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November 1998

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THE WORD FROM THE WELS



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More than a lifetime of thanks

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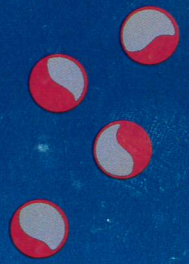
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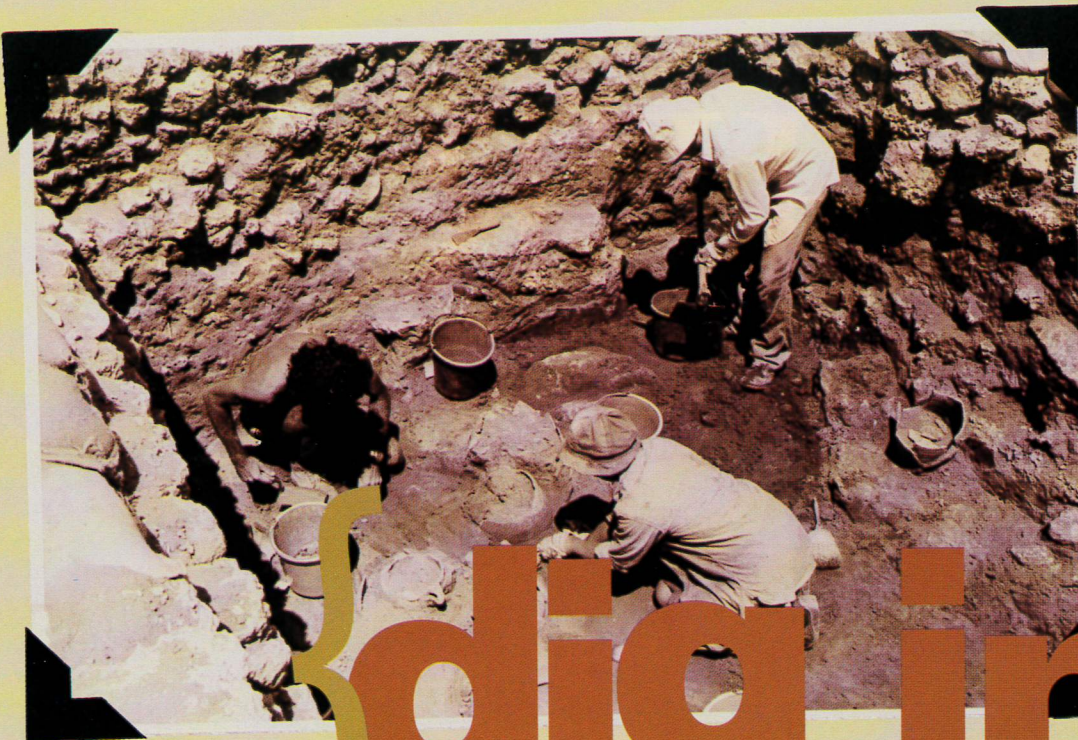
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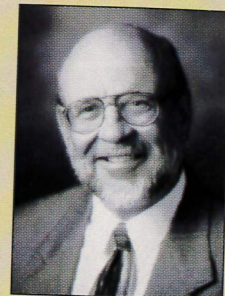
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Judges, Ruth author, John Lawrenz, has participated in numerous excavations as a staff member of the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology. Today Dr. Lawrenz codirects the Yafo (Joppa) Excavations and serves as the administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education of WELS.

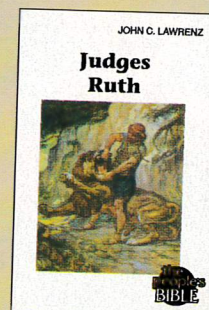


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Can I dissuade you?

When I say to the wicked, "O wicked man, you will surely die," and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. Ezekiel 33:8

Eric S. Hartzell

Sometimes whales get befuddled and head for shallow water. They get in the news when they do that. People try to get them turned around and headed for the safety of deeper water. You could say that people try to dissuade the whales from the certain death of getting beached.

A warning

Consider the Christian life first a dissuasion and not just a persuasion. Ezekiel spoke of God's desire for dissuasion. When you persuade persons not to do something, you dissuade them. That is what God does. Jesus' work with Judas was dissuasion. The Father is dissuading by saying, "Turn, turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

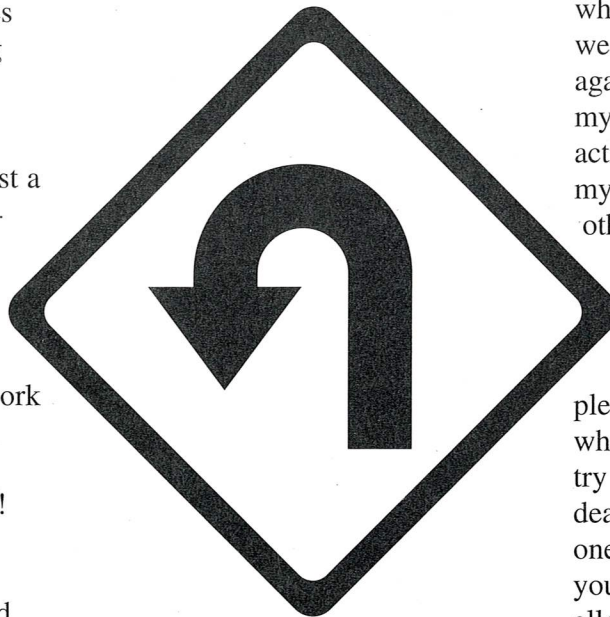
The whale has to be dissuaded from shallow water and death before deep water and life are possibilities. Dissuasion precedes persuasion. God's dissuasion is more than a "Save the Whales" campaign. "Turn!" "Stop!" "Don't!"

The Prodigal had to be dissuaded from life in "far country" before he went back to his father and home.

A change of heart

When a person becomes a believer, he is dissuaded by the Holy Spirit from continuing his life of sin. The thief on the cross first said, "I am getting what my deeds

deserve" before he said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." He needed to stop hurling insults against Jesus before he could ask Jesus' blessing. Conversion is first a dissuasion.



That is what makes conversion such a mighty work. The Holy Spirit works in us to have that wonderful change of mind that says, "I am going to stop doing all the things I have thought all along were so good and necessary and right, all the things that felt good." I have changed my mind about everything. (This doesn't come easy for anyone. Think about the last argument you had with someone.)

An urgency

There is urgency in our witness then. People are going to perish if

they can't be dissuaded from doing wrong. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12). The confession of sins comes as a result of God's dissuasion, when we recount what we have done wrong, and say we want to stop it and not do it again. "I have sinned against you in my thoughts, my words, and my actions. I have not loved you with my whole heart; I have not loved others as I should. I am distressed by the sins that trouble me and am deeply sorry for them" (*Christian Worship*, p. 154).

Love loves dissuasion. If people did not feel some affection for whales and their kind, they wouldn't try so hard to dissuade them from death. That's true also when someone who loves you tries to dissuade you from wrong. It isn't love that allows a loved one to swim on and flounder and die. Remember that the next time someone loves you enough to point something out that you need to stop doing.

What a triumph it is when God's Spirit persuades us to live like believers! What an even greater triumph it is when through believers God's Spirit dissuades us from living like unbelievers!

NL

Eric Hartzell is pastor at Cross and Crown Lutheran Church, Georgetown, Texas.



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- ❑ A father hugging his son by the side of a river—it's not a typical Thanksgiving picture. But that's because the article it accompanies isn't typical either. You won't hear a whisper about a turkey in this Thanksgiving article, but the sounds of thanksgiving are unmistakable. Turn to "More than a lifetime of thanks" (p. 6). You'll be glad you did.
- ❑ Too often, we read the Bible in hopes that God will address every issue from weight loss to politics. But sometimes there's a difference in what God says and what we want to hear. To regain perspective, read "The principal scriptural principle" (p. 29) and then participate in our interactive Bible study (p. 19).
- ❑ Our series on revitalizing ministry in the cities ends this month. We pray that Mark Jeske's message renewed your passion to reach the lost—regardless of where they live. Don't miss his final article on page 8.
- ❑ The series on addiction also ends this month. We thank the Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling staff for their work. They helped us discuss a tough topic that touches many lives.
- ❑ In our age, many people are afraid to stand up and proclaim that there is an absolute truth. Unafraid, Wayne Laitinen clearly reminds us that God has spoken, and we sin if we defy his Word. Laitinen wraps up his series on the sacraments on page 14.

—LRB

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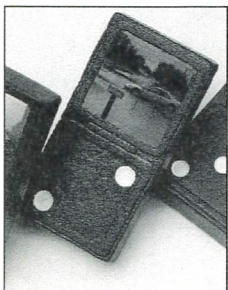
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More than a lifetime of thanks

Whether we are on this earth for a moment or a century, we all have reason to give thanks.

David L. Hein

The boy was only four and didn't appreciate the art of fishing. If he did, perhaps he wouldn't have wandered from his father and brothers.

But he zipped up his jacket and tugged down his cap as he walked upstream along the river, noisy from spring rains. It was much larger than the creek near his house where turtles could be found to bring home to Mom. "Maybe there are turtles—or frogs!" was the thought that moved his hand into the sparkling waters. He was not prepared for the boldness of the river that tore at his arm and dragged him below the surface. His last recollection was of seeing fish swim by—but no frogs.

"If the fish don't start biting soon, I'm taking these boys in," the father thought as he reeled in his bait. Then he saw it. The hat. Bobbing atop the water. Then flowing by. His little boy's hat. "David!" He said. Again, louder, "DAVID!" A glance upstream: just the two older boys, looking at their father, wondering what was wrong. The father knew. He jumped into the river. This man who had never learned to swim flailed against the current as he kicked lower toward the bottom. His roaring heart nearly stopped, for there was the body of his child bouncing along the bottom of the riverbed.

By God's grace, the father pulled the body onto the shore. The next seconds took an eternity, but it happened. Water exploded from the child's mouth, and coughing, gasping, he breathed! The father

held that child closer than he had ever before. "Thank God. THANK GOD!" The Lord had returned his child to him.

We don't serve the Lord only if he's been a little extra good to us today.

The Lord had a purpose for that boy to remain on earth. He wanted him to grow up and become a pastor. Someone who would point others to their Savior. Someone who would lead God's flock in giving thanks for God's blessings. Someone who would encourage people to look to that day when we will stand together with songs of thanksgiving in heaven.

I know. I'm that someone. I'm that boy.

It would be nice and neat to end the story here and toss on the title: Thank God for the life of this boy! But we live in a world woefully afflicted by sin. Things are rarely "nice and neat."

We move ahead 40 years, and our eyes are drawn to another boy. His name: Luke. Leukemia invaded Luke's life when he was in kindergarten. The news wounded his relatives, his classmates, and everyone who knew him, including me, one of his pastors. Doctors worked hard to make him better. The prayers of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Christians flew to heaven before the

Father's throne: Please, Lord, help your little lamb get better!

And he did. By God's grace, his health improved. The spirits of all around him were uplifted. Classmates made Luke pictures to tell him he was in their prayers. After his treatments, Luke returned to school wearing a baseball cap to cover his hair loss, and his classmates wore caps too. They loved him. God loved him. And we all gave thanks to God for his mercy.

Our thanksgiving lasted for months. Luke left kindergarten and first grade behind. But only days after first grade ended, he was rushed to the hospital. A fever. Perhaps it would be nothing. But it was chicken pox.

Many children get chicken pox. With time and attention, the body fights it. But Luke's body was tired. His prior illness and treatments left his immune system weakened. He was still a fighter, but his strength was quickly disappearing, at least the strength of his body. The strength of Luke's spirit never weakened. And in his last day with us, he told his grandfather, "Grandpa, I want God to take me home."

When you talked with this little boy, he spoke confidently of his Savior. When you prayed with this little boy, he prayed confidently of his heavenly home. And when God decided it was time to take this little boy, the family and I stood there and—in the midst of tears—gave thanks to God for the love he had given through Luke.

There was no last minute rescue. No doctor running in with a miracle cure. We had prayed that God's purpose for Luke on this earth had not yet come to an end. But it had.

Oh, Luke's life had purpose. God had placed him here to glorify the Lord's name—the same reason we are all here. And God helped Luke encourage others to glorify God. In his life, he trusted in Jesus and showed a school-full of children what that means. At his death, he trusted in Jesus and showed a hospital, a school, a church, and a community-full of people what that means.

It means we don't thank God just for obvious blessings. And we don't serve the Lord only if he's been a little extra good to us today. We are all called as his disciples, called to thank, praise, serve, and obey him.

With his first disciples, the Lord called two brothers, James and John, to do just that. Their mother had big plans for them. When she prayed to Jesus for her sons, she could not have realized how outwardly different their paths would be.

James was the first of the Twelve to die for his faith. His ministry was cut short by order of King Herod, who had him executed shortly after the stoning of Stephen. The young church must have been reeling from what seemed a senseless death. Why had Jesus called James and spent years training him, only to let him die such a short time after becoming a pastor?

That question may have occurred to brother John. According to tradition, John outlived all the apostles and died a natural death. Two

brothers, called to the same purpose. One died so young. One remained to old age.

But both served the Lord. Both glorified his name. Both fulfilled their purpose on earth, and—right now—both are serving that same purpose together in heaven, their voices joined to sing songs of thanksgiving to the living God.

Sin's reality is found in every newspaper, cemetery, and heart. But Jesus came and died and rose to bring us another reality: salvation! Whether we are on this earth for a moment or a century, we all have reason to give thanks. Our Lord put us here for a purpose. Our Lord will guide us to fulfill our purpose. And then only one purpose will remain.

I look forward to when I can stand by Luke and we can thank Jesus together. Then my father who saved me from the river will stand with me before my Father who saved me from my sins. On that day, together with all God's children, we can say in person what each of us can start saying to God right now: Thank you, Lord! Thank you for giving me my purpose, my life, my family, my Savior, and my Home!

NL

David Hein is pastor at Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Transforming city ministry

God loves city people as much as he loves suburban, small town, and rural people.

Mark A. Jeske

Bonnie Harrell, a member of St. Philip, Milwaukee, sings with the United Voices of Praise gospel choir. This combined choir is made up of members from three Milwaukee churches' gospel choirs.



The desire and ability to do cross-cultural ministry begins in Scripture as we hear the first word of the Great Commission, “Go!” God does not entrust us with his life-changing message and then suggest we hang around to see if anybody has any questions. He just says, “Go!” The tellers go to the hearers. Here are seven attitudes that I think will transform ministry in the city.

1. Love the city.

Christian missionaries go where the people are. Cities are where the people are. America and the world are continuing rapidly to urbanize. It's the future. We need to increase our missionary presence there, not fade away. City life is diverse, rich, intriguing, mind-expanding, challenging, cosmopolitan. Within one mile of our church's front door we have 10,000 addresses. How can you attract visitors to your church if the leaders hate being there? If they're apologetic about their location?

Cities are not horrible places for raising kids. Mine benefit greatly from being close to museums, parks, little league, cultural events, beautiful historic architecture, and major universities. They are learning from young on how to relate to people from different cultures.

2. Want to grow.

There is nothing particularly noble or holy about having a little congregation that stays little. Jesus did say, “Have no fear, little flock,” but that does not sanctify a “no-growth” mindset. Thinking of church only in terms of “shekels and scalps” does cheapen the concept of outreach, true enough, but the reverse is just as bad—blaming your stagnation or decline on God.

A congregation's numbers are people, real people, sinners in need of a Savior. If we are serious about carrying out Jesus' purpose for our existence, that is, getting the gospel message to every creature, then the

natural result will be congregations with more people in them. Growth in your outreach ministry will not happen by itself. It happens when pastors and lay leaders share a vision to want to grow. Then they will be inclined to do the things that make growth happen.

3. Welcome change as opportunity.

Don't curse the present, fear the future, and look longingly at the past. Aquila and Priscilla became great evangelists and teachers—why? Because the emperor Claudius had ordered them and all the Jews out of Rome. Look at all the different approaches Paul used on his mission journeys. He used whatever openings God gave him—Lydia and her friends at the river, before the Areopagus in Athens, in Governor Felix's court, even in chains under house arrest in Rome.

Why should we mope around when “our neighborhood's changing?” Why must that mean “Pretty

soon we won't have enough of our people to have church any more." Why can't it mean, "How clever of God to bring a mission field right to our neighborhood"?

4. Adapting is good.

When the gospel is communicated across cultures, who adapts to the other, the teller or the listener? Right! The teller! Study 1 Corinthians 9—St. Paul says that he will do whatever it takes to get the message of Christ across. European-American Lutherans have found that they will not suffer permanent injury, either to their faith or body, when they clap along to gospel music.

5. Respect other cultures.

It is natural (and sinful) to assume that your culture (including your religious culture) is superior to others'. God has blessed Lutherans with many treasures and invited us to share them. But he has also richly blessed other cultures and other Christians as well, and invites us to listen and learn. 1 Peter 3:15,16 says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

You have no business attempting to share your traditions and treasures with someone unless you are willing to learn from that person's culture. Our German Lutheran heritage has enormous and amazing strengths: a fabulous educational system, careful and thorough theology, sacramental worship, a fine hymnal and catechism, and centuries of momentum.

But our church life doesn't have it all. From members of my parish who have non-Lutheran backgrounds I have learned a great deal, not so much about doctrine as about style

in ministering those truths to people. Gospel songs are a healthy complement to the traditional European chorale hymn. Black preaching at its best is fiery, down-to-earth, energetic, appealing, rhythmic, story-based rather than logic-based.



Pastor Loren Steele with international students. Steele is serving and reaching out to Chinese and Japanese international students and business people in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn.

There is tremendous evangelism energy in black churches. There is a long tradition of lay ministry through the deacons—these laymen are accustomed to praying, singing, and reading Scripture in public worship. We of Central European ancestry could benefit by not denying of people's emotions. It is more satisfying to minister to the whole person—not just to the head, but to the heart, soul, and spirit, too.

6. Adding is better than subtracting.

We can easily be maneuvered into getting into arguments over which "tradition" is better, of pitting one ministry style against another. Resist! Letting yourself be influenced by other styles and even using some of them does not diminish you or your heritage. Think of our ways of communicating Christ as a great big buffet table. Don't take any

dishes off the table—just add more! Don't pit gospel music against the chorales—use them both! Is the Lutheran liturgy flexible enough to be used with organ, piano, guitar, bass, drums, brass, winds, and digital keyboard? Certainly!

7. Keep the side doors open.

When Paul says "by all possible means" he encourages us to use all of the church's ministries as potential points of contact with new people. Maybe that will be your Lutheran elementary school. Sadly, many of our 364 schools do not have any non-members enrolled. Our day school is the main reason our congregation is multicultural. Blacks from our neighborhood were not attracted initially to the page 15 liturgy from *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

There are many side doors to your church family. Youth camping outings, choirs, vacation Bible school, community service, block watch meetings, and community house and garden tours are great ways to meet people and make friends.

Why does any of this matter? Because God loves city people as much as he loves suburban, small town, and rural people. Because city people are part of "all nations." We exist to make disciples of all nations. Because Christ died and rose for city people, too.

Who will tell them? Why not we? If not now, when? God's delightful surprise is that Christians who make outreach and evangelism the heart of their congregational life, as opposed to something at the edge of their congregational life, will grow mightily in their own faith, joy, and satisfaction. We can do this!

NL

Mark Jeske is pastor at St. Marcus, Milwaukee.

GOD IS CALLING

Who watches out for his church? God. Who provides public ministers to keep watch? God.

Gary P. Baumler

I prayed, "Should I become a pastor?"

The Lord answered my prayer in ways that seemed an unmistakable "Yes!"

Was that a divine call?

Tom enrolled at Martin Luther College. "I have a call from God to be a pastor," he avowed.

Was that a divine call?

The call may be misunderstood

Insofar as answers to prayer come from God, we might say my answer was his call. And insofar as Tom's Spirit-worked faith led him to desire to be a pastor, his confidence was the Lord calling.

But are these things what we mean when we say, "Our pastor has a divine call," or what we mean by the doctrine of the divine call?

No! The divine call is the means God uses to place a person in a specific public ministry (pastor, teacher, staff), to establish a person as the servant-leader (minister-shepherd) of a group of Christians. It's the name we use to express confidence that God provides the ministers in his church and guides them where he wants them.

It's a wonderful, mysterious thing, the divine call. We know what it means, but we struggle to understand what it is.

As part of that struggle, we need to overcome our sinful tendencies to make more of the call or less of it

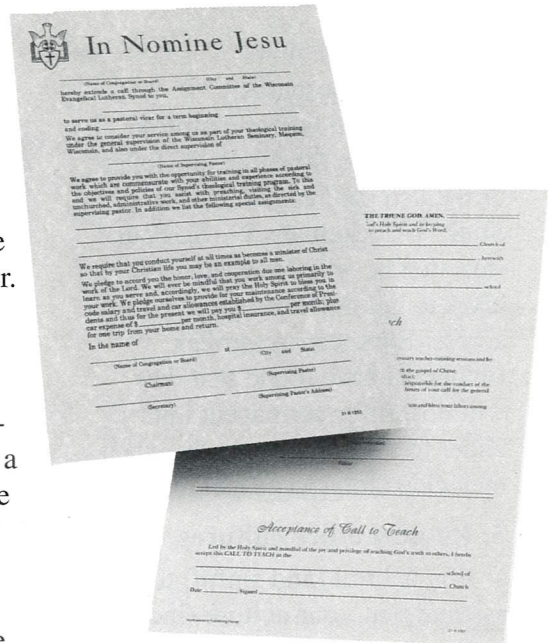
than Scripture allows. The divine call, for example, does not give one Christian a higher rank than another. We are all priests of God. No one has any call to lord it over others (1 Peter 5:3).

The call is not the same as a secular contract. It does not constitute a hire/fire relationship. It doesn't give a congregation free reign to "boss" the minister any which way it feels—or else!

The divine call does not provide the minister, on the other hand, a place to hide from responsibility and accountability. It doesn't make him immune to criticism. "I've been called" is an inappropriate dodge in facing difficult issues. And "it's not in my call" shouldn't be used to avoid expanding the scope of ministry.

The call comes from God

How do we arrive at those conclusions? We apply what we know from God's Word about the call. We know, for example, that God called some directly, such as Moses, Isaiah, Amos, Jonah, Jesus' disciples. We call that an "immediate" call. Now, however, he calls through other Christians (cf. the call of Matthias, Acts 1:21-26), who ask the minister to be their public representative in carrying out his work among them. We speak now of a "mediated" call.



Whichever way he uses, God provides the minister. The call is to God's service and under his control. That's what allows us to say it's a divine call. The minister is made a shepherd of God's flock (1 Peter 5:2). In the church "God has appointed" apostles, prophets, teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28). Jesus gave us apostles, prophets, evangelists, "pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service" (Ephesians 4:11,12). As with the elders of the church at Ephesus, the Holy Spirit makes people "overseers" and "shepherds" (Acts 20:28).

Who watches out for his church? God. Who provides public ministers to keep watch? God. The pastor in the pulpit is God's representative to you by virtue of your congregation's call. The teacher at the chalkboard is God's called representative for your child.

The call has qualifications

Still, the call is divine (from God) not magic. It is divine but practiced by sinful humans. And humans have been known to mess up in divine matters. Therefore, God has given us guidelines to sort out what is of God and what is of man's sinful nature.

God has clear qualifications for his public servants. They need to have a good reputation; be gentle, self-controlled, and hospitable; able to teach and good with their own families; not prone to drink too much; not in love with money (see 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:7-9).

The calling body looks for candidates with those characteristics. They may also look for special gifts fitting their needs (e.g., music, youth leadership, language). They don't have to cast lots as the apostles did in choosing Matthias, but they depend on God to guide them. They avoid using less than godly

lures to attract a candidate (e.g., a bonus, a swimming pool, country club membership). They act only in love and understanding, and avoid any appearance of tampering. They pray and proceed, confident that the Holy Spirit will be at work in reaching the right person.

Similarly, the candidate, who should be gentle and not greedy, will not demand conditions for accepting the call and not be driven by money, nice house, desirable climate. The candidate asks rather, "How might God use my gifts in this call? How will his kingdom best be served? Do I have a special talent, or does the calling body have a particular need that I can fill?" The candidate deliberates, prays, and decides. Many things influence his decision, but he lays them at God's feet and goes from there.

So what happens when the fit between the congregation and minister is not good? Do we blame

God, since it's a divine call? No, we look to where there are human failings and try in love to correct them. We don't expect perfection, placing impossible expectations on the worker or expecting the impossible from the congregation; but we work together in loving understanding, always ready to forgive when things go wrong. In extreme cases, a call may be terminated for cause: the minister teaches contrary to God's Word, sins publicly, is not able to teach.

In the vast majority of cases, however, we thank God he has given us dedicated ministers, and we thank our ministers for their dedicated service. We rejoice in worship with God's people and see firsthand why the call to serve his people is divine.

NL

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

THE MECHANICS OF CALLING A PASTOR OR TEACHER

When the congregation needs a new pastor or teacher, it contacts the district president for help. It informs the president of particular qualifications it would like to see in the candidate. At all times, all pastors or teachers in good standing in our fellowship are eligible to receive the call. However, in good order, the president prepares a list of about five names for the congregation to consider, and supplies basic information about each.

When the congregation meets to decide whom to call, they may still add a suitable name at the meeting. Then they pray, vote, and issue their call.

At times, under the Holy Spirit's direction, some pastors and teachers receive repeated calls and others few or none. When that happens, it sometimes raises questions about procedure. But, keep in mind that at every call meeting, several names are considered. Because we are human, it is an imperfect system. But God in his perfection uses it for his best purposes.

Meanwhile, receiving a call can be a time of immense disquiet for congregation and called worker alike. Suddenly, the pastor or teacher holds two calls, and it is not immediately certain which one God intends him to fill. It's a time for prayer and godly advice. It's a time to reassess ministry. It's a time for the congregation to pull together no matter what and for the worker to revitalize efforts no matter where. It's a time to trust that the divine purpose will be served.




To successfully cope with our harried world, you need to maintain balance.

Linda R. Baacke

Life's a circus—and you're the juggler.

You know what I mean. Work. Family. Friends. Church. Exercise. School. Rehearsal. Meetings. Sleep—what's that?

Sometimes you manage to keep all those balls in the air—and you don't miss a beat. Other times, they're slipping from your hands—and you can't stop them!

 **Checking for balance**

It's a fine line. How do you keep up with your daily life, without becoming too obsessed and stressed? The key is to maintain balance by keeping perspective. You can keep perspective by determining if all of your activity...

... brings you closer to God.

Serving on the evangelism committee and teaching Sunday school may motivate you to study God's Word. Or are you so busy at church that you serve the church but grow further away from God?

... enhances your ability to live.

An hour of intense aerobics may clear your mind and work out stress, giving you energy to accomplish

your tasks. Or are you so hooked on exercise that you continue to work out even through injuries?


... helps you love unselfishly.

Sex should be enjoyed within a marriage, uniting one man and one woman. Or do you use sex as a game for power and control, and risk your career, reputation, and marriage?

... helps you appreciate God's creation. Food is good. A healthy diet can include fruits and vegetables—and chocolate and ice cream. Or do you eat so little, or so much, that you damage the body God made just for you?


... allows you to work more effectively. A computer game may offer a welcome break from a stressful day. Or do you spend hours on the Internet, putting off the important presentation that's due next week?

... encourages growth, expansion, change. You may challenge your mind and open up exciting opportunities by making a career change. Or, fearing the risk, do you refuse to leave your comfort zone, not trying anything new?

 **Losing balance**

If you looked on that list and found that you maintain balance and perspective with aplomb, good. For others, however, it's not easy. They have addictive tendencies and live on the tenuous line between balance and addiction.

Some have a family history or genetic link that may predispose them to a specific addiction. Others become addicted because of lifestyle. They believe they'll find control and avoid loneliness, fear, and anxiety by burying themselves in an activity. But they soon find they are out of control. Other addictions start because Satan sometimes succeeds in distancing people from their Savior. They replace God as the center of their life, or they don't believe that God's law sets the standards and God's gospel sets them free. Finally, in all addictions, sin gets control in people's lives.

 **Recognizing addiction**

It's not always easy to recognize those who have addictions, however. Most people can spot signs of alcoholism, but not

everyone knows when exercise or shopping has crossed the line between hobby and addiction. How, then, do you know if your life is out of balance? These eight signs point to an unbalanced life.

❑ **You are ritualistic or compulsive.** You plot to know when your next meal will be, and you find out where the nearest bathroom is so you can purge.

❑ **You are inflexible.** You won't skip your morning run to eat breakfast with out-of-town guests.

❑ **You distance yourself from relationships.** You don't spend time with friends because they might call attention to your behavior.

❑ **You feel guilty.** You know you shouldn't spend four hours a night on the Internet and neglect your family, but you do anyway.

❑ **You grieve if you can't participate.** You take a vacation but

don't enjoy it. You can't imagine how the office functions without you so you check your voice mail and e-mail constantly.

❑ **You neglect your family.** You skip your child's recital because it falls at the same time as your weekly racquetball match.

❑ **You deny there's a problem.** Others see you in this list, but you don't. Denial is always a part of addiction.



Regaining balance

Being the juggler who handles every situation seems appealing. It offers a sense of control, and life seems neat and tidy. The problem is that life is messy. Sometimes it's a struggle, and control is elusive.

It all comes down to trusting God's forgiveness and guidance, knowing he is taking care of you

no matter how you feel. Trusting isn't easy because our "sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit" (Galatians 5:17). But the Holy Spirit is more powerful than our nature. Through the Spirit, you'll learn to trust that God's much-more-capable hands have everything under control.

Have you dropped the balls? Don't worry. God invites you to pick them up and start over. Call it a second (or third or fourth) chance, if you want. He calls it grace.

NL

Linda Baacke is the senior communications assistant for Communication Services and Northwestern Lutheran.

Thanks to the staff of Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, Milwaukee, for the input and information in this article.

Here are nine suggestions to keep managing—juggling—your life wisely.

▼ **Check your priorities.** God's priorities give you a pattern to follow. Sit down, read your Bible, and pray. Spend time alone with your God to learn what he says is important.

▼ **Find identity in God.** You aren't valuable because you fill your time with "things." You are valuable because of who Christ has made you.

▼ **Communicate openly with family members.** Make your family a priority. Don't know how to start? Have everyone state their best and worst part of the day. This may be awkward at first, but simple questions may lead to deeper conversations.

▼ **Use family devotion time.** Help you and your family develop a personal relationship with your Savior.

▼ **Be accountable to someone.** Confess your sins and sinful thoughts to your spouse, friend, pastor, or counselor. It is risky to be vulnerable, but if you can't imagine being accountable, you may be hiding your sins and getting trapped in them.

▼ **Be willing to confront.** If someone is losing balance, speak up! Confrontations are scary because you don't know what to say and you feel hypocritical. After all you're a sinner too. As a Christian, you need to speak the truth in love, and hold to God's standards. By not confronting others, you're saying "I don't care enough about you to ask you to stop."

▼ **Connect with other families.** You may focus on your family so much that you don't open up to others. But that is selfish—you need others, and you need to be needed. When the balls are slipping from your hands, your friends will be the ones who help you cope.

▼ **Attend communion.** The Lord's Supper is our way of tangibly hearing God say, "I forgive you. I love you. Start over."

▼ **Admit that you can't be in control.** Everyone thinks they have life neatly planned. Recognize that God ultimately gets his way anyway, and you don't need to be in control if he is.

Common space or common union?

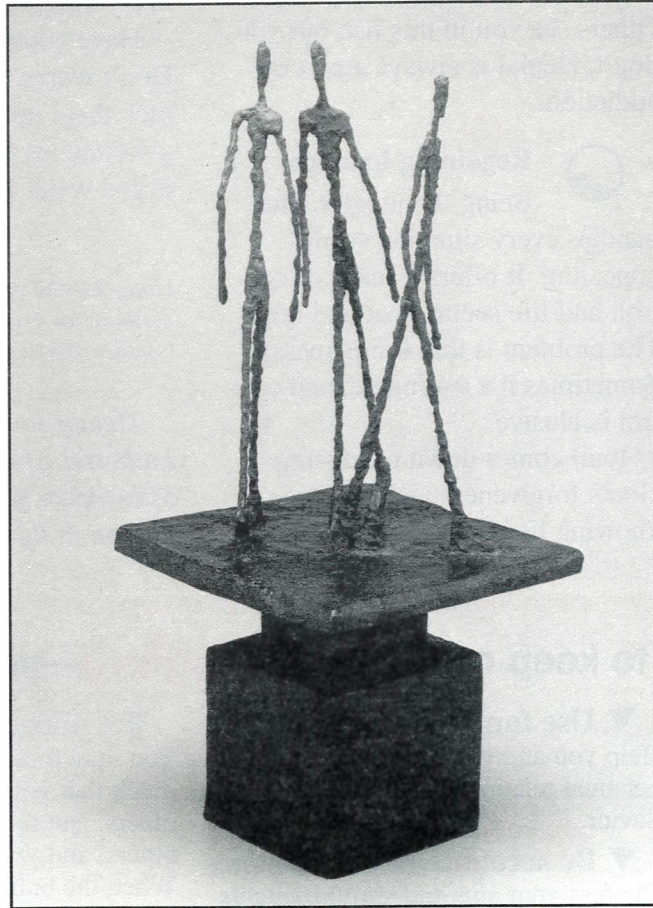
The longing to have the mind of Christ binds the communicant into a “common-union” with all communicants who crave that same freedom.

Wayne A. Laitinen

A half-century ago Alberto Giacometti created a bronze sculpture of three men who are walking so closely they could barely avoid a collision. Before long the casual observer can see that spatial proximity is all that the three figures have in common. In every other way, they are total strangers. Each is unconscious of the others. Each face avoids the glance of the others. Each torso leans in a different direction. With long, resolute strides, every man marches toward his self-appointed goal. How can a person share the same space with other people and, at the same time, be so alone . . . so trapped in solitary confinement?

Separate beliefs

I've often wondered if this was the sculptor's chilling commentary on post-war society. Then it occurred to me that if the artist added a communion rail, it could just as well have been a commentary on post-modern Christianity.



Other than proximity to the Lord's Table, everyone believes what he wants and does what is right in his own eyes. In many churches, the communion rail is touted as the place where spiritual diversity is celebrated. Doctrinal confusion is blessed, even as Scripture is ignored.

If you think I am painting too dark a picture, bear with me a moment. A pastor of another Lutheran synod once visited our WELS pastoral conference. After

the first session he thanked me for the privilege of attending. Then he added, “You don't know what a great blessing it is to study the Word of God at your pastoral conference. Do you do this all the time?”

Mystified, I said, “Well, yes we do. But if you don't study the Word of God at your conferences, what do you study?”

“We mostly have outsiders come in,” he replied. “They talk about church law or education or something like that. Whenever we talk about the Bible we can never agree. It always ends in an argument. So we've given up on it.”

The fellowship he described was rather like a married couple who share nothing more than a roof and four walls—perhaps an occasional dinner. But even at the table they are restricted to light banter about the weather or events at work. The moment they run out of anecdotes, there is only the sound of the fork against the plate and ice rattling in their glasses. For fear of a blow-up, they must tread with cat's paws around every subject that matters.

It would require the same amount of moral anesthesia to kneel at a communion table with those who have given the Savior a vote of no confidence when he promises, “If you hold to my [Word]. . . . Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31,32). In that context, the Lord's

body and blood is little more than a license to disagree.

Common union

How contrary that is to the very nature of Holy Communion. At the altar, what matters most is shared freely and openly between God and his people, between communicant and fellow-communicant. Holy Communion is “a participation in the blood of Christ” and a “participation in the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:16,17).

The Lord's Supper is an outward expression of this beautiful, inward agreement over the saving truths of Holy Scripture.

When the communicant eats the bread and drinks the wine at the Lord's Table, that person has a “common-union” with the forgiving body and blood, which was given on Calvary. And why does the believing communicant long for a common-union with the Christ of Calvary? To be his own god? To determine for himself what he ought to believe and do? To create a christ who will be his personal genie? That is the very mutiny for which God judged and damned us in the first place. These are the sins for which our Savior died.

The communicant who believes these words, “Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins,” wants forgiveness for such rebellion, relief from its damnation, and the freedom to think and act like Christ.

This longing to have the mind of Christ binds the communicant into a

common-union with all communicants who crave that same freedom.

It should go without saying that when Jesus says, “you will know the truth” (John 8:31,32), the truth is knowable. If the truth is knowable, people can agree on it. The people who agree on it long for the visible gathering of Christians where only the truth of Scripture is shared. Shortly before his death, Jesus prayed for this common-union between Christians: “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (see John 17:11,17,20,21). From the right hand of his Father, Jesus sent apostles who urged us to be “perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10; see also 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 2:2; Acts 4:32).

Outward expression

The Lord's Supper is an outward expression of this beautiful, inward agreement over the saving truths of Holy Scripture. We face one direction—the Lord's altar. Some express this common union by drinking from the same cup. But more important, we all eat the same bread, which is Christ's body. And we all drink the same wine, which is Christ's blood.

Likewise, the new creation within us is repulsed by the idea of kneeling at a strange altar where strange teachings are attributed to Jesus. To commune among those who relegate God's truth to debate (and eventually to icy silence), we would rightfully feel that we've cheated on God. Those who would commune with us would be made comfortable in their error. That we would be communing at a strange altar would show that we've misjudged our own strength in standing for the truth. We'd have

set a precedent that is easy to repeat—as long as we silence the voice of conscience with loud protests and clever rationalizations. St. Paul's words, “. . . keep away from them” (Romans 16:17) only reinforces what our “new man” has been saying all along: the Lord's Supper under such circumstances is an outward expression of a unity that doesn't exist . . . and that hurts everyone involved.

Our conference guest was right: I didn't fully appreciate what a great blessing I had in my WELS communion. Now, when I hear a sermon or a conference paper repeat an ageless truth of the gospel, I fight against the attitude of “I've heard all that before. I know all that already.” Instead, I encourage the thought, “O my soul, believe every word of it! And rejoice that God has given our synod the rare gift of agreement on this point, too!”

In the summer of 1999, the Commission on Worship will host the second National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts. Perhaps there is a sculptor among our readers who could answer Giacometti with a bronze sculpture of a different sort: One of people who have more in common than spatial proximity. The title, I'm sure, will suggest itself.

NL

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

Pointing students to Jesus

Though students face somewhat different problems, they need the same assurance of eternal life through faith in Jesus.

Julie K. Tessmer

College—a time of freedom, learning, and opportunities. A time of new friends, challenges, and ideas.

College—a time of loneliness and temptation. A time of new, and dangerous, issues—premarital sex, homosexuality, alcohol, different religious beliefs.

College—a time of decisions that aren't always easy to make.

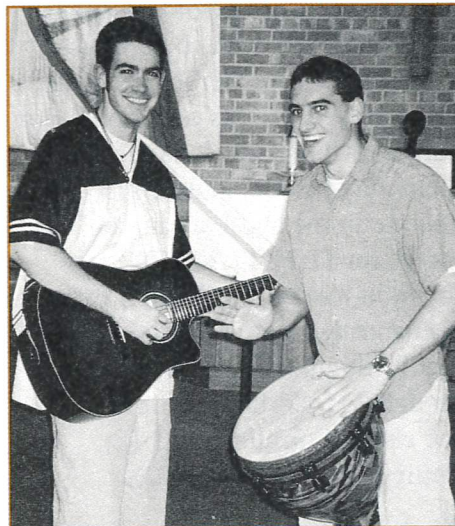
WELS Campus Ministry helps students during these times of difficult choices—by pointing them to Jesus.

“Campus ministry helps provide growth in faith at a time in life where students are growing emotionally. The two grow together,” said Joel Lintner, campus pastor at the University of Minnesota—Minneapolis. “In the ages of 18 to 22, you solve many of the toughest problems in your life. If you face them with Jesus, the rest of your life you'll face your problems with Jesus. If you face them without Jesus [now], it's tougher down the line to do it.”

The importance of campus ministry

About 370 pastors work through the Campus Ministry Committee (CMC), a division of the Board for Home Missions, to bring Jesus to the front of students' lives. About 50 work full- or part-time, providing programs specifically for the students.

“It's kind of like working with a small congregation,” said Lintner.



David Burleton (left) and Jason Paltzer singing at a Wednesday night vesper service for students at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Once a semester is “Open Mike” vespers, where students share poems, stories, songs, and Scripture readings during worship.

Though these “congregations” face somewhat different problems, they need the same assurance of eternal life through faith in Jesus.

“College students are thrown into a world of loneliness and one that is indifferent—if not hostile—to religious values,” said Lintner. “They need to be around Christians and be built up in faith so the hostile environment doesn't swallow them up.”

They also need guidance in finding answers to difficult questions.

“In college you often hear ‘What's true for one may not be true for another.’ You can get sucked into that if you don't have people to confirm Christian truths,” said Tracy Stichmann, a student at the University of Wisconsin—Madison.

How students get support

Through worship, Bible studies, and events, campus ministries work to incorporate Christian truths into the students' busy schedules.

The University of Wisconsin—Madison, one of the four campus ministries with full-time called workers, has Sunday worship and Wednesday vespers. On Monday evenings, students cook meals at the campus ministry chapel-student center, charging \$1 for a home-cooked dinner. Bible study and fellowship occur frequently.

Campus ministry also provides friendship and support.

“It's a lot easier to stay away from the bad things if you have friends who know they shouldn't be involved in them,” said Stichmann.

This support extends across the nation at regional and national rallies. Here students attend workshops and make even more friends dealing with similar issues.

Besides helping fund and coordinate rallies, the CMC sends *Meditations* and *Northwestern Lutheran* by request, and rally information and *Lightsource*, a newsletter designed for college students, to all students on its mailing list.

How students get involved

But campus ministry doesn't only equip students with information for their personal use. They want the students to share it.

“Campus ministry involves more than the campus pastor sharing the Word,” said Robert Hoepner, chairman of the CMC. “It’s training our students so they can reach out too.”

And students are reaching out. In Madison, students phone other WELS students and encourage them to attend. Campus ministry students also pair up with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary students once a year to personally visit these people.

But students don’t just share the Word on campus. WELS college students assist mission churches with evangelism through the Travel Canvass Witness (TCW) program. In 1998, 57 students from seven campus ministries, plus 79 from Martin Luther College and 46 from Wisconsin Lutheran College, spent their breaks reaching out to unchurched neighbors.

Stephen Geiger, pastor at Prince of Peace, Yankton, S.D., describes students from his campus ministry at the University of South Dakota—Vermillion “like a TCW team that lives here.” Students drive 30 miles to church, sing in the choir, play instruments, and teach Sunday school. They also help canvass for Prince of Peace and an exploratory in Vermillion.

“What wonderful gifts God has given to the church—and they’re in college,” said Geiger. “We need to allow them to grow and participate in their faith.”

Evangelism or retention

The importance of helping WELS college students grow in faith can’t be underestimated. But sharing the gospel with those who haven’t heard it before should not be overlooked.

“It’s not either [retention] . . . or [evangelism]. It’s both . . . and,”

said Hoepner. “Maybe one year you focus more on retention than outreach, but you can’t do that every year.”

The Commission on Evangelism will hold a School of Outreach for campus ministries in April 1999 to help with outreach planning for the next school year. A campus pastor, lay person, and student from each participating school will attend.

The CMC is also putting together a Web page for the WELS Web site <www.wels.net>. With so many students “surfing the Web,” this site may answer concerns or questions—either directly or through e-mail—students are afraid to ask in person.

International students are a specialized group that campus ministries reach. This October, the CMC and world missions joined to sponsor Asian Call ’98, an international student rally.

“We want to take those international Asian students who are interested or friendly to Christianity and push them over the edge,” said Lintner, one of the rally organizers.

Push them over the edge—right into our Savior’s waiting arms. That’s what campus ministry is about—pointing and leading students to Jesus. Then even when choices are hard, they know they have someone they can trust completely, someone who will always be there for them—in college and throughout their lives.

For more information, contact Karen Marshall, WELS Campus Ministry, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3279; <usr20@sab.wels.net>.

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Julie K. Tessmer is the communications assistant for Northwestern Lutheran and Communication Services.

At least 18,000 to 20,000 WELS young adults attend college. They need support from campus ministries—and from you. Here’s how you can help:

- Give your pastor names and addresses of students to add to mailing lists—both local and national. Finding WELS students is one of the biggest challenges of campus ministry.
- If you live near a college or university, give students rides to church and Bible study. Take students under your wing. Invite them for supper. Call them regularly—just to see how they’re doing.
- Provide a solid Christian foundation for young children so they have a strong base to draw on.
- Pray that God will guide students as they go through these exciting—but difficult—times.

Attend the National Campus Rally, held Dec. 27-30 at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Contact Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, 608/257-1969; <national.rally@juno.com>; <<http://www.sit.wisc.edu/~chapel/rally.html>>.

Students: Call Karen to receive *Meditations* and *Northwestern Lutheran* free. 414/256-3279; <usr20@sab.wels.net>

When bad things happen to good people

When bad things happen, our first question is often, "Why, God?"

Robert F. Raasch

Hundreds of innocent people die in the Swissair crash. A man is struck down by cancer in the prime of his life. Tragedies such as these cause us to ask "Why would God allow such terrible things to happen?"

Bad things

In his holy Word, God answers that perplexing question. The Bible identifies Satan, and not God, as the ultimate source of evil in the world.

That evil may enter our lives in a number of ways. Some bad things are a direct result of deliberate, sinful acts, such as a terrorist bombing. Other times, hardships enter our lives as a result of our often misguided behavior. We are all capable of bringing pain and sorrow into our lives through everything from clumsiness to stupidity to open rebellion against God.

Some bad things are not the result of specific sins, but rather a general symptom of sin's presence in the world. God told our first parents that when sin entered the world, so did disease, pain, and death. Such universal sorrows are constant reminders that we no longer live in Paradise.



Ten-year-old Abbey Buske is a fifth-grader at Fairview, Milwaukee. She suffers from spinal cord atrophy but still leads an active life. She plays violin and participates in wheelchair sports like hockey, softball, and basketball.

Wonderful promise

And yet, in spite of all the bad things happening in the world today, God's Word still offers believers a wonderful promise. Romans 8:28 says, "In all things, God works for the good of those who love him." That means God can use even the bad things in life to serve our eternal good. God can use a terminal disease to draw a person closer to himself. God can use financial hardships to lead people to readjust their priorities for the better. Even death itself, by God's grace, becomes the entryway to heaven.

When we consider all the good

things that God has done for us, especially his gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, we are able to view our present sufferings from the perspective of the apostle Paul: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

God can use even the bad things in life to serve our eternal good.

Discovering the answer to the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people" is not a matter of understanding God's unfathomable ways. It's a matter of trusting God's unconditional love. That love is best expressed in the familiar words, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Be assured. God's good will for you in Christ will far outweigh any bad you may face in life. You can believe it.

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Rob Raasch is pastor at Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wisconsin.

INTER-ACT

Mark J. Lenz

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

Introduction

Consider the following uses some people make of the Bible:

- A practical handbook for financial success.
- A place to discover the rules for good physical and mental health.
- A means for ordering and regulating society.
- A place to discover the principles of democratic government.
- An object on which to swear an oath to tell the truth.
- A source of quotations to make a speech credible and persuasive.

Which of these uses of the Bible did God not intend? Why did God give us the Bible?

I. Text

Read Ephesians 3:14-19:

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

III. Application

1. Why does being able to address God as Father give you confidence in prayer?
2. What did Christ do to reveal his amazing love for you?
3. Why does a person who knows Jesus as Savior want to continue diligently to read and study the Bible?
4. A respected Lutheran theologian once said that the sole purpose for studying the Bible is described in the verses above. What do you think he meant?
5. Reflect on the uses for the Bible mentioned in the introduction above. In what ways do they reveal a misunderstanding of the Bible's purpose?
6. Pray for people whom you earnestly desire that the Father would grant them strength, knowledge, and fullness in Christ.

II. Questions

1. In chapter two Paul says that God has united Jew and Gentile in Christ. How does this help you understand what Paul says in verses 14 and 15?
2. The Greek word translated as family is related to the word "father." What is the significance of this?
3. What one word might describe what Paul requests for the Ephesians in verse 16?
4. Where are the Father's "glorious riches" to be found by us? How does the Father strengthen us with his power?
5. The word "dwell" in verse 17 means "to be completely at home." What does this suggest regarding Paul's prayer for the Ephesians?
6. Distinguish between being "rooted" and "established" in love.
7. Although the love of Christ surpasses human knowledge, it can be understood to a certain degree. How does Paul describe it?
8. "To be filled to the measure" means to be filled to overflowing. Why does Paul use this expression?

IV. Prayer

Father, I rejoice that you have made me a member of your family. Strengthen my faith through your Word. Let Christ always be completely at home in my heart. Help me know better and better the width, length, height, and depth of Christ's love. Fill me to overflowing with this love. Let it show in my worship of you and in all my dealings with others. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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

Nurse commissioned

Marladene Mohr, a member of New Life, Shoreview, Minn., was commissioned as a nurse to Central Africa on June 28.



Marladene Mohr

Mohr will serve at Mwembezhi Lutheran Rural Health Center, located 45 miles from Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Her work is part of the Central Africa Medical Mission Committee's efforts to develop an outreach program that will help provide physical, emotional, and spiritual care and counsel for AIDS victims. WELS medical mission is currently training community healthcare villagers to become more independent in dealing with their local health concerns.

Mark A. Cordes

LWMS celebrates 35 years

At its annual convention, Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) celebrated its 35th anniversary. Held in Dallas from June 26-28, the convention centered on sharing the gospel.

The 760 registrants came from 47 circuits and 23 states to hear firsthand about mission work in the United States, Canada, and the world. The missionaries came, not only to report, but to meet—and thank—the women who offer encouragement to continue sharing the gospel throughout the world.

These new national board officers were installed at the convention: Esther Huebner, Columbia, Md., vice president; Alice Sather, Cannon Falls, Minn., secretary; John Beck, Kenosha, Wis., pastoral advisor; Susanne Hanson, Andover, Minn., spiritual growth laywoman; and John Baumann, Duluth, Minn., spiritual growth pastor.

LWMS exists solely to support missions. A grass roots operation, the women gave a quarter of a million dollars this year to support missions.

Service agencies join forces

Jesus Cares Ministries became an affiliate of The Lutheran Home Association (TLHA) in May. The Lutheran Home is the oldest social service agency in WELS. At its 13 locations in Minnesota and Wisconsin, TLHA serves over 1,000 people, including the elderly, mentally ill, and cognitive disabled.

Jesus Cares Ministries, a Southeastern Wisconsin District program, has five areas of ministry to the developmentally disabled—education, worship, support, fellowship, and evangelism.

Although Jesus Cares Ministries will keep its name and incorporation, its voting membership will be through TLHA.

Merging with TLHA gives Jesus Cares Ministries the opportunity to expand its mission nationwide as it develops new chapters. Although the ministry will expand, the office will remain in Milwaukee.

"Jesus Cares Ministries will still be a grassroots organization that relies on local volunteers to serve our programs," said Jim Esmeier, Jesus Cares Ministries administrator.

For more information, contact Jesus Cares Ministries, 2949 N Mayfair Rd #105, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/259-8122.

Calling all writers

A hymn text competition is underway to create a hymn for the synod's 150th anniversary celebration. Lyrics should focus on the year 2000 and the 150th anniversary, and should acknowledge past blessings and future hope in a specifically Christian way. The melody is already chosen, you can hear it at <www.wels.net/sab/frm-cow.html>. For more information, contact Paul Prange, 2777 Hardin, Saginaw MI 48602; <Ptp@mlsem.org>.



The Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) hostel included looking at the animal life in the Menomonee River. Eighteen seniors attended the hostel, which combined education with fellowship. It was held July 10-15 at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.

With 56 active chapters and 1,842 members, OWLS help churches with telephone canvassing, participate in prison ministry, work to cross generations with WELS youth, help out in nursing homes, and enjoy countless fellowship activities. For more information, contact OWLS, 8420 W Beloit Rd, West Allis WI 53227; 414/321-9977.

An anniversary is coming

We've all heard the words "An anniversary is coming." Maybe your sister or brother said, "Mom and Dad's anniversary is coming," or maybe your pastor came to a church council meeting and said, "The 50th anniversary of our church building is coming." No doubt you could make your own list of anniversaries that are coming.

We plan for anniversaries

Think of the children planning for their parents' 40th wedding anniversary or of the congregation planning for the 50th anniversary of their worship facility. Both might ask, "What kind of anniversary celebration should we plan? Should we send out invitations or just make a public announcement? Should we plan a meal or just a small luncheon? What about a program? Should we ask someone to write a special song or prepare a skit? Should we ask one or two guests to speak?" Thus plans are made for that special day.

Why do we as Christians observe and make plans to celebrate an anniversary? First, to say thank you to God for his rich grace and mercy that he has abundantly showered on us.

Anniversaries give us an opportunity to review God's goodness and grace and to join our hearts and voices in thanksgiving and praise to him.

But we have a second reason to celebrate an anniversary. It is not only to look back in thanksgiving, but also to look forward with confidence, zeal, enthusiasm, and renewed joy.

Whether it is a couple or a congregation that is planning an anniversary celebration, we give thought to the future. We look forward with confidence to God's continued blessings and to our joy in serving him.

We have an anniversary to plan for

Did you know that in the years 1999-2001 we, as members of WELS, will be privileged to observe the 150th anniversary of its founding?

Why should we celebrate this special anniversary? Certainly we want to give thanks to our God for his blessings in Christ. At the same time, we think about our future service to the Lord.

How should we celebrate this special anniversary? The Conference of Presidents, in keeping with a resolution of our synod, appointed a steer-

ing committee to make initial plans and to encourage congregations and organizations to become involved in the anniversary celebration. Many individuals are preparing materials to assist us in celebrating this anniversary under the theme "Forward in Christ."

Will every district, every conference, and every congregation observe and celebrate the 150th anniversary of our synod in the same way? Certainly not. Just as individuals, couples, and congregations choose to observe their anniversaries differently, we will all choose our own ways to commemorate this anniversary.

More information will follow about the WELS 150th anniversary. Please share suggestions that you feel we, within our districts, conference, and congregations, could use to observe and celebrate this milestone of our synod. Send ideas to Gerald Free, Executive Director, Forward in Christ, 954 Solar Pkwy, Neenah WI 54944; FAX 920/729-1210 <FICWICKS@tccom.net>

Gerald Free



To help celebrate this milestone, a 150th anniversary logo has been created. Use this logo for outreach such as advertisements, signs, banners, newsletters, stationery, and displays so more people recognize WELS, our mission, and our upcoming anniversary.

You can download the logo and find instructions on making an anniversary banner on the WELS Web site <www.wels.net>. For the logo on disk or a logo manual, contact Communication Services, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3210; <karenb@sab.wels.net>.

YOUTH NEWS

Cara Zarnstorff, an eighth-grader at Faith, Anchorage, Alaska, competed in the national spelling bee in Washington, D.C., in May. Zarnstorff qualified by winning the Alaska state spelling bee after correctly spelling "scintillate."

Daniel Tacke, a 12-year-old from Auburn, Wash., performed a piano concerto with the Tacoma Junior Symphony. Tacke, who is home-schooled, is a member of Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.

Nora Kraemer, a sophomore at Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High

School, Waco, took sixth in the all-arounds in Level 5 at the national AAU Gymnastics competition in Orlando, Fla. She is a member at St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.

The American Volleyball Coaches Association honored the **Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School's volleyball team** as an outstanding academic team. The team received this award by maintaining a team cumulative 3.3 grade-point average for the 1997-98 school year.

Jim Kostowicz, a member of King of Kings, Maitland, Fla., won the 50

meter free style at the 1997 Florida State competition in swimming. He broke the Florida high school 6A 50 meter free style record. He is a freshman at Ohio State University.

Julie Ruth, a senior at Lake Mary High School, has sung on Walt Disney Christmas specials on national TV and has sung the national anthem at professional sporting events. She also has been in leading roles in "Mikado" and "Carmen," produced by the Central Florida Lyric Opera. She is a member at King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.

U.S. history comes alive

United States history is taught in classrooms across the country. However, it is seldom truly understood within classroom walls. History comes alive when students stand where the foundations of our democracy were first established. They gain a deeper appreciation of the cost of freedom when stepping onto the battlefield that Americans once occupied as they gave their lives to preserve the country they loved.

This lesson was learned by 48 Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School juniors, who participated in a 10-day tour of historical sites in the eastern United States.

Touring Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, students stopped at Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown Settlement, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Antietam National Battlefield, and Gettysburg National Military Park. The students also explored Washington, D.C.

In its third year, this tour is an additional educational opportunity

at student expense. This year over 70 percent of the junior class participated.

Not only did the students make many lasting memories as they

traveled with their classmates, but they also gained equally long-lasting insights into the cost and responsibility of preserving our God-given freedom.

David Russ



Members of the MVL U.S. history tour at the monument to the First Minnesota regiment at Gettysburg. Over 70 percent of the junior class participated in this extra opportunity, which help history come alive for students.



In this section, you'll hear news from missionaries that came via the Internet. We hope you enjoy these tidbits from our missions.

From Beth Flunker, wife to Missionary Charles Flunker in Brazil:

Here in Brazil the laws about marriage are fuzzy. Three types of marriage are recognized by the government. The difference between a marriage with a license and a common-law marriage is that the woman may take her husband's last name if she wishes (many don't), and they can own property jointly. Many never bother with the license because of the high cost (about a month's minimum salary). The Catholic church confuses the issue more when it refuses to recognize a registry marriage, but

says you have to have a church wedding. To be married in the Catholic church, you have to be baptized in it and pay a hefty fee.

So how do we teach marriage to our people? They have to know that common-law marriage is a marriage in God's eyes and cannot be broken. We decided to spend time reviewing God's Word about marriage, and then offer a wedding service in the church so they could ask the Lord's blessings on their marriage and declare their commitment to the congregation.

So the fourth week in August was the week of the Christian Couple. The calendar had special Bible readings on marriage that week. Friday night, 21 people gathered for an in-depth study of what God says about marriage. On Saturday most returned to hear a member explain the laws of the land regarding marriage. Then we

had another Bible study about the importance of commitment and of having a church service to demonstrate that commitment and ask the Lord's blessings. After those studies, six couples decided to participate in a wedding service on Sunday.

In a service attended by about 100 people, these couples exchanged vows and were assured the Lord's blessings on their marriages. Charlie and I renewed our marriage vows, also, after 33 years! There was a processional, special music, and a time for pictures and food. The service was even filmed. We were impressed by how seriously the couples took their simple marriage ceremony. We were also struck by the comments of others in the congregation. We cannot thank the Lord enough for his blessings on our feeble attempts to encourage people in their walk with him.

Obituaries

**Otto William Jungkuntz
1893-1998**

Otto Jungkuntz was born April 2, 1893, in Columbia City, Ind. He died Aug. 2, 1998, in Jefferson, Wis.

Jungkuntz served St. John, Jefferson, Wis., for 43 years.

He is survived by three sons, one daughter, 23 grandchildren, 50 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.

**Irvin W. Weiss
1918-1997**

Irvin Weiss was born on Jan. 27, 1918, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died May 28, 1997, in Roseville, Mich.

A 1942 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Weiss served Palos Heights, Palos Heights, Ill., and Zion, Warren, Mich.

He is survived by his wife, Peggy; two daughters; and three grandchildren.

**Henry Woodrow Grigsby
1906-1998**

Henry Grigsby was born Jan. 10, 1906, in Camden, Ala. He died Aug. 15, 1998, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1931 graduate of Immanuel Lutheran College, Greensboro, N.C., Grigsby served three congregations in Alabama from the old Synodical Conference. He also served Zoar, Detroit, Mich., and Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis. He was the first, and for 29 years the only, African American pastor in WELS.

He is survived by his wife, Cotty; two daughters; three sisters; eight grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

**Orvin A. Sommer
1914-1998**

Orvin Sommer was born Dec. 20, 1914, in Oshkosh, Wis. He died Sept. 19, 1998.

A 1939 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Sommer served churches in Cataract, Kingston, and Salemville, all in Wis.; Immanuel, Clayton/Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.; and Immanuel, Oshkosh, Wis.

He is survived by a daughter, a son, a sister, four grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

correction: Carl Wacker served at Immanuel, La Crosse, Wis., not at Mt. Calvary as was reported in the August NL (p. 29).



A vision for the future

At its April meeting, the Synodical Council looked ahead to the future of WELS. Calling it "Vision 2003," here is what they saw as being the most important issues to be addressed. Read through these and see how your church, and you personally, can help us reach these goals.

We base everything on the Word of God. It is the reason for everything we do.

The Word is everything!

Goals: An ongoing scriptural study of doctrine in every congregation and conference.

Further cultivating a clear biblical understanding of the gospel ministry that may take on many forms.

Publication and distribution of thorough theological studies on contemporary issues challenging Christianity.

Increased use of up-to-date technology and methods of communication to proclaim the truth of God's Word.

Fostering confessional unity of faith among ourselves and among Christians throughout the world.

We need to share the good news with people in our communities, nation, and world. Every person needs to be active and spread the gospel.

Go with it!

Goals: Reach new people by planting new churches with the goal of 20 new groupings (e.g., congregations, preaching stations, daughter congregations) annually.

Reach people of other cultures in our home mission fields by establishing annually three new cross-cultural missions in urban centers as well as other geographic settings.

Expand our world outreach by increasing our overseas mission corps to 75 seminary trained missionaries, 10 teachers, and 40 mission workers.

Get every member to evangelize the lost.

To remain firmly rooted in God's Word, we need to know what it says. We can do this by actively studying it in our homes and churches.

Study it!

Goals: Equip all of our members for personal and family devotional life.

Focus parents' efforts on spiritual nurturing of preschoolers.

Concentrate efforts to enroll 100 percent of our children in formal programs of Christian education and grow from six percent to 15 percent in the number of teens in Bible study.

Emphasize every communicant's need for organized Bible study as reflected by an increase in average synodical Bible class attendance from 14 percent to 25 percent of confirmed members.

Recognize every member's need to worship regularly as reflected in an increasing synodical church attendance from 45 percent to 52 percent of baptized members.

As the Bible says, "Faith without works is dead." We need to take God's Word and use it in our daily lives, showing by our actions how much Jesus means to us.

Apply it!

Goals: Reflect the scriptural injunction to give as God has prospered us by doubling our personal offerings for the Lord's work to an average of five percent of income, including a doubling of gifts for our shared mission and ministry as a synod.

Assist each other to love one another and to utilize our spiritual gifts by providing encouragement, training, opportunities, and structure for ministry in all of our congregations.

Assist families in our congregations and reach out to our communities by providing Christian marriage and parenting programs, Christian schools and day care, youth ministry, family support groups, and Christian counseling with a plan for family ministry implemented in every congregation.

Respond to special needs and a changing society with Christ-centered ministry for people whose physical, emotional, or social situation may require assistance.

Use 50 percent of God's people in the ministry with God's Word.

Optimize the enthusiasm of emerging adults (18-24) for evangelism by involving 25 percent of our young adults in personal evangelism.

Capitalize on maturing generations' (55-80) spiritual wisdom through ministry by involving 30 percent of them in the ministry of the Word.

We need to encourage future generations to serve the Lord full time, and support current called workers by encouraging them to continue their studies.

Teach it!

Goals: Continue recruitment from elementary, high school, and non-traditional sources with recruitment and scholarship emphasis in every congregation in order to produce 55 pastor candidates and 99 teacher candidates each year.

Implement and enhance recruiting, training, certifying, and calling of staff ministers other than pastors and teachers.

Encourage use of a comprehensive program for professional growth in ministry that has all called workers participating in individualized continuing education with the support of their congregations.

Support the called workers Christ gives to the church with a structure for mutual encouragement, counseling, adequate financial provisions, and staff-to-membership ratios appropriate to ministry expectations.

Engage up to five percent of our faculties annually in alternate settings of ministry-related field experience.

Involve the majority of our ministerial education students in appropriate ministry-related field experiences while in school.

District news

Michigan

Grace, Muskegon, Mich., celebrated its 75th anniversary on Sept. 12 and 13. . . . **St. John, Allegan, Mich.**, marked its 130th anniversary as a congregation on Sept. 6.

David M. Zahn

Minnesota

St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn., celebrated its 40th anniversary on Sept. 26. . . . **Bruce Backer**, a professor emeritus of music at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., finished 50 years of service as an organist at St. John, New Ulm. Backer played for the first service at St. John when it organized in 1947. . . . On June 24, **Our Savior, Kasson, Minn.**, broke ground for its church. Members came forward alphabetically by family to read a Bible passage and take turns turning a shovel of earth. When they finished, a cross was spaded in the ground. The congregation numbers 66 souls. The church is being built by Builders For Christ and should be dedicated by the end of the year.

California

On Sept. 20, **Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa, Calif.**, celebrated the 25th anniversary of its Lutheran elementary school. That same day, they celebrated the 15th anniversary in the ministry of its principal, **Peter Sehloff**. . . . On Oct. 11, **Messiah, North Hollywood, Calif.**, celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Hermann John

Western Wisconsin

On July 26, St. John, Baraboo, Wis., celebrated **Myron Schwanke's** 30th anniversary in the ministry. . . . **St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis.**, celebrat-



In July, 23 of the 43 families that support Martin Luther School went camping together. Weekend activities included golf, swimming, crafts, games, a watermelon carving contest, a euchre tournament, and an outdoor church service. Martin Luther School is supported by five congregations in the Detroit area.



These new faculty members joined the staff at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Back (from left): Kurt Wittmershaus, Kenneth Cherney Jr., James Danell, David Bauer, Heath Butler. Front (from left): Jeffrey Enderle, Daniel Heiderich, James Grunwald.

ed the 25th anniversary of its elementary school on June 14. . . . On June 7, **St. Peter, Marshfield, Wis.**, dedicated a new addition to the church. . . . **St. John, Christie, Wis.**, dedicated a new church building on July 12. . . . Two pastors in the district are celebrating their 25th anniversaries in the ministry this year: **Larry Koester** and **Herb Prahl**. Prahl is the president of the Western Wisconsin District.

Elton Stroh

Dakota-Montana

St. John, Dempster, S.D., celebrated its 90th anniversary on June 28. . . . In its third year of operation,

Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D., now includes grades 9-12, and has received accreditation from the state of South Dakota. Forty-six students are enrolled at the school. A special ground breaking service was held for the addition of a gymnasium and a classroom facility on the campus. . . . Eight congregations from the Dakota-Montana District and one from the Nebraska District participated in an evangelism **School of Outreach**, held at Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D., on August 7-8.

Jon W. Hadler



News briefs

◆ In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that **the government can deny cash grants to artists if their work is considered indecent.** In the 8-1 decision, justices said the policy allowing the National Endowment for the Arts to consider decency when it distributes public money does not violate the free-speech rights of artists. "The winners here are the American people who are not going to have their tax dollars used to fund offensive projects under the guise of art," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice in Virginia Beach, Va.

◆ **Where people live often affects their views.** When asked if they considered themselves to be Christian, this is how people in various parts of the country responded. Northeast: 72%; South: 90%; Midwest: 89%; West: 73%.

◆ **In June, the first Voodoo Festival was held at Congo Square in New Orleans.** Gro Mambo Angela Novanyon of Philadelphia, a voodoo priestess and spiritual mentor, decided to reunite voodoo and the scattered religions of Africa. Voodoo is the product of African folk religion transformed by the slave experience in Christian Haiti. Followers claim it has nothing to do with the occult, twisting other's wills, or casting evil spells. Instead, adherents see a world inhabited by "loas" or spirits, each with its own territory—enlightenment, finance, faith, destiny—who can be summoned for guidance and protection.

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Six Months Ended June 30, 1998

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received				
	Communicants 12/31/97	1998	Year to Date Projected	June Offerings	Six Months Offerings	Percent of Subscripnt	Annldz Ave Per Commun
Arizona-California	17,110	\$1,025,567	\$462,578	\$88,908	\$447,581	96.8%	\$52.32
Dakota-Montana	9,195	429,512	170,608	26,551	171,655	100.6	37.34
Michigan	36,777	2,129,256	908,732	173,477	936,128	103.0	50.91
Minnesota	43,636	2,387,541	995,889	178,246	998,292	100.2	45.76
Nebraska	10,334	590,248	248,516	37,031	263,524	106.0	51.00
North Atlantic	3,831	321,867	154,454	34,144	160,637	104.0	83.86
Northern Wisconsin	61,019	2,542,489	1,055,213	189,289	1,081,496	102.5	35.45
Pacific Northwest	5,067	264,918	122,757	25,867	111,412	90.8	43.98
South Atlantic	6,661	467,354	225,190	41,594	222,304	98.7	66.75
South Central	4,531	416,738	191,792	43,837	201,477	105.0	88.93
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,563	3,334,263	1,311,904	265,462	1,340,635	102.2	46.58
Western Wisconsin	59,631	3,058,170	1,311,352	221,729	1,314,099	100.2	44.07
Total - This Year	315,355	16,967,923	7,158,985	1,326,135	7,249,240	101.3	45.98
Total - Last Year	315,377	16,765,951	5,882,517	1,120,179	5,877,063	99.9	37.27

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities/Year ended June 30

	1998 Actual	1997 Actual	1998 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$ 16,831,935	\$16,296,082	\$16,424,000
Gifts and memorials	6,347,655	4,678,327	7,296,000
Bequest/planned giving	686,276	1,078,311	842,000
Tuition and fees	8,685,630	8,297,298	8,603,000
Other	285,460	193,026	194,000
Transfers-endwmt/trust earnings	285,366	274,755	276,000
Transfers-gilt trust	8,969,616	7,649,332	8,756,000
Transfers-continuing programs	3,902,064	3,308,416	4,081,200
Transfers-other	20,060	3,392	-
Total revenues	46,014,062	41,778,939	46,472,200
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	8,619,492	7,429,713	9,490,100
World Missions	8,236,855	8,197,877	8,850,800
Ministerial Education	19,845,665	18,496,873	19,880,600
Parish Services	1,655,493	1,748,793	1,893,800
Administrative Services	5,387,005	5,673,443	5,808,400
Total expenditures	43,744,510	41,546,699	45,923,700
Changes in unrestricted net assets	2,269,552	232,240	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	174,800	2,883,454	
Bequest/planned giving	(26,000)	3,052	
Change in value of trust agreements	240,773	176,048	
Satisfaction of restrictions	(2,085,000)	(2,494,994)	
Total revenues	(1,695,427)	567,560	
Change in temp restricted net assets	(1,695,427)	567,560	
Net assets - beginning of year	5,909,760	5,109,960	
Net assets - end of period	6,483,885	5,909,760	

Statement of Financial Position

	June 30, 1998	June 30, 1997
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,806,263	\$ 844,061
Due from other funds	129,194	24,532
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	107,250	101,750
Cash advances-schools	261,955	280,388
Other accounts receivable	101,305	103,424
Contributions receivable	3,569,400	5,264,827
Mortgage note receivable	15,901	17,790
Allowance for doubtful accts	(92,000)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	19,972	58,923
Total assets	6,919,240	6,603,695
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Accounts payable	435,355	693,935
Total liabilities	435,355	693,935
Unrestricted	2,914,485	644,933
Temp restricted	3,569,400	5,264,827
Total net assets	6,483,885	5,909,760
Total liab. and net assets	6,919,240	6,603,695

Mark Meissner, director of finance

Russia: more regulations on religion

A new Russian regulation has the potential to restrict foreign religious workers to three-month visas. This would require missionaries and other religious workers to leave Russia after three months to receive a new visa from a Russian embassy or consulate. Until now, most foreigners could receive a one-year visa.

This appears to be the latest step to limit the influence of foreign religious groups. Mikhail Osadchev, an official of the Russian parliament's Committee on Public and Religious Organizations, said the visa regulation was "indirectly inspired" by the law limiting religious expression signed into law last year.

That law enshrined the Russian Orthodox Church as the nation's predominant faith, while giving a lesser status to Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and "Christianity." The law also put restrictions on the activities of religious groups who have less than 15-years official recognition in Russia—including many foreign-based organizations.

In Russia, however, the local Oblast (state) has freedom in these areas and the application of the law is left to the local administration. The effect this may have on our missionaries in Siberia is still unknown. —ed.

Religious grandparents more involved

Although nonreligious grandparents may have close relationships with their grandchildren, a new study found that religiously active grandparents have higher levels of contact with and participate more in the lives of their grandchildren as caregivers, teachers, mentors, and friends.

"In many cases, grandparents provide an important safety net for children and help them make the transition to adulthood by offering support and encouragement," said Glen H. Older, co-author of the study.

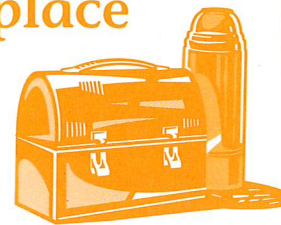
The study examined 500 grandparents, ages 51 to 92. A majority were middle- or working-class Protestants—primarily Methodists and Lutherans—and a smaller number were Catholics.

The study measured "religious activity" by the number of times people attended church, led services, taught Sunday school, attended religious classes, prayed, or listened to religious broadcasts. "Involvement" in grandchildren's lives was measured by frequency of contacts, "quality" of relationships, participation in various activities, friendship and mentoring, and discussing personal problems.

The study was conducted by sociologists at Pennsylvania State University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Religion and the workplace

Most people engage in discussions about their faith while at work, according to a survey for Lutheran Brotherhood.



The survey, conducted by Yankelovich Partners, showed that 70 percent of those surveyed talked about faith in the workplace. Half said the discussions take place at least once a month and 19 percent said they talk about religion with their coworkers at least once a year.

"Religion and work are important aspects of many people's lives," said David Rustad, Lutheran Brotherhood spokesman. "Since Americans spend so many hours at work, it's not surprising that conversations about religion crop up among coworkers.

Women are twice as likely as men to discuss religion in the workplace more than once a month—29 percent to 15 percent. And Americans in rural areas also are more likely to talk about religion at work than those in the suburbs—28 percent to 17 percent.

High hopes

The rite of marriage as a passage to fatherhood is in question in the minds of some of the next generation. According to the latest Gallup Youth Survey, only 48 percent of 13 to 17 years old consider marriage to be an "extremely important" undertaking for a man prior to becoming a father.

However, another 30 percent do consider marriage a "very important" precursor to fatherhood. That's a total of 78 percent who consider a sanctioned union "extremely" or "very" important.

Ninety-three percent of teens expect to get married someday. Likewise, 88 percent expect to have children.

[Emerging Trends, June 1998]



On Thanksgiving day we called our five-year-old grandson in Milwaukee.

During our conversation we asked him if he learned all about the pilgrims and the Indians. His reply was, "Oh no! We just learn about Moses and God and stuff like that in my school."

*Mr. and Mrs. Bob Woessner
Kimberling City, Missouri*

CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Blauert, Timothy K., to St. Mark, Richwood/Immanuel, Hubbleton, Wis.

Bolda, James L., to St. Stephen, Fall River/St. John, Doylestown, Wis.

Hering, John R., to Divine Peace, Rowlett, Tex.

Johnson, Donald F., to retirement

Kieta, Geoffrey A., to Grace, Muskegon, Mich.

Kipfmiller, David A., to St. John, Westland, Mich.

Kolander, Paul H., to retirement

Krause, Daniel E., to Grace, Oshkosh, Wis.

Krueger, Mark C., to Southeast Asia Missions, India Mission Coordinator

Learman, Charles L., to St. John, Peshtigo-7SW, Wis.

Neumann, David M., to Sioux Indian-Rosebud Reservation, S.D.

Pries, David C., to Grace, Dakota-12W, Minn.

Rosenau, David L., to Shepherd of the Mountain, Cedar Creek/Gethsemane, Cibecue, Ariz.

Rothe, David J., to St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.

Sattler, Mark J., to St. Matthew, Renville-12SE, Minn.

Schumann, Robert L., to retirement

Seefeldt, Glenn R., to Grace, Ringle, Wis.

Steffenhagen, Warren, to retirement

Sutton, Donald R., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.

Wenzel, Kenneth L., to WLIM, Inc., Milwaukee

Westenberg, Douglas M., to St. John, Juneau, Wis.

Wietzke, Bruce V., to exploratory, Leonardtown, Md.

Teachers

Cison, Julianne M., to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.

Eckert, Ruth M., to Emanuel, Lansing, Mich.

Grosinske, Cheryl L., to St. John, Westland, Mich.

Mundstock, Catherine, to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.

The Synod Administration Building will close: Nov. 26-27—Thanksgiving. Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888.

ANNIVERSARIES

Slinger, Wis.—St. Paul (125). Nov. 1. Services, 7:45 & 10:30 AM; potluck follows. RSVP for dinner, 414/644-8890.

Chesaning, Mich.—Zion (125). Nov. 1—anniversary finale. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. 517/845-3006.

Belle Plaine, Minn.—The Lutheran Home Association (100). Nov. 8. Worship, 2 PM at Trinity, 500 W Church St, Belle Plaine. Open house follows at The Lutheran Home campus. 612/873-2760.

Fond du Lac, Wis.—St. Peter (140). Nov. 15. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Lunch and activities at Holiday Inn. 920/921-8075.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Risen Savior (25). Nov. 22. Thanksgiving banquet & program. RSVP for meal tickets. 414/354-7320.

North Hollywood, Calif.—St. Paul (70). Nov. 22. Service, 9 AM. 818/761-1846.

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.

New Ulm, Minn.—St. John (50). Nov. 22. Services, 8, 9:30, and 11 AM. 507/354-6744.

West Chicago, Ill.—Hope (25). Nov. 22. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM; anniversary celebration service, 3 PM. Meal, 5:30 PM at American Legion Hall in Geneva. RSVP, 630/293-0756.

Racine, Wis.—First Evangelical (150). Feb. 14. Matrimony-theme service, 9:30 AM. Any couple married at First Evangelical may participate in a processional. Reception follows. March 28. Confirmation-theme services, 8 & 10:45 AM. Anyone confirmed at First Evangelical is invited. RSVP, 414/633-8267.

COMING EVENTS

Marriage conference—"The Two Shall Become One," Nov. 6-7, at Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Grand Rapids, Mich. \$45. Holy Trinity, 616/538-1122; <www.pavaleyrrer.com>

Women's retreat—Nov. 7. Trinity, Minoqua, Wis. Registration, 8:30 AM. Sue Bowman, 715/356-7542.

Concert—Lutheran Chorale. 3 & 7 PM, Nov. 29 at Atonement, Milwaukee.

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.

Band concert—3 PM, March 21, 1999, at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

National WELS handbell festival—April 10-11, 1999, at Wausau, Wis. Sunday concert, 2 PM. Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.

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.

SERVICE TIMES

Tucson, Ariz.—Winter visitors worship at Holy Cross, Eastside Tucson. Service, 9 AM; Sunday school & Bible class, 10 AM. 520/296-5129.

Manhattan, N.Y.—Sunday evening Bible study and worship. Christopher Orr, 718/721-8676.

AVAILABLE

Candelabras—for 5/8" circular "tube" candles. Robert Seifert, 509/962-8521.

Computer printer—Image writer printer free to a church or school for cost of shipping. Emory Steinke, 11796 N Eytcheson Rd, Hayward WI 54843; <sportcly@win.bright.net>

Organ—Lowrey tube organ, Model HR152579, excellent condition. Free to a church for cost of shipping. Jan Hoy, 414/377-7833.

Hymnboards—two 6-ft. hymnboards. Free for cost of shipping. Dorothy Custer, 414/782-8481.

Hymnals and Bibles—123 blue TLH and 34 black KJV Bibles. Dan Schoeffel, 1119 W Walnut, St. Charles MI 48655; 517/865-8087; <deschoeffel@juno.com>.

Paraments—red and purple altar paraments. Four pieces each color. Altar piece measures 30" wide by 34" long. 612/477-5981.

NEEDED

Candelabras—to fit standard size candles. Robert Seifert, 509/962-8521.

Candles—5/8" circular "tube" candles. Robert Seifert, 509/962-8521.

Bible study guide—*The Word Gives the Answer* by Harold E. Warnke. Need leader's and student's guide. Mark Vance, Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, FL; 904/278-9476; <golf@mediaone.net>

Commentary—R.C.H. Lenski's commentary on 1-2 Corinthians, and Col-Thess-Tim-Titus. Dr. Eric Vestrup, 630/724-9318.

Hymnals—TLH. Will pay for cost of shipping. Ascension (ELS), Eau Claire, Wis. 715/835-5507.

Catechisms—orange Gausewitz NIV catechisms, new or used. Will pay for shipping and handling. Faith, Dexter, Mich. 734/426-4302.

Worship supplies—offering plates, banners, paraments, candle holders, or other worship items. For Tree of Life exploratory, Cary, N.C. Michael Geiger, 919/363-7720.

NAMES WANTED

Corona, Calif.—for exploratory. Rick Johnson, 909/734-1625; <pasturick@aol.com>.

High school honors choir—for the National Conference on Music, Worship, & the Arts, Kenosha, Wis. July 18-21, 1999. Open to WELS and ELS students in their sophomore, junior, or senior year. Contact pastor or high school/prep school choir director for information. Deadline: Jan. 15, 1999. Peter Sordahl, 602/936-6764; <PASordahl@aol.com>

Southwest Broward County, Fla.—of people interested in starting a Bible study and mission congregation in the Pembroke Pines/Weston/Davie area. Jack or Barbara Meyer, 954/385-1788.

Cary, Apex, Morrisville, Holly Springs, Fuquay-Varina, N.C.—for Tree of Life exploratory, Cary, NC. Michael Geiger, 919/363-7720.

Ports Townsend, Hadlock, and Ludlow, Wash.—for Hope (ELS), Port Hadlock, Wash. 360/379-1721 or Glenn Obenberger, 253/537-5492.

SE Jacksonville, Fla.—for exploratory. Phil Hoyer, 904/821-9445; <jaxannephil@juno.com>.

Kodiak, Alaska—Worship & Sunday school available. Fred Voss, 907/345-6129; <fvoss@juno.com>.

Adult Honors Choir—for the National Conference on Worship, Music, & the Arts. Must be available July 17-19, 1999 for rehearsals and concerts. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.

For a weekly updated bulletin board, check out the WELS Web site <www.wels.net>.

The principal scriptural principle

Kenneth A. Cherney

Some time ago, I reacted with concern to a book that showed you how to use the Scriptures to help with your tax planning. Now I've heard a better one. There's a new weight-loss program that uses "Scriptural principles."

Puzzled, I asked our advanced Bible class where to look in Scripture for advice on weight control. "How about Psalm 34—'Taste and see that the Lord is good'?" one member suggested. "They probably stay away from Isaiah 55—'Eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare,'" someone else said.

Maybe the program is based on John the Baptist's locusts-and-honey diet (Mark 1:6). Maybe it warns you against emulating King Eglon, who was so fat that Ehud plunged a dagger into him—and nobody noticed (Judges 3:21-25).

Maybe, after the program, you'll be like those incredible metabolic dynamos: the seven lean cows of Pharaoh's dream. Each one ate an entire fat cow, by herself, without gaining an ounce (Genesis 41:3,4).

Please don't misunderstand. I hope you won't think that my members and I were taking an irreverent attitude toward the Holy Scriptures.

Quite the opposite. Our reverence for Scripture makes us wince when we see it being used in a particular way.

Perhaps you could call this use an "intentioned reading" of Scripture, for want of a better term. When I read the Scriptures this way, I have an agenda. I want to learn about weight loss. I want to learn about tax planning. I want "scriptural principles" that will help me at work in the gym, or at home. Bible study then becomes a matter of rummaging through

the Bible in search of these principles.

There are two problems here. First, the "principles" I'm searching for in Scripture may, or may not, be there.

And second: while I'm searching, I may overlook the real treasure that is there.

Few other books state their purpose as clearly or as often as the Scriptures. "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). "I write these things . . . so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). The Scriptures were written "to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Of course, the Bible's message of salvation through Christ makes a profound difference in how we live our lives. But the Bible wasn't written merely as a "how-to" guide for the here and now. To read it that way is to settle for much less than God, the Bible's author, wants to give you. It's like stuffing yourself with appetizers and passing up the main course, if you'll pardon the analogy.

At their worst, "intentioned readers" of the Scriptures approach them with lists of demands. "Listen up, Lord. Here's what's on my mind this week. What have you got to say about it?"

Instead, why not read the Scriptures to find out what God has on his mind?

Why not open them up today, with just this little request: "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10).

Ken Cherney is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

The Bible

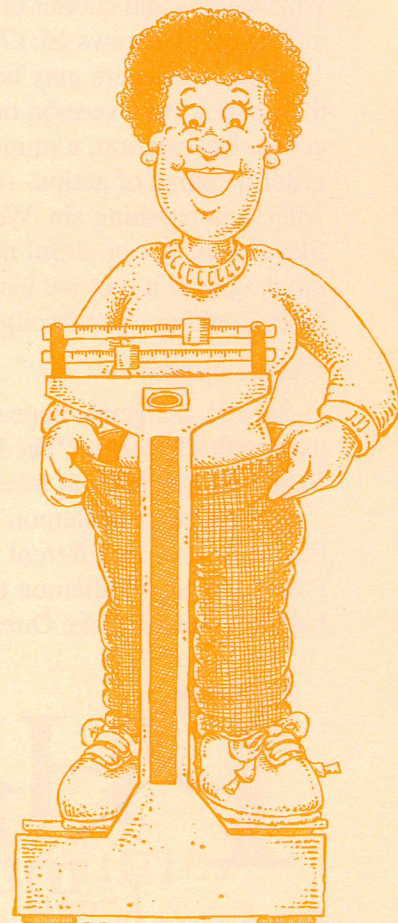
wasn't written

merely as a

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Intercession for a fellow believer

Intercession is important to Christian fellowship in a church.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

In Philemon 4-7, Paul laid the foundation stones for all fellowship in the church—faith and love. In verses 8-11 he puts into practice one vital feature of that fellowship—intercession for a fellow believer.

Bold approach

Paul identifies two approaches to intercession. First, the authoritative approach: **“Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do . . .”** (Philemon 8). As a called apostle and spiritual head, Paul could have told Philemon what to do. God gave him that right: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority” (Hebrews 13:17).

Today, ministers may be bold and demanding. In a sermon or private counseling session, a minister may order a course of action—especially when admonishing sin. We may not like to hear it, our sinful nature may rebel against it, but we view it as God speaking to us through him.

Gentle appeal

Second, the gentle appeal that Paul used with Philemon: **“Yet I appeal to you on the basis of love”** (v. 9).

Appealing to Philemon’s Christian love in different ways, Paul persuades Philemon to take back his former slave Onesimus:

- Paul first calls himself an old man. Perhaps 60, he was reaching the upper limits of life expectancy and deserves special consideration.

- Then, Paul says he is suffering for the sake of the gospel. Sympathy is a powerful motivator.

- He calls Onesimus his son. Philemon would respect anyone Paul called by such a tender name.

- He says that Onesimus’ conversion took place during his imprisonment. It would be unlikely for Paul to witness while in prison, but it happened to Onesimus—surely an act of God.

- Finally, Paul appeals on the basis of Onesimus’ name. Onesimus literally means “useful.” As a runaway slave, Onesimus hadn’t lived up to his name. Having become a Christian, he was now useful both to Paul as a helper, and even more to Philemon as a fellow believer.

Paul displayed wisdom by interceding to one brother on behalf of another using the gentle approach of love that Jesus’ followers possess.

Modern intercession

Intercession is important to fellowship in a church. Pastors intercede on behalf of members. Someone has been wronged—spouse, parent, teacher, children,

member—the plea is to forgive and treat the offending party with love.

Members intercede for other members to tolerate character flaws, forgive sins, and offer a second chance. They also intercede on behalf of their pastor to overlook his weaknesses and moments of indiscretion. Some may be reluctant to forgive and forget. But what a blessing to have someone on our side pleading our case. And how much better if the appeal is based on love rather than demands. Mature Christians like Philemon are more likely motivated by love.

Ultimately, the vital role that intercession plays in the church is to unify, as Paul wrote, “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

The highest form of intercession is appealing to our heavenly Father on behalf of fellow Christians—prayers of intercession in times of sickness, trouble, or spiritual turmoil. When this occurs, Christians model themselves after Christ. Jesus pleads our case before the Father. He asks him to meet our needs, forgive our sins, and help us reach heaven. This appeal persuades the Father because it is based on love—the Father’s love for his Son and his Son’s love for us.

Fredric Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.

Next: forgiveness

PHILEMON
family respect
intercession
love forgiveness
etherness

Calling all seniors to solve our

Walter F. Beckmann

When I first realized that the day was only a few years away, the idea seemed exciting and appealing. It was a source of comfort when I was discouraged and strength when I felt worn out. But the closer it came, the more I hoped it would always stay just in sight but never actually come within reach. I wasn't sure I was ready—or ever would be. I'm talking about retirement.

Many who had faced it said how traumatic it could be, especially when it's immediate and final. You're immersed in your work one day, and getting on your wife's nerves the next. Suddenly you have no responsibilities and nothing to do. Hobbies can be enjoyable, if they're a diversion, but can become frustrating if they're your reason for existing. Ordinarily, I would have made that adjustment last December when I celebrated my 65th birthday.

But these are not ordinary times in our synod. With about 80 pastoral vacancies, retired and semi-retired pastors can continue to serve the church and fill some crying needs. Since January, I've been serving our local congregation on a reduced schedule in a "social security call" and continuing as district president. To have retired completely would have created another vacancy at a time when we have far too many already.

Thankfully, many retired and semi-retired pastors are doing the same. Some have greatly benefited our North Atlantic District where pastoral vacancies are often in fields too remote to be served effectively by neighboring pastors. Thank you to the retirees who helped us serve vacancies we couldn't have served as well in any other way. I'm sure other district presidents have similar words of gratitude

for our senior brothers who responded to calls to serve. Appreciation also comes from the congregations who have been served by these men and their unique God-given gifts.

The thank yous also come from the retired pastors who enjoy these opportunities to serve the Lord and his church. One told me what joy he felt not only to serve during a vacancy but to confirm a class of six adults.

Recently, a questionnaire was sent to retired pastors asking if they could or would consider serving. If you weren't able to at the time, but now are, or if you feel that you offered but were overlooked, get in touch with your district president. Call him collect. If he doesn't need your services at the moment, some other district president will, or soon will. There's no end in sight for our current vacancy crisis.

But, let me also add that "calling all seniors" is not the long-term answer to our need. We seniors aren't getting any younger. The thin gray line can only be stretched so far. We need young men with the potential for about 40 years of service—and we're not getting enough of them. If you're such a person but are hesitant to consider the ministry as your lifelong calling, let me assure you—it's a good life. We veterans wouldn't welcome these opportunities if it weren't.

Walter F. Beckmann is pastor at Grace, Falls Church, Virginia.

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Who's who or what?

John F. Brug

I appreciated the recent articles on homosexuality, which show love and kindness for the homosexual. Is it possible that they are the same as the "eunuchs" that Christ referred to in Matthew 19:12? Could this explain why some are homosexuals?

The NIV translation is not so good here since it breaks down the parallelism of the three phrases. There are three groups here. Some became "eunuchs" by birth, some by the acts of men, and some by their own choice. Understanding the point of reference for the first two groups causes little difficulty. Some are born with a birth defect that leaves them unable to marry. Some are castrated by men.

It is the third group that causes discussion among commentators. Most believe this does not refer to literal castration (though one of the early teachers of the church, Origen, applied this to himself literally), but to voluntary renunciation of marriage (celibacy). This is the reason for the NIV translation. As a background read 1 Corinthians 7, which deals with refraining from marriage.

There is no indication that Jesus is referring to homosexuality here. Even if this is read into the passage, this explanation would not be satisfying to those who insist homosexuality is inborn, since it also lists the person's own choice and the actions of others as two causes. Inborn dispositions, the actions and influences of others, and the choices that a person makes may all play a role in

homosexuality, but this does not alter the fact that God's Word condemns it as sin.

One of my friends believes that Ezekiel 28:12b-17 is about Satan. I had never heard this interpretation before, nor had it occurred to me since the context says it's about the king of Tyre. Does Ezekiel 28:12b-17 address Satan or the king of Tyre?

Ezekiel 28 is part of the prophet's announcements of doom against foreign nations and foreign rulers who have been opposing and oppressing God's people. It is clear, therefore, that these verses are addressed to the king of Tyre.

It is common for Scripture to describe wicked rulers as being "in the image of Satan."

The verses, however, describe the king as a fallen angel who rebelled against God, language that is certainly based on the fall of Satan. The reason for using this image is that the king's sin was a repetition of the sin of Satan. Like Satan, the king was a created servant of God. His duty was to serve for the good of God's people. Instead, in his pride he set himself above God (Ezekiel 28:1-6) and worked to harm God's people. For this reason he will be subjected to God's eternal judgment.

It is common for Scripture to describe wicked rulers as being "in the image of Satan." Another

example is found in Isaiah 14:12 where the king of Babylon is called "the morning star, the son of the dawn" (in Latin, *Lucifer*), who has fallen from heaven. Consider also the beasts in Revelation 13, who are Satan's henchmen.

The interpretation of Ezekiel 28 as a literal description of Satan is closely associated with dispensational millennialism that teaches that God created another world before this one in which Satan lived in the Garden of Eden. When Satan's rebellion destroyed that first world, God created the second world in which Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden. The Bible knows of no such "first world." This world was created from nothing, not from the ruins of a previous one.


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

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

In his letter [Aug.], Gerhold Lemke contends that he “know(s) of nothing in the detailed realities of world geology that supports the ICR scenario.” He further suggests that a theory of “created fossils” be discussed within WELS instead.

The scientists of the Institute for Creation Research admit they are fallible. No theory can carry the authority of God’s infallible Word. This is why we reject evolution—it is not compatible with creation.

I contend that the theory of created fossils is equally incredible, given the testimony of Scripture. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights, and “the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered” and “all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died” (Genesis 7:19,22 NASB). It is inconceivable that such large quantities of moving water and sediment, combined with the simultaneous death of millions of creatures, would not produce fossils. If fossils were instantaneously created, are we to say that God made all the animals entombed under the sediment disappear? It seems more likely that God left these fossils as a testimony to his awesome power.


 *Joel F. Kluender
Shakopee, Minnesota*

I have a concern regarding “It was only a Nintendo game” [Aug.].

Linda Reed gave examples of addictions and wrote: “Most of these started innocently. . . . An afternoon at the casino or the dog track may seem okay if it’s handled appropriately.”

Unfortunately, Satan uses things that seem harmless to deter us from the work God put us here to do. How does one handle an outing to a casino or dog track “appropriately?” In what way do such activities “seem harmless?”

My parents are lifelong WELS members. They are retired on a very limited income. Yet, they are gambling addicts. It does them no good when they see WELS pastors, teachers, and members at casinos. They do their members more harm by indulging in [such] activities.

 *Name withheld*

“Concern for the city” [Sept.] needs a more balanced approach.

While it is true many city churches have less members than in the past, it is also true that many cities are losing population—especially inner city areas. In Toledo there are many houses around the churches, but fewer people in those same houses than 40 years ago. People—both black and white—are moving to the suburbs. It is expected that most new churches are being started there.


Also it is not fair to compare liturgical conservatives with the Judaizers of Acts 15. They were not conservatives—they were unbelievers. While there is nothing wrong with using hymns and songs that did not originate among Lutherans, it is to choose form over substance to allow hymns that are man-centered, unscriptural, or revivalistic.

*Ken Engdahl
Toledo, Ohio*

A word of thanks. It has to have been one of the best articles I’ve seen in recent issues. Mark Jeske’s “Concern for the city” was written with style and grace, capturing the interest and then convincing the

spirit of the validity of and need for urban outreach. He could have scolded, but he didn’t. He could have been sarcastic and wry, but his point was too important, too real. He did not cheapen it, but challenged in an ambiance of friendly professionalism.

This reader wouldn’t mind seeing more from that author. God might have some good things to say through him.

*Chris Cordes
 Bogota, Colombia, S.A.*

Through my Bible in 3 years

December 1998

1. 1 Corinthians 5, 6
2. 1 Corinthians 7
3. 1 Corinthians 8, 9
4. 1 Corinthians 10:1–11:1
5. 1 Corinthians 11:2-34
6. 1 Corinthians 12
7. 1 Corinthians 13
8. 1 Corinthians 14
9. 1 Corinthians 15:1-34
10. 1 Corinthians 15:35-58
11. 1 Corinthians 16
12. Psalm 30
13. Psalm 31
14. Psalm 32
15. Psalm 33
16. Psalm 34
17. Psalm 35
18. Psalm 36
19. Psalm 37:1-20
20. Psalm 37:21-40
21. Psalm 38
22. Psalm 39
23. Psalm 40:1-10
24. Psalm 40:11-17
25. Psalm 41
26. 2 Corinthians 1:1-11
27. 2 Corinthians 1:12-22
28. 2 Corinthians 1:23–2:17
29. 2 Corinthians 3:1–4:6
30. 2 Corinthians 4:7–5:10
31. 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:10



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

Only God can still the storm

The old woman shuffled along between two younger family members. They carried blankets and some food. Two children skipped along behind. The set jaws and the empty eyes of the adults said it all. Another 10,000 like them were descending on the Superdome in New Orleans to escape the fury of Hurricane Georges. Depending on the direction and fury of the storm, no one knew whether they'd have a home to return to after the storm passed.

Me? My conference was canceled, but I couldn't get out of the city. Not to worry! We were in one of the safest buildings in New Orleans, across from the Superdome. At 6 PM they ushered us into two large rooms—some thousand or more of us with our pillows and blankets. They fed us dinner as we hunkered down to weather the worst.

Three hours later, when it was clear that we would be spared the worst of the storm, we were allowed to return to our rooms.

Now (the next day as I write), the blustery winds and horizontal rain continue to assault our hotel, and I'm left to ponder God's ways in all this.

One thing is sure. God has his way. Clearly, the authorities in New Orleans were well-prepared for this emergency. All the fail-safe mechanisms and emergency teams were in place. Plywood was pounded into place over windows everywhere, and sandbags plugged vulnerable door-sills. Still, as the big blow approached, everyone waited, helpless before the forces of wind, rain, and tide.

Only God could still the storm—or redirect it.

A few degrees north and tenths of a degree east is all it took to avoid

disaster—"the doom's day hurricane" the locals call it—with the eye of the storm moving up the mouth of the Mississippi River. Still, the human drama was to play itself out. The people around us in the "hurricane" room spoke mostly about personal inconveniences: canceled conferences, disrupted vacations, how tough it would be to sleep if we had to stay there. Yes, I was guilty too. But it was all very shallow.

How many, I wondered, had prayed for our safety? How many said, "Thank you, Lord"? How many were calm in the face of the storm because of the Lord Jesus?

Only the Lord can still the storm.

And what about the empty eyes in the Superdome? Some of them, too, had trouble looking past immediate self interests. They complained that they weren't fed well enough during the emergency. (They had been warned to bring their own food.) Some tried to loot the place (bar stools, couches, etc.) when the "all clear" was given to leave the next day, and some (not nearly as many as feared) would return to major wind and flood damage at their homes.

Still, they are all souls like us, paid for by the Savior. We have no lasting home here, but he's prepared an eternal home for us. We complain now, but he never complained on his way to the cross for us. We sin now (maybe we've stolen?), but he never sinned, so his pure life could be counted for us.

Only the Savior can still the storm.

Did all those people know that?

Are we doing enough to tell them?

Gary P. Baumler

We complain
now, but
Jesus never
complained on
his way to the
cross for us.

*pastors... elementary, high school, and college teachers...
worship committee members... interested lay people...
organists... choir directors: plan now to attend –*

The National Conference on

Worship, Music, & the Arts

July 18-21, 1999

**The conference is presented by the WELS Commission on
Worship at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin**

WORSHIP with 1000 other WELS Christians...

SING in choirs and join instrumental ensembles...

ATTEND workshops and presentations...

POLISH SKILLS and gain new perspectives...

RENEW old friendships and make new acquaintances...

FIND NEW MUSIC for organ, choirs, bells,
and instruments...

VISIT displays by music and worship vendors...

Interested? Watch for registration information in early spring. Call the WELS Commission on Worship at 414-256-3226, email us at: worship@sab.wels.net, or look for more information at www.wels.net/sab/frm-cow.html

Chain reaction

Steven G. Stern



We need to start our own chain reaction of sharing Jesus with everyone we meet.

In winter 1997, storm after storm swept across eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota. In April the snow began to melt, and heavy rains followed.

This double whammy set up a chain reaction, just like a row of dominos going down, that sent the Red River to record heights, causing immense damage.

These days, not only mammoth spring floods bring to mind the term chain reaction. We see young people dropping out of high school, getting pregnant, doing drugs, and joining gangs—a chain reaction. As families disintegrate, as neighbors stop caring for each other, as children are lost in the shuffle, a chain reaction is set in motion. One domino knocks down the next, destroying individuals and communities.

We often talk about the state of our society. We worry that this chain reaction cannot be reversed. Like homeowners watching their houses ruined by rising waters, we feel we can do nothing but watch our society crumble.

My experience, though, is that chain reactions go in both directions. One day after my Bible class at the county jail, a young Hispanic man approached me.

“I want to talk to you alone,” Roberto said. As we sat in a counseling room, he told me his life was a disaster. Gang involvement, drug dealing, and drug usage had ravaged his body, his mind, and his spirit. Sitting in jail, he thought about these things and wondered if he could turn his life around.

As he spoke, Roberto looked at me and said, “I want to know about God.” So we talked about what had gone wrong. We talked about God’s forgiveness in Christ and the exchange whereby Jesus took our sins and gave us his life.

After a number of weeks, Roberto asked to be baptized.

A few weeks later, I received a letter from a mother who asked me to see her son, Juan, at the jail. Her son had gotten my name from Roberto.

On my next visit, I stopped to see Juan. We sat down with Roberto, and I realized that a chain reaction had started. As Andrew had sought out his brother Peter, and Philip talked to Nathanael, one jail inmate said to another, “Come and see.”

What made this chain reaction remarkable is that these young men were from rival Hispanic gangs. Juan had been part of a shooting that involved Roberto’s gang buddies. Revenge should have been on their

minds. They should have become bitter enemies and fought and hurled insults at each other. Instead they sat together looking at Scripture and its message of peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope.

How far will this chain reaction go? Will these young men carry what they have found back to other members of their gangs? Will they carry the love of Jesus to the young boys who look to them as role models? Could these chain reactions reverse the disintegration of neighborhoods and cities?

Who can say if such things are possible? Meanwhile, isn’t it encouraging to see that Jesus’ love is powerful enough to change the hardest of hearts?

To the tough and hardened fishermen of his day, Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth.” They then went out and set in motion a chain reaction that revolutionized the world.

It’s time we stop talking about the chain reaction of destruction around us and start being a part of the chain reaction that passes the love of Jesus from one person to the next.

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