David Sternhagen of Crown of Life, go to www.wels.net/imprint and click on "Disaster relief."

APRIL

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JANUARY ISSUE

I always enjoy reading *Forward in Christ*, but this [January] issue seems to top them all—with such good articles!

I especially enjoyed “Let’s celebrate,” “Stories from a postmodern campus,” “Survivors” (God bless the teens who write), and the poem, “A perfect church.”

Keep up the good work. It is very inspiring.

*Frieda Miller
Benton Harbor, Michigan*

ORAL COMMUNICATION

After reading the article on “Breaking through the invisible barrier” by Paul Hartman [Jan.], I’d like to suggest that you encourage every seminarian (perhaps when they vicar?) to teach a kindergarten or first grade class for a certain number of hours (you decide how many) to get a feel for communication to those who don’t read with great skill.

I didn’t grow up in WELS (where I’ve been for about 20 years now), and I was from a family who taught Sunday school. We used pictures and oral stories often. I wonder if there aren’t people in WELS who do, too, but aren’t so visible to the scholars who get the advanced training of the seminary.

I am thankful that communicating orally will be a conscious effort in WELS when that is the most effective way to share the good news of our Savior.

*Judy Mahn
Kaukauna, Wisconsin*

WELS IN CHICAGO

Re: “Seizing the opportunity.” [Feb.].

While it is true that the Crossroads effort to establish a congregation is the first initiated by WELS in the city of Chicago, there already are three WELS churches in Chicago. St. Andrew congregation and school are located a few blocks from the home of the world

champion Chicago White Sox. Like her namesake, the congregation has been reaching out near and far with the good news about Jesus for 117 years. The congregation joined WELS from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1973. Emmaus and St. Mark, two congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, joined WELS in 2004. They form a dual parish on Chicago’s far West side.

*Pastor D. N. Rutschow
Southeastern Wisconsin
District president*

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

I would like to commend Paul M. Janke for his answer to the question about Habitat for Humanity [Feb.]. He is right to warn about the dangers of ecumenism that seems to be coming at us from all sides. . . .

*Herb Kluth
Rochester, Minnesota*

FREEDOM FROM FORMALISM

Reading criticism of “Freedom from formalism” [Dec. 2005] in February’s Feedback makes me cringe. Defensive positions like this will oversee a continuation of membership decline within the synod. One thing cannot change in our churches: The Word must be taught in its truth and purity during a service with order. Beyond that, we must carefully examine our worship services. . . .

*Kimberly Parten
Springfield, Missouri*

ESTABLISHING SCHOOLS ABROAD

Re: “Lutheran elementary schools abroad” [Feb. Feedback]. It’s true that a Lutheran elementary school is a proven way to reach young souls with the gospel. On the world mission field, however, a school has its pros and cons. Compared with other forms of ministry, an overseas school requires a huge outlay of

dollars and manpower. Our goal on the world mission field is to plant churches that can nurture, support, and propagate themselves as early as possible. A school can saddle a fledgling national church with a bigger institutional infrastructure than it can ever hope to operate without our help.

That doesn’t mean there’s never a place for a school in a foreign mission strategy. But our hope to be able to “move our expatriate missionaries to new fields sooner” isn’t a reason to start schools overseas. Experience has shown that they have the opposite effect.

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

CORRECTION

Dan Koelpin, who wrote “A rescue mission” [March], is a member at Living Word, Waukesha, Wis., not Trinity.

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*.

When should we celebrate Easter?

This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24

Peter A. Panitzke

Can you celebrate Easter on the Saturday before Easter? This question came up in our congregation as we considered how to handle the large Easter service crowds. One suggestion was to offer a Saturday evening Easter service. But what kind of service should that be? Should it be a somber Easter vigil? Or should it be a pull-out-all-the-stops, joy-filled celebration like the Easter dawn service? The question was really: Can we celebrate Easter before Easter?

It reminds me of an ancient controversy with the imposing label Quartodecimanism, literally “fourteenthism.” The ancient church struggled with the date for Easter. Some Christians wanted the Easter celebration connected to the date of the Passover, the 14th day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar. Then the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection could fall on any day of the week as Christmas does. Others argued that the date of Easter should not be determined by the Jewish calendar but should always fall on Sunday. So who is right?

What is the right day?

Most of the churches finally settled on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. But is that the right day to celebrate Easter?

What is the right day to celebrate that you know Jesus is who he claimed to be? He claimed that the Son of Man would “give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). But that claim would ring hollow if another claim did not come to pass, that is, that he would rise from the dead.

“Everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will . . . kill him. On the third day he will rise again” (Luke 18:31-33). Jesus’ resurrection proves his claim to be the Son of Man, the Savior who could give his life as a ransom for us.

What is the right day to celebrate that your sins are forgiven? Paul wrote, “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25). At every appearance of Jesus on the day of his resurrection, the Father was announcing for all to hear that he was satisfied with the payment his Son Jesus offered for the world’s sins. Jesus was right on Good Friday. “It is finished.” No more payment is required.

What is the right day to celebrate that you will live forever? Jesus told his disciples, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19). The Spirit led Paul to assure us, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). If Jesus rose from the dead, your body and my body will rise from the dead. If Jesus lives forever, you and I will live forever.

Today is the day

So what is the right day to celebrate this good news? The early church wanted uniformity. Our congregation will have to make a decision about the content of a service the Saturday evening before Easter. But the correct day to celebrate this



good news is every day. Every day we can rise and sing with the psalmist, “This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Today is the day to celebrate that Jesus has risen.

Not the day but the joy is what unites Christians everywhere in a constant celebration of Easter.

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

Free forgiveness

Paul T. Prange

Some years ago I had the privilege of attending a fascinating religious debate. One debater was a respected rabbi from a prominent synagogue. The other debater was a distinguished Baptist seminary professor.

The subject of the debate was the identity of the “Suffering Servant of the Lord” in Isaiah 53. The question: Who is the “he” in the following Bible verses?

Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace
was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

The rabbi went first. He explained that some Jews believe that the man will be a Messiah who is to come. Others teach that the person suffering here is the prophet Isaiah himself, who was stricken when people didn’t listen to his heartfelt message. But, explained the rabbi, most Jewish scholars believe that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is the Jewish people themselves, who suffered in the Holocaust, with the resulting lesson for the world that such genocide should not happen again.

In his first turn, the Baptist seminary professor explained that Christians have always seen Jesus in the words of Isaiah 53, including many details of the crucifixion. During his explanation he used the term “vicarious atonement,” explaining that Jesus paid the full price for our sins and as a result we have forgiveness and peace with God the Father.

The rabbi had a chance for rebuttal. He said, “We see no evidence in the Scriptures of what

you call ‘vicarious atonement.’ In fact, Ezekiel says that each person is responsible for his own sin. That’s exactly what’s wrong with you Christians. You think that because someone else is responsible for your sin you can do what you want. You think that you are forgiven without strings attached, and so you live unholy lives. That’s what causes religious wars today, and that’s what caused the atrocities of the Crusades and even the Holocaust.”

While the rabbi was speaking, I was anticipating what the professor would say to explain the connections between justification and sanctification. How would he present the connection between repentance and faith? Here was an opportunity to explain to the many Jewish people present how Christians lead good lives as a result of grace, not in order to earn heaven.

Instead, the Baptist seminary professor replied, “You misunderstand me when you say that Christians teach you are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ with no strings attached. Christians do teach that you have to repent and

keep the Ten Commandments, or at least try, in order to go to heaven. The only Christians who teach that you are freely forgiven, without any strings attached, are conservative Lutherans, and even a lot of them are giving it up.”

The only Christians who teach that each human being is freely forgiven through faith in Jesus as Savior, without any strings attached, are conservative Lutherans, and even a lot of them are giving it up.

We have a precious message. Who will speak it if we do not? If it is not on the lips of our children, who will speak it to our grandchildren? May the Lord preserve the preaching and teaching of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus among us, with every clear gospel implication.

**We have a precious message.
Who will speak it if we do not?**

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



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Spreading the gospel in Old Testament times

In the Old Testament, God told his people to separate from unbelievers. Were the people of the Old Testament to share the good news with others or did that happen first in the New Testament? How were the people in Old Testament times to believe if no one told them?

God's desire for salvation always included all. The Old Testament just as the New speaks of God's salvation for sinners from every nation, tribe, people, and language. Consider Psalm 67:2: "That your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations." As the promise of the Savior was passed down from generation to generation, it was mentioned that through him "all peoples on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Misunderstanding just this point often led to spiritual arrogance in Israel. They forgot that God's choice fell on them by grace, not by merit. God didn't choose them because they were by nature more worthy than other nations (Deuteronomy 9:4). Think how hard it was even in early New Testament times for Jewish Christians to accept Gentle Christians as full co-heirs in Christ!

Certainly God did command his people to keep separate—in particular by not intermarrying with other nations or copying their idolatrous immorality. By this he sought to keep a unique people eager to welcome the Promised One. But in none of this was God seeking to withhold salvation from other nations.

An analogy may help. As congregations plan outreach efforts, sometimes they speak of "come" and "go" strategies. In "come" strategies we seek to attract the unchurched to "come" to us to hear the gospel. In "go" strategies we seek to carry that gospel out to where the unchurched are.

We could also use those terms to describe a general difference in "outreach strategy" from Old to New Testament times. The Old Testament period was very much a "come" strategy. Out of all the nations in the world God had by his grace called Israel to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). As they lived and worshiped differently from other nations, they were God's shining beacon in a sea of unbelief.

This would lead other nations to note: "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deuteronomy 4:6).

Consider also that God had situated them at the crossroads of the world. Trade routes intersecting from Africa, Asia, and Europe passed through Israel's narrow "land-bridge" between the Mediterranean and the desert.

Certainly there were exceptions to this basic "come" strategy. When Israel's faithlessness brought defeat and deportation, God's grace scattered witnesses into surrounding nations. The testimony of the young Israelite girl, captured by raiders, led to the conversion of a Syrian general (2 Kings 5). There were even some brief "missionary journeys," such as Jonah's reluctant Ninevite preaching tour. In New Testament times, when Paul spread the gospel throughout the Roman world, his first stop was often to the Jews that were scattered throughout the world but had established synagogues. God used the come strategy to prepare bases for a go strategy.

In New Testament times, there's little doubt that God's primary strategy is "go." On the day of his ascension Jesus outlined his broad strategy for his followers as "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The time for a dominant "come" strategy was replaced by a dominant "go" strategy.

Of course, some things never change. We often need God's forgiveness for the same spiritual arrogance that clung to Israel (as if we are by nature better than any other sinners in this world!). But most of all what hasn't changed is God's eager desire for the salvation of every sinner. That's reason to fit our feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. For until Christ inaugurates the final "come" strategy of the Last Day, the dominant word is "go!"

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.

Our God raises the dead

As Jesus rose, notice was served that the earth would no longer be the final resting place for humans. The earth will give up her dead.

Dumbfounded amazement.
Jaws dropped in disbelief.

Eyes stared in shock. You couldn't expect much else when the dead neighbor walks by. When the deceased grandpa or daughter comes back out of the grave, you know this day is going to be different. The newly-resurrected must have had a tough time just explaining themselves to the old neighborhood. "But . . . but . . . I thought you were . . . dead."

As unbelievable as their story was, it wasn't even the big news of the weekend.

The beginning of this new week also heralded the beginning of a new approach to life. Like those resurrected people, new claims would supplant old promises; new life would push death out of the grave. It was Sunday morning, and Jerusalem had to be chaotic over the dead people who came back from their graves on Friday (Matthew 27:52).

For thousands of years the earth had been reclaiming her dust. Humans were formed from the earth, and part of the death sentence for disobeying the Creator was that the earth would take their flesh back to her bosom.

So for thousands of years, in coffins and shrouds, at sea and on the land, all over the globe the earth had been reclaiming her material. The voice of the Creator was present at every funeral, even at those that

refused to acknowledge his presence: "Dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19).

But this Sunday morning, a new way was dawning.

God promised our resurrection


People had been living on a promise: Our God raises the dead. Beside the dreaded cadence of funerals, a promise had also been marching with God's people throughout the centuries—the hope of resurrection. It was a powerful promise, but only a promise. The whole world needed to know if the Creator would really bring back to life those who had been given to the grave.

Job had forecast it. In the midst of his tortuous hurt, he still held to the promise: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27). But Job, like millions

of other saints, had already returned to dust without the promise being fulfilled. It was still only a promise: Our God raises the dead.

There were a few signs here and there. To Moses, he had revealed himself as the God of three men who had been dead for hundreds of years (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), but he spoke of those three in the present tense, as if they were not dead. "I am . . . the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6).

In the time of Jesus, a whole segment of the Jewish leadership (the Sadducees) denied the resurrection. Influenced by the Greek culture, they said there was no clear testimony from God that the dead would rise to life. When they pressed Jesus on the issue, his replies were simple words about the reality and the certainty of the resurrection. Still many in Judea denied it. They presented a different theology—God does not resurrect dead bodies.



The Sadducees must have been the most astonished when those dead people went strolling through Jerusalem. They were proof positive: Our God raises the dead.

Jesus completed God's promise

Jesus preached powerful testimony a few months earlier when he raised a friend from the grave. To the sobbing sister, Martha, Jesus had made a sober assertion: Your brother will live again. "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" was the sister's tear-stained confession (John 11:24). She knew the promise. Our God raises the dead. But right now, she knew the hurt more—her dear brother has been dead four days.

In the middle of that pain, Jesus staked his claim on world history. All the hope, all the promise, all the power were centered on him. "I am the resurrection." There it is—he said it! Resurrection from the grave is dependent on him and flows from him. He staked his claim and pressed for more territory—he wanted every hurting human heart to turn to him: "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25,26).

The Source of that Sunday morning resurrection has made his case. He will complete the promise: Our God raises the dead.

So why are there any dead in the first place? The cause of death is sin, and Jesus had come to deal with both those monsters, as well as their misguided angel, Satan. He went toe-to-

toe with the latter. Each time one of the liar's temptations encircled the Savior, it was the deceiver who was defeated. He had thousands of years of experience in getting humans to sin, but the One was different. The devil brought the whole pack of lies, but this human, the One, this Jesus was different. He didn't fall for the trick; he fought the deceiver, and, for the first time in history, one of the humans succeeded!

In the face of sin, Jesus was resolute. He would not falter. He did not fail. He was obeying in our place. He was going to release his sisters and brothers from the grave by going after the very cause of death: sin-coated attitudes and sin-laden actions. His atonement was constructed of holy obedience long before he went to the cross.

A small, empty grave proved to be the turning point of history.

Then on Friday, his obedience bowed its head for one more pious act of devotion. He took the cross and the suffering, the separation from his Father. He drank the last dregs of the cup of death. Death took hold of him,

and he took hold of death. He walked into the devil's territory, and only one of them could come out victorious.

And now, Sunday morning, he had been held in the clutches of our last enemy since Friday. He volunteered to go into the tomb, but he refused to cooperate with death's decay. He and the grave were locked in a true death-grip, and the living Jesus broke the power of cold, hard death.

That Sunday morning, while some former corpses walked the streets of Jerusalem, a small, empty grave proved to be the turning point of history.

As Jesus rose, notice was served that the earth would no longer be the final resting place for humans. The earth will give up her dead. The devil had met his match. The Offspring of the woman has crushed the deceiver's head. The great Substitute for all humans has refused to give in to sin, and a long line of humans will follow him to safety. That news even eclipsed the astonishing sight of the formerly-dead now waltzing through Jerusalem.

This is the day that changed everything.


This is the day the grave lost its grip on humanity.

This is the day that death and Satan met their match.

This is the day that made the promise ring true: Our God raises the dead.

This is the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jerry Ewings is vice principal at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.



Each year God leads numerous WELS members to choose a path that guides them into the public ministry. The paths that lead them to their decision will vary, and each student will follow a different path as they leave school and enter the world. But two things will keep them going—God and his Word. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105).

WELS ministerial education schools have a unique single purpose: to thoroughly prepare the pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and missionaries of tomorrow who will take the unconditional gospel to the next generation. The Board for Ministerial Education oversees and coordinates this four-school system, which consists of two high schools, a college, and a seminary. Ministerial Education receives 24 percent of the synod’s budget to help support these schools and their students.

Here are some facts about WELS’ ministerial education schools.

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Primary purpose: To offer theological training that prepares men to enter the pastoral ministry of WELS or of churches within its confessional fellowship. The seminary also offers opportunities for theological and professional growth to called workers who already are serving in the ministry of its confessional fellowship.

Number of students: 178 students from 23 states and 3 foreign countries.

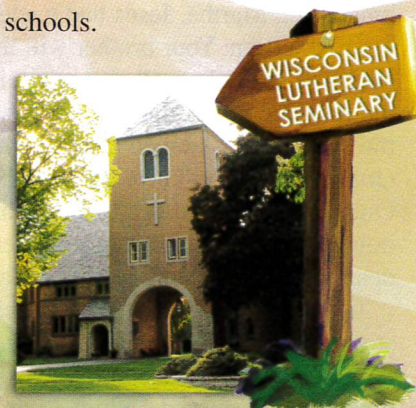
Faculty: 16 full-time, 1 part-time.

Other facts:

- The seminary offers courses in four different areas: biblical theology (study of the Bible in its original languages), historical theology (study of the history of the church and the Lutheran confessions), systematic theology (study of Christian doctrine), and practical theology (study of worship, evangelism, counseling, leadership, and Christian education).
- The Pastoral Studies Institute, a part of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, works to identify, train, and partner with workers of different ethnicities. It also counsels men older than the traditional college-age students who seek training for the pastoral ministry.
- The *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, the theological journal of the seminary and WELS, is written and edited by seminary professors.

Located in: Mequon, Wis.

Web site: www.wls.wels.net



FOLLOWING a Path

**WELS ministerial
education schools
provide a path into
the public ministry.**

Julie K. Wietzke

WHAT'S COMING

After learning all the facts about WELS' ministerial education, we want you to get to know graduates from the schools. These graduates are going down different paths into the public ministry. But whether the graduates are pastors, teachers, or staff ministers; whether they serve at home or abroad; whether they're first-career or second-career students, they all have one goal in mind—to touch the world and the people in it with the gospel.

Over the next seven months, you'll read stories of how different graduates have reached out with the gospel and how their education has prepared them for the blessings and the challenges they face as called workers.

The last article in the series will discuss future challenges for our ministerial education system and how the world that we send our called workers into is changing.

MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

Primary purpose: To prepare men and women for proclaiming the gospel to a dying world. This college of ministry educates men for the pastoral ministry—graduates receive a Bachelor of Arts degree and continue their preparation at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary—and both men and women

for educational ministry—graduates receive a Bachelor of Science in Education degree and enter the public ministry as either early childhood educators, elementary school teachers, high school teachers, or staff ministers. The college is accredited through the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Number of students: 763 students from 33 states and 7 foreign countries.

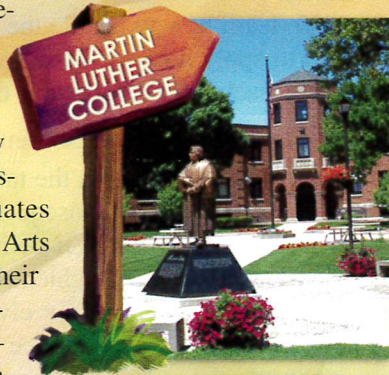
Faculty: 69 full-time, 9 part-time, 3 tutors.

Other facts:

- When studying to be an elementary school teacher, students spend 800 hours in observing and teaching in both public and Lutheran schools.
- Martin Luther College also offers a Master of Science in Education.
- Students have opportunities for service. For example, through Project SOAR (Standing on a Rock), students went to the New Orleans area this school year to do relief work and outreach.

Located in: New Ulm, Minn.

Web site: www.mlc-wels.edu



LUTHER PREPARATORY SCHOOL (LPS) AND MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY (MLS)

Primary purpose: To train high school students for the public ministry of the gospel and upon graduation to enroll them at Martin Luther College.

Number of students:

LPS—387 students from 27 states and 9 foreign countries.

MLS—260 students from 14 states and 3 foreign countries.

Faculty:

LPS—26 full-time, 15 part-time, 10 tutors

MLS—22 full-time, 5 part-time, 5 tutors

Other facts:

- Graduates of the two prep schools accounted for 55 percent of the enrollment in the pastoral ministry program at Martin Luther College last year.
- Seventy percent of students at Michigan Lutheran Seminary and 80 percent of students at Luther Preparatory School live in dormitories on the campuses.
- Both schools offer programs that provide students with opportunities to participate in cross-cultural mission work. In these programs, students travel to world and home mission fields and help with mission activities.

Located in:

LPS—Watertown, Wis.

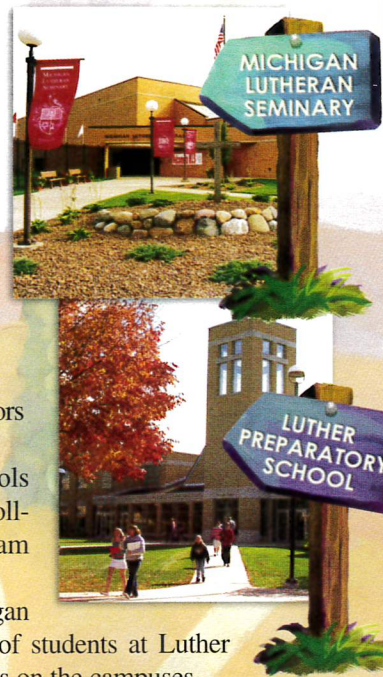
MLS—Saginaw, Mich.

Web sites:

LPS—www.lps.wels.net

MLS—www.mlsem.org

Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ



SO WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PREPARATORY SCHOOL AND AN AREA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL?

The two WELS preparatory schools' main goal is to train men and women for the public ministry. Their curriculum is focused singularly on preparing students to attend Martin Luther College. On average, 53 percent of Luther Preparatory School graduates and 47 percent of Michigan Lutheran Seminary graduates continue on to Martin Luther College. The WELS 24 area Lutheran high schools have a broader focus—to provide a Christ-centered education that prepares students for college or the workforce. Even though these schools have a broader focus, about nine percent of their graduates enroll in the educational track at Martin Luther College.

Much of the revenue for all of these schools comes from tuition and fees. But the preparatory schools receive additional funding from the synod's budget while the area Lutheran high schools are supported by groups of congregations in the area (federations).

JUSTIFICATION: HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH

The law crushes us. The gospel gives us life. We need to understand how to use these two great teachings of Scripture.

THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE TO TIMOTHY, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). When we study doctrine, it’s not only important to teach truth correctly. It’s important to apply truth correctly.

To learn how to handle the doctrine of justification and to apply it correctly, we must first review the two great teachings of Scripture: the law and the gospel.

The law convicts and condemns

As you can see from the table, the divine law brings about some horrible consequences for man. It demands what none of us can ever deliver, namely, perfect obedience and untainted righteousness. The law peels back the outward veneer of our civil obedience and all our efforts to present a good face to those around us, and it exposes the wretched depravity of our natural human heart. It reveals the frightful fury of the living God, who is a consuming fire.

Many people have been taught that “God hates sin but loves sinners.” This statement is a tragic confusion of law and gospel, and it actually contradicts Scripture. The law introduces human beings to the true God—not the god of our own imagination—the God who hates all evil and who hates all who sin against him.

Why do we still need the law? Because the law must tear down before the gospel can build up. We do not correctly handle the word of truth when we preach the gospel to people who are comfortable loving their 401(k)s, their automobiles, their jobs, their leisure activities, their travel plans, or even their children more than God. We are to expose their idolatry and warn them to repent. We are not to rail upon the outward sins of the flesh that condemn all the wicked Hollywood movie moguls, slam the purveyors of porn, and indict the murderers and pedophiles at the state penitentiary. We are to condemn the sins that lurk, cold and sinister, within our own hearts and the hearts of those close to us. We cannot make excuses for apathy, stinginess, lack of Christian charity, prejudice, and indif-

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL



THE LAW

Declares that God hates all sinners

(Psalm 5:4,5; Psalm 11:5)

Commands what we must do and not do

(Exodus 20)

Exposes our sin

(Romans 3:19,20)

Demands righteousness from man

(Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5)

Damns sinners

(Galatians 3:10; Revelation 21:8)

Restrains unbelievers

(1 Timothy 1:9-11)

Instructs Christians

(Psalm 119)

THE GOSPEL

Declares that God loves all sinners

(John 3:16)

Reveals what God did for us in Christ

(2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Reveals our Savior

(John 1:17,18)

Gives righteousness from God

(Romans 3:21-31)

Saves sinners

(Romans 1:16,17)

Liberates in Christ

(Galatians 5:1)

Motivates Christians

(2 Corinthians 5:14)

ference to the means of grace. We are to remember the words of Christ, “Unless you repent, you too will all perish” (Luke 13:5).

If a sinner has not come to grips with his own sin, can justification—especially objective justification—still be preached to the impenitent? Can Christ’s forgiveness as an objective reality be proclaimed to those who do not know their sin? The answer is: absolutely not!

The gospel heals and saves

Justification, on the other hand, is gospel—pure gospel. As gospel, it finds application to sinners who have been crushed and broken and brought by the law to see their helpless and hopeless condition.

When your conscience is troubled and you are burdened by guilt, afflicted by past sins, nagged by thoughts of your own mortality, and assailed by doubts about your salvation, where are you to turn? Scripture points you to a completed salvation that exists entirely outside yourself. When you are troubled by the weight of your sin and fear God’s wrath, you should never look inside yourself for the assurance of salvation. You cannot find consolation in your own life or your own works. You are not to find comfort even in your faith; in other words, you are not to have faith in faith. Looking inside yourself, you will find only sin and death, from which you can in no way set yourself free. Introspective self-searching will only spiral a troubled soul downward into the black hole of despair.

To find comfort, you are to look outside yourself. Look to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which holds out the objective truth of Christ’s completed

salvation. In faith, you lay hold of the completed forgiveness already won for you at the cross, and you receive it for your own by faith.

This *theocentric* (God-centered) approach to theology has always been a hallmark of Lutheran doctrine. When you’re troubled, the Word of God directs you away from your own fears, from your own feelings, from your own doing, your own praying, and even your own believing, and it points you to the reality of God’s grace in Christ and his completed work at Calvary.

But even looking outside yourself, you may fail to find peace if Jesus’ justifying work is not seen as complete for all. For whom did Jesus live, die, and rise again? Was it only for the elect? Was it only for those whom God recognized in his foreknowledge? Did Jesus somehow manage to pay for the sin of the entire world, yet still overlook you? When Jesus said from the cross, “It is finished,” did that triumphant decree embrace you and me and declare our justification finished, complete, and certain—or were we left out? Is there something that you or I have to add to make Jesus’ justifying work real for us? Is there a change inside you and me that has to take place for us to be found not-guilty before the judgment bar of God?

The next time you find yourself lying awake in the pre-dawn dark-

ness, thinking of the passage of time, contemplating your own mortality, and reflecting upon the approaching appointment you have with a just and holy God, your only unassailable assurance of salvation is the unchanging truth that Jesus lived, died, and rose again to justify the world—and the world includes you!

The objective reality of justification for the world that was achieved at the cross does not change with the roller coaster of human emotion. Whether your faith is weak or strong, Christ—the object of faith—remains rock-solid and unshakeable. God’s completed forgiveness, acquired at Calvary and sealed by Easter’s empty tomb, is the objective basis of comfort for you to hold onto in the most troubling times of your life.

Conviction for the impenitent and unbelieving; comfort for the penitent and believing. God’s Word speaks to all, at every stage of life, in such simple terms: “Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15).

Jon Buchholz is pastor at Emmanuel, Tempe, Arizona.

Next month: Justification motivates our mission.

This is the third of a five-part series on justification. These articles are taken from essays that were presented by Pastor Jon Buchholz at the 2005 synod convention. To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net/jumpword/ficarchive, and search by the author’s first and last name.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

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

A BIGGER PICTURE

Abby L. Janssen

If you ask anyone in the New Orleans area, they'll tell you that the problem wasn't Hurricane Katrina arriving on Aug. 29, 2005. It was the breached levees afterward that did the city in.

For Crown of Life, New Orleans, La., those breached levees caused four feet of water to pour into the church, activity building, and parsonage, virtually destroying the buildings. What wasn't destroyed by water was overtaken by mold, a byproduct of standing, stagnant water that remained for weeks. In all, every building on Crown of Life's property had to be gutted and disinfected. This was in addition to clearing downed trees and debris and repairing damaged roofs.

The area around the church didn't fare much better. All of the homes, like many in New Orleans, were uninhabitable, forcing most of Crown of Life's membership to scatter across Louisiana and beyond. As member Carol Sternhagen notes, "The most challenging thing in the beginning was just surviving."

With such massive destruction and the question of whether people would return or not, was there even a possibility that Crown of Life could survive?

"You lean on me and I'll lean on you"

For the members of Crown of Life, it wasn't a question worth asking. Those that could gathered the first Sunday after the flooding at the home of Randy and Linda Hall, members who reside in Baton Rouge. The Halls offered up

their living room as a makeshift church for as long as needed.

Member Kristopher Smith recalls that service. "That first Sunday was such an emotional day. There were a lot of hugs and a lot of tears because many in our congregation were still lost. Yet to see us together, supporting one another with a spirit of 'you lean on me and I'll lean on you,' was a defining moment. As a church we stood

This is just a hurdle that needs to be overcome.

—Pastor David Sternhagen of Crown of Life, New Orleans, La.

together and said, 'God is great and he is greater than any condition or circumstance that could ever happen to us.' Worshipping together every Sunday since has been motivating and healing."

Linda Hall concurs. "From that first week it became apparent that everyone who was here wanted to work to try to keep the church together. I think it goes back to the personality of the congregation and our pastor. There is such an attitude of humility and a spirit of service and willingness to help each other. Regardless of whether you are black or white, a new member or an old member, there is a very strong bond there."

What happened just weeks after the storm exemplified that bond. Pastor David and Carol Sternhagen loaded up an RV and traveled thousands of miles in an attempt to locate their members who had scattered across



Pastor David and Carol Sternhagen.

several states and bring them comfort.

Pastor Sternhagen also sends out a daily e-mail that is part devotion, part news.

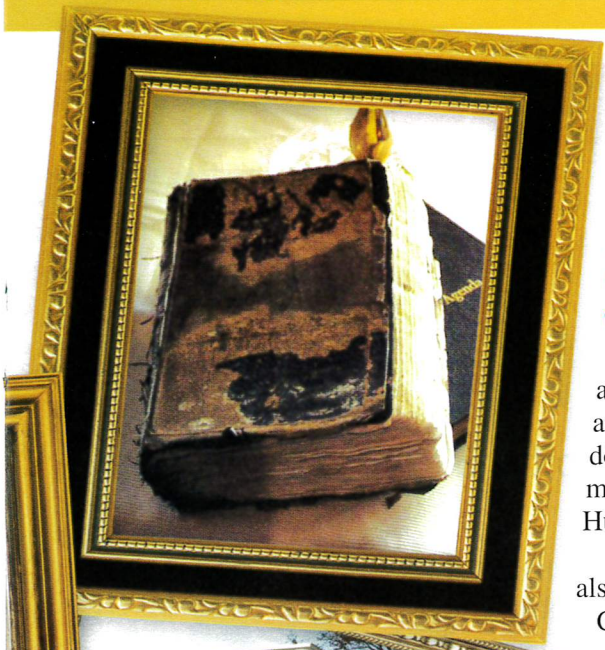
Through that e-mail, he continues to remind his members that they are all in this together, and, with God's help, they can overcome anything.

Another aspect that has helped keep Crown of Life going, literally and figuratively, is the outpouring of support from fellow WELS members around the country. Smith points out, "From the beginning we started getting little gifts and cards saying, 'We're behind you.' People that we don't know came to our rescue and are still coming to our rescue. That's just a wonderful thing to see."

The next step

With a clear focus of keeping the church together, the next question was how to proceed. Even though the city of New Orleans was unsure of its future plans for rebuilding the city, the congregation decided not to wait.

a congregation are stronger than ever.



After sitting in water for two weeks, Pastor Sternhagen's bible was rescued from the church. Although covered in mold and the binding gone, Sternhagen painstakingly re-glued the pages and cleaned it. Rather than purchase a new Bible, he says, "there are some things that are better old, in this case The Good Book."

and transport relief workers to the area. To date, more than \$2 million dollars has been given to the Committee on Relief as a direct result of Hurricane Katrina.

Individual congregations have also been compelled by the love of Christ to donate everything from handmade quilts to bottled water.

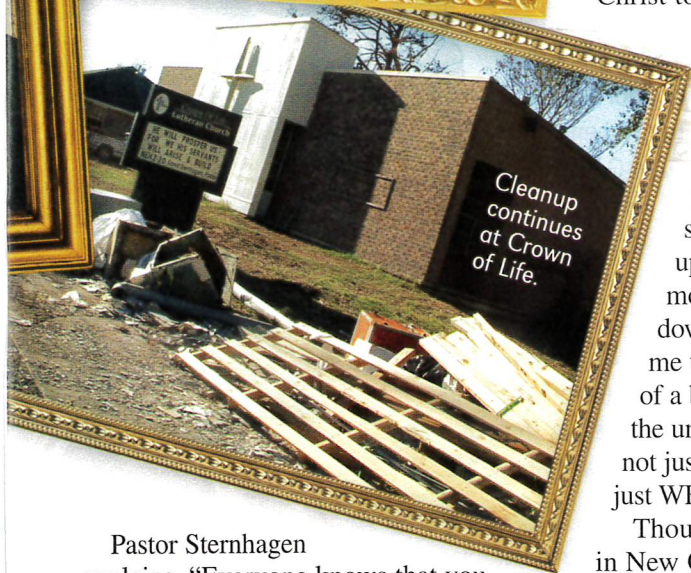
Fighting back tears, Linda says, "It's not just the monetary gifts and the prayers either. It's people saying, 'I'm going to give up a week of my vacation or months of my time to come down and help.' It's allowed me to remember that I am part of a bigger picture. I'm part of the universal Church of Christ, not just Crown of Life, and not just WELS."

Though the rebuilding efforts in New Orleans will continue for the next two to three years, Crown of Life is already worshipping in its church. Although it is just a shell of a building, the congregation is hoping the reconstruction phase will be finished by the end of 2006. They also are hoping to use the events of 2005 as a springboard for outreach.

Notes Pastor Sternhagen, "I'm hoping that the Lord will use this tragedy to change the lives of a lot of people in a positive way and bring some people to faith. Ultimately some people are going to be in heaven because of this."

Abby Janssen is assistant editor of Forward in Christ.

Next month: The volunteers in New Orleans.



Pastor Sternhagen explains, "Everyone knows that you want to have a church in an area that people are moving into. I would like the congregation to be in a position where we can invite and encourage people as they move back in, and then become their church home. Over the years we've demonstrated a commitment to our neighborhood, and I think that the people who come back will see that."

With funding from the WELS Committee on Relief and volunteers from WELS Kingdom Workers and Builders For Christ, Crown of Life began rebuilding its church, activity building, and parsonage.

In addition to the rebuilding project, the Committee on Relief has also distributed funds necessary for Crown of Life to assist its members with relocating and basic needs and to feed, house,

WELS

Committee on Relief

The WELS Committee on Relief (COR) is the synod's "ministry of compassion," providing funding for those who have been devastated by natural disasters and other tragedies.

What often goes unreported is the fact that the COR is a five-man committee coordinated by Pastor Philip Schupmann. Schupmann, who chairs the committee on an unpaid, appointed basis until 2009, also is the pastor of Resurrection, Aurora, Ill. Unlike many other relief agencies, the COR has no administrative staff or offices. Instead, the COR partners with WELS Kingdom Workers to mobilize relief efforts and disperse many of the funds.

It also is committed to seeing projects through to the end. The reconstruction of Crown of Life's fellowship hall and parsonage will be completed by late spring, but the COR will continue assisting in the area. Schupmann states, "After the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is gone and the Red Cross has left, the Committee on Relief, in conjunction with WELS Kingdom Workers and local congregations, will help those who may have slipped through the cracks with their rebuilding or repair needs."

Schupmann is also quick to point out that the COR also helps internationally, recently sending humanitarian aid to Pakistan, India, Thailand, and Africa. WELS missionaries or friendly counselors use the money to provide humanitarian aid and do outreach.

More information about the COR and how you can donate is available at www.wels.net/jumpword/cor.



Crown Of Life
Lutheran Church

**HE WILL PROSPER US ;
FOR WE HIS SERVANTS
WILL ARISE & BUILD**
NEH 2:20 *David Sternhagen, Pastor*

WHATEVER

A time to weep and a time to laugh

When your faith is weakened, you just have to turn to the Bible.

Jackie Tetzloff

When I was in seventh grade, my sister, Kristi, was a junior at Winnebago Lutheran Academy. I looked up to her for a lot of things. She introduced me to my favorite band and even influenced my love of the color orange.

One night my family received a phone call from my other sister, Becky. There was an accident that involved her and Kristi. The next morning, my alarm went off, and my mom walked in and turned it off. I wondered why my mom just turned it off and did not wake me up for school. So I lay there for a little while. After hearing mumbling from my mom on the phone, I decided to sit up and wait for my parents.

Eventually they came into the room and sat next to me. I stared straight ahead. I was afraid to look at them, but I asked, "How are they?" I knew what the answer was, but I was afraid to hear it.

When I found out Kristi had died, I cried for hours. After this, my faith weakened . . . a lot.

My question is, how does one's faith get stronger after a terrible incident such as the death of someone you care about?

I think back to the time when my faith was so weak, and I remember the passages that really helped. The thing is, though, everyone's faith is different. What may strengthen me may weaken another. But I know that God works through the message of Jesus so you have to be patient.

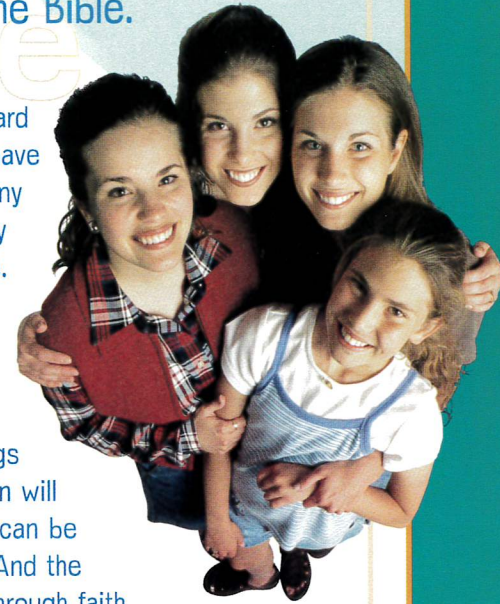
For instance, Ecclesiastes 3:1,4 says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance." What really got me into this passage was the song, "Turn, Turn, Turn" by the

Byrds. If I had never heard that song, I would not have found this passage on my own. This passage really opened the door for me. It helped me remember how much God loves me. It reminded me that no matter how bad, or even good, things are on this earth, heaven will be tons better. Nothing can be as glorious as heaven! And the only way to heaven is through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 2:16).

Whenever I have a doubt in my mind or if I feel lonely without my sister or even my friends, I just remind myself that life without Jesus would make my life empty. There is no life in emptiness. Jesus promised that he is always there for me and he will never leave me. That right there shows his great omnipresence. Truth is, when your faith is weakened, you just have to turn to the Bible. We cannot do anything on our own. Only the Holy Spirit is capable of making our faith grow stronger through the Bible.

My faith may have been weakened at the time of my sister's death, but I know for sure that my faith is growing stronger each day now. The Holy Spirit really does work in our hearts, and I cannot imagine what life would be like without God. It's scary to think about. I'm just grateful to have a God who was, is, and will always be there for me, even in times such as death.

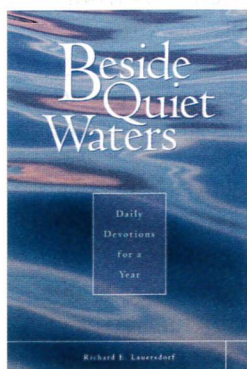
Jackie Tetzloff, a senior at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, is a member at Grace, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.



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.

Daily walks with God



\$16.99

Most of us know that we should read and study God's Word every day. Unfortunately, many of us succumb to the temptations and distractions of the devil that prevent us from doing so. "I have too many things

to do today," "I woke up late," or "I'm just too tired," are excuses that we may have used at one time or another to justify our failure to read and study God's Word. However, *Beside Quiet Waters* by Pastor Richard E. Lauersdorf is a great way to study God's Word and work toward that goal of getting involved with God's Word on a daily basis.

Each devotion is one page in length and has a Bible passage, a three or four-paragraph discussion, and a short prayer. Even for the busiest of people, this book is the answer for those who use the above mentioned excuses for not delving into God's Word. Each devotion takes no more than five minutes to read, but it can cause one to

ponder the biblical truths expressed for an entire day. Lauersdorf weaves personal anecdotes into his devotions and applies them to the passage that he is writing about. The devotions are written in a language that is clear and simple enough for beginning readers, yet it carries a biblical message that even mature Christians can ponder and apply to their daily lives.

Just the other day, after reading the newspaper and learning more about all of the unrest that is taking place in the world today, I found one of Lauersdorf's devotions very comforting. In commenting on the well-known passage of Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd," Lauersdorf writes, "The world may flare up with bombs and hatred. Earthquakes of massive force may toss my life back and forth. But my loving Shepherd is still leading me, and I'm safe when I trustingly follow him." With each daily devotion, Lauersdorf reminds all of us of the fact that even though we may be burdened with the troubles and cares that come from living in a sinful world, we have a loving Savior who cares for us deeply and who will never forsake us.

Matthew Beyersdorf
Crown of Life, Corona, California

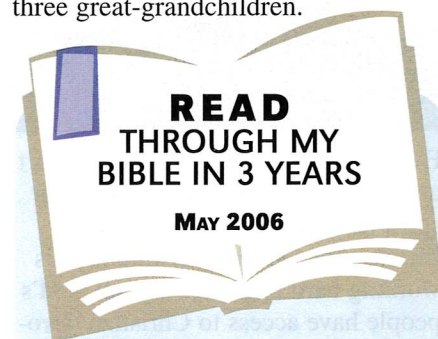
Obituary

Max N. Herrmann
1922-2005

Max Herrmann was born July 7, 1922, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died Dec. 12, 2005, in Mauston, Wis.

A 1947 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served churches in Bison, Athboy, and Date, S.D.; churches in Kendall and Dorsett Ridge, Wis.; Grace, Manitowoc, Wis.; and St. Paul, Mauston/St. Luke, New Lisbon, Wis.

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



1. Deuteronomy 14, 15	16. Mk. 10:32-52
2. Dt. 16, 17	17. Mk. 11:1-19
3. Dt. 18, 19	18. Mk. 11:20-33
4. Dt. 20, 21	19. Mk. 12:1-27
5. Dt. 22, 23	20. Mk. 12:28-44
6. Dt. 24, 25	21. Mk. 13:1-23
7. Dt. 26	22. Mk. 13:24-37
8. Dt. 27:1-28:14	23. Mk. 14:1-25
9. Dt. 28:15-68	24. Mk. 14:26-52
10. Dt. 29, 30	25. Mk. 14:53-72
11. Dt. 31	26. Mk. 15:1-21
12. Dt. 32:1-47	27. Mk. 15:22-41
13. Dt. 32:48-34:12	28. Mk. 15:42-16:8
14. Mark 10:1-16	29. Mk. 16:9-20
15. Mk. 10:17-31	30. Judges 1:1-2:5
	31. Jdg. 2:6-3:6

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Bringing the Word to the visually impaired

A cup of cocoa, a fuzzy afghan, and a good book. Can you imagine a rainy Saturday afternoon without them? What blessings! But what if you weren't able to make out the words on the page of your book?



(L to R) Elmer Stolle, Carol Weber, and Bev Noack help in the cassette department at the Mission for the Visually Impaired, headquartered in St. Paul, Minn.

Even more sadly, what if you weren't able to read God's words when your spirit had a rainy day? The WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired is working hard to ensure that all God's people have access to Christian devotional and informational materials, regardless of their visual capabilities.

The Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI) began in 1965 when the

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) undertook the production and distribution of materials for the visually impaired. The first brailled Small Catechism was produced in 1967, followed by *Forward in Christ* (then called *The Northwestern Lutheran*) in 1969. In 1974 they began producing *Meditations* and *The Northwestern Lutheran* on cassette tape as well.

The MVI remained under the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society until 1970 when the Commission on Special Ministries established a subcommittee, then known as the Mission for the Blind. Thanks to special gifts from church groups, Sunday schools, day schools, and individuals, along with the continued support of the LWMS, this mission has been able to continue without assistance from synodical funds.

Each week, many volunteers gather at the mission's headquarters in St. Paul, Minn. They are trained in all phases of production, packing, and shipping of materials. Eleven transcribers regularly contribute their time and skills.

The mission sends all materials free of charge. Three hundred *Meditations* cassettes, 45 braille *Meditations*, and 160 *Forward In Christ* cassettes (among others) are sent each month. Perhaps someone is listening to this article as you are reading it! Requests from Africa arrive monthly, as Africa has many people who become visually impaired due to disease. The mission also receives special requests for other publications on occasion.

The work of the Mission for the Visually Impaired continues as it settles into a new building in South St. Paul, Minn. The building accommodates the Mission for the Visually Impaired and provides warehouse storage for the distribution of WELS Prison Ministries materials. At the dedication service on May 7, the mission will not only dedicate the new building in God's name but also rededicate its important work to the Lord.

Learn about the Mission for the Visually Impaired and what materials are available at www.wels.net/jumpword/mvi or by calling 651-291-1536.

Unleash the laypeople

Attention Christian women! Does this sound familiar? You're in conversation with friends about a neighbor or colleague who is hurting—in body or spirit—and you yearn to reach out with the Savior's love. As a Christian woman, God designed you that way.

Karen Harmon (Warner Robins, Ga.) and Sharon Buck (New Ulm, Minn.) of Jars of Clay Ministries understand where you are coming from. "Our experiences with women in the workplace, community, and church convinced us that their natural relationship tendencies create perfect opportunities for Christian witnessing," Harmon shares. But they also realized that while many women shared the passion to witness their faith, there was no focal point for sharing resources, experiences, train-

ing, and support. That's why Jars of Clay Ministries was born.

Jars of Clay Ministries started in 2003 as an effort to connect and encourage women as they share the gospel. Through annual conferences; phone and e-mail networking; and, most of all, through its Web site, www.jarsofclayministries.com, Jars of Clay Ministries has attracted not only laywomen, but laymen and called workers as well. The Web site tells stories of witnessing and describes ideas for ministries. It also contains Bible studies, doctrinal information, and tools to help one prepare for evangelism.

Pastor Ed Schuppe serves as an advisor to Jars of Clay Ministries. "I have truly enjoyed working with the women of Jars of Clay Ministries," he says of the organizers and contributors



to the ministry. "These are an awesome group of women that simply want to serve the Lord in their local congregations, in their homes, in their workplaces, and in their communities."

Determined to showcase the Holy Spirit's power rather than human effort, Jars of Clay Ministries takes its name from 2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." Like mere jars of clay holding precious treasure, sinful human beings don't seem fit to carry God's saving Word to the world. But God entrusted the task to all Christians. Jars of Clay Ministries seeks to "unleash the laypeople" to spread the Word wherever God has placed them.

Where are they now?

In *Forward in Christ*, we report the news but aren't always able to follow up. "Where are they now?" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

In the July 1999 issue, we told you about the commissioning of the first WELS missionary in Scandinavia.

Here's a recap

Pastor John Vogt was commissioned in March 1999 as a friendly counselor for Scandinavia, to assist especially the Lutheran Confessional Church (LBK) of Sweden and Norway. The Board for World Missions called and supported him in this short-term ministry. Vogt's duties included training pastors for this church body and serving as pastor for the LBK's Gothenburg congregation.

So what is happening now?

Vogt described his main work with the Lutheran Confessional Church over the past seven years as "to guide the rebirth of its pastor-training program, which had not graduated a new pastor in 20 years." The seminary (called *Biblicum*), with Vogt serving as president, resumed full-time classes in 2002.

Since then, more than 70 different students (pastors and theological students) from 13 countries attended at least one course at *Biblicum*. Three men have completed their seminary training and are about to begin serving as LBK pastors. Five more students enrolled in the fall of 2004.

A side benefit has been the increased friendship and cooperation among the sister churches in Europe. "I believe that they feel much closer to one another after having met and studied together at *Biblicum*," says Vogt.

Since Vogt's call was limited to seven years, he has accepted a new call to serve as president of St. Sophia Seminary in the Ukraine through the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. WELS will not be replacing him, but the Lutheran Confessional Church is prepared to assume responsibility for running the training program and has called a part-time instructor to teach Greek and Hebrew. It will use its own pastors and some guest professors to teach courses as well as have students take classes at other seminaries in its fellowship. Distance learning will also play a role.

WELS will continue to provide encouragement and assistance through the Commission on Inter-Church Relations.

Vogt will be taking many memories with him as he leaves Scandinavia. "The thrill of being able to stand before a seminary class and teach God's Word stands at the top of the list," he says. "I have cherished those opportunities because I grow spiritually through the preparation and discussions and also because it is such a 'high' to see God lead young men to want to study for the pastoral ministry. The Lord's working is evident in Scandinavia where the men prepare for the ministry, fully aware that they will not be paid for their pastoral service but will need to support themselves through secular work."

He continues: "I have always known in my head that the gospel is powerful and at work around the world, but now I have seen with my own eyes that it is true."



John Vogt (left front) attending a class led by visiting professor John Brug. The other students are from Sweden. Peter Oman (second from left) is the first graduate of *Biblicum* and now is a pastor in Umea, Sweden.

WELS member going for the crown

Dottie Cannon, a member of Beautiful Savior, Eagan, Minn., was recently crowned Miss Minnesota USA 2006. Dottie, a 22-year-old graduate of the University of St. Thomas, is currently an internal communications specialist with the Target Corporation.

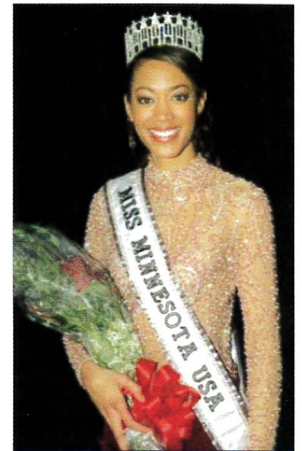
Cannon assists in directing the children's choir at Beautiful Savior.

She has also served as a Sunday school and vacation Bible school teacher. Says Cannon, "The congregation is very supportive of anything that the members pursue, including the events I am preparing for. All of the members, especially the children, are excited and ask tons of questions."

She also states that her faith has helped her in her pageant experiences. "It has taught me not to worry too much about some things. God has a plan for me, and I have to trust that all things will work out in his favor."

As Miss Minnesota, Cannon is concentrating on children's literacy rates and sharing her love of reading and learning.

During the three-week pageant period, Cannon will compete for the national title, Miss USA 2006, in Baltimore, Md. The live show and crowning will be broadcast on NBC on April 21.

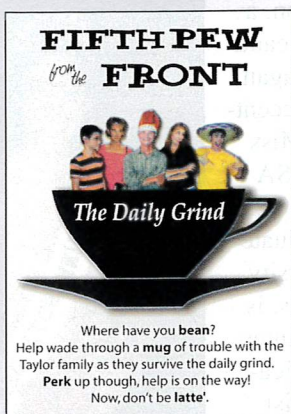


Dottie Cannon of Beautiful Savior, Eagan, Minn., will be competing in the Miss USA 2006 pageant on April 21.

News briefs

Commission on Adult Discipleship

414-256-3277; cad@sab.wels.net



The fourth episode in the *Fifth Pew from the Front* series, "The Daily Grind," is now available. Join the Taylor family as they try to survive in the fast-paced world. Each episode in the series contains a 30 to 45-minute Christian sitcom, Bible study vignettes, and accompanying printable materials available online at www.fifthpew.com. There you can also learn more about other episodes in the series.

"The Daily Grind" (DVD: 387607; VHS: 387608) is available online at www.nph.net/welsproducts. Search the online catalog by catalog item number. Or call Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022.

Board for Home Missions

414-256-3284; bhmadmins@sab.wels.net

In January, the **Board for Home Missions allocated mission dollars** to help provide manpower to establish new congregations in Round Rock, Texas, and Henry County, Ga. It also allocated money to subsidize Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., for three years so the congregation could establish another site in Hugo, Minn., as part of its multi-site ministry. Funding was granted to Risen Savior, Orlando, Fla., to help increase its Spanish language outreach and to Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn., to launch its preschool outreach ministry. In addition, one-time outreach grants ranging from \$250 to \$18,000 were allotted to help initiate or enhance missionary outreach efforts in 45 congregations.

In the past two years Home Missions has granted funding or other assistance to help provide 27 personnel positions. These efforts have been used by the Lord to help establish 19 new "congregated groups."

Learn more about new outreach ministries at www.wels.net/jumpword/bhmactivities.

Commission on Worship

414-256-3226; worship@sab.wels.net

Those coming home from the **National Conference of Worship, Music, and the Arts** this past summer carried the thrill of worship done right and worship that inspires. The Commission on Worship has provided a way for that thrill to be more than a memory. It has reated a double CD of the music and short selections from the presenters. It's mostly the music and worth every note even if on some occasions the presenters are sometimes difficult to hear. "In Liturgy and Song" (388505) is

available online at www.nph.net/welsproducts. Search the online catalog by catalog item number. Or call Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022.

Commission on Parish Schools

414-256-3222; cps@sab.wels.net

The **Commission on Parish Schools has released its statistics** for the 2005-06 school year. The statistics are intended to provide a snapshot of trends in WELS schools. They are compiled from school information request forms that were completed and returned to the Parish Schools office. For more school statistics, visit www.wels.net/jumpword/schoolstats.

Number of schools, teachers, students

SCHOOL TYPE	SCHOOLS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
Early childhood ministries	386*	517**	9,131
Lutheran elementary schools	350	1,899	26,525
Area Lutheran high schools	25	513	5,938
Preparatory high schools	2	86	664
TOTALS	510	2,723	42,258

*253 are part of Lutheran elementary schools; 133 are free standing.

**292 also serve Lutheran elementary schools; 225 only serve early childhood ministries.

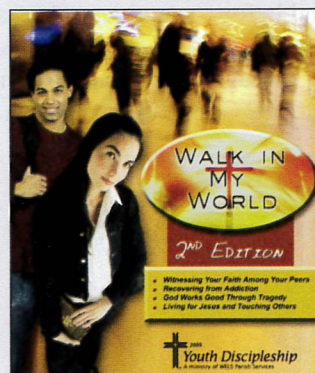
Student enrollment growth/decline

SCHOOL TYPE	'01-02	'02-03	'03-04	'04-05	'05-06
Early childhood ministries	6,241	6,351	8,103	8,449	9,131
Lutheran elem. schools	28,930	28,202	27,297	26,632	26,525
Lutheran high schools	5,680	5,671	5,607	5,805	5,938
Preparatory high schools	916	869	804	721	664

Commission on Youth Discipleship

414-256-3224; cyd@sab.wels.net

The second edition of *Walk in My World* is now available.



This edition of the video newsmagazine will present the following lessons for teens and their parents to discuss:

- Witnessing your faith among your peers
- Recovering from addiction
- God works good through tragedy
- Living for Jesus and touching others

Walk in My World chronicles how WELS teens and their families wrestle with real life issues. Accompanying Bible study and discussion guides will draw participants into deeper discussion and into a deeper understanding and appreciation for what God's Word says about our walk in this world. *Walk in My World Edition 2* (383150) is available online at www.nph.net/welsproducts. Search the online catalog by catalog item number. Or call

“Synod Partnership Sunday” slated

Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022.

Communication Services

414-256-3210; csc@sab.wels.net
WELS Communication Services in cooperation with the Ministry of Christian Giving released the **WELS 2005 Annual Report** in February. The 12-page document highlights many of the activities undertaken by each area of ministry since the synod convention in July 2005. Information on each ministry's efforts for 2006 is also included. Each congregation received six copies of the report to distribute to the chairmen of its church boards. View the 2005 Annual Report online at www.wels.net/jumpword/annualreport.

WELS Communication Services provides production resources to congregations looking to produce **DVD calling cards**. These calling cards can promote a congregation within a community and serve as a great outreach tool. A production crew spends two days on-site to shoot the material, including a worship service; Bible class; Sunday school; an introduction by pastor or other host; and interviews with members, called workers, and others. WELS Communication Services then edits the material into a 15 to 20-minute DVD presentation. Congregations interested in developing this reasonably priced tool for outreach should contact Media Communications Director Steve Zambo at 414-256-3281; steve.zambo@sab.wels.net. Find out more online at www.wels.net/jumpword/media

These updates are from the offices of the synod administration building at 2949 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center in Madison, Wis., will be hosting a “Synod Partnership Sunday” on April 23 at 3 P.M. The afternoon worship service and tours of the new facility are designed to thank individual supporters from across the country and the many congregations who contributed to the chapel's outreach ministry.

The synod also supported Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel's building and cross-cultural mission with funding from the special Forward In Christ mission offering gathered during the WELS 150th anniversary celebration in 2000.

Since 1920, WELS has brought the good news of Jesus to thousands of students who have attended and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and area colleges. Because more than 50 percent of WELS members live within a 100-mile radius of Madison, the campus ministry of Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel (a five-minute walk from the university) reaches out to an estimated 2,000 WELS students per year.

Its unique ministry, which trains young adults to be church lay leaders, serves the ministries of the synod—

Home and World Missions, Parish Services, and Ministerial Education. An intentional outreach effort is carried out to the many lost Americans on the university's 41,000 student campus with ongoing financial support from the Board for Home Missions. In addition, Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel shows Christ's love to more than 200 international students each week, many from Asia. The chapel also partners with the Board for World Missions to help international students bring the gospel to their home countries, either through providing multi-language publications or connecting them with a national pastor in their homeland.

The new 26,000-square foot Chapel & Student Center includes a guest room designed for WELS professors to use when attending the University of Wisconsin or for WELS students, throughout the world, to use while experiencing and learning about the mission opportunities of campus ministry.

For more information about Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, visit www.wlchapel.org or call 608-257-1969.



The new Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel held its first service in February. The chapel reaches out to the more than 41,000 students on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus.

WELS 2006 district conventions approaching

Each of the 12 districts holds a convention once in each biennium, generally in the even numbered years. (The synod convention is held in the odd numbered years.) Every pastor, professor, and male teacher of the district plus a lay delegate representing each congregation attends the convention as a voting delegate. Other members of the district are welcome to attend as guests.

District conventions are held for the following purposes:

- To meet as a group to carry out the legislative responsibilities of the district, such as holding elections, formulating resolutions to send to synod convention, etc.
- To celebrate God's blessings.
- To nurture faith.

Here is the schedule of the 2006 district conventions:

Arizona-California

June 12-14
Arizona Golf Resort, Mesa, Ariz.

Dakota-Montana

June 13-15
Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.

Michigan

June 6-8
Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Minnesota

June 13-15
Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Nebraska

June 12-14
Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.

North Atlantic

June 15-16
King of Kings, Clifton Park, N.Y.

Northern Wisconsin

June 12-14
Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.

Pacific Northwest

June 15-16
Evergreen Lutheran High School, Des Moines, Wash.

South Atlantic

June 5-7
Indian Rocks Beach, Tampa, Fla.

South Central

June 5-6
Calvary, Dallas, Texas

Southeastern Wisconsin

June 6-7
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

Western Wisconsin

June 4-6
Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Questions about specific district conventions may be directed to the president or secretary of that district.

Growing in love

He did it all for love. Locks of Love, that is. Pastor Newton Trimmer of St. Paul, Valley City, N.D., cut off 10 inches of his hair and donated it to Locks of Love this past Valentine's Day. Locks of Love is a non-profit organization that provides hair prosthetics to financially disadvantaged children.

Trimmer's hair odyssey began two years ago when talking with someone who had a daughter suffering from alopecia areata, a disease that causes hair loss. He noticed how many people in his congregation had long hair and challenged them to donate their hair to Locks of Love.

"They said, 'We'll donate our hair as soon as you grow yours'" he states. "I took them up on that challenge right away." For two years Trimmer avoided haircuts, except for the occasional front trim, to grow his hair past his shoulders.

As a pastor, Trimmer found himself under some scrutiny, especially when officiating events where people didn't know about his congregation's challenge. "I always explained why it was long, and people were okay with that," Trimmer says.

Trimmer also felt that the Locks of Love challenge was a great way to reach out to the community. He says, "Most Christians are willing to share their faith, but far too often fail to do so. Perhaps they need a conversation starter. Talking about long hair or growing hair gave people that conversation starter. Many in the community asked, 'Why does your pastor have such long hair?' It allowed our members to talk about sharing their love for one another through Locks of Love and then focusing the conversation on Christ's love for us."

Although Trimmer says that the



Pastor Newton Trimmer gets his hair separated into sections before having more than 10 inches cut off. He then donated his hair to Locks of Love.

Locks of Love project did not increase St. Paul's membership, he notes that it brought a lot of positive media attention to the church and a new excitement to the membership. He also uses his experience to point out that reaching out to the community with the gospel does not need to be an expensive undertaking, rather just personal and loving.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VALLEY CITY TIMES-RECORD

District news

Arizona-California

Mr. Mark Neumann, former Rep. from Wisconsin, addressed the student body of **Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.**, on Feb. 6.

Reformation, San Diego, Calif., held a World Outreach Sunday on Feb. 12. Pastor David Valleskey was the guest preacher. The purpose was to kick off an initiative by the congregation to increase its Congregation Mission Offerings to the synod.

Michigan

Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich., dedicated its new gymnasium on Jan. 15. More than 400 guests attended the service. Speakers for the dedication included: Pastor Jim Hoff, liturgist; Pres. Karl Gurgel, sermon; Pastor Ken Jahnke, rite of dedication; and readers Jeremy Husby and Michael Nocella. Husby and Nocella are Huron Valley Lutheran alumni who are pursuing the pastoral ministry.

Grace, Muskegon, Mich., dedicated its new facility on Feb. 12.

Minnesota

The varsity basketball and dance teams from **West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.**, had the opportunity to play at the Target Center in Minneapolis on Jan. 12. The girls' and boys' basketball teams were both victorious over Providence Academy. The Target Center is the home of the Minnesota Timberwolves.

"Be prepared" (1 Peter 3:15) was the theme of the first annual Evangelism Day at **Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.**, on Jan. 18. All students and faculty members attended a keynote address by Pastor Donn Dobberstein of Our Savior's, Port Orange, Fla., and smaller workshops with titles like "Starting Spiritual Conversations," "Preparing a Personal Witness," "Biblical Leadership," and "Welcoming People to our Churches and Schools." MLC, the Commission on Evangelism, and the Board for Parish Schools worked together to prepare and present the evangelism curriculum.

Nebraska

Salem Lutheran School, Colorado Springs, Colo., is the first Lutheran elementary school in the Nebraska District to complete work towards WELSSA accreditation. WELSSA is the formally recognized accreditation system for WELS schools. Salem hopes to hear by September 2006 if it has been accepted for accreditation.

South Atlantic

Abiding Faith, Smyrna, Tenn., dedicated its first church building on Jan. 22. District Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Charles Westra, was the guest preacher.

South Atlantic



Abiding Grace, Covington, Ga., hosted a Christmas for Kids at a daycare belonging to one of their members. Of the 86 children attending, 52 were from unchurched families. Pictured is an attendee taking part in the face painting activity.

South Central

Divine Peace, Garland, Tex., applied for membership to the South Central District after being released from support and interest subsidy. Divine Peace has joined with Atonement, Plano, Tex., and Grace, Scroggins, Tex., to serve a new preaching station at Caddo Mills/Greenville, Tex.

Southeastern Wisconsin

In February, **Dr. Tom Potisk**, a member at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis., traveled in Belize to provide chiropractic services to the destitute Mayan Indians. His trip, organized by the Christian

Chiropractors Association, is one of several volunteer excursions he has been a part of. Potisk has also traveled to Poland and the Amazon.

Western Wisconsin

U.S. Rep. and 2006 Republican gubernatorial candidate Mark Green recently visited **Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.** Green met with student reporters to answer questions about current state topics and visited history and government classes.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Fred Casmer; CA—Hermann John; MI—John Eich; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Donald Wichmann; SA—Chris Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.

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.

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) recently unveiled its redesigned Web site at **www.nph.net**. The clean and organized new site offers quick links to key areas at NPH, as well as event promotion for the NPH retail store.

Kurt Adams, director of Internet and publishing technology for NPH, says, "In the latest redesign, we have tried to address concerns and suggestions that have come directly from our valued customers. Since many of our customers have ordered online for years, we were also mindful to maintain familiarity in the shopping experience."

Some other things customers should look for are

- expanded product information,
- current sales or promotions,
- online catalog navigation, and
- seasonal changes in the look and feel of the site.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY**Pastors**

Beck, John A., to Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev.

Dolan, David B., to Ministry of Christian Giving, Milwaukee

Vogt, John R., to St. Sophia Seminary, Ukraine (ELS & ULK)

Teachers

Eggert, Sandra L., to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.

Kelm, Paul H., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee

Kieselhorst, Jerome N., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee

Kortbein, Marcia A., to St. John, Maribel, Wis.

Mears, Harold I., to Ministry of Christian Giving, Milwaukee

Ohrmundt, Marla R., to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.

Schaper, Brad D., to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.

Wainwright, Kristi N., to Shepherd of Peace, Powell, Ohio

ANNIVERSARIES

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.

Redgranite, Wis.—Trinity (100). June 25. Service, 3 P.M. Dinner, 4:45 P.M. Free will offering. RSVP by May 25, 920-566-2742 or 920-787-2879.

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

COMING EVENTS

Choir tours—for a complete listing of concert dates for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., go to www.wels.net/jumpword/bulletinboard and click on Concerts.

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

Leadership training for congregations—conducted by the Western Wisconsin District. The focus will be on increasing Bible study and Christian stewardship in congregations. April 1, St. Matthew, Janesville; April 8, Eastside, Madison; April 22, St. Mark, Eau Claire; and April 29, Our Savior, Wausau, Wis. All training will be held from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M., with

registration at 9:30 A.M. Rod Seefeld, 608-356-7217 or cfcswwd@wels.net.

Cascade Lutheran Chorale concert—April 2, 4 P.M. Grace, Portland, Ore. Joy Williams, 503-493-0465.

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

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.

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

Lutheran Chorale concert—April 30, St. John, Lannon, Wis., 3 P.M., and St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., 7 P.M.

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

Graduation week events at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary—Vicar Assignment Service, May 23, 7 P.M. Anniversary Festival Concert, May 24, 7:30 P.M. This marks the 75th anniversary of the Seminary Chorus. WELS pastors who participated in the chorus are invited to join the present chorus. Call Day Service and assignment of graduates, May 25, 10 A.M. Graduation Service, May 26, 10 A.M.

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

Pilgrimage to Israel—June 12-21. Five-day extension tour to Greece and Ephesus, June 21-26. Sponsored by St. Paul, Muskego, Wis. Peter Panitzke, 414-422-0320 (ext. 122) or ppanitzke@stpaulmuskego.org.

College course—"What is a proper defense of creation?" June 12-30. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Graduate credit possible. Limited enrollment. Middle and high school teachers of science preferred. Grant supported. Contact Dr. Paul R. Boehlke, paul.boehlke@wlc.edu, or check the biology pages at www.wlc.edu.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society national convention—June 22-25. Tacoma, Wash. Hosted by Evergreen and Cascade Circuits. 414-321-6212.

OWLS Convention—July 11-13. Holiday Inn and Austin Conference Center, Austin, Minn.; owls@newulmtel.net.

WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Convention—Aug. 4-6. Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis. Dean Weigand,

262-547-3096 (V/T) or mdhhdliweigand2005@sbcglobal.net.

WELS/ELS Women's Conference on Mormonism—Sept. 22-24. University of Utah. Hosted by Light of the Valley, Layton, 801-444-1591; Prince of Peace, Taylorsville, 801-261-3808; and Hope (ELS), West Jordan, Utah, 801-963-4151.

Class reunions

- **1975-1977 classes of Martin Luther Academy**—July 7-9. New Ulm, Minn. Deb Walz, walz@frontiernet.net or Doug Weishahn, oxdoug@aol.com.

- **1974-1979 classes of Northwestern Lutheran Academy**—July 7-9. St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn. Tom Krueger, E5401 470th Ave., Menomonie WI 54751; tomkrueger@wwt.net.

- **1981 class of Northwestern Preparatory School (25)**—July 8. Sprecher Brewing Co., Glendale, Wis. Jennifer Marr, heyjenmar@yahoo.com or Chris Schwan, cwschwan@cox.net.

- **1981 class of Martin Luther Preparatory School (25)**—July 14-16. Prairie du Chien, Wis. Paul Hirsch, 402-462-9623 or Phil Malchow, 915-822-3748.

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 and additional information several weeks before the event. Contact Prof. James Tiefel before April 23, tiefelj@wls.wels.net.

Soldiers 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 to present). 608-257-1969.

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

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Maintenance and housekeeping—St. Thomas Lutheran Ministries assisted living home in Goodyear, Ariz., is seeking a couple or single to provide maintenance, housekeeping, and cooking chores. Salaried position with living quarters. Office, 623-925-1095.

Director of parish music—part time. Christ the King, Palatine, Ill. 847-358-0230 or pastor@byfaithalone.org.

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



My three-year-old son Ruben built a cross out of his blocks last April. He lined up his little people, asking them, "Who wants to go up on the cross?" When none of them answered, he told me, "Nobody wants to!" Then to his toys he said, "That's okay. Jesus already did."

Submitted by Sarah Micheel

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

NOTES FROM THE
Centurion's Diary

8 AM I RECEIVE ORDERS FROM GOV. PILATE TO PREPARE AN EXECUTION SQUAD. I ASSEMBLE 12 SOLDIERS—HARDENED VETERANS ALL.

8:30 AM THE CROSSBAR OF THE CROSS IS PLACED ON THE SHOULDERS OF EACH OF THE CONDEMNED: ONE JEWISH RABBI THEY CALL JESUS AND TWO THIEVES. THE RABBI LOOKS IN BAD SHAPE. A SOLDIER CARRIES A SIGN IN FRONT OF THE RABBI WRITTEN IN THREE LANGUAGES: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS." DIDN'T KNOW BEING A JEWISH KING WAS A CRIME. THE RABBI COLLAPSES IN THE JERUSALEM STREET. A CROWD GATHERS AROUND US—DANGEROUS FOR ROMAN SOLDIERS! I QUICKLY RECRUIT SOME GUY FROM CYRENE TO CARRY THE RABBI'S CROSS.

8:50 AM WE ARRIVE AT CALVARY. I GIVE ORDERS TO STRIP THE CRIMINALS AND FASTEN THEIR HANDS AND FEET TO THE CROSSES WITH NAILS. THERE'S MUCH CURSING AND SCREAMING, EXCEPT FOR THIS JESUS. HE ASKS GOD FOR OUR FORGIVENESS!

9 AM CROSSES ARE IN PLACE. THE SUN IS ALREADY HOT THIS MORNING. MY MEN GAMBLE FOR THE CLOTHING OF THE CONDEMNED. THE RABBI IS SO STEADY AND FOCUSED; IT'S UNNERVING. HE SAYS SUCH UNUSUAL THINGS FOR A DYING MAN. THE TAUNTING CROWD IS MERCILESS.

12 PM SOMETHING'S HAPPENING! THE SUNNY SKY SUDDENLY DARKENS AND BECOMES STORMY. NOON BECOMES BLACK AS MIDNIGHT! I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING . . .

3 PM THE RABBI APPEARS DEAD. THERE'S A DREADFUL EARTHQUAKE . . . SWAYING . . . I'M KNOCKED TO THE GROUND! WHEN I GET UP, I LOOK AT THE DEAD RABBI AND FIND MYSELF SAYING, "SURELY HE WAS THE SON OF GOD!"

3:30 PM I RECEIVE ORDERS FROM GOV. PILATE TO HASTEN THE EXECUTION SINCE THE JEWISH LEADERS WANT THE BODIES DISPOSED OF BEFORE THE SABBATH BEGINS AT 6 PM. THE SOLDIERS CRUSH THE CRIMINALS' LEGS TO HASTEN DEATH AND STAB JESUS' SIDE TO BE SURE HE'S DEAD. BLOOD AND WATER POUR OUT, INDICATING A SEPARATION OF BODY FLUIDS. HE'S DEAD.

4 PM GOV. PILATE RECEIVES A REQUEST FOR JESUS' BODY. I ORDER MY MEN TO HAND IT OVER TO A FOLLOWER OF THE RABBI. THE OTHER BODIES ARE TAKEN TO THE CITY DUMP (CALLED GEHENNA) FOR INCINERATION. IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY . . .

5 PM BACK IN THE BARRACKS. I LOOK FOR A JUG OF WINE . . . CAN'T SEEM TO FORGET THAT RABBI.

A fictional account by Pastor Ronald Winter, Grace, Wausau, Wis.

**IN THE DARK?
FOLLOW THE SON.**



When my wife and I were asked to write an article for this series, our first reaction was to decline. We did not want to create an image that we were trying to take credit for something we have done. Neither did we want to suggest that our example was the right one for everyone. But we agreed to write because we hoped it could help others as they consider their giving.

Why we should give

God has provided a simple guideline on how to be generous givers. We call it the golden rule: we should share our material blessings with the church and other people in the same way that we want God and others to be generous with us. The guideline is easy to understand, but doing it consistently is difficult. Our human nature has trouble parting with the money and goods we want to call our own.

Perhaps the biggest principle to consider in generous Christian giving is remembering who really owns and provides everything we have. Psalm 24:1 is clear: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." We don't really own anything during our life here on earth. We simply are given the opportunity to be stewards of what he provides. If we understand and believe that, we can look at giving in a different light.

God's resources can be used in two ways. The first is to provide for our own and our family's physical needs. The second is to support the work of the church and also to help others. God did not firmly state how much he wants us to allocate to each of these categories. But he did make it clear that we should keep our priority on the second category at the same time as we take care of our own needs. He promised that we would never lack anything we really needed physically if we kept generous Christian giving as a priority.

How we should give

If we believe everything is God's and we know he wants us to give generously, when should we start? It is wise to establish goals and giving habits early in life. Preschool and grade-school children can give a small amount to church or Sunday school each week. High school and college students may not have much income, but a regular routine of contributing will make giving easier. If adults haven't already done so, they should establish a goal and then stick to it. Starting your giving early and continuing it consistently will lead to giving becoming a way of life. The longer you do it, the easier it becomes.

When you are blessed with additional resources, more is expected of you. The story is told of the man who committed to giving 10 percent of all his income to the church when he was making \$200 per week. He had no trouble putting his \$20 in the collection plate each Sunday. God blessed him, and after several increases he reached an income of \$1,000. He considered giving \$100 weekly to the church, but he told God that it was just too much. He could not afford that level. So God decided to help the man by taking his income back down to \$200 per week so he could provide the 10 percent that he originally committed.

Whether you are young or old, whether God has provided you with much or little, you can make a real difference by making a commitment. Remember that we don't really own anything. Everything belongs to the Lord. He provides the privilege for us to be stewards in determining how those resources can best be used.

Paul and Valerie Holzhueter are members at St. Mark, Mankato, Minnesota.

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

The Lord owns everything we have.

We simply are given the opportunity to be faithful stewards of what he provides.

GENEREROUS Christian giving

Paul R. and Valerie A. Holzhueter

A bumper crop

The Holy Spirit made you a living tree, bearing fruit in this barren world.

Robert Gove

I have been wondering about the desirable characteristics listed in the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Galatia (Galatians 5:22,23). There are nine of them—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. They are called the fruit of the spirit.

The Holy Spirit produces fruit

We know that when the Holy Spirit gives us the gift of faith in Christ, God brings us to life spiritually. Then the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts—a guarantee of our heavenly inheritance.

However, the Holy Spirit is not just sitting there. He has a job to do—a big job. He intends to mature us—bring us to “the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). It's interesting how the Holy Spirit works on our spirits to create these characteristics. Through the gospel, he gives our spirits power to demonstrate these traits in our lives.

But why is this set of virtues called “fruit”? Perhaps we can think of the Holy Spirit as the tree of life growing within us. The way he makes his presence known is to produce the fruit of Christ-likeness in our character.

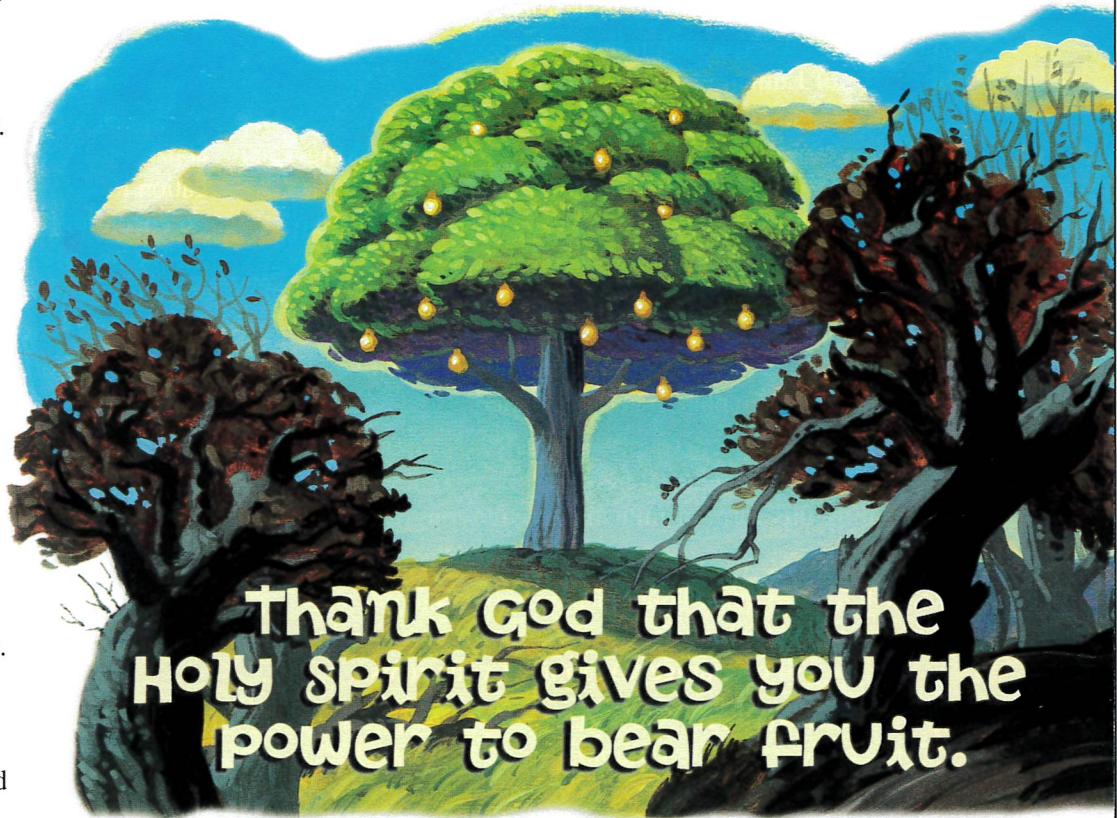
You probably noticed that the singular form (fruit) is used. Apparently he does not produce these gifts one at a time, giving us only love this month and then concentrating on joy next month. Nor is patience manifest on one branch of our lives and kindness on another. It would seem that his intent is for all these great attributes to develop and ripen to maturity together.

The Christian spirit shows fruit

Imagine for a moment that you are walking out in the hills. You come upon a beautiful tree. Although the others nearby are warped and appear to need water, this one is symmetrical and bright green. Then you notice large, fine looking, golden-colored fruit hanging from its many branches. You take hold of one of these delicious looking orbs, and it drops into

self-control. You are glad rather than resentful when others enjoy the good fruit that grows in the branches of your life. After all, what good is love that is not given away?

When you bring peace and joy into a tense situation, your spirit shows its fruit. When you are kind and gentle even though your patience is “tried” and when you are still faithful, good, and in control after strong temptation,



your hand. You tentatively bite into it—the taste is even better than the appearance. There is no pit in the center like the peaches. You don't have to worry about avoiding the parts you can't eat. Instead there are tiny seeds similar to those in a blueberry. They slip right down with the sweet juice.

This is a picture of you, dear Christian. You stand out from the other personalities around you because you have balance and life. You freely give love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and

thank God that the Holy Spirit gives you the power to bear such fruit. But most importantly, as others benefit from some fruit of the spirit available in your conduct, you have the opportunity to sow seeds of the gospel in their hearts—Word of Life seeds that can spring up and bring glory to Jesus.

That's what it's all about. That's why we are here.

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

Church

A 10-step guide for starting a church library. Becky Retzlaff

Imagine curling up with a good book and knowing that it has been reviewed for harmful or dangerous content. Imagine giving your children a book or showing them a DVD or video and being assured that the content will help them grow spiritually instead of challenging their faith. Imagine exploring religious topics from the perspective of Lutheran truth. A church library can help. Lutheran elementary school teachers or Sunday school teachers can even reinforce their lessons by making applicable library items available. We can reach out to our neighbors by recommending Christian novels, devotions on dealing with loss, and parenting resources. What an opportunity to share God's Word and strengthen our faith as well!

If you don't currently have a church library, here's a basic step-by-step plan to get you started.

1. **Seek the input of your pastor or church council.** Are your church leaders agreeable to adding this form of ministry to your congregation?
2. **Enlist the help of others.** Your library project will require many hours of preparation and ongoing care to make it a success. Enjoying the work with others will encourage you to meet your goals.
3. **Write a mission statement.** Scripture passages to consider include Philippians 4:8, Hebrews 12:2, and 2 Peter 3:18. Keep your congregation's mission statement in mind when you write your library's statement.
4. **Learn about common library practices and decide on your library policies.** Two good books on this subject are *You Can Have a Church Library* by Maryann Dotts or *The Library and Resource Center in Christian Education* by Betty McMichael. After your research, decide on the policies that are right for you.

Who will be responsible for ensuring that the content of the library fits with your mission statement? A trained called worker, an invaluable resource in

determining the appropriateness of materials, can help you draw up a policy concerning donations.

How will you keep records of checkouts and returns? Many libraries rely on pen and paper, while some are moving toward library software for record keeping. You may want to consider a checkout system that allows for privacy of use. What if someone wants to read about sensitive issues like addiction, abortion, abuse, or divorce, but doesn't want the whole congregation to know about it? You may "black-out" names on checkout cards after items are returned or allow people to sign out items using their envelope number.

Will you use due dates, or can people keep items indefinitely? How do you plan to follow up on items that are not returned on time?

Will you catalog using the Dewey Decimal system, color coding, age category, or another system? If you choose the Dewey Decimal system, the Library of Congress Web site, <http://catalog.loc.gov>, is a good reference when assigning numbers to your items.

5. **Choose a location.** The more visible and accessible your library is, the more it will be used. But even if your church library has to be tucked into a seldom-seen corner, it still will be beneficial to members.
6. **Obtain resources and supplies.** Your church may already own many books that can be gathered into the new library. Search yard sales for inexpensive children's Bible storybooks and videos. Seek book donations from your congregation. Speak with your public library and local schools to acquire supplies like checkout cards, book pockets, catalog cards, labels, and protective coverings. Don't forget to search online for library supply companies like Brodart, Demco Inc., Library Store, and Highsmith Co.
7. **Determine sources for long-term funding.** Will your library be a part of the yearly church budget? If not, consider seeking donations through memorials, grocery store receipts, book fairs, or door collections. You can also research matching gifts available from

Libraries 101

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Sometimes the Holy Spirit moves people to give just by showing the need, so get the word out about your library.

8. **Promote the library.** The more people are exposed to the library, the more apt they will be to use it. Write about it in the weekly bulletin or monthly newsletter. Put an article on your church Web site. Do a display for a church or school bulletin board. Provide treats for people browsing in the library at its opening. Offer incentives for checkouts, such as a small token to children (or adults) after reading a certain number of books. Host a Lent or Advent supper, deliver media to shut-ins, and invite the Sunday school and elementary school classes to a monthly church library "field trip" where they can learn how to use the library on their own.
9. **Join the WELS Church Librarian's Organization (WELS-CLO).** WELS-CLO is here to support you throughout the process. Through the welcome packet; quarterly newsletters; semiannual meetings; and its Web site, www.wels.net/clo, you will be encouraged every step of the way.

WELS-CLO members of all experience levels can relate to your struggles and triumphs. Devon Cole of Risen Savior, Navarre, Fla., shares, "I found out about WELS-CLO from the quarterly newsletter about four years ago when I became the church secretary. The newsletter was informative so I began revamping our small church library with the help of WELS-CLO by e-mail and now . . . members have begun using it." But the organization isn't just for new libraries. Charter member Joanne Weber of St. Paul, Muskego, Wis., says, "The best thing about membership is the fellowship with the other librarians. It is great to know that someone else has gone through the same thing. My library was started in 1982 with 30 books . . . we now have 2,800 books and over 700 videos."

The WELS-CLO Web site even offers a discussion board called "BookTalk." It is an excellent resource and opportunity for you to share your experiences.

10. **Most of all PRAY!** "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed" (Proverbs 16:3).

A church library requires work and patience. However, the spiritual blessings that result are immeasurable, both for those doing the work and those who benefit from it.

Becky Retzlaff is a member at Zion, Columbus, Wisconsin.

More about WELS Church Librarian's Organization

- PRESIDENT:** Carol Leonard, St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis., cleonard@dotnet.com, 920-922-6650.
- WEB SITE:** www.wels.net/jumpword/clo.
- ORGANIZATION DUES FOR ONE YEAR:** \$15 (includes members-only access on the Web, quarterly newsletters, and the right to vote and serve on committees).
- UPCOMING MEETINGS:**
- SPRING MEETING:** May 6 at Christ, Baxter, Minn. Speakers include Jim Esmeier of Jesus Cares Ministries and stained glass artist Greg Rosenberg. Contact Bev, 218-746-3732.
- FALL MEETING:** Sept. 16 at St. Paul, Mauston, Wis. Contact June Firlus, 608-464-5532.
- COST OF ATTENDING A MEETING:** \$10 (covers lunch, speaker fees, etc.)



Carl R. Hugel

Personally yours

We like the sound of our own names. Sometimes it's a pride thing. We want others to recognize our importance. On other occasions it's more the result of our humility. We hesitate to apply some good news to ourselves, thinking that we do not deserve what was announced.

Easter is surely a general proclamation of good news. Having died for all, the Savior's resurrection is God's declaration of new, eternal life for all. But what about me? Is this good news meant for me personally? It would be nice to hear my name mentioned specifically so I'm sure that I'm included.

On that first Easter a number of people heard the good news applied to them specifically. The angels met the women at the tomb, personally announcing to them the resurrection. On the way home from the empty tomb, they personally met Jesus, the one who had vacated the tomb and emptied death of its sting.

On Easter evening, a spiritual dawn brought excitement to the Emmaus disciples. They heard and saw the risen Savior applying resurrection truths to them. The apostle Paul, in the great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, referred to more than 500 Christians who all, at the same time, in person, saw the risen Lord.

The application of the resurrection truth also was made personal for some who weren't even present at the moment. The women at the tomb heard that God's message was for others. The angel said, "But go, tell his disciples and Peter" (Mark 16:7).

"Go, tell Peter." Can you imagine what the mention of his name must have meant to him just then? Peter had been so confident of his spiritual durability.

"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will," he boasted. Then he added, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Matthew 26:33,35).

But, disabled by a little maid's question, we see Peter weeping sorrowfully, no longer so sure of himself and no longer so sure of his Savior's love for him. Now, what would it mean to him, on Easter morning, to be told that God intended the news of Christ's resurrection, personally, for him?

Your name—my name, too—is not recorded, personally, anywhere in the Bible. If it were, undoubtedly, it would only serve to reference the many times when we, just like Peter, are a disgrace to the name of Jesus. So why should we then expect God to mention our names personally in connection with the resurrection?

What if wherever you read the name Jesus, you would just substitute your own name?

That's not human arrogance; that's the humility of faith speaking. "If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection" (Romans 6:5). Paul says that both Jesus' death and resurrection count for us. John, recording the words of Jesus, tells us God's name has been placed on us (Revelation 3:12). No wonder Jesus says to each who bears his name, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

Jesus gives you permission wherever you see his name to substitute your own. For in both death and life he is your substitute.

Can there be any doubt, then, after Easter, what a treasure your soul is to him? Don't others need to know it, too?



I rejoice that others also serve the Lord

Philippians 2: 19a,20-22a,25,29-30

¹⁹I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, . . . ²⁰I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. ²¹For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²²But you know that Timothy has proved himself, . . . ²⁵But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs . . . ²⁹Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, ³⁰because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Whether they resemble outstanding Timothy or struggling Epaphroditus, we rejoice that others serve the Lord faithfully.

Paul E. Zell

I love the Lord because he first loved me and rescued me from sin and death. I serve the Lord because he first served me with countless blessings for body and soul. I don't do this alone. Like the apostle Paul, I have Christian co-workers. As Paul writes in his "epistle of joy," I rejoice that others also serve the Lord.

Like Timothy

Timothy compiled an impressive resume. By the time Paul mailed this letter to Philippi, Timothy had been his devoted lieutenant for at least a dozen years. He journeyed thousands of miles by land and sea, having "served with [Paul] in the work of the gospel" (Philippians 2:22). Timothy acted as Paul's capable emissary to Thessalonica, Philippi, and Corinth, usually when there was turmoil among or around the believers. He repeatedly "proved himself" by showing "genuine interest" in the welfare of his brothers and sisters. "I have no one else like him," Paul announced.

Co-workers at church who demonstrate sincerity, prove themselves trustworthy, and get the job done no matter how difficult are highly valued. When outstanding teachers and preachers proclaim the gospel, when outstanding parents raise exceptional children who take a genuine interest in others, when outstanding leaders direct a congregation along God-pleasing paths, everyone benefits. Sometimes the Lord blesses those with extraordinary gifts with observable success. When we see it, we rejoice in him.

Like Epaphroditus

Yet not everyone is a Timothy. Compared to Paul's incomparable young protégé, Epaphroditus may have struggled. His assignment was to transport donations from Philippi to the imprisoned apostle and then stay on at Rome. The Philippians hoped Epaphroditus would "take care of [Paul's] needs" perhaps for many months. But Epaphroditus became ill. He almost died "for the work of Christ." God mercifully spared his life, but after his recovery Paul decided to send him back to Philippi.

What was the reaction in Philippi? Were they disappointed with Epaphroditus because he had difficulty completing the mission they had sent him to perform? If so, it wasn't echoed at Rome. Paul had nothing but praise for his "fellow soldier." "Welcome him in the Lord with great joy," Paul pleaded, "and honor men like him."

Don't pastors, teachers, parents, and other leaders sometimes look more like Epaphroditus than Timothy? They set out to do their assigned tasks, but health issues rob them of energy and time. Conflicts at home hamper their work. New and unforeseen problems turn their attention from goals that then are not reached at all.

Assessing others by the usual standards of success can lead to immense dissatisfaction. Paul's encouragement: Continue to receive them with great joy, and honor people like them. Love for Christ and concern for souls, after all, are precious Spirit-given attitudes not measured by the usual standards.

Paul urged another congregation, "Respect those who work hard among you" as leaders and messengers of God's Word. "Hold them in the highest regard in love," he wrote, "because of their work" (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13). Whether they resemble outstanding Timothy or struggling Epaphroditus, we rejoice that others serve the Lord faithfully.

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



John A. Baird

The empty tomb

The news hasn't been good. It's as though we have been stalked by an enemy that has started to pick off those around us. In fact, that's true. Two funerals. News of cancer reappearing. Another diagnosed with cancer. Still another weakened by chemo. And while we talked about all this, a phone call announced the death of a 19-year-old in an auto accident.

I know this is not unique; I've heard the stories of others, and they repeat themselves. Only the names and circumstances change. Like a stealthy sniper, death picks off one then another, leaving us to wonder who will be next and when it will be our turn in his cross-hairs.

What are we to do?

I know the answer. Easter and the empty tomb. That's the single bright light in any conversation about death. Only Jesus said he would arise and then did. Only Jesus spent 40 days here on earth after his death to make sure the disciples understood he was alive. He showed them his hands and feet. He was not a phantom or a figment of their imagination. He promised that they would live too. The disciples were so convinced of Easter's truth that they willingly died for their faith—some meeting terrible deaths.

Yes, Jesus—not dead but alive—is the light that shines in the darkness and tears of death. He wipes away our tears with his empty grave clothes and tells us we will hear his voice and live. We will awaken from the grave just as easily as we awaken after a night of sleep. The sniper death will continue to stalk us, but he doesn't have the last word. Jesus does. And it is life.

What is so disturbing in the face of this reality is that those who should have the answer have abandoned it. This Easter some churches will proclaim hope without the empty tomb. Others will speak of new life and new beginnings but will find no time to include the victory over death that Jesus demonstrated. Still others will

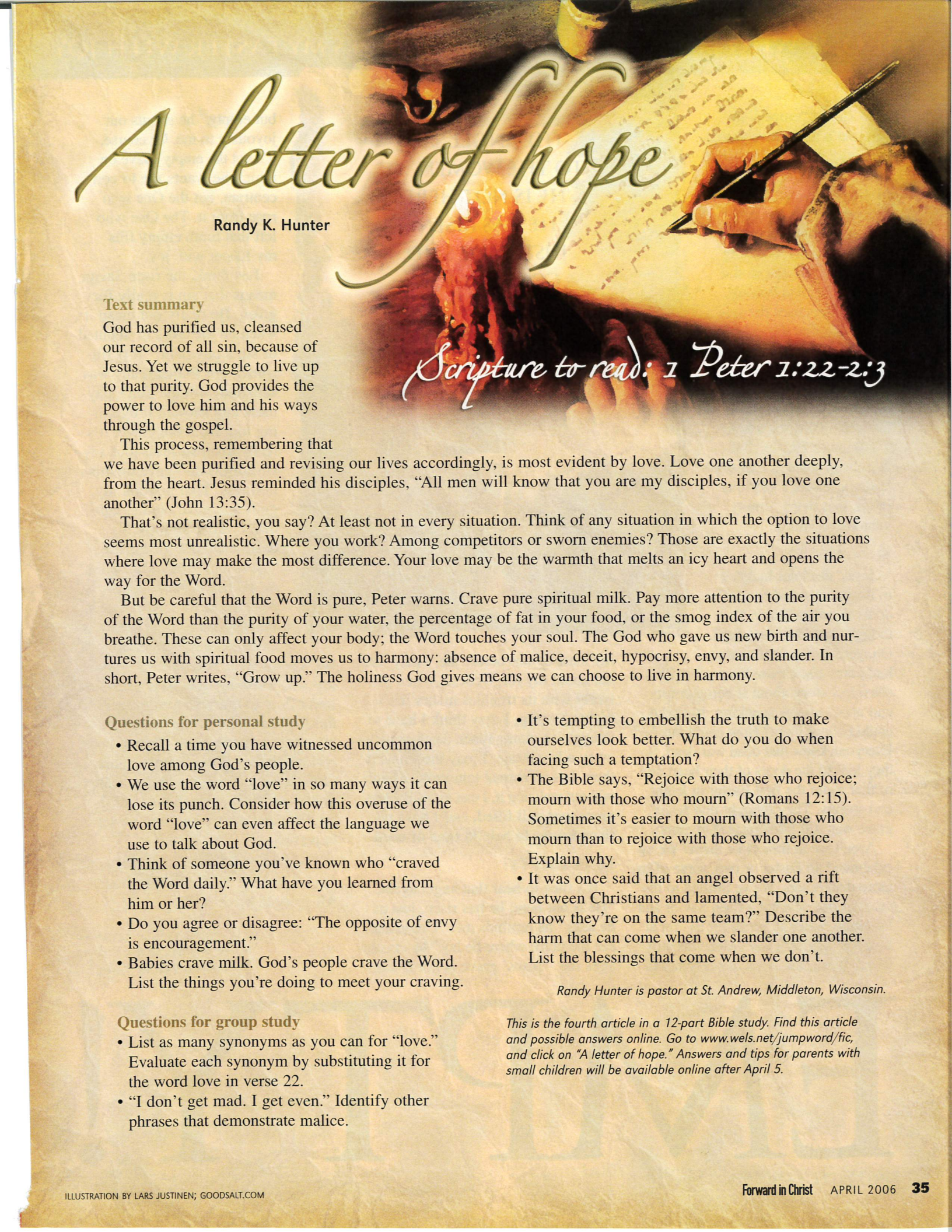
say that the accounts of Jesus' resurrection are only fables that desperate disciples added to the stories of the prophet called Jesus. Magazines, newspapers, television, and radio will carry these stories. You and I will hear some of them. Perhaps the resurrection of Jesus is just too astounding for some to believe.

In other places men and women will believe the words and teachings of men who remain dead. Millions will follow the road of submission outlined by Mohammed. But this prophet remains dead, and followers deny that Jesus lives. Millions of others will look for an enlightenment within, but Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, is dead too. And Mormons, one of the fastest growing religious groups in the world, follow the path of Joseph Smith. He's dead like the others.

All of us will die. I've stood in cemeteries where granite gravestones punctuate the neatly trimmed grass. Eventually the green grass covers the places where the dead are buried. Cemeteries are serene places interrupted by occasional visits of family members left behind. The visits stop over time, leaving only the stones and the grass. We cover the dead and over time forget them. Tsunami, famine, and terrorist victims as well as battle, auto accident, or cancer fatalities, all hide under the grass, the sand, or the waves of the sea. Carl Sandburg wrote, "I am the grass. Let me work." No mention of an empty tomb. Why?

The apostle John helps us understand why so many do not believe, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (John 1:5). But we are warned by the light. When we stand in the green serenity of a cemetery, we have a bright sure hope of life. Jesus is not dead. He is alive. Because he lives, so will we.

When the darkness presses upon us and the pain, sorrow, and loss of death intrude, may the brightness of Jesus' empty tomb light the path and lift our hearts.



A letter of hope

Randy K. Hunter

Text summary

God has purified us, cleansed our record of all sin, because of Jesus. Yet we struggle to live up to that purity. God provides the power to love him and his ways through the gospel.

This process, remembering that we have been purified and revising our lives accordingly, is most evident by love. Love one another deeply, from the heart. Jesus reminded his disciples, "All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

That's not realistic, you say? At least not in every situation. Think of any situation in which the option to love seems most unrealistic. Where you work? Among competitors or sworn enemies? Those are exactly the situations where love may make the most difference. Your love may be the warmth that melts an icy heart and opens the way for the Word.

But be careful that the Word is pure, Peter warns. Crave pure spiritual milk. Pay more attention to the purity of the Word than the purity of your water, the percentage of fat in your food, or the smog index of the air you breathe. These can only affect your body; the Word touches your soul. The God who gave us new birth and nurtures us with spiritual food moves us to harmony: absence of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. In short, Peter writes, "Grow up." The holiness God gives means we can choose to live in harmony.

Questions for personal study

- Recall a time you have witnessed uncommon love among God's people.
- We use the word "love" in so many ways it can lose its punch. Consider how this overuse of the word "love" can even affect the language we use to talk about God.
- Think of someone you've known who "craved the Word daily." What have you learned from him or her?
- Do you agree or disagree: "The opposite of envy is encouragement."
- Babies crave milk. God's people crave the Word. List the things you're doing to meet your craving.

Questions for group study

- List as many synonyms as you can for "love." Evaluate each synonym by substituting it for the word love in verse 22.
- "I don't get mad. I get even." Identify other phrases that demonstrate malice.

Scripture to read: 1 Peter 1:22-2:3

- It's tempting to embellish the truth to make ourselves look better. What do you do when facing such a temptation?
- The Bible says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). Sometimes it's easier to mourn with those who mourn than to rejoice with those who rejoice. Explain why.
- It was once said that an angel observed a rift between Christians and lamented, "Don't they know they're on the same team?" Describe the harm that can come when we slander one another. List the blessings that come when we don't.

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

This is the fourth 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 April 5.

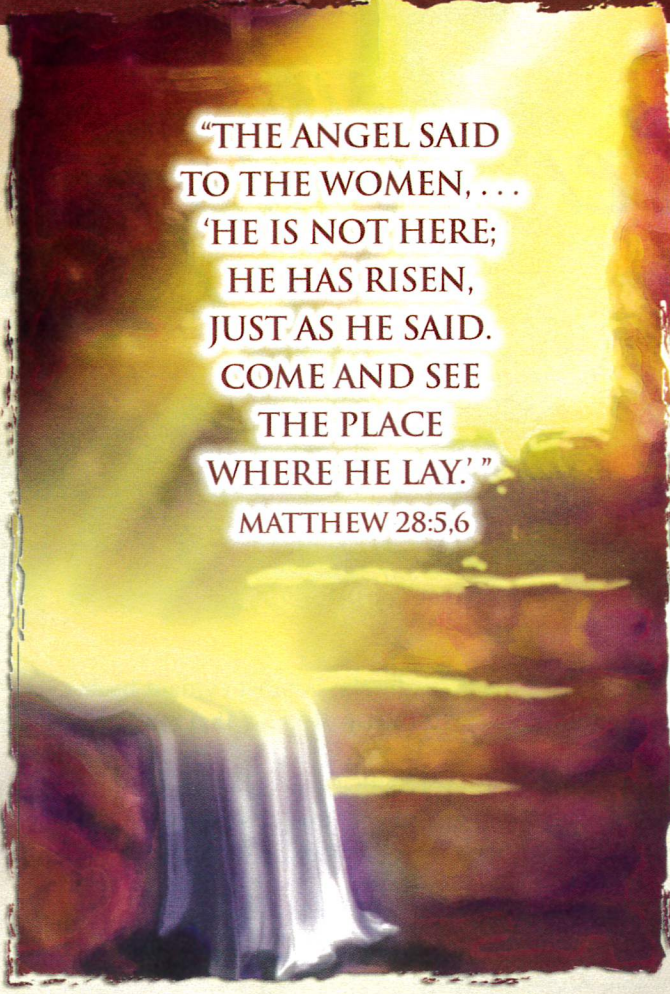
Usually “empty” is such a negative word. “Empty,” mutters the father as he checks the gas gauge of the family car driven by his teenage son the night before. “Empty,” says the cook in dismay, reaching for the egg carton in the midst of cookie baking. “Empty,” accuses the sister as she tips the cereal box from which her brother has filled his bowl.

“Empty” is usually negative, implying uselessness. But not when it comes to Easter. For those who stand at Christ’s tomb on Easter’s glorious morn, that word “empty” means everything.

IS IT EMPTY?

Jesus’ disciples huddled in despair behind locked doors that first Easter. They thought that Jesus was dead. Oh, yes, some of the women had come back from his tomb with a senseless story about it being empty and about angels speaking. But who could believe them? How could that be? Everyone knew that dead was dead. So they locked the doors of their heart and of that room the first Easter in fright and sorrow. They thought that Jesus’ grave was still filled instead of empty.

Aren’t we at times like them? We’ve celebrated an Easter or two, some of us more than others. We’ve thrilled to the joyous news of what a risen Savior and his empty tomb all mean for us. Yet at times we act as if his grave was still filled. When the devil cleverly holds



“THE ANGEL SAID
TO THE WOMEN, . . .
‘HE IS NOT HERE;
HE HAS RISEN,
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COME AND SEE
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WHERE HE LAY.’ ”

MATTHEW 28:5,6

my mass of sins before me, I may wonder about my forgiveness. When the world with its troubles makes life’s highway steep, I may think I have to struggle on alone. When death snatches away a loved one, I may mourn as if there was no eternal tomorrow. Almost without realizing it, I can act as if Jesus’ grave was still filled, and I have no risen Savior to help in time of need.

IT IS EMPTY!

It’s time to hear that angel again. “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said,” he reminds me. “Come and see the place where he lay,” he encourages me. “Jesus’ grave is not filled,

but empty,” he shouts out joyously to me. Of course, it’s not the empty grave on which he wants me to concentrate, but the One who rose from it. The One who left that tomb empty fills my Easter with joy.

Just think, the risen Savior means that sin is really forgiven. He really did mean it when on the cross he shouted of sin’s payment, “It is finished.” His Father really was satisfied with the Son’s payment and showed it by raising him from the grave. It’s really true that Jesus took my sinfulness and gave me his holiness. That he took my guilt and gave me his innocence. That he took my death and gave me his life.

Just think, the risen Savior means that death no longer is punishment for me because my sin has been paid for. Death is no longer a one-way ticket on

hell’s penal train, but the quiet elevator that will whisk my soul from earth’s lower floor to heaven’s penthouse. All this the risen Lord of life guarantees my soul, and on the Last Day my body will take that step too, from the dust of the tomb to reunion with my soul in heaven. There with all his saints I shall see and glorify my risen Savior in person.

**EMPTY—THANK GOD
HIS GRAVE IS!** My Jesus lives!
All glory to his name!

*Richard Lauersdorf serves as
a visitation pastor at Good
Shepherd, West Bend, Wisconsin.*

EMPTY!