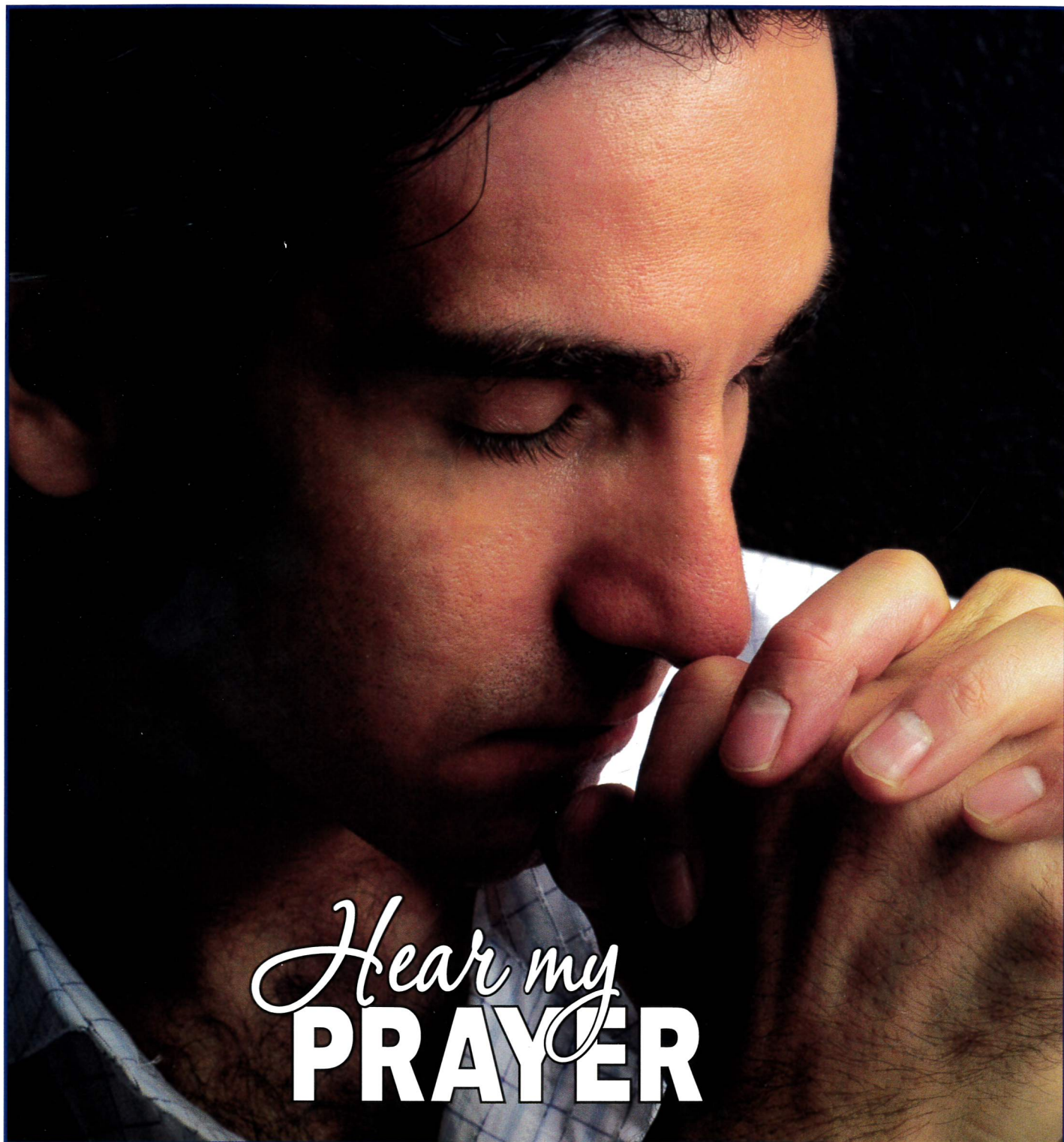


WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? • SUICIDE • CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

AUGUST 2008

Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness

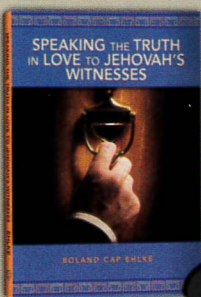


Hear my
PRAYER

Who's there?

We've all answered the knock of Jehovah's Witnesses at the door. *But just who are these Witnesses?* They remain outside mainstream society as well as mainstream religion. They have departed from the Bible and the central teachings of Christianity. You ask, "What can I say to win them over to Christ?" With this new book, examine the Witnesses' history, see what they believe, and understand how you can open the door to the gospel for them.

Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses



by Roland Cap Ehlke
Paper cover, 233 pages.

LU12N2032, \$15.99

Includes questions for study and discussion.

NEW!

Price is subject to change without notice.
All orders are subject to shipping and handling fees and sales tax where applicable.

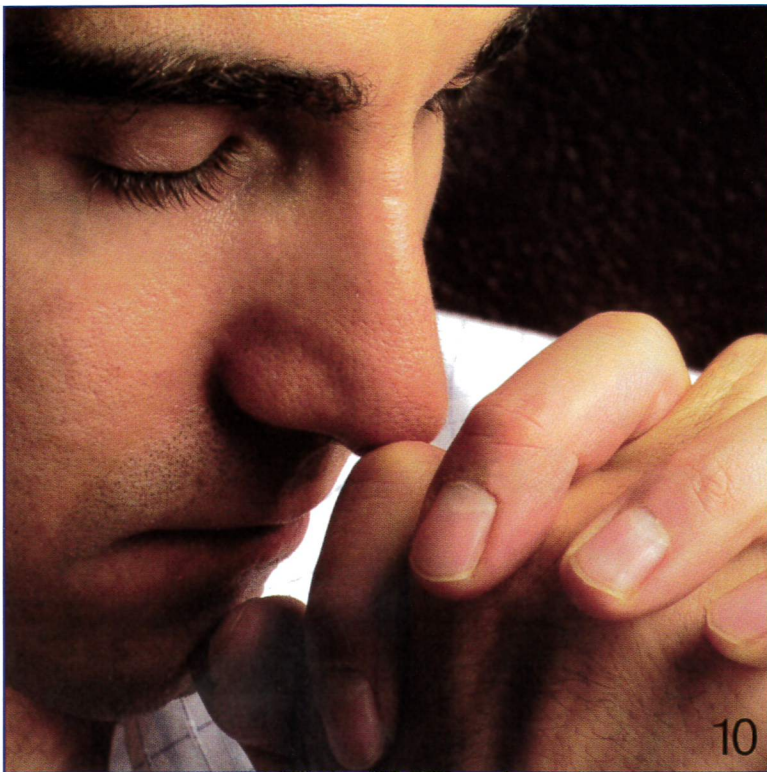


Northwestern
Publishing House
1250 North 113th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284

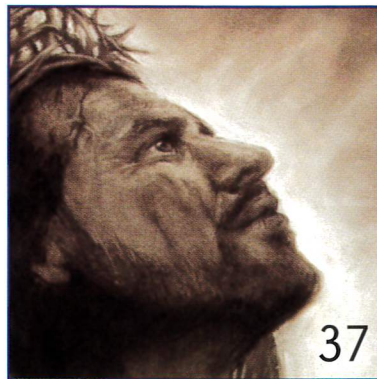
Go to page 14 of this issue for a personal account from a former Jehovah's Witness.

To order, call 1-800-662-6022 or visit www.nph.net.

“Prayer is like breathing
for a believer.”



SHUTTERSTOCK



Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

FEATURES

- 10 PRAYER IS PERSONAL AND POWERFUL** Faith breathes in God's gospel and breathes out prayers to the God of grace.
David D. Sellnow
- 12 THE LUTHERAN WAY OF WORSHIP** The Christian church year reviews Christ's saving work.
Victor H. Prange
- 14 CONFESSIONS OF FAITH** A Jehovah's Witness rejoices to find a church that sticks to what the Bible says.
Caroline Joy Amico Adkins
- 16 CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES** Believers have connections with others who do not know Jesus. Christian neighbors build bridges to Christ.
Jonathan E. Scharf
- 32 WORLDWIDE FELLOWSHIP** A photo essay of the triennial convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.
- 34 A TWISTED PATH** A teenager's self-destructive behavior ultimately leads to stronger faith in God.
- 40 A CHANGE OF HEART** God removes our dead hearts of sin and replaces them with hearts of faith.
Marcus C. Nitz

WELS

CAMPUS MINISTRY

What 2 Look 4:

National Retreat!

May 18-21, 2009

Eau Claire, WI

CampusMinistryRally.com

Campus Cornerstone!

College-themed column
coming soon to
Forward In Christ

wels.net/cm

- Register with Campus Ministry
- Find a campus pastor
- Listen to mp3 sermons
- Read college devotions
- Discover much more!

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

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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

MANAGING EDITOR

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

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Alicia A. Neumann
alicia.neumann@sab.wels.net

STAFF WRITER

Laura C. Warmuth
laurachristine@wels.net

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

ART DIRECTOR

Karen Knutson

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

COPYRIGHT

©2008 by Forward in Christ. Printed in the USA. Forward in Christ grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a WELS church, school, or organization, provided that copies are distributed free and indicate Forward in Christ as the source. Artwork may not be reproduced except in the context of its article. For other copyright questions, contact Kristine Laufer, 414-615-5706; lauferk@nph.wels.net.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to Forward in Christ, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

Forward in Christ (ISSN 1541-8936) is published monthly through Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Individual: USA—\$16; Canada—\$16.96; all other countries—air mail \$48.40. Postage included, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House. Contact Northwestern Publishing House for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 800-662-6093, ext. 8. Milwaukee area, 414-615-5785. www.nph.net/periodicals.

ON AUDIO

Mission for the Visually Impaired, 375 Bridgepoint Dr, South St. Paul, MN 55075; 651-291-1536.

AUGUST

WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

Love comes into play in many articles this month—the love of God, our love for God, and our love for our neighbor.

On p. 16, Pastor Jon Scharf reminds us who our neighbors are and why it's important to show love to them. This love could lead to an opportunity to share an even greater love—that of God for the world. Some congregations showed love to their neighbors this spring by helping with cleanup after major storms and flooding in the Midwest. See how they got involved (pp. 26, 31).

One way we can demonstrate our love for God and his Word is to confess the truth of God's Word. The hard part of that confession is avoiding worship with those who believe differently. Although this seems unloving on the surface, Pres. Schroeder explains how love actually plays a big part in our fellowship principles (p. 36).

True fellowship is a wonderful thing between church bodies. A photo essay on p. 32 shows the blessings of sharing the same beliefs with other members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. The pictures help us see the faces of Christians worldwide who believe the same things we do.

DEPARTMENTS



- 6 FEEDBACK**
- 7 DEVOTION**
Bones can speak *Stephen H. Geiger*
- 8 EDITORIAL COMMENT**
Batteries and birds *Thomas J. Jeske*
- 9 QUESTION & ANSWER**
Suicide *Forrest L. Bivens*
- 18 WHATEVER**
Trusting in God *Mariah Stulken*
- 19 NEWS**

- 30 BULLETIN BOARD**
- 31 POTLUCK**
- 36 FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK**
A synod that cherishes Christian fellowship *Mark G. Schroeder*
- 37 BIBLE STUDY**
To die is gain *Bruce A. McKenney*
- 38 A THOUGHT**
My kingdom come? *John A. Braun*
- 39 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY**
God's tool belt for unity: Confidentiality *Donald W. Patterson*

CORRECT REFERENCE

Please remember to refer to those of us who have Down syndrome with people-first language. I am a person with Down syndrome not a Down syndrome person/child ["Amazing Grace," June].

Andrew Gerbitz

SLINKING SAINTS?

In "God's toolbelt for unity" [June], I appreciate Pastor Patterson's emphasis on encouraging one another. However I fear that his description of "slinking saints" may lay a burden on the consciences of those members who struggle with issues of social anxiety or personal guilt.

For some members, overcoming deep-seated apprehensions related to awkward interactions and actually attending worship services may be their greatest accomplishment of the week. To expect more from them may be unrealistic at this time in their lives. Others can certainly heed the article's encouragement to reach out to them in gentle ways to help ease their fears. But I felt certain qualifications could have been included in the article for the tender hearts of these struggling brothers and sisters.

*Bill Pekrul
New Ulm, Minnesota*

LIVING TOGETHER

Re: "Confessions of faith" [June]. I was sorry to see that nothing was said about the WELS church standing on Christ's Word. When I read: "I e-mailed churches and they would say, 'We don't want you. You're living in sin,'" I was sure that what followed would be where we stand on Christ's Word; however, the story continued on like a fairy tale with the Lutheran church being put on a pedestal. We are taught to lovingly proclaim God's Word and tell what he says. Living together is a sin against God. The Bible calls living

together without being married "sexual immorality," and Jesus took those sins to the cross and paid the price for those sins. One cannot undo them, but "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). I would hope that the couple was counseled to stop living together before their marriage in the Lutheran church because that is an important step to take—making sure things are right between you and God, confessing to him where you have done wrong, and being assured that your sins are forgiven.

*Gail Hupalo
Belleview, Florida*

HOW WE DRESS

I get your magazine each month and read it from cover to cover. I want to commend you for the article by Pastor Jon Buchholz ["Wear your faith," June]. I have long been embarrassed by the way women and young people are dressing. I worked for 20 and a half years before I married at 37 and quit to raise my three sons. I was never sexually harassed because I looked, dressed, and acted like a lady.

Yes, we are ambassadors for Christ, so we should dress and act that part. People judge you by what they see. My parents were very strict, and I was too with my sons. I never had a problem when they were teenagers. They wore what I brought them, and they still like my taste.

The only complaint I have of *Forward in Christ* is your obituaries are so brief. I'd like to know more of our Christian servants—teachers and parents and widows too.

Name withheld

Re: "Wear your faith" [June]. I want to express my sincere thanks for this much-needed article. It is distressing to see non-Christians dressing

immodestly, but even more upsetting to witness those kinds of inappropriate clothing worn by members of our churches on Sunday mornings. Let us all remember that—even though we do not need to wear "formal" clothing when we enter the Lord's house—we certainly should show proper respect and reverence for God by dressing modestly and decently. As the author so aptly put it, we should "wear our faith." I pray that many folks will heed this important message and be good ambassadors for Christ not only with our words, but also with our dress.

*Vivian Weseloh
Moorhead, Minnesota*

FIC AS DAILY DEVOTION

I enjoy using FIC as part of my devotional "routine." When I first receive the issues, I peruse them by title or heading to see what's to come during the month. I imagine this is the same thing someone picking up an issue would do who has little time as we leave them scattered at various places (it is a good idea!). . . .

*Andy Schwartz
Bremerton, Washington*

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*.

Bones can speak

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place." Genesis 50:24,25

Stephen H. Geiger

“Who will get my bones?” When people draft wills, the lawyer asks about mutual funds, life insurance, and jewelry.

But not bones.

The message of Joseph's bones

We know that Joseph cared a lot about his bones. He wanted his bones to be buried in the land of Canaan. But not right away. He asked his family to swear that they would move his bones to Canaan when the Lord kept his word and restored the Israelites to that promised land.

That wouldn't happen for more than 350 years. In the meantime, the Jews experienced brutal oppression and bitter hard labor in Egypt. Yet in the testimony of his last breath, Joseph gave witness to his confidence in the unseen fulfillments of his covenant Lord. Joseph directed survivors to look beyond his death into a future held by divine, gracious hands.

God's promised rescue finally did come. Moses did just as Joseph's last recorded words had asked—he carried Joseph's bones toward Canaan, bones that served as a living witness of divine faithfulness.

Our confident confession as we face death

Death seems like an enemy. God never desired that death be a part of our world. Death comes because of sin, our sin. The thought of death brings to life the accusations of con-

science, the expectation of facing a Judge who knows our hidden—as well as our obvious—faults.

We may avoid thinking about death because our flesh calls to mind only deserved punishment. Yet death became something so different in Christ. He knew our sin. He made it his. He knew of hell. He made ours his. Jesus died for us. He loves us.

Jesus faced death with Joseph-like confidence in the future, or, perhaps better said, Joseph faced his death with Christlike confidence. It was anticipation of God's conquest of sin and death that permitted Joseph to look to the future after death. It was peace that came from the promise of a Satan-crusher that focused dying Joseph on a God who never breaks his promises. It is the assurance that Jesus died for the sins of the world that gives us the desire to make a confident confession as we face our own deaths. Death is not evidence of God's defeat. Death was the enemy over which God scored the greatest of victories. Jesus lives! He has risen. We, too, will rise.

Our deaths become opportunities to confess a future held by divine, gracious hands. Perhaps instructions about our bones won't accomplish the same as it did in the case of



Joseph. But we can sit down with those close to us and confess our confidence that our good God will look after all who are left behind. We can craft the details of our estate plan to give evidence of our joy in God's promises. We can add a spiritual message to our will, to be read to those we love when our last hour has come.

Death is coming. God's promises remain sure even in death.

Give witness to that, just as Joseph did with his bones.

Contributing editor Stephen Geiger, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Risen Savior, Milwaukee.

Batteries and birds

Thomas J. Jeske

Whoever designed this big builders'-supply store did not want me to conclude that I am ever finished shopping. As the checkout line channels me past a display of flashlights, I wonder, "Am I sure I have enough?" A few feet farther along, I am cleverly positioned in front of thousands of batteries. This time there's a sign, "Are you sure you have enough?" My insecurity is being manipulated for profit.

I wonder what would happen if I asked the lady in front of me, "Excuse me, ma'am. Could you tell me please, what's the purpose of a flashlight?" Might this weary shopper respond, "Umm . . . to use up batteries"?

While I'm waiting, I wonder how it would sound to God when a human being says, "My purpose in life is to use up batteries." After all, aren't food and clothing just fuel, a source of energy—like flashlight batteries? But my insecurity makes me worry: "I run on food and clothing. My car gulps gasoline. The bank demands my mortgage payment on time. So yes, my goal this week is to earn money to 'buy more batteries.'"

If I could just get out of this store long enough to listen. Jesus once said that a bird could teach me a lesson about worry, about acquiring and possessing.

What's the purpose of any creature's life? Survival? Look at the birds. Do swallows sow seeds in spring? Will that crow cultivate them? Can that red-tailed hawk harvest the crops in fall?

Ask yourself what message it sends to your Father when you worry. Isn't it that you doubt his power or desire to supply you?

A casket rests under a tent in the cemetery. What of that person's former stress and worry?

Jesus, in sharpest contrast, voluntarily gave his life away. If surviving for one more day had been his goal, he'd never have yielded to the

cross. But he was doing what his Father asked—and what we needed.

When a flashlight fails, it goes into the landfill. When a bird dies, it crumbles into dust. But Jesus' body did not see corruption, for his Father gave life to him. The Father decided that his child should live. And he did.

This indestructible Jesus now calls you to trust his Father as your own. That means you're permitted as much stress about food and clothing as Jesus had. No more worrying about the fuel you require as you serve your neighbor and your Savior.

"Look at the birds," says Jesus. Can a Canada goose keep his extras in little blue silos? Do sparrows speculate on grain futures?

Ask yourself if your worry ever changed anything for the better. Did it bring back anything you lost or wasted? Did it buy you more time? Did it make you more fun to be with?

Your Creator supplies his creatures with what they need. And I know you're thinking about this: when your tour of duty is carried out, when your tired body rests in the ground, God has decided to give you life yet again in his bright country.

God somehow daily provides for and protects his birds. He will never forget about his own dear children, adopted at the price of Jesus' trust and blood.

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:26,27).

God somehow daily provides and protects his birds. He will never forget about his own dear children.

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

QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

Ultimately if the sin of suicide is accompanied by saving faith in Jesus, eternal death does not result. We may, therefore, be able to comfort survivors, but thoughtfully and cautiously.

Possible causes

Reasons why people attempt and often succeed in terminating their life may vary. Probably the majority of suicides result from a deep regret or despair that reflects unbelief. But unbelief may not be the cause of every suicide. A mental illness like clinical depression may lead to suicide. Such a death may not be linked to unbelief. Suicide may also be a rash act of selfishness, anxiety, or anger, displaying sinful weakness but not an absence of saving faith.

Important concerns

While identifying possible causes for suicide we need to remain alert to concerns that immediately surface. We are not downplaying the seriousness of suicide. From Augustine in the fifth century to the present time, suicide is often classified as self-murder. The words of 1 John 3:15 enter the picture: "You know that no murderer has eternal life in him." Others prefer to classify suicide as a sin of theft since our lives are not our own. We were bought at a price, belong to Christ, and have no right to rob him of what he has given to us (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century taught that suicide was the most fatal of all sins because the victim has no time to repent of it. In medieval fashion, he assumed formal confession to be essential for repentance.

These issues are not to be ignored or lightly dismissed. Suicide isn't a God-pleasing action. It is sinful, typically selfish and loveless, and usually devastating for surviving family members and friends. The necessity of repentance and saving faith is not negotiable. Allowing the possibility of suicide in extreme weakness of faith or psychological distress does not minimize these truths.

Q. Does suicide always result in eternal death? Is there any comfort we might offer loved ones?

Parallel cases

Consider what we say about a professing Christian who consciously speeds and dies in an accident, rashly gets drunk and dies in a stupor, knowingly disobeys parental prohibition and falls to death from a roof, or in

a sudden fit of anger does himself great bodily harm. There is no shortage of foolhardy sins with serious consequences. Yet we allow the possibility of the person being in a state of grace and expressing Spirit-worked repentance even when this cannot be perceived by or articulated to others.

Believers are repeatedly described in Scripture as people who express godliness in love and have hope and purpose in life. Suicide seems incompatible with this, so it complicates things. What a reminder of the value of taking care lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:12) and giving evidence of our faith every day! After all, the time of death is seldom known with precision.

Measured comfort

I commend you for asking your question not to satisfy curiosity or engage in speculation, but to determine how to comfort surviving loved ones. We're all aware that only God can provide authoritative answers regarding all suicide victims. It is our privilege to offer whatever comfort we can without compromising law and gospel. Acknowledging the possibility of weak faith allows us to highlight how our hope of heaven is based on the perfect work of Jesus. Even a weak faith grasps that treasure. Christ's measureless love provides the basis for our measured yet valid hope in at least some suicide cases.

Contributing editor Forrest Bivens, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.

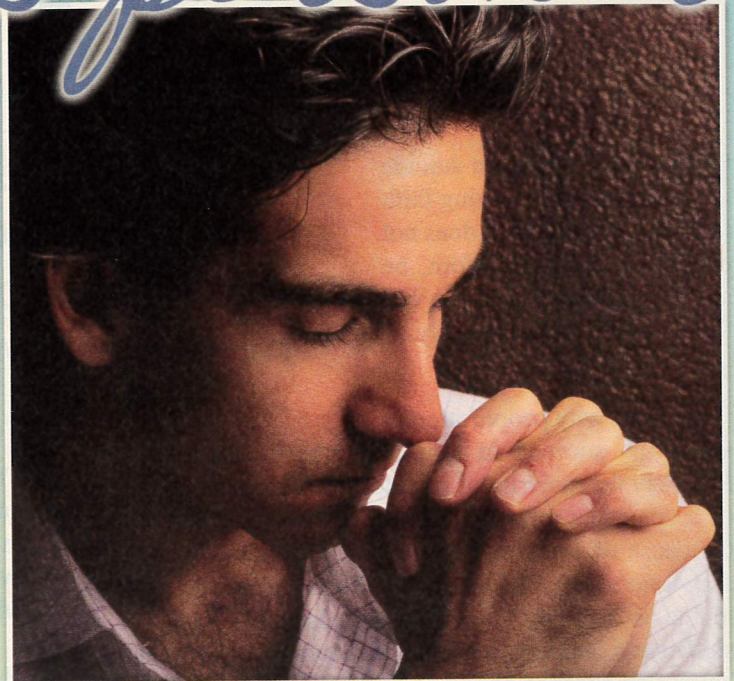
Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries has prepared a DVD and Bible study about suicide. Read more on p. 27.

PRAYER *is personal*



Faith breathes in God's gospel and breathes out prayers to the God of grace.

David D. Sellnow



At a mission conference, I bunked with a seminary classmate whom I hadn't seen since we'd graduated. He was nearly 20 years my senior; ministry was a path he had pursued after other career endeavors. At bedtime, there in a smallish dormitory room, he politely asked, "Do you mind if I say my usual prayers?" "Of course not," I said.

In his pajamas, he knelt on the floor beside his bed, folded his hands, and proceeded through his prayer list. I flushed, feeling a bit ashamed. No, I was not ashamed that a man nearly 50 years old—and who was a former college teacher and current church pastor—would be down on his knees saying bedtime prayers like a child. My shame was that my own prayer life was so meager, so sporadic, so detached—that I was usually too preoccupied to let myself pause in prayer as humbly and devotedly as this man was doing.

Prayer is a work of faith

Something the Lord's brother James had said ran through my head. "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18). An application of that verse struck me: "Show me your faith that exists without praying, and I'll show you my faith by my praying." Of course, my praying friend had not intended to show off. He believed very much in the Lord's admonition: "When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen" (Matthew 6:6). It was only because there was no private

place in the small space we shared that I was able to witness what normally would have been done in secret.

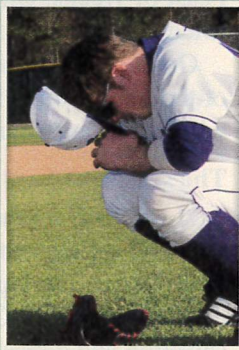
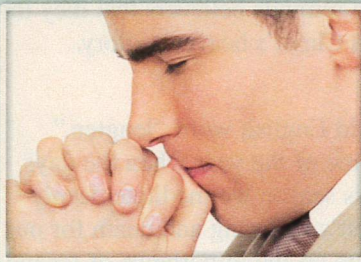
Nevertheless, the experience stuck with me and has made me more aware of prayer. Prayer is like breathing for a believer. A soul that is alive in Christ breathes in words from God and breathes out thoughts and words directed toward God. People of faith are people who pray. James warned, "Faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26). Prayer is perhaps the most primary deed produced by faith. Faith without prayer, we could say, is dead.

Prayer is personal communication

When we pray, we are communicating with our Father, with our Brother, with our most supportive Encourager. At times we will phrase our prayers very carefully, but other times we can just let our hearts pour out whatever we are feeling. We have the promise that "the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Romans 8:26).

Prayer flows from all corners of our faith. It's not just asking for things. It's also the amazement we experience as we think about God, the sorrow that cuts through us on account of our sins, the praise we render to God for his grace, the thanks for many daily blessings, and the questions we puzzle over as we seek greater understanding. Every faith-filled thought we think toward God is an

and powerful



element of our ongoing state of prayer as we “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

We pray to the one who knows best

Our prayers are offered in trust. We can say anything to God, ask anything of God . . . but we also acknowledge the depth of his relationship with us and recognize that his response will always be a “good and perfect gift” (James 1:17). Just as we expect a father always to do what is best for his children, so we expect God’s answers to our prayers to be just what we need—not necessarily what we think that we want. We implore our Lord with complete certainty that he really listens and really cares. We cry out, “Abba, Father,” because we know that he has made us his own children through Christ, and we have nothing to fear, knowing that he is caring for us (cf. Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:6,7).

In teaching us about prayer, Jesus instructed us: “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:11-13). Sometimes we are foolish enough to ask for snakes and scorpions (things that might likely harm us spiritually). God is wise enough

to know what we need and don’t need, and gracious enough to give us what will keep us close to him.

Prayer is a powerful force

Prayer can change things. Prayer has altered the course of history, as God has responded to his people’s pleas. Consider just one example.

“Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (James 5:17,18).

Astonishingly, the Lord who rules the heavens, who “controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash” (Job 37:15), was willing to bend his ear to the request of one of his believers. God redirected rain clouds in response to one man’s prayers.

Meditate on this mystery: all “dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations” (Psalm 22:28). He is in front of us and behind us; he holds us and everything in his power (cf. Job 12:10, Psalm 95:3-5, Psalm 139:5). “All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:16). And yet he promises that he listens to our prayers! He hears our every little request for this or that—and is willing to respond! “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry” (Psalm 34:15).

Our prayers are not merely going through the motions of a conversation in which the outcome is unchangeably predetermined. Jesus made the promise even more personal: “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:14). This is a mystery beyond our comprehension. God knows all things, has foreseen all things, and yet is willing to rearrange things as we pray. We are awestruck by this truth: “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). God grant us such righteousness and boldness in Christ! “In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).

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

If you’d like further instruction about prayer and suggestions for your prayer life, visit the online Bible study that accompanies this article at www.forwardinchrist.net.

The LUTHER

The Christian church year reviews Christ's saving work.

Victor H. Prange

When God created the world, he placed lights in the sky to “serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years” (Genesis 1:14). God used these signs to establish the basic calendar for his Old Testament believers: Passover, Feast of Weeks, and Tabernacles. The New Testament church gradually developed a calendar that annually reviews Christ's saving work. We call this calendar the Christian church year.

Easter Sunday, the Festival of the Resurrection

Even though the church year begins with the first Sunday in Advent, we can do no better than starting our description of the church year at Easter. Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday. The disciples discovered his empty tomb, and Jesus appeared and assured them of his victory over death. The men and women who believed in him continued to gather for worship on the first day of the week. Each Sunday became a “little Easter.” And once a year, Christians celebrated the anniversary of that first Easter.

But on which Sunday should we celebrate Easter? We know the date for Easter changes each year. In 2008 we celebrated the resurrection on March 23, something which won't happen again till 2228. Next year Easter will fall on April 12. Why isn't Easter, like Christmas, observed on the same date each year?

It's because of two decisions made by the early Christians: 1) to celebrate the resurrection on a Sunday and 2) to celebrate it near the time of the Jewish Passover. Since the Passover is observed on the 14th day (full moon) of the first complete month in spring, the believers set the date for Easter as the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring. Setting the date for

Easter was important in the development of the church year calendar.

The Easter season and Pentecost

The 50 days between Easter and Pentecost is the same as the period of time between the Old Testament festivals of Passover and the Feast of Weeks. This is the oldest season of the Christian year. Pentecost, the Coming of the Holy Spirit, marks the close of the Easter season. The word “pentecost” (literally meaning “five ten times”) was the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks. On Pentecost the ascended Lord fulfilled his promise to pour out the Holy Spirit.

On the 40th day after Easter, we observe the Festival of the Ascension, which reminds believers that they too will ascend and share in Christ's heavenly glory.

The season of Lent

“Lent” is from the Old English word “lengten,” meaning spring—the time of the year when the days grow longer. During this season we meditate deeply on the meaning of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation and concentrate on the importance of amending our sinful lives. The ancient practice of placing ashes on the heads of worshipers on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, reminds us that the penalty for sin is to return to the dust of death. Sundays are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent.

Holy Week focuses attention on Christ's final week. It begins with Palm Sunday when Christ entered Jerusalem riding a donkey. Maundy Thursday, from the Latin *mandatum* (or command) of John 13:34, recalls Christ's institution of Holy Communion on the night in which he was betrayed. Good Friday is the solemn remembrance of our Lord's death on the cross. The entire Christian year will have its greatest significance when we remember the overriding importance of Easter.

Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany

The theme of Easter is life; of Christmas it is light. The Word made flesh, “the true light,” came into a world of darkness. The celebration of Christmas on Dec. 25 has its origins in Rome or northern Africa. This date was likely chosen to counter

AN WAY of worship

the pagan festival related to the winter solstice called *natalis solis invicti* (birth of the invincible sun). The Christians celebrated the birth of their invincible Son, the Son of God.

In distinction from Easter, whose date is established by the phases of the moon, the date for Christmas is based on solar computations. It occurs near the winter solstice, at that time of the year when in the Northern Hemisphere people experience the most darkness. At the darkest time of the year we celebrate the coming of the Light of the world.

Epiphany, a Greek word meaning "appearance," refers to the appearance of Christ as Savior. In the East, Christians celebrate the birth of Christ, the coming of the Magi, and the baptism of Christ on Jan. 6, though no one is sure why this day was chosen. In the Western church, Epiphany became the day on which to recall the Magi's worship of the newborn king. The period between Christmas and Epiphany is known as the "12 days of Christmas." On the eighth day of Christmas, we celebrate the naming and circumcision of our Lord.

The season of Advent, the four-Sunday preparation for Christmas, had its origins in Western Europe. Advent, a Latin word meaning "coming," focuses on three events:

- 1) Christ's coming in the flesh at Christmas.
- 2) His continuing advent in Word and sacrament.
- 3) Our Lord's coming in glory at the end of time.

Though Advent is a time for repentance, there is a note of joyful anticipation running through the season.

Sundays after the Epiphany and Pentecost

Well over half the Sundays of the Christian church year fall outside the seasons of Christmas and Easter.

Because the date for Easter is movable, there will always be a variable number of Sundays between these major festivals. These Sundays are numbered as "after the Epiphany" and "after Pentecost." On the First Sunday after the Epiphany the church recalls the Baptism of Our Lord. The Transfiguration of Our Lord is always celebrated on the last Sunday after the Epiphany. On the First Sunday after Pentecost the Holy Trinity is honored.

Unique to *Christian Worship* is the designation of the last four Sundays after Pentecost as the End Time. The four are Reformation Sunday, Last Judgment, Saints Triumphant, and Christ the King. The final Sunday of the church year reminds us that the entire cycle celebrates the reign of Christ over our hearts now and forever.

Some of the most ancient Christian festivals, usually termed minor festivals, honor apostles, martyrs, and significant church leaders. Lutheran Church calendars generally retain the festivals of those saints named in the Scriptures plus a few noteworthy events. *Christian Worship* includes 33 minor festivals (pp. 159-160).

The calendar of the Christian church year annually enables believers to review the saving work of Jesus Christ and encourages them to a life of faith and good works. Understanding and appreciating this calendar will help us worship more thoughtfully in joyful response to God's marvelous grace.

Victor Prange, a retired pastor, is a member at Grace, Tucson, Arizona.

This is the third article in a nine-part series on Lutheran worship.

COLORS of the Christian church year

Colors of the paraments and vestments help to distinguish the festivals and seasons of the church year.

White (joy and purity)—

Christmas, Easter

Blue (hope)—Advent

Purple (repentance)—Lent

Black (death)—Good Friday

Red (fire; courage, zeal)—

Pentecost; church festival

Green (growth)—Epiphany,

Pentecost seasons



I was born into a family of very faithful Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses attend five meetings a week and join in giving presentations at these meetings when they learn to read. I joined the program at five years of age. I gave my first talk about Peter and Cornelius in front of 100 people.

Jehovah's Witnesses preach from door-to-door, and at birth I started accompanying my mom. When I was two I was giving out pamphlets. At home we spent much time in family study, learning obscure points about the Bible and learning chronology that supposedly pointed to the end of Satan's system.

I graduated from high school and was not allowed to go to college. I was well-known at my school as "the nun" just because I was so openly loyal to my faith. My grades were exceptional. I was even offered a full scholarship to college. Because my grades were so high in Spanish, I was given an opportunity to be a translator

for the United Nations! But in my piety, I turned it

down. I did it for my god. After all, I believed that the United Nations was an abomination foretold in the Bible.

I take the next step

I had been devoting 90 hours a month to door-to-door preaching since my middle teenage years, and now I needed to go the next step. As a 17-year-old graduate, I planned to move almost 1,700 miles from home to serve as a missionary on an Indian reservation. At 18 I moved from Pennsylvania to South Dakota alone. I believed that my god was worth it. I was proud of myself. I was truly earning salvation!

Soon things in my world began to fall apart, and I now am grateful that they did. I got married at 20. Witnesses are not allowed to date. They have to be committed to the person before they "go out" anywhere and must be accompanied by a chaperone. Because you have company along on your "dates," you never get to really know the person. That is how I ended up marrying a man who became my abuser. He was the most exemplary man in three states. All the elders told me I was a lucky lady.

Confessions of faith

Why are you a member of WELS? What does this church body have that makes it unique from hundreds of others? In this series, you will read about why some choose to join WELS and what members treasure most about being WELS.

Caroline Joy Amico Adkins

I was loyal to him for more than a decade. I was also in the hospital three times. He stopped going to Witness meetings, and the elders could see that he was not who they thought he was. But it was too late for me. Finally, when I was at death's door, I had to leave to save my life. When I got out of the hospital that third time, I never returned. Instead I moved into a little apartment.

The elders condemned me for being on my own, insinuating that I wanted to play the field. That was far from the case! For half of my marriage my husband had wanted nothing to do with me, and I remained loyal to him. That would not change. After all, I was still legally married.

But the accusations persisted. The elders said that I had to move to another congregation because my presence was a disruption. This discouraged me. I was desperately in need—frail in health and frail in mind—as my marriage had caused me to become suicidal. The more I tried to please God, the more the elders condemned me. Even though I had gotten so much better since I fled my marriage, I relapsed into wanting to die. I cut my wrists. Again.

I see things differently

That's when I met someone who told me about the Bible. My neighbor, Jeremy, was a very devout man. He had read the Bible through more times than me. I was stunned! He saw so many things differently.

Jeremy began to open my eyes. I devoured Jeremy's Bible and began to see that my Witness Bible had subtle inaccuracies. I researched Christianity online and began to visit churches. I knew in my heart that there was a God. I knew it was not his fault that I was in an abusive marriage and in a congregation that no longer wanted me. I knew that I just had to keep searching. So I went



Caroline and Jeremy on their confirmation and wedding day in June 2007. Caroline was re-baptized that same day.

to a non-denominational church a couple of times. But I didn't like the one I went to, since they just sang songs and waved their arms.

I decided to go with a friend to a Catholic church, but I was not happy with the adoration of Mary, belief in purgatory, and other practices that were not in the Bible. I went twice, and I was uncomfortable saying "amen" to the countless prayers to Mary. So I kept looking.

Then I found it. I was taking a walk with Jeremy, and we passed a little country church with a sign saying when services were. We decided to give it a try. Jeremy and I were unsure because so far we had not had success, but the Bible had to be taught somewhere!

The next day was Sunday. Jeremy and I walked to church, Bible in hand. We were warmly welcomed at the door. We sat down, and I contemplated the decor. It was simple, yet holy. As the service opened, I found myself quite lost, but Jeremy helped me follow the order of service. I found that the hymns and Psalms that we sang

were Bible-based. The Bible was actually used!

The second visit went just as well, and I found myself learning more about the Bible. There was stuff I didn't know?! Yes, lots! I decided to write up a list of questions for the pastor. He had to pass my test!

I really wish I still had that list, because it was brutal. I had written about 20 questions. I really put the pastor on the spot. He handled it well, answering every question from the Bible to my satisfaction. And he did not even get offended! Jeremy said he seemed to like the challenge.

We took lessons to become members, and within about three months we were officially made members. That same day

I was re-baptized, this time in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit . . . *not* in the name of the Watchtower Society!

I married my Jeremy in that same hour, at the same private ceremony.

We have truly been blessed by our loving Lord. We are now awaiting our first baby's arrival. I will have him or her baptized in the name of the same God who blessed me so much, and his Son, and his Holy Spirit. Every Sunday at our WELS church my eyes linger on the baptismal font, and I am so joyful to have the prospect of bringing my baby into a church that really does stick to what the Bible says.

Caroline Joy Amico Adkins went through instruction at Divinity, N. St. Paul, Minnesota. She now is a member at Shepherd of the Lakes, Milford, Iowa.

Do you have a story to share about how you became a WELS member? Send it to Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net.



Connecting to our COMMUNITIES

The church is people who believe in Jesus. Believers have connections with others who do not know Jesus. Christian neighbors build bridges to Christ.

Jonathan E. Scharf

“**W**ho is my neighbor?” Remember that question? The expert in the law (Luke 10:25-37) thought he had his responsibilities before God taken care of. He knew what he had to do, and of course he did it. Certainly he loved God, and he loved his neighbor. He thought he had done everything necessary to “inherit eternal life.” So Jesus told a story.

There was a man—beaten, robbed, and stripped—who needed some help. Those you would assume would help—the priest and Levite—didn’t. But then, the Samaritan—yes, the good Samaritan—came to where the man lay in the road and did something. He bandaged him, gave him a ride, and paid for his recovery even though the victim probably wouldn’t have given him the time of day before. He was a Samaritan after all. The expert in the law caught that. The expert’s description of that Samaritan was “the one who had mercy.”

Suddenly, all the barriers between Jew and Samaritan vanished. All that hatred Jews felt for those rivals to the north, the ones who had caused them so many problems and tried to usurp their heritage, suddenly disappeared when he saw love. Now, the Samaritan


was not the half-breed. He wasn’t the scum. Now, he was “the one who had mercy,” the one who loved. To which Jesus responded: “Go and do likewise.”

Who is *my* neighbor? You probably noticed that the Samaritan hadn’t gone on his journey with helping the poor and unfortunate on his agenda. But he had his eyes open. And he had mercy. Do we? Do we go through life looking for opportunities to love, even at inopportune times? Or do we try to avoid the inconvenience?

Another parable

Now a modern-day parable, which, in fact, is a true story: Don is a man I had the privilege of taking through adult instruction classes just about four years ago. He’s a southern gentleman, and he takes care of his family through a small business he runs. “Outgoing” is not the first word anyone who knows him would choose to describe him. He’s not on the evangelism committee, or any standing board or committee for that matter. Yet, through his personal connection to his community and his open eyes, I’ve had the privilege of talking about God’s grace in Jesus with

- his best friend and his family;
- his doctor and the doctor’s wife;
- three current employees and their families;
- a former employee and her family, her tennis coach, mom, in-laws,



a neighbor, and even a lady who was getting her nails done next to her daughter; not to mention

- all of the countless customers and the extended family connections of Don and the others on this list.

All told so far, 10 of his connections have attended adult instruction, with at least another dozen other opportunities for clear presentations of law and gospel. That's not even counting the customers who have visited and gotten involved after picking up one of the invitations he regularly gives them.

These are people who probably wouldn't have invited me into their homes to talk about salvation, but did. They are nice people who didn't have talking about Jesus and thinking about eternity on the top of their to-do list, but did. Why? Because they saw a man who had mercy. They saw a man who loved. They saw a man who preached Jesus with his life.

And he had his eyes open to make and seize the opportunities. He did things like invite his pastor to his Christmas parties, hoping that there would be another religious conversation that could give some classic opportunities. He lived his life as a good employer, a good coach, a good friend, and a good man. He was ready to love.

That builds bridges. Think about how the act of mercy changed the attitude of the wounded Jew. Would he be ready to listen to the Samaritan? If asked, "Who is my neighbor?", would

he have readily said, "The Samaritan"? Our goal as disciples of Jesus is to share the gospel. The goal of connecting to our communities—being lights in our dark world, being what comes naturally to those touched by God's love—is to win a hearing or to catch someone's ear. Then we can share. Then we can unleash the sword of the Spirit, the fire of his Word.

You are a neighbor with connections

So who are you? Are you just a nurse? Just a teacher? Just a mom? Just a factory worker? Just a restaurant manager? Just a student? Well, don't forget that you also might be a customer, coach, or coworker; a teammate, roommate or bus-mate; the person who lives next door or a Facebook friend. Think of how many opportunities you have to be that good neighbor, that good Samaritan. Think of how many opportunities you have to show the striking love of Jesus that goes out of its way to act. Think of how many ears there are in your life—ears open to the message of Jesus because of your love and connections to them. Through the gospel, the Spirit can win their hearts. In a way, you have a better opportunity to reach the lost in your life than your pastor does. You have so many eyes that can see your love, and you have all of their ears when they do see it. You have the opportunity Don has—to be who you are where you are.

Now, if one person can show that love and connect to his community simply by being who he is and by keeping his eyes open, why can't each of us do it? As individuals, we

are gathered together as the church of Jesus. As this family of believers, our web of influence is even greater. We are seen by all those around us. Is our love? That's what makes us neighbors.

Don't walk by on the other side, too busy with taking care of your own agenda. Look around at the homeowners and the homeless in your community. See the children playing and the parents longing to do right by their kids. Notice the lonely and the too busy and . . . everyone. Now, love them.

May God grant that you and your fellow believers aren't just seen as the narrow-minded exclusive church down the road on the corner. May you be seen, in your community and in your neighbors' lives, as the church that has mercy—the church that loves.

Jonathan Scharf is pastor at Abiding Grace, Covington, Georgia.

This is the second article in a three-part series on connecting to your community.



CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP

The Commission on Evangelism is offering seminars to help congregations build bridges to people in their area. For more information on seminars in your district, go to www.wels.net/jump/conncomm.

WHATEVER

Trusting in God

We can't stop bad things from happening. We can only embrace them and trust that God will make things better.

Mariah Stulken

Life comes at you very fast. Even if you're not ready to handle it, it comes anyway. One day you're outside with your family playing games and having fun. The next you are at a hospital watching your sister deal with pneumonia. That is an awful thing to watch your sister go through.

My sister was diagnosed with a life-threatening case of pneumonia in both of her lungs. She was only six years old and very helpless. She was sent to the hospital immediately to be treated and cared for. This was the beginning of one of the scariest times in my life. You always think that this kind of thing will never happen to you, just like you think that you will never get in a car accident or a family member will die. But these things do happen. They happen all over the world, every day. And they happen in our lives too.

My sister was a very good sport; she took everything well and listened to the doctors. Even though she had an IV in her arm and tubes in her nose, she wasn't scared. I can't believe how much courage she had during that week. She was so strong. If I were in that situation, I don't think I could have handled it. She knew that everything was going to be okay. She relied on Jesus to take care of her. If we did that more often, we wouldn't be worried. We would trust Jesus in everything we do.

But how can I trust God to help me when he does something like this? During that time I found myself asking God why he would do this. It seemed unfair that she was put in a life-and-death situation when she was only six. Why her? Why not someone else, someone older? If God loves us so much, why do people die and get sick or hurt?

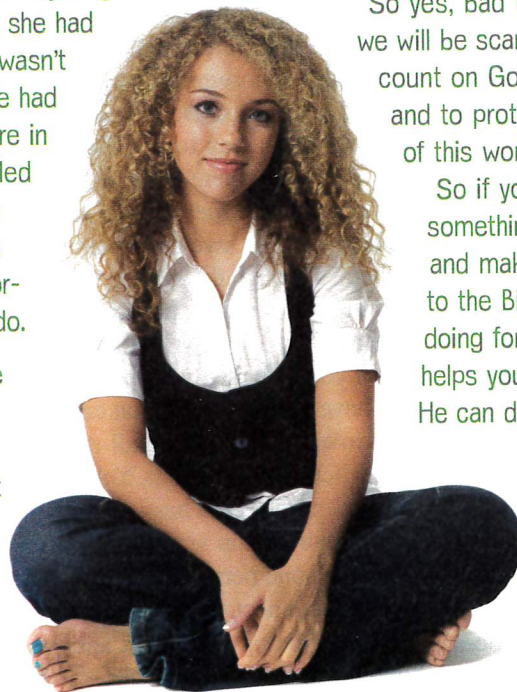
My pastor visited every day and told us that everything will work out for our good. He was right. A couple days later my sister was getting better. God does work everything out, and he also has a reason for everything that happens in our lives. God puts many obstacles in our way, but he does it for a reason. This whole experience brought my family closer to God. It taught us that bad things can happen; people can die or get sick. But God is always with us, and he helps us with our struggles.

The Bible says: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). We can't stop bad things from happening. We can only embrace them and trust that God will make things better. After a total of eight days, my sister was released from the hospital. She was healthier than ever, and we were all very happy.

So yes, bad things do happen, and we will be scared. But we can always count on God to be there for us and to protect us from the evils of this world.

So if you're ever dealing with something that tests your faith and makes you doubt God, turn to the Bible. See what God is doing for you every day—how he helps you with all your troubles. He can do amazing things. All you need to do is trust him.

Mariah Stulken, a sophomore at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member at Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wisconsin.



Suzanne Marie Doberstein
1946-2007

Suzanne Doberstein (nee Covach) was born Mar. 31, 1946, in Ann Arbor, Mich. She died April 10, 2007.

A 1969 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Grace, Eau Claire, Mich.; Zion, Chesaning, Mich.; St. John, Saginaw, Mich.; and Bethany, Saginaw, Mich.

She is preceded in death by her parents and one sister. She is survived by her husband, John; one son; one daughter; five grandchildren; two brothers; and one sister.

Daniel Joseph Boehm
1947-2008

Daniel Boehm was born June 7, 1947, in Bluffton, Ohio. He died April 27, 2008, in Saginaw, Mich.

A 1970 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at Trinity, Saline, Mich.; St. John, Westland, Mich.; and St. John, Bay City, Mich.

He is preceded in death by his first wife, Priscilla. He is survived by his second wife, Janice; three sons; four daughters; five grandchildren; and four brothers.

Henry Eugene Paustian
1919-2008

Henry Paustian was born May 10, 1919, in Barre Mills, Wis. He died May 29, 2008, in West Bend, Wis.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Moberge, S.D.; James Valley, Jamestown, N.D.; St. John, Barre Mills, Wis.; and St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.

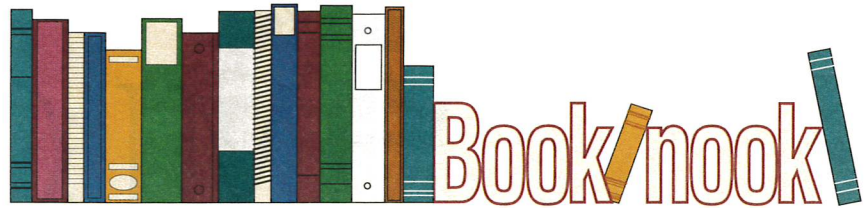
He is survived by his wife, Elaine; four sons; one daughter; 14 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Irene Loretta Eva Hilma Manthey
1913-2008

Irene Manthey (nee Kremmer) was born Mar. 23, 1913, in Bangor, Wis. She died June 9, 2008.

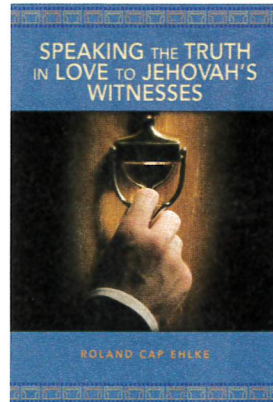
She taught in Bangor, Wis., and at St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.; First German, Manitowoc, Wis.; and Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Frederick, and one sister. She is survived by one son, five daughters, nine grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.



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.

Learning about Jehovah's Witnesses



\$15.99

How many times do we try to avoid talking to the door-to-door Jehovah's Witnesses because maybe we don't quite know what to say? *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses* by Roland Cap Ehlke is very helpful in understanding the teaching and history of this cult, which can help us share the reason for the hope we have to these millions of people who are not on the road to heaven.

The book begins by explaining that Jehovah's Witnesses, or officially the "Watchtower Organization," is a cult and not just another Christian denomination. The book gives some insightful common characteristics and appeals of cults, along with a complete history of Jehovah's Witnesses and their leaders.

The second part of the book is devoted to the false teachings of the Watchtower Organization. The author did a wonderful job of paralleling the false doctrines with Scriptural support for our beliefs.

Finally, the third portion of the book is dedicated to Christian witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses. Through the author's close relationship with two former Witnesses we are given a look at how difficult leaving this cult can be.

This book was helpful in understanding these neighbors who we see walking our streets, neighbors who have Bibles but don't know the gospel. I was struck with how quick the devil is to appeal to our human reason, and how without relying completely on Scripture alone we can so easily lose our hold on God's promise of full and free salvation.

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in learning more about Jehovah's Witnesses, and especially to those who have a family member or a friend who is a Witness. The study questions in the book make a great personal study tool and would work well for a Bible class at church.

Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses will help you understand how to give Jehovah's Witnesses the hope of heaven that they will not find through the Watchtower Organization.

Laura Heiman
Divinity, St. Paul, Minnesota

READ THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS
SEPTEMBER 2008

1. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:17	16. Jos. 23
2. Joshua 1	17. Jos. 24
3. Jos. 2	18. Galatians 1
4. Jos. 3, 4	19. Gal. 2
5. Jos. 5, 6	20. Gal. 3:1-18
6. Jos. 7	21. Gal. 3:19-4:7
7. Jos. 8	22. Gal. 4:8-5:1
8. Jos. 9	23. Gal. 5:2-24
9. Jos. 10	24. Gal. 5:25-6:18
10. Jos. 11, 12	25. Proverbs 1
11. Jos. 13:1-15:12	26. Prov. 2, 3
12. Jos. 15:13-17:18	27. Prov. 4, 5
13. Jos. 18, 19	28. Prov. 6, 7
14. Jos. 20, 21	29. Prov. 8
15. Jos. 22	30. Prov. 9



MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

GRADUATES

One hundred thirty-seven people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 17. Ninety-eight were in the teacher track or the staff ministry program. Thirty-seven completed the preseminary program. Two received master's degrees.



Alissa M. Alonte ●
Milwaukee, Wis.



Brandon W. Aswege ◆
Mesa, Ariz.



Andrew J. Babinec ■
Lansing, Mich.



Carrie L. Bade ●
East Tawas, Mich.



Niccolo F. Barber ■
Salt Lake City, Utah



Anthony J. Barthels ■
Green Bay, Wis.



Leah R. Beck ●
Reno, Nev.



Carrie E. Behnken ●
Aberdeen, S.D.



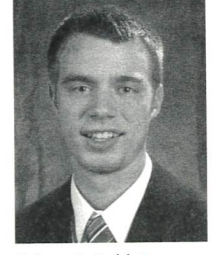
Jacob C. Behnken ■
Watertown, S.D.



Brett J. Bengel ●
Menasha, Wis.



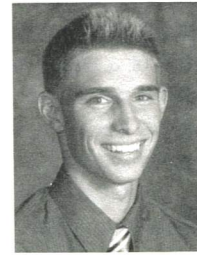
Amy B. Biedenbender ●
Mission, S.D.



Adam R. Bohl ●
Appleton, Wis.



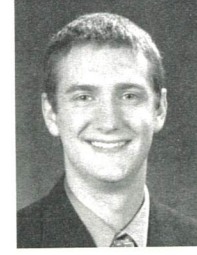
Jessica S. Bohl ●
Wildomar, Calif.



Kevin M. Boushek ■
Citrus Heights, Calif.



Connie L. Brandt ●
Cedarburg, Wis.



Scott D. Brown ◆
Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.



Jessica R. Bryson ●
Torrance, Calif.



Hannah I. Buschkopf ◆
Milwaukee, Wis.

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



Nicholas J. Bush ◆
Racine, Wis.



Jacquelyn N. Colletta ●
San Jose, Calif.



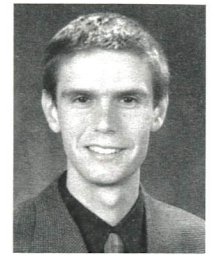
Zachary J. Cvikel ◆
Jackson, Wis.



Jonathan A. Dannecker ◆
Milwaukee, Wis.



Joel T. Davidson ●
Weston, Wis.



Casey J. De Frain ●
Phoenix, Ariz.



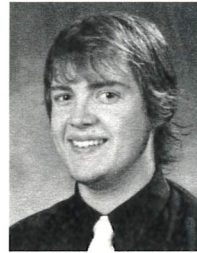
Leah R. Dose ●
Fairfax, Minn.



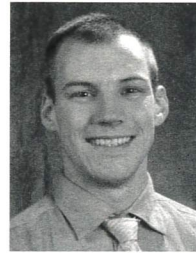
Katie E. Duffee ●
North Mankato, Minn.



Rachel G. Duncan ●
Nicollet, Minn.



Jason A. Enderle ■
Clear Lake, S.D.



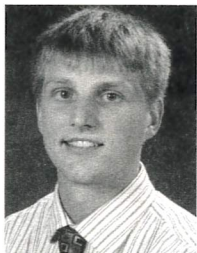
Philip N. Ewerdt ●
New Ulm, Minn.



Jessie M. Fields ●
Bradenton, Fla.



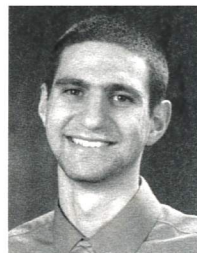
Rebecca H. Finke ●
East Brunswick, N.J.



Joel T. Fischer ◆
Wilmet, Wis.



Jennifer L. Foelske ●
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



Andrew C. Franzo ■
Emmaus, Pa.



Joshua G. Free ■
Plover, Wis.



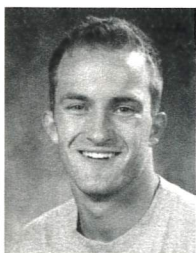
Patrick S. Freese ■
Tucson, Ariz.



Rachel M. Friend ●
Westminster, Colo.



Sarah J. Fritzler ★
Owosso, Mich.



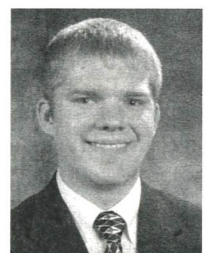
James P. Garrison ▲
Milwaukee, Wis.



Daniel P. Gawrisch ◆
New Berlin, Wis.



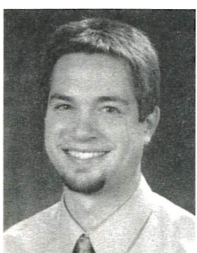
Zachary A. Gebert ■
Georgetown, Tex.



Seth A. Georgson ■
Watertown, Wis.



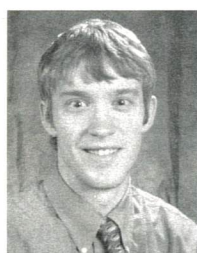
Beckie L. Gilbert ●
Lake Geneva, Wis.



Joshua J. Gorske ◆
Appleton, Wis.



Elizabeth A. Gumm ●
Loves Park, Ill.



Bradley P. Gurgel ●
Mequon, Wis.



Nickolas P. Haasch ■
Cambridge, Wis.

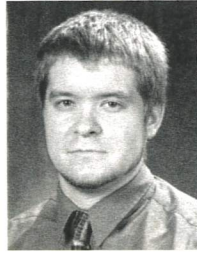


Aaron M. Hartwig ★
Hemlock, Mich.

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



Jessica M. Hegman ★
Mequon, Wis.



George E. Hella II ●
Watertown, Wis.



Lynn M. Heschke ●
Waupaca, Wis.



Anna C. Horneber ●
Pittsford, N.Y.



Destinee R. Jaeger ●
Two Rivers, Wis.



Stephanie A. Jones ◆
Las Vegas, Nev.



Jamie L. Jurek ●
Saginaw, Mich.



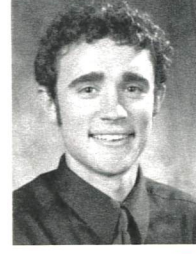
Stephen H. Kamps ●
Coleman, Wis.



Erin R. Kanter ◆
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



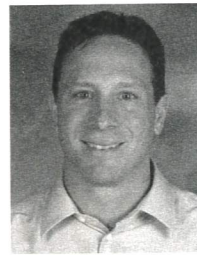
Mark D. Knickelbein ◆
West Allis, Wis.



Michael W. Koepke ■
Saginaw, Mich.



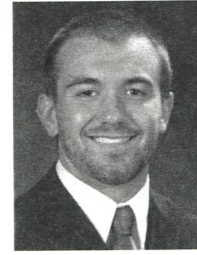
Lisa M. Komay ●
Onalaska, Wis.



Brett T. Kriese *
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



Jonathan A. Laabs ◆
Kiel, Wis.



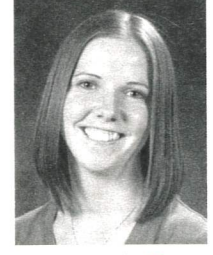
Daniel J. Laitinen ■
New Ulm, Minn.



Ashley R. Lecker ●
Saginaw, Mich.



Allison R. Leibner ★
Tavares, Fla.



Emily C. Lemke ●
Weyauwega, Wis.



Amanda M. Lewig ●
Watertown, Wis.



Daniel I. Lewig ■
St. Petersburg, Fla.



David P. Liebhard ◆
Albuquerque, N.M.



Daniel R. Maki ◆
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Fiona M. Matlock ●
Chugiak, Alaska



Timothy J. Matthies II ■
Lake Mills, Wis.



Lisa B. McKenney ●
Lake Mills, Wis.



Shawna M. Mehlberg ★
West Bend, Wis.



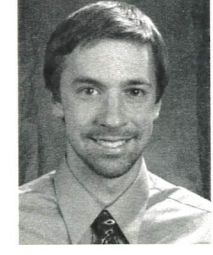
Marshall J. Milbrath ◆
Owosso, Mich.



Amanda A. Miller ●
Douglas, Mass.



Meredith L. Moeller ●
Watertown, Wis.



Philip M. Moldenhauer ■
New Ulm, Minn.

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



Stephanie M. Moldenhauer ◆
New Ulm, Minn.



Amy M. Mottl ●
Green Bay, Wis.



Amanda J. Musinski ●
Lake Orion, Mich.



Nathan C. Nass ■
New Ulm, Minn.



Rachel L. Nass ★
Racine, Wis.



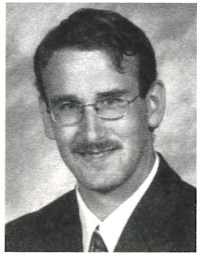
Claire E. Natsis ◆
Saline, Mich.



Daniel T. Naumann ■
Benton Harbor, Mich.



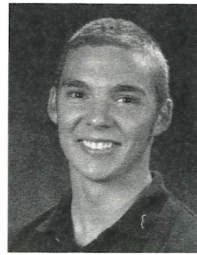
Emily A. Nefstead ●
Milwaukee, Wis.



Bradley G. Nehls ◆
Hustisford, Wis.



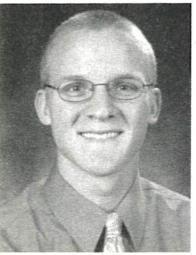
Andrea E. Neumann ●
New Ulm, Minn.



Andrew C. Olson ●
Wildomar, Calif.



Martin R. Pagel ◆
Moline, Ill.



Brian D. Papenfuss ●
Pewaukee, Wis.



Timothy S. Payne ◆
New Ulm, Minn.



Sarah E. Priestap ★
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



Corinn E. Pyscher ●
Saginaw, Mich.



Jennifer L. Quint ●
Bemidji, Minn.



Kelley M. Randall ●
Redford, Mich.



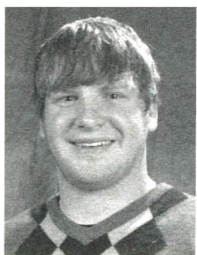
Philip J. Randall ■
Milwaukee, Wis.



Rebecca K. Rixe ★
Graceville, Minn.



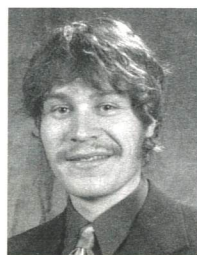
Brian J. Roloff ▲
Wausau, Wis.



Michael D. Ross ●
Neenah, Wis.



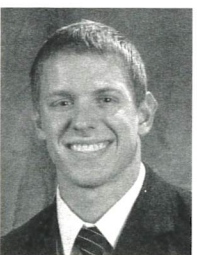
Scott T. Salesky ◆
Davison, Mich.



Karl G. Schauland ■
Lewiston, Minn.



Ryan R. Schlicht ■
Sturgeon Bay, Wis.



Samuel S. Schlicht ■
Morris, Minn.



Miriam J. Schlieve ●
Vesta, Minn.



Tiffany R. Schlough ●
Ridgeland, Wis.

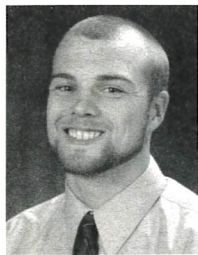


Heidi K. Schone ●
New Ulm, Minn.



Brian D. Schultz ★
Merrill, Mich.

★ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Early Childhood Education
◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
▲ Master of Science in Education



Jacob M. Schwartz ■
Waterloo, Wis.



Jamie L. Schwartz ●
Morton Grove, Ill.



Jasper B. Sellnow ■
Madison, Wis.



Stephanie L. Sellnow ●
Wyoming, Mich.



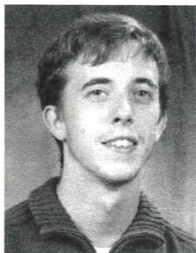
Rachel L. Shimek ◆
La Crosse, Wis.



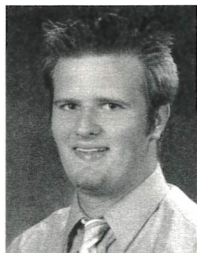
Kristi K. Slovik ●
Eagle, Wis.



Emily G. Smith ●
Hastings, Neb.



Stefan J. Sonnenfeld ■
Winona, Minn.



Jeffrey H. Sonntag ■
Milwaukee, Wis.



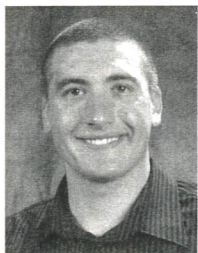
Joshua D. Stine ■
Waukesha, Wis.



Elizabeth M. Strong ★
Loretto, Minn.



Shanna L. Stubalt ●
San Jose, Calif.



Luke I. Tembreull ■
Maplewood, Minn.



Mark G. Thiesfeldt ●
New Ulm, Minn.



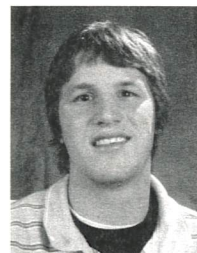
Christopher M. Tredler ●
Stevensville, Mich.



Linden A. Valus ●
Swartz Creek, Mich.



Elizabeth A. Vander Galien ●
Lowell, Wis.



Douglas D. Voss ■
Aurora, Colo.



Joel A. Voss ■
Williamston, Mich.



Daniel W. Waldschmidt ■
Greenfield, Wis.



Bethany R. Warnecke ●
Watertown, Wis.



Ian P. Watson ◆
Temecula, Calif.



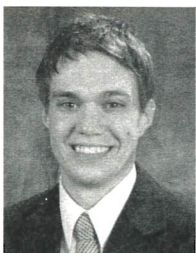
Allison L. Weihing ●
Hastings, Minn.



Mark J. Weinkauf ●
Mukwonago, Wis.



Benton J. Witte ●
Crete, Ill.



Joseph M. Woldt ◆
Jackson, Wis.



Benjamin P. Workentine ■
New Ulm, Minn.



Peter G. Zaferos ■
Watertown, Wis.



Nathan G. Zastrow ■
Mayville, Wis.

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

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

CALL ASSIGNMENTS

On May 17, the Conference of Presidents assigned 91 new and previous teacher and staff minister candidates out of the 100 who were available for assignment to any location. Thirteen May 2008 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, 27 new and previous candidates are available for calls from congregations through their district presidents. Additional calls and assignments have been made since May 17.

To see a list, go to www.mlc-wels.edu/home/academics/resources/assignments.

- Alonte, Alissa M.**, to Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio
Beck, Leah R., to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.
Biebert, Zachary M., to Memorial, Williamston, Mich.
Biedenbender, Amy B., to Zion, Toledo, Ohio
Bohl, Adam R., to St. John, Princeton, Wis.
Brandt, Connie L., to Hope Lutheran Early Learning Center, Manhattan, Kan.
Brown, Scott D., to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
Burfeind, Amanda R., to St. John's, Pardeeville, Wis.
Burmeister, Jessica L., to Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.
Buschkopf, Hannah I., to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee, Wis.
Bush, Nicholas J., to Zion, Torrance, Calif.
Cvikel, Zachary J., to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.
Davidson, Joel T., to St. Bartholomew, Kawkawlin, Mich.
De Frain, Casey J., to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.
Dodge, David L., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Drkula, Tony P., to St. John, St. Paul, Minn.
Dunn, Amanda M., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Eich, Philip D., to St. John, Bay City, Mich.
Ewerdt, Philip N., to St. John, St. Paul, Minn.
Fischer, Joel T., to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.
Friend, Rachel M., to St. John, Lake City, Minn.
Gawrisch, Daniel P., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Gilbert, Beckie L., to Nozomi (Hope), Tsuchiura Ibaraki, Japan
Gorske, Joshua J., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.
Gurgel, Bradley P., to Living Word Christian Academy, Mission Viejo, Calif.
Hegman, Jessica M., to The Genesis Academy, Houston, Tex.
Hella II, George E., to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.
Henchen, Rossi-Kay, to Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Horneber, Anna C., to St. John, Montello, Wis.
Hunter, Samuel A., to St. John, Newburg, Wis.
Jones, Stephanie A., to Messiah, North Hollywood, Calif.
Jurek, Jamie L., to Trinity, El Paso, Tex.
Kamps, Stephen H., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kanter, Erin R., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.
Kionka, Rachel L., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Komay, Lisa M., to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.
Laabs, Jonathan A., to Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.
Lecker, Ashley R., to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Liebhard, David P., to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.
Maki, Daniel R., to Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio
McKenney, Lisa B., to Zion, Egg Harbor, Wis.
Mehlberg, Shawna M., to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Miller, Amanda A., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
Moeller, Meredith L., to St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis.
Mottl, Amy M., to Immanuel, Sault Sainte Marie, Mich.
Musinski, Amanda J., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Nass, Rachel L., to Jesus Loves Me Learning Center, Jackson, Mich.
Nefstead, Emily A., to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.
Olson, Andrew C., to Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.
Pagel, Martin R., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Papenfuss Brian D., to Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis.
Payne, Timothy S., to St. Paul, Bangor, Wis.
Pickart, Joshua L., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.
Polzin, Margaret E., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Pyscher, Corinn E., to Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo.
Quint, Jennifer L., to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.
Rathje, Stefanie L., to St. Peter's, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Rixe, Rebecca K., to St. Luke, Kenosha, Wis.
Ross, Michael D., to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
Schiewe, Miriam J., to Christ-St. John's, West Salem, Wis.
Schlough, Tiffany R., to St. John, Newark, Del.
Schone, Heidi K., to Good Shepherd, Saint Peters, Mo.
Schultz, Brian D., to Abiding Word, Houston, Tex.
Shimek, Rachel L., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Slovik, Kristi K., to Immanuel, Hutchinson, Minn.
Springer, Benjamin D., to St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.
Steindorf, Erin N., to Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.
Thiesfeldt, Mark G., to English, Viroqua, Wis.
Treder, Christopher M., to Messiah, North Hollywood, Calif.
Vander Galien, Elizabeth A., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Wagie, Laura R., to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
Watson, Ian P., to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.
Wessel, Kristina J., to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.
Witte, Benton J., to Riverview, Appleton, Wis.
Woldt, Joseph M., to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.

Record-setting storms surge through Midwest

In early June, the Midwest portion of the United States was devastated by a series of storms that produced tornadoes, record rains, and widespread flooding and destruction across the region. With cleanup and recovery efforts underway, government agencies are estimating the damage will reach hundreds of millions of dollars.

As waters continue to recede, WELS congregations are reporting that their members are safe, but many have experienced property damage—some even lost their homes. Worship facilities, for the most part, do not seem to be as severely affected.

WELS Relief has traveled to some of the hardest-hit areas in the Midwest to assess damage and help affected congregations develop

long-term ministry plans. WELS Relief initially donated \$100,000 to help with flooding problems in Iowa and Wisconsin and will continue to work with individuals, congregations, and communities that need assistance.

“I certainly encourage people to contact us if they need help,” says Pastor Philip Schupmann, chairman of WELS Relief. “We stand ready to help any of our congregations—their members and their communities.”

At the time this article was written, limited information was available since many areas were still flooded. For updates or for information on how you can support relief efforts, visit www.welsrelief.net.



A typical view of the streets after the floods.

Congregation helps community recover after tornado

Residents of Hugo, Minn., are still recovering after a category F3 tornado rocked the town of 12,000 this spring. A young boy died and eight others were seriously injured in the storm, which caused an estimated \$22 million of damage.



Volunteers from Christ, Hugo, Minn., helped with cleanup efforts following an F3 tornado that hit their town May 25.

Two WELS families, members of Christ in Hugo, were among those who lost their homes in the storm. Matt Hennig, pastor at Christ, says the storm also affected a number of other members—but thankfully no one was injured. “Sunday night and all day Monday I was getting phone calls

from members asking, ‘Were families affected from our church? What can we do to help?’” he says.

Volunteers from across the state lined up to help the suffering community. Hennig says he and 13 of his members got together to help clean up—and all of them wore religious T-shirts. “Our members did a great job of just sharing their faith in Christ and talking with people in general,” he says. “And it was neat to see the kind of response that we got: we were on the local news and our picture was in the newspaper.”

But that’s not the only opportunity they had to witness. The night of the storm, Hennig and nearly 400 other families in the neighborhood were forced to evacuate to the nearby public school. That school, which is rented by Christ for a worship facility, had been designated as an emergency shelter by the Red Cross.

“Everyone was supposed to report to the center immediately following the tornado,” says Hennig. “That was

also a unique opportunity: I let the Red Cross workers know I was a local pastor and if anyone needed counseling I would be there.”

Hennig says he read Psalm 46 and talked with a number of families, including neighbors of the family that lost a child. “When someone goes through something tragic like this, you want to take the time to listen to their story but then also assure them that they have a loving God who is greater than sin and greater than any tragedies we can face,” he says.

In the days following the storm, the school remained open as a shelter for those whose homes were destroyed. Hennig says his members helped where they could, many donating food and blankets and helping with meals.

The following Sunday, Christ had a special outdoor service—and Hennig says he recognized the faces of a family from the shelter. “You can just see God’s hand using the bad for his good,” says Hennig. “People have their earthly dreams shattered, their homes torn apart, but then suddenly God opens their eyes to their eternal mansion waiting for them in heaven.”

First graduates of master's program

One hundred thirty-seven students graduated May 17 from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. Among them were Brett Kriese and Aaron Hartwig, the first two to complete the Master of Science in Education program at MLC. Kriese and Hartwig, both former MLC grads, currently serve at Lutheran elementary schools.

Kriese, fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Pilgrim Lutheran School, Menomonee Falls, Wis., had been searching for a graduate program in the Milwaukee area before discovering that one was being offered through MLC. "When the first class was offered in the summer of 2004, I jumped at the opportunity to continue my education and take credits to renew my teaching license," remembers Kriese.

Hartwig, principal and upper-grades teacher at St. John Lutheran School, Hemlock, Mich., says he signed up for classes because he wanted to keep pace with the latest education research, methodology, and technology applications. Both say they learned a lot from the professors and the classes, which applied to their daily routine in the classroom and to their teaching ministry as a whole.

Before these graduate-level courses were offered, more than 700 people had been taking continuing education courses each summer at MLC, according to Dr. David Wendler, director of

graduate studies at MLC. "[The master's program] really began with inquiries from the field and a feeling on the part of MLC that we should formalize our continuing education program," he says. "Then that got impetus from the 1999 synod convention." Five years later, after working through the accreditation process, MLC was authorized to offer five graduate-level courses.

Twenty-four classes are now offered online, and more than 50 students are currently enrolled. "All of the courses are applicable to our Christian schools," says Wendler, "and we work to make sure we have a good balance of theory and practice because we want to help teachers further Christian education in their schools and in WELS."

Wendler says he is excited that two teachers have completed the program and hopes many more will enroll. "If you're not continually studying and learning, you're just treading water—or you're going backward," he says. "This enables teachers to stay current, to really reflect on Christian education, and take a deep look at how they can expand their ministry to children and adults in their schools and congregations. That's a major thrust of mine—that we really use this program as an outreach tool."

For more information about the program, visit www.mlc-wels.edu/home/academics/graduate.

New DVD and Bible study discuss suicide

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc. (WLIM) has put together a DVD and Bible study called *Dealing with Suicide—Surviving and Healing* for congregational use. The project flowed out of WLIM's 2007 annual meeting, which focused on suicide.

A main goal of the DVD and Bible study is to start a dialogue. "People don't have a way to begin talking about [suicide]," says Pastor Ken Wenzel, a WLIM chaplain and author of the Bible study. "It has a stigma about it; people don't want to hear about it and don't want to talk about it."

According to Wenzel, this is detrimental to the healing process. His goal with the study is to help people share their stories about suicide. "Listening to stories—whether it's your own story or someone else's story—and letting people express their feelings is really a key part."

The three-part study includes interviews with people who have tried to commit suicide or have had a loved one commit suicide. It also looks at warning signs and preventative measures and discusses what to say and what not to say to someone affected by a suicide.

"Christians are in a unique position to provide care for survivors by using the Word of God and letting the Lord do the healing," says Wenzel.

To order a copy of the DVD and Bible study, call WLIM at 414-259-8122. Read a Q&A about suicide on p. 9.



Aaron Hartwig (left) and Brett Kriese were the first two to complete the Master of Science in Education program at Martin Luther College.

Meet the editorial staff — uncut

Ever ask yourself, “Who are these people who write for Forward in Christ magazine?” Through this series you can find out. Read on:

One of the things Pastor Bruce McKenney, the newest contributing editor for *Forward in Christ*, enjoys is teaching Bible class. “The thing I love most of all is not just presenting the truth of God’s Word but also letting people share their experiences in Bible class,” he says. “You can learn so much [from them].”

In his new Bible study for FIC, McKenney will be sharing some of his own experiences as a parish pastor to illustrate important truths on death and dying, the topic for his study that starts this month (p. 37).

This topic has been important to him since his high school years, when he attended a public high school in Marinette, Wis. A number of his classmates died tragically during those years, and he was disturbed by the lack of gospel comfort at their funerals. “When people are grieving the loss of a loved one, they have to have a pastor stand at the casket and say, ‘It’s going to be okay

because in Christ we’re going to be together again,’” he says.

He continues, “I have a passion or that. I’m not afraid to be at the side of someone who’s dying or to stand by loved ones at a casket because there’s nothing more important to do than that.”

To be able to help people in their time of need was just one of the reasons McKenney decided to become a pastor. Although several colleges were recruiting him to play basketball, he went on to Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis., and then Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, where he graduated in 1984. He served at Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis., and currently is pastor at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.

While attending Northwestern College, McKenney met his wife, Lois Spaude, the daughter of his Hebrew professor. “He showed me reverse discrimination, though he would argue that point,” McKenney says, jokingly. He and his wife have four children: Rachel, 26; Joel, 24; Lisa, 22; and Laura, 20.



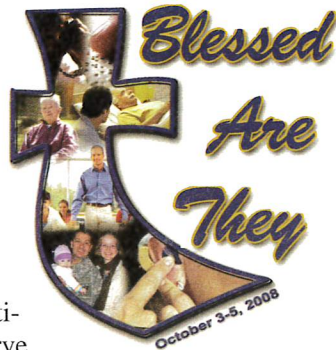
Pastor Bruce McKenney

McKenney feels privileged to be able to share the gospel with people at all different stages of their lives. “It’s incredible to see the power of the gospel,” he says. “You’re visiting someone who is dying or very sick or having trouble and you bring them the Word of God and hear their confession of faith. You walk away and say, ‘I can’t believe that I was the one privileged to hear that.’ No one can put a price on that. It’s just unbelievable.”

WELS news briefs

Commission on Special Ministries 414-256-3241; csm@sab.wels.net

On Oct. 3-5, WELS Special Ministries will host its **national conference** in Brookfield, Wis. Through featured speakers, workshops, panel discussions, ministry huddles, and networking opportunities, pastors, teachers, and laypeople can discover practical and effective ways to serve people with special needs or in special circumstances. Leaders of the eight areas of Special Ministries—prison ministry, deaf and hard of hearing, visually impaired, mental health needs, military services, special education, care for called workers, and health and wellness—will be available for questions and discussions. Thrivent Financial



for Lutherans is providing partial funding for this conference. For more information or to register, go to www.wels.net/jump/smconference or call 414-256-3241.

Commission on Youth Discipleship 414-256-3274; cyd@sab.wels.net

Due to cost-saving measures, three quarterly newsletters from Youth Discipleship—*Partners*, *REACH!*, and *Sowers & Seeds*—will now only be available online. Even though paper copies won’t be mailed, these publications—providing information on Sunday school ministry, youth ministry, and early childhood education—will continue to include pertinent articles and information to help individuals and congregations with these ministries. You can view PDFs of the newsletters as well as sign up to be notified by e-mail when new material is put online at www.wels.net/jump/cydnews.

These updates are from the offices of the synod administration building at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

District news

Dakota-Montana

More than 100 people attended the May 4 dedication service for the new worship facility of **Christ Our King, Lewistown, Mont.** The building was purchased in June 2007 with a matching funds grant from WELS Church Extension Fund; the congregation previously worshiped in the basement of a rented office building.

Minnesota

Rachel Kionka, a 2007 graduate of Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., won this year's MLC Thalassa Prize for her essay, "One in Christ," which reflected on her year of teaching at Sir Harry Johnston International School in Zomba, Malawi. Kionka received \$500, and \$500 will be donated to the mission of her choice. She and almost 50 other MLC students and graduates taught overseas last year through MLC's Daylight International program.

The grand opening of **The Lutheran Home Association's Kingsway Retirement Living** in Belle Plaine, Minn., was held June 21. A dedication service also took place for the center, which features German architecture and a German Town Center (the Market Platz), where residents can eat at the restaurants or visit the Rathskeller Pub. The new center also features a gift shop, beauty salon, lounges, a bank, business center, therapeutic massage room, and billiards room.

South Atlantic



Peggy Nead and Ken Lance, members at Redeemer, Merritt Island, Fla., are faithful customers at a local Chinese buffet and friends of the owners. Jason, the restaurant manager (pictured with Nead and Lance), agreed to donate coins from the restaurant's fountain to Redeemer, which in turn sent the \$320 to Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong.

Southeastern Wisconsin

Several students and faculty members from **Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.**, together with instructors from **Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Milwaukee**, met at Camp Minikani in Hubertus, Wis., April 13-14 for a peer leadership conference. Students

Southeastern Wisconsin



More than 30 people showed up on motorcycles and rode 90 miles throughout Milwaukee, Wis., on June 21 as part of the first annual Sanctity of Unborn Life (SOUL) Ride. The event was sponsored by WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee to support pro-life pregnancy services in Greater Milwaukee. "The riders loved the route and everything about the day," says Peter Georgson, executive director of WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee. "The gospel was shared both before and after the ride, and we were able to talk about WELS Lutherans for Life and raise awareness of what the organization has been doing in Milwaukee for 25 years."

learned how to be a leader and help their friends—and more importantly, to lay all problems at the foot of the cross. "We are always going to have troubles in life," says Peter Plagenz, a sophomore who attended. "But whatever they are, we can find refuge in the Lord."

Christian Life Resources, a national pro-life, pro-family organization affiliated with WELS, recently moved its offices and retail store from Milwaukee to Richfield, Wis. According to Pastor Robert Fleischmann, national director, the new location acts as a gigantic information center and provides opportunities for "drive-by witnessing" to the public. The new address is 3070 Helsan Dr, Richfield WI 53076-9582. Call 800-729-9535 for more information.

Happy anniversary!

D-M—**Willow Lake, Willow Lake, S.D.**, celebrated 85 years on June 15.

NE—**St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.**, celebrated 100 years on April 27.

NW—**Mr. Dennis Oldenburg** celebrated 45 years in the teaching ministry in June.

Trinity, Marinette, Wis., celebrated 125 years on Aug. 17.

SEW—**Nathanael, Milwaukee, Wis.**, celebrated 50 years on Aug. 3.

The district reporters for this month are: D-M—Wayne Rouse; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Timothy Kemnitz; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Chris Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY**Pastors**

Cole, Daniel L., to St. John, Maribel, Wis.
Cortez, Kevin L., to St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio
Hallemeier, Mark L., to retirement
Hochmuth, Donald F., to retirement
Huehn, Burgess A., to retirement
Krueger, Robert M., to Ascension, Crossville, Tenn.
Schwab, Rodney R., to Trinity, Elkton, Mich.
Toppe, John F., to St. Paul, Ridgeland, Wis.
Zittlow, Paul R., to retirement

Teachers

Anderson, Sharon M., to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.
Biesterfeld, Chad A., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Biesterfeld, Laura A., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Burgess, Rachel L., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
Ebeling, Elizabeth E., to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.
Falck, Karena S., to Bright Beginnings, Menasha, Wis.
Foelske, Jennifer, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Foelske, Rachel A., to St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.
Frey, Kimberly J., to Redeemer, Rice Lake, Wis.
Gumm, Elizabeth A., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Hansen, Cheri, to Trinity, Bangor, Mich.
Harris, Melissa A., to Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.
Hermanson, Carol J., to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.
Hoogervorst, Laura, to The Hope High School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Jones, Elizabeth A., to Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.
Kasten, Kenneth C., to St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.
Kohler, Anthony D., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.
Liesener, Kimberly A., to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Lindke, Sarah E., to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
Matter, Karla J., to Bethlehem, Germantown, Wis.
Miller, Martin M., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Moldenhauer, Stephanie M., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Moore, Candace B., to retirement
Nicoline, Kimberly D., to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
Parker Fedewa, Rebecca, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Reinemann, Dave H., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

Rimpel, Joshua T., to Our Savior, San Antonio, Tex.
Rydecki, Krista L., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
Schiebel, Matthew L., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Schroeder, Terri E., to St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.
Shambeau, Michelle, to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.
Smith, LaShawn C., to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.
Turriff, Janine A., to Grace, Yakima, Wash.
Underwood, Denise L., to Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz.
Utecht, Laurel E., to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minn.
Wirt, Erin E., to Hope Christian School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Wodack, Jennifer E., to St. Paul, North Fond du Lac, Wis.
Zinke, Sharon A., to retirement

ANNIVERSARIES

Wasilla, Alaska—King of Kings (25). Aug. 3. Worship, 4 P.M.; dinner to follow. Sara Sutton, 907-373-0777; suttons@mtaonline.net.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Nathanael church building (50). Aug. 3. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; luncheon to follow. Tobin Schuster, tobin.j.schuster@gmail.com.
Burlington Wis.—St. John (150). Aug. 3. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; service of thanksgiving, 3 P.M.; potluck dinner to follow. RSVP by July 25. 262-763-8229; office@stjohnsburlington.org.
Jenera, Ohio—Trinity (125). Aug. 10. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; fellowship to follow. Arleen Bolwerk, 419-420-5504; arnjeff@gmail.com.
Red Wing, Minn.—St. John (150). Aug. 15. Concert with Koiné, 7 P.M. Aug. 16. Cemetery walk, music recital, pig roast. Aug. 17. Worship, 9:30 A.M., at Red Wing High School; dinner and program to follow. RSVP requested. Janet Gehlhar, 715-792-5397; jgehlhar@redwing.net.
Marinette, Wis.—Trinity (125). Aug. 17. Worship, 9 A.M.; picnic to follow at Red Arrow Park. Oct. 5. Worship, 9 A.M.; German meal to follow. 715-732-9868.
Wausau, Wis.—Salem (100). Sept. 7. Worship, 3 P.M.; dinner and entertainment to follow. Richard Russow, 715-845-2822; RussowRnK@aol.com.
Allegan, Mich.—St. John (140). Sept. 21. Worship, 3 P.M.; open house and light luncheon to follow. Ron Kruse, 269-673-2079; lutheron@charter.net.
La Crosse, Wis.—Mount Calvary-Grace school (50). Oct. 12. Worship, 11 A.M.; meal to follow at All-Star Banquet Hall. RSVP requested by Sept. 1. Pictures and memories requested ASAP. 608-784-8223, principal@mcglutheran.org or excare@mcglutheran.org.

COMING EVENTS

Retired WELS called worker reunion—Aug. 6. 9:30 A.M. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. J. Fenske, 262-677-2602.

WELS Riders brat fry—Aug. 9. 9 A.M.—3 P.M. Site, Oak Central, Oak Field, Wis. Patrick Stankiewicz, 414-379-4363; pstankiewicz66@yahoo.com.

WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall conference—Sept. 13, 8:30 A.M. Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis. Jan Fleming, 262-547-1961, jrflaming@wi.rr.com or Howard Wilsman, 920-682-5351, hbwilsman511@sbcglobal.net.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium—Sept. 22-23. Theme: "The Church." 262-242-8100; Web site, www.wls.wels.net.

Fall teen retreat—Sept. 26-28. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. 920-787-3202; office@campphillip.com.

Golf tournament—Sept. 27. 2 P.M. Site, Glencoe Country Club. Host, Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn. Jeff Vinkemeier, 952-873-3487.

11th annual Life Banquet and Auction—Sept. 28. 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.

Metro-Milwaukee area Reformation service—Nov. 2. 4 P.M. Site, Wisconsin Lutheran High School auditorium, Milwaukee, Wis. Preacher, Pres. Paul Wendland. Meal and ministry presentations to follow. Sponsored by Greater Milwaukee Area Chapter of WELS Kingdom Workers. 414-771-6848.

A Dance with the Lord pastors' wives' renewal—Nov. 7-8. Burnsville, Minn. Valerie Johnson, 612-267-3017; coordinator@truenorthwels.org. Web site, www.choicesforyou.org/pwrenewal.

Christian Life Resources 2008 National Convention—Nov. 15. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Web site, www.CLRevents.com.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Awareness Retreat—April 24-26, 2009. Byron Center, Brownsville, Wis. Sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service. Elsa Manthey, 920-731-9798; emanthey@wlcsf.org.

NAMES WANTED

Beaumont/Banning, Calif. area—Rick Johnson, 951-734-0923.

Hawaii—service men or women. Charles Gumm, 808-423-7044; pastor@comm-lutheran.org.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Childcare assistant—St. Matthew, Port Washington, Wis., is looking for caring WELS individuals to work part-time afternoon hours with children ages 5-12. Duties will include snack preparation, devotion, and light cleaning. Kirsten Rehborg, 262-284-0792.

Manager—Arizona Lutheran Retirement Center, Phoenix, Ariz., is looking for a full-time, live-in manager for a 24-apartment complex. Handyman skills preferred. Bob King, 602-885-8599.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@sab.wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. View an updated bulletin board at www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard and a calendar at www.wels.net/jump/calendar.

The Good Neighbor

In early June, a series of storms produced record rainfall in several cities across the Midwest—including Fort Atkinson, Wis. In this town of almost 12,000 the rainfall caused the nearby Rock River to flood a good portion of the downtown area. Many evacuated their homes—among them were residents of Golden Living Nursing Home, who found refuge at Bethany, a local WELS church.

"It happened kind of suddenly," says Ethan Steinbrenner, one of the pastors at Bethany. "[The nursing home staff] asked if they could look at our building in case they needed a contingency plan. About a week later the water got high and they called and said, 'We have to come over.' We didn't know what to expect. We just opened our doors and said, 'Do whatever you need to do and we'll help.'"

In just one day, more than 70 senior citizens were transferred to their temporary home in the fellowship hall and Sunday school classrooms of Bethany. "There were about six or seven full-size classrooms that they commandeered," says Steinbrenner. "It was like a triage unit in there, like a refugee [camp]." He says cots, food, oxygen machines, and patient lifts were brought in, and a huge refrigerated semi and dumpster sat outside the church.

Although things were chaotic, Steven Wilkens, the other pastor at Bethany, says the visitors were appreciative of the church's hospitality. "We had residents wheel down to our offices, knock on our door, and say, 'I don't know if anyone's told you this, but thanks for taking care of me,'" he says. "It's just been incredible."

Many from the congregation offered their help; the nursing home staff readily accepted

offers from people who wanted to come in and do activities with the displaced residents.

In another effort to serve the visitors, Bethany broadcast that week's worship services into the fellowship hall so residents could participate in the service if they wished. Wilkens' daughter, Amy, was also married that week, and residents were excited to see the wedding.

"Following the service, she and [her husband] stopped in and talked to the residents," says Wilkens. "We figured it would be a nice thing to do for them."

Steinbrenner says overall this was a positive experience. "We were asked if we could help, and we did what we could," he says. "It's cool to see Christian people banding together to help. And when something like this happens it can be helpful to the general awareness of our congregations in the town."

Read more about connecting to your community on p. 16.

Picture this

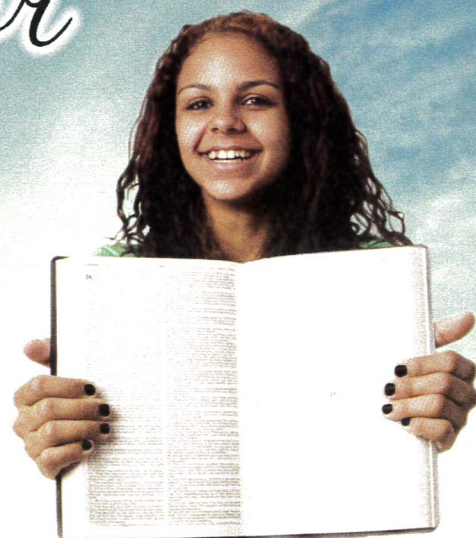


Following their wedding ceremony June 21, Doug and Amy Voss talked with local nursing home residents. More than 70 people from the home were transported to Bethany in Fort Atkinson, Wis., when floodwaters forced them from their regular facilities.



PHOTOS: KARI MUELENTE

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



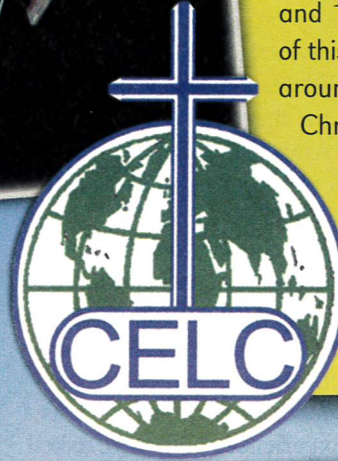
Potluck Poll

When faced with life's challenges, many turn to God's Word for encouragement, comfort, and hope. Throughout your life, which Bible passages have helped or inspired you? Why?

Send your answer by Sept. 15 to *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222 or fic@sab.wels.net. Select answers will be printed in the November issue of *Forward in Christ*.

WORLDWIDE FELLOWSHIP

Approximately 85 people attended the sixth triennial convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in Kiev, Ukraine, in June. WELS and 19 church bodies around the world are part of this fellowship. "These are lonely Lutherans from around the world that are just boosted by fellow Christians," says Dan Koelpin, administrator of WELS World Missions and vice president of the CELC. "They need that encouragement; just like water, it is refreshing to them. And we're uplifted by their faith and courage as well." Learn more about the 20 church bodies at www.celc.info.



Pastor Artur Villares (left) from the Lutheran Church of Portugal and CELC President Steven Petersen

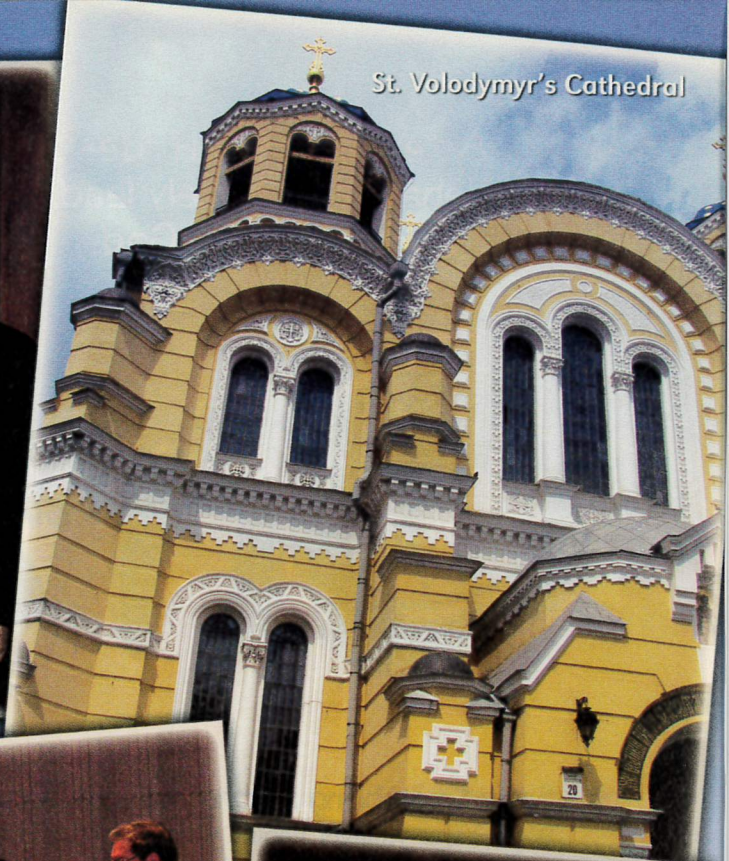
Pastor V'yacheslav Horpynchuk from the Ukrainian Lutheran Church

Enjoying fellowship at mealtime

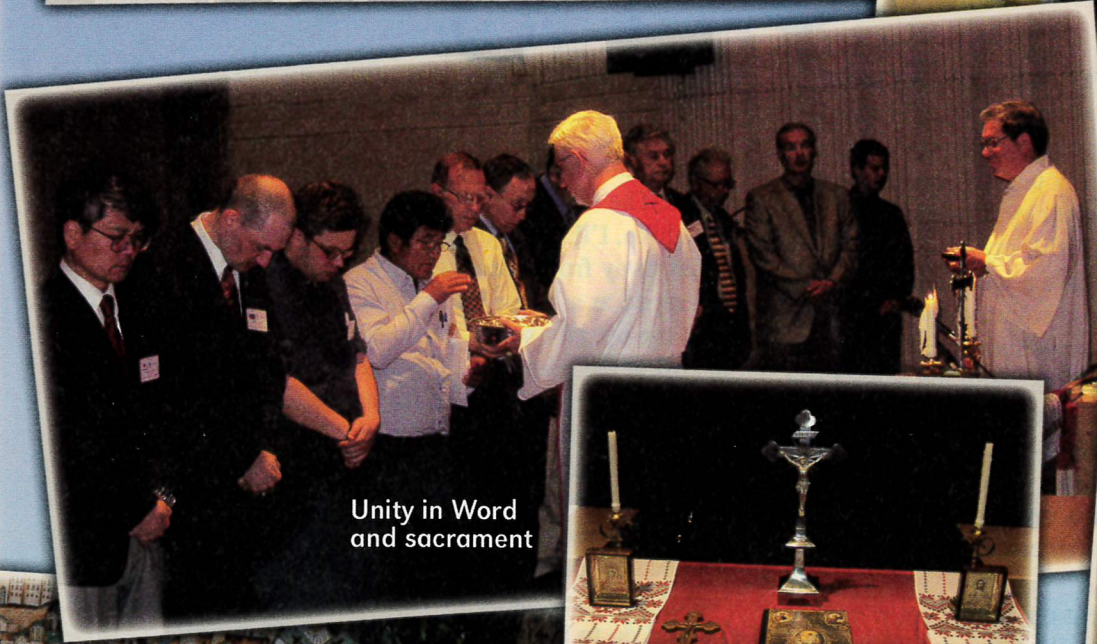
St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery in Kiev



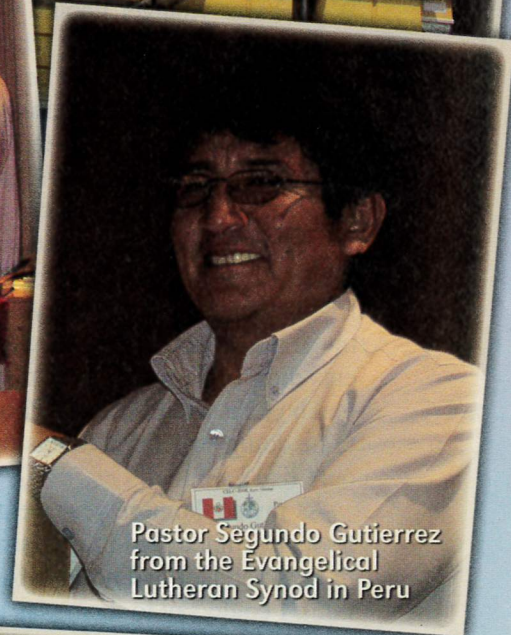
WELS delegation



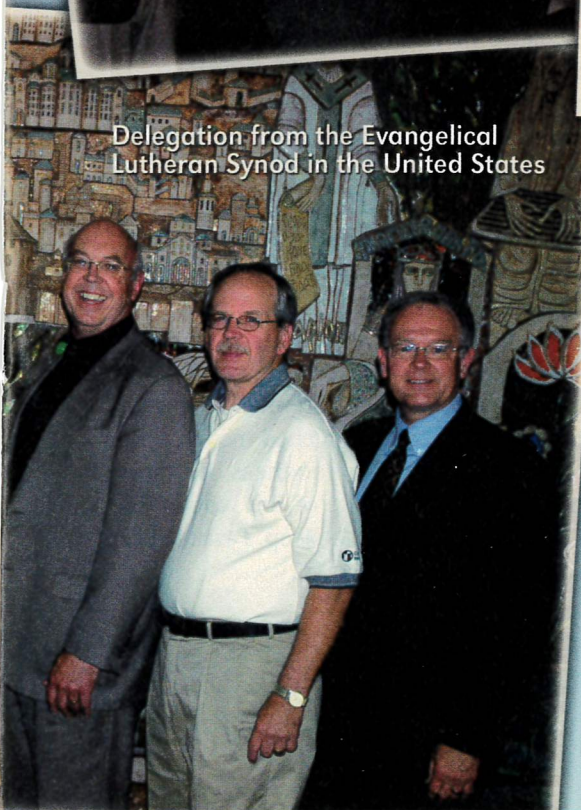
St. Volodymyr's Cathedral



Unity in Word and sacrament



Pastor Segundo Gutierrez from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Peru

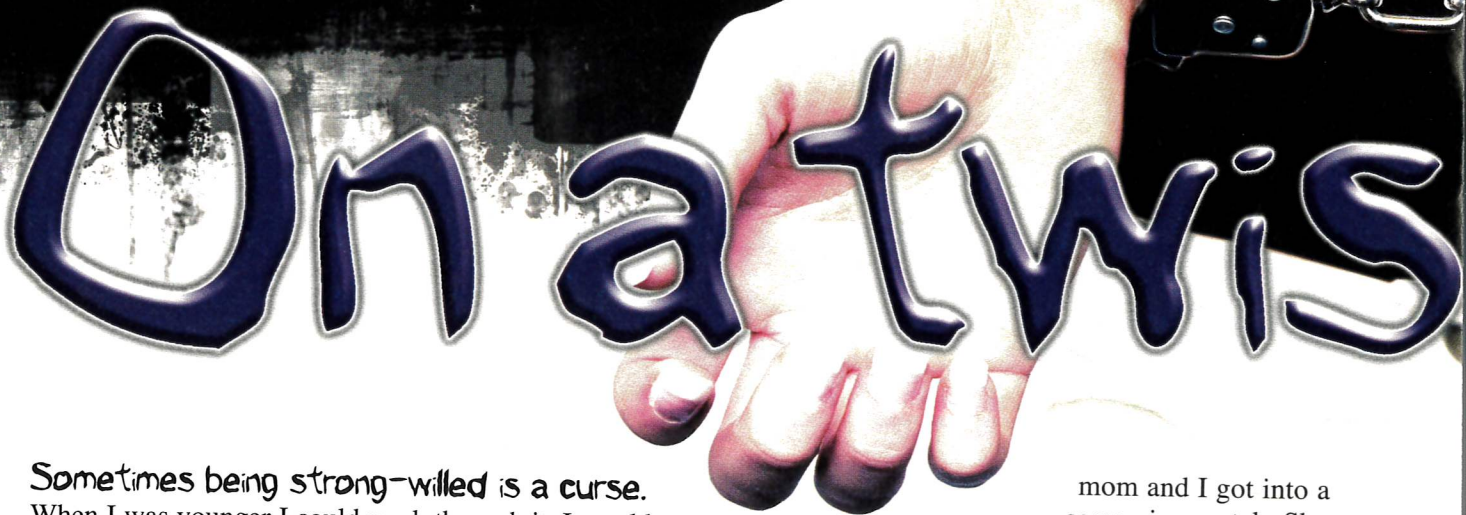


Delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the United States



Ukrainian Lutheran Church choir members

A teenager's self-destructive behavior ultimately leads to stronger faith in God.



Onatw

Sometimes being strong-willed is a curse.

When I was younger I could work through it. I would just get a punishment for whatever happened, and that was the end of it. But as my teenage years rolled around, things started getting sticky. I wanted my freedom to do what I wanted with my life.

I couldn't drive, nor did I have a job. So basically I didn't do much. I did run cross country my freshman year, even made varsity. But sophomore year, I stopped running because of knee problems. With my school and friends about 15 miles away from home, things weren't much fun. I would want to see my friends, but my parents didn't like to drive me to see them because of how much gas it would use up. Plus my parents wanted me to be doing structured things rather than just "hanging out" like I wanted.

As my sophomore year went on, things got worse. I was less interested in my family and more interested in my friends. I had no love for my family. The nicest thing I could say to them was a curse.

A life spiraling out of control

I decided to start smoking. During second semester I began sneaking out on a regular basis to hang out with people my parents didn't like. One time I even got a tattoo. We were gone all night—stayed up, got our tattoos, got a little drunk, and then went to school. I made it on time and even managed to stay awake in all my classes, but still that was really stupid.

After getting that tattoo, my parents decided that they wanted to get me tested to see if I had picked up some disease. On the way back from the doctor's office, my

mom and I got into a screaming match. She ended up pulling over to

the side of the road and told me to get out and walk home. The last thing I heard her say was, "And if you hitchhike, I'll see you in heaven!" I was seven or eight miles away from home. After walking about two miles I stopped at a house and called a friend to come and pick me up. Not sure what to do, he ended up dropping me off at the house of a guy that I was involved with.

The guy and I hung out for the day and then went to a party that night. Around 3 A.M. I knew my family was probably sufficiently freaking out and I should get home, but I still didn't want to. We ended up parking the car somewhere, and I lost my virginity. The sad thing about it is that I did it not so much because I wanted to do it with him, but because I knew it was the one thing that I could do to hurt my mom the most. Then I went home and went to bed.

In the morning I told my parents that I couldn't stand living with them, and they said I couldn't stay anymore. So I ended up living with my pastor and his family and then one of my grade school teachers on and off until the end of July. I would sneak out all the time and do illegal, unhealthy things.

One night at the end of July my parents found out what I was doing. I freaked out, knowing what could happen to me now that my "secret night life" was out of the bag. I called a friend, and he picked me up. I was gone for four days, living off the goodness of others. I even slept in a tent in the middle of the woods one night, because I had nowhere else to sleep. I was labeled



tedpath

a runaway. I still talked to my parents because I had a cell phone, but I wouldn't tell them where I was. I made the "mistake" of telling a friend where I was, and he gave my location to the police. So one night the cops showed up at my boyfriend's house, and I was handcuffed and taken away in a cop car.

My dad picked me up, but I said that I would not live with my family. So I moved into my friend's house. It was a comforting time; they were more like a family than anyone else. I knew I needed to change my ways—and I believe I was starting to—but I needed more help than just not living with my family. Things were just not working or changing for the better with my family.

During these few months I went through the actions of being a Christian, but I really didn't believe it. I didn't care for God or religion. I figured that since it wasn't helping me, why should I bother? That really made things even harder.

A needed change

Desperate for what to do, my parents decided to enroll me in Calvary Academy.* I went to a family counseling session, and they announced their decision. That day I left the real world and was placed in the Calvary bubble—basically complete seclusion from reality. I was made to face up to my problems.

It was a terrible time those first few months, hard on everyone. I will not deny that it was the most difficult 10 months of my entire life, but those 10 months away from everything may have saved my life.

The program is insanely tough. You have to want to change. Living with the girls that I did, I definitely had to appreciate some things about my family. Some of those girls had it way worse than I ever did. They helped me with the personal change I had to make. Well, change through the help of the Holy Spirit anyway. I can never thank those girls and the staff enough. I still miss them!

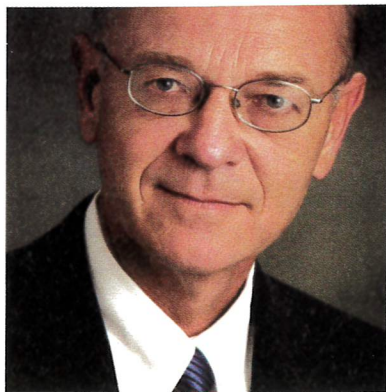
As the months went on I started to work harder. By Christmas things were looking up. I actually cried at the graduation service in June. I almost didn't want to leave. I still can't believe how in a little over a year, things went from a living hell—hating my family and living with other people—to actually living with my family and loving them again.

I know I'm not perfect, nor will I ever be. But the difference between now and then is that there is love and faith in God. We have our ups and downs. As a matter of fact, things are kind of rough right now, especially with my 18th birthday right around the corner. But I believe we can get through this.

I graduate from high school this year, and college is just right around the corner. I know that despite hardships I will always love my family and that my faith in God can only get stronger. Life is good.

Due to the personal nature of the content, the author wishes to remain anonymous.

*Editor's note: Calvary Academy is a WELS ministry that helps troubled youth and their families.



Mark Schweder

A synod that cherishes Christian fellowship

WELS is not among the most widely known Christian church bodies in the United States. In cases where people do know something about WELS, the views expressed are usually not positive. Sad to say, WELS members may become more than a little defensive—maybe even embarrassed—about what we believe and practice.

Why don't we pray and worship with all other Christians?

It is not because we do not believe that there are Christians in other churches. We rejoice that even in churches that have false teachings and practices, by God's grace there are people who have been touched by the gospel and who believe and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

It is not because we believe that we are "better" than people in other Christian churches. We honestly admit that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Each Sunday we confess our own sins but also recognize that we are children of God only by his grace.

It's not because we think we can judge the faith and hearts of other people. We know that only God can do that; the only thing we can use to determine what someone believes is what they say they believe.

Then why don't we pray and worship with all other Christians? The answer lies in one word: love. Love for God's Word. We don't want to do anything to compromise the truth of God's Word. Love for fellow Christians in other churches. We don't want to give people the impression that false teaching is not dangerous to their faith. And finally, love and concern for our own faith. God's Word often warns us not to do anything that will potentially endanger our own faith.

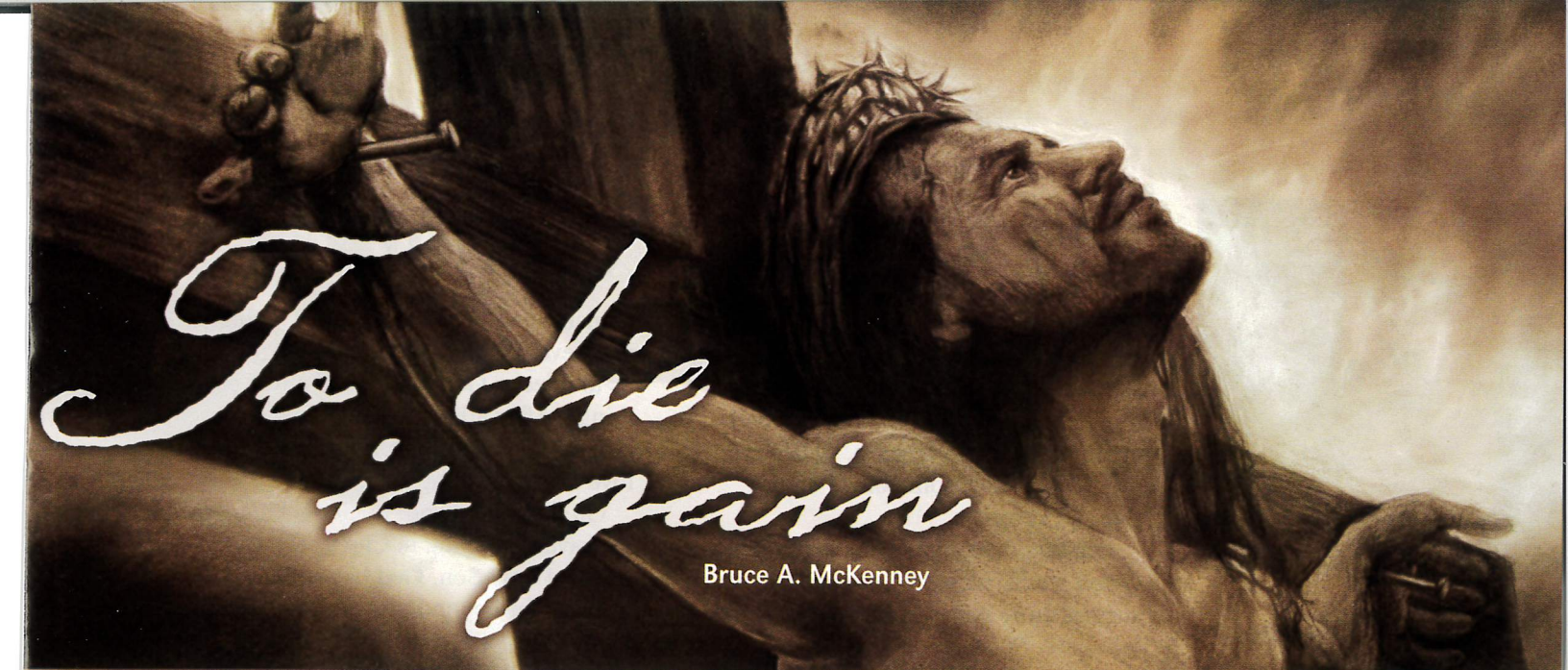
We are a synod that cherishes and values the fellowship and unity of faith that

God himself has given us. When we kneel at the altar to receive Christ's body and blood, we are united not only with Christ, but also with our fellow believers. When we join with others in worship and prayer, we are making a strong public confession that we believe what they believe. When we join with other members of WELS in carrying out mission work, we are carrying out that mission as people who believe the same truths of God's Word and are working to share those same truths with others.

I was privileged to attend an event this June that celebrated such unity. In Kiev, Ukraine, representatives of confessional Lutheran church bodies from around the world gathered at the convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (see pp. 32-33). People there spoke different languages, came from different cultures, and had differing shades of skin color. But as we listened to essays, sang hymns, and shared the Lord's Supper, it was clear that we were fully united in one thing: a Spirit-worked faith in Jesus Christ, based on a united belief in and commitment to the Word of God. As I looked at those people from all over the world, I was filled with thanks to God that, in spite of all of our outward differences, we share a unity of faith, a unity of beliefs, and a unity of purpose.

In WELS, we cherish our unity in faith. Because we cherish it so much, we will never want to lose sight of the privilege we have to express that fellowship with one another—in prayer, in praise, in the Lord's Supper, and in our common mission.

Next: We are a synod with a message that is relevant to life in today's world.



To die is gain

Bruce A. McKenney

A saw that look many times before. Emil had just taken his last breath. When that moment came, Emil seemed to squeeze his eyes together and take a deep gulp. Then it was over.

That's the way death looked on the faces of others I had seen die. It's as though you can see the body "giving up the ghost," or as Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "... the spirit returns to God who gave it."

How God looks at death

Is that how death always looks, or is it more dramatic as shown on TV? Perhaps more important is the question, "How does death look to God?"

The unbelieving scientific world looks at death as just a natural part of the life cycle. But nothing could be further from the truth. Death is a terrible consequence of sin! That's what God told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God had warned them, "When you eat of [the tree] you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). We know what happened next. Adam and Eve disobeyed God. When they bit into that fruit, they tasted death. In this way death has come to us all, because all have sinned. But the sight gets even uglier. Sin not only brought physical death, it also brought eternal death. That's how the holy God looks at death!

But Jesus changed the look of death. That's why he came into this world. "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). And how did Jesus destroy death? He himself died, and God the Father looked upon his Son's death as the payment for our sin. Having made that payment, Jesus rose from the dead, conquering it once and for all.

How we can view death

Now we can look at death differently. In Christ, we can now look upon death as the doorway to eternal life. At the moment of death, the believer's soul goes to heaven to be with the Savior, and the body only sleeps to await the great day of the resurrection of all men.

That's how Jesus looked at the death of Jairus' daughter. When he approached her deathbed, he said, "She is not dead but asleep" (Luke 8:52). They laughed at Jesus. But they weren't laughing when they saw her walk out of her room with Jesus. When Lazarus died, Jesus said he also was only sleeping. So he went to Bethany and woke him from that sleep.

That's the way it will be for all who believe in Jesus. When death comes, our bodies will sleep no matter what happens to them after death. On the last day Jesus will come back to awake them to live forever in heaven.

I don't know whether or not the expression on the face of every person who is dying will be the same as Emil's. I've seen that look many times. But I do know this: when our death comes we can look death square in the face and confess with Job of old, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

Contributing editor Bruce McKenney is pastor at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

This is the first article in a 10-part series on death and dying.

What does death look like?

In Christ, we can now look upon death as the doorway to eternal life.



John O'Brien

My kingdom come?

We would never pray such a petition. Or would we? It seems so arrogant, and yet what I read and hear sometimes makes me wonder if we don't actually mean "my kingdom come," when we pray, "Your kingdom come," in the Lord's Prayer.

Our kingdom, that is, the domain over which we have control, expands as we acquire more money, property, power, or influence. Spouses, children, friends, and colleagues sometimes revolve around us. At least they come and go in our little worlds as we think best. So it seems.

We do have the responsibility to seize every opportunity; make use of the skills we have; work hard; and make a better place for ourselves, our families, even our world. But a virus infects us sometimes along the way—the virus of self-importance.

The world around us fosters it with glitzy advertising for all the good things of life, seminars on self-fulfillment, and workshops designed to help you get what you deserve. Once infected, we begin to think of our lives as our little kingdoms. In effect we believe that we are the monarchs in control of all we survey.

But the infection often gets worse. We invite God into our kingdoms, asking him to make them grow. If we pray, "My kingdom come," God becomes a rabbit's foot we put in our pocket and rub when things get difficult. We also see nothing in the future except what our human eyes can see. We want God to do what we want. Sadly, we ask God only for the crumbs.

This infection becomes fatal—eternally fatal—when we think that our will is better than God's and our kingdom is more important. We turn away from him when he doesn't do what we want. For example,

a financial setback, the death of a child, or a severe injury to one we love prompts us to reject a God who could allow such things. After all, we reason, God is a God of love. Why doesn't he show his love to me by doing what I want?

On the other hand, in God's kingdom, we have everything in Christ. Through his one and only Son, God has stretched our horizon far beyond our limited human view. The horizon of God's kingdom in Christ stretches to eternity. His kingdom has come to us in the simple message of the gospel. We are forgiven, delivered from death, and assured of his constant presence and care.

As citizens of his kingdom, we know that we are royal priests and part of a chosen people—chosen by grace in Christ. Whether we have much or little of the world's crumbs, we are heirs of eternal life. We are content and confident as God conducts the affairs of his kingdom. All things will work out for our ultimate good. We trust that he will do whatever is necessary to bring us to his heavenly home, even if it hurts us here.

When we want only our own kingdoms, we miss the best God has for us. Sometimes I think God has to remind us of that through pain and suffering. In the process, he reminds us that we have so much more than even the best of this world.

So we pray for God's kingdom to come. We wait for its final coming. While we wait, we learn to pray, "Your kingdom come," and look for ways to share the gospel with others. Citizenship in God's kingdom is by faith. So we pray and work to share the gospel of Jesus in order that others may become part of his chosen people—citizens in his kingdom.

GOD'S tool belt for unity

Donald W. Patterson

What needs to be fixed? Lack of confidentiality.

Three pastors used to meet for breakfast every week to build each other up. One day one of them said, "Hey, let's confess to each other a sin that we struggle with so we can pray for and encourage each other." They all agreed. The first pastor confessed, "I struggle with greed. Because of my struggle I have even cheated on my taxes and have been envious of my members." The second pastor said, "I struggle with lust. I try not to, but I find myself lusting at every turn." The third pastor said, "My problem is gossip. All of my life I have tried to keep secrets, but I just can't. When I hear something juicy about someone else I just have to share it with everyone." The three never met again.

What happens when you hear someone sharing other people's problems and sins? You wonder what he will share about you, don't you? When God's people break confidentiality they isolate each other and fracture the body of Christ. The atmosphere that once was full of gospel love and acceptance is now covered with suspicion and embarrassment.

God sees all of our problems and sins, but he does not intend that all people see them too. He wants our eyes fixed firmly on him and his redeeming grace, not the sins of others. He has forgiven our sins. Sins forgiven are best forgotten. He wants us to protect each other's reputation.

Many times people in our churches feel isolated and alone because they realize others have been talking *about* them rather than *with* them. What are we to do? The Word of God guides us:

He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats

the matter separates close friends (Proverbs 17:9).

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you (Matthew 18:15).

The first passage gives us the reasons for protecting another's confidences. The second reminds us to rescue others from sin in a confidential way. Let's study both passages to see how to minister to one another with confidentiality.

Familiarize yourself with the tool

- What motivates us to keep other people's sins confidential?
- How does telling others about someone's failure ruin friendships?
- What can we do if we are troubled by someone's sins and need to talk about it but we don't want to hurt their reputation?
- Why is it important to confront someone alone instead of around others?
- How does confidentiality help all people involved stay Christ-centered?

Use the tool

- Name three people that you trust to keep your confidences. Next time you need to talk to someone about a problem, limit yourself to only those people.
- Name three people who know that you would keep their confidences. Think of three ways you could change to make more people know you can be trusted. Write those ways down and look at them often.
- Make a list of questions to ask yourself before speaking about another person. Share that list at your next family devotion time.

Contributing editor Donald Patterson is pastor at Holy Word, Austin, Texas.

This is the eighth article in a 10-part series on Christian unity. Find this article and answers online after Aug. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net.



A change of

God, in his work of salvation, removes our dead hearts of sin and replaces them with hearts of faith.

Marcus C. Nitz

Near the end of my final year at our seminary, my professor assigned me an Old Testament text for my final sermon. When I first read the text from Ezekiel, I was dismayed. The prophet wrote, “I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). While I knew what it meant to have a change of heart, the picture of removing one’s heart and replacing it with another just did not make sense to me.

Replacing a heart

A good many years later, surgeons at the University of Minnesota, I believe, began doing heart surgery. As dangerous as it seemed, I saw that it was possible for a doctor to open a patient’s chest and do some work on his heart. In fact, a man joined our church and shared that he was one of that special surgeon’s first patients. Yes, he had heart surgery.

In the process of time, heart surgery became rather commonplace, and my mind adjusted to this new level of medical care. And then came another breakthrough: the actual removal of a person’s heart and replacing it with the heart of another person. Doctors became so skilled at this work that they even replaced the hearts of babies. Now the procedure is so commonplace, we

hardly give it a second thought as long as it is not our own heart or the heart of someone close to us.

Then came another breakthrough for me. I learned that Bud, a man who lives about 100 yards from me, has the heart of another man in his chest. It’s been about 10 years since his surgery, and Bud appears to be in good health. He regularly walks past our home, and we often chat a bit. I call him my Miracle Man. His case has given me a better understanding of the prophet Ezekiel’s passage. I realize that Ezekiel wanted to teach his people that God, in his work of salvation, removes our dead hearts of sin and replaces them with hearts of faith.

Using anti-rejection medicine

But Bud recently took me to a new level of understanding when he told me he was going to see his doctor to check how his anti-rejection medicine was working. I have known that trans-

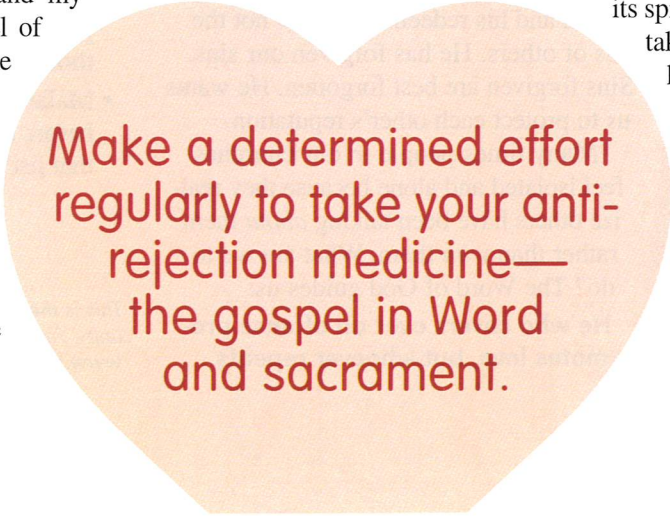
plant patients must take anti-rejection drugs so that their bodies do not reject the transplanted organ. For some reason, however, I did not think of that in Bud’s case.

Suddenly I had a new level of understanding of Ezekiel’s lesson. You see, when a person has had a spiritual heart transplant—that is, a heart that confesses sin and turns to Jesus for forgiveness—he also should have a regular dose of God’s anti-rejection drug: his grace through Word and sacrament.

The big difference is that it soon becomes evident when a recipient’s body is rejecting the new heart. It is not all that obvious when a spiritually transplanted heart is being rejected. No thermometer, stethoscope, or procedure can measure faith. But there are some signs of rejection: failure to attend worship, failure to read the Bible, failure to partake of Holy Communion.

Only God and the person himself can look into his heart and determine its spiritual condition. I invite you to take a good look at your own heart. And I urge you to make a determined effort regularly to take your anti-rejection medicine—the gospel in Word and sacrament.

Marcus Nitz, a retired pastor, is a member of Grace, Yorba Linda, California.



Make a determined effort regularly to take your anti-rejection medicine—the gospel in Word and sacrament.