

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

October 1998

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



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Preachers of the Word are builders

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:10,11

Paul M. Janke

If your pastor weren't a pastor, could he make a living as a carpenter? Some pastors are skilled in areas that aren't directly related to their ministries, but many are not. Some may not even know how to use a hammer properly.

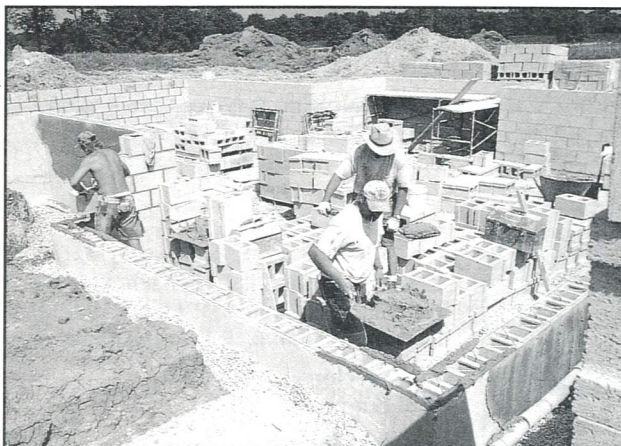
That's all right. We didn't call them to carpenter. We called them to care for souls by preaching Christ. If their only expertise is in the Scriptures, that's enough.

But in one sense, every minister of the Word is a builder. Teachers of the gospel are engaged in building God's church.

They lay just one foundation

The apostle Paul was skilled at making tents. He supported himself on his missionary journeys by selling the tents he made. But he also called himself "an expert builder." As an apostle, Paul specialized in foundations. Imagine: a tentmaker who laid foundations! But Paul's ambition was no secret. He didn't aspire to do finish work or even framing. He just wanted to lay the foundation, to preach the gospel to people who did not know Jesus.

When Paul arrived at a place where Christ was not known, he always began his work by laying the foundation. Jesus Christ is the foundation of God's building, the



church. Christ, crucified and risen, was the content of Paul's preaching. Our hope is built on Christ. In Christ, we who were weak and foolish gain the firm footing of holiness and righteousness.

In the days before the Reformation, when the dominant teaching in the church urged people to try to merit eternal life, a different foundation was being laid. It was a foundation of quicksand. Those who tried to rest on it sank. Rather than exalting Christ, that teaching buried him. So God raised a new crew of builders in the Reformers. Like the apostle, by grace, they laid the Christ foundation. That work continues today, wherever Christ's cross is lifted up.

They build carefully on that foundation

Buying a house is the biggest investment most people will ever

make. That's why it makes sense, when building a house, to choose a careful builder. Careless construction is worse than annoying; it's costly and possibly dangerous.

There are careless builders in the religious world, too. Rather than building with God's wisdom, such preachers try to cobble a house together out of the wisdom of this age. They subject the Word to the scrutiny of

human reason. They submerge the gospel under lists of laws. They spout the fad of the hour when they should be laying the enduring foundation of Christ.

That's why the apostle says, "Be careful how you build." Only one foundation is worthy of the name. Jesus is the only solid basis for our faith. His Word is truth. What it says about creation, conversion, communion, and everything else can be believed without hesitation. When the building materials come from Scripture, the house will endure.

Even a minister who can't drive a nail is a builder. And when his teaching focuses on Christ and his Word, he is a careful builder whose work is a blessing.

NL

Paul Janke is pastor at St. Peter, Modesto, California.



For Lutherans, Reformation reminds us of our heritage and focuses us on our future. Seven articles address our heritage, our church, and our role in the kingdom. We hope they renew your zeal for the reformation spirit needed in our church and our hearts.

- Martin Luther clung to God's unchanging Word in the face of excommunication and death threats. Drop in on "Worms revisited" (p. 31)
- Luther's conviction, however, means nothing if we don't know what our convictions are. Read, "Where do you stand?" (p. 8).
- What happens when unity is achieved at the expense of God's Word? Learn from "Lutherans' losing legacy" (p. 34).
- Everyone who brings you God's Word lays the foundation of God's church. See "Preachers of the Word are builders" (p. 3).
- We are grateful for those faithful builders. But what happens when a congregation goes through pastors as often as some people go through cars? Turn to "Turnstile pastorates" (p. 32).
- God has opened so many doors for WELS that we don't have enough pastors, teachers, and staff ministers to fill them. What is being and can be done? See "The wolf is at the door" (p. 6).
- Sometimes we rely so heavily on called workers that we forget how vital we are to building the kingdom. The called worker shortage reminds us to step forward and volunteer. After all, "You are part of the army" (p. 29).

—LRB

Cover photos by Jerry Kiesow

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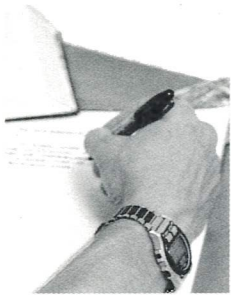
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Many treat church like a crash cart. They don't mess with it. It's someone else's job to take care of it—until they really need it.

The wolf is at the door

Doing something about the pastor-teacher shortage.

We've said it before: "We are going to have a shortage of pastors or teachers in a few years." But the shortage never came. We even had problems placing all pastor and teacher candidates at graduation. Some people must have felt we were crying "Wolf!"

Now, the wolf is at the door. We are no longer predicting an uncertain future. We are short of the pastors and teachers needed in our churches, schools, and missions. Worse yet, we

see no short-term fixes, no hidden cache of public ministers waiting to be discovered. And we hear of present workers resigning.

Maybe you see this as a crisis. But it's better if you see it as an opportunity. What follows explores the shortage and some things we are doing and can do to ease its impact.

Encouraging teachers

The synod's Commission on Parish Schools has developed projects and ideas to support teachers. Although the commission is considering short-term solutions, such as calling retired teachers to serve part time, they are also developing two pilot projects to retain those who already serve.

The first addresses principals. Each year about 30 men—who have little or no training for it—are called to principal positions for the first time. This year, LeDell Plath, project director, will spend 10 days with each first-year principal to provide practical direction and assistance. This support may lead fewer WELS principals to resign or accept teacher-only calls.

The second project will assist beginning teachers, who face pressures and frustrations like the teachers in all schools. To help graduates adjust from being students to teachers, a two-day seminar focuses on transition issues. To help congregations, guidelines for new teacher orientation were sent to every school. Also, in 1998-99, two districts—Western Wisconsin and

Nebraska—will mentor beginning teachers. The program is expected to go synod-wide in 1999.

Encouraging students

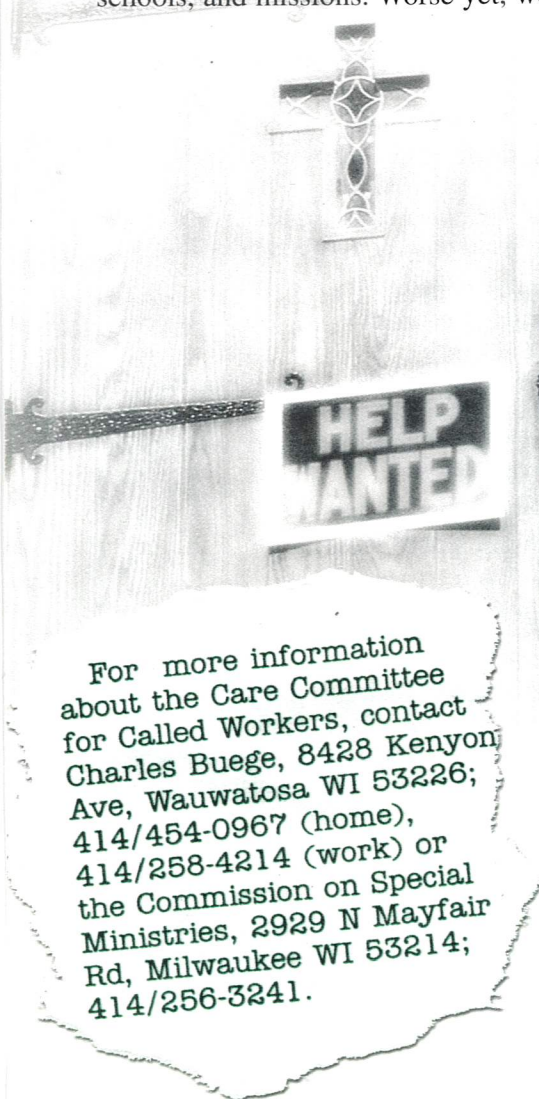
Another way to combat the called worker shortage is to encourage Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College students. They are eager to serve, but may be discouraged because of the years of study or the cost of education.

John Murray, evangelism committee chairman at Mt. Olive, St. Paul, Minn., offers these tips to remind students that they are important and appreciated. It starts by forming an "adopt a student" program.

- Buy one textbook a year.
- Send a box of cookies, a book of stamps, a long distance phone card, a Christmas card, a birthday card.
- Invite a seminary student to preach and pay him. Or buy him a new suit.
- Most married students can't afford vacations. Lend them your lake cabin or offer an unused week of time-share.
- Dedicate a Sunday at church to pray for the adopted student. Send your student the bulletin.

Encouraging current workers

Students need encouragement. So do called workers in our congregations as they carry on the day-to-day work of the ministry. The Care Committee for Called Workers (CCCW) of the Commission on Special Ministries encourages called workers and their families and enhances the quality of their lives.



For more information about the Care Committee for Called Workers, contact Charles Buege, 8428 Kenyon Ave, Wauwatosa WI 53226; 414/454-0967 (home), 414/258-4214 (work) or the Commission on Special Ministries, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53214; 414/256-3241.

They also address problems before they become too big.

The synod's CCCW offers workshops and support to district and individual parish care committees. Forty to 50 percent of WELS congregations have some form of care committee.

St. Mark, Watertown, Wis., has had a worker care committee for 10 years.

"In many congregations, elders work with spiritual matters, trustees work with property, and the finance committee works with finances. But no one looks at people and their feelings. Now [with the care committee] someone's affixed with the responsibility of looking out for the workers," said Donald Sutton, pastor at St. Mark.

St. Mark's committee does this by conducting yearly interviews with the workers, where they discuss church, home, and family issues. The committee also serves as advocates for the called workers in issues involving compensation, benefits, and use of time. Not to mention setting up fellowship activities, sending birthday and anniversary cards, and praying for the called workers.

"They care about those who work in the church, not just as producers, but also as God's people," said Sutton.

Joining the effort

All these ideas, however, only address how to encourage the people who serve you. But you need to serve too. So many people need to hear God's Word that it is impossible to expect called workers to fulfill every aspect of ministry.

You can help in simple ways: mow the lawn, shovel the sidewalk, prepare the bulletin, set up tables for events.

Maybe you could play a larger part: Visit shut-in members. Meet prospects. Drive the elderly or

disabled to church. Attend meetings and take an active role in church groups. Talk to school kids about your area of expertise.

Others ideas may delve into other areas of ministry. Talk to your pastor or teachers about which areas of service are waiting to be filled. Those could include starting a singles' ministry or a couple's Bible study, setting up a food pantry, leading an after-school ministry, beginning a parish nurse program.

These ideas may take hard work and may be scary. But God helps us serve confidently.

Our shortage is a concern, and steps are being taken to confront it. But the shortage is also a blessing. It teaches us to value, even more, those who already serve, and helps us see our role in ministry. Our pastors and teachers are indispensable—but so are you. Every one of us is needed because we are parts of the body of Christ. With Christ as the head, he more than makes up for any shortage.

NL

The article was written by the Northwestern Lutheran staff.

Public minister resignations

Year	Pastors	Teachers		
		Men	Women	Total
1986	16	32	90	122
1987	7	31	96	127
1988	12	19	109	128
1989	20	31	98	129
1990	15	27	104	131
1991	17	25	120	145
1992	16	38	116	154
1993	9	32	104	136
1994	23	29	147	176
1995	20	31	140	171
1996	30	20	137	157
1997	20	23	152	175
Average	17	28	118	146

Some people are concerned that resignations are the main reason for the shortage of pastors and teachers. In reality, the percentage of resignations is small. Pastor resignations are only 1.3 percent of all pastors, and teacher resignations are under four percent for men and under 10 percent for women. Those numbers are extremely low compared to other careers—and other denominations.

Still, those resignations need replacements. And replacing them can take up to 40 percent of graduates, who are also needed in new areas for outreach that God has provided. Pray for more workers. Encourage people—young and old—to consider the ministry. And be active and share the gospel, wherever you are.

Where do you stand?

It doesn't matter where Luther stood, if we don't know where we stand.

Paul O. Wendland

When he first heard that people were calling themselves "Lutherans," Brother Martin was horrified. I wonder how Luther would feel today if he strolled into one of our Reformation celebrations. Would they fill him with equal horror? Would he see them as monuments to himself, the liturgical equivalent of a Luther statue? Has Reformation become only a time when we stand together to celebrate how right we are, and how wrong all the rest?

Finally, it doesn't matter where Luther stood, if we don't know where we stand. If his gospel spirit does not live in us, our Reformation celebrations can only be exercises in which we, like the Pharisee, thank God that we are not like others.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

"Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you," Scripture says, "and imitate their faith." We should remember our Reformation leaders, so long as we remember the Word of God they spoke and imitate their faith. Reformation celebrating is good, so long as it helps rekindle in our hearts a repentant humility before God.

God's penitent people gather because they hunger for the good news of Jesus and for the strength Jesus brings. And of all the gospel gifts Christ gave to Luther, the church today needs none more than Luther's gospel certainty, gospel courage, and gospel freedom.

Gospel certainty

Sects are formed of people united in their admiration for some heroic founder, someone they believe made contact with the world beyond and brought its message to the world below. Not so with Lutherans! We respect Luther not because he was so heroic, but so human. In his writings he stands before us, warts and all. We see a man plagued with guilt and troubled by doubt.

At first he was driven by a need to know that things were right between him and God. "Nothing is more miserable than uncertainty," he declared. To find certainty, he tried all the prescribed methods and went through all the right spiritual exercises. He tried to cover his sin in the righteousness of self-denial, of being spiritual, and of fervent prayer. He made pilgrimages. He read the works of German mystics—people who advocated finding God deep within our own religious feelings.



But none of it gave him the certainty he craved. All of it was based on man's doing. None of it brought the peace that only comes from God. God's act of sending a Savior happened outside us—before any of us knew, cared, or responded. That makes Jesus' work permanent and sure. It does not depend on us. Once Luther understood that Christ's righteousness, suffering, and forgiving love were all "for him," he said, "I felt as though I had been born again and had entered Paradise through widely-opened doors."

How much such certainty is needed today, for graceless people who

Gospel certainty

dash down any blind alley in search of hope—in a nation drowning in emotion, where we only believe what we feel! How much needed in an age of irony, when every word means its opposite and everything folks once held dear is dismissed with a smirk and a shrug. Needed at a time when truth lies bleeding on the ground and people pass calmly by, uncaring.

There's nothing wrong in remembering our Reformation leaders, so long as the Word leads us into imitating their faith.

How much I need it, when plagued by sin and shattered by doubt. When I look inside me, and feel nothing but pain; look around me and see nothing but despair; look up to heaven and wonder where God is, Luther points me to Christ, and says, "Find in him what you're looking for."

How I feel about myself and God is one thing; how God feels towards me is quite another. What I do is one thing; what God has done, another. Christ's Word is the one firm place to stand. It lets God be true, and all men liars. It makes us sure of what we know, and content to leave the rest in God's control.

Gospel courage

This kind of certainty set Luther down in a haven where he saw nothing standing against him and nothing could withstand him. "The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" So even though there were more devils than tiles on the rooftops, Luther went to Worms

to confess his Lord before emperors and kings. He was safe, protected by the power of Jesus' name.

We live in a violent world that cherishes no great affection for God's people. We have reason to fear many things: the moral collapse of our country, the accelerating pace of change. We might like to retreat into a fortress of our own making and hide inside our houses. But Jesus left us here for a reason. His command, "Go out into all the world," keeps us from hunkering down for protection in our little holes.

When Jesus prayed for his disciples before his death, he didn't ask the Father to keep them cozy in comfortable homes by the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He didn't ask for each to have a big church with a steeple and their name inscribed on it. He didn't ask for a nice life as a professor in Jerusalem Christian University. These things might be good in their own time, but they couldn't keep his disciples safe from the world's hatred, the devil's terrors, or the fear of death. So, Jesus prayed, "Keep them safe by the power of your name."

God's love will keep us safe, wherever it might lead us. It will keep us warm and secure, though we may lose every earthly comfort, and life itself. Only God's love lasts forever and will give us a place to stand, even when heaven and earth pass away. For the sake of his love, God leaves us in the world, sends us into the world, and kindles in our hearts the gospel courage to confess his name. No other name can save, and only in that name are we safe.

Gospel freedom

Once released from the misery of uncertainty, Luther was free to serve as he had been served, to love as he

had been loved, and to pour out his life for others as Christ poured out his life for him. Did people need to hear the Word in their own language? Luther translated it for them. Did people need to worship and sing God's praises in their own heart's voice and tongue? Luther saw to it they could.

He had critics. Some wagged their bony fingers and shook their wooden heads saying he had gone too far. Others clucked their tongues and said he had not gone far enough. But the gospel had set Luther free of the need to buy God off by being good, free of the fear of what others think. Christ's love and his neighbor's need compelled him.

May the Holy Spirit breathe that freedom into us! Freedom to do something new, to keep something old. Freedom from living a fearful cramped life, hedged in by rules and protected by fences of custom. A freedom born of confidence in Christ and the certainty that he will keep us safe. A freedom bound only by love: God's love for us, our love for our neighbor. As Luther wrote, "It is impossible that any man who feels such fire of God's love should not be at least a little warmed and kindled by it."

That's where Luther stood. Where do you stand? The gospel doesn't turn us into statues. It gives birth in us to a living hope, a hope that makes us bold and a hope that sets us free.

NL

Paul O. Wendland is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

To my family, whom I love

A father in recovery writes to his wife and children. His perspective can be applied to those involved with other addictions.

John Cook

To my family, whom I love, I know that this letter is too long in coming. Maybe you won't agree with or appreciate what you will read, but I think it is important that I try to explain why it has taken me so long to begin my recovery. I need you to understand what I see as important to happen for me to remain in recovery. So, here goes.

For a long time, I could not see that I was addicted. I knew I was causing you great difficulties and that our lives were getting more out of control. I was not connecting the neg-

ative happenings to my dependency.

I remember the Christmas when there was not enough money to buy gifts. Somehow, I convinced myself it wasn't my wasteful and addicted behavior that caused that situation. Kids, I can still see your tears. You didn't complain. In fact, I saw a look in your eyes that seemed to say, "Can't you make this different, Dad?" In response, I dove deeper into my addiction.

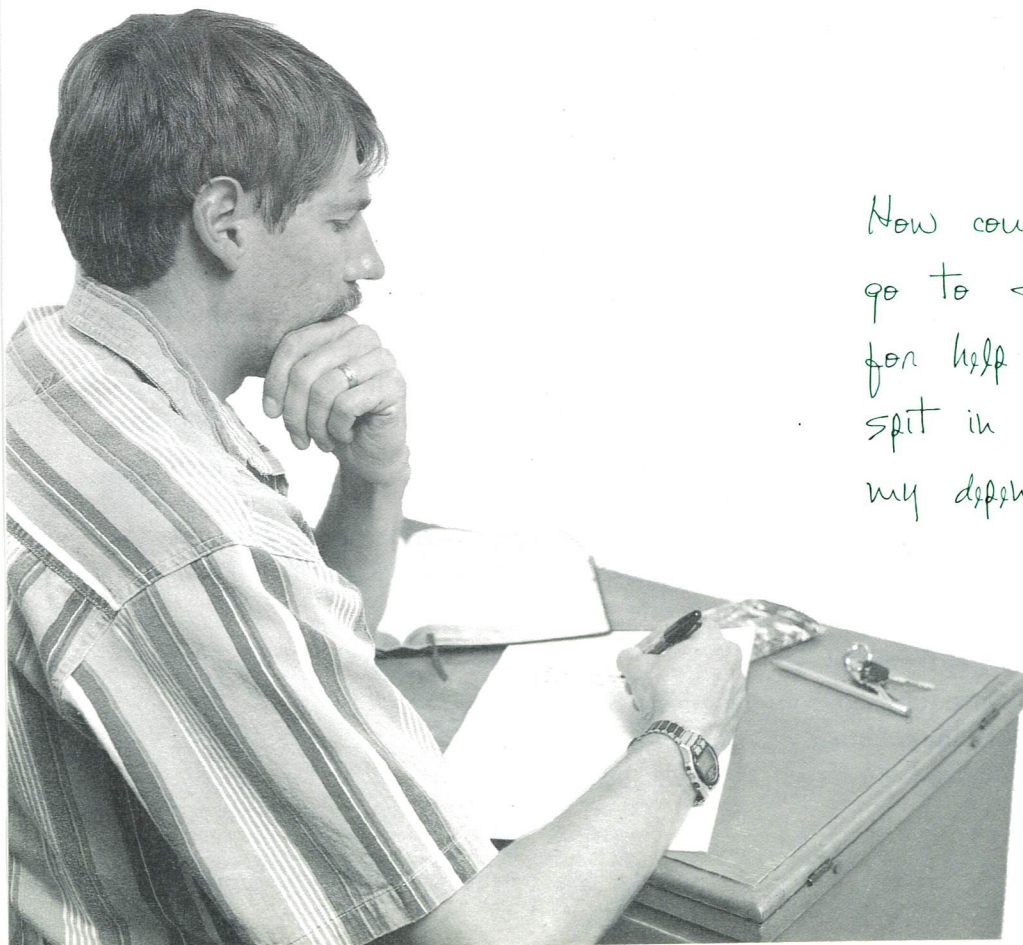
You see, my addiction (I guess any addiction for that matter)

produces a lot of guilt and even shame. That guilt ate away at me as I fought to bring my behavior under control, but I failed. I saw our family drifting farther and farther apart by my addiction, but felt powerless to change what was happening.

Dear, I know you did not get married expecting to have to deal with a problem like this. I blamed you for the problems that my addiction caused. I could always rationalize that it was your fault—that you were unreasonable, selfish, or impossible to live with. At some level, I knew that my actions were tearing apart our marriage, but I would not admit it. I hated that I felt like a failure—as a father, husband, and employee. So, my dependency grew.

How could I possibly go to God and ask for help when I daily spit in his face through my dependency?

Even more painful was the feeling that I was a failure as a Christian. Sure, I knew all the passages about what Jesus did. I rejoiced that all of you were going



to heaven because of your faith in the Savior. But, I felt I was somehow different.

I could not understand how God could forgive me. Because I was addicted, I felt unworthy and ashamed. How could I possibly go to God and ask for help when I daily spit in his face through my dependency? As you know, my dependency continued to worsen, aided by my endless guilt.

This is the past that I can never erase from my memory nor, unfortunately, from your memories. But the good news is, as you know, God stepped in and rescued me. I couldn't clean up my act on my own, so God started me on the way.

The way he started it was the day that all of you sat down with me and shared exactly what my dependency was doing and how it made you feel. The intense pain I saw in your eyes was like a stab to my heart and conscience. I wasn't immediately "cured," but God kept that memory alive inside of me and through it planted a growing seed of recovery.

To keep me in recovery, God has worked wonders with you as a supportive, forgiving family. Thank you. I see how much you love me and openly share that love. That gives me a little bit of God here on earth. You love me and support me despite the ways I have hurt you and let you down. My recovery is truly strengthened because of my family.

Even if God had not given me a family like you, he has also put Christian friends in my life to whom I need to be accountable. I need to meet with them on a regular basis to share my struggles. My dependency may not be active, but there are still

a good number of other problem areas to handle. I hope you know that I am not trying to avoid spending time with you, my family. I just need the support I get through my Christian friends.

I also see how God has changed me through my recovery. He used the counseling I received to help me discover that I am not the weak, less-than-others person I always felt I was. He reminded me of who I am because of what Jesus did.

God has taught me that my way is not always the best. (That's something that I wish he wouldn't have to show me so often!) He has also proven to me, many times, that being uncomfortable with people or events in my life is not bad. I can still trust that he is taking care of me, no matter how I feel.

God used a source for all of this teaching that I really did not know how to use, even though I thought I did. God opened up the Bible for me. I understand more clearly Paul talking about good things he tried to do but couldn't and the bad things he constantly struggled against but lost. I have seen how God does more than I could ever imagine, all because of his love.

That Jesus was sent to die for us and to rescue us while we were still sinners, helps to explain how my recovery began and does wonders for my humility. His mercies, which freely come every day, power my recovery. His Word tells me that each day his mercies are new. What a truly wonderful God we have!

I know I have a long way to go to become the husband and father that you need and want. I also know that my recovery is only as secure as my

relationship with God, you, and my good Christian friends. I just wanted you to know that, with God's help, I'm not going to give up on my recovery. I don't need my dependency as much as I need my Savior's love. I need to live out my recovery in the same way I need to live out my faith—one day at a time. For today then, I can truly agree with Paul that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Romans 8:37).

NL

John Cook is a marriage and family counselor at Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, Milwaukee.

Do you need to talk to someone?
Call **1-800-422-7341**.

The WELS CareLine offers 24-hour confidential Christian counseling. The phone is answered by a WELS professional counselor from 8 AM to 5 PM (Central Time) on workdays. During the evening and on weekends, trained WELS volunteers staff the phone.

Breaking free from addiction

To overcome addiction is a slow, hard process. Here are some steps addicts need to address to break their dependency.

Renew the relationship with God.

Deal with the denial.

Don't lay the blame on family and friends. Separate the issues between dependent and codependents.

Determine an effective approach to abstinence.

Build a support/accountability network.

The feast that awaits fulfillment

For pilgrims at the end of a lifelong journey, there will be neither thirst nor darkness. The love of Jesus will flood the resurrected self.

John C. Lawrenz

October has its harvest moon. Turning leaves and golden fields signal the end of another growing season. The 31st is Reformation Day. The day following is All Saints, a day for the living to remember the blessed dead. November wraps up the Christian church year and includes the United States' day of national thanksgiving. Scripture readings at year's end point to the end times, the final Judgment, and eternal life. At this time of year, Christians give thanks for the present, recall the past, and anticipate the future.

Three Hebrew pilgrim feasts

God provided three yearly pilgrim festivals for the ancient Hebrew farmer. The three trips to the central sanctuary celebrated divine goodness poured out on fields and flocks. The three treks to the Temple recalled God's powerful hand at work in Israel's past. Furthermore, the three journeys to Jerusalem lifted pilgrim eyes to behold a Christ-centered future.

The pilgrim feast of the full moon of spring was Passover. It recalled the night in Egypt when the angel of death passed over homes on whose doorposts glistened the blood of a lamb. As the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover signaled a clean break with the old year. Each day for seven days the last flour of the previous year's harvest was baked without yeast. The farmer cut the

first sheaf of the harvest just begun. He waived it before the Lord. Thus the first pilgrim feast anticipated the coming of Jesus, God's Lamb, whose blood turned death aside and whose resurrection promises new life for all who believe.

In Jesus, sinners are "at one" with God in a way that will withstand even the gates of hell.

Pentecost was the pilgrim feast held 50 days later. It marked the end of the grain harvest. Priests waved two loaves of bread baked with yeast. Thank God, there was flour enough for another year! The day recalled the Lord's kneading of poor, wretched slaves into a special people through the commandments he had given them on Mt. Sinai. The day and the loaves celebrated the Holy Spirit's working, like quiet yeast, in the hearts and souls of all who hear the Word of God and keep it.

Jesus came. The Hebrew Passover became Easter. We still celebrate it on the Sunday nearest the first full moon of spring. The Hebrew Pentecost has become our Pentecost. We celebrate it 50 days after Easter. But what of the third pilgrim feast? Why did the Hebrew farmer rejoice in it? What event of divine grace did it recall? Will we New Testament Christians celebrate it this fall?

The pilgrim feast of the seventh month

The seventh Hebrew month followed drought. From May till September the heavens never rained in the Promised Land. Green things survived only because God sent dew each morning. The seventh month began with a blast of trumpets. Ten days later the Hebrew farmer denied himself food, work in the fields, and the embrace of his wife. He looked toward holy Jerusalem where the high priest, his representative before God, entered the innermost chamber of the Temple to sprinkle the blood of a sacrifice on the Mercy Seat of God.

Then, at mid-month with the moon full, the party began. For a full week every Hebrew pilgrim slept outdoors. For shelter he had four standing poles lashed to an overhead maze of leafy branches. Inside his shelter the pilgrim stashed fruits, all newly harvested. There were juicy pomegranates, luscious dates, gooey figs, purest oil, and sweet wine. Day after day he and his family listened to the words of Moses read aloud. Priests drenched the altar of God in the Temple with water drawn from the Pool of Siloam prior to the morning sacrifice. Other priests prayed for rain as they circled the altar with a piece of fruit in one hand and a flowerless bouquet of leafy branches in the other. At night after the evening sacrifice, giant outdoor

candelabra bathed the Temple's courtyard with a light so bright that the hills around Jerusalem glowed.

The days of the feast of the seventh month were days of great joy. The Lord had sustained life through the drought of summer. He had spared the trees. And the trees had produced abundant fruit.

The Hebrew pilgrim rejoiced as he remembered Israel's survival in the wilderness. Back then the Lord accompanied his people with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He showered them with manna from heaven. They received water from a rock. There was victory in battle. Shoes and clothing lasted the length of the journey. *Succoth* (Exodus 12:37) had been the first stop on Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. *Succoth* is the Hebrew word

for "temporary shelters." This word (translated "tabernacles" or "booths") gave the pilgrim feast of the seventh month its name.

Fulfillment yet to come

But what of joy yet to come? Of each man's journey through life In John 16:20, Jesus said, I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. There will be joy when angels summon the elect with a loud trumpet call. There will be joy before the judgment seat of God when believers deny themselves and turn confidently to the One who is their perfect priest and perfect sacrifice.

In Jesus, sinners are "at one" with God in a way that will withstand even the gates of hell. Then painful memories of this vale of tears will vanish. Sins will be forgotten. Then

there will be no regret, no tears, no pain, no sorrow.

Instead, each of us will march with the bouquet of Christ's victory in one hand and with the fruits of our faith in the other. We will recall with joy the hungry we fed, the stranger we welcomed, the naked we clothed, the sick we befriended, and the prisoner we visited.

For pilgrims at the end of a life-long journey, there will be neither thirst nor darkness. The love of Jesus will flood the resurrected self. The brilliance of godliness will illuminate our heavenly Jerusalem.

Come, Lord Jesus! Fulfill the feast of the seventh month.

NL

John Lawrenz is administrator for the Board of Ministerial Education.



Seven reasons why city churches die



By ignoring the cities, we are not taking the gospel to all people.

Mark A. Jeske

Churches may close for many reasons. Here are seven opinions as to why once-strong city congregations die.

1. Immigration

WELS was built by German immigrants for German immigrants. Their congregations were built on a shared cultural base, which has now disappeared, at least in the cities. Most congregations never viewed their mission as evangelizing their community regardless of who was living there, but rather as gathering people like them. The first resolution, passed by the three founding pastors in December 1849, resolved “that the synod which is to be founded bear the name ‘The First German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin’ and that this specific name and title remain with it forever.”

In his 1883 convention report, President Johannes Bading wrote, “Every year thousands upon thousands of our people and brothers in faith spread out over the parts of this land in a mighty stream. . . . We have a holy and important mis-

sion and work to fulfill among these people which we will not be able to finish in our whole lives.”

Our synod has probably 30 urban churches that are declining for every one that is flourishing.

It is difficult for us who live in the late 20th century to imagine how this influx of Lutherans affected the way congregations viewed their mission. In the late 1880s, my congregation in Milwaukee had over 200 baptisms each year. The pastor had to announce after worship that all who wished to join the congregation should form a line outside the sacristy. Yes, there was a time for gathering European immigrants, but that time has long gone. The boats full of German Lutherans were declining even before World War I stopped them completely.

Another variation on this goal of finding “our people” is to imagine that our mission is to provide a

haven for conservatives from more liberal Lutheran church bodies. Indeed, we started some “missions” in the 1950’s and 1960’s that way.

Some WELS congregations that grew by receiving people already Lutheran had no idea what to do when transfers stopped coming. They held regular worship services, heard orthodox sermons, trusted firmly in the power of the Means of Grace, and waited for more Lutherans to move into their neighborhood. But people like that didn’t come any more. So the church died, and that community was deprived of one of its voices of the gospel.

2. Racism

Just as certain Jews practiced a restricted form of evangelism in Acts 11:19, “telling the message only to Jews,” a congregation might selectively avoid trying to connect with certain groups of people. Sometimes this is a failure of imagination, that people simply cannot imagine how Anglos and Mexicans could share church life, and so they don’t try. This is why we had “colored missions” for people not wel-

come in white churches, all-Apache congregations in Arizona, and all-white congregations near the reservations in northern Wisconsin.

But sometimes avoidance is just plain racism. Racism is ignorance—it is hard to relate to someone about whom you know nothing. Racism is unreasoning fear—black people often assume there's a white conspiracy to keep them down.

White people often assume that when a black family moves into the neighborhood, crime, graffiti, guns, drugs, rats, plywood, and prostitution will follow.

Racism is a communication breakdown—"why can't they be more like our people?" Racism is laziness—getting close to your Hmong or Puerto Rican neighbor takes work, patience, and a willingness to listen. Racism is selective indignation—seeing the faults of other groups clearly while being blind to your own. Racism is self-superiority (sometimes called "ethnocentricity")—many whites justified slavery on the grounds that Africans were too dumb to read and were fit only for brute labor.

Racism is victim obsession—this is one of the forms black racism takes. People mask laziness and non-achievement by asserting that blacks can't succeed in a white man's world because "The Man" controls economic power. Another side of this sickness is for black students to settle for below average academic performance and accuse black achievers of "acting white," the kiss of death to social acceptability.

3. Fatalism masquerading as piety

Some church leaders watch their churches decline and assume it is inevitable. "It's God's will." "This

corrupt and evil generation would not hear the Word of God." "We were faithful, which is all God expects of us." "God ordained that the races should be separate." "If God wants us to grow, he can make it happen." "Blacks have their own churches—they're all Baptist or Pentecostal anyway." "I would rather have our church die with dignity than change our ways."

4. Bias against cities

It's my impression that most WELS people feel about cities the way Jonah felt about Nineveh. We are people of the soil. "God's country" is where you can look around and see no human beings. Where is the absolutely ideal place to live? Out in the country, of course, on 20 wooded acres. Cities are evil and degenerate—they are no place to raise kids. Cities seem dirty, crowded, polluted, noisy, and full of threatening people who are not like us.

5. Lack of models

Where do you look for ideas about how to build a thriving city ministry? Anybody can complain and give up, but we need positive models to show how it can be done. There aren't many. Our synod has probably 30 urban churches that are declining for every one that is flourishing, yet some consider it traitorous to look at non-Lutheran positive models for ideas.

6. Social class issues

WELS is heavily geared for ministry to the middle class. We have difficulty dealing with low-income people. Our worship style often requires a high degree of literacy as we juggle two books and a bulletin with long things to read. Many hymns have dense, complex texts that baffle the semi-literate. One

reason why gospel music is favored by the urban underclass is that its simple lyrics and choruses can easily be learned by rote.

Another issue is economic—it is difficult and awkward to be viewed as a "have" church in a "have not" neighborhood. How do you conduct a "mercy ministry" to share food, clothes, and other kinds of material help in a way that does not ruin the church's spiritual mission?

7. Fear of crime

This is a legitimate concern, though vastly overblown. Fear and paranoia about urban living increase not the closer you live in the central city but the farther you live from it. This is an egg/chicken dilemma—which came first: urban deterioration or middle-class flight? When our church's neighborhood was first built up, the large houses of the merchants and wealthy were built side by side with smaller cottages of working people. Today, economic stratification is severe—people are expected to "know their place." If pastors and teachers cannot bear to live near their parishes, that sends a powerful message about their commitment to the area.

Although there is a decline in urban churches, good things are happening. Winds of change are blowing as churches feel permitted to adapt ministry styles. From steel drums in Toronto to a junior gospel choir in Milwaukee to a multicultural seminary program, Christians in WELS are looking for new ways to communicate Christ to all people, "so that we might by all possible means save some."

NL

Mark Jeske is pastor at St. Marcus, Milwaukee.

Jesus' last will and testament

The night Jesus was betrayed, he bequeathed riches that moths and rust can't destroy and that thieves can't steal.

Wayne A. Laitinen

You don't have to look far to see that the biblical teaching about the Lord's Supper is out of step with the world's wisdom. Who hasn't heard the complaint: "I think that the differences between our churches are silly. What difference does it make whether Jesus gives us his body and blood in Holy Communion? Isn't it enough that we all believe in Jesus?"

That sounds oh-so-reasonable until you ask, "What does the Holy Spirit use to give and preserve saving faith in us?" God's answer is plain: The gospel in Word (Romans 10:17), in Baptism (Matthew 28), and in Holy Communion (Matthew 26:28). These are the only three bridges between God's grace and the human heart. Without them there can be no forgiveness of sins, life, or salvation.

Is it any wonder that Satan, that evil genius, plots (especially among those who wear the name of Christ) to detonate the bridge of the Lord's Supper by calling it a silly war over words?

But let's put the shoe on the other foot. What if it were not our immortal soul at stake? Let's say a spiteful relative went to court to challenge your part of a rich uncle's inheritance. Would you be willing to dismiss a court appearance as a petty quarrel over words?

How tenaciously we cling to that which will be destroyed by fire.

How quickly we yield the things that give us eternal happiness. That is why we must regard the Lord's Supper with solemn awe and holy joy. After all, this is not a human will, but the last will and testament of the very Son of God.

A matter of public record

No, Jesus did not have a lawyer draw up his last will and testament. Neither will you find it written in the popular legalese: "I, Jesus of Nazareth, being of sound mind . . ." And, thank God, it is not tucked away in some musty Palestinian safety deposit box where no one can read it. Just as human wills are made known to every heir, Jesus' will was published in public record no less than three times for all his heirs to read (Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22). The Holy Spirit repeated it 30 years later for the Gentile heirs (1 Corinthians 11).

Carefully worded under solemn circumstances

Jesus' last will and testament was given in the context of the high, Jewish festival that pointed to the Savior's death for the sins of all mankind. On that night, every Hebrew knew that salvation came only through the death of an innocent, male lamb. The Twelve, who only reluctantly came to Jerusalem in the first place, could almost smell

death as it stalked their master. Jesus gave his will on a solemn occasion: the night he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies—only hours before his death.

The heirs of the kingdom receive both the bread and the body of Christ, both the wine and the blood of Christ.

There were times when it was appropriate for Jesus to speak in parables and mysteries. But this was not one of them. The closer he came to the cross, the more he used plain, simple words about his betrayal, denial, arrest, and death. In that upper room emotions were high, and confusion swirled about the disciples. Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus to give his last will and testament clearly so his heirs would not have to read between the lines:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said, "Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you"; In the same way, after supper he took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to them and said, "Drink from it,

all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

The words are clear. The bread is there and so is Jesus’ body. The wine is present and so is Jesus’ blood. The heirs of the kingdom receive both the bread and the body of Christ, both the wine and the blood of Christ.

This is a mystery of God’s grace. St. Augustine gave us some solid advice: “Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, do not seek to understand that you may believe. But believe that you may understand.”

Riches beyond your wildest dreams

Jesus wrote you into his will. If you were hoping for a Lexus, a Beverly Hills home, a trust fund, or a closet full of Tommy Hilfiger shirts, your Jesus is too small. To listen to the proponents of the health-and-wealth gospel, one might think we should stand in line and lay claim to Jesus’ Rolex.

How quickly they forget.

Jesus’ only transportation was his two feet. As for his home, well, the birds of the air have nests and foxes have holes, but the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. What money Jesus had was in the hands of Judas Iscariot. And a Roman soldier won his coat in a bet.

The night Jesus was betrayed, he bequeathed to us riches that moths and rust cannot destroy and thieves cannot break in and steal: “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for many” (Mark 14:24). In this holy meal Jesus removes the very things we fear most—God’s judgment, death, and everlasting punishment—and replaces it with the reward that he earned: forgiveness of sins. And (as Dr. Luther explains) “where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and eternal salvation!”

An ancient communion exhortation went like this: “Receive what you believe; and become what you receive.” When our Lord’s body and blood is received in faith, God no longer sees us (the damned sinners that we are), but his holy Son. And he treats us as if we were his Only-Begotten!

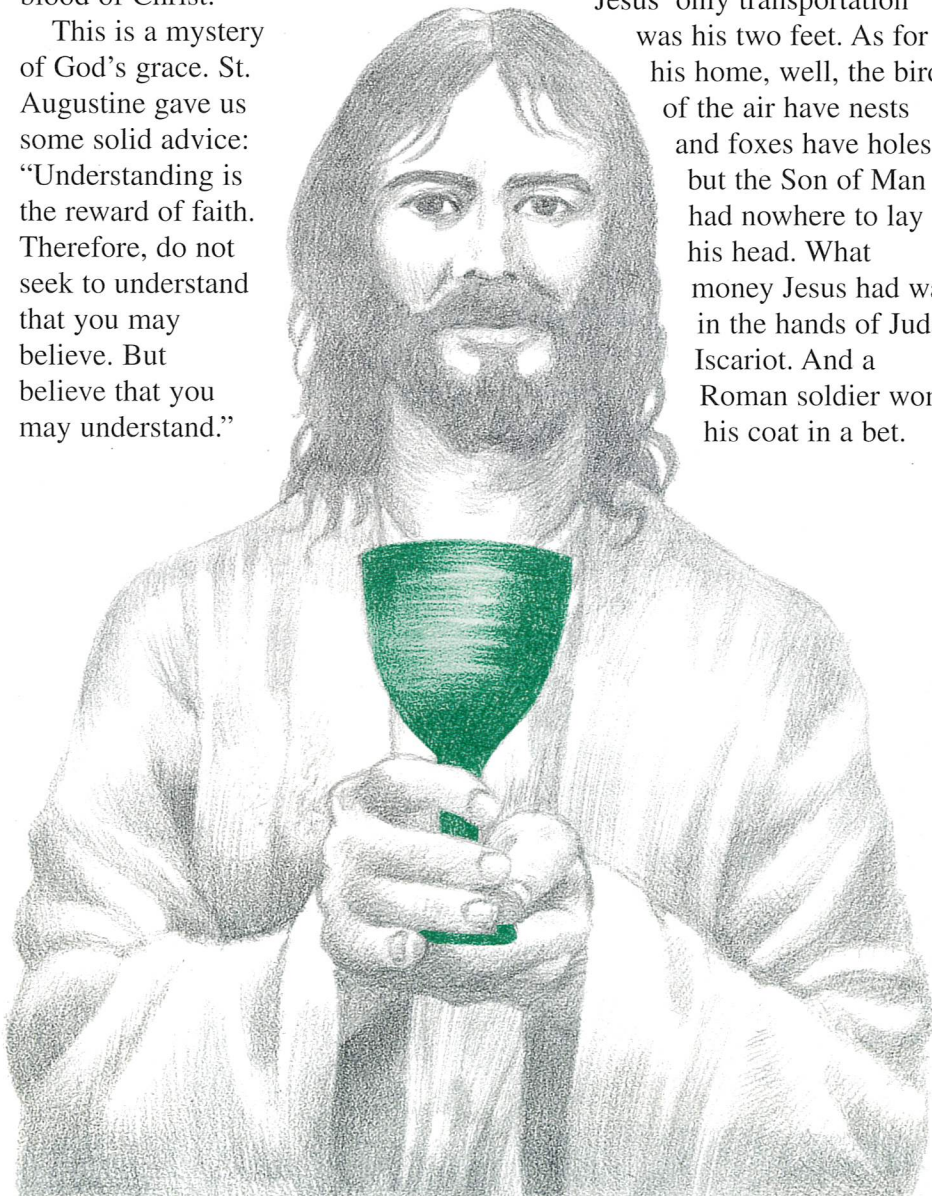
An unalterable instrument

When a human will is altered, it becomes null and void. That is why each word is witnessed and notarized, and copies are carefully preserved. It is even more critical that we preserve the simple, plain words of God’s will. “This is my body,” is not the same as, “This represents my body.” Nor may we edit, “This is my blood” to mean “this wine changes into my blood.”

Only when the words stand as our Savior spoke them, will we find the everlasting comfort that our Jesus intended. The Forbes and Gettys might well envy us.

NL

Wayne A. Laitinen is pastor at Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.



A bitter Christian

A mean old man teaches an important lesson about grace.

Joe Christina

“Marvin” was a bitter man. His demands were always loud, always gruff. His temper control was the size of the period at the end of this sentence, and after I met him, mine was too. I would be confounded if this old man ever said “Thank you.” I know, because the last years of his life I spent time with him.

Mean old Marvin

I worked at the nursing home where Marvin lived out his “golden” years. Every time Marvin was on my assignment, my thoughts were never polite. This man had a divine gift for embedding himself underneath your skin like a tick. I tried to keep calm in the face of his constant insults, his ridiculous demands, and his violent temper. I doubted he knew what “kindness” meant.

It amazed me how anyone could be like Marvin. He was not neglected. His family visited often. His physical ailments were little more than soreness and occasional back pains of old age. The cross Marvin bore seemed no more extraordinary than others at the home.

Still, Marvin was downright mean. I saw him throw and break things. He hit me more than once, and even managed to lift his leg high enough to kick me. He didn’t bring out the best in me. I never liked him. I don’t think I hated him, but maybe I did. Regardless, somewhere in the reaches of my sinful mind, I rationalized it. After all, he was mean old Marvin.

Marvin is gone now. According to his confession, Marvin dwells with the Lord. My grudge against Marvin took time to subside because it’s hard for minds steeped in sin to let go of malicious insults and physical assaults. But something good came from my long evenings spent with a cranky old man.

We are all like Marvin.
Nothing is good enough.

Gracious loving Christ

We are all like Marvin. Nothing is good enough. We earn our summer keep for the chance to go to school and then complain about not having enough money. Classes are too long; homework is too much. Worship services are never convenient. Maybe our setting is work instead of school and housework instead of homework, but the same is true. We, like Marvin, are easily aggravated. It doesn’t matter if we never hurled a chair at someone or uttered a barrage of degrading insults at a stranger. We, like Marvin, wallow in the filth of sin. And this sinfulness follows us to our graves.

But Jesus died. Our loving Savior lived a life that no one could live. He alone fulfilled God’s holy law. He alone bore the

weight of our sin in death. And he alone rose from the grave to proclaim his victory, and our victory, over death. He did this for you, for me, for Marvin.

It is foolish to proclaim ourselves better Christians than Marvin. We’re not. We will enter into heaven’s glorious gates the same way Marvin did—by the virtue of Christ. Let us be thankful that God no longer looks on our miserable lives as payments for sin, but instead on Christ, who atoned for all sin. Through our baptism we were given faith and made children of a patient God. And we are kept in that faith through Word and sacrament.

Marvin was a bitter man. We, too, are bitter. Thank God for his grace—the grace that led our Lord one Tuesday morning to say, “Welcome home, Marvin.” That very grace will allow you and me to one day behold the heaven we don’t deserve and hear those words: “Welcome home, ‘Marvin.’”

NL

Joe Christina is a first-year student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.



INTER-ACT

Mark J. Lenz

"The word of God is living and active." Hebrews 4:12

Introduction

How do you picture God?

- Do you see him with a long flowing white beard, sitting on a bright and shiny throne with a luminous radiance surrounding him?
- Do you see him as the supreme ruler of heaven and earth, governing and guiding the course of history and the destinies of men and nations?
- Do you see him as a man with dusty feet and sweaty brow?
- Do you see him bloodied and bruised, suffering and dying on a cross?

Which of the above do you think are the more accurate pictures of how God has revealed himself to man?

I. Text

Read Exodus 33:18-23

¹⁸Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

¹⁹And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

²⁰But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." ²¹Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock.

²²When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will remove my hand, and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

IV. Prayer

Father, you have revealed yourself as good and gracious. Though I deserve your wrath and punishment, you have been merciful and compassionate for the sake of your Son, Jesus. Keep me from flights of imagination and reason by which I might seek to create you in my own image. Remove from me any traces of a theology of glory. Help me cling firmly instead to Jesus and his cross. Thank you for the forgiveness of sins and the life eternal in heaven that you have given me for his sake. Amen.

II. Questions

1. What did Moses want God to show him?
2. What did the LORD cause to pass in front of Moses instead? This is a reference to God's nature and character.
3. What does 34:5-7 reveal about the name of the LORD? What additional insights does 3:14,15 give regarding the name of the LORD? Why does God proclaim his name to people? (John 1:12 and 17:6)
4. How has God shown his mercy and compassion to a world of sinners?
5. Why does death await any sinful mortal who sees the LORD's face?
6. What did Moses see instead? Though God is a spirit, he speaks of himself as though he were human. Why?

III. Applications

1. Sinful humans cannot see God face to face nor can they know him by reason or imagination. How alone can they know him? (1 Corinthians 2:9,10 and John 20:31)
2. Luther called attempts to know God apart from his revelation a "theology of glory." Why did he call it that? Why did he reject it? What are modern-day examples of such a theology?
3. Based on Exodus 33:23 and Isaiah 45:15, Luther spoke of God as "hidden" even when he reveals himself. How is Jesus himself an example of this? What other examples can you think of?
4. Luther said, "The cross is our theology." What did he mean?
5. Man often seeks to create God in his own image. Think of examples. Why is this appealing? Why is this wrong?
6. How would you picture God for a child? For an inquiring adult?

Mark J. Lenz is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.



WELS schools opt out of state program

On June 10, the Wisconsin State Supreme Court ruled that the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) could include religious schools. This follows recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions that using public funds in religious institutions is permissible if the program is neutral between religious and secular options, and parents or children direct the funds. The Court ruled under the Wisconsin State Constitution that the program does not operate primarily for the "benefit" of religious schools, but rather for children. This decision could have a major impact on cases pending in Ohio, Arizona, Vermont, and Maine. It has direct impact on the 18 WELS elementary schools and one area Lutheran high school in Milwaukee's city limits.

"Forty-nine of our 70 students are eligible for tuition vouchers through the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. If our school participates, we could have over 100 students. If we don't, we might have less than 50," says Ray Kimbrough, pastor at St. Philip, describing the effect of the MPCP upon Beautiful Savior Lutheran School.

Numerous proposals have been made at state and federal levels to help parents choose their child(ren)'s school. In principle, these efforts support the scriptural principle of

parents' responsibility for children's education. In practice, however, these proposals might undermine our schools' mission and purpose.

In 1993, the Commission on Parish Schools (CPS) gave guidelines to parish leaders to consider issues related to government aid. Here's a summary:

It is not necessarily wrong for the church to receive financial support from the government for the education of children. It is still wise to adhere to the guidelines established by the 1967 synodical convention that indicate that accepting financial support from the government is acceptable if:

1. it does not hinder us from carrying out our objectives,
2. it does not lead to financial dependency on the government or does not undermine our Christian stewardship,
3. it does not bring improper government control,
4. it does not jeopardize our unified Christian education.

A set of questions is also available to help parish leaders consider any "parental choice" program. Copies are available from the CPS office.

The Wisconsin ruling presents a challenge to WELS schools in Milwaukee. Parental choice has the potential to give hundreds of low-income youth a Christian education by providing tuition vouchers to parents equal to the congregation's cost of operation.

Wisconsin's law mandates that "a private school may not require a pupil attending the private school under this section to participate in any religious activity." It, further, requires

a school to determine "which pupils to accept on a random basis." These legal requirements may undermine the school's ability to:

1. Carry out its mission to make disciples for Jesus by basing all of the school's activities for all of its students upon God's Word; and
2. Enroll those students whose spiritual, emotional, academic, and physical needs are able to be met within the scope of the school's program.

At great cost to their future enrollment, many Milwaukee WELS parishes have resolved not to participate because of these infringements. These decisions, however, are not synodical positions, but were made by individual congregations. By making these decisions, parish leaders have said "no" to amounts in excess of \$40,000 per school. As a result, hundreds of children from low-income families may not be able to afford WELS schools.

Tim McNeil, principal of Siloah, expressed the leaders' commitment to provide a Lutheran education for the community's children: "We have found ways to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. We will find a way to do it here also." They look to their members and to those throughout the synod for prayers and financial support.

For more information, contact the Commission on Parish Schools, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3220.

Dan Schmeling



I was sitting on the couch with our two-month-old grandson, Aric, lying

beside me. His five-year-old cousin, Bryton, was admiring the new cousin. Noticing a pink spot on the middle of Aric's forehead, he asked, "Grandpa, is this where he was sanitized?" I asked him to repeat what he said (probably looking a little puzzled), and he repeated, "You know. When we were all in church, and pastor sanitized Aric."

Then it made sense. Only a few weeks ago Bryton had attended Aric's baptism. In a way I guess he couldn't have been more correct with that choice of words.

Ellery Gulbrand
Green Bay, Wisconsin

YOUTH NEWS

Youth in service

Forty Manitowoc, Wis., high school students took time out of their summer vacations to serve their Lord, congregations, and community. These dedicated WELS teens participated in a two-day event known as Youth in Service.

Youth in Service was sponsored by the Commission on Youth Discipleship. It let the members of Manitowoc youth groups organize help for projects they felt were important. In June

the teens did maintenance around Manitowoc Lutheran High School, visited residents of nursing homes, cleaned up area beaches, and took care of children for Parents' Night Out.

The program was such a success that the teens are looking forward to next year. Ross Henzi, youth discipleship chairman for the Northern Wisconsin District, reports that he had to pry two teens away from nursing home members because they were so involved in their visits. "If you give youth a meaningful opportunity to serve, they are willing to do it," emphasizes Henzi.

For information on the Youth in Service event, call the Commission on Youth Discipleship, 414/256-3274.



Youth group members in Manitowoc register children for Parents' Night Out. While parents enjoyed a quiet evening alone, the children played games and heard Bible stories from the high school students.

Working for the Lord

The 70 youth and 19 adults who attended the regional youth rally in Lansing, Mich., took the rally's theme to heart. The rally, held June 30 to July 2, was guided by the passage, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23).

Participants from Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin did the normal rally events: a baseball game, swimming, and a trip to a sportsplex. But the group really came together on July 1, when Joseph Dietrich, campus pastor

of Michigan State University and Lansing Community College, taught the teens how to canvass.

The goal was to cover a portion of East Lansing, finding those interested in Christianity, English, and children's activities. Of the 322 people they met, 45 were interested in Christianity, 70 in English lessons, and 88 in children's activities. These statistics taught teens that "working for the Lord" through canvassing is hard, but joy-filled work.

Paul Lindloff

Martin Lemke, 16, of Sturgis, S.D., was one of six homeschooled high school students profiled before the 1998 South Dakota State Legislature. He was chosen by the South Dakota Home School Association as an ongoing success story.

In his homeschooling projects, he is helping set up a curriculum computer program and assists other homeschool students in setting up an on-line conferencing network.

A member at Trinity, Sturgis, S.D., Lemke has designed his church's Web site, serves as an usher and organist, and plays the trumpet.

For information on home schooling, check out the Commission on Parish School's Web page at <www.wels.net/sab/frm-cps.html>.



Participants in the WELS regional youth rally in Lansing, Mich., take a break after spending the day canvassing.



WELS news briefs

These updates are from the offices at the synod administration building. You can contact these offices at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3888.

Commission on Adult Discipleship

Six new Bible classes have been published in four Bible study series:

Moses from "His Word—My Life"
Predestination and Holy Spirit, from "People's Bible Teaching"
19 Minute Bible Studies and
The Large Catechism, Part 1, from "Bible Insight"

God of the Covenant from "The Gospel," the newest of the Bible study series.

All are available from Northwestern Publishing House in kit format—reproducible student's text, leader's guide, and diskette (1-800-662-6022).

Commission on Worship

The 1999 Worship Conference will be held July 18-21 at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis.

Correction:

Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School (NELHS), Waco, Neb., will not be relocating to Omaha as was reported in the Nebraska district convention news (Sept., p. 21). A feasibility study suggested this action, but convention delegates left the final decision up to the school association. In August, the association voted to keep NELHS in Waco. We regret any confusion our error may have caused.

Missionary leaves Albania—again

Missionary Richard and Karla Russow were once again evacuated from Albania. As a precautionary measure, they and their two children, Caleb, two, and Aaron, three months, left the country on Aug. 15.

The U.S. State Department issued an evacuation order for all non-essential personnel at the Tirana embassy. That order, coupled with ongoing unrest in neighboring Kosova and the flight of refugees into Albania, led to the decision to bring the Russows home.

The Russows were evacuated once before, in May 1997. That time, however, an uprising and mass flight of expatriates led to an emergency evacuation that was much more harrowing.

"Given the volatility of the region, it is unlikely that the Russows will

return to live in Albania in the near future," says Stephen Valleskey, executive committee member of the Japan Europe Asia committee of the Board for World Missions. "We are nonetheless committed to continue to serve the Christians that have been gathered by our mission."

To do that, the Board for World Missions has called Russow to live and assist with the work in neighboring Bulgaria, while serving as a liaison to Albania. In this capacity, he would maintain phone contact with the church leaders in Albania, offer church service, sermon, and instructional materials, develop a correspondence course, and—as circumstances permit—begin periodic visits.

As of Sept. 1, Russow had not made a decision about the call.

Institutional ministries merge

Three WELS ministries to the institutionalized merged on Sept. 1.

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministry, Inc. (WLIM), WELS Madison Institutional Ministries, Inc. (MIMI), and the Northern Wisconsin District Institutional Ministries, Inc. (NWDIM), became Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc.

This merger brings together an executive director, five full-time chaplains, a deaconess, and a lay ministry coordinator. The called workers will continue to work in their respective areas, with the headquarters in Milwaukee.

"The Lord is opening up doors for

our ministry, and he wants us to walk through them," said Don Borgwardt, executive director of Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc. "This merger will give us an opportunity for more ministry."

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries spreads the Word in prisons, juvenile detention facilities, hospitals, nursing homes, and drug and alcohol treatment facilities.

A video about WLIM is available. Contact Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc., 2949 N Mayfair Rd #105, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/259-8122; <wlim@wlim-jcm.wels.net>.

rē · li' giōn
Defining religion

epistle: a letter; the New Testament contains 21 letters written in the first century by apostles or companions of the apostles to congregations, individuals, or the Christian Church in general.

District officers

The following men, all parish pastors, were elected at this summer's 12 district conventions. They will hold these positions for two years. These men, along with synod president, Karl R. Gurgel; vice president of mission and ministry, Richard Lauersdorf; second vice president, Jon Mahnke; and secretary, Douglas Bode, make up the Conference of Presidents.

Arizona-California

President: Paul Janke
First Vice President: Philip Koelpin
Second Vice President: Joel Prange
Secretary: Kenneth Pasch

Dakota-Montana

President: Peter Naumann
First Vice President: Douglas Free
Second Vice President: Wayne Rouse
Secretary: Paul Marggraf

Michigan

President: John Seifert
First Vice President: Paul Naumann
Second Vice President: Carl Otto
Secretary: James Seelow

Minnesota

President: Larry Cross
First Vice President: Charles Degner
Second Vice President: David Kolander
Secretary: Michael Hatzung

Nebraska

President: Joel Frank
First Vice President: Philip Zarling
Second Vice President: David Russow
Secretary: Keith Petersen

North Atlantic

President: Walter Beckmann
First Vice President: Thomas Zarling
Second Vice President: Kieth Kuschel
Secretary: Brett Voigt

Northern Wisconsin

President: Douglas Engelbrecht
First Vice President: Bruce McKenney
Second Vice President: David Sternberg
Secretary: Ronald Szep

Pacific Northwest

President: Warren Widmann
First Vice President: Ted Lambert

Second Vice President: Douglas Weiser
Secretary: Gary Kraklow

South Atlantic

President: John Guse
First Vice President: Keith Kruck
Second Vice President: James Pope
Secretary: Robert Krueger

South Central

President: Vilas Glaeske
First Vice President: Mark Bitter
Second Vice President: Donald Patterson
Secretary: Daniel Voigt

Southeastern Wisconsin

President: David Rutschow
First Vice President: James Huebner
Second Vice President: Mark Jeske
Secretary: Robert Pasbrig

Western Wisconsin

President: Herbert Prah
First Vice President: David Fischer
Second Vice President: Mark Lindner
Secretary: Mark Johnston

New BWM associate administrator experienced

Having served as an instructor and head of the Lutheran Bible Institute, Malawi, Africa, for 10 years and still acting as an area coordinator of teaching in India, Walter Westphal, new associate administrator of the Board for World Missions, is looking forward to applying these experiences to other world mission settings.

Because he will be supervising the missionary orientation/repatriation programs and helping define an approved core curriculum for world seminary programs, his experience will prove valuable.

"Activity has grown so much in world missions," says Westphal. "It's an exciting time to be involved."

Westphal's responsibilities include planning world missionary confer-

ences, promoting translation of English materials into other languages, helping develop a curriculum for worker training in multicultural settings in the United States and Canada, and helping develop plans for cross-cultural awareness training.

A 1968 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Westphal served as a tutor at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis. He also served Our Savior, Longmont/St. John, Platteville, Colo., and at St. John, La Crosse, Wis.

He and his wife, Diane, a teacher, have three children: Elizabeth, 25; Sarah, 23; and Erich, 21.



Walter and Diane Westphal. He is the new associate administrator of the Board for World Missions.

The other side of the classroom

When most high school students take a foreign language, they spend their time learning the language, not teaching it. But not students at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis. Last year German 3 and Spanish 4 students taught grade school students at Eastside, Madison, Wis.

Eastside has developed a middle school to expose their students to a broad spectrum of opportunities—from drama to journalism to economics.

“We also wanted students to get a taste of language and help them make high school decisions,” says Roger Ehlke, Eastside’s principal.

So Ehlke approached Lakeside’s foreign language department and asked them to run a German and Spanish language club.

To prepare for the high school students’ teaching experience, German teacher, Gerry Walta, and Spanish teacher, Sarah Scheitel, wrote the lessons. The students practiced teaching the lesson to their classmates and then on Fridays taught it to the middle schoolers.

The program was so successful that they are doing it again this year.

“The program has been very beneficial,” says Ehlke, “We’re meeting our goals of exposing our students to foreign languages.”

And it has benefited the Lakeside students too. It made foreign language come alive and brought variety to the curriculum. However, the benefits weren’t only related to language development.

“It gave students an opportunity to serve others and gave them a taste of ministry,” said Walta. “And they were good Christian witnesses.”



In NL, we report the news. But we aren’t always able to follow up. We’re running this short feature, “Where are they now,” to give you updates on news items or inspirational features. —ed.

The feature article “We all need a little Faith” ran in December 1996.

Here’s a recap:

On July 31, 1996, Faith Dabe was born. Three months earlier, Rachel and Brett Dabe’s unborn baby was diagnosed with acute hydrocephalus. Doctors gave no hope for her survival and suggested an abortion, but the Dabes put their family in God’s hands.

In the hours after her birth, Faith breathed on her own, sucked milk from a bottle, and was baptized. The following day an MRI revealed that Faith’s brain had developed enough and she was expected to live.

So, where are they now?

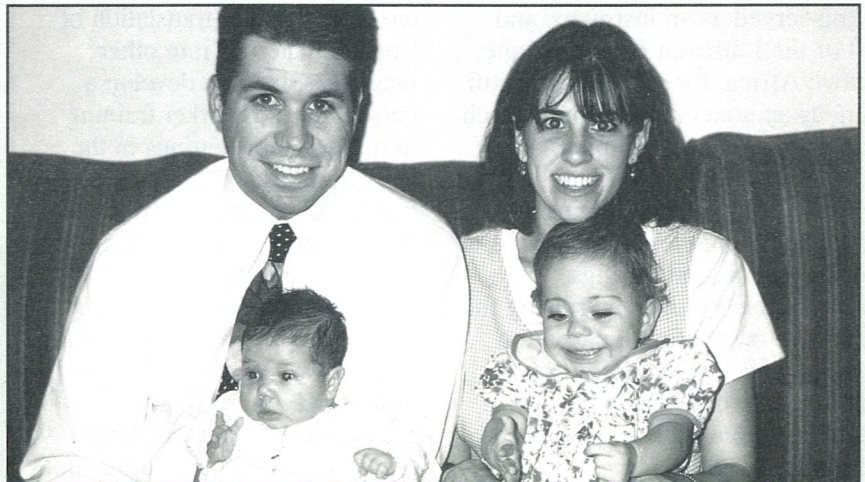
“She’s a happy little girl with a great personality,” says Rachel.

Faith is doing remarkably well, making strides in gross motor skills, and the neurosurgeon is surprised at how far along Faith is. Brett and Rachel communicate with Faith using their own sign language. Because of the early intervention, there’s a lot of hope that she will someday walk and talk.

Still, there are bad days, slow-downs, and setbacks. In February, Faith had hip surgery. She wore a cast until April and then a splint until June. “This surgery had really set her back more than we expected,” says Rachel. “But Faith adjusted to it better than Mom and Dad.”

The Dabes are still getting support from members at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati. “Whenever there’s a medical mishap, the members call and pray and pitch in,” says Rachel.

On Mar. 11, members had one more reason to call and pray and pitch in. Rachel and Brett had to make another trip to the doctor—to give birth to their second daughter, Kailyn.



Brett and Rachel Dabe, with daughters Kailyn and Faith. Faith, who was diagnosed with acute hydrocephalus before birth and not expected to live, celebrated her second birthday on July 31, 1998.

District news

Western Wisconsin

St. John, Baraboo, celebrated its 125th anniversary on May 31. . . . **St. John, Christie**, dedicated a new church building on July 12.

South Atlantic

Lynn Wiedmann, Gainesville, Fla., is headed to the Lutheran Mission of Salvation in India. He will serve as a friendly counselor and join Pastor Bhushana Rao Dasari on the mission team. . . . **Living Word, Johnson City, Tenn.**, will receive a vicar for the first time. Stephen Meyer arrived in August and is helping this young congregation continue outreach-exploratory work.

Mark Haefner

Nebraska

Grace, Burke, S.D., celebrated its 75th anniversary on Aug. 16.

Keith Petersen

North Atlantic

Prince of Peace, Fairport, N.Y., celebrated the fifth anniversary of its church building dedication on Aug. 7. . . . **Messiah, South Windsor, Ct.**, celebrated its 30th anniversary on Sept. 13. They began the next 30 years the following Sunday by adding a second worship service. . . . At a coffee hour following her last Sunday as organist at King of Kings, Clifton Park, N.Y., **Dorothy Czirr** was honored for 25 years of playing organ. . . . A new sign marks the entrance and property of **Good Shepherd, South Attleboro, Mass.** The 35-foot high sign has two movable message boards and a gold cross at the top. . . . Conducting his first service since being ordained and installed, Eric Roecker baptized three children at **Resurrection, Virginia Beach, Va.** The three sets of parents were waiting for the new pastor before baptizing their baby girls.

Kevin Schultz

South Central

Phillip Schwerin, pastor at Faith, Russellville, Ark., celebrated 25 years in the ministry on July 12. . . . **Trinity, Mountain Home, Ark.**, moved into its new building and held its first worship service the first week of June. The church dedication took place on Sept. 6. . . . An **evangelism workshop**, "Everyone a Witness," was held on Aug. 2 at St. Mark, Duncanville, Tex. Sponsored by WELS Kingdom Workers, the workshop provided participants with motivation and encouragement in their personal outreach efforts.

Charles Learman



Rose Schmiedeke (seated at left) with Sunday school students at St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb. On June 14, the congregations honored Schmiedeke for serving 37 years as Sunday school superintendent.

Obituaries

Mentor E. Kujath 1922-1998

Mentor Kujath was born Dec. 3, 1922, in Zumbro Falls, Minn. He died Aug. 16, 1998, in Muskego, Wis.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Kujath served St. Peter, Brodhead; St. Matthew, Janesville; and Zion, South Milwaukee, all in Wisconsin. He also served at Lutheran Children's Friend Society in Wauwatosa, Wis., and as director of public relations at Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, Milwaukee. He was editor-in-chief at Northwestern Publishing House. During his retirement he taught at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School and served several pastoral vacancies.

He is survived by wife, Margaret; three daughters; one son; 13 grandchildren; a sister; and a brother.

Youth in Bible Class	4,419	4,368	4,257	4,501	4,310	4,437
Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Adults in Bible Class	33,985	33,976	35,082	36,758	38,503	39,962

With a renewed sense of the importance of Bible study, more WELS members are attending Bible classes. Statistics taken from the WELS Statistical Report.

Mission counselor for ELS



Pastor Steven Petersen

Steven Petersen has been installed as Mission Counselor for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). He will aid home and foreign mission

boards in promotion, management, and publicity.

This new position is the second full-time administrative position in ELS. He joins President George Orvick in working out of ELS headquarters in Mankato, Minn.

A 1977 graduate of Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Petersen previously served as pastor at Holy Cross, Madison, Wis.

Thomas Nass

WELS campus rally coming

Attention college students! It is time to register for the WELS National Campus Rally being held at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. The theme, "Weathering the Storm," focuses on how God's mercy, forgiveness, and love carry us all through the storms of life.

The rally, which runs Dec. 27-30, is jam-packed with events. Students have the opportunity to interact with well-known speakers, enjoy Christian music concerts, and attend workshops based on college issues.

For information, contact Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, 608/257-1969; <national.rally@juno.com>. Register before Oct. 15 for lowest cost.

ELS celebrates anniversary of Peru mission

At its June convention the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) celebrated the 30th anniversary of its mission in Peru. National pastor Fidel Convercio and his wife, Dora, attended the convention. Convercio came in contact with the mission in 1971; he was ordained in 1991.

Traveling by horseback, he serves five congregations in the mountains of Peru.

Missionary Timothy Erickson and his wife, Ellen, also attended. Erickson and the other expatriate missionaries, David Haeuser and Terry Schultz, spend much of their time training national pastors at the seminary in Lima.

Peru was the first foreign field entered independently by ELS. It has grown to 840 souls in 27 preaching stations. It officially joined the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference in 1996.



Fidel and Dora Convercio with Ellen and Timothy Erickson on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.

In other convention action, ELS delegates reelected George Orvick as president. John Moldstad Jr. was elected vice president.

A new library, which will hold over 100,000 volumes, was dedicated at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn. The library is one component in Bethany's plan to become a four-year institution. Bethany will begin offering junior level classes in fall 1999. The first baccalaureate degrees will be given in 2001.

Thomas Nass



hugs and diplomas, I was telling the children I would miss them.

It was the last day of one of my pre-kindergarten classes. As they were receiving

One energetic, curly-headed boy replied, "I'll miss you, too. But next year you'll have new children, and they'll make you happy just like we did!"

*Trudy Madetzke
 Marshall, Minnesota*



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

No condemnations, but no consensus

After some 450 years of dispute, some Lutherans and Roman Catholics studied the statement, "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." To agree with the statement would mean that each group sees authentic Christian faith in the other and that the condemnations and anathemas hurled at each other during the increasingly bitter dispute no longer exist.

The main issue behind the condemnations was justification—how people are saved. The Catholic Church argued that a person's life—or "works"—had something to do with "justification" or salvation. Martin Luther, however, stressed that salvation comes from faith.

The differences in the 16th century sparked Luther to challenge church teachings and practices. Ultimately, the challenge led to the division of Europe into Catholic and Protestant camps and religious wars.

The Lutherans who met represent the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). LWF members signed the statement, endorsing its claim that

"a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics."

Reaction by the Vatican, however, was different. Although the Vatican welcomed the lifting of the condemnations, they rebuffed a Lutheran affirmation that a consensus on justification existed.

"The Catholic Church is . . . of the opinion that we cannot yet speak of a consensus such as would eliminate every difference between Catholics and Lutherans in the understanding of justification," the Vatican said.

It said divergences remain "that constitute still an obstacle to agreement . . . on all the fundamental truths concerning justification."

However, the Vatican signed the agreement, stating that there was a "differentiated consensus" concerning the document.

The LWF is made up of 224 Lutheran churches. The 5.2 million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a member. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, WELS, and ELS are not members of the LWF. —ed.

British sports figure: Soccer could replace real God



If left unchecked, enthusiasm over sports could replace the "real God" in the lives of many Britons, a leading sports figure in the United Kingdom has warned.

David Mellor, chair of the Football Task Force, warned the nation against turning football—a sport Americans call soccer—into a religion.

"The danger is that at a time when we get into an obsessive belief, perhaps about football, we are losing our faith—not just in religious institutions, but certainly in political

institutions and indeed in other fundamental institutions," said Mellor.

"That's because [of] the slight reverence with which, sometimes, the popular press treats football and its gods—they don't give the real God the benefit of the doubt to the same degree."

At least one fan agreed with Mellor: "Football is my religion because it's something that gives me a release from everything that I have on a day-to-day basis," said a lifelong Manchester United fan.

Finding faith in cyberspace



As use of the Internet explodes, more people are turning to it for spiritual purposes.

A survey of American teenagers by Barna Research Group showed that although only four percent use the Internet for religious or spiritual experiences, 16 percent expect to use it as a substitute for their current church-based religious experience within the next five years.

This expectation was most common among teenagers who currently attend church regularly. African-American teens (31 percent) were more likely than white teens (eight percent) to expect to rely on the Internet for their future religious experience.

If that seems outrageous, a Barna survey among adults shows that 12 percent of the adult population already uses the Internet for religious purposes. The most common purpose is to interact with others via chat rooms or e-mail about religious ideas, beliefs, or experiences. That represents about 25 million adults who rely on the Internet for religious expression each month.

The teenage data has a sampling error of +4 percent. The information for adults has a maximum sampling error of +3 percent.

Who uses the Internet for religion?

Baby Busters (ages 18 to 32)	17%
Boomers (33 to 51)	11%
Builders (52 to 70)	8%
Seniors (71 or older)	4%
Christians	14%
Non-Christians	10%

To see how WELS is using the Internet for ministry, log on to <www.wels.net>.

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors:

Capek, Allen D., to retirement
Dorn, John S., to exploratory, Oshkosh, Wis.
Haberkorn, David M., to exploratory, Clifton, Colo.
Helwig, Daniel J., to Bethany, Appleton, Wis.
Hirsch, Philip C., to exploratory, Manhattan, Kan.
Johnson, Ricky R., to exploratory, Corona, Calif.
Krieger, Philip E., to Grace, Tecumseh, Mich.
Laabs, David W., to Trinity, Kiel, Wis.
Leyrer, Daniel P., to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
Lindemann, Michael A., to St. John, Lewiston, Wis.
Martens, Ralph W., to Chile (ELS)
Melke, John T., to St. John, Renville, Minn.
Rimmert, Jonathan E., to St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis.
Sluke, Gregory S., to St. Paul, Berlin/Trinity, Redgranite, Wis.
Strobel, Nathan J., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Voigt, Daniel R., to Evergreen LHS, Des Moines, Wash.
Warnecke, Richard H., to WELS Kingdom Workers, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Wiedmann, Lynn E., to India Mission

Teachers:

Affeld, Ruth J., to St. Peter, Mayville, Wis.
Anderson, Linda K., to Cross, Rockford, Minn.
Bain, Patricia M., to St. John, Lake City, Minn.
Biesterfeld, Laura A., to Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis.
Biesterfeld, Laura D., to Crete, Crete, Ill.
Borchert, Kenneth W., to East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Burow, Sharon R., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
Callaway, Tina M., to St. Luke, Oakfield, Wis.
Cioni, Tonya R., to First, Green Bay, Wis.
Coffren, Patricia M., to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.
Conklin, Rachel J., to Grace, Durand, Mich.
Dowling, Margie A., to Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.
Durst, Deborah J., to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.
Esch, Julie M., to St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.
Esmay, Kerri L., to Immanuel, Fort Worth, Tex.
Faust, Vickie L., to California LHS, Wildomar
Favorite, Denise M., to Christ-St. John, West Salem, Wis.
Gruenwald, Cynthia, to St. Paul, Livonia, Wis.
Guentenberg, Thomas M., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Hartwig, Amy M., to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.
Hauf, Tod A., to Manitowoc LHS, Manitowoc, Wis.
Hennig, Ellen, to Zion, Hartland, Wis.
Kilburn, Carol L., to Gloria Dei, Grand Blanc, Mich.
Koester, Brenda S., to St. John, Dowagiac, Mich.
Kulhanek, Susan K., to St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.
Kuske, Jennifer, D., to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
Lindemann, Colleen L., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Marshall, Sandra K., to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
Marti, Rebecca R., to Bloomington, Bloomington, Minn.
Mau, Rebecca M., to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.
Nell, Marilyn, to retirement
Pagel, Gloria L., to St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis.
Petersen, Sally J., to Good Shepherd, Midland, Mich.

Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210;
FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net>
Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

Pluger, Janine H., to St. Mark, Brown Deer, Wis.
Proeber, Laurel F., to St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.
Reckard, Susan D., to St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis.
Rush, Gregory A., to Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.
Salzwedel, Terri L., to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.
Schierenbeck, James R., to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.
Schoening, Melanie L., to St. Paul, Algoma, Wis.
Schone, Susan M., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.
Schroeder, Elroy J., to Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.
Schultz, Loran R., to Zion, Cheshaning, Mich.
Schwartz, Jacqueline, to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
Shambeau, Elise, to St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.
Sielaff, Ann L., to Memorial, Williamstown, Mich.
Slates, Elaine M., to St. John, Bay City, Mich.
Spurgin, Dinah L., to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.
Steil, Luella J., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Stephenson, Rebecca E., to Trinity, Bangor, Mich.
Stiefel, Danette L., to Emanuel, Lansing, Mich.
Thiel, Natalie M., to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Thiesfeldt, Jeneane M., to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.
Thon, Marni L., to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.
Tullberg, Donna L., to St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.
Voigt, Karen A., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.
Weigand, Judith N., to Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.
Welke, Dawn, to Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn.
Wendland, Sandra J., to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.
Wernicke, Diane E., to St. John, Wrightstown, Wis.
Wilk, Cathlyn A., to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.
Wolff, Tonya M., to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
Yagodinski, Rebecca L., to St. John, Burlington, Wis.
Zink, Joel K., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Sebewaing, Mich.—New Salem (145). Sept. 27. Service, 9 AM; potluck follows. 517/883-2062.
Burlington, Wis.—St. John (140). Oct. 4-5. Services, Sunday, 8 & 10:30 AM, Monday, 6:30 PM. Sunday potluck, noon. 414/763-8229.
Rio Rancho, N.M.—Peace (15). Oct. 11. Services, 8:30 & 11 AM; pig roast and historical review follow. 505/891-8246.
Charles City, Iowa—Cross (50). Oct. 18. Service, 10 AM; lunch follows. RSVP for lunch. 515/228-6654.
Fond du Lac, Wis.—St. Peter (140). Oct. 18, Nov. 15. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM; lunch at Holiday Inn on Nov. 15. Joe, 920/922-6847 or Ralph 920/921-6987.
Campbellsport, Wis.—Immanuel (75). Oct. 25. Service, 10:15 AM; dinner follows. RSVP for dinner. JoAnn Maedke, 920/477-2806.
Slinger, Wis.—St. Paul (125). Nov. 1. Services, 7:45 & 10:30 AM; potluck follows. RSVP for dinner. 414/644-8890.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Risen Savior (25). Nov. 22. Thanksgiving banquet & program. RSVP for meal tickets. 414/354-7320.

COMING EVENTS

Seminar—aLIVE in CHRIST. Oct. 10. Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. Christian enrichment opportunities focus on a variety of topics. \$10 per person or family. Jeff Pralle, 608/783-2049.

Christian Women's retreat—Oct. 16, 17. Cedar Lake Bible Conference Center, Ind. Register by Oct. 4. 708/672-8600.

International student rally—Oct. 16-18. St. Paul, Minn. Free. Open to all international students. Joel Lintner, 612/378-1346; Leon Piepenbrink, 612/420-9294; Loren Steele, 612/222-2429.

WELS-CLO—church librarians meeting. Oct. 17. Zion, Hartland, Wis. 414/513-9590.

Banquet—Waukesha, Wis., chapter WELS-LFL. Oct. 18. Country Inn—dinner, \$25 each, \$40/couple. Kathy Gates, 414/513-9590.

National campus rally—Dec. 27-30, UW-Madison. 608/257-1969; <national.rally@juno.com>.

Women's retreat—Circle of Love retreat. March 12-14, 1999. Manitowoc, Wis. Karen McVey, 920/757-9401.

Women's retreat—Christian Women Today retreat. March 12-14, 1999. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Info to come.

Women's retreat—Today's Christian Women's retreat. April 16-18, 1999. Treetops Sylvan Resort, Gaylord, Mich. Laurie, 248/391-1133; <tcwr@hotmail.com>

Women's retreat—Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women. April 16-18, 1999. Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866, AM only.

WELS Historical Institute—annual meeting. Oct. 18, 7 PM. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. All WELS members invited.

AVAILABLE

Church office machines—AB Dick 555 mimeograph and Gestetner 1100. Free for cost of shipping. St. Michael's, Fountain City, Wis.; 608/687-3281.

Communion cushions—5 green, 2 navy blue, 1 light blue. Free for cost of shipping. Lynn Weimar, 602/948-9916; <danylenn@doitnow.com>.

Iowa Basic and Cognitive Basic tests—old copies with answer sheets and teacher guides. Free for cost of shipping. Bill Arndt, 708/448-2260.

Organ—Wurlitzer. Free for cost of shipping. Neil Doerr, 414/483-9103.

NEEDED

Room dividers—to create Sunday school classrooms for mission church. Amazing Grace, Florence, Ky. 606/283-9009; <LSeafert@aol.com>.

Set of English Luther's Works—for Ev. Lutheran Free Church of Germany seminary library in Leipzig. John F. Vogt, 517/485-4118 or 517/485-0250; <VogtEman@aol.com>.

Reference—"Bible History References" Explanatory Notes on Advanced Bible History, vols. 1&2 by Rupprecht (CPH 1947); Popular Commentary, New Testament, Volume 2 by Kretzmann. Lori Wischer, 785/388-2675.

Choir gowns—Used. For vicars of the Lutheran Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia. D. Westendorf, 414/673-3811.

Hymnals—Red TLH in good condition. 734/971-1317; <EdwardZell@aol.com>.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Personal care assistant—for 45-year-old female quadriplegic in eastern Montana. Live-in position available. Experience helpful but not essential; training offered. References required. Call 406/429-7601 between 10 AM and 8 PM Mountain Time for job description and application.

You are part of the army

Karl R. Gurgel

What if the enemy convinced the opposing army to let only their generals fight? How long would the battle last? Could you predict the outcome?

Transfer this picture to the church. Here, too, a battle rages. Luther, in his battle hymn, "A Mighty Fortress," put it this way: "The old evil foe now means deadly woe. Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight. On earth is not his equal."

The devil wants Christians to lay down their arms while he and his allies, the world of unbelievers, retain theirs. No wonder, if his strategy works, on earth he has no equal.

But Luther was led by God to discover the strategy that works against Satan—the power of the Word. Because the power was in the Word of God, it made no difference who wielded this sword of the Spirit. It might be a pastor or teacher; it might be any Christian. It made no difference. The power was in the Word.

In that Word, Luther rediscovered a powerful truth: the priesthood of all believers. Peter was speaking for all Christians when he wrote: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Religion in the middle ages was a spectator sport. Everyone watched what the priest was doing. The laity participated little, if at all. Luther changed all that. Really, God was the agent of change. Through Peter, God told us we were all his special people, royal priests of God. Each of us proclaims God's salvation; for he called us out of the darkness of ignorance

and sin into the light of the knowledge of our forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

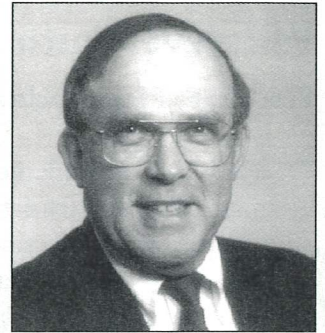
Yes, there was to be a public ministry, too, of people called from among this priesthood of all believers to represent others publicly. But the rights and privileges of the priesthood of all believers remained undiminished. As a family under God, all of the royal priests of God were to labor together, fighting this battle against Satan.

We presently don't have enough pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. Even if we did, do you think it was ever God's intention to let them fight the battle against Satan alone, playing right into the devil's strategy? But especially now, when we are so short of called workers, we need each royal priest of God to step forward, entering this fight against Satan.

The list is almost endless of the ways you can help. You can come up with a specific list just right for assisting in your congregation. Don't wait to be asked. Step forward and volunteer. Enlist in the Lord's army.

By stepping forward, not only will you be filling the immediate need, you may even be providing workers for the future. If young people are considering full-time service in the church, the task may seem overwhelming. If they think they will be in this alone, they may reconsider offering themselves for service. But, if they see Christians in their own congregations assisting with the work, they may be encouraged to take up the task, entering the battle on God's side against the devil.

As pastors, teachers, staff ministers—as men, women, and children united in faith and worship by the Word of God, we all can defeat Satan. "The kingdom's ours forever."



Karl R. Gurgel is the president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

*Step forward
and volunteer.
Enlist in the
Lord's army.*



Foundations of fellowship

Wherever faith in Jesus is planted, love for all the saints will follow.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

Paul's letter to Philemon contains many facets of Christian fellowship. In verses four to seven, he points out the two foundation stones for all *koinonia* (fellowship) in the church—faith and love.

Seeing Jesus' love

Paul writes, **"I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints"** (v. 4). Paul was always praying for fellow Christians, especially those new to the faith. When he prayed for Philemon one thought came to mind, "Thank you, Lord, for Philemon's faith and love." The two go together. Wherever faith in Jesus is planted by the Holy Spirit, love for all the saints will follow. Philemon had a strong measure of both.

Although Philemon was not an eyewitness to Jesus' life, he was impressed with Jesus' love. Jesus showed that love in his compassion and desire to help. Jesus taught that love in discourses and parables. Jesus' love took him to the cross where he sacrificed himself for all the world. Jesus commanded his disciples to love one another. The

early Christian church gained a reputation for loving each other, which had to contribute to the church's phenomenal growth.

It is no secret. What helps attract new people to a congregation and helps make them come back is the warm, friendly, patient, unconditional, sacrificial love that members show.

Showing our love

As Paul thanked God for Philemon's faith and love, he also prayed on Philemon's behalf, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." Later Paul made a request that would take all the love Philemon could muster. It was to welcome, forgive, and set free his thieving, runaway slave Onesimus.

The only way it would happen was if Philemon remembered and understood fully what he had in Christ. What he had was every good thing that flowed from God's grace and mercy, including forgiveness of sins, help in time of trouble, comfort in trials, answer to prayer, spiritual life, and eternal salvation.

The world, family members, even fellow Christians are not always

easy to love. Oh, some are. Some we are attracted to, we get along with them and enjoy their company. But others rub us the wrong way. We feel uncomfortable with them. Some have hurt us deeply. To love them as God commands takes a full understanding of Christ's love for us and all people. But when we have that understanding, and demonstrate it with words and actions, it brings a blessing to the church.

Paul writes, "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints." Philemon's track record on love was good. Now he was in a position to bring great joy and encouragement and touch the hearts of all the saints with one sweeping act of kindness. That opportunity stood at Philemon's door in the form of Onesimus.

What opportunities for extraordinary love have come your way? It may be volunteering long hours at church without compensation or appreciation, forgiving a spouse instead of divorcing, helping the sick or needy, counseling the parents of a child who hurt your child, reaching out with the gospel to total strangers, or admonishing a fallen-away member of the church. Paul's encouragement is, "Do it," because it demonstrates Christ-like love, and the hearts of your fellow believers will be refreshed.

Fred Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.

Next: intercession

PHILEMON
 family, respect, togetherness
 love, intercession, forgiveness

Worms revisited

Joel C. Gerlach

On Reformation Sunday this year, WELS members living in Germany will be concluding a retreat in Worms.

At Worms Luther appeared before Emperor Charles V and stood for the truth. "My conscience is bound by the Word of God. Unless I am convinced from the sacred Scriptures that I am in error, I cannot and I will not recant. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me."

The AAA Europe Travel Book says of Worms: "The old Rhine town of Worms is very important in religious history. It was in this town in 1521 that the edict against Martin Luther was issued by the Diet of Worms (the Imperial German Reichstag). A monument is dedicated to his memory."

Looking up at the monument of Luther leaves one with mixed emotions. First there is profound gratitude to God for giving Luther the insight and courage to make a confession that helped restore the Bible to its rightful place of authority in the church. That feeling is countered by an awareness that Luther's words are falling largely on deaf ears today, in Germany especially, but also in the United States.

People eagerly pay lip service to the Word, but the uncompromising spirit Luther exhibited at Worms has given way to a spirit of accommodation. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the document Lutherans and Catholics have endorsed as a resolution of their differing beliefs on justification. Luther taught that God accepts us because he has declared us to be righteous for Christ's sake. Rome taught, and still teaches, that *we* become righteous with the help of grace, and then God accepts us as his own.

The Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration says that both views are correct. We are declared righteous (justification), and then we become righteous (sanctification). In essence that is what Rome taught in

Luther's day. Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, still insists that "eternal life is, at one and the same time, grace and the reward given by God for good works and merits." Those who now say that "Roman Catholics and Lutherans share a basic understanding of how human beings receive God's forgiveness and salvation" do not stand where Luther stood.

In a famous sermon on 2 Corinthians 6:1-10, Luther said, "The preaching of the gospel is not a constant, permanent, and continuous proclamation. The gospel is rather a pelting rain that hurries on from place to place. What it hits, it hits; what it misses, it misses. But it does not return and stay in one place. . . . Experience teaches us that in no place in the world has the gospel remained pure and unadulterated beyond a person's memory. On the contrary, it stood its ground and flourished as long as those remained who brought it to the fore. But after they have passed from the scene, the light also disappeared. Factious spirits and false teachers immediately followed."

Three months in Europe allowed me to observe the religious scene in Germany. It is painfully apparent that Luther's prophetic words have come to fulfillment. That is why revisiting Worms leaves a person with mixed emotions. It also leaves one wondering whether the rain that has pelted our land for a century and a half is about to subside.

Revisiting Worms is a good way to renew one's determination to continue with God's help to stand where Luther stood. But one doesn't have to revisit Worms personally to make that kind of commitment.

Joel Gerlach is serving as a chaplain's assistant in Germany.

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Turnstile pastorates?

John F. Brug

The church I belong to is about to lose its fifth minister since about 1972. Something doesn't feel right. I am beginning to question that something might be wrong with our church because God keeps taking away the ministers. All of the ministers whom God has called away are exceptionally good. Most of the members are feeling as confused as I am.

I can't help but wonder if my church is not "God-pleasing" and so the Lord moves these shepherds to transfer to or be called to a different church. Perhaps we, the members, should be looking for a different church. Maybe this is God's way of warning us that our church is not a place where the grace of God can keep us. Are there any WELS churches out there where the ministers stay?

You say that for more than 25 years the Lord has supplied your church with "exceptionally good ministers." Why then would you conclude that there is anything wrong with your congregation or with God's care for your congregation? If God has provided your congregation with good pastors for 25 years, why does it matter if he has done it with one pastor or with five? If what you say is true, it seems that his grace is keeping you very well.

However, five changes of pastors in 25 years is more frequent than we normally like to see. I heard of a congregation that had only five pastors in 100 years. These two cases are probably close to two

extremes, with the average falling somewhere in between. But long or short pastorates are not in and of themselves proof that a congregation is "good" or "bad." A pastor may leave after a short time for either good or selfish reasons. A pastor may stay for a long time for either good or selfish reasons. We cannot jump to conclusions.

Generally speaking, we encourage pastors to stay in a call a minimum of five years, and your congregation's experience is close to that. But there may be valid reasons for exceptional cases. It would be wrong to draw any conclusions either about the congregation or the pastor after a short pastorate.

When a pastor leaves a congregation, it is not necessarily because he is unhappy. On the contrary, a pastor and his family often leave with great sadness and tears because of the love that has grown between them and the members. He may wish he could stay, but has been convinced that God is calling him to serve in another place where his special gifts are urgently needed. Or he may have reached the conclusion that another man with different gifts could serve his present congregation better than he could. He may even leave with the conviction that things are going to be much more difficult for him at the place he is going.

On the other hand, it may happen that a pastor leaves for selfish reasons or because of dissatisfaction with faults of the congregation. But it would be wrong to jump to a conclusion without clear evidence. If

there is such evidence, the congregation should correct those problems with the help of the circuit pastor or district president. If some situation makes it difficult for pastors to work in that congregation, this should be considered when calling the new pastor, so a man can be called who has the gifts to help the congregation resolve the problem in a God-pleasing way.

Long or short pastorates are not in and of themselves proof that a congregation is "good" or "bad."

Most congregations that Paul founded would have been happy to have him stay for many years, but God had a purpose in moving him on to found new congregations in other places. Though we may not always see clearly what God's purpose was for your congregation and for the pastors who served you for a short time, we can be sure that in every case he had a purpose that will ultimately work for the good of his kingdom.

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

Send questions to Your question, please, *Northwestern Lutheran*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; <nl@sab.wels.net>



I am an organist for Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. I am often called on to play at other WELS churches because **there aren't enough organists to go around**. I recently was at St. Andrew, Toledo, and the pastor made a comment that the synod thinks WELS is low in its number of pastors for churches. But what is really hard to get are organists! This subject really needs to be brought up.

*Jan Sherman
Ada, Ohio*

Our congregation has about 10 Bible classes a month with a "not too healthy" attendance. A friend told me, "You Wisconsin Synod people pay far too much attention to the Bible. It's an old book written a long time ago, that has nothing to do for us nowadays." My jaw dropped, and I still remember her words. I am on the second time around NL's three year reading plan, and it has become a daily habit.

As a born Methodist who came to Missouri Synod through day school and found WELS 22 years ago, I am secure in my faith and hope WELS will always be watchful of its doctrine and emphasis on the Bible.

*June Drummond
Fort Wayne, Indiana*

I finished your series on homosexuality and greatly appreciate your treatment of the subject. While this sin carries a stigma as being "worse" than other sexual sins, it is a sin that needs to be dealt with using harsh truth and caring compassion. We are reminded that God's Word truly does change people. I know because I personally experienced that change.

I noticed, however, that Pastor Trapp used the term "ex-gay." I do not use this term. 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And that is what some of you *were*. But you *were* washed, you *were* sanctified, you *were* justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" [emphasis added]. Because of what Jesus has done, forgiveness is mine. When God looks at me, he does not see an "ex-gay," but he sees the righteousness of his Son. Why should I focus on the past by using that term? I prefer to cling to what Christ has done and look to my future as a forgiven child of God.

Please pray that God would give us all the strength and desire to share his life-changing Word with others struggling with this sin.

Name withheld

Re: "We would rather switch than fight. Or would we?" [Aug.] As a family that has not been lifelong WELS members, we see a particular need to heed Baumler's admonition: "If WELS expects loyalty for loyalty's sake, it deserves to drift on the sea of shifting loyalties."

As newcomers to WELS, we have been surprised by the suspicious treatment we received on several occasions. Ironically, we were persecuted in our former synod for upholding Scripture's inerrancy in general and WELS doctrine in particular! While care in assimilating new members is understandable and even expected, it is difficult to fathom how some go well beyond this.

One thing that brought down the old Synodical Conference was a "we're right because we're us" mentality. Love for one's "beloved synod" dare not be placed above Scripture. As long as WELS is true to Scripture and the Lutheran

Confessions, we will consider ourselves blessed to be part of this Bible-based fellowship. If WELS fails to live up to this, then how can we criticize others who are adrift on the "sea" of unscriptural loyalties?

Name withheld

NL will not run anonymous letters. We may, however, withhold an author's name due to the sensitive nature of the letter. NL staff reserves the right to make that decision.

Through my Bible in 3 years

November 1998

1. Romans 9:14-29
2. Romans 9:30—10:21
3. Romans 11:1-10
4. Romans 11:11-24
5. Romans 11:25-36
6. Romans 12
7. Romans 13
8. Romans 14
9. Romans 15:1-13
10. Romans 15:14-33
11. Romans 16:1-16
12. Romans 16:17-27
13. Exodus 21:1-32
14. Exodus 21:33—23:19
15. Exodus 23:20—24:18
16. Exodus 25
17. Exodus 26, 27
18. Exodus 28
19. Exodus 29
20. Exodus 30, 31
21. Exodus 32
22. Exodus 33
23. Exodus 34
24. Exodus 35:1—36:7
25. Exodus 36:8—37:9
26. Exodus 37:10—38:31
27. Exodus 39, 40
28. 1 Corinthians 1:1-17
29. 1 Corinthians 1:18—2:16
30. 1 Corinthians 3, 4



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

God tells us
to beware that
the goal of
visible unity
doesn't itself
lead to a denial
of the faith.

“Lutherans” losing legacy

People—understandably—ask, “What does it mean to be Lutheran today?” One man wrote in frustration: “Can’t you sue them [the ELCA] to give up the name Lutheran?”

The answer to the first question should be: “Lutheran means what it has always meant. The Lutheran confessions are clear on the basic teachings.” The second? “No!”

The questions grow out of the confessional morass today in which the distinctive scriptural truths that Luther championed and led to the Lutheran church have been quickly sinking into obscurity. In the resulting haze, “Lutheran” comes to mean many things and in some senses not anything absolute. Some Lutherans have declared open communion with the Reformed in spite of their opposing views on the sacrament. Some Lutherans claim the keystone of the Reformation, justification by grace through faith alone, is no longer a point of controversy with the Roman Catholic Church.

One thing is clear: Lutherans who still believe everything as written in the Lutheran Confessions are a small minority. Lutherans who still maintain that denying the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in Holy Communion is divisive and dangerous are seen as hopelessly out of step with the times. Lutherans who do not agree that a true consensus exists between Luther’s scriptural definition of justification and the Roman Catholic understanding are a small number seen as unwilling to listen.

Who deserves the name Lutheran is, I suppose, a moot point. Lutheran is as Lutheran does. But which Lutherans have changed and are denying their legacy is demonstrable. Ironically, for example, Reformed people have said for years that it doesn’t really matter whether we agree about the sacraments. Luther vociferously disagreed with that sentiment. The largest

Lutheran body in America now takes sides with the Reformed.

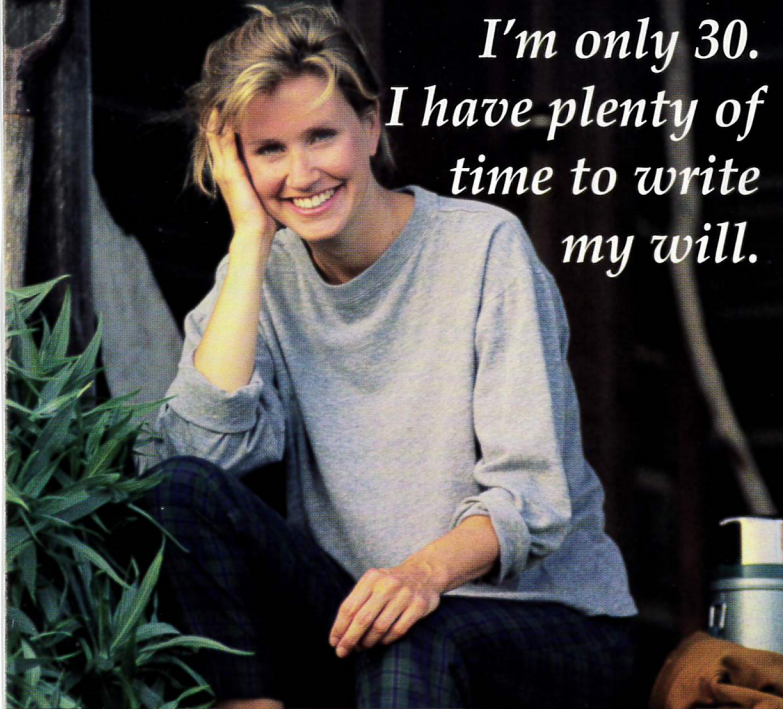
The Roman Catholic Church hasn’t changed anything of its teachings about justification. Their official catechism gives ample evidence of that (see NL, Nov. 97). In fact, Catholics and Lutherans alike have admitted they don’t really agree. Luther led the Reformation on the basis of the disagreement about justification. Now the two sides settled on a so-called “differentiated consensus” in the matter. I trust they know that’s an oxymoron (the two terms contradict each other). But they really don’t care.

Not only don’t they care, they cry for more of the same. They strive for visible unity of the church at almost any cost. Edgar Trexler, editor of *The Lutheran*, the ELCA’s national magazine, insists: “It is virtually a denial of the faith not to try to enhance the visible unity of the church” (August 1998, p. 58). Writing to praise the ecumenical strides of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic agreement, he wasn’t shy about calling into question the faith of all Lutherans who deeply regret the implications of those accords.

We should and do care about the visible unity of the church. But it needs to be true unity. God tells us to beware that the goal of visible unity doesn’t itself lead to a denial of the faith.

The ecumenical events of the ELCA and others have changed forever, at least for generations, what Lutheran means. That doesn’t mean they will drop the name Lutheran or that we should. It just means we have to show the world what we as Lutherans believe from the Bible. And we will pray that somehow more and more Lutherans will take a stronger confessional stand in the spirit of Luther.

Gary P. Baumler

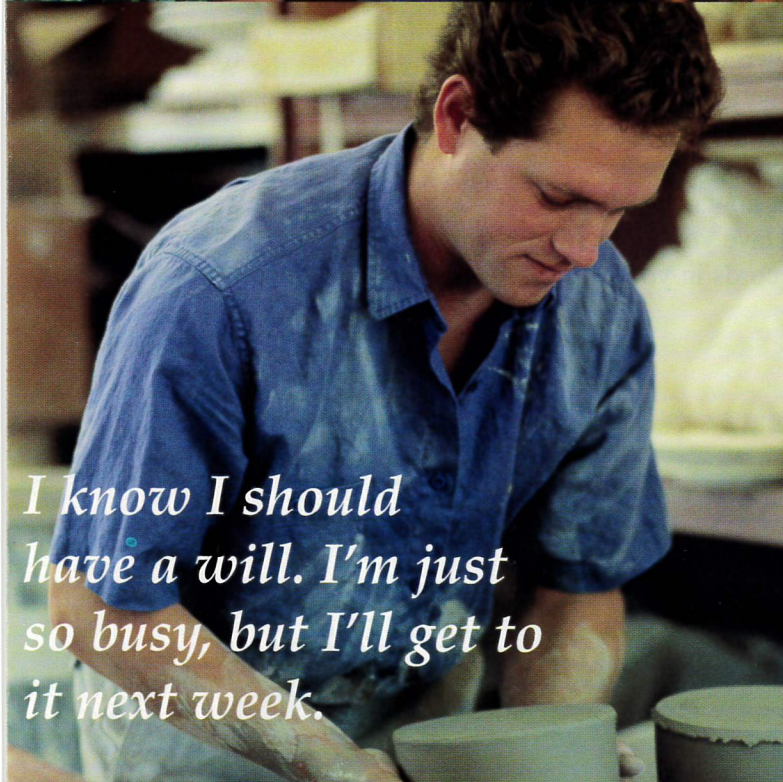


*I'm only 30.
I have plenty of
time to write
my will.*

The Importance of Your Will

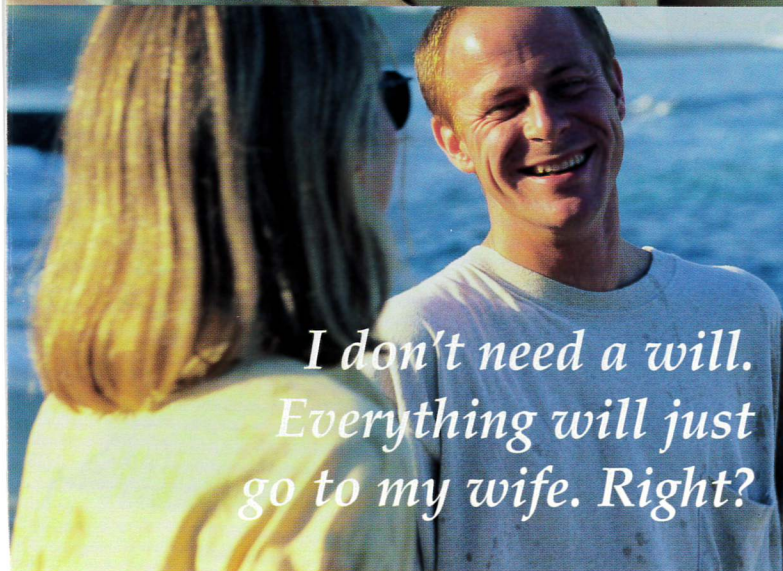
Some things just can't wait!

*By carefully planning
today, you will save your
loved ones unnecessary
anxiety and you'll have
the satisfaction of
knowing your desires
will be carried out.*

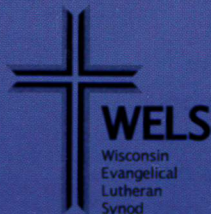


*I know I should
have a will. I'm just
so busy, but I'll get to
it next week.*

Please write or call for
assistance from a WELS
gift planning counselor —
another person just like you —
a fellow Christian.



*I don't need a will.
Everything will just
go to my wife. Right?*



Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Ministry of Planned Giving
2929 N Mayfair Rd ❖ Milwaukee WI 53222-4398
800-827-5482 or 414-256-3881

Crash cart



Many treat church like a crash cart. They don't mess with it. It's someone else's job to take care of it—until they really need it.

David Danford

At the hospital where I work, a red cart sits at the end of the hall. It holds emergency equipment and medicines to use if a patient suddenly stops breathing or if the heart stops. We call it the crash cart.

I don't mess with the crash cart. It's someone else's job to take care of it. I know it's there, but I never go and visit it. Many months can go by, and I don't give it a thought—until one day when something goes terribly wrong. Then I'm a desperate man. I yell, "Someone get the crash cart!" I'd give almost anything for the stuff on that cart.

Fellow Christians, where in the Bible did Jesus say the kingdom of heaven is like a crash cart?

"Don't be ridiculous," you say, "I know my parables. Let's see . . . there's 'like a mustard seed' and 'like a net cast into the sea' and 'like a treasure buried in a field,' but no, there's no reference to a crash cart."

Yet we have members, many members, perhaps even you, who treat the church like I treat the crash cart. They don't mess with it. It's someone else's job to take care of it. They know church is there, but they never go and visit it. Many months go by, and they don't give it a thought. But maybe someday

something will go terribly wrong in their life, and they'll yell, "Someone get the pastor!"

What would you give up to hear the Word of God on a regular basis?

You think I exaggerate? There are over 411,000 members in WELS. In 1997, only an average of 44.7 percent of them attended church weekly. Who knows how many did not worship at all. Have you looked at the attendance records in your church recently?

Look at Matthew 13:44 and understand that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. You'd give up almost anything just to have it.

Would you give up a morning to sleep in, 18 holes of golf, a little overtime at work, a few Sunday morning TV shows? What would you give up to hear the Word of God on a regular basis? What is the treasure of the kingdom of heaven worth to you? It's more than a crash cart.

NL

Dave Danford is a member at Good Shepherd, Omaha, Nebraska.

