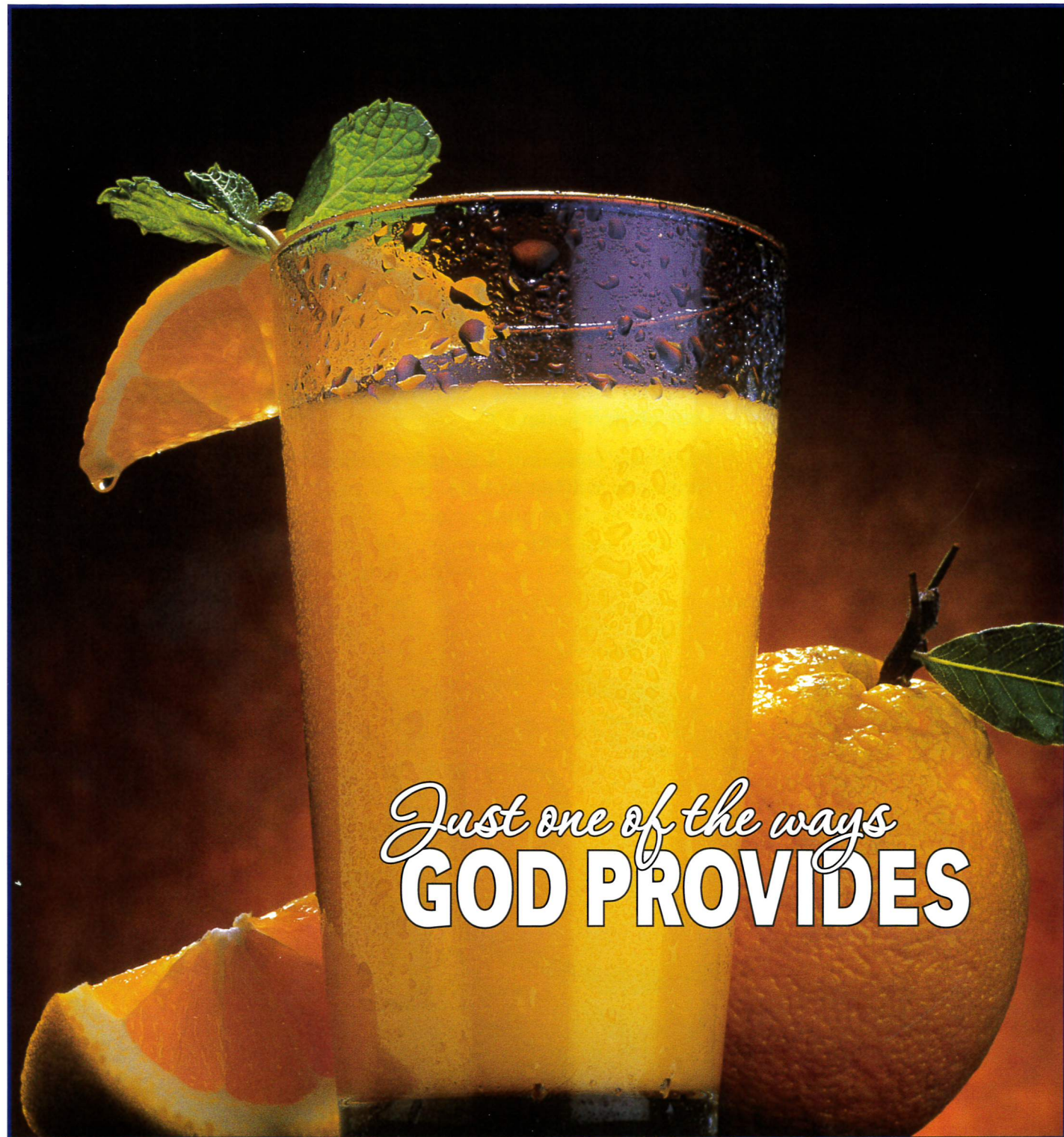


10 COMMANDMENTS • PRAYER • MLC GRADUATES

AUGUST 2009

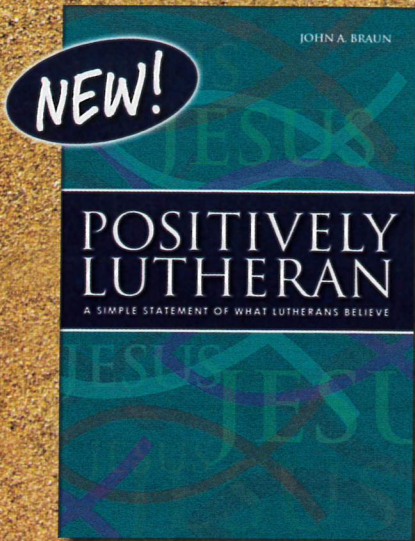
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## Forward in Christ

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### FEATURES

**10 GOD WORKS, EVEN THROUGH ORANGE JUICE** Giving us orange juice is just one of countless ways that God provides for us.

*Mark J. Lenz*

**12 MARRIAGE IS GOOD** Even when spouses argue and fight, the institution of marriage is still good.

*Lance A. Hoff*

**14 CONFESSIONS OF FAITH** How one couple's witnessing brought a realtor closer to Jesus.

*Gail Stoeber*

**16 NOT WHAT WE EXPECT** The ways that God uses to draw us to himself can be surprising.

*Chris J. Pluger*

**32 THE COMMANDMENTS** We should love and trust in God, and gladly obey what he commands.

*James A. Aderman*

**34 PRAYER IS A POWERFUL TOOL** After a fall from a roof, a man learns that God's people pray for one another and God promises to listen.

*Elroy Begalka*

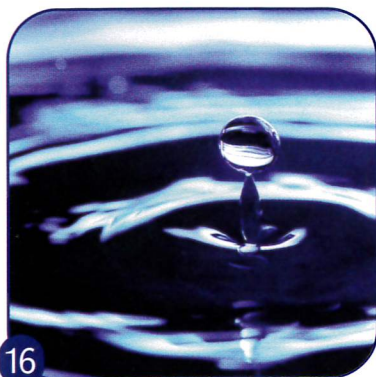
**40 I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M SEEING** The church looks different depending on the perspective from which you view it.

*Jonathan R. Hein*

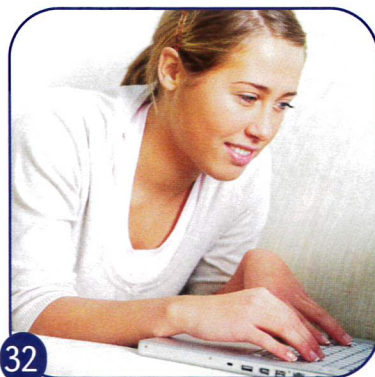
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10



16



32

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NOR FORSAKE US.

1 Kings 8:57

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AUGUST

**WHAT'S INSIDE** by Julie Wietzke

A staple in my refrigerator at home is a large jug of orange juice. I always have one, and I never wonder if someday orange juice won't be available anymore. But I don't thank God for it every day.

Perhaps I should. In a new three-part series, Mark Lenz reminds us that not only does God provide for all our spiritual needs but he also gives us everything that we need here on this earth—including orange juice. Lenz's first article talks about the things God works through to care and provide for us physically (p. 10).

God also uses people to provide for us spiritually. Those people include our called workers—pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. One hundred forty-three individuals training for these callings graduated from Martin Luther College this year and are pictured in this issue (pp. 20-24).

One way we can thank God for taking care of our spiritual and physical needs is by doing what pleases him. He tells us what to do in his Ten Commandments. Jim Aderman starts a new series on this topic with an article explaining more about God and his laws (p. 32).

**DEPARTMENTS**



7

6 **FEEDBACK**

7 **DEVOTION**

The backpack of loneliness *James A. Mattek*

8 **EDITORIAL COMMENT**

Flags *Thomas J. Jeske*

9 **QUESTION & ANSWER**

Gambling *Forrest L. Bivens*

18 **WHATEVER**

Don't worry *Benjamin Becker*

19 **NEWS**

30 **BULLETIN BOARD**

31 **POTLUCK**

36 **FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK**

What's in a name? *Mark G. Schroeder*

37 **BIBLE STUDY**

I believe in the Holy Spirit *Charles F. Degner*

38 **A THOUGHT**

Repent!?! *John A. Braun*

39 **INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY**

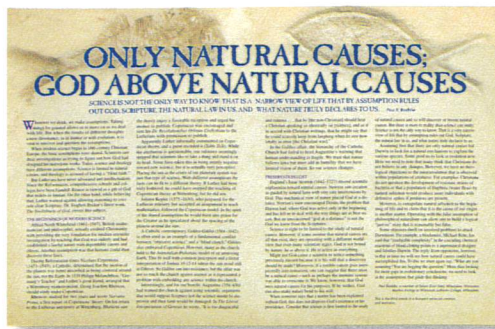
The apostles: Matthias *Jonathan E. Schroeder*



18



37



**SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE**

Having recently read Prof. Paul Boehlke's article on creation and evolution [April], I would make this observation and comment, as far as Prof. Boehlke's statements about Luther and the Copernican theory are concerned: . . . Luther, like most other clergy and churches at the time, believed the geocentric model of science, not the proven Copernican heliocentric, to be correct.

What are we to learn from this? Simply put, there are indeed those significant instances where scientists are right and theologians are wrong. Copernicus was right. Luther et al. were wrong. As Bible-believing Christians, we need to be sure and certain of this simple fact: Sometimes science is the only way to know something to be true, since the Bible does not tell us certain scientific facts. In sum, God's Word—"scientifically speaking"—puts the lie to evolution, and that alone is quite enough!

*Dr. James Kempf  
Appleton, Wisconsin*

**BAPTISM**

In the June issue there appeared a letter from Gary Branscome, commenting on the March Q&A on Baptism. Mr. Branscome wrote, "I would have liked to have seen the article go a little further in explaining why Baptism does not save. Lutheran teachings make it clear that it is not the outward ceremony by which the Holy Spirit engenders faith into salvation, but the divine promise of forgiveness in Christ that the ceremony proclaims. . . ."

I assume that Gary Branscome did not mean what the statement appears to say, that "Baptism does not save." Both the Lutheran Confessions and Scripture clearly state that Baptism does indeed save. Paul writes in Titus 3:5, "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." In his Large Catechism, Luther comments on this verse: "Thus it is well described as a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water, for it is through the Word that it receives the power to become the 'washing of regeneration.'"

The Holy Spirit does not engender faith by the "outward ceremony." But he does engender faith by the Sacrament of Baptism, the water connected with the Word. In Baptism, salvation is not just proclaimed, but communicated to the one being baptized. Baptism does save!

*Joel Kluender  
Big Rapids, Michigan*

*Ed's note: We must apologize to Gary Branscome. He does not subscribe to the false idea that Baptism does not save us. He wrote that Baptism does not save simply as an outward ceremony. We thought that in the context of the letter and article that was understood, so the words were deleted for space considerations. We try to include as many of the letters as we can and do cut portions. Our goal is not to distort the intent of the author. Apparently we did not achieve our goal with this letter and created a problem for Gary Branscome and for some of our readers. Sorry.*

**FAMILY MINISTRY**

In "Where are all the young people?" [April], President Schroeder reminded us of the great responsibility and influence parents have on the faith life of a child. The nuclear family is a sacred institution, responsible for faith building (Ephesians 6:4) and for the passing of faith from one generation to the next (Psalm 78:1-7).

This basic truth should also remind us of the great responsibility and influence our congregations have on parents and their families. We need to engage and equip parents in a real world way (e.g. interactive topical discussions, practical resources for the home, family-friendly worship, etc.). We need to minister with parents and not for parents. We need to engage and assimilate children of all ages into our multi-generational faith-family so that a youth's connection to the church goes much deeper than his or her confirmation class.

As God's Word guides and inspires parents, may it also guide and inspire your congregation's ministry.

*Steve Gast  
Woodbury, Minnesota*

**GRACE ALONE**

The article "To die is gain" [April] talked about babies dying without Baptism. When the thief was hanging on the cross next to Jesus, Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Jesus didn't say, "First you must be baptized."

While Baptism is a wonderful sacrament given to us by God, we must be careful not to make it a works requirement. As Paul says in Romans 3:28: "A man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" and again in Ephesians 2:8, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not from works, so that no one can boast." Other churches pick out various words from the Bible to ignore or take out of context. As Lutherans, we stand firm in our belief that we are saved by grace alone.

*Nancy Growney  
Livingston, Montana*

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*.

# The backpack of loneliness

*Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Psalm 25:16*

James A. Mattek

While walking through the campus of a major university I noticed that nearly everyone had one. With books, computers, cell phones, and their lunch to carry, they had to have one. I'm talking about backpacks. It appeared that backpacks were standard equipment for getting through the day.

As I sat and watched the river of students flowing from building to building, I wondered what they might be carrying in the backpacks of their minds. Were they carrying weighty thoughts of an upcoming exam or maybe the burden of homesickness? Were they carrying worrisome fears about future employment or lingering guilt from last night's party?

## The weight of loneliness

Some appeared to be weighted down by loneliness. King David carried the backpack of loneliness too: "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted." David was treated unfairly and alienated by friends, foes, and family. He felt the weight of loneliness. He slept in caves to avoid a jealous king. Then he was lonely at the top, as it was up to him to make high-level decisions. He was alone with his guilt in the post-Bathsheba cover-up. It seems like David's backpack of loneliness was heavy for much of his life.

Weren't there enough people around for David to avoid loneliness? If one could avoid loneliness by simply being around more people, loneliness would be extinct today. The world's population has grown by billions since David's day, and

yet loneliness is rampant. Merely having more people around isn't the answer.

A child will carry his backpack of loneliness to the baseball game that his mom and dad were too busy to watch. The unpopular kid at school watches the "cool" kids play together without him. He's lonely. A wife carries her backpack of loneliness around the house as her husband watches TV; he's neglected intimacy for years. They're still together . . . but she's alone. You'll find backpacks of loneliness at the country club and in the boardroom. You'll find them with workaholics and alcoholics. You'll find them next to the bed of a one-night stand. You'll find them next to the chairs of the elderly, as they stare out the window wondering why the kids don't visit.

## A burden carried by our Savior

"Turn to me and be gracious to me," the king prays. God hadn't turned away from David and withheld his grace from him. But in his loneliness and affliction David is reminded of his need for what he always had . . . the loving presence of God. That is the silver lining in the dark cloud of lonely solitude. We turn anew to the face of God that has been shining upon us.

And God is able to sympathize with us in our loneliness. His Son carried the heavy backpack of loneliness from cradle to grave. He was



rejected by family, friends, and foes. Ultimately he was left alone in the darkness on the cross. His own Father turned his back on him. But he didn't only carry the burden of loneliness; he carried the burden of our rebellion. God didn't want to spend his time alone in his heaven. He did what was necessary so he could have his family back together again. And someday he will wipe every tear from our eyes, and we'll never be lonely again.

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

# Flags

Thomas J. Jeske

**M**uch divides us human beings. Every group and sub-group flies its flag, demands its rights, champions its cause, seeks its own funding, honors its fallen heroes, and nurses its grievances.

Travel this August to the eastern United States, and you won't go far without a reminder of the Civil War. Those brown National Park Service signs announce names like Antietam and Bull Run and Chancellorsville. Visit one battlefield and you'll learn about others: Ft. Sumter and Richmond and Chickamauga. Slide your fingers south on a map. Can you locate Mobile Bay and Shiloh and Vicksburg? Each has monuments and museums, shops and tours. Meet guides, historians, biographers, and re-enactors dedicated to helping a seeker experience the story of the great divide between North and South.

One starts out as a tourist, carrying sunscreen, map, and camera. Along the way, something changes. Questions are asked, memory is engaged, opinions develop. Somewhere emotion gets involved. I am learning about my country, my neighbor, myself.

What traveler leaves Gettysburg without envisioning himself among the troop movement, sweat, and sound? In our imaginations a dozen different kinds of guns bark, crack, rattle, and bang in a din of sound. From every point come human voices: shouted commands, cries of pain, cries for help. Tourists in souvenir T-shirts estimate the level of their own courage—or lack of it—at the advance of a blue or gray adversary.

What a panorama! Anxiety, pain, division, and confusion spread out as far as the eye can see. Who's fighting against you? Who's fighting with you? One answer is, "Look for flags."

The battlefield is one aspect of the Christian experience. Once God baptizes you into his family, your battle begins. You now have a passionate

and antagonistic enemy. Jesus once said that Satan is master and commander in this place.

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil don't use bullets against each other. They use ideas; they speak words. So we teach, tell, write, print, preach, witness, and publish about Jesus. The content of our message is not a secret. These are our creeds and confessions. They are like regimental flags. In the confusion and fear and death that is the battlefield, our flag is out there, flapping and flying.

Some are going to shoot at it, and some are going to run to it. Our flag will inspire fury, while for others our flag will inspire hope.

Our *This We Believe* will not be needed in heaven, but it is needed here. Our church body is small and insignificant in the eyes of the world. But we still maintain that the words we share are the old, authentic, original Christianity. The reason that not everybody rallies to our flag is that it draws too much fire.

Visit a Civil War battlefield by foot, book, or Internet. You will bring home a lesson learned by U.S. citizens of old. Sometimes it becomes impossible to continue working together when the price is agreeing to disagree.

In heaven the divisions and flags will fall away. But here on the battlefield, it is our duty to fly our flag, to rally the frightened, the lost, the hurt, the dying to come to the message we treasure: *Christ for me*. For now, we contend for the faith once entrusted to

us. Much divides us human beings. But we know two things that unite us under our flag: "In Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

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

**Our creeds and confessions . . . are like regimental flags. In the confusion and fear and death that is the battlefield, our flag is out there, flapping and flying.**





Forrest L. Bivens

When asking your question you clarified that you do gamble but limit the frequency of the activity, limit the amount of money put at risk, and maintain fiscal responsibility in your giving to the Lord. You want to view gambling as an acceptable form of entertainment that offers at least relatively harmless excitement, but you are really not sure if this is right.

Since gambling has become so pervasive in our culture, Christians increasingly wrestle with questions like yours. It's a question that won't go away.

#### **Always sinful? No.**

The main reason we don't classify gambling as sin is that we don't have the right to label something sinful if the Bible doesn't. Gambling was well known in Bible times and a widespread obsession in ancient Rome, yet God's Word contains no prohibition of the practice.

A second factor is that there is no universal definition of what gambling is. To make a sweeping statement that "gambling is wrong" could condemn all risk taking and games of chance that conceivably would include investing in the stock market, involvement in the insurance industry, or playing penny-ante parlor games.

#### **Often sinful? Yes.**

Historically Christianity has strongly opposed most gambling practices because they are hard to reconcile with timeless biblical principles for God-pleasing lifestyles. Here's a partial list of issues that surface when gambling is considered:

- The Bible condemns and warns against greed, the love of money, and "get rich quick" mindsets (Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 6:10; Proverbs 13:11; Ecclesiastes 5:10). These attitudes often accompany gambling, and temptations to sin quickly surface in that environment.
- The Bible repeatedly calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves (as in Romans 13:9,10), yet most forms of gambling invite us to get something at the expense of those who must

## **Q. Is gambling always sinful? What about gambling as entertainment when safeguards are in place?**

ultimately lose. Even when my neighbor seems willing to lose what he has, should I seek to take advantage of that?

- Romans 14:19-21 instructs us to avoid the use of otherwise permissible activities when we might lead others to sin or harm

another's faith. Isn't this worth thinking about in our country where there are an estimated 8 million pathological and problem gamblers and where 60 percent of adults have gambled within the past year? Do we ultimately feed an industry that preys on so many?

- We are called to be faithful stewards, or managers, of all God's blessings all the time (Psalm 24:1; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15; Luke 12:35-48). While gambling is only one in a long list of potential time and money wasters, the question needs to be asked: Is this a wise use of resources God has given, even when moderation is shown? Do we fail to support our churches and yet spend money on gambling?

#### **Personally sinful? Yes or no.**

After identifying pertinent issues and inviting self-examination, we entrust the matter to the conscience of the individual brother or sister, who is called to apply the Bible principles in his or her own life. Generally speaking, churches used to condemn gambling more quickly and comprehensively than they do now. Such is the power of culture. For the conscientious believer, however, the internal struggle to know and do what is wise, loving, and beneficial will continue. Your question is evidence of that.

Sometimes Christians might apply one principle somewhat differently than others. Let's be quick to listen to their explanation and loving when we offer input. What we *really* want most is that believers grow spiritually and seek to do what shows love for their neighbor and respect for our gracious Lord.

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

# God works, EVEN THROUGH ORANGE JUICE

Giving us orange juice is just one of countless ways that God provides for us, but orange juice is a secondary cause. God himself is the first cause.

Mark J. Lenz

“Did you have a glass of orange juice this morning?”

“Yes.”

“It came from God.”

*Hmm. That’s a nice, pious thought.* “Well, actually, I got it from the carton of orange juice in the refrigerator.”

“Yes, but where did the carton of orange juice come from?”

“I bought it at the store.”

“And where did the store get it?”

“From the orange juice distributor, I suppose.”

And so the questions could continue . . . the distributor got it from the company that makes orange juice, which got it from the orange grove, which got it from the orange trees . . . but it really was God who provided it. He caused the seed to germinate and sprout and grow into an orange tree. He caused the sun to shine and the rain to fall and the ground to provide nutrients so that the tree could grow and produce blossoms and fruit. He caused the fruit to have a skin that protected the orange wedges that contained the juice and the pulp.

Why does God give us orange juice? It’s just one of countless ways by which God provides for us. Orange juice quenches our thirst. It provides us with vitamins. It tastes good. But orange juice is a secondary cause. God himself is the first cause.

God is the primary cause

How does that work exactly? Psalm 127:1 says, “Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” The architect designed the house; someone invented the backhoe to dig the hole; the block-layers manipulated the trowels, blocks, and cement; the carpenters measured the boards and wielded the hammers and saws; but it was the Lord who built the house. The Lord made the materials for the blocks and cement. The Lord made the trees from which the lumber was taken. The Lord gave the block-layers and the carpenters arms, hands, and various skills to do the building. It was the Lord who built the house. He simply used a variety of materials and workers to serve his purpose.

God uses secondary causes to preserve life itself. He gives us air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, hearts to pump blood, and muscles to let us move. The Bible says that God is the one who “gives all men life and breath and everything else . . . In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25,28). You and I do the living. You and I do the breathing. You and I place one foot in front of the

other. But unless God were the primary cause, you and I could not live or breathe or move or exist for a moment.

### God uses secondary causes

God uses many things that we often take for granted to provide for us.

#### Government

Voters in our country elect presidents, legislators, governors, mayors, and others to serve and protect citizens. But it is really God who uses these public officials as his agents to serve us. The Bible reminds us that each public servant is “God’s servant to do you good” (Romans 13:4).

#### The family

The same applies to families. God could provide for people directly, but instead he has instituted the family to serve as his agent. Husbands care for wives, wives serve husbands, parents provide for their children, and sometimes children need to care for their parents, but really God uses family members as his agents.

#### The laws of nature

Even what we call the laws of nature are simply secondary causes that God uses to provide for us. Really? Don’t the laws of nature just happen apart from any intervention on the part of God? Isn’t “Mother Nature” ultimately in control of everything? In the spring we expect the grass to turn green, the flowers to bloom, and the trees to produce leaves. We say that night naturally follows day, that the sun rises and sets. We say that when the atmospheric conditions are right, it will rain. We watch squirrels gathering nuts and birds eating seeds, and we say that is how nature takes care of its creatures. All these things just happen naturally, don’t they?

Scientists sometimes talk about the unchangeable laws of nature, and people generally conclude that’s just the way things are. For example, the law of inertia says objects at rest tend to stay that way unless acted on by an outside force. The first law of thermodynamics says energy is indestructible, that it can neither be created nor destroyed but simply changes form. Aren’t these laws immutable? No, they’re not. What the world speaks of as “laws of nature,” and what we speak of as things that just

happen naturally, are actually evidences of God’s will in action for the welfare of his creatures. He who made the laws of nature is above them. He can change them anytime he wishes. But he uses them as secondary means to provide for us. Imagine what life would be like without these laws of nature. Consider, for example, how impossible life would be without the law of gravity.

#### Angels

God, however, is not dependent on the laws of nature to provide for us. That’s the way he normally does it, but he can override the laws of nature when he wills. He can even use angels to provide for us. He did that in the case of Daniel. Because Daniel had refused to bow down and pray to King Darius, he was thrown into a den of lions, but “God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions” (Daniel 6:22). God sent angels to provide for Jesus when he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Mark 1:13). He sent an angel to deliver Peter and John from the public jail (Acts 5:19). Later the Lord sent an angel to deliver Peter from prison where he was bound between two soldiers (Acts 12:7-10).

God still sometimes uses the angels as secondary agents to accomplish his purposes for us. The Bible says, “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14).


How comforting it is to know this. You and I are not just the result of a biological accident or an evolutionary process. God made each one of us. And since he made us, he has also promised to uphold, sustain, provide for, and protect us every moment of our lives. Why? It’s all because of his love for us in Christ Jesus. Because of Jesus we are guaranteed life eternal in heaven, but we are also assured of God’s care and protection as long as we live on this earth.

Yes, God works through orange juice. And cereal and milk, bacon and eggs, toast and butter, coffee and cream. . . .

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

*This is the first article in a three-part series on God’s providence. Find a related Bible study after Aug. 5 at [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net)*

# MARRIAGE

IS  good

Even when spouses argue and fight, the institution of marriage is still good. It is our sin that more than occasionally brings heartache rather than blessing to marriage.

Lance A. Hoff

**M**arriage is good! I suspect a few might object. Maybe you just had one of those domestic quarrels that occur in every marriage. Good? Maybe your spouse has been unfaithful, and you were left deeply hurt. Perhaps you grew up in a broken home or a home where domestic quarrels escalated into violence. Marriage good?

Yet I want to say marriage is good because God says it. He created marriage in the perfection of paradise to be good, and it is! Even Solomon wrote, “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22).

### The three great blessings of marriage

Marriage is good because God blesses it. Luther’s Small Catechism speaks of three major blessings of marriage: (1) loving companionship, (2) sexual happiness, and (3) the precious gift of children (The Sixth Commandment).

Loving companionship is certainly the first blessing of marriage. That was obviously what our Creator had on his mind when he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). God had the perfect solution to Adam’s loneliness. He created a companion perfectly designed to complement and balance his life in every way. Eve fit perfectly with Adam—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—to become a whole just like two pieces of a puzzle.

No other earthly relationship is so close. Parents always love their children and children honor their parents, but children leave home. Friends may remain loyal for a lifetime, but we have many friends. Marriage is the only relationship designed by God to yoke a man and woman together to face a lifetime of sharing the most intimate recesses of their beings.

What a blessing! In marriage, we are able to face life with its joys and sorrows knowing that there will always be that one special person to pick you up when you fall, to believe in you when you are not sure of yourself, and to share a joy or a tough decision when it arrives. It is precisely because marriage is such a blessing that there is such an enormous hurt when that relationship is ended either by death or human sin.

The second blessing of marriage is sexual happiness. God created us as sexual beings. He gave us the desire for the opposite sex. Not only did God create this powerful force in our lives, but he also gave the pleasure it produces.

It seems that one of the first things Adam and Eve sensed when they fell from grace was how this gift could be misused, and so they covered their nakedness. In this world that has gone sexually berserk, we can easily see just how true that innate impression was. One out of every ten individuals is sexually molested or raped. Sexual unhappiness runs like a wide river in our world.

God did not want it that way. Instead God wanted marriage to provide sexual happiness for each married couple. In marriage and only in marriage our sexuality finds its proper expression. God intended sex not as a selfish desire but as a joy-filled expression of loving companionship. This is God’s blessing on marriage. And it is good. As Paul wrote, “Since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2).

The third blessing grows out of the first two blessings. When God created marriage, he “blessed [Adam and Eve] and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it’ ” (Genesis 1:28). Children are not rug rats, mere tax exemptions, or handicaps in the world of big success. They are precious gifts

of marriage. Children cement the marriage, give it purpose and joy, and provide grandchildren for the joy of old age. They prevent selfishness and build character by testing patience and every ounce of wisdom and love.

Please note that these three great blessings do not in themselves make marriage. Marriage can exist without any one of these blessings. But they convince us that marriage is good. That message needs to be repeated. In a day when self-centered pleasure and success become god, the world needs to hear that some of the greatest blessings of this world are found in giving oneself up to another person as his or her life's companion. Marriage is good!

### **The God who solves the problems of marriage**

Yes, marriages have problems. However, that doesn't make marriage bad. Instead, when sinful people ignore God's will in marriage, it causes problems. The fault is not marriage. Marriage is still good.

It is our sin—our selfishness, our pride, and our unkindness—that more than occasionally brings heartache rather than blessing to marriage. When there are stumbling blocks in our loving companionship, when sexual happiness is disturbed, when our children break our hearts, the marriage is not bad. We are.

But God has provided a solution. Jesus paid the penalty on the cross. Every sin of selfishness, pride, and unkindness that has come into our homes has been forgiven. Then God sent his Spirit to renew us more and more into his image—to daily drown that old, sinful, self-centered self so that a new self might arise to live before God in righteousness and purity. He teaches us to love, to be kind, to be patient. He teaches us to swallow our pride and say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong." He teaches us to be selfless and to live for one another.

So marriage is not the problem. We are! And our God can fix us. I know of no problem in marriage that cannot be solved by the Holy Spirit, as he works in hearts that are open to his power. Doesn't that remind us about the importance of centering our homes in Christ so we can receive his daily strength and wisdom and healing?

I'm afraid our young people are getting the wrong message today. They are told that a lucrative career is more important for their happiness than a godly marriage and the importance of being parents. They see all of the divorce and the problems in marriage today and conclude that marriage is not good. They are getting a wrong message. Marriage is good!

I have a vivid childhood memory. The home I grew up in had its occasional spats just as most of yours do. And those things can leave some scars on a child. But the memory I have is a good one. An unmarried guest was having dinner with us, and my father said that "this marriage thing" was a very good thing that our guest should consider. I never forgot that! My father was teaching me that in spite of the difficulties, marriage is good.

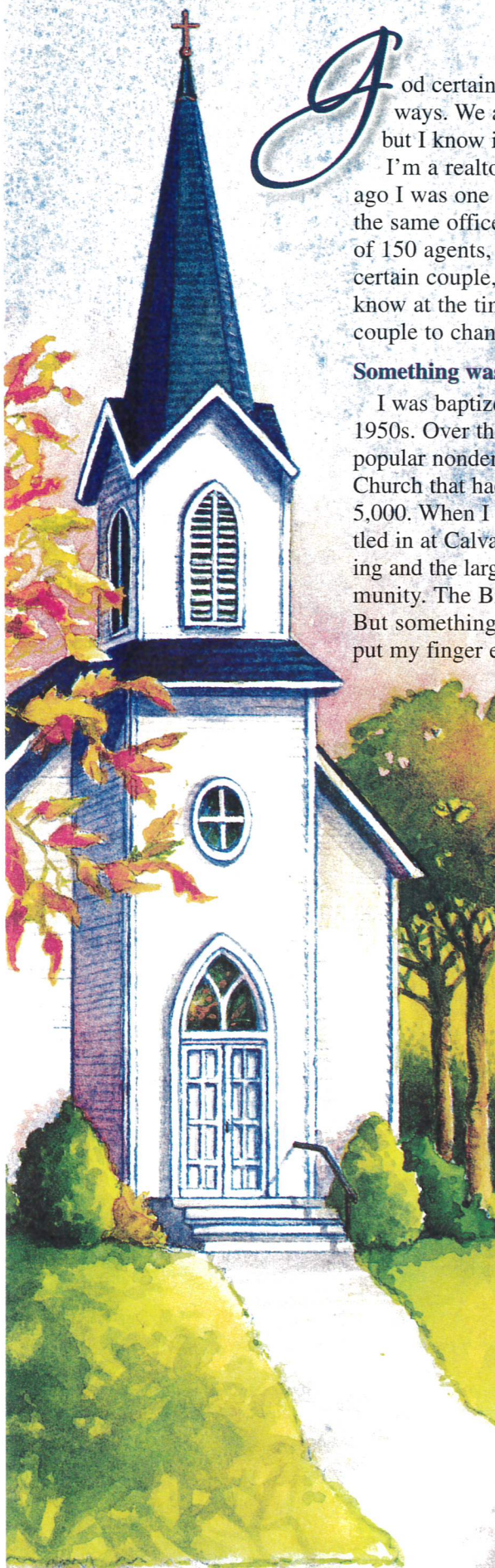
What are the most important things in our lives? Family and things

related to our family are usually at the top. Most of the precious blessings we enjoy on this earth come through marriage. It needs to be repeated again and again: marriage is good!

*Lance Hoff is pastor at St. Peter, Helenville, Wisconsin.*

*This is the second article in a six-part series on marriage. To read other articles in the series, go to [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net) and search by the author's first and last name.*





God certainly does work in mysterious ways. We all seem to take that as a given, but I know it's true!

I'm a realtor in San Diego. Fifteen years ago I was one of 150 agents working from the same office. My broker decided that out of 150 agents, I would get the referral of a certain couple, Paul and Chris. Little did I know at the time that God would use this couple to change my life.

#### Something was missing

I was baptized with my entire family in the 1950s. Over the years, I had gravitated to the popular nondenominational Calvary Chapel Church that had a membership of more than 5,000. When I met Paul and Chris, I was settled in at Calvary Chapel and enjoyed ushering and the large events that captured the community. The Bible studies were invaluable. But something was missing. I could never put my finger exactly on what it was. At best,

I suppose that I could describe it as a lit-

tle unease or discomfort, but it was only a little thing.

At Calvary Chapel, I could worship the Lord and not have visibility or connection with others. I could hide in plain sight among the crowd. That was fine with me, because I could worship with love in my heart and passion for Christ and then leave. But I still felt that something was missing.

My contact with Paul and Chris began as a professional client-based relationship, but it quickly moved to one of friendship. I had never met young people so passionate about their faith, its traditions, its history, and the idea of grace. The weeks stretched out into months and years. They had children; we got closer; and they invited me to events at their church, Reformation in San Diego. I would go and observe with my heart partially closed because my mind was convinced that Lutheranism was very much like Catholicism, and that just was not going to work for me.

For 15 years, I occasionally attended Reformation with Paul and Chris and their

## 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.

Gail Stoewer

family, went to women's retreats, met church members at their home, and watched their children get confirmed. Chris' father, a Lutheran pastor, showed such kindness by giving me books to help me understand "this Lutheran thing." But I kept believing that Calvary Chapel was the place for me.

### Loss led to peace

Then I started a long journey of loss, devastation, and change in my life that put me on my knees. Every time I got through one hurdle, another one would hit me. I was at the point where I couldn't respond or breathe quickly enough as the troubles came one after the other. I started to doubt everything I had believed my entire life. I wondered, "What is important? Why is it important? What is the point?" And then I started believing that God just didn't care about me anymore. That hurt even worse because if I lost God, then I had truly lost everything and my life was over.

Paul and Chris continued to show support and love to me. They included me in their family and daily prayers, and they showed such care for me. All I could think about was that this is how Jesus wants us to be.

On Christmas Eve in 2007, I attended church with Paul and Chris. (Earlier that evening I had attended the megachurch's Christmas Extravaganza with all its pageantry.) At Reformation that night, I filled out the friendship register. Shortly after, I received a letter from the pastor saying, "How can I serve you in your Christian walk?" It was a first step, an introduction, but God knew where I was headed and what I needed.

The next month, the last living member of my family was diagnosed suddenly with stage-4 bone cancer and was given six to eight months to live. Those next months were guel-



Gail Stoewer

ing and painful. It was difficult for me to watch someone I cared about suffer in such pain. I spent the time focusing on her, and God kept sending people to me to help me through it all. Paul and Chris and their pastor kept me focused on the Lord's grace and helped me lead my sister to Jesus before she died. People from Calvary Chapel were nowhere to be found. Did I mention something was missing?

Paul and Chris' pastor took so much time with me. He never seemed too preoccupied or hurried to counsel me through this. Somebody really cared about me, and I wasn't even a member of his flock! What a gift I was given at this time in my life. I began to see the humility and grace of Pastor Schultz in all the members at Reformation. I had missed it before, perhaps because I was too preoccupied or because I had gone with only a half-opened heart. With all the turmoil in my life, I began to find peace.

I started to leave behind my preconceived judgments of Lutherans. I had thought that they were not devout enough because they did not carry or

write in their Bibles at church. Lutheran music was harsh to my ears after years of worshiping with contemporary praise music. But now I concentrated on how I felt when I sat in the church sanctuary at Reformation and heard the pure gospel of Jesus Christ every week. Through the smiles of the children singing at the front of the church, the simplicity of the Christmas Eve service, and the reverence for God, I was noticing what a church should be. I began to see what was paramount in the church. God started to open my heart so that I could know and feel his love.

I watched as members raised their families in the truth of God's Word. I marveled as I noticed hymns dating back to the 1400s—hymns that were starting to sound beautiful to my ears.

God was so patient with me. After a 15-year journey, I officially and proudly became a member at Reformation. The Holy Spirit had worked through the gospel and through the kindness and concern of all of these people to bring me home where I was supposed to be all the time. There is no longer anything missing.

My office broker, who knows my story, reminds me occasionally that she hooked me up with Paul and Chris. When I talk to her next time, I will let her know how God used her and others to lead me to Reformation Lutheran Church where the truth of God's Word brings me the comfort of knowing that I have joy, peace, unity of faith and family, and eternal life in my Savior Jesus Christ.

*Gail Stoewer is a member at Reformation, San Diego, California.*

*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.*



# NOT WHAT WE

## The ways that God uses to draw us to himself can be surprising.

Chris J. Pluger

It's ground up wood mixed with water, rolled flat, dried, spattered with a little bit of ink, and sometimes wrapped in the skin of a dead animal.

It's hydrogen and oxygen, combined to make the most common substance on the planet, together with air, moving with the vibration of sound waves.

It's baked flour paste and spoiled grape juice.

It's the nervous, shaky voice of a seminary student delivering his first sermon. Perhaps even the firm voice of an experienced preacher. But it's also a tentative explanation offered to a questioning friend. It's a personal testimony over a cup of coffee. It's a weakly sung hymn, a sermon delivered to fidgety people and crying babies, and the same words with the same hand gesture that you heard last Sunday and that you'll hear next Sunday too.

It's a homeless Jewish carpenter, born in a barn, hounded by the establishment, dying a cruel death in public humiliation.

It's the Word of God. And it's not what we expect.

Maybe, if you guessed already what I was talking about, it *was* what you expected. But if you guessed correctly, then maybe you've become so accustomed to the "trappings" of Christianity and to the way God presents himself to people that you're not so surprised anymore by the claims that the Word of God makes about itself. But take a step back from your long association with the Christian church, from your firsthand acquaintance with Christian symbolism and sacramental theology, and see how surprising these claims really are.

### The spoken Word

"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Can you believe it? The Holy Spirit uses simple words, be they read or spoken, to create and sustain saving faith in our hearts. He doesn't use miracles with dazzling demonstrations of power. The miracle is there, but it certainly is not the flashy and showy display of ostentatious pizzazz we might expect of something from God and claiming to be powerful. Yet even all the glitz and glitter of all the kingdoms of this world cannot compare with the splendor of the kingdom to come and the kingdom to which we are bound.

Faith comes from hearing. It is not a flash of enlightenment after hours or days of mind-emptying meditation or an ecstatic emotional high after years of ascetic self-discipline. Faith simply comes from hearing the Word of Christ.

### Baptism

"[Baptism] now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). What looks like a silly little ritual, a fancy way to give a child a name or pledge your allegiance to a congregation, is really God's work of saving and adopting that baby or grown-up into his kingdom forever. A dash of water and the name of the triune God intimately unite a person with Jesus' death and resurrection, to the eternal benefit of his or her soul.

"How can water do such great things?" asks Luther, and then he answers with words that explain but do not exactly satisfy the most probing scientific skeptic: "It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water" (The Power of Baptism, Luther's Small Catechism).





## AS LUTHERANS, WE CONFESS:

God's Word is absolutely correct when it says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). Yet our Father does not do this without means, but instead has ordained ordinary means and instruments—his Word and sacraments—to draw us to himself. It is not the will of the Father or the Son that anyone should fail to hear the preaching of his Word or despise it and still expect to be drawn by the Father without the Word and sacraments. But according to the order he himself has decreed and ordained, the Father draws people by the power of the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the Word. It is like a net God uses to snatch believers from the jaws of Satan. Therefore, every poor sinner should diligently hear the Word and not doubt that the Father draws people to himself through it. For the Holy Spirit desires to work with his power through his Word. That's how the Father draws us. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI, 76,77)

### The Lord's Supper

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body'" (Mark 14:22). It looked like thin, unleavened, Passover bread. It was the body of the Savior of the world, the same body that he was about to hand over willingly to be punished for our transgressions. It looked like a cup of wine, but it was the blood of Jesus, the same blood that the apostle John tells us "purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). We eat and drink bread and wine, body and blood, for the forgiveness of sins.

A friend from a different theological tradition was surprised to hear me describe Holy Communion this way. She asked me point blank, with more than a hint of sarcasm in her voice, "You believe Jesus is *in* the grape juice?" The Word of God was clearly not what she expected. Like so many others, she had difficulty grasping such an unexpected truth. But there he is, just as he promised he would be.

### The divine Word

And Jesus on the cross? We know what that was.

What looked like an innocent man dying a horrible death was the Son of God and Son of Man dying for the sins of mankind. He was far from innocent,

even though he himself was sinless. He bore the guilt of every human who has ever lived or ever will live. What looked like a terrible act of cruelty was, in God's eyes, "the punishment that brought us peace" (Isaiah 53:5). What looked like a vicious wounding was, in fact, the healing of the world.

A book. Water. Bread. Wine. A crucified criminal. Hardly the trappings of glory one would expect from the largest religion on the planet. Hardly the place you would expect to find the Creator of the universe. But there he is. You can't see him, but he is there, right where he promised he would be, wherever the gospel is taught and the sacraments rightly administered. For he said, "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20).

Thank God that his Word is not what we expect. Thank him that he still works not only to draw us to himself but also to keep us as his own through such unexpected means.

*Chris Pluger is a member at Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio.*

# WHATEVER

## Don't worry

When our trust in God surpasses any worry we have, then we are truly living bold.

Benjamin Becker

**M**My father seems to have songs for every occasion. They're not your everyday pop/rock; instead, they are slightly off-key renditions of folk songs, your basic Peter, Paul, and Mary-type music. We always dread saying some word that will set him off.

Yet some of those songs have real meaning. One song sticks in my mind. The words sometimes go round and round in my head: "Worry is a rocking chair. You go back and forth, but you go nowhere."

**Worry is arguably one of the biggest wastes of the human mind.** We go back and forth over everything that has gone wrong, could go wrong, might go wrong, and what, we believe, will go wrong. What if I miss lunch? What if I fail this test? What if they don't like me? What if I never understand it? What if I get cancer? What if I die? The list goes on and on, ranging from the humorously trivial to the utterly dramatic. It grows the more we think. All these fears and worries hang over us, dragging us down until we break down.

How sad it is that we so easily forget the words of 1 Peter 5:7: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." We all have heard it. We all know it, and still we refuse to cast our cares upon Christ. Sometimes we even forget the second part of the verse: "because he cares for you." God does not listen to our problems because he wants the credit for solving them. He does not want payment or favors from us. He does it simply because he cares for us.

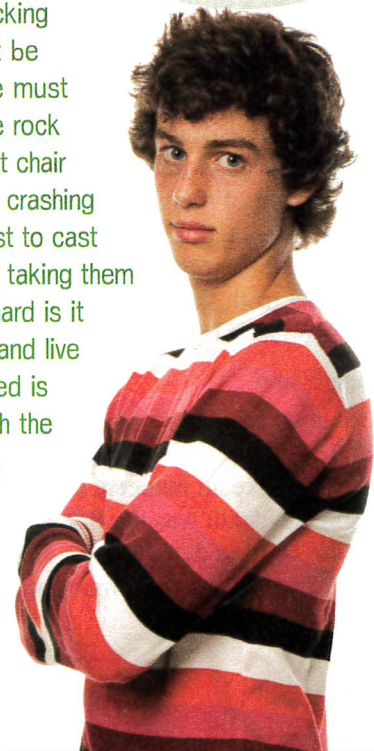
**The flipside of worry is trust.** Trust in God is one of the greatest qualities a person can have. Without trust in God, Noah would not have built the ark, Abraham would not have left his family to go to the land God would show him, Joseph would not have

saved his brothers from the famine, Moses would not have taken the Israelites out of Egypt, and David would not have defeated Goliath. Without trust these people would never have understood God's promises of a Savior. They would have missed the greatest way that God cares for us. The list of people who trusted goes on and on forever—not only in the Bible but also still today. Only those who trust in God can truly achieve great things.

When our trust in God surpasses any worry we have, then we are truly living bold. Our lifestyle in turn affects those around us. We encourage those who have faith, and we get those who do not have faith thinking about what makes us different. When we let our fear and worry overcome our trust in the one who cares for us, we are not the only people we let down.

Worry is indeed a rocking chair, one that we must be careful not to sit in. We must remember that when we rock harder and harder in that chair eventually we will come crashing down. How hard is it just to cast all your cares on Christ, taking them to him in prayer? How hard is it to overcome our worry and live lives of faith? All we need is to trust in God with faith the size of a mustard seed.

Benjamin Becker, a junior at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wisconsin, is a member at St. John, Lannon, Wisconsin.



## Obituaries

### Daniel M. Hennig 1941–2009

Daniel Hennig was born Aug. 18, 1941, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died May 17, 2009, in Manitowoc, Wis.

A 1964 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at Christ, Grand Island, Neb., and St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb. A 1978 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Zion, Monroe, Mich.; Christ Our Redeemer, San Diego, Calif.; and Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa, Calif.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara; 2 sons; 2 daughters; 18 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; his mother; 4 brothers; and 1 sister.

### Paul Michael Schmeling 1952–2009

Paul Schmeling was born July 5, 1952, in Springfield, Ill. He died May 25, 2009, in River Falls, Wis.

A 1978 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Zoar, Detroit, Mich.; Ascension, Clinton Township, Mich.; Hope, Stow, Ohio; Bethany, Granite Falls, Minn.; and Faith, River Falls, Wis.

He is preceded in death by a sister. He is survived by his wife, Beth; two sons; two daughters; seven grandchildren; his parents; three sisters; and two brothers.

### Ernst Henry Wendland 1916–2009

Ernst Wendland was born June 16, 1916, in Watertown, Wis. He died May 28, 2009.

A 1941 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Immanuel, Washington, Iowa; St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis.; St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.; the Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Zambia; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his first wife, Betty; two sons; and two grandchildren. He is survived by his second wife, Kathie; 3 sons; 2 daughters; 20 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; and 1 sister.

## On the bright side

Members of the Sunday school class at St. Luke's, Watertown, Wis., had invited their parents for the final day of activities. They ended up playing "Are You Smarter Than a First or Second Grader?" Questions were taken from Bible stories studied in class. In one match up, first-grade Sunday school student Ella Schmidt squared off with parent Mr. Joe Fischer. The question given was, "What was the name of the town where Jesus saw Zacchaeus?" Joe Fischer was quick to reply with his answer, "Damascus." Good guess, but incorrect. Then the big moment came for Ella as she contemplated her response: "Well, hmm, I don't know. Maybe South Carolina?"

*Linda Hertig, Watertown, Wis.  
(Do you know the answer? It's Jericho.)*

## Through my Bible IN 3 YEARS

09/2009

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. 2 Samuel 15:1–16:14 | 17. Ps. 64, 65       |
| 2. 2 Sam. 16:15–17:29  | 18. Ps. 66, 67       |
| 3. 2 Sam. 18:1–19:8    | 19. Ps. 68:1-18      |
| 4. 2 Sam. 19:9-39      | 20. Ps. 68:19-35     |
| 5. 2 Sam. 19:40–20:26  | 21. Ps. 69           |
| 6. 2 Sam. 21           | 22. Ps. 70, 71       |
| 7. 2 Sam. 22           | 23. Ps. 72           |
| 8. 2 Sam. 23           | 24. 1 Kings 1        |
| 9. 2 Sam. 24           | 25. 1 Kgs. 2         |
| 10. Psalms 52–54       | 26. 1 Kgs. 3, 4      |
| 11. Ps. 55             | 27. 1 Kgs. 5         |
| 12. Ps. 56, 57         | 28. 1 Kgs. 6:1–7:12  |
| 13. Ps. 58, 59         | 29. 1 Kgs. 7:13–8:11 |
| 14. Ps. 60             | 30. 1 Kgs. 8:12-66   |
| 15. Ps. 61, 62         |                      |
| 16. Ps. 63             |                      |

# MARTIN LUTHER College graduates

One hundred forty-three people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 16. Ninety-five were in the teacher track or the staff ministry program. Forty-four completed the preseminary program. Four received master's degrees.



April M. Alonte ●  
Milwaukee, Wis.



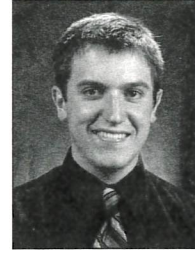
Katherine J. Anderson ●  
Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.



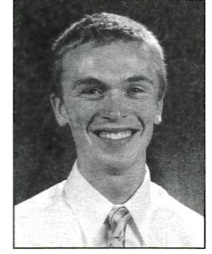
Daniel R. Babinec ▲  
New Ulm, Minn.



Elisabeth A. Babinec ●  
Onalaska, Wis.



Derek C. Bartelt ■  
Jackson, Wis.



Jonathan D. Bauer ●  
New Ulm, Minn.



Sylvia A. Beahm ●  
Montello, Wis.



Christopher J. Becker ◆  
Jackson, Wis.



Brandon T. Beitlich ◆  
New Ulm, Minn.



Jaymie L. Bergmeier ◆  
Pontiac, Mich.



Samuel L. Biebert ■  
Neillsville, Wis.



Joshua P. Bishop ■  
Port Orchard, Wash.



Lucas F. Bitter ■  
Rochester, Minn.



Hannah R. Bode ●  
Saginaw, Mich.



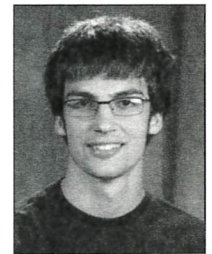
Sara N. Borck ★  
Jefferson, Wis.



Nicole M. Brost ◆  
Medford, Wis.



Kyle L. Burmeister ■  
Muskegon, Mich.



Ethan C. Cherney ■  
Mequon, Wis.



Alexandra E. Chworowsky ●  
Taipei, Taiwan



Rodrigo S. Concha ■  
Santiago, Chile



Sarah J. Crabtree ★  
Phoenix, Ariz.



Heath D. Dobberpuhl ◆  
New Ulm, Minn.



Lindsay E. Ernst ★  
Madison, Wis.

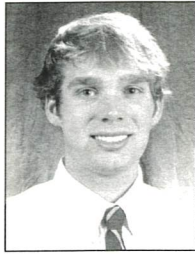


Andrew G. Ewald ■  
Burton, Mich.

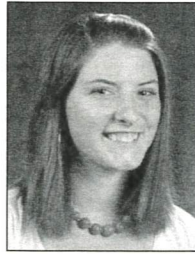
- Bachelor of Arts
- ▲ Seminary Certification Program
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- ◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Secondary Education



Charles M. Flunker ♦  
Green Bay, Wis.



Caleb K. Free ■  
Plover, Wis.



Laura R. Fritzler ★  
Deford, Mich.



Kimberly S. Gartner ❖  
Springdale, Ark.



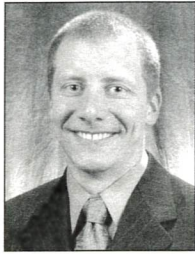
Walter J. Gawel IV ■  
Midland, Mich.



Theodore R. Glodowski ♦  
Fountain City, Wis.



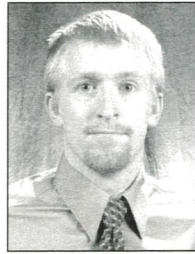
Emily Y. Gorzalski ●  
Appleton, Wis.



Timothy P. Griepentrog ■  
Greenleaf, Wis.



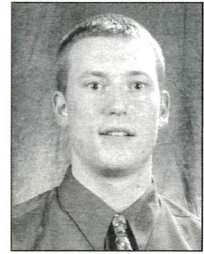
Jonathan W. Gross ●  
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Jeffrey O. Grundmeier ■  
Houston, Tex.



Hannah M. Gumm ★  
West Chicago, Ill.



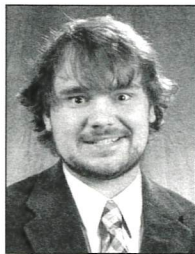
Philip M. Gustafson ●  
West Bend, Wis.



Andrew M. Haag ♦  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Justin D. Hansen ●  
Mukwonago, Wis.



Ian E. Headrick ■  
Manitowoc, Wis.



Gregory W. Hein ■  
Mandan, N.D.



Daniel D. Herold ■  
Eagan, Minn.



Sarah L. Hildeman ●  
Appleton, Wis.



Jacob M. Hoff ■  
Livonia, Mich.



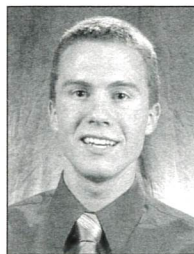
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Beaver Dam, Wis.



Abby L. Hosbach ●  
Hartford, Wis.



Katrina M. Ide ●  
Federal Way, Wash.



Adam T. Igl ●  
Fox Lake, Wis.



Joshua P. Janke ■  
Sioux Falls, S.D.



Sarah M. Janke ●  
Sioux Falls, S.D.



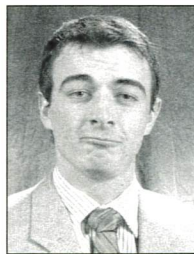
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Corona, Calif.



Daniel J. Johnston ■  
Lecanto, Fla.



Paul R. Kanzenbach ♦  
Watertown, S.D.



Jonathan J. Kehl ■  
Milwaukee, Wis.

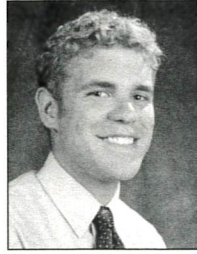


Amber L. Kieselhorst ★  
Whitelaw, Wis.

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



Matthew D. Kimmel ■  
Flushing, Mich.



Samuel J. Kleinke ◆  
Essexville, Mich.



Sarah E. Koester ●  
South Bend, Ind.



Michael D. Kopitzke ★  
Wind Lake, Wis.



Sheila M. Krause ✦  
Jackson, Wis.



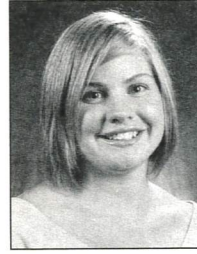
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San Jose, Calif.



Philip A. Kurbis ●  
Tacoma, Wash.



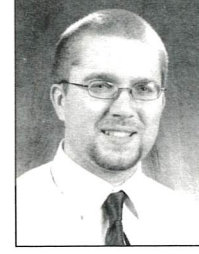
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Nicollet, Minn.



Christina K. Lindloff ●  
Watertown, Wis.



Laura R. Martens ●  
New Ulm, Minn.



Robert L. Martens ●  
New Ulm, Minn.



Stefanie A. Matteson ●  
Arvada, Colo.



Emily S. Mayer ◆  
Mukwonago, Wis.



Laura B. Merklinger ●  
Littleton, Colo.



Glenn R. Metzger ◆  
Livonia, Mich.



Peter S. Metzger ■  
Gladwin, Mich.



Andrew D. Meyer ■  
Tomah, Wis.



Kristal A. Meyer ✦  
San Jose, Calif.



Brent G. Miller ■  
Traverse City, Mich.



Lauren A. Moll ●  
Oshkosh, Wis.



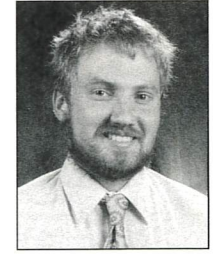
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Saline, Mich.



Katherine L. Nettesheim ★  
Sussex, Wis.



Kimberly D. Nicoline ●  
Round Lake Beach, Ill.



Daniel A. Niemi ●  
La Crosse, Wis.



Jessica A. Niemi ●  
La Crosse, Wis.



Amanda A. Nitz ●  
Slades Corners, Wis.



Kaylen A. Orr ★  
Wasilla, Alaska



Anna M. Panning ●  
Denton, Tex.



Julia M. Pasch ●  
Watertown, Wis.

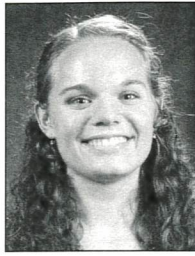


Holly J. Pearson ●  
Belle Plaine, Minn.

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



Katelyn A. Peter ♦  
Wausau, Wis.



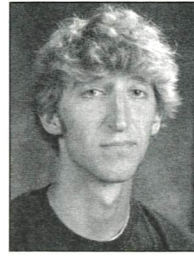
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Rhineland, Wis.



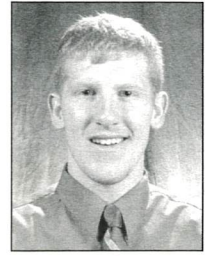
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Laura L. Pringle ●  
Hustisford, Wis.



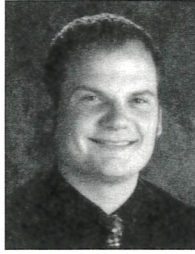
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Prairie du Sac, Wis.



Joel D. Putz ●  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



John T. Raasch ■  
Sioux Falls, S.D.



Anthony D. Rach ●  
Onalaska, Wis.



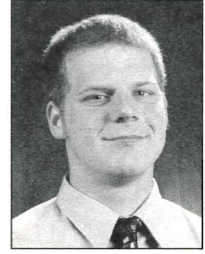
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Mark D. Reichert ■  
Elroy, Wis.



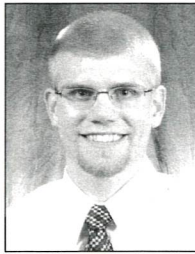
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Sussex, Wis.



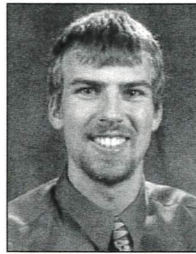
Christian N. Ristow ●  
Hartland, Wis.



Emily K. Roberts ●  
Edina, Minn.



Jonathan D. Rosenow ★  
Manitowoc, Wis.



Thomas W. Rosenow ♦  
Manitowoc, Wis.



Elizabeth A. Ross ♦  
Jemez Springs, N.M.



Joel E. Sankey ■  
Waupun, Wis.



Matthew W. Scharf ■  
West Allis, Wis.



Caralyn M. Schmeling ●  
River Falls, Wis.



Sarah L. Schmugge ●  
Saginaw, Mich.



Katrina M. Schneider ●  
Milwaukee, Wis.



Michael W. Schneider ■  
Salina, Kan.



Michael A. Schotthey ■  
New Ulm, Minn.



Stacey R. Schotthey ●  
New Ulm, Minn.



Ruth A. Schwichtenberg ●  
Jordan, Minn.



Jacob V. Scott ■  
Beaver Dam, Wis.



Jeremy F. Seeger ●  
Manitowoc, Wis.



Brian A. Semrow ■  
New Berlin, Wis.



Joanna J. Smith ●  
Zumbrota, Minn.



Justine M. Smith ●  
Westland, Mich.

- ★ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Early Childhood Education
- ♦ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
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Bradley J. Snyder ■  
Saginaw, Mich.



Rachael L. Stein ★  
Poynette, Wis.



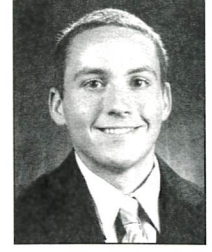
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Muskego, Wis.



Warren J. Steinbrenner ■  
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



Caleb A. Stellick ●  
Hustisford, Wis.



Daniel R. Sting ■  
Pigeon, Mich.



Kristin K. Strong ★  
Loretto, Minn.



Brandon H. Stubalt ●  
San Jose, Calif.



Paul A. Sullivan ◆  
Milan, Ill.



Christine E. Swoboda ◆  
Green Bay, Wis.



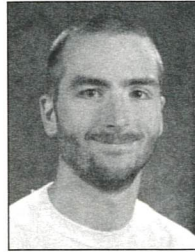
Rebekah L. Taves ●  
Marquette, Mich.



Cassandra A. Thoma ●  
Neillsville, Wis.



Emily R. Thomas ●  
Fort Collins, Colo.



Luke G. Thompson ▲  
Milwaukee, Wis.



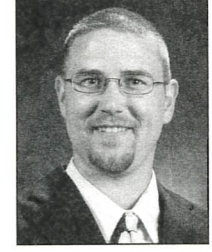
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Fayetteville, Ga.



Dustin D. Uhlenbruck ◆  
North Saint Paul, Minn.



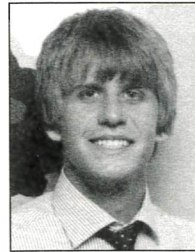
Deborah R. Voigt ★  
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Nathan D. Voss ★  
Sturtevant, Wis.



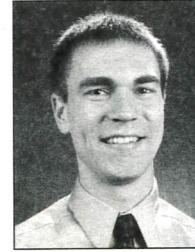
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Peter J. Walther ■  
Jackson, Wis.



Andrew J. Welfel ■  
Beverly Hills, Fla.



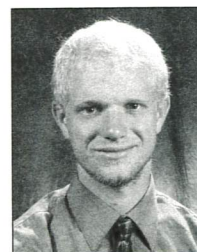
Benjamin P. Wells ◆  
Plymouth, Neb.



Mark A. Westra ■  
Fairfield, Ohio



Leah K. Wilberts ●  
New Ulm, Minn.



Adam L. Winkelmann ■  
Navasota, Tex.



Stephanie L. Wockenfuss ●  
Colorado Springs, Colo.



Amanda J. Yetts ◆  
Muskego, Wis.



Joseph A. Zell ■  
Mequon, Wis.



Elisabeth K. Zuehke ●  
Watertown, Wis.

■ Bachelor of Arts  
 ▲ Seminary Certification Program  
 ● Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education  
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★ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary and Early Childhood Education  
 ◆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry  
 ★ Bachelor of Science—Staff Ministry  
 ◆ Master of Science in Education



# CALL ASSIGNMENTS

On May 16, the Conference of Presidents assigned 80 new and previous teacher and staff minister candidates out of the 102 who were available for assignment to any location. Nineteen May 2009 graduates deferred assignment, choosing to pursue further education or other areas of service (most electing international service opportunities). Due to marriage plans or living in specific locations, 15 new and previous candidates are available for calls from congregations through their district presidents. Additional calls/assignments have been made since May 16. To see a list, go to [www.mlc-wels.edu/home/academics/resources/assignments/](http://www.mlc-wels.edu/home/academics/resources/assignments/).

- Babinec, Elisabeth A.**, to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.  
**Beahm, Sylvia A.**, to Cross of Glory Lutheran Learning Center, Baton Rouge, La.  
**Bergmeier, Jaymie L.**, to St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.  
**Burmeister, Jessica L.**, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.  
**Colletta, Jacquelyn N.**, to Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.  
**Cordes, Joel C.**, to Michigan Lutheran High School, Saint Joseph, Mich.  
**Dose, Leah R.**, to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.  
**Dunn, Amanda M.**, to Mt. Love, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Fischer, Timothy P.**, to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.  
**Flunker, Charles M.**, to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.  
**Gilbert, Beckie L.**, to St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb.  
**Gorzalski, Emily Y.**, to Salem, Owosso, Mich.  
**Gustafson, Philip M.**, to St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis.  
**Hering, Rebecca E.**, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Hosbach, Abby L.**, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.  
**Janke, Sarah M.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.  
**Joicks, Jennifer A.**, to St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.  
**Johnson, Carin L.**, to Abiding Love Preschool, Cape Coral, Fla.  
**Kanzenbach, Paul R.**, to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.  
**Kieckhaefer, Anna J.**, to Hope Christian School, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Kleinke, Samuel J.**, to Zion, Monroe, Mich.  
**Knickelbein, Mark D.**, to Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis.  
**Koester, Sarah E.**, to Peridot-Our Savior, Peridot, Ariz.  
**Kurbis, Philip A.**, to East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.  
**Lendt, Cindy M.**, to St. John, Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Lindloff, Christina K.**, to Divine Peace, Largo, Md.  
**Livingston, James C.**, to St. Peters, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.  
**Livingston, Nathan C.**, to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.  
**Mayer, Emily S.**, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.  
**Merklinger, Laura B.**, to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Metzger, Glenn R.**, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.  
**Meyer, Rachel A.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.  
**Moll, Lauren A.**, to Hope Lutheran Early Learning Center, Manhattan, Kan.  
**Natsis, Claire E.**, to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.  
**Natsis, Erica E.**, to Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Nettesheim, Katherine L.**, to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.  
**Nicoline, Kimberly D.**, to Christ-St. John, West Salem, Wis.  
**Niemi, Jessica A.**, to Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.  
**Orr, Kaylen A.**, to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.  
**Panning, Anna M.**, to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.  
**Pearson, Holly J.**, to St. John, Sparta, Wis.  
**Pingel, Timothy F.**, to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.  
**Putz, Joel D.**, to St. John, Lomira, Wis.  
**Rosenow, Jonathan D.**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Rosenow, Thomas W.**, to St. John, Pigeon, Mich.  
**Ross, Elizabeth A.**, to Peace, Green Lake, Wis.  
**Schlough, Tiffany R.**, to Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.  
**Schmiege, Jeremiah D.**, to Sola Fide Christian School, Lawrenceville, Ga.  
**Schneider, Katrina M.**, to Immanuel, Salem, Ore.  
**Schone, Heidi K.**, to Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.  
**Schumacher, Kaitlyn R.**, to Christ, North Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Seeger, Zachary P.**, to St. John, Hemlock, Mich.  
**Smith, Joanna J.**, to St. Paul, Moline, Ill.  
**Steinbrecher, Jaime C.**, to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.  
**Stubalt, Brandon H.**, to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Thomas, Emily R.**, to St. John, Lewiston, Minn.  
**Uhlenbrauck, Dustin D.**, to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.  
**Wagie, Laura R.**, to Lambs of Grace Child Development Center, Charlotte, N.C.  
**Wahl, Katherine J.**, to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.  
**Watson, Ian P.**, to St. John, Fremont, Wis.  
**Wells, Benjamin P.**, to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.  
**Wockenfuss, Stephanie L.**, to Petra, Sauk Rapids, Minn.  
**Yets, Amanda J.**, to Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.

## Q&A with Kaylen Orr, MLC graduate

One hundred forty-three people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 16. Forward in Christ sat down with graduate Kaylen Orr; originally from Wasilla, Alaska, who was assigned to be the preschool teacher at Ascension, Escondido, Calif.

**Question** – When did you decide you wanted to be a teacher?

**Answer** – In high school and middle school you're figuring out what you want to do, and I don't know why exactly, but I always just knew that I wanted to be a teacher. I started hearing more about Martin Luther College (MLC) from students who were also members of area congregations back home. The more I heard about it, the more it made me want to go too.

My senior year I went on one of MLC's Focus on Ministry trips. There were professors and other students who explained to me how wonderful it is to be able to share God's Word with kids and all the ministry outreach there is. I think that's really what kind of pulled me over.

**Question** – Was it hard to move away from your family and friends?

**Answer** – When I came to MLC I didn't know anyone, but then somehow after four or five years I just had this awesome network of friends. I think a lot of it has to do with that Christian bond that everyone shares. That's something that I didn't really experience back home, since I didn't go to parochial school. So definitely, the friends I've made have been a major blessing.

**Question** – Tell me about your training at MLC.

**Answer** – Sophomore year you spend a week over spring break actually in a classroom. Junior year you do the same thing: you spend another week in the classroom. You're also assigned to a public school classroom, and you spend one day a week there.

Senior year you do student teaching. I spent nine weeks in a parochial school classroom and five weeks in a public school classroom. Since I did the early childhood program, I had another semester of student teaching at the MLC Early Childhood Center my fifth year. The early childhood program has changed a little bit, but that's what I did to get the

double major [in elementary education and early childhood education].

**Question** – What was it like leading up to call day?

**Answer** – That last week in May was quite nerve-racking for me, not knowing where I was going to go, not knowing how many of us were going to get calls, and knowing the situation of the economy today. But it was exciting at the same time too, and it was kind of nice to know that it was out of my hands. I mean God already had a plan; it was already taken care of. He already knew where I was going, so I just had to sit back and enjoy all of the exciting times before graduation.

**Question** – So your call was to Escondido, and now you're getting settled in. What is on your plate between now and the start of the school year?

**Answer** – Lesson planning for the year is definitely a big item on the agenda and getting my classroom set up the way I want it. Here at Ascension, the preschool runs year-round; it's offered as a summer child-care program for all students that are enrolled in our school. So even before the official first day of the school year, I'll probably have already started teaching in the summer program a little bit.

**Question** – What are you the most excited for in your new call?

**Answer** – I guess I'm really excited—and nervous—for the first day of the school year and getting to meet all of the kids and seeing what their personalities are like. The ultimate goal and purpose is to share God's Word, so I'm excited for Bible time. I don't know these kids' backgrounds; some of them might be hearing the Word for the first time. Just getting to see kids' firsthand responses to the gospel—I wouldn't want to do anything else.

See more MLC graduates and where they were assigned on pp. 20-25.



Kaylen Orr (right) and one of her former roommates, Kristi Slovik.

## A decade of blessings

Boreholes in Africa, sanitation projects in India, and medical clinics in Nepal and Pakistan—these are just a few of the projects funded by WELS Humanitarian Aid Committee, part of the Board for World Missions. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the committee, which is working to build bridges for the gospel in countries around the world.

Although the committee has only been around for ten years, the concept is not new to WELS; in fact, humanitarian aid has been part of WELS' ministry since mission work began in Apacheland in the late 1800s. Today, the committee is funding humanitarian aid projects in a dozen countries.

"The Humanitarian Aid Committee is a very important arm of our World Missions work," says Dan Koelpin, administrator of the Board for World Missions. "Humanitarian aid has been the vehicle for [mission work] in places like Bulgaria, Albania, and Russia, and has helped launch new mission initiatives in countries where we are already reaching out."

For example, countries like Nepal and Pakistan will not allow missionaries into the country; they will, however, accept assistance in the form of disaster relief or humanitarian aid. Once in the country, workers have an opportunity to build relationships and share the gospel.

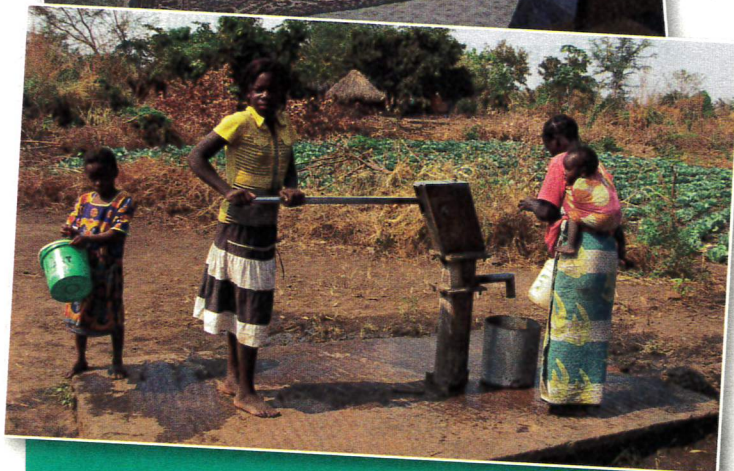
Koelpin says the gospel aspect is very important; it's what separates the work that WELS is doing from other organizations that provide only for peoples' physical needs—sometimes referred to as "social gospel."

"When the Humanitarian Aid Committee was formed in the 1990s, there were valid concerns from people in the synod that these efforts would turn into social gospel," says Koelpin. "But the committee has worked hard to make sure that does not happen."

In fact, committee members just visited Africa last summer to assess the projects being carried out there and to find new opportunities. After meeting with national pastors and visiting congregations, Pastor David Valleskey, committee chairman, says the projects were accomplishing their goal of building bridges for the gospel.

"One of the things we always have to be clear on is we are not saying to members of the community, 'We will help you in your need if you listen to us,'" says Valleskey. "We simply want to show them the love of Jesus. At the same time, we want our members to be aware that this might provide great opportunities to tell others about the love of Jesus."

Koelpin says this approach of caring for peoples' earthly needs and then ministering to their souls—much like Jesus did during his ministry—may be a model for future work in world mission fields, especially since the number of missionaries in world fields is shrinking in the wake of synod-wide budget cuts.



A doctor helps people in a clinic in Pakistan (top), children at an orphanage in India listen to a book being read (center), and a family pumps water from a borehole in Zambia, Africa (bottom). These and other projects around the world are funded by the Humanitarian Aid Committee, celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

"If we continue to get special funding for humanitarian aid projects, the possibilities are unlimited," says Koelpin, in explaining that the committee's work is not funded by the synod budget. "Even if our traditional missionary approach goes away, humanitarian aid can be our string to keep the door open to certain fields. This kind of approach can be sustained and will endure into the future because it's a chance to witness and let our lights shine."

To learn more about the work of the Humanitarian Aid Committee, contact Chairman Valleskey at [djvalleskey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:djvalleskey@sbcglobal.net).

## Choir reaches out in Europe

On May 24, the Wisconsin Lutheran College choir and chamber choir performed at Fruchthalle in Kaiserslautern (K-Town), Germany, for WELS members who are part of the European chaplaincy program. The performance was a thank-you to the many U.S. soldiers who work at nearby Ramstein Air Base and a way to gain more community exposure for WELS ministry in Europe.

The concert in K-Town was the final performance for the choirs, which completed a 15-day European concert tour. Before the concert in K-Town, choir members split up into smaller groups to sing throughout the area and pass out flyers advertising the concert and promoting WELS European Chaplaincy.

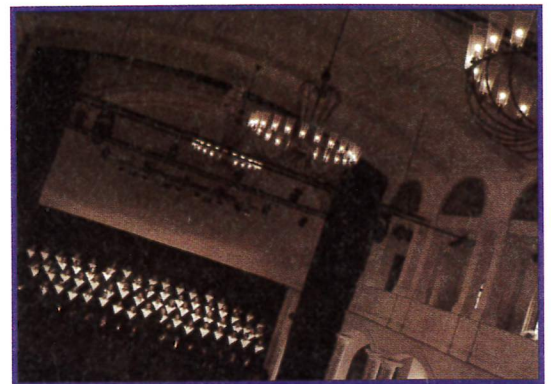
Mick Scheuer, Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) choir member and student manager of the K-Town Project, says that the goal of the project was to “carry out the Christian mission to go and make disciples of all nations and to connect with military servicemen and women, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.”

More than 40 members of WELS European Chaplaincy attended the con-

cert. The chaplaincy, coordinated by WELS Special Ministries, serves members of the military and civilians. A full-time pastor, Joshua Martin, serves these WELS members, who are scattered throughout Europe. Each month Martin meets with these members for Bible study and worship in five different locations throughout England, Germany, and Switzerland. At each location, 15 to 20 members meet.

Martin said that those who attended the concert in K-Town appreciated the chance to gather around God’s Word and be with other Christians. “We hardly had any visitors,” he observed. “Yet, I did not sense any letdown or sadness from the choir or from those in attendance. It seemed to me that everyone enjoyed being there. The few visitors that we did have all said they enjoyed the concert.”

Leah Bauer, a civilian member of WELS European Chaplaincy, agreed that the concert was fantastic. “It was such a blessing to hear God’s Word



The 2009 Wisconsin Lutheran Choir, which toured in Europe this summer, was made up of 66 full-time undergraduate students. Here the choir sings at Fruchthalle in Kaiserslautern, Germany, near Ramstein Air Base, which is home to soldiers in the U.S. Air Force and Army. The Kaiserslautern Military Community has the largest concentration of American citizens outside the United States—more than 53,000.

delivered through song,” says Bauer. “I get to attend church somewhat often through the chaplaincy, but it’s rare that I get to hear that many voices unified and perfectly harmonized to sing praises to God. It’s not something one takes for granted over here. And sometimes I forget that there are so many people out there who believe what I believe. To see and hear a choir full of fellow believers is an indescribable blessing. It was truly refreshing and inspiring.”



## Let your light shine

*Walter “Bud” Erdmann, a member at St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis., shares why he feels that it is important to stay in the Word.*

I recently finished reading the Bible for the 35th time. Some people express doubt when they hear that, but it is true. It took me seven months to read it the 35th time.

I started reading the Bible on Christmas Eve 1943. I was on a troop ship in the Pacific heading for India. I got homesick—what a feeling. I reached for my small Bible and read from Matthew and Luke. I felt much better.

From then on and until now, I’ve been a Bible reader. Each time I finish reading the Bible, I say to myself, “This is the last time.” But after not reading for a few weeks, I am compelled to start again. Is it habit? Maybe, but I say it is out of love for God’s Word. I have spent so many peaceful and contented hours reading the Bible. I just can’t stop.

So you say, is reading the Bible going to put me into heaven? No, but believing what the Bible says and having faith in God’s grace will.

What did I learn from reading the Bible? I learned how I fall short in many ways, the sinner I am, and that there is no hope for me. I also learned about God’s love, grace, and compassion for me when he sent his Son into the world to shed his blood and die on the cross for me. Now that’s real love.

So you say, “I don’t read the Bible, but I go to church and I believe in God and his grace.” That is good; all Christians should think that way. But the Bible says, “Search the Scriptures.” God wants us to read his Word to strengthen our faith.

I am 88 years old now and will start reading the Bible for the 36th time. I read it every morning before the paper and very often in the afternoon. It isn’t a chore but a pleasure. I love it!

So to the people who never read the Bible or just glance at it: make a habit of reading the Bible on a regular basis. Pick a day and time for reading. You will get “hooked” on God’s Word and will enjoy the quiet times reading. You will learn more of God’s love for you.

## Commission on Parish Schools 414-256-3221; cps@sab.wels.net

**Mr. Jim Brandt**, administrator of WELS Commission on Parish Schools, accepted a call in June to serve as the vice president of Adult and Graduate Studies at Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC), Milwaukee. Brandt began his work at WLC in July. WELS Commission on Parish Schools will seek nominations to fill Brandt's position as soon as the calling process for teachers is reopened in the fall. In the meantime, Parish School's associate administrator, Mr. Jeff Inniger, will assume full oversight of this area of ministry, with help from Mr. Greg Schmill, a full-time consultant for Parish Assistance's Forward with Lutheran Schools.

## Campus Ministry 414-256-3279; cm@sab.wels.net



About 60 WELS college students met this May in Eau Claire, Wis., for the **2009 Campus Ministry Rally**. Based on 1 John, 1:7, the theme of the rally was "Walk This Way." Students enjoyed worship time together as well as participation in different workshops and roundtable discussions that helped them explore and strengthen their faith. "The rally was very uplifting for all the students who attended," says Pastor Charles Vannieuwenhoven, member of the Campus Ministry Committee. "They appreciated the opportunity to grow in their faith, share their faith, and discuss different issues that are affecting them as Christian college students, most of whom attend public or non-Christian universities." The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society provided a grant to keep costs down for the students. The next campus rally is being planned for Christmas-New Year's 2010-2011. Watch for more information at [www.wels.net/cm](http://www.wels.net/cm).

## Muslim Outreach Committee 970-556-4969

The Muslim Outreach Committee, part of the WELS Joint Mission Council, has produced a **four-session DVD Bible study** called "Speaking the Truth in Love to Muslims" to help WELS members better understand why Muslims need the gospel as well as help them reach out to Muslim neighbors and friends. "Islam has a growing presence in the United States and presents important issues for many of our world mission fields such as Albania, South Asia, Indonesia, and Africa," says Paul Hartman, member of the Muslim Outreach Committee. "Therefore our members need to understand Islam and how to reach out to Muslims." The lessons discuss the differences between Islam and Christianity as well as offer suggestions on forming friendships with Muslims and finding opportunities for sharing the gospel with them. The Bible study (385100) can be ordered at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net) or by calling Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022. Go to [www.truthinlovetomuslims.com](http://www.truthinlovetomuslims.com) to find out more.

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

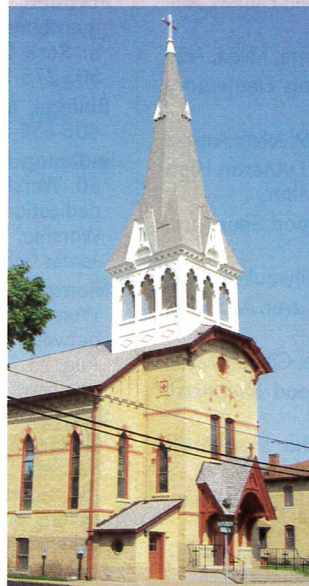
# District news

## Happy anniversary!

**MN**—On May 17, St. Andrew, St. Paul Park, Minn., recognized **Doris Panning** and **Joan Tjernagel** for their years of service. Panning has served as an organist for 60 years. Tjernagel has served in the teaching ministry for 25 years.

**WW**—**Timothy Biebert**, pastor at St. John, Neillsville, Wis., celebrated 25 years in the preaching ministry on June 14.

## Western Wisconsin



The church and parsonage of Zion, Columbus, Wis., were recently added to the Wisconsin Register of Historic Places. Built in 1878, the buildings were the work of architect Edward Townsend Mix, one of the most important architects practicing in Wisconsin at that time. The church features a 125-foot-tall steeple.

## Pacific Northwest

Peace in Jesus, Boise, Idaho, celebrated seven baptisms during the first half of 2009. This home mission church reaches out to the Vietnamese community in Boise. One man



who was baptized on Palm Sunday, Nghia Trung Nguyen (pictured), was the son of the first adult member of Peace in Jesus to be baptized nine years ago. It was Nghia's father's dying wish that all of his family members would become Christian. Nghia is the tenth member of his family to be baptized.

The district reporters for this month are: MN—Jeffrey Bovee; PNW—David Birsching; WW—Brett Brauer.

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY**

**Pastors**

**Boehringer, Luke J.**, to Gethsemane, Davenport, Iowa  
**Ninmer, Donald P.**, to retirement  
**Pautz, Larry L.**, to retirement  
**Snyder, Peter J.**, to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.  
**Stuebs, Paul A.**, to retirement  
**Tauscher, James W.**, to Russia

**Teachers**

**Brandt, James A.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Brown, Amber L.**, to St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.  
**Crabtree, Sarah J.**, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**DeFrain, Richard A.**, to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.  
**Fliester, Abigail M.**, to Illinois Elementary School, Crete, Ill.  
**Foxen, Matthew B.**, to St. John, St. John's Antigua  
**Fry, Laura M.**, to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Heismeyer, Jennifer**, to Good Shepherd, Sioux Falls, S.D.  
**Henne, Anne**, to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Hill, Scott R.**, to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.  
**Johnson, Megan J.**, to Prairie, Gibbon, Minn.  
**Kramer, Joshua R.**, to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.  
**Kutz, Jeannine M.**, to The Shepherd's Little Lambs Preschool, Duluth, Minn.  
**Leckwee, Dennis D.**, to First German, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Mildebrandt, Kathleen**, to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.  
**Monroe, Tamara K.**, to Eastside, Madison, Wis.  
**Plocher, Martin V.**, to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Schmill, Rebekah L.**, to Bethel Little Lamb, Galesville, Wis.  
**Stratil, Julie**, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.  
**Thies, Timothy J.**, to Bethany, Port Orchard, Wash.  
**Treuden, Jennifer L.**, to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.  
**Valerio, Amy**, to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.  
**Wordell, Keith D.**, to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.  
**Zellmer, Rebecca J.**, to Zion, Columbus, Ohio

**Martin Luther College assignments**

**Brost, Nicole**, to First, La Crosse, Wis.  
**Stubalt, Shanna**, to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

**COLLOQUY NOTICE**

Mark Story, formerly a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, after having successfully completed the steps of our colloquy

program, including study at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, was declared eligible for a call into the ministerium of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

James Huebner,  
 WELS Second Vice President  
 Joel V. Petermann,  
 North Atlantic District President  
 E. Allen Sorum,  
 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor

**ANNIVERSARIES**

**South Haven, Mich.**—St. Paul (125). Aug. 2. Worship, 10 A.M.; dinner to follow. 269-637-1497; phansen18@verizon.net.  
**Portland, Ore.**—Grace (100). Aug. 8. Golf tournament, 11 A.M.; picnic, 4:30-7:30 P.M., at Rose City Park. Peter & Susan Dorn, 503-775-1775.

**Billings, Mont.**—Apostles (40). Aug. 16. 406-656-7141; www.apostlesmt.net.

**Indianapolis, Ind.**—Divine Savior (40). Aug. 30. Worship, 8 & 10:45 A.M.; church bell dedication prior to each service. Sept. 20. Worship, 8 & 10:45 A.M.; meal to follow. James Schulz, schulzjg@sbcglobal.net.

**Montrose, Minn.**—St. Paul (100). Aug. 30. Worship, 10 A.M. & 2 P.M.; catered meal between services. RSVP requested by Aug. 23. Robert Hellmann, 763-675-3201; sptrinch@lakedalelink.net.

**Bellevue, Wash.**—Calvary (50). Sept. 20. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; reunion gathering, 10:45 A.M. Sept. 27. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; picnic, 11:30 A.M.; organ recital, 3 P.M. Personal memories in picture or story received at www.calvarybellevue.shutterstock.com Password: calvary.

**Lake Geneva, Wis.**—First (125). Sept. 20. Worship, 10 A.M.; catered meal to follow. 262-248-3374. Web site, www.firstlutheranwels.org.

**Rio Rancho, N.M.**—Peace (25). Sept. 27. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested by Aug. 31. Eric Ziecker, 505-891-8246; plcnm@juno.com.

**Morton Grove, Ill.**—Jerusalem school. Century of Christian education celebration. Oct. 9-11. Web site, www.jerusalem.lutheran.org/jels100.

**Tacoma, Wash.**—Faith school (50). Oct. 10. Worship, 4 P.M.; meal, 5:30 P.M. RSVP requested by Sept. 10. 253-537-2696; office@faith-wels.org

**COMING EVENTS**

**Pastor's Wives Power Saturday**—Aug. 1. New Life, Shoreview, Minn. Theme: "Wives Alive." Valerie Johnson, 612-267-3017. Web site, www.pwrenewal.org.

**12th Annual WELS retired workers reunion**—Aug. 6. Lunch, noon. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. 920-261-9280 or 920-206-0951; lrdahlbe@ticon.net or voss.c@sbcglobal.net.

**St. Paul, Seaforth, Minn., closing services**—Aug. 9. Worship, 10 A.M. & 1:30 P.M.; catered meal, 11:30 A.M. Delbert Kuehn, 507-342-5748.

**Christian Educators for Special Education Conference**—Aug. 11, 8:30 A.M.-3 P.M. Klemmers, Milwaukee, Wis. Lunch included. pleifer@peacehartford.org.

**Prayer conference**—Aug. 14-15. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Hosted by WELS Prayer Institute. Web site, www.welsprayerinstitute.com, click on events.

**WELS riders Coolies/Mississippi River ride**—Aug. 14-16. Patrick Stankiewicz, pstankiewicz66@yahoo.com.

**Camp Phillip**—920-787-3202, office@campphillip.com.

- Sept. 4-7. Fall family camp.
- Sept. 25-27. Teen retreat.

**North Atlantic District Labor Day retreat**—Sept. 5-7. Camp Taconic, Hinsdale, Mass. Judy Becker, 518-872-1372; judibeck5@aol.com. Web site, www.welslabordayretreat.org.

**Quilters: An Evening at the Chapel**—Sept. 11, 6 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wis. Food, fun, and networking. Pam Reichardt, 920-732-3656. Web site, www.wlchapel.org.

**Annual Life Banquet**—Sept. 27. Hosted by Waukesha Chapter of WELS Lutherans for Life. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Kathy Gates, 262-513-9590.

**Annual Lutheran Ladies League rally**—Sept. 30. Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis. Co-host, Grace, Manitowoc, Wis. Charlotte Endries, 920-682-2990.

**Martin Luther College Ladies Auxiliary annual meeting**—Oct. 14. Registration, 9 A.M.; meeting, 9:30 A.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., 507-354-8221. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu.

**In the Footsteps of Paul study trip**—Jan. 2-16, 2010. Hosts: Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis., and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Tour sites include Ephesus, Aphrodisias, Sardis, Pergamum, Troas, Istanbul, Philippi, Thessaloniki, Delphi, Athens, and Corinth. Rome extension offered. Non-students welcome. Joel Pless, 414-443-8930, joel.pless@wlc.edu. Stephen Geiger, 262-242-8161, geigers@wls.wels.net.

**HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS WANTED**

In an effort to reclaim storage space, church leaders often discard documents, not realizing that they tell the story of God's grace in the congregation and the synod. If you have items related to the history of your congregation, even bulletins from special services, forward them to the synod archives, which are housed on the seminary campus. Send documents to WELS Archives, 11831 N Seminary Dr, Mequon WI 53092.

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).

## Picture this



Seven called workers and their families from the North Atlantic District gathered Memorial Day weekend in Cary, N.C. Pictured are the Gehls, Roeckers, Stuppys, Guldbergs, Guenthers, Geigers, Mantey's, and Neumans.

"We do gatherings like this a couple times a year, but this was the biggest in my seven years out here," says Frederick Guldberg, pastor at Star of Bethlehem in Winston Salem. "It was great to see everyone's family and kids. We see each other at conferences—but that's work. This was just for fellowship."

He says events like this have been going on for quite some time. "We try to gather the day after Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, and Labor Day," he says. "I know that in the Piedmont Circuit we make it a priority. The fewer churches there are in an area, the times we gather are all the more precious."

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.

Summer is a great time to relax under the shade of the tree in your backyard. Can you unscramble the words below to find types of trees that are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments? If you get stuck, look up the passage in parentheses.

1. LSMAAB  
(2 Samuel 5:24)

2. GFI  
(Matthew 21:19)

3. LOPRAP  
(Genesis 30:37)

4. DRCAE  
(Psalm 104:16)

5. TNEPMAAOREG  
(1 Samuel 14:2)

6. NPEI  
(Psalm 104:17)

7. PRESYCS  
(Isaiah 60:13)

8. VOELI  
(Psalm 52:8)

9. BRMYERLU  
(Luke 17:6)

ANSWERS: 1. Balsam 2. Fig 3. Poplar 4. Cedar 5. Pomegranate 6. Pine 7. Cypress 8. Olive 9. Mulberry



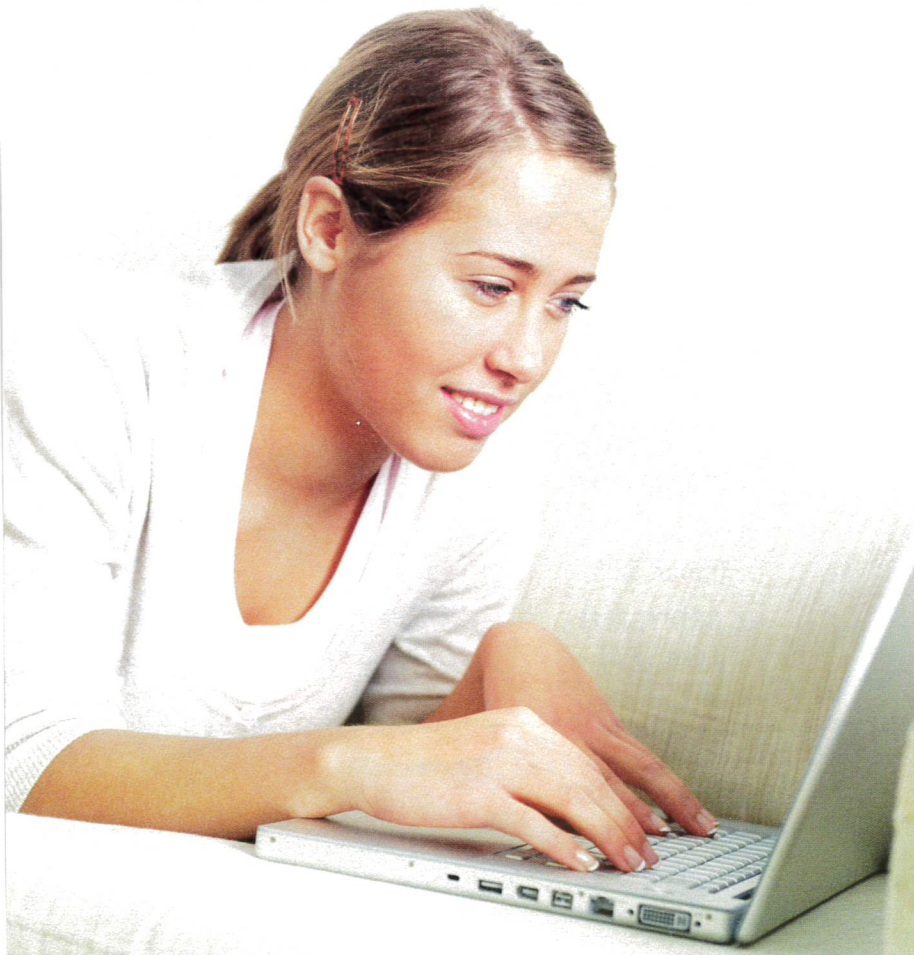
PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Even in an age of e-mail, God's law still guides us. Follow this imaginary conversation between a granddaughter and grandfather that shows us how God's law applies to all generations.

Dear Grandpa,

You know me. You know how I really try to be a good student, a good daughter, and a good person. But so many others don't care about the right thing. There's a guy in my grade who gets A's on pretty much everything—only because he cheats. A girl in my English class always wears new, expensive clothes, but she shoplifts them. These kids never get caught. It's so unfair. What's the use of trying to be good if cheaters and thieves end up better off? Please help me understand.

I love you,  
Denali



James A. Aderman

# The

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him, and gladly obey what he commands.

Dear Denali,

When you were little you thought your mother had eyes in the back of her head. She always seemed to catch you when you did something wrong. Now you're realizing that justice doesn't come that easily. People don't always get caught. They can live outside of God's will for a long time and do terrible, even unspeakable, things without being brought to human justice.

Probably since Adam and Eve's children thought Cain and his friends were better off than they, believers have fretted about evil in the world. That includes several psalmists. The Spirit inspired them to write about how unfair they thought it was that life went well for the wicked while those who tried to live for God suffered. For example, maybe you've read Psalm 94, "How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked be jubilant? They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting. . . . They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless. They say, 'The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed.'"

I understand your frustration. I know people who have been unfaithful to wife and to work and yet have ended up—apparently very happy—with another spouse and another job. I have been taken advantage of by salespeople at appliance stores, mechanics at car repair shops, and neighbors. That doesn't seem right. Want to know a secret? I've also wondered whether living like a Christian is worth the hassle. But there are three things I keep remembering.

**God's laws show me how serious he is about punishing sin**

The first is that we Christians strive



# Commandments

to keep God's commandments because God is serious about his threats to punish everyone who lives outside his laws. That's a scary thought, scary enough to convince the sinful nature part of me to get its act together. God's threat of punishment curbs our evil behavior. When God warns, "I . . . am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me," he's telling us we must take him seriously—or suffer severe consequences.

There is a flag from the Revolutionary War that featured a coiled snake. The words on the flag caution, "Don't Tread On Me." God's threats to punish those who break his laws remind us he is like that snake. We kick him around at our peril.

Ask King David and his girlfriend Bathsheba if God is serious about punishing sin. Check with King Herod as he suffered in agony on his deathbed. When God threatens to punish us for failing to obey him, he carries out his threats.

The problem for us is that we may not always understand how the holy God of the universe is bringing about justice. We may want him to show his justice much sooner than he does. But God's justice is always on the hunt—and the wicked are his prey. Punishment will pounce, if not in this life, certainly in the next.

## God's laws show me how sinful I am

That includes dealing with me for the sins in my life. There's where sin gets personally scary. My jealous God demands that I keep him first; that I live for him with all my heart, soul, and mind; and that I love him more than anything or anyone. But I don't. God's laws show me I don't. God's laws force me to look carefully at myself—like I do when I look into the bathroom mirror in the morning. Beard stubble. Wrinkles. Grey hair on the sides of my head and a bald spot in the middle. There's nothing as shocking as morning ugliness! God's law, like a mirror, shows us our soul ugliness, how we can't fix our ugliness, how we must expect he will reject us because of our ugliness.

Gazing into the mirror of God's laws and shuddering at what we see is worse than any horror movie. We see ourselves as the monster that our law-breaking has made us. But it's precisely then that the Lord puts his gentle Father's hand on us, smiles, and points us to Jesus as the one who took our ugliness away. He cleansed us and reminds us that we are "a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27).

## God's laws show me how to thank him

I am forgiven. It's that truth that brings me back to God's law for another reason. God's law answers my grateful question: How can I thank God for his grace in Jesus? Christians turn to God's commandments to guide their lives in ways that will thank him.

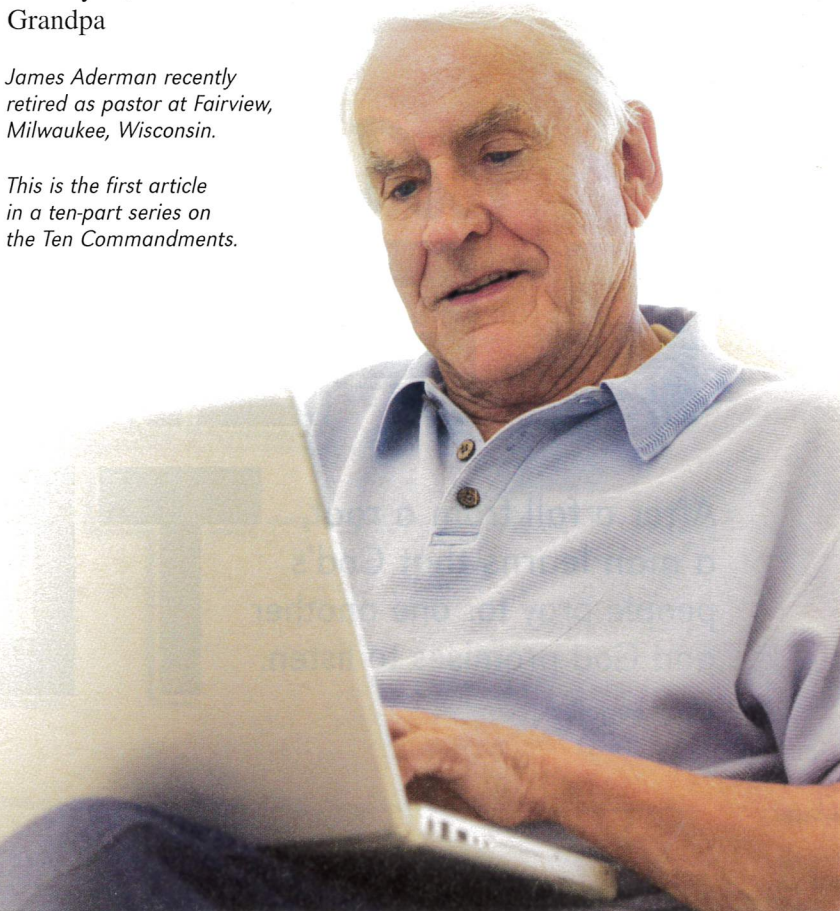
Do you remember last November when you asked Grandma what you could get her for Christmas? There was no better way to be sure your gift showed her how much you loved her than to find out from her what she wanted. We go to God's laws to find out how we can make the gift of our lives an expression of our love for him. God has made us his children, and we gratefully want to show him that we appreciate his love and forgiveness.

Is it troubling that people can do bad things and seemingly get away with it? Sure. Believers have wrestled with that unfairness since sin slithered into the world. But even if doing wrong always got us ahead and doing right always got us in trouble, we Christians would still do what God wants us to do. He is the God who is so stuck on us, so jealous of our love, that he sent his Son to forgive our sins and make us his forever. We keep his rules to thank him.

I love you,  
Grandpa

*James Aderman recently retired as pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

*This is the first article in a ten-part series on the Ten Commandments.*





All things are subject to the will of God. When we pray, we do as

Jesus did and say, "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). At times it appears that God does not listen to our prayers—a spouse dies or someone is not released from constant pain or troubling difficulties.

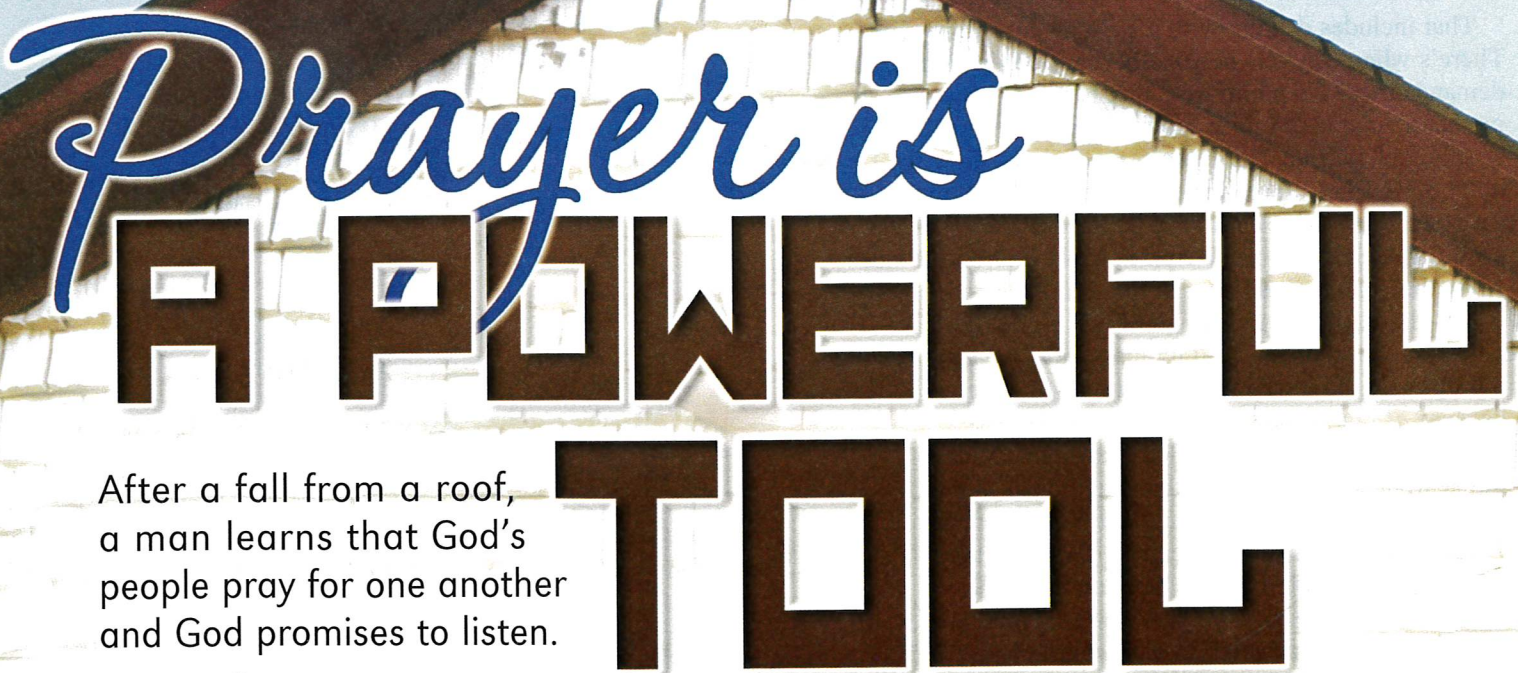
Others live, survive harrowing accidents, or find cures or relief. God has his plan for each of us even if at times we do not understand it. Even the death of his saints is precious in God's sight (Psalm 116:15).

When God does grant healing, relief, and life, we thank him and are tempted to think that any other outcome is not an answer to prayer. But every prayer is answered for our good. When God grants life or health, he still has work for us to do here. When he doesn't, he has determined our work here is finished even if that leaves sorrow and pain. He has a purpose for that too.

The Lord has encouraged us to pray and promises to hear our prayers. My story is a reminder of the importance of praying for others. At times some cannot pray for themselves and have to rely on others who can offer intercessory prayers. What a blessing to go to the Lord and pray for our loved ones and those in need. Many are the blessings from our heavenly Father as he answers such prayers in his own way.

#### A fall from a roof

I myself have had experience with prayers on my behalf. My case involved a near fatal fall from the roof of a two-story house. I was helping a friend shingle his house when I slipped



# Prayer is A POWERFUL TOOL

After a fall from a roof, a man learns that God's people pray for one another and God promises to listen.

Elroy Begalka

on some wet shingles and fell about 18 feet to the ground. It was a warm day in August, a few miles east of Brookings, S.D.

While I lay on the ground, others called for emergency help. Within a short time an ambulance arrived and took me to the hospital in Brookings. The doctors checked me over and found severe internal bleeding. The cause of the bleeding turned out to be a ruptured diaphragm. That's the membrane that separates the heart and lungs from the rest of the body's organs. I was taken into surgery to stop the bleeding and to receive transfusions for the loss of blood.

The doctors almost lost me twice on the operating table due to shallow breathing and low blood pressure. The trauma of shock made their work difficult. Many drainage tubes were inserted into my body. Many pints of blood were used for transfusions. The X rays showed many broken bones. The fact that the Lord did not take me when I landed next to a pile of cast iron sewer pipes seemed to indicate that he still had a use for me here.

I had a broken collarbone, a broken shoulder blade, a broken wrist, 14 ribs that were either cracked or broken, and four cracked or broken vertebrae. The doctors thought at first that I should be transferred to the trauma center in Sioux Falls but decided that the injuries were too severe and I probably would not survive the trip.

#### Others prayed for me

The news soon spread in Brookings that I had been in an accident. My pastor set up a prayer chain. Many people offered many intercessory prayers for my recovery.

After surgery I was taken to intensive care where I awoke to see my pastor and some family members, including my wife, Carol. I had no idea how severe my injuries were, so I thought I'd only be hospitalized a few days. As it turned out, I spent almost a month in rehab, healing, exercising, and learning to live with pain.

My wife, of course, understood my pain and difficulty. I can never thank the Lord enough for giving me Carol; she was there constantly to aid me in my healing process and to give me comfort in my hours of need.

Since I received so many drugs for pain and antibiotics for infection, I don't remember praying hardly at all. The doctors gave me only three days to live. When I lived past the three-day limit, the doctors thought it was a miracle. Whether it was a miracle or not, I always think my recovery was because God listened to the intercessory prayers of many God-fearing people. I praise and thank the Lord for sparing my life and for leading me in his paths.

I couldn't work for almost a year after my accident, so my family had financial problems as well. We prayed about the matter and soon had funds from relatives and friends for living costs. This was truly a blessing from our Savior, who was looking out for us.

#### A reminder

I still have a reminder of my ordeal more than 30 years ago. I have a so-called thorn in the flesh. My injured back has little hope of being completely healed or corrected. I have learned to live with the occasional pain and discomfort day by day with the Lord's help.

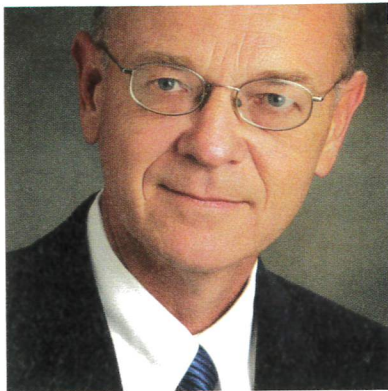
There is always the temptation to give up and blame the Lord for all our trials and troubles. I've felt that way from time to time because of my weak faith and lack of trust in my Savior. But despite the pain of a broken body, I can see where the power of intercessory prayer by fellow Christians has helped me through my ordeals and helped my body heal, as slow as it seemed at times.

What can I tell others now? Don't despair or give up hope. The Lord is there beside you even though it may not always look like it. Jesus is in control, and he won't desert you in your hour of need. Don't stop praying, but continue to thank the Lord for all of his blessings, even though it may be difficult in your trials and tribulations.

I gradually healed, and eventually I not only prayed for others but also for myself. I have realized that it was because of the grace and mercy of my Lord Jesus Christ that my life was spared. He had a purpose in leaving me here and granting me recovery. I've learned to trust his promises to strengthen my weak faith.

May he help us all fight the good fight of faith until life everlasting.

*Elroy Begalka is a member at Trinity, Clear Lake, South Dakota.*



Mark Schweden

## What's in a name?

A name can be very descriptive. It can also be misleading.

The word *Lutheran* in our synod's name, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, is not merely a word. We call ourselves Lutheran because it clearly identifies what we believe and describes how we carry out the work that God has entrusted to his church on earth. We call ourselves Lutheran, in spite of the fact that others using that name have departed from many of the essential truths that God revealed in the Scriptures—the same truths Martin Luther believed and taught.

By adopting the name *Lutheran* we are saying that we stand, as Luther did, on the truth of the Scriptures alone. No hesitation. No qualification. No evasive explanation. A Lutheran church believes that God's Word is true in all it teaches. A Lutheran church bases all that it teaches and all that it does on the Scriptures and on nothing else.


As Lutherans we proclaim Christ crucified. We proclaim a message that is not packaged to be palatable and not soft-pedaled to be acceptable. Rather, we proclaim a message that, as Paul said to the Corinthians, is utter foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). The theology of the cross was not a message that itching ears wanted to hear in Paul's day, nor is it at all attractive in our postmodern, self-gratifying world. The people in the world we live in look for a message that doesn't make them uncomfortable. The people in our world look for things that make sense to their own way of thinking and that build up the esteem they have for themselves. They won't find that in the harsh condemnation of God's law. Neither will they find that in the sweet message of the gospel. They won't find that in the news of a Savior who offers to

give them the perfection that they think they can achieve on their own.

As Lutherans we recognize that doctrine—what you teach—is important. And we recognize that practice—what you do—flows from correct teaching. It's interesting to note that our Wisconsin Synod did not hold that view from the start. The first synod president was very quick to point out that “denominational fences” were not important to him. A draft of the first constitution of our synod contained words that pledged the synod to the Lutheran Confessions, but later those words were crossed out and replaced with a generic pledge to “pure Bible Christianity.” It was only later that God provided leaders who would guide the synod to the confessional Lutheran church that it is today.

As Lutherans we recognize that we hold on to the truth of God's Word and defend the gospel against all foes. We do that, however, not merely to keep that Word for ourselves but in order to share that message with a world that desperately needs to hear it. Holding on to the Word can be pitted against sharing the Word. In reality, however, the two are inseparable. We treasure and defend the Word in order to have a pure message to share. Lutherans who know and appreciate the beauty of the gospel will immediately see the need to share that gospel. Lutherans are committed to preserving the Word and to sharing that Word.

Some have suggested that we not use the word *Lutheran* in our name because it has been misused by others and can be misunderstood. I believe the name *Lutheran* says much, as long as we are committed to explaining what it really means to be Lutheran.



# believe in the HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts.

Charles F. Degner

“Have you been born again?” Perhaps someone has asked you that question, and you didn’t quite know how to answer it.

### We must be born of the Spirit

One night Nicodemus came to talk to Jesus (John 3). In the course of their conversation, Jesus confronted him with a strange idea. “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (v. 3). When Nicodemus couldn’t understand this, Jesus explained more fully. “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (vv. 5-8).

Jesus’ few words tell us much about the Holy Spirit’s work. Flesh gives birth to flesh. You were not a child of God when you were born. As cute and innocent as you appeared, you were just the opposite in the sight of God. You were dead in your sins (Ephesians 2:1-3). You could breathe on your own, but you could not believe on your own.

You needed a miracle. Sometimes the Bible refers to the miracle of believing as a resurrection (Ephesians 2:4,5; Ezekiel 37:1-10). In John 3 Jesus uses a different but similar expression. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be “born again.” This is just another way of saying that you must come to faith in Jesus and that you cannot do this on your own, any more than you could be born on your own.

### The Spirit calls us by the gospel

The Holy Spirit creates faith. You don’t have to point to the day it happened or to a special experience for the assurance that you have been born again. The Spirit works like the wind. You don’t see the wind, but you see the results—the leaves rustling and the treetops waving. It is the same with the work of the Holy Spirit. For some, conversion comes as suddenly as it did upon the apostle Paul (Acts 9). For others it comes as quietly as it came to Nicodemus while he sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to the Word. The evidence of the Spirit’s work is the fact that you trust in Jesus alone to save you.

The means the Holy Spirit uses are also very plain and ordinary. Jesus speaks of Baptism—being born again of water and the Spirit. In other places, he speaks of the power of the gospel, which makes us wise for salvation (Romans 1:16). These are the tools the Holy Spirit puts in our tool box to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18,19).

Luther said it so plainly. “I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me *by the gospel*, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith” (Third Article, Luther’s Small Catechism).

The next time someone asks if you have been born again, tell him, “Yes.” Then tell him how it happened to you.

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*This is the third article in an eight-part series on the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. Go to [www.forwardinchrist.net](http://www.forwardinchrist.net) and search by the author’s first and last name to read other articles in the series.*

THE EVIDENCE OF THE  
SPIRIT’S WORK IS THE FACT  
THAT YOU TRUST IN JESUS  
ALONE TO SAVE YOU.

## Repent!?!

The public ministry of Jesus began after John prepared the way in the desert of Judea near the Jordan River. John's message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2). The first words of Jesus after his baptism and temptation were "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17).

After four hundred years of silence when no prophet from God appeared, God broke the silence with a call to repent. God's people were to turn away from what entangled them—their sin and the consequence of their sin, death—to the God of grace who had sent them the answer and rescue from sin and death, his Son, Jesus.

The call to repent hasn't changed over the centuries. It still comes to those who do not know Jesus. They are trapped in the mess of this world's problems and in their own problems. With the simple message of the gospel, God invites those lost and helpless to turn away from their hopeless state and turn toward Jesus.

But once someone turns toward Jesus, he or she soon discovers that living in this sin-polluted world is not easy. Like so many others whom God has given the power to turn toward Jesus, we also find that our lives are not so neatly black and white, sin and grace, before Jesus and after Jesus. We discover a battle every day. Sin still clings to us, and we smell its foul odor when we fail to bring forth fruits of repentance and instead become selfish, loveless, proud, and smug. Like the apostle Paul, we anguish over the good we want to do but fail to do and the evil we don't want to do but manage day after day to do (Romans 7:7-25).

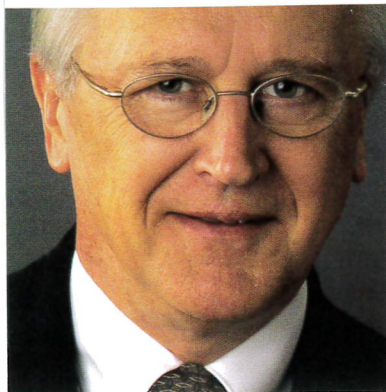
So the call to repent is our daily chal-

lenge—turn away from the sin within that still infects our hearts, souls, and minds and cling to the forgiveness, hope, victory, and life that Jesus has given us. In turning toward Jesus, we grasp his power to renew our struggle against sin and grow to be better disciples on the journey through life. Our faith is refreshed. Luther observed that the entire life of a Christian is one of repentance.

God's law still crushes our sinful nature. It's still painful. The muddle of our lives reminds us what a mess we can make of our lives on our own and sometimes what a mess we can make even of our work together as believers. Death, disease, heartache, and pain stalk us like a pack of wolves.

Jesus tenderly invites us to turn away from all this daily and embrace his gracious blessings. But our sinful natures sometimes become like little children and resist repentance. We arrogantly protest when the law points an accusing finger. We attack and scream rather than face the reality of sin. We want to do it ourselves and take credit. We sometimes resist the lesson of Jesus that we remain unworthy servants even after we have done so much for our master (Luke 17:10).

How perverse is the sin within us all! How difficult the struggle to be servants of our master! How important the call to repent remains. The future will not remember any of us. We will be swallowed up by the ground and become dust. We will be forgotten when the next couple of generations also disappear. But that does not lead us to despair. Instead, in abject humility, we turn away from that too and in faith reach out toward Jesus, who remembered us in love, called us to be his disciples, and made us more than conquerors (Romans 8).



*John Ortberg*

# THE APOSTLES

Jonathan E. Schroeder

## Matthias: The replacement

“What happens if you leave? Where will we get another pastor?” New members frequently ask that question when their pastor receives a call. Imagine what went through the minds of the 120 Christians when they contemplated the empty seat left by the death of Judas! Who will replace him? How do we replace him? The fledgling church learned that their ascended Lord had not abandoned them. They trusted that he would give some to be apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers. God provided the replacement: St. Matthias.

### READ ACTS 1:15-17,21-26

<sup>15</sup>In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) <sup>16</sup>and said, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus—<sup>17</sup>he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.” . . .

<sup>21</sup>“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

<sup>23</sup>So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” <sup>26</sup>Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

### DIGGING INTO THE VERSES

1. List the criteria required to be a replacement apostle. Why was each a requirement?

2. What were the requirements for later servants of the Word (Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7)?
3. They cast lots to choose between the two candidates. In doing so, what were they confessing about each man? What were they confessing about God?
4. The church didn’t always cast lots to appoint new pastors. Look up these passages to find other methods.
  - Acts 6:1-6
  - Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5
5. Today we call through congregations, boards, or committees; in the early church they elected or appointed or chose by lots. In either case, what assurance do we have about our pastors (Ephesians 4:11 and Acts 20:28)?
6. Review the WELS call process. What similarities and dissimilarities do you see to the New Testament examples listed above? What potential blessings or pitfalls do you see in our call process?

### MORE ABOUT MATTHIAS

The risen and ascended Lord provided new workers for his church, and he has never stopped. Nothing else is known of St. Matthias; his later life is shrouded in silence and late legend. The church celebrates the Feast of St. Matthias on Feb. 24 each year, and his festival provides an excellent opportunity for the worshiping church to remember that God gives ministers of grace. The second lesson for that festival is Acts 1:15-26.

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



# I CAN'T BELIEVE

Just like a sculpture in Australia, the church looks different depending on the perspective from which you view it.

Jonathan R. Hein

I know of a fascinating sculpture called *Impossible Triangle* in Perth, Australia. If you approach from the north, west, or east, you might wonder about its name. It looks nothing like a triangle. Instead it looks more like goalposts that have been savaged by a tornado, bars jut randomly here and there. I suppose it has some redeeming qualities—it's shiny. But for the most part, it's not beautiful.

Approach it from the south, however, and you will see something completely different. Eventually those bars seem to converge and form a perfect equilateral triangle—but not just any equilateral triangle. What you are looking at appears impossible. The sides are made of straight beams. At the three vertices of the triangle, the beams intersect at what are clearly 90-degree angles. Yet, any sophomore geometry student will tell you that the three angles of a triangle always *total* 180 degrees. There is no such thing as a triangle with three 90-degree angles.

Once you see it from the south, the title of the sculpture makes sense. The object is a three-dimensional impossibility. Beautiful. Perfect. But impossible. And yet, there it is. So you stand there and stare and say, "I can't believe what I'm seeing!"

**The church is similar.** People talk as though there are two churches—visible churches and the invisible church. That is not accurate. The terms *visible* and *invisible* do not describe different churches. They describe different perspectives of the same church. But there is only one church. It looks different depending on the perspective from which you view it—man's or God's.

Approach the church from most directions, and it has some shiny parts. Church buildings may be attractive, the music

pleasing. Most pastors are nice. But there is also plenty that looks wrong. In church you will find bickering, greed, and the most grotesque sins—even among the clergy.

But approach the church from God's perspective, and you see something else entirely. What you are looking at is beautiful and orderly and perfect, impossibly so! When you look at the church from God's perspective, you stand there and stare and say, "I can't believe what I'm seeing!"

**The problem is, we cannot see the church from God's perspective, can we?** That's what we mean when we say the church is invisible. It's a bit of a misnomer. The church is not really invisible; it is only invisible to us. That is why in our creeds we confess "I believe in the holy Christian church" but never "I see the holy Christian church." We believe this perfect, majestic church exists, not because we have empirical evidence but simply because God promises us it exists.

Like one walking around that *Impossible Triangle*, as we walk on this earth we can tell there is more going on than meets the eye.

So we continue to walk and watch. While what we are looking at remains the same, it seems to be constantly changing as we advance in our perspective.

So we continue to walk and watch. The closer we get to the final perspective, the more anxious we grow.

So we continue to walk and watch, until—finally—we see what God has seen all along. We fall to our knees, with tears in our eyes and a smile on our face. And with every child of God we simultaneously cry, "I can't believe what I'm seeing."

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# WHAT I'M SEEING