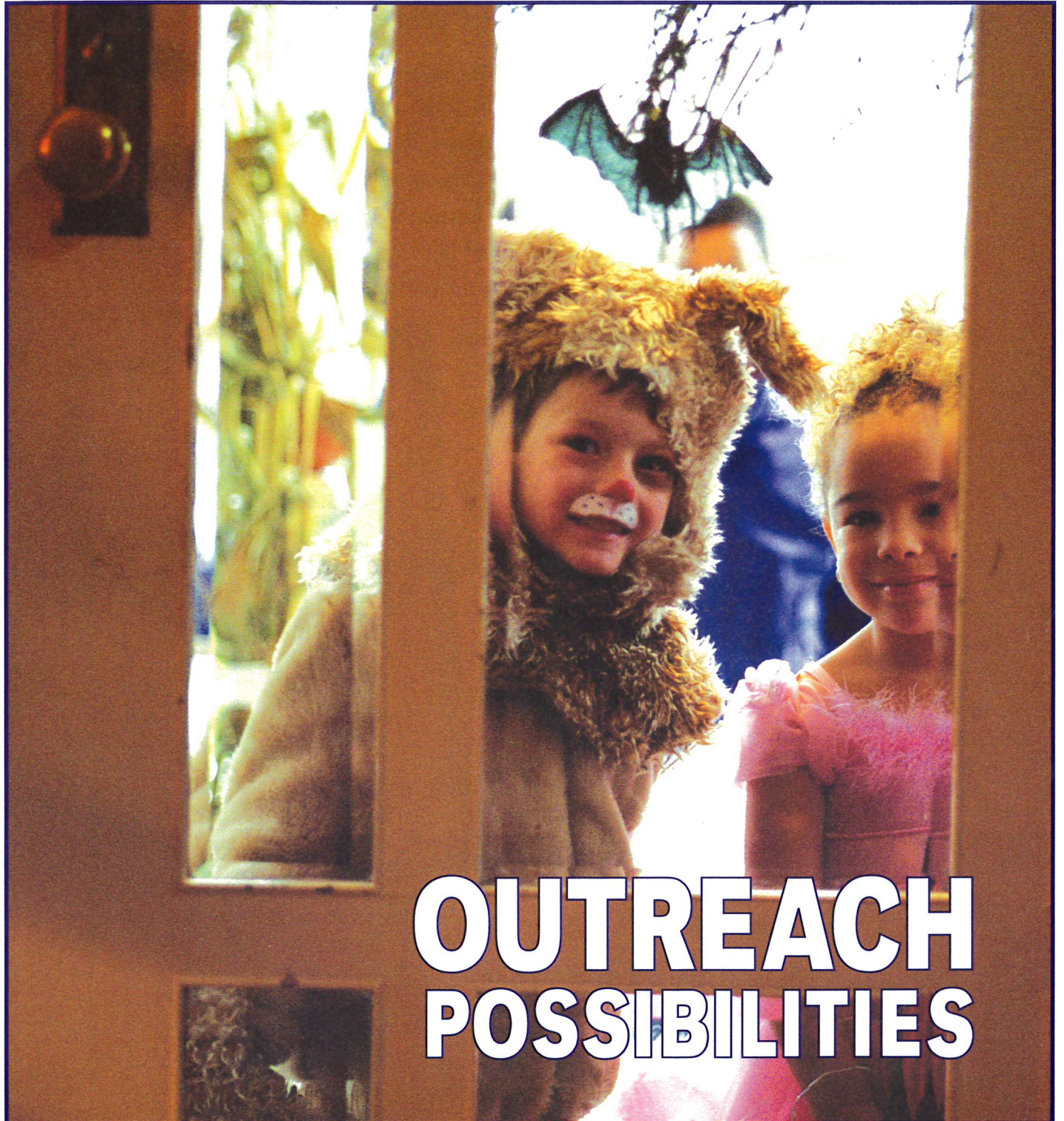


A MODERN-DAY REFORMATION • WILL YOU VOTE?


OCTOBER 2006

Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness



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1517

Before today's age of extreme makeovers, Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, initiating one of the greatest makeovers of all time—the reformation of the Christian church. At a time when false teachings heavily influenced Christianity, God used Luther to lead a reform that swept across Europe. As a result, the confessional identity of the Lutheran church emerged, stating its beliefs and rejecting falsehoods concerning faith.

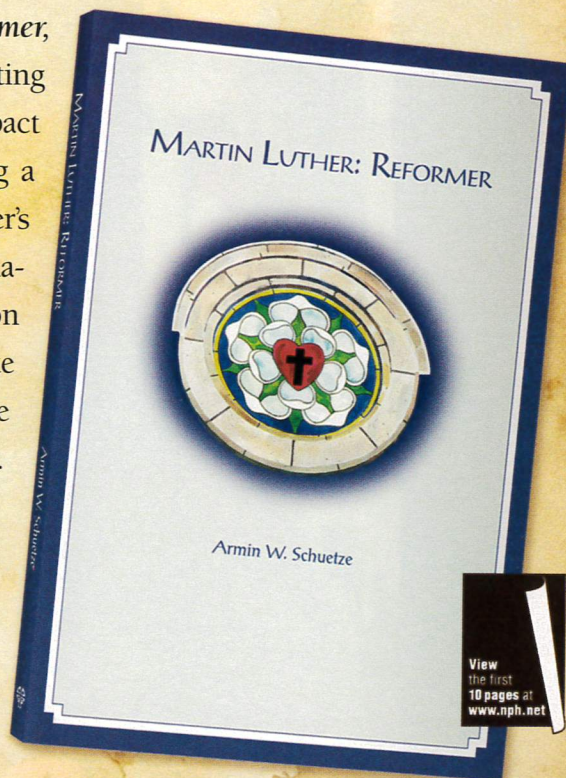
In the NPH classic *Martin Luther: Reformer*, author Armin Schuetze writes a captivating commentary that explores the reformer's impact on the Christian church. While not writing a biography of Luther, Schuetze wove Luther's words and life events into the text to emphasize what Luther represented and his function as a reformer. Readers will come to appreciate how much this 16th-century theologian gave to Christianity through the Lutheran church.

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by Armin W. Schuetze

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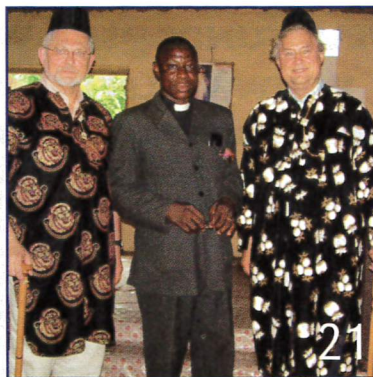
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“This year, when I go out trick-or-treating, I’m going to invite people to church.”



PUNCHSTOCK



Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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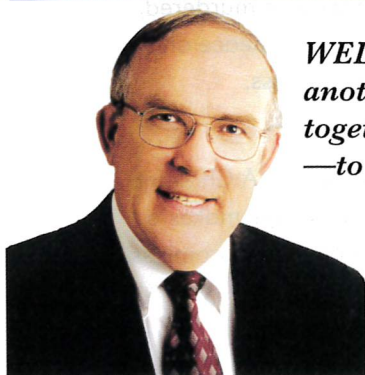


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MAY THE LORD OUR GOD
BE WITH US AS HE WAS
WITH OUR FATHERS;
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US
NOR FORSAKE US.

1 Kings 8:57

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OCTOBER

WHAT'S INSIDE by Julie Wietzke

This month in "What's inside," I'm going to tell you about what's NOT inside. Several articles in this month's issue were too long for us to fit the entire story. (We do, unfortunately, have to adhere to some strict word counts!) But we want to share the entire article with you. So we are offering "uncut" versions online at www.forwardinchrist.net. The articles that have more pictures and information online will be marked throughout the magazine. Check them out! We hope to continue to offer more online articles in future months.

Over the past few months, we also have been providing an online Bible study with specific doctrinal articles. This month's online Bible study is on the division of church and state. Our Web site also includes a searchable database of articles, subscription information and writing guidelines, and information about our contributing editors.

We hope that these materials "outside" the magazine will enhance what's provided inside the magazine. Wherever you may read FIC material, may it continue to strengthen your faith and bring you closer to your Savior.

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TOLERANCE

Interesting that the article “Forgiveness transforms us” [July] focused only on homosexuality when speaking of the church’s obligation not to become tolerant of sin. Why was this particular trespass chosen when there are numerous other sins of which most Christian churches, WELS included, are presently tolerant, including

- overeating,
- drunkenness,
- fiscal irresponsibility, and
- desiring money and things? . . .

The issue of tolerance for sinful practices within the church is far more broad than just homosexuality.

*Kirsten Peters
San Francisco, California*

THE GOSPEL IS WITHOUT BORDERS

Just a few comments regarding the article “The gospel is without borders” [Aug.].

I concur completely with Pastor Roth’s statement of “Let’s be the church!” I, however, question his assumption that we should apparently choose not to recognize one’s sin until some later period as cited in his example of an undermanned and overwhelmed agency (ICE) or the disobedience of traffic laws. . . .

Pastor Roth asks, “What creative, gospel-inspired ways can we reach out and show the love of Christ to our nation’s new immigrants?” I would say what we as a synod through God’s grace have always done: present God’s plan of salvation by law and gospel, without compromise, without error, and in its complete truth and purity.

*John Bahne
Apache Junction, Arizona*

This is in response to “The gospel is without borders” [Aug.].

I agree with only one of the author’s opinions for the most part. That is that we, the church, should

not report people who may be undocumented immigrants. All people’s souls are important, and we must proclaim Christ to them. . . .

That being said, time and again we have heard from WELS pastors that God has ordained all governments, even bad ones, and that we should be obedient to the laws therein. Should we expect less from those who, for the most part, are seeking a better life for themselves?

*Milton Maxheimer
Patterson, California*

I was quite leery when I saw the cover of the August issue of *Forward in Christ*. After I read the cover story “The gospel is without borders,” I was totally dismayed. . . .

No, the gospel does not have any borders. It must be preached in all places. But this does not allow us to ignore the sovereignty and laws of our nation. Our synod churches may not be required to report illegal aliens (they are not “undocumented workers”), but we cannot assist others in the open and continuous violation of the laws of our country. . . .

*James McCawley
Globe, Arizona*

SHARING JESUS

Michael Hintz, in his four-part series on “Sharing Jesus” [May-Aug.], should be more careful in his choice of words and terms. Let us be cautious before we quickly exchange historic, confessional Lutheran terms for a popular “church growth” vocabulary.

Today we are continuously being told to “share Jesus” and to “reach out.” The meanings of these expressions are a bit hazy and confusing. . . .

Jesus says, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you” (Mark 5:19). The women, who saw the empty tomb, went and “told all these things” (Luke 24:9). We are to proclaim to everyone what Jesus has done! Evangelism is

not sharing but telling, proclaiming, and confessing Christ Jesus! And Jesus tells us that when we confess (not share) him before men, then he will confess (not share) us before his Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32).

*Mark Bartling
La Crosse, Wisconsin*

CHANGE

I question some assertions made in the article “To change or not to change” [July]. Do we really have “the freedom to adapt the way we do things as long as we do not alter the truth of the gospel”? The article could be seen as promoting an “anything goes” view of Christian freedom, as long as we maintain the simple message that Jesus died for the sins of the world.

The gospel is the core of our beliefs, but there is so much more. All of Scripture contains and reveals the whole truth of God in Christ. In our churches, we need to strive to profess the whole truth, not just with words, but through our actions. How a church does whatever it does—from worship services to administration—is a powerful testimony to its beliefs.

The struggles we face regarding change are not about “nonessentials” as the article states. It is essential that we get it right. It is essential that our practice supports and upholds our doctrine.

*Sheri Kreuter
Chanhassen, Minnesota*

Send your letters to **Feedback**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 200 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers’ views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

Do you think Jesus is happy?

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Matthew 26:6-13

James A. Mattek

Her fingers felt along the bottom of her little purse until she found it. The young worshiper took one last look at the coin and placed it in the offering plate, losing sight of it among the envelopes of the big people. Then she whispered to her mom, "Do you think Jesus is happy?" Probably.

We know for certain that he was both happy and unhappy at the home of Simon the Leper.

Mary's expression of faith

Bethany was a hiccup-sized town around the bend and over the hill from Jerusalem. It was a burg, however, that everyone was abuzz about. Why? The death date had been scratched off the grave marker of Lazarus. News of the miracle was feeding the paranoia of those bent on Jesus' demise. Now they wanted Lazarus dead too.

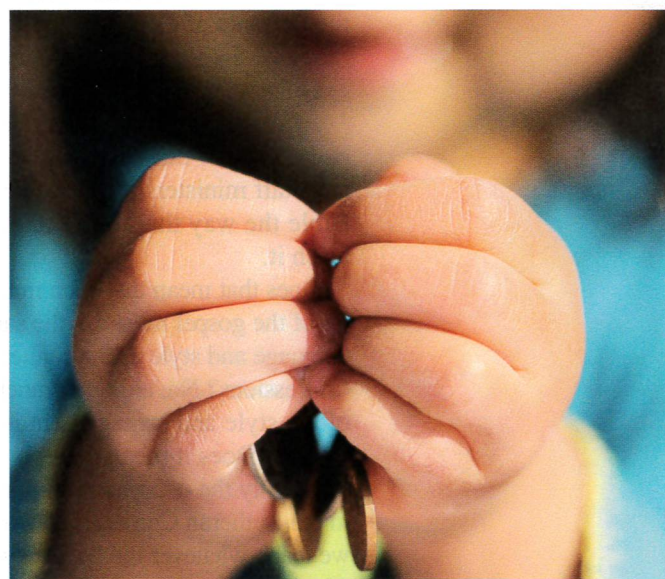
Down the street from Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' house was the home of Simon. It's likely that at one time in his life Simon had the skin disease known as leprosy. Perhaps it was Jesus who had removed the spots from this leper. Maybe that's why he invited Jesus to his house. When one recognizes the goodness of God, the thankful heart seeks out the appropriate means of expression.

That's what this woman did . . . and she did it beautifully. Since "without

faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6), we know that what she did was done with faith in Jesus. We know God was pleased because, in spite of popular opinion, Jesus said, "She has done a beautiful thing to me." From other accounts we also know that the perfume-pouring person was Mary; that she poured it not only on his head but also on his feet; that as a wealthy Jewess she risked her reputation by letting her hair down and then doing the work of a slave. But all in all, it was a thing of beauty, and for it Mary would forever be remembered. In three years of ministry Jesus had found precious few whose expressions of faith he could commend. Mary's was one of them.

Our expressions of faith

Probably Mary didn't realize that Jesus not only saw this as an expression of faith but also as a pre-embalming of his inadequately-embalmed body the following Friday. I once read: "The best of our good works are those we do without realizing how good they are." You don't need a big name with a big title from a big town to make a big impression on Jesus. Just believe in him. What follows makes him smile.



"Do you think Jesus is happy?" The following Friday Jesus would die. That day will forever be called Good. It was good that "Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). He died to make us his own. That makes us happy. That makes us want to dig down deep to express thanks. Whether it's a small coin or a large gift, it fills God's throne room with an aroma he relishes.

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

We are confessional Lutherans

Paul T. Prange

Confessional Lutheranism means that we believe, teach, and confess the doctrines taught in *The Book of Concord* because we believe them to be faithful to the teachings of the Bible.

The Book of Concord includes the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther, the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, and the Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord.

Quite a mouthful, isn't it?

After studying both the Bible and those confessions, each of our pastors, teachers, missionaries, and staff ministers promises publicly to teach the Bible the way that the Lutheran Confessions teach it.

Does that mean that each minister of the gospel must use the same language and style as the Lutheran Confessions? No, although much of the style and arrangement is helpful. Does it mean that we teach only the doctrines mentioned in the Lutheran Confessions? No, we teach whatever the Bible says, whether or not it is mentioned in the confessions.

Then why make a public promise about the confessions? It is one way to demonstrate that the people of God can rely on us to teach what Lutherans have always taught from the Bible. It is also a way to define what we mean when we say that we teach the gospel the way God does in the Bible.

The most striking thing to a first-time reader of the Lutheran Confessions is how clearly the gospel is presented there. The words of the gospel and all of their implications are spelled out so clearly that Jesus Christ shines through each section. We have forgiveness of sins and peace with God through faith in Jesus as our Savior, without any of our

own works coming into play. All of our own good works and worship are in joyful response to the love of Jesus in our lives.

Some claim to teach the gospel but do not subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions. That should give you a clue that there are some hidden strings attached to what they call the gospel.

Some subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions but go beyond and add ideas not found in the Bible or the confessions. That doesn't count as a subscription. Real confessional Lutherans read the Scriptures and boldly confess with Luther, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise." Real confessional Lutherans, regardless of personal consequences, always "speak the truth," always "in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

Some subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions but say that all doctrines of the Bible not mentioned there are not so important for fellowship and life. But that makes some of the teachings of the Word of the Lord insignificant.

Under a lot of personal pressure, the writers of the original Lutheran Confessions studied the Bible and heard the clear voice of the Lord in his gospel.

We must marvel at how clearly they understood the gospel and its implications and how clearly the Lord moved them to write what the Bible says about Jesus and his work for us.

It is not easy to be a confessional Lutheran today. The term is used so improperly in some circles that it might not communicate clearly to the world. But regardless of labels, let us continue to communicate clearly the gospel of Jesus Christ and all of the teachings of the Bible, those teachings so beautifully presented in the Lutheran Confessions.

Let us continue to communicate clearly the gospel of Jesus Christ and all of the teachings of the Bible.

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



at the foot of the cross. Richard Gurgel

TOPIC: Forgiveness

We often say that we were forgiven at the cross. At other times we say forgiveness is offered to us each day as a free gift. The two statements seem to contradict each other. If we were already forgiven at the cross, why do we need to be forgiven again? I know that we use the terms objective and subjective justification, but all that does is confuse me further. Could you explain this to me in theology that is less complicated?

At Christ's cross and empty tomb, God did indeed declare the entire world not guilty. Paul tells us that in Romans 4:25: "He was put to death because of our sins and was raised to life because of our justification" (a literal translation of the Greek). At his cross, Jesus allowed all the judgment for our sin to be poured out on him. In saving love for us, he became the sinner of sinners—really all sinners rolled into one. As Paul put it: "He was put to death because of our sins."

On Easter morning, God the Father accepted his Son's sacrifice by raising him from the dead. Christ's resurrection is the Father's "Not guilty!" verdict about his Son. But even in his resurrection Jesus remains our substitute. With all sins now paid for, the Father declares our substitute to be not guilty. At the same time, the Father made that declaration about us as well! That's why Paul went on to say: "He was raised to life because of our justification."

In his death, Jesus suffered for our sins. In his resurrection, God declares us to be not guilty. So, yes, it is true, at Jesus' cross and empty tomb God already forgave us. He proclaimed the entire world of sinners holy and righteous in his sight! (That's the truth of objective justification.)

Yet what good would that do if we did not know about this gift or didn't hold on to that truth by faith? That is what the gospel in Word

and sacrament was given to us to do. Every day as we remember our baptism, hear or read the gospel in the Word, or receive the Lord's Supper, God freely pours out on us anew the gift that he declared to be ours at Jesus' cross and empty tomb. He leads me daily to trust that what he did for the world belongs to me! (That's the truth of subjective justification.)

Each day as I become aware of the sins into which my sinful nature eagerly plunges, that awareness brings a new sense of guilt to my heart. How thankful I am that God doesn't just say, "Well, I told you once that I forgave you long ago at my Son's cross. That should be enough!" As true as that statement is, he understands the doubts and struggles of my sinful heart too well to brush me off. Instead, he comes to me through his gospel in Word and sacrament to assure me of forgiveness.

Day after day, God gives me again what he gave me already on Good Friday and Easter morning. God knows that only by such repetition of his gift of grace in Christ will my heart continue to rest secure in his love.

There is no contradiction here. There is only the wonderful redundancy of the Father who picks me up when I fall, places me in his lap, and repeats yet again: "Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven!"

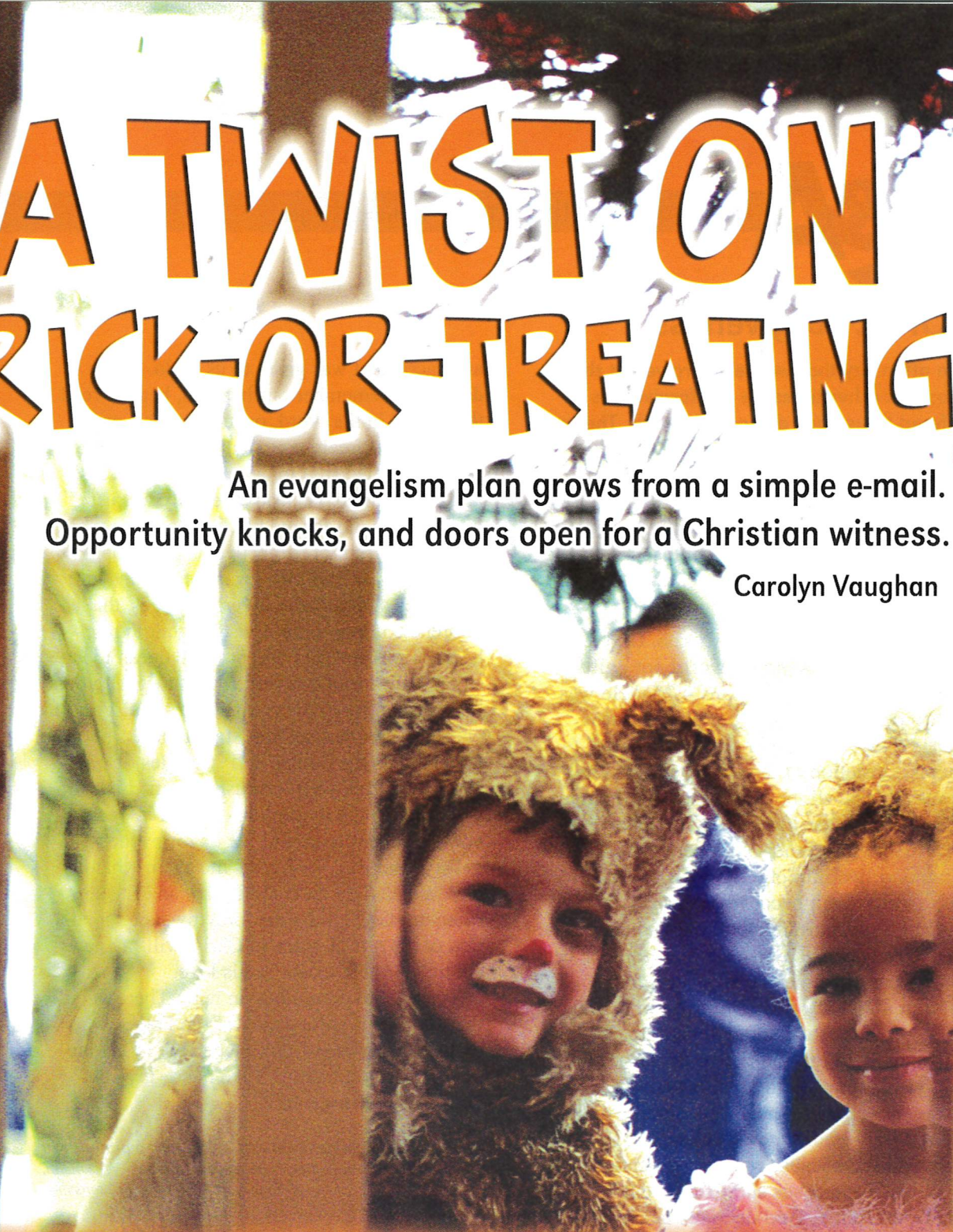
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Have a question? Send it to **Q&A**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Look online at www.wels.net/jump/qa, for more questions and answers.

A TWIST ON TRICK-OR-TREATING

An evangelism plan grows from a simple e-mail.
Opportunity knocks, and doors open for a Christian witness.

Carolyn Vaughan

A photograph showing two children looking out from a doorway. The child on the left is wearing a brown, furry costume with a white mustache and a red nose. The child on the right is wearing a pink, fluffy costume. The background is bright and slightly out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees.

“HEY MOM,” THE MESSAGE ON MY COMPUTER SCREEN READ, “THIS YEAR, WHEN I GO OUT TRICK-OR-TREATING, I’M GOING TO INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH, TOO.” “GREAT IDEA, HONEY,” I TYPED BACK. CLICKING THE MOUSE, I SENT THE MESSAGE FLYING ACROSS THE STATE TO SAGINAW, WHERE MY TEENAGE DAUGHTER IS A STUDENT AT MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY. SUDDENLY A LIGHT BULB FLASHED ON IN MY HEAD. BINGO! I HAD AN EVANGELISM PLAN OF MY OWN FOR HALLOWEEN.

PHASE ONE: OTHERS HELP DISTRIBUTE INVITATIONS

My church was built during the Victorian era when Benjamin Harrison was president. The tide that raised the building and flooded its pews with worshipers has long since ebbed. We are an aging congregation now, our membership in steady decline, as the one-two punch of death and demographics inexorably takes its toll. Like many old churches, we desperately need new people.

So when I suggested the plan inspired by my daughter's e-mail to our Mary-Martha group, they saw its outreach possibilities at once and eagerly agreed to give it a try.

Springing into action, the president of the group made up special invitations with a picture of our church; our address and worship schedule; a map showing our location; a Bible passage

(Matthew 11:28); and information about Kids' Night Out, our new family outreach program. On the day before Halloween, Mary-Martha members got together

and stapled a piece of fun-size candy to each invitation.

After getting their parents' permission, I asked children in our congregation to hand out the invitations when they went trick-or-treating. Some of our older members also volunteered to give invitations to the trick-or-treaters at their doors. With this two-pronged approach we would reach people of all ages in many parts of the city.

PHASE TWO: CANVASS WITH A SWEET INVITATION

But there was still one thing left to be done.

As darkness fell on Oct. 31, I drove to my church. With the pastor's blessing, it was time to carry out the final phase of the plan that had popped into my head the day of my daughter's e-mail. Alone in the church basement, I put on a mask of cartoon character Marge Simpson, shoved a flashlight into the pocket of my jacket, and grabbed a shopping bag full of invitations. Disguised as Marge Simpson I was going to canvass the neighborhood.

I went out through the side door and immediately developed a serious problem. The mask was making my glasses fog up. Even with the flashlight, I could barely see the ground. The last thing I needed was to take a tumble in somebody's front yard. Regretfully, I retraced my steps to the church, abandoning Marge on a table.

THE DOORS OPEN

Back outside I dodged through crowds of excited children. The sidewalks had been deserted the last time I'd canvassed this neighborhood on a quiet Sunday afternoon in June. Then, it had been like pulling teeth to get people to come to their doors. When they did, they had almost always been suspicious or slightly annoyed.

Tonight the feeling was different. Yard lights were shining a welcome up and down the street. Somebody was playing spooky music. I climbed the steps to the porch of the first house with a giraffe, a ballerina, and Darth Vader. I let the kids go first. After they had clattered away again down the steps, I approached the door.

A gray-haired woman greeted me with a bowl of candy.

"I've got a treat for you instead," I told her, reaching into my shopping bag.

She took the invitation, smiling when she saw the Almond Joy bar stapled to the front. "This is my favorite kind of candy," she said.

I continued down the block, hitting the houses that had lots of lights on. Everywhere I knocked people came to the door faster than you could say, "Marge Simpson." As

I gave them the invitations, I wished them a happy Halloween.

I complimented them on their costumes or the artistic way they'd carved their pumpkins.

If it felt right, I talked

to them about my church. Everyone was friendly, and they focused on what I had to say. By doing something a little bit different, I was getting their attention.

I did raise a few eyebrows.

"Aren't you a little old to be trick-or-treating?" one man asked.

I laughed and gave him an invitation. "I'm really a kid," I said. "I got this costume at Wal-Mart."

A HAPPY TIRED

The yard lights started snapping off a little before nine, and the streets grew quiet. It was time to call it a night. I walked back to the church.

I thought about the children who had gone out trick-or-treating with bags full of invitations. I thought about the older people, some of them shut-ins, who had handed out invitations from their homes. I wondered if things had gone as well for them as they had for me. A few blocks away, the clock on the Catholic Church began to chime the hour. Stopping in the middle of the sidewalk, I closed my eyes and said a silent prayer, asking God in Jesus' name to help our Halloween evangelism efforts bear fruit.


Later, when I was driving home, I couldn't stop smiling. I was tired and my feet hurt, but I was also supremely happy. Bordering on the euphoric, in fact. Halloween was over. Invitations had been placed into hundreds of hands all across the city. I had canvassed an entire neighborhood, meeting lots of nice new people in the process. The houses around my church were no longer filled with strangers.

Mission accomplished.

Carolyn Vaughan is a member at St. Paul, Manistee, Michigan.



**BY DOING SOMETHING A LITTLE
BIT DIFFERENT, I WAS GETTING
[PEOPLE'S] ATTENTION.**



Every morning school starts the same way: my 12 first-grade students come into the classroom, unpack their backpacks, and eagerly find a seat on the mat for Bible Time.

This sounds like a typical Lutheran elementary school, right? Yes, but there is a big difference.

This is actually my classroom at an international school in Chiang Mai, Thailand. My 12 students are from eight different countries and backgrounds. Half of my students are missionary children, and the other half are Buddhists.

It has been a wonderful miracle to watch the transformation of all of their hearts and minds this year! Every morning we have a *Christ-Light* lesson that has introduced many new Bible stories to both the Buddhist and Christian children.

One particular morning, about the third month of school, we were learning about Abraham sacrificing Isaac. I asked them where Isaac would have gone if he had died at that time. An in-depth discussion of heaven followed.

I then asked the children where they would go when they died, and suddenly they all started joyously shouting, "Heaven. Heaven!" I looked up, and they were

all clapping and shouting with huge smiles on their faces. It was infectious, and I joined in! We ended up laughing and thanking God for heaven. It was such a wonderful moment that energized Bible Time for many days to follow.

The school is different in another way. The school is a Christian school, but many of the teachers are not Christians. This is a challenge at times, but also it is one of the best witnessing opportunities that I have ever had. I have formed close friendships with many of these teachers. They know what I believe, and we often get into discussions about what Christianity really means.

A high school teacher and I were having coffee one afternoon when I asked her about her beliefs. She told me that she did not really have a religious belief, but she was open to religion and was reading the Bible at the time. She had some good questions about the Old Testament that I was able to answer for her. Then I was able to share the heart of the gospel message with her. She had never heard it before. She could see the excitement in my eyes and hear it in my voice and said that she would like to have excitement like that. We talked for two hours that day. She is still looking, but I am glad that the Lord put me there at that time in her life to give her some answers. I pray often that the Lord continues to work in her heart. I would love it if he would use me to give her the words of eternal life.

TEACHING HAS A GLOBAL REACH

Jesus told us to make disciples of all nations. Sometimes the opportunities he gives us are startling and moving.

Katie Lange

To have such an opportunity to witness to my students and fellow coworkers is amazing and challenging. I have been stretched and strengthened in my thinking, my teaching, and most of all my faith. I was well prepared for this situation at Saint Croix Lutheran High School and Martin Luther College (MLC). Both schools gave me strong religious training to prepare me to have answers for the questions I receive from students and coworkers. At MLC, I was taught how to teach children Bible stories in a joyful and exciting manner. I also learned, after being surrounded by fellow believers at MLC, to speak honestly and openly about my faith in my everyday life and to see Christ working in everything. These tools have been invaluable in witnessing to coworkers and friends who are still searching.

One of the most beneficial opportunities that I had during my training was my student teaching experience. I taught at Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis. I was able to experience a multicultural setting and teach children about Jesus. It gave me a wonderful taste for what I do here in Thailand every day.

I praise and thank God for placing me in Thailand with the right tools to be able to share Christ with those who do not yet know his grace. I pray that he continues to bless this ministry!

Katie Lange is a member at Crown of Life, West St. Paul, Minnesota. This is her second year at Chiang Mai International School, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Footnote: Katie Lange is teaching in Thailand through the International Teaching Opportunities (ITO) program at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. This program is designed to enhance the training of future called workers by making them aware of short-term teaching opportunities in foreign settings. Participants teach English or other content subjects in a variety of school settings, which leads to opportunities for witness and Bible study with a wide range of people. Some ITO participants work with missionaries and provide direct support for world mission efforts. In 2006, 40 MLC students and recent graduates are participating in various ITO activities around the world.

In Scripture, Timothy and Titus were students of the apostle Paul and accompanied him on several of his missionary journeys.

Today Projects Timothy and Titus allow current Luther Preparatory School (LPS) and Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) students to have similar mission experiences. Since 1981 at MLS and 1993 at LPS, students have traveled during summer months to cities and countries both in the United States and abroad. These trips allow them to be exposed to cross-cultural outreach, to gain personal experience in mission work, and to be encouraged to continue their training for the public ministry.

Matt Rothe, a senior at Luther Preparatory School, was one of 10 LPS students who traveled to Ukraine this year to assist in vacation Bible school outreach efforts:

“In Kremenets my partner, Lauren Gross, and I taught 45 children, ages seven through nine. Most of those kids were not members of our Lutheran church. I began each morning with devotion and a Bible story. Lauren worked with the kids on an art project.

“Project Timothy has enabled me to look at so many things in a new way. Ukraine is still a very poor country, and this trip has made me more appreciative of my blessings here in the United States. The Ukrainian children look forward all year to hearing God’s Word at vacation Bible school (VBS); that was a reminder of how much we take God’s Word for granted. These kids are so excited to be at VBS and hear God’s Word—you can just tell by the smiles on their faces. Seeing firsthand how effective God’s Word can be has really made me excited to spread his Word in the future.”

Benjamin Ehlers, a senior at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, traveled to Malawi to help with vacation Bible school:

“Before the week of vacation Bible school (VBS) started, our group had to advertise it. So we split up to hand out fliers. My partner and I had the marketplace. I was amazed to see that everybody wanted to see what we had, and I mean everybody. When the week of VBS arrived, I was shocked to see how all the children arrived at the church. Some walked a few miles or rode bikes, others took buses, and 35 kids even managed to cram into a van. Our numbers increased each day. These children were eager to hear what our Lord has to say, and it was exciting teaching them.”





WILL YOU VOTE?

How should a Christian live as a citizen when sometimes the government challenges Christian principles?

John A. Braun

Some months ago I conducted a Bible class in a nearby congregation while the pastor was away. He said I could choose any topic I wanted. I chose a topic, but I began the hour by passing out small, blank, green, note-size paper. I asked the class to help me understand what was on their minds by writing down whatever question they thought was important. I told them that I wanted to use the opportunity to allow them to bring up questions that were important to them. I promised that I would use the information to help the staff of *Forward in Christ* focus on the issues.

At the end of the Bible class, one gentleman stuffed a note in my hand on his way out the door. I know him as a dedicated layman who has served as an elder. His question was, "How should we as Christians be involved in politics as it pertains to issues challenging Christian principles?"

It's a good question. The fall elections are the next step in the political process, and already presidential candidates are looking for issues to engage voters. But it's not just that the ques-

tion is timely for us in the United States; it's also important to Christians around the world in a wide variety of governments. What's a Christian to do?

There are a couple of principles we should keep in mind.

First, God has established two different societies or kingdoms for the Christian—the church and the state. In the church, which is the assembly of his believers, God works to nurture his believers with the gospel. The assembly of believers uses the gospel in Word and sacrament not only to help Christians mature and grow, but also to bring others to faith. In the church, the Word of God or the Bible is an important resource to guide and direct believers. Actually it's the only standard for what is right and wrong and for what is true and false.

The other society or kingdom is the government or state. It's different from the church in many ways because people of all faiths in a certain location belong to it. They are citizens of a city, a state or province, and a country. The purpose of the state is to keep order,

dispense justice, protect its citizens, and foster the common good. It doesn't use the gospel or the Bible to accomplish its purpose. Instead it uses laws, penalties, money, and power. We may grow cynical of the government, but Paul says, "[The government] is God's servant working to do you good" (Romans 13:4).

The second principle is that Christians should not confuse the two. The church should not presume to exert its influence by power, money, or penalties, and the state should not presume to exert its influence by quoting the Bible or proclaiming the message of Jesus.

The church should not expect the state to be a perfect moral society. No society, no gathering of people, will ever be perfect in this life. Even the visible church as an organization is not perfect. Like the government, it too has flaws, makes mistakes, and sometimes has poor leadership. Christians understand what the writer to the Hebrews meant when he wrote, "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (13:14).

So how can we be involved in politics as Christians?

Christians could simply become so concerned about the new Jerusalem or heaven which God promises that they take no interest in the affairs of this life. However, that's not what God directs them to do. Christians not only are to love God above all things; Jesus gave another commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). One way to love our neighbors is to take an active interest in looking out for their good. That could mean to work for political goals that protect our neighbor from harm and protect his property and life from threats of all kinds.

A Christian could participate in the political process by voting, contributing to campaigns, working for candidates he or she feels would foster the good of society, or serving on the election commission. Another possibility is running for office. A Christian candidate may not only desire the common good of society but may also desire to provide a Christian witness in the political arena and voice a Christian perspective.

One could think of Daniel in the government of Babylon as an example. He did not impose his opinion on others but humbly worshipped God so that others in government recognized his piety and perspective. Nebuchadnezzar trusted and respected Daniel as an advisor. Daniel's firm witness eventually got him into trouble, but he was faithful to God above all else.

What happens when the government and the political process moves in a direction that violates the Christian's conscience or principles? I think that's the question that the little green note raised. A number of things come to mind. The Christian can first of all pray. The Scriptures tell us more than once that we are to pray for the government (Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3). We know that all things are in the hands of our

gracious God, and he invites us to bring our concerns to him in prayer. He promises that he will hear us. But we must be careful not to become impatient with the Lord's answers.

We can oppose government policy that conflicts with Christian principles. Christians can voice their objection by writing letters, participating in demonstrations, offering testimony at legislative hearings, and supporting candidates by volunteer work or contributions. Not every candidate will support every Christian principle, so a Christian will look for a candidate that best matches the Christian worldview. If no such candidate exists, the Christian will support the candidate that promises to do the most good.

In the political world Christians can take every *legal* step available to voice their concern and work for change. But Christians should not break the law. We have a clear direction from God, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1).

One exception: when the government commands us to do something that is clearly against God's will, we will obey God rather than the government. Then, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we will worship God and, if necessary, suffer the consequences of our disobedience (Daniel 3). Peter and John did the same thing when the Sanhedrin ordered them to stop proclaiming the gospel of Jesus (Acts 4:18-20).

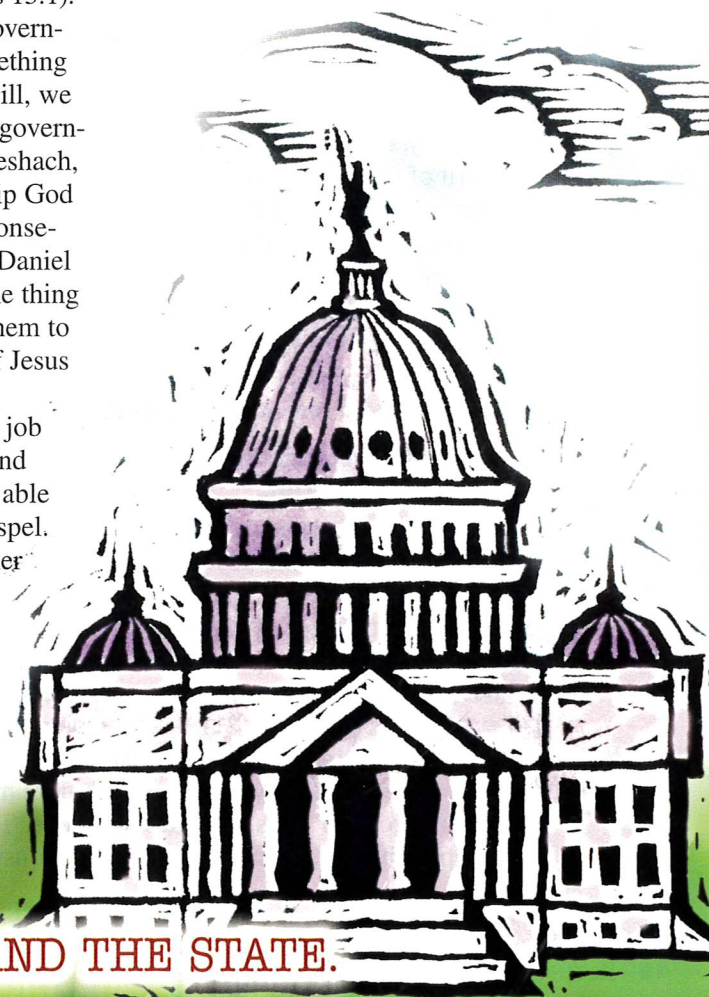
As the government does its job of providing order, stability, and protection, the church will be able to do its work of using the gospel. The two complement each other in this world.

John Braun is executive editor of Forward in Christ.

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

With a question like this, often many additional questions arise. We cannot answer all of those questions in this forum, but other resources are available. Some of these questions are asked and answered on the WELS Web site, www.wels.net/jump/qa. Two books also are worth consulting: *This We Believe: Questions and Answers* (LU15N0726) by Richard Gurgel and *Civil Government: God's Other Kingdom* (LU15N0608) by Daniel Deutschlander. These books are available from Northwestern Publishing House, 800-662-6022; www.nph.net.

A Bible study on church and state also will be available after Oct. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net.



FOR THE CHRISTIAN—THE CHURCH AND THE STATE.

Kenneth L. Brokmeier

Our reformation

Three reformations—the reformation of King Josiah, the reformation of Luther, and our own reformation today—bring God's people back from their sins to the love of God in Jesus.

October 31 is a critical date, especially in retail. The National Retail Federation has reported that sales of Halloween-related items come to \$6.9 billion in a year. Polls indicate that about 80 percent of Americans participate in trick-or-treat activities. The figures speak volumes about the significance of Halloween, don't they?

Confessional Lutherans understand that October 31 is a critical date for a much different reason. It marks the day when the Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. October 31 has been called the birth date of the Reformation. In the following days and months, Martin Luther would uncover corruption and false teaching within the church of his day.

But to use the Reformation primarily or exclusively for the purpose of finding fault with others, especially in Luther's day, is to miss out on an important opportunity. The spirit of the Reformation dictates that we continually examine our own beliefs and practices as well as those of others. This means that as we celebrate the Reformation we concentrate on ourselves and, if need be, also find fault with ourselves. But whether the year is 1517 or 2006, the litmus test has not changed. The standard is still God's Word. Perhaps the time has come for us to ask, "Is it time to hold our own modern-day reformation?"

An ancient reformation brings God's people back to the truth

We journey back more than 2,600 years to the time of King Josiah (2 Kings 22–23) to help us both appreciate and answer that question. Josiah became king of God's people at the tender age of eight. He found himself in the position of leading a people who for the past 60 years had been led by the most vile and godless kings Judah had ever seen (cf. 2 Kings 21). As we repaint the picture we discover that Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh, had filled the house of God with altars and monuments to the fertility gods of the surrounding nations. The king worshipped the sun, moon, and stars. He consulted

mediums and spiritists. It appears he even sacrificed his own son in the fire to the idol, Molech (2 Chronicles 33). It was clearly time for a reformation.

Hard to believe, isn't it? God's people tolerating such practices. How did it happen? The answer was simple. A neglect of his Word. For decades before Josiah became king, the Book of the Law, the Old Testament Bible, was gathering dust from neglect. The result? Spiritual darkness and apathy reigned in the hearts of the people. It was clearly time for a reformation—to rediscover the Book.

A second reformation brings to light the truth of God's grace for sinners

So it was in the days of Luther. God's gracious revelation, his Word, had been lost. Many priests knew little of the Bible and rarely used it. Only a few laypeople had ever actually seen a Bible.

The Word was also lost in another way. The sweet message of God's full and free pardon through Jesus Christ was not proclaimed. Few actually heard that Jesus lived a perfect life as our substitute in order to set us free from the curse of the law. Sermons did not announce that God gives us his righteousness as a free gift through faith in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. God revealed those truths to bring peace and rest to a troubled soul. But people found no comfort because the message had been lost. It was clearly time for a reformation—to rediscover the Book.

Do we need a reformation today?

In the days of King Josiah, the Bible had become a lost book. In the days of Luther, the Bible was a lost book. Is the Bible becoming a lost book in our day too? Are the Bibles in our homes lost under a pile of books on how to have a safe and secure portfolio? Are the Scriptures lost under a pile of umpteen different magazines or remotes for the technological gadgets we own? Does reading our Bibles fall well below sporting events and musical presentations in our priorities?

Do parents today open up their Bible to show their children the answer to the questions they hear from the entertainment industry and a thousand other sources—questions about tolerance, sexuality, Lord's Supper, and scores of other issues? How much time do we spend in front of video games, the Internet, and TV? How does it compare with staining our Bibles from the oil of our own hands as we diligently search the Scriptures?

We would do well today to hold our own modern-day reformation by again finding the Book and searching it with the zeal of Luther.

God's Word reforms hearts

In Josiah's day, Hilkiah, the priest, did find the Book of the Law. Rapid arrangements brought it to the king. Josiah's secretary read it to him. The results were quick. When Josiah heard its words, he tore his robes, a sign of sorrow over his own sins and those of his people. Immediate reforms began to take place because Josiah took God's message to heart. What an impact that message had! We read, "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength" (2 Kings 23:25). God's Word planted itself deeply in Josiah's heart. He sought to lead his people back to the LORD. The Passover, neglected for so long, was celebrated again with a zeal that had been missing for centuries.

God's grace also caused Luther to take to heart the message of the Book. The Lord opened Luther's eyes to the most beautiful and precious truth in all Scripture, the truth about the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. As Luther raced through the Scriptures, he no longer saw Christ as an angry judge who made demands. Instead Luther rejoiced to confess Jesus as his loving Savior who came to give his life as the sacrificial lamb to pay for the sins of the world. Luther took to heart the truth that Christ is the one to whom we run to find forgiveness and eternal life.

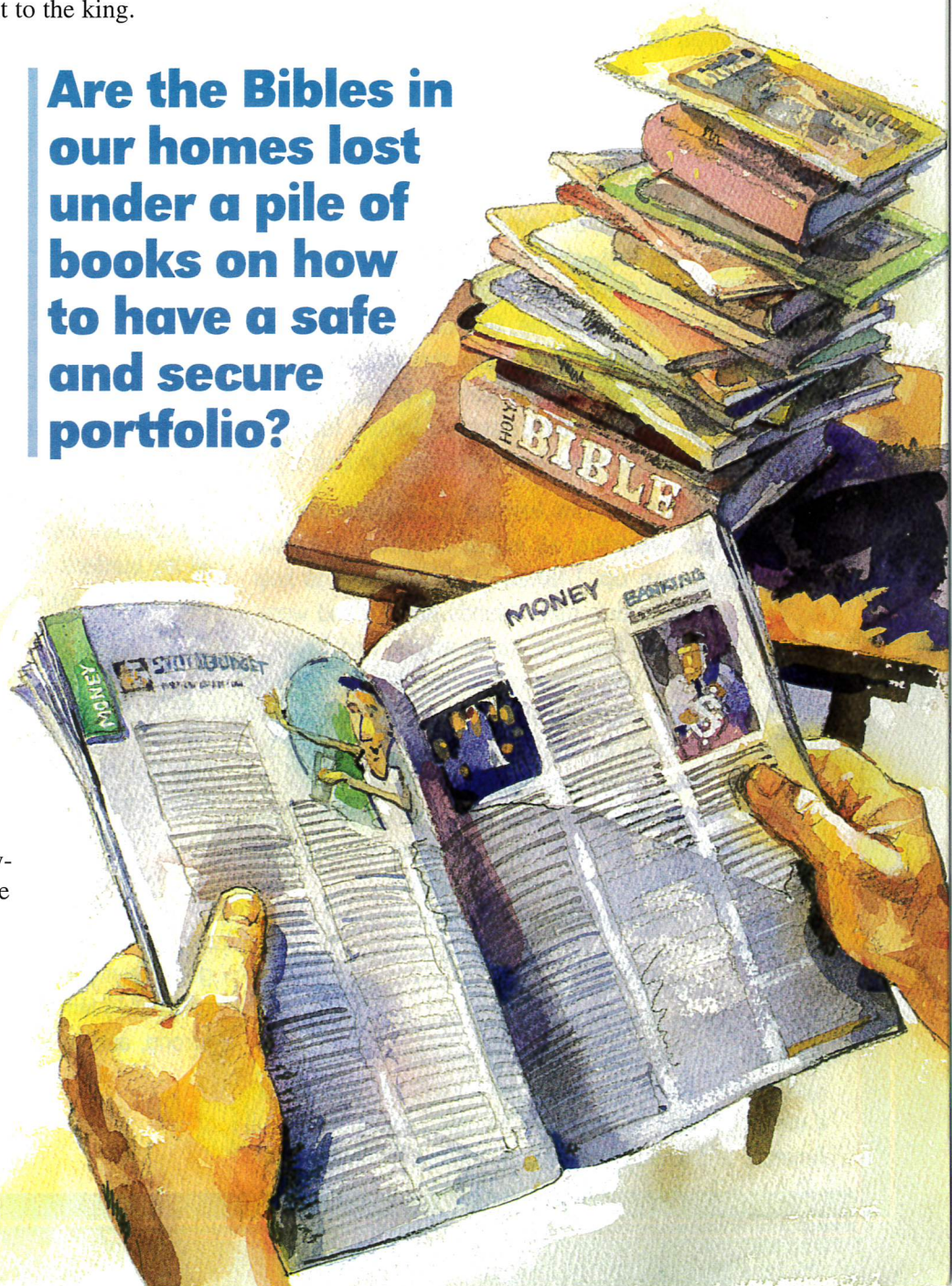
As we hold our own modern-day reformation, that same grace of God still leads us to not only again discover the Book, but also to take its message to

heart. God's good news of full and free forgiveness is still the only message that brings lasting comfort to consciences plagued by guilt and failure.

Amazing, isn't it? What a wonderful Savior we have! God help us to take his message deep into our hearts by reading it regularly and meditating on it frequently. Then rest assured that God will do for us what he did for both Josiah and Luther. He will turn us to him with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength.

Ken Brokmeier, pastor at Our Savior, Brookings, South Dakota, also serves the campus ministry at South Dakota State University, Brookings.

Are the Bibles in our homes lost under a pile of books on how to have a safe and secure portfolio?



WHATEVER

Who's in charge?

No matter how out of control life may seem, we can always be sure that God is in charge of our every move and struggle.

The sight of a fresh cut on "Amanda's" wrist made my heart wrench yet again. It was one of the many cuts that crisscrossed her wrists. I swallowed hard, knowing I had failed yet again.

Amanda has always been one of the funniest girls I knew. She would make the best of any situation and make everyone laugh. She didn't care what others thought. I remember one day she wore a plastic rain poncho to school, and no one thought much of it. She was just like that—random but hilarious.

As Amanda and I grew closer, she confided her darker feelings and emotions to me. She started telling me about how she cut herself and how she hated her life. She often mentioned how she wanted to die. I never thought much of it. It wasn't possible for the funny, carefree Amanda to have these feelings. Or was it?

When the cut marks began to appear and she started wearing all black clothes, I knew something was up. I talked to her and tried to help her. Some of Amanda's other friends noticed and were worried about her. They told some adults, and I was furious. I thought that this was the last thing that would help Amanda. I thought Amanda needed a friend, one that would be there for her and not betray her trust. I made it my duty to be that person.

I tried to give her advice and get her to stop, but no matter what I did, it didn't help. When she got worse, I blamed myself for failing her as a friend.

Around Thanksgiving, Amanda attempted suicide but failed. All that ran through my mind was, "What did I do wrong? Did I do all I could to help her?" I knew that I had failed. I couldn't handle the emotions of knowing I had led Amanda to her last straw. I hadn't provided her with the right advice. I took the guilt upon myself, and I suffered a period of slight depression. I thought I could change Amanda, and when I realized my failure I broke down.

Amanda ended up going to a mental health institute to get help. I thought that it was stupid. She didn't need their help; I was supposed to be the only one that could truly help her. I was her best friend, right?

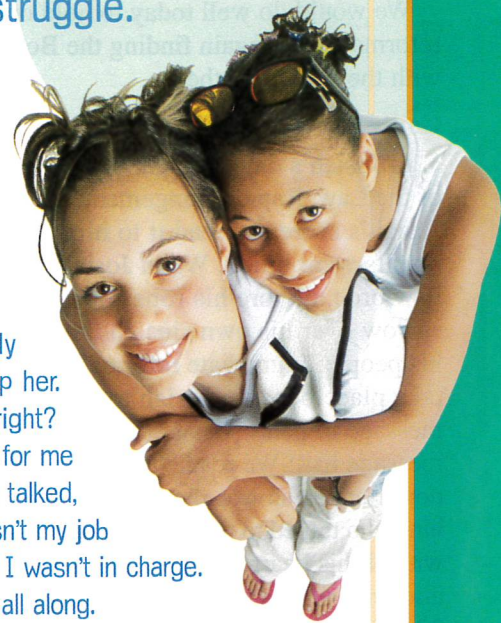
My parents were there for me during this hard time. We talked, and I realized that it wasn't my job to help Amanda and that I wasn't in charge. God had been in charge all along.

I totally forgot about God and took his role in Amanda's life. I tried to be her solace and forgot that God was both hers and mine. I had tried to carry the problem myself, when really all I had to do was put all my burdens on God. Like 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." I had gotten so wrapped up in helping Amanda that I lost all sense of God's role in her life and in mine.

Even though Amanda has improved only a little, I learned a powerful lesson. God is in charge. No matter how out of control life may seem and no matter how large a load we carry, we can always be sure that God is in charge of our every move and struggle.

I know now that it isn't my job to change Amanda. Rather I can put all my troubles into God's hands and know that he will do what is best. He even brought good to my life through this hardship. He taught me to trust in him no matter what happens, to stay strong, and to know that he will care for us.

Due to the personal subject matter, the author has asked to be kept anonymous.



Obituaries

Joan A. Kannenberg 1942-2006

Joan Kannenberg (nee Rohlf) was born Sept. 26, 1942. She died July 1, 2006, in Waukesha, Wis.

She served St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.; and Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Daniel; two sons; and three grandsons.

Harold A. Wood 1913-2006

Harold Wood was born Sept. 25, 1913, in Colome, S.D. He died July 4, 2006, in Atkinson, Neb.

He served as pastor at Apostles, Billings, Mont.; Mt. Zion, Missoula, Mont.; and Our Saviour, Monte Vista, Colo.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mildred. He is survived by his second wife, Myrlen (Pat); one son; one daughter; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild; one stepson; five stepdaughters; 13 step-grandchildren; and three step-great-grandchildren.

Norman J. Barenz 1925-2006

Norman Barenz was born Jan. 26, 1925, in the Town of Cedarburg, Wis. He died July 17, 2006, in Hartland, Wis.

A 1950 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. Paul, Livingston, Mont.; St. John, Burlington, Wis.; Our Savior, Zion, Ill.; Zion, Hartland, Wis.; and Living Water, Hot Springs Village, Ark.

He is survived by his wife, Gena; two sons; two daughters; and 11 grandchildren.

Gordon C. Follendorf 1920-2006

Gordon Follendorf was born Feb. 1, 1920, in the Town of Little Falls, Wis. He died June 24, 2006, in La Crosse, Wis.

He served as a teacher at Immanuel and First Lutheran, La Crosse, Wis.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Lilah. He is survived by two sons, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Harold A. Kaiser 1926-2006

Harold Kaiser was born May 23, 1926, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died July 7, 2006, in Owatonna, Minn.

He served as a professor at Dr. Martin Luther College and Dr. Martin Luther High School, New Ulm, Minn.; Martin Luther Preparatory School, Prairie du Chien, Wis.; and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Thelma; three sons; two daughters; 12 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Oscar A. Lemke 1911-2006

Oscar Lemke was born March 26, 1911, in Morrison, Wis. He died July 16, 2006, in Green Bay, Wis.

A 1937 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Emmanuel, Flint, Mich.; parishes in Circle/Olanda/Brockway, Mont.; parishes in Elgin/Burt/Leith, N.D.; St. John/Zion, Rib Falls, Wis.; St. John, Pardeeville, Wis.; Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.; and Bethany/St. Matthew, Renville, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Arline; three sons; two daughters; 16 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

T. W. Zuberbier 1910-2006

T. W. Zuberbier was born June 25, 1910, in East Bloomfield, Wis. He died July 3, 2006, in Green Bay, Wis.

He served at pastor at Emanuel, New London, Wis.; St. Martin, Winona, Minn.; St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.; and as a professor at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Laura; a son, and a daughter. He is survived by a son, a daughter, 18 grandchildren, 42 great-grandchildren, and 11 great-great-grandchildren.

READ THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

NOVEMBER 2006

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. John 10:22-42 | 16. 2 Kgs. 15, 16 |
| 2. Jn. 11:1-27 | 17. 2 Kgs. 17 |
| 3. Jn. 11:28-44 | 18. 2 Kgs. 18:1-19:7 |
| 4. Jn. 11:45-12:19 | 19. 2 Kgs. 19:8-37 |
| 5. Jn. 12:20-36 | 20. 2 Kgs. 20, 21 |
| 6. Jn. 12:37-50 | 21. 2 Kgs. 22, 23 |
| 7. 2 Kings 1, 2 | 22. 2 Kgs. 24, 25 |
| 8. 2 Kgs. 3:1-4:7 | 23. John 13:1-20 |
| 9. 2 Kgs. 4:8-44 | 24. Jn. 13:21-32 |
| 10. 2 Kgs. 5:1-6:7 | 25. Jn. 13:33-14:14 |
| 11. 2 Kgs. 6:8-7:20 | 26. Jn. 14:15-24 |
| 12. 2 Kgs. 8, 9 | 27. Jn. 14:25-15:8 |
| 13. 2 Kgs. 10 | 28. Jn. 15:9-25 |
| 14. 2 Kgs. 11, 12 | 29. Jn. 15:26-16:15 |
| 15. 2 Kgs. 13, 14 | 30. Jn. 16:16-33 |

Untangling the Web



Are you looking for photos and art for your Web site or print publication? WELS' new Inspire Photo Art collection has hundreds of royalty free photos and artwork that you can download and use. You can also donate

images for others to use. Every month there will be a theme for donated photos, with the best photo being featured on the theme page. The theme for October is fall. View, download, and donate pictures now at www.wels.net/jump/inspire.



Theatre production explores the life of Paul

“My name is Paul. My name means little. Though I am small in the shadow of my Lord, he has called me to great things.” These words are spoken by Jonathon Roberts each time he performs *Project Paul*, a theatre production currently touring the United States with shows at colleges, high schools, churches, and theatres. *Project Paul*, as described by Roberts, is “an evocative theatre piece that explores the life and writings of the apostle Paul through theatre, music, video art, and light. It is a collage of Paul’s original writings and artistic reactions to them that captures the passion behind his ministry.”

Roberts, a member of St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Composition and a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Performance from Lawrence University, Appleton, Wis. During his college career he set many of Paul’s texts to music. What began in 2004 as his senior project has developed into a powerful show that has been performed more than 50 times since he graduated in May 2005.

Project Paul is a collaboration among Roberts and his siblings. Because he believes in the power of Paul’s text to move people, he kept much of the writing intact. His sister Christy Bagasao helped organize the text and write scenes. Roberts wrote the music (classical, jazz, ballad, calypso, techno, and much more) and is the sole performer, bringing the passion of Paul’s story to life. His brother Scott Baye layered in video art that supports the music and dramatic action.



Jonathon Roberts performs one of many musical pieces he composed for the show.

“Jonathon has taken one of the most fascinating figures of the Bible and created a show that helps us to experience the apostle Paul in his own time, in his own inspired words,” shares Pastor John Stelljes of King of Kings, Maitland, Fla. Stelljes’s wife Angela adds, “*Project Paul* is not only a fantastic, vigor-filled witness to Paul’s life, but also a professional artistic presentation.” The Stelljes see this work being used in Bible studies or as a means of “event evangelism.”

“My hope is that by using Paul’s original writings and the book of Acts, people are surprised by the power of Scripture and inclined to read it for themselves,” Roberts says of his work. “Paul was not a perfect man. He was weak just like every one of us. But he saw in people the potential that they had. Sometimes he went over the top. Sometimes he offended people. But it was always about love.”

Learn more at www.projectpaul.com.

Web site directly witnesses to Mormons

Naturally a Christian would be happy to hear that an acquaintance believes in Jesus as his Savior. But if that person is a Mormon, his definition of salvation is merely bodily resurrection, not eternal life in heaven. Officially called “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” Mormonism may appear similar to Christianity, but its source of truth is not the Bible. These similarities in terms may easily cause confusion when Christians share their faith with Mormons.

A new Web site, www.thecityofzion.com, seeks to share the message of God’s Word with Mormons in a language that they understand and in ways in which their culture is comfortable.

The Web site was developed by Truth in Love Ministry, which grew out of the outreach ministry of Messiah, Nampa, Idaho. Since the congregation is situated in a heavily Mormon area, Messiah and its pastor, Mark Cares, have been witnessing to

Mormons for many years. With the support of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society and numerous private gifts, www.thecityofzion.com was launched earlier this summer.

Much of the site’s development is thanks to the dedication of Messiah members, Keith and Becki Detro. Becki was raised Mormon but has become an avid student of Scripture. “Never once in my entire life as a Mormon did anyone try to witness to me by using God’s Word or by telling me the positives of Christianity,” reflects Becki. “Their focus was always on the negatives of Mormonism.” Becki’s understanding of the stresses and culture of Mormonism fuels her passion to reach out to “her people” through the site. Her husband Keith does all the design work and engineering for the site.

Many aspects of Mormon culture are reflected in the site: journaling (Peter and Abraham write journals), competitiveness and perfectionism (the Coliseum holds

The loving hand of God in Nigeria

Pastor Daniel Koelpin, WELS Board for World Mission administrator; Pastor Doug Weiser, WELS liaison to Nigeria; Pastor Paul Hartman; and Pastor Curtis Lyon traveled to the southeast region of Nigeria in July to evaluate and visit Christ the King Lutheran Church and All Saints Lutheran Church, two church bodies that are in fellowship with WELS.

Both synods continue to expand by starting new congregations. With its 14 pastors, Christ the King serves over 2,500 people, while All Saints ministers to nearly 5,000 with only two pastors. Currently seven men from All Saints are training for the public ministry at Christ the King Lutheran Seminary in the village of Uruk Uso. Teams of two WELS pastors each travel to the region three times a year to help support the training and assist in teaching. WELS also provides a subsidy to Christ the King Lutheran Church and supports the seminary and its students. As gifts permit, financial assistance is given to help with building chapels, digging deep water bore holes (wells), and providing welfare relief. WELS pro-

vides no ongoing subsidy to All Saints Lutheran Church.

The greatest challenge for these synods, according to Koelpin, "is striving for self support in the matter of pastors' salaries and church operations. There is little opportunity for most of the members of the churches to earn a livelihood. Thirty-two percent of the populace is illiterate. The nation of Nigeria is sometimes rated the second most corrupt in the world. There is little opportunity in rural villages to pursue business ventures and even less knowledge of how to go about doing so. African culture has the expectation that an influential man (a tribal leader, government leader, or church pastor) is to provide for them rather than the other way around. Support for church work and church workers is an uphill battle."

Despite financial hardships, the Nigerian people find ways to give joyfully. "During the worship service everyone in the congregation gets up from his or her respective chair and dances all the way to the collection plate up front, giving what they can. That is joyful giving," says Koelpin.



(Left to right) Pastor Douglas Weiser, All Saints Pastor Simon Orem, and Pastor Daniel Koelpin pose after Weiser and Koelpin were named honorary chiefs.

Koelpin is equally awed by the worship style: "Endearing is the enthusiastic worship of these Lutheran Christians. They dance and use drums to praise the Lord. They take choir membership seriously. To be asked to leave the choir is almost tantamount to excommunication in its social impact. All are involved in worship and song. There are people here who know the Lord."

To learn more about the more than 70 years of Lutheran presence in Nigeria, view pictures from Koelpin's recent trip, and read how you can help support this growing mission field, go to www.wels.net/jump/nigeria.

THE CITY OF ZION.COM

**Where Heavenly Father's Holy Words
are used to present Spiritual Truths**



games where only a perfect score will do), and guilt (for which the counseling office offers prescriptions). Even the name speaks to Mormons, since Zion is a name for Mormonism and Salt Lake City is often called Zion.

While certain buildings in the Web site are functional now, Cares and the Detros are continuing to add new information, praying that God will use the site to reach as many souls as possible.

This Web site follows the first Web site developed by Truth In Love Ministry, www.truthinlovetomormons.org. This site, which went online in 2001, helps Christians witness to Mormons. With more than 5.5 million hits, it is rated the #1 Internet site for outreach to Mormons.

Missionaries meet for conference

More than 45 world missionaries, national pastors, seminary professors, and world mission committee members convened on the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., for the World Seminary Conference in August.

The conference opened with a worship service led by Pastor Salimo Hachibamba, a national pastor in the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. Board for World Missions administrator, Pastor Daniel Koelpin, gave the keynote address centered on the theme of "World Seminaries in the Light of the Great Commission." Koelpin stressed to the assembly that "we can be more effective than we think if we realize that the Lord has given us life on the installment plan, a day at a time, and each day lived for him can reap

a wonderful harvest when lived with his mission to the lost in mind."

The five-day conference, held every four years, was a chance for Bible institute and seminary instructors from around the world to discuss strategies and ideas in training nationals in each mission field for the public ministry. It also provided a forum to discuss how several of our world seminaries could work together to share resources and encourage one another.

A portion of each day was set aside for breakout groups to discuss the day's presentations and come up with strategies for implementing the ideas presented in their own mission fields.

One of the conference highlights was the commissioning service of a third friendly counselor to India.

In reflecting on the conference, Koelpin notes, "Many of the partici-

pants described the conference as the most helpful World Seminary Conference they ever attended. Significant guidance was presented by some of the best trained and experienced leaders in our confessional Lutheran circles on things like seminary curriculum development, translation, teaching, and communication across cultures."

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor E. Allen Sorum, one of the organizers of the conference, says, "Not only did the conference allow our missionaries to share and see how our core curriculum is being taught in seminaries around the world, but it also gave them a process in which to develop additional materials that are relevant to their location and must be addressed by their curriculum."



More than 45 people attended the World Seminary Conference held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in August. The conference allowed Bible institute and seminary instructors to discuss strategies for training nationals for the public ministry.

WELS news briefs

Commission on Parish Schools
414-256-3222; cps@sab.wels.net

More than 230 people attended EduTech, a national conference on teaching, learning, and technology, in Oshkosh, Wis., in June. The conference provided workshops on topics ranging from creating a Web site to church administrative software

to curriculum mapping in schools. Conference attendees—whether teachers, pastors, or laypeople—learned teaching and technology tricks to help reach out in the world today. "Everybody who was there was thirsty for new ways that could enhance their ministries," says Martin Spriggs, WELS' chief technology

officer and member of the planning committee.

"I'm confident most of them found those ways." Many of the conference workshops are online at www.wels.net/jump/edutech.



Emphasizing faith focused finances—

To help pastors and congregational leaders provide greater leadership in the area of finances, the Conference of Presidents authorized the development of Faith Focused Finances—workshops, seminars, and resources to provide vision and training for personal and congregational management of financial resources.

“This is not about paying the synod’s bills,” says Pastor Dave Kehl, administrator of the Commission on Adult Discipleship and coordinator of the program. “This is about individual Christians finding more satisfaction in the way they’re honoring God with their finances.”

Faith Focused Finances will have three main components:

- **Pastoral Leadership Seminars:** These seminars for pastors and their wives will provide helpful training for the wise management of their own personal finances. The seminars will also provide training for developing and leading greater ongoing financial faithfulness within the congregation.

- **Congregational Workshops.** These weekend workshops for pastors and congregational leaders will consist of biblical and practical training in stewardship. Practical training includes setting up regular communication of the stewardship message, developing an annual stewardship focus, and training in personal finance. “We will also help congregations get a handle on managing what comes in from God’s people,” says Kehl. The first workshop will be held in January 2007 in Antioch, Ill.

- **Personal Finances Training Course.** This locally led course will provide information to train members in the basics of wise faith-focused finances for their daily lives. The goal is to have this course available by summer 2007.

“The hope is that through these resources Christians will excel in their financial stewardship as part of their growth in faith and that an atmosphere of joyful giving emerges,” says Kehl.

To schedule a workshop, contact the Commission on Adult Discipleship at cad@sab.wels.net or 414-256-3278.

WELS emphasizes benefits to ministry through endowment funds—

In recent years, members have learned about the challenges facing the synod as a result of inadequate funding restricting opportunities for further gospel outreach. Budget shortfalls loomed for our ministerial education schools. Missionaries were called back.

Although the synod’s financial situation is improving, economic factors continue to complicate things. WELS’ outreach and education efforts are long-term programs that require continuing and predictable financial support. However, these programs are very inflation-sensitive. Because the cost of items such as health care, utilities, and insurance is rising faster than inflation, the cost of maintaining ministry programs rises approximately two percent above inflation annually. Enrollment declines at the ministerial education schools have also led to financial challenges. In addition, economic fluctuations cause bumps and dips in giving.

To counter these factors, WELS is developing two \$150 million endowment funds over 12 years to provide ongoing supplemental income for missions and ministerial education. The 2005 synod convention endorsed the creation of these funds. In endowment funds, the historic dollar value is preserved, while a portion of interest gained on the funds provides continuing, predictable, additional funding to ministry.

Building up \$300 million for the endowment funds may seem like a daunting task, but the timing is right. One-fourth of the U.S. population, the Baby Boomers, is beginning to retire and look ahead to passing along their estates to their families, charities, and churches. According to financial analysts, the coming years will see the greatest transfer of wealth ever, somewhere between \$25 and \$45 trillion through 2052.

Pastor Dave Liggett, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving,

hopes members will consider supporting the new endowments through their estate plans. “Endowment funds provide the perfect vehicle if you want to make a substantial gift to ensure WELS ministry is supported well into the future.” Seven out of 10 people do not have estate plans set up, however. Says Liggett, “We want to get the word out that we can assist with setting up a Christian estate plan and that a WELS endowment fund is an excellent option.”

To help educate churches and individuals about these endowment funds, the Ministry of Christian Giving is providing informational materials about endowments to every church. They are also offering the assistance of Christian giving counselors in presenting further details and assisting with gifts. Counselors can help churches set up a planned giving committee that would start and/or manage a church endowment fund as well.

Liggett emphasizes that the endowments are another way for Christians to give cheerfully. “In 1 Chronicles 29, when King David was preparing to leave this earth and join the Lord in heaven, he modeled joyful Christian giving through a type of Christian estate plan—he led his people in providing funds for his son Solomon to build the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem. He acknowledged that everything he had accumulated in life was a gift from God; therefore the Lord’s church was going to receive the bulk of his estate. May God compel all of us to respond to his grace in a similar fashion by making a planned gift towards a WELS endowment fund.”

Learn more about the endowment funds at www.wels.net/jump/endowment. You can also contact the Ministry of Christian Giving at 800-827-5482.

Q & A with Ken Cherney Jr., world mission professor

Pastor Kenneth Cherney Jr. recently began his duties as the new world mission professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. A 1988 seminary graduate, Cherney is no stranger to teaching or mission work, having served as a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; as a missionary to Brazil; and most recently, as director of the Caribbean Christian Training Institute in Antigua, West Indies.

In this new position that is subsidized by the Board for World Missions, Cherney will work with mission fields currently served by WELS missionaries to help determine their teaching needs in training national pastors. He will also assist in coordinating efforts for mission work in areas where a missionary presence is unavailable. Cherney will travel to many of the regions to assist but will also teach classes at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary so other professors can travel abroad to teach.

On the heels of the World Seminary Conference in August (see p. 22), Cherney sat down with Forward in Christ to talk about his new role.

What led you to take the world mission professor call?

ANSWER – There were a number of things. I saw my teaching style and my background as something the Lord could potentially use on this campus. But also I saw this position as just a critical need in the history of our work overseas right now and an opportunity to be involved in some pretty exciting things.

What excites you most about your position?

ANSWER – Perhaps it's getting to see firsthand the really great things the Lord is doing all over the world and getting to work with national pastors around the world in a vast variety of cultures. It's not just being involved in teaching but also learning from them and from our missionaries.

What are the challenges that you face?

ANSWER – The fact that it is a new position; there isn't really a template. That's a little intimidating and encouraging at the same time. It's interesting to take a position like this and shape it. . . . Determining what's best to do, what needs to be done immediately, and what can wait is all going to take some time to sort out.

What do you hope to teach your students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary about the world mission field?

ANSWER – When we take the gospel out, particularly to other cultures, we cannot do it with the attitude that we are givers and the people we work with are takers or on the receiving end. It is much more complicated than that. The Lord blesses others through our ministry

overseas, but he also blesses us and changes us in ways that, before we left home, we probably couldn't have imagined.

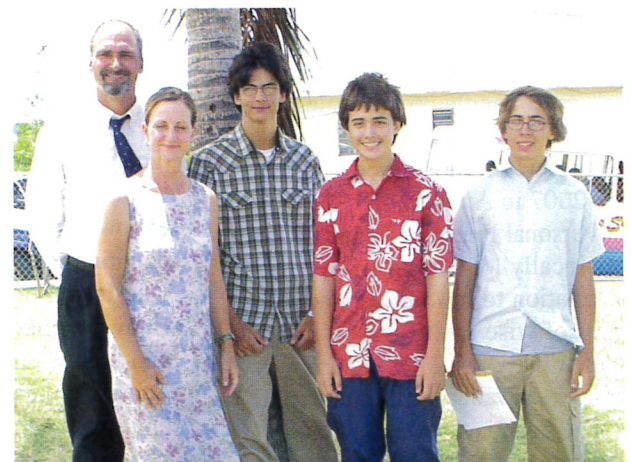
What can WELS people do to help best support our missionaries and support you in your position?

ANSWER – Prayer is key. I hope that never becomes a cliché among us. Prayer is powerful.

Something else I appreciate is that a soul is a soul and it doesn't matter where he's saved. It's thrilling and exciting what God is doing in far flung places around the world, but it is just as exciting when someone comes to faith in Kenosha, Wisconsin. I'm hoping we can keep our eyes focused on the spiritual side of things and not just in the exotic places where some of the work is taking place.

The financial challenges continue, but I do firmly believe that God has blessed his people with the resources that we need to do everything he is asking us to do and more. It's a matter of us, in thankful love, putting those resources at his disposal and saying "Here Lord, use me, use my time, use my talents, but also use my money." I would hope that we would still walk together as a synod in the work that we're doing in places around the world, that we continue to trust our leaders, that we continue to see the big picture, and that we not become fragmented by thinking that only one pet project is important. Let's do the Lord's work together, because together we can do so much more.

To see more questions and answers with Prof. Ken Cherney Jr., go to www.forwardinchrist.net.



Pastor Kenneth Cherney Jr., the new world mission professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., with his wife Kris and sons (from left) Ethan, Michael, and Isaac. Not pictured: son Kenneth III.

District news

Dakota-Montana

Volunteers from congregations around the Tomah, Wis., area came to **Zion, Mobridge, S.D.**, to help with vacation Bible school in June. With their help the congregation handed out fliers to surrounding towns, including several on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. A community project of painting three houses was also undertaken.

Minnesota

The Lutheran Home Association (TLHA) dedicated the Faith Residence Apartments on June 22. Faith Residence is an eight-unit housing project for people with disabilities. The project was funded through a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and donors from around the Belle Plaine, Minn., area.

Nebraska

Zion, Valentine, Neb., had a scare on July 16. A wildfire started in the canyons north of town and got out of control,

quickly spreading toward Valentine. Much of the city had to evacuate. Thankfully the fire was stopped five blocks north of the church and school. Some members' homes were affected.

St. Mark, Salina, Kan., opened a preschool named St. Mark Little Lions this fall. Staff Minister Jace Holden serves as the program director and teacher.

St. Paul, Grand Junction, Colo., dedicated a new Sunday school addition and a remodeled altar area on Sept. 10.

Abiding Word, Highlands Ranch, Colo., held

a three-day "Soccer and Bible Camp" for six to 10 year olds from Aug. 1-3. Forty children attended, 35 of these from the community. They not only learned soccer skills but also learned about their Savior, memorized a Bible verse, and made a craft.

Northern Wisconsin

St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis., was chosen as one of the landmarks to be included in a large mural painted in Weyauwega as part of the city's 150th anniversary.

Lutheran Girl Pioneers attending the annual international camp enjoyed a visit from Megan Coffey, the recently crowned Miss Wisconsin. The theme of this year's camp was "Go for the Gold on God's Team." It was held July 31-Aug. 5 at Camp Bird in Crivitz, Wis.

South Atlantic

The school of **King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.**, was recently recommended for full WELSSA accredited status. King of Kings will be the first WELS school in the South Atlantic District to receive WELSSA accreditation.

On June 11, **Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn.**, dedicated its new worship facility. Pastor Charles Westra, the South Atlantic district mission board chairman, was the guest preacher.

Minnesota



Two dozen Minnesota children enjoyed a week-long German camp on the campus of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., in June. Prof. Kurt Wittmershaus taught the campers simple German words and phrases and introduced German food, arts and crafts, music, and folk dances. Wittmershaus was assisted by seven students from St. Paul, New Ulm, who study German with him year-round.

South Central

Holy Word, Austin, Tex., held its (Austin) fifth annual Soccer Bible Camp from July 24-28. Eighty children attended and heard the gospel every day. The congregation is following up with several prospective families.

Pacific Northwest

Redeemer, Yakima, Wash. dedicated its new church building on July 30. Former Redeemer pastor, Jim Oldfield, was the guest preacher for the special service.

Happy anniversary!

DM—Mark Guthmiller, pastor at Peace, Clark/Bethlehem, Raymond/Willow Lake, Willow Lake, S.D., celebrated 25 years in the preaching ministry.

PNW—Mark Cares, pastor at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho, celebrated 25 years in the preaching ministry.

SEW—Jeanette West celebrated 75 years as an organist at First Lutheran, Lake Geneva, Wis.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: DM—Wayne Rouse; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Donald Wichmann; NW—Joel Lillo; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

South Atlantic



St. Paul's, Beverly Hills, Fla., hosted "Get Wet Wednesdays" for seven weeks. Each session included a Bible story and water activities, including a giant waterslide. Because of the events, interest has been generated in the church and school.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Baumler, Dale R.**, to retirement
Birkholz, Mark A., to Grace, Grand Anse, Grenada
Ditter, Gerald G., to Immanuel, Springerville/Immanuel, Taylor, Ariz.
Haar, Thomas W., to Emmanuel, Stratford, Wis.
Hansen, Neil C., to Beautiful Savior, Bella Vista, Ark.
Heins, Ronald K., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Krahn II, Richard I., to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.
Lindemann, Edward W., to retirement
Mahnke, Jon M., to retirement
Neumann, Steven L., to Mt. Zion, Kenosha, Wis.
Otto, Joel D., to Trinity, Minocqua, Wis.
Panning, Armin J., to retirement
Schneider, Wayne E., to retirement
Valleskey, David J., to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.
Wagenknecht, Myrl F., to Immanuel, Fort Worth, Tex.
Wegner, Paul L., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee
Zierner, Paul C., to Living Hope, Midlothian, Va.

Teachers

- Anderson, Nancy**, to Faith, Tacoma, Wash.
Barnes, Laurie E., to Lakewood, Lakewood, Wash.
Beagle, Jon M., to St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.
Bock, Suzanne E., to St. John, Juneau, Wis.
Carlovsky, Elizabeth, to St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.
Deglow, Kari M., to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.
Feuerstahler, Joyce D., to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee
Glowicki, Shaun E., to Lord of Life, Northglenn, Colo.
Horton, Jacqueline I., to Trinity, Kiel, Wis.
Koniar, Erika A., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee
Liesener, Jonathan M., to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
Makinen, Robert R., to Christ, West Salem, Wis.
McNeill, Timothy A., to St. Philip, Milwaukee
Mielke, Crystal M., to Little Lambs, Fort Collins, Colo.
Murphy, Jodi L., to Trinity, Brillion, Wis.
Nelson, David L., to Salem, Milwaukee
Pacl, Dianne M., to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.
Schwall, Lynn, to St. John, Bay City, Mich.
Skorzewski, Janinne, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee

Voigt, Dawn, to Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Wolle, Rhoda S., to Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Milwaukee

Correction

Erik J. Nelson did not accept the call to The Hope School (High School), Milwaukee, as reported in the August issue.

Additional assignments

Additional calls/assignments have been made since the assignment services at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College in May. To see a list for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, go to 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/.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Otsego, Mich.**—Peace Lutheran School (25). Oct. 1. Service, 4 P.M. Dinner to follow. RSVP, peace.25@hotmail.com.
Rockford, Minn.—Cross (100). Oct. 8. Services, 10:30 A.M. & 2 P.M. Dinner at noon. RSVP required, 763-477-5981.
Watertown (Richwood), Wis.—St. Mark (100). Oct. 15. Service, 10:15 A.M. Clint Burow, 920-262-0327.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Calvary (50). Oct. 22. Service, 10:30 A.M. Dinner to follow. 414-463-1397.
Casper, Wyo.—Lord Of Lords (25). Oct. 22. Service, 4 P.M. Dinner to follow. RSVP, 307-266-2166 or 307-262-7292.

COMING EVENTS

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.

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, or visit www.wels.net/jump/ctw.

Ninth Annual Run for the Prize 5K Run & Walk—hosted by Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. Oct. 21. Dave Braun, 419-365-5770, or visit www.immanuelfindlay.org.

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 visit www.ChristianLifeResources.com.

Christian Woman Today Retreat—March 23-25, 2007. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.

WELS Regional Handbell festivals—

- April 21-22, 2007. Host, St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.; site to be determined.
- April 21-22, 2007. Host, Peace, Hartford, Wis.; site, Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.
- April 14-15, 2007. Host, Salem, Loretto, Minn.; site, West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.

A concert will be held at 2 P.M., on each of the respective Sundays. Kim Pilz, kim@tomah.com, or visit www.welsbells.com.

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. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. An updated bulletin board is available at www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard.

Picture this



Victory of the Lamb, Katy, Tex., celebrated a triple baptism on Mother's Day 2006. Pictured (left to right) are Marissa Buege (born May 4) with her mom, Amy; Erin Smith (born April 21) with her mom, Emilie; and Isabel Baldazo (born April 18) with her mom, Lori. Victory of the Lamb has 84 members, seven under the age of two.

Submitted by Amy Buege

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.

LYRICS, KID STYLE!

My four-year-old granddaughter, Megan, loves to sing Bible songs, sometimes with a unique twist. "Fisherman Peter, by the sea, put your net down and follow me" became "Fisherman Peter, by the sea, get your nightgown and follow me." "A sunbeam, a sunbeam, Jesus wants me for a sunbeam," according to Megan, is "A sun screen, a sun screen, Jesus wants me for a sun screen."

*Verna Hollenbeck
Ithaca, Michigan*



Welcome families!

Here are nine ways to broadcast to families that they are welcome at your church:

- Provide a small exterior door that children can open on their own to go into church.
- Add child-size furniture to areas normally used by adults.
- Establish reserved parking spaces close to the church door for mothers with babies.
- Create a staffed drop-off zone to help families with small children into church.
- Set up changing stations in women's and men's restrooms.
- Hook up video transmission in the cry room so parents don't have to miss the service.
- Put in child-size restroom fixtures—especially sinks and drinking fountains. Or provide stools.
- Hang paintings and artwork at a child's eye level or children's artwork at an adult's eye level.
- Create a children's space with Lego tables, books, toys, and children's furniture.

These ideas are taken from the Summer 2006 issue of Sowers & Seeds, a newsletter from the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship and Parish Schools. Find this publication online at www.wels.net/jump/bps-cyd.

Quiet bags

Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis., has another idea for helping families with young children. It uses "Quiet Bags," sacks filled with books, soft toys, and other items to keep young children in church engaged and excited about coming. The bags are kept on a special rack near the entryway, and families pick one up as they enter church and return it when they leave. Designated members make sure the bags are ready to go before each service.

Taken from Sowers & Seeds, Summer 2006



TAKE OFF *your shoes*

Some Sunday mornings, I just don't feel like worshipping. No, I am not sick in bed. No, I'm not tired from watching a late-night movie. I just don't feel like worshipping. Typically, I have been rushing around getting ready for church. I forgot my object lesson for the children's sermon and had to put it together quickly. The sound system started hissing, and I had to figure out why. The elder for that morning was ill and had called while I was running through my sermon at church. Now I need to do his duties too. By the time the first people began to arrive, I was sweating.

As I came into God's presence that morning, I felt more harried than holy.

Have you come into church breathless, feeling rushed, even distracted? The kids were dilly-dallying, the cat spilled its milk all over the floor, the car wouldn't start, the traffic was heavy. So many thoughts going through our heads. So many distractions.

It's not just on Sunday. Most days are so busy they whiz past in a blur. On those days, I wonder how nice it would be to follow the Old Testament Sabbath. No work. No rush. Just take off your shoes and spend some quiet time with God.

We don't observe that kind of Sabbath rest. We have too much to do and too many places to be. Yet I wonder if we come to God too often with our shoes on—our

hearts and minds ready for action. We don't stop to listen and think.

Take off your shoes and rest

Taking off your shoes means you are coming home after a long day of work. Think of the old movies in which the man of the house comes home and exchanges his shoes for a pair of comfortable slippers. Being able to take off your shoes means being at rest and not in a rush to go somewhere else.

Wouldn't that be a healthy attitude for worship? Scripture repeatedly reminds us to wait patiently on God.

But we are very impatient people. We're born that way. When a baby wakes up in the middle of the night and is hungry, or his diaper is wet, he doesn't lie there and think, "I know Mom and Dad are tired. So I'll just wait until a more convenient time to let them know that I need something to eat or my diaper changed." No! That baby cries impatiently and continues to cry until he receives the attention he demands.

As adults we stay impatient. We honk our horns at the car in front of us if it is driving too slowly. We multitask: talk on the phone, cook dinner, tend to the dog, all the

NO TIME? TOO BUSY? TOO DISTRACTED? SOMETIMES WE NEED TO STOP, TAKE OFF OUR SHOES, AND RECONNECT WITH GOD AND HIS LOVE IN JESUS.

JOHN L. EICH

while watching TV. We're in a world of fast food, quick print, expressways, 10-minute oil changes, and microwaves.

We bring that hurry-up attitude to God's house too. A church in Florida advertises a 22-minute service. That's right. It promises that 22 minutes after the service begins, you will be dismissed. The music is fast. The prayers are quick. The sermons are only eight minutes long.

God wants us to slow down, to take off our shoes, to relax a spell, and recharge our spiritual batteries. Meditation on the Word of God can't be done quickly. As we slow down and hear the gospel, we give the Holy Spirit a chance to work on our heart with his soothing comfort. As we slow down, we have time to soak in the beauty of God's grace.

Take off your shoes and pay attention to where you're going

Shoes are a protective layer enabling us to walk anywhere without paying special attention. We simply walk over hot sidewalks and pavement in the summer and icy streets in the winter. We don't worry about the gravel or the rocks. We have shoes on. But when we're barefoot, we must pay attention to where we are walking.

When we take off our shoes, we have to pay attention to the dangers and difficulties around us. We are concerned about how to live according to the will of our holy God. Our paths follow his path, avoiding the hot temptations of sin and the cold that numbs our heart and faith. We avoid the sharp rocks of spiritual danger. People without shoes pay real attention to where they are going and on what they are treading.

They are careful to walk on the path of God's holy ground. That's not just on Sunday morning, but every day. The place upon which you are standing, the exact situation in which you find yourself, is God's holy ground. In whatever distracting and difficult situation you find yourself, there are opportunities to be his disciple and walk his path. Every place—your workplace,

your kid's messy bedroom, your grocery store—yes, every place you walk is holy ground. You can find opportunities to be disciples of Jesus and demonstrate love, kindness, faithfulness, compassion, and patience.

When we find ourselves in a situation with many distractions and difficulties, we are likely to say: "When my situation improves, then I will be able to do what I really should do—follow God's path. But not right now. Now all I can think about are these problems. God will have to wait until other things calm down." That is the time to take off our shoes and carefully follow the path

God has pointed out. Danger, pain, and misery await us if we don't.

Take off your shoes and stand before God as you are

A final thought about removing our sandals in the presence of God could be the idea that God wants us to stand before him as we are. God wants to reach out to the core of our being. Sinners might typically think that they are not good enough to touch holy ground, but

God graciously invites us to come before him.

In the story of the burning bush, Moses' bare feet—unprotected by the soles of the sandals—would be touching holy ground. Here God reinforces the idea that he is seeking our friendship and our fellowship, and we do not need to wait till we are better, more qualified, or less sinful. We can come right now, remove our sandals, and stand before him. Yes, God wants us to come as we are, not as we think we should be. He invites us to bare our souls before him. We can drop our guards, remove our masks, slow down, and enjoy the fellowship he has given us through his Son.

Once Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and made them clean. He does the same for us, every time we come into his presence. He washes us in his cleansing blood.

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

AS WE SLOW DOWN, WE HAVE TIME TO SOAK IN THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S GRACE.

AFTER MY FATHER WAS MURDERED, I TURNED TO

Do you think of joy when you consider the word “forgiveness?” Maybe not. But in my life, joy and forgiveness are linked, even though forgiveness continues to be a work in progress.

My story begins on June 8, 1974—the day my father, Ruben Borchardt, married my mother, Susan Manthie.

I was born a year later. My brother Chuck came along in 1977.

On Feb. 10, 1979, my brother and I were with a babysitter while my father worked on our basement. My mom came home from work to take the sitter home. My parents argued because my mom bought a garbage can. Soon after my mom pulled out of the driveway, there was a fatal crash. The crash took the life of my mom and my unborn brother. I was only three and a half years old.

Eight months later my father married my stepmother, Diane. She became the only mother that I knew. My dad told me that in the beginning she was loving and accepting of me and my brother. However she was not accepting of my father’s previous marriage. She constantly tried to destroy any memories or reminders of my mother.

In 1980 Diane gave birth to my sister, Regen. Chuck and I were pushed aside. She also became impatient with us. My first memory of physical abuse

happened after I woke up my baby sister by talking in my sleep. I remember Diane pulling me from my bed and beating me.

The instances of abuse became more frequent, and her anger grew as did her paranoia concerning my dead mother. Although she seemed to lose interest in me, she was still insistent that I know her as my only mother. This became my reality. It wasn’t until I was eight that I was told about my birth mother’s accident.

Other instances of abuse weren’t so apparent. She would cut my hair so short I looked like a boy. She would make me eat things that would make me physically sick. She didn’t allow me to participate in activities my biological mother once enjoyed. Still Diane was my mom, and I loved her.

Things were also deteriorating between my dad and Diane. Besides the abuse and tension, there were rumors of infidelity on both of their parts.

Finally in November of 1993, when I was 18, my dad told Diane that he wanted a divorce. Their relationship became one of extreme bitterness and anger, and Diane’s behavior became unpredictable. My dad perceived her to be a ticking bomb.

The days that followed now seem like a blur, but three events stick in my mind.

In January 1994, I remember my mom taking my friend and me out for lunch and telling me that “if she couldn’t have him no one else could.”

Then, in February, my dad took me to my mom’s grave. He told me that Diane had threatened to leave him several times. He tried to make the marriage work, but he became fearful of her. He even hid money for Chuck and me should something happen.

In late March, I drove Dad to his final court hearing for the divorce. When he returned to the truck, I noticed that he had been crying. He said that he had seen hate in Diane’s eyes and knew that she wouldn’t let things end. We prayed together—the last time I remember praying with my dad.

On April 3, 1994, my dad rose early to get ready for Easter Sunrise service. As he started to climb the stairs, he was shot in the chest. When he turned to flee, he was shot again in the back. The assailants, unknown to us at the time, were three young boys ages 13, 14, and 15, whom Diane, a teacher’s aide at the local high school, had hired. Dad died before he got to the hospital. It was Easter Sunday morning, and all I kept thinking was that I was supposed to be at church with my dad and brother—not being considered a suspect in my dad’s murder.

I don’t remember all of the explicit details of the following months, even

The joy of

GOD FOR PEACE AND HELP WITH FORGIVENESS.

years. My brother and I sat through lie detector testing, long hours of questioning by lawyers and detectives, four jury selections, trials, and sentencings. We had so many emotions run through us. Sadness, shock, and horror when they arrested our stepmother and the three boys. Grief that all three of the boys had their lives changed forever. And then the rejection from our mom—the only mother that we knew. There was no joy to be found.

All of these things could have affected me in different ways. I could have chosen to be angry at everything. I could have closed up into a ball. I could have ignored it all and not felt anything. But instead I turned to God for peace.

We all have choices in our lives. We don't always make the right ones, but when we ask God to guide us we can guarantee that he will help us. In order to heal I first needed to choose to forgive my enemies—my stepmother and the three boys. I have struggled and wrestled most with God about forgiving my stepmother. For years I held a grudge and have even dreamt of revenge.

But God continuously brings me messages of forgiveness. Jesus spoke these words, "You have heard that it was said, eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an

evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:38,39).

Now I am finally finding peace. My feelings of hate and revenge have diminished, and, for the first time in a long time, I feel free from my own emotions. My husband and three children are proof that God answers prayers, that he is always with you and never leaves you.

I'm even working to reconnect with my mom. We have written to each other, and I have tried to see her in prison. Am I looking for a renewed relationship with her? At one point I thought I needed that in order to forgive her. Through the Scriptures and advice of my brothers and sisters in Christ, I have realized that forgiveness at times is a one-sided event. Because my mother continues to maintain that she is innocent, I have realized that I will probably never get the "I am sorry" that I was looking for. But I still need to forgive her.

So how do you even begin to find forgiveness, let alone joy in forgiving? When I think about how Jesus came to this earth to be ridiculed and cursed, spat at and whipped, tortured by the devil himself, and in the end crucified and died for me—how can I second guess forgiveness? How can anyone who believes in him not forgive others? Jesus gave me a second (and third, fourth,

fifth, and sixth) chance. Why shouldn't I do the same?

Jesus says, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14). How can we not find joy in that message? After all of the horrible things I have done in my life, Jesus died for me, and because of him I am forgiven. He is my true joy in forgiveness!

Brook Hilber is a preschool teacher at St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

For the unedited version of Brook's story, go to www.forwardinchrist.net.



Brook and her husband, Scott.



Brook and her brother Chuck with their birthparents a year before their mother's death.

forgiveness

BROOK HILBER



Carl R. Jung

Harvest-home

In the Midwest, October is the time for the harvest. Huge combines sweep through the fields, depositing their golden, ripe treasures in gravity wagons or trucks. Juicy, red apples are plucked from the bending branches of orchards. And many a field or roadside garden market gleam orange with pumpkins. The harvest is in!

It's just the way God foretold it: "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest . . . will never cease" (Genesis 8:22). And so, responding to those reassuring words, are the words of a Thanksgiving hymn: "Come, you thankful people, come; raise the song of harvest-home" (*Christian Worship* 613:1). Richly and daily God provides for our bodily needs. The fall harvest is just one example of his providential care for all of us.

But the fall harvest can also be a picture of the end of the world. The same Thanksgiving hymn has these words: "Even so, Lord, quickly come to your final harvest-home" (CW 613:4).

The McCormick reaper was one of the early harvesters for ripened grain. The "grim reaper," pictured as a cloaked skeleton holding a scythe, is the personification of death, reaping humans at the end of life.

In Luther's day people were obsessed with thoughts about death. All Saints Eve, or "hallowed eve" (Oct. 31), became a futile search for some relic from the past to bring relief from future judgment

Instead Luther turned people's attention to the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He pointed mortals to the words about God's justification of the sinner, not to ghosts from the past. Thanks to the perfect merits of Christ, thanks to his substitutionary death, sinners like you and me can stand pardoned and at peace before God.

But God's justification of the sinner was not limited to just some. "He died for all," the Scriptures affirm. And so justification

turns a Christian outward, trusting God rather than himself and seeing all human beings as the recipients of God's mercy. And any and every child of God, Luther taught, in accord with the Scriptures, becomes one of God's harvesters, preparing people for the final harvest-home.

That's confirmed by Jesus' words: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37,38).

While we often apply these words when we are encouraging prayers for more church workers, there is a more direct application, one that includes us all. The commentator on this section in the People's Bible writes: "We surely are willing to let [God] make us the answer to our own prayers."

Luther calls this the "priesthood of all believers." Our "ordination" into this priestly office occurred at conversion and our baptism, where God made us his dear children. Our "Call" is given to us in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Our message is a simple, two-part, law-gospel sermon: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

This harvest season, when you bite into a crisp, delicious apple or a tasty piece of pumpkin pie, thankfully remember God's temporal providence. But remember, too, God's eternal, gracious provisions in Jesus, your Savior, that prepare you for God's final harvest-home. Thankful for sharing in God's double harvest, may we delight in sharing this good news. Let's rejoice in our God-given mission: Every member a missionary!

“Don’t tell me what I can’t do!” These words were spoken by John Locke, a character on the TV series *Lost*, after he’d been denied participating in a wild game hunt in Australia because he couldn’t walk. Dejected by the limitations imposed on him, he wheeled himself onto a plane that would fly him back to America. But when the plane crashed, Locke discovered he could walk again. Locke, an intense skeptic after being conned by his own father, now becomes a believer in miracles.

Do you believe in miracles?

In Acts 3:1-10, we learn of a man who was crippled from birth and forced to beg every day at the gate to the temple courts. His despair was evident as he refused to lift his eyes even to look at the passers-by. Any hope of being healed had long ago faded.

We are not immune to experiencing dejection and even despair in our lives. When the doctor gives us a bad health report, for example, we may put up a brave front: “Don’t tell me what I can’t do!” But inside we are hurting and growing more skeptical as we realize how hopelessly limited we are. Only a miracle could help us. But who really believes in miracles anymore?

Walking by faith

“Look at us!” (v. 4), Peter said to the lame man. The man looked

at Peter. But Peter knew he hadn’t set the man’s sights high enough. Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (v. 6). Peter directed the man to see Jesus Christ as the source of hope and miracles.

THE HOLY SPIRIT NUDGES OUR DOWNCAST SOULS HEAVENWARD AS HE REVEALS TO US IN SCRIPTURE THE MIRACULOUS POWER OF JESUS.

The Holy Spirit nudges our downcast souls heavenward as he reveals to us in Scripture the miraculous power of Jesus. “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1,2).

Don’t try to tell Jesus what he can’t do! Mourners laughed at him when he asserted he could raise Jairus’ daughter

from death to life. But he did it. His own disciples didn’t think he could feed 5,000 people. But he did. No one thought he could destroy the temple of his body and raise it up in three days. But he did.

Don’t tell Jesus what he can’t do! Don’t think for a moment that he cannot turn your dejection into celebration. Don’t think he is limited in the scope of the hope he offers you. Lift up your eyes to the Son of God and be filled with wonder and amazement as he performs miracles beyond imagining: restoring life to souls long dead in sins, creating hope in a limitless life in heaven for those so limited on earth, and even turning our graves into gateways to paradise.

“When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him” (v. 9,10).

Look up to Jesus. He will make you a believer in miracles!

Contributing editor Philip Kieselhorst is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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

Next month: Lost in fear

LOST IN DESPAIR

PHILIP L. KIESELHORST

LOOK UP TO JESUS. HE WILL MAKE YOU A BELIEVER IN MIRACLES!



No guilt?

No one is responsible. No one does anything wrong. At least that's the way it seems sometimes. Humans have the pervasive tendency to avoid guilt. We have created a wide range of strategies to maintain our innocence and shift guilt and responsibility away from ourselves. Even Billy Joel sings of being an innocent man.

The strategies began early, when as children we tried to hide what we did wrong. We hoped no one would notice that we broke Grandma's vase if we hid it somewhere out of sight. Of course, when discovered, we played dumb. We didn't know how it happened or who did it. Our sinful nature has learned to use the strategy whenever we think it will succeed. Yet we have a sense of guilt that lingers long after we have escaped responsibility and possible punishment. Our consciences gnaw away.

We've developed a couple of strategies to avoid the voice of conscience too. We tell ourselves that our mistakes were not intentional; they were simply flaws or temporary lapses. A woman caught embezzling thousands had a weakness in an otherwise kind and good personality. The man given to fits of rage blames his drinking. He claims that he's not guilty when his rage inflicts pain on his wife, children, or neighbors.

We even point the finger at other people who are far worse. We tell ourselves that our little faults are not as bad as those of others. We ease our consciences and try to avoid guilt. We hide in plain sight because we do not murder, injure, defraud, or steal like others. Perhaps we even suggest that everyone else is doing exactly what we are doing, so it can't be wrong. We've all been there, following the crowd so we don't lose our status or risk disapproval.

How many other strategies are there? Too many to list. All the strategies only

avoid guilt and shift responsibility for human flaws and mistakes—sins. Such dodging remains a pervasive and persistent effort of our natural human nature. We even avoid the word "sin" so we do not bruise our self-esteem or offend anyone.

When God's law shines a bright, harsh light on our behavior, we have tried these strategies and added one more. We get angry and resist any accusation. We protest our innocence like the child accused of breaking Grandma's vase. Not only do we vehemently assert our innocence, but we also lash out at anyone who would accuse us of wrongdoing. "How dare you accuse me?" we protest. Our sinful nature readily makes such a protest even to God, and certainly to any human who would dare to say, "You're guilty."

When we come to church, as Lutherans, the first thing we do is confess our sins. It does not surprise me that some strangers resist our services. They are uncomfortable with so much emphasis on sin. Often they don't get past the sin part. They're still employing strategies to avoid sin. Unfortunately they tune out before they hear about forgiveness. Some have even adopted another strategy. They classify churchgoing people as stiff moral hypocrites. That helps them to avoid facing their own flaws. It's saying, "How dare you accuse me, you hypocrite?"

But going to church is about forgiveness—Christ's forgiveness of every sinner there. Yes, we do confess our sins—first thing—but then also as a matter of first importance we hear that our sins have been forgiven because Christ has paid for them by his suffering and death. God has cleansed us of our sins. Then and only then can we understand what it means to be not guilty.



A letter of hope

Randy K. Hunter

Text summary

Peter ended the previous section by describing Christians as people who “live according to God.” He goes on to illustrate what that kind of life looks like.

And it’s different. When God changes our hearts, he changes our attitudes and actions as well. He gives us power to change the way we live. Try these on for size: clear minded, self-controlled, loving, hospitable, serving. It may not impress everyone around you, but it will bring a smile to God’s face. Peter also describes God’s grace as arriving in various forms. The Bible normally reserves the word “grace” to describe God’s undeserved love for sinners by sending us a substitute in his own Son. But there are times, like here, when grace refers also to special gifts God gives his children to enjoy and use in this life. Giving money, for instance, is called a grace. Speaking and serving is called a grace. Those two categories encompass much of what we do in the church. Some are gifted to speak. Some to serve. Some for both. All of us, though, do all we do to praise God.

Scripture to read: 1 Peter 4:7-11

Questions for personal study

- Peter writes, “The end of all things is near” (v. 7). Make a mental list of things that can help you remember that daily.
- Treating others with love honors God. The best way we can thank God for our forgiveness is by forgiving those who sin against us. Whom do you need to forgive? Ask God to help you forgive him/her today.
- Hospitality doesn’t have to be extravagant. Make a plan to be hospitable to someone this week.
- Ministry is a two-way street. We serve others. Others serve us. Thank God for your opportunities to serve. Write a note or make a phone call to thank someone who serves you.

Questions for group study

- “Be clear minded.” Describe things that aren’t wrong but can tend to clutter our minds and distract us from God.
- Peter connects two things: “Be self-controlled so that you can pray.” Explain how a lack of self-control hinders prayer.

- Some churches list their pastor by name, “John Smith: pastor,” and then list “Ministers: all members.” Evaluate this practice.
- Make a list of 10 antonyms (opposite words) for hospitality. Discuss what you learn about hospitality from them.
- Peter reminds those who speak for God to make sure that they accurately reflect what God says. The difficulty is that no false prophet would ever tell you, “I’m about to misrepresent God.” Believers need to be able to tell the difference between truth and lies. What helps you determine if someone is accurately speaking God’s message?

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

*This is the 10th article in a 12-part Bible study. Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.forwardinchrist.net, and click on **A letter of hope**. Answers and tips for parents with small children will be available online after Oct. 5.*



A CLEAR CHOICE

A Christian in the Amazon jungle makes a stand based on God's promises.

Terry L. Schultz

The native evangelist Maravi is a rather short, thin man who can pull giant fish out of the Amazon river. He is timid and usually talks quietly like so many isolated, deep-jungle dwelling natives. A former animist who dabbled in the shamanic arts, Maravi became a Christian who loved to share the Word.

Maravi lives with his wife, Lucha, and their four small children in a thatch-roof home about a half-hour walk from the village of Parinari. He built a cluster of dwellings for his entire extended family, which includes his two married daughters and their families.

Maravi's firstborn is 18-year-old Gloria. She and her husband, Nilo, live only a few feet away in the thatch-roof dwelling Nilo and Maravi constructed together, the home where Gloria gave birth to Maravi's first grandchild last year.

The jungle fever

The Amazon jungle takes a mighty toll every year among the natives with illnesses like malaria, yellow fever, hepatitis, parasites, and a host of deadly tropical diseases that are simply referred to as "jungle fever." Maravi and family were greatly alarmed when Gloria began exhibiting the unmistakable symptoms of a fatal jungle fever.

In one day, Gloria stopped eating altogether, while the deadly fever grew hotter. Maravi and the family devoted themselves to hours of nonstop prayer on her behalf. But Gloria's condition kept deteriorating. She survived the night, but the next morning she still refused to eat anything.

To some family members, the family's prayer vigil did not seem to make any difference. Desperate to save Gloria, Nilo asked Maravi for permission to take Gloria downriver to Yurimaguas, to the most famous, powerful shaman in the region, renown for his healing powers. As patriarch of the tribal family, Maravi had the final say in the matter.

Maravi refused! He knew that God forbade any involvement with the supernatural, magical arts. Nilo, a new Christian, was stunned by Maravi's refusal. "Consulting a shaman did not deny the true God," Nilo pleaded, "but the shaman's healing plants could help save her."

Maravi tried to explain the simple facts: you don't just receive medicine when you visit a shaman. You also get the magical incantations that supposedly give the medicines their extraordinary power. Supernatural forces are always summoned by the shamans. "Exactly," thought Nilo, "so what was the problem?"

Now, besides his own anguish at Gloria's condition, Maravi had to defend his decision not to go to the healing shaman.

Gloria went two days without food and hardly any water. The questions grew more insistent: What harm could be done by going to the shaman? Why just pray and wait? Why not do everything to save his daughter? Even his dear wife pleaded with him to make the trip to the shaman.

Trust in God, not magic

But there in Parinari, Maravi made his stand. It was like Abraham sacrificing Isaac. Maravi was willing to sacrifice his beloved daughter before he would disobey God. All night long Maravi prayed beside his motionless daughter. No one supported him.

On the third day an exhausted Maravi nodded off around dawn. When he awoke, he saw that Gloria's breathing and color seemed a little better! By afternoon she was sitting up and eating. God had saved her!

And Maravi? What a witness before his entire family and the entire village! A week later, I asked him about the illness and the intense pressure. In his quiet, humble voice, Maravi stated that he never felt he had any choice in the matter; he clearly knew that God does not permit shamanism. Maravi then uncharacteristically looked me straight in the eye and said: "Besides, I knew I would be with Gloria again in paradise." What a breathtaking faith in God!

Terry Schultz is an Evangelical Lutheran Synod missionary who proclaims the gospel to tribes in the upper Amazon river basin.

Read an extended version of this story at www.forwardinchrist.net.

Photos from left to right: National Pastor Ronal, Lay Leader Maravi, Missionary Terry Schultz, and Jungle Guide Jose; Gloria and her baby; Maravi's extended family.