

NOVEMBER 2009

Forward in Christ

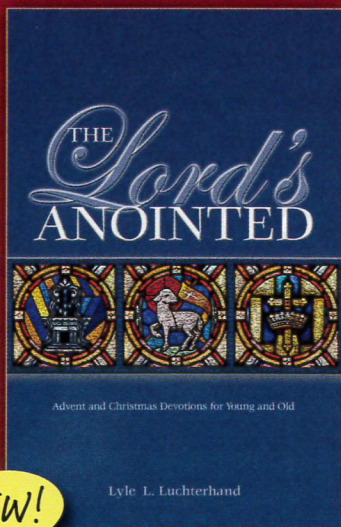
God's wisdom, WELS' witness

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CONTENT?



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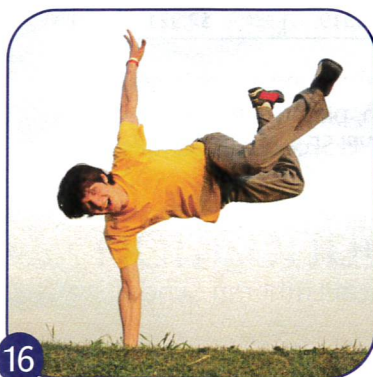
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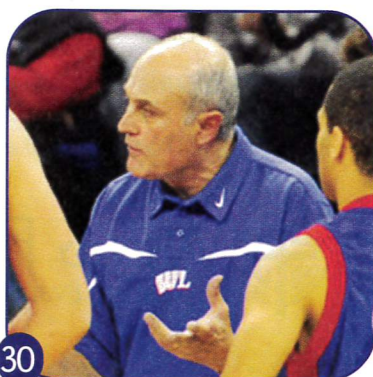
“How can we not be content, when we have a heavenly Father who knows what we need?”



10



16



30

Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

FEATURES

10 GIVING THANKS A lack of material blessings does not leave us without reason for thankfulness.

Rolfe F. Westendorf

12 DATING IS NO GAME Hooking up with someone can become a kind of game for the unmarried. But finding a mate will influence our lives in many important ways.

Lance A. Hoff

14 CONFESSIONS OF FAITH A man shares his roller-coaster ride to confessional Lutheranism.

Alicia A. Neumann

16 ARE YOU EXCITED? International youth rallies are a life-changing, faith-emboldening, rip-roaring, good time.

Jonathan I. Enter

28 THE THIRD COMMANDMENT Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.

James A. Aderman

30 MORE THAN JUST A COACH Dale Walz used his passion for God, family, and basketball (in that order) to lead kids to victory—both on and off the court.

Linda R. Buxa

36 THANKSGIVING MEMORIES We remember the family gatherings for dinner, but it is all a prelude to the future feast with Jesus.

David L. Hein

Your gift creates a lasting legacy.



Giving Through a Charitable Gift Annuity

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

1 Kings 8:57

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NOVEMBER

WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

We often use the Thanksgiving season to reflect on and thank God for our blessings from the past year. So what are you thankful for?

Maybe you are having a hard time coming up with a list of material blessings this year. Stocks are down, unemployment is high—there's just not as much money to go around. Pastor Rolfe Westendorf reminds us that as Christians we still can be content even though our material goods may not be as abundant as in years past (p. 10).

Are you thankful that God blesses you with a strong faith? Or has the past year tested you and your beliefs? Pastor Don Patterson starts a new Bible study this month that explores the marks of a mature Christian and provides some points to ponder (p. 35).

Are you so excited about the blessing of forgiveness and the promise of heaven that you're thinking about how you can share the good news? The News section may give you some ideas (pp. 19–25). It is full of stories of congregations and individuals sharing the gospel with those who don't know about Jesus and the spiritual blessings he gives us through faith.

DEPARTMENTS



7

6 FEEDBACK

7 DEVOTION

Jesus, our living water *Peter A. Panitzke*

8 EDITORIAL COMMENT

The shining wire *Thomas J. Jeske*

9 QUESTION & ANSWER

Demon possession *Forrest L. Bivens*

18 CAMPUS CORNERSTONE

Recipe for a successful transition *Carla Hill*

19 NEWS

26 BULLETIN BOARD

27 POTLUCK

32 FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Lovingly intolerant *Mark G. Schroeder*

33 BIBLE STUDY

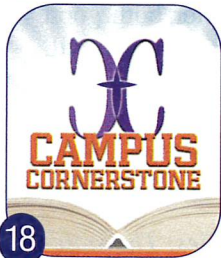
I believe in the Holy Spirit *Charles F. Degner*

34 A THOUGHT

Jesus, priceless treasure *John A. Braun*

35 PORTRAITS OF A MATURE CHRISTIAN

A mature Christian knows that he is at peace with God.
Donald W. Patterson



18



33



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

I was so happy to see the words of [WLHS] student Brian Webb Jr. [News, Sept.]. His straightforward message about the error of applying our own fallible second-guesses to the Lord's will is one that I need to be reminded of every day; I reread the words often. B.J. never would have guessed that this simple answer would have been read by so many people after his death, but I cannot think of a more true and comforting message to all those who miss him and know that he lives with Jesus.

*William Wendorff
Watertown, Wisconsin*

FORREST SEES THE TREES

I want to thank you (. . . thank Forrest Bivens . . . thank the Holy Spirit) for the way in which Prof. Bivens delivers his Q&A insights! He presents the facts without embellishing the facts; he addresses the question without suppressing the question; and, most importantly, he leaves the answer to each soul's God-given discernment. He is truly keeping in step with Ephesians 4—humbly and gently speaking the truth, then allowing the Spirit room to do his thing. I'm thankful that Prof. Bivens is preparing God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith.

*Ryan Weber
Arlington, Virginia*

GOD & EVIL

In his article titled "God & Evil" [Sept.], Mark Lenz states, "God forbids evil, he prevents evil, and he always uses evil to serve his good purposes." He also states, "To say that God concurs in evil does not mean that he is the author of evil or an accomplice in evil. Satan, not God, is the author of evil and the one who regularly causes evil to happen."

While this might be part of the mystery of God concurring with evil to which he alludes, there are several passages in 1 Samuel 16:14-23 that seem to indicate otherwise: ". . . and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, 'See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you will feel better.' . . . Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him." While the NIV translators indicate an alternate word for evil in the footnotes (injurious), they selected the word *evil* for their direct translation. Did they make a mistake?

Can/does God author both good and evil? Does he not create evil, e.g., weather storms, to serve his purpose?

*William J. Hertel
Dixon, Illinois*

Prof. Mark Lenz replies: The statement that "an evil spirit from the LORD tormented" Saul is similar to other places in Scripture that state that evil spirits are subject to God's control and can operate only within boundaries that he determines

(e.g., Judges 9:23; 1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1:12). The Hebrew word translated by the NIV as evil can also mean injurious. Either translation underscores that the Lord was permitting this spirit to torment Saul.

Although God permits evil and concurs in evil, he is never the author of evil. Psalm 92:15 says that "The LORD is upright . . . there is no wickedness in him." God is holy and righteous, and everything he does is perfect. Since all creation has been affected by sin (Romans 8:18-23), there are sometimes storms that cause property damage and even loss of life, but, like everything else in this world, these storms are under God's control and always serve his good purpose (Romans 8:28).

MARRIAGE

Re: "Marriage is good" [Aug.]. I take exception to the reference that every marriage has domestic quarrels. Unless my memory has totally deserted me, my wife of 58 plus years of marriage and I have not once had a so-called domestic quarrel. I always called our marriage a perfect marriage. Sadly the Lord called her home October 2008. With the great marriage we had, it makes it so much sadder and lonelier.

*Orrin Korth
Watertown, South Dakota*

Send your letters to **Feedback**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222 or email them to fic@wels.net. Letters should be between 100 and 200 words. 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*.

Jesus, our living water

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. John 7:37-39

Peter A. Panitzke

Driving through the Arabah south of the Dead Sea, it is not uncommon to see signs warning of the danger of flash floods. The signs look like a joke if you are traveling in the summer dry season. No water is in sight. But during the rainy season, a wadi (dry riverbed) can become a roaring river very quickly.

Drink to refresh yourself

The dry Sinai desert pictures well the spiritual desert that I sometimes find myself in. In the face of the financial struggles of our church body, I feel the dry desert wind draining the spiritual life from me. I see how society is becoming more secular, and I feel that dry wind again. Then I look at the people in our congregations who are battling addictions to drugs, and it seems so terribly hopeless.

But Jesus made a promise during the fall of the year. On the last and greatest day of Sukkot, or the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus was in the temple courts in Jerusalem when he promised, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

The fall of the year is a great time to come to Jesus and drink. In Israel, it is the time of the early fall rains. The dry soil drinks in the rain so that it becomes fertile again. In our churches, it is the season of End Times. Reformation Sunday refreshes us. "I am forgiven for Jesus' sake." Last Judgment Sunday proclaims that the wicked will not win in the

end. Saints Triumphant Sunday announces that not even the winds of death can dry up our hope. Christ the King Sunday helps us see that in spite of apparent setbacks here on earth, Jesus still rules and accomplishes his good and pleasing will for us and in us.

If you are going through a time of spiritual drought, come to Jesus this month and enjoy these refreshing waters.

Drink to refresh others

But don't come just for yourself.

Come because you want those same blessings to be poured out on others. When we drink deep of these waters, Jesus causes streams of living water to flow out from us.

When an ex-con talks about his spiritual confidence that comes from Jesus who washed away all his sins, the Reformation river of God's grace flows out of his heart into mine.

When a person who was sexually abused as a child can entrust judgment to the God who judges justly and forsakes the natural desire for revenge, I am humbled and encouraged to follow in her steps.

When an adult child says good-bye to a dear, dying father with the words "I'll see you again," the chill of death is washed away in the promises of Saints Triumphant Sunday.



When a friend who has lost her job tells me she isn't worried because Jesus will help her through, the river of Christ the King has just flowed past me again.

The End Times season of the church year is a great time to come to Jesus and drink. Drink so that streams of living water will flow out through you to refresh others.

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

The shining wire

Thomas J. Jeske

“I announce with trembling pleasure the appearance of a great story.” So read the *London Times* in its review of *Watership Down* (1972).

The story is engaging. British author Richard Adams follows a small group of exiles on a perilous passage from their condemned village to a new home called Watership Down. Along the way we find hard-to-forget scenes. The author gives us much to think about.

Oh. Recall that *Watership Down* is a story about rabbits.

That’s part of the author’s skill. A rabbit makes for a sympathetic character, if only because he must live among enemies—the cat below and the hawk above to name two out of a thousand. The small scale of a rabbit’s life does not diminish the struggle to survive; it somehow embroiders the whole story.

In one unforgettable chapter, the ragtag traveling band stumbles into an established rabbit community. This warren is delightfully located, roomy, and dry. Danger, which had run alongside them until now, is conspicuous by its absence. The refugees marvel at how big and sleek the newly met rabbits are. Although the visitors are ready for fight or flight, they are invited to stay and settle. Whatever sacrifices there may be are brushed aside with thoughts of the hard life on the trail.

The exiles assimilate—that is, all but one. It’s little Fiver who uneasily suggests that something doesn’t seem right. He has trouble articulating his fear, so the other wayfarers ignore him. The lonely rabbit spends miserable nights in the open while his old comrades find comfort among the grand residents of the splendid new warren.

The weak and discredited rabbit makes the decision to leave. Old acquaintances challenge his plan. There is an ugly farewell scene. After

sharp words, one of his former band angrily turns away and runs through a gap in a nearby hedge.

On the other side of that hedge was a wire snare. As the panicky rabbit twisted and tore the ground gasping for breath, everything came into nauseating focus for Fiver. The reason this warren has no enemies is that a farmer drives off all predators. The reason these rabbits are so big is that the farmer puts out food for them. The reason that every so often a rabbit disappears without a trace is that the farmer snares what he wants for his comfort. And here at last is the reason no resident is ever permitted to ask where another rabbit has gone. Only undersized, discredited Fiver spoke clearly and truly: “This warren—it’s nothing but a death hole.”

Something to think about! Does our world distort things in the same way? Is death an unmentionable? One example: abortion. Does the Freedom of Choice Act remove *death* from the vocabulary and replace it with *choice*? “It is the policy of the United States that every woman has the fundamental right to choose to bear a child, to terminate a pregnancy after fetal viability when necessary to save the life or health of a woman . . . the government may not interfere with a woman’s right to choose.”

In 36 years since *Roe v. Wade* there have been 50 million choices. Fifty million gone. Don’t talk of death. It’s choice. Shall we ignore death like so many others?

Jesus became a little one, weak and discredited. He took the nature of a servant in order to break the shining wire that waits just ahead for us all. Tell of his victory even if the entire world angrily disapproves.

Jesus took the nature of a servant, in order to break the shining wire that waits just ahead for us all.

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

QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

Your question has stimulated great debate within the Christian community. Some have concluded that there is no biblical way to answer the question decisively. Still, there is much that can and should be said.

Define terms carefully

One reason why the idea of demonized or demon-possessed Christians is so controversial is that the terms are imprecise. Does this refer to demons indwelling people in such a way that the people have no choice but to submit and succumb to them, as illustrated in Matthew 17:14-18; Luke 4:33-35; and Luke 8:26-33? Or does being demonized include being actively oppressed or influenced by demonic activity, as illustrated in Job 2:6; 1 Samuel 16:14; and 2 Corinthians 12:7? Distinctions need to be made and definitions clarified.

Since believers are told to resist the devil (1 Peter 5:8,9; James 4:7), believers do encounter some level of demonic work. But does God set limitations that protect believers from the kind of demonic possession or domination that renders them, at least for a time, unable to exercise any freedom of choice in physical or spiritual matters? I assume that this is what you are asking.

Draw conclusions cautiously

There is no explicit Bible statement telling us that believers cannot be demonized in ways that involve the full loss of their will to seek what is good and godly. Nevertheless, since Christians are purchased with Christ's blood (1 Peter 1:18,19) and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19), and since "the one who is in [believers] is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4), a logical conclusion makes it unlikely that a demon can exercise such severe influence on a child of God.

Those who receive saving faith are described as dead to sin, alive in Christ, and under grace; "sin shall not be [their] master" (Romans 6:1-14). It is simply not a domi-

Q. Can a Christian be demon possessed?

nant characteristic of believers to maintain sinful lifestyles (1 John 1:6,7; 3:7-10). A logical conclusion is that complete demon possession necessitating

sin is incompatible with these truths.

Despite all this, there is wisdom in measuring our words and admitting that the Lord, for his purposes, retains the full right to use demonic activity or influence among his people in a way that suits him. Despite the presence of the Holy Spirit within his people, severe demonic influence may still prevail. Recall the "daughter of Abraham" whom "Satan [had] kept bound for eighteen long years" (Luke 13:10-16). When God allows demonic influence, he will limit it, direct it, and use it for his wise and loving purposes. So we need to be cautious in drawing sweeping conclusions.

Continue to live confidently

Admitting that there can be degrees of demonic influence, even on Christians, dare not paralyze us in our lives of faith. Demonic activity is never an excuse for sin, and we should never assume that we are unable to do what is right. That thinking, in line with the view that "everyone's a victim," is not biblically acceptable. When God permits abnormal things to happen, it allows us to stand all the more in awe of him. But we should not use these things to make excuses for disobedience or to fall into a false fatalism.

Satan and demons, hoping to accomplish their evil purposes, ultimately serve God's good purposes among both believers and unbelievers. Let that knowledge help keep us from an unhealthy and unwise preoccupation with demonic activity and from failing to rejoice in God's universal rule over us and others.

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

The celebration of Thanksgiving has generally been associated with abundance. The origins of the event go back to the Pilgrims, who had barely survived a winter of starvation and disease. Then, with the help of their Indian neighbors, they were able to face the next winter with food to spare.

The abundance theme is repeated at our own Thanksgiving tables. This is not a snack of hot dogs and potato chips. There is a turkey with all the trimmings, which is too much for one family so guests are invited to help consume the feast. Then an evening meal is served, not because anyone is hungry but because it all tastes so good and there's no room in the refrigerator for all the leftovers.

Abundance does not bring happiness

But the traditional abundance is absent in many homes across our nation this year. Some of those who celebrated with abundance in 2008 will be hard-pressed to repeat last year's sumptuous feast. Layoffs and unemployment have robbed many of their source of income, and their loss of buying power has reduced or eliminated the profits that others were counting on. Some will be fortunate to have any food at all on this Thanksgiving holiday. They think that maybe it would be better to skip Thanksgiving this year instead of facing the irony of trying to be thankful in the midst of want and privation.

Such reasoning is valid only if abundance is the only source of happiness. Since we are surrounded by the doctrines of materialism, that would seem to be the truth of the matter. We have been told over and over again by the experts of advertising: "If you get this, if you buy that, you will be *happy!*"

That myth, however, has been shattered by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who warns us that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). He then went on to illustrate that truth with the parable of the rich fool, who provided

Thanksgiving

for a future of ease and luxury and then died before he had a chance to enjoy it. Other examples of the same truth are readily available, like the famous entertainer who enjoyed abundance that enabled the fulfillment of every desire and then died young, alone, and hideously in debt.

The great and wise King Solomon reflected upon the same experience. "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:10,11).

It takes a determined and irrational mind to maintain the opinion that wealth makes us happy. Scripture declares and experience affirms that abundance does not bring happiness. In fact, the very opposite is sometimes true, that the pleasures of material possessions distract us from the greater joys of faith and family. A lack of material blessings does not leave us without reason for thankfulness.

Contentment brings great joy

There is another blessing that can produce genuine thanksgiving this year. St. Paul said, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

The apostle does not expect us to be content when we are numb with

**A LACK OF MATERIAL
BLESSINGS DOES
NOT LEAVE US
WITHOUT REASON
FOR THANKFULNESS.**

Rolfe F. Westendorf



Thanks

cold or weak from lack of food. But if we have clothing sufficient to protect us from the cold and food sufficient to prevent hunger pangs, we can be comfortable—and content.

Notice that this does not require designer jeans. We do not need the latest styles to protect us from the cold. One warm blanket will do that well. We do not need rib eye steaks or baked Alaska to prevent hunger pangs. The key to this kind of contentment requires only the simplest kind of nourishment, the nourishment that even the poor can afford.

But how does one acquire such contentment?

Experience is a good teacher. Those who lived through the Great Depression can recall days of want and poverty. Newlyweds sitting in a bare room on orange crates because there was no money for furniture. Mothers darning socks for the third time because new stockings were not an option. Children cutting pieces of cardboard to slide into their worn-out shoes because the family could not afford to buy new ones. Proud and independent workers swallowing their pride and standing in line at a soup kitchen so that their children could have something to eat and then thanking God that they had enough to keep them from going cold or hungry.

Those who lived through those days have forgotten the stress and the worry. They remember the happy times of sharing time and companionship with each other, because that was all they had to share. They readily accepted prosperity when it came along. But experience taught them about a time when they were content, even happy,

with food and clothing, instead of wasting time being miserable about what they did not, could not, have.

Those who actually have experienced contentment in times of poverty know that such contentment is possible. But their number is dwindling. Not many who read these words can nod their heads and say, “Yup. That’s the way it was.” What about those of us who have lived for years, for decades, in the atmosphere of prosperity. How do we find the contentment that the Bible tells us about?

Not easily, to be sure. But faith makes it possible, faith that believes Jesus when he says, “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:31-33).

How can we not be content, when we have a heavenly Father who knows what we need? It’s something like having an empty refrigerator but a bulging wallet. What’s there to worry about? We have a loving Father in heaven. He promises to open his great wallet to give us what we need. Food. Clothing. Shelter. And so much more.


How can we trust him? He is the Father who loved us so much that he sacrificed his Son to pay for our sins and make us holy enough for heaven. If we believe that, how can we not trust him?

Jesus put it this way, “O you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:30). Faith comes from hearing the Word. So let the Spirit use his Word to fill you with faith, and contentment will follow.

We may not be able to thank God for an abundance of material things this year, but we can thank him for the faith that supplies contentment, which, after all, is the greater blessing.

Rolf Westendorf is pastor at Emmanuel, Montello, Wisconsin.

DATING

is no  game

Hooking up with someone can become a kind of game for the unmarried. But finding a mate will influence our lives in many important ways.

Lance A. Hoff

I'm not one to watch a lot of TV, not only because I have better things to do but also because the messages I get from almost every show encourage behavior God rejects. The underlying message—especially in the area of marriage and morality—is that all sexual behavior is okay. It is normal and fun. Dating and sex seem more like a game or just a way to have fun.

God wants to protect us, our children, and our society from anything that would bring heartache and difficulty. God's commands are intended to keep us from what will harm us and others. He includes sex, morality, and relationships among his concerns. And God doesn't think that dating should be a game.

One place where God gives us directions is in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit."

It might seem like these verses don't speak about dating and choosing a spouse. But the footnote in the New International Version acknowledges some differences of opinion about the translation. The People's Bible on 1 and 2 Thessalonians provides this direction: "Perhaps the best translation in the context is, 'Let each of you

know how to obtain a marriage partner in a way that is holy and honorable' " (1,2 Thessalonians, p. 40).

God does not prescribe the method

The way we choose a spouse has changed a bit over the centuries. In times passed and in many cultures, parents arranged marriages. Remember the account of Abraham arranging a marriage for his son Isaac (Genesis 24). Over the years that arrangement had its flaws. Many are the woeful tales of the abuses of the old dowry system.

Today's system more resembles that of Jacob and his passion for his beloved Rachel. It emphasizes consent—the commitment of two people to each other—as the essence of marriage. But disadvantages also are evident. Passion is blind. The power of the sexual urge in human nature can lead to enormous heartache.

God has not prescribed a method for choosing a spouse. We are free to use whichever method is best. I suspect that the best arrangement is a combination: two young people making their choice yet seeking the help of their parents.

Although God has not spoken on the method of choosing a spouse, he definitely has given us direction. We are to do it "in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust."

God cares about the manner

Paul further wrote, "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality." God clearly states that passionate lust is not to be a part of the Christian's dating life. When dating becomes a

game played for sexual excitement or fulfillment, we get it wrong. Choosing a spouse, a life partner, is the most important earthly decision one makes. It should not be taken lightly. All of the locker-room talk and girl talk do not fit with the serious business of marriage.

At the bottom of our problem today is a lack of understanding of the difference between love and lust. We understand lust, but the problem is that we don't know what love is. The subject of most songs seems to be love, but what they are really about is lust. Yes, sexual attraction and passion have their places, but it is

not in the backseat of a car; it is in the marriage bed. Let's understand the difference. Love is *you*-centered; lust is *me*-centered. Lust cares only for the moment; love cares about tomorrow. Lust is deceitful and manipulative: "If you really cared about me, you would go all the way." Love is honest and sacrificial: "Because I care about you, I will do what is best for you no matter how difficult, and I will be yours on our wedding night." Love gives; lust takes. Lust plays little games to get to sexual gratification; love can say no.

Harsh warnings are attached to this subject by God: "The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you." God does not speak harshly on the subject because he doesn't understand us. It is because he does understand the power of sex that he speaks so strongly. He is not trying to impose impossible, unloving standards. He does it to protect us. He loves us and knows how much harm will come when we fail to listen to him.

To be a virgin on one's wedding night is not old-fashioned. It is the will of God. It protects us from countless physical and emotional nightmares. But even more important, it protects God's honor. That is the emphasis of God's instruction to those dating:

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified . . . not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God, . . . For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." Not to control our passions is to violate our relationship with God. He paid an enormous price for our forgiveness, not so that we could keep on living in impurity but so that we could be separated from this dark and filthy world and live with him in holiness.

To sin sexually is not only to defraud our partner but to drive a spiritual wedge between our partner and God. Those who sin sexually find God hard to face and often

stay away from him. If anyone might think that the abuse of dating is no big deal, Paul concludes, "Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit."

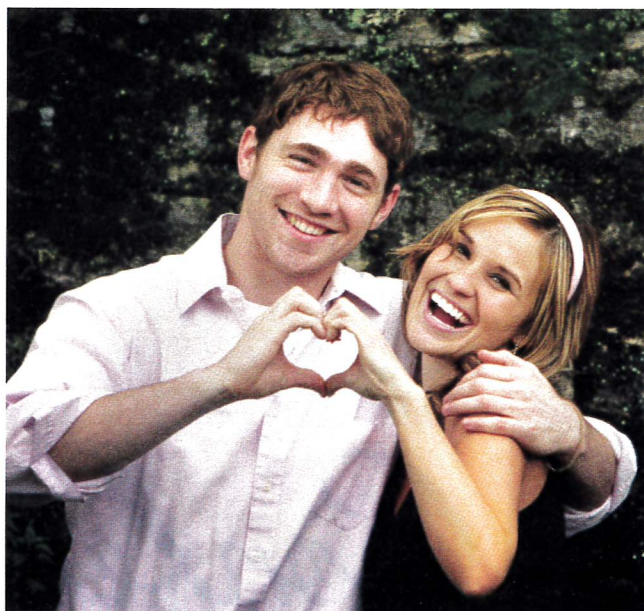
Dating is no game. Those who date may get lots of ideas from friends, TV, and movies about what dating is supposed to be, but the producers, actors, and actresses couldn't care less about your happiness. They don't have to live in your marriage. But there is One who cares so much that he


died to take away every one of your sins, even the sexual ones. Never go on a date anywhere or with anyone in which you can't take him along. He will help you choose a spouse in a holy and honorable way.

Dating is no game. It is serious preparation for one of life's most important events—marriage. How you choose a spouse has far-reaching results for physical and spiritual happiness.

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

This is the fifth article in a six-part series on marriage. To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net/forwardinchrist and search by the author's first and last name.





Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal—Robert Slattery had several different religious experiences during his search for meaning in his life. But none of those gave him the direction he needed.

“I’ve been on the roller coaster of faith where you fall away from God, you come back to God, and you find relevance in different Scriptures at different times in your life,” says Robert, a member at Living Hope, Redmond, Wash. “But I have never found an issue in life where I cannot find an answer to it in the Bible. And every time I’ve asked Lutheran pastors, ‘What does the church say about this?’ they always back it up with the gospel and with the Word.”

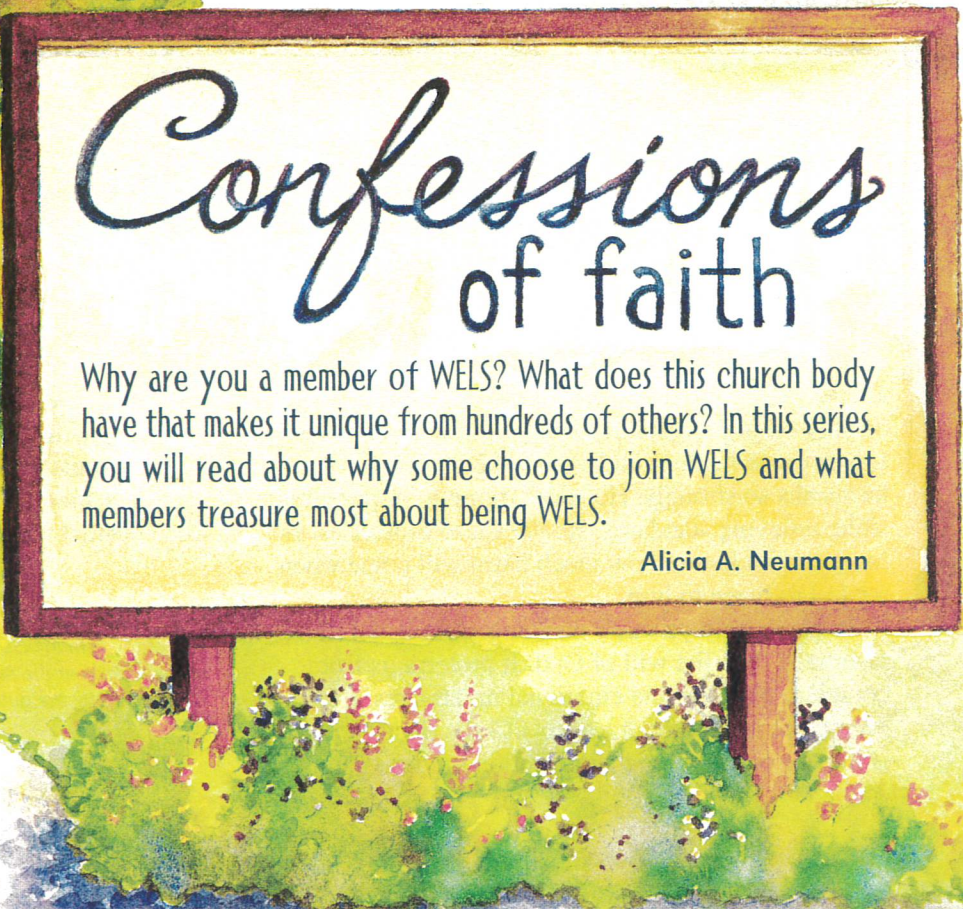
The beginning

Robert’s journey to faith began as a child. Although both of his parents attended church growing up, they stopped going after they got married. Robert says he remembers going to church maybe five times as a child. “God had no place in our family,” he says. “The only thing I knew is that I’d go to heaven when I died.”

When Robert was 13, a pastor from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)—WELS’ sister synod—moved in next door. He had two sons who were Robert’s age, and they all became friends. The pastor used these opportunities to invite Robert to church; Robert began attending and was baptized and confirmed the following year. In retrospect, Robert says that his understanding of the gospel at that point was still not fully developed. “But I knew who God was,” he says, “and I knew that Jesus had died for my sins on the cross.”

When it was time to go to college, Robert says he didn’t know what he wanted to do with his life; he ended up attending Western Oregon University with his high school sweetheart. “While dating her, we did not attend church,” he remembers. “My relationship with her replaced my relationship with Christ.” Two years later, Robert says the relationship came to a bitter and emotional end. “This began the darkest era of my life,” he says. “I had lost my reason for living.” He says he became depressed, couldn’t sleep, and even had thoughts of suicide.

During that time, his friends encouraged him to start attending the university’s Campus Christian Fellowship. “I experienced the new-



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.

Alicia A. Neumann

age 'evangelical' worship style for the first time," he says. He also began attending Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal churches with his friends. "I realized quickly that the other churches were not rooted in the Scriptures in the way the Lutheran church is," recalls Robert. "I missed the traditional service: the hymns, the Word, and the gospel."

Midway through his junior year, Robert dropped out of college and moved back to Portland. He says he began casually attending church again but didn't really get involved. "I still didn't have my life straightened out," he says. "I just kind of floated for about three years. I dated some different gals along the way and worked some different jobs, but never really felt like I was getting my life on track. I was living without a purpose."

Finding his path

He got a new job in the summer of 2000 and moved to the Seattle area. Through the WELS Web site, he discovered a WELS congregation was meeting in a rented building not far from his home. The first time he visited, Robert says he received a warm welcome. "I got to know the pastor well and sought frequent counsel from him as I struggled with job issues, relationship issues, and other life issues," he says.

As he began attending more regularly, he says he appreciated how WELS is rooted in the Scriptures. "I don't ever have to evaluate the pastor's comments during the sermon to find the biblical reference to tie it to," he says. "Every other church I've been to relies on the personal experience or emotional presentation of the pastor to lead their services. Everything WELS does is law and gospel."

Robert was becoming more involved at church when he met his future wife, Pam, in 2007. Pam grew up in the Church of the Nazarene but was not



Robert and Pam Slattery.

attending church when they met. Robert asked her to attend his church. "I had deep roots with that church, and I didn't want to leave," he says.

They attended Bible study classes together, became members, and then began premarital counseling. They were married in 2008. "Our relationship has been Christ-centered from day one, and that has made a huge difference in my life," says Robert. "I would say that I'm probably stronger in my faith now than ever before."

Part of the reason for this, Robert says, is that his wife helps him be more consistent in his study of God's Word. But Robert says that even though they try to do Bible study each day, becoming spiritually mature is a gradual process.

"Through hindsight, I can identify challenges that helped me grow as a person," he says. "I never blamed God for the rough patches, but we did have a few disagreements along the way. God is always right, of course, and I am immature and stubborn when it comes to accepting that fact sometimes.

... It's easy to lose sight of God when things are good, so I believe that he allows us to go through rough patches to remind us that he's in charge. I'm okay with that. That's not to say that I enjoy the difficult times, but I do have an appreciation for why they happen."

He says he's also learned to trust in God. "I can recall several periods of my life when I prayed for a wife to come along, but God did not bless me with Pam until 2007. As we have gotten to know each other, we have both realized that we wouldn't have worked as a couple if we had met even five years prior. There is a plan, and we are foolish when we think we know how our lives should work out better than God does."

A bright future

Robert and his wife are now expecting their first child. Even with his busy family and professional life, Robert finds time to serve as outreach chairman and church council member. He even volunteered to be a delegate to the 2009 synod convention—an experience he says was very eye-opening.

"Something that was very powerful to me was talking about the difference between being a Lutheran and a confessional Lutheran," says Robert.

He says today many churches call themselves Lutheran but don't necessarily follow the teachings on which the Lutheran church was founded. Using the term *confessional Lutheran*, he says, means something more. "It reaffirms that what we believe is in complete agreement with the Augsburg Confession and the teachings of Martin Luther," Robert says. "To me, being a Lutheran is not just saying, 'I'm a Lutheran.' I am a *confessional Lutheran*, and I will continue to be as long as this church sticks to its original foundation."

Alicia Neumann is assistant editor of Forward in Christ.

Are you EXCITED?

International youth rallies are a life-changing, faith-emboldening, rip-roaring, good time.

Jonathan I. Enter

I'll admit it: I cried. I tried to stop the waterworks. Really, I did. I pinched up my face. I looked away. I did the guy-grunt along with the uneasy foot shuffle to distract myself, but there was no stopping the tumbling tears. I was overcome with raw emotion because of the scene unfolding before my tear-soaked eyes.

I wasn't alone. It's hard to tell the exact number who involuntarily participated in squirting out tears. It could be as high as 1,431 teens and adults. We all united our worship voices to the praise of our Lord at the 2009 WELS International Youth Rally. Souls were so saturated in joy during the opening worship hymn "In Christ Alone," so moved by the roar of Christian voices, so overtaken by unity of the faith that tears became the visible manifestation of the overflowing, inward joy!

The sight and sound of souls committed to Christ is so much better than any box-office blockbuster. Etched into my memory of that opening service is the excitement I felt for the teens. They had no clue how Jesus would touch their lives and how he would alter them. But I knew. I knew because I wouldn't have been blessed to deliver the sermon at the opening worship unless God had firmly grabbed my heart through the gospel in a similar circumstance.

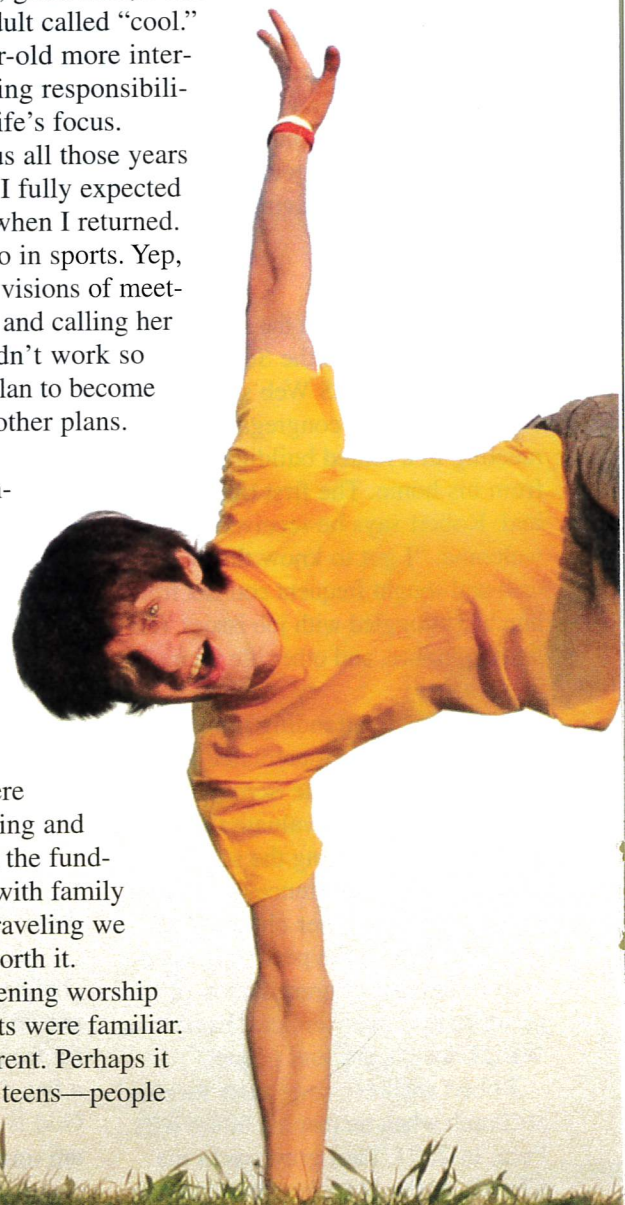
Sixteen years earlier, I took a small leap of faith by attending my first youth rally, the 1993 WELS International Youth Rally in Estes Park, Colo. Even though my youth

leader promised a life-changing, faith-emboldening, rip-roaring, good time, I was suspect of anything an adult called "cool." After all, I was a 15-year-old more interested in sports and dodging responsibilities than improving my life's focus.

When I boarded the bus all those years ago for our 15-hour trip, I fully expected to be the same teenager when I returned. I had dreams of going pro in sports. Yep, that didn't pan out! I had visions of meeting a cute girl on the trip and calling her my "girlfriend." That didn't work so well either! And I had a plan to become a surgeon. But God had other plans. I just didn't know it.

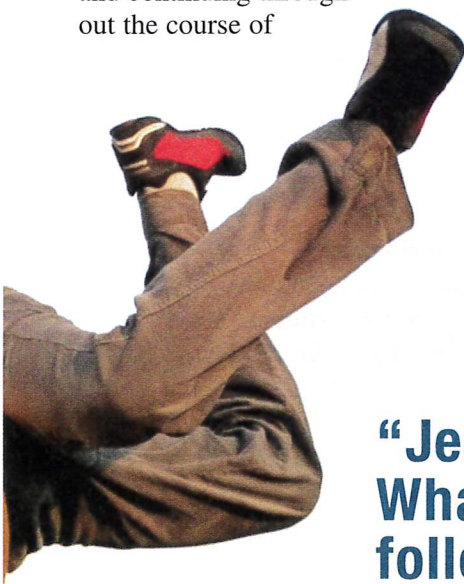
When our tired bus finished the climb to 7,500 feet above sea level, I cautiously stepped out and joined the sea of other anxious teens who were all overwhelmed and tired, wondering what was coming next. We were led into a timbered building and nervously sat, hoping all the fundraising, all the lost time with family back home, and all the traveling we had endured would be worth it.

Then it happened. Opening worship happened. The Bible texts were familiar. Yet something was different. Perhaps it was being with all these teens—people



my own age who loved Jesus. I felt more alive than I had ever felt before. As the assembly stood and thundered forth the Confession of Sins, I felt renewed and ready for the Lord. As the lessons were read, they jumped off the page and were applicable to my life as a teenager. As we belted out the rally theme song, "Our God Is an Awesome God," I felt different. Maybe it was high-altitude sickness. Maybe it was a bad burrito I had at lunch. But, of course, those weren't the answers. It was the Lord. The Almighty, our awesome and only God, was moving my heart with the message of his forgiving love. Before I knew it, he was moving me to full-time service in his kingdom.

Starting at the opening service and continuing throughout the course of



the prophet Isaiah spoke, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

God's Word did not return empty. I didn't return home from the rally empty; I was filled with a new purpose. I thought, *If serving God is that much fun, I want to live in that joy continually. I'm enrolling to become a pastor!* By God's good grace, I've been continuing that same joy every day as a servant in Christ.

Because of that youth rally's life-changing experience, I take every opportunity possible to encourage today's youth to get real with God.

I've been blessed to attend seven youth rallies with a goal to encourage the next future pastor, future teacher, or future lay leader to find the same joy I have in serving Christ. Every rally I attend triggers flashbacks to that timbered lodge in Colorado and to how truly awesome our God is!

From the Rocky Mountains to the cornfields of Iowa—no matter the location, no matter the elevation—WELS International Youth Rallies raise hearts high to Christ. As I stood

dled joy. Their hearts and lives were growing closer to Christ. Their problems and stresses were unburdened at the foot of the cross as they blasted together a response I asked them to repeatedly echo, "Jesus died for my sins. I am forgiven." What a refrain! What a motivation! What a reason to leave past problems and follow the path toward serving the Savior!

Who knows? Who knows which teens left their addictions at the cross? Who knows which teens gave up their self-inflicted wounds and found healing in Jesus' nail-scarred hands? Who knows which teens defused anger as they witnessed the love of Christ? Who knows which teens were motivated to answer the calling of Christ, saying, "Here am I. Send me"? Who knows? God does! The loving Father gathered his teenage children and cleansed their lives in the mercy of Christ. I trust that they left the youth rally repurposed to praise God in life and action.

These rallies are teen tested and receive a resounding "cool" stamp of approval. They certainly are a life-changing, faith-emboldening, rip-roaring, good time. Encourage your children, your grandchildren, and the children of your congregation to take

**"Jesus died for my sins. I am forgiven." ...
What a reason to leave past problems and
follow the path toward serving the Savior!**

the rally, I was reprioritized, reprogrammed. I was so impressed by the servant heart of the leaders surrounding us that I had a new desire to motivate others the way they moved me. I'm certain they didn't realize how God was using their wise words and powerful actions to touch my heart and transform my life's focus. But they did! That is the power of God's Word displayed by Christian servants. As

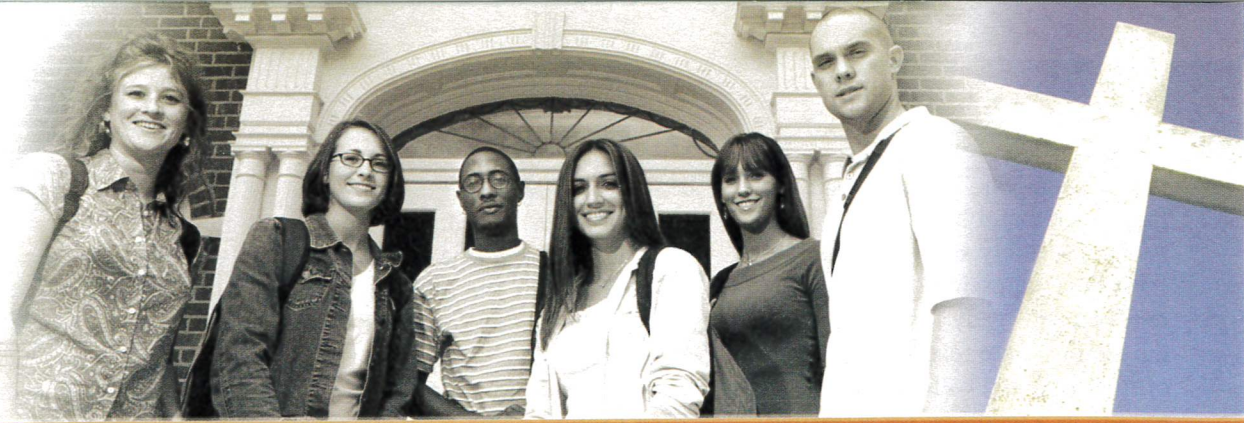
before a new sea of teens filled with the same nervous energy I had 16 years prior, it was impossible to contain my joy for the future that lay before them.

I prayed God would touch their lives as he had touched mine. I trusted that God would do that. I could see it on their faces as they worshiped. I could hear it in their cracking voices as they tried to sing through the emotion. I could witness it in their unbr-

the small leap of faith and attend the next international youth rally. When they do, they'll leap into the waiting arms of their Savior. And who knows, your encouragement might just lead a young soul to serve Christ in the full-time preaching or teaching ministry!

*Jon Enter is pastor at Hope,
West Palm Beach, Florida.*

Find out how teens shared their faith through rally service projects (p. 24).



Carla Hill

-Recipe for a successful transition-

Keep near to the Lord as you make your
life transitions, both big and small.

When I was asked to write about transitions, I actually laughed out loud. Why? Because quite frankly my past track record during the major transition periods in my life has been rocky. At my recent wedding shower, my sister told my mother-in-law, "Just so you know, she's not good with big changes. Good luck."

For me, transitions always seem to end up synonymous with scary; awkward; nervous; strange; stressful; and, did I mention, awkward. My transitions have been a pretty normal part of growing up: going to high school, moving to college, moving to a new state for grad school, even getting married. Unfortunately, my transitions have often followed a familiar path: move, freak out, call my family members crying and stressing out about the new stage of life, feel upset and angry because things are not "perfect" right away, and start envying others situations—even if I had been praying to be in this new situation. Then when all the stress and worry gets unbearable, I finally turn to God and lastly realize that maybe praying and turning things

over to God would work best. He is, in fact, the one leading me to where I need to be.

One might think that after the first—or even second—rocky transition, I would just skip the mess in between and jump simply to the prayer and trust in God. I thought it was always easy to make fun of the Israelites when they repeatedly doubted God, until I realize that I'm

no different. Fortunately I've made enough transitions that now I can reflect on them.

One of my favorite comfort passages is from Philippians. Paul writes from prison, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:4-6). This passage speaks a lot to me regarding transitions:

1. You have a great and loving Lord—be happy about that!
2. Relax.
3. Cut the needless worrying and stressing.
4. Just go straight to the Lord and talk about it.

It all seems like a recipe for a successful transition to me.

All this talk of transitions is very timely for me. I was married the weekend before I wrote this article. Talk about a transition and the potential for scary, stressful, and nervous times. However, as I face this exciting—maybe even awkward at times—transition, I am going to challenge myself to bring those worries that plague me to the Lord; to remember not to be anxious about anything; and to ask God for the things that I need, things like gentleness and patience. I know he will help me move smoothly into the next new and exciting stage in my life.

I pray that you are able to keep near to the Lord as you make your life transitions, both big and small. Moving away from home? Finding new friends? Looking for a new job? Changing apartments or roommates? Meeting that special person you want to spend your life with? The Lord has his plan for you laid out down to the smallest details.

It's not easy skipping the doubt and worry, but go straight to him and talk it through. Follow his guidelines, stay close to him, and he will bless the next stage in life.

Carla Hill is a member at Redeemer, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Obituaries

Geraldine Mae Bruss, 1943–2009

Geraldine Bruss (nee Lueck) was born June 14, 1943, in Jessenland Township, Minn. She died July 17, 2009, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

She taught at Trinity, Janesville, Minn., and Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.

She is preceded in death by one brother. She is survived by her husband, Wesley; one son; three daughters; five grandchildren; one brother; and two sisters.

Ralph J. Polzin, 1935–2009

Ralph Polzin was born Jan. 18, 1935, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died July 19, 2009, in New Ulm, Minn.

A 1961 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon Wis., he served at St. Stephen, Fall River, Wis.; St. John, Doylestown, Wis.; and Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra; three sons; one daughter; and nine grandchildren.

Mary Kathryn Schuller, 1953–2009

Mary Schuller (nee Covach) was born Dec. 2, 1953, in Ann Arbor, Mich. She died Aug. 4, 2009, in Yakima, Wash.

She taught at Grace, Yakima, Wash.

She is survived by her husband, Hans; three sons; one daughter; five grandchildren; and two brothers.

Arnold O. Lehmann, 1914–2009

Arnold Lehmann was born April 14, 1914, in Stanton, Neb. He died Aug. 24, 2009, in Watertown, Wis.

He taught music at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Esther; and two sisters. He is survived by 3 sons, 11 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren, and 1 sister.


William Henry Wietzke, 1926–2009

William Wietzke was born Nov. 4, 1926, in Shickley, Neb. He died Sept. 6, 2009, in York, Neb.

A 1951 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.; Zion, Denver, Colo.; Community, Honolulu, Hawaii; and St. James, Evanston, Ill.

He is survived by one brother and two nephews.

In the news



Anna Fink, a member at St. Peter, Mishicot, was featured in the Aug. 20 edition of the *Herald Times Reporter*, Manitowoc, Wis. In the article, Fink, a college sophomore, shares her experiences of traveling to the Holy Land to participate in an archaeological dig. The article also picked up information from Fink's blog. "I sat in the chair that Pilate probably sat in when he washed his hands of Jesus' blood, and turned him over to the Jews. That was a pretty heart-hitting moment," Fink wrote. "How often do I forget that it wasn't just the Jews who crucified him, but it was my sins too."

Through my Bible

IN 3 YEARS

12/2009

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. John 17:1-5 | 17. Is. 10:5-34 |
| 2. Jn. 17:6-19 | 18. Is. 11, 12 |
| 3. Jn. 17:20-26 | 19. Is. 13:1-14:23 |
| 4. Jn. 18:1-27 | 20. Is. 14:24-16:14 |
| 5. Jn. 18:28-19:16 | 21. Is. 17, 18, 19 |
| 6. Jn. 19:17-37 | 22. Is. 20:1-22:14 |
| 7. Jn. 19:38-20:10 | 23. Is. 22:15-23:18 |
| 8. Jn. 20:11-31 | 24. Is. 24, 25 |
| 9. Jn. 21:1-14 | 25. Is. 26, 27 |
| 10. Jn. 21:15-25 | 26. Is. 28 |
| 11. Isaiah 1 | 27. Is. 29:1-30:17 |
| 12. Is. 2, 3, 4 | 28. Is. 30:18-32:20 |
| 13. Is. 5 | 29. Is. 33, 34, 35 |
| 14. Is. 6 | 30. Is. 36, 37 |
| 15. Is. 7:1-8:15 | 31. Is. 38, 39 |
| 16. Is. 8:16-10:4 | |

Picture this



These little sisters in Christ were seen enjoying the church picnic at Woodlawn, West Allis, Wis. It is a lovely reminder of the joy we share in Christ.

Submitted by Margaret Trissel

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

Two musical groups share one purpose

“The opportunity to be part of something that is bigger than you is truly a powerful gift,” says Michael Goede. “Through God’s grace, the WELS Youth Chorale and WELS Youth Wind Ensemble provide this very experience.”

The chorale and ensemble are new opportunities for WELS high school musicians to grow musically, spiritually, and culturally. In June 2009 the two groups toured cities throughout the United States’ southern region.

Matthew Schlomer, conductor of the wind ensemble, says, “Both groups are primarily formed around students of strong character and their desire to focus on developing God’s gift of music to their highest potential. From this starting point, we hope to offer students a chance to surround themselves with the arts and, in turn, grow as artists themselves. Our tours are designed to incorporate as much exposure to the arts as possible

while also giving students an opportunity to serve others with their music through performance in concerts and churches along the way.”

Students first must audition for either the chorale or the wind ensemble. Those who are chosen to participate meet for three weekends during the spring semester to practice the music for the summer tour. Students then attend a three-day mini camp right before the tour.

The 2009 tour, which began and ended in Milwaukee, Wis., was seven days long with stops in St. Louis, Mo.; Memphis, Tenn.; New Orleans, La.; Birmingham, Ala.; and Nashville, Tenn. The students’ days were filled with exposure to fine arts, sightseeing that included impromptu performances and Christian witnessing, clinics with accomplished musicians, and scheduled performances.

Schlomer says, “My best memory on tour was probably our time in the French Quarter in New Orleans, where a couple stopped to listen to the choir in Jackson Square and ended up attending the church service the next day at Crown of Life Lutheran Church with tears in their eyes. It is so important for our young Christians to realize that they can have an impact on people’s lives.”

Goede, choir director of the chorale, agrees. “Students experienced real people in the real world, and for some, this was the first time they had an opportunity to speak about Jesus and share their faith with a stranger,” he says. “One student described her experience on the tour as a ‘mission trip,’ and I believe that is truly fitting. . . . We laughed and prayed, sang and played as one family that developed over the course of six months.”



WELS Youth Wind Ensemble performs at Union Station in St. Louis.



WELS Youth Chorale performs an impromptu concert outside Saint Louis Cathedral in New Orleans. Many who passed by inquired who the group was and what they were singing about, which provided chorale members an opportunity to share their faith.

Wanted: Musicians for the 2010 tour

WELS high school students who participate in a school band or choir may audition for the 2010 WELS Youth Chorale or WELS Youth Wind Ensemble. The groups are tentatively planning a summer tour to Toronto, Canada.

For more information, contact Matthew Schlomer (conductor), matthew.schlomer@gmail.com, 608-284-7553, or Michael Goede (choir director), welsyouthchorale@gmail.com. Auditions are taking place in fall 2009.

Congregation helps mission church

At a time when budgets for missions and evangelism are being cut, congregations looking for ways to do mission work can be inspired by members from St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.

"We just do what the Lord says to do—go," says Bert Hagen, a teacher at St. Paul's school and the coordinator of the youth group.

Hagen has organized three nonbudgeted youth group mission trips to sister congregations. This past July, the group helped out Star of Bethlehem, in Savoy, Ill.—"a tank of gas away," says Hagen.

Star of Bethlehem is a mission congregation that wanted to reach out to its neighbors through a carnival and vacation Bible school. "The church didn't have a lot of people, so we were the hands and feet for them," says Hagen. "They called us their shepherd congregation. That made us feel special and helped us focus that we were there to help them, not to do it all for them."

After the five-day trip filled with serving, canvassing, reaching out, and teaching, Hagen emphasizes that "you think it's how you help them. Really, it's how you are helped."

The first blessing for St. Paul's members was a reminder that God will provide—even when money is tight. "We hold fundraisers, mission circles donate, people hand me a \$10 bill or a \$50 check, and an endowment fund contributes. Whatever we need always

finds its way into our hands," she says. With frugal planning, each trip has cost about \$150 per person.

Another blessing is how it brings together a congregation and families. "This wasn't just a youth activity; it was a lot of Ma, Pa, & the kids," says Hagen. Other members simply wanted to experience a mission trip. Some helped with canvassing. Another member spraywashed Star of Bethlehem so it would be clean for visitors. One volunteer chose to spend her 60th birthday on that trip. "She canvassed, served ice cream and popcorn—and it was right up her alley," says Hagen.

Hagen is thrilled by the results. "I love seeing adults modeling their faith and having the kids following their example. As a teacher, I'm just there for support. We provide the opportunity for the parents to lead by example."

Through helping its fellow Christians, St. Paul's is also leading by example for the rest of us.

Interested in organizing a mission trip for your church? Contact Bert Hagen at bert.hagen@yahoo.com for ideas and tips. Don't want to organize your own trip but still want to help? WELS Kingdom Workers has plenty of opportunities available—1-800-466-9357; kingwork@wkw.wels.net; www.welskingdomworkers.org.

Linda Buxa



A group from St. Paul's, Tomah, Wis., traveled to Star of Bethlehem, Savoy, Ill., to help the congregation reach out to the community through a carnival and vacation Bible school.

A new look at stewardship

The first year of stewardship resources under the new synod theme "Christ's Love, Our Calling" are now available for congregations.

Instead of focusing on the traditional viewpoint of stewardship—time, talent, and treasure—this four-year stewardship program will look at stewardship from a different perspective.

"It's taking a step back and saying, *What is valuable to God? Is it money? Is it talents?*" says Dave Kehl, administrator of Adult Discipleship. "What's valuable to God is relationships."

Resources, which include sermon helps, worship resources, Bible studies, a take-home booklet, and commitment forms, will look at how to nurture four different relationships—our relationship to God, family, the body of Christ, and our neighbors—through refocusing our use of time, self, finances, and witness.

This year, materials will focus on how "love takes time," says Kehl. "A person who wants that love to show needs to take time with his Lord and with his family . . . and our world is not geared to taking time with those relationships."

After going through the resources, Kehl says he hopes that participants will reexamine how they spend their time and adjust their schedules to allow time to nurture the relationships in their lives.

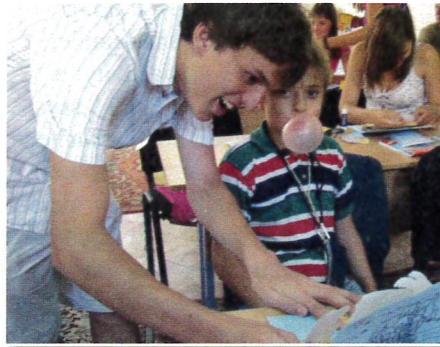
By the end of the four-year program, Kehl says that WELS members should have a better understanding and appreciation of what Christ's love and our calling entails. He says, "Love is the big theme this year. God has shown us his love, and he's given us that love to steward by growing to know him better and by sharing his love in our other relationships. . . . It's all about understanding or getting a grasp of Christ's love and then understanding or getting a grasp of our calling in view of Christ's love."

Go to www.wels.net/ourcalling for more information. Downloadable resources are available for pastors and congregational leaders on Connect, the synod's Intranet.

WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod members reach out



The church in Sevastopol where the students held the VBS program.



Volunteers from Wisconsin Lutheran High School who went to Ukraine to teach vacation Bible school.



The world became smaller this summer for 46 WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) members who traveled to Ukraine for two weeks to teach vacation Bible school to about 443 children.

“You’re only there a little bit of time, but you just love each other,” says Bev Braun, a trip participant and member of the 2009 Ukraine VBS Committee.

WELS and ELS members have been helping their sister synod the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC) spread the gospel message in this way since the mid-1990s. The program started when a missionary called by Thoughts of Faith, a church-related organization of the ELS, had family members come to teach in Ternopil, Ukraine, where he was serving.

Volunteers this year met in Kiev for orientation and then split up into groups to travel to 12 ULC congregations. Each group helped the local congregation by teaching Bible stories, doing craft projects, and singing songs with the local children, who ranged in age from 5 to 18. The congregations were responsible for publicity as well as for providing translators and snacks.

Bev, along with her husband, Bill, chaperoned four students from Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee. Their group traveled to Sevastopol and lived in local people’s homes. “It’s ‘a little scary for [the students] at first because the family doesn’t speak English,” says Bev, a teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. “But it’s amazing how you can communicate with these people even when you can’t speak each other’s language.”

Changes to Thoughts of Faith

Thoughts of Faith has experienced many changes—from the first radio broadcasts behind the Iron Curtain to now supporting full-fledged Lutheran church bodies in Ukraine, Latvia, and the Czech Republic. Throughout these changes, the Holy Spirit continues to call people to faith through the preaching of the gospel.

For years Thoughts of Faith has enjoyed “church-related organization” status with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). Since Thoughts of Faith affiliates in Ukraine, Latvia, and the Czech Republic are church bodies, it is proper that these organizations now relate to the rest of the world through a sister synod rather than through a mission society. Therefore, in June it was resolved at the ELS convention that Thoughts of Faith “come under the governance and control of the ELS.”

In spite of these changes, other things remain the same. In Ukraine, the Gift of Life program continues to provide public health care in poor villages and counsels women not to abort their babies. In Czech Republic, Martin Luther School continues to teach the gospel. In Latvia, national pastors still bring the Word and sacraments to the souls under their care. The ELS Board for World Outreach will continue to serve as a partner so that these ministries can continue.

While Sevastopol is a fairly modern city in Ukraine, some groups traveled into the country, where there were no cars, running water, or sanitation system.

While their experiences all varied, the groups’ overall goal stayed the same. “The Ukrainians suffered greatly as a Communist nation,” says Bev. “Now it is a slow growing process. They are blessed and so are we the missionaries to now be able to bring the good news.”

Being able to share the gospel also affected the volunteers. Bev shares that one student who went on the trip this year has decided to attend Martin Luther College due to her experience. “These mission trips put into our students a servant heart—anxious and on fire to continue to spread the message of Christ, our Savior and Redeemer,” she says.

With Thoughts of Faith now moving under the ELS Board for World Outreach (see sidebar), the program, currently funded by the volunteers who participate and Thoughts of Faith, is being reevaluated. Discussions with the Ukrainian Lutheran Church are underway to determine how to get ULC churches and members more involved in the program. Among other things, this will help with follow-up after volunteers leave.

“You just pray that the seed is being planted,” says Pam Schultz, volunteer coordinator for the program. “I’m praying that we can continue to assist the Ukrainian Lutheran Church in reaching out to the children in their country.”

For more information, check out www.tof.org or e-mail Pam Schultz at pamtof@blc.edu.

ELCA convention delegates vote to allow non-celibate gay clergy—At its convention in August, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) ended an eight-year debate by voting to allow clergy in “lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships” to serve as pastors.

Votes were split, and now some of the ELCA’s more conservative congregations are reevaluating whether to stay members of the synod.

After the decision, WELS released a statement from its president, Pastor Mark Schroeder, that expressed regret. “To view same-sex relationships as acceptable to God is to place cultural viewpoint and human opinions above the clear Word of God,” says Schroeder. “The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, along with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and other smaller Lutheran synods, maintains and upholds the clear teaching of the Bible that homosexuality is not in keeping with God’s design and is sinful in God’s eyes.”

He continues, “We are saddened that a group with the name Lutheran would take another decisive step away from the clear teaching of the Bible, which was the foundation of the Lutheran Reformation.”

The ELCA also voted to share ministers and resources in a “full communion” accord with the United Methodist Church. This means that the two denominations express a common confession of faith and recognize the validity of each others’ ministers, baptisms, and sharing communion. The ELCA has five other full-communion partners

NIV to get update—An updated version of the New International Version of the Bible will be released in 2011.

“As time passes and English changes, the NIV we have at present is becoming increasingly dated,” said Keith Danby, CEO of Biblica, Inc., the copyright holder and translation sponsor of the NIV. “If we want a Bible that English speakers around the world can understand, we have to listen to, and respect, the vocabulary they are using today.”

Previous versions of the NIV were published in 1978 and 1984. Published by Zondervan, more than 300 million copies are in print worldwide.

WELS news briefs

Commission on Adult Discipleship 414-256-3278; cad@wels.net

WELS Women’s Ministry Committee is holding its second **National WELS Women’s Leadership Conference** July 16–18, 2010, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Under the theme “Leading with a Christ-like attitude,” the conference will focus on Philippians 2:1-16. Breakout sessions will include topics such as Organizing Women’s Ministry in the Church, Christian Leadership in the Secular World, and Working Together to Address Conflict. To receive registration materials, e-mail contact information to carolyn.sachs@wels.net or call 414-256-3278. To learn more, visit www.wels.net/women.

Board for Ministerial Education 414-256-3236; bme@wels.net

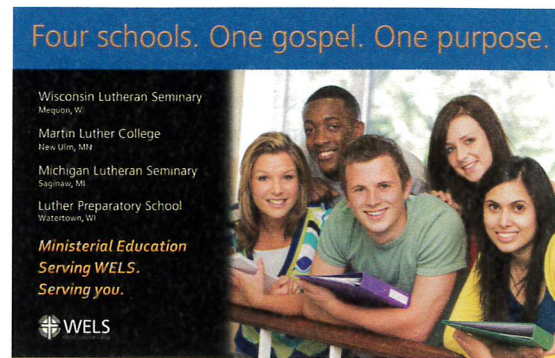
Opening enrollments of the four ministerial education schools are in for the 2009–2010 school year. These schools include two preparatory high schools: Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich.; a college that trains teachers and staff ministers and prepares men for the seminary: Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.; and a seminary that trains pastors: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis.

BME schools’ opening enrollments

	2009–2010	2008–2009
LPS	351	333
MLS	182	197
MLC	712	723
WLS	161	165
Total	1,406	1,418

On Sept. 21 and 22, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., held its tenth **symposium for the continuing education of WELS pastors**. Three parish pastors—Pastor David Kolander, Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.; Pastor Thomas Kock, Living Word, Gray, Tenn.; and Pastor Kenneth Fisher,

Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.—presented essays addressing the symposium topic of congregational health. Almost four hundred men attended this annual event.



Materials for a **Ministerial Education Sunday** were mailed to all congregations in October. The theme—Ministerial Education. Serving WELS. Serving you.—highlights the value of the system and shows how this ministry impacts each congregation and every member. Materials include a video; a resource disk containing Sunday worship materials, text study, and bulletin inserts; three color posters; and ideas for hosting the service. Although the service can be held at any time, congregations are encouraged to have it in November.

President’s Office 414-256-3202; pres@sab.wels.net

Several new members are joining the Synodical Council at its meeting in November. These men were elected to their positions at the 2009 synod convention in July.

- Pastor Joel Voss (second vice president)
- Pastor Phil Hirsch (chairman of the Board for Ministerial Education)
- Pastor Jonathan Schroeder (pastor at-large)
- Teacher James Moeller (teacher at-large)

The Synodical Council supervises the mission and ministry of the synod between conventions.

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

Congregation reaches out after tornado

Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn., is a community church and school. Located in an urban center, Pilgrim serves a diverse population that includes Native Americans, Hispanics, Hmong, Northern Europeans, and many other ethnic groups. The school is predominantly an outreach tool, with more than 30 people baptized over the past two years, most of whom came to Pilgrim because of its school.



Members of Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn., and students from St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn., help neighbors clean up after a tornado.

On Aug. 19, a tornado struck the neighborhood surrounding Pilgrim. The tornado, which touched down only six blocks from the church, did not harm Pilgrim's property. However, many homes and cars in the area did suffer severe damage. No serious injuries or deaths were reported.

After the storm passed, Pilgrim's neighbors grew concerned over how they were going to pay the insurance deductibles associated with their policies so that their property could be repaired. Through a \$10,000 grant from the Committee on Relief, Pilgrim is now providing relief and support to its neighbors.

"This is a tremendous chance for outreach," says Scott Gostchock, director of Christian

development at Pilgrim's church and school. "We are building relationships with these families, sharing God's Word with them, and inviting them to church. We can say, 'Pilgrim is here to help.'"

Members of Pilgrim are now canvassing the neighborhood on weeknights and weekends to find those who need help. Gostchock says that as of Sept. 17, Pilgrim identified 11 families who will receive financial help. Pilgrim is also helping neighbors by clearing trees that have fallen and providing general cleanup services.

"Our neighbors are joining us in praising God for his greatness as we share our resources with them," says Gostchock. "It is very overwhelming to be able to help, and God is getting the glory for that. This is how God works through what we might perceive to be terrible things."



Let your light shine

One way that teens and adults at the 2009 International Youth Rally in July were able to show their love for Christ was by participating in service projects. Teens painted playground equipment, weeded flowerbeds in parks, and spent time with nursing home residents. They also sent cards and wrote letters to inmates, soldiers, and those with developmental disabilities.

Several inmates responded and shared how they were encouraged by these letters. Here are a few excerpts from letters written by prisoners at the Milwaukee County Correctional Facility—South.*

"Thank you for the beautiful card. Receiving something like this in a place like this is a great blessing. Many people assume jail is punishment, but for me it has been a God-send. This has been a time for me to evaluate my life, my relationships with God, family, and others. . . . I was never able to trust strangers before, but now I know we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. I will include you in my prayers this evening."

"I would like to say that the card really made my day. I would like to thank God and you because it's been very

hard. . . . I really needed to know that someone cares and that God loves me. I will not forget to keep the faith and forget the past and focus on what my future holds for me. I read the card every day. That's how I make it day to day. So just wanted to say thanks and keep writing cards because people like me really need to hear those kind of things."

"Thank you for your card. It really brightened my day to hear from someone. Yes, you are right. Always remember no matter what God will forgive us. God is very important to have in your life. Keep him in your heart all the time and never forget who he is. Stay in school and learn everything you can about God. If you learn to walk with God, he will bless you always."

WELS Prison Ministry always needs volunteers to serve as pen pals to inmates. Letters are sent through a P.O. Box for security reasons. If you are interested, contact David Nack, 507-354-3130; welspm@newulmtel.net.

*These letters were received at a secure location and were not mailed directly to the teens who sent the cards.

District news

Minnesota

On July 14-16, WELS choral directors from 14 area Lutheran high schools and prep schools met at Heartwood Conference Center, Trego, Wis., for the first WELS Choral Dialogue. The directors discussed several different topics, shared ideas, and enjoyed several music reading sessions.

Nebraska

St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb., opened the doors to a brand new school this fall. St. Paul is a congregation of 375 members in a town of 450 people. An increasing number of children are attending St. Paul's preschool and elementary school. The dedication service for the new school was held Sept. 20.

South Atlantic

Divine Savior Academy, Doral, Fla., dedicated its 44,300-square-foot addition on Aug. 23. The addition consists of a full-sized gymnasium, library, science lab, art room, music room, administrative offices, and 16 classrooms. In 2004 Divine Savior opened its doors with 35 students in kindergarten through third grade. Now it has 310 students in preschool through ninth grade.

Dedication of the new classroom building at Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Fla., took place on Aug. 30. The new building houses Precious Lambs Preschool and a pilot kindergarten program, plus the church offices.

South Central

Thirty-five members of Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla., participated in the Bethany, Okla., parade on July 4. Volunteers handed out 1,600 bags with the church logo prior to the parade. The publicity caused traffic on the church Web site to spike, a number of interested parents to call about Gethsemane's school, and one family to attend worship service at Gethsemane.

Southeastern Wisconsin

David's Star, Jackson, Wis., recently completed a school renovation and addition project. The construction in the school included new classrooms, new meeting areas, a dedicated special



For 10 years King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., has been running a summer day camp. Every day children learn about Jesus, participate in games and activities, read, and have a good time. Weekly events include swimming, crafts, and a special field trip (pictured). This year 42 children, mainly from the community, participated in the camp, which ran from May 26-Aug. 21. Three Martin Luther College students served as counselors alongside King of Kings members.

education room, combined church and school offices, a health office, and enhanced handicapped accessibility at all entrances.

Happy anniversary!

DM—The tri-parish of St. John, Carson, N.D.; Trinity, Carson, N.D.; and Immanuel, Elgin, N.D., celebrated its 100th anniversary on Aug. 23 with a joint picnic.

MN—The year 2009 marks the 125th year of ministerial education training at (Dr.) Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

NW—Russell Kloehn, pastor at Grace, Pickett, Wis., and Zion, rural Oshkosh, Wis., celebrated 40 years in the pastoral ministry on Aug. 2.

SA—On May 17, Living Savior, Asheville, N.C., recognized Eva Krauss' 10 years in the teaching ministry.

SC—On Oct. 11, members of Holy Cross, Oklahoma City, Okla., celebrated the 30 years that their pastor, John Strackbein, has served in the ministry.

SEW—On Sept. 13, Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., celebrated the 40 years that James Haferman has served in the teaching ministry.

Members of St. Paul, Livonia, Mich., recognized Chuck Buege's 40th anniversary in the teaching ministry on Sept. 13.

Western Wisconsin



"Jesus died for you!" sang the children and teachers at the 27th international vacation Bible school of Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel and Student Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The 70 children and 20 adults who attended came from all over the world, including the nations of China, Honduras, Japan, South Korea, Swaziland, Taiwan, and the United States.

On Sept. 13, Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis., honored Donald Kolander and Craig Radue, both of whom celebrated 25 years in the teaching ministry.

The district reporters for this month are: DM—Wayne Rouse; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Timothy Kemnitz; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY**Pastors**

Brown, Patrick L., to Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla.

Heffner, James J., to St. John, Rib Lake/Zion, Ogema, Wis.

Kroll, Daniel R., to St. John, Lake City, Minn.

Krueger, James R., to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.

Kuerth, Roger L., to retirement

Mutterer, Frederick A., to retirement

Story, Mark S., to Mt. Olive, Detroit, Mich.

Vogt, John F., to regional coordinator, Eastern European Missions

Assignment

Arnold, Philip, to St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.

NOTICE FOR CONGREGATION TREASURERS AND PASTORS

We thank God for you and for your support of the ministry WELS carries out on behalf of all congregations. We ask that you continue to mail your Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) deposit and its processing coupon to our bank lock box, which provides effective and efficient deposit processing for the synod. The last business day of each month is the reporting cutoff date for the CMO deposit. For the deposit to be included in reported receipts for the month, CMO must be received in the synod's bank lock box on or before the last business day. An exception is made for December offerings. Gifts received by the bank lock box up to and including Jan. 8, 2010, will be credited as 2009 CMO, if accompanied by a 2009 coupon. Thank you for your assistance.

ANNIVERSARIES

Port Washington, Wis.—St. Matthew (30). Nov. 1. Worship, 9 A.M.; meal at noon. 262-284-3360.

Aurora, Ill.—Resurrection (40). Nov. 8. School dedication and anniversary worship, 3 P.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested ASAP. 630-907-1333; resurrection60506@msn.com.

Lowell, Wis.—Salem (140). Nov. 8. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested by Nov. 1. Paul Vander Galien, 920-927-5353; pvgvandy@netscape.net.

Mesa, Ariz.—Pilgrim (50). Nov. 15. Worship, 4 P.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. Patricia Coats, 602-616-0821.

Milwaukee, Wis.—St. Peter (150). Apr. 25, 2010. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow at Serb Hall. RSVP requested. Elaine Metoxin, 414-764-8847.

COMING EVENTS

Milwaukee area Reformation service—Nov. 1, 3:30 P.M.; light refreshments to

follow. Christ, Pewaukee, Wis. Host, Greater Milwaukee Area Chapter of WELS Kingdom Workers. Guest preacher, WELS President Mark Schroeder. Robert Pasbrig, 414-259-8122.

Reformation service—Nov. 1. Time: TBD. Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis. 262-859-2595.

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries annual meeting and conference—Nov. 7. Business meeting, 9 to 11:30 A.M.; lunch and conference, 11:45 A.M. to 4 P.M. St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis. Theme: "A gentle presence—ministering to people living with mental health issues." Registration, \$20 before Nov. 1. 414-259-8122 or 888-214-6490.

Quilting retreat—Nov. 6-8. Camp Phillip, 920-787-3202, office@campphillip.com.

Women's fall retreat—Nov. 7. Trinity, Minocqua, Wis. Theme: "In search of security and peace of mind." Judy Rathke, 715-385-0088; duje@centurytel.net.

Christian Life Resources "Back to Basics" conference—Nov. 7. St. Paul, Slinger, Wis. Cost: \$15, includes lunch. 800-729-9535. Web site, www.clrevents.com.

Honoring veterans—

- Nov. 7. 11 A.M., Veterans Day Parade, Milwaukee, Wis. Wisconsin Lutheran High School Marching Band participates. Web site, www.wlhs.org.
- Nov. 11. 8 A.M., breakfast with a worship service to follow. RSVP requested. Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis. Web site, www.fvlhs.org.
- Nov. 11. 9:20 A.M., Veteran's Day program. RSVP requested. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Web site, www.kmlhs.org.
- Nov. 11. 7:30 A.M., breakfast. RSVP requested. 8:30 A.M., chapel service. Theme: "Serving that others might live." Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis. Web site, www.wlhs.org.
- Nov. 12, 10-11 A.M. Fox Valley Lutheran High School choir and/or band will participate in a special Veterans Day service. St. Paul, Appleton, Wis. Web site, www.fvlhs.org.

LWMS Board of Directors meeting—Nov. 11-14. St. Louis, Mo. Paula Danekas, pdanekas@comcast.net.

Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee concert—Nov. 29, 2 and 4:30 P.M. Gloria Dei-Bethesda. Theme: "Prelude to Christmas." Mary Prange, 414-873-9105; mjprange@aol.com.

Pathways to Christ (ladies) retreat—Mar. 12-14, 2010. La Sure's Hall, Oshkosh, Wis. Theme: "Window of Opportunity." 920-233-1069. Web site, www.martinlutheroshkosh.com.

Christian Woman Today retreat—Mar. 19-21, 2010. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Theme: "Jesus Christ

is the same yesterday and today and forever." Maureen, 262-784-0412.

Chapel of the Christ dedication service—Apr. 11, 2010, 2:30 P.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. 877-652-1995; mlcinfo@mlc-wels.edu.

St. Paul's second missionary journey tour—May 17-27, 2010. Nearly a dozen biblical sites in Greece will be visited. Hosted by Bethany College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minn. Adolph Harstad, 507-344-7373, aharstad@blc.edu.

Class reunion—June 1, 2010. Site, Las Vegas, Nev. Graduates of Northwestern Prep (70) and Northwestern College (74). Roger Crawford, 414-559-4037; roger.crawford@wels.net or Curtiss Seefeldt, 952-261-6702; cseefeldt@frontiernet.net.

National WELS Women's Leadership conference—July 16-18, 2010. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Theme: "Leading with a Christ-like attitude." 414-256-3278, carolyn.sachs@wels.net. Web site, www.wels.net/women.

Hymn writing contest—Two WELS members are sponsoring a hymn writing contest, starting now and running through Jan. 30, 2010. The contest offers a prize of \$300 to the winning entry based on the following theme: The Parables of Matthew 21. Entry forms and information about the contest can be found at www.hymnwriterchallenge.com or by writing to Hymn Writer Challenge, PO Box 562, Waupun WI 53963.

NAMES WANTED

Ft. Drum/Evans Mills region—Jeremiah Gumm, Cross of Christ, Liverpool, N.Y. 315-652-7951, pastor@nycrossofchrist.org.

Military—congregation members, family, or friends who serve in the Armed Forces and desire spiritual services. Complete an online form at www.wels.net/military. Include as much information as possible; e-mail addresses are especially important. Special Ministries, 414-256-3241; csm@wels.net.

Graduates—of Northwestern Prep (70) and Northwestern College (74). Roger Crawford, 414-559-4037; roger.crawford@wels.net or Curtiss Seefeldt, 952-261-6702; cseefeldt@frontiernet.net.

Fort Knox, Ky.—soldiers and civilians moving into the area. Paul Horn, 270-304-1682; revhorn@yahoo.com.

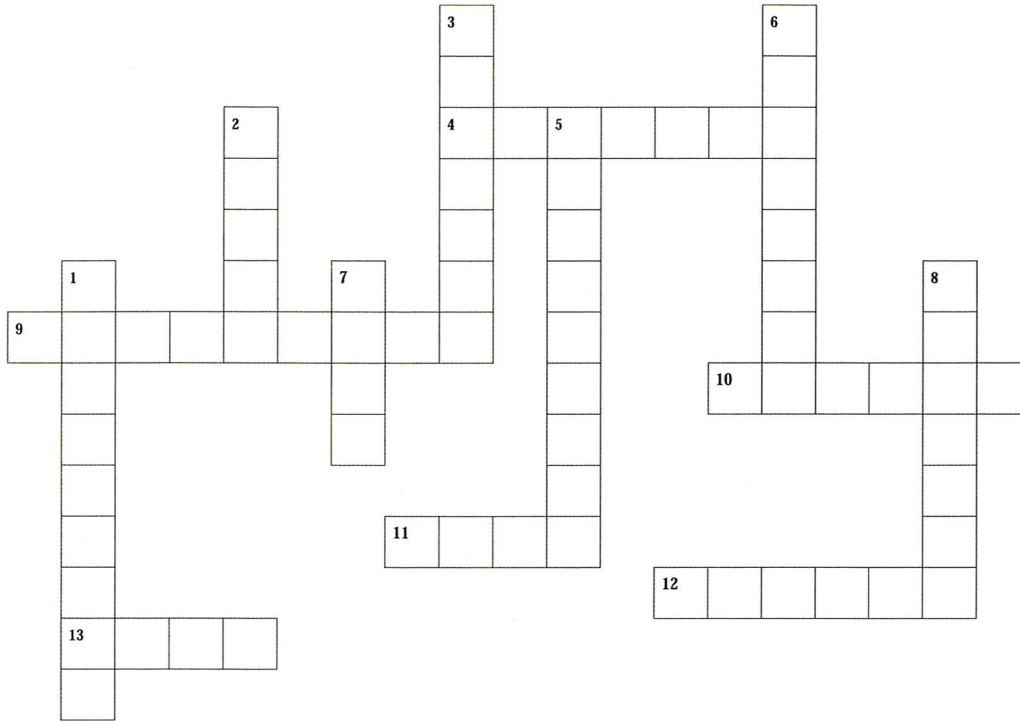
Albuquerque, N.M.—WELS students attending the University of New Mexico. Jeremy Bakken, jsbakk@hotmail.com.

West Plains, Mo.—preaching station developing in South Central Missouri. Trinity, Mountain Home, Ark. Dave Kapler, 870-424-2888; tlcwels@mtnhome.com.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

CROSSWORD POTLUCK

Christians have been meeting for centuries to encourage one another, be strengthened, and enjoy the fellowship God has given us here on earth. The Bible verses below demonstrate that spirit. See if you can fill in the blanks to complete the crossword puzzle.



DOWN

1. "Therefore _____ one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
2. "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in ____!" (Psalm 133:1).
3. "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any _____ from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Philippians 2:1,2).
5. "May the God who gives _____ and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5,6).
6. "For where two or three come _____ in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20).
7. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you ____" (Matthew 11:28).
8. "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and _____ hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46,47).

ACROSS

4. "Let us not give up _____ together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).
9. "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our _____" (1 Timothy 6:17).
10. "Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's _____ springs from his earnest counsel" (Proverbs 27:9).
11. "My command is this: _____ each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12,13).
12. "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to _____ ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up" (Romans 15:1,2).
13. "So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be _____. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 8:15).

ANSWERS: 1. Encourage; 2. Unity; 3. Comfort; 4. Meeting; 5. Endurance; 6. Fellowship; 7. Rest; 8. Glad; 9. Joy; 10. Entertainment; 11. Love; 12. Please; 13. Glad

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,

Last Sunday I was at a retreat for teens. We talked lots about worship. Wow! We sure worship in a lot of ways. One church only uses an organ. Another has a worship band, complete with drums and amplifiers. There's a church with one Sunday service, while another has services on Saturday evening, Sunday morning, and Monday night. At one church the pastor wears a black gown while at another the pastor wears a suit. Aren't there worship rules we're supposed to follow?

I love you,
Denali

The Third

The Third Commandment:
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

Dear Denali:

You'd think that since God gave us a commandment about worship, he would insist on specific ways to honor him. But we would be wrong.

The truth is that God permits us Christians wide worship variety. God nowhere commands that we use certain instruments in worship. He didn't make a rule that Sunday is the day for worship. He doesn't insist that pastors wear certain garments. He doesn't dictate the shape of a church or the kind of furniture we place there.

But he does command us to worship him. Luther explains that in the Third Commandment, God demands we "regard [preaching and his Word] as holy, and gladly hear and learn it."

So what should we remember about worship?

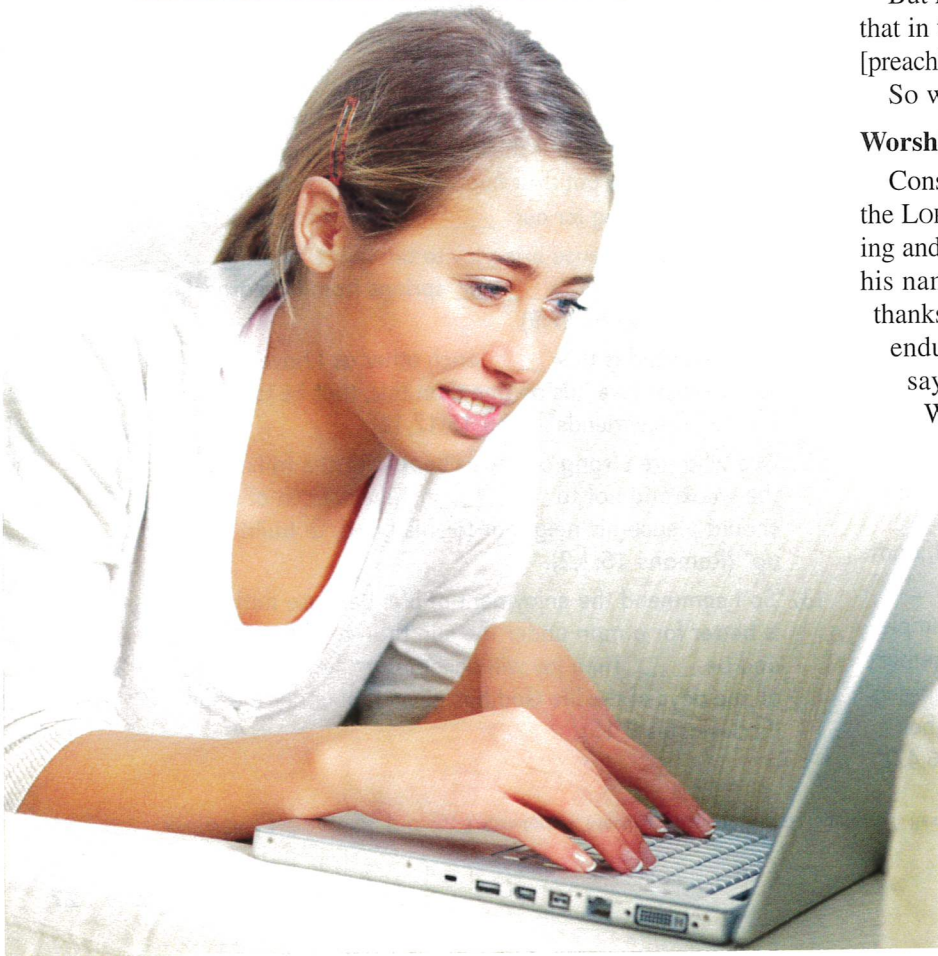
Worship must be God-focused

Consider the worship attitude of the psalmist: "Worship the LORD with gladness . . . Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Psalm 100:2,4). The reason for this joyful thanksgiving and praise? "The LORD is good and his love endures forever" (100:5). Worship God, the psalmist says, because he keeps loving and forgiving you.

Worship must be God-focused.

That's not so easy. Do you see a difference between worshiping and "going to church"? Church can be a place to catch up with friends. It can be a place we expect to be entertained—and complain when we're not. Church can be where we conduct business: a place to make a sale or to take care of congregational matters. It can even provide people with a few minutes to daydream.

Where's the focus of that kind of "worship"? It's on us. On our pleasure. On our goals. God has a different purpose for worship. Through Word and sacraments, God



Commandment

James A. Aderman

invites us to look at his bright smile. At worship he wants us to thrill to the good news that Jesus has forgiven us—completely—and that we are adopted by him for eternity.

God is the reason for our being at worship. He's the center of our attention. In fact, even if the pastor preaches the most boring sermons ever, even if a baby screams through every service, even if Mrs. Peterson on the organ slaughters all the hymns, we'd still want to gather at God's house because at worship our focus is on God and his love.

Worship must be gospel empowered

When the lens of our heart is sharply focused on God, more than his praise happens. We are strengthened, helped, transformed.

Worship that pleases God benefits God's people. That benefit is unleashed when the guarantees of his grace in Jesus ring out in the hymns, in the readings, and in the message. The gospel, the good news that God has provided us with a Savior, contains power. Unimaginable power. Power to bring life to the dead. Power to replace the hell we deserve with the heaven we don't. Power to transform our lives into hymns of praise.

The gospel brought you to faith in Jesus 16 years ago at your baptism. The gospel's continuing touch has kept you in faith. It works that way for every believer. Spiritual health depends on God's persistent contact with us through his promises of grace.

For a worship service to claim that title, it must be filled with God's message of mercy. Yes, sin will be exposed and repentance demanded. But the gospel must be there to assure forgiveness for those sins. The gospel must be there for the worship's celebration to have a foundation. The gospel must be there to empower us to live up to the high status Jesus has provided us.

Did you notice? We take some responsibility. We need to concentrate on the gospel. A great organist—or band—can enhance worship for us. A pastor's well-written, well-presented sermon makes the time spent listening fly by. A beautiful building, stained glass, and fine art heighten our reverence. But none of this is worth anything if we miss the gospel. The assurance that we have a Savior in Jesus must ring true and clear—not just from the worship leaders but also within us worshipers.

Worship must be life encompassing

We carry that faith out the door of church into the world. Christians want to live for God every hour, not just the one we call "church." Paul encourages us, "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). He also urges, "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1).

We look at life differently. A walk in the park becomes a time to recall the beauty of the creation God intended for us. Taking out the garbage becomes an opportunity to thank our Father for the home he has given us. Work becomes a place where we represent our Savior. Even school becomes a way to enhance the abilities our Father has built into us. (Now that puts a positive spin on mastering those geometry theorems, doesn't it?) Worship becomes a way of life.

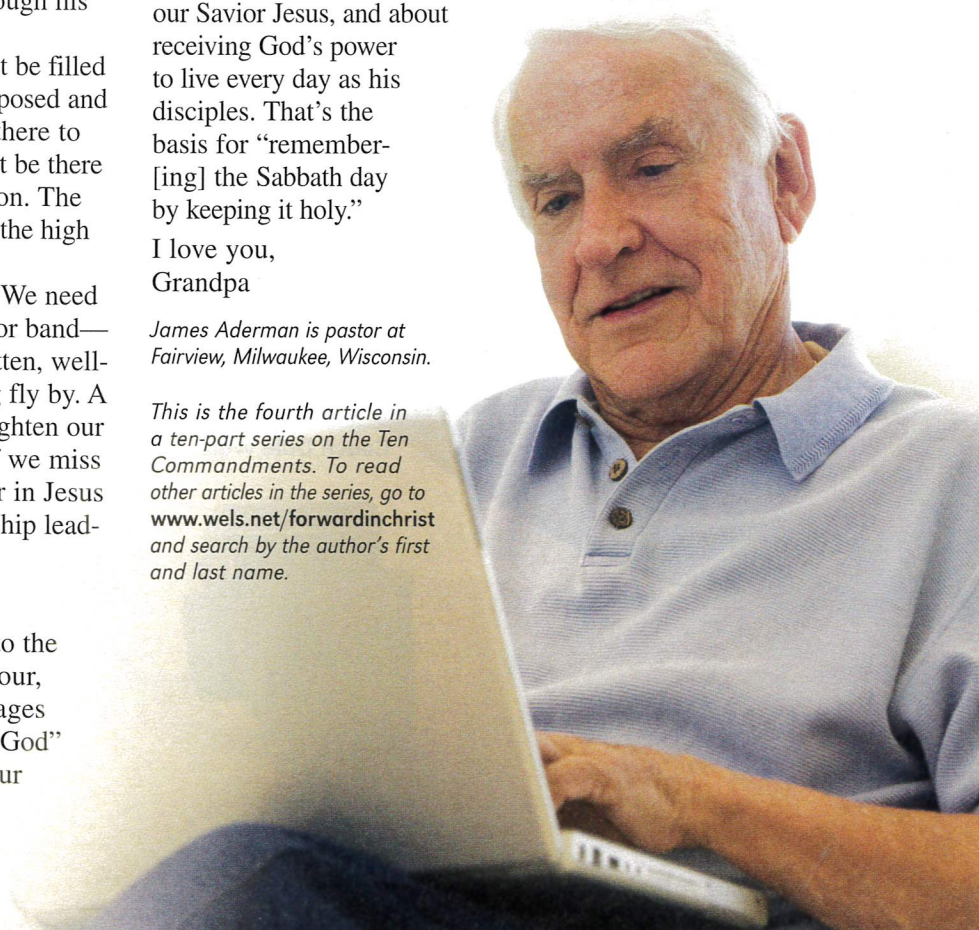
Just as when we gather for corporate worship, personal day-by-day worship is fueled by God's Word. The Bible is for daily use. When your family pauses after supper to read from the Scriptures and pray, God touches you. When your father gets up early for personal Bible study or your mother takes her time with Jesus before bed, the Holy Spirit works within. And didn't you tell me you've continued to review the passages you learned in confirmation class? The Spirit's there too. It's part of worship as a lifestyle.

Denali, don't misunderstand. It's good to discuss how we worship God. Your teen retreat was a wonderful idea. It's so great to worship together. That's important too. We have to remember all God's people come together—all ages. When we think about worship we should think about what is good for everyone. Whatever we do, our worship is about him, about the powerful message of our Savior Jesus, and about receiving God's power to live every day as his disciples. That's the basis for "remember-[ing] the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

I love you,
Grandpa

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

This is the fourth article in a ten-part series on the Ten Commandments. To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net/forwardinchrist and search by the author's first and last name.



MORE THAN JUST A COACH

Dale Walz used his passion for God, family, and basketball (in that order) to lead kids to victory—both on and off the court. **Linda R. Buxa**

Dale Walz has always loved basketball. “I grew up in Sanborn, Minn.—a basketball-crazy town,” he says. “We cleared snow away from the basket at our little school’s playground so we could play at recess in the harsh Minnesota winters.”

That childlike passion has only grown in the 40-plus years that Walz has taught in WELS schools. Walz, who retired from varsity coaching in 2008 after 35 years, still serves as vice principal at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee.

Coaching winning teams

“In college, I knew I wanted to be a high school basketball coach,” Walz says. “Not a day went by at any time of the year when I didn’t think about basketball.”

That love of the sport was obvious in his coaching style. “I was demanding and critical, but hopefully my players knew I loved them and that I treated them with respect and fairness as I tried to bring the best out of each of them,” he says.

While he worked on their skills, even opening up the gym on weekends so kids could just come in and shoot, he worked more on their spiritual lives. “I reminded them that their talent was given by God, that they should work hard and give him the glory for any success that might come their way,” he says.



Coach Dale Walz

But never did he lead them to believe their prayers would automatically bring them victories or to think God was only on their side. He says, "I told them their prayers should ask for God's blessing on their effort; that everyone would be free from injury; and that whatever happened they would act and react as God's children, allowing others to see their witness."

If they weren't sure how to let others see their witness, all they had to do was look to their coach. "You see Dale's Christianity in his everyday life," says Jeff Sitz, athletic director at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. "He goes ahead and lives his life, and you realize just by watching him that he has faith. It's not something he has to work at. It's just who he is."

Though Walz didn't pray for victories, God gave them—lots of them—to him. Between 14 years at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis., and 21 at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Walz's record is 515-245, which places him 12th on the all-time list of Wisconsin's winningest coaches.

Those victories also earned him respect outside of the schools. In 2008 he was inducted into the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. "Being nominated for, and then being inducted into, the Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame was a special blessing from God because it is an honor to be recognized by your coaching peers," he says. Again, though, he turns the credit over to others. "I believe it is a tribute to all the Christian young men who won all those games over the years on our teams."

Mentoring kids and coaches

Though nice, those achievements aren't what matter most to Walz. "For all his success on the court, Dale was always a coach who was far more concerned with the kids and where they were heading in life, than he was with his record," says Sitz.

Like many great coaches, Walz is more than just a coach. "Many players came from difficult situations at home or faced tragedy in their family, which can make building relationships more difficult," he says. Still, some of those young men looked up to him as a father they didn't have, or at least as an adult who truly cared. "Working through their problems with them, being a part of the team, and striving together to accomplish our goals was not only therapy for them, but also an education in being successful," he continues.

Even for those who had stable homes, Walz's dedication was apparent, and his influence on them continues. Years after one player graduated, Dale and his wife, Kathy, attended that player's wedding.

At the reception, they were asked to move—to a head table. "There was a reserved seat for us with the parents of the bride and groom," says the still-amazed coach. "I was surprised, humbled, and so very appreciative of that gesture of love and respect. I will never forget it."

Encouraging future ministers

Walz's love for basketball and kids is all tied together because of his love for the ministry. "I know the joy I have gotten personally—and also that my family has gotten—through my service in WELS schools," he says.

Now he serves as the chairman of the Recruitment for Ministry Committee at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. "Encouraging our youth to consider the ministry and serve the Lord full time is easy when you have such a fondness for it," he says. "What could be a better opportunity for them to lead others to the Savior?"

Ken Brokmeier, pastor at Our Savior, Brookings, S.D., confirms this. "I was thinking of going into the Marine Corps when Coach pulled me into his office and said, 'You should think about the ministry.' So I did. The Lord used him, and many others, to guide me."

And that's just one story. Of Walz's former players, 32 went on to full-time public ministry.

Still, Walz also is quick to praise those who have chosen other careers and are witnesses to the world no matter where they work. "All of my players have been special in one way or another," he says, "I am pleased to see so many of them grow into Christian young men with families. I also take joy in their active service in our churches."

Passing the ball

Of those 32 former players who went on to full-time public ministry, four have a special place in his heart—his sons Jason, Ryan, Justin, and Micah.

"My father was a WELS teacher, which made attending Martin Luther College seem like the natural thing to do," says Walz. Then his sons went to Martin Luther College and are now teachers. "I am not sure Kathy and I verbally encouraged them as much as that they were able to see the joy we both had for this work," he says. Then he adds, almost with a sigh of relief, "It is rewarding to see that we did not turn them off to that career choice."

All of his children—he also has a daughter, Julie—picked up his love for basketball and coach at either the grade school or high school level. In fact, in 2009, his son Ryan took over as varsity coach at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, won the state championship, and was named Coach of the Year.

That means that another generation of Walzes—along with all the generations of those motivated by Dale's faith, coaching, encouragement, and example—are out in the world, ready to win more games—and more souls—for Christ.

Linda Buxa is a member at St. Mark's, Citrus Heights, California.

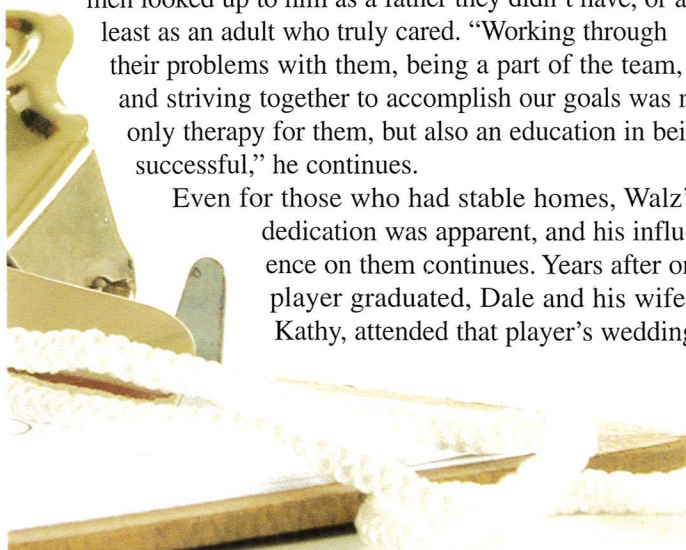
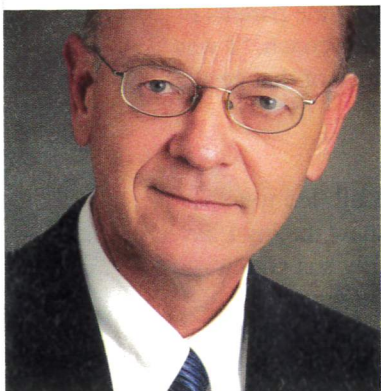


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



Mark Schweden

Lovingly intolerant

I can think of many words to describe my father, but *tolerant* is not one of them.

Students in the Latin classes he taught at Northwestern College would agree. From the first day of class, his students recognized that this serious-faced professor would tolerate nothing less than their total attention and their best effort. He would not be tolerant of careless mistakes. He was even more intolerant of students who were lazy or who gave less than their best in their preparation for class.

No one knew better of his intolerance than his children. He was a father who would not tolerate even a hint of disrespect or misbehavior from his children. He was intolerant of anything less than his children's best effort in school or in their work. He was intolerant when his children acted without thinking or when they spent money foolishly.

I thank God for my father's intolerance. Through his intolerance, he showed genuine love.

It was that intolerance that instilled in his children the values that they still hold today: the importance of regular worship, a clear sense of right and wrong, a respect for authority, the virtue of hard work, the importance of honesty, the commitment to family, and the need for careful stewardship of God's material blessings.


In today's politically correct view, one of the greatest sins is that of intolerance. For freedom-loving Americans, the argument for tolerance seems irresistibly attractive and compelling. After all, America is a land of freedom, born from a desire of our founders to be free from tyranny and oppression and founded on principles championing the rights of the individual. It is often said that people should be free to believe and live as they please as long as no one else is harmed.

But this culture of tolerance has gone far beyond the defense of the right to think and live in freedom. In the name of toleration of all views and actions, the idea has caught on that it's no longer legitimate to distinguish between right and wrong, moral and immoral, truth and falsehood. Anything and everything should be tolerated. This thinking has had a devastating effect on nearly every area of society. In a society drunk with the wine of tolerance—where there is no longer any right or wrong—moral standards disappear, families disintegrate, schools decay, and self-interest rules.

Not surprisingly, the toleration agenda has invaded vast stretches of the Christian church in America. We saw clear evidence of this last August. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted to allow homosexual men and women to serve as pastors in ELCA congregations. It did this in the name of "love" and in a spirit of toleration. Our synod issued a public statement critical of this action since it marked another clear departure from the truth of God's Word.

There will be those who say that our lack of toleration is unloving. Just the opposite is true. Defending and upholding the truth of God's Word means that we will say what God says. When God calls certain behavior sin, so will we. When God's Word proclaims his truth, we will boldly admonish those who deny that truth. When God, in his love, calls sinners to repentance for ignoring his will, we will echo that message in the same spirit of love. To tolerate what God condemns is anything but loving. To tolerate sin in silence is to abandon sinners when they need us the most.

Sometimes intolerance is the only way to show genuine love. May God help us to remain lovingly intolerant for the sake of the gospel.



believe in the HOLY SPIRIT

I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Charles F. Degner

Which of these statements is true? God forgives the sins of the whole world. God only forgives those who believe in Jesus.

The answer to the question is that they are both true. Jesus' simple gospel teaching to Nicodemus uses both ideas. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:16-18)

If you remember what you learned in catechism class, you may recall the terms *universal justification* and *personal justification*. The first means that God justifies the whole world for Jesus' sake and declares all people forgiven. The second means that God justifies only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior.

Rich and poor

It may be helpful to look at it this way. Imagine that a multi-billionaire lives in your community and he loves to give away money. He has decided to put a million dollars in the bank for every man, woman, and child who lives in your town. The only notice given will be an ad in the local paper that invites you to pick up your money at any time.

Everyone in your town is a million dollars richer. A third of the people see the ad and believe what it says. They run down to pick up their money. A third of the people think that the advertisement is nothing more than a bank gimmick. That's unbelief—and they will not benefit from their new wealth. And the last third don't get the paper and never hear about their money! That's unbelief, too—

the unbelief of ignorance. You can be rich and poor at the same time.

Forgiven and not forgiven

You can also be forgiven and not forgiven at the same time. God in his rich generosity and mercy has justified the whole world for Jesus' sake. That's universal justification. Some believe this because the Holy Spirit has convinced them that this is true. They believe that they are holy in God's eyes because God has forgiven all their sins. They are justified before God. By faith, they have made God's forgiveness their own.

Some refuse to believe this. Even though God loves them and has declared them holy for Jesus' sake, they remain in their sins because of their unbelief.

And some have not heard the message. That's why we send missionaries into the world with the gospel. That's why we tell our friends and neighbors. If you lined up at the bank to get your million-dollar windfall, wouldn't you tell your neighbor about it by nightfall?

Won't you tell your neighbor about Jesus and what he has done for you? The Holy Spirit works through the message of forgiveness to create faith in people's hearts, the same way he created faith in your heart.

In the end, believing what the Bible says about your forgiveness is what matters. For you and for all others on earth.

Contributing editor Charles Degner is pastor at St. Peter, St. Peter, Minnesota.

This is the sixth article in an eight-part series on the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. Go to www.wels.net/forwardinchrist and search by the author's first and last name to read other articles in the series.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS
THROUGH THE MESSAGE OF
FORGIVENESS TO CREATE
FAITH IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS.



John C. Baer

Jesus, priceless treasure

We have so much! Well, perhaps this Thanksgiving we don't have as much as we have had. The value of our portfolios may be slowly rising, but they are not what they were a few months ago. Some have lost jobs and still look for a way to pay the bills. Others have changes in health and life that may cause them to swallow hard when someone like me says, "We have so much."

Not long ago I sang "Jesus, Priceless Treasure" (*Christian Worship* 349) with my fellow Christians in worship. The words helped me remember that I do have so much. I think it might be a good idea for us to count the blessings we have in Jesus this Thanksgiving.

Jesus loves us with a deep, constant, lasting love. He knew we would be helplessly trapped in our own sinful natures—his enemies and destined for eternal separation from him, on our own. In order to rescue us, he entered time and space to be like us and claim us for eternity with his holy, precious blood. He has declared us to be free of our sin simply because he loves us—by grace, as we sometimes so casually confess. His love is still "wide and long and high and deep" (Ephesians 3:18).

That love helps us understand that Jesus is our "truest friend," as the hymn suggests. We rest in his powerful arms and depend on his power and love to keep us along the paths of our lives. So we sing, "Though the earth be shaking, ev'ry heart be quaking, Jesus calms my fear. Lightnings flash and thunders crash . . . Jesus will not fail me."

Think what that has meant for millions of believers over the ages. Our current troubles are real. I don't want to minimize our troubles. I understand the problems, but I also know that many before us have endured hardship, pain, and misery too—

some more severe than any of us will see. Yet, Jesus preserved them. "God's great pow'r guards ev'ry hour."

Because we have Jesus as our treasure, we have so much. We can defy trouble, Satan's accusations and power, and even death. Our Savior is not dead! He lives. He said he would die, but he also promised to arise from death. What power that is! No one who has spent time on earth has ever made such a claim except for Jesus. Some think that it is all just wishful thinking, but I don't—and neither do you. Jesus said that because he lives, so will we (John 14:19). We have so much for which to be thankful.

One stanza of this hymn begins, "Hence, all earthly treasure!" I had to pause when I sang those words. A "tempting voice" whispers in my ears that I need more things. I need a newer car, a better house, more money in the bank, and a position with more power and clout in order to be happy. I don't think I'm the only one who hears those enticing words. Such temptations may make it hard for all of us to sing, "Hence, all earthly treasure! . . . Hence, all empty glory!" We should be thankful for all the earthly treasures we have, but perhaps it is more difficult to sing "Hence," that is "Away, all earthly treasures" when they are taken away or shrink in the downward spiral of economic challenges.

But it also might be easier. The last stanza triumphantly notes "Hence, all fear and sadness! . . . Though the storms may gather, Still have peace within. Yea, whate'er I here must bear, Thou art still my purest pleasure, Jesus, priceless treasure!" We do have so much!



Donald W. Patterson

Portraits of a mature Christian

A mature Christian knows that he is at peace with God.

In the corner of the fitness room stood a life-sized cardboard picture of a man with the perfect body. I stared at it a few seconds and thought, "I'll never look like that." I'm a realist. On the bright side, at least I was in the gym. I might not ever be the poster boy for fitness, but I can improve my health. That's my goal: to improve, not to be perfect.

When some Christians think about growing into spiritual maturity, they feel the same way. They see Jesus in the gospels and think, "I could never be like that." They're right. They can never be perfect. Only Jesus is perfect. That's why we trust in him.

But we can grow and mature. What else would we want to do? Growing in Christian maturity honors the One who saved us. With this Bible study we begin a 12-part series on the portraits of a mature Christian. In each study we'll look at a distinguishing mark of a mature Christian and consider what it takes to become a portrait of maturity ourselves.

Peace with God through Christ

The first mark of a mature Christian is that one knows that one is at peace with God. Jesus' life mission was to make peace for us with God. Those who listened carefully to him understood this. Do you remember the story about the woman who barged into a Pharisee's home where Jesus was eating dinner and washed his feet with tears and expensive perfume? The Pharisee was so religious that he hadn't heard Jesus when he promised peace with God. But this woman heard him. She had longed for peace in her troubled conscience. Up until she met Jesus, nothing settled her troubled soul. Once she realized that Jesus himself was her peace, she had to show him her appreciation. So many men had come to her to take. No man had ever come into her life to give so much. The irony of the story is that to most people it was the Pharisee who looked mature. After all, he was so religious. No one would have thought that the sinful woman was more mature than he was, but she was.

Before you go any further, pick up your Bible and read the story in Luke 7:36-50. Pay careful attention to verses 48-50. The questions that follow are a personal spiritual workout to help you live in peace.

Luke 7:48-50:

⁴⁸Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Points to ponder

1. Why did Simon criticize Jesus for allowing this woman to gush over him?
2. What reason did Jesus give Simon for her actions?
3. Why do you think Jesus said, "Go in peace," and not "Now, go and sin no more"?
4. How would this moment with Jesus help this woman live free from her past?

Fruit to bear

1. Describe how a person filled with Christ's peace lives and acts.
2. What are some things we Christians do that sometimes make us lose the peace we have in Christ?
3. Explain this statement to someone: "No Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace!"
4. Think of someone you know who tends to beat himself or herself up over sins. How will you use the story in Luke 7 to free that loved one from the chains of guilt?

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

This is the first article in a 12-part series on Christian maturity. Find this study and answers online after Nov. 5 at www.wels.net/forwardinchrist.



Thanksgiving MEMORIES

We remember the family gatherings for dinner, but it is all a prelude to the future feast with Jesus. **David L. Hein**

“Mom! Mike keeps poking me!” “Is there any more stuffing, Grandma?” “Jeff and John, get out from under the table right now!” “Aunt Pat, Kimmie spit up again!” Thanksgiving memories of long ago. Rejoice!

In those years, Thanksgiving dinner was always the best meal of the year. Our small relation was still ample enough to overflow the dining room with squirming kids, football chatter, and frequent laughter. But then would come time to pay the piper.

“Okay, children, be still for a moment while Grandpa takes a picture.” Ask us to carry plates into the kitchen or take out the garbage or even help dry the dishes, but do not attempt to get us kids to sit still for a picture.

“Say cheese!” Agonizing seconds followed until: “Okay, nobody move yet. The flash didn’t work this time.” Grandpa’s flash never worked the first time.

Finally, after removing, licking, and replacing the bulb, we’d hear: “Jerry and Ron, quit making funny faces. Now smile.” *Flash!* Rejoice!

It took years for me to realize how truly blessed a childhood I had. It became clear as I’ve counseled those who don’t have such fond memories. That’s why telling others about a joyful future with Jesus has become all the more important to me.

What opportunities we have to help others shape wonderful new memories this entire holy-day season! Thanksgiving is a kind of doorway to Christmas and Jesus. Candlelight services, children singing of a manger, and a church dressed up to celebrate the birth of our King—all this and more so we can aid lonely hearts and empty lives to truly give thanks. Rejoice!

We might use the Thanksgivings in our memories as a springboard to conversation with others. They may be

thinking about what they are going to do this Thanksgiving holiday. Talk about the past and lead them to think about the future—not only tomorrow but an endless future with Jesus. Invite them to spend the present Thanksgiving with you at your church.

Today my family is spread all over the country.

Gathering together is becoming more difficult and more infrequent. I get excited just thinking about sitting once again with my grandparents and all the believers in my relation, united not just by ancestral blood but even more so by the blood of our Savior! What fun we shall have sitting at the table of Jesus, our minds and hearts filled with wonder. And thankfulness. And joy!

Our Lord has made clear to you and me that there still is room at his table . . . for more family, neighbors, friends, and anyone else he puts in front of us who still doesn’t know why we are so very, very thankful. May everyone hear that no matter what kind of past we have experienced, the best dinner of all is yet to come. Then the only reason my brother may still poke me at the heavenly table is to remind me that this is real, all real, thanks to Jesus.

“Hey, Grandpa, take a picture now!” *Flash!* Rejoice!

“Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you!” (*Christian Worship* 23).

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

David Hein is pastor at Redeemer, Mandan, North Dakota.