

*Arvid Schwartz*  
*“Running in the Path of His Commands”*

Emile Burgess  
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Professor James F. Korthals

## Foreword

*“I have nothing but the kindest things to say about Arvid. He never complains, including about his disability. He absolutely ignores the disability in his drive to be as active as possible. He is a true Christian gentleman, courteous, kind, generous, helpful. He loves his Lord and puts in a tremendous amount of time volunteering and serving. He is very intelligent and capable as a businessman, but never beats you over the head with it. He has passion, vision, good judgment, and is a natural encourager. He is a devoted family man.”*

- Pastor Mark A. Jeske

The name Arvid Schwartz came up many times at the 2006 Minnesota District Convention for a number of reasons. That year Arvid was retiring from his position on the Synodical Council as the Minnesota District lay representative. Many people publicly (and the convention officially) thanked him for the nearly 25 years he spent on the committee. In addition to this, the theme of the convention happened to lay ministry, which afforded even more opportunities for people to mention Arvid and his wife Judy as shining examples of active lay people in the Synod.

It was impossible to ignore the effects of polio as he “crutched” his way up to the podium to give his final report. And it begged the questions: Did the polio push him to serve to a greater extent? Did Arvid turn this “cross” into a catalyst in his life? And Arvid will not hesitate for a moment when answering those questions, as the interview will show.

The sheer number of organizations that Arvid has touched with his knowledge and expertise speaks for itself. His field of expertise started out being finance, but he has not let that prevent him from leading and serving in so many other capacities. And he will be the first to tell you that anyone could have done what he has. Arvid believes that willingness is all that is needed to serve. To paraphrase him: “God’s business is the results, our business is the effort.”

In addition to the organizations, there are also the congregations that Arvid has served. Arvid’s current pastor, Dennis Reichow had this to say about him:

*With his business background, Arvid was a very good leader for the congregation in his role as church president. In a limited way now, he still is a very good role model for other leaders in our congregation. Arvid was good at keeping the Church Council focused on the current issues and agenda items. When some of the council members started to drift into discussion off the topic, Arvid would quickly get us back on task. Arvid was, and still is, good at helping the people here in rural Minnesota to see the big picture in regard to ministry in the US and over seas. Of course, Arvid acquired his perspective of the bigger picture from his many years serving on the Synodical Council and from his association with pastors and laymen all across the country. I have appreciated Arvid's ability to bring a layman's perspective to our discussions on ministering with the Word and related church issues. Many times he has brought up good points that I would not have thought about on my own.*

My interview with Arvid took place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Thursday, October 26, 2006. An hour and a half was only enough time to scratch the surface of all the volunteer work Arvid has done within the sphere of the Wisconsin Synod. The goal of the interview was to touch on some of the aspects of his service to the Kingdom, his personal life and some of the factors that have contributed to his high degree activity as a lay person.

## Interview Outline

### Synod Involvement<sup>1</sup>

- *Time of Grace Ministries*, Treasurer and founding member, 5+ years
- *Synodical Council*, MN District Representative for almost 25 years
- *Wisconsin Lutheran College*, Board of Regents, 5 years as Chairman (12 years total)
- *WELS Board of Trustees* for 12 years, and member of the Executive Committee
- *WELS Kingdom Workers*, Vice President of the National Board of Directors
- *Bethesda*, Board of Directors, Chairman of Finance Committee
- *The Lutheran Home*, Watertown, MN
- *Synod Restructuring Committee*

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<sup>1</sup> This list includes little if nothing of the various congregational boards and committees Arvid has served on.

- *St. Croix Lutheran High School*, member of the Board
- *Jesus Cares Ministries*, Volunteer

### **Finding the time**

- Priorities
- Gifts

### **Currently...**

- WELS Kingdom Workers

### **Early Years**

- Growing up in Western Minnesota
- Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Minneapolis

### **Wife, Judy – On Courtship and Teamwork**

- Sharing the same values
- Supportive in the work

### **Mentors and Influences**

- Lay people
- Called Workers
- Non-believers
- Parents
- Judy

### **Polio, Faith, and Playing the Cards You Are Dealt**

- Polio's Legacy
- Polio and faith
- Burdens to "bear and share"

- To God's glory
- "You play the cards you're dealt"

### **Time of Grace Ministries**

- 7 laymen
- Blessings beyond their dreams

### **Changes in WELS**

- 1950 vs. 2006
- Meeting people where they are at culturally
- Lay and called workers – a joint effort
- "Let the Synod do it"

### **Consciously Loving the Lost**

- Looking outside your own bubble
- 25 years in health care
- Mr. McKay
- Maturing through the means of grace
- From regretting missed opportunities to seeing new ones
- The Everything-Somehow-Connected-To-My-Faith game

### **Favorite Bible Verses**

- "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."
- "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."
- The results are God's business, the faithful effort is ours.
- Good to have a plan, but God's plan is always better than ours.

**Devotions**

- Ongoing conversations with God
- Pastor's sermon text Bible study
- Spouses sharing God's Word

**Synodical Council, MN District Representative**

- Active in MN District
- Pastor's Conference paper, "Shepherds in the Marketplace"
- Synodical Board of Trustees
- Different challenges today
- Memorable and edifying experiences

**What's going on in WELS that you're excited about?**

- Ministerial training
- Tent Ministry
- Lay Ministry critical
- "If we could get 10% of them [in the Synod] active in outreach, just think how many people we could tell about Jesus."
- Tell it the way we know how

**Synod Finances**

- Giving is a fruit of our faith
- Time of Grace

**Practical Advice for Pastors on Committee**

- Lead well
- "Who's the CEO of Your Church?"

- Beware of the bad compromise
- Consolidate
- Have a plan
- Members will follow
- Sort through different styles
- Beware of timidity
- To God be the glory.

### **Psalm 119:32**

“I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.”

### **Quotations Read in the Interview**

*“[My early treatment] consisted basically of hot packs and then more hot packs. I dreaded them. They were hotter than hot, and before they cooled off, they'd come by and put on fresh ones. We had to lie on our backs with our feet up against a footboard. We weren't allowed to sit up or even lie on our stomachs, and we couldn't have a pillow...There were two sessions of hot packs in the morning and one in the afternoon...(and) there was a great big guy who would come and do the stretching. It was quite painful, especially when he would come and stretch my leg muscles”*  
(Polio's Legacy).

*“In the time I have talked here this afternoon--roughly 30 minutes--another 1,000 or 1,100 people have joined the ranks of those headed to hell.”*

### **Miscellaneous**

Arvid and Judy Schwartz live in Green Isle, Minnesota and attend St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Green Isle. Despite being retired from his career in finance and the Synodical Council, Arvid and Judy remain active in many capacities throughout the Synod and Kingdom. They still enjoy farming their land and making the most of each “day the Lord has made.”

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