

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

January 1999

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



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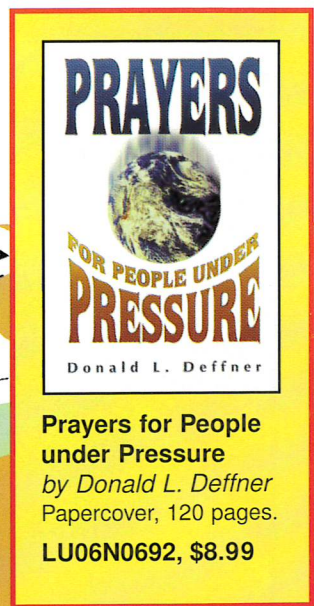
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You can see Jesus

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Matthew 14:30

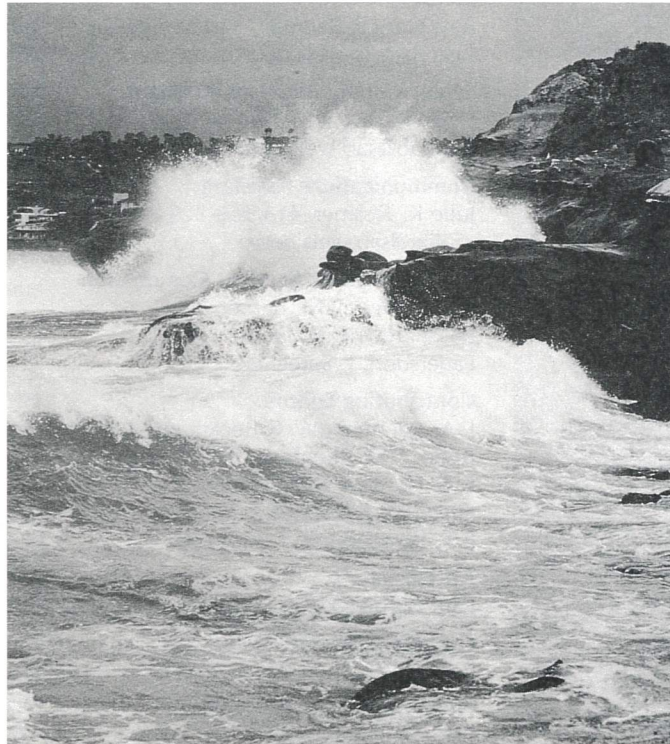
Eric S. Hartzell

Peter did something impossible. He saw the wind. It was dark that night. It was storming. You can't see the wind anyway. But he saw it all right. Even if you feel he was just reacting to the results of the wind—the white-caps, the foam, the spray—he saw something impossible to see.

See the wind

It isn't possible to see something stronger than our God. But Peter saw a power he thought was stronger. It was the wind, and he was afraid and began to sink. Peter believed that walking on the water was impossible, and even with the Creator of the wind inviting him to walk, he sank. He thought he saw a Savior who could callously allow him to sink and drown. No believer has ever seen Jesus abandon him in a storm. But in his fear and lack of faith, Peter saw impossible things. He saw the wind.

At first, Peter saw Jesus as a ghost. That is like seeing the wind too. "When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear." Jesus isn't a ghost. You can't see him that way. He isn't just the figment of someone's imagination. He isn't a phan-



asma of dark and stormy nights. Those who see Jesus this way see something that is impossible to see.

See the Savior

There are much better things for you and me to see on stormy nights than the wind. When no one else is around who cares or knows, see Jesus coming to you in that fourth watch of the night. See him knowing where you are in the darkest part of your stormy lake. See him caring enough to come to you and help you with his presence and with his voice. Just see him close and coming closer. Don't let the apparition of the wind block out the appearance of the Savior. Watch the

Savior, and don't see the wind.

Jesus points out that seeing the wind has something to do with not seeing him. He caught Peter by the hand that night and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Another definition of faith is that, whatever the situation, we see Jesus and not the wind. You can be certain that Jesus—especially when he is striding across the impossible waves of your life—is stronger than the wind, whatever that wind might blow up or be.

What took place when Peter saw the wind and began to sink is not just some strange event that happened to a Hebrew fisherman long ago. Seeing the wind is something that all believers in an unseen Christ deal with . . . often. It isn't hard for us to try the impossible and see the wind. Storms come and the wind blows, but faith strains in the storm to see the Savior. And he can be seen still, walking on the waves.

NL

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



- × Remember as a teen when every adult said: "When I was your age . . ."? Then they'd list how hard things were "back then." Two authors explore how things are actually harder today—and how teens and families can use your help. See "How you can parent your teen" (p. 6) and "The church is in trouble" (p. 29).
- × Epiphany is often overlooked. After all, once Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's are over, you're tired! However, Tom Kuster, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, will give you a fresh perspective on why Epiphany is such a wonderful time of the church year. (p. 8)
- × Too often when people say "the synod," they mean "the office in Milwaukee." That's not accurate. The synod is you and the members of every WELS church and mission. To remind you that you are important and that your church is where the real work takes place, we have a new series: "WELS in action." We'll feature churches around the United States and Canada. Don't miss it. (p. 12)
- × You are part of Christ's body, and God has a special role for you as a spiritual leader. Learn more about the characteristics of spiritual leaders in Paul Kelm's new series. (p. 10)
- × In a new series on stewardship, we'll expand on the typical time, talents, treasures aspects. You'll learn how stewardship affects every aspect of your life.

—LRB

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HOW YOU CAN parent your teen

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from God. He gives the main responsibility and privilege for Christian nurture to parents. God designed the home to teach identity, values, and skills. Parents are God's primary agents for nurturing children.

Being a parent requires commitment and effort.

So how are things going? What's happening with youth and families in WELS congregations? Some studies estimate that less than one-third of our students who are active Christians in grade school will still be active when they reach their twenties. WELS churches appear to be losing about two-thirds of their kids during and after high school. I am not sure where Christian families are headed, but I think we're not going to like it when we get there. Consider the contributing indicators.

- About five percent of our WELS homes have daily Bible study or devotions.
- Six percent of WELS teenagers attend some type of formal Bible study at church.
- Forty-two percent of WELS congregations offer teen Bible classes.
- Forty-five percent of WELS members attend church on Sunday.
- Fourteen percent of adult members attend formal Bible study.

What teens need from parents

It would be nice if parenting could be simpler. I earnestly wish

Twenty years ago, being a father seemed rather easy—challenging, but not terribly complicated. Fairly regular devotions, rules about finishing broccoli before dessert, lots of wrestling on the living room floor, an occasional spanking for infractions of established boundaries, some good family outings, and a weary, but noble, patience seemed quite enough.

What teens face

But in 20 years the stakes have risen considerably. Misbehavior then meant a messy room or perhaps a tantrum. The decisions parents must make today seem much more complex. Now it may involve drug abuse, anorexia, or a lifetime of rejecting God.

No matter what has changed, though, children are still a blessing

that all I had to do to get my kids to turn out well was to pray before meals, bring home a paycheck, and never miss church on Sunday.

But sin has ruined everything. We live in a fallen world. Parenting isn't something that can be solved by simple formulas. Any honest parent knows that being a parent requires commitment and effort. What seems to be at the heart of parenting struggles is having the knowledge and understanding to do what will have the greatest impact on kids.

Teenagers need their parents to . . .

○ **love the Lord and his Word.** What youth need the most is for mom and dad to be in church, to attend Bible class, to participate in the Lord's Supper, to read their Bibles, to pray out loud, and to use God's Word in their homes. When parents break the silence and initiate conversation about spiritual matters and share the truths of God's Word with their family, then you can look forward to youth who are spiritually fit.

○ **love unconditionally.** It's not what they accomplish that makes them significant. Nor should our love be dealt out only when children obey. Look to God the Father for the ultimate example. He doesn't see us for what we are. Rather, he sees what his Son has done for us.

○ **act like adults.** Teenagers don't need another buddy who dresses and acts just like them. Be someone who models and instructs how a Christian thinks and acts.

Sometimes that means having the courage to say "no."

○ **love each other.** How can your children know that you love each other? Show them. There is a difference in being in love with your mate and showing love. Someone once said that it takes four or five hugs a day just to exist, seven or eight for maintenance, and 10 for growth.

○ **give them time.** "Quality time" is a myth. The real time that counts is quantity. Teaching and training takes time and commitment. The teachable moment seldom occurs twice.

○ **get to know them.** What are their struggles? How do they see themselves? Do they have a foundation for making godly decisions? Who are their friends? Knowing your child's friends can be an important window to your child.

○ **communicate with them.** That means listening and instructing. It's all right to disagree and discuss. The key is to keep the channels of communication open so that you can reach their heads and hearts.

○ **help them find their talents and gifts.** Not everyone can do everything well. Avoid pressuring teens to do the things you did or couldn't do when you were young. Each youth is a precious and unique gift from the Lord.

○ **pray for them.** Make it the real thing, not wishful thinking. Pray for them daily and frequently. They need your prayers. God does not ignore the prayers of his people.

What if you are a single parent? The needs are the same. But there are extra challenges:

- ✦ **Stay close to the Lord** by regularly attending church and Bible class. Conduct home devotions.
- ✦ **Pray with and for your teenager.** Let your teens see that you trust the Lord to handle your problems and that there is reason for your hope.
- ✦ **Never put down the other parent** in front of your teen. This creates resentment and is counterproductive for everyone involved.
- ✦ **Give your teen both time and love.** One-parent families have even less time than two-parent homes. This precious commodity means the most to young people as they grow up.

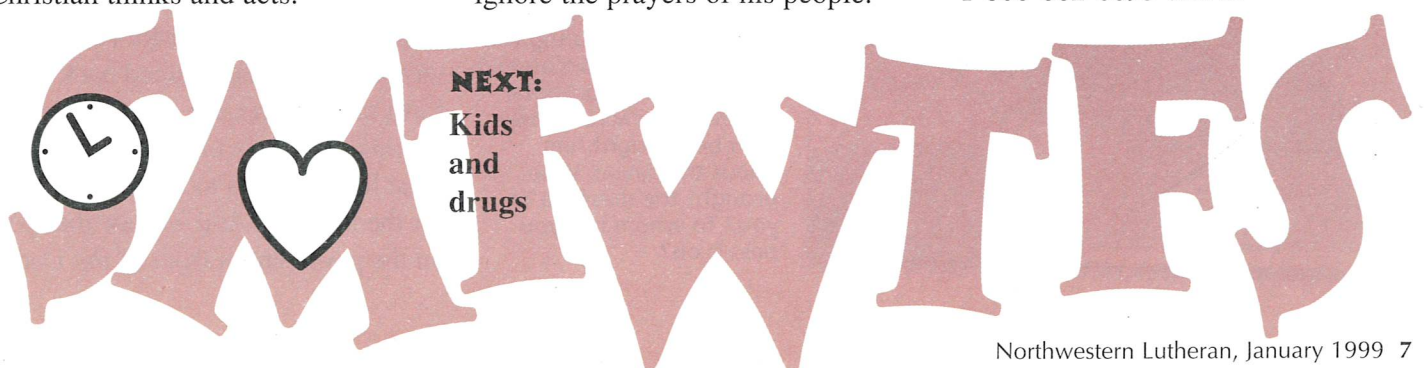
Focus on the main thing

Undergirding all of our efforts is a caring God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Everything your family needs is available from the Father. He does not cast us off for our failures. Rather, he is gracious and faithful to his promises. His Word and sacraments alone can strengthen our faith and give us the resolve to provide the kind of parenting that teenagers need.

NL

Jerry Kastens is the administrator of the Commission on Youth Discipleship.

For more coverage of parenting issues, subscribe to *Lutheran Parent*, 1-800-662-6093 ext. 8.



Your epiphany bough: where was its stem?

Every year, the church publicly celebrates the Epiphany to the Wise Men. But each of us can privately celebrate our own personal epiphany, as we thank God for the people who shared the gospel with us. Thomas Kuster

The flashing red and blue lights startled me as the squad car pulled up just ahead of where I had parked on a busy Chicago street. The officer emerged and walked toward me. As I stood with camera in hand, I spoke first: "Am I illegally parked?"

She answered with a more basic question: "What are you doing in this part of town?"

I explained that I was taking pictures of the school building across the street. In that civil but authoritative tone of a seasoned law officer, she told me: on this street, within two minutes, someone like me would be lying on the ground and my camera would be gone. "Go ahead and take your pictures," she said, "but

I'm going to stay here until you're done." And there she stood, with her hand on her side arm.

Embarrassed by my naiveté, I thanked her, snapped one more quick shot aimed at nothing in particular, hustled to my car, and drove off.

What were we doing in that part of town? We were tracking my personal epiphany.

Searching the past

Three others were with me: my father, A.V. Kuster; his wife, Veta; and my wife, Judy. Dad had been born in this part of Chicago 87 years ago, and hadn't been back to visit since he left to attend the seminary in the early '30s. Since then he had been a pastor for many years in Canada,

Iowa, Indiana, and Wisconsin. We were on a three-day trip last August, to explore the places of his youth.

Explore your own personal epiphany branch.

Embarrassing brushes with the law aside, it was a marvelous trip. We got to see the locations where his great-grandparents and grandparents settled. (No landmarks from that generation are left today.) We saw the home where his family lived when he was brought home from the hospital, and another house in which he grew up, with his bedroom window overlooking the street where they played ball. We found the third home where the family moved to be nearer their church, and the church in which, after a confirmation class, his pastor had first suggested he become a pastor (he replied with a quick and emphatic "No!"). We took pictures of the sidewalk in front of the pastor's house where later he had walked back and forth many times one evening, trying to work out a way of asking the pastor what he should do to begin studying for the ministry. And we saw the spot on the pavement in front of my Dad's



The author's father and his parents in their early auto. Recently the author, along with his parents, explored some of the places of his father's youth. During this trip, the author discovered more about his personal epiphany, how his family members taught him about the Savior. Who brought the message to you? To whom can you pass it on?

house where the pastor engaged Dad's father in a tense discussion, finally convincing him to give his blessing to these new vocational plans of his son, who was watching the entire exchange from the window.

It was a rich experience for us all. In particular, it bolstered my appreciation of the way God's grace found its way to me. It was an exploration of my own epiphany.

Tracing our roots

The word "epiphany" refers to a revelation, a presentation of the divine to a new audience. The Church celebrates the Epiphany season in the weeks after Christmas, starting by remembering the star that revealed to the Wise Men that the Savior had been born. Their visit to the Christ Child established a strong Epiphany theme—that this child is the Savior not only of the Jews but also of Gentiles.

Another Bible text often heard at Epiphany is Jesus' parable of the mustard seed, where he compared his kingdom to this tiny seed, which becomes a huge tree. The growth and spread of that kingdom-tree throughout the ages is the story of a series of epiphanies. As God's Word and sacraments were presented to one new audience after another, the Holy Spirit worked an epiphany in one heart after another, and finally came to you and me. My father and mother brought God's Word to me—who brought it to them?

The Bible describes the earliest of these spreading boughs of epiphanies. Of others we read in history. The most recent branches we have to trace by ourselves, as we did in Chicago.

In Acts we read of an early offshoot, when the apostle Paul was

called to leave Asia Minor and preach in Troas. That was an important moment: it was the first stretch of the gospel from Asia to Europe. The mustard tree was growing.

In AD 718 a young man named Boniface decided his calling was to leave his native England and preach the gospel in Germany. Through his work the Word spread into central Europe, where the Reformation would begin. The limbs of the mustard tree were spreading.

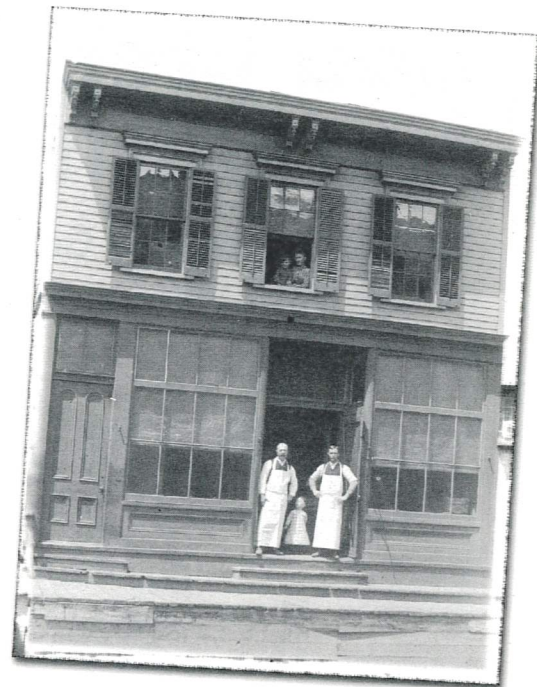
We in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod find another epiphany twig in Harold Bluetooth, the first Christian king in Denmark. His conversion opened the door to the gospel in Scandinavia. Through him a branch of the mustard tree spread to the north.

In Chicago I learned a new appreciation for my Grandmother Kuster. She knew the difference between the teaching of the non-denominational church conveniently located a block from home and the Lutheran church over a mile away. Both pastors were recruiting my Dad. She knew the difference and guided him, despite the inconvenience, to the Lutheran church.

The graves, too, provide testimony of that epiphany bough. Grandma Kuster's maiden name was Langosch. As I grew up, I knew only a few of them, all as old people. We found their graves in Chicago—in a Lutheran cemetery. Grandma's mother (nee Taube) had all her children instructed and confirmed in the Lutheran church. That's why Grandma knew the difference. This mustard tree branch was very personal to me.

Passing it on

In church again this year, we celebrate publicly together the



The author's great-grandparents at their Chicago butcher shop. His great-grandmother had all her children instructed and confirmed in the Lutheran church. The beliefs were passed down to future generations.

Epiphany to the Wise Men. Other epiphany events, the more personal ones, we thank God for privately. Each generation provides an epiphany to the next, passing the news of how our Savior rescued us from sin and death, restored us to God, and assured us of a blessed life now and in eternity. It's a worthy act of praise to explore your own personal epiphany branch, and that of your family. Look back! Talk to those who remember. Who brought God's Word to you? And who brought it to them?

And then look ahead. Who in the future will look back, and find you to be, by God's grace, the offshoot that grew into their epiphany bough?

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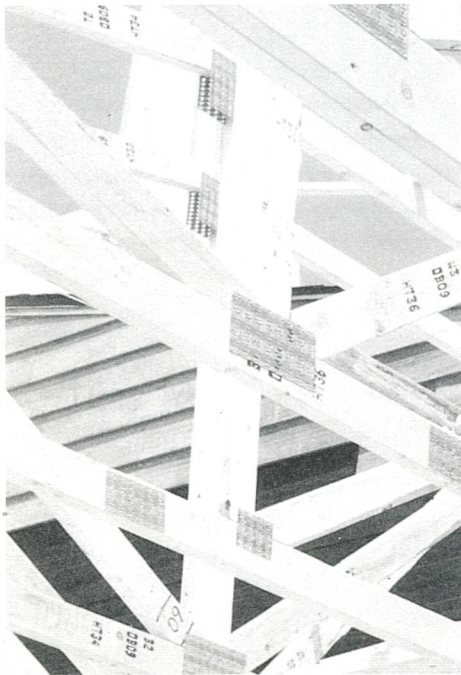
Tom Kuster, is a professor at Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minnesota.



God prepares leaders and positions them

The size of the role God has for you isn't as important as the fact that he has sized you for that role.

Paul E. Kelm



the restoration of a remnant in Jerusalem, and rekindled the people's hope for the Messiah's coming. As Isaiah had foretold, God ended the 70-year captivity with the edict of Cyrus the Great that allowed the people of promise to return to their homeland. Some did return and, at the direction of Ezra and Haggai, rebuilt the temple to at least a semblance of its former grandeur.

But Jerusalem remained an underpopulated village in the Judean backwater of the Persian empire. Crumbled walls and untended vegetation mocked the glorious past of this city of God. A disorganized and dispirited populace mirrored the sorry state of their city.

Nehemiah was one of many described by the term *diaspora*—"Jews" they were now called—who had elected to remain in their adopted homes throughout the empire. Some, like Nehemiah, had become successful in the Persian economy while retaining their distinctive faith and heritage. Nehemiah was in civil service, as far up as someone whose bloodlines were wrong could go. He had the emperor's ear.

But Nehemiah's heart was still with the people God had chosen to bear his promise, in the land given to Nehemiah's ancestors as the tangible evidence of that promise. One day Nehemiah heard this report from a

brother who had returned to Jerusalem: "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire" (Nehemiah 1:3). Moved by this news and the faith that defined him, Nehemiah became a spiritual leader, and a model for our generation of spiritual leaders.

God prepared you

Like Nehemiah, spiritual leaders have been prepared by God. Their faith has been matured and their character shaped by his Word. Their gifts have been refined by education and experience. Their perspective



Nehemiah may be the best model of spiritual leadership that Scripture provides. Perhaps you remember his story.

God prepared Nehemiah

Jerusalem had been systematically reduced to rubble by Nebuchadnezzar a century and a half earlier. All but the socially insignificant had been forcibly relocated from Judah in a series of deportations, first as hostages and later as mere refugees. God's people were learning the hard way how serious the sin of idolatry is.

But God hadn't abandoned his chosen people. Prophets like Ezekiel called them to repentance, promised

has been broadened with important insights, and their passion for at least one area of the Lord's mission has been kindled. They recognize opportunities, and they are not daunted by challenges.

God will somehow turn even sins and mess-ups into blessings that develop your ability to serve him.

Like Nehemiah, spiritual leaders have been positioned by God. Their careers present opportunities for witness, open doors for the mission of the church, and provide resources for the work of the church. They may be in politics or business or education or a profession. Because of their roles outside the church, they see possibilities for the church. Read Nehemiah 1 and 2. Spiritual leaders may have been positioned in the church by call or election or appointment. Then again, like Nehemiah, spiritual leaders may simply step forward and offer their service.

Are you thinking "I'm not a leader"? Think again. Leaders are servants. So if you serve by working with youth, music, evangelism, developmentally disabled, Bible studies, or outreach events, you are a leader. And there's a magazine for you. *Lutheran Leader* is published four times a year by the Board for Parish Services and Northwestern Publishing House. Contact *Lutheran Leader*, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226; 1-800-662-6093 ext. 8 or 475-6600 ext. 5 (Milwaukee area).



Your life is not a random series of events leading to nothing more significant than an early-as-possible retirement. God has been preparing you while he has been employing you. Just as St. Paul promised in Romans 8, God will somehow turn even sins and mess-ups into blessings that develop your ability to serve him. The size of the role he has for you isn't as important as the fact that he has sized you for that role. Whether you are a vocal stimulus or a quiet catalyst, God designed the leadership role he has in mind for you.

Will you recognize it?

You can make a difference

Nehemiah could not accept what had become of the city of God. Maybe the people living there could coexist peacefully with the compromise. No doubt, they had wrung their hands at the decline, looked for someone to blame for the demise. But they had learned to become comfortable with the way things were. Nehemiah couldn't accept what shouldn't be.

Spiritual leaders never will.

Maybe you belong to a church whose face needs lifting, a congregation convinced that its best days lie in the past. Maybe you refuse to accept that post-confirmation dropout is "just the way it is" or that getting 50 percent of your members to worship on a weekend is a success. Maybe you're tired of hearing about how difficult evangelism is in this post-Christian culture and how the young seem to lack the values of previous generations. And maybe you believe that God's Word works and his promises are still valid, that he hasn't downsized his expectations or amended his mission. Maybe you believe the church can be more effective and efficient, that God's people want to grow and serve, and that you have been prepared and positioned by God to make a difference.

Maybe, like Nehemiah, you are a spiritual leader.

NL

Paul Kelm is a parish consultant for the Parish Assistance Office.

These future articles will explore Nehemiah's example.

- ✓ Spiritual leaders are characterized by Word and prayer.
- ✓ Spiritual leaders have a passion for God's purpose and a vision for the future.
- ✓ Spiritual leaders assess contemporary reality realistically.
- ✓ Spiritual leaders build plans around people.
- ✓ Spiritual leaders anticipate and confront obstacles.
- ✓ Spiritual leaders celebrate God's blessings.

Salem's GRAND BUFFET

Each ministry at Salem that addresses a specific need in the neighborhood provides a link with the Word of God.

John Hoh

Salem on Milwaukee's East Side has some clear links with Jerusalem, where our Savior became the sacrifice for our sins. Both names are derived from "Shalom"—the Hebrew word for "peace."

Despite that, both have seen days of trouble—Jerusalem as the prize in frequent wars, and Salem through the population move from the city, times of dissension, and a scarcity of financial resources. There's a more important link—the saving blood of Jesus Christ, poured out on

a cross at Jerusalem and still cleansing souls at Salem.

As with many WELS congregations, Salem's challenge since its founding in 1889 remains the same—discovering troubled souls, knowing their needs, and finding ways to serve those souls with God's law and gospel.

A varied neighborhood

At a fellowship celebration, the circuit pastor observed that attendees represented several populations that might seem nontraditional in WELS. Salem has thrown open its doors and welcomed the East Side—a community that defies categorizing—to find Jesus. Those people include the housebound, members of several ethnic groups, college students, career singles, the retired, children and teens, people recovering from alcoholism and addiction, the homeless, people just released from jail, and souls struggling with depression and other disorders.

If the gospel is living bread for the soul, Salem's approach to serving may be described as a grand buffet. Each ministry that addresses a specific need among our neighbors provides a link with the Word of God and an opportunity to confront sin with the law and to heal with the gospel.

A varied ministry

And Salem's ministries "feed" one another.

Salem's busy community pantry provides many opportunities for Christ-centered counsel. New members, Art and Pat Wofgram and Warren Kahn, have taken charge of the pantry program. Kahn said that "because of W-2 [a Wisconsin back-to-work welfare program], the food pantry now serves 80 people a month. Many do not have access to food stamps. Other East Side organizations take care of their members only once a month. Salem serves the general public. Many of these people now attend church, Grace Oasis, or Narcotics Anonymous."

Art adds, "[The food pantry] started with nine people a week. Now, over 40 people come on a Friday night."

Those who use the pantry may begin participating in children's programs, in worship, or in Grace Oasis. Neighborhood children and parents are always seeking Christ-centered activities to fill the gaps in community programs. Since Salem has no school, the congregation serves children and teens with the gospel in other ways. These include the traditional weeklong vacation Bible school (VBS) in June, served by a corps of youth volunteers; an After-School club; an extended VBS in July and August; and Kid's Oasis, a Friday night open house for children. The youth volunteers also provide staffing and support for the Inner City VBS program that

Salem

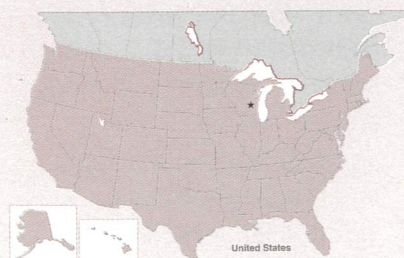
Founded: 1889

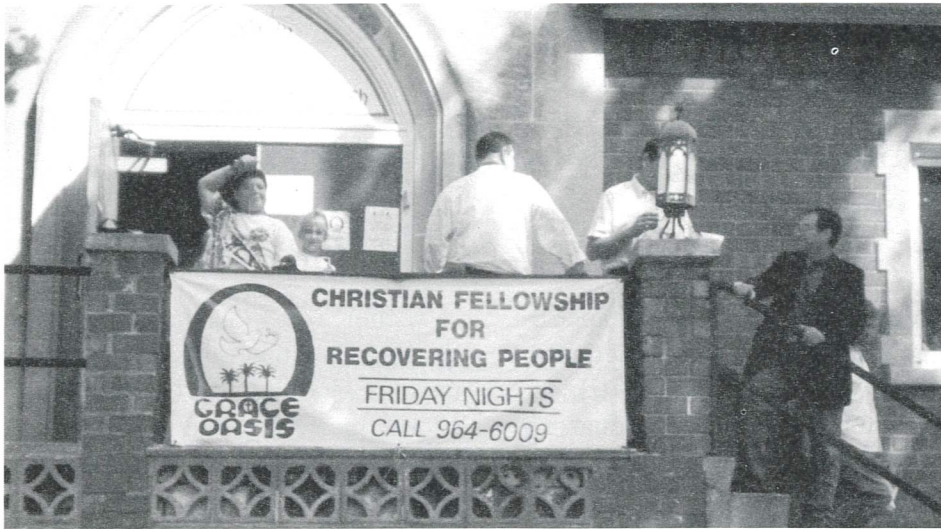
Communicants: 137

Baptized: 188

Staff: Pastor James Sonnemann, Pastor Phil Merten (Grace Oasis; Institutional ministries chaplain), Bill Ritchie, seminary assistant for evangelism, Mary Schroeder, Salem after-school club director

Location: 2400 N Cramer St, Milwaukee WI 53211; 414/964-7036; FAX 414/964-5871; Web site <<http://www.hows.net/53211SELCS&>>





At Salem, Milwaukee, the congregation uses God's law and gospel to reach people and change their lives.

includes 10 WELS congregations. Salem also assists in the Milwaukee-area campus ministry.

Some neighborhood teens have found Salem to be a convenient place to fulfill court-mandated community service hours to atone for minor offenses. They are often receptive to talk about Jesus, and many return regularly for worship with friends. Jim Sonnemann, pastor at Salem, has begun a teen Bible class for those who requested baptism and confirmation.

But Salem doesn't just serve children. They also reach out to adults. Kid's Oasis started as a spin-off of the three-year-old Grace Oasis program. Grace Oasis serves people who are in recovery and distress with an open-house format on Friday nights. This program has grown from five to 30 visitors per Friday. These programs have brought new members to the congregation through adult membership classes, which are taught during the week. Several new members have become active with Grace Oasis by providing snacks, crafts, and a friendly face and listening ear.

A trained therapist has lead another support program on Wednesday evenings. This support group applies the 12-step program to people in any type of recovery and is based on God's Word.

Women form a strong, congregation-wide sorority, drawn together by their common love for Jesus. Women's ministries include a weekly Bible study for women and by women.

Volunteer deaconess, Doris Jens, helps with hospice work. She cares for special needs and shares God's Word and prayer. "I visit regularly to make sure their needs are met, whether meeting with the nursing staff, reading their mail for them, sewing on buttons, doing laundry, reading Scripture to them, or saying a prayer," said Jens. "Sometimes it's hard. You don't want to go through another funeral. Just knowing there's a better place waiting keeps me going, I guess."

A family in Christ

Newcomers, finding a warm and friendly congregation of believers at the corner of Cramer and Thomas, soon are part of a

large family in Christ. As Virginia Woelky says: "As newcomers to Salem, we are very enlightened by the pastors of the church and also are happy to be in the fellowship of our congregation. We humbly say, 'Thank God for such a wonderful, wonderful place.'"

"The Holy Spirit is at work through the gospel," says Pastor Jim Sonnemann. "The God-given openness of the congregation and the creative ways our members have found to make the gospel available are bearing fruit. In one year, we have grown from 119 to 137 communicants. Interest in Bible study and hands-on participation in ministry are increasing. God has allowed a small congregation with limited resources to reach a large number of people with the gospel."

He continues, "One great concern that people have is whether God will restore their lives. We're privileged to see slow but very steady growth as God conforms lives to the pattern of Jesus."

Salem, like Jerusalem, may never have the outward appearance of peace. But the true peace—earned by Christ's perfect life, won with his blood at Jerusalem, and proclaimed almost daily at Salem—gives peace to souls and hearts tormented by sin, guilt, depression, and addiction. It is a peace that the world cannot understand, but a genuine peace nonetheless: We don't know what the future holds; we only know who holds the future.

NL

John Hoh is a member at Salem, Milwaukee.

Choices, choices!

You can't choose to come to faith. But once you're a Christian, you have choices to make every day.

Kenneth A. Cherney

Over 75,000 people are in the stadium, but at this moment you could hear a pin drop. Some of those around you seem to be holding their breath. They sit with eyes closed, brows knitted in concentration. Every open eye is on the speaker on the platform. He just asked anyone who wants to give his life to Jesus to come onto the infield.

Softly, the choir intones the familiar hymn: "Just as I am . . . O Lamb of God, I come, I come." Without a sound, people around you rise and head for the aisles. As the crowd on the infield grows larger, the choir's volume swells, and the speaker praises God for the lost souls who are receiving salvation right before our eyes. After it's all over, magazines will report how thousands of people were "saved" that night by "making their decision for Christ."

You've been to a "crusade"—a modern version of a practice that goes back for centuries, through the tent revivals of the frontier days to roots in 18th-century Pietism.

You've also witnessed the practical result of a false doctrine of conversion. One that does not deal realistically with human sinfulness. One that robs God the Holy Spirit of the credit he deserves.

God's decision—not man's

The problem here, of course, is the notion that an unbeliever who realizes his need for salvation can do something about it—by "making his

decision for Christ." It's an appealing idea, especially for Americans. Americans believe passionately in the autonomy of the individual. They value few things more highly than the freedom to make their own choices. That's why, in this country, the words of Luther's catechism have not won us a lot of friends: "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him."

A lost sinner can no more choose to become a Christian than a garden slug can become a racehorse simply by wanting to.

But it wasn't Luther who took away our freedom to "make a decision for Christ." It was Satan. Human freedom was destroyed in the Fall.

Now, as we are by nature, we're powerless to make any meaningful choices in spiritual things. Unbelievers can choose to rein in their outward conduct somewhat, and keep themselves from utter mayhem and debauchery. They can also choose among many different techniques for keeping God out of their lives. But a lost sinner can no more choose to become a Christian than a garden slug can become a racehorse simply by wanting to. And it is unrealistic—even cruel—to tell people that the choice is within their power.

A choice was involved when we became Christians—but we didn't make it. God did. "'You did not choose me,' Jesus said to the disciples, 'but I chose you'" (John 15:16).

From all eternity, before the foundation of the world, God selected us to be his. Without any input from me, God even chose the time, place, and means by which the Holy Spirit "called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" so that now I believe—and you do, too. Not our well-informed decision, but God's free grace, has made us what we are. Not our "decision for Christ," but Christ's decision for us, is the foundation of our faith.

But now that we are Christians, is our "free will" still just an illusion? Can we still make no choices at all in spiritual things? Scripture's answer might surprise you.

Man's choice—for God

I do not like movies that use the theme of mind control. It happens all the time: somebody can weave a spell over you, infect you with a germ, or fit you with a gadget, and instantly your personality is gone. Suddenly you think someone else's thoughts, speak his words, and do his will—even when it means turning on the people you love most. The idea makes me shudder.

That's why I'm uncomfortable when Christianity is presented that way—by its friends or its foes. To hear some people talk, the Church is

an army of mindless robots whose individuality has been absorbed into some vast spiritual collective: a group of people whose personalities are gone, who have surrendered the ability to think for themselves in exchange for a little comfort and security.

Nothing could be further from the truth. "Mind control" is a perfect picture of the state of an unbeliever, not of a Christian. Unbelievers are caught in "the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26). It's Satan, the "ruler of the kingdom of the air" who "is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Ephesians 2:2). As we were by nature, we had no choice but to obey that ruler and his close ally: our pushy, domineering, controlling sinful nature (Romans 8:7,8). We were powerless to do anything but serve sin and Satan—whether consciously or unconsciously.

Now that we're Christians, it's a different story. Satan still tempts us as he always did. But now, we don't have to give in. Our sinful nature still tries to push us around—but now, aided by the Holy Spirit, we push back. Jesus has liberated us, not just from the guilt of our sin, but also from its power. We have a new self that our sinful nature can't dominate and an ally Satan can't resist. Of course we still succumb to sin—but for Christians these are temporary setbacks, not the complete routs they once were. "Resist

the devil, and he will flee from you," James promises us Christians (4:7). "Sin shall not be your master," says Paul, "because you are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

That's why, to us believers, Scripture can say: You have freedom! Use it! "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). "Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him" (Deuteronomy

30:19,20). Every day, in countless ways, you face choices over whom to serve: your self-destructive, control-freak sinful nature or the Lord who loves you. When that happens, go ahead. Make a "decision for Christ." Not in order to become a Christian, but because you are a Christian. Not just once, but every minute of every day.

And remember to thank God because you can.

NL

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

"CHOOSE
for yourself
this DAY
whom
YOU
will
SERVE"
Joshua 24:15

Islands of Time

Mark A. Paustian

Yesterday morning I paused before an unbelievable sunrise and my spirit soared, "and all that is within me, blessed his holy name." *Five minutes.*

In the afternoon I walked across the street to a neighbor who recently lost his wife, and I offered to buy coffee one morning. *Four minutes.*

Last night I knelt by my daughter's bed and told her how Jesus called the bent-over woman to the front of the synagogue. She had seen only the dirt for 18 years. "Come here," Jesus said. She lumbered awkwardly through the crowd of men. Friendly carpenter hands rested on her back. In a moment she looked into his face. "Imagine that, Abby," I said. She gave me a smile as big as the sun. We sang a song and prayed. *Six minutes.*

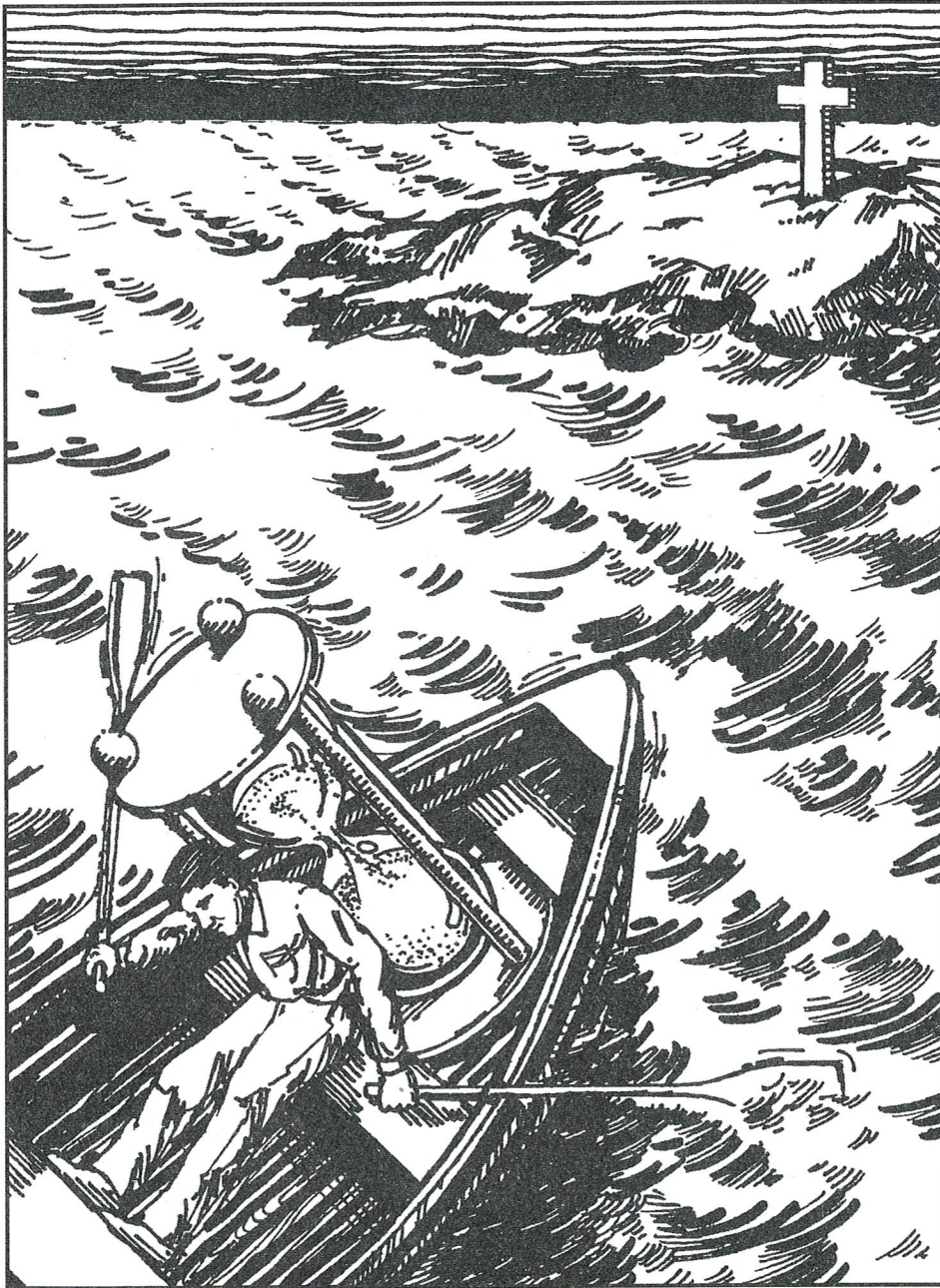
What we've done with time

The point? What was truly memorable about yesterday—the pieces that most contributed to joy and purposeful living—fit into about 15 minutes. It overwhelms me to observe how these small islands of time contribute in vast disproportion to the meaning of my life.

Other things seem like they matter:

- Social conventions.
- Living up to (or collapsing under) the expectations of people who have lesser missions in mind for me.
- Countless worthwhile functions for which I'm not particularly gifted.
- A straining for that peace I think will come when loose ends are finally tied up.

All this frenetic activity—this mass of urgent things—wants to be the



Once I say that time is a stewardship issue, a gift provided by God, I need to stop saying that there isn't enough of it. Time is lavished upon me.

Next time . . . "From the mission to the moment"

On one hand, God has given every believer a mission. On the other hand, we make momentary choices, subject to a dizzying array of influences. With deep regret, we discover the discon-

nect between what we were made to do and what we do.

In the next article, we'll pursue a Christ-like way of thinking about time and make the critical connection between our mission in Christ and the moment by moment choices we make.

bushel under which my light is covered. These duties with some value want to keep me from making the real contribution my soul longs to make.

I know clearly what my life is for: letting the Word of Christ dwell in me, connecting with people, speaking gently of Jesus, lifting a neighbor's burden, engaging faithful allies in this sweet ministry, pulling a child onto my lap. This is a "time of grace." It is for knowing Christ and making him known.

But to analyze the time actually spent directly in this mission? I'm not sure I could bear it. Let's just guess that some time-experts might be right: 80 percent of the meaningful things I accomplish is coming from 20 percent of my time. If true, it suggests enormous possibilities for having more impact with my life. But what actually happens is that 80 percent of my time, though it seems to be accomplishing something, is really standing in the way of things that matter more. I try to prioritize. But some things matter to a degree I am rarely aware of—in a way I can scarcely imagine. Until I think of forever.

What God did with time

My problem is not a shortage of time. More arrived with the sun this morning. But there is a sinking regret over what one has done with time. It's not about time management . . . it's about Jesus. There remains a dreadful gap between what I ought to be and what I am. For that guilty pain, we have one exquisite moment. The Savior looked toward heaven and said, "Father, the time has come" (John 17:1).

Six hours one Friday purchased joy for us that will never end. Everything the Spirit teaches about time tells me to use this next five seconds to tell you, "You are forgiven. He loves you and has taken your sin away." There is a peace that does not depend on you getting a single thing done. It is in Christ—that magnificent island of absolute truth in this ceaseless river of grace. Crawl onto him again, untie the burden that bends your back, and rest a moment.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love," says the timeless One. Your cry for grace in a single instant of grief or fear is one he has had forever to listen to. And his answer is Jesus, who truly loves you. Sit with him a while. Spend some unhurried time with Christ in his Word. Fifteen minutes of devotion at the beginning of your day. An hour of worship at the beginning of your week. A 10-second absolution. A 20-minute sermon. Thirty seconds to receive Jesus' body and blood. Islands of time with impact on eternity. This is you, taking the other point of view—that life is your time of grace.

What we can do all the time

Here is not only the grace and absolution we've been thirsty for, but something else as well. It's called meaning. It's knowing that, in Christ, our lives matter. The next hour I spend can be eternally significant. Before you consider the bottomless pit of need that surrounds you and conclude: "God wants me to do a hundred things quickly, thoughtlessly, and poorly," meditate on the words of Peter: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received. . . . If

anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides . . ." (1 Peter 4:10,11). You are hugely more effective at some things than other things. My joy in serving him is not identical to yours. Scripture calls you to put superior thought and effort into your unique gifts.

And about those duties we can't avoid? I may have to take my daughter to preschool in a few minutes. But do I have to talk about nothing, model nothing, pray about nothing as I listen to her? Do I have to throw away that half hour? No. One word from Christ, and it is a time of grace.

Any effort we make in better time management must include constantly reconnecting with our mission as Christians and with our Savior through his Word. Make new choices about what to do now, drawn from that other kind of life: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). We must gain a perspective about life's urgencies in the light of Christ's sufficiency. In relaxed dependence on him, know when to close the planner, set the overwhelming list of urgency aside, identify those islands of meaning and joy in Christ. Move into them. Grow them.

"I know it's been a tough time for you. I'd be happy to talk if you like."

"Well, that's real nice of you. But I know how busy. . ."

"No, really. I have time."

NL

Mark Paustian is pastor at New Life, Rockford, Illinois.

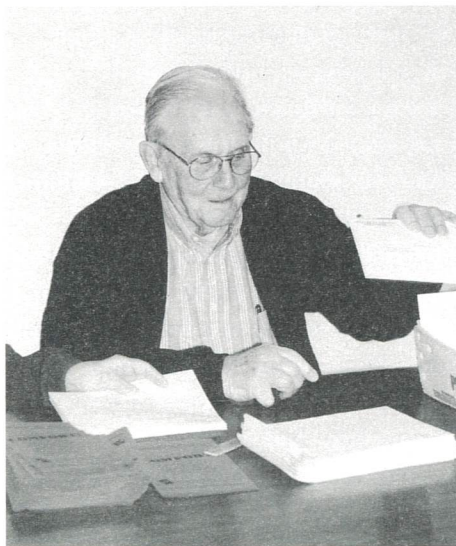
Seniors doing ministry



About 20 seniors volunteer at the SAB every month—using their time and talents to serve their Lord.

Don't look now but we are getting older—both in numbers and life expectancy.

In his book *Age Wave*, Ken Dychtwald writes, "In July 1983, the number of Americans over the age of 65 surpassed the number of teenagers. We are no longer a nation of youths." There are 76 million Baby Boomers who are over 50 years old. It is estimated that, as we enter the new century, 20 percent of our population will be over 65 years of age.



A volunteer helps with a mailing at the Synod Administration Building (SAB) in Milwaukee.

At the beginning of this century, life expectancy was 47 years. As we enter the new millennium, life expectancy averages 75 years.

Let's change the subject for a minute. The church depends on volunteer help. No pastor can do all that needs to be done—not even if he works 60 and 70 hours a week. Nor should the pastor do everything alone, since we all belong to the universal priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5). But as some become overcommitted and others only want to cocoon at home, the pool of volunteers keeps shrinking.

What do these subjects have to do with each other? Just think of what a wonderful blessing the growing number of senior citizens can be for the church. With retirement comes more time to use talents in the Lord's service.

To help congregations use this valuable resource, the Commission on Adult Discipleship has formed a senior ministry committee. This committee, instead of planning programs that minister to seniors, are planning programs that will be carried out by seniors.

When it began in spring 1998, the committee mailed a survey to parish pastors. Fifty-one percent of respondents said they would use seniors

more if material and training were available for specific programs. Pastors expressed the greatest interest in using seniors to help make shut-in calls and for peer counseling.

The committee is now working to provide congregations with materials to help get seniors to assist in those two areas, as well as others. Two programs—using seniors as tutors for students in confirmation class and using seniors as sponsors for high school graduates—are already being field tested. The committee will publish a manual with information on all new programs.

Check out our senior ministry Web site under adult discipleship at <www.wels.net> or contact the senior ministry committee members at <usr8@sab.wels.net>.

Richard Winters

Jesus Cares Ministries developing school program

Jesus Cares Ministries, a program that provides spiritual services for people with developmental disabilities, will create a pilot project to place these children into WELS elementary schools. A grant from AAL will help cover costs of training for teachers, parents, and students involved in the program.

Currently, the WELS elementary school system is not equipped with specially trained teachers or adaptive learning materials that would enable severely disabled students to attend its schools. A consortium of 50 WELS schools in metropolitan Milwaukee has expressed a need for a school inclusion program. About 25 students, age six-13, have been identified who could immediately benefit from it.



Last September, Hurricane Georges hammered the Caribbean and our world missions located there. Pictured here is Juana Antonia of the Dominican Republic, who lost her entire house and all her belongings to the river. She is standing where her house used to be before the hurricane. With help from money she received from the WELS Committee on Relief, she was able to find a place on higher ground. Our churches in Puerto Rico, a country also hit by the hurricane, even had a clothing drive and sent canned food and clothing to the Dominican Republic. The Committee on Relief sent \$35,000 to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and Antigua. They also sent \$60,000 to Nicaragua and Honduras after Hurricane Mitch hit in November. If you want to send contributions, specify which fund and send it to Committee on Relief, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.

Potluck—Vietnamese style

In August, members at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho, made room for chopsticks next to the forks for their potluck. The potluck followed a service where Daniel Kramer was ordained and commissioned as the outreach explorer to the Vietnamese in the Boise, Idaho area.

The ordination rite was translated by Mr. Vinh, a Vietnamese who works with the outreach in Idaho. Kramer concluded the service by having a

prayer and blessing in Vietnamese. The Americans present had an unusual opportunity to experience what many Vietnamese go through every day: the language barrier.

After the service, the potato salad moved aside for the rice, and the jello mold made way for the *chá giò*, (Vietnamese egg roll) as everyone enjoyed the Vietnamese-American potluck.

Daniel Kramer



Daniel Kramer and the Vietnamese families who attended his ordination. Kramer is the outreach explorer to the Vietnamese in the Boise, Idaho area.

Synodical school enrollment increasing

Overall enrollments at the synod's ministerial education schools are again higher. They are significantly higher at Martin Luther College and Luther Preparatory School. Enrollment in the pre-seminary program at MLC is 222, compared to 180 at the time of amalgamation.

WELS operates four ministerial education schools—one seminary, one college, and two prep schools. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., trains pastors. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., prepares teachers for the ministry and others who will continue at the seminary. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., work at the high school level, preparing students for full-time church work.

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99
WLS <small>(on campus)</small>	111	123	112	103
MLC	772	816	811	863
LPS	506	475	479	528
MLS	319	335	347	338
Total	1,708	1,749	1,749	1,832

correction: The e-mail address of Gerald Free, the director of the Forward in Christ celebration, was listed incorrectly in the November issue. His correct e-mail address is <FICWICKS@tcccom.net>.

Humanitarian aid committee developed

The Board for World Missions (BWM) has established a Humanitarian Aid Committee to encourage and promote humanitarian work.

The committee members—Pastor Ray Cox, Keystone Heights, Fla.; teacher Brian Abraham, Bay City, Mich.; and layman Kent Raabe, Milwaukee—will also assist and advise the BWM administrative committees on questions of fundraising and administration. Finally, the committee will regularly evaluate all humanitarian efforts for their balance, effectiveness, or possible hindrance to the Means of Grace ministry.

The expanding need for humanitarian aid in the mission fields of poor or developing countries forced the BWM to wrestle with these big questions:

1. To what degree, if any, should the BWM be involved in humanitarian work?
2. How can this work serve the ministry of the means of grace rather than detracting from or overshadowing it?
3. How do we keep the proper balance between valid concerns for physical needs and our primary concern for people's souls?
4. How can unhealthy dependencies be avoided and administrative snafus not become the burden of the overworked missionary?

The BWM, after scriptural study and much discussion, adopted the following principles to guide our humanitarian programs:

- The Church is to carry out Christ's commission by using the Means of Grace (Word and sacrament). To proclaim law and gospel is the church's foremost task as it is the answer to sinful humanity's greatest need—the need for salvation and all that comes with it.
- Acts of Christian love (e.g., helping people in time of need, offering medical, technological



As WELS works more in poor and developing countries, determining the role that humanitarian aid plays in mission work is a big issue. In Guntur, India, the Moriah Children's Home has successfully combined reaching out with the gospel and caring for people's physical needs. This orphanage, managed by Korunna Dasari, houses and feeds 60 children and teaches them the gospel—at the same time.

and/or educational assistance) may assist Christians in carrying out Christ's commission by providing a point of contact with non-Christians. Such efforts are a significant way by which Christians, both individually and corporately, can let their faith shine before men that they may see their good deeds and praise their Father in heaven.

- Since God causes his church to grow only through the means of grace, use of humanitarian efforts must, therefore, always be subservient to the use of the means of grace.

The BWM established the Humanitarian Aid Committee after adopting these guidelines.

Questions? Contact the Board for World Missions at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <bwm@sab.wels.net>.

Dan Koelpin

Are you photocopying NL?

We often get calls from our readers who ask for permission to photocopy articles. As a general policy, WELS congregations have permission to copy articles for local parish use as long as the phrase, "Permission to photocopy granted by NL," accompanies the article.

If you have any questions about copyright, contact our office and we'll be happy to talk to you about them. Thank you for being conscientious about copyright laws.

Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; 414/256-3232; <nl@sab.wels.net>.

Opening the gospel for Asians

Thousands of Asians come to study in U.S. universities. (The University of Minnesota has approximately 1,600 ethnic Chinese.) They speak some English, but are more comfortable in their native language. Isolated from their families, they are often lonely.

Then, they find people from their homeland. They speak their native tongue and eat their native foods. But they are different from the people back home. They are Christians. The Christians invite the newcomers to learn about Jesus, and many are willing to listen.



One of the 121 Asians who attended Asian Call '98, a rally held for Asian students. Another Chinese student remarked about the rally, "Only once a year? Can't it be more often?"

To get Asians together for this purpose, Loren Steele, who works with Asians in the Twin Cities, and Joel Lintner, campus pastor at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis/St. Paul, planned a rally for Asian students from Oct. 16-18.

The goal of Asian Call '98, held at Saint Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn., was to take people friendly to Christianity and enroll them in Bible study. Of the 121 Asians who attended, 80 to 90 are non-Christian. They attended workshops describing the basics of Christianity.

The results were impressive. Many people committed to learn more about Christianity. Steele's Asian Bible classes have more than doubled. One

woman from China, another from Japan, and a Vietnamese man confessed their faith in Jesus. Joe Dietrich, campus pastor at Michigan State University, brought four Asians. Two of them attended worship the following week for the first time.

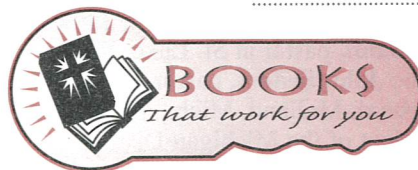
About 30 Asian students stayed with American families. Many exchanged addresses. One Chinese woman, expecting her only child (under China's "One Child Policy"), told her host family she would name her baby after one of their children.

Jesus says in Revelation 3:8, "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut." Christ has placed an open door before us. Many Asian students who come to America are open to new ideas, and even to old ones. They are willing to hear about a faith that is neither American nor Chinese nor Japanese, but is for all people of all time.

The Asian students who come here are genuine scholars. Many will return home with doctorate degrees and become leaders in their societies. Just think what a tremendous impact they could have if they returned home as disciples of Christ.

Next year, we hope to host Asian Call '99. Pray that God will keep the door open and that we will have the boldness to walk through it.

Joel Lintner



Check out these books from Northwestern Publishing House.

Civil Government (God's Other Kingdom), Daniel M. Deutschlander.

Separation of church and state is a volatile issue in our society. In clear language, Deutschlander shares the history of civil government and offers principles that guide Christians today, working for both God's kingdom and



Builders For Christ (Code 5194), 1998, 8 min., SCA

Volunteers describe the satisfaction they enjoy in helping congregations build, remodel, or repair their churches at substantial savings. Short enough to be shown after services, this can be an excellent tool for recruiting new "builders for Christ."

Building Time (Code 5195), 1998, 21 min., CA

This video provides a light-hearted approach to the serious business of planning a new church building. Intended as an aid for new mission congregations, this presentation will be helpful for any building program.

These videos are available for rental for \$7.50 by congregations, schools, and church groups. Subscribers to the library may order them for the cost of return postage from Audiovisual Library Services, Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 414/475-6600; 1-800-662-6093.

the civil kingdom. Softcover, 215 pages, \$9.99, 15N0608

Man (From Glory to Ashes and Back), Lyle L. Luchterhand

Luchterhand explores a human paradox. He shows us the heights of joy, knowing that God formed us for himself. Then he reminds us of the depths of sin, and how the curse of sin affects us today. Finally, he takes us back to the heights of joy, reminding us that we will spend eternity with God in heaven. Softcover, 181 pages, \$9.99, 15N0609

District news

These are the reporters for this month's featured districts. CA: Hermann John
MI: David M. Zahn MN: Jeffrey Bovee SEW: Scott Oelhafen WW: Elton Stroh

California

Good Shepherd, Livermore, Calif., dedicated a refurbished 3,313 square ft. church building on Oct. 18, 1998. The congregation enlarged the narthex, and added a kitchenette, four stained glass windows, and new doors. This is the first church building, after four office complexes, for the 13-year-old congregation. . . . **Christ the Vine, Temecula, Calif.**, purchased their first permanent church site—a three acre parcel.

Western Wisconsin

On Sept. 27, 1998, **Gethsemane, Davenport, Iowa**, dedicated its new organ and celebrated the anniversary of its sanctuary.



St. John, Hill Point, Wis., recognized their organist, Marlene Korth, with a special song service, banquet, and entertainment on Oct. 18. Marlene played organ for St. John for 44 years.

Southeastern Wisconsin

On Aug. 30, 1998, retired pastor **E.C. Renz** baptized **Theodore Matthew Schmitz** at Calvary, Thiensville, Wis. What makes this baptism unique is that Renz also baptized Theodore's father in 1974—in Gau-Bischofsheim, Germany. The parents and grandparents traveled 900 kilometers from

Italy to Germany to have their son baptized by Renz, who was serving as a chaplain to WELS people stationed and living in Europe.



On Nov. 1, St. Marcus, Milwaukee, celebrated Henry Frank's 44 years of service as organist. A number of those years, he was the only organist, playing for every worship service and funeral. He retired in the middle of 1998.

Happy anniversary!

California—Prince of Peace, Thousand Oaks, Calif., celebrated the 25th anniversary of its pastor, **Charles D. Found**, on Aug. 30, 1998.

Michigan—**St. Mark, Wallace, Mich.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary on Oct. 18, 1998. . . . The following celebrated 25 years in the preaching ministry: **Dennis Smith**, pastor at Holy Redeemer, Port Huron, Mich.; **James Naumann**, pastor at St. Luke, Vassar, Mich.; **John Seifert**, pastor at Good Shepherd, Midland, Mich., and District President of the Michigan District.

Minnesota—**Bill Staab**, pastor at Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn., celebrated his 40th anniversary in the pastoral ministry on Nov. 15, 1998.

Western Wisconsin—The following pastors recently observed their anniversary of ordination: 25th anniversary—**Ronald Hahm, Gerald Hintz**, and **Kenneth Wenzel**; 40th anniversary—**Paul Pankow**; 50th anniversary—**John Jeske** and **Frederic Nitz**.

Obituaries

James A. Fricke 1929-1998

James Fricke was born March 22, 1929, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died Oct. 25, 1998, in New Ulm, Minn.

A 1954 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Fricke served at St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.; St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.; and St. John, Watertown, Wis. He was an instructor at Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn., and a professor at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, and Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.

He is survived by two daughters, two sons, and 16 grandchildren.

Richard Gerhardt Martin Seeger 1931-1998

Richard Seeger was born July 5, 1931, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died Aug. 8, 1998, in Lakeland, Fla.

A 1956 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Seeger served as the first resident missionary in Tokyo, Japan, and as a chaplain to military personnel. He was the first "friendly counselor" to the Chinese Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong and served as a professor in their seminary. He also served St. Marcus and Ephrata, both in Milwaukee; St. John's, Antigua, West Indies; and King of Kings, Alexandria, La.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley; one daughter; one son; one sister; one brother; and seven grandchildren.

Relatives or officiating pastors: please submit obituaries of called workers to NL, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <nl@sab.wels.net>



Fifty-six people from England, Belgium, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, and one family from the United States, attended the WELS Civilian Chaplaincy for Europe Reformation retreat in Worms, Germany, in October. Pictured here in front of the Martin Luther monument, the group attended Bible studies about applying the law and gospel in their daily lives. They also had free time for sight-seeing. The high point of the retreat was the Reformation service at a Worms cathedral, the oldest Lutheran church in southwest Germany.

Hundreds learn about life

Pro-life is not just about being against abortion. It's about recognizing that the fight for life starts at conception and doesn't end until God calls someone home.

On Oct. 3, 1998, at the WELS Lutherans for Life 15th annual convention, 668 pro-life adults, almost 100 teens, and 107 children learned what God says about the beginning of life, the end of life, and issues that arise between those times. Topics ranged from abstinence to in vitro fertilization to peer pressure to taking care of elderly parents.

As with most conventions, this one was packed with information, and everyone was motivated about their work in their church and community. But also, as with most conventions, that enthusiasm and information could quickly be forgotten until next year.

WELS Lutherans for Life, however, wants to keep people motivated and informed about life issues throughout the entire year. To accomplish that, they've produced LifeWire, a free e-mail newsletter that is sent twice a week. LifeWire shares high-

lights about current life-issues news. It also keeps readers up-to-date on what WELS Lutherans for Life is doing as an organization. To subscribe, e-mail the message "Subscribe to LifeWire" to <welslutherans.forlife@wfl.wels.net>.

By subscribing, you'll stay informed about current life-issues news from around the world until the next convention, to be held Oct. 30, 1999, at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing, Mich.

rē · li · gi·ōn

Defining religion

Epiphany: A revelation or making known. The festival on which we celebrate the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Epiphany is commemorated on Jan. 6, and the Epiphany season lasts for one to six weeks depending on the date of Easter.

Anniversary celebration update

Planning a two-year celebration for 400,000 people takes a lot of work. To help our synod's 150th anniversary run smoothly, each district nominated a chairman to coordinate celebrations in different areas of the country. In each district, the chairmen hope that celebrations will occur

1. on circuit and district levels;
2. in congregations, educational agencies, and organizations; and
3. in homes and among families.

To help those groups celebrate, a congregational handbook is in the making to share suggestions and ideas.

For a copy of the congregational handbook, to share ideas, or to get more information about your district's celebration, contact your district chairman.



Arizona-California—Allen K. Schroeder, Mesa, Ariz.

Dakota-Montana—Curtiss W. Seefeldt, Aberdeen, S.D.

Michigan—James Mattek, Findlay, Ohio

Minnesota—Paul T. Otto, Frontenac, Minn.

Nebraska—Philip E. Zarling, Overland Park, Kan.

North Atlantic—Donald L. Tollefson, Long Valley, N.J.

Northern Wisconsin—Bruce A. McKenney, Manitowoc, Wis.

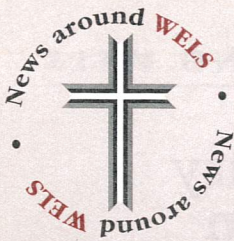
Pacific Northwest—Jonathan R. Schoeneck, Federal Way, Wash.

South Atlantic—Dale L. Raether, Palm Bay, Fla.

South Central—David A. Kapler, Mountain Home, Ark.

Southeastern Wisconsin—Nathan R. Pope, Racine, Wis.

Western Wisconsin—Gerhardt F. Cares, Columbus, Wis.



Through my Bible in 3 years

February 1999

1. Leviticus 8
2. Leviticus 9, 10
3. Leviticus 11
4. Leviticus 12:1—13:46
5. Leviticus 13:47—14:32
6. Leviticus 14:33—15:33
7. Leviticus 16
8. Leviticus 17
9. Leviticus 18
10. Leviticus 19, 20
11. Leviticus 21, 22
12. Leviticus 23
13. Leviticus 24
14. Leviticus 25
15. Leviticus 26
16. Leviticus 27
17. Hebrews 1
18. Hebrews 2
19. Hebrews 3:1-6
20. Hebrews 3:7—4:13
21. Hebrews 4:14—5:10
22. Hebrews 5:11—6:8
23. Hebrews 6:9-20
24. Hebrews 7:1-14
25. Hebrews 7:15-28
26. Hebrews 8
27. Hebrews 9:1-15
28. Hebrews 9:16-28

Peter the Barber once asked Martin Luther how he, an ordinary kind of guy, could read the Bible and benefit from it. Luther answered:

Ask yourself:

1. What does God tell me here?
2. What makes me glad?
3. What makes me sad?
4. What do I want to pray for?

Try it in your Bible reading.

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Nine Months Ended September 30, 1998

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received				
	Communicants 12/31/97	1998	Year to Date Projected	September Offerings	Nine Months Offerings	Percent of Sbscrptn	Annldz Ave Per Commun
Arizona-California	17,110	\$1,025,567	\$699,633	\$81,690	\$687,689	98.3%	\$53.59
Dakota-Montana	9,195	429,512	260,370	26,032	258,962	99.5	37.55
Michigan	36,777	2,129,256	1,369,581	161,213	1,389,954	101.5	50.39
Minnesota	43,636	2,387,541	1,487,161	167,818	1,529,334	102.8	46.73
Nebraska	10,334	590,248	369,206	34,650	382,414	103.6	49.34
North Atlantic	3,831	321,867	228,580	26,159	237,018	103.7	82.49
Northern Wisconsin	61,019	2,542,489	1,580,742	171,369	1,638,529	103.7	35.80
Pacific Northwest	5,067	264,918	174,257	16,629	162,276	93.1	42.70
South Atlantic	6,661	467,354	325,405	32,600	323,687	99.5	64.79
South Central	4,531	416,738	288,531	38,071	298,874	103.6	87.95
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,563	3,334,263	2,014,878	218,674	2,011,877	99.9	46.60
Western Wisconsin	59,631	3,058,170	1,964,632	240,068	1,981,536	100.9	44.31
Total - This Year	315,355	16,967,923	10,762,976	1,214,973	10,902,150	101.3	46.09
Total - Last Year	315,377	16,765,951	10,628,300	1,211,512	10,458,601	98.4	44.22

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities/Three Months ended September 30

	1998 Actual	1997 Actual	1998 Budget
Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets Revenues:			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$ 3,652,910	\$3,504,666	\$3,424,100
Gifts and memorials	2,195,259	1,008,862	3,077,600
Bequest/planned giving	128,330	83,061	149,300
Tuition and fees	2,605,974	3,261,623	2,912,200
Other	66,431	54,914	29,900
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	2,085,000	-
Transfers-endwmt/trust earnings	78,440	74,687	65,000
Transfers-gift trust	1,950,281	2,030,571	1,963,800
Transfers-continuing programs	1,284,645	1,139,181	1,496,200
Transfers-other	-	10	-
Total revenues	11,962,270	13,242,575	13,118,100
Expenditures:			
Home Missions	2,391,535	2,016,072	2,414,000
World Missions	2,117,649	2,084,174	2,478,300
Ministerial Education	6,718,785	6,063,661	6,242,800
Parish Services	445,461	340,595	477,300
Administrative Services	1,341,582	1,259,254	1,623,000
Total expenditures	13,015,012	11,763,756	13,235,400
Changes in unrestricted net assets	(1,052,742)	1,478,819	
Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets			
Gifts and memorials	-	63,200	-
Bequest/planned giving	-	88,000	-
Change in value of trust agreements	-	(1,700)	-
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	(2,085,000)	-
Total revenues	-	(1,935,500)	-
Change in temp restricted net assets	-	(1,935,500)	-
Net assets - beginning of year	5,939,285	5,909,760	
Net assets - end of period	4,886,543	5,453,079	

Statement of Financial Position

	Sept 30, 1998	Sept 30, 1997
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,704,898	\$ 2,054,939
Due from other funds	84,350	42,151
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	107,250	101,750
Cash advances-schools	-	45,074
Other accounts receivable	89,540	67,542
Contributions receivable	3,024,800	3,329,327
Mortgage note receivable	15,901	17,790
Allowance for doubtful accts	(92,000)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	54,407	29,448
Total assets	5,989,146	5,596,021
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Due to schools	945,542	-
Accounts payable	157,061	142,942
Total liabilities	1,102,603	142,942
Unrestricted	1,861,743	2,123,752
Temp restricted	3,024,800	3,329,327
Total net assets	4,886,543	5,453,079
Total liab. and net assets	5,989,146	5,596,021

Mark Meissner, director of finance



Inter-Act

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

Introduction

We like transformations. The more dramatic the better! Why are these transformations dramatic?

- Cinderella
- Tommy Lasorda in the SlimFast ads.
- Your puppy
- Peter

Jesus transformed people he met. Some became healthier or more. Some were forgiven. Some, because of their rejection, were more frustrated or bitter; but that was their fault, not Jesus'. The next six Interacts will be about change. Jesus changed lives then. He can do the same now.

I. Text

Read Matthew 16:13-17, 21-23.

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. . . . ²¹From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. ²²Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" ²³Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

II. Questions

1. When Jesus nicknamed Peter, "Rock," he didn't look very rock-like! His faith could be so strong. His faith could be so weak.
 - How did Peter demonstrate his trust in Jesus during this exchange?
 - How did Peter demonstrate his weakness of faith?
 He was more like a yo-yo than a rock. How did his faith waver when
 - Jesus invited him to walk on water (Matthew 14:22f)?
 - Jesus taught him about money (Matthew 19:37)?
 - Jesus wanted to wash his feet (John 13:1f)?
 - Jesus was on trial (Matthew 26:69f)?
2. Peter also demonstrated great courage. He got out of the boat to walk on water! He vowed to suffer and die rather than leave Jesus. He drew a sword to defend Jesus. After rising from the dead, Jesus said, I have a job: "Feed my lambs . . . feed my sheep." Of all the disciples, why Peter?

Randy Hunter is pastor at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin.

III. Application

We love Peter because he's inconsistent—just like us! The Bible is a case study of Peter's transformation. He grew from an inconsistent fisherman to a stable leader. The pebble became a rock by the same power that transforms us—the Holy Spirit.

1. Jesus changed Peter by spending time with him. There is no substitute for time with Jesus. For us that means time with God's Word. How has God, through his Word, changed you?
2. How have you seen God, through his Word, change others?
3. As we mature in Christ, we become more consistent. Is church attendance a good measure of spiritual maturity? Doctrinal consistency? (Check out Ephesians 4:14,15.) Self-control? Why or why not?

Christianity is both a gift and a growing. We receive the gift at baptism when the Spirit washes away sin and gives faith. From then on, our lives are about growing. Peter had room to grow. So do we. By Jesus' blood we are forgiven. By God's grace, we are transformed day by day into his image. That's dramatic!

IV. Prayer

Lord, I have a long way to go before I'd call myself "Rock!" But I'm on the way. You've transformed me from lost to saved. Now transform me the way you did Peter. Help me spend time with your Word. Help me see my responsibility to "feed your sheep." Transform me into someone willing to do your work, share your goodness, and praise you by my life. Help me show everyone I meet the love you've shown me in Jesus. Amen.



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

Religion remains vital, though not influential

Although actions may be contradictory, faith remains a critical matter to most people. More than four out of five adults (83%) asserted that their "religious faith is very important in their life." Even the least overtly religious segments of the population agreed: men (77%), residents of the Northeast (77%), single adults (79%), Baby Busters (81%), and liberals (74%).

Adults in their 20s seem the most open to exploring faiths other than Christianity. One out of six claim to be atheist or agnostic, and eight percent align with faiths outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Overall, that's 25 percent of young adults affiliating with a non-Christian faith.

The shifting dynamics of faith were explained by the director of the survey: "Despite all of the talk about the encroachment of non-Christian faiths in America, the reality is that more than four out of five people still view themselves as Christian. The real transformations relate to what people believe the content of the Christian faith to be and how dedicated they are to living out the precepts of Christianity," said George Barna.

"The fact that so many people behave in ways that contradict the principles of the faith they claim to possess may be attributed to spiritual ignorance as much as to cultural seduction."

Results are based on a national survey by Barna Research Group of 1,006 interviews among a national random sample of people 18 or older. The maximum sampling error is +3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

China reports fewer executions

Last year, China, the world's most populous nation with 1.1 billion people, reported executing more of its citizens than the rest of the world combined. Still, the 3,000 executions reported in China for 1997—more than eight per day—represent a 31 percent drop from 1996, human rights monitors said.

Some claim that the drop in executions can be attributed to a new criminal code and sentencing guidelines that went into effect on Oct. 1, 1997. The code narrowed uses of the death penalty for theft, which accounts for nearly a third of all criminal cases in China. Only bank robbery and theft of cultural relics now are punishable by death.

Facts on the death penalty in China are hard to come by because the new sentencing guidelines, as well as the total number of executions, are considered state secrets.

Catherine Baver, a China specialist for London-based Amnesty International, said the 1997 execution figure "represents only a fraction" of the real total. Baver said state-run media reports, a major source for her group's estimates, often do not provide accurate counts of executions.

"Killer" kit approved

The Food and Drug Administration approved the Preven Emergency Contraceptive Kit containing a pregnancy test, usage guidelines, and four pills of ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel.

"It is disappointing that the FDA has approved of the so-called Emergency Contraceptive Kit. While it sounds like this is recourse for women who engaged in unprotected sex yet fear they may become pregnant, it is, in fact, a kit designed to end pregnancy—it does not prevent conception," says Robert Fleischmann, WELS Lutherans for Life national director.

"The name of this kit misleads women. The kit does not prevent the fertilization of a woman's egg. Rather, it is designed to change the uterine lining to prevent this youngest of human life to embed and grow. The kit is designed to kill a developing youngster."

WELS Lutherans for Life is one of the nation's largest single-denomination pro-life agencies, addressing a wide spectrum of life issues. WELS Lutherans for Life has over 70 affiliates operating throughout the country as well as in Ukraine and Bulgaria.

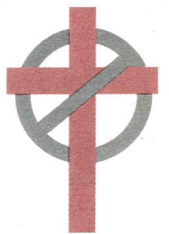
Ban on religious expression

A new law in Uzbekistan makes it illegal for anyone except government-certified clergy to talk about religion one-on-one in the mostly-Muslim, central-Asian republic. The law also bans private religious instruction and churches with fewer than 100 members. Those who break the law face criminal charges that could lead to heavy fines and detention in labor camps, according to Human Rights Without Frontiers.

A backlash against foreign religious groups that flooded the republics with missionaries since the collapse of the

Soviet Union led to the law.

The law was passed by May 1, 1998, but groups were not informed about the unwieldy registration process until six weeks before the deadline. Any church that managed to meet the Aug. 15, 1998, deadline is still prohibited from proselytizing and is required to submit detailed reports. Then the state still reserves the right to cancel registration and close the church at any time.



Fathers, train your children

With the talk about fathers who shirk their responsibilities, there are glimmers of good news.

Currently, 63 percent of American teenagers live with their biological fathers. Teens with higher grades and those whose two parents attended college are more likely to live with their biological fathers.

And the fathers seem to be active. Of the teens interviewed, 70 percent say they feel "extremely" or "very" close to their father. Teens from white collar homes and those who attended religious services the previous week are more likely to feel extremely close to their fathers.

But room for improvement exists. For teens, 85 percent believe that a good father says "I love you" at least once a week, but only two-thirds of teens say their own father does this. Also, 75 percent believe that a good father hugs his kids at least once a week, but only 55 percent receive a hug at least weekly.

One more place where fathers seem to be falling down, according to their teenage children, is with school life. While a majority of teens (71 percent) say a good father helps children with their homework, only 45 percent report that their own father does so.

Findings are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 501 teenagers, conducted July through November 1997. [Emerging Trends, June 1998]

Japan's high suicide rate

In 1996, the number of Japanese who killed themselves was 23,104. In 1997, that number was 5.6 percent higher at 24,931 suicides for the year. The overall suicide rate for Japan is

Dual membership congregations given notice

Six congregations, six retired pastors, and five teachers currently hold membership in both The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). At this year's LCMS convention, those congregations were given until January 2000 to resign from the ELCA or forfeit their LCMS membership.

In July, the convention gave the district presidents 90 days from the end of the convention to "notify them that this arrangement must be brought to an end" within 18 months.

The convention resolution seeking an end to dual memberships said that the LCMS "has been very patient in dealing with these situations, speaking to them as early as the 1977 Dallas convention. . . ."

The 1998 resolution said also that the "ELCA has joined in confession with church bodies that teach false doctrine"—a reference to the ELCA's 1997 declaration of "full communion" with three Reformed church bodies—and that it "is not possible to make confession in two church bodies at the same time." It noted that a requirement of the LCMS constitution for membership is to "renounce unionism and syncretism of every description."

[News and Information Division, LCMS Board for Communication Services, Nov. 4, 1998]

Do pastors and members think alike?

Compare how pastors described their church with how parishioners described themselves.

How pastors describe their church How church-going adults describe themselves

36%	fundamentalist	29%
79%	evangelical	20%
19%	charismatic	32%
79%	theologically conservative	50%
13%	theologically liberal	42%
610	sample size	1,015

The survey of adults was a national telephone survey of 1,015 interviews conducted in July 1998. The maximum sampling error is +3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Barna Research Group, Ltd. Sept. 8, 1998.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Dietz, Michael W., to Good Shepherd, St. Peters, Mo.

Fritz, Lester G., to Zion, Van Dyne, Wis.

Gunn, Dean A., to Our Savior, Kasson, Minn.

Gurgel, Richard L., to WLS, Mequon, Wis.

Hankwitz, Robert P., to Our Savior, Freeport, Ill.

Hildebrant, John R., to Rockwood, Manitowoc-6NW, Wis.

Jensen, Daniel A., to Navajo exploratory, Shiprock, N.M.

Jensen, Michael T., to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

Kloehn, Russell W., to Zion, Oshkosh/Grace, Pickett, Wis.

Lother, LeRoy H., to retirement

Mutterer, Frederick A., to Messiah, Los Alamos, N.M.

Nommensen, Timothy L., to St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.

Piepenbrink, Leon E., to Hmong Ministry coordinator, Twin Cities, Minn.

Pontel, Larry B., to Malawi, Africa

Vander Galien, Paul W., to Salem, Lowell, Wis.

Vertz, Tod A., to Faith, Reedsburg, Wis.

Wuebben, James P., to retirement

SYNOD CONVENTION

The 55th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held July 26-30, at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Details will be announced later.

Memorials to be included in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) must be submitted to the president's office by Feb. 1.

REQUEST FOR COLLOQUY

Rev. David W. Schmidt, Rochester, N.Y., formerly a pastor of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, has requested a colloquy for the purpose of entering the pastoral ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Correspondence related to this request should be addressed to President Walter Beckmann, North Atlantic District, 7401 Masonville Dr, Annandale VA 22003.

NOTICE FOR CONGREGATION TREASURERS

The cutoff date for Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 1998 lock box offerings will be credited as 1998 receipts through Jan. 11, as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled "December" on the remittance coupon. Please note that offerings must be mailed to the lock box rather than delivered to the synod offices.

Mark Meissner, Director of Finance

The Synod Administration Building will close: Jan. 1—New Year's Day. Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888.

ANNIVERSARIES

Hemlock, Mich.—St. John (100). Jan. 17—Praise services with Michigan Lutheran Seminary Concert Choir, 8 & 10:30 AM; potluck follows. Feb. 21—Old-time founding, 8 & 10:30 AM; German potluck follows. March 21—Friendship outreach/inreach, 8 & 10:30 AM. 517/642-8757.

Bulletin BOARD & NOTICES

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210;

FAX, 414/256-3899; <karenb@sab.wels.net>

Deadline is six weeks before publication date.

Crete, Ill.—Trinity (150). Jan. 31—"A Festival to the Lord." Services, 8 & 10:45 AM; potluck, noon. Feb. 28—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Chorus, 8 & 10:45 AM. 708/672-8125.

Colorado Springs, Colo.—Salem (25). Jan. 24—services, 8 & 10:30 AM; chili dinner follows. 719/599-0200.

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.

NAMES WANTED

Grant-writers—to head the grant-writing program for Wisconsin Lutheran College. Must have excellent writing skills. Send information to Director of Development, Wisconsin Lutheran College, 8800 W Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee WI 53226.

Sheridan, Wyo.—picturesque, tax-friendly. John A. Schroeder, 307/686-4080.

East Troy, Wis.—addresses of past confirmands from St. Paul, who reside out of state or no longer are in contact with current members. For 125th anniversary celebration. 414/642-3200

COMING EVENTS

Ladies retreat—WELS/ELS ladies retreat at Woodlands Lutheran Retreat Center, Montverde, Fla. Jan 8-10. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.

Staff minister extension course—at Wisconsin Lutheran College. Introduction to Youth and Family Ministry, Joel Nelson, instructor. Three credits. Can be applied toward staff ministry certification. Friday evening and all day Saturday—Jan. 15-16, 29-30, Feb. 12-13, 26-27, and March 12-13. \$380. For information and registration materials contact Special Services, Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Ct, New Ulm MN 56073; 1-800-686-4142; <olsonlo@mlc-wels.edu>

Martin Luther College 1999 choir tour—Prof. Mark Lenz, 507/354-8221

March 27—Our Savior, Springville, N.Y., 4:30 PM

March 28—Hope, Markham, Ontario, noon; St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, 8 PM

March 29—St. Paul, Amherst, N.H., 7 PM

March 30—Good Shepherd, South Attleboro, Mass., 7 PM

March 31—Christ Redeemer, Trumbull, Conn., 7:30 PM

April 1—Messiah, South Windsor, Conn., 7:30 PM

April 2—Our Savior's, East Brunswick, N.J., 7:30 PM

April 4—St. John, Newark, Del., 9:30 AM; Grace, Falls Church, Va., 7 PM

April 18—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 7:30 PM

Alcoholic awareness retreat—for recovering alcoholics and family members. Includes keynote

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

speakers, workshops, support meeting, and Christian worship. Wonderland Camp and Conference Center, 30 miles south of Milwaukee. John Cook, Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling, 6800 N 76 St, Milwaukee WI 53223; 414/353-5005; <wlcfcs@execpc.com>

Lecture—"Real Choices . . . Alternatives to Abortion" by columnist Frederica Mathewes-Green. 7:30 PM, Jan. 25. Free. Wisconsin Lutheran College, 8800 N Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee. Diane, 414/774-1331 ext. 107; <dianea@wfl.wels.net>

Convention—of the Conference of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. April 20-22 in Winter Haven, Fla. CELC, N73 W27077 Kettle Cove Ln, Sussex WI 53089; 414/538-1462.

Medical ethics conference—medical professionals, clergy, attorneys, and anyone interested in becoming educated on Christian decision-making in medicine invited to "Decisions in Medicine" Medical Ethics Conference. Feb. 18-19 at the Sheraton World Resort, Orlando, Fla. Cost: \$110. WELS Lutherans for Life, 1-800-729-9535 ext. 107; 774-1331 (Milwaukee). <dianea@wfl.wels.net>

NEEDED

Rhythm band instruments—for Jesus Cares Bible class, Olivia, Minn. Julie Luetke, 320/523-1041.

Used playground equipment—Grace, RR1 Box 86, Dakota MN 55925; David Pries, 507/452-1283.

Portable classroom trailer—new or used trailer(s). Gethsemane, Davenport, Iowa, 319/359-0144.

Worship supplies—offering plates, communion ware, paraments, lectern, coat rack, room dividers, or any worship items you no longer need. Exploratory, Roscoe, Ill., 815/633-6197.

Youth size choir gowns—for ages 6-12. Will pay for shipping. San Juan, El Paso, Tex. James Connell, 915/592-9900.

AVAILABLE

Organ—Wurlitzer. Two keyboard electronic. Free for cost of shipping. Columbus, Ohio. Ruth Steller, 614/860-9696.

Commentary—Popular Commentary by Kretzmann. Four volumes, excellent condition. Free for cost of shipping. Pearl, 406/485-3479.

Hymnals and Samplers—*The Lutheran Hymnal* (230 copies) and *Christian Worship Samplers* (160 copies). Free for cost of shipping. Jerusalem, Milwaukee, 414/241-5757.

Organ—Yamaha electone. Model E-10R. Free for cost of shipping. Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M., 505/292-6622.

Organ—Gulbransen, full-size electronic organ. Free for cost of shipping. Trinity, Brillion, Wis., 920/756-3738.

Choir gowns—24 gold and brown. Good condition. Free for cost of shipping. Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis., 608/837-5346.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Livermore, Calif.—Good Shepherd, 486 South J St, Livermore CA 94550. Sunday school and Bible class, 9:15 AM; worship, 10:30 AM. Paul Mueller, 925/371-6200.

SERVICE TIMES

Sun City, Ariz.—Winter visitors, join us at Our Savior during your stay. Sunday service, 9 AM. Bible classes, Monday, 9 AM and Thursday, 7 PM. 9925 N 103 Ave, Sun City, Ariz.; Paul Siegler, 602/977-2872.

Yuma, Ariz.—Winter visitors coming to Yuma, worship at Prince of Peace. Worship times—Dec. through March, 8:15 and 10:45 AM; April through Nov., 9 AM. 2500 S 8 Ave, Yuma, Ariz.; Alan Gumm, 520/726-8716.

The church is in trouble

Rolfe Westendorf

The community is in trouble and so is the church.

One pastor no longer serves a congregation of a 1,000 or more. Now, a second pastor, vicar, and staff minister have been added. Previously one teacher handled 54 children in three grades, more or less adequately. Now teachers are stretched to the limit with 25 children in two grades.

Today students require more teaching and members require more ministering. That requires more staff. And that takes more money—money that used to send missionaries and train ministers.

Sometimes even the extra staff is not enough. Pastors resign, and well-trained teachers, who assumed their ministry with dedication, look for less painful ways to earn a living.

A common thread runs through these difficulties. It's the breakdown of the family. Simply put, the church is being called to do more of what Mom and Dad used to do at home—and sometimes that's just too much. In fact, it's always too much, because pastors and teachers can't compensate for everything that goes wrong at home.

Fortunately, the church has the answer. It's called God's Word. The Bible not only tells you how to make a healthy family. It provides the strength to do it through the Holy Spirit. We have sermons and Bible classes, retreats and seminars, videos and premarital counseling, all designed to let the Word work.

And the blessings are abundant. Christian families find God's answers to their questions. They see where they need to change their priorities, and families headed for disaster end up on the right track again.

But it's not enough. Generally speaking, the families who are helped are among the 10 percent who are closest to the Word to

begin with. These are the families who come to Bible class and family workshops. They already have a spiritual foundation, but, without the extra attention from the Word, may have slipped.

The sad fact is that those who need the most help are least likely to get it. Like the crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda, someone else gets into the healing water before they can move themselves into position.

So the deterioration continues, in spite of occasional victories, and the church struggles to serve more children and adults who have been malformed by their homes.

What else can we do? We have taught the Word. We have prayed. We have produced tracts and Bible studies. We even offer a world-class family magazine—*Lutheran Parent*—worth far more than \$25 a year. Still we haven't been able to help the growing number of families who are too weak to seek spiritual help.

What now, Lord? John suggests the answer: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

The shepherd in Jesus' parable went after the sheep who was lost until he found it. Troubled families, now beyond the reach of our ministry, need to be brought back to the fold. How do you do that? How can you get the horse to drink when you can't lead him to water in the first place?

We can either use it as an excuse, or a challenge. We can offer Bible classes and give up on those who never come, or we can look for ways to help those who need the most help getting their priorities straight. Can we come up with a plan that will really make a difference?

I don't know, but I think we have to try.

Rolfe Westendorf is pastor at Siloah, Milwaukee.

The sad fact is that those who need the most help are least likely to get it.



R-e-s-p-e-c-t

Strong Christian relationships are based on respect.

Fredric E. Piepenbrink

In Philemon 17-21, Paul personally expresses the relationship he enjoyed with Philemon as a brother in Christ. Paul highly respected Philemon, and he hoped Philemon felt the same. This close relationship between two Christian brothers is the goal of every relationship in the church. But it can only happen if all members maintain high respect for one another.

Partners

Paul presents his last argument to Philemon for accepting his thieving, runaway slave, Onesimus, as a brother: **"If you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me"** (Philemon 17). Paul expected Philemon to consider them partners, working together for the gospel.

Who does the church's work? The pastor? The parishioners? Both. They are partners. Both use the gifts Christ, the head of the Church, entrusted to each for the good of the kingdom. Nothing is more disheartening than when a congregation thinks the pastor should do all the work, or when a pastor thinks no one else can do ministry. That thinking should have ended with the Reformation. Nothing is more enriching than when they respect

each other's gifts and view themselves as a team.

Divisions

Next, Paul mentions: **"If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self,"** (Philemon 18,19). Onesimus stole some money from Philemon, who might be reluctant to take Onesimus back because of the loss.

So also, many controversies that destroy fellowship in a church center around money. Dividing the economic pie can turn pastors against parishioners, parishioners against each other, and congregations against synods and area Lutheran high schools. But Paul wouldn't let money prevent two Christians from showing love.

Other social issues also cause divisions. Some members bring prejudices with them into the congregation that can create favoritism based on economic status, gender, race, intellect, or age. A lack of complete respect for one another can turn long-time members against new members, church workers against perceived non-workers, givers against perceived nongivers. But this should not be.

Respect

James says we should not respect some Christians more than others (James 2:1-7). Rather, treat all as God's precious children and valuable parts of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). There are no throw-away or better parts to the human body; each has a role and function. The same is true for the body of Christ. Paul's letter to Philemon is a strong encouragement for Christian respect. Paul told Philemon to treat his former runaway slave as an equal. Respect him as a man gifted by God and a fellow Christian for whom Christ died.

Parishioners, respect your pastor; he may have been the instrument God used to bring you to faith. Pastors, respect your parishioners; they are valuable members of Christ's body. Parishioners, respect one another. When there is respect for one another, members go out of their way to serve one another.

Then members and pastors jump into action to benefit the kingdom. Then they cannot do enough for each other. Paul wrote to Philemon, **"I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask"** (Philemon 20,21).

Fred Piepenbrink is pastor at Atonement, Milwaukee.

Next time: togetherness

PHILEMON
family respect
intercessors
togetherness
love forgiveness

The millennium bug

Joel C. Gerlach

The new year is making a lot of people extremely nervous. They're worried about the "millennium bug," otherwise known as the Y2K problem. It concerns everyone who uses a computer.

The Year 2000 Problem (Y2K) is the result of a decision computer programmers made at the beginning of the computer age. They designated calendar years with two digits instead of four, omitting the 19 to identify the century. Consequently computers are unable to distinguish the year 2000 from the year 1900.

To computer novices like me that seems like a rather simple problem. The truth is that corporate America is spending billions (yes, billions) of dollars in a panicky attempt to fix the bug before we change calendars again. Horror stories abound, alerting us to what will happen if the bug is not exterminated and systems subsequently crash.

In the 16th century, the Lutheran confessors, who subscribed their names to the Augsburg Confession in the presence of Emperor Charles V, were concerned about a more serious millennium bug—one with dire spiritual consequences rather than mere financial ones.

In Article XVII they said, "Also [our churches] teach that at the Consummation of the World, Christ will appear for judgment, and will raise up the dead; he will give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils he will condemn to be tormented without end.

"... They condemn also others, who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed."

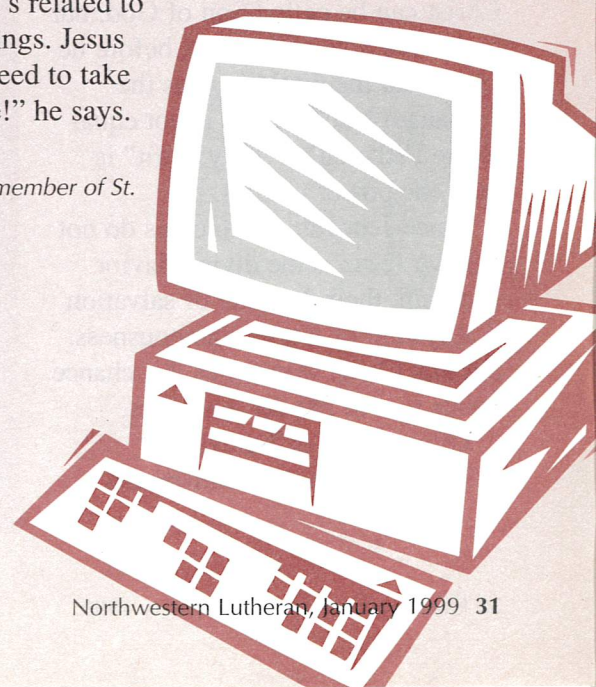
Visit any Christian bookstore, especially in the Bible Belt, and you will discover that the millennium bug the Augsburg Confession condemned is still alive and well. It thrives especially in Pentecostal, Baptist, and other Protestant churches. You can also find it on many Christian radio and TV stations. Even some Lutherans are willing to compromise what Article XVII condemns. A personal friend, a pastor in the former American Lutheran Church, once told me, "Prof. Bodensieck used to tell us in class that he personally did not believe in the millennium. But if it did happen, he said he wouldn't be taken by surprise."

Our Lutheran fathers warned that millennial teaching deflects attention away from the real nature of Christ's kingdom and arouses false hopes about the future of the world. It spawns utopian dreams. Nowhere does Jesus lead us to expect that "the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world" and the ungodly will be "everywhere suppressed."

The Y2K problem could have serious, though temporary, consequences for all of us. But the more serious millennium bug is not related to computers. It's related to false teachers and their teachings. Jesus tells us what precaution we need to take with regard to them. "Beware!" he says.

Joel Gerlach, a retired pastor, is a member of St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

But the more serious millennium bug is not related to computers. It's related to false teachers and their false teachings.



Other teachings

John F. Brug

What do the Jehovah's Witnesses teach?

Although Jehovah's Witnesses claim to accept the inspiration and authority of Scripture, in practice they subject all teaching to human reason. Historically, the starting point for the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses was the hostility that their founder, Charles Russel, had against the doctrine of the eternal duration of hell. He believed this teaching was contrary to reason, justice, and love.

The errors of Jehovah's Witnesses are so serious that they cannot be regarded as a Christian church.

The most serious consequence of the Jehovah's Witnesses' use of reason as the standard for doctrine is their denial of the Trinity. They believe there is only one divine person, who should be called Jehovah. Christ can be called Son of God, but he is only a "god," that is, before he came into the world he was the archangel Michael. He is not equal to the Father. The "holy spirit" is only the power of God.

Since Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe Jesus is the divine Savior from sin, their doctrine of salvation is a system of works righteousness. All that Christ won for us is a chance for us to win life for ourselves.

Other errors of Jehovah's Witnesses are millennialism and

rejection of the continued existence of the soul between death and the resurrection. During the millennium people will have another chance to win salvation.

A practice that has often gotten Jehovah's Witnesses into difficulties with governments is their refusal to salute the flag or to participate in the affairs of secular government. Jehovah's Witnesses have sometimes been taken into court because their beliefs led them to refuse blood transfusions for their children.

The errors of Jehovah's Witnesses are so serious that they cannot be regarded as a Christian church, but as an unchristian cult.

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

Interested in learning more about other religions? Christian living? Relationships? The Triune God? The beginning and the end? The Bible? Prayer? The Sacraments? Fellowship? The Church and its ministry?

Then the Question & Answer section on the WELS Web site is for you. Here questions posed by people all over the world are answered daily. And the Q & A is now divided into sections for easier access to past questions.

Read answers to difficult questions. Ask a question you have been wondering about. Learn more about your faith. Check out the Q & A section at <www.wels.net>.

I have heard the Covenant Church described as "renegade Lutherans." Are they really an offshoot of the Lutheran Church?

The Evangelical Covenant Church of America is the name adopted in 1957 by the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant of America, which had been founded in the late 19th century by Swedish immigrants. The official state church in their homeland Sweden was Lutheran. Already in Sweden, people who were dissatisfied by what they perceived to be a lack of spiritual vitality in the Lutheran state church had formed mission societies that were influenced by German pietism and Methodism. When some of these people moved to America, they formed the Swedish Lutheran Mission Synod, which later merged into the Swedish Mission Covenant. It is in that sense, I suppose, that some have called them "renegade Lutherans."

Although they may have been provoked in part by the shortcomings of the Lutheran state church, it must be noted that they also departed from biblical teaching at a number of points. They value a conversion experience and consecrated living more than doctrinal clarity. Though they use the Apostles' Creed, they do not have clearly defined doctrine and allow a certain amount of doctrinal diversity. They practice infant baptism but allow other views.

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

Re: "The wolf is at the door" [Oct. '98]. Although I am happy to see ideas to encourage WELS students and called workers, the ideas are beginning to feel worn out. There was nothing in the article that has not been mentioned at conventions, conferences, and in magazines. I am glad to see these ideas pursued and promoted diligently by the synod, but there is also a gold mine waiting to be tapped.

I am speaking of second career candidates. I feel many lay leaders would consider serving the Lord as a pastor. However, because they do not come from a pastor's family or were not schooled or raised in a WELS church, they do not believe themselves capable of serving in this capacity. I feel the blame for this attitude lies with our leaders for not encouraging lay leaders and young adults.

If you know someone that is active in the Word and the work of the Lord, take every opportunity to encourage them and unlock their potential. Do not overlook your future pastors and teachers because they do not have a Wisconsin accent or because they work at the local convenience store or Wal-Mart.

*Clarence Wittwer
Alvin, Texas*

We are very happy with all the topics discussed in *Northwestern Lutheran*. There are times I read it in one sitting and share it with friends who might benefit from certain articles. Articles in which pastors address problems we face today are important. The pastors are direct, using God's Word but always showing love for the soul. Thank you for your efforts and good work.

*Judy and Burt Johnson
Longmont, Colorado*

I have enjoyed Mark Jeske's articles on inner-city ministries. However, I'm not sure I share his sadness at the lack

of "non-member" students in our Lutheran elementary schools. If by non-member he means legitimate mission prospects, then I, too, am sad we don't have more students enrolled. If by non-member he means members of heterodox churches who intend on remaining members of those churches, then I am not sad. These people are persistent errorists with whom the Lord says not to be "unequally yoked."

*Scott E. Jungen
Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

Re: "Koinonia (fellowship) in practice." I find Pastor Piepenbrink's articles on fellowship refreshing because he speaks of Christian fellowship as such a joyous thing. There may be times we experience the anguish of finding it necessary to separate from a brother or sister in Christ to remain true to our Savior and his Word. Through it all, however, let us center our attention, as Piepenbrink does, on the wondrous blessings we share not only with fellow members of our synod, but with all others who know Jesus as Savior.

*Harold R. Johnne
Austin, Texas*

It seems we have a hard time expressing ourselves when it comes to Christian love. The fine article on intercession [Nov. '98] is a case in point. The author gives many good reasons why Philemon should heed Paul's request that he receive Onesimus as a son. But Paul simply says, "Yet I appeal to you on the basis of love." That means that Paul wants Philemon to welcome Onesimus back because Paul loves Philemon and Philemon loves Paul—and that is happening because both have been loved by God. Paul wanted Philemon to respond favorably to his request for love's sake.

Perhaps that is so obvious that it didn't need to be said in the article. It is obvious to me that this very thing needs to be said over and over again.

*Rolfe F. Westendorf
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

Re: "The principal scriptural principle" [Nov. '98]. How sad that you, Kenneth Cherney, would write such an article. To some, the Bible is the here and now "how to." If this is where the answers to their questions lie, how wonderful to find them in the Bible. Just think how many more questions they have and where they will turn for answers. Some for the here and now, some for the "how to," and yes, some to find out what's on God's mind.

*Suzi Schuster
Omro, Wisconsin*

Ken Cherney, Jr. replies:

The purpose was certainly not to discourage Bible study, nor do I deny that God's law provides direction for daily living. But an approach to Bible study that seeks only "life principles" makes it virtually impossible for the gospel to shine through—to say nothing of the tortured interpretations that result when Scripture is pressed for answers to questions that it simply doesn't address.

When we let the holy writers set their own agenda and speak on their own terms, we find ourselves reading the story of our salvation—not an almanac of advice for the here and now. As Luther said: "He who would correctly and profitably read Scripture should see to it that he finds Christ in it; then he finds eternal life without fail." When Bible study programs point students away from Christ—as often happens—this is what is truly "sad."

Re: "When bad things happen to good people" [Nov. '98]. I found the article interesting and encouraging. But, I feel one must also be reminded that Jesus, who was perfect, suffered bad things. It started in infancy with the flight into Egypt, and continued throughout his life with making enemies of the leaders of the church, friends and family dying, hunger, thirst, and finally a cruel death. How can we expect less?

*Karen Gertz
Farmington Hills, Michigan*



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

It's good to
feel good
about your
Christianity.

Feeling good about feeling good

How do you feel about your religion? That question is not as obvious as you might think. In fact, it's a risky question. Some would rather we didn't ask it, because Christianity is not about feeling. It is about God's truth and what he has done to give you eternal life. It's true no matter how you feel.

Beware of the religion that only seeks to make you feel good. Such religions are reinvented periodically. They ask, "What do you want from your religion (church)?" and they give it to you. They do what it takes to make you feel good—at least for now. God's Word and truth, in any absolute sense, have little to do with it.

That approach to religion is called "feel-good" religion. It usually waters down God's law and talk of sin, because that doesn't make you feel good. It offers oodles of tea and sympathy. It's a religion lacking substance and, in the extreme, without God's promises.

Even so, don't confuse it with feeling good in your religion—feeling good in your Christian faith and hope, in your worship and praise, feeling good about witnessing and doing good. It's good to feel good about your Christianity.

We are speaking of feeling good in two ways here: one creates religion to make you feel good, the other the religion itself leaves you feeling good. So, the earlier cautions bear repeating: God's message to us is not about feeling good; it's about receiving eternal life. In fact, you may feel lousy, but you're still saved in Christ. Your disposition does not color God's love toward you. Also, it's never good to feel good about sin—not the world's and not your own. Anything opposed to God's will should give us a bad feeling. The call to repentance must be sounded, and we must

be humbled by it: aware of our sin and our need for forgiveness.

Now, think of the reasons God has given you to feel good:

1. He sent his Son to be your Savior.
2. He has given you his Holy Spirit in Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the message of Christ crucified and risen to work faith in you and comfort you.
3. He has forgiven all your sins and counts you righteous for Jesus' sake.
4. He promises to answer your every prayer spoken in Jesus' name.
5. His forgiveness in Christ applies to all people.
6. Jesus is coming again and will take you and all who believe in him to heaven.
7. He gives you a church where you join fellow believers in confession and praise and fellowship and love.
8. With his forgiveness, he gives you the will and the power to forgive others.
9. He instills in you the desire to tell others about Jesus.
10. He works everything for your good as long as you love him, and his Spirit brings you "love, joy, peace. . . ."

A simple list, you say? Yes, but not at all exhaustive of the blessings God gives.

You know all of that already? Exactly! Isn't that what makes you happy as a Christian? Because of those simple, unchangeable, oft-repeated truths, you can face each day feeling good. Notice, I did not say face each day free of troubles—that comes with heaven. But you can feel good about what God has done for you as he leads you to heaven.

That's what keeps me going. How about you?

Gary P. Baumler

1999 WELS INTERNATIONAL YOUTH RALLY

OTTAWA, CANADA
July 7-10



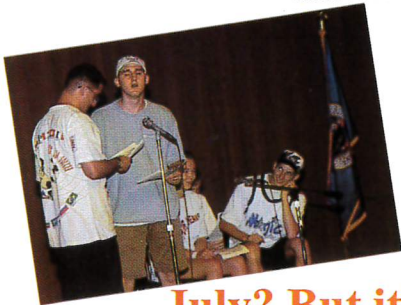
Family

Honor everyone. Love the

f
a
m
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matters

of believers. Fear God. 1 Peter 2:17



July? But it's only January ...

Don't delay! Sign up now! Registration forms arrived in WELS congregations in November. The registration deadline is February 15th.

But it's going to be boring ...

Are you kidding?

- ☞ It's a foreign country!
- ☞ You're going to worship with 1800 of your closest friends!
- ☞ FOOD!
- ☞ We're going to talk about dating, prayer, and friends!
- ☞ You'll get to spend a day exploring Ottawa—the capital of Canada!
- ☞ You'll get to play on a professional football field!
- ☞ Beavertails (you'll never know unless you come)!



But I don't have enough money ...

- ☞ Start saving ... NOW!
- ☞ Talk to your youth counselor. Some congregations have funds set up for this.

But I have more questions ...

Talk to your pastor or youth counselor. Or call the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship at 414/256-3274 for a registration packet.

Full of beans?

Know God's truth, teach God's truth.

John L. Eich

At the church summer picnic, I always liked guessing the number of beans in a jar. I'd examine it carefully. I'd even try counting the beans at the bottom and then estimating how many rows. Usually I wasn't close.

In another vein, think of each family member's favorite song. Who picked the right song, the best song? Not a fair question? That's right, there is no right, wrong, or "best" song—a person's favorite song is a matter of personal taste.

Take your pick?

When we decide what to believe, is it more like guessing the number of beans or choosing our favorite song? Is it a wild guess or a matter of personal taste? It is neither, but sometimes we don't act that way.

Some parents say, "We won't force our child to go to church. He can choose when he gets older." Others say, "Whatever you believe is up to you. It's what works for you." When we think we have to guess what God wants us to believe, we are being tempted to think that our faith is "full of beans"—just a guess or personal taste.

What if we did the same in other matters? How long would a teacher last if she said, "You can believe that $2+2=5$ if you want, but that's not for me." What if a police officer or judge told a criminal, "However you want to live, that's up to you. I can't judge your choices." Consider if parents placed ice cream and vegetables before their children and said, "Take your pick. I won't force my eating habits on you. You decide for yourself."

For Christians, God doesn't say, "Guess which one is right," or "Pick which one you like." He clearly defines our beliefs in his Word. It is centered in Jesus—his perfect life for us and his sacrificial death for our sins. What we believe testifies to our relationship with Jesus. Jesus taught, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples" (John 8:31).

For Christians, God doesn't say, "Guess which one is right," or "Pick which one you like."

Tell the truth!

What we believe matters as much as how we come to believe. I can firmly believe a brick wall is soft, but it still hurts when I run into it. One can believe there are many ways to God. But there still is only one way to the true God.

If we don't boldly teach and confess that truth, we give the impression that it isn't really worth believing. Children's concepts of right and wrong, their habits, and view of God form at an early age. Without our guidance, who teaches them? Television? Friends? Magazines? Though we can't force anyone to believe, it doesn't mean we don't teach them.

How we live is as important as what we say. When I guessed the beans in the jar, I watched how others guessed. Mimicking them, I sometimes got a closer guess than when I did it on my own. When we live the truth, people watching us



will see the benefits of the truth. Jesus tells us to let our light shine before men so they see our good deeds and praise the Father in heaven. Ask yourself daily: "Am I living my faith in such a way that I show others it is worth believing?"

We are not full of beans when we say with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Let's proclaim our faith and teach our faith.

And leave the bean guessing for the fair.

John Eich is pastor at Grace, Alma, Michigan.