

# LUTHERAN



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A dose of  
church now  
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# Faith food: the menu of promises

*Taste and see that the Lord is good. Psalm 34:8*

**Robert H. Hochmuth**

**F**or infants in faith, the milk of God's Word sustains life: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son . . ." (John 3:16).

For growing and developing, the Bread of Life helps us repent of our sin and enjoy salvation. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23,24). "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

In Old Testament times, the verb "to see" often indicated "to experience." So in the Psalms, David encourages something deeper than intellectual definition of God's characteristics. A lost sinner realizes personal deliverance and new joy under God's favor.

The Holy Spirit moved the writers of Scripture to compare the Word of God's saving grace to physical food. Jesus frequently pictured God's kingdom as a banquet. The apostles referred to the need to progress spiritually as receiving solid food in contrast to milk.

## Meaty subjects

The Scriptures give us meaty subjects to sink our teeth into if we are to mature spiritually. Distinguishing sanctification from justification is one. As important as grateful Christian living is (exercising sanctification), our right standing with God is not attained by serving him, but by what Jesus accomplished for us (justification). We are not saved because we love God; we love God

because he has saved us. That's a Bible class subject that will energize genuine joyful Christian living.

Another subject is the sobering reality that the gospel has an effect on everyone who is touched by it—if not for better, then for worse.

What about the recurring question: If God is good and God is powerful, why do bad things happen to God's people? A regular diet of God's revealed truth can supply the nourishment that will sustain our trust in him.

## How about dessert?

In a world in which we are not exempt from bitter tears, Psalm 119:103 opens another menu page to the words: "How sweet are your promises to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

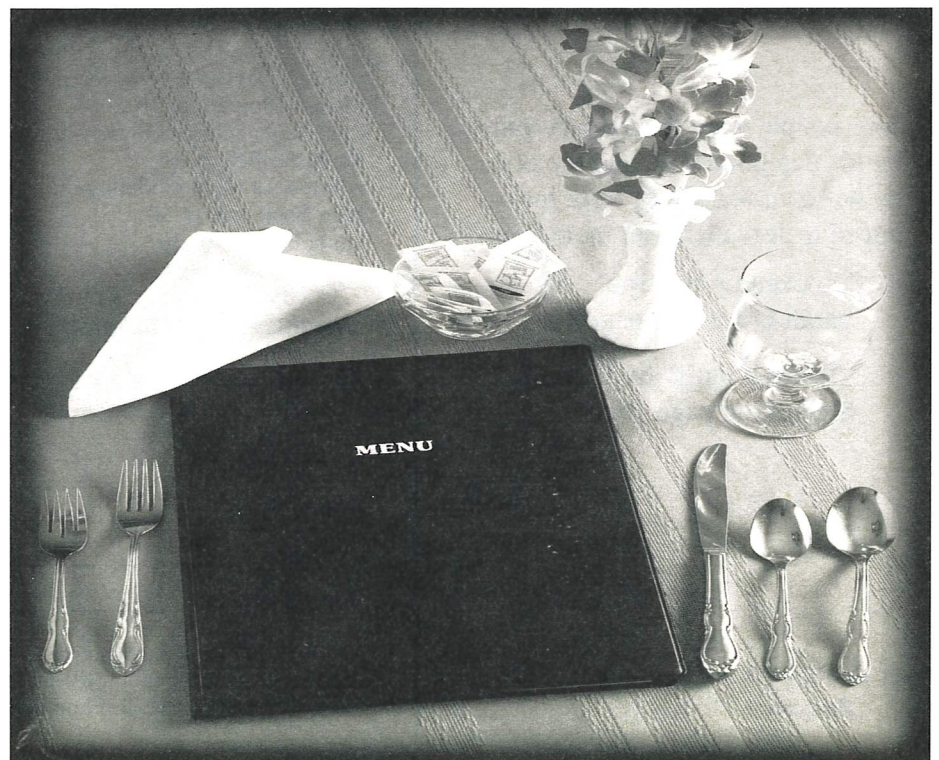
Our Creator, also provides a variety of assurances for our spirit to enjoy, especially when we are under the pressures and pains of life. What's more, these sweets are available at no cost.

How about Psalm 34:18: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

We also recommend Isaiah 54:10 to learn more of God's "unfailing love for you" and his "covenant of peace." The selection goes on and on.

One more little helping? Hebrews 13:5: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Is there a sweeter promise anywhere?

*Robert H. Hochmuth, a retired pastor, lives in Citrus Heights, California.*







- Haven't we all thought we were a little better than someone else? Two authors share stories of how they questioned others, but then turned that question back on themselves.
  - ✓ "Exercise worth the effort" by Gary Baumler on page 34.
  - ✓ "Day stressor" by Robyn Smith on the back page.
  
- The right to die is a hot topic these days. But Robert Fleischmann reminds us: We have a right to witness our faith, even at death. On page 14, you can read his advice about medical directive statements and living wills.
  
- Two people were locked up—one by his detention cell, and the other by her own fear. Both were introduced to Jesus who set them free.
  - ✓ "Locked up for 'life'" by Sarah Owens on page 12.
  - ✓ "Trashed idols" by Kevin I. Stellick on page 16.

—LRB

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### Editor

Rev. Gary P. Baumler, 414/256-3230

### Communications Assistants

Linda R. Baacke, 414/256-3232

Julie K. Tessmer, 414/256-3231

### Northwestern Lutheran

#### WELS

2929 N Mayfair Road

Milwaukee WI 53222-4398

Phone 414/256-3888

Fax 414/256-3899

### Communication Services Commission

R. J. Zink (chairman), R. D. Balge,  
J. M. Barber, W. F. Bernhardt, M. D.  
Duncan, T. L. Schultz.

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R. H. Hochmuth, R. E. Lauersdorf,  
F. E. Piepenbrink, V. H. Prange.

### Art Director

Paul Burmeister

### Graphic Designer

Melissa Homan

### Photographs and Illustrations

Jerry Koser, p. 3

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Care, not suicide page 14

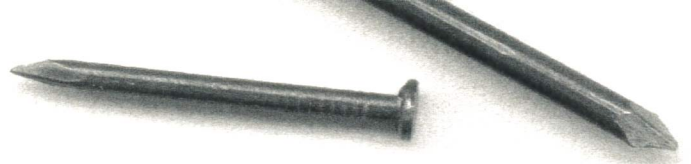
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# Faithful work is faith full

The Christian work ethic is about faithfulness.

Paul E. Kelm

Faithfulness is . . . Faithfulness is showing up for class when you're dog-tired, under-prepared, and uninterested.

Faithfulness is finishing a job that's boring and useless; but somebody has to do it, and you drew the short straw.

Faithfulness is giving 100 percent effort in practice every afternoon on the athletic field, even though you aren't likely to play in the game on Saturday.

Faithfulness is doing the best job you can when your boss is a grouch, the pay is lousy, and the people you work with are foul-mouthed blasphemers.

Faithfulness is keeping the commitment you made to your church or volunteer organization even though it will mean missing an event you really wanted to attend.

Faithfulness is **consistency**, doing what has to be done, finishing what you started, staying on task.

Faithfulness is **integrity**, being a person of your word, someone who lives by principles, someone others can count on.

Faithfulness is **responsibility**, stepping up when there's a job to be done and standing up when things go wrong.

Faithfulness *assumes* there will be temptations to quit, difficulties to overcome, other things you'd rather do.

Faithfulness *assumes* there will

be second-guessing, criticism, even ridicule.

Faithfulness *assumes* work won't always make sense or yield results, won't always be exciting or satisfying.

## The Christian work ethic is based on values

The Christian work ethic doesn't look at the job, the rewards or the consequences, or the people you work for or with as a reason to be faithful. The Christian work ethic isn't pride that doesn't want to look bad or stubbornness refusing to accept the reality of a bad situation.

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**Work is how God intends  
us to support ourselves,  
our families, and  
those in need.**

---

The Christian work ethic is based on certain values. Work is a gift from God, as is the ability to accomplish work. Work is the stewardship of resources God created and entrusted to us. To work is to find fulfillment in life, because God has designed us to use our gifts. Work is a way to enjoy relationships, because God designed us to work together. Work is how God intends us to support ourselves, our families, and those in need, for Scripture sets down the principle:

"If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Work is one way Christians glorify God, doing their best for him, telling him thereby how much they respect, appreciate, and love him. Work is one way Christians witness, expressing the character and values produced by faith in Jesus Christ, so that others will want to know the Savior.

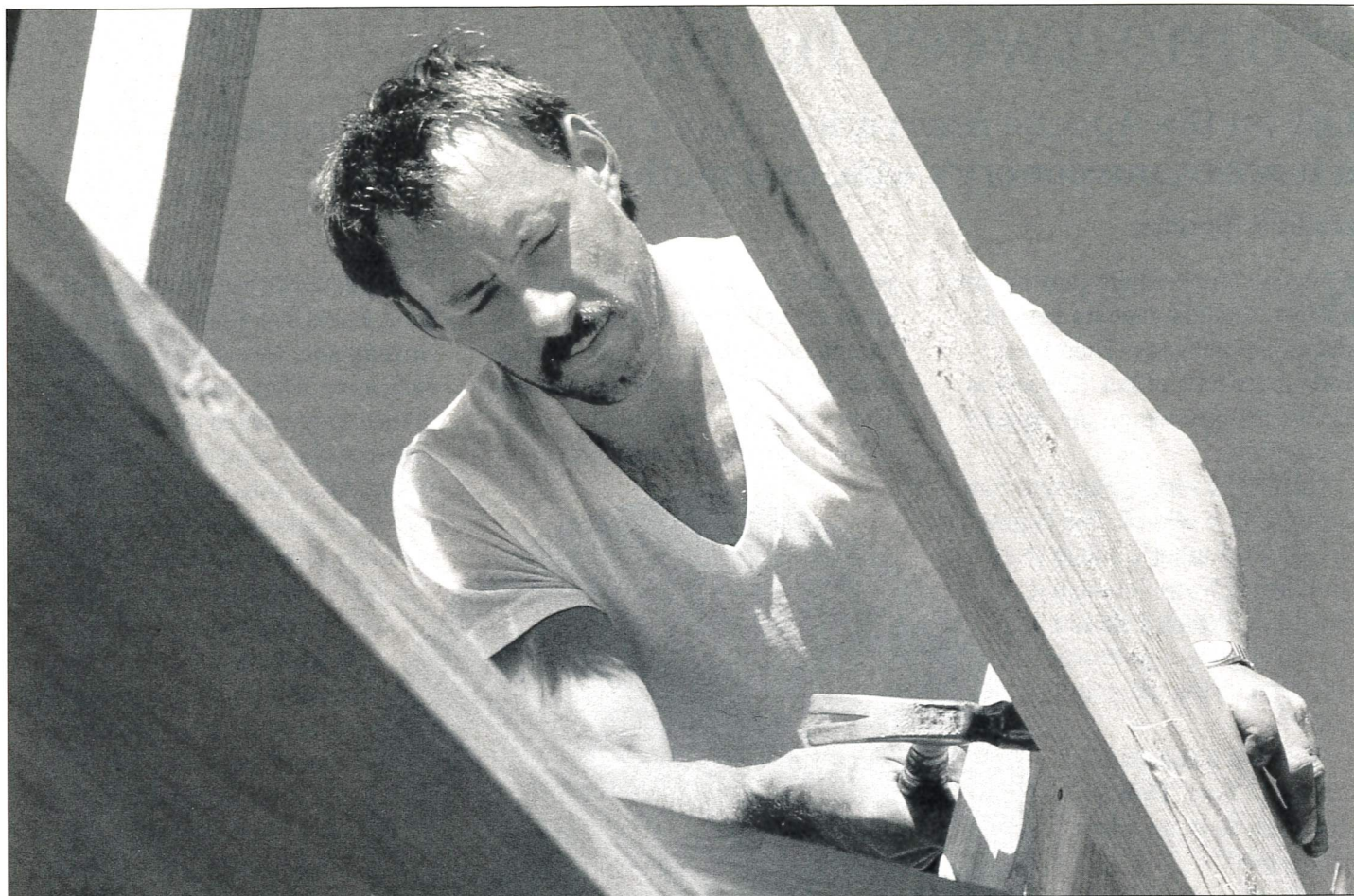
All of these values reinforce faithfulness.

## The Christian work ethic trusts promises

The Christian work ethic trusts certain promises. God rewards work, even if not as immediately or financially as we'd like. St. Paul urged the Galatians: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." God balances justice, even if it doesn't seem that pay scales, recognition, and appreciation are distributed appropriately on earth. God promises to meet our needs, heal our hurts, come through in trial, so we don't have to back down from a job. All these promises of God encourage faithfulness.

The Christian work ethic believes certain truths. God is worthy of all the glory we can give him, and to respect God is to be faithful in our work. God has loved us beyond anything we could hope for, let alone deserve; and faithfulness is





just loving him back. God has blessed us with gifts and opportunities, the use of which is saying “Thank you” to him. Above all, God has taken away the guilt and fear and slavishness that made us resent work. He has freed us to enjoy what we do. These truths motivate faithfulness.

### **Faithfulness begins with God**

You see, faithfulness was a heavenly Father enduring centuries of faithlessness, of idolatry and indifference, just because he had made a promise. Faithfulness was the Son of God giving up heaven to do the dirty work of saving you and me, just because he loved us.

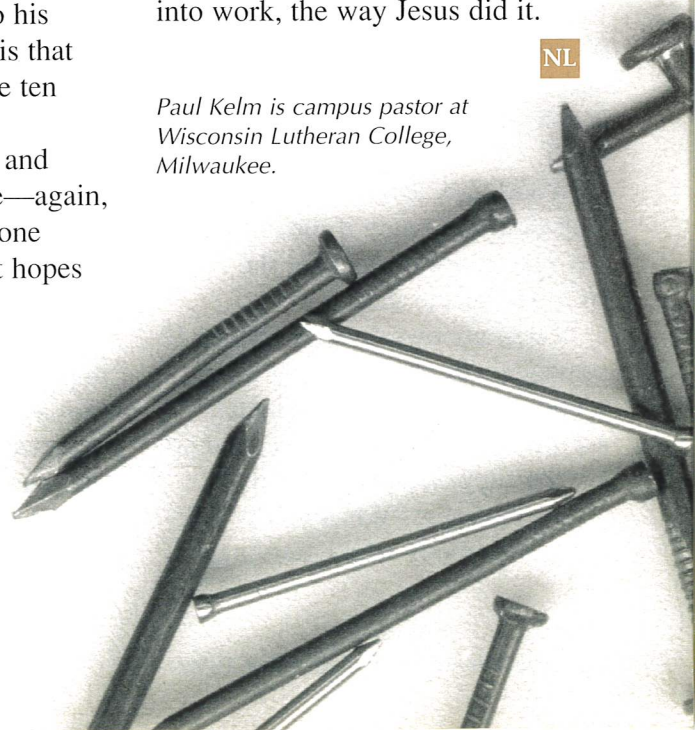
Faithfulness was that Jesus didn’t quit when followers forsook him and enemies conspired against him, when pain racked his body and our guilt tormented his soul, just because he was obedient to his Father’s will. Faithfulness is that my sins are forgiven for the ten thousandth time, that the sun came up this morning, and there was food on the table—again, that my worst fears have gone unrealized, and my fondest hopes have come true.

Faithfulness will be when, on schedule and just as he promised, Jesus returns to take us to be with him forever;

and we get to serve him day and night, as Scripture says, in the perfect faithfulness that now we’re only working on. Faithfulness is faith full of Jesus and poured into work, the way Jesus did it.

NL

*Paul Kelm is campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.*





# Home sweet home

Life on the Apache reservation wasn't easy for Erna Sprengeler—a teacher, missionary's wife, and mother.

Linda R. Baacke

She sits in her chair, puts up her feet, sets her cane by her side, and closes her eyes. Then Erna Sprengeler tells of her 32 years at the WELS mission on the Apache reservation.

"In 1927 I was assigned to East Fork mission school. The faculty at Dr. Martin Luther College (New Ulm, Minn.) was devastated. They didn't think I should go." Every day a professor asked her, "How do you feel?"

With her usual spunk, she said: "Fine! Didn't you teach us to go where we're sent?"

**Still, she was scared.** Not even 22 years old, Erna had never been out of Minnesota.

"I didn't know how to teach phonics. Did I have enough training to go to a people who didn't speak English—not even 'yes' and 'no'? But the missionaries coached me, and I did a lot of praying."

In addition, Erna was told the Apaches didn't care if their children were in school or not. But she wouldn't accept that.

"I was my own truancy officer. If someone was missing, right after school I'd take my thermometer, aspirin, bandages, and salve, and go see the supposedly sick child."

She believes: "When you're talking to somebody who's starving,

you can't tell them about God's kindness and goodness, say 'Amen,' and walk off. You've done nothing. First you feed their tummy. Then you feed their soul."

Her approach was successful.



*Ernie and Erna Sprengler on their wedding day, July 15, 1930.*

"I had very good attendance. The parents knew I would do what I could," says Erna.

Doing "what she could" meant caring for terrible illnesses. "Impetigo was rampant; children had scabs all over their heads and faces. And trachoma, a contagious eye disease, was terrible. I peeled something like fisheggs off their eyelids." She shudders at the thought.

**While Erna was teaching at East Fork, her fiancé, Ernie Sprengeler, was studying at the seminary.** They married in 1930. "Since they wanted me to stay in Arizona, they called my Ernie to the Bylas, Ariz., mission," Erna continues. "His salary was \$80, but since we were getting married, they gave us \$85." Because of that, Ernie would occasionally tell Erna: "You're my \$5 wife." "We wouldn't have gotten through without a sense of humor," says Erna.

A sense of humor was hard to keep during the Depression. Erna shakes her head slightly. "Those were bad, bad days. Once we weren't paid for 10 weeks. We ran up our bill at the trading post to \$500. We were good for it, but what could we do?" she asks.

**Situations got worse before they got better.** The mission bought a government school for \$1. But a law stated that if three people were dissatisfied, the school reverted back to a government school. "Three women didn't like it, so we had to leave the building and the government school reopened." The mission school moved to the church. Of 150 students, only 12 students stayed.

"My husband was devastated. He was so run down he could hardly walk. One day he said, 'I'm gonna lock the door, that's it.'"



"I got angry and said 'Ernie, who gave you permission? The board didn't, synod didn't. Who told you to lock that door? You're not gonna lock it.'"

The school stayed open. Eventually enrollment grew again, and the mission built a modest school—no insulation and definitely no air conditioning.

**The Sprengelers had served in Bylas for 17 years when they moved to East Fork in 1947.** The government was about to close that mission school. "Because we had nothing, the Indians didn't know if we would stay permanently or leave anytime." Ernie took the problem to the synod. "In 10 years, we got six new buildings."

Erna taught about 50 children there. "I don't know how I taught them to read," she puzzles. "We had nothing—no workbooks, no phonics books. We had only reading books the government school discarded.

"I don't know how we did it. But anything for the Lord. Whatever we could accomplish for the Lord's sake."

**Doing "whatever we could accomplish" often meant being overworked.** In 1957, it got the best of Ernie. Early one morning he was snoring (he did that when he was overtired). Erna woke up and thought, "This is different."

She realized he was dying. "He was in my arms, and I'm calling my sons," she says. "I said, 'I think daddy is dying.'"

"He hadn't been sick," Erna explains, sadly but matter-of-factly. "Just overworked."

Her voice softens: "You know, some people think it's gorgeous marrying a pastor." But she dis-

agrees. "The wives are the most lonesome people in the world. The men live for the public. You have all you can do to stay true to your marriage vows."

She explains further. "There was so little time together. Ernie loved to fish and he'd say, 'I'm going out, want to come along?' But I had to make dinner because the kids had to practice basketball, and he had some meeting."

Not fishing with him didn't bother Erna as much as not worshipping with him. "I looked forward to sitting next to him in church when we had furlough—every four years. I thought, 'If I could just sit real close to him and pinch him.'"

But on furlough Ernie said, "I'm supposed to preach here and there and tell about the mission."

So Erna sat alone. "I never got to sit next to him. You know, today is my 66th wedding anniversary. But I've been alone 39 years. It's a lonesome life."

**Erna may have been lonely, but she kept her perspective—and her faith.** "The Lord has shown his love by sending his Son to die for us. We were working for the Lord. There's no glory in it. And hopefully Satan

doesn't get the best of you."

Erna stayed at East Fork two years after her husband died so the children could finish school. "But I was finished with church work. I had such a chip on my shoulder about it," she says.

At age 55, she moved to Winona, Minn., and studied to be a licensed practical nurse. She worked for four years when she went back to teaching.

In 1965, she took a call to Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, Wis., and taught for 10 years—until age 70. "It never dawned on me that I was 60 years old." She laughs. "Here I was out playing ball with those kids. Going down the slide. Making snow forts. Having the time of my life."

It hasn't been an easy life. But it's been a life serving the Lord. And yet, for all the loneliness and hardship, when she gazes at the scenic, panoramic picture on her wall she smiles. "That's the Salt River Canyon in Arizona. Home sweet home."

NL

*Linda Baacke is a communications assistant for WELS Communication Services and Northwestern Lutheran. (see "On the bright side," p. 27)*



*Sprengeler taught these school girls to read and to sew. She also taught so much more. "We're there to teach about God and the only Triune God, so we must preach against their religions. But we should not take their culture or language away from them," says Erna.*



# So, what are these tongues?

Scholars disagree about what tongues are, giving explanations ranging from recognizable foreign languages to demonic deception.

Mark E. Braun

“**T**he charismatic movement,” wrote Larry Christenson, “cannot be reduced simply to speaking in tongues. Yet neither can it be understood or explained apart from tongues.” For David du Plessis, tongues simply “go with” being a Christian.

In contrast, G. Campbell Morgan is credited with calling Pentecostalism “the last vomit of Satan,” and others have dismissed tongues as incoherent gibberish, the “emotional extravagance of the socially deprived,” or “morbid outbursts of psychological misfits.”

So, what are these tongues?

## Recognizable foreign languages

Because the crowd said, “We hear them declaring the wonders of God *in our own tongues!*” (Acts 2:11), most commentators hold that on Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave the disciples recognizable foreign languages. Subsequent accounts of tongues-speaking in Acts are best taken as referring to the same gift.

The purpose of tongues in Acts is also clear: they confirmed the Word for others. At the Jerusalem Council, Peter said, “God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us” (Acts 15:7,8).

Pentecostals occasionally claim they’ve spoken in recognizable but unlearned foreign languages—Hebrew, Nepali, French, Polish, Japanese, and others. One report tells of a missionary in Africa, captured by cannibals. When he began to shake violently and then spoke in their native language, they set him free, and his preaching led to their conversion.

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**Satan can masquerade  
as an angel of light,  
and so God calls on us  
to test the spirits.**

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But if tongues are always recognizable foreign languages, and if, as Douglas Judisch contends (NL, June ’96), the Spirit no longer gives charismatic gifts, most pentecostal claims to tongues-speaking are, at best, well-meaning self-deception. Even Judisch’s supporters, however, question his understanding of 1 Corinthians 13:12.

How can Paul’s phrase, “Then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known,” be descriptive of any state but heaven? How, then, can we determine that tongues will be stilled before we reach heaven?

## Ecstatic, heavenly speech

Many readers see major differences between the tongues at Corinth and those in Acts. At Corinth, no one could understand the tongues, and an interpreter (or translator) was needed. The purpose of the Corinthian tongues was not to confirm the Word to others but for personal edification. In Acts, tongues came on Pentecost and at other pivotal moments. But no special circumstances accompanied the Corinthian tongues. On Pentecost, the Spirit fell on all the disciples, unrequested and beyond their control; at Corinth, not all received tongues, but those who did could exercise control over them.

Some propose that tongues at Corinth—and most tongues today—are not recognizable foreign languages but “ecstatic speech,” which even the speaker doesn’t understand. “Although one does not know what he is saying,” Christenson explains, “he does have a clear sense that he is praying to God.” Sometimes these tongues are also called “heavenly speech,” an (probably inaccurate) allusion to 1 Corinthians 13:1, “Though I speak in the tongues of men and of angels . . .”

What benefit is there in speaking in an unknown tongue? Paul Tournier says tongues help a person “express the inexpressible,” to communicate with God “beyond the lim-



its of clearly intelligible language.” People who know and love each other have many forms of communication: a glance, a look, a sigh, a nod. Tongues are not irrational but a-rational, or superrational.

Others challenge the very term “language” to describe this ecstatic speech. Linguists such as William Samarin and Eugene Nida have examined tape recordings of tongues-speakers and have concluded that tongues contain only “a facade of speech,” strings of “non-language sounds.” Anybody can do it, Samarin says, if he discovers what the “trick” is.

### Physical or psychological explanations

Psychologists (John Kildahl, Wayne Oates, Felicitas Goodman, and others) characterize tongues-speaking as “a form of dissociation”—behavior that functions outside a person’s normal consciousness—and perceive tongues-speakers to be in an altered state. “There is a buildup of tension,” explains Oates. “There is a hypnotic impact of a group or mass, followed by an ecstatic release of tension.” Some have compared tongues-speaking to the release of sexual orgasm, or the relief one feels when a stomach cramp goes away.

Pentecostals want to believe in God passionately. Previous religious experience may have aroused, but not fulfilled, strong spiritual aspirations. They want to feel God and see him at work in their lives. They must fulfill certain conditions to be granted the gift: prayer, obedience, complete submission to Christ’s will. Pentecostals are frequently “coached” to speak in

tongues, under what one observer has labeled “the instinct of the herd”—in an emotional setting, heavily reliant on an authoritative teacher, among group members who already claim the gift, where they are expected to conform.

### Demonic deception

Pseudo-languages are not unique to Christianity. Tongues occur in spiritism, Haitian Voodoo, and the cult of Santeria; among Muslim dervishes, Tibetan monks, and religious shamans. Tongues-speaking has been associated with demon possession and satanic worship. Not every person who speaks an unlearned language is demon-possessed, but neither can every occurrence of tongues be embraced as the gift of the Spirit. God can still give supernatural gifts, but we cannot dictate when and where he should give them. Satan can mas-

querade as an angel of light, and so God calls on us to test the spirits. David Hunt, himself a Pentecostal, nevertheless admits:

Most of what goes on out there in the name of the Holy Spirit is not of God. People have been taught how to pray in tongues, they’ve gone to seminars and been taught how to do miracles or how to heal. . . . It’s not easy to pretend to raise the dead or to deceive yourself into thinking you are raising the dead. But it’s very easy to deceive yourself into thinking you are speaking in tongues or to deceive someone else into thinking you are. Therefore this gift ought to be handled with the most caution.

*Mark Braun is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.*

NL





# Locked up for “life”

True life only comes from having the Holy Spirit in your heart.

Sarah L. Owens

I was sitting in a group of three for Bible study on the unit usually reserved for the older juveniles and more serious offenders. Two of the boys spoke out with spiritually uplifting things to say. Their “church” background shone in the stream of usually downcast and worried faces.

**“Jesus died for people who killed people too.”**

Kenneth, however, stayed quiet, and his head seemed comfortable facing the ground. Early in our talk, one of the more open boys was expressing his faith, talking sincerely about Jesus’ love and forgiveness. Next thing I knew he was looking at Kenneth’s bowed head and telling him, “Jesus died for people who killed people too.”

Kenneth sheepishly raised his head, with an embarrassed look on his face.

The next week there were only two. One of the boys had been sent to a longer-term detention facility. One of the bolder boys was there and again Kenneth.

Yet Kenneth was different. He spoke and looked up at us. He shared a poem one of the other two boys had shown him, from a Bible study book the boy had. This poem talked about being locked up in jail, where there seemingly is no hope or happiness, and yet finding peace through knowing God is there as the Savior, their comforter and protector.



Both boys raved about the poem. Kenneth said he read it several times a day along with his Bible, and it helped support him.

The other boy was called down for court in the middle of our study. I was disappointed to see him leave, but there was a purpose for Kenneth and me having a talk together.

**“I had to have the best of everything.”**

Kenneth had much to say. Time in detention had gotten him think-

ing about the way things were, the way they are, and the way they are going to be. For half an hour, he shared his “life” back on the streets and described his hustling.

“I had to have the best of everything,” he said. “I wanted people to respect me and think I really had it all. I got a new pair of tennis shoes every week because just as soon as I bought a pair to match my outfit, another new pair came on the market, and of course I had to have it. So, I just knew I’d have to sell a



little more drugs or steal something in order to get it. I was always having to watch what I had because people knew I had a lot, and that led to buying guns.”

Kenneth went on to tell me he had to have the biggest, most powerful of these too, and when one was surpassed in greatness, he'd sell it really cheap to someone and take a big loss. This didn't bother him, however, because he knew he'd have better.

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**God's Word did not return void but filled an empty vacuum in an insecure, lost, searching boy, who needed peace badly.**

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So why was he telling me this? He was beginning to see the insanity in it all. He had thought at one time that having these things, selling drugs, being a part of a gang, and watching people die before your eyes was “the life.”

We agreed together that this was the life, the life of death and destruction, of greed, and of the devil. He saw it so clearly now, when he faced much time in jail and prison, perhaps being waived to adult court and tried as an adult.

**“I wouldn't mind more time by myself.”**

That same day Kenneth shared a verse from the Bible that touched his heart. He said that although he was poor in reading, he was getting better. He practiced in his room by reading a verse and then talking to himself about it for a while.

Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit led Kenneth to read Philippians 4. This Word of God said to Kenneth, don't worry about anything, but pray about it to God with a thankful heart, and God will give you peace.

Kenneth also found that true contentment and peace can be available in all situations, rich or poor. But it has nothing to do with having or not having. The true life only comes from having the Holy Spirit in your heart. Once again, God's Word did not return void but filled an empty vacuum in an insecure, lost, searching boy, who needed peace badly.

The following week Kenneth brought a friend. Kenneth had lent his friend his books and again shared his favorite verses. Kenneth said he used to resent “room time.” Now he said, “I'm content in my room because I can read from my Bible and pray. I've been let out of my room a lot lately, and, to tell you the truth, I really wouldn't mind some more time by myself.”

That was the first time I'd heard that!

Kenneth is a new person. His eyes reflect peace. If anyone would have reason to be unsure and nervous, it would be Kenneth. Yet he's not. For he knows Jesus is with him now and always. He knows Jesus is in control of his situation now and always.

Kenneth will now tell you that life with Jesus, even if it's behind locked doors, is truly “the life.” And in heaven, we will experience “the life” in all it's fullness.

NL

*Sarah Owens is deaconess for Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry, Milwaukee.*

Many people physically cannot come to church—so we go to them.

Institutional ministries brings the gospel to the church and unchurched in health care centers, retirement homes, mental health facilities, prisons, halfway houses, hospitals, drug and alcohol treatment centers, and juvenile detention facilities.

Three chaplains and one deaconess serve full-time, and seven chaplains serve part-time, in **Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry (WLIM)**. Volunteers also play an important role. WLIM, primarily in southeastern Wisconsin, has over 70 part-time volunteers who conduct Bible classes in area institutions.

*For more information, contact WLIM, 2949 N Mayfair Rd Ste 101, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/259-8122.*

Dozens of parish pastors also work part-time ministering to the institutionalized under the direction of the synod's **Institutional Ministries Committee**.

Because these pastors have limited time, volunteers are counted on heavily. The Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) helps with a growing program—prison ministry. They run a pen pal program with prisoners and correct the prisoners' completed correspondence courses, which were produced by the Institutional Ministries Committee.

*For more information, contact Pastor Edgar Herman, institutional ministries committee chairman, 25385 E Huron River Dr, Flat Rock MI 48134; 313/782-3726; or WELS Commission on Special Ministries, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3241.*



# Care, not suicide

**You can choose a medical directive statement that will witness to your faith.**

Robert R. Fleischmann

Sooner or later you will face the question, "Do you have a medical directive statement?" Or more specifically, "Do you have a living will?" These are routine questions for anyone entering a hospital or nursing home. Such documents spell out the medical care you want (or don't want) should you become unable to make decisions.

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**Living wills became a contemporary forbidden fruit, authorizing us to become lord and master over life and death—a right distinctly reserved for God.**

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In the past I spoke out against living wills, medical directive statements, and the presumption-to-die mentality (NL, May 15, 1989). Today, I still have little use for most living wills, but I am inclined to look more favorably upon some medical directive statements.

### **God gives us life and responsibility to care for it**

Christians are stewards of the blessings God gives. One of these blessings is the gift of life. Remember the good Samaritan. God wants us to care for human life. On the last day Jesus will welcome believers, "blessed by my Father," to "take [their eternal] inheritance." And he will identify deeds of faith that have helped the lives of others: feeding, clothing, visiting. In

Genesis 9:5, he warns, "And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. . . . And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man."

God calls us to care for the blessing of human life. In that connection, we can reexamine medical directive statements for today.

The first high profile medical directive statement that captured the public's attention was the living will. Euthanasia advocacy groups heavily endorsed this type of document. In contrast to a society that functions with a presumed desire to live, the living will carried the obvious bias to die. Basically it instructed medical personnel not to take certain action or provide certain care if the sustained life lacks a level of desired quality. In essence,

Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell\* didn't have medical directive statements. When Mr. Mitchell went to the hospital, he expressed his wishes orally, but the doctor didn't comply. Instead he ended up on a respirator and had IVs he didn't want—and in fact, weren't necessary. He died, 10 days later, in the hospital.

Mrs. Mitchell didn't want to go through the same struggle.

"She looked at WELS Lutherans for Life documents because she didn't want mistreatment," says John Seifert, pastor at Good Shepherd,

Midland, Mich. "With an attorney's help, she had a durable power of attorney document drawn up."

When Mrs. Mitchell went into the hospital she took the documents with her.

Yet, she ran into some difficulties—her doctor wanted to put her through the same procedures her husband had undergone. She wanted to go back home and be cared for there.

The doctor continued to pressure her. The attorney was called to look over her medical directive state-

ment. Because she had the document, she didn't need to go through any more tests—she could go home.

"The statement was helpful for her," says Seifert. "It was drawn up when she was still in a state of mind to communicate and emphasize her desires and wishes.

"Death is not the last great enemy we fight at all costs," Seifert continues. "She trusted in the Lord Jesus and was called home after a few days."

*\* not their real names*



living wills became a contemporary forbidden fruit, authorizing us to become lord and master over life and death—a right distinctly reserved for God.

That's why I discourage Christians from using living wills. However, my feelings on medical directive statements have changed.

### **A medical directive statement can help preserve the sanctity of life**

A subtle change has taken place in our medical institutions. In the absence of a medical directive statement, a patient is subject to the policies and practices of institutions, which vary significantly. Many institutions now adopt a presumption-to-die mentality masked with such euphemistic terms as "comfort and care." Such terms mean health care providers will try to keep you comfortable once a decision has been made to stop feeding you.

To combat this new mentality, I suggest a medical directive statement that allows you to provide more comprehensive instruction on your medical care. It also allows

you to designate a health care surrogate who can provide direction to the medical staff when you cannot. These documents are specifically designed for selecting a health care surrogate or power of attorney for health care. You should appoint your surrogate with utmost care—someone you trust with your life and who shares your religious convictions.

These medical directive documents provide you, a Christian, the wonderful opportunity to witness to your faith concerning life, health, and salvation. In most cases people retain the services of an attorney to draw up such documents. That works, though most public attorneys show little skill in weaving Christian testimony into such a document.

### **You can act now**

At WELS Lutherans for Life, we have done the weaving. We have developed documents that conform with a majority of state statutes on medical directives and provide a clear profession of faith. If you purchase these documents, you will not need legal counsel to complete the

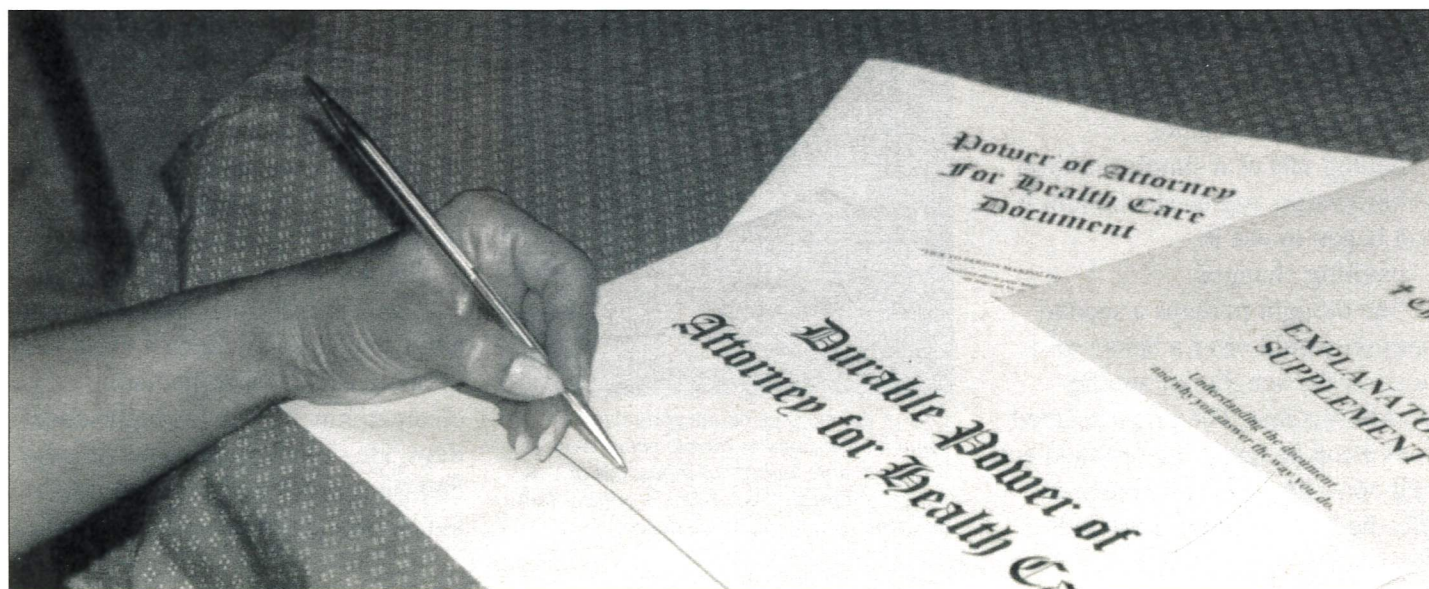
document. WELS Lutherans for Life has used attorneys from around the country to create these documents. An accompanying "Explanatory Supplement" instructs individuals on how to fill one out. Most important, this supplemental piece will not merely tell you what option will select, but will explain why you should select an option.

When abortion became legalized in 1973, many claimed it was the beginning of a slippery slope of the eroding value of life. The trend in medicine and medical directive statements reflects this slide. If there is ever a time to give a clear and correct Christian witness on life issues, now is the time.

NL

*Robert Fleischmann is the national director for WELS Lutherans for Life.*

*Durable Power of Attorney Documents may be purchased from WELS Lutherans for Life, 2949 N Mayfair Road Ste. 309, Milwaukee WI 53222-4304; 414/774-1331; 1-800-729-9535.*





# Trashed idols

The peace of Jesus freed those held captive by fear.

Kevin I. Stellick

Mrs. Jung was successful in real estate and well-known in her village of Shulin. Her family life, however, was a mess. Her relationship with her husband was in trouble. At times he did not seem emotionally stable. He would talk of becoming a monk. He was seldom at home. He abused her and her two daughters. The mother and girls seldom slept well. In fact, for years their fears caused them to keep the lights on while they slept. Mrs. Jung and her daughters said they sensed a presence of evil in their home.

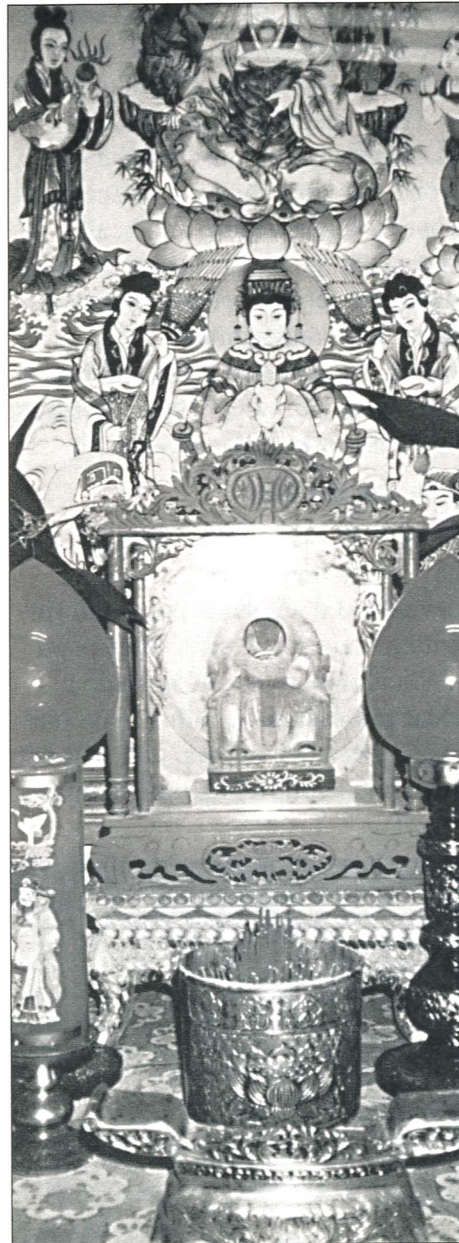
## They always needed more money

What do you do when faced with problems? Seek assistance, right? Mrs. Jung did just that. She went to her friends. With good intentions, they pointed her to local temples and Buddhist priests. The priests told her which gods to worship. They told her if she burned a special kind of incense her life would get better. The incense costs U.S. \$200/pound and burns less than a month.

Seeing this as a simple solution to her restless nights she bought it and began to use it.

Nothing changed.

She thought perhaps a second opinion would offer a better solution, so she sought out another Buddhist priest. The priest seemed convinced he knew the problem and told Mrs. Jung that in a previous life she had killed her husband



*One of the more elaborate god tables. In some homes, families devote entire rooms for their god table and spend thousands of U.S. dollars to furnish them. Some also have fruit on them, an offering to the dead.*

(most people in Taiwan believe in reincarnation). Now she was receiving evil back for the evil she had previously committed.

Could this bad luck be changed? Could she find a higher power to defeat the evil in her life? Starting at a few hundred U.S. dollars, advisors were hired to try to get rid of the evil. Immediately after their "help," there was relative peace for a few days. Things, however, got worse. The advisors came again, but now they needed twice as much money to get results. They always needed more money.

## Things got worse

Well-meaning friends suggested buying some Buddhist works of art and putting them on the god altar in her home. Traditional families will attach a small platform to the wall and place on it their images and ancestral tablets, tablets with the names of their deceased relatives. Burning incense and placing offerings for the dead are common.

Another person suggested buying a highly recommended pure crystal ball worth several thousand dollars.

She bought it; things got worse.

It was at this time Mrs. Jung met Mr. Chen at a high school class reunion. She noticed he had changed much from his high school days. He seemed like someone who had things together and would listen, so she started sharing her story.



## Only Jesus could help

Mr. Chen, a Christian and co-worker in one of our Taipei churches, knew immediately she was caught in a situation only Jesus could handle. He set up a time to visit her the next week.

Taking a Christian friend, Mr. Chen shared with her how he too had once felt these “gods” and images were very “ling” (Chinese for “lucky and powerful”). But 10 years earlier, he had thrown all of his images and idols into the river. He realized that whatever power these images offered—and they certainly seemed to have power—came from an evil source, Satan.

**Whatever power these images offered—and they certainly seemed to have power—came from an evil source, Satan.**

He shared with her the only power able to free us from evil, from fear, from sin—the power and love of Jesus. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name, under heaven, given to men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

### The idols had to go

The Holy Spirit worked through the Word of God shared with Mrs. Jung. That very night she became a follower of Jesus. Now she wondered, “What shall I do with the idols?” With the assurance that Jesus rules over all powers and protects all who call on his name, she



*Chen Dien Ming and his family at Fountain of Grace Lutheran Church. Mr. Chen's son was confirmed in May 1996. Mr. Chen's witness of faith helped Mrs. Jung out of her cycle of beseeching pagan gods for guidance.*

was prepared to get rid of all the idols (monetary value \$10,000 U.S.). She decided that night to throw out all the gods, images, and good luck charms she had accumulated. (Her husband was at a monastery that night, contemplating becoming a monk.)

Praying for Jesus' peace and protection over this family, Mr. Chen and his friend carried all of the idols and altar objects out to the junkpile.

### “We have peace.”

The next day, Missionary Siirila went with Mr. Chen to visit Mrs. Jung. “How did you sleep last night?” they asked.

“Because of Jesus, this is the first night in years that we slept through the night!” Mrs. Jung exclaimed. “We have peace.” Her face was shining with the joy of a child of God who has returned home to her Father.

Mrs. Jung could not find the answer to her problems in anything

in this world. She sought peace. She tried to buy it, but it could not be bought. The power of the gospel of Christ defeated the spells of Satan. The power of the gospel of Jesus Christ cleared the way for her to see Jesus as her Savior.

Do we have any idols in our lives? Work? An unholy desire for success at all costs? Anything that takes God out of first place in our lives becomes our idol. We, too, can fix our eyes on Jesus. With Christ Jesus as our focal point in life, we will find true peace and meaning for this life and eternal life in heaven.

Pray for God's help to get rid of the obstacles blocking the way to Christ and real peace. Pray for Mrs. Jung and her family that the seed of faith now planted will grow and mature.

NL

*Thanks to Missionary Siirila for assisting with this article.*

*Kevin Stellick is a missionary in Taichung, Taiwan, Republic of China.*



# God had a plan

**A woman relates how God's patient, compassionate, loving hand guided her life.**

**Mary Hildebrandt**

**T**wenty years ago I lost my brother to suicide. I was devastated. I felt guilty—I should have seen it coming; I should have helped him. The church could not bury him, and I was hurt. I was embarrassed whenever I walked into church because I would burst into tears. So I stopped going.

To help my recovery, I got a job but worked Sundays—another excuse to stay away. I continued to be angry. I wanted peace and contentment but couldn't find it. I expected this world, the people, and the things in it to give me what I needed. But it wasn't there.

## **God wasn't giving up on me**

I thought I found what I needed when God sent me a Christian friend who shared her unshakable faith. But suddenly God took her home.

My problems kept getting worse until serious financial setbacks caused me to cry out to the Lord. I prayed for God to take away my trouble and give me the peace I desperately wanted.

God answered my prayers, but not the way I expected. He had his plan for me. He gave me one more problem; it was a blessing in disguise. I came down with cardiomyopathy. Something damaged the outer muscle of my heart—probably a flu virus—and I was left with only 25 percent function

of my heart. There was no cure.

I was weak and helpless. I had no strength to deal with my problems, so I gave them to the Lord. Only he could solve them. I asked him to lead the way. My life was totally in his hands.

## **God planned a miracle**

Unable to work, I wondered what I would do with my time. I spent it resting. Lying on my bed, I picked up the Bible my friend had given me and read about the wonderful things God did for me. In his mercy, he sent his Son to die on the cross for my sins. Christ rose from the dead to return to heaven where he has a place for me.

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**God never promised  
to satisfy our every want,  
only to provide for our  
needs. He will never  
let us down.**

---

God led me back to church and Bible class, where I learned the joy of studying God's Word. The pastors assured me that Jesus fully paid for my sins on the cross, and I didn't have to do anything to atone for them. I could spend my time finding ways to thank my Lord and telling others the gospel.

I joined the choir, although at times I didn't have enough breath to sing with a strong voice. My voice dropped so low I joined the tenor section, but I could still sing praises to my Lord. I joined the church's over-55 social group, where I was reacquainted with friends who gave me support and comfort. My family pulled together to support me. Four co-workers took me out to breakfast once a month. Good things were happening, and God allowed me to see his wonderful plan unfold, bringing me peace and contentment.

My condition remained stable for three and a half years. With encouragement from another Christian friend, I returned, in a small way, the support I received from others. I joined the Agape program at church and the reading buddy program at school, both involving one-on-one contact.

The outpouring of love and support overwhelmed me. My life was fuller and richer. My problems stayed in God's hands. I was content to let my illness run its course, because in the end I would be happy in heaven with my Lord.

But that wasn't part of God's plan for me.

## **God answered all the prayers**

I needed a heart transplant to save my life. At first I said no. But my family and doctors encouraged



me to try for the long waiting list. After talking it over with my pastor, I decided to go on the list and leave the rest in God's hands.

In January 1995, my heart weakened further, and in May I began extensive testing. On June 29 I was officially put on the bottom of the waiting list.

People had been praying for me since my heart condition began, but now the prayers were multiplying. Christians from four different churches—my own and my three children's—members of my extended family, friends, school children, and even strangers were remembering me in their prayers. God heard those prayers, as he hears and answers prayers of Christians everywhere.

While I was going through medical tests, my oldest daughter was planning a July 29 wedding. Because of my blood type and

small size, I probably would not have the usual long wait for a matching heart. I should be ready at any time—in a week, a month, a year. We laughingly said, "Not before the wedding!" But God had his plan for me. I was not to wait.

The call came on July 22 at 4 PM as I was preparing to attend the Saturday church service. Within an hour, another call confirmed that this was a definite match, and I was to come to the hospital immediately. By 10 PM I was in surgery, and early Sunday morning God gave me a strong new heart from an 11-year-old girl who was killed in a car accident. Her parents donated all of her organs.

My recovery was smooth and uncomplicated. It went so well that I was released from the hospital six days after the transplant—just in time for my daughter's wedding. Another miracle from God.

### God will never leave me

My home recovery has been remarkable. I don't know what God has planned for me now, but I know he is always with me and will never leave me. The problems I worried about are slowly being resolved, and though we have lost our financial cushion for retirement, God is providing for our every need. He never promised to satisfy our every want, only to provide for our needs. He will never let us down.

God is gracious and good. He answers when we come to him in prayer. He overwhelmed me with his love. I have seen his patient, compassionate, loving hand guiding my life. And I pray I recognize the opportunities he sets before me.

NL

*Mary Hildebrandt is a member at Grace, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.*



*God's plan for Mary Hildebrandt included seeing her daughter get married. On July 22, 1995 Mary had a heart transplant. She was released just in time for her daughter's wedding on July 29.*





## WELS men—getting into the Word



*Men of all ages gathered for a Christian men's convocation. Over 500 men attended the convocation which preceded the opening service of the Western Wisconsin district convention. Everyone attending was given two Bible studies—one for home use and one for their home churches' Bible study.*

Women have had them for years. Now WELS men are getting equal time. Retreats. A time to get away from it all, while getting into the Word.

Men's retreats are being planned around the country. One is set for Sept. 6-7 at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. It will focus on "the basics of life." Another, on Nov. 16, is at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. The variety of topics will be based solidly on Scripture and what it says to men.

A third, focusing on Lutheran leadership, is in place at Estes Park, Colo., on Nov. 1. Others are tentatively planned in St. Louis, Mo.; St. Paul, Minn.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and the South Atlantic district.

Ones that have already been held

have been successful. In June, a men's convocation preceded the Western Wisconsin district convention. Over 500 men attended the two-hour presentation. The men were given two Bible studies to take back. One is for personal, home Bible study, and the other is for congregational use.

Mike Hellwig, former vicar at St. John, Baraboo, Wis., said, "People at the convocation came away with a renewed sense of getting into the Word and being in the loving role God has given them."

*For information on the Camp Phillip retreat, contact Terry Pope, 414/422-0453. Milwaukee retreat, contact David Timm, 414/771-6848; 1-800-466-9357. Estes Park retreat, contact Pastor Raddatz, 970/867-5500.*

## Volunteer Corps expanding

"I want to see people asking 'What part can I play in the mission of the church?'" says John Wiederhold. Wiederhold is the administrator of the Christian Volunteer Corps, a division of WELS Kingdom Workers.

"The Lord blessed us in many ways and has people serving in many capacities. There's a lot of skills out there. We just need to put them to use."

Often volunteers help with the administrative and maintenance responsibilities of world missions, taking the burden off the called staff. Many also teach English or offer medical assistance.

Yet volunteers aren't needed only in world missions, but also in congregations closer to us. "It could be working for a citywide vacation Bible school project, or helping neighboring churches with mission outreach, or establishing a relationship with missions across the country or the world," says Wiederhold. "The work of the Lord doesn't have a fence. It starts in your own neighborhood and carries out through the world."

*For information on the volunteer opportunities available, see the issue of Mission Connection, available at your congregation, or contact John Wiederhold at 414/771-6848 or 1-800-466-9357.*

## Obituaries

### Julius August Wantoch 1915-1996

Julius August Wantoch was born Oct. 2, 1915 in Hoskins, Neb. He died Jan. 12, 1996 in Minnetonka, Minn.

A 1936 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, Wantoch served schools in Sanborn, Acoma, and Faribault, all in Minn., and Benton Harbor, Mich.

He is survived by wife Ardell, two brothers, and one sister.

### Gerhard Martin Cares 1914-1996

Gerhard Martin Cares was born Nov. 10, 1914 in Hemlock, Mich. He died May 28, 1996 in Watertown, Wis.

A 1940 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Cares served Christ, Swan; and Zion, Monroe, both in Mich.

He is survived by wife Eleonore, four children, one sister, and 14 grandchildren.

### Edna Schnitker 1900-1996

Edna Schnitker (nee Fritz) was born July 2, 1900 in Wels, Minn. She died May 29, 1996 in New Ulm, Minn.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, she served in Oconomowoc, Wis.

She is survived by one daughter, five grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, two sisters, and one brother.



## Natural disasters hit WELS churches

Less than 20 minutes before the Thursday evening service was to begin, guest preacher Bill Flynn stepped out the door of St. Luke, Oakfield, Wis. He saw the tornado headed right for the church. Flynn, a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary student, and the people who had already arrived for church ran into the school basement—just in time.

“Everything started shaking,” Flynn said at the following Sunday’s service. “I didn’t even have time to utter a prayer. I just got out ‘O Lord, O Lord.’ And all of a sudden it stopped.”

They came out of the basement and saw nothing but sky—no building, no walls. Only rubble.

Once again natural disasters have swept through the lives of WELS members. A tornado on July 18 demolished St. Luke’s church and school. It also destroyed as many as 24 members’ homes. Miraculously, no one was killed.

Pick-up trucks showed up the next day to start the clean-up. The congregation is amazingly organized. Within the day, they set four priorities on the clean-up schedule. The first was meeting members’ needs. The second was cleaning up debris. Then came rebuilding the school and, following that, the church.

Although it hurts to see their church as a pile of rubble, the congregation is looking forward to rebuilding. They already put plans together for a new church design.

Just hours south of Oakfield, in Aurora, Ill., WELS members also faced natural disaster tragedy. In July, near national record rainfall overwhelmed the city with 16.9 inches of rain in 24 hours. The rain caused severe flooding throughout the city.

Resurrection, Aurora, was not damaged, but the homes, contents, and cars of eight or nine families were completely lost.



*The picture of Jesus knocking at the door was one of the only parts of the church left standing after a tornado hit St. Luke, Oakfield, Wis. The rest of the church and school was completely destroyed.*



*A St. Luke member’s home. The owner of the house was sitting on his couch when the tornado hit. The home was demolished, the man was unharmed, still sitting on the couch—on the other side of the street.*

What does WELS do to help those whose lives are touched by tragedy? In 1995, through WELS Committee on Relief, WELS members gave almost \$400,000 to help those hurt by war, terrorism, hurricanes, fire, tornadoes, floods, and to families in need, both in and outside of the U.S.

The relief committee is a non-budgetary fund. Aid is given based on individual donations. To help your fellow Christians, send gifts to the Committee on Relief, WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. For more information, contact Pastor Kenneth Strack, relief committee chairman, 517/423-3716 (office) or 517/423-2621 (home).





## LGP national convention held

About 130 people from Canada and the United States enjoyed worship, meetings, workshops, and fellowship at the Lutheran Girl Pioneer national convention in Lansing, Mich., in May.



Participants celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Sunbeams, a program for girls in kindergarten and grades one and two.

The following national council officers were elected: Joann Janssen, president; Kathy Knobloch, vice president; Diana Widdifield, secretary; Mary Deyo, treasurer.

The next national convention will be in Milwaukee in 1998.



**CORRECTION:** *Soul Search* (Code 5176) and *The Promise* (Code 5175) are available from Northwestern Publishing House at a **rental** rate of \$5.00. They are not to be ordered from Mass Media as was reported in the August issue.

Rent these videos from Audiovisual Library Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

## District news

### Dakota-Montana

**John Ruege** is taking a one-year sabbatical from serving as pastor at Peace, Isabel, S.D., to travel to Novosibirsk, Russia with his wife, Dorothy. He left Aug. 11 and will teach English and basic Christian doctrines using the *Communicating Christ* tapes in Russian and an interpreter.

*Phil Paustian*

### Minnesota

Construction on the **campus house in Mankato** is proceeding well. Volunteers have been painting the new facilities. On Sept. 15, dedication starts at St. Paul, N. Mankato and continues at the building site. . . . Immanuel, Buffalo, Minn., honored **Walter Gutknecht**, who is retiring after teaching Sunday school for 50 years.

*Jeffrey Bovee*

### Michigan

**Cross of Glory, Washington, Mich.**, dedicated a new church organ April 21. . . . In the annual golf tournament between the **pastors of the Michigan and Southeastern Wisconsin districts**, the Michigan district pastors won 435-468. "Hail to the conquering heroes. . . ."

*David M. Zahn*

### South Atlantic

**Crown of Life, New Orleans, La.**, and **Trinity, Abita Springs, La.**, held a family retreat, filled with Bible study, fellowship, singing, and relaxing, at a state park on Lake Ponchartrain on April 26-28. . . . **Grace, Spring Hill, Fla.**, held an Easter for kids this year. Of the 26 children attending, 20 were unchurched. . . . More than 50 people attended a workshop for elders, church musicians and Sunday school staffs hosted by **Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.**, in April.

### South Central

**Good Shepherd, The Woodlands, Tex.**, dedicated its first worship facility on Jan. 14. Good Shepherd is a mission congregation in the Houston area. . . . King of Kings, Alexandria, La., hosted a 40th anniversary celebration for its pastor, **Richard Seeger**, on June 2. . . . **Grace, Lowell, Ark.**, dedicated its new worship facility on Sept. 24, 1995. . . . **Abiding Savior, Weslaco, Tex.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary on Nov. 12, 1995. . . . **Abiding Word, Houston, Tex.**, dedicated a new worship facility on Dec. 3, 1995.

*Charles Learman*

### Western Wisconsin

On April 14, St. Matthew, Marathon, Wis., presented **Violet Gresens** a plaque of recognition for 50 years of playing piano and organ for St. Matthew.

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- teachers

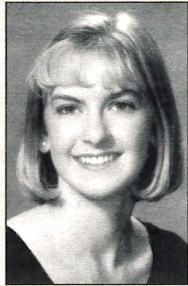
Write or call to let us know how and, if you want, why—you shared your copy. We'll send you another. Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3232; FAX 414/256-3899.



## YOUTH NEWS

Please send photos or news on teen activities to: youth news, *Northwestern Lutheran*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

**Mollie Schweppe** traveled to Spain as a winner of the Bay City Times/Parade magazine Young Columbus contest. While in Spain, Schweppe and 150 other youths met



with U.S. and Spanish dignitaries and visited local schools and historical sites. Judges selected the winners by essays, grade transcripts, letters of reference, extracurricular activities, and personal interviews. Schweppe is a member at St. John, Bay City, Mich.

**David Kogler** and **Carrie McLees**, juniors at St. Croix LHS, West St. Paul, Minn., attended the St. Paul Rotary Club Youth Leadership conference. The conference taught leadership skills in a county government setting. Participants were recommended and sponsored by their school and local rotary clubs.

**Brandon Ehinger** and his team from the Manufacturing Engineering Technology program at Libbey High School, Toledo, Ohio, took first place with their medallion-stamping machine in the Student Robotics Automation contest, a national robotics competition. A total of 14 high schools participated. Ehinger is a member of Arlington Ave., Toledo, Ohio.

**Mark LeBon**, a student at Santa Rita High School, Tucson, Ariz., was regional champion of Arizona and California in GoKart racing at the Super Stock division this year. He placed 11th in his division in the grand nationals of speedway GoKarting in Concordia, Kan. He has been racing #3 GoKarts for eight years. LeBon is a member at Holy Cross, Tucson, Ariz.



The **Lady Vikings of Wisconsin LHS**, Milwaukee, captured WLHS's first ever state championship in softball this spring. The team defeated Notre Dame, Green Bay, Wis., Divine Savior, Milwaukee, and Milwaukee Lutheran in state competition for this honor. The Lady Vikings are coached by George Mortl.

**Leigh Ann LaFave**, an eighth grader, pitched shutout ball in state and regional play for the Escanaba girls' Major League All-Stars in 1995. Escanaba took fifth place in the World Championships in Portland, Ore., after winning the Michigan State Championship and the Midwest Regionals. This year, LaFave is a member of the Escanaba girls' Major League All-Stars in the 13- through 15-year-old age bracket. They competed in the Michigan State Championship in July. LaFave is a member at St. Paul, Bark River, Mich.

## Bringing Christ to a diverse community

What began in El Paso, Tex., 30 years ago, as an outreach to the Spanish-speaking community, God now uses as a vehicle to bless and save "all sorts and conditions" of people within commuting distance of San Juan Lutheran Church.

San Juan, celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, consists of former Roman Catholics, non-Lutheran Protestants, Muslims, atheists, agnostics, and a handful of "born-Lutherans."

"We are brown-skinned, black-skinned, pink-skinned, and every other shade except 'thin-skinned,'" said Pastor James Connell. "All we have in common are our sins and our Savior."

The congregation has only had a

full-time pastor since 1989. Prior pastors had duties that extended beyond the congregation—teaching seminary classes, supervising the Mexican national church, and conducting mass communications for Latin America.

Now San Juan has nearly 100 souls. It has a church council, ladies' group, a corps of dedicated Sunday school teachers, and best of all, a congregation of faithful Christians whose diversity rivals that of the Tower of Babel. It not only offers public worship and religious instruction in Spanish and English but also has people who could offer it in languages as diverse as Arabic, Indonesian, and several dialects of Nigerian.

Over the past 30 years, thousands of people have heard and seen the message of San Juan through pastoral visits, canvasses for VBS, inquirers' classes, and food pantry and anti-drug programs, as well as bilingual worship services. Thousands more have passed the church with its wooden cross as they travel the nearby streets.

San Juan is not about difficulties or triumphs. Even less is it about statistics of membership and finances. San Juan's sole reason for being is to bring the authentic Christ, through Word and sacrament, to as many people as it possibly can.

*Javier Tostado  
President, San Juan, El Paso*





## DISTRICT CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS



*Dr. Arthur Schulz, vice president for educational ministry at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., presented an MLC medallion for the district to district president Marcus Nitz. Each district received a medallion, which marks the birth of MLC, and recognizes the districts' importance to MLC's mission.*

### ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA

**Synodical restructuring:** The district recommended the Synodical Restructuring Committee (SRC) to "reconsider the ratio of laymen to called workers on the proposed Synodical Council in an effort to achieve equal voting representation." The convention otherwise approved the committee's extensive work and recommended presentation to the 1997 WELS convention.

### DAKOTA-MONTANA

**Synodical schools:** The delegates recommended that the district encourage the Board for Ministerial Education to slow the rate of tuition increase at synodical schools and to seek ways to increase financial assistance to students through voluntary gifts.

**Synodical restructuring:** Delegates agreed in principle with the proposals and urged the SRC to present the proposals to the 1997 synod convention for ratification.

### MICHIGAN

**Martin Luther College:** They advised the Board for Ministerial Education to lower tuition and room and board fees at Martin Luther

College, New Ulm, Minn., to a rate consistent with synodical support of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

**Delegate ratio:** The district will petition the 1997 synod convention to rescind the synod's "50/50 balance" convention delegate representation.

**Synodical restructuring:** Delegates recommended the SRC report be adopted in principle along with the proposed constitutional changes, but that district and synodical officers continue to be elected to two-year terms.

**Home schools:** The district Commission on Parish Schools (CPS) will study ways to assist home schooling families, and the synod's CPS was urged to offer more materials and assistance to home schoolers.

### MINNESOTA

**Synodical restructuring:** The delegates resolved that the SRC's proposed constitutional and bylaw changes be presented to the 1997 synod convention for adoption.

### NEBRASKA

**Mission board:** The Colorado mission district board will add a pastor and a layman to its board. The Colorado mission board, with the members of St. John, Montrose, Colo., received three years of funding for assistance in the ministry to the Cora Indians and other Spanish-speaking people in the area.

**Nebraska Lutheran High School:** NELHS, Waco, will enter a program to fund building expansion.

**Synodical restructuring:** The district concurred with the proposal to restructure the synod's governing boards.

### NORTH ATLANTIC

**Martin Luther College:** The district urged Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., to place emphasis on other cultures by offering French and

Spanish courses, and more personal training in working with other cultures.

**Synodical restructuring:** Convention delegates recommended that the synod convention adopt the proposals for restructuring.

### NORTHERN WISCONSIN

**Synodical restructuring:** Delegates concurred in principle with the recommendations of the SRC, but suggested further study into several issues. They recommended that the synod in convention take the necessary steps to incorporate WELS whether WELS restructures or not.

### PACIFIC NORTHWEST

**Synodical restructuring:** The convention overwhelmingly supported the recommendations of the SRC.

**Laity Sundays:** District conventions and conferences will continue to be held on weekends so lay delegates may attend. Those Sundays will be designated as district-wide Laity Sundays, in which laymen conduct congregational services in the pastor's absence.

**Bible study:** Recognizing that, according to synod statistics, only 12 percent of members, 15 percent of post-confirmation teenagers, and 6 percent of councilmen and elders attend formal Bible study, the district will encourage the parish services division "to develop a congregational self-study to aid congregations in discovering the unique underlying causes for such low attendance."

### SOUTH ATLANTIC

**Synodical restructuring:** The convention urged the 1997 synod convention to adopt the SRC's recommendations. It thanked the SRC's members and everyone else who helped carry out "this Herculean task to the glory of our Savior and for the benefit and welfare of our synod."



**SOUTH CENTRAL**

**Synodical restructuring:** The delegates encouraged the reorganization plan be presented to the 1997 synod convention.

**Martin Luther College:** Delegates acknowledged that dedicated work made the amalgamation of synod schools possible, but voiced concern about the final cost of the building programs and the greater than anticipated cost of the school operations.

**Visitor highlights:** Ahmad Sedaghat, raised as a Muslim, shared the story of his coming to faith in Jesus. Sedaghat grew up in Teheran, Iran. While working in Japan, he came in contact with WELS missionaries. Ahmad came here to attend

Martin Luther College to prepare to become a pastor. He has been living in Houston, Tex., with Vicar Daniel Habben, whom he met in Japan.

Another welcomed guest was Mitsuo "Timothy" Haga, a member of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church, Japan. He is also preparing to be a pastor.

**SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN**

**Synodical restructuring:** The delegates concurred that the recommendations and proposed constitutional and bylaw changes be presented to the 1997 synod convention for adoption.

**Multicultural preseminary program:** Delegates commended the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) for recognizing the need to

recruit multicultural students for the pastoral ministry but passed along concerns for the BME to consider.

**WESTERN WISCONSIN**

**Christian men's convocation:** Under the theme "Be Men of Courage," 500 men attended a convocation that preceded the convention. Bible studies were available to take home. The district will work to make this an annual event for WELS men.

**Synodical restructuring:** The district resolved "that these recommendations and proposed constitutional and bylaw changes be presented to the 1997 synod convention for adoption." Concern, however, was voiced over the burden of the synod president in his role as "pastor" of the synod.

*Thanks to the district reporters and district secretaries for providing this information.*

**The following men, all parish pastors, were elected at this summer's 12 district conventions. They will hold these positions for two years.**

**DISTRICT OFFICERS****Arizona-California**

Marcus Nitz, president  
Philip Koelpin, first vice president  
Paul Janke, second vice president  
Allen Schroeder, secretary

**Dakota-Montana**

Peter Naumann, president  
Douglas Free, first vice president  
Wayne Rouse, second vice president  
Paul Marggraf, secretary

**Michigan**

John Seifert, president  
Gerald Schroer, first vice president  
Paul Naumann, second vice president  
James Seelow, secretary

**Minnesota**

Larry Cross, president  
Ron Uhlhorn, first vice president  
Charles Degner, second vice president  
Phil Hoyer, secretary

**Nebraska**

Joel Frank, president  
Philip Zarling, first vice president  
David Russow, second vice president  
Keith Petersen, secretary

**North Atlantic**

Walter Beckmann, president  
Thomas Zarling, first vice president  
Donald Tollefson, second vice president  
Brett Voigt, secretary

**Northern Wisconsin**

Douglas Engelbrecht, president  
Paul Kolander, first vice president  
Gerald Free, second vice president  
Ronald Szep, secretary

**Pacific Northwest**

Warren Widmann, president  
Theodore Lambert, first vice president  
Douglas Weiser, second vice president

Gary Kraklow, secretary

**South Atlantic**

John Guse, president  
Keith Kruck, first vice president  
James Pope, second vice president  
Robert Krueger, secretary

**South Central**

Vilas Glaeske, president  
Mark Bitter, first vice president  
Donald Patterson, second vice president  
John Liebenow, secretary

**Southeastern Wisconsin**

David Rutschow, president  
James Huebner, vice president  
Mark Jeske, second vice president  
Robert Pasbrig, secretary

**Western Wisconsin**

Herbert Prah, president  
Mark Zarling, first vice president  
David Fischer, second vice president  
Mark Johnston, secretary





Most news reported in this section is derived from Religion News Service. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of WELS or Northwestern Lutheran.

## Charitable giving surges in 1995

Overall giving to U.S. charities surged more than 10 percent in 1995 with Americans giving a total of \$144 billion to non-profit groups.

The American Association of Fund Raising Counsel's Trust for Philanthropy's report cited the stock market rally and higher personal income as primary reasons for the sharp increase.

Religious contributions grew by only five percent, but nevertheless continued to take the largest share of contributions—\$63.4 billion of the \$144 billion given to charities.



In broad categories other than religion the report said donors gave

- 17% more to charities helping society and the public,
- 12.5% more to environment and wildlife groups,
- 9% more to health groups, and
- 8% more to educational institutions.

## Burned at the stake by mistake?

The Vatican is "reconsidering" the case of Jan Hus, the Bohemian reformer who was executed in 1415 as a heretic. But the Vatican is not planning to rehabilitate him, according to a spokesperson for the Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Republic.

A Czech newspaper claimed that Rome would exonerate Hus this year.

The newspaper Lidove Noviny also claimed that the Vatican was considering Hus's beatification. Miloslav Fiala, the spokesperson for the Czech Bishops' Conference, said although the case of Hus was being "reconsidered" by the Vatican, "the aim is not Hus's rehabilitation or canonization, only an objective re-evaluation of his work."

## Fear of death

Because they have the hope of heaven, a majority of Lutherans aren't afraid of death. According to a recent national survey of 1,632 Lutherans conducted for Lutheran Brotherhood,

79 percent aren't afraid of death, although 21 percent admit to this fear.

Surprisingly, Lutherans' fear of death increases with their income levels.

SALARY	PERCENT WHO FEAR DEATH
less than \$25,000	18%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	20%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	25%
\$75,000 or more	26%

Age also affects one's fear of death.

- 30%** of young Boomer Lutherans (ages 30 to 44) fear death
- 28%** of Generation X Lutherans (under age 30)
- 20%** of pre-retirees (ages 45 to 64)
- 12%** of those age 65 or more say they fear death.

Lutheran Brotherhood did not indicate how many respondents came from each Lutheran body or if the results varied from one to another. —ed.

## Committee rejects plea for Russian ban on missionaries

A call by the Russian Orthodox Church to ban missionary work of foreigners in Russia has been rejected by the Committee on Religious and Public Organizations of the State of Duma (the lower chamber of the Russian Parliament).

However, the committee did give its approval to draft law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations."

If the new draft law is passed, foreign religious organizations will be required to submit to the Russian government their "charter or another basic document," certified by the respective government body of their country of origin, as well as a description of their religious teaching and practice, and a statement of intent.



## Many laborers, more needed

In spite of the work of 4,500 missions agencies, 3,200 Christian broadcasting stations, and annual world missions expenditures of \$10.5 billion, 20 percent of the world's population has yet to hear about Jesus Christ.

If the present pace of evangelization continues, 16 percent of the earth's inhabitants will still be without the gospel by the year 2000, the date by which many organizations hoped to complete the evangelization of the entire world.

[National and International Religion Report, Feb. 19; quoted in Current Thoughts and Trends, May]



## Canada moves to limit church control of schools

When Newfoundland became part of Canada in 1949 it did so with the agreement that its schools, although funded by the government, would be run along denominational lines.

But on June 3, the Canadian House of Commons, citing the cost of maintaining 27 separate school boards in the impoverished province, voted to ratify a constitutional amendment

limiting the power churches maintain over schools.

The vote was in response to a referendum adopted by Newfoundland voters to reform the school system. If approved by Canada's Senate, the amendment would allow the Newfoundland government to merge schools of different religions, eliminate school boards, and bus students to the nearest school, rather than to a school of the student's religious affilia-

## Presbyterians oust executive director

In a sign of grassroots discontent with denominational leadership, the executive director of the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s General Assembly Council lost his bid for a second four-year term.

In what was expected to be a rubber-stamp vote, delegates to the denomination's General Assembly surprisingly refused to confirm Rev. James D. Brown as the leader of the council, which represents the church body outside of the annual meetings.

"There is an air of general discontent and a feeling of disconnection out in the church, a sense that things

just aren't being run well in Louisville," said Jerry Van Marter, news director for the Presbyterian Church (USA), headquartered in Louisville, Ky.

Van Marter listed reasons for discontent, among them a perceived lack of firm council leadership; dissatisfaction with the denomination's continuing debate over ordaining homosexuals; and fallout from the controversial "Re-imagining" feminist theology conference in 1993, in which some Presbyterian staff members were involved.

## Singapore woman convicted for owning Bible

A 72-year-old grandmother in Singapore was convicted of owning a banned Bible and literature published by the Jehovah's Witnesses—her religious denomination. Yu Nguk Ding, a retired nurse, faces up to two years in jail.

Her case is one of many stemming from a crackdown on the group last year in which 64 Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested. The Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in Singapore

in 1972 because male followers refused to perform compulsory military duty.

Although people are allowed to have Bibles in Singapore, they cannot have Bibles produced by the Jehovah's Witness' publishing arms—the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and the International Bible Student Association. Yu's Bible was printed by Watchtower.

## Case barring cross rejected

A lower court barred the city of Edmond, Okla., from displaying a Christian cross on its official seal. Then the U.S. Supreme Court refused an appeal by the city to overrule the lower court's decision.

The lower court said the symbol violated the separation of church and state. The 10th Circuit said, "We must conclude that the average observer would perceive . . . endorsement of Christianity."

The seal is divided into four quadrants showing such symbols as a covered wagon, a train and oil well, and a building from the University of Central Oklahoma. The fourth quadrant contains a cross, which city officials say represents the historical significance of early churches in Edmond.

**Erna Sprengeler writes of her husband's first time preaching at Bylas, Arizona.**



It's very humid and hot. My husband turned pale and sat down, his head on his knees. He resumed preaching, but soon sat down again. He motioned for me to come and finish reading the sermon. . . . Lucky me, our courtship progressed for three years by letter writing, so I was familiar with his handwriting.

Later he said the smell made him sick. The teacher said there had been many bats, so they fumigated the church. With tall ladders, and some help, the molding under the ceiling was ripped off—and what do you know—dead bats!

*Read more about Erna's life in Arizona on page 8.*



# Bulletin BOARD

& NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3231; FAX 414/256-3899. Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

## CHANGE IN MINISTRY

### Pastors:

**Aichele, Alvin R.**, from Grace, Pickett/Zion, Oshkosh, Wis., to retirement  
**Bostedt, David P.**, from St. Peter, Elmwood, Wis., to Emmanuel, Zephyrhills, Fla.  
**Ehlers, Robert E.**, from St. Mark, Sterling Heights, Mich., to retirement  
**Guenther, Arthur A.**, from Open Bible, Whiteriver, Ariz., to retirement  
**Kessel, William B.**, to Peace, Cottonwood, Ariz.  
**Kraus, Thomas G.**, from Epiphany, Racine, Wis., to retirement  
**Lichtenberg, Herbert F.**, from St. John (68th), Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement  
**Lopahs, Martin C.**, from St. Paul, Muskego, Wis., to retirement  
**Lyon, H. Curtis**, from Trinity, Crete, Ill., to Christ the Vine, Temecula, Calif.  
**Petermann, Joel V.**, from Christ Our Rock, Rochester, Minn., to St. Paul, Amherst, N.H.  
**Pfotenhauer, Thomas C.**, from St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, to retirement  
**Schapekahn, Gerhard F.**, from Immanuel, Greenville, Wis., to retirement  
**Seeger, Richard M.**, from King of Kings, Alexandria, La., to retirement  
**Thierfelder, Victor W.**, from Redemption, W. Palm Beach, Fla., to retirement  
**Weindorf, Luther T.**, from Messiah, N. Hollywood, Calif., to retirement

### Teachers:

**Archer, Pamela**, to Crete, Crete, Ill.  
**Arnold, Laura A.**, from St. Paul, Appleton, Wis., to Gloria Dei-Bethesda, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Bleick, Avis**, to Immanuel, De Pere, Wis.  
**Borgwardt, Heidi R.**, from Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Butler, Carol L.**, from Grace, Yakima, Wash., to retirement  
**Callaway, Kurt P.**, from St. John, Princeton, Wis., to St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis.  
**DuFore, Ruth A.**, from Faith, Antioch, Ill., to Crete, Crete, Ill.  
**Feliciano, Marilyn E.**, to St. Paul, Riverside, Calif.  
**Gerhart, June R.**, from St. Paul, Algoma, Wis., to retirement  
**Glende, Kathleen**, to St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio  
**Hill, Nicole**, to Holy Word, Austin, Tex.  
**Jahns, Susan D.**, from Trinity, West Bend, Wis., to Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.  
**Kiecker, Craig K.**, from Trinity, Johnson, Minn., to Hope, Penryn, Calif.  
**Lemke, Carol J.**, to Emanuel, W. St. Paul, Minn.  
**Maas, Linda M.**, to Zum Kripplein Christ, Iron Ridge, Wis.  
**Mueller, Kurt D.**, from Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich., to Mt. Calvary, Flagstaff, Ariz.  
**Nerby, Scott C.**, from Grace, Yakima, Wash., to Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo.  
**Nolan, Gary A.**, from King of Grace, Golden Valley, Minn., to Salem, Owasso, Mich.  
**Raabe, Lillian M.**, from St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis., to retirement

**Roemhildt, Vernon R.**, from Christ, Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement  
**Rusch, Dorothy A.**, to Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.  
**Russ, Julia L.**, to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Schlavensky, Richard A.**, from North Trinity, Milwaukee, Wis., to retirement  
**Tess, Elizabeth C.**, from Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis., to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Witt, Steven C.**, from Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn., to Immanuel, La Crosse, Wis.  
**Zanto, Stephen P.**, from St. John, Jefferson, Wis., to Michigan LHS, St. Joseph, Mich.

### The synod administration building will close:

September 2—Labor Day  
 Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888; FAX 414/256-3899.

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Pending the Board of Ministerial Education's approval, the Martin Luther College Board of Control invites synod voting members to nominate candidates for the office of admissions and recruitment. He should be a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduate because he will be working specifically with applicants for studies in the pastoral ministry. Submit names by Sept. 20 to Philip Leyrer, 3209 Nightingale Ln, Middleton WI 53562.

The Board for Ministerial Education invites synod voting members to nominate candidates for program director for WELS Multicultural Preseminary Program. The program director will be seminary trained with duties including publicizing the program, maintaining student records, overseeing the budget, staying abreast of cross-cultural issues, supervising the development and updating of course materials, and teaching. Send nominations by Sept. 20 to Pastor Lynn Schroeder, 5105 McCarty Rd, Saginaw MI 48603.

## NOMINEES

The following men have been nominated as the administrator for ministerial education in WELS:

Prof. Forrest L. Bivens, Mequon, Wis.  
 Rev. David E. Bode, Delano, Minn.  
 Rev. John A. Braun, Watertown, Wis.  
 Rev. Douglas J. Engelbrecht, Neenah, Wis.  
 Rev. Robert J. Hellmann, Montrose, Minn.  
 Rev. Paul E. Kelm, Brookfield, Wis.  
 Rev. Philip A. Koelpin, Tucson, Ariz.  
 Rev. Steven L. Korth, Bay City, Mich.  
 Dr. John C. Lawrenz, New Ulm, Minn.  
 Rev. James D. Liggett Jr., North Mankato, Minn.  
 Prof. Marcus P. Manthey, Saginaw, Mich.  
 Rev. Wayne D. Mueller, Oconomowoc, Wis.  
 Prof. David J. Valleskey, Mequon, Wis.  
 Rev. James G. Witt III, St. Louis, Mo.  
 Rev. Mark G. Zaring, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

Correspondence regarding nominees should be mailed by Sept. 20 to Board for Ministerial Education, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.

## NEEDED

**Choir robes**—12. For mission congregation. Pastor Jeff Heitsch, St. Paul, Calgary, Alberta, Canada; 403/285-1880; 403/293-9046.

## COMING EVENTS

**Labor Day retreat**—Aug. 31-Sept. 2. Berkshire Mountains, Mass. Choose from six educational seminars; concurrent programs for children. Phil Becker, 603/472-5551.

**Life concert**—with WELS Lutherans for Life convention. Oct. 11. 6:30 PM. 414/774-1331; 1-800-729-9535.

**WELS Lutherans for Life national convention**—Oct. 12; registration, 8 AM. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. Amy Pingel, 414/774-1331; 1-800-729-9535.

**Enrichment seminar**—Oct. 12, 8 AM to 3:15 PM. Luther LHS, Onalaska, Wis. For area WELS members. Covers many topics. Registration forms available at home churches. Margaret Thumann, 608/783-2669.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

**Marine ecology course in Jamaica**—Three-credit course offered by Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran College from Dec. 27, 1996-Jan. 5, 1997 in Discovery Bay, Jamaica. Approximate cost: \$1,500. MLC, Office of Special Services, 1-800-686-4142.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Eugene, Ore.**—Trinity (40). Sept. 15. Service, 4 PM; dinner, 6 PM. 1207 E 30 Ave, Eugene OR 97405; 541/344-9719.

**Hastings, Minn.**—St. John (125). Sept. 15. Services, 8 and 10:30 AM; dinner, 12:15 PM. Reservations, call 612/438-3730. 202 8 St W, Hastings MN 55033.

**Tomah, Wis.**—St. Paul (25th anniversary of building). Sept. 15. Services, 8:15 and 10:30 AM; pig roast and potluck follows. 525 Superior Ave, Tomah WI 54660; 608/372-2347.

**Milwaukee, Wis.**—St. John (68th) (150). Confirmation reunions: Sept. 15—1846-1959; Oct. 20—1960-1975; Nov. 17—1976-1996. Services, 8:30 and 10:45 AM; Sept. 15, evening banquet. 4001 S 68 St, Milwaukee WI 53220; 414/541-5881.

**Universal City, Tex.**—Cross of Christ (10). Sept. 29. Service, 4 PM; dinner follows. 1530 Kitty Hawk Rd, Universal City TX 78148; 210/659-3311.

**El Paso, Tex.**—San Juan (30). Sept. 8—service, 10:30 AM. Oct. 6—service, 5 PM; meal, 6 PM. 580 Giles Rd, El Paso TX 79915; 915/592-9900.

**St James, Minn.**—St Paul (100). Sept. 29. Service, 10 AM; banquet at American Legion, noon. 507/375-3636.

## AVAILABLE

**Prayer calendar**—features WELS missions and missionaries. \$2. Order from Lutheran Women's Missionary Society, 8420 W Beloit Rd, West Allis WI 53227; 414/321-6212.

**Organ**—Two keyboard Hammond. For church or school. Free for cost of shipping. Christine Brown, 414/744-7261.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

**Director of music**—for King of Grace (ELS), Golden Valley, Minn. Responsible for music and music programs of the congregation. Send resume and/or letter of interest to King of Grace, music director selection committee, 6000 Duluth St, Golden Valley MN 55422; 612/546-3131.



# A dose of church now and then

James R. Woodfin

A prominent author said, “I am impressed by people with other things to do who get up on Sunday morning, put on good clothes, and assemble *out of nothing but faith*” (emphasis mine). He identified faith as “some vague yen toward something larger.”

Then he spoke of the “moving, reassuring, and even inspiring” aspects of such a “human gathering” and admitted he needed “a dose of church now and then” to provide some “other worldly point of reference.” He capped off his philosophical soliloquy by observing that “a church is a little like a novel: both are saying there’s something important about being human.”

I was struck by the similarity to a statement I heard from a lofty and esteemed church leader: “The primary purpose of Christianity is, after all, to help people feel good about themselves.”

**Notably absent in these assessments of church going—and the purpose of Christianity—is any reference to Christ.** The author’s “something larger” was as close as he came to acknowledging God. The Reverend “Lofty” ignored the subject altogether.

How sad that two men of intellectual prominence completely missed a basic truth. Then I wondered how many church-going Christians share these lightweight views. Is it really noble and uplifting to give up something (golf? the funny-papers? TV? sleeping late? . . .) in order to participate in a “human gathering” because of a “vague yen for something larger”? Do some who profess to be Jesus’ followers believe he endured the agony of the cross just so they can feel good?

Maybe some people require only a dose of church now and then, and maybe that makes them feel good about them-

selves. Maybe for some people a vague yen for something larger is as good as it gets. Maybe some are content with another worldly point of reference—without having any clear idea of what that other world is all about.

But if church is only a place where a “moving, reassuring, and even inspiring” experience can be obtained because of the in-gathering of humanity, if church is no more than a semi-sanctified pep-pill, what is there in it that could not be obtained by attending a secular seminar on Living the Good Life?

**In truth, when it comes to church attendance: “A dose of church now and then” is not enough.** A “vague yen” falls far short. Recognizing the importance of “being human” and being made to “feel good” about it is a poor substitute for the glorious, life-giving message of the gospel.

Perhaps only others subscribe to the casual view and need to be in our prayers. Or, maybe a lot of us need to ask ourselves some questions: Why do we go to church—especially if it’s only now and then? We should go as the Father’s redeemed children. We should gather in gratitude to thank, praise, and worship him for his love, mercy, and salvation. We should attend to learn more of his Word so we can live more God-pleasing lives. If we don’t go for these reasons, perhaps we need to do some intense spiritual self-examination.

After all, what we need is not a dose of church now and then, but a large measure of Christ . . . continually. And church—for the right reasons—is where we will find it . . . every time.

*Jim Woodfin is a member at Redeemer, Huntsville, Alabama.*

*If church is no more than a semi-sanctified pep-pill, what is there in it that could not be obtained by attending a secular seminar on Living the Good Life?*



# Samuel: sheltered in faithfulness

**Samuel's family was a disaster, but Samuel's heavenly Father is a deliverer.**

James A. Aderman

When young Samuel prayed, we might imagine him pleading, "Lord, look after Eli. He can hardly get around. He's so old. And bless his sons, even though they pick on me—and hate you."

A child with a 90-year-old foster father. How did Samuel reach normal adulthood, especially since Eli's parenting skills evaporated decades before and left his sons to flop like grounded fish? Read **1 Samuel 2:12-25**, but don't miss how the Lord shows himself to be an upside God in a downside world.

## An evil family

Eli allowed his two sons to disgrace their father, their calling, and their God. Imagine how you'd react if your pastor intercepted the offering envelopes and pocketed what he wanted. Imagine your pastor coercing sexual favors from the women of your congregation. You'd change churches, you say? Imagine a church you can't leave. You'd huff off, disillusioned and disappointed? That's what the people of Eli's day did.

The Lord held Eli responsible. He was the high priest. Still Eli waffled. Yes, he warned his sons—meekly. No, he didn't act on the Lord's command about dealing with "wicked men" like his sons. In Deuteronomy 13:12-18, the Lord insists that Israel destroy wicked men and the town that shelters them. Drastic action, but the eternal

welfare of God's people demanded that faith in the Lord remain pure.

No wonder the Lord, through his prophet, thundered against Eli (2:27-36). If his high priest refused to carry out his commands, God himself would act. Eli's sons would die—on the same day. No one in Eli's family would live to old age. Humiliation and poverty would dog his descendants, and the high priesthood would slip from their grasp.

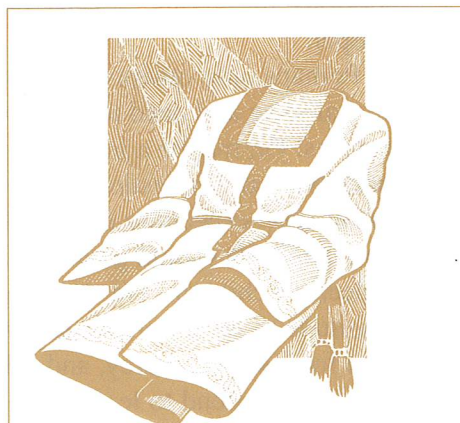
## A faithful Father

Some family! What were the odds Samuel could escape its influence? Infinitely high. Samuel's

family was a disaster, but Samuel's heavenly Father is a deliverer. He rescued the boy's mother from her sorrow by answering her prayer for a son—and then gave her a family. No surprise "the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men" (2:26), even while his foster father squirmed under God's judgment.

More than rescue Samuel, God used his family to shape him for a life of powerful ministry. He taught his future prophet humility and service, patience and trust. Years later Samuel remembered his childhood lessons and urged his countrymen, "Commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you" (7:3).

God is just as faithful today, no matter how unlikely it seems. That's guaranteed in the Lord's promise to raise up "a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind" (2:35). That priest is Jesus, the "high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary . . ." (Hebrews 8:1,2). With the ultimate promise kept, God's faithfulness is certain—as certain for us as it was for Samuel.



## FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. In what situation in your life is God most clearly calling you to trust his faithfulness?
2. Read Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:26,27, 8:1,2. How does Jesus, our high priest, guarantee God's faithfulness?

*James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.*



# Children's confirmation classes

Victor H. Prange

September marks the beginning of confirmation classes in most congregations of our synod. Over the years I've experienced the joys and frustrations of instructing a variety of students. I've had classes as large as 26 and as small as one. But no matter who the student or what the class size, the goal of confirmation instruction remained the same: to help baptized boys and girls grow in their faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior from sin and eternal death.

Was that goal reached? We must wait until heaven to answer that question. From a human point of view, it often seems confirmation instruction fails to accomplish as much as we would like.

That is borne out by some statistics I compiled for the congregation I have served my entire ministry (and as its only pastor). Of the 398 persons confirmed as children, only 31 percent are still members here. Where are the rest? Some are active in other congregations. But many won't be found worshipping anywhere on Sunday mornings.

Of our communicant membership, 37 percent were confirmed here as children. The other membership sources were confirmed as adults (24%), transferred from other WELS congregations (18%), received from non-WELS congregations (18%), and accepted by confession of faith (4%). Children confirmations represent the biggest source of our membership, which helps show the importance of confirmation classes.

This group of members is also the least active as measured by whether one communed six or more times in 1995. I found that only 22 percent of those confirmed here as children had done so. The percent-

ages for the other membership sources were: confirmed as adults (48%), WELS transfer (69%), other Lutheran (77%), confession of faith (83%). These percentage rankings of activity are the exact reverse of our sources of membership.

Those confirmed here as children are the largest membership source, but they also appear to be the most inactive. This certainly points to the need to work at improving our confirmation instruction. That's obviously something I as a pastor will strive to do.

Parents of confirmands also need to ask themselves how they can help their children grow in Christian faith and life. Here are some suggestions:

1. Remind your child often of the significance of baptism: we have been baptized into Christ.
2. Worship regularly with your child and show the importance of hearing the Word and receiving Holy Communion.
3. Set an example of Christian living, including daily use of God's Word in your home.
4. Pray regularly for your child.
5. Consult with your pastor if you have questions or concerns about the instruction—refrain from criticizing your pastor.
6. Learn along with your child so that you also might grow in faith and life.

Luther concludes his *Small Catechism* with the rhyme: "Let each his lesson learn with care/and all the household well will fare." May that be our experience.

*Victor Prange is pastor at Peace, Janesville, Wisconsin.*

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# Christian freedoms and forgiveness

John F. Brug

*What guidance does God give us in regard to smoking? Since smoking is harmful to one's health and perhaps to others, can the Fifth Commandment be applied?*

The Bible does not address this issue directly. It teaches us we should be good stewards of the life and health God has given us, and we should look out for the welfare of others. Christians should weigh carefully whether these considerations permit them to smoke at all or only set limitations on it.

How does the risk of smoking compare with other risks, such as hazardous sports, being overweight, and so on? Where Scripture does not give us specific guidelines on such issues, we should prayerfully and conscientiously make decisions for ourselves and be cautious in passing judgment on the decisions of others.

*Many Bible passages assure us of complete forgiveness of sins in Christ. Others indicate that our evil deeds and every careless word will be brought to light on Judgment Day? How do these agree?*

The passages warning that every sin must be accounted are statements of the law. But when we have received forgiveness through Christ, such sins are no longer on our

record and will not be held against us. We can assure repentant sinners that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

*What are adiaphora? Could the way we celebrate Jesus' birthday be considered an adiaphoron?*

Adiaphora is a Greek word that means "things that don't make any difference." (The singular is adiaphoron.) In theology, adiaphora are things God has neither commanded nor forbidden. We are, therefore, free to use them or not to use them.

The name "adiaphora" is, however, somewhat of a misnomer, since often how we use adiaphora makes a difference. We may not use adiaphora if using them would cause us to sin against our own consciences (Romans 14:14), encourage others to sin against their conscience (Romans 14:20,21), or give the appearance of supporting false teaching (Galatians 2:3-5). In such cases, things that of themselves are adiaphora become sin.

Since the Bible does not command us to celebrate Christmas nor does it prescribe specific forms of worship, the way we celebrate Jesus' birth is an adiaphoron if it falls within the limitations listed above and does not violate any other principle of Scripture.

*In some congregations before the service the pastor says "Good morning" and tells the congregation the theme for the day. Some congregations respond with "Good morning." Is there any reason not to do this?*

There is no reason pre-service announcements cannot include an exchange of greetings. Probably the main reason congregations include such a greeting is to project an air of warmth and friendship, especially to visitors.

Some worshipers prefer to exchange personal greetings at the door of the church as they enter and leave, so the opening of the service will focus on the invocation of the name of the Triune God (*Christian Worship*, p. 15) rather than on human greetings. They point out that our common service already contains an exchange of greetings more spiritual than a mere "Good morning." This greeting (The Lord be with you/And also with you) precedes the prayer for the day on p. 17 of *Christian Worship*.

*John Brug is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.*

**Send questions to  
Your question, please,  
Northwestern Lutheran,  
2929 N Mayfair Rd,  
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.**





**As voters, regardless of political party, we must remain firm concerning the abortion issue** rather than following what the media, the polls, or candidates say is important. God commands us to "speak for those who cannot speak" even though it may not be the "politically correct" thing to do. There is also no room for compromise.

The circumstances of conception have nothing to do with the value of that life in God's eyes. Contact your local, state, and national candidates concerning your feeling, write to the newspapers, as well as other organizations. WELS Lutherans for Life is a pro-life organization with chapters around the U.S. For more information call 1-800-729-9535.

*Roxanne Wodtli  
Eugene, Oregon*

**Instead of real cheese and real meat, how about real pictures of real people?** The real meat in Ken Cherney's article, "Get real," which appeared in the May 1996 NL, was not enhanced by the illustration. Magazines and newspapers carry enough food ads. A picture of the author would have given a personal touch and a friendlier feel, especially on the last page.

*Irene Riege  
West Allis, Wisconsin*

**I question the blurb included in "On the Bright Side" of the July 1996 edition of *Northwestern Lutheran*.** The pastor launching into a German version of the Lord's

Prayer when asked for "the old Lord's Prayer" was supposed to be funny?" This type of joke is insensitive and hurtful to those of us who continue to cherish our heritage.

*Lynda K. Roper  
Richmond, Virginia*

**Re: "Let's not call our Christian faith 'religion'"** [July]. Knowing the various meanings, definitions, and synonyms of the word "religion," I could not respond to the question "What is your religion?" with the reply "I have no religion," even if I followed it with an explanation.

Our God himself, the only true God, inspired a number of Old Testament writers to use the same word (elohim) to identify both himself and the Gentiles' false gods. In the same way, although our religion is the only true religion and is sharply different from all other religions, I do not believe that a believer should object to anyone calling our faith a religion, or using the term "Christian religion."

I could not in good conscience reply to the question "What is your religion?" with the answer "I have no religion," even though I qualified my answer. A response might be: "My religion is different from every other religion on earth, because it grants me forgiveness and eternal life as free gifts without any merit or worthiness on my part." I think that such a response would do as much to pique interest as the one suggested in the article.

*Oswin W. Herrmann  
Kansas City, Missouri*

**CORRECTION:** In "A true man" (August), we printed that Jesus' "own breath was *wrested from him* in death on the cross" (emphasis added). Although that was the intent of the crucifiers and true from their point of view, actually Jesus gave up his life voluntarily for us. "He bowed his head and gave up his spirit," says John in his Gospel (19:30). We regret if NL's wording gave a wrong impression.

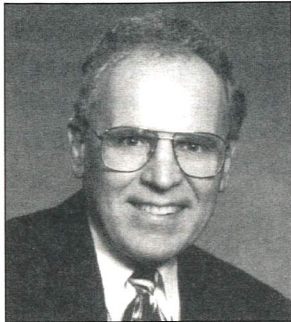
## Through my Bible in 3 years

### October 1996

1.  1 Kings 9:1—10:13
2.  1 Kgs. 10:14—11:43
3.  1 Kgs. 12:1-32
4.  1 Kgs. 12:33—13:34
5.  1 Kgs. 14
6.  1 Kgs. 15:1—16:7
7.  1 Kgs. 16:8-34
8.  1 Kgs. 17, 18
9.  1 Kgs. 19
10.  1 Kgs. 20
11.  1 Kgs. 21
12.  1 Kgs. 22
13.  John 1:1-18
14.  Jn. 1:19-34
15.  Jn. 1:35-51
16.  Jn. 2:1-22
17.  Jn. 2:23—3:21
18.  Jn. 3:22-36
19.  Jn. 4:1-26
20.  Jn. 4:27-54
21.  Jn. 5:1-29
22.  Jn. 5:30-47
23.  Jn. 6:1-21
24.  Jn. 6:22-40
25.  Jn. 6:41-71
26.  Jn. 7:1-24
27.  Jn. 7:25-52
28.  Jn. 7:53—8:29
29.  Jn. 8:30-59
30.  Jn. 9
31.  Jn. 10:1-21



## Exercise worth the effort



Gary P. Bauml is editor of Northwestern Lutheran and WELS Director of Communications.

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**Do I let my spiritual muscles atrophy from too little exercise—running God's route only once a week?**

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I've had this itch for some time now, and I just have to scratch it. I'm talking about the feeling I get when I see walkers and runners and cyclists out on the road as I drive to church on Sunday mornings.

"How sad!" I think. "They exercise their bodies and maybe increase their life span, but they miss exercising their souls and enjoying the gift of eternal life. They belong in church (my thoughts aren't entirely noble) like me."

I call this feeling an itch because it gets into my skin and doesn't want to go away. For one thing, I worry about a society that tends to make more of physical fitness than spiritual fitness, that idolizes well-toned bodies and ignores the body of Christ. What can we do to show these people the Way?

But the itch is more personal than that. Maybe you've already spotted the rash it leaves on my own skin. "How do you know," I accuse myself, "that this person doesn't go to later church (I'm usually out early) or Monday night church or . . . ?" Truth is: I don't know.

Truth is, too, that I can learn something from those runners who never seem to lag on their appointed rounds: I'm on my way to church. Will I approach my worship with the same concentration and enthusiasm as the runners? Will I get a spiritual uplift from the gospel, much as the runners get a physical and psychological uplift? Will I stretch and strengthen my spiritual muscles on the path of God's Word so I am more ready to live a spiritual life when I finish the exercise, just as the runners do physically? Or will I lag and lapse and wish the course finished before its time?

After church, I'll return home and probably see some more fitness seekers along the way. They, too, will return to their homes. Chances are, however, that the next day you might see them out again: walking, running, cycling. For some it's quite a ritual.

That's how they get the most benefit from their exercise. They get in shape and stay in shape by repeating the routine.

As for me, you won't see me going to church again until next Sunday. So, do I let my spiritual muscles atrophy from too little exercise—running God's route only once a week? Or might you see me reading my Bible each day? Will I have regular home devotions and persevere in prayer? Might you see me talking with my friends and acquaintances about our Savior? Will I be aware of Jesus with me as I decide what I will do each day? Might you see me comforting someone with the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ? Will I meditate daily on the wonderful works of God and the mysteries of his Son, Jesus?

What am I doing to stay in fit spiritual shape?

Oh, the itching!

The next Sunday morning when I see a jogger (walker, cyclist), I'm going to say a prayer for both of us: "God, for Jesus' sake, lead that person to pay like attention to spiritual exercise as, at the moment, to physical exercise—and me too."

Ahh, that helps.

*Gary P. Bauml*



# Share The Promise

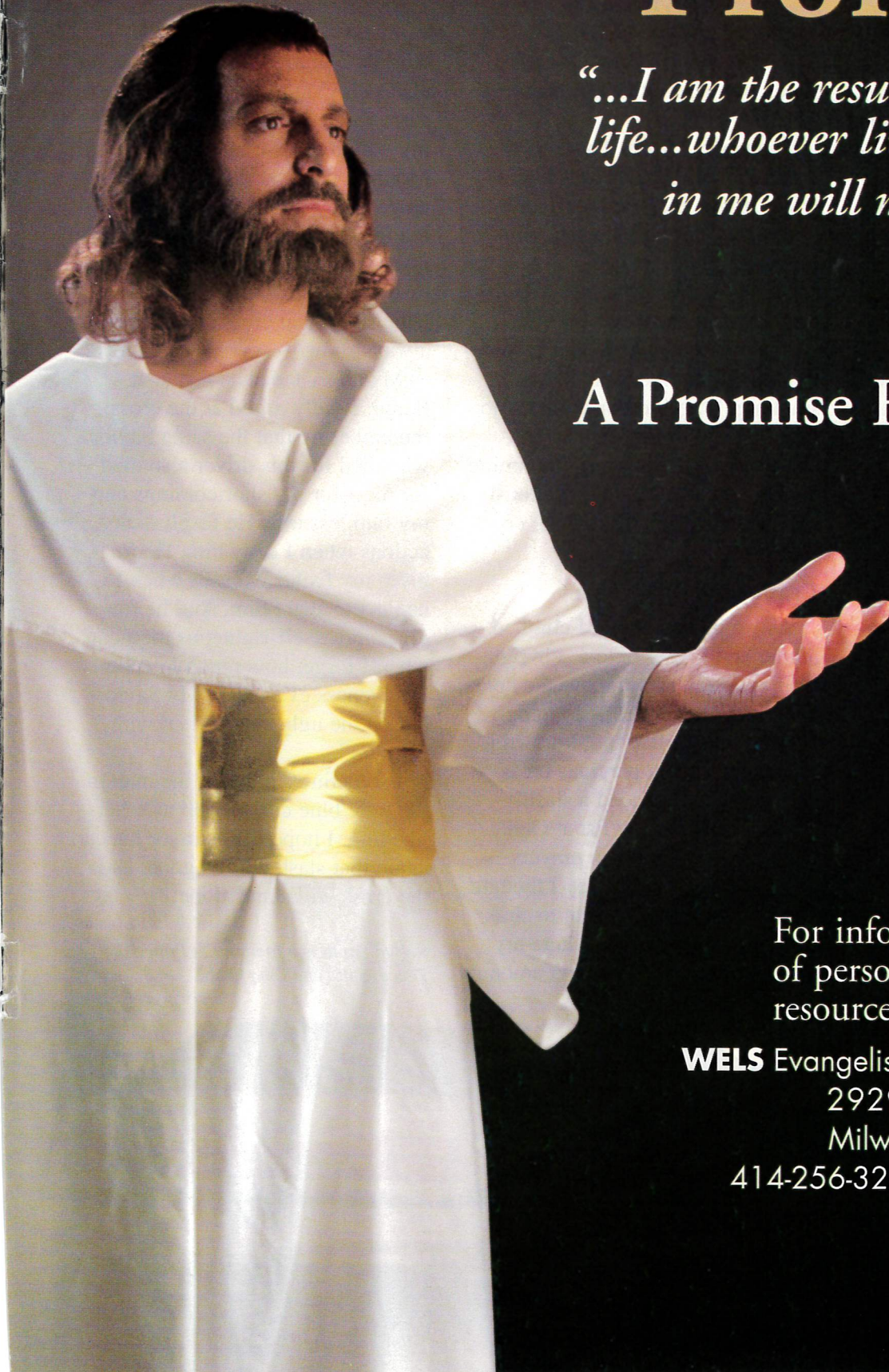
*"...I am the resurrection and the life...whoever lives and believes in me will never die..."*

*John 11:25,26*

## A Promise For Eternity

For information and a listing of personal witness helps and resources, call, write or fax:

**WELS** Evangelism/Mass Media Ministry  
2929 North Mayfair Road  
Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398  
414-256-3280 FAX: 414-256-3899





# Day stressor

How dare the driver callously say “no” to Christ and all the cross stands for?

Robyn Smith

It was going to be a long wait, and the Utah sun was blisteringly hot. We crept along in road construction in rush-hour traffic at a maddeningly slow pace. We moved just often enough that I couldn't make notes in the planner my pastor lovingly referred to as my “Day Stressor.”

As a mother with appointments, lessons, sporting events, and errands, I felt trapped. I started doing the breathing exercises child-birth coaches and women's magazines suggest.

## A slash through the cross

Becoming frantic wasn't going to move traffic faster. Resigned, I stared at the collection of stickers on a little blue car just inches from my windshield. They were a sick collection of sayings—a veritable billboard—revealing the strange personality of the car's occupant.

One sticker shouted “Vandals,” while another with bright green letters oozed “Rancid.” Skeletons and gore decorated the sticker that read “Gutter Mouth.” We crawled along the dusty maze of signs, cones, and orange vested construction workers. In disbelief, I read on: “Voodoo Glow Skulls.” One with blood and

weaponry read “Major Threat!” I shook my head—this guy was weird.

Suddenly, I froze. There, in the corner of the rear window, was a cross. It was encircled with a ring of red, and through it was a bold red slash.

That was the last straw! Here a symbol of my Savior's sacrifice was blatantly mocked, as if it somehow fit among the array of “no smoking,” “no food or drink,” “no dogs in this public place” signs. “No Christ?” I considered ramming his bumper. How dare he callously say “no” to Christ and all the cross stands for?

## Erasing the slash of sin

As we inched along, I climbed higher and higher onto a self-righteous pedestal, ranting into the hot air, when I had a heart-stopping thought. How often had I drawn a circle around that precious cross and deliberately added a slash?

Didn't I shake my fist at God with my “whys?” when prayers weren't answered the way I thought best? Wasn't it convenient to slink away from discussions where my Christianity could stand out among

worldly opinions? Was my language always loving to the people who surrounded me daily? Where was my witness when my young Mormon neighbor lay dying, when a newcomer was standing alone feeling out of place at our church, when my poor actions spoke much louder than my pious words? I confessed I believed in that cross, but did I always show it—or share it boldly?

My anger faded as fast as it flared. I sadly gazed at the cross, remembering that the same Savior who died for this driver also died for me—for my shortcomings and my faithlessness. He forgives my actions when I deny him. He forgives my feeble excuses when I neglect to share him. And he forgives those self-righteous moments when I forget how much I need his forgiveness every day. My Savior erased the ugly slash of sin with his blood.

I sometimes pray for the man in the little blue car, as well as others like him. I hope if I ever see his car again that slash will be gone, and the cross will stand alone.

*Robyn Smith is a member at Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah.*

