

INTELLIGENT DESIGN • WITNESSING AT HOME

SEPTEMBER 2006

# Forward in Christ

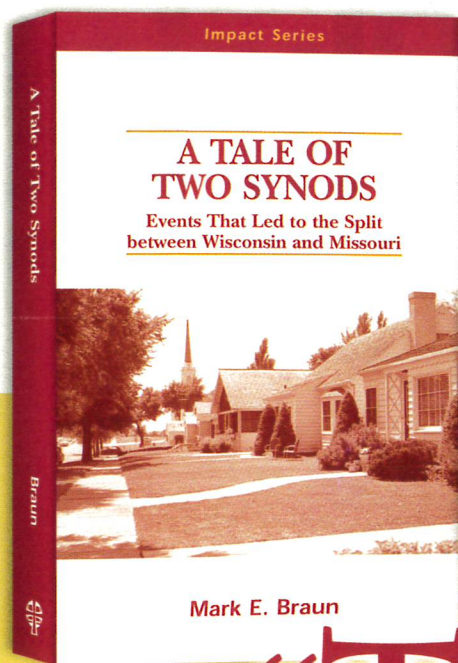
God's wisdom, WELS' witness



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—Greg Galler, *Forward in Christ*

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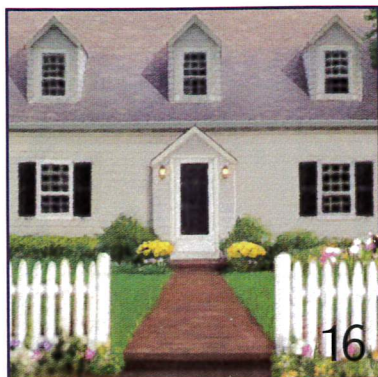
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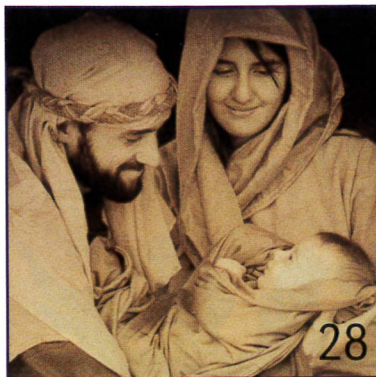


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## Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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

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# SEPTEMBER

## WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

Four hundred seventy-five years ago Philip Melancthon and other supporters of Martin Luther and his teachings published the Apology of the Augsburg Confession to defend the truths written a year earlier in the Augsburg Confession. While some may question the importance of this anniversary to our world today, two articles this month assert the significance of this event to modern-day confessing Lutherans. Using many quotes from the Apology, Prof. David Sellnow talks about the challenges to confessional Lutheranism today and how we can continue to proclaim Christ in our postmodern world (p. 10). Executive Editor John Braun reminds us of one of the main themes in the Apology: we are saints by grace through faith.

Many other articles in this issue share stories about confessing Christians. Don't miss "Easy Witnessing" (p. 18), "Putting the pieces together" (p. 30), and "Lois' leaf" (back page). All these stories show how WELS members have used the opportunities God has given them to tell others about his love.

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**ASSIGNMENTS**

Rather than making no mention of the plight of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduates who did not receive an assignment [July], I thought the seminary June E-news had a more compassionate way of reporting their situation:

“Thirty-nine men received assignments to serve in full-time ministry this past May 25. Five men were reassigned to serve as tutors. Eight candidates are still waiting for their assignments. We praise our Lord Jesus for giving us these gifts, and we pray that the Spirit will soon make it known to his church where he wants the remaining eight to serve.”

Maybe you could follow this more caring example when reporting the Martin Luther College assignments.

*Robert A. Bitter  
Oakfield, Wisconsin*

*Thanks for your suggestion. Additional calls/assignments have been made since May. To see a list for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, go to [www.wls.wels.net](http://www.wls.wels.net) and click on “Assignment update.” To see a list for Martin Luther College, go to [www.mlc-wels.edu/home/academics/resources/assignments/](http://www.mlc-wels.edu/home/academics/resources/assignments/).—ed.*

**PRAYING FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

In reading your article, “Long distance love in the Lord” [July], I noticed two things: in the “How can I help” section, I thought the last item—prayer—should come first. Then in reading Carl Schroeder’s article, I noticed that he did exactly that. He also concludes with prayer and trust.

*Jerry Hildebrandt  
Weyauwega, Wisconsin*

**CHANGE**

I would like to respond to “To change or not to change” [July]. You remind us to be loving, gentle, and to put the best construction on that which we may not understand in regard to changes. Thank you.

You refer to a letter from a gentleman that contains the simple answer to what all the lightning and thunder is about regarding change. The gentleman is worried that the church will abandon God’s truth in Jesus. That is certainly something to cause worry, but is abandoning God’s truth in Jesus really causing the worry or could it be fear of change coupled with moving outside of our comfort zone? . . .

You refer to the frog in the kettle becoming too comfortable or unaware of what’s going on around him. We do need to be cautious of anything that would erode our confession of God’s truth. We can also become too comfortable with the man-made traditions and start to confuse the traditions with law. Now the frog should jump, but he is told that he can’t. This has been my experience.

*Barry Spencer  
Medford, Wisconsin*

**SHARING FORWARD IN CHRIST**

*In the July issue, we asked you how you share your copy of Forward in Christ. We received these replies:*

I reside at the Arboretum. There are over 300 apartments. I can’t know everyone, but there must be more Lutherans here. Often I find *Forward in Christ* in our magazine rack and on tables. Today I left mine to enjoy. The *July Forward in Christ* was beautiful with stories and love and hope in our Savior, so I left mine for folks to read.

*Margaret Wardins  
Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin*

I do things a little differently. I take *Forward in Christ* apart and send different articles to different people that might be interested in them or may help them in their faith. I also share some items locally here.

*Jerry Hildebrandt  
Weyauwega, Wisconsin*

**SHARING JESUS**

I just finished reading Michael Hintz’s article “Sharing Jesus anytime” [Aug.]. I also went back to his earlier

article “Are you telling anyone about Jesus Christ?” [July]. What an important message it is that we are God’s mouthpiece for all he has done for us, and what a reminder that not everyone is as fortunate as we are to already know this message. His message to be prepared and go forward with God’s message to others is extremely valuable in this day and age.

In closing, here’s a short poem, (thanks to Robert Frost), I wrote after reading the articles:

**Stopping by neighbors on a snowy evening**

Whose cross this is I finally know  
my neighbor told me why it’s so.  
He took the time to talk to me  
and through The Spirit now I see.  
My neighbor could have let me be  
but I would lose eternity—  
and so he told me of God’s love  
and now I too have been set free.  
He gives me answers, burdens drop  
I’m a new seed in this year’s crop.  
For the harvest will come someday  
and I am free for Christ did pay.  
The message now that’s in my heart  
is a beginning, just a start—  
now I’m a voice to do my part,  
now I’m a voice to do my part.

*Jeff Ryan  
Schofield, Wisconsin*

**CORRECTIONS**

In the obituary for Dale Arndt [July], Pastor Arndt died in Marshall, Minn., and served St. Matthew, Flora Township, Minn.; and Bethany, Emmet Township, Minn. These towns were incorrectly stated to be in Wisconsin.

In the obituary for Alvin Schulz [Aug.], Pastor Schulz served Good Shepherd, Wolf Point, Montana, not Good Shepherd, Wolf Point, Michigan.

Send your letters to **Feedback**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222; [fic@sab.wels.net](mailto: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*.

# Living without fear

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:16-18*

James A. Mattek

I like to think back over my life and relive the memories I cherish. It's like paging through an old picture album. It brings a smile.

It's been 14 years now, but I can still see it like it was yesterday. Like the flash of a camera, the blackness of the night was lit up by a lightning storm. Then came the cracks of thunder. Then came the squeak of my bedroom door. Then the sound of tiny feet as blond hair bobbed toward my bedside. There my daughter stood in the darkness, her face inches from mine, waiting. Without saying a word I lifted the covers and held open my arms. She silently snuggled in and my arms closed around her. There she lay as the growling thunder gradually became a whimper in the distance. "I'm okay now," and she returned to her room. It's not fun to live with fear.

## Living in fear

I have another mental scrapbook. It's not filled with cherished memories but with memories I regret. Many of these snapshots have to do with fear. It's not fun to live with fear. Maybe you can relate. Maybe your scrapbook is like mine. What have we feared? The list is long and the scrapbook is thick. We've feared the bully down the street or the boss across the room. We've feared the uncertainty of the future and the futility of the past. We have feared failure and success. We've feared that nobody understands and that everyone is watching. We've had the fear of losing love or never finding it. We've been afraid of education and

constipation. We've feared not fitting into the crowd at school or not fitting into our clothes. We've feared dying, and we've feared living. You name it, and we've probably been afraid of it at some point in our life. It's not fun to live with fear.

This tired, old world is on a collision course with the pent-up anger of its Maker. Now that's something to fear. "Fear has to do with punishment." The moral failure of every last mortal invites the lightning bolt of God's righteous fury. Like the Hebrews whose hearts melted in fear at the base of the holy mountain, the thunder of God's wrath will make the unbelieving dead sit up in their graves, hoping it's all a bad dream. The growl of God's thunder will never subside but will forever rattle the gates of hell. "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

## Living without fear

It's not fun to live with fear, and we don't have to. "Perfect love drives out fear." This "love" that drives out fear isn't your love or mine. In fact, my inadequate attempts at love only invite fearful thoughts. After all, I'll be called on the red carpet in the throne room of the One who loves perfectly. No, the perfect love that drives out fear is God's love.

The thunder and lightning of God's justice were the twin fists that jolted



Jesus while on the cross. Jesus was the innocent and adequate lightning rod for our sins. It was the perfect storm. God is satisfied. You and I are forgiven. There's nothing to fear. The perfect love of God has removed the reason for fear, and now "we will have confidence on the day of judgment."

When the storms of life wake us, we don't have to fear and we don't have to go far. The throne room of our loving Father is a prayer away. He never slumbers or sleeps. His door squeaks open, and there he is, arms wide open. And there we rest. "I'm okay now." It's fun to live without fear.

*Contributing editor James Mattek, chief executive officer of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, is a member at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.*

# Come to WELS . . . you might be surprised at what you hear

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

A parochial school gave a test on the Bible to some third-graders. Here are some of the answers that the children wrote . . . not retouched or corrected.

- The seventh commandment is: Thou shalt not admit adultery.
- Sampson slayed the Philistines with the axe of the Apostles.
- Lot's wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire at night.

Come to a group of third-graders with questions on the Bible, and you might be surprised at what you hear!

Come to WELS, and you also might be surprised at what you hear. For example, you might be surprised to hear: Peace through Jesus is for all people.

The Samaritan woman who came to the well was certainly surprised to hear that. Read John 4:5-26. The Jews had told the Samaritans that worshiping on Mt. Gerazim didn't cut it. The Jews insisted that they had to go to the temple in Jerusalem if they wanted their worship to have any value. And so this Samaritan woman was surprised to hear Jesus say to her: "True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23).

Come to WELS, and you might be surprised to hear that, too. Because somewhere along the line WELS has gotten the reputation of maintaining that there is no salvation outside of the Wisconsin Synod. If you belong to another church, your chances of salvation are slim and none. But that is hardly our confession! We clearly recognize what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman. God didn't care if you worshiped in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerazim.

And he doesn't care whether you worship in a church that has the letters WELS attached to it, some other letters attached, or no letters at all. The Father seeks those who worship in spirit and in truth, wherever they might be. Salvation is not for a select few or a certain group of people in a particular organization. Peace through Jesus is meant for all!

And that's what we in WELS wish to safeguard and protect—the comforting message of peace through Jesus. We know that some people all over the world do worship the Father in spirit and in truth. They are sincere Christians

who love the Lord Jesus and look to his cross for the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life in heaven. But we also recognize how that wonderful gospel message has been watered down or almost totally buried under a mound of social

issues and political correctness today. And so, if WELS seems a little standoffish when it comes to other church bodies, it's only because we want to guard and keep that precious message of peace through Jesus. Sadly that seems to have all but disappeared in so many religious denominations today.

We believe what Jesus said to the woman at the well: "True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." The peace that Jesus gives through his cross is for all, not just a select few, and that peace through Jesus is found wherever the Father is worshiped in spirit and in truth, and wherever the cross of his Son is embraced in spirit and in truth!

**Peace through  
Jesus is for  
all people.**

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





at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: Discrimination against women

**Why does this synod discriminate against women? Please DON'T QUOTE BIBLICAL SCRIPTURE that is from thousands of years ago! It will not make any reliable case. Save yourself some energy!**

The common definition of “discrimination” is to treat others as of lesser value or importance. Based on that definition, I do not believe that our synod discriminates against women in its official teaching. Certainly, a humble and loving Christlike spirit often eludes us as we seek to put what we teach into practice with one another. Perhaps the pain in your question reflects that you have experienced far less than a patient and loving explanation and application of the biblical principle.

However, when it comes to what we are actually trying to teach, there is only one way the accusation of “discrimination” can fit. It can fit only if the definition of discrimination is distorted so that it can be hurled at anyone who lets Scripture say what it does.

Our synod teaches that women and men are not duplicates of each other, but unique genders with shared blessings and unique callings (roles) from our Creator and Savior. While how God has directed us to live out our callings is not identical, we do not believe that either men or women are of greater or lesser importance in God’s eyes.

Of course, I would need to quote Scripture to show what I mean and fully answer your question. But you have asked me not to quote Scripture. Do you realize where that leaves us in this discussion?

It leaves us hopelessly confused and isolated from one another. Consider what options remain for our discussion if Scripture is off limits. Are you looking for me to weigh in with my opinions on the subject? My opinions are really quite worthless. They tend to change with the weather, even though in pride I tend to want to prove my current opinions to be superior to the opinions of anyone who disagrees with me.

Do you want me to quote the latest studies of psychology and medical science on the issue of

gender? A generation ago many were telling us that the only differences between women and men were because of culturally biased nurturing. If parents would treat their children the same regardless of gender, our “differences” would begin to disappear as the cultural creations they are. Other than details of anatomy, we were told, we are identical.

Now the growing opinion of many recent studies is that our gender differences are far more than “nurture.” Many in the scientific and medical field are convinced that men and women are simply “wired” differently already in the womb.

So, if we base our discussion on the “experts,” what I share with you today may be different a year from now. Where will that leave us in our discussion? It would probably leave each of us quoting whatever studies seem most favorable to our opinion and discounting other studies as biased or discriminatory.

Perhaps we could follow the hostile pattern of an unbelieving world and hurl angry words at each other with ever increasing volume (“We **DO** discriminate!” “**NO**, we don’t!”) and see who gives up first. But shouting others down only turns resentment up. It solves nothing.

So where does that leave us? If we cannot quote Scripture, we are left adrift—isolated from one another on a sea of ever-changing opinion and often contradicting research.

You asked me to save my energy and not quote Scripture, but I cannot help but ask you one question. If the Bible is the Word of the God who loves us in Christ more than we can even imagine—if that love is in a Savior who bled and died and rose for us and who has never changed and will never change (unlike human opinions and feelings)—then why wouldn’t we want to take a look at what his Word has to say?

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

David D. Sellnow

# Confessing truth today

Confessors are songbirds, sounding a clear call to the world with the gospel.

**T**oward the end of the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche announced: "There are no eternal facts, nor are there any absolute truths." He also famously declared, "God is dead." What were outlandish assertions then have become mainstream thoughts today. Barna Research found that just two out of 10 American adults believe in the existence of absolute moral truth. University of Chicago professor Allan Bloom summarized the cultural relativism of our age: "The point is not to correct mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all."

When contemporary society values tolerance more than truth, can we teach truth without being intolerant? Can a confessional church survive in these times?

## Confessing must continue

Yes, confessionalism can survive. Indeed, confessing Christ is the rock on which Christ builds his church. Human institutions rise and fall. Church bodies, including WELS, have no guarantee that they will endure. But the communion of those who confess Christ cannot be overcome, not even by the powers of hell (Matthew 16:18).

So we will and we must remain confessional Christians. Our aim is to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and to answer everyone with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:16).

## Confession centers on Christ, not ourselves

Our confession centers on Christ. Being confessional means we proclaim Jesus as the Savior, not a particular church as the location of salvation. This focus was a catalyst for Lutheran confessors in the 16th century. Rome's religious establishment had declared there was no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. Confessors of the gospel responded that the church is not "an external government" but "consists rather of people scattered throughout the entire world who agree on the gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether or not they have the same human traditions" (Ap VII/VIII, 10).

To be true to the Lutheran confessions, we dare never give the impression that our particular church, WELS, or any other human organization, is the only place where God's Spirit can be found. We confess that the Spirit does work through his Word also

in other denominations, despite the fact that they obscure the truth with unbiblical ideas. “Even though there are among these people many weak ones who build . . . structures of stubble that will perish (that is to say, certain useless opinions), nevertheless, because they do not overthrow the foundation [Christ], these things are to be both forgiven and also corrected” (Ap VII/VIII, 20).

### Confession counters error

Affirming the universal, invisible character of the church does not mean we can ignore errors taught in various churches—including our own. We are careful to correct each other within WELS, safeguarding our own confession. Likewise, we passionately call on Christians in other denominations to follow all that Christ says. We point out teachings that “overthrow faith” (Ap VII/VIII, 21). We warn that “ungodly teachers must be avoided, because they no longer act in the person of Christ” (Ap VII/VIII, 48). We assert that the marks of the true church are “the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel” (Ap VII/VIII, 5). If we didn’t care about other Christians or about non-Christians, we’d leave everyone to believe whatever they wanted.

### Confession is proclamation

Confessing is proclaiming. We do not stay to ourselves and say to others, “Look at how blessed we are!” We go into all the world to tell good news to everyone (cf. Mark 16:16).

Sometimes our confessional stance has looked a little like a bird that puffs up its chest and preens to show off its feathers. “We are the church that has the pure gospel!” we declare. True as that may be, a better way to promote our confession would be to sing it from the treetops for all to hear. Confessors are songbirds, sounding a clear call to the world with the gospel.

### Confession does not aim at isolation

Perhaps your neighbors perceive Lutheranism as limiting. When we

are confessional and practice fellowship accordingly, some separating will occur between us and other visible churches. But love does not aim at isolation. Gospel confessors do not avoid their neighbors from other churches or those without a church. How will others know the truth if they are not told? How will they know our confession if we keep it to ourselves? We are the light of the world; let’s not seclude ourselves from those in the dark or abandon those whose light is weak (cf. Matthew 5:14ff). Christ’s church consists of believing people “scattered through the entire world” (Ap VII/VIII, 20)—not of people who have removed themselves from the world to huddle together. Don’t be afraid to venture outside the safe circles of your church friends and Lutheran schoolmates. God will go with you, and you will go with the confession of his name on your lips.

### Confession’s attraction

When speaking for Christ, be open and engaging. Don’t aim to prove others wrong, but to point them to the truth. For example, a campus ministry announced a study comparing Mormonism to traditional Christianity. Advertisements invited Latter Day Saints (LDS) to an exchange of dialogue. A number of LDS students attended. They were asked to explain their faith. The Lutheran students, in turn, gave the reason for the hope that they had. When it was done, the LDS students commented, “Usually Christians just attack us; thanks for talking with us.” One girl, who had been questioning her commitment to Mormonism, was drawn to follow the positive, powerful confession that the Lutheran students had displayed. She noted that the Mormon students had focused on what they liked about their churches and the people in them, whereas the Lutheran students repeatedly appealed to the Bible in expressing their beliefs.


In 1531, the Lutheran church published a defense of its confession in a document known as *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, penned by Philip Melanchthon, a colleague of Martin Luther. Four hundred seventy-five years later, confessional Lutheranism continues, but faces much criticism. In this article, we consider our present stance as confessing Lutherans, calling to mind some thoughts concerning the church from Melanchthon’s *Apology*. Quotations from the *Apology* are based on the September 1531 edition and are referenced according to article and paragraph numbers, using the Fortress Press edition of *The Book of Concord* (R. Kolb, T. Wengert, editors, © 2000).

### Confession remains controversial

Still, confessionalism remains controversial. Even if you are friendly in offering your confession, some will attack or reject it. Jesus warned his disciples, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 15:18). Our confession challenges others with truths they aren’t eager to hear; yet confessing is vital work. “We are not engaging in a mere war over words. We are arguing about an important matter. . . . Unless a conscience sorts this out, it cannot have firm and certain consolation” (Ap IV, 358).

Confessional Lutheranism was born at a time when accepted dogma dictated one way of belief—a way at odds with the truth of the gospel. Today, we find ourselves confessing evangelical truth amid a culture that accords equal status to all beliefs, without declaring any way truer than another. The times have changed, but the need for confessionalism remains as critical as ever. God help us to witness clearly, confidently, and lovingly, pointing to Christ in everything we say and do.

*David Sellnow, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm.*



**“W**hat does a plant need to be a plant?” The faces of 10 five-to-eight-year-olds stared at me. We had started our unit on plants, and this was a question they had to consider. Obvious answers were given, such as leaves, stems, and roots. And then there were some we had to think about: Can a plant be a plant without soil, sunlight, or water? We might not be able to see the water molecules in every plant, but they are there, and in the sunlight and soil there are important minerals to help the plant grow. As we listed the parts of a plant and the things that keep a plant alive, I was once again reminded of the privilege I have to be a vessel watering the little seed of faith planted in each of these children.

#### **Deciding to be a teacher**

For me the decision to become a teacher seemed too easy. From the time I started grade school, family and teachers had told me I would be a great teacher. Most people don’t stick with the job they choose when they are six, and in high school I began to wonder if I truly wanted to be a teacher. For a while I pushed teaching away, thinking it was not what I wanted to do but instead it was something that others had decided for me. However, I changed my mind once again when I was challenged by a wonderful pastor to consider my gifts. Would I best serve

the Lord as a teacher or in another profession? When I looked at the gifts God had graciously given me—patience and a passion for helping others learn—I had to admit that teaching would be a perfect fit. Now, where would I go to make this dream come true?

My parents had modeled the value of Christian education for my siblings and me by making sure that we were able to learn about our Savior, not only on Sunday but throughout the week. From kindergarten through high school in all of my classes and extracurriculars I was surrounded with the message of Jesus and his saving grace. I wanted to make sure that I could continue studying God’s Word and that I would be able to share this great news with everyone I met. This desire to stay in the Word led me to Martin Luther College where I would prepare to serve the Lord someday as a teacher in our Lutheran schools.

#### **Staying on course**

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6). This passage helps me see how I came to be a teacher and how my life affects others. There were so many times that I wanted to stop studying. If I had chosen another university, I would not have had to write doctrine papers, and my credit load would have been much lower. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit gave me the strength to overcome all the arguments that my sinful mind devised.

Through all my experiences I was blessed with faithful layworkers, teachers, and pastors, who all demonstrated a servant’s heart. They modeled Christian love and concern for me

The desire to be a teacher is the beginning—like a small seed. The seed grows when it is watered and nurtured until it blooms in the classrooms of our Lutheran schools.

Sandra O’Laire

# GOD MADE IT GROW

## WATERING THE SEEDS



Sandra O'Laire and her students display a class art project that they entered in the Sarasota County Fair.

*Philip Leyrer, vice president for enrollment at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., shares the unique features of Martin Luther College's teaching training program.*

**Teacher education has always been widely available.** From its earliest years, however, WELS has believed that distinct teacher training is important for those who serve in our schools. Distinct does not mean superior, but it does mean that such training is unique to WELS ministerial education. Three features, among others, make this training distinct.

**1. The Philosophy.** Martin Luther College students are not training to meet a contract but to answer a divine call from congregations who have schools because Christian education marked by Lutheran confessionalism is a priority. This training shapes the way teaching ministry candidates see themselves and their students.

The children in front of our teachers are complex and learn all about their world through mathematics, English, and science. But most important is a child's relationship with Jesus Christ because it affects all other aspects of his life and is the sole determinant of where that student will spend eternity. Since God's Word nurtures such a relationship, the teaching minister learns how to teach that Word formally, in light of God's plan of salvation. He or she is also trained to integrate that Word into all subjects, to make the law and the gospel the foundation of the classroom and co-curricular activities as well.

**2. The Bond.** Students aimed at the same goal discuss their future ministries at night and over meals. One of the strongest links in the bond is the students' common desire to make themselves available to the church through the assignment process. For decades WELS has come to depend upon this willingness, and it allows us as a church to fill vacancies no matter the location.

**3. The Faculty.** Graduate studies give instructors competence in their subject areas, but they are not career professors. Before coming to Martin Luther College they served in the classrooms and parishes for which they are now preparing their students. This "been there" quality allows them to weave insightful ministry applications into their teaching.

Other effective teacher training programs in public and private institutions exist but do not bear these marks of distinction simply because they are preparing teachers for a different setting and purpose. For more than 100 years, WELS has placed uniquely-trained teaching ministers in our schools, and, by grace, rich blessings have followed.

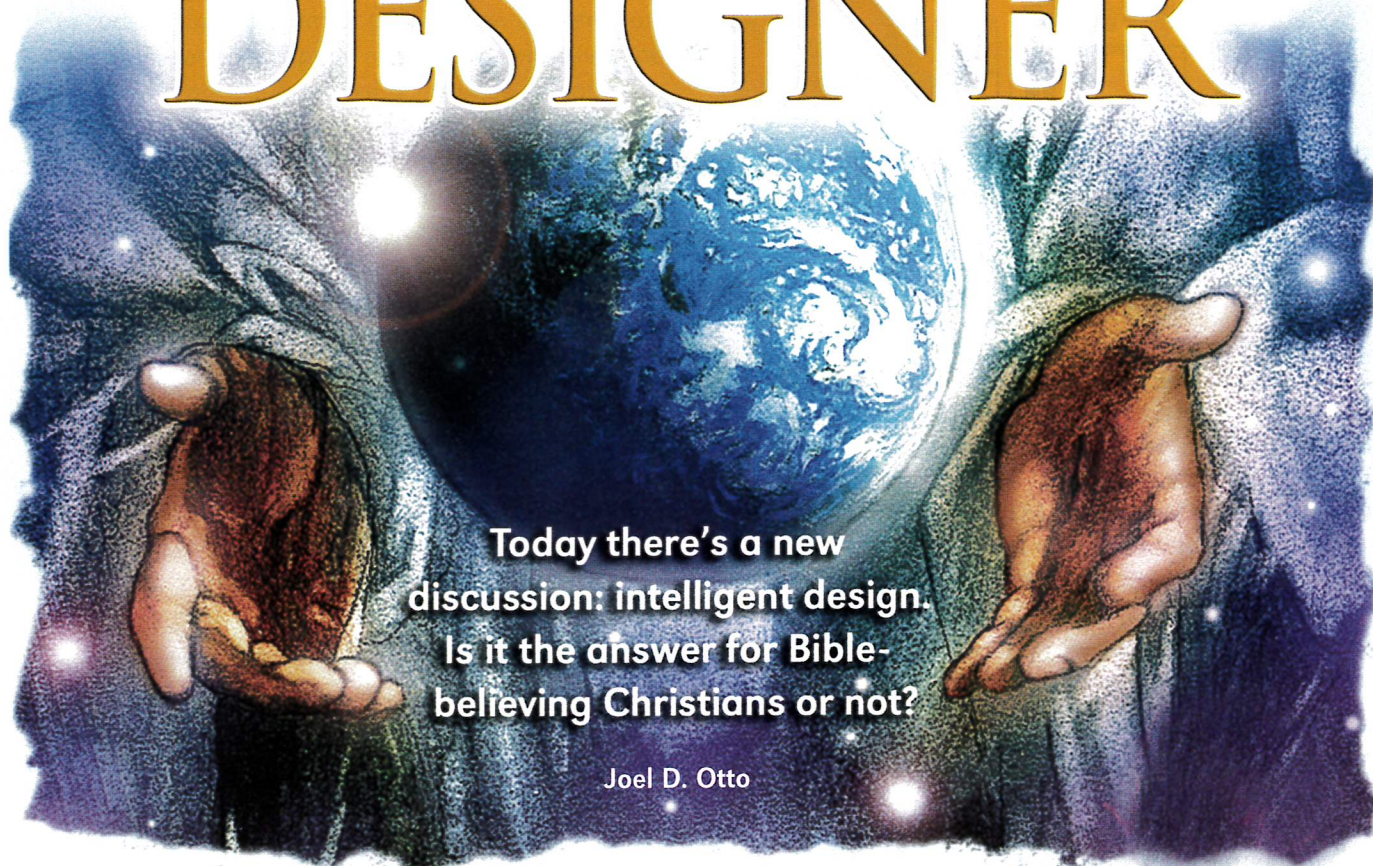
and many other students, and this encouraged me to give time to others. At times I still wasn't positive that I could teach or wanted to teach, but I did know that I wanted to work with people and that I wanted to be able to share my faith with those I met daily. It takes a lot of practice to share our faith, and at Martin Luther College I found many opportunities to help me prepare. My education, from kindergarten through my final year of college, gave me the tools and information I needed to strengthen the faith that had been growing in me since baptism and the courage to share this message with those I meet.

### Something to think about

For those who are going into high school, think about where you can strengthen your faith. I was blessed to grow up with an area Lutheran high school near my hometown, but for many this is not the case. WELS has wonderful prep schools where Christian education is helping young people grow for the ministry. But if you are a high schooler wondering if you can still enter the public ministry without having gone to a Lutheran high school, the answer is yes! The Lord pulls his workers from all paths of life, and that is a blessing to his church. Each experience is another training session preparing you for a life of service as a called worker or a strong layperson in Christ's church. For those who are struggling with whether they should start a life of service in the public ministry, I can only pass on the encouragement that was given to me when I was 16. Consider your gifts and how you can best use them. What an honor to live as a vessel in the garden of God!

*Sandra O'Laire teaches kindergarten through second grade at Ascension, Sarasota, Florida.*

# The true “INTELLIGENT DESIGNER”



Today there's a new  
discussion: intelligent design.  
Is it the answer for Bible-  
believing Christians or not?

Joel D. Otto

I live in one of the most desirable places in America (as evidenced by housing costs). One of San Diego's top industries is tourism. People flock to San Diego at all times of the year because of our mild temperatures. We have beautiful beaches and stunning views from cliffs that overlook canyons. Mountains and deserts are only a short drive away. You can grow almost anything in our climate. Some kind of plant always seems to be blooming. When you come to San Diego you get to see a wide variety of God's creation.

We also have tourist attractions like SeaWorld, the San Diego Zoo, and the Scripps Aquarium. God's

many and varied creatures are on display. But invariably, posted signs and tour guides will talk about how the canyons were formed or how the mountains rose up over the course of millions and billions of years. They will speak about how certain sharks evolved to adapt to their environment. You just can't escape the atheistic evolutionary talk. As Christians, we get frustrated that the people of the world just don't seem to see God's creating hand in all of this beauty and variety.

### What is intelligent design?

A recent phenomenon in the United States is the Intelligent Design (ID)

movement. This is headed by a group of scientists who are endeavoring to restore some balance to the teaching of science and origins in public school classrooms. By examining the complexity of the natural world, as well as the obvious patterns to be found in the universe, they have come to the correct conclusion that Darwin's natural selection is impossible. Life is too complex and too orderly to be explained by accident and chaos. Therefore, an intelligent designer must have been the original cause of the universe.

The ID movement is simply an expression of the truth proclaimed

in Scripture. King David wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1). The writer to the Hebrews declared, “For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything” (Hebrews 3:4). Both the vast array of the universe and its incredible complexity point to the wisdom and intelligence of a Creator. The psalmist wrote, “How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (Psalm 104:24). The Lord impresses upon Job the magnitude and immensity of creation to demonstrate the difference between God and man (Job 38–41).

It is only the fool who claims that evidence of God’s power and presence cannot be seen in creation (Psalm 14:1). The ID movement seeks to answer the questions of origins without preconceived atheistic notions. The fact that intelligent design is being advocated in the 21st century validates Paul’s words to the Romans, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

### **The problems with intelligent design**

But there are a couple of problems with the ID movement. First, the evolutionary scientific community, as well as the majority of the mainstream media, dismisses the movement as another attempt to introduce religion into public schools. Massimo Pigliucci, an evolutionary scientist, wrote that intelligent design is “a thinly veiled version of creationism, a pseudo-intellectual enterprise that has nothing to do with science or philosophy (or indeed, good theology), and everything to do with inserting a religious wedge into public school education.” These attitudes seem to be reflected

in the court system as attempts by the ID movement have been rebuffed in nearly every case. The result is that not only have ID speakers been denied access to public hearings, but creation scientists, who routinely engage in debates on public school campuses, also are finding the doors closed.

The second, more serious problem, has to do with the nature of the “intelligent designer.” Leaders in the ID movement purposely are vague about who the intelligent designer might be, even to the point of saying that evolution could be the way the world developed, but some kind of “intelligence” had to design everything. They strive to remove the Bible and the one true God from the discussion. A literal reading of Genesis 1–2 and the introduction of the Triune God as the Creator is almost an embarrassment that might cause them to lose intellectual and scientific credibility.

That’s a tragedy. Our faith, as Christians, is placed in the Word, through whom all things were made, and who became flesh for our salvation (John 1:3,14). To deny or doubt as an embarrassment the Triune God as our Creator is to deny Christ, by whom “all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (Colossians 1:16) and “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). We can see the connection between this discussion of science and the origins of the universe with our eternal salvation. The Triune God—Father, Son and Spirit—is the true intelligent designer not only of the created universe, but also of our salvation.

### **New opportunities for Christians**

There is a plus side to the ID movement for Bible-believing Christians. It provides us with an opportunity to engage people in a conversation that could lead to sharing Jesus. Paul’s speech to the philosophers of Athens

provides us with such an example. He began by speaking of God as the one “who made the world and everything in it” (Acts 17:24). He expanded that discussion to talk about the creation of humanity and God’s providence. God made his presence known in creation so that people might seek him. The divine intelligence evident in the world provides a starting point for people’s spiritual journey. Paul used this as a bridge to get to the only way to the only true God—the one who had been raised from the dead and would someday return to judge the world (Acts 17:31).

Could the current debate about intelligent design and evolution spark conversations in your life where you could lead people to Jesus? Are you ready “to give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15)? Are you bold to speak up when evolutionary tour guides tout the propaganda of evolution? Don’t be ashamed of God’s Word, even in a world that might mock or ridicule a literal interpretation of Genesis 1–2. Remember Jesus’ words: “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

And while you’re at it, marvel at God’s creation, wherever you might live. Take the time to see the hand of the true Intelligent Designer in the simple beauty of a rose, the uniqueness of the animal world, or the vastness of outer space. Glorify our Creator and Savior for his wisdom and intelligence in giving us this world as our temporary home until he takes us to our eternal home.

*Joel Otto is pastor at Reformation, San Diego, California.*

**Find out more about this topic at [www.wels.net/jump/fic](http://www.wels.net/jump/fic). A Bible study on intelligent design will be available after Sept. 5.**

## Our families need our witness for their spiritual health.

**W**e remember the words of Jesus before ascending to heaven, “You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). A witness is a person who has seen something. What amazing things we have seen our Savior do for us, as recorded in the Word! We have seen his life of love and holiness. We have seen his bitter suffering and death. We have seen his glorious resurrection and ascension to heaven. All of this has immediate and eternal benefits for us. This redefines who we are, how we live, and our purpose for living. Yes, when we review the truth of the gospel, we know that we have seen the spectacular and life-changing love of God, and that this message is intended for all people. So we are ready and motivated to be witnesses. Where do we go? We don’t have to go far, to begin.

### Our families need what we treasure

If “mission work begins at home,” then we really don’t have to step outside to be a witness for Christ. We might say, “But, my family is Christian, so how can I be a witness to them?” Yes, it is true that our witness to Christian family members is not strictly evangelism. But it is an important witness because we can continue to encourage our family in their Christian faith and life. They need that ongoing witness, as we all do.

How do we give witness at home? We do that with our words. When we faithfully have devotions with our family, we are sharing the gospel. As a family, it is a wonderful occasion to share again and again the good news of Jesus with each other and rejoice in the common faith in Christ that we have. We give witnessing words when we forgive one another. We give witness when we honestly admit our mistakes and ask for the forgiveness of our family. We can also correct and train our family members in living lives of love.

We witness to our family members also with what we do. Parents quickly discover that their children are watching them—watching to see if they practice what they preach. We give witness to Jesus by our example in attending worship and Bible class. We give witness as we serve each other, even by the routine activities of cooking dinner, taking out the garbage, cleaning the house, mowing the lawn, or dropping off and picking up our children from school.

### Are you the only Christian in a family?

Many, however, may be the only Christian in a family. That presents some great opportunities and challenges to do evangelism with other family members. The Christian may be carefully looking for ways to share the gospel with his or her spouse, children, or parents. That is not always easy! Naturally Christians want to try to keep peace and harmony in the family too, and not create a lot of conflicts.

But there are ways to witness. While having dinner on Sunday evening, one may share a few important gospel gems from the sermon that morning. “You know, I heard something this morning that the pastor said that really made me feel happy . . . (pause, no response) . . . he was talking about how God loves us even when we do things wrong or act selfishly . . . (another pause) . . . it makes me feel thankful because I know I am not perfect and I need forgiveness and God is always ready to forgive.” Such a witness might get a rather disinterested “uh huh” from family members. Rejoice! It’s a start. At least they did not start arguing!

This gets tougher when facing resistance and downright persecution from a family member. Perhaps a spouse makes fun of you when you are busy getting ready to go to church on Sunday morning. You may have a parent or older child that gets angry with you for praying before the meal. May God give you strength and patience when you deal with such persecution.



# Mission work begins



## The immigrants next door need our witness too

We may not consider that persecution of Christians is real in a country like the United States. We may think that if there is persecution, it is fairly subtle and easy to handle. But our country is changing. Attitudes about Christian faith and life are changing. In addition, the population of our country is changing, with a great number of new immigrants arriving each year. Some of these immigrants are coming from a background and culture that had little or no Christian influence.

I have had the privilege over the past 13 years to be given a ministry with various Asian peoples in the United States, especially the Hmong people from the hill country of Laos. Their traditional religion is shamanism, or spiritism. This includes a belief in many spirits, both good and evil, that affect one's day-to-day life. The shaman is called into the home to drive out evil spirits, call in good spirits, and direct a person's soul to the right place.

As Hmong people in the United States and Canada have become Christian, they regularly deal with strong opposition and even persecution from family members. Often, younger Hmong people become Christians and face persecution from parents, grandparents, or elders in the clan. This is especially painful in a culture where there is great respect and honor for the elders in the family and the clan. The questions arise, "How do I show proper love and respect for my elders when they are not Christians and oppose my faith in Jesus? How do

I give a witness about Christ to my family members when it just makes them more angry with me?"

Sometimes we build walls around ourselves just to avoid that anger instead of finding a way to reach out. The walls just get higher and thicker when we get annoyed with our family and neighbors. It is easy to see the faults in others. Here's an example. As we are preparing to go to bed at a reasonable hour, we notice our neighbor outside is trying to fix his car. He is hammering away at something, then gets in the driver's seat and tries to start the heap. Can't get it started. Slams the car door. Curses. Back under the hood to hammer away at something again. Back in the driver's seat. Still won't start. More cursing. This goes on and on while we are trying to get to sleep. It's annoying. The next day we may not want to talk to our neighbor or we voice our annoyance in anger.

Jesus knew, of course, that our role as witnesses in this world, even to our own families, would not always be easy. But we can still rejoice. Rejoice because we have seen the love of God in Christ Jesus. Rejoice because we have the privilege—and challenge—of sharing that love with others.

*Leon Piepenbrink is pastor at Mount Olive Chinese Christian, Saint Paul, and coordinator of Hmong ministry in the Twin Cities area, Minnesota.*



Leon E. Piepenbrink  
**at home**

# WHATEVER

## Easy witnessing

Just going to see a new baby can be an open door from the Holy Spirit.

Amber Grefsheim

**I**n April 2005, my neighbors, "Jenny" and "Ron," had a baby girl. My mom could hardly wait to take a gift over to their house. Not only was it an opportunity to see the baby, but it was also a good opportunity to get to know our neighbors better. We didn't know it then, but it was also a good opportunity to share our faith too.

**We arrived at the house one night a few weeks after the baby came home.** Mom was the first one to hold little "Lacy," and Jenny listened as Mom gave her advice on parenting. One of the subjects that came up was religion. Jenny had been raised Catholic, and Ron had been raised in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Neither of them was active in any church at all. Mom gave Lacy to me, and she began to tell them things about our congregation and what we believed. Jenny and Ron both listened with interest. My mom encouraged them to get Lacy baptized and offered them the use of some Christian parenting books by Dr. James Dobson. By the end of the night, we didn't know whether or not my mom's words had done any good, but we were going to find out soon enough.

Jenny and Ron hired me to baby-sit for their new baby all summer long. Even though it was only for a couple of hours every day, I still enjoyed every minute of it. One day, when Jenny came home, she asked me about getting Lacy baptized. I was surprised and told her that the person she should really talk to was my mom. That same night, after I came home from baby-sitting, Jenny called my mom. She and Ron had thought it over and wanted to have Lacy baptized. Mom gave them our pastor's number, and Jenny called him. In August, Lacy was brought into God's family.

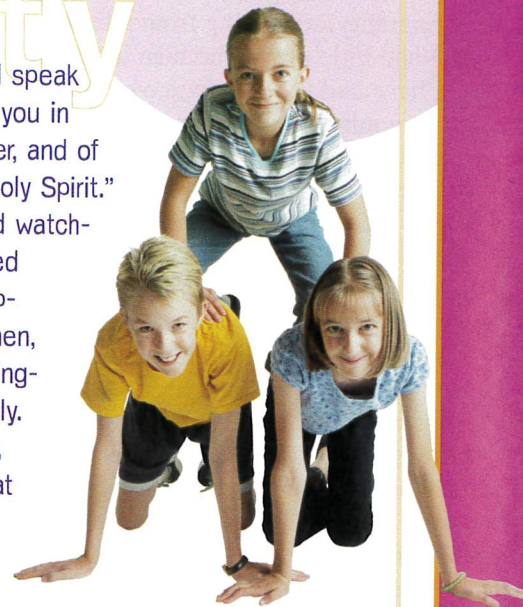
**At Lacy's baptism, I sat with my parents, watching our staff minister pour the water**

**over her head** and speak the words "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." As I sat listening and watching, I silently marveled at what a miracle baptism really is. Right then, I thanked God for bringing Lacy into his family. I still baby-sit for her, and I have noticed that her favorite books to read are her Bible story pop-up books.

They're only a couple of months old, but the wear on them tells me that Jenny and Ron read them to her all the time.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells us, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." In other words, Jesus commands us to spread the Word all over the world. While some people are blessed to be able to carry the Word overseas, there are the rest of us who are like my mom. Just going to see a new baby can be an open door from the Holy Spirit.

Amber Grefsheim, a junior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member of St. Matthew, Janesville, Wisconsin.



# to share

## Obituaries

### Gerald F. Kastens 1947-2006

Gerald Kastens was born March 31, 1947, in Mankato, Minn. He died May 26, 2006, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1970 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served Trinity, Goodview, Minn.; St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.; St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.; Commission for Youth Discipleship, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Trinity, Watertown, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Sandy; one son; one daughter; and two grandchildren.

### Esther E. Kiessling 1906-2006

Esther Kiessling (nee Brockmann) was born July 5, 1906, in Fort Douglas, Utah. She died May 3, 2006, in Franklin, Wis.

She served St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Elmer; and a son. She is

survived by one son, one daughter, four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

### Emil F. Peterson 1913-2006

Emil Peterson was born June 9, 1913, in St. Paul, Minn. He died May 30, 2006, in Saginaw, Mich.

He served as pastor at St. Paul, St. James, Minn.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Julia. He is survived by two sons, one daughter, seven grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

### Paul E. Eickmann 1928-2006

Paul Eickmann was born June 13, 1928, in Watertown, Wis. He died June 15, 2006, in Oconomowoc, Wis.

A 1955 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; Grace,

Geneva, Neb.; Zion, Crete, Ill.; Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.; Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; and Trinity, Watertown, Wis.

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

### Doris N. Burmeister 1930-2006

Doris Burmeister (nee Pankow) was born June 25, 1930, in Mauston, Wis. She died June 14, 2006, in Winona, Minn.

A 1951 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.; St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.; and Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

She is survived by her husband, Richard; five sons; and nine grandchildren.

**Prepare to be caught in the flow**

# Streams

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**READ  
THROUGH MY  
BIBLE IN 3 YEARS**

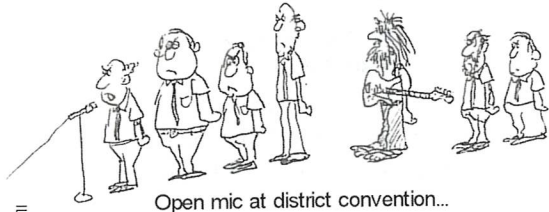
**OCTOBER 2006**

1. 1 Kings 9:1-10:13	17. Jn. 2:23-3:21
2. 1 Kgs. 10:14-11:43	18. Jn. 3:22-36
3. 1 Kgs. 12:1-32	19. Jn. 4:1-26
4. 1 Kgs. 12:33-13:34	20. Jn. 4:27-54
5. 1 Kgs. 14	21. Jn. 5:1-29
6. 1 Kgs. 15:1-16:7	22. Jn. 5:30-47
7. 1 Kgs. 16:8-34	23. Jn. 6:1-21
8. 1 Kgs. 17, 18	24. Jn. 6:22-40
9. 1 Kgs. 19	25. Jn. 6:41-71
10. 1 Kgs. 20	26. Jn. 7:1-24
11. 1 Kgs. 21	27. Jn. 7:25-52
12. 1 Kgs. 22	28. Jn. 7:53-8:29
13. John 1:1-18	29. Jn. 8:30-59
14. Jn. 1:19-34	30. Jn. 9
15. Jn. 1:35-51	31. Jn. 10:1-21
16. Jn. 2:1-22	

## District convention wrap-up

During the summer of even numbered years, pastors, teachers, and lay delegates in each of the synod's 12 districts meet for a district convention. The conventions, usually held in June, allow the districts an opportunity to discuss important issues pertinent to their members. The convention also allows delegates to debate and vote on major synodwide matters prior to the 2007 synod convention.

Two of the biggest issues facing delegates at this year's conventions were the synod restructuring proposal (viewable at [www.wels.net/jump/restructuring](http://www.wels.net/jump/restructuring)) and the adoption of a fee-based system for the Commission on Parish Schools (CPS). Below are results of the elections and the highlights from each district.



Open mic at district convention...

ILLUSTRATION BY REV. JEFFREY BOVEE

### Arizona-California / Election results:

**President:** Rev. Paul Janke  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Steven Degner  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Snowden Sims  
**Secretary:** Rev. Kenneth Pasch

#### Highlights:

Voted to oppose the formation of the National Council as laid out in the restructuring proposal.

Opposed the proposed changes to the Synod Bylaws that would make the area of ministry boards standing advisory committees and would change the calling body of administrators from the ministry boards to the Synodical Council.

Voted to approve the fee-based system for Parish Schools.

### Dakota-Montana / Election results:

**President:** Rev. Peter Naumann  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Douglas Free  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Jonathan Schultz  
**Secretary:** Rev. David Bitter

#### Highlights:

Unanimously voted to reject the restructuring proposal.

Rejected the Parish Schools' alternative funding proposal, although a modified resolution said it would be acceptable to levy a fee for a few years to relieve budget pressures.

Encouraged the synod to look at a different way to select synod convention lay delegates. The suggestion was that delegates represent a circuit or conference and be able to serve for two to three conventions.

### Michigan / Election results:

**President:** Rev. John Seifert  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Paul Naumann  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Carl Otto  
**Secretary:** Rev. James Seelow  
**Synodical Council Lay Representative:** Mr. Phil Hempel

#### Highlights:

Rejected the proposed restructuring plan. It was felt that this plan centralizes decision-making while reducing the check and balance system, which has proven helpful.

Accepted the proposed amendment of WELS Constitution Article IV.

Accepted the recommendation that the synod convention reconsider fair and equitable representation and return to its former practice.

Decided to hold a special district convention in 2007 as opposed to a pastor/teacher/delegate conference. The district praesidium is to look into the wisdom of doing this every year.

Elected Mr. Phil Hempel as the Synodical Council lay representative. Mr. Mark Bannan stepped aside from serving on the Synodical Council after four years of service.

### Minnesota / Election results:

**President:** Rev. Larry Cross  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Charles Degner  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Joel Luetke  
**Secretary:** Rev. Michael Hatzung  
**Synodical Council Lay Representative:** Mr. Paul Holzhueter

#### Highlights:

Encouraged further study of the restructuring proposal, particularly in the area of missions.

Expressed concern over the matter of change proposed by the restructuring proposal in regard to the Conference of Presidents.

Elected Mr. Paul Holzhueter as the

Synodical Council lay representative. Mr. Arvid Schwartz stepped aside from serving on the Synodical Council. This concludes about 25 consecutive years of serving the synod on the Coordinating Council, Board of Trustees, and Synodical Council.

### Nebraska / Election results:

**President:** Rev. Joel Frank  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Philip Zarling  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Mark Voss  
**Secretary:** Rev. Phillip Sievert

#### Highlights:

Opposed the formation of the National Council.

Accepted the resolution addressing the authoritative status of elected boards, committees, and commissions.

Resolved to accept the resolution addressing future steps in restructuring, after inserting "President and."

Accepted a resolution supporting the current structure of the Boards for Home Missions and World Missions.

### North Atlantic / Election results:

**President:** Rev. Joel Petermann  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Donald Tollefson  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Kevin Schultz  
**Secretary:** Rev. Jeffrey Wegner

#### Synodical Council Lay Representative:

Mr. Rodger Anderson

#### Highlights:

Accepted and passed the restructuring proposal and all reports.

Accepted the Parish Schools' alternative funding proposal.

Gave the convention offering of \$863.50 to the district student assistance fund.

Made a motion that the convention district praesidium have the authority to change the district convention from a Saturday/Sunday.

### Northern Wisconsin / Election results:

**President:** Rev. Douglas Engelbrecht  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Mark Gass

**Second Vice President:** Rev. Ross Henzi  
**Secretary:** Rev. Ronald Szep  
**Synodical Council Lay Representative:**  
 Mr. Ron Hillmann

**Highlights:**

Elected Pastor Mark Gass as first vice president to replace Pastor Dave Sternberg, who chose not to stand for reelection.

Ran basically a "paperless" convention. Using the technology available at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., devotions, the opening service, resolutions, and anything else that formerly required paper were put up on the big screen. This saved about \$1,500 in paper and printing costs and was well received by the delegates.

Resisted the restructuring proposal, especially the prospect of extra work for the district presidents, the concentration of "power" in a smaller group, and having the possibility of a layperson chairing this group. The delegates voted down a resolution that the committee continue with their work.

Passed the proposal to fund Parish Schools and encouraged Parish Schools to implement the full schedule in July 2007.

Elected Mr. Ron Hillmann as the Synodical Council lay representative. Mr. Ron Rathke stepped aside after 14 years of serving on a synod council.

**Pacific Northwest / Election results:**

**President:** Rev. Theodore Lambert  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Thomas Unke  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Joel Nitz  
**Secretary:** Rev. Scott Mews  
**Synodical Council Lay Representative:**  
 Mr. Warren Ehlke

**Highlights:**

Reacted positively to the Parish Schools' plan for fee-based services. The resolution, passing unanimously, even included the proposal that the plan be implemented fully in its first year rather than phased in over three years.

Didn't accept or reject the restructuring proposal, but agreed with the committee's proposal to pass along the positives and negatives as helpful reaction.

Heard a presentation from Mission Counselor John Huebner and Pastor Mark Cares on mission outreach that tied into the theme of "Every Member a Missionary."

Elected Mr. Warren Ehlke as the Synodical Council lay representative. Mr. Peter Dorn stepped aside after 14 years of serving on a synod council.

**South Atlantic / Election results:**

**President:** Rev. John Guse  
**First Vice President:** Rev. David Priebe  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Larry Zahn  
**Secretary:** Mr. Kurt Rosenbaum  
**Synodical Council Lay Representative:**  
 Mr. Dale Anderson

**Highlights:**

Elected Teacher Kurt Rosenbaum as district secretary to replace Pastor Robert Krueger, who chose not to seek reelection.

Endorsed the Parish Schools' alternative funding proposal.

Recognized Grace, Grenada, West Indies, as an independent congregation in fellowship with WELS.

Announced that the residential program of Calvary Academy will move from South Milwaukee, Wis., to recently purchased facilities in Florida. Calvary's day program will continue in Wisconsin.



After 16 years of serving the South Atlantic District as secretary, Pastor Robert Krueger (left) decided not to seek reelection. He is pictured here with South Atlantic District President John Guse.

**South Central / Election results:**

**President:** Rev. Vilas Glaeske  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Donald Patterson  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Mark Bitter  
**Secretary:** Rev. Christopher Goelzer  
**Highlights:**

Passed a motion to accept the Parish Schools' alternative funding proposal.  
 Passed a motion to combine Home Missions and World Missions into the Outreach area of ministry.  
 Passed a motion to create a National Council.  
 Passed a motion that board and committees become advisory to the ministry administrators.  
 Passed a motion that the National Council calls all area of ministry administrators.

**Southeastern Wisconsin / Election results:**

**President:** Rev. David Rutschow  
**First Vice President:** Rev. James Huebner  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. David Kolander

**Secretary:** Rev. William (Billy) Carter

**Highlights:**

Elected Pastor William (Billy) Carter as district secretary after two run-off ballots.

Rejected the restructuring proposal until further clarification can be given.  
 Approved the use of the Parish Schools' alternative funding plan.

**Western Wisconsin / Election results:**

**President:** Rev. Herbert Prah  
**First Vice President:** Rev. Mark Lindner  
**Second Vice President:** Rev. Steven Staude

**Secretary:** Rev. Daniel Sims

**Highlights:**

Studied the restructuring proposal, which brought up a number of concerns. The district chose to share their questions with the synod praesidium and resolved that the praesidium forward a new version of the proposal for review at the district's Pastors' Conference in the fall.

Gave the convention offering of \$1,619.71 to the Western Wisconsin District Scholarship fund.

Resolved to pass the Committee on Constitutional Matters' memorials to change the bylaws concerning the election of our synod's officers, with some slight wording changes and additional information.

For more information, go to [www.wels.net/convention](http://www.wels.net/convention).

## A reaction to the district conventions

Forward in Christ assistant editor Abby Janssen sat down with WELS President Karl Gurgel to discuss his reaction to the districts' feedback on the restructuring proposal.

**How do you feel the restructuring proposal was received at the district conventions?**

**ANSWER** – I think it was objectively presented, and it had a fair hearing. Unfortunately, materials came out somewhat late. That was primarily because we wanted to give the district presidents a chance to see the full proposal before it went to their districts, so that precluded the delegates from having it much more than a couple weeks before their conventions.

**Were there any reactions that surprised you?**

**ANSWER** – No, I don't think I was surprised. It was encouraging to hear though that the most important thing in the minds of the delegates is the mission of our church. Doctrine and practice in staying true to God's Word is number one, like it should be. People saw structure as a secondary consideration. I think [the delegates] all understood that this is where brothers and sisters can disagree and have different opinions because structure is not scripturally mandated.

**Many districts were concerned about adding to the current duties of their district president by approving this restructuring proposal. How do you respond to that?**

**ANSWER** – This didn't surprise me. In every district there was strong support for the office of the district president. There was concern that the proposal makes the work of their district president much more difficult and, in their minds, somewhat impossible.

**Some districts expressed concern that someone other than the synod president would preside over the National Council. Do you feel that is a relevant concern?**

**ANSWER** – It would be if that person were more than just a meeting moderator. But that was one of those things that wasn't explained as well as it could have been. This person would simply be the facilitator for the meetings but not have a day-to-day leadership role in the synod.

**One district said that the proposal "centralizes decision-making while reducing the check and balance system." Do you feel this is accurate?**

**ANSWER** – No, I don't. We have to have a common definition of checks and balances. For me it is the direct accountability to which anyone in a position of responsibility is held. I felt the proposal had the potential to actually increase accountability, which in my mind equals checks and balances.

**Another comment was that the restructuring proposal was hastily done and not completely thought through. How do you answer that?**

**ANSWER** – It was [the Ministry Operations Team's] choice to have some basic concepts brought to the people first to see if the concepts were worth pursuing any further. If they were, then for the [2007 synod] convention, we would have details clearly spelled out and not just in the nick of time for the convention. We hope that by early 2007, we will have the details to any proposal that comes forward.

**Now that all of the districts have reviewed the proposal, what are the next steps?**

**ANSWER** – As the original resolution states, we were to take the proposal to the districts for their input and based on that input present something to the 2007 synod convention. What the districts said will weigh heavily in our minds as we put together a new proposal. We will not discount anything that was said.

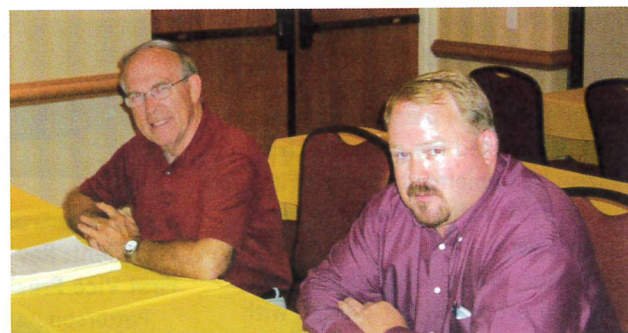
**What can delegates to the 2007 convention expect?**

**ANSWER** – We need to bring something to the convention. It could be to say that we've studied it and we don't think we should go any further with restructuring. Another option is a modification of what was brought to the districts. But I think we can clearly say that anything brought to the synod in convention will not be an identical proposal to what was brought to the districts this summer. We will thoughtfully reconsider the proposal based on what was heard at the district conventions.

**Any final thoughts?**

**ANSWER** – We have to keep in mind that proclaiming a living Jesus to a dying world is really the core of what we do and structure is merely a servant of our primary mission. We can't forget what our real goal is.

*Want to learn more about the restructuring proposal? Go to [www.wels.net/jump/restructuring](http://www.wels.net/jump/restructuring).*



President Karl Gurgel (left) with lay delegate Matt Steger, from Grace, Casa Grande, Ariz., during the Arizona-California district convention.



## LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

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

### SOMEONE REACHING THE AGE OF 98 SHOULD BE VERY SURE ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN GOD TAKES THEM HOME.

When I asked God to help me spread his Word to others, he answered my prayers in an unusual way. I first met Ruth Berndt five years ago when I interviewed her for a research paper. Ruth is a vivacious woman who still lives in the home her grandfather built in 1863.

As we got to know each other better, we talked about religion. "Whether you call him Buddha, Allah, or Jehovah, aren't all gods the same god?" she asked.

"No," I had to disagree. "There is only one true God." She never once mentioned Jesus, so I did. "I am the way—and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6)," I recited.

We talked about Jesus living a perfect life for us and dying on the cross to pay for our sins. "Jesus' resurrection proves he is the one true God," I said.

Ruth thought about that. "You mean only Christians will go to heaven?"

"That passage makes it pretty clear that we can't go to heaven unless we rely on Jesus." That bothered her. Now Ruth and I are reading the book of John together.

When Ruth fell and broke her wrist, she recuperated in a nursing home for a month. As I walked through the lobby to visit, one of the residents called out, "Please, take me home." Down the hall another pleaded, "Take me home!" A third offered payment to take her home. How could I help these lonely people?

I couldn't adopt them all. I chose Ruth. But it made me think,

if each of us visited a "grandmother" or "grandfather" weekly, what a difference it would make! Befriending the elderly returns many wonderful blessings. I don't need tickets for exotic countries to be an ambassador for Christ. All I need to do is make friends. Retirement homes, hospitals, or the backyard fence are wonderful places where the Holy Spirit presents me with opportunities to enlighten and encourage with words from Scripture.

God gives me two ears and one mouth. I figure that Jesus wants me to listen twice as much as I speak. When people sense that I really care, they open their hearts and share their needs. I'm often amazed how the Holy Spirit gives me effective words, working through me in quiet conversations over a cup of coffee.

Wendy Enter



Ruth (left) and Wendy Enter.

## Academy closes after two years —

On May 25, the families, staff, and board of Southern Lutheran Academy (SLA), Mulberry, Fla., marked the close of the academy's second year of operation. The service also marked the closing of this young area Lutheran high school. After extensive research by the Forward with Lutheran Schools consulting team, it was determined that declining area Lutheran elementary school enrollments and the location of the school were two of the biggest challenges facing the fledgling school. Additionally, the rural, local community where the school was housed was not interested in a high school. The campus itself needed a gym and millions of dollars for capital improvements, and the cost to educate a student stood at \$40,000 to \$80,000 per year.

The consultants encouraged Southern Lutheran Academy's association of supporting churches to go a different direction in meeting the needs of its youth. The campus was sold and assets liquidated in order to invest funds to develop a program to support youth with regional rallies, Bible study opportunities, and the chance to meet other confessional youth beyond their own congregation. Students will be supported if they want to attend other area Lutheran high schools or prep schools, WELS/ELS colleges, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The invested principal would be maintained for a possible area Lutheran high school in the future.

Even though Southern Lutheran Academy has closed, God's blessings are evident. Several SLA students are considering full-time ministry and will attend a synod prep school in the fall. All of Southern Lutheran Academy's full-time staff have received calls or are continuing studies for further gospel ministry. Gospel ministry to youth will continue in the South Atlantic District. Just where the Lord will guide those steps, he alone knows.

Pastor Henry Koch, chairman, SLA board

## Teaching Christian giving

Earlier this year, two men accepted calls to join WELS Ministry of Christian Giving as counselors specializing in deferred gifts. Harry Mears and Neil Scriver, both in their early 60s, are taking on the new positions after serving WELS for nearly four decades each in the teaching ministry.

"It's always been a real joy to work with young people and to try to give them a sense of the enjoyment and fun I had as an upper grade student in a Lutheran grade school so many years ago," says Harry Mears, who has taught teenagers in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. But when Mears received his call to serve as a Christian giving counselor in the Arizona-California District, he realized that "it would be a good time in my life to transition from working with young people to working with people on the other end of things."

He has a unique perspective to share. Mears' father died when he was in seventh grade, and his Lutheran teachers helped to fill the void in his life and mold him into who he is today. At a time when much of synod ministry is operating on tight budgets, he is eager to point out the value of supporting things like ministerial education as part of WELS' overall effort to spread the gospel and change lives.

Neil Scriver was involved in a variety of teaching positions, mostly at the high school level, including serving as principal, teaching business and coaching, and doing development work. "I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to teach God's

Word to children and young adults, and to have his Word make a difference in their lives," he says. As a counselor in the Southeastern Wisconsin District, Scriver is looking forward to reconnecting with ties he developed as a teacher in the region.

The change taking place at this point in their lives is not as drastic as it might initially seem. Says Scriver, "The development work—talking and encouraging people—a lot of this carries over from teaching quite well."

Mears adds, "A lot of the new job involves education. Maybe it's a little bit different than a classroom setting, but it is imparting knowledge—what can and can't be done with what God has given you."

Most importantly, the new position allows both men to continue carrying the light of the gospel. "Christian giving has to come from the heart," says Mears. "If your heart is filled with the sunshine of the gospel, I don't think anybody has to pry a gift out of you at all. It flows out of a heart that realizes sins are forgiven and heaven is won."

*Adam Goede*



After nearly four decades of teaching each, Harry Mears (pictured above with his son) and Neil Scriver (pictured left with his wife, Barbara) have accepted calls with the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving.

## Grant received to mentor ex-offenders

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries (WLIM) recently received a \$23,000 grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans to pilot a program to mentor ex-offenders.

The program is meant to provide care and Christian direction within the first 24 to 48 hours after an inmate's release.

"Several counties in Wisconsin, in an attempt to not have to provide extra meals to inmates, release people at 12:01 A.M.," says WLIM Director of Ministry Advancement, Pastor Robert Pasbrig. "Those released

often have no means of transportation and no reliable way of finding a safe place for the night."

The program would have mentors pick up the inmate upon release and provide funding for emergency expenses such as a hotel room and meals for the first couple of days. The mentor would also assist the recipient in getting employment established, determining ongoing transportation needs, finding a church, and connecting with support resources.

Pasbrig notes that the program will be open to assist juveniles as well as

adults and that mentors would meet with their recipient to establish a foundation and rapport prior to the release date through Bible studies and, in some cases, one-on-one visits.

WLIM is currently looking for volunteers willing to train to be mentors throughout the state of Wisconsin. But "with success I can see this program receiving more funding to expand beyond Wisconsin," says Pasbrig.

*For more information on the program or on becoming a mentor, contact Pastor Robert Pasbrig at 414-259-8122; pasbrig@wlim.net.*



## LWMS convention was “electric”

Nearly 30 years after returning from Zambia, Pastor (and former missionary) Douglas Weiser stood on a stage filled with mission workers as the assembly of the 2005 Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society (LWMS) convention rose and applauded. “The thanks and love of that audience washed over me like a flood,” he shares. “The women attending these conventions are a sort of life-blood, carrying mission interest and enthusiasm back to their congregations.” It’s no wonder that as a presenter at this year’s 43rd annual LWMS convention in Tacoma, Wash., Weiser cherished the opportunity to tell of the work he is a part of as liaison to Nigeria.

Surrounded by the mountains of the beautiful Pacific Northwest, 820 attendees gathered for the 2006 LWMS convention from June 22-25 under the theme “Shout Jesus from the Mountaintops.” Weiser, who now serves at Calvary,

Bellevue, Wash., and his friends Ikpe and Ima Udofia from Nigeria presented “70 Years and Still Proclaiming Jesus in Nigeria.” Weiser’s overall goal was “to get people to understand how the Nigerians are making their own way and that we are coming just to help them. Money is not the highest and best of what we can give them, but recognition of our relationship with these brothers and sisters is.”

Weiser was exhilarated by the ovations elicited when he spoke of God’s blessings in Nigeria. And when the Udofias spoke . . . “It was electric.” The Udofias, who came to the United States in the 1960s, live in Virginia but still remain citizens of Nigeria and members of one of WELS’ Nigerian sister synods: Christ the King Lutheran Church. (All Saints Lutheran Church is the other sister synod.) Ikpe told how their synod began, and Ima spoke her thanks from

the heart and connected with the LWMS women as a true Nigerian mother. “The enthusiasm generated by the women to our presentation created an indelible mark in our memory,” Ima reflects. “We felt like shouting Christ louder on the mountaintops of Nigeria.”

Weiser and the Udofias made an impression on their audience, but they also were uplifted by other presenters: the prayers for Indonesia by the president of Gereja Lutheran Indonesia; the Brazil workers’ determination to make the best use of their remaining funds; and a Muslim background believer’s testimony to faith in Jesus. Ima, still involved with women’s groups in the Nigerian synods, left knowing that “it requires time, effort, patience, and cooperation to yield the kind of fruit we saw among the LWMS members.” Her prayer is that God will bless the Nigerian women as he has blessed the LWMS.

## A ministry extends beyond the church

When five college students arrived at The Lutheran Home Association in Belle Plaine, Minn., at the beginning of the summer for their nine-week Summer Ministry Experience (SME) program, they knew they would be learning about sharing their Savior with people having special needs, but little else. They certainly didn’t expect it to involve house painting.

It started last spring when Jason, a student in the Jesus Cares Ministries (JCM) program at Zion, Olivia, Minn., came to Bible class, distraught about the condition of his home. The paint was peeling, and he feared that the wood might begin to rot. His landlord was elderly and could no longer keep up the property. Jason’s pastor, Joel Luetke, and his wife, Julie, looked at the possibility of volunteers from Zion, Olivia (where Jason attends JCM), and Zion, Morton, Minn. (where Jason is a member), taking on the painting job.

When Staff Minister Michael Hennig, SME coordinator, learned of the project,

he thought it would be a great way for the SME students to get involved.

Through the help of numerous volunteers and gifts, the project was soon underway. Julie Luetke explains, “As we began the job, it seemed much bigger than I imagined. It was certainly much hotter. Most of us had never painted a house. I thought that if this was Jesus’ house we wouldn’t think it too big of a job. As church volunteers and Jesus Cares students began to arrive and the work and laughter began, I knew our work was blessed.”

The SME students were amazed at the Christian love within the JCM group.

“One thing I heard a lot of the [JCM] students saying is how happy they were to help out a friend, and that’s really cool. The friendships that the students have built with each other while learning about Jesus will truly last forever,” said Philip Babler, SME participant.

A very thankful Jason adds, “I’m glad it’s finally done, and I appreciate that everyone was here to help. It’s kind of nice that you can have fun



SME’s interns flank Jason after his house painting project is complete. Pictured are (front row) Jessica Gehrke and Jonathan Mayer, (center) Jason, (back row) Hannah Schmiege and Philip Babler.

while you work. I’m very glad for all the people that showed up. I wasn’t expecting a turnout like this.”

The SME program is funded through grants from foundations and private gifts. The program is designed to provide a special ministry experience to future congregational leaders within WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY**

**Pastors**

- Bode, David E.**, to retirement
- Cherney, Kenneth A. Jr.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
- Ditter, Gerald G.**, to retirement
- Dolan, John H.**, to Christ, Eden Prairie, Minn.
- Kenyon, John R.**, to Ministry of Christian Giving, Milwaukee
- Kock, Eugene A.**, to retirement
- Lehrkamp, Robert W.**, to retirement
- Panning, Mark T.**, to Malawi Lutheran Bible Institute
- Rau, David C.**, to Shepherd of the Hills, Tucson, Ariz.
- Snyder, Peter J.**, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
- Stensberg, Burton E.**, to retirement
- Wendland, Mark T.**, to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.

**Teachers**

- Anderson, Hannah**, to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
- Boche, Jonathan P.**, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee
- Boye, Marilyn**, to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
- Brown, Janell S.**, to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
- Cody, Richard E.**, to St. John, Juneau, Wis.
- Eaton, John L.**, to retirement
- Eggert, Sandra L.**, to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
- Fitzsimmons, Seth**, to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
- Gauger, Linda M.**, to Christ Our Savior, Rockford, Mich.
- Haakenson, Monica**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee
- Hannemann, Rebecca**, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
- Hoenecke, Henry E.**, to Westside, Middleton, Wis.
- Hutchinson, Ethan S.**, to Riverview, Appleton, Wis.
- Kleist, Kathryn M.**, to St. John, Mequon, Wis.
- Koester, Brenda S.**, to St. Peter, Helenville, Wis.
- Kramer, Rebecca R.**, to Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Lai, Laura J.**, to St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.
- Meinke, Colleen**, to St. John, Burlington, Wis.
- Myers, David**, to Great Plains LHS, Watertown, S.D.
- Rendmeister, Krysta**, to Hope, Milwaukee
- Rouse, Lisa**, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
- Schaffer, Mical G.**, to Hope Middle, Milwaukee
- Scharf, Hannah H.**, to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee
- Schlafer, Tara B.**, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

- Schmidt, Heidi**, to Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.
- Schoeller, Michelle L.**, to Bethany, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
- Warning, Katherine L.**, to Christ/St. Peter, Milwaukee
- Wieting, Melissa M.**, to St. John, Pardeeville, Wis.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Prairie du Sac, Wis.**—St. James (40). Sept. 10. Service, 10 A.M. Meal, 11:30 A.M. RSVP, Brenda Hutter, 608-643-4050.
- Waterloo (Newville), Wis.**—St. John (150). Sept. 10. Service, 10:30 A.M. Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 920-648-5205.
- Kenosha, Wis.**—Friedens (150). Sept. 16. Christian contemporary concert, 2 P.M. & ice cream social. Sept. 17. Services, 8 & 10:15 A.M. Brunch, 9 A.M.-1 P.M. RSVP by Aug. 15, lori.wuerker@friedenswels.org.
- Watertown (Richwood), Wis.**—St. Mark (100). Sept. 17. Service, 10:15 A.M. Clint Burow, 920-262-0327.
- Algoma, Wis.**—St. Paul (125) school. Sept. 23. Service, 7 P.M. Sept. 24. Services, 8 & 10:30 A.M. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 920-487-5712.
- Albuquerque, N.M.**—Shepherd (40). Sept. 24. Service, 4 P.M. Dinner, 5:30 P.M. RSVP, 505-292-6622.
- Plymouth, Mich.**—St. Peter (150). Sept. 24. Dinner, 1 P.M. Service, 4:30 P.M. Reservations required. 734-453-3393.

**COMING EVENTS**

- Annual walk-run**—supporting Associated Pregnancy Counseling Centers operated by WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee. Sept. 9. 9 A.M.-noon. NPH Christian Books & Gifts, 1250 N 113, Milwaukee. Peter Georgson, 414-727-8176.
- Church dedication**—Sept. 10. 1:30 P.M. Christ, Pewaukee, Wis. 262-691-0720.
- WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall meeting**—Sept. 16. St. Paul, Mauston, Wis. June, 608-464-5532 or visit [www.wels.net/jump/clo](http://www.wels.net/jump/clo).
- Organ dedication**—Sept. 17. Mini concert, 3 P.M. Worship, 3:30 P.M. Light lunch to follow. St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis. 920-885-3309.
- Lutheran Ladies League Rally**—Sept. 27. Trinity, Kiel, Wis. Gladys Mueller, 920-693-8347.
- Joint Reformation services organized by local chapters of WELS Kingdom Workers:**
  - Greater Milwaukee Area Chapter—Oct. 29, 3 P.M., with light refreshments to follow. Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee.
  - Minnesota Valley Chapter—Oct. 29, 2:30 P.M., with lunch to follow. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

- La Crosse Coulee Region Chapter—Nov. 5, 3 P.M. St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
  - Mid-America Chapter—Oct. 29, 4 P.M., with lunch to follow. Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.
  - Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter—Nov. 5, 4 P.M., with lunch to follow. Immanuel, Fort Worth, Tex.
  - Valley of the Sun Chapter—Oct. 29, 4 P.M., with meal to follow. Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
  - Fall Women's Retreat**—Sept. 29-30. Grace, Lowell, Ark. Cost, \$20. Harriet Johnson, 479-855-1608.
  - Christian Singles Fall Retreat**—Sept. 29-Oct. 1. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. 262-534-7852.
  - Dare to Lead conference**—Oct. 3-4. Bemis International Conference Center, St. Norbert College, De Pere, Wis. Hosted by St. Mark, De Pere, Wis., [www.stmark-depere.org](http://www.stmark-depere.org).
  - A day at the Seminary**—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary. Oct. 7, 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. Barb Bergquist, 414-476-2384.
  - WELS Historical Institute annual meeting**—Oct. 13, 3 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chapel, Mequon, Wis.
  - Congregational Team Workshops**—Oct. 21. Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee. Sponsored by Southeastern Wisconsin District Parish Services. Tammy Miller, [tmiller@wels.net](mailto:tmiller@wels.net) or visit [www.wels.net/jump/ctw](http://www.wels.net/jump/ctw).
  - Christian Life Resources National Convention**—Oct. 26-28. "Decisions at the End of Life" Medical Ethics Conference—Oct. 27. Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan, Wis. 800-729-9535 or [www.ChristianLifeResources.com](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com).
  - Christian Woman Today Retreat**—March 23-25, 2007. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.
  - 2007 Grand Alaska Escorted Land Tour**—sponsored by Camp Phillip. June 15-24, 2007. Ten-day tour featuring Anchorage, Valdez, Fairbanks, Denali National Park, Mt. McKinley, Alaska railroad, and glacier cruise. Marcus Buch, 920-478-2937.
- NAMES WANTED**
- Soldiers and families at Fort Drum, N.Y., or Binghamton, N.Y. region**—Jeremiah Gumm, 315-622-2843.
- To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; [bulletinboard@sab.wels.net](mailto:bulletinboard@sab.wels.net). Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. An updated bulletin board is available at [www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard](http://www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard).

# From time to time

Forward in Christ receives photos from members who have captured wonderful images that remind us of Christ and his love.

## Picture this



As the clouds parted in Rio de Janeiro, the "Redeemer" came into view.

*Submitted by Alice Noel, Ft. Atkinson, Wisconsin*



A unique image left by two jet trails in the Sandhills of Nebraska.

*Submitted by Bob Rooney, Brewster, Nebraska*

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.

## Little children, **BIG FAITH**

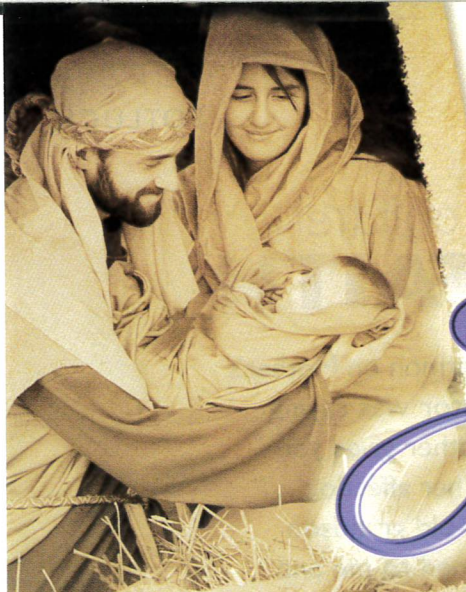
During the sermon on Mother's Day, our pastor was saying "... your mother gives you her love and her affection ...". My four-year-old grandson suddenly turned to me and said, "I had an ear infection once."

*Janice Krueger,  
Shepherd of the Hills,  
Tucson, Ariz.*

Do you have a story to share about a child you know? Send it in to fic@sab.wels.net with the subject "Potluck." We'll print some of the cutest and funniest in upcoming issues.

## I am thankful . . .

- for the taxes that I pay, because it means that I am employed.
- for the mess to clean up after a party, because it means that I have been surrounded by friends.
- for the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.
- for a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.
- for all the complaining I hear about the government, because it means that we have freedom of speech.
- for the parking spot I find at the end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking and that I have been blessed with transportation.



# SHARING *Jesus' story*

Julie K. Wietzke

Stories that offer insights into Hispanic culture and advice on sharing Jesus' story with Hispanics and Latinos.

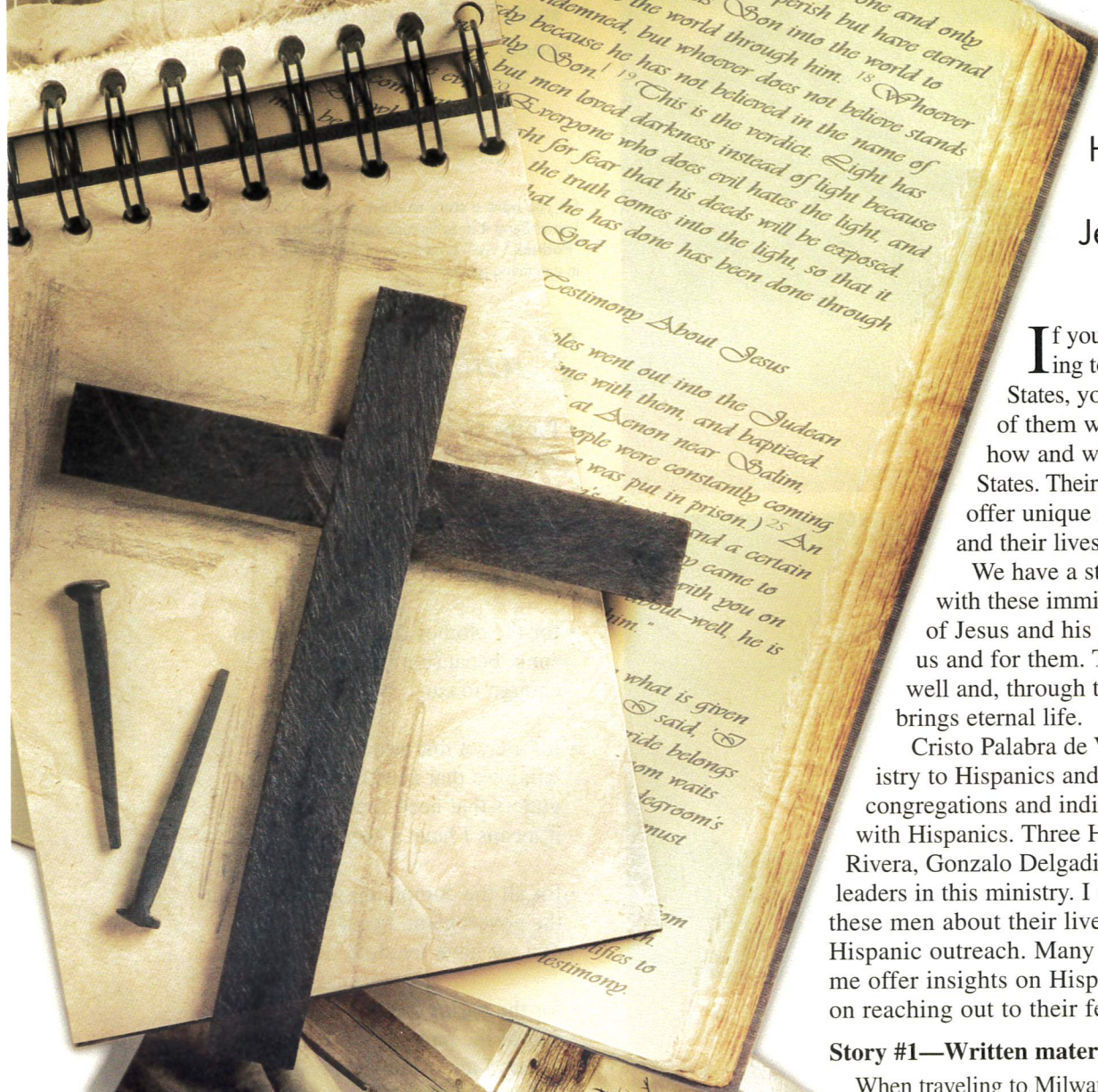
If you have ever spent time talking to immigrants to the United States, you will discover that many of them want to share their story of how and why they came to the United States. Their stories are fascinating and offer unique insights into their culture and their lives.

We have a story that we need to share with these immigrants as well. It's the story of Jesus and his perfect life and death for us and for them. This story is fascinating as well and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, brings eternal life.

Cristo Palabra de Vida, WELS' outreach ministry to Hispanics and Latinos, is working to help congregations and individuals share Jesus' story with Hispanics. Three Hispanic men—Reinaldo Rivera, Gonzalo Delgadillo, and Juan Garcia—are leaders in this ministry. I spent some time talking to these men about their lives and their thoughts on Hispanic outreach. Many of the stories they told me offer insights on Hispanic culture and advice on reaching out to their fellow countrymen.

### Story #1—Written materials

When traveling to Milwaukee, Delgadillo, the director of Spanish publications for Multi-Language Publications, and Paul Hartman, director of Multi-Language Publications, struck up a conversation with a Hispanic woman in the airport. "We asked her if she went to church," says Delgadillo. "And she said, 'You know, I work every day



and I don't feel that I have the time or the energy to go to church.' So we asked her, 'Do you want us to send you some literature?' She gave us her name and address." Delgadillo plans to send her the *El Mensajero Luterano*, a Spanish religious magazine.

*Insights into Hispanic culture:*

Hispanics work long, hard hours to support themselves and many times family members who are still in their homelands. "Some of them have two jobs at the same time," says Delgadillo. "They work 12 hours and have no vacation." This means there may be less time for traditional church services.

*Advice for reaching them:* "We will have to invent new ways to reach people," says Delgadillo, "perhaps through written materials." Multi-Language Publications offers *El Mensajero Luterano* and many other Spanish materials that can give congregations and individuals a way to get the Word into their Hispanic neighbor's hand. (Go to [www.mlpwels.com](http://www.mlpwels.com) to learn more about these publications.) WELS also has developed a Web site, [www.cristopalabra.com](http://www.cristopalabra.com), that offers online Spanish materials to fortify faith.

**Story #2—Spanish worship services**

When Delgadillo and his wife moved to the United States from Colombia, the church they attended—Risen Savior, Orlando, Fla.—didn't offer Spanish services. "My wife . . . doesn't speak English," says Delgadillo, "so she came with me to the services, but I knew that she was not understanding anything." A few years later, Risen Savior began offering a Spanish-language service. Says Delgadillo, "I saw [my wife] when we had the first Spanish service, and she was so happy because this was the first time in two years for her to really listen to the gospel and to participate in the service in Spanish."

*Insights into Hispanic culture:*

While children may pick up English quickly, it may take years for adults to learn fluent English. "What will happen in the meanwhile?" says Delgadillo

about his wife. "She needs someone to preach and to teach to her in Spanish." Garcia takes that thought a step further: "The majority [of Hispanics] will feel more comfortable hearing the gospel in Spanish. They will understand it better and it will have more meaning in their heart than it would in English."

*Advice for reaching them:* "[WELS] needs to invite or stimulate pastors and teachers to start studying Spanish so we can be prepared," says Delgadillo. "We need to look at how we can prepare and teach Spanish and use those who speak Spanish to help us in this ministry."

**Story #3—Friendliness and openness**

All three men told stories about the friendliness of the churches they attend. When Garcia joined Abiding Word, Houston, Texas, in 1985, he was the only Hispanic in the whole congregation. "I never felt different," he says. "I always felt very welcome. If I wouldn't have felt welcome, I wouldn't want to be there." Delgadillo and his family recently moved to El Paso, Texas, and joined Christ Our Redeemer. "I feel completely at home. They are so warm, so nice. . . . In less than three months I've been in the home of three families. It makes my life so good."

*Insights into Hispanic culture:*

Hispanics—just like all people—want to be welcomed and loved. Remember that they are in a different land, trying to start a new life. They also want to be accepted for who they are. And they will respond to that love and acceptance. Says Delgadillo: "I remember being in Orlando. I felt at home. When I had to be gone, my wife went to the church, even though she didn't speak English, because she felt at home."

*Advice for reaching them:* In order to accept Hispanics for who they are we need to learn and understand their culture and customs and incorporate them into our church. For example, the Hispanic culture is less time-driven. "When we finish the church service we will stay for a while," says Rivera. "Usually we spend 30

minutes or 45 minutes just speaking with [each other]. Other cultures are very strict with their time. Once [church] is finished, everyone goes away. We tend to stay with people, talk to them, drink coffee. We will ask about their parents or their sons. We're not in a rush." Also Hispanics celebrate additional festivals and holidays, such as a coming-of-age celebration known as *Quinceanera* (sweet fifteen). Understanding the Hispanic culture and customs may just open the door a bit wider for you to share the good news of Jesus.

**Story #4—Evangelism efforts**

Garcia shares how he reaches out to other Hispanics: he plays soccer with them every Saturday morning. "I blend in and make friends. They are a lot more receptive to me and about anything I want to talk about because I came first as their friend."

*Insights into Hispanic culture:* The Hispanic culture is very family- and friend-oriented. "We do business with our friends," says Delgadillo. "So in the case of evangelism, I think we need to become friends of the person we want to evangelize."

*Advice for reaching them:* Offering English as a second language classes may be one of the best ways to get to know your Hispanic neighbors in a non-threatening environment and to become their friends. "They want to learn English. They want to blend with society," says Garcia. "We at Abiding Word decided we were going to invite people to learn English and then by making friends we would invite them to our services." He emphasized, though, that attending church services shouldn't be a requirement to attending ESL classes.

To learn more about reaching out to Hispanics and what resources are available, e-mail [cristopalabradevida@sab.wels.net](mailto:cristopalabradevida@sab.wels.net).

*Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ.*

# Putting the pieces together

Patient and loving witness allows the gospel the time to do its strange and wonderful work.

Abby L. Janssen

As Rick describes it, he had all the pieces of the puzzle he just didn't know how they fit together. That puzzle was his spiritual life, and the quest to put the puzzle together has led Rick on an interesting journey.

## The backstory

Growing up Jewish, Rick attended Jewish day school but also attended Sunday school at a Presbyterian church. "[My parents] wanted to be sure that we fit into all of the appropriate country clubs," says Rick.

"My childhood home was not a religious situation. I remember being scolded by my dad for reciting Hebrew at dinner and my being told to speak in English because we were 'modern Jews.' My grandfather, however, kept a kosher house. We were only allowed to visit him on Friday when everything was in preparation for the Sabbath. My grandfather would only talk Yiddish, even though he knew English.

"As a child we celebrated Hanukkah, Passover, and Rosh Hashanah (New Year). Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) was discussed but not celebrated. Passover, in our home, was the most solemn occasion. But, we did not celebrate the Sabbath, because that interfered with the doings at the country club," recalls Rick.

Although Rick had some knowledge of Christianity from Sunday school, he also carried scars from encounters with some Christians. He recalls being spit upon while walking down the street as a young child with his father, simply for being Jewish. The events surrounding the Holocaust are also hard for him to reconcile. "How could so many people who claimed to be Christian, let something like that happen?" he asks.

As a young man Rick says he and God parted ways. "My life was very materialistic, and my religious experience in my childhood did not give me the beliefs that were necessary to

succeed in life. I was an angry young man and felt that I was a disappointment to myself and others. I came to a point where I asked 'If there is a God out there, what do you want me to do with my life?'

### Pieces of a puzzle

Part of God's plan was to bring Karen into his life. Rick met Karen after a high school dance when they were 15 years old. They went for a walk and have been inseparable ever since. Besides being husband and wife, they also are each other's best friend.

Karen, who was raised Lutheran, was not exactly welcomed by Rick's family though. Rick recalls how his mother, who did not approve of their union, had a sewing machine that she offered to the couple as a wedding gift. His mother, who lived half a block away, walked the machine to their apartment, set it on the stoop, rang the doorbell, and walked away. The icy reception only thawed after Rick and Karen's daughters were born, and even then it was cool.

Despite Rick's upbringing and his less-than-close relationship with God, he and Karen decided to raise their two daughters in a Christian household. Rick explains, "I didn't want them to go through the same religious turmoil that I did." He and Karen felt that giving their children a Christian upbringing would be much more tolerant. "The Jewish parochial environment was not tolerant. The type of environment I was brought up in was 'They [Christians] ain't gonna help you.' Yes, Christianity was a negative for me, but it was the best choice at the time for my children. I wanted them to succeed. I tried not to contaminate them with my negative thoughts."

About 20 years ago, personal events led Rick to begin searching for answers to the religious questions that plagued him. He describes it as a puzzle: "I had all the pieces I just didn't know how they fit together."

### Being honest

It wasn't until he and Karen attended a Grandparents Day three years ago at

the WELS church where their children and grandchildren were members that Rick's contact with the gospel began to shift some of those puzzle pieces into the right places.

Soon after that initial visit, Karen expressed an interest in becoming a member of the church and began attending Bible information classes. Because Karen suffers from multiple sclerosis, Rick came along with her to help her with the church's stairs. He was excited to attend with her, if just to listen. During the classes, Rick contributed to the discussion, especially when the Old Testament and ancient Jewish law were discussed. When the class was over, Karen was ready to join the congregation. However, Rick wasn't.

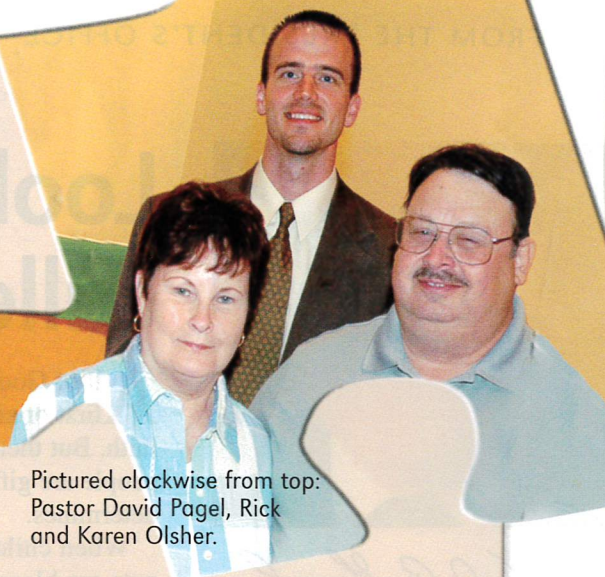
Pastor David Pagel, who led those Bible information classes, says, "Rick is Jewish, but he was willing and even interested to learn more about Jesus. Patient and loving witness allowed the gospel time to do its strange and wonderful work." Yet Rick points out that the hardest part of this journey has been understanding exactly where Jesus should be in his life and what Jesus is going to do for him. "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God and I believe in the Triune God." But he also says, "Pastor and I have had some detailed discussions about the Old Testament and the New Testament and the Lord's Supper, and I understand what it's about. But I just don't get it."

Rick says, "I've always been honest about who I am. I've been open in that I'm very secure in my relationship with God. I like to say that it used to be a long distance call to talk to God; now it's a local one."

He continues, "I've always felt welcome here at church. Coming to church is so wonderful, and I love the part about getting your sins forgiven every week. I bring a truckload in." Judaism has a confession and absolution aspect, but it is not the same as it is in the Christian tradition.

### Keep the doors open

Pagel points out, "I think our education as WELS pastors puts us in a



Pictured clockwise from top: Pastor David Pagel, Rick and Karen Olsher.

great position to relate on the basis of Old Testament sacrificial law, and we know enough Hebrew to have that in common as well."

Rick says, "I've been in enough religious situations where I've been talked down to. I don't find that here. I come to church to hear something that is going to motivate me for the week, and both pastors do that. I'm like a kid in a candy store."

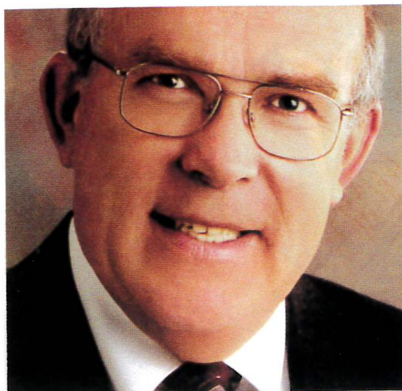
Pagel notes that what may look like a dead end is actually an intersection. "At an intersection you stop, look, and listen. The listening is often the most important, because through listening to someone's experiences you earn the right to be heard. Through listening you will learn the sore spots and soft spots to which sin and grace may be specifically applied."

Rick, too, offers advice to congregations. "Keep the doors open; you never know who may walk in. Be open; be yourself. If the people in church are comfortable with their relationship with God, what better attraction could there be?"

For Rick, some of the pieces of the puzzle that were in the wrong order earlier are starting to snap into place as he continues his journey. Where does he go from here? His answer is quite simple: "To church on Sunday."

*Abby Janssen is assistant editor of Forward in Christ*

*A special thanks to Rick and Karen Olsher for sharing their story and to Pastor David C. Pagel, Bethany, Kenosha, Wis., for providing his insights and guidance in the telling of Rick's story.*



*Carl R. Gungl*

## Looking for the next called servants

All of God's people are gifted, gifted, first of all, by the Holy Spirit with faith. But then, in addition, all of God's people are gifted in other ways, as God determines.

When children are young and if parents are blessed with more than one, it becomes clear that they all have their individual gifts. And so, as they begin to contemplate the future, it's good to make a few suggestions, keeping their unique talents in mind.

One suggestion we all should think about making is to encourage them to consider serving the Lord full time. There are a number of options. Becoming a pastor or teacher are two of them. Being a staff minister is a more recent addition within WELS.

What kind of gifts are we looking for here? Generally speaking, the one considering full-time service in the church needs to do well in the classroom. The academic courses will be challenging but not impossible. The person doesn't need to be a straight-A student. Rather he needs to be one who faithfully and consistently applies himself to his studies.

If it's the pastor's course someone is considering, interest and ability for foreign languages will be needed. WELS still desires its pastors to know Greek and Hebrew, the ancient languages of the Bible. Learning Spanish might be an option they would choose, knowing how widely it is spoken today.

But being a good student and learning foreign languages are not unique to full-time church workers. Many other professions would have similar academic requirements. And many could qualify if these were the only requirements.

We should consider other God-given gifts when we recommend someone for

the full-time ministry. Among those gifts would certainly be a strong and growing Christian faith, and, as a fruit of the Spirit-given gift of faith, a desire to share it.

Maybe the person you are thinking about encouraging for full-time church work is the boy next door, the son who sits at your table, or the grandson half way across the country. Maybe you observed him, as a young boy, dressed in some kind of black robe, "preaching" to whomever would listen. Perhaps you saw a young girl in the neighborhood or your daughter or granddaughter "teaching" dolls. Or maybe you observed some older sibling, kindly caring for his or her younger brothers and sisters.

The point here is the fervent desire to share some great good news. The point is to share quietly, not proudly. Called servants do not lord it over others but simply care for the needs of others.

Do you know someone like that, someone close to you, whom you could encourage? There would be a place for them at Martin Luther College (MLC), the WELS college of ministry. And later, when their education is complete, God would find a place for them to serve in our country or halfway around the world. God could use them to help all of us remember that every member is a missionary.

There is always a need for full-time church workers. The need is especially critical right now. It may be too late, this school year, to encourage someone to consider this special way of serving the Lord by attending MLC. But it is not too early, or too late, to encourage someone for next year, or even 10 years from now. Encouraging full-time ministers of the gospel is one way for every member to be a missionary.



**L**ive together or die alone.” This became the motto for the stranded plane crash survivors on the television show *Lost* during its first season. Faced with a decision to wait on the beach for rescue or to relocate inland near fresh water, the group became divided. To make matters worse, they discovered they were not the only people on the island. The “Others” were a threat to their survival, even kidnapping one of them. The group faced the dilemma: “Live together or die alone.”

This was the dilemma facing the early Christians as well.

According to Acts 2:46: “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” The early Christians wouldn’t live in isolation from one another. They couldn’t. They shared something far too intimate to ignore.

#### Dying alone

They shared the experience of how lost a person is when isolated from God. Before Jesus came, they didn’t know about God’s love for them. Before Jesus introduced himself as the Christ, they lived in complete isolation from their Creator. That is the loneliest life of all.

We like to think that we can make it on our own. We pursue love and happiness with our best efforts, but we don’t attain what we seek. Our sins keep getting in the way, isolating us

from our perfect Creator’s approval. The more we try to make it on our own, the lonelier we become and the emptier we feel. We were made for God, but we isolate ourselves from him. Without a Savior we would die alone, isolated from heaven.

But Christians have been saved from dying alone. We share the intimate knowledge that Christ ended our isolation. In fact, the Son of God left heaven and joined us on earth. He then “took up our infirmities” (Isaiah 53:4) and trudged alone to a cross. There his Father left him all alone in anguish to bear the penalty for the sins of the world. Jesus was alone in death . . . alone in a tomb.

**WITHOUT A SAVIOR  
WE WOULD DIE  
ALONE, ISOLATED  
FROM HEAVEN.**

#### Living together

But death and a tomb could not keep Jesus isolated from the living. He rose again, rejoined the living, and gave us hope. Reunited with his disciples, Jesus promised: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus ended our isolation. We now live together with our Lord and together with all believers. Sharing the happiness and love God grants us through his Son, we gladly devote ourselves to “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). As we read and listen to God’s Word, our Savior draws us close to himself, equipping us with his compassion to reach out to those still trapped in isolation.

Enjoying new life together, we devote ourselves “to the fellowship” (v. 42). The Holy Spirit exercises our faith and increases our joy as we praise God not in isolation, but together in fellowship with many believers in Christ.

Alive together, we devote ourselves “to the breaking of bread” (v. 42) in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Here we commune with Christ, receiving what we can only receive by grace: Christ’s body and blood.

And “with glad and sincere hearts, praising God” (v. 46,47) we devote ourselves “to prayer” (v. 42), expressing our Christian fellowship as we ask God to supply one another’s needs.

“Live together or die alone.” Praise God that we are isolated no more. We live together forever with Christ.

*Philip Kieselhorst is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.*

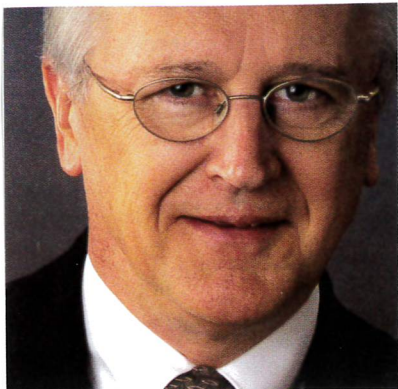
*This is the second article in a seven-part Bible study on God’s answers when we’re feeling lost.*

*Next month: Lost in despair*

**LOST**  
**IN ISOLATION**

PHILIP L. KIESELHORST

**WE LIKE TO THINK WE CAN MAKE IT ON OUR OWN, BUT THROUGH CHRIST’S SACRIFICE WE DON’T HAVE TO.**



*John A. Banerjee*

# I am a saint! So are you!

What? Isn't that arrogance? Only the best people become saints. We know some who are so kind, generous, helpful, and loving they put us all to shame. We even refer to some of them as saints: "She was just a saint to put up with all that trouble." "He was just a saint whenever I needed help."

For some, the requirements for sainthood are quite rigid and demanding. They even require proof of at least one miracle. Roman Catholics are trying to accord the last pope with the status of sainthood. Yes, some in this world are considered wonderful charismatic people. They seem to demand a position far above the rest of us.

But I want to confess and assert that I am a saint and so are you. We have not achieved that status by the good we have done in this world. If you are honest, you'd have to conclude with me that neither of us is good enough for sainthood—at least if we measure that status by the good we do or the love we show. We just can't cut it. We are not good enough.

Yet I'm a saint because God has covered my sins with the purity of Jesus. God has declared me a saint—his forgiven child. You too! We are saints because God has decreed us to be holy. The basis for that decree is the work of Jesus, not our superior or exemplary lives. We certainly don't deserve such a declaration. It's God's undeserved proclamation for Jesus' sake.

That important concept is the heart of the Bible and the Lutheran faith. In 1530 those who believed it presented their confession to the Emperor in Augsburg. Of course not everyone agreed. Those who disagreed countered the Augsburg Confession with their own document opposing it. But they did not permit a copy of their refutation to be printed or circulated. Instead they de-

manded the Augsburg confessors accept the alternative version and the conditions it imposed.

Well, they didn't. Instead they defended their confession a year later by publishing the Apology or Defense of the Augsburg Confession. One of the dominant themes of that document is that we are declared right and holy by grace through faith for Jesus' sake. They wanted the world to know that they believed they were saints by grace through faith not because their lives measured up to some standard of behavior. They boldly asserted the Bible's main truths again.

The Apology was first presented in April and May of 1531 but was revised until its final version in September of the same year. We mark its 475th anniversary this year.

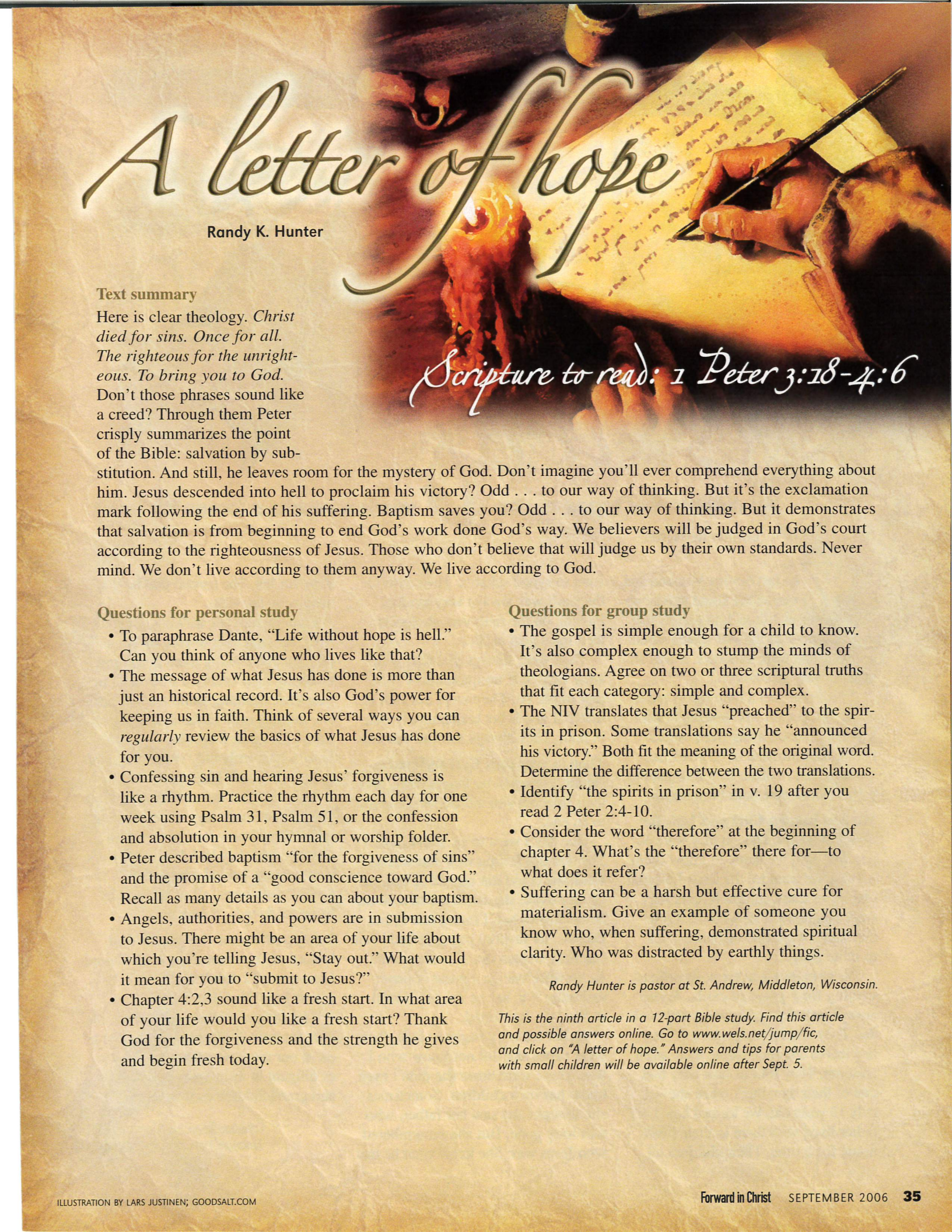
Is a 475-year-old document still important to modern, contemporary Christians? I want to assert that I am a saint because God has decreed it so for Jesus' sake. I also want to assert that the truths of the Apology and the other Lutheran Confessions are important in our world today.

Our postmodern world needs a God who loves us so much that he sent his only Son to achieve for us what we could not achieve on our own—sainthood. The world still needs to hear our confession of that truth.

Blessed are the saints of God;  
They are justified by grace;  
All their sins are washed away;  
They shall stand in God's great day  
They are lights upon the earth,  
With them numbered may be  
Here and in eternity.

*(Christian Worship 394 Adapted)*

Happy anniversary Lutheran saints!



# A letter of hope

Randy K. Hunter

## Text summary

Here is clear theology. *Christ died for sins. Once for all. The righteous for the unrighteous. To bring you to God.* Don't those phrases sound like a creed? Through them Peter crisply summarizes the point of the Bible: salvation by substitution. And still, he leaves room for the mystery of God. Don't imagine you'll ever comprehend everything about him. Jesus descended into hell to proclaim his victory? Odd . . . to our way of thinking. But it's the exclamation mark following the end of his suffering. Baptism saves you? Odd . . . to our way of thinking. But it demonstrates that salvation is from beginning to end God's work done God's way. We believers will be judged in God's court according to the righteousness of Jesus. Those who don't believe that will judge us by their own standards. Never mind. We don't live according to them anyway. We live according to God.

*Scripture to read: 1 Peter 3:18-4:6*

Questions for personal study


- To paraphrase Dante, "Life without hope is hell." Can you think of anyone who lives like that?
- The message of what Jesus has done is more than just an historical record. It's also God's power for keeping us in faith. Think of several ways you can *regularly* review the basics of what Jesus has done for you.
- Confessing sin and hearing Jesus' forgiveness is like a rhythm. Practice the rhythm each day for one week using Psalm 31, Psalm 51, or the confession and absolution in your hymnal or worship folder.
- Peter described baptism "for the forgiveness of sins" and the promise of a "good conscience toward God." Recall as many details as you can about your baptism.
- Angels, authorities, and powers are in submission to Jesus. There might be an area of your life about which you're telling Jesus, "Stay out." What would it mean for you to "submit to Jesus?"
- Chapter 4:2,3 sound like a fresh start. In what area of your life would you like a fresh start? Thank God for the forgiveness and the strength he gives and begin fresh today.

## Questions for group study

- The gospel is simple enough for a child to know. It's also complex enough to stump the minds of theologians. Agree on two or three scriptural truths that fit each category: simple and complex.
- The NIV translates that Jesus "preached" to the spirits in prison. Some translations say he "announced his victory." Both fit the meaning of the original word. Determine the difference between the two translations.
- Identify "the spirits in prison" in v. 19 after you read 2 Peter 2:4-10.
- Consider the word "therefore" at the beginning of chapter 4. What's the "therefore" there for—to what does it refer?
- Suffering can be a harsh but effective cure for materialism. Give an example of someone you know who, when suffering, demonstrated spiritual clarity. Who was distracted by earthly things.

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

*This is the ninth article in a 12-part Bible study. Find this article and possible answers online. Go to [www.wels.net/jump/fic](http://www.wels.net/jump/fic), and click on "A letter of hope." Answers and tips for parents with small children will be available online after Sept. 5.*



# Lois' leaf

An autumn leaf taped to the window recalls a lesson for us all.

Bonnie Reuschel

The last day my husband and I visited the house to rake up some leaves and show it to perspective buyers, I noticed the leaf scotch taped to one of the front windows. It was an autumn leaf, once colorful.

It made me feel a little sad to see it there. The person who had put it there had only passed away three weeks before. Her husband of 63 years had preceded her in death only four months earlier. They were both 86 years old.

**We had known Carl and Lois for about 30 years.** Though they were our parents' age, we came to know them because we attended the same Lutheran church in Lansing, Mich., and they were neighbors a street over. Their children's work had taken them all to other states.

We were drawn to them, sometimes visiting for a game of cards. A visit always included coffee or tea and cookies. They shared many stories. They had lots to tell after raising their seven children. They told us how they lost one of their daughters when she was only 12 years old. We learned how Lois' father lived with them in their small home for a time. Their children all

went to synod schools. Their love for the Lord was always very evident. Passing on the faith was obviously their main goal in life.

They were always satisfied with what they had, no matter how little that might be. They were not rich in material goods but uncommonly rich in faith. They always went to worship.

**Then, a year ago, Carl suffered a stroke.** He could no longer drive, and their freedom and independence came to an end.

One day I went to sit with Lois. She was not feeling well and was so weak she could not get out of bed. As she lay there, she asked me to read the Scriptures to her. I found one of her Bibles. Her favorite passages had been carefully written out. She also asked me to write one on a piece of paper and bring it to her so she could read it. She was comforted.

As her memory began to fade, there were times she did not know who I was. There were times she didn't even know her own children. Sometimes she thought she saw her father, who was long gone. But she remembered who Jesus was. She knew what he had

done for her. She trusted that he was always by her side.

I can picture her walking down the road, bending over to pick up some pretty leaves, taking them home and admiring their beauty. I remember her beautiful, beaming smile and her positive attitude even in the most difficult times. I'll never forget her beautiful faith, which truly did "shine like stars in the universe" (Philippians 2:15).

Lois and Carl were children of God. They knew their days were growing short. They knew that heaven was waiting. And they had done their work well, leaving behind a large family of faithful followers, all of whom are beautiful friends of ours now.

**I stepped up on the porch and looked at the crumbling leaf.** Should I remove it? I didn't really want to. It was Lois' leaf. But I finally did.

The days of visiting our friends are over for now. Their example will live on in our memories. May we be just as diligent in training our children and grandchildren as they were.

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