

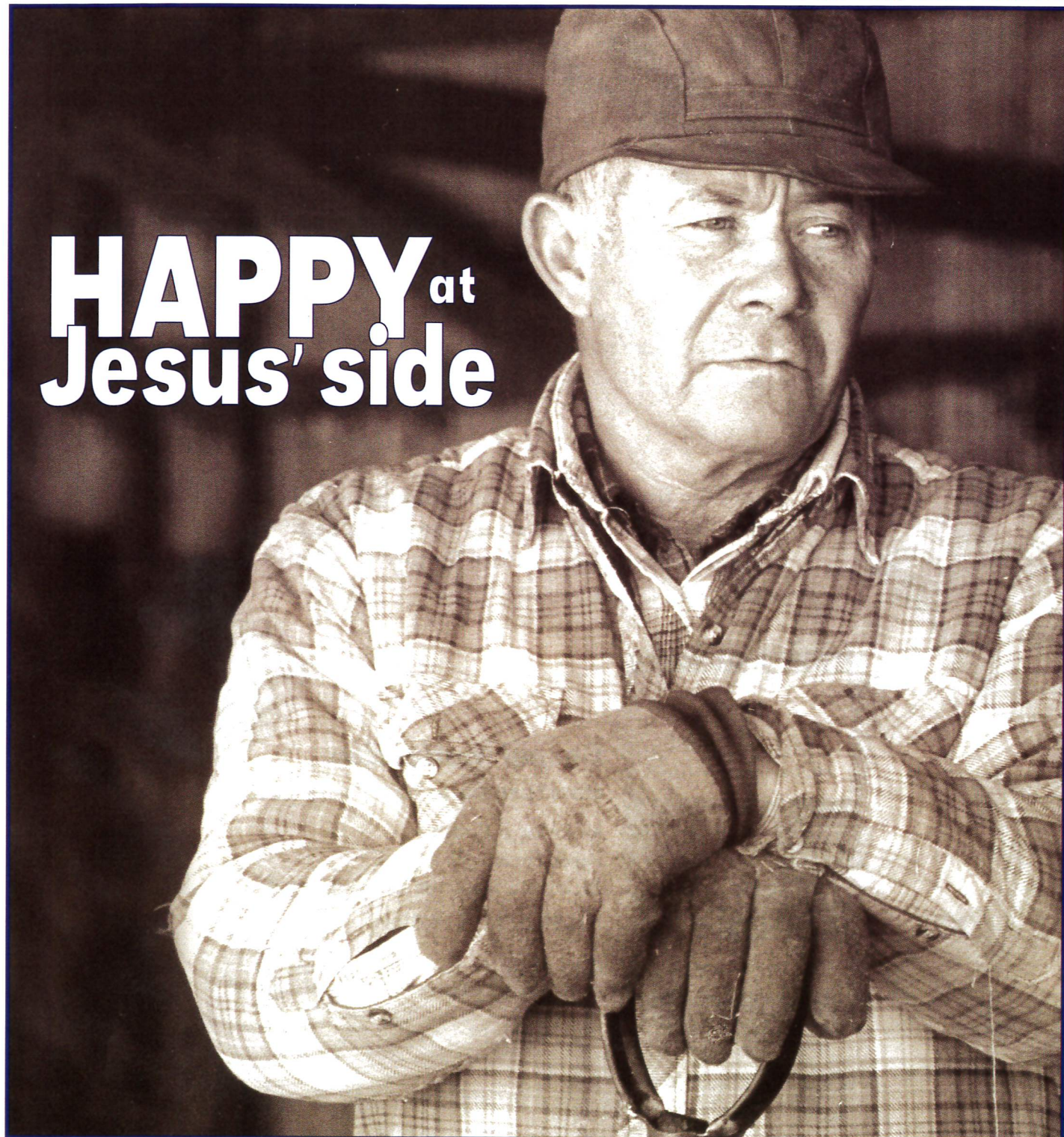
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AUGUST 2007

Forward in Christ

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HAPPY at
Jesus' side



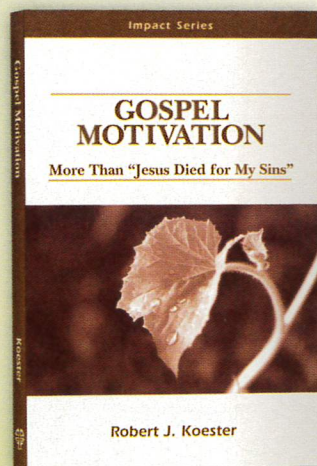


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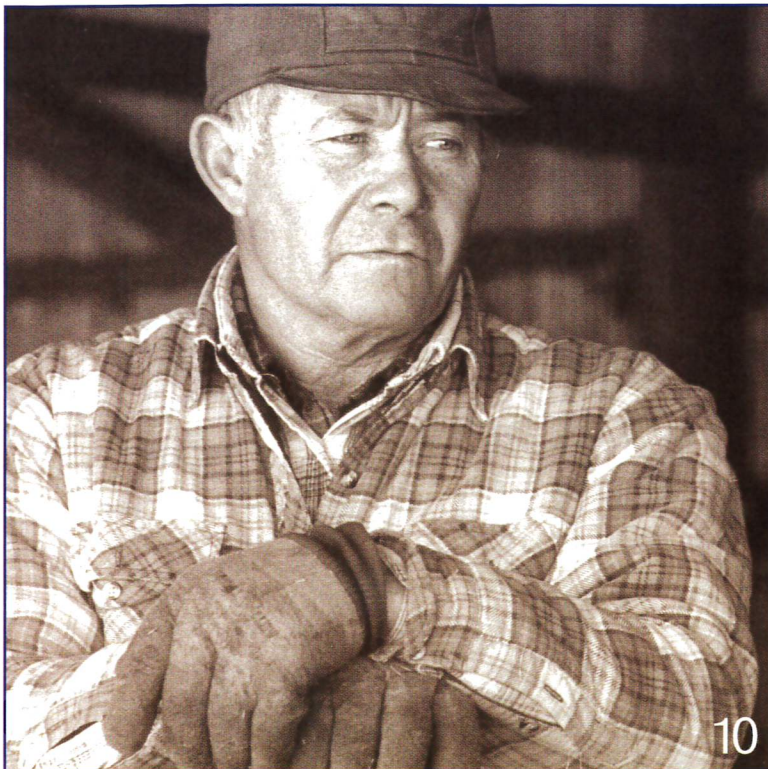
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“Grandpa can’t hang on to God anymore, so Jesus picks him up and is carrying him the rest of the way home.”



DEBBIE NAHRGANG



Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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Introducing Fifth Pew from the Front's

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PART 1 AND 2

The popular Fifth Pew from the Front series continues with the release of the episodes *Weather or Not Part 1 & 2*. Thanks to the support of the WELS Committee on Relief, each WELS congregation will be receiving a complimentary copy of this two-part program in August.

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Rev. Philip Schupmann
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FIFTH PEW *from the* **FRONT**

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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AUGUST

WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

For the past 14 years, President Karl Gurgel has been adding his personal touch to *Forward in Christ* through his editorial column. Though the topics were varied, his columns all showed his love for his Lord and God's love for us.

This month is no different. In "Person to person" (p. 36), Gurgel shares memories from his life that demonstrate how God prepared him for the ministry as well as gave him opportunities to proclaim the gospel.

This will be Gurgel's last article as synod president. He has decided to decline nomination to serve for another term and has accepted a call to Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong. It is fitting that his last article contains a mission-minded message, because his love and concern for the souls of others is obvious to all who know him. We thank Pres. Gurgel for his service and for his insights throughout the years. Our prayer is for God's richest blessings to him and his family wherever the Lord will take them.

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

I read with interest the letters by Katrina Meinel, Jan Kolva, and Charmaine Greanya. [Nov. 2006, Feb., and Apr.] concerning Christian education and schools. I attended parochial schools, and I wanted the same for my children. They attended our school and went on to the synodical schools—two becoming teachers and one a pastor.

I never worried during those years what sort of friends they would “get mixed up with” or what might draw them away from the straight and narrow. The friends they made throughout those years are lifelong, as they are all involved in the ministry in some form or another. How can one go wrong hearing and studying God’s Word every day? In this world of anti-Christ, they really need a friend in Jesus to guide them along life’s way. They won’t find that in schools where they are not even allowed to carry a Bible or a catechism to school!

My son, who is a pastor in Florida, recently remarked that Christian education was the best gift we could’ve given them. We struggled financially during those years with two in the system most of the time, but the money always seemed to “be there.” I have never regretted money spent on their education or “sending them away so young”—it has paid off many times over. The Lord does and will provide.

*Lois Pederson
Zumbrota, Minnesota*

LUTHERANISM

I agree with the writer who believes our churches need Martin Luther’s teachings to be restored to modern biblical sermons [Apr.]. Today’s evangelical churches and televangelists attract great crowds who want charisma/music and personal psychology, promoting man’s pride and supporting it with a Spirit-filled outpouring. People are thriving on

man’s doctrines, books, and DVDs, all supported with a heavy dose of out-of-context Scripture used improperly to support false prophesying and teaching. Everyone seems to believe they can decide to accept Christ when they think it is to their benefit. The “Sinner’s Prayer” ends almost every program on TV, and according to a recent Barbara Walters special, 90 percent of people surveyed think they are going to heaven. The false teachers rake in millions of dollars, while true biblical teachings such as what WELS teaches are struggling for survival.

The truth appears to be that people are hearing some of the Word, but they neither understand it nor can they discern what is true from what is false. Almost anything presented as religious is accepted as truth, particularly if it is promoted by a popular and often times untrained evangelist. Most listeners consider themselves students of the Word, “born again Christians,” and think they are saved no matter what they do or if they ever pick up a Bible.

Luther recognized that justification is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, a gift of God. This teaching is nearly lost to all but some Lutherans today. [Martin Luther’s] matured teachings need to be brought forward and spread in our churches once again. [Luther’s 1531 (1535) commentary on Paul’s letter to the Galatians] is a good starter. It belongs on the *NY Times* best seller list!

Don Gretel

BLANKENHORN AND FATHERS

It was interesting to read of David Blankenhorn in the article, “Fathers” [June]. Many WELS teachers heard him speak about the importance of fathers at a convention several years ago. In addition to being the founder of the Institute for American Values in New York, he is the author of *Growing Up In A Fatherless Society*.

Although the Bible was not one of the textbooks used in his studies at Harvard, he was deeply influenced by the book, *Calling God Father*.

At the convention, Dr. Blankenhorn said, “I am always somewhat surprised when Christian groups like yourselves ask me to speak about the importance of fathers because you have THE BOOK!” Following a moment of silence, there was a burst of applause as we all acknowledged the truth of his words.

*Trudy Madetzke
Marshall, Minnesota*

PRISON MINISTRY

The WELS News Briefs [June] for the Commission on Special Ministries only scratched the surface of the depth of God’s work provided through WELS Prison Ministry to help inmates like myself grow in Christ. Their ministry goes way beyond providing the Bibles and Bible correspondence courses listed. One example is the monthly service with sermon that they provide. These sermons may appear insignificant to someone outside of prison, but they are priceless to inmates like me, who live where no Lutheran worship service or fellowship is available.

I am one of the fortunate few to have a lasting spiritual relationship with a WELS pen pal who has stayed with me and supported my spiritual well-being with her letters and encouragement.

I know I speak for other inmates in extending my gratitude and expressing my appreciation to everyone who volunteers their time to WELS Prison Ministry and wish to thank those whose contribution make their efforts possible.

Name withheld

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*.

Your life is over

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

Peter A. Panitzke

One of my favorite lines in a wedding sermon is to tell the groom, "Your life is over." It always gets a few chuckles. Then I explain that this new husband in his wedding vow commits to sacrificing himself for his wife just like Christ sacrificed himself for the church. He promises no longer to make decisions based solely on what is good for his life. He has the call to live and act in a way that benefits his wife and their marriage.

We all died

Paul said the same thing about himself: "My life is over." Paul died on Good Friday. We all did. "[Christ] died for all, and therefore all died."

First of all, that gives every Christian a reason to breathe a sigh of relief. As long as we are alive, we face the sentence of death. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). We were like the criminal on death row, waiting for the inevitable.

But the sentence of death has already been carried out. In God's sight when Jesus died, we all died. Justice has been satisfied. We don't have to live in fear of the sentence of death anymore.

We now live for Christ

But if we died, then our lives are over. "He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." The life we once called "ours" belongs to Christ.

Like the husband who is to live for his wife, so we are to live for Christ.

That affects everything we do and think. What will you do with your time today? It isn't your time. It belongs to Jesus. Christ's love for us compels us to ask, "Jesus, how do you want me to use your time today?"

What talents do you have? Paul would say, "None!" They all belong to Jesus. So we ask Jesus, "How do you want me to use your talents and abilities in your service today?"

How much money do you have? None! It all belongs to Jesus, not just the tithe, or 10 percent, that God commanded his Old Testament people to give. That means we need to ask Jesus, "It is your money. How do you want me to divide it? What percentage do you want to give to spreading the news of your death and resurrection? What portion should go towards the purchase of a car, or a home, or entertainment?"

Some couples keep separate checking accounts. But in our relationship with Jesus, there are no separate accounts. It all belongs to Jesus. My life is over. Jesus lives in me.

As I finish this article, the guilt is weighing heavily on my shoulders. How often have I forgotten that this is Jesus' life?

Allow me one more comparison



to a marriage. Sometimes a man and woman will postpone marriage because one or both want to pay off their personal debts first. But in our relationship with Jesus, he only unites himself with people who recognize they have an unpayable debt of guilt.

So are you guilty? No! Jesus paid the punishment of death. And just as Jesus rose from the dead, he has raised you to a new life. His life. Enjoy living Jesus' life.

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

Bread and directions

Thomas J. Jeske

Traveling through a foreign country carries with it a certain level of stress. You are different. People look at you. Or they don't look at you. Simple duties become a struggle. Buying bread. Asking directions. Navigating a train schedule. Finding a post office or even a restroom. The tension is a ready reminder that you are far from home.

Sometimes you just have to take out that navy-blue passport, look at the gold-stamped eagle, and remind yourself, "That is who I am. There is such a place as home."

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (Matthew 6:31,32).

Who is it that runs after food, drink, and clothes? Pagans. "Pagan" means someone who does not know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. A pagan has no higher goals than feeding his body and dressing his body. This is his home. He or she knows no other. Have you met any pagans? Do you work with any? Do you live with any?

An extended stay in a foreign country taught me some things about myself. When far from home I am very conscious about money. Many times each day I will ask, "How much does this cost?" I double-check the currency in my wallet. On the train, I mentally rehearse the steps that the bank would require before they entrust me with more money.

My anxiety reminds me that I was born a pagan. Sometimes I still think like one. I think the affairs of life—what I eat, drink, wear, and the house I live in—are the only things that matter. The inventory of my things easily becomes the measure of my personal happiness. This pagan perspective is common, but it is not right.

When I am far from home I am also very conscious about my passport. Simply stated, my ID means the difference between continuing the journey or halting in frustration.

"Seek first [God's] kingdom . . . and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

The King's great gift is righteousness, that is, to be right with him. God's approval comes only through faith in his Son.

I am grateful that it was pagans that Jesus summoned to faith. His call changed them into learners and followers. It means I'm called from being a pagan to being an alien here in this world. To remember that I possess righteousness because of Jesus, well, that's like taking out my passport. To make sure of my ID is to possess the one gift before which my stress and worry and tension fade away.

Part of our—and all Christians'—worldview is that we are away from home. Our citizenship is in heaven.

All heaven's blessings underwrite the lives of Christians, wherever in the world we are at the moment. Experience teaches that whether in an airport or hospital, at an interstate rest stop, or in a college campus or nursing home, we will be like pagans. The questions of "What shall we eat? Drink? Wear?" will pick at us. Part of our—and all Christians'—worldview

is that we are away from home. Our citizenship is in heaven.

One day, stranger, you will be home. But today you are traveling through a foreign country, and you sense it acutely.

So check your passport, Christian. Because of Jesus, your heavenly Father has already given you citizenship in his kingdom. Will he refuse, forget, or fail to give you bread and directions?

Contributing editor Tom Jeske is pastor at Living Hope, Omaha, Nebraska.



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Sins of ignorance

Can I lose my salvation if I don't repent of sins that I'm not aware that I committed?

As if the number of our sins we do recognize isn't large enough, it's astounding to consider that there are many more we don't even realize we commit. Such is the result of living with a sinful heart. Jeremiah understood. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

There are probably two chief areas in which these "sins of ignorance" are hidden from our eyes. The first are sins hidden from us because we don't know Scripture well enough. After reading some passage of Scripture, who of us hasn't suddenly become aware of a sin of heart and life with a clarity previously hidden?

Sins may also be hidden from us because we are unaware of the impact our words and actions have on others around us. At times our words and actions, perhaps innocent enough to us, may have hurt another or caused them to stumble in their faith. All the while we may be clueless about how what we said or did hurt them.

When it comes to being ignorant of our sins, such ignorance is not bliss. Sin, whether known or unknown, is never strengthening to faith—ours or others'. Sin is always at work—whether we realize it or not—to destroy faith.

Certainly persisting in sins of which we are aware brings the most immediate danger of falling from faith. Yet even sins of which we are unaware can have a cancerous effect on faith.

That's why we join David in this humbling confession: "Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12). That is the same encouragement Martin Luther gives as he writes about confession in the Small Catechism. "Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer." As we run to Christ's cross with

that burden of guilt, it's comforting to know that "the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). That "all sin" from which Christ purifies us includes not only sins of which we are aware, but also those hidden from our eyes.

But as we rejoice in forgiveness, even for sins of ignorance, it would be spiritually dangerous to wish such ignorance to continue. We can be thankful when a brother or sister in Christ (or even an unbeliever!) makes us aware that we have sinned against her/him or someone else. At first it may hurt to learn of a sin we hadn't seen. But when we see our sin, we then seek forgiveness from the one our words or actions have wounded. As much as it is in our power, we don't want our sin to remain a stumbling block to that person.

Removing such blinders of ignorance is also one reason we study Scripture. Through his law in Scripture, God reveals to us the depths of our sinful hearts in ways we often had not seen before. That leads us to flee from that sin to God's boundless grace. Such repentance further frustrates Satan's plans to use that sin to bring harm either to our faith or to the faith of others. It also opens our eyes even more to the depth of this glorious reality: "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20).

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

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

It was my 25th birthday. My boss laughed as I lamented that I was halfway to halfway to 100—and my, that’s so old! I was recalling my last birthday when two good friends showed up and proudly presented me with a pineapple and a balloon bouquet—rationalizing that it wouldn’t be appropriate to bring me flowers since I work at a flower shop. When the office phone rang for the umpteenth time that afternoon, I picked it up with my usual, “Garden Gate. This is Laura. How can I help you?”

“Is this the birthday girl?” my mom asked. When I confirmed that I was, she wished me a very happy birthday . . . and said that she also needed to tell me that my grandpa was celebrating his first birthday in heaven. He had died earlier that day.

We had known Grandpa’s time was coming soon. He had been ill for the greater part of my life. Now he was

himself again—happy at Jesus’ side. As I finished out the workday and spent the evening on the phone receiving birthday wishes, I couldn’t help but hope that the years of life ahead of me would pass quickly so that I could meet Grandpa again in heaven.

In 1997 I wrote this for a high school composition class:

My grandparents’ farm was one of my favorite places in the world. There were always plenty of cousins with whom to get into mischief. We’d chase farm cats through the hayloft and jump into the bins of cotton seed. I was amazed by the bravery of my cousins ducking under the barbed-wire fences into the cow pasture and disgusted when they let the baby calves suck their fists! I remember when one of my cousins, attempting to jump over the manure pit, ended up down in it, looking and smelling as bad as the cow pies into which Grandpa threatened to drop us.

Grandpa was the best part of the farm. He was built into it—belonged

there. I loved to watch him do his chores in his manure-covered boots and seed company caps. I never could tell when he was serious and when he was joking because he blended the two so well. I recall one year when he had me convinced that we were going to skip Christmas presents! He always made sure we grandkids got our rightful birthday spankings.

The best thing about Grandpa, though, was his diet—both physical and spiritual. He loved Jesus, and it showed. Even as a busy farmer he never missed a Sunday of feeding on the Bread of Life in church. Next to Jesus he loved ice cream. And he made sure his grandkids shared his desire for both. There wasn’t a day that went by that we didn’t see Jesus’ love radiating from our grandpa. And not a single night passed when ice cream wasn’t served before bed.

Every time my family visited the farm, things were the same. Grandpa was always a joker and welcomed us at the door. But nothing on this side

I remember Grandpa

Our most vivid memories are happy times with family, especially grandparents. How they live their faith in Jesus is one bright, warm memory they leave behind.

Laura E. Warmuth



of heaven ever stays the same. Not even grandpas.

When I was around nine years old, something about Grandpa changed. I didn't notice. My mom noticed, though. Grandpa was no longer the dad she knew. He used to be very sharp and clever, but now things always slipped his mind. It crept up on him, hardly noticeably. To me, he was still the same playful grandfather, so the changes nudged my heart without warning.

Grandpa had Alzheimer's disease. How could that be? He was mine. He would always be there for me. That would never, could never, wasn't supposed to ever change. He was a constant in my life.

I didn't see it at the time, but all the changes going on inside Grandpa's head actually allowed my same old grandpa to show through to me. A paradox. While his mind slowly worsened, the things that made him dear to me remained the same. It has been eight years since we found out about his Alzheimer's. My memories are of roughhousing and teasing and ice cream and spankings. These things remain a part of him. Sometimes I wish that, as I've grown and matured, I'd have had the chance to grow in my relationship with my grandfather too. But God has used his disease to let me keep my childhood relationship with him. When we're together, I am still seven years old, being teased by my loving grandpa.

Each time my family visits, Grandpa is a little worse. While he still greets us at the door, it hurts a little when he doesn't know

my name. I still know he loves me, though. He doesn't need all his intelligence to give me a hug, to tell me I'm pretty, or to notice my new nail polish color.

The one thing that frightens me, though, is his diet. Sure, he still has his daily dose of ice cream, but what about his faith? If he can't follow a television program or a conversation, how can he follow a sermon? He

the mood of the room or a TV program. And while he couldn't maneuver kitchen utensils, he never forgot what to do with an ice cream cone.

We feel blessed that Grandpa never became violent and could stay home with my grandma until his time. While his mind and motor skills deteriorated, his playful spirit still impacted our family. Perhaps God allowed this disease to remind us

Grandpa was the best part of the farm. . . . The best thing about Grandpa, though, was his diet—both physical and spiritual.

gets frustrated when he goes to church, yet it's encouraging that he comes home whistling hymn tunes.

My family's comfort is that God takes care of his children. Little babies can't comprehend the Word, but the Holy Spirit still works faith in them. Maybe that's how it is with Grandpa too. He can't hang on to God anymore, so Jesus picks him up and is carrying him the rest of the way home. Jesus is a constant in Grandpa's life, just as Grandpa is a constant in mine.

In the years since I wrote that, my family learned to hang on to the little things that gave Grandpa his identity. We weren't sure he understood our conversations, but he'd interject in appropriate places. His facial expressions and even tears or laughter showed that he could sense

that there is more to life than knowledge and work. Or maybe it was to teach a lesson in love through my grandma's constant devotion and strength. "In sickness and in health" and "till death do us part" mean ever so much to me after watching her care for him with such love for the better part of my life.

At Grandpa's funeral, I served ice cream with my sisters and cousins. I'll always treasure the stories guests shared with us as they lingered, licking their spoons clean. Grandpa was a constant blessing to their lives as well as mine. I look forward to my birthday in heaven when I can get to know him all over again.

Laura Warmuth is a staff writer for Forward in Christ.

"Salt to taste." It's a common instruction found on recipe cards.

In many churches, it's also a common approach to variety in worship. The message of the pastor's sermon is the main course, but the rest of the weekly service is designed to be little more than a sprinkling of sanctified seasoning. There are wake-up songs for the beginning of the service. Quiet, calming music settles over the congregation when it's time to pray.



Proclaim sin and grace

Confessional Lutherans don't tend to look at worship from this point of view. Every Christian is a priest in God's eyes. This has implications for our role in weekly worship. In Lutheran worship every member is a preacher, the nave is a pulpit, and the entire service is the congregation's sermon. Together we preach it in our songs

and prayers. We preach it indirectly through our called pastors and musicians. But all of it is the congregation's sermon on sin and grace, from prelude to postlude.

Is worship variety a matter of preaching, or is it a matter of salting to taste? That's a distinction worth thinking about.

Once, in a church I was visiting, I heard a musical offertory that was based on the "flying feather" theme from the end of the movie *Forrest Gump*. In terms of a personal thank offering, nobody could question the musician's decision. But if the music of worship is a part of the congregation's sermon, the message the people were proclaiming at that moment was: "Life is like a box of chocolates."



Study the text for the day

The philosophy behind our worship affects not just our musical choices, but also our texts, our prayers, and even the path of worship we choose to follow.

If we're looking for healthy worship variety, we are wise to prepare for worship the way a preacher prepares his sermon.

A good preacher begins by studying his sermon's Bible text.

If the preacher's main goal was to be eloquent or charming, he wouldn't need to study. He would also soon learn that his sermons all sound kind of the same.

But a good preacher knows that the love of God in Christ is like a multi-faceted jewel. Which facet will he preach this week? The answer lies in his text. Before he writes a word of his sermon, he lets that living Word of Christ dwell richly in him. He does this out of Christian love for his people.

Healthy worship

- A pound of sermon
- A handful of hymns
- A spoonful of Bible readings
- Five ounces of liturgy
- One offertory
- A pinch of prayers

Blend all ingredients carefully.



Salt to taste?

Chefs don't pick and choose ingredients and hope everything turns out. They use recipes that carefully blend the right ingredients for good tasting food. Healthy worship is also a wonderful blend.

Jon F. Zabell



Blend it all together

One of the easiest ways for a church musician to add variety to worship is to pick a likable Christian song and plug it into the church calendar on a convenient day. That's not wrong, but there's a more loving way to offer variety for the congregation's sermon.

Like a sermon text, each Sunday of the Christian church year is designed to be unique. It draws its theme from the gospel for the day. Once you know the text, you can help the congregation preach their sermon.

How about a musical prelude that offers the people an appetizing whiff of the hymn they'll soon be singing? Maybe some of your gifted singers can lead the rest of the congregation in a special setting of the selected psalm. Can you find an anthem that reinforces the message of the day's gospel?

There are dozens of other ideas like these and countless musical and textual settings from which to choose.

Pastors can encourage this kind of thoughtful variety by sharing their weekly sermon texts and hymn suggestions with musicians and other worship planners well in advance.



Listen to the "expert"

In this consumer-driven society, we are used to thinking of ourselves as customers. It can be challenging for Christians to remember that when it comes to worship, we all share a unique priestly role. This means that worship is not like anything else in this world.

Experts in performance may be able to help us learn how to keep a crowd's attention. Experts in education can show us how different people learn in different ways. We can learn something from experts like these.

But there are no secular experts on the kind of communication that happens in worship, because nothing in the secular world compares. Where else does the universal priesthood regularly gather to be fed by Word and sacrament and to preach a sermon to each other in story and song?

The only real "expert" is the past worship experience of the gathered Christian church. A congregation that is interested in more than the "salt shaker" approach to worship variety is wise to listen to what that expert has to say.

It's called the liturgy.

The more you study it, the more you can appreciate the gospel content of the weekly sermons Christ's Church has been preaching in public worship for almost 2,000 years.

You may also be surprised to discover just how much room for healthy variety is already built into this historic pattern.

That's the thinking behind a new WELS worship resource. *Christian Worship: Supplement* is scheduled to be published next summer. It will offer a rich variety of new hymns, services, psalm settings, and devotions. At the same time, the book aims to remind our people

that they are preachers, and to give their gospel proclamation an authentic voice.



Know your congregation's voice

It's hard to recognize someone if they are trying to adopt someone else's voice. We grow suspicious and question the person's sincerity. We may even doubt the message we hear. Their true voice removes

questions and helps us listen.

Can we import a "salt to taste" form of worship and infuse it with Lutheran content? We have Christian freedom to do so. But will people in the pew have a hard time accepting it as the main course? Will it distort the congregation's voice and message making it difficult to recognize?

Regardless of how you answer those questions, don't let the worship variety in your congregation be simply a matter of majority opinion. Help to make it a matter of ongoing study. When it comes to worship, the experience of the church is the best consultant you will ever find.

As in any area of Christian freedom, worship variety has little to do with personal taste or preference. It has much more to do with love and putting God's gifts to good use. Along with giving the members of your congregation the privilege of proclaiming the gospel in worship, God has blessed them with abundant and varied gifts to accomplish the task.

Which of those gifts are appropriate for use in public worship? And how can we best use our own gifts for the benefit of our fellow members? When you think about worship variety, don't think seasoning. Think sermon.

Then, in church, when you sing, speak, pray, and listen, you can better appreciate the green pastures of your risen and ascended Good Shepherd, who traded his life to give you his all-forgiving love. This is the food you need. This is also the sermon God has called you to preach!

Jon Zabell is pastor at St. Paul, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

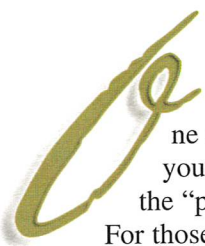
When you think about worship variety, don't think seasoning. **THINK SERMON.**



GOD'S *beautiful* PAINTING

Life comes in gloomy gray and vibrant yellow. But both colors are needed to paint the big picture God has in store for us.

Ned H. Goede



One of the crowning achievements of my youth was completing a painting using the “paint-by-number” method.

For those of us who grew up in the 1960s, we remember the paint-by-number kits as being standard gifts at most birthday or holiday celebrations. The concept behind these kits was basic. A picture was divided into sections. Then the same number was assigned to all sections that needed to be painted the same color. The idea was to paint all the “ones” with blue and let them dry, then all the “twos” with yellow and let them dry. You continued this way until all the numbered sections were painted. The resulting masterpiece was a stunning painting of Lassie on a hillside, sailboats on lakes, the forest in wintertime, or something similar.

IMPATIENCE AND FRUSTRATION

The problem for me was my impatience and lack of understanding regarding “looking at the big picture.”

I dutifully would begin a new picture by painting all the “ones” the appropriate correlating color. Then the “twos.” By the time I got to “threes,” I was getting a little restless. Somehow I just couldn’t see how Lassie was going to be created this way. So I stopped the paint-all-the-ones-first method and just started painting from bottom to top or side to side or whatever way I thought would get Lassie to develop the fastest.

Inevitably, I created such a mess that Lassie looked like an amoeba with fur. The entire painting either became yet another unfinished

masterpiece placed in my junk drawer or got tossed in the trash.

BIRCH TREES IN THE WIND

One time, though, I actually completed a painting. It was called "Birch Trees in the Wind."

I had contracted one of those nasty childhood diseases of that era, which put me in bed for a week, quarantined from my siblings. After two hours I was bored to tears and making life miserable for my mother. In desperation she threw a you-know-what at me and said, "Paint."

Since I knew I had a week to kill, I decided to take my time and follow the directions. That meant painting one color at a time. When I got to the "threes," I was ready to revert back to old form, but I decided I would do it right this time. Even when the browns and grays came along and I didn't know how they would ever help to make the vibrant, colorful painting on the cover of the kit, I still followed the directions.

By the time I reached the "eights," I saw how this painting was actually going to all come together. When I painted my last "ten," my young mind understood the importance of browns and grays in a painting as well as the need to follow the master plan developed by the producers of the paint-by-number kits. They knew what they were doing. Besides that, I also had painted a beautiful landscape.

My mother purchased a wooden frame for it from the local dime store, framed it, then presented it to my beloved grandmother who nailed this artistic jewel to her bedroom wall. There it stayed until she died.

LEARNING THE LESSON

In a sense, God's people are living "paint-by-number" creations. Our lives are a canvas created by an all-knowing and all-loving God. We know that if we submit to his will, allowing him to carry out his purpose for us in our lives, the finished product will be beautiful, pleasing to God

and others, and exactly right for us.

The problem is our impatience. Just like that young boy who couldn't see how the "ones" and "fives" would fit together to make something pleasing and good, God's people sometimes don't want to submit to the will of our Lord. We want to take charge of our lives.

**WE NEED TO
REALIZE WE
CAN'T SEE THE
BIG PICTURE
OF OUR LIVES,
BUT WE KNOW
THAT OUR
LORD DOES.**

We chafe when the Lord is filling our lives with grays, often seeking ungodly ways of getting through these times or creating artificial yellows and reds. We narrow our focus to see the here and now rather than visualizing the big picture. We scorn the directions the Lord gives us in his Word, instead developing our own directions and creating our own painting.

But as God's people, we need to realize that our lives will experience grays as well as reds. We need to understand that the grays are not punishment from a vengeful God, but acts of love from a gracious Lord. We need to fight off our sinful desire to resist God's will for us, instead working hard to submit to his will and receive with thanksgiving the events placed in our lives. We patiently need to work through the grays, leaning on Jesus for support and guidance. We need to delight in the wonderful yellow periods of our lives. We need to realize we can't see the big picture of our lives, but we know that our Lord does. We need to trust God when he tells us that all things work to those who love Christ.

A LESSON FOR YOUNG AND OLD

As difficult as it is for mature Christians to believe this and live this, it is even more a struggle for our youth. Adolescence is a time when one's focus is narrow. Feelings are extreme, and events are monumental. Yellows are dazzlingly bright, and grays are gloomier than a dreary winter day. The Lord gives parents a challenging, but vital, opportunity to help their children place their lives into God's hands and to accept the events placed into their lives by God. Parents and adolescents can work together to create the finished, beautiful handiwork of the Lord.

So patiently help young people overcome their impatience. Encourage them to avoid the tendency to create their own directions for living, and, instead, to follow God's directions found in his Word. It's not an easy lesson for anyone. The hard part is to accept that lesson for yourself. Then you can model an attitude of cheerful acceptance and thanksgiving for all the Lord places in your life—good and not so good.

Easier said than done? Indeed! Love for Christ and love for our children, however, compels us to work constantly at living a life that says, "Lord, my times are in your hands."

May we live each day in the knowledge that it was created for us by our Master Planner. May we live in reverence of our Lord, allowing his will to be carried out in us and through us. That way, whether gray, green, or yellow, it is another day lived for him and a day of blessing for us.

And after all the days are finished, we can look back and see the big picture God has painted with our lives.

Ned Goede, the principal at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a member at Atonement, Milwaukee.

Jesus was BAPTIZED

Jesus had no personal sins stuck in the nooks and crannies of his life.
But the water of Jesus' baptism was still connected to sin—ours!

Eric S. Hartzell

John 3:16 is maybe the most famous of Bible passages. Wouldn't you agree?

But maybe that isn't right. Maybe Matthew 3:16 should be that dearest and most easily remembered of all Bible passages. It could well be the one closest to our hearts. It is in Matthew 3:16 that we read three gigantic words in Jesus' life: "Jesus was baptized." Matthew and Luke tell us the story of Christmas. But Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all speak about the baptism of Jesus.

Baptism is important to Jesus and to us

The emphasis by all four gospels should tell us that our God wants us to think of Baptism as incredibly important.

It was important to Jesus. He wanted to be baptized. John the Baptist applied the water and the promise "... to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). The water of Jesus' baptism didn't splash away his sins like it does ours. Jesus had no personal sins stuck in the nooks and crannies of his life. But the water of Jesus' baptism was still connected to sin—ours! John the Baptist said at the same Jordan River and at the time of Jesus' baptism, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

It is not important how the water was applied to Jesus that day when he was baptized. God doesn't tell us. Jesus could have been immersed. That is one of the ways the Greek word *baptidzo* is used. John could have used a shell or cup to pour the water on Jesus' head. Christian art and Christian symbolism choose the shell as a representation of Baptism. According to the Greek word, washing and sprinkling are other words connected to the application of water. The Bible connects all these pictures of the application of the water to Baptism. What is important is not how the water was applied but that it was applied. Luther said it this way in the Small Catechism, "Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word."

Baptism was important because God's Spirit was so active there. John the Baptist saw this at the Jordan River when he baptized Jesus. He said, "I would not have known [Jesus], except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit'" (John 1:33). Paul told the young man Titus about this Holy Spirit in Baptism when he wrote, "[The Father] saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5,6). And to Nicodemus, the very man who heard John 3:16 the first time, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5).

Baptism pleased God. It caused God to say to his son Jesus so that all could hear, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). This audible pleasure of God at Jesus' baptism is still heard at every baptism. To the little boy baptized, God says, "This is my son." And to the little girl, God says, "This is my daughter." God is pleased and happy to have everyone who is baptized in his family. He personally assures each one of that fact with the water and the Word in Baptism.

Baptism forgives sins

AV in the computer world stands for "anti-virus." Wicked and evil people delight in getting your computer infected with their viruses. You don't even understand how it all happens or what happens. It just makes your computer sick. Its glassy eye goes blank in death. So you put AV software in it. It is someone else's program and idea. You don't understand how it works (at least most of us don't). You just know that it works. And it delights you when you come back to your desk and find that your AV protection has checked through your files and has identified and isolated infection. It's as though your software has the infection in a vault! It can and will completely eradicate the evil. You just have to smile when you think about it. The little cursor of life is blinking happily again.

In some ways Baptism is like God's AV protection in our lives. The psalmist said, "Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12). Baptism is God's program, his design. "Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away,"

Ananias told Saul (Acts 22:16). God promises, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Who can understand how it works? Water applied with thin black words from a Bible's page? God's Spirit is there. Adoption papers are there, signed by God himself. God's covenant and promise are there. Sin is scrubbed away, washed away . . . splashed away. Sin is contained, isolated, taken care of. Health and renewal and joy are effervescing byproducts of Baptism.

Martin Luther understood this importance of Baptism. He took the devil to his baptism for daily drowning. It comforted him to hold the devil's evil and accusing head under the water until every last bubble of accusation and blame stopped rising. He understood Baptism to mean "that the old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die" (Luther's Small Catechism). He reminded himself daily of God's unfailing AV protection in Baptism. And so can we.

Matthew 3:16 says it: "Jesus was baptized."

Those three words set the stage for those three most important of words for us too: We were baptized! The treasure is ours to have and to hold.

Eric Hartzell is pastor at Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas.

Read more about Baptism in Baptism: My Adoption into God's Family, an NPH publication written by Gaylin Schmeling. Find a related Bible study on this topic after Aug. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16,17

WHATEVER

Letting go

We find comfort in the people who love us, but relationships change. Only God remains a friend forever.

Jennifer Beth

Many people say that losing a loved one is the hardest thing to overcome. My story doesn't really involve totally losing a loved one, but it does involve the process of letting go. People grow up and leave our lives, things change, and only with God's help can we truly cope with our problems.

My sister has always been my role model, best friend, and the one I go to for help. She's always been there for me and helped me through my rough times. However, a few summers ago was my last summer with her.

At the beginning of the new school year we had to go our separate ways. She graduated and went off to college and I was still stuck at home with what seemed to be no one. I felt so alone at first that I didn't know what to do. It seemed like I had no one to talk to or share secrets with, to giggle with about the stupidest things, and sometimes just to sit there and do absolutely nothing. I felt so alone, and I didn't know what was going to happen without my sister by my side.

The last night she was at our house, my sister and I talked like normal, but we both knew that she would be leaving the next day. We shared all the latest gossip, watched our favorite Disney movies, and tried to do just about everything we could to make it seem like a regular night. But we both knew that the next day would change our lives forever.

My sister would be starting a new chapter in her life. I would not be a part of the new things and situations she would be experiencing. I knew growing up meant moving on and experiencing new things, but I didn't want things to change between my sister and me.

After she left, I would just sit in her bedroom wondering what to do. It all had happened so fast. One night we went to bed like usual and then when I got

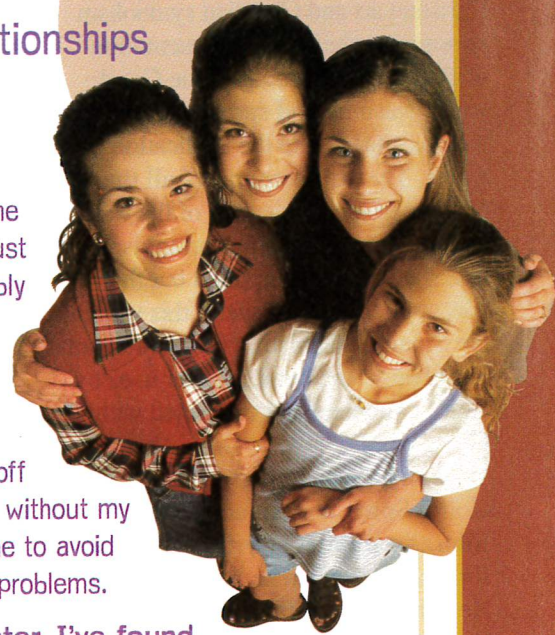
back from school the next day she was just plain gone. I probably wouldn't see her for quite a few months. That night I felt so alone and vulnerable—so cut off in such a big world without my big sister to help me to avoid stumbling over my problems.

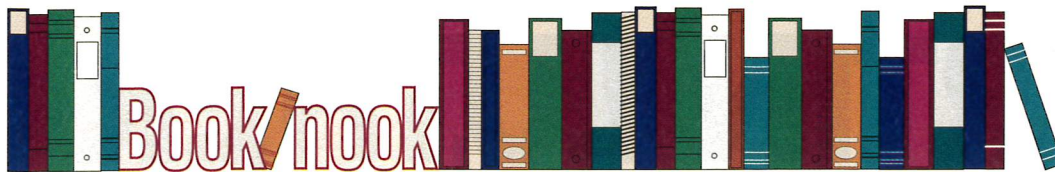
A few months later, I've found that, although the first few weeks were hard, I shouldn't be upset. I know that even though she's farther away, my sister still loves me as much as she did before, and I can still communicate with her over the phone and on the Internet. It may have taken a while, but I finally adjusted.

There are still going to be times in my life that I will feel alone. There will be times when I will need someone to be with me but they can't be. And there will be times when people let me down. But I can always trust that God won't ever leave me or let me down. He will be with me, through thick and thin.

It took me awhile to realize that the true comfort is with God. He will always be there to comfort me, guide me, and listen to my problems. No matter what, God won't move away and leave you. He will always have an open ear, listening to whatever is troubling you at any second of your life. While family members and friends are comforting and helpful, God is our true comfort and help.

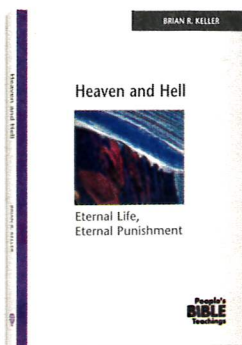
Jennifer Beth, a junior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member at Our Redeemer, Madison, Wisconsin.





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

Death, heaven, and hell



\$14.99

Pastor Brian Keller uses biblical support and solid theology to answer a full range of questions on these topics, exposing errors in today's popular thinking and beliefs.

The stark reality of hell is affirmed when questions like "Can we be certain there is a hell?" and "Is there really fire in hell?" and "How can a loving God send anyone to hell?" are tackled. Chapters on heaven explore

In a world constantly fed by Hollywood's spin, *Heaven and Hell—Eternal Life, Eternal Punishment* reminds us that God's truth is sorely missing. The book begins by defining death both physically and spiritually and rapidly moves into hot topics like reincarnation, near-death experiences, life support, euthanasia, and universalism (doesn't everyone get to heaven eventually?).

questions like "Will we recognize each other?" and "Will there be animals there?" The discussion on funerals and burials could be referred to when death brings up painful questions and sound guidance is needed.

Bible passages in a few areas are cited repetitively making some parts lengthy to read, but the subject index can be used to locate topics easily. Quotes from *Christian Worship* hymns make the book slightly more suited to a WELS reader, but comprehensive coverage of so many questions about eternal life and eternal punishment make it valuable for anyone to read.

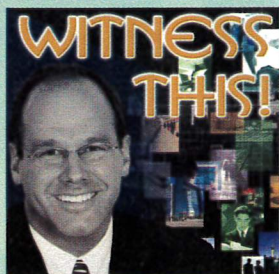
Most importantly, *Heaven and Hell* will help equip and motivate believers to share the Bible's answers to serious questions with an unbelieving world. As a Christian, I was grateful for the reminder, "It is loving to warn of hell and tell of heaven."

Robyn Smith
Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah

DISCOVER WHAT'S NEW ON Streams

Podcasts to listen to on WELS' Internet media network.

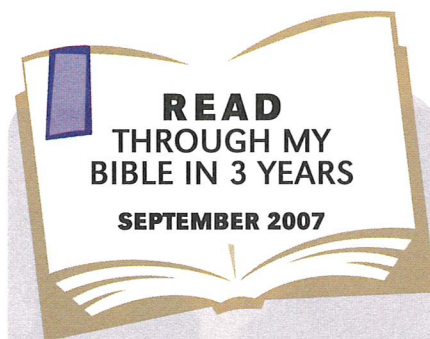
- **Witness This:** Do you ever feel alone as a Christian in this world?



See how ordinary Christian laypeople live and share their faith in everyday life. Current offerings include WELS Communications Director Joel Hochmuth interviewing a Christian biologist about the challenges of evolution on his Bible beliefs, a woman about sharing her faith in the workplace, and more.

- **Through my Bible:** Do you run out of time for your daily Bible reading? Hear Pastor David Witte read a section from the Scriptures. A new reading will be posted every day.
- **Sermons:** Do you need a midweek boost from the Word? Download and listen to a wide variety of sermons from WELS pastors around the country. Gospel Gems, devotions presented at past synod conventions, are also available.

<http://streams.wels.net>



1. James 1:19-27	16.1 Chron. 22:2-19
2. Jas. 2:1-13	17.1 Chron. 23, 24
3. Jas. 2:14-26	18.1 Chron. 25-27
4. Jas. 3	19.1 Chron. 28
5. Jas. 4	20.1 Chron. 29
6. Jas. 5	21. Psalm 107:1-32
7. 1 Chronicles 1-9	22. Ps. 107:33-43
8. 1 Chron. 10, 11	23. Ps. 108
9. 1 Chron. 12	24. Ps. 109
10. 1 Chron. 13, 14	25. Ps. 110
11. 1 Chron. 15:1-16:6	26. Ps. 111, 112
12. 1 Chron. 16:7-43	27. Ps. 113, 114
13. 1 Chron. 17	28. Ps. 115
14. 1 Chron. 18-20	29. Ps. 116
15. 1 Chron. 21:1-22:1	30. Ps. 117, 118

MARTIN LUTHER College graduates

One hundred seventy-one people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 19. One hundred twenty-five were in the teacher track or the staff ministry program. Forty-six completed the preseminary program.



Kimberly J. Aaberg ★
Stanton, Neb.



Lincoln A. Albrecht ■
West Bend, Wis.



Andrew M. Bare ●
Owosso, Mich.



Caitlin R. Bare ●
Lake Geneva, Wis.



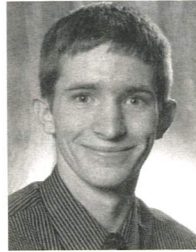
Julie A. Becker ●
Phoenix, Ariz.



Jennifer R. Bertoni ●
Watertown, Wis.



Emily F. Bey ●
Crete, Ill.



Zachary M. Biebert ●
Neillsville, Wis.



Kyle D. Bitter ■
Rochester, Minn.



Joshua M. Bodden ▲
New Ulm, Minn.



Anna C. Bourman ●
Rochester, Minn.



Paul A. Bowe ■
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



Emily A. Buck ◆
New Ulm, Minn.



Jessica L. Burmeister ●
Phoenix, Ariz.



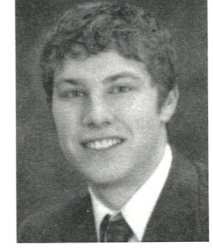
Joel R. Carlovsky ◆
Crystal Lake, Ill.



Timothy S. Denney ■
Appleton, Wis.



Sarah M. Detro ●
Madison, Wis.



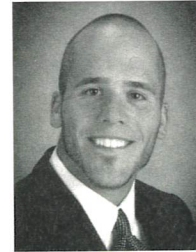
Jeffrey D. Dolan ◆
New Ulm, Minn.



David M. Duncan ●
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



Amanda M. Dunn ●
Southlake, Tex.



Philip D. Eich ●
Alma, Mich.



Dawn M. Emmer ●
Hartland, Wis.



Jordan P. Ertl ■
Watertown, Wis.



Carrie K. Ewings ●
DeForest, Wis.

■ Bachelor of Arts
▲ Seminary Certification Program
● Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Secondary Education



Christopher R. Ewings ■
DeForest, Wis.



Julianne Foelske ★
Concord, Wis.



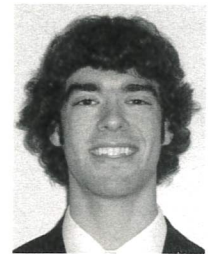
Rachel A. Foelske ●
Manitowoc, Wis.



Joel D. Free ■
Rapid City, S.D.



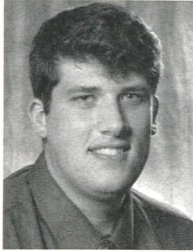
Adam M. Frey ◆
New Carlisle, Ohio



David A. Frey ■
Belleville, Mich.



Kathryn M. Fuerstenau ●
Germantown, Wis.



Jonathan K. Gaulke ◆
Watertown, Wis.



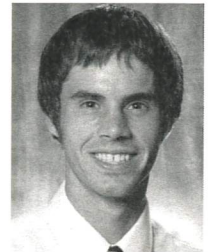
Benjamin P. Gentz ■
Juneau, Wis.



Elizabeth J. Glodowski ◆
Fountain City, Wis.



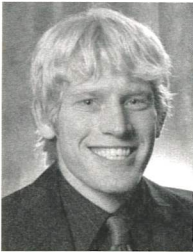
Harland H. Goetzinger III ■
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



Joseph R. Greefkes ●
Jackson, Wis.



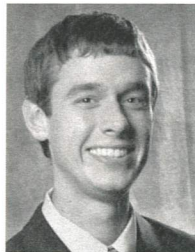
Elizabeth A. Greenlee ●
Baton Rouge, La.



Alexander F. Groth ■
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Timothy D. Grundmeier ■
Houston, Tex.



Peter F. Hagen ■
Appleton, Wis.



Stephanie M. Hanneman ●
Arlington, Minn.



Joshua J. Hanson ■
Portland, Ore.



Adam A. Harvey ●
Maplewood, Minn.



Amy L. Hein ●
La Crosse, Wis.



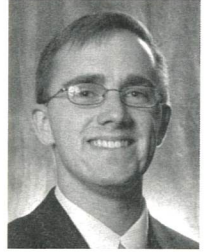
Rossi-Kay Henchen ●
Neillsville, Wis.



Rebecca E. Hering ●
Grafton, Wis.



Noah J. Herrmann ■
Sheboygan, Wis.



Preston T. Heuer ■
Watertown, Wis.



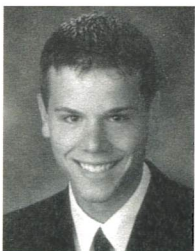
Brandon J. Hinrichs ■
Geneva, Neb.



Chelsey A. Hintz ●
Delavan, Wis.



Timothy R. Hochmuth ●
Watertown, Wis.



Benjamin J. Hoff ●
Livonia, Mich.



Jacob C. Holm ■
Kewaskum, Wis.



Ryan P. Holper ◆
Onalaska, Wis.

★ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Early Childhood Education
◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
● Staff Ministry Certification Program



Naomi M. Horn ●
Mazepa, Minn.



Amanda K. Hosbach ●
Hartford, Wis.



Sarah E. Howell ●
Saginaw, Mich.



Grant P. Hultman ■
Lenexa, Kan.



Jessica L. Hupalo ●
Bellevue, Fla.



Peter A. Iles ◆
Lake Mills, Wis.



Jennifer M. Italiano ◆
Sodus, Mich.



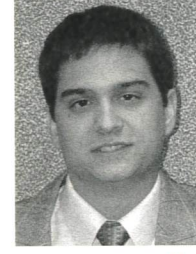
Seth M. Jaeger ◆
Johnson Creek, Wis.



Jessica L. Janke ●
Modesto, Calif.



Jennifer A. Joecks ●
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



Jesse K. Johnston ■
Lecanto, Fla.



Brittany A. Kavalaukas ●
Kenosha, Wis.



Erika J. Kehl ●
Milwaukee, Wis.



Cheryl A. Kern ●
Twin Lakes, Wis.



Philip P. Kiecker ■
Watertown, Wis.



Rachel L. Kionka ●
Concord, Wis.



Amanda C. Klindworth ●
Lake City, Minn.



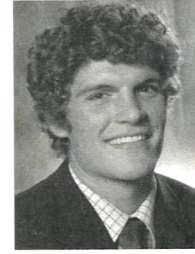
Sara E. Knuth ★
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Danielle L. Kramer ●
Sleepy Eye, Minn.



Joshua M. Krieger ■
Tecumseh, Mich.



Caleb J. Kurbis ■
Tacoma, Wash.



Erin E. Laetsch ●
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Rebekah S. Langebartels ●
Inlay City, Mich.



Michelle L. Lecker ●
Greenville, Wis.



Angela J. Leinberger ◆
Papillion, Neb.



Joanna L. Lescher ★
Bellevue, Wash.



Jonathon T. Lindloff ■
Watertown, Wis.



Matthew M. Linton ◆
Watertown, Wis.



Jonathan P. Loescher ■
Jackson, Wis.



April M. Lorenz ★
Watertown, Wis.

■ Bachelor of Arts
▲ Seminary Certification Program
● Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Secondary Education



Rachel M. Luehring ●
Lake Mills, Wis.



Kristin J. Mantey ★
Port Orchard, Wash.



Sara E. Marggraf ●
Delano, Minn.



Erika L. Martin ★
Arlington, Ohio



Matthew R. Matzke ●
Manitowoc, Wis.



Jennifer A. Mehlberg ★
West Bend, Wis.



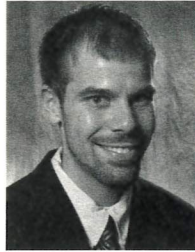
Kelly G. Mellgren ●
Lake City, Minn.



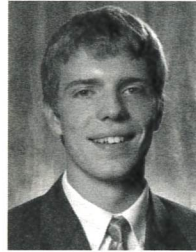
Audrey M. Metzger ●
Livonia, Mich.



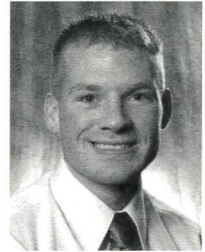
Rachel A. Meyer ●
Milwaukee, Wis.



Paul M. Micheel ■
New Ulm, Minn.



Thomas M. Moldenhauer ■
Watertown, Wis.



Christopher S. Mueller ●
Watertown, Wis.



Jenni L. Mueller ●
Livermore, Calif.



Katie L. Myers ●
Watertown, S.D.



Bethany M. Nagel ●
Watertown, Wis.



Marques J. Nelson ■
Winona, Minn.



Aaron A. Nitz ■
Slades Corners, Wis.



Rachel A. Nottling ●
Fox Lake, Wis.



Matthew P. Nowak ■
Munith, Mich.



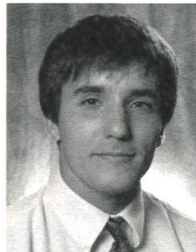
Andrea L. Oppermann ◆
Jefferson, Wis.



Matthew D. Oppermann ●
West Bend, Wis.



Adrienne R. Osmus ●
Thornton, Colo.



Benjamin R. Pagel ●
Moline, Ill.



Susan Pappathopoulos ◆
Two Rivers, Wis.



Erik A. Parsons ◆
Montrose, Colo.



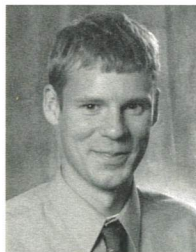
Ashley J. Peil ◆
Midland, Mich.



Sheila R. Pottorff *
New Ulm, Minn.



Jennifer L. Proeber ●
Frankville, Wis.



Kevin A. Proeber Jr. ◆
Janesville, Wis.



Aaron T. Punke ●
Milwaukee, Wis.

★ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Early Childhood Education
◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
* Staff Ministry Certification Program



Benjamin J. Raddatz ●
Ripon, Wis.



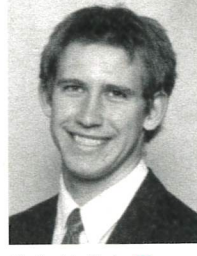
Nicholas R. Raith ◆
Beaver Dam, Wis.



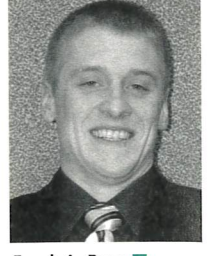
Nicole M. Richmond ◆
Leslie, Mich.



Lisa J. Rick ●
La Valle, Wis.



Colin M. Rieke ■
La Crosse, Wis.



Frank A. Rose ■
Eden, Wis.



Bethany L. Rossman ●
West Salem, Wis.



James D. Saatkamp ■
Milwaukee, Wis.



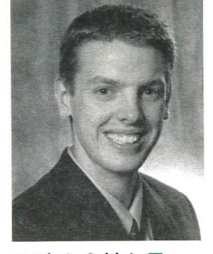
Newlin T. Schafer ■
Allegan, Mich.



Amanda L. Schaffer ●
Oakley, Mich.



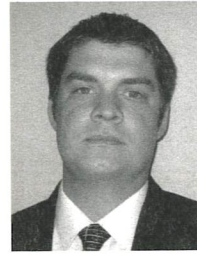
Sarah A. Schaub ◆
Alma, Wis.



Keith A. Schleis ■
Green Bay, Wis.



Sarah B. Schlicht ●
Black Creek, Wis.



Brian J. Schmidt ■
Brownsville, Wis.



Stephen A. Schmiel ■
Egg Harbor, Wis.



Rebekah L. Schmill ●
Manitowoc, Wis.



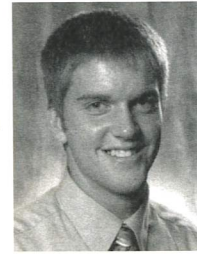
Faith H. Schmitzer ●
Jenera, Ohio



Erika R. Schreiner ●
Hemlock, Mich.



Gina L. Schumann ●
Prior Lake, Minn.



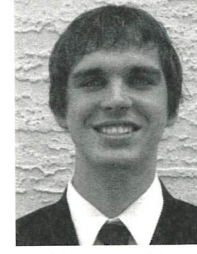
Phillip P. Scriver ●
Kansasville, Wis.



Sarah A. Seelow ●
Port Huron, Mich.



Lorien S. Siegler ●
Manitowoc, Wis.



David J. Sigris ■
Westerville, Ohio



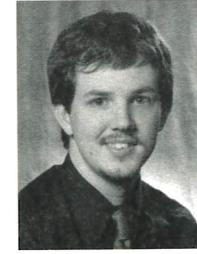
Amanda N. Smith ●
Westland, Mich.



Michael J. Smith ◆
Zumbrota, Minn.



Jamie L. Spielbauer ●
Appleton, Wis.



Benjamin D. Springer ◆
Aurora, Colo.



Hannah I. Stahl ●
Winneconne, Wis.



Katherine J. Sternberg ●
Rhineland, Wis.

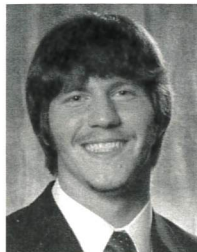


Heidi A. Stillman ●
Helenville, Wis.

■ Bachelor of Arts
▲ Seminary Certification Program
● Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Secondary Education



Emily L. Sting ●
Pigeon, Mich.



Thomas H. Strackbein ■
Oklahoma City, Okla.



Amber L. Stritt ●
York, Pa.



Jason A. Strong ■
Greenfield, Minn.



Michael G. Strusz ●
Appleton, Wis.



Janine H. Techtmann ★
West Bend, Wis.



Donald J. Tilbury ■
Watertown, Wis.



Matthew A. Tomfohrde ●
Rochester, Minn.



Peter C. Trapp ●
Madison, Wis.



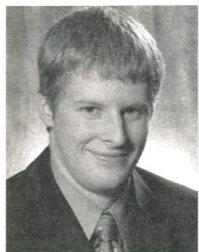
Joel M. Tullberg ■
Milwaukee, Wis.



Shannon L. Umphrey ●
Midland, Mich.



Angela M. Unke ●
New Ulm, Minn.



Justin T. VanBeckum ◆
Oxford, Wis.



Kathrine E. Vogt ●
Howards Grove, Wis.



Elizabeth J. Webb ●
Crete, Ill.



Tanya N. Weichel ◆
Plymouth, Neb.



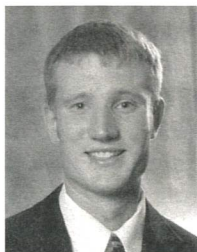
Rachel E. Welke ●
Winona, Minn.



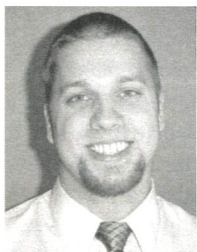
Daniel J. Westendorf ■
Mequon, Wis.



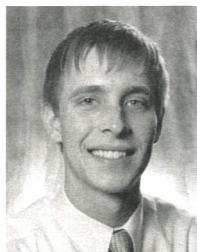
Gretchen M. Westerhoven ●
Eau Claire, Mich.



Matthew P. Westra ■
Fairfield, Ohio



Justin T. Wiechmann ●
New Berlin, Wis.



Zachary J. Wiegman ◆
Onalaska, Wis.



Hannah E. Witte ★
Green Bay, Wis.



Benjamin P. Zak ■
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Cathryn R. Zarling ●
Mequon, Wis.



Cara R. Zarnstorff ●
Anchorage, Alaska



Stephanie H. Zastrow ★
Mayville, Wis.

Seminary graduate CORRECTION

In the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduate pictures [July, p. 16, 17], we mistakenly used Brian Hackmann's picture twice and failed to include Christopher Koschnitzke's picture.

We apologize for the error.



Christopher Koschnitzke
Lannon, Wis.

★ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Early Childhood Education
◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
● Staff Ministry Certification Program

CALL ASSIGNMENTS

On May 19, the Conference of Presidents assigned 101 new and previous teacher and staff minister candidates out of the 120 who were available for assignment to any location. Twenty May 2007 graduates deferred assignment, choosing to pursue further education or other areas of service (most electing international service opportunities). Due to marriage plans or living in specific locations, 33 new and previous candidates are available for calls from congregations through their district presidents. Additional calls/assignments have been made since May 19. To see a list, go to www.mlc-wels.edu/home/academics/resources/assignments/.

Teachers

- Bare, Caitlin R.**, to The Shepherd's Lambs, New Hope, Minn.
Becker, Julie A., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Biebert, Zachary M., to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
Buck, Emily A., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Case, Jennifer A., to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.
Dolan, Jeffrey D., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.
Duncan, David M., to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.
Dunn, Amanda M., to Nozomi (Hope), Tsuchiura City, Japan
Ewings, Carrie K., to St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich.
Fischer, Timothy P., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
Frey, Adam M., to Lord of Life, Northglenn, Colo.
Greefkes, Joseph R., to St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.
Hagglund, Anne K., to Resurrection, Rochester, Minn.
Hanneman, Stephanie M., to Petra, Sauk Rapids, Minn.
Harvey, Amanda M., to Lamb of God, West Allis, Wis.
Hein, Amy L., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
Henchen, Rossi-Kay, to Peace (ELS), Kissimmee, Fla.
Hering, Joseph M., to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
Hering, Rebecca E., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Hintz, Chelsey A., to Lord of Life, Northglenn, Colo.
Hosbach, Amanda K., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Howell, Sarah E., to Eastside, Madison, Wis.
Iles, Peter A., to Grace, Oshkosh, Wis.
Jaeger, Seth M., to St. Paul, Bloomer, Wis.
Janke, Jessica L., to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.
Kavalauskas, Brittany A., to Emanuel Redeemer, Brockway, Mich.
Kehl, Erika J., to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.
Knuth, Sara E., to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.
Kock, Drew P., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.
Kramer, Rebecca R., to Zion, Columbus, Wis.
Lange, Katie M., to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.
Lecker, Michelle L., to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee, Wis.
Lemke, Cindy M., to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.
Lescher, Joanna L., to Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.
Linton, Matthew M., to St. Peter, Modesto, Calif.
Lorenz, April M., to Lamb of God, West Allis, Wis.
Luehring, Rachel M., to Mt. Olive, Delano, Minn.
Mantey, Kristin J., to Star of Bethlehem, Winston Salem, N.C.
Martin, Erika L., to Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M.
Martin III, John E., to St. John, Newburg, Wis.
Mehlberg, Jennifer A., to Crown of Life, Fort Myers, Fla.
Mellgren, Kelly G., to St. Martin's, Watertown, S.D.
Metzger, Audrey M., to St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.
Mueller, Christopher S., to Christ, Eagle River, Wis.
Mueller, Jenni L., to Christ-St. John, West Salem, Wis.
Nottling, Rachel A., to Peace, Otsego, Mich.
Oppermann, Andrea L., to Prairie, Fairfax, Minn.
Pagel, Benjamin R., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Pappathopoulos, Susan M., to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
Peil, Ashley J., to St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.
Priebe, Benjamin J., to Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Proeber, Jennifer L., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
Proeber Jr., Kevin A., to Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis.
Raith, Nicholas R., to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.
Reed, Nicole A., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Richmond, Nicole M., to Evergreen Lutheran High School, Des Moines, Wash.
Rick, Lisa J., to Grace, Oshkosh, Wis.
Ross, Jonathan P., to Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.
Rossmann, Bethany L., to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
Schaffer, Amanda L., to Family of God (ELS), Fort Mohave, Ariz.
Schaub, Sarah A., to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Schmill, Rebekah L., to Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis.
Schramm, Benjamin J., to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.
Schreiner, Erika R., to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Siegler, Lorien S., to St. John, Goodhue, Minn.
Smith, Michael J., to St. Paul, Hopkins, Mich.
Spielbauer, Jamie L., to Divine Peace, Largo, Md.
Springer, Benjamin D., to Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wis.
Stahl, Hannah I., to Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
Sternberg, Katherine J., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Sting, Emily L., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Techtmann, Janine H., to Hope, McDonough, Ga.
Umphey, Shannon L., to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.
VanBeckum, Justin T., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Vogt, Kathrine E., to Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis.
Weichel, Tanya N., to Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.
Welke, Rachel E., to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
Westphal, Greta M., to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Wiechmann, Justin T., to Immanuel, Salem, Ore.
Yeliseyev, Petr J., to Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis.
Zarling, Cathryn R., to St. Paul, Saint James, Minn.
Zastrow, Stephanie H., to St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.

Staff ministers

- Hochmuth, David P.**, to St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis.
Kohl, Benjamin S., to Calvary Academy, Milwaukee, Wis.

Bible correspondence programs now include online worship, Bible study

On a Friday evening, a family in Bogota, Colombia, gathers around the computer screen and turns on the Webcam. Are family members chatting with faraway grandparents or creating a family blog? No. They are preparing for their weekly online Bible study with a WELS pastor in the United States. Families in Spain, France, and Venezuela also learn about the Bible in this way. These online Bible studies are part of the Bible correspondence programs under WELS Multi-Language Publications.

The idea for Bible correspondence programs came almost simultaneously from people in Pakistan and Nepal who had studied God's Word in the WELS' Bible Teachings series. These self-guided Bible study booklets were adapted from prison ministry materials to use in cross-cultural ministry. Nationals in these countries have been overseeing the printing and distribution of the Bible Teachings series since the Bible correspondence programs began in 2006.

In 2007, Multi-Language Publications applied the idea to Latin America. Since then, more than 22,000 pieces of literature have been distributed in Pakistan, Nepal, and Latin America, exposing many souls to the gospel.

Now through the use of the Internet, the correspondence programs can share

God's Word in other ways as well. Online Bible studies began when some people who had finished the first booklet in the Bible Teaching series wanted to study more, but the closest Spanish-speaking church of fellowship with WELS was a hemisphere away. With the help of WELS' technology department, these families now have face-to-face Bible studies over the Internet.

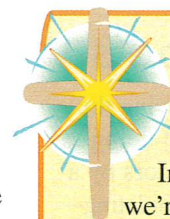
When families requested online worship services, the correspondence program expanded again. On Easter Sunday 2007, Gonzalo Delgadillo, the Spanish Publications Director from Multi-Language Publications, coordinated an online service in Spanish. Now sixteen Spanish-speaking pastors have volunteered their time to preach for regular online services with families in several countries.

The WELS contact in Nepal set a goal of enrolling 1,000 people in the Bible correspondence program each year for the next five years. In a country where Christianity was introduced only a little more than 50 years ago, the gospel has worked to surpass this goal. The same is true in Pakistan, a 97 percent Muslim nation where thousands of people are now studying God's Word.

"The Lord has truly blessed these programs to teach about Christ as the Savior of all mankind," reflects Harold

Essmann, coordinator for mission outreach in Nepal and Pakistan. "For this we are extremely grateful."

For information on the Spanish Bible Correspondence Course, contact Gonzalo Delgadillo at gdelgadillo@mlpwels.com; 915-857-5852. For general information about Bible correspondence programs, contact Pastor Paul Hartman at paulhartman@mlpwels.com; 915-857-5852.



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

In the spirit of Matthew 5:16, we're sharing examples of people who live their faith. May they inspire you to let your light shine even brighter.

Peter Panitzke, pastor at St. Paul, Muskego, Wis., shared a true story that was told to him by his member Sally Behrens.

In introducing the story, he wrote: "I just wanted to share with you a victory the Holy Spirit worked through one of your sisters in Christ. I know that victories like this are happening around us all the time. Praise God!

"May the Holy Spirit lead us to listen to those around us, to hear their hurts and fears, and to trust that the Holy Spirit will guide our conversations as we seek to bring everyone within our area of influence closer to Christ."

Here's Sally's story:

A friend of mine at school kept on saying, "I know there is something missing." She was so frustrated and downcast.

We started talking. I just brought up, "I think you need God."

She responded, "You know, my sister just told me that too!"

I gave her my congregation's Web site and talked a little bit about our faith. I asked where she lived and told her about a WELS church nearby.

A week after that I gave her a Bible, "God's Yellow Pages" and a copy of *Meditations*. She said she didn't know how to use the Bible, so I explained about the Old Testament and New Testament, chapters and verses. She didn't know any of that even though she had been raised in a nominally Christian home.

A week went by. During a class, she slipped the Bible back on my desk. I thought, "Oh no! Am I in trouble? Did I step on her toes?"

She leaned over and whispered, "I want you to personalize it."

Please pray that my friend continues to draw closer to Christ!

The screenshot shows the website for WELS Multi-Language Publications. At the top, it says "www.cristopalabra.com" and "ESPAÑOL: CEB, CRISTO NUESTRO REDENTOR". The main heading is "Cristo Nuestro Redentor" with the subtitle "Iglesia Virtual por Internet". There are sections for "Misa/Servicios en vivo" (Live Services) listing locations like California, Barranquilla, Caracas, and Barcelona. There is also a "Streams" section with a video player showing a group of people. At the bottom, there is a "CHAT" section for Spanish speakers.

Bible correspondence programs have led to Spanish Bible studies and church services being conducted online.

Spreading God's Word in jail

Presenting an ID card, showing the contents of your bags, and being escorted down secure corridors by a guard might seem a bit intimidating—but for people like Karen Schroeder, it's just a regular part of going to Bible study. Schroeder, a member at Christ, Pewaukee, Wis., visits the local jail to comfort, encourage, and spread God's Word to the inmates. And thanks to the newly formed Jail Ministry Training Team, more volunteers across the country are being prepared to serve in the same way.

and prisons and they are lonely. They are confused, they are troubled, and they really need one thing: the message of the gospel," explains Carl Ziemer, administrator for WELS Special Ministries, ". . . and I can't tell you how much more it means when inmates can look someone—a fellow Christian—in the eye, and know that that person truly cares for him or her."

In an effort to recruit, train, and support more volunteers for face-to-face ministry in local jails, WELS Prison Ministry partnered with Wis-

there. . . . That is really a wonderful blessing, to see the Holy Spirit moving in their hearts."

When a group of people or church is ready to begin a jail ministry, one of the team trainers travels to the congregation for the first of three training sessions. The sessions focus on how to conduct a prison ministry and give instruction on leading Bible studies. This training also encourages volunteers and gives them confidence to share their faith without feeling intimidated.

After training is complete, volunteers receive certification for prison ministry. Many times these credentials make it easier for volunteers to gain access to local facilities; however, if a group has problems getting permission to visit inmates and hold Bible studies, the training team is available to help.

"The Jail Ministry Training Team comes with years of experience under their belt," explains Ziemer. "[They] not only offer a template to get a program going, but also offer themselves as consultants once a congregation or group of congregations has initiated its effort of going into jails."

During the past few months, the training team has discovered a surprising amount of interest in jail ministry from congregations around the country. "Many people are anxious to explore a local jail ministry and are just looking for a little help and encouragement to get started," says Ziemer. "We're trying to raise their sights and show them what potential there is for gospel outreach in their own communities. . . . We're giving them a taste of the joy that is there for any Christian who wants to go with the gospel to people who are in such need."

For more information, contact the Jail Ministry Training Team at jmtt@wels.net; toll free, 866-924-7688; or contact WELS Special Ministries, 414-256-3241.



Jail Ministry Training Team members (l to r) Mark Santelman, Pastor Roger Zehms, and Duane Anderson travel throughout the nation to recruit, train, and support volunteers for ministry in local jails.

"The main reason that I think each of us goes into jail is because it's a great way to share God's love and forgiveness with others in our community who are ready and willing to hear it," says Schroeder. "We've found that when we lead our Bible studies, the women and the men are very interested—they love to read Scripture, they love to look up the passages, they participate very freely . . . and they are very appreciative that we're there."

With millions of people currently incarcerated in the United States, more volunteers like Schroeder are needed. "Many souls are in those jails

and consin Lutheran Institutional Ministries to form the Jail Ministry Training Team in March 2007. Thanks to a generous grant from WELS Kingdom Workers, the three-man team now travels throughout the nation to provide workshops for individuals and congregations that would like to begin or enhance a local jail ministry.

"We went to Victorville, Ariz., and a single congregation had four facilities within 10 miles," says Duane Anderson, lead trainer of the Jail Ministry Training Team. "So they are saying, 'We know we have the opportunity, train us.' We started with seven [volunteers]

District news

Michigan

Travis Siferd and Brent vonStein, members of Trinity, Jenera, Ohio, were members of the first-place FFA team competing in the agronomy contest at the Big E Exposition held in Springfield, Mass. More than 600 FFA members compete in this event each year.

Minnesota

Mt. Olive, Delano, Minn., dedicated its new worship facility on May 20. The congregation started a campaign three years ago to replace the old facility, which it worshiped in for 79 years.

North Atlantic

More than 20 volunteers from Gethsemane, Raleigh, N.C., pitched in to help the family of Dave Gruber, currently serving in Korea. The family is planning to move to North Dakota, where Gruber will be stationed in 2008. The volunteers helped get the Grubers' house ready-to-sell by cleaning, painting, and landscaping. "I even dabbled with a bit of electrical work and was shocked (quite literally) to see how tricky it was in spite of how easy it appeared," says Rob Guenther, pastor at Gethsemane. "It was a great afternoon with over 20 volunteers from Gethsemane putting in quite a few hours. Many of them have headed back to the Grubers' on their own since that day."

South Atlantic

Nine couples from four different states participated in a **WELS Marriage Retreat**, held April 27-29 at the Unicoi State Park and Lodge in Helen, Ga. Dave Kehl, administrator for WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship, led the retreat, which included worship, marriage sessions, fellowship, and relaxation. For five of the couples, this was the second year in a row they attended this event.

After five years of sharing the gospel, **Our Redeemer, Union City, Tenn.,** celebrated its first baptism. Cara Noelle Leatherberry was baptized May 13.

South Atlantic



Abiding Word, Covington, Ga., held an Easter for Kids program on April 1. Seventy children between the ages of three and 10 participated, with the help of 20 youth members (including a youth group visiting from Rochester, Minn.). Craft time, face painting, songs, and a Bible lesson reminded children about the true meaning of Easter.

Southeastern Wisconsin



Antonio Washington (center) was baptized at Lighthouse Youth Center, Milwaukee, Wis., on April 1. Washington attended a four-week baptism instruction class with 31 of his peers during Lent. He and two others were to be baptized on Easter Sunday; however, Washington's family was going to be out of town. "He was sad," says James Buske, pastor at Lighthouse. "He thought he had to wait an entire year—until next Easter—to be baptized." After learning he could be baptized anytime, Washington was baptized on Palm Sunday. Two others—Donovan Butler and Tatyanna Smith—were baptized on Easter.

Ascension Lutheran School, Sarasota, Fla., received recommendation for accreditation through WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA) in January. Ascension School, opened in 1999, is the second school in the South Atlantic district to receive a WELSSA recommendation.

Northern Wisconsin

Fourteen members of the **girl's soccer team at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.,** traveled to San Antonio, Tex., during spring break. Students helped Cross of Christ in Universal City with its annual Spring Festival by running carnival games, painting faces, and interacting with 120 non-member children who attended the event. Later, the students handed out more than 4,400 door hangers and invited families to Easter worship.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

D-M—William Allwardt, pastor at St. Peter's, Goodwin, S.D., celebrated his 40th anniversary in the ministry on June 3.

MI—Dorothy Steinbrecher, Sunday school teacher at Holy Trinity, Wyoming, Mich., celebrated 40 years of service on June 3.

MN—Five professors from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., celebrated their anniversaries in the ministry on April 29: **Glenn Bode** (40 years), **Thomas Nass** (25 years), **Douglas Lange** (25 years), **Robert Klindworth** (25 years), and **James Unke** (25 years).

SC—William Gabb, pastor at Atone-ment, Plano, Tex., celebrated his 40th anniversary in the ministry on July 1.

WW—Helen Radtke, member at Peace, Hayward, Wis., celebrated 65 years as a WELS organist in December 2006.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: D-M—Wayne Rouse; MI—John Eich; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Harland Goetzinger; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY**Pastors**

Boehm, Aaron D., to Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa, Calif.

Ehnert, Thomas R., to Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla.

Ewart, Michael J., to Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.

Gurgel, Karl R., to Asia Lutheran Seminary

Hennig, Daniel M., to retirement

Krause, Daniel E., to Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Milwaukee, Wis.

Maertz, David C., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.

Pieper, Gary L., to retirement

Schroeder, Kent E., to retirement

Schroeder, Michael A., to Living Hope Christian Ministries, Wildomar, Calif.

Seefeldt, Curtiss W., to The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn.

Smith, Jeffrey S., to Christ, Windsor/Living Word, Petaluma, Calif.

Turriff, James E., to Grace, Yakima, Wash.

Wietzke, David H., to Christ, Grand Island, Neb.

Teachers

Aaberg, Kimberly J., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.

Albers, Heather L., to Little Lamb Academy, Medford, Wis.

Barthels, Karilynn A., to St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.

Becker, Paul H., to The Hope School (HS), Milwaukee, Wis.

Blonien, Deedra, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

Braun, Tamara, to St. John, Baraboo, Wis.

Christensen, Kendra, to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minn.

Chernohorsky, Nicole, to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.

Ebeling, David F., to retirement

Fager, Kayla M., to Grace, Yakima, Wash.

Fenske, Kim M., to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.

Foelske, Julianne, to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.

Fuerstenau, Kathryn, to St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.

Geissler, Elizabeth A., to St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.

Golisch, Susan L., to King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.

Heifner, Katherine, to Gloria Dei, Belmont, Calif.

Hemling, Sandra L., to Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.

Heyn, Matthew J., to Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.

Hopfensperger, Christopher, to Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.

Hussman, James E., to St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif.

Hussman, Renee A., to St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif.

Jacobs, Dominic P., to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.

Jaeger, Rebekah S., to St. Paul, Bloomer, Wis.

Kassulke, Tammie M., to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.

Knobloch, Ernest F., to retirement

Kuehn, Danielle, to Faith, Milwaukee, Wis.

Laetsch, Erin E., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.

Miller, Kimberly M., to Hope, Milwaukee, Wis.

Miller, Philip A., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.

Ohrmundt, Marla R., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minn.

Oppermann, Matthew D., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.

Paul, Terry L., to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.

Prekop, Peggy R., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.

Roloff, Jeffrey L., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.

Roth, Donna M., to retirement

Rust, Anne K., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.

Rydecki, Matthew C., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

Springstroh, Candice, to retirement

Stern, Mollie L., to Martin Luther (ELS), Plzen, Czech Republic

Thoma, Rebekah J., to St. Peters, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Ulrich, Christine M., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.

Ungemach, Margaret A., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

Unke, Angela M., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.

Van Brocklin, Christi, to Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, Nev.

Voss, Laurie B., to Memorial, Williamston, Mich.

Weber, Sarah M., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.

Weinstein, Stacia J., to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.

Wells, Juanita, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.

REQUEST FOR COLLOQUY

Daniel C. Iwinski, an LCMS pastor at Almond, Wis., has now requested a colloquy for the purpose of serving in the pastoral ministry in WELS. Correspondence related to this request should be addressed to President Herbert H. Prah, president of the Western Wisconsin District, S8441 Michael Dr, Eau Claire WI 54701-8473, 715-878-4297; wwdpwels@sab.wels.net.

ANNIVERSARIES

West St. Paul, Minn.—St. Croix Lutheran High School (50). Aug. 10-12. Weekend includes open house, banquet dinner/dance, and Sunday service. 651-455-1521; Web site, www.sclhs.org.

North Hollywood, Calif.—St. Paul's First School (60). Sept. 9, 10 A.M. A meal will follow the service. RSVP requested. 818-762-2892; school@stpaulsfirst.org.

Onalaska, Wis.—Luther High School (50). Sept. 16. Worship, 2 P.M.; light refreshments and building tour to follow. 608-783-5435.

Salem, Ore.—Immanuel (40). Oct. 7. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; catered lunch at noon with program to follow. RSVP requested. Robert Presser, 503-393-0945; crgardens3@netscape.com.

Bella Vista, Ark.—Beautiful Savior (10). Oct. 14. Worship, 4 P.M. 479-876-2155.

Thousand Oaks, Calif.—Prince of Peace (40). Oct. 14. Worship, 9 A.M.; brunch to follow. 805-492-8943.

COMING EVENTS

Operation Science Training (WELS K-8 Teachers)—Aug. 1-2. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Web site, www.operationscience.org.

Dedication of church addition—Aug. 5. Peace, Hartford, Wis. Worship, 7:30 and 10 A.M. Meal to follow. 262-673-5610.

MLA class of 1977 reunion—Aug. 10-12. Site, New Ulm, Minn. Christa Andersen, 218-828-4844; candersen4844@charter.net or Sue Sledge, ssledge@amphi.com.

Retired WELS Called Worker Reunion—Aug. 15, 10:30 A.M. St. John's School, Two Rivers, Wis. Edward Stelter, 920-553-4800.

35th annual WELS North Atlantic District Labor Day Retreat—Sept. 1-3. Great Berkshire Mountains. Hope Meyer, labordayretreat@gmail.com. Web site, www.welslabordayretreat.org.

Northeast Wisconsin Lutheran Ladies League Rally—Sept. 26, 8:30 A.M. Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis. Ruth Siegmund, 920-388-0294, jrslieg@itol.com.

10th annual Life Banquet and Auction—Sept. 30, 3 P.M. Hosted by Waukesha Chapter of WELS Lutherans for Life benefiting Tomorrow's Choice Resource Center. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Kathy Gates, 262-513-9590.

A day at the Seminary—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary. Oct. 6, 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. Worship, 9 A.M. Barb Bergquist, 414-476-2384; barbie33@netzero.net.

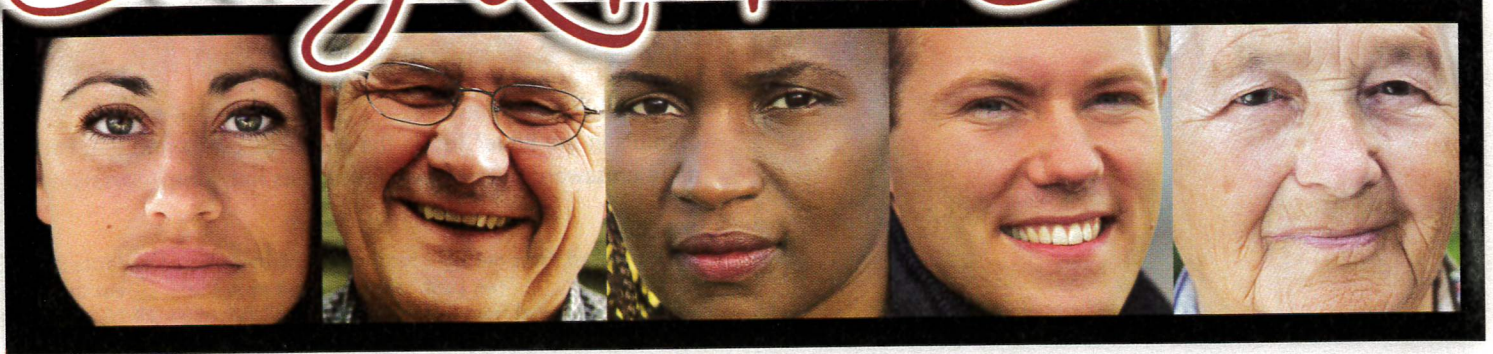
Church and Change Conference—Oct. 15-17. Four Points Sheraton, Milwaukee, Wis. Web site, www.churchandchange.org.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

RN Nurse Manager/Wellness Director—RN to manage new Residential Care Apartment Complex at Luther Haven and coordinate the wellness program for all Luther Haven residents. 24-32 hrs/wk with on-call duties. Send resume to dtanck@wlcfs.org, call 414-354-4600, or apply in person at Luther Haven, 8949 N. 97 St, Milwaukee, Wis.

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.

Every Life for Christ:



John A. Braun

ORDINARY PEOPLE BELIEVE

Justification by grace through faith is the central belief of Lutheran laypeople.

*A*ll Christians believe the same truths, right?" How many times have you heard that? A slight variation suggests that the clergy or theologians are responsible for differences and that ordinary Christians don't care about all the church doctrine.

I suppose that some might think that all Christian churches are the same, but not everyone thinks that way. Obvious differences arise with even the most casual observation. Baptists are different than Roman Catholics, and Lutherans confess different beliefs than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Closer investigation will reveal profound and fundamental differences.

declared him to be righteous because of the work of Jesus Christ (justification). He was a clergyman trained as a theologian. But once he began to share what he discovered, ordinary people—lawyers, artists, princes, soldiers, government officials, milkmaids, farmers, clerks, merchants, and their children—understood its value.

When they were faced with the possibility of losing that truth, they banded together and confessed the truth. These ordinary people even faced the loss of their property and life and fought to keep the treasure rather than surrender it. They opposed anyone who would force them to believe something different.

Lutheran congregations are as strong as the laypeople that walk through the doors on Sunday morning. Those people carry the idea of justification by faith with them. They bring it into their professions, homes, and everyday activities. When people no longer think that justification is important, they simply will not support their churches and schools. They no longer will wish to have their children taught the truth of God's Word. They will not be interested in proclaiming it to the world. Instead, they lose their identity and become like every other religious group.

As Lutherans we confess the chief article of our faith—justification by faith. The Formula of Concord expresses it this way, "The article about justification by faith (as the Apology says) is the chief article in all Christian doctrine." Luther wrote, "If this one teaching stands in its purity, then Christendom will also remain pure and good . . . where this falls, it is impossible to ward off any error or sectarian spirit."

We are Lutherans at this time and in this place. God has knit us together with the strong thread of justification. Not all believe this truth, but it makes us different. Those who believe that they are justified by grace through faith may be a minority, but the world needs the message they possess and treasure.

John Braun is executive editor of Forward in Christ.

LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS ARE AS STRONG AS THE LAYPEOPLE.

A historical look

But do laypeople believe that the profound differences separate churches? Some would suggest that it is just the theologians that disagree. Over the history of the church, ordinary people in all walks of life have read the Scriptures. Many have come to treasure the simple concepts of the gospel—that sinners are saved by the grace of God.

Luther discovered the gem of salvation by grace through faith as he read the Scripture. He understood that God

Lutheran congregations today

Churches are gatherings of people who hold the same truths. We are Lutherans and not Baptists, Mormons, or Methodists because we believe God has justified us by grace through faith. This doctrine is not only held by our clergy or theologians. It is also God's truth believed by people of all vocations and gathered together in our congregations. It's not the result of some hair-splitting or an unimportant truth. It's the center of what Lutherans are and what Lutheran laypeople believe.

BLAISE PASCAL:

Defender of the gospel

A scientist and mathematician abandons his scientific pursuits to defend the gospel through his writings.

Theodore J. Hartwig



There are only two kinds of people: the righteous who believe themselves sinners; the rest sinners, who believe themselves righteous” (533).

“It will be one of the confusions of the damned to see that they are condemned by their own reason by which they claimed to condemn the Christian religion” (562).

“Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it for religious conviction” (894).

These quotes come from a collection of more than 900 *Pensees* (*Thoughts*). They were set down by the Frenchman, Blaise Pascal, during the last months of a short life plagued by debilitating illness. His *Thoughts* stand in contradiction to the time in which he lived. The seduction of scientific discoveries had turned many away from the Bible—a time no different from today’s secular climate where many think that to be a Christian is to commit intellectual suicide.

The Jansenists’ beliefs

Pascal belonged with the top of his world’s intellectual elite. Born June 19, 1623, he won international fame for his achievements in mathematics and science. Then, at 23, he became acquainted with the religious movement of Jansenism.

Named for its founder, Cornelius Jansen, a Belgian clergyman, Jansenism rejected current Catholic ideas and was accused of being Lutheran.

The Jansenists opposed Jesuits, who taught that our human reason and strength cooperate in coming to faith and that our good works help gain forgiveness. We are saved, the Jansenists declared, by grace alone and by faith alone.

Equally offensive to Jansenists was the Jesuit idea that if someone confessed his sins to a priest but thought what he did was all right, then, even though sinful, it was not a sin. The thought meant that disgusting vices were excused. Such are the bitter fruits of being required to recall each sin as well as of having a superficial understanding of sin.

Defending these beliefs

Pascal’s battle against Jesuit notions about confession began in 1647. He recognized that human reason and strength could not assist in conversion and that before God human works had no value of themselves. By grace alone God awakens faith in the heart. Abandoning his scientific pursuits, Pascal devoted himself to Bible study, prayer, and service to the poor and needy. With his large talent he also took up the pen against the Jesuits.

Under a pseudonym, he composed 18 pamphlets in the form of letters, in which he lashed out against Jesuit distortions of God’s grace and Jesuit moral laxity with confession. The impact of these letters on the general public was sensational. They popularized what had only been an ivory

tower debate among the clergy. The letters were circulated in France by the thousands and were quickly translated into all of Europe’s major languages.

But Pascal lost the battle against his powerful opponents—the Jesuits, the French king, and the pope. The letters were burned in public, and Jansenism was crushed by papal decree. But attempts to ferret out the writer of the pamphlets in order to bring him to trial and burn him at the stake as a heretic failed. Nothing could be proved until after Pascal’s death. Though the popularity of the letters soon waned, their excellence as a masterpiece of French literature has endured.

Pascal’s chronic illness worsened in 1647. Twelve years later, it struck with more vengeance. He was unable to walk and was threatened with the loss of memory. After three more years of mounting pain, he died, not yet 40 years old, on Aug. 19, 1662.

Theodore Hartwig, a professor emeritus at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.

Next month: Rosa Young

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Suicide is never a solution. Those left behind have described the pain as a hole in the heart. But God can heal those hearts with his love and care.

Jesus is the light

Eleanor Goid

*I*t was 5 A.M., the first Sunday in Advent, Nov. 28, 1971. The phone rang. A doctor at General Hospital informed me that my husband Pete was dead by suicide. At 38, after 12 years of marriage, I was left with two daughters to raise by myself—Karen, 10, and Linda, 7.

Death's COLD SULLEN STREAM

That November day is just a blur. Because of our difficulties, our family had been staying with our friends Gail and Ray. The night before Pete died, at about 11 P.M., I found him slumped over on the toilet. The large aspirin bottle indicated that he had probably taken about 120 of them. Ray phoned the ambulance and took me to the hospital. When they pumped his stomach, I started shivering. When there was nothing to do but wait, I came back to Ray and Gail's to be with the girls. It was there that I received the call. Coldness went into the core of my being.

My first reaction was to blame the doctors. Not one had listened to his cries for help the past year. He had been making suicidal threats, but his psychiatrist said he wasn't the "type" to do it. I told these things to the doctor, and his response was that if a person wants to commit suicide bad enough he'll do it. No one can watch him every minute.

Another reaction was anger. I was angry with Pete for abandoning me and the children. I felt like he was playing a cruel joke on me and saying, "See how well you can do on your own."

Anger is such a destructive emotion, and it blocks our relationship to God just like any other sin. It took many years before I could put my finger on it and confess it. I was very good at stuffing things down.

When Pete died, I felt so cut off, so empty, which is what I've read that the word "widow" means. I had been a wife for 12 years and now had lost that identity. I had to face the stigma of suicide, and I wished the ground would open up and swallow me.

Strength TO MY FAINTING HEART

The Lord and caring relatives and friends held me up those next few days. I was running on automatic pilot. Making funeral arrangements was the worst ordeal. I decided to have a small service at the funeral home chapel. I felt a lot of shame that Pete had taken his own life.

There is such a conspiracy of silence around suicide. We're not comfortable talking about it. Yet there are things that need to be said. I have read that, around the anniversary of the death, members of the family would benefit by sharing what has been going on for them—any new insights or ups and downs. It helps to share. Otherwise, you may feel alone like I did even if you know that God is with you in all things.

"If only I hadn't . . ." or "if only I had . . ." seem to be what tortures those left behind after a suicide. I agonized over my part that night. If only I had knocked on the bathroom door sooner. Karen told me when she was older that she had wished she had kissed him good night. Humanly we look for someone or something to blame. But God knows our every weakness; so take

it to him in prayer. Jesus took all of our sins upon himself. I've found so much strength in his forgiveness.

BE THOU MY *guide*

There were so many decisions to be made. We needed to find somewhere to live. At first I was not able to find a house that I could afford. But in the first week of January, I found two houses that were in my price range. I asked a pastor if he would go along with us, and he agreed. After we had seen both houses, I asked his opinion. He said the last one was "a lot more house." Karen and Linda had already picked out which rooms they would like. A retired pastor and his wife had lived in it, and that seemed fitting.

We moved the middle of January. It was so wonderful to have a whole house to ourselves after months of living out of a suitcase. Karen and Linda, weary of our nomadic existence, wanted assurance that we wouldn't be moving again. I said I didn't intend to.

WIPE SORROW'S *tears* AWAY

We know that only in heaven will God wipe away our tears completely. Everyone's experience with death is different. For me it seemed like I was numb for such a long time. I don't remember crying at the funeral. There were times that I felt like I didn't want to go on especially when Karen and Linda were fighting. People told me that I must be strong for the children. During the busy time of the day that was not too difficult, but at night, when they were in bed, it would hit me. I don't think we ever cried together. I wish that we had.

I shut feelings off and got very good at not showing emotion. It wasn't until almost 20 years later

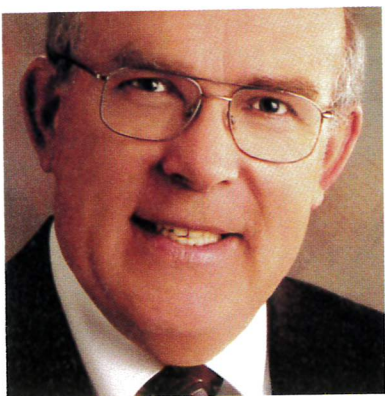
in a suicide bereavement group that emotions started coming out again. It was a safe place where we didn't have to feel that others would wonder why we weren't over this yet. Journaling about your feelings was encouraged, and this was the best advice for me. It was in this group that I first heard suicide referred to as a hole in the heart.

My pillow absorbed a lot of tears, and my pastor was my main counselor. There were so many times I went over to the parsonage. He would point me in the right direction with Bible reading and prayer.

There continue to be ripples from that November day. When Linda graduated from the university, I wished so much that Pete could have been there. She is very interested in politics just like he was. On the way home, I stopped at his grave and wept for the first time. "Jesus wept" is the shortest verse in the Bible, yet it says so much. He was human and knows our every weakness. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3 KJV).

Life since the fall in the Garden of Eden is not perfect, but God is able to use what happens to us for his purpose. "I am weak but he is strong," the children sing. I have to keep reminding myself that "though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith . . . may be proved genuine" (1 Peter 1:6). I also cling to the promise, "Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love" (Lamentations 3:32).

Eleanor Goold is a member at St. John, Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada.



Carl R. Gungl

Person to person

For most of the time I've been privileged to write this department, it was called "Person to Person." Now, for one last time, I'd like to make it personal.

We all learn from our fathers, from our mothers, too. We're only too aware that our children and grandchildren are watching us, seeing what we do, hearing what we say. In their minds and hearts, they're putting it all together. They draw conclusions about what's important to us.

I grew up in a parsonage as had both my parents before me. From my earliest recollections, it was obvious that the ministry was important. I saw the way my dad worked hard at it. I saw the pleasure as well as the pain. My mother continued to make allowances for the demands the ministry made upon our family time. Both of them rarely complained; the Lord's ministry was too important to be distracted by mere earthly considerations.

I attended a synod prep school. My father was clear, at least for my high school years, that I needed to seriously consider the pastoral ministry. The choice would be mine after that. The Lord led me, encouraged by both my parents, to continue preparation for the pastoral ministry.

For the most part, I enjoyed the preparation. Academics, with a good dose of music and sports, appealed to me. But, throughout the years, what excited me most of all was the mission of the church. In my father, who was the chairman of missions for WELS, I saw the love for souls everywhere. One year a member of the Nigerian Lutheran Church was a frequent guest for Sunday dinner. At another time we children rode in a mission vehicle, purchased locally and shipped internationally to Central Africa.

A love for missions was a legacy left for me by the Lord through my parents.

My first call was to a new home mission in South Windsor, Conn., and Pittsfield, Ma. My wife and I enjoyed every minute of it and were sad to leave it behind. But in accepting a call to a well-established congregation in Lake Mills, Wis., we quickly discovered, if we had ever doubted it, that mission work was still all around us. And for the last 14 years, we've been able, thankfully, to experience and participate in it worldwide.

As Jacob expressed it, "The God of my [parents] has been with me" (Genesis 31:5). He gave me a wife, eager to serve her Savior. On thousands of miles of travels he's kept us both safe as well as our children at home. In sickness and health he's been with us constantly, preserving or restoring us. And now, it appears, he has another opportunity for us to serve him. I've accepted a one-year call from Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong.

Some time ago, before God called veteran Hong Kong missionary Gary Schroeder home to glory, we ate lunch together in China. It amazed us that God would use two country boys, both from Caledonia, Minn., to serve him and his people worldwide. The God of our fathers prepared us to proclaim his saving Word in distant places.

It's with thanks on my lips and hope in my heart that I look to the future, a future rich with his promised blessing. May we never forget that God, after providing us individually with heaven, prepares each of us for the privilege of proclaiming his saving message to others.

LESSONS FROM THE CREED

Charles F. Degner

“He descended into hell.”

The 1948 presidential election was very close. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* incorrectly guessed the outcome and printed its headline—“Dewey Defeats Truman.” The next day, the news media carried a photograph of Truman smiling broadly and holding up the errant newspaper headline. The picture tells the story. Truman won.

Jesus descended into hell to give us the same message. The devil didn't win. Jesus won. For early Christians who struggled to proclaim the gospel in a world that hated them, it seemed that the devil was winning. Sometimes, when we see people leaving our churches today, it still seems that way. But these are only false headlines. The devil didn't win. The devil never wins.

There was never a question that Jesus would win. Jesus descended into hell to celebrate his victory and to show the devil who won and who lost.

Two key Bible passages

Two primary passages in the Bible teach this. 1 Peter 3:18-20 states: “Because Christ also suffered for our sins once for all time. The One

who did what was right suffered for us who have done what is wrong. He did this to bring us to God. He was put to death in a fleshly state, and he was raised again in a spiritual state. In this spiritual state Christ also went and announced his victory to the spirits in prison. They disobeyed God long ago in the days when God was waiting patiently while Noah completed a large boat” (NPH Translation).

JESUS DESCENDED INTO HELL TO CELEBRATE HIS VICTORY AND TO SHOW THE DEVIL WHO WON.

The other reads: “He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:13-15 TNIV).

Notice that both passages first speak about the forgiveness of sins and then about how Jesus publicly shamed the devil by proclaiming his victory in the devil's own backyard. This is how Jesus defeated

Satan. He took away our sins. He rendered Satan powerless by taking away Satan's power to accuse us.

Correcting some misunderstandings

Some think that Jesus descended into hell to suffer. This cannot be because he suffered “once for all time.”

Some think that Jesus descended into hell only as a spirit, not in the flesh. But his glorious body arose. If Jesus descended into hell while his body was still experiencing death, it would not have been a triumphant descent.

Some think he went to hell to give unbelievers another chance to believe. Jesus did not descend to “preach” (NIV) the good news. He “announced his victory,” which sealed their doom. For us who believe, it reminds us that we are on the winning side.

Luther said, “After his burial the whole person of Christ, the God-man, descended into hell, conquered the devil, and destroyed the power of hell and Satan. The mode and manner, however, in which this was done can no more be comprehended by human reason than his sitting at the right hand of the Father, and must therefore not be investigated, but believed and accepted in simple faith. It is sufficient if we retain the consolation that neither hell nor the devil is any longer able to harm us.”

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This is the sixth article in a 10-part series on the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed. To read other articles in the series, go to www.forwardinchrist.net and search by the author's first and last name.



JESUS.

The history ahead

Every day we arise from sleep to greet another day. Sometimes the sun is shining. Sometimes it's cloudy. And, on occasion, storms descend upon us. We might have a sense of what the day will bring, but most often we don't know what will happen.

That's a good thing. If we knew the events of each day, we would simply grow lazy. We might even fail to share the gospel. We might conclude that it didn't matter. If the future was difficult, painful, or disastrous, we might either panic or crawl inside our shell and wait for it to come.

But we don't know what lies ahead. Only after we have passed through unknown days and uncharted events can we look back and think of them as history. The events of each day create the history we look back on and think about. We might wonder, as all the minutes pass, what event, comment, or action will turn out to be important. Only afterward do we know.

Where I worship there's a stained-glass window that depicts Christ on his throne ruling all things. I have found comfort in knowing that he sits at the right hand of God, that is, he exercises all power for the benefit of his people. Whatever each day brings, he rules. Whether I face a contrary wind or a calm sea, I find comfort in his power.

Another part of the artwork in the window has a book with seven seals. The artist placed a reminder of the future contained in the scroll John the Apostle saw in Revelation. Those visions are often troubling. But the artist has added something more. A lamb lies on top of the book—a gentle lamb. That part of the window reminds me that all the future lies under the love of the Lamb of God.

The two ideas—Christ the all-powerful ruler and Christ the gentle Lamb of God—are not in conflict. The Lamb of God took away sin—my sin and the sin of all the world. He has deep love for me and for all those who follow him. The history ahead—mine and that of my fellow believers, the church, and all the world—will be dominated by the great love that moved him to come to earth and shed his blood for us all.

But the love Christ has for us does not minimize his great power and majesty. All we are, all we have, all we hope to be, yes, every day comes as a gift to us from his almighty power. Without his power we have nothing. He promises to exercise that power for our good—even when the days are stormy or disastrous. Each day he allows us to chart the course ahead, promising to guide, direct, and control it for our good.

So as our representatives assemble again in convention to discuss our work together as Christians, we might wonder about the future. We are at an important fork in the road—a new president and significant decisions will influence the history ahead. The Lord of the church allows us to participate in the history ahead, but we do it dependent upon his love and his power.

Perhaps you are not all that interested in our history together as a synod, but you are more concerned about what the future holds for you or for your family. As one believer or as an assembly of believers, may we cling to the gospel that made us his people. The gentle loving Lamb sits atop our future, and he is also the great Lord of lords.



John A. Banerjee

Warren Jeffs, the leader of a Fundamentalist Mormon group, gained national notoriety when he made the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list. His group is known for practicing the old Mormon teaching of polygamy, or the marrying of multiple wives. They point to the patriarchs of the Old Testament, and ask, "Why would God allow them plural marriage, and not us?" Jacob was a man who wrestled with God's plan for marriage and family.

What is marriage?

1. Look up Genesis 2:18-24. What problem did God display for Adam? What did God mean to teach Adam and us by his unique source material for creating woman? Describe Adam's reaction to God's plan.
2. Look up Matthew 19:4-6. When people asked Jesus about marriage, he pointed back to Genesis 2. How does Jesus expand the definition of marriage?
3. From those two passages, what does the Bible say makes a marriage?
4. Look up Ephesians 5:22-27. What aspects of marriage is God teaching here?
5. Agree or disagree: You could find a way to fit polygamy into God's definition of marriage.

Jacob's dysfunctional marriage

1. Jacob loved Rachel but was tricked into marrying Leah. So Jacob took two sisters as wives. Read Genesis 29:26-30. What verse portends future trouble? Why?
2. What makes this favoritism so surprising in Jacob?
3. Warren Jeffs wants more wives because he thinks it makes him closer to God. Why did Jacob want more than one wife?
4. Read Genesis 29:31-30:13. Find words that sum up each of the following relationships:
 - Jacob and Leah
 - Jacob and Rachel
 - Jacob and Bilhah and Zilpah
 - Leah and Rachel
5. How do these words point out the abuses to marriage that were ongoing in this home?

6. For whom do you have more compassion: unloved Leah or unfruitful Rachel? Why?
7. Look at Leah's comments at the birth of each son. What changes do you see in her?
8. What was so ironic about Rachel's comment in 30:1?
9. What is striking about Jacob's response?

Truly dysfunctional

1. Read Genesis 30:14-24. What does the mandrake incident reveal about the married life of these three? About their sexual relationship?
2. Evaluate each of the three characters and their actions in the mandrake incident:
 - Rachel
 - Leah
 - Jacob
3. Rachel tried everything to have children. Her anger didn't work. Her maidservant-solution didn't satisfy. Finally, she was left with nothing but prayer and trust in God. God remembered her, and she gave birth to a son. Comment.

Bringing it home

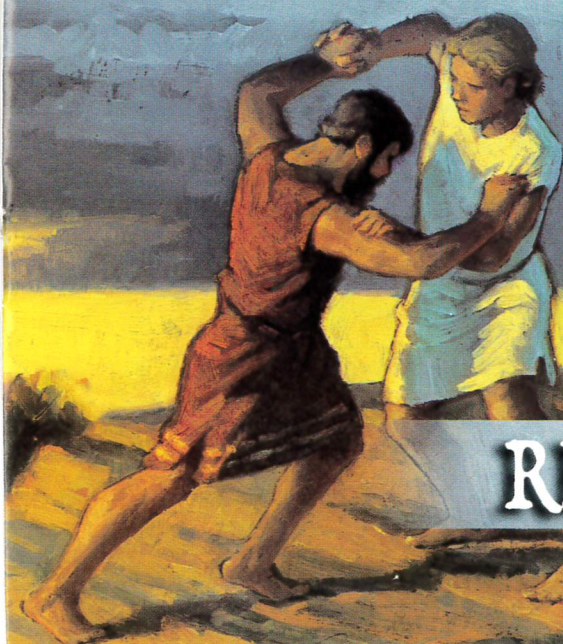
1. Agree or disagree: It is easy to see why people like Warren Jeffs practice polygamy, because God gives conflicting messages about polygamy in the Bible.
2. It would be hard to find a more dysfunctional family than Jacob's. Yet the Holy Spirit spends an entire chapter of Genesis outlining their problems in great detail. What does God want you to learn from this chapter?

At the beginning of time, God put forth a plan meant to give joy and happiness to his children. God's plan for marriage and family has not changed, because his love for us has not changed. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). What God has joined together, let man not separate.

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This is the eighth article in a 12-part Bible study. Find this article and possible answers online after Aug. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net.

ILLUSTRATION: JOHNSON AND FANCHER



WRESTLING WITH GOD:

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

An interactive study of Jacob Jonathan E. Schroeder

The whole picture

One person, Jesus, has all the truth, and he shares it with humanity.

See what your friends think. Try this one on them: "Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, and all others pray to the same God, although they use different names for that God."

Another expression of the same thought goes like this: "It does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons about life."

Do you agree or disagree? When polled, about 70 percent of Americans will agree.

I disagree, and you should too. One reason why. I'll explain with a story.

The blind man and the elephant

In 1873 John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) published "The Blind Man and the Elephant," a still-famous poem about these questions.

It retells in rhyme what Saxe called "a Hindoo fable." Its exact origin is unknown. Scholars are sure only that the story started in India.

In Saxe's version, six blind men all approached an elephant from different sides. Each touched part of the elephant.

Then each described what he thought the elephant was:

- the one who touched its side thought it was a wall;
- the one who touched its tusk thought it was a spear;
- the one who touched its trunk thought it was a snake;
- the one who touched its leg thought it was a tree;
- the one who touched its ear thought it was a fan; and
- the one who touched its tail thought it was a rope.

Naturally, as the poem notes, "These men . . . disputed loud and long . . . Though each was partly in the right . . . all were in the wrong."

The poem concludes, "So oft in theologic wars The disputants, I ween, Rail on in utter ignorance Of what each other mean And prate about an elephant Not one of them has seen!"

Saxe's logic seems irresistible: No one has seen God. No one has the whole picture; so then everyone is limited in experience. Thus all religions must be at best only partly true.

Someone knows the whole story

Yet, though the blind men were all wrong, that doesn't mean the truth about the elephant, or about God and all that counts forever, is mostly unknowable, or relative.

Don't say, "It doesn't matter which religious faith you follow."

Why not?

One person involved with the story knows, completely, what an elephant is.

Who? The storyteller.

Yes. The storyteller sees what no one man can see, because he's outside the story, looking in.

Then the storyteller passes it all along to you, or puts it down in print, so you get the whole picture too.

So who knows the whole story? Christians, Jews, and Muslims agree that a unique man named Jesus lived in Israel in the early first century. Josephus, a non-Christian Jew a generation later, wrote of Jesus' reputation for teaching wisdom, doing miracles, and being executed on a cross.

But the Bible goes further. It says Jesus rose from the dead to give everyone eternal life. It says, "No one has ever seen God. God's only Son, the one who is closest to the Father's heart, has made him known" (John 1:18 *God's Word*).

Do you believe Jesus? Or only the few things you have seen, felt, and heard?

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