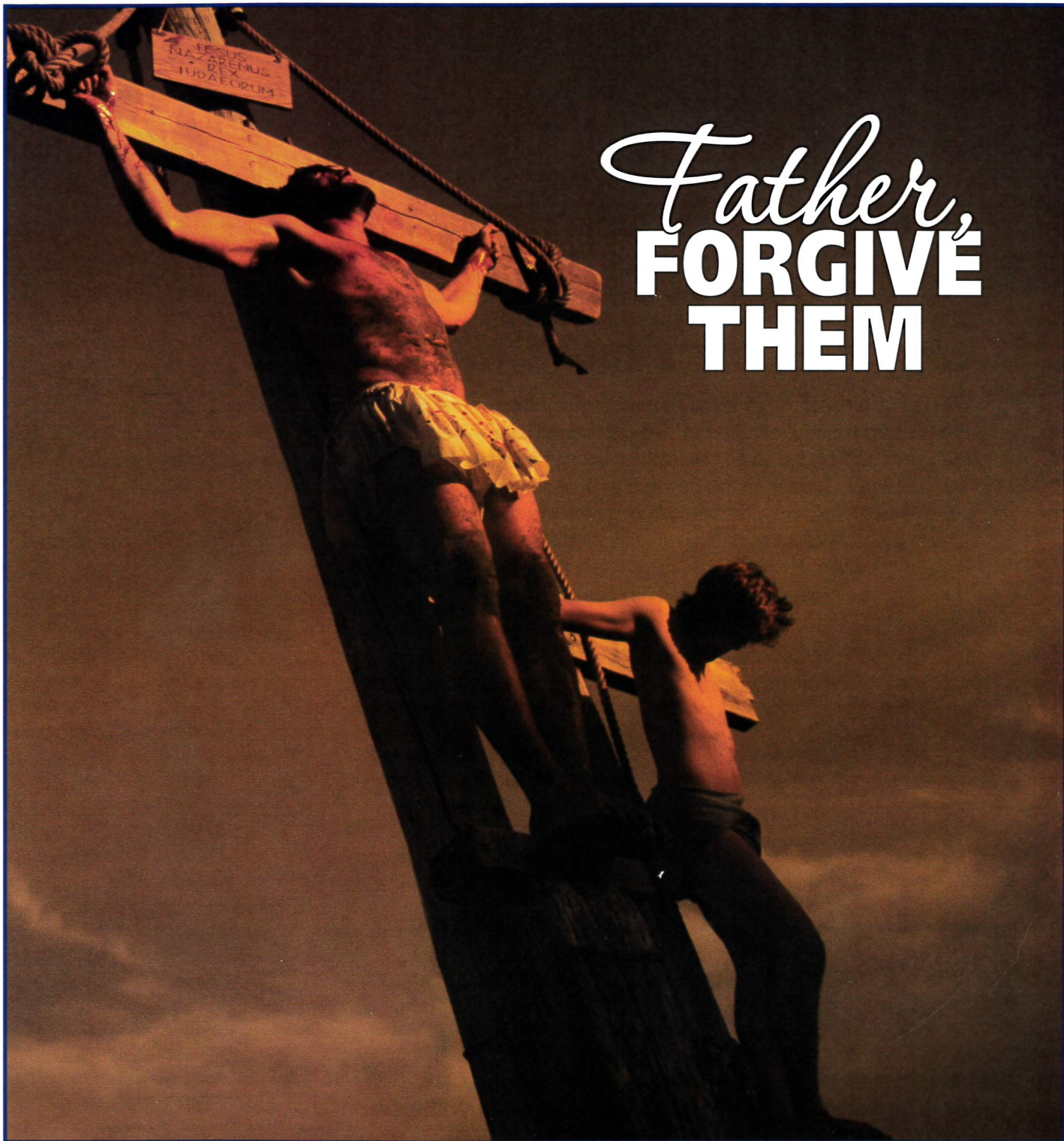


THE HIDDEN GOD • CREMATION • ST. PHILIP


MARCH 2009

# Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness



*Father,*  
**FORGIVE  
THEM**



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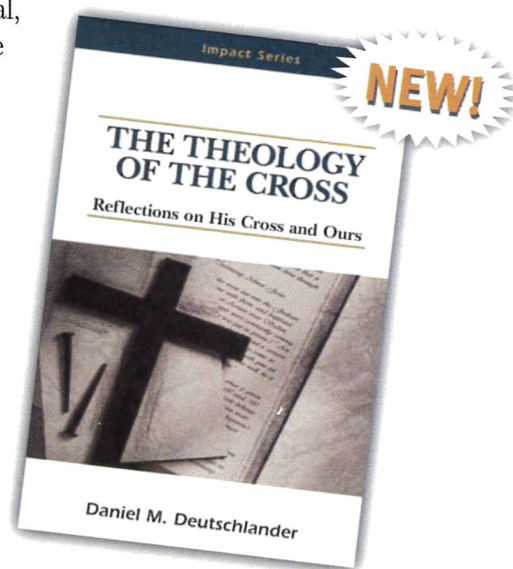
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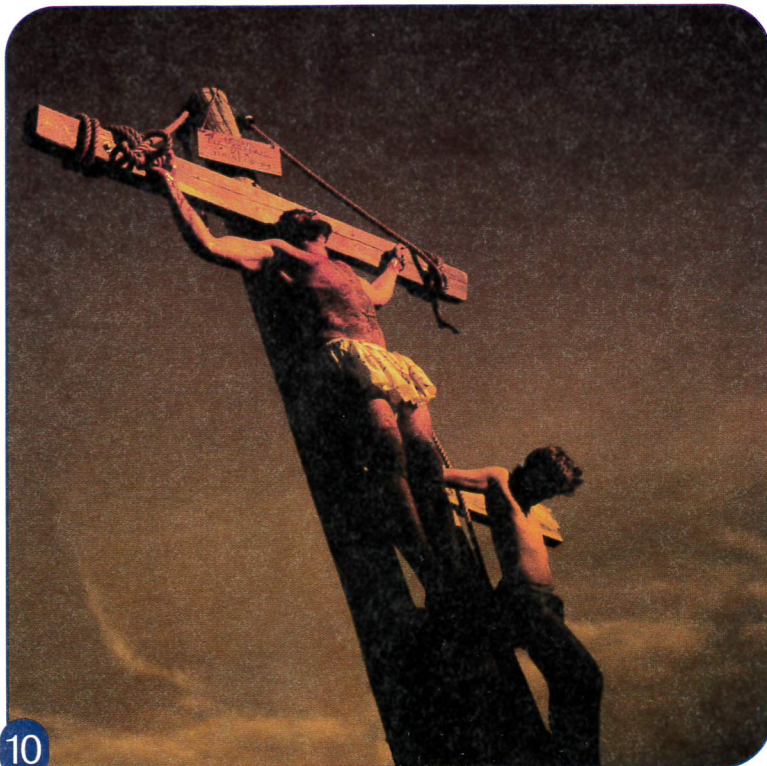
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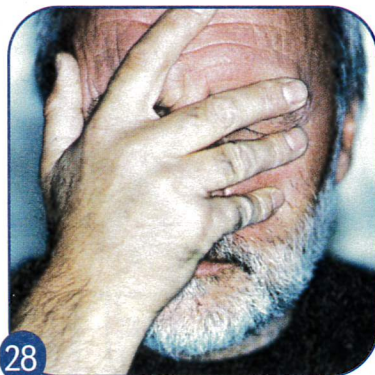
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✠ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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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. Schaefer  
laura.christine.schaefer@gmail.com

**SEMINARY CONSULTANT**

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

**ART DIRECTOR**

Karen Knutson

**DESIGNER**

Carianne Ciriacks

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MARCH

**WHAT'S INSIDE** by Julie Wietzke

It's been almost a year since we started the series "Confessions of faith" in Forward in Christ. Yet these personal stories of faith continue to inspire me and create a sense of wonder at the love and mercy of our Lord as he puts us at the right place and the right time to touch people's lives with the gospel. This month's story is no exception. You will meet Christin, an East German who ended up staying with a WELS pastor when she was a foreign exchange student in Texas (p. 12).

Since we started the series, we have received numerous stories from new WELS members about how they became part of the synod. These articles all are testaments to God's grace, and I'm thankful that I get to be a part of sharing some of them with you.

This month, we're also updating another story of God's grace. Perry Lawson from Las Vegas, Nev., was featured in the Year of Jubilee video that is being shown throughout the synod. In the video Lawson shares how he came to faith. WELS members across the country have been contacting Lawson and his pastor to offer support and encouragement. Check out the update on p. 20.

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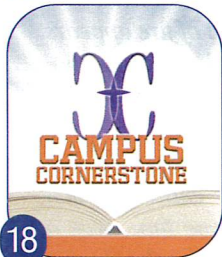
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**THE GOSPEL AND FAITH**

I appreciated Prof. Korthals' article on the visible church [Jan.]. The ranks of true believers—the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints—are drawn from visible congregations with widely divergent doctrinal views. Some of these, although doctrinally inimical to the gospel, still use the Word in worship and Bible study and, therefore, provide the Spirit with an opportunity to lead souls to faith in Christ as their Savior.

Prof. Korthals alludes to this near the end of the article. Referring to Romans 10:17, he states, "Where the gospel is proclaimed, there you will find faith. Where there is faith, there you will find the church."

To state that "where the gospel is proclaimed, there you will find faith" makes the proclamation of the gospel an irresistible force that always creates faith. In fact, Scripture and the confessions remind us 1) that hypocrites may proclaim the gospel and 2) that the proclamation of the gospel can be resisted, resulting in condemnation instead of salvation.

Because of those two possibilities—hypocrisy and hardness of heart—Lutherans prefer to state that "only where the gospel is proclaimed is it possible for the church to be present." To our ears it is clear that the gospel is being proclaimed. Our senses, however, cannot determine the faith of the officiant or of any of the members. Eternity alone will reveal to us if the mark of the church (i.e. the proclamation of the gospel in

Word and sacrament) that we can recognize with our ears resulted in saving faith and membership in the Holy Christian Church.

[The gospel] converts. It also hardens. Sometimes thousands are converted, and sometimes none are touched by that good news. We recall that our confessions state that when the gospel is proclaimed, the Spirit creates faith when, where, and in such quantity as pleases him.

*Howard Festerling*

**FIRE IN THE BIBLE**

I commend the staff of *Forward in Christ* for a magazine that greatly benefits Christ's kingdom. I especially like the ongoing "Confessions of faith" and hope that it becomes a permanent feature.

However, I was surprised that the quiz "Fire in the Bible" [Jan.] had Elijah going to heaven in a chariot. Scripture clearly states twice (2 Kings 2:1,11) that Elijah was taken in a whirlwind. The chariot separated Elisha and Elijah. I was even more surprised to find that *The People's Bible: 1,2 Kings* has this error in text and in a sketch. I know our WELS publications strive to avoid such errors. It is unusual to have one make it into print.

*Mark Bergemann  
New Berlin, Wisconsin*

*The writer of 2 Kings does mention twice that Elijah went to heaven in a whirlwind. The chariot of fire appears and separates Elijah and Elisha. Some view the chariot as a separate and distinct vision and not the same as the whirlwind. That is possible. It is also possible that the chariot, which came at about the same time, was a part of the whirlwind. Was the chariot of fire in the whirlwind, a part of it, or a separate thing? That's a question we will have answered when we are taken to heaven. For now we should be more careful about reflecting the language of God's Word.—ed.*

**WORDS AND MUSIC**

Re: "The Lutheran way of worship" [Dec. 2008]. Pastor Bode writes that most people are attracted to a particular piece of music because it has a nice melody. Then he goes on to make the point that in Lutheran worship the words are equally, if not more, important. I don't disagree with his conclusion, but there are a lot of songs in the Lutheran hymnal that have pleasing melodies and meaningful words.

Unfortunately, it has been my experience that many of these popular songs are not sung, while the congregation is forced to sing songs that have nice words but absolutely no melody. It is very difficult to get the meaning of the words when you are trying to find the correct note to sing.

*Jack Affeldt  
The Villages, Florida*

**PLEASE INCLUDE BIBLE VERSES**

As I was paging through the December issue, the Q&A section about Jeremiah 10 condemning Christmas trees caught my eye. I began to read the article but was very discouraged three paragraphs in when the article began talking about the verses of Jeremiah 10 but only directly quoted two words! Without being able to read the passage, the rest of the article quickly became irrelevant.

There is always an encouragement to leave FIC in public places so others may pick it up and read it. If it is the common practice to not print out portions of Scripture that are so relevant to the article, I don't know how anyone that does not carry a Bible will gain anything from articles like this.

*Dave A. Ross  
West Allis, Wisconsin*

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*.

# Safe from floods

*Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. . . . You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you. Psalm 69:1,2,5*

Peter A. Panitzke

Soon the winter snow will melt. The spring floods will come.

Sandbagging is a fact of life in many river towns. "Build the levees higher!" But just when you think your home is safe, a sand boil appears. The pressure of the floodwaters causes the groundwater and sand to bubble up like a fountain on the "dry side" of the levee. Water flows beneath the earth and the sandbags. The levee disintegrates. The sandbagging was wasted effort.

## We can't protect ourselves

That scene is constantly replayed in my spiritual life. God's anger is a relentless flood that threatens my life. God's law convicts me. Pride, a sin against the very first commandment! Guilty! Selfishness, a sin against the second table of the law! Guilty! "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). I try to build the levees higher. What more can I do? How can I become a better person?

I find someone that seems to be living a better life than I so I imitate him or her. I make new rules for myself to follow. I give up something for Lent. The levee gets higher. I'm a "better" person. I fill sandbags with all the good things I have done. Surely that will hold back the flood of God's anger.

But it never does. I overcome one temptation only to see God's anger, like a sand boil, appear in another area of my life. New temptations. New failures. More guilt. Nothing can hold back the flood of God's anger.

With King David we confess: "You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you."

## Jesus keeps us safe

But who is speaking these words? Read Psalm 69 in its entirety. King David wrote the psalm, but it is messianic. The promised Savior was speaking. King David was just his mouthpiece. You hear Jesus' voice clearly in several verses: "Zeal for your house consumes me, . . . They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst" (69:9,21).

But if the Savior was speaking through King David, how could he say, "You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you"?

This is the mystery of Lent! In Advent we ponder the mystery that God could become a human being. In Lent we ponder the mystery that the Holy One could become a sinner. Jesus "has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). "In him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). Yet he confessed himself to be a sinner. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus claimed my guilt and yours for himself. He endured the miry depths of God's anger for us. He became the levee that holds back the floodwaters of God's wrath.



Lent is not a time to be a better person—to build the levee higher. Instead go back to your catechism. Study the Ten Commandments. See the flood of God's wrath that should rightfully engulf you. Then rejoice that Jesus put himself between that flood and you. In Christ you are safe. "May your salvation, O God, protect me" (Psalm 69:29).

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

# It seems like such a little thing

Joel V. Petermann

When it comes to money, my wife and I don't always see things the same way. Not that my wife isn't careful and frugal with money. Rather the problem is that I'm ultra-frugal. I remember my wife telling me that she had bought something: "It was only a few dollars." Immediately that ultra-scrooge voice was screaming inside my head: "Yeah, but a few dollars add up. It may seem like just a little, but it adds up."

That exchange got me thinking about how easily we think "It's only one" or "It's just a little." Those on a diet know the caloric consequences of thinking this way.

"Just a minute" to a child turns into an eternity of waiting. "Just a few more minutes" on work breaks rob our bosses of countless hours of production. "Oh, it's only one little thing," we think. Yet just a few items shoplifted from retailers cost billions of dollars in losses.

Just one comment to a co-worker or friend can destroy a reputation forever. Just one drink can drag an alcoholic back to drinking. Just one little vote can swing an election. Just a few little heat tiles on a space shuttle or one little O-ring can spell disaster for an unsuspecting crew.

Little bits add up, don't they? One little thing can have huge consequences. That's also true in our spiritual lives.

It may seem like such a little thing when we read about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It seems like such a little thing to take a piece of fruit and eat it. Yet the consequences of that eating were enormous. Death entered our world. Sin became our nature. To God it was not such a little thing. It was rebellion against his word, doubt of his goodness, thievery of his glory. There is no

such thing as a little sin to God. James reminds us that one "little" sin against any of God's commands breaks them all (James 2:10). Holiness has no loopholes. Perfection invites no compromises. One "little" sin brought condemnation for the entire human race.

It may also seem like such a little thing that a baby was born in a stable. It may seem like such a little thing that Jesus lived a perfect life—not once compromising God's perfect plan. It may seem like such a little thing for a thirty-something-year-old man to be nailed to a cross along with common crooks. It may seem like such a little thing that a rich man's grave was reopened. But the result of these seemingly "little" things was seismic. The dying world was shaken to the core. The damnation devouring our race was deleted in the righteousness of a Savior who brought Life with a capital "L."

One man brought us all down. One man also brought us all back to Life. Just one. But he makes all the difference in the world. He isn't so little after all. He is the Son of God. "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass

was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men" (Romans 5:18).

One little thing doesn't always have bad consequences. One kind word can lift someone's spirits. Just a little savings can become a bountiful retirement account. Indeed, one Savior was enough for the whole human race to be justified.

That's no little thing.

**One man brought us all down. One man also brought us all back to Life.**

*Contributing editor Joel Petermann is pastor at St. Paul, Amherst, New Hampshire.*



# QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

In today's religious world, Christian Baptism is often misunderstood and sometimes downright disrespected. This God-given instrument gives or strengthens saving faith in Christ, but too often it becomes a mere human act of obedience or a mere external sign. But is it possible that people sometimes give Baptism too much credit? Your question makes me think of that possibility. Are the blessings of Baptism overstated when we speak of it "guaranteeing faith and eternal salvation"?

## Baptism gives saving faith

Paul assured the Galatians, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27). In and through Baptism, a most intimate link between the sinner and the Savior is promised and accomplished.

Other New Testament passages affirm that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness of sins and salvation, are bestowed through Baptism. They are not just symbolized or pictured in Baptism. Baptism gives these blessings. Perhaps because of such vigorous promises, people speak of Baptism "guaranteeing" salvation. But more needs to be said.

## Saving faith needs gospel nourishment

If the baptized sinner retains saving faith, he or she will retain the gift of salvation and inherit heaven. But this is different than saying that Baptism guarantees heaven. Baptism is God's way of beginning or enriching a lifelong relationship, but it remains vital that the faith given be nurtured and strengthened through the gospel aside from Baptism. This is why, when children are baptized, we urge parents and others to include the children in family devotions, train them to read Scripture at home, and have them participate in public worship and Sunday school.

It is important that all who are baptized enjoy growth in faith to maintain their hold on God's salvation promises. If the saving faith received through Baptism is allowed to

## Q. Are those baptized guaranteed faith and eternal salvation?

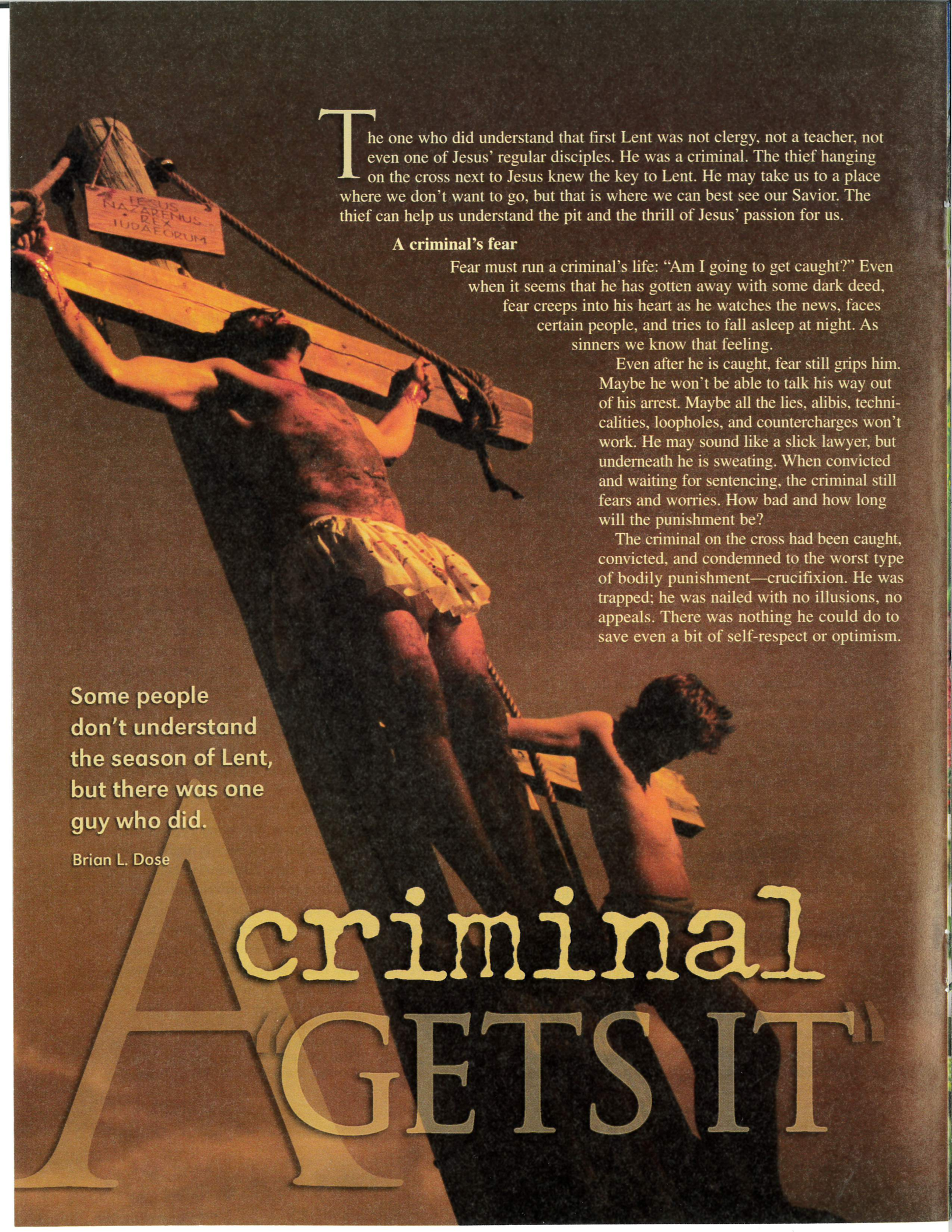
die, it will result in the forfeit of spiritual and eternal life. It is irresponsible to speak of Baptism "guaranteeing" salvation unless this kind of clarification is immediately added. God has chosen to give and preserve faith through the means of grace, that is, the gospel in Word and sacraments. After Baptism, to despise the Word and the Lord's Supper is more like guaranteeing eternal death, not life.

## A parallel to circumcision

Since the Bible draws the striking parallel between Baptism and Old Testament circumcision (see Colossians 2:11,12), we may draw a fitting analogy. Any Old Testament Jew who thought that his circumcision was a "guarantee" of eternal blessing was very wrong. Paul explains: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code" (Romans 2:28,29). This does not despise or deny the blessings received through circumcision. But it is a strong reminder that unbelief forfeits all blessings once received through the God-given external rite.

Similarly, a baptized person is not to be considered a believer if he or she was once baptized but has neglected the gospel ever since. To think that Baptism guarantees a preservation of faith for a lifetime is an unwise presumption involving a misunderstanding of how the Spirit works. The Spirit gives saving faith—as he does with infants through Baptism—and then preserves faith through Word and sacrament until we depart this life at death. We are commanded to seek and rejoice in both aspects of his gracious work. We desperately need both. We praise him for giving us both.

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



**T**he one who did understand that first Lent was not clergy, not a teacher, not even one of Jesus' regular disciples. He was a criminal. The thief hanging on the cross next to Jesus knew the key to Lent. He may take us to a place where we don't want to go, but that is where we can best see our Savior. The thief can help us understand the pit and the thrill of Jesus' passion for us.

#### A criminal's fear

Fear must run a criminal's life: "Am I going to get caught?" Even when it seems that he has gotten away with some dark deed, fear creeps into his heart as he watches the news, faces certain people, and tries to fall asleep at night. As sinners we know that feeling.

Even after he is caught, fear still grips him. Maybe he won't be able to talk his way out of his arrest. Maybe all the lies, alibis, technicalities, loopholes, and countercharges won't work. He may sound like a slick lawyer, but underneath he is sweating. When convicted and waiting for sentencing, the criminal still fears and worries. How bad and how long will the punishment be?

The criminal on the cross had been caught, convicted, and condemned to the worst type of bodily punishment—crucifixion. He was trapped; he was nailed with no illusions, no appeals. There was nothing he could do to save even a bit of self-respect or optimism.

Some people don't understand the season of Lent, but there was one guy who did.

Brian L. Dose

# A criminal

# "GETS IT"

At the bottom of this pit, though, his fear and shame became productive. He feared God.

The thief rebuked his former partner in crime and confessed, “Don’t you fear God . . . ? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve” (Luke 23:40,41). The criminal’s fears had deepened into a clear insight. He knew and publicly confessed his sin. He knew that he was first of all responsible to God. He knew that the nails in his body were fair punishment and that he deserved what was to come. And he had something more to lose—his soul. But the criminal couldn’t do a thing about his sin.

We hate to be in that criminal’s position, to feel his intense pain, shame, and fear. But that pit is a place from which necessary truths become clear. It is where Lent starts. When someone asks, “Do I have to go to church on Wednesday?” he doesn’t yet get Lent. When I answer, “Yes! We have to go. No, I mean, we have to want to go . . .,” I am not quite there either. I’m still holding on to the foolish notion that I can do something about my sins.

When life crushes us, that is where Lent starts. When we see no good within, when “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6), we hate those times. But then we have found the criminal’s perspective—we fear God. We can’t get away with sin. No more mind games, no excuses, no explanations, no loopholes. We need to fear and face the truth. We too are caught, convicted, and condemned by God’s justice.

### **A criminal’s plea**

Other people in the passion story also realized this justice. That fear was in Peter’s eyes when Jesus looked at him after the third denial. A wild and unimaginable fear must have been in Judas’ eyes when he threw the thirty coins into the temple. Judas’ despair and gruesome suicide remind us that something horrible happens when our fear fails to look at Jesus. But the criminal hanging with Jesus turned his eyes to Jesus and simply said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42).

The criminal’s plea is amazing. It seems such a natural thing to do, but the ease of it should not keep us from seeing the miracle of faith here. By the work of the Holy Spirit, the thief turned from his sin and dropped into the hands of his Savior. No plea bargaining, no evasion, no promises on his part, and no “Save me, Lord, in the way I want to be saved.” Rather he spoke simply and openly: “Remember me.”

The thief used a phrase common in the Old Testament that asks the Lord to remember his promises to rescue and save his people. And the criminal knew Jesus’ name, which

means “the Lord’s salvation.” With the line “when you come into your kingdom,” the thief showed that he believed that Jesus is a king who will rule beyond this world. And he told the other criminal that Jesus was innocent. He confessed a good chunk of the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. The criminal was not grabbing at straws; he was turning to the sinless Savior promised by God to redeem the world. Lent takes fear and knowledge—and faith.

The criminal’s plea is even more amazing when we consider that the one the criminal was looking at was not the risen and radiant Son of God as revealed in the rest of the New Testament. He was looking at an ordinary looking body, a victim of horrible injustice dripping with blood and spit. Lent can look ugly.

Why did he believe that this beat-up Jesus could help him? Why did he think that the Son of God would want to help? Not long before Jesus had said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). This was what the crim-

inal was seeking: not the reasonable or attractive answer but the only answer there could be—mercy. One who understands Lent is not looking for what he can get out of the situation, nor is he looking to get out of a tight spot or to get away with something. Lent is looking for a new life.

### **A criminal’s sweet, sweet news**

“Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise’ ” (Luke 23:43). Think of the news the criminal was used to hearing. He heard bad headlines one after the other: “You’re caught. . . . You’re guilty. . . . You’re on crucifixion row!” Now during the absolute worst day of his life, after three hours of hanging by nails and with hours to go before soldiers broke his legs to hurry his suffocation, his heart tortured him with the justice of it all: “This is what I deserve.” In the middle of all this, more news: “Today . . . paradise!”

Sometimes good news can be long, open to various interpretations, or hard to understand. Even a favorable legal decision can have qualifications, split decisions, or waiting periods. There is none of that from Jesus. His news is clear, direct, and final. The Lamb of God has sentenced us to paradise, full and free and forever.

Maybe we don’t always get Lent. But the criminal invites us in for a closer look at sin and at Jesus’ sweet answer: “Today . . . paradise!”

*Brian Dose, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.*

## **LENT IS LOOKING FOR A NEW LIFE.**



Christin had a wonderful family life. “I could not have had better parents,” she says. “They taught me so many things, and we still have a very close relationship.” Her hometown was Hohenmoelsen in eastern Germany.

But life was different when she was young. “My mom would always tell me stories about when I was a child,” she says. “It wasn’t easy for her, for example, to get bananas for me. You had to have good connections to get such rare things back then. The situation was the same with clothes and other things.” But Christin maintains that those who grew up in eastern German “care more for their family. We had to work together to get through this difficult time. I’m proud to be born there because we grew up with lots of love, not just money and material things.”

Christianity and faith, however, were missing in her early life. “Religion was never an important part of our family life, because it was forbidden for many years . . .,” she says. “Both my grandparents used to go to church when they were

young, but when the Soviets ruled over us, you had to leave church for your workplace. That was the case with my grandparents, and afterwards they never got back to it.”

But Christin started to question things. She decided to take the religion course offered in high school. The teacher managed to make it interesting, although only one boy in the class was a believer. High school was not a good time for her. “My high school time was pretty tough, and there is not much I like to look back at,” says Christin. “There was lots of gossiping going on and much arguing. Overall, it wasn’t a joy to go to school even though it has always been easy for me. I guess I was looking for something different.”

#### An exchange student in Texas

One reason Christin became an exchange student was to escape from her school. She is thankful that her parents let her go so far. When she arrived in Houston, her host family was waiting for her when she got off the plane. She remembers, “I went over to them and, with tears in my eyes, fell in their arms. I will never forget the moment, and every time I think about it I get goosebumps.”

## 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.

John A. Braun

The Lord had a hand in this meeting. Her host family was the VonDeylon family. Marc VonDeylon is pastor at Lord of Life, Friendswood, Texas, and Monique, his wife, is a preschool teacher. The VonDeylons had four boys. Christin had always wanted to have siblings, and from the first day this family simply accepted her as a part of their family.

They were helpful during the first days when language was a little problem. Says Christin, "They talked slowly and were really patient with me, which helped to get into the new language really fast." Although it took a little time to adjust, the language was not a big problem. Christin remembers, "One person from the exchange company said the first time you dream in English, that's the point when you caught on to the language. That happened to me only after a few days."

#### A Bible to read

In the evenings when the kids went to bed, Christin, Marc, and Monique talked, sometimes for hours and hours. "They were always open for my questions, which led to many conversations related to religion," says Christin. She has grown to calling Pastor Mark VonDeylon "Dad." He was able to answer her questions. "As I got more into it, I realized that that was the part I was missing in life," she says. More questions came, and more conversations.

Going to church was another new experience, but everyone welcomed her. "I never felt like I was a stranger. I always felt like a part of it from the first day on, even though I wasn't a Christian." She loved the music "even though at first I wasn't able to follow everything. . . . From week to week it became more familiar to me, and I felt like I understood what church was all about: God's love for us."

At Christmas the VonDeylons bought a Bible for Christin. "I started



Ronny and Christin. Christin learned about her Savior when she was a foreign exchange student in Texas.

reading right away because I was interested in it," she says. It was a beginning, and the Holy Spirit was at work. But she had to return to Germany. Her new faith was clear, and she wanted to be baptized. "I remember how happy the whole congregation was for me. They all came up to me and welcomed me to God's family. We had a big baptism party and celebrated me becoming a child of God. It was a great feeling and a day I'll never forget."

#### Romance and new faith in Jesus

She left for Germany a changed person. She was more optimistic, and her old friends had difficulty with the change. Christin remembers it as a "very difficult situation filled with many tears and sorrows." But many phone calls back to Texas and a new friend who worked as a waitress at a hotel helped her. Through this new friend, Christin began helping out when the hotel needed another waitress. Eventually she met Ronny, who also worked at the hotel. A romance grew, and conversations about Jesus became a part of the relationship. Ronny also came to understand the importance of Jesus.

Christin returned to Texas for vacations and during one of these visits began a confirmation class with others. She remembers, "I felt

very comfortable in my confirmation class because all the people who were there wanted to learn more about God and his Word. It was very informative, and you realized that all the other people were troubled with the same kind of questions like you before you came to faith. . . . What I love about the WELS is that they take the Bible just as it is. There is no interpretation or parts taken out of the Bible and used in different ways." She returned to Germany and shared her new knowledge with Ronny.

At one point she decided to leave Germany to attend college in the United States. Once she arrived in Texas, however, it became clear that the difference in educational systems would mean repeating courses she had already had in Germany. She decided to return to Germany, but Ronny had already planned a surprise visit to Texas. After Christin's plans changed, Ronny came early to visit and to bring Christin back to Germany. While in Texas, Ronny came to the point that he wanted to be baptized.

Back home they found Pastor Schroeder, the WELS European chaplain, and Ronny completed his course of instruction. He grew in his faith, and he and Christin were married in June 2006. Now they attend services with other English-speaking Christians in Germany. "Whenever we go to church, we are really looking forward to it," says Christin. "The people are so nice, and it's great to hear and learn more about God's Word every time. Worship brings you closer to God, and with Jesus at the center of your life, it brings a couple closer together as well."

*John Braun is executive editor of Forward in Christ.*

*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.*

# THE GOD WHO HIDES

Because we are sinful and imperfect, we are unable to bear the sight of God's full glory.

Mark A. Paustian



Communication scholars reserve the term *immediacy* for human talk at its most intimate and intense: "Here's what you mean to me in this moment." In such talk, if we can stand it, we are responding to an actual person, false fronts all left behind. Whether the encounter is pleasant or painful, the point is that nothing stands between us. We've come out of hiding. The masks are off.

Immediacy.

However, when God speaks to us, when he draws close to us out of his gracious desire to be known, we meet that familiar paradox: God hides himself in order to reveal himself. The masks don't come off. They go on. God's communication with us is always *mediated*, that is, there is always something he places in between.

## GOD IS REVEALED THROUGH HIS SON

The "hiddenness of God" is a blessing to us. He keeps his true majesty and transcendent glory carefully veiled, safely beyond our reach. This fits our situation, of course, since the likes of us, sinners through and through, could not survive the undiminished splendor of God.

Call it Theology 101: "Surely, no one can see his face and live."

And so we come to God's things: the Word and the water, the bread and the wine, plain things without the least bit of shimmer—matters easily dismissed because they seem like nothing at all. Yet here we are confronted by God himself, speaking his message of reconciliation. We are always being shown the crucifixion of God's one and only Son. The words are simplicity itself. God has never been more thoroughly hidden . . . nor more profoundly cut open and set on breathtaking display. In Christ, we have seen to his very heart.

Only they can know him at all who are not offended by the lowliness of the masks behind which glory stoops down and hides. The rest will wander in deepest ignorance of him. Faith is that intimate trust in him that exists over against every natural inclination, against all reason, against all sight. God's own Word and Spirit cause such faith. It is a perpetual miracle, a gift sustained by God along with every other thing. Only such faith in Jesus Christ has ever laid hold of God.

## GOD HIDES IN OUR LIVES

And when we understand that God is revealed in Jesus, the faith that has discovered him soon spots him everywhere and falls to its knees at the sudden realization. Beneath the seemingly random movements of history, within the humble church, behind all the faithful vocations that make the world work—in, with, and under it all—we catch the meaning of Isaiah, “Truly you are a God who hides himself” (Isaiah 45:15). If I live in a home that is lovely and warm, with a wife who doesn’t hold my sins against me, with daughters who put their arms around my neck, they are the masks with which God conceals himself. They are wonderful blessings to me.

God is hidden in my own life story, answering my questions and dilemmas with his own kind of silence, driving me to his words. Yet I come to know him in ways otherwise not possible, as he schools me in the hard words, “Not my will, but yours be done.” Beneath my cross, I encounter my God in the words of Scripture. Our relationship is mediated even there, and yet is so intimate, so immediate. He is drawn all the way down and into my life.

“‘You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. *I will be found by you,*’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:13,14).

## GOD HIDES IN NATURE

At last, consider the humbling beauty and staggering intricacy of nature that compel every human being to sit up and marvel. The dazzling sunset breathes into the word *glory*—at least a partial meaning for us in the here and now. We feel ourselves to be in an encounter with God. The truth is, the sunset is not God. He is far more, infinitely more, and all of it unknowable and unknown. No, the sunset is just another of those things God has placed in between. Like every other act or creation of his, it marvelously reveals him, while at the very same time, he himself and his actual glory remain fully veiled.

Nature offers her relentless, astonishing testimony day by day to God’s invisible and indescribable qualities. But nature in all her artistry cannot satisfy the longings she awakens, nor answer the questions she poses. Reason can never peer past the curtain or pass through the phenomena to God himself. Those who try, despising the simplicity of Genesis chapter one and two, forfeit the elemental information found there available in no other way. Reason has lost its mind. Outside of Jesus, God has locked

up his heart and hidden his will. Who wants to know God must listen to Mary’s son. And so our journey to God involves a detour. We must constantly turn *away* from nature, as C.S. Lewis wrote, and “pass from the dawn-lit field into some dusty little church . . . back to our studies, back to our Bibles, back to our knees.”

The faithful and most gifted scientists I have known show little interest in harmonizing faith with that worldly brand of science that is simply too far gone, its denials of revealed truth worked too deeply into the very fabric of its own thinking. No, the faithful believing minds hum with “even the winds and the waves obey him” (Matthew 8:27). They don’t speculate. They adore.

Meanwhile, they have a proper lack of enthusiasm for proving God or for bringing anyone to faith if it involves demonstrating the

reasonableness of Scripture or piling up scientific documentation to take the edge off our foolishness.

A person won in such a way is not yet won. Such faith is no faith at all. The Scriptures supported by science are open to attack at that very spot. A faith buttressed in this way may very well not survive the uni-

versity. Where God has spoken in Scripture, no matter the subject matter, reason must be dethroned. Every thought must

be taken captive to Christ. Since this is our approach to all of life, childlike as it is, we can only take the same approach to nature.

That is, we believe.

We believe that the stuff of life—the impossibly big and the unthinkably small, all that whirls and dances, flashes out and holds together—that it all exists because he wills it . . . for us. Maybe more can be safely said using words like *gravity* and *photosynthesis*, words that describe but can never explain. Certainly not less.

Our hope is in God. We look forward to the day when the hidden Lord Christ steps out from behind the sunset and the glacier, the foxes and the periodic table, everything that made you cry, and history and the Church, the books of Genesis and Isaiah, Romans, John, the water, the bread, the wine—and nothing stands in between.

All will be changed at last. In a twinkling and in a flash. We will be face to face.

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

WHEN WE UNDER-  
STAND THAT GOD IS  
REVEALED IN JESUS,  
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EVERYWHERE.



# A WORLD WITH A WORLD

IN AN EFFORT TO EXPLAIN ALL OF NATURE, THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE ENDED UP REACHING FAR BEYOND BOTH SCRIPTURE AND NATURE.

Darwin's 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* offered another worldview. Darwin provided a mechanism by which life could be explained without any reference to God.

Science is not separate from its times. Furthermore, the events in an individual scientist's life, as seen in the first part of this magazine series, also affect scientific claims. Science is a human activity subject to everything that is human. There is bias. There are limits. There is human error. What happened with Darwin was that biology took a philosophical turn.

Physics had already taken this turn. Isaac Newton (1642–1727), perhaps Britain's greatest scientist, had described the universe as completely explainable using fixed physical laws. Everything was like a clock wound up and running, so there was no need for God to actively preserve it. This allowed God to be the Creator of the laws, but his active role as preserver in day-to-day operations was deemed unnecessary.

Darwin's uncle, Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), an agnostic before the term was invented, had espoused evolutionary changes among creatures. He emphasized the characteristics that were acquired through the artificial breeding of animals and the marriages of humans. But his statements did not attract much attention. We do know that his nephew, Charles, took note of his ideas.

French scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829) also suggested that animals could evolve. He thought that an animal could acquire helpful physical changes during its life and then pass them on to its offspring. The classic example was that giraffes would reach for the highest leaves on trees thereby slightly stretching their necks. He believed that this change would be passed on to the next generation.

They in turn would stretch to add even more height to this helpful adaptation. But Lamarck lacked support for his ideas. Darwin and many others, therefore, rejected his mechanism of acquired characteristics but not the idea of evolution.

## REASON ADDED TO SCRIPTURE

At the same time, in a well-meaning effort to explain all of nature, theology and science were mixed together. Human reason ended up reaching far beyond both Scripture and nature.

The Bible and nature were viewed as two revelations from God, each for our learning. Unfortunately, theologians often felt that the book of nature was clear by itself without the revelation of God in the Bible. As science produced more discoveries, this "natural theology" attempted to explain even these new discoveries of nature in terms of the moral lessons they believed God had plainly put there. The country parsons and the upper classes of England would often spend much time dwelling on questions concerning nature's meanings.

In the process natural theologians went too far. When dinosaurs were being discovered, William Kirby (1759–1850), an outstanding entomologist, suggested that there might be a cavern under the crust of the earth where dinosaurs still lived so that dinosaurs would not be evidence for an old earth. Furthermore, this cavern would be filled with water, the same hidden water that God used in the biblical flood. The dinosaurs, because they were viewed as lizards by the science of that time, would enjoy the water. In order to keep dinosaurs from predating Adam and Eve, Kirby invented scientific supports for faith that could only eventually draw ridicule.

Kirby stated in the spirit of the times, "The author of Scripture is also the author of Nature



# THOUT GOD; WITH GOD

WERE MIXED TOGETHER DURING DARWIN'S TIME AND HUMAN REASON THEN DARWIN TOOK THEOLOGY OUT OF THE PICTURE. Paul R. Boehlke

and this visible world, by types indeed, and by symbols, declares the same truths as the Bible does by words. To make the naturalist a religious man—to turn his attention to the glory of God, that he may declare his works, and in the study of his creatures may see the loving-kindness of the Lord.” The natural theologians filled their writings with examples of a good creation but neglected the violence and cruelty also evident in nature. Darwin focused on the other side: that nature was suffering and could be cruel.

## THE RESULT

Any consideration of theological meaning in biology was removed by Darwin. In his theory of natural selection, the variety in nature undergoes cold selection by the environment just as the breeder of cattle selects the animals to be bred. Those that are more fit pass their traits on and have more offspring. So a species survives and changes; nature makes us what we are. Of course, Darwin's argument polarized his readers.

Darwin's *The Origin of Species* held that we are the results of a natural process and implied that this life is all that there is. Darwin conceded that God could have started it, but the rest was simply an uncaring mechanism. In modern times Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard added that if evolution could somehow be done over, humans most likely would not even occur. By chance, the process would take different turns.

The applications of evolutionary thought vary. At the extreme, humans have no purpose in life, are merely equal to animals, and are left without any moral and ethical guidelines.\* Our aggressiveness, even rape, can be explained as a result of the struggle to retain our genes—to survive (Richard Dawkins). Any behaviors in which we sacrifice for others can be transformed into selfish behaviors benefiting the survival of our genes. For example, if one would give up life or goods

to defend his tribe, he is helping their genes, which are like his, to make it into the next generation. In this framework, all effort is simply self-serving. Furthermore, we have no special place in nature. All species are the equal results of evolution. It's not difficult then to understand why some attempt to free research animals from laboratories.

All this would be fine, and we would have to resign ourselves to it if it was true, but it is not. God revealed a different view.

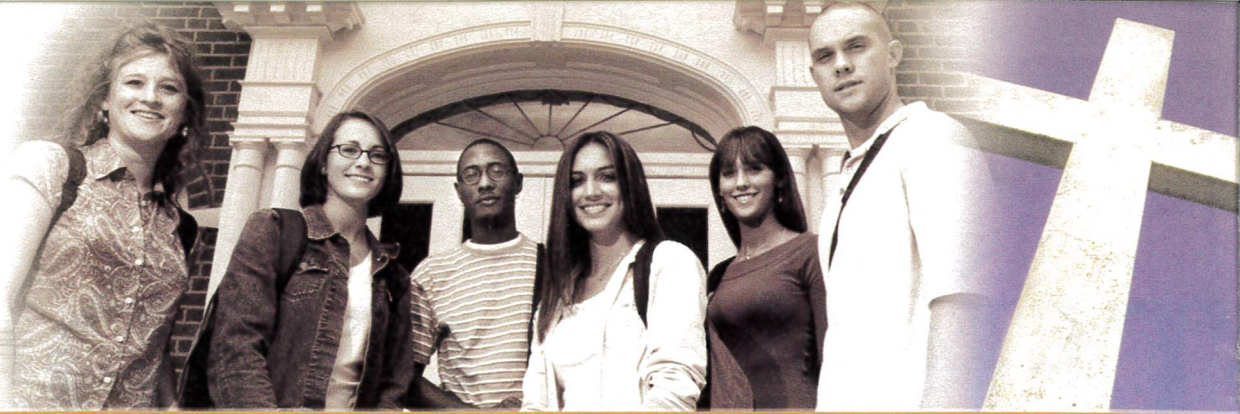
Combining science with theology can be philosophically dangerous. If theology endorses a particular brand of science, it exposes itself to attack. For example, in the history of science, it made sense to many that organic compounds could only be made within a living being who contained, according to the science of the time, “a vital principle.” This idea seemed to fit well with the Christian faith. Then when Friedrich Wohler (1800–1882) synthesized urea (a compound found in the urine and other body fluids of mammals), it was a blow to both vitalism and Christianity.

Jacques Roger in *God & Nature* states, “Here again, it would have been wiser perhaps not to have linked religion with a changeable philosophy and a transient stage of scientific knowledge. But few can resist the intellectual trends of their age, and, in any case, it is much easier to identify the error of the past than to see the misunderstandings of the present.”

*Paul Boehlke, a member at Salem (East Side), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, teaches biology at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.*

*This is the second article in a four-part series on creation and evolution.*

*\*A great many theistic evolutionists believe that God used evolution to create us. They would not accept all of the dark aspects in this paragraph.*



Catie Michaelson

# The only Christian on campus?

Even if we happen to be the only believer in the classroom, we should not hide on campus because we are of Christ.

Six years ago I started my college career at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. As a 19-year-old girl from Wausau, Wis., I had no idea what I was in for as I headed off to the university and to a campus whose population is larger than that of my entire hometown.

One thing I quickly learned as a student is that you can find just about everything on campus—every culture, every religion, every belief, and, of course, every opinion. Something else that I quickly realized is that with such a large number of students, the population of Christians on campus quickly can appear diluted.

When I was a microbiology undergraduate, I'm sure that many times I was the Christian population of one in the classroom. In fact, the microbiology professor with whom I did research throughout my undergraduate career asked

me numerous times how I could be a microbiologist and doing well in my classes yet at the same time be stupid enough to believe in a Creator instead of the big bang theory. While this was

not always easy to deal with, it certainly did challenge me to constantly be prepared to give an answer for the faith that I have.

As I transitioned into a graduate nursing program at the same university, little changed. Several of my current classmates have shadowed a nurse practitioner who performs abortions in Minneapolis, a career choice that they are proudly considering. Again, it has not always been easy to be

the one with the opposing and sometimes unpopular viewpoint, but it is also a constant reminder of the work that God has placed all Christian students here to do. As Christians, if we were not there in that classroom, there might only be one viewpoint heard, only one value voiced. Even worse, there may be no one who aligns with the real truth.

But even if we happen to be the only believer in the classroom, we should not hide on campus because we are of Christ. Hebrews 10:39 states, "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." We are the blessed recipients of the amazing gift of salvation and the consequential peace that accompanies it. In light of what that gift means to us, what an opportunity to be the only Christian in a classroom!

Each Christian on any campus has the amazing opportunity of coming into contact with hundreds—even thousands—of unbelievers every day. How many people have that same opportunity? Every day we walk by new people; each semester we meet new classmates. There is always an abundance of new faces at the student union, libraries, and sporting events. The harvest is ripe, and the opportunities to share with others the glory of God's love are bountiful! We have been commissioned to go into the world to win disciples for Christ.

As a six-year veteran of university study and everything that it has to offer, I pray that as Christians on campus we can continue to grow in the faith and love of Christ and that through friendship and fellowship we can support and encourage one another. But I also pray that we have the strength and excitement to be the Christian in the classroom, dorm room, cafeteria, or study hall. That way, where we exist, Christ exists.

*Catie Michaelson, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, is a member at Pilgrim, Minneapolis.*

## Obituaries

### Caroline M. Gieschen 1930–2008

Caroline Gieschen (nee Lehrke) was born May 6, 1930, in Gaylord, Minn. She died Dec. 13, 2008, in De Soto, Wis.

A 1951 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. Paul, Gresham, Neb.; Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.; St. John, Juneau, Wis.; First, La Crosse, Wis.; Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, Wis.; Immanuel, La Crosse, Wis.; and St. John, Wood Lake, Minn.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Norbert. She is survived by two sons, two daughters, three grandchildren, three brothers, and two sisters.

### Elda May Rockhoff 1938–2008

Elda Rockhoff (nee Tietz) was born Oct. 2, 1938, in New Prague, Minn. She died Dec. 21, 2008, in North Fond du Lac, Wis.

She taught at Christ, Grand Island, Neb.

She is survived by her husband, Jim; four sons; eight grandchildren; two brothers; and one sister.

## On the bright side

My grandchildren, ten-year-old Emily and six-year-old Jacob, were seated at the kitchen counter with PLAY-DOH. Emily made a little doll and then left to use the computer.

I told them to clear the counter for dinner. Jake cleared the counter and packed the PLAY-DOH away. Emily returned and demanded, "Where's my doll?"

Jake thought a second or two and replied, "Hmm! I guess she's in heaven."

*Mary Ann Doering, Watertown, Wisconsin*

Driving to church last Sunday with my six-year-old daughter, Shelby, I commented, "Did you know that anytime two Christians are together, God is with them?"

Shelby thought about this for a few minutes, then asked, "What side of the church does he sit on?"

*Trudy Francis, Chatham, Massachusetts*

## Through my Bible IN 3 YEARS



04/2009

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Numbers 33–36  | 16. Mk. 8:1-26      |
| 2. Mark 1:1-15    | 17. Mk. 8:27-38     |
| 3. Mk. 1:16-34    | 18. Mk. 9:1-29      |
| 4. Mk. 1:35–2:12  | 19. Mk. 9:30-50     |
| 5. Mk. 2:13–3:6   | 20. Deuteronomy 1   |
| 6. Mk. 3:7-19a    | 21. Dt. 2           |
| 7. Mk. 3:19b-35   | 22. Dt. 3           |
| 8. Mk. 4:1-20     | 23. Dt. 4:1-40      |
| 9. Mk. 4:21-34    | 24. Dt. 4:41–5:33   |
| 10. Mk. 4:35–5:20 | 25. Dt. 6           |
| 11. Mk. 5:21–6:6a | 26. Dt. 7           |
| 12. Mk. 6:6b-30   | 27. Dt. 8           |
| 13. Mk. 6:31-56   | 28. Dt. 9:1–10:11   |
| 14. Mk. 7:1-23    | 29. Dt. 10:12–11:32 |
| 15. Mk. 7:24-37   | 30. Dt. 12, 13      |

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## Year of Jubilee celebration brings unexpected blessings



Perry Lawson had no idea of the impact telling his story would

have. He's the member of Beautiful Savior, Las Vegas, Nev., featured in the video presentation viewed in congregations across the synod as part of the Year of Jubilee offering, which is designated toward eliminating the synod's debt.

Since December, when most congregations viewed the presentation, Beautiful Savior has received dozens of e-mails from around the country in support of Lawson and his family. His pastor, Matt Guse, has forwarded many of them on to Lawson. "I did not really expect that kind of reaction from people outside our congregation," Lawson says. "I just thought that was really kind of neat to see."

In the video, Lawson tells how as a rock musician he lived apart from God and struggled with drug abuse most of his adult life. He didn't come to faith until he was in his forties when he began attending Beautiful Savior, a WELS mission congregation. After hearing the Word, Lawson shared it with his parents—they both were led to believe and were baptized shortly before their deaths.

In many of the e-mails, other WELS members have encouraged Lawson and have offered prayers for him in his new walk of faith. Others have shared how hearing Lawson's story has encouraged them in their own situations. Some tell heartbreaking stories of their own children who have fallen away from faith or of their own parents who—despite their best efforts—have yet to come to believe in Jesus. Lawson says, "When I read those letters coming in and people encouraging me, it just reminds me that the Lord is not going to leave us. He's not going to forsake us, even in troubled times."

The video presentation has brought unexpected blessings for Beautiful Savior as well.



Perry Lawson, who was profiled in the Year of Jubilee video, pictured with his wife, Cindi.

Already what Lawson lovingly refers to as "hug-oriented," the church has been brought even closer after seeing his story. While still a relatively small congregation with less than 200 members, many were unaware of Lawson's history. Guse says there wasn't a dry eye in the house the Sunday he showed it in church.

"It just boosted the care and concern and compassion for one another because it made people realize that we don't always know people's backgrounds or where people came from or what they went through," says Guse. "As a family in Christ, maybe we ought to take the time to find out."

As a result of the flow of e-mails from all regions of the country, Lawson says he now has a better understanding of just what it means to be part of a larger synod. "It was just really kind of neat and overwhelming for me. I thought it was really wonderful to see how we're all tied together with one another."

Guse points out that Lawson's story—and the reaction to it—are reminders that the Year of Jubilee isn't simply about dollars but something even more precious: souls. "I wish more people could be out here in the mission field where we are and just see how the gospel affects people and their lives and how the Lord can take people from such a raggedy background and give them hope and peace and joy," he says. "We wouldn't be here without mission dollars; we're the result of it. We're the result of why everybody puts money into their offering plates."

Lawson sees things more simply: "I was just really glad I could share my story for the glory of God and to help other people."

For more information about the Year of Jubilee or to view the video, go to [www.wels.net/jump/jubilee](http://www.wels.net/jump/jubilee).

Joel Hochmuth

**de-fining re-li-gion**  
Dispensationalism—

The false interpretive approach to Scripture developed by John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) and popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible (1909, revised 1967), that divides history into various periods, each characterized by a new test of natural man by God and each ending in man's failure. The final dispensation involves Christ's physical, political, millennial reign on earth.

The phrase “preschool power” will likely conjure different thoughts for every parent. Powerful bursts of energy. Powerful wills and tempers. Powerful hugs and laughter. But it is these powerful years of learning and bonding that are focused on at Preschool Power Hour at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.

Preschool Power Hour is like a hands-on parenting workshop in which teachers work together with parents (usually young mothers) and children to nurture a bond and stimulate growth in five crucial areas: spiritual, intellectual, physical, creative art, and social. Beth Ziel and two other teachers at St. Matthew developed the program in 1999. “We felt that the congregation was lacking a connection between very young families and the Lutheran elementary school,” Ziel explains. Many similar programs now exist in congregations around WELS.

When St. Matthew first advertised the program in the church and the community, it expected 20 students. Instead 69 families applied for the first session. Now in its tenth year, the program continues to thrive. The last session was filled to capacity with 35 children, and new teachers and volunteers have stepped up to help.

“The greatest blessing through this ministry is not found in results that someone is able to count,” says Daniel Schmidt, pastor at St. Matthew. “Rather it is the opportunity we have

to share the Word of God with those families who make use of Power Hour.”

Ziel feels that mothers are excited about the program because it is affordable and gives them opportunities to interact with other mothers. “Our program is also very hands-on and provides the parents with tools such as songs, crafts, prayers, and games to take home and use again and again,” she says.

Much research and preparation was put into the curriculum. Each song, art project, and gym activity was chosen with the development of the children’s intellectual, creative, and motor skills in mind. Most important, though, is nourishing the children’s spiritual growth in Bible time.

Following Power Hour is an optional half-hour devotion called Power for Parenting. “This not only helps bring the gospel to non-members, whom are two-thirds of the participants,” says Jonathan Schultz, pastor at St. Matthew, “but it also encourages members to grow in the Word of God as it relates to their families.”

“Our Preschool Power Hour is one way our congregation carries out its mission statement, which states that, compelled by the love of Christ, we seek to reach out to our families, community, and world, using law and gospel . . . [to] grow and nurture them in their Christian faith and life,” says Schmidt.

To learn more about this program, visit [www.smls.org/powerhour](http://www.smls.org/powerhour).

## Reigniting marriage

*Fireproof*, a movie about a firefighter who is considering divorce, received mixed reviews when it was released last September. Some critics said the movie was a bit gimmicky and melodramatic; others called it uplifting and impressive. Members of Reformation, San Diego, Calif., however, saw it as a way to reach out to the community.

“It has a solid Christian message about the importance of doing marriage the way God designed it to be done and ‘fireproofing’ your marriage against the temptations of the devil, the world, and your sinful nature,” says Kevin Schultz, pastor at Reformation. So the congregation decided to organize a *Fireproof* campaign, complete with a six-week sermon and Bible study series on marriage.

To advertise the series, the congregation mailed out 5,000 postcards to community members. “We had 127 visitors attend, many of which were unchurched or first-time guests,” says Schultz. At the end of each sermon, Schultz gave separate assignments to the couples and to the singles in the congregation that they were to do during the week.

Overall, Schultz says reactions were positive. One couple facing difficulties in their marriage said the series reignited their desire to work on their marriage instead of giving up on it. Others said it gave them a renewed commitment to their marriage. A divorced woman from the community listened to the sermons on tape and said they taught her how to “do marriage right” if she remarried and motivated her to start attending her church regularly again.

“I think this campaign helped our congregation see once again how God’s Word can change people’s lives and, in this case, their marriages,” says Schultz. “It certainly brought a new excitement to the congregation during the six weeks of the campaign. It also provided a great opportunity for members to get involved by inviting their friends and neighbors to come and hear how God’s Word is relevant to their life today.”



Moms take time to visit and build friendships during Preschool Power Hour at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis. Pictured (l to r): Tammy Bloedorn and daughter Sydney; Nancy Heimsch and son Aaron; and Ethan Pillard with his mom, Brenda.

## Q&A with Pastor Joel Voss, chairman of the Ad Hoc Commission

*The Ad Hoc Commission was authorized by the 2007 synod convention to analyze the way the synod works and to propose comprehensive, long-term strategies to help the synod carry out its mission. Final recommendations will be presented at the synod convention in July. Forward in Christ sat down with the commission's chairman, Pastor Joel Voss, to find out more about the commission and its work.*

### **Question** – What is the commission's main job?

**Answer** – When [the commission] was formed at the 2007 convention . . . there were questions about what our synod should be doing; what can it do; how did we get to where we are; what's the philosophy of the ministry of doing the work of the synod and what should it be; and when we have troubled times, how do we make the best decisions possible. In order to assist them, the convention authorized a commission [to study these issues].

Initially we saw that there were changes we could make. But I think what we're able to do differently now is going to be tempered by the fact that we are facing some cutbacks in funding. That makes the work harder and less optimistic.

### **Question** – How will the budget shortfall affect your recommendations?

**Answer** – It has ramifications on any of the recommendations that call for an increase in budget—for instance, forming three new districts, increasing the level of assistance that we give to our district presidents, calling for a decrease in the cost of [ministerial] education or at least holding the line. . . . We are going to have to either drop some [recommendations] or qualify them with the statement that in light of our financial outlook, some of these recommendations we feel still have merit but can't be enacted at this time.

### **Question** – What were the reactions of the districts to the preliminary report?

**Answer** – We developed a tally sheet of each recommendation and what we heard from each of the districts. . . . There were 86 recommendations, and about 80 of them received an overwhelming or a majority approval. A few received very little support—one of them being moving the Campus Ministry Committee under the Commission on Special Ministries.

### **Question** – How did the commission take into consideration suggested changes?

**Answer** – We recognized that sometimes we didn't explain ourselves well enough. That's why the districts

either didn't like what we said or had questions about it. In some of these cases we are going to increase our rationale. . . . We also may have to reconsider some financial issues as well as items that did not receive majority support. . . . Finally, we need to be concerned about what decision-making bodies will be presenting to the synod regarding some of the issues we are dealing with.

### **Question** – As chairman of this commission, how much time have you put into this?

**Answer** – It varies from month to month. Initially it was mostly travel and being at the meetings. And then coordinating. I didn't have to do a lot of the writing or the interviewing—that's the committee's work. Most of my time was spent in meetings in Milwaukee.

It has been very rewarding because I have been able to see a little better how the synod operates and how we try to carry on the work that we have to do and how much things can change in just a short time.

### **Question** – Any last thoughts?

**Answer** – It is apparent to me that we don't see [these recommendations] as solutions to all of our difficulties. Satan is always going to oppose us, so it's made me aware that you don't just fix things once. You have to keep going at these issues and these problems, confident of God's blessings that he will work things out for us. Because the minute you think you have a solution to one problem, another one arises. That's the nature of

church work. But the blessings are that God always works through his Word and sacraments to bring people to faith and nurture them in their faith. That's our confidence and our joy, which overshadows the difficulties.

*In upcoming issues, look for interviews of other Ad Hoc Commission members regarding specific recommendations in the report.*



Joel Voss, pastor at Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio, and chairman of the Ad Hoc Commission.

## Pastor's hobby cultivates interest in the Bible

For the past 15 years, Keith Amborn, pastor at St. Paul, Milwaukee, Wis., has tended to an ever-increasing garden in his backyard. Although his hobby seems common enough, Amborn's garden is anything but typical. It is an herb garden, containing almost 70 plants connected in some way to the Bible.

Fascinating? Organizers of a neighborhood garden walk thought so. Thanks to the tour he gave last July and a consequent whirlwind of events, Amborn's garden is now being talked about coast-to-coast—and is proving to be a great way to share God's Word.

"When they wanted to put my garden on the walk, I thought, 'Why would people want to come here? It's just my garden; it's no big deal,'" remembers Amborn. But the guests thought otherwise. While they sampled herb-infused snacks, Amborn explained how the plants in his garden were used in ancient times and how they related to the Bible.

All said and done, almost 80 people saw Amborn's garden that day. Amborn used that as an opportunity to hand out brochures and welcome people to visit St. Paul; some did take him up on his offer and later attended worship services.

That tour got people talking. Soon Amborn was showing his garden to a reporter from Milwaukee's *Journal Sentinel*. Within weeks the article was reprinted in newspapers and magazines around the country. "It's just amazing," says Amborn. "This was on the Internet in Cuba, in Mexico, and I got letters from people in the Bahamas, California, Idaho, Montana, and all over in the South. I even got a letter from my sixth-grade teacher that I always had such a crush on."

And some of those letters provided unique opportunities. "One lady mentioned she used to live in this area," says Amborn. "Her husband is Catholic, she used to be Lutheran, and they haven't gone to church in while. I wrote back to her and told her about the WELS churches in their area." Another woman wrote to tell Amborn about her mother, an avid gardener, who had recently passed away. Amborn used this as an opportunity to comfort her with God's Word.

In the months following the tour, Amborn was asked to give his herb garden presentation to several groups in the Milwaukee area, and he is now exploring the possibility of traveling to other regions. Although he is eager to fill requests, Amborn

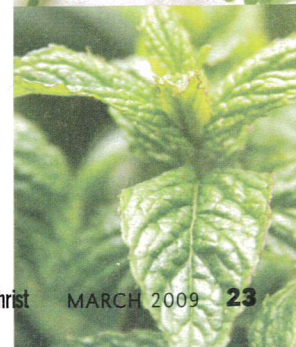
reminds those inquiring that what he's sharing is not just a talk about herbs and plants, but a Bible study. After all, he says, three of the most important events in the Bible took place in a garden: sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:6,7), Jesus prayed for strength in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36), and he was buried and came to life in a garden (John 19:41,42).



Amborn's biblical herb garden.

With all of the opportunities that Amborn's garden has created, St. Paul's congregation is now considering putting in its own biblical herb garden. "Wherever I go, there's a mention of our church—and I stress the fact that people from my church are helping me and how great it is to be a pastor here," says Amborn. "I see it more than anything as a mission [project] for our church. This is really an opportunity for our church to do evangelism."

*Learn more about the plants in Amborn's garden and their biblical ties on p. 27.*



## WELS news briefs

### Campus Ministry

414-256-3279; [cm@sab.wels.net](mailto:cm@sab.wels.net)

The **2009 Campus Ministry Rally** will be held in Eau Claire, Wis., on May 18-21. The retreat's theme, "Walk This Way," is based on 1 John 1:7. Students will be able to attend workshops on topics ranging from the personal, such as anxiety and stress, to the public, such as how to live one's faith and evangelize. Students will also have the opportunity to attend worship services and enjoy fellowship time. For more information or to register, go to [www.campusministryrally.com](http://www.campusministryrally.com).

### Ministry of Christian Giving

800-827-5482; [mcg@sab.wels.net](mailto:mcg@sab.wels.net)

In February, WELS Ministry of Christian Giving sent materials for the **2009 Walking Together Sunday** to every congregation. Materials included a DVD, brochures, promotional posters, and worship resources. The 2009 Walking Together service, based on 1 Corinthians 12, reminds us how we all, through our God-given gifts, have a role in the church to show people God's love. Congregations are encouraged to hold this year's Walking Together service sometime between August and the end of year since the Year of Jubilee is the focus through the synod convention in July. Find out more at [www.wels.net/jump/walkingtogether](http://www.wels.net/jump/walkingtogether).

### Communication Services

414-256-3210; [csc@sab.wels.net](mailto:csc@sab.wels.net)

WELS Communication Services in cooperation with the Ministry of Christian Giving released the **2008 Annual Report** in January. The 18-page document provides a clear picture of the synod and the activities carried out by its areas of ministry in 2008. The report was mailed to congregations and sent with gift statements to WELS donors. See it online at [www.wels.net/jump/annualreport](http://www.wels.net/jump/annualreport).

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

## Families in Mexico receiving physical, spiritual nourishment

Twenty years ago a group of volunteers headed to a small village in Northern Sonora, Mexico, to distribute donated food and other basic essentials to 13 families and 25 children. Their goal? To show Christian compassion. Today the group—known as Mission to the Children—is working in 14 villages in the region to provide food, clothing, and the message of Jesus to approximately 1,500 children and their families.

"I think this ministry is extremely important because people in the area are just walking down a path that has no hope connected with it," says Missionary Ronald Baerbock, who has been ministering to families in the region for three years. "When you ask them if they have eternal life, many say, 'No, I don't think so.' They are just very uncertain."

Baerbock is the first full-time missionary supported by Mission to the Children, which is funded solely by gifts and donations. "It was a real step out in faith," Baerbock says, especially since the addition of a full-time missionary doubled the mission's budget. But Mission to the Children leaders saw the need to add a stronger spiritual emphasis to the group's expanding humanitarian aid efforts.

And that spiritual nourishment is what Baerbock is providing. Since he arrived, the message of salvation has been reaching more people through the addition of weekly worship opportunities, confirmation classes, and Bible information classes. Baerbock now ministers to 49 communicant members and 97 baptized souls, and in a typical month approximately 650 children and 550 adults participate in Bible schools and Bible studies.

"Things have moved along much faster than we ever envisioned," he says. "We just give thanks daily for the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit working through that Word."

Baerbock says another blessing has been the addition of a new church building in Altar. More than 180 people attended the dedication service, which was held last June. "It was a milestone in that most of the pueblos, or villages, we work in are small and so it's really tough to get a dedicated group of any size together," says Baerbock. He says

Altar, on the other hand, is one of the bigger and faster-growing areas in the region, and having a building gives a sense of permanence to the community. "This property is in an area where there are a lot of unchurched people. There have been a lot of new faces in church, and even people across the street have become members."

Baerbock says many of the members are eager to serve and have been teaching Sunday school and helping with church events. "It just warms my heart to see the willingness of the people to volunteer and to work," he says. "This group is really dedicated, and they've been a real blessing."



Last December, more than 60 people attended a Christmas program in Altar. "I personally would classify it as the neatest [service] I can remember in my ministry," says Baerbock.

Although he has enjoyed seeing the power of the Word work in many lives, Baerbock says he will be happy when he is no longer needed in Sonora. "My call is a 'sunsetting call,' which is a temporary call until the national pastors from the *Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Confesional* (WELS' sister synod in Mexico) can take over," says Baerbock.

He hopes that in the future there will be a solid, core group of believers and a church in each of the 14 communities as well as people trained in each area to take over children's classes and the worship services. "Right now there's a lot of ignorance down here as far as the true message is concerned," says Baerbock. "We just have to get the message across that if you believe in Christ, you have eternal life."

For more information, visit [www.missiontothechildren.org](http://www.missiontothechildren.org).



## District news

### South Atlantic

**Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga.**, dedicated a new education wing last winter. According to Pastor Jonathan Schroeder, the new wing expands preschool classroom space and provides a multi-purpose adult education classroom equipped with audio and video presentation technology. The education room has also provided space for the launch of a college outreach program called "Foundations."

**Shepherd of the Lakes, Land O Lakes, Fla.**, held its grand opening service on Dec. 14, 2008. Almost 140 were in attendance. Less than a week later, Shepherd of the Lakes held a Christmas for Kids. Forty-five children attended.

**Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn.**, held its seventh annual German Christmas service on Dec. 14, 2008. Professor John Hartwig of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, conducted the service, and more than 200 people attended. "As in years past, this service has served as a wonderful outreach opportunity for the congregation," says Pastor Matthew Brown.

More than 740 people attended a community kids carnival at **Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla.**, on Nov. 16, 2008, and another 45 children from the area attended the church's Christmas for Kids program on Dec. 20.

**Abiding Peace, Simpsonville, S.C.**, dedicated a 2,500 square-foot building expansion on Jan. 25, which will add fellowship space and two classrooms for a growing preschool and Sunday school.

### South Atlantic



Hope, Irmo, S.C., held its annual fall festival on Oct. 26, 2008. Almost 250 people from the community enjoyed the food, games, hayride, and costume contest.

### Happy anniversary!



Former WELS president, Rev. Karl Gurgel, celebrated 40 years in the ministry while serving as a visiting professor at Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong. The celebration was held Nov. 29, 2008—the same day the expatriates were celebrating Thanksgiving. "As things turned out, Karl didn't expect this to be his night," wrote Dr. John Lawrenz, president of Asia Lutheran Seminary. "We kept the secret!" Following a Thanksgiving feast, the group surprised Gurgel with gifts and a presentation called "This is your life." Thanks to Web cameras, Gurgel's family members in the United States were also able to join in the celebration.

### Arizona-California

**Grace, San Carlos, Ariz.**, held its first Advent by Candlelight service on Dec. 21, 2008. Thirty-five women from the southern Apache reservation churches (Bylas, Peridot, San Carlos) attended the event, which was by women and for women. "It was a great way to help us all slow down and refocus on the true meaning of Christmas," says Bethany Olson, one of the organizers and a teacher at Peridot Lutheran School, Peridot. "It was a big success for us. I talked with many of the ladies afterward, and they were more than willing to do it even bigger and better next year."

### Southeastern Wisconsin

Approximately 200 Hispanic members from **Christ, St. Peter, Gethsemane, and Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.**, attended *Navidad Hispana*, a Spanish Christmas service, at Christ on Dec. 13, 2008. The service included Hispanic Christmas songs and a play of the Christmas story, followed by food and fellowship in the gym. WELS

### South Atlantic



Members of Abiding Grace, Covington, Ga., welcomed 94 children to their rented space on Dec. 13, 2008, for their Christmas for Kids program. The children made crafts, sang songs, learned the Christmas story, and presented a program for their parents at the end of the day.

also streamed the event live on the Internet so an additional 40 people from around the world were able to watch.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ—Frederick Casmer; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY**

**Pastors**

**Ewart, Jason W.**, to Hope, Oconomowoc, Wis.  
**Hayes, Dennis A.**, to retirement  
**Luchterhand, Lyle L.**, to Trinity, Minocqua, Wis.  
**Marquardt, Guy M.**, to Christ, Lodi, Calif.  
**Monday, Shiloh M.**, to St. Mark, Salina, Kan.  
**Rautenberg, Daniel J.**, to Apache Christian Training School, Whiteriver, Ariz.  
**Stuebs, Ralph O.**, to Trinity, Morenci, Mich.

**Teachers**

**Baade, Brett M.**, to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Behnken, Carrie E.**, to Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis.  
**Buschkopf, Rachel L.**, to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Fischer, Heidi A.**, to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.  
**Gibson, Jason T.**, to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.  
**Hartzell, Luke J.**, to Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn.  
**Henkel, Linda L.**, to retirement  
**Kiecker, Craig K.**, to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.  
**Kitka, Lauren M.**, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.  
**Reede, Amy A.**, to King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.  
**Rosenbaum, Kurt E.**, to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.  
**Tietz, Trudy K.**, to St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

**Appleton, Wis.**—Riverview School (40). Apr. 26. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; reception and school tour to follow. RSVP by Apr. 1. 920-954-8106; sweihing@new.rr.com.  
**Hayward, Wis.**—Peace (25). May 17. Worship, 2:30 P.M.; light luncheon to follow. RSVP by Apr. 30. Emory Steinke, 715-634-8785.  
**Raymond, S.D.**—Bethlehem (125). June 21. Worship, 10:45 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 605-532-3766; pheasant@itctel.com

**COMING EVENTS**

**Evangelism workshop**—Mar. 7, 9 A.M.-3 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Theme: "Be prepared to answer." Speaker: Prof. Mark Paustian. 414-771-2530; church.secretary@FairviewLutheran.com. Web site, www.ShareGrace.net.  
**Prep Singers spring concert tour**—920-261-4352.  
 • Mar. 11-7 P.M., Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.  
 • Mar. 12-7 P.M., Shepherd of Peace, Powell, Ohio.  
 • Mar. 13-7:30 P.M., Bethlehem, Manassas, Va.

• Mar. 15-8, 9:30, & 11 A.M., Grace, Falls Church, Va.; 7 P.M., Resurrection, Chesapeake, Va.  
 • Mar. 16-7 P.M., Living Hope, Midlothian, Va.  
 • Mar. 17-7 P.M., Grace, Charlotte, N.C.  
 • Mar. 18-7 P.M., Living Word, Gray, Tenn.  
 • Mar. 19-7 P.M., Beautiful Savior, Clarksville, Tenn.  
 • Mar. 20-7 P.M., Victory, Lexington, Ky.  
 • Mar. 21-7 P.M., Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio.  
 • Mar. 22-10:15 A.M., Bethlehem, Carmel, Ind.; 7 P.M., Peace, Wilmot, Wis.  
 • Mar. 23-7 P.M., St. John, Watertown, Wis.

**Today's Christian Women Retreat**—Mar. 13-15. Sheraton Lansing Hotel, Lansing, Mich. Theme: "Lord, you have the words of eternal life." Web site, www.tcwr.org.

**Pathways to Christ Retreat**—Mar. 20-22. LaSures Hall, Oshkosh, Wis. 920-233-1069. Web site, www.martinlutheroshosh.com.

**WELS Church Librarians Organization meeting**—Mar. 21, 8:15 A.M. St. John, Lannon, Wis. Marilyn Lemke, 262-251-4145; m-lemke@wi.rr.com.

**Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale concerts**—  
 • Mar. 22, 7 P.M., St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis.  
 • Mar. 29, 7 P.M., Grace, Manitowoc, Wis. Alan Ross, 920-684-5833; rossoa4@tm.net.

**Christian Woman Today Retreat**—Mar. 27-29. Olympia Spa & Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Theme: "Love each other as I have loved you." Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412. Web site, www.ChristTheLordBrookfield.org.

**Autism workshop**—Mar. 28, 8:30 A.M.-4:30 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel & Student Center, Madison, Wis. Hosted by Jesus Cares Ministries and The Lutheran Home Association. Registration deadline, Mar. 16. 414-259-0292. Web site, www.jcministries.org.

**2009 WELS Regional Handbell Festivals**—  
 • Apr. 18-19. Concert, 2 P.M., Apr. 19. Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.  
 • Apr. 18-19. Concert, 2 P.M., Apr. 19. St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.  
 • Apr. 25-26. Concert, 2 P.M., Apr. 26. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Web site, www.welsbells.com.

**2009 Staff Ministers Conference**—Apr. 24-25. Grace, Falls Church, Va. Theme: "In God we trust." Jim Boggs, 636-978-6791. Web site, www.StaffMinistry.net.

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

**The Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee choral concert**—May 3, 3 P.M., Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.; 7 P.M., St. John's, Wauwatosa, Wis. Mary Prange, mjprange@aol.com.

**National Campus Ministry Retreat**—May 18-21. Metropolis Hotel, Action City, and Florian Gardens, Eau Claire, Wis. Hosted by UW-Eau Claire. Theme: "Walk THIS Way." Web site, www.campusministryrally.com.

**Creation Museum in northern Kentucky tour**—June 15-19. MLC, DMLC, and NWC alumni as well as current MLC students and members of OWLS are invited. Hosted by the Martin Luther College Alumni Association. Steve Balza, 507-217-1731. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu/home/alumni.

**46th annual LWMS convention**—June 25-28. Sheraton Denver Hotel, Denver, Colo. Hosted by the Rocky Mountain Circuit. Theme: "Mission with an altitude." Web site, www.lwms.org.

**2009 WELS International Youth Rally**—July 8-11. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Theme: "Follow the path; lead the way." Web site, www.welsyouthrally.net.

**MLC, DMLC, and NWC Reunion Weekend**—July 24-26. Site, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Celebrating five-year incremental class reunion (2004, 1999, and all previous classes ending in four or nine). Steve Balza, 507-217-1731; alumni@mlc-wels.edu. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu/home/alumni.

**Prayer conference**—Aug. 14-15. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Hosted by WELS Prayer Institute. Steve Witte, 920-499-7405. Reg Draheim, 920-497-1000.

**NAMES WANTED**

**Shepherd of the Lakes, Land O Lakes, Fla.**—John Huebner, 813-401-9135; miscojohn@aol.com.

**Fort Drum/Watertown, N.Y.**—Jeremiah Gumm, 315-652-7951; pastor@nycrossofchrist.org.

**Camp Shiloh Lutheran Retreat, Pittsburg, Tex.**—Volunteer opportunity for maintenance couples. Wayne Fischer, 903-855-1800; director@campshilohretreat.org. Web site, http://campshilohretreat.org/.

**Williston, N.D.**—Dave Ruddat, 406-635-2180.

**Sparks/Spanish Springs, Nev.**—Steve Hillmer, 775-354-2800.

**PREACHER NEEDED**

**Mountain Home, Ark.**—Trinity is looking for a pastor to preach June 21 and 28 in exchange for the use of a home in the area. Dave Kapler, 870-424-2888; tlcwels@mtnhome.com.

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](http://www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard) and a calendar at [www.wels.net/jump/calendar](http://www.wels.net/jump/calendar).

# It all started in a garden . . .

Last summer, a neighborhood garden walk took place in northwest Milwaukee. One of the stops was the backyard of Keith Amborn, pastor at St. Paul, Milwaukee. His unique biblical herb garden created a buzz with the guests and was soon highlighted in Milwaukee's *Journal Sentinel*. The article, which explains the biblical ties of plants in his garden, has since been reprinted in newspapers and magazines around the country. (Learn more on page 23.)

"Plants mentioned in the Bible are the living link between us and the people of distant times," says Amborn. "Today we cultivate plants that grew in the gardens of the Promised Land, plants of which Isaiah and Ezekiel spoke, plants that Jesus used in his parables. For us, wheat is still the staff of life as it was for them. The onion and the leek, the dill, the mint, and the rue of our lives were also part of the everyday lives of the Bible people."

Below is information that Amborn shared about the plants in his garden. Can you match the following descriptions to the plants that are pictured?

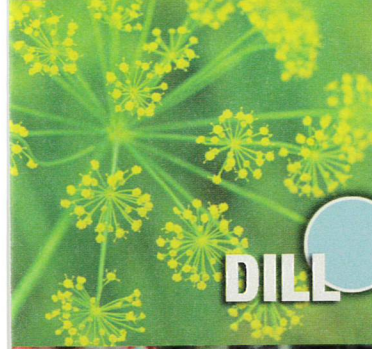
1. Mentioned in the Old Testament for purification, this herb is used by herbalists to treat bronchial infections. It attracts bees and butterflies to its nectar-rich flowers (Psalm 51:7).
2. The stems of this plant are soaked or "retted" in water to release fibers for making linen cloth. Fine linens were used as hangings and curtains in the tabernacle as well as for burials. The body of Jesus was even wound in linen cloths with spices (John 19:40).
3. This is one of the oldest existing plant names. In biblical times it was valued for its fresh aroma and sweet taste and was often used to flavor meat. This plant was so valuable that Pharisees tithed it (Luke 11:42).
4. Used to reduce inflammation and ease bee stings, the leaves of this plant can also be made into tea and given for colds and bronchitis. In the Bible, Job mentioned this plant when he spoke of a time when his persecutors and tormentors had no standing (Job 30:1-4).
5. One of the oldest spices, this plant was mentioned in Exodus as one of the bitter Passover herbs. In the desert, it was likened to manna (Exodus 16:31).
6. This plant is an excellent remedy for digestive disorders and was used in the Middle East since biblical times by ancient Egyptian and Roman doctors. It was also one of the tithed herbs (Matthew 23:23).



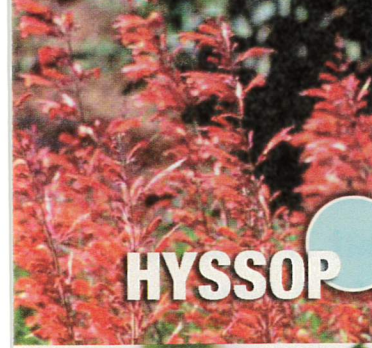
**FLAX**



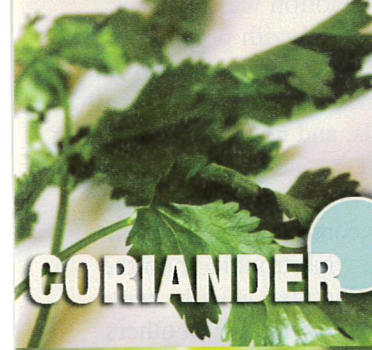
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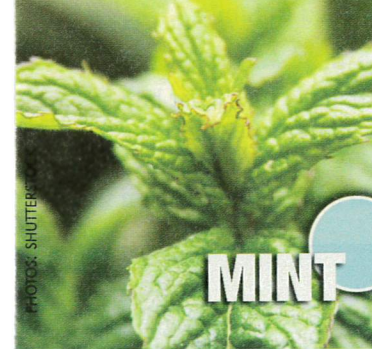
**DILL**



**HYSSOP**



**CORIANDER**



**MINT**



**Picture this**

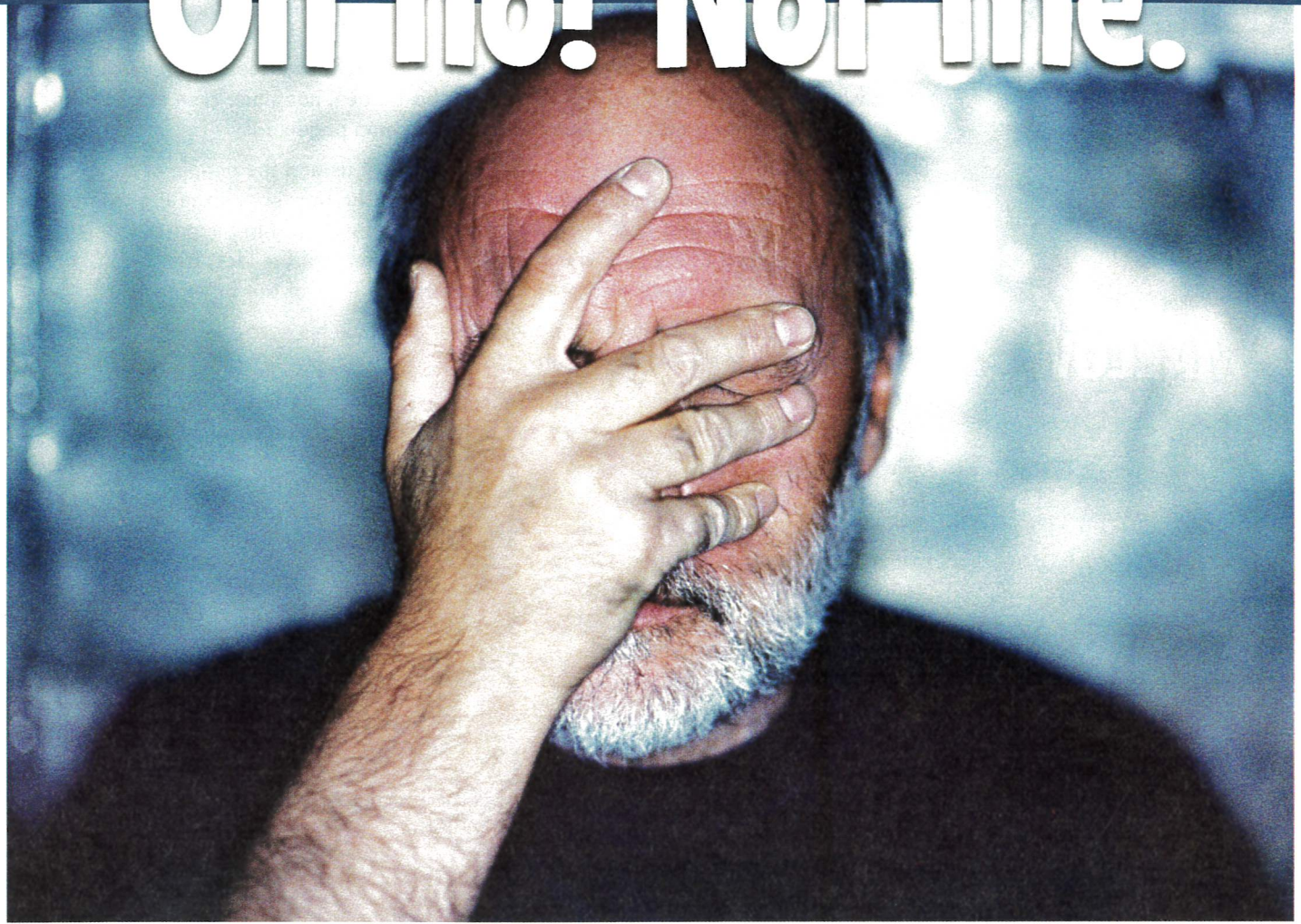
Pictured are Nathanael, Hannah, and Caleb—children of Missionary Rob and Rebecca Wendland who serve in Malawi, Africa. The children appeared in *Taste of Home* magazine after Rebecca sent in a picture of them making one of the magazine's featured recipes. "Our kids were absolutely thrilled to see themselves in print," she says. "I was quite happy they kept the 'Lutheran Church of Central Africa' with our name. I was even more surprised when the apron prize actually arrived in the mail here in Malawi! The envelope was very torn up and taped by the post office, but the contents were still enclosed. I am so thankful for the technology that allows us to stay in touch with the rest of the world despite the thousands of miles that separate our continents."

*Submitted by Rebecca Wendland*

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.

ANSWERS  
 1. FLAX  
 2. MALLOW  
 3. MINT  
 4. DILL  
 5. CORIANDER  
 6. HYSSOP

# Oh no! Not me.



**Embarrassed by our own failings, we understand what it means to show compassion and forgiveness to others.** Carl R. Henkel

We were at a gathering of about 30 people, and I was at the podium. I was about a minute into my opening devotion when a cell phone began to ring.

### **Cell phone embarrassment**

After a couple rings, a man recognized it as his phone and immediately began to retrieve it. It continued to sound its piercing tone as he tried to turn it off. I paused briefly; we all waited; I tried to continue. There was a lot of snickering and more than a few witty comments.

Finally the phone stopped ringing, and its owner assured everyone that he had turned it off. More than a little embarrassed, he apologized for the

interruption but seemed satisfied that it wouldn't happen again. Ah, but soon it was ringing again ever so loudly! And again! Then followed the ring that alerts its proud owner that he has a message waiting.

By this time, the person next to him was giving him that "look." You see, the person whose phone was now out of control had, in the past, chided his friend for allowing this kind of thing to happen. The annoyance of the ringing cell phone happened often to his friend, but now it was happening to him. This one who admittedly had been critical of the cell-phone etiquette of others was now the offender!

After the devotion was over and we had concluded with prayer, the man apologized again and again for the disruption. Of course, we were all among friends, and no one was in the least bit upset. Yet he continued to say he was sorry, even e-mailing me later to express his contrition one more time. I suspect that what troubled him the most was the fact that what he previously found unacceptable in others had now happened to him.

### **We've all been there and done that**

I'd like to believe that what happened in that conference room is one of those "teachable moments."

With human nature being what it is,

all of us have a tendency to be somewhat critical of other people, especially if they think or act differently than we do. Like it or not, we often prejudge folks and form opinions based upon limited information or information that is either skewed or outright erroneous. We wonder how a person could think this way or act that way. We have no sympathy toward those who make a mess of things because they “should have known better.”

But then something happens. Suddenly it's not the other person's cell phone that disrupts a room full of people. It's ours. Now we're thrust into the position of being the offending “other person.” Now we begin, at last, to see things from the other person's perspective. We still may not like what we see—and we still may not agree—but at least we are able to empathize. When a similar situation happens again to the next person, our faces will no longer reveal a smug scowl but an empathizing smile. Without a doubt, we will then clearly identify with the offender.

When it comes to compassion and empathy—and just a basic understanding of humanity—there is no substitute for experience. Until a person has been around the block a few times, he will view the misfortunes, the missteps, the mistakes, and the just plain poor judgments of others with a sense of condescending arrogance. But once he has walked in those shoes—once he is able to say, “Been there! Done that!”—only then will the smugness be replaced by a spirit of understanding and compassion.

Of course, experience isn't the only component. Anyone can have the kind of empathy and compassion that comes from experiencing failure and embarrassment. But we have another perspective. An honest assessment of ourselves brings us to the stark reality that

we are just like everyone else. We fail. We sin. Maybe not always in the same way as everyone else, but we've been there and done that. The ringing phone is ours. We know it, but we also know that Jesus has forgiven every sin, even those that only make our own phones vibrate so no one else knows.

### **We need to show mercy**

Jesus also reminds us that we are to forgive, empathize, and show compassion just as he has done those things for us. “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.” That's not a condition: “Only forgive us the same way we forgive others.” Instead it's a reminder to remember that our phone rings just like everyone else's. We are forgiven because he empathized with us and had compassion on us.

Then reading about the Pharisee in the temple who stood up and prayed about himself: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men . . .” (Luke 18:11), becomes intensely personal. Rather than fostering arrogance or thinking that we are so much better, we instead look for ways to show compassion, mercy, and forgiveness to those whose phones are ringing in pleas for mercy. We become Christlike. We find tremendous comfort in hearing how the writer of Hebrews describes our Savior and Lord: “We do not have

a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Because Jesus can empathize with us—and has in ways that are deeper and more profound than we sometimes imagine—we can first plead for his mercy and then live that mercy.

Paul calls our gracious God compassionate: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). What a privilege to share God's comfort with our fellow sinners! We are called upon to treat others with the same grace that our Lord has showered upon us. John Newton, the author of the well-known hymn “Amazing Grace,” could write with such passion and power because he truly had once been spiritually lost but now was found, had been blind but now could see. He knew firsthand the efficacy of grace.

The gospel writers remind us several times that when Jesus looked out at all the people coming to him, “he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). May we view the folks in our little corner of the world with that same compassion.

So the next time some careless person's cell phone disrupts your concentration and challenges your civility, remember your own thoughtless failures. Wipe off the smug smirk! Put on the sympathetic smile! Because sooner than later something similar will surely happen to you.

*Carl Henkel is pastor at Hope, Belvidere, Illinois.*

**We are called upon to treat others with the same grace that our Lord has showered upon us.**

# Life is valuable

Miscarriages and surgery for a child challenge a mother's faith.

Laura Bublitz

**T**he monotonous tone of the ultrasound machine was deafening as my husband held my hand tightly. Full of anxiety, we both stared at the screen and waited. The technician was silent. Time seemed to be moving backwards. I finally mustered up the courage to ask, "Is there a baby there?"

"I see what looks like an embryo," she said, pausing, "but it's measuring much smaller than it should be."

"Is there any heartbeat?" I said, with my voice nearly breaking.

Hardly audibly she spoke, "No, I'm not seeing one. I'm sorry."

## Two debilitating heartaches

I could barely walk out of the clinic. I felt as if sorrow was roped around my neck, weighing down my every feeble step. Tears came unending for the next three days. I eventually made them stop around my other two children because it was noticeably bothering my three-year-old son.

Later that evening I stood in the shower trying to ease the pain and discomfort from the unpleasant process that a miscarriage is. I found myself wanting the utter sadness, hurt, frustration, anger, and disappointment to wash right down the drain. I wanted to scream out to everyone, "My baby is gone, and there is nothing I can do about it."

During the next days, I saw myself living a wounded existence. Trying to be "normal" for my children. Trying to smile and mean it. Trying not to break down crying in Wal-Mart every time an adorable baby was wheeled by. Trying not to stare at my children every waking moment, wondering if their sister would have looked like them. Trying not to burst into tears when others would seem to treat my loss as a minor circumstance that I should just get over. Trying to refrain from shaking my head and blurting that I have heard more people pour out sympathy to another after losing a pet than I heard after losing my unborn child.

I wrote my lost one a letter to ease the pain.

Dear Grace,

*I [trust that God has you safely in his care] and I needn't be concerned, but I have a mother's heart. Even though I have never beheld you with my eyes or held you in my arms, you will always be such a part of me. I hope you have found your sister, Lillian, up there. I know God is gracious and good, and I wouldn't be surprised if she was waiting for you upon arrival. I know it may be strange to some, but I imagine you both in heaven sitting by a stream. In the end, I leave that to God. I know you are safe in his hands covered by his grace. We name you for his grace.*

*I know I needn't worry, but I pray so much that you and your sister have some sense that though you never held my hand or used your voices to call me Mama, that you know how much I love you both. I know you don't know sadness there and for that I am so comforted, but I at least hope you know somehow of the sadness and void you left behind. We are still human and can't but help miss getting to know you, my sweet dear children.*

*It greatly saddens me how many in this sin-sick world look at you as non-beings, as if you are not children with souls and worth. I need you to know that I will fight for you and all the others that have been lost or taken before birth. I will proclaim upon every opportunity that life is precious and should be valued and honored. I will attest to the fact that life at six weeks*

*after conception is just as much a person as a baby being handed to a joyful mother.*

*I pray every day that the Lord will help me trust his will that he has chosen for you two. I guess I just need you to know it is not what I would have chosen, but I know you know even better than I that God's will, timing, and grace are so perfect that it is foolish of me to question them.*

*I look so forward to meeting you someday when I meet my life's end. You will never be forgotten, my first daughter and my fourth. You are so precious and dear, but I know you know this. How could you not when you are experiencing heaven's bliss.*

*I will always love you and will ever remember you.*

*Your Mama*

What added to my heartache was just two weeks prior to our loss we found out our two-year-old daughter, Arianna, was going to have to undergo open-heart surgery later in the month due to worsening of her heart defect.

It all did not make any sense to me. Why was God choosing to send us so much at once? We lose one precious child and then we are supposed to face major surgery with another child?

### **One gracious God**

I found myself at a crossroads. I could either crawl inside myself feeling bitter, sad, hurt, and alone, or I could completely turn to my Lord, who is the only one who could drag me out of this pit of sadness and use these tribulations to let his light shine. I mean glow. I mean just blind everyone around me with his light because all, especially non-Christians, who watch me



The Bublitz family after Arianna's successful open-heart surgery: (l to r) Aaron, Micaiah, Arianna, and Laura.

were just waiting for me to despair and crawl away quietly to deal with this on my own.

I chose not to hide from those around me as if I were ashamed, embarrassed, or defeated. I even asked for prayers from my church family regarding both the surgery and the miscarriage. God had a reason for these heartaches, and with the Lord's help my faith would prove genuine. He drove me to his Word where the Spirit worked comfort, courage, and healing.

To help myself and my family heal from the loss of our baby, we decided to memorialize our lost daughters by placing their names on the Memorial for the Unborn, a place of remembrance for miscarried and aborted babies, located in Pleasant Hills Cemetery in Hartford, Wis.

God has used these events to set my heart burning for him even greater. I have never so boldly spoken to anyone in my life as I have since these hardships. I have spoken about the precious worth of the unborn and God's good and gracious will. I've spoken to anyone who would listen: an acquaintance at work, a gal from the YMCA, my non-Christian obstetrician, and my neighbors. I am ready to proclaim the love of a gracious Savior who allows tragedies to occur for our good and that of others.

I have been and will continue to praise God for continuing his refining process on my faith. Yes, my heart still hurts from my losses and trials, but God will not allow them to break my heart but to set it burning for his gracious will and purpose.

*Laura Bublitz is a member at Our Savior, Grafton, Wisconsin.*



Mark Schwede

## Send workers!

Our Wisconsin Synod is blessed with perhaps the nation's finest and most dependable educational system for training church workers. Beginning at the high school level, our two prep schools and area Lutheran high schools produce a steady supply of young people who will continue their training for the public ministry. We operate Martin Luther College, whose sole purpose is to train and equip candidates to serve as teachers and staff ministers and to provide a solid liberal arts education for young men who will continue their study for the pastoral ministry. Our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary provides virtually all of the men who will serve as pastors in our congregations. All three levels are supported as a high priority in our work as a synod.

Over the years WELS has experienced times when the supply of called workers did not meet the demand for called workers. There have been other times when the number of workers exceeded the calls available. That pendulum has swung back and forth with some regularity over the last four decades. More recently, the number of candidates for the ministry has been almost perfectly matched to our needs.

Unlike other church bodies, it is a blessing of God that we are not facing a shortage of called workers in the next few years. But that does not mean that we should relax our efforts to recruit young people for ministry.

Think about this fact: An eighth-grade boy who decides to prepare for the ministry next fall will not be ordained as a pastor until the year 2021. An eighth-grade girl who plans to become a teacher will not enter a classroom until 2017 or 2018, depending on her course of study. Since we cannot predict with any kind

of certainty what our needs for called workers will be eight or twelve years into the future, it seems clear that our efforts to encourage young people to study for the pastoral and teaching ministry should not be relaxed.

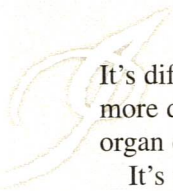
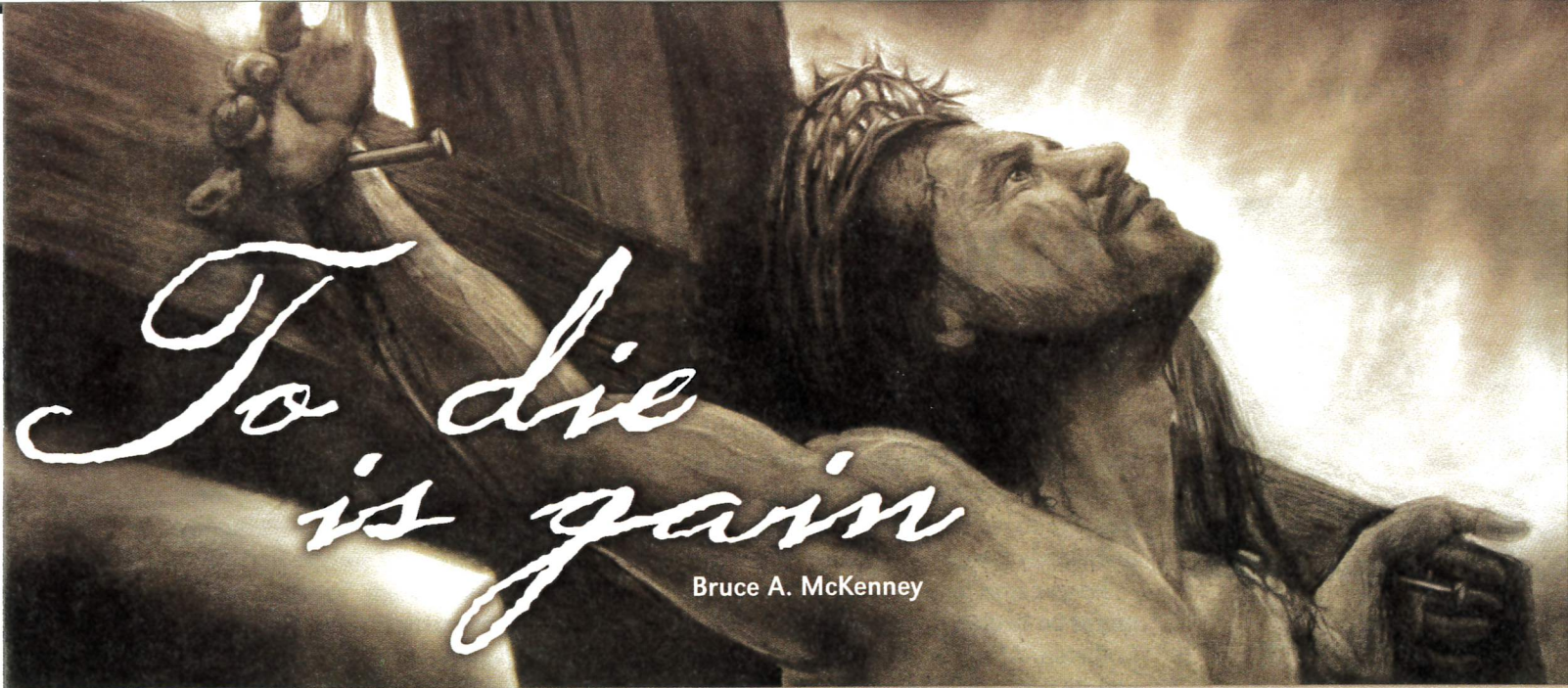
Some have noted that our synod has not grown in recent years and have wondered whether we might be training too many workers. The fact is that we never want to assume that the lack of growth in recent years will continue. We want to continue our efforts to plant the gospel in new locations, to open new congregations and mission fields, to open new schools, and to expand school enrollments. If we are serious about expanding our efforts to preach and teach the gospel to the entire world, then we will need to have an expanding number of workers to fill classrooms and pulpits.

Jesus clearly asks us to pray for workers (Matthew 9:38)—as many as he in his grace and wisdom will give to us. If God blesses us with willing workers, is it not our responsibility to utilize those gifts of God in his church? If we have young people, after years of prayerful consideration, saying, "Here am I, send me," is it not our responsibility as a synod to put those willing workers to work? I believe it is.

Recruitment for ministry is not just the responsibility of our schools. Encouraging young people to prepare for the public ministry is something each of us can do. Sit down with your child or grandchild and talk about the need for pastors and teachers. Pray that God would move more and more young people to consider whether the public ministry is their life's work.

After all, the harvest is still plentiful. And the workers are still few.





It's difficult for families to plan for a funeral, but it's even more difficult when there are questions or doubts about organ donation or cremation.

It's wonderful when a person donates organs so that others can live. But will that affect what happens to his or her body on the great day of the resurrection of the dead? And what about cremation? Some people may want to be cremated and have their ashes scattered as a statement of defiance to God, but what about a Christian who, for personal reasons, wants his or her body cremated? Is that wrong, or will that affect what happens at the resurrection?

### **God has the power to raise all bodies**

If ever we wrestle with such decisions, it might be good to read what Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth, Christians who also had questions about the bodily resurrection:

Someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?' How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is

perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. . . . Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." (1 Corinthians 15:35-43,49)

The "long and short" of Paul's words is basically this: Look at the different kinds of bodies God created in the beginning—man, animal, heavenly bodies. They are different in their make-up and their splendor. If God had the power to put all of those different kinds of bodies together at creation, will he not also have the power to put our bodies back together on the Last Day regardless of where or how they are buried or whether or not they have all their original parts? The answer is obvious.

### **They will be like Christ's glorious body**

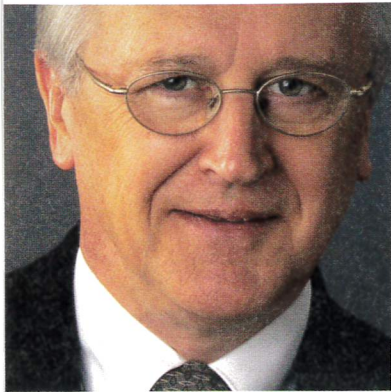
And what will our bodies be like? Paul says that "just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." In other words, our bodies won't be like Adam's after the Fall, tainted with sin, subject to suffering, and destined to die. God will raise our bodies to be like Christ's glorious body. They will be real bodies of flesh and bones, but they will be completely spiritual, that is, never perishable again.

So whether or not we donate our organs or have our bodies cremated are personal choices that we can make in Christian freedom. But when it comes to the resurrection, don't worry about whether or not God can raise our bodies. He has the incredible power to do so and has given an incredible promise that he will!

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

This is the eighth article in a ten-part series on death and dying.

*How will cremation and organ donation affect a body on the Last Day?*  
At creation, God had the power to put our bodies together. He has the same power on the Last Day.



*John A. Beck*

## Hunger for righteousness

The Christmas decorations gather dust now in their storage places. Weeks ago we put them away again for another year. Our attention has shifted from the happy holiday of Christmas to the somber notes of Lenten hymns and midweek services. We move from a baby in a manger to a bloody condemned Savior on a cross.

Jesus came to die for us so that we might be declared righteous. That's Lutheran. Along with the Lenten season and its concentration on the suffering and death of Jesus, we look to remember again that we have the righteousness of God as a gift by faith in Jesus.

But when we talk of the righteousness of God, we don't make a lot of sense to the world around us. It's an old problem. The word *righteousness* is not part of everyday language. To make matters worse, the righteousness we talk about can't be understood by what you see, touch, feel, taste, and smell. Those around us walk by sight. The righteousness we know by faith is understood by the work of the Holy Spirit and defies observation and experience by the senses.

At first Luther was confused by the term too. He considered the righteousness of God a fierce standard. We humans must struggle against sin and do God's work until we become righteous. Luther was terrified because no matter what he did, it was not good enough for God. In that, he was correct.

The light dawned in Luther's heart and mind when the Holy Spirit broke through his misunderstanding. Then Luther understood that the righteousness of God was the holiness and perfection of Jesus and God's free gift to sinners by faith. We still sing of that righteousness. I especially treasure these words: "Jesus, your blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress" (*Christian Worship* 376:1).

In this world, not everyone wants to sing the same song. Sadly today even Christians do not understand righteousness. Too many are where Luther was and think of righteousness as something we must achieve. It is a rightness of behavior, justice, or fairness—a quality within our hearts and a characteristic of our lives. True enough, but such definitions of righteousness most often make Jesus an example of right behavior and skip the righteousness he achieved for us by his suffering and death. It makes me bristle. When I read this distortion, I think of Luther's comment that such people make the Bible a wax nose that they twist and shape to fit their own ideas and opinions.

What happens when we remove the comfort of the cross and the righteousness Christ won there for all humanity? Such righteousness or justice launches us into an endless swamp of human effort. At each step we sink into the mire and struggle to pull ourselves from the muck for another step, only to sink again. In the end, we are exhausted and unable to reach the goal God demands of us.

I need to hear of the perfect righteousness that Christ achieved by his blood on the cross. I hunger for it, and, by God's grace, I will think about it again as I sit in the midweek services this Lent. I am declared righteous by God's grace. I need to hear of it often.

When we have God's free gift of righteousness, then we can place both feet on solid ground and act like the children of God he has made us. We no longer slog in the swamp, but we run the race set for us. We joyfully show justice toward others, help the needy, and do a thousand other works of love. Without Christ's righteousness, life—Christian life—is difficult. No, impossible.

# THE APOSTLES

## St. Philip: Finding our friends for Christ

Philip left home with a group of friends from the same small town. They journeyed into the wilderness to hear the preacher called John the Baptizer. These young men were devout believers; they studied their Scriptures; they prayed and hoped and waited for the Messiah to come. And then one day, John the Baptizer stopped saying that the Messiah was near and instead pointed and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Philip knew his search was over.

### READ JOHN 1:43-49

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

<sup>44</sup>Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

<sup>46</sup>"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

<sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

<sup>48</sup>"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

<sup>49</sup>Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

### DIGGING INTO THE VERSES

1. Before Jesus left town, he found Philip and said, "Follow me." What did he mean by that? How do you know?
2. Philip told Nathanael that he found Jesus, but verse 43 says the opposite. How were both statements true? How did God find you? What was your path to faith in Christ? In retrospect, how do you see God's hand through it all?

3. Jesus certainly could have invited Nathanael to follow him too. Why didn't he? What insight does that give you about evangelism?
4. Look at what Philip said to Nathanael in verse 45. Comment on the impact of each part of his sentence:
  - a. We have found
  - b. The one Moses wrote about
  - c. About whom the prophets also wrote
  - d. Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph
5. When we share Jesus with our friends, we can expect excuses or objections. What makes Philip's answer to Nathanael's objection such a great model for us to follow in evangelism?
6. Look at verse 49. When Philip found Nathanael for Christ, he gave Nathanael the greatest gift ever. Name three emotions Philip must have felt as he heard those words. Give your reasons for each.
7. Make a list of friends or coworkers that don't regularly attend church. Beside each name, write something you can do that might give you the chance to say, "Come and see!"

### MORE ABOUT ST. PHILIP

Everything we know about St. Philip comes from John's gospel. In the sixth chapter, Jesus asks Philip about buying bread for the five thousand to eat. Philip replied that eight months wages wouldn't be enough to buy everyone a bite. In Christian art, Philip's symbol is two loaves of bread to remember Jesus' solution. The church celebrates the Feast of St. Philip and St. James on May 1 each year. The Gospel reading is John 14:8-14 where Philip says to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

*Contributing editor Jonathan Schroeder is pastor at Faith, Sharpsburg, Georgia.*

*This is the fifth article in a 12-part series on Jesus' apostles. Find this study and answers online after March 5 at [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net)*





# HE KNEW

*Jesus was not naïve. He knew full well what was waiting for him.*

Paul C. Ziemer

**P**ictures are rattling on the walls of my study as I write this. It's not an earthquake; it's not even a strong wind. It's the firing of guns on an Army artillery range miles away. Field artillery bangs, slams, and shakes. You can't mistake it.

None in the military community do. Whether it is the firecracker sound of small arms or the boom of the howitzers, people hear it. Mothers look up from their kitchen sinks. School children turn toward the noise as they get off their buses.

### **Horror at what had to happen**

Everyone knows what it means. When the big weapons are repeatedly fired, it means units are about to head for the war zone. These are final practices. Families with loved ones about to head into harm's way know the sound. It is the sound that brings dread to their hearts.

The scheduled date of deployment is seldom marked on family calendars. Some families refuse to even mention the day their loved ones will leave. It is too painful to think about.

The first disciples of Jesus experienced something similar. Warning sounds announced something horrible on the horizon. "The Son of Man will be betrayed. . . . They will condemn him to death" (Matthew 20:18). "Leave her alone. . . . She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial" (Mark 14:6,8). When the time grew closer, the words grew stronger—and more frightening. "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered'" (Matthew 26:31). The words were like thunderous booms.

Those who loved Jesus could not ignore the warning sounds. They also could not face them. Denial, fear, and

dismay came upon them as aftershocks. When the time arrived for Jesus to face the great conflict, most could not even watch. It was too dreadful.

### **Joy that it did happen**

One might think that dread would show itself among the soldiers preparing for war on the firing range. It does not. The scene is similar to high school boys coming together for the first basketball practice of the season. Faces smile. Jokes and quips fly. Excitement crackles. A mission awaits. They are eager to go. They are confident. Some say, "This is what I was born to do!" When the time comes, they will put on their game faces and take up the battle.

Jesus was not naïve. He knew full well what was waiting for him. It would be worse than his disciples feared. Spear and nails were only part of it. The depths of hell waited for him too. He would scream out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). He knew the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was waiting.

But he also knew how it would end. He knew that we would one day call him "death of death and hell's Destruction" (*Christian Worship* 331:3). The Easter angels had probably already received their joyous assignment. Soon their words would ring out: "He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:6).

The far-off Easter sound has reached our ears too. It has crimped our fear. Eyes of faith see beyond our earthly lives, beyond our graves. Courage replaces fear. Joy overcomes sorrow. The undeserved love of God has paved the way to glory.

This is amazing grace! How sweet the sound!

*Paul Ziemer, WELS national civilian chaplain to the military armed forces liaison, is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Fayetteville, North Carolina.*