

NORTHWESTERN

June 1999

LUTHERAN

THE WORD FROM THE WELS



Teens in trouble.
How you can cope when your teen does not grow up the way you hoped.
8

What Buddhists believe

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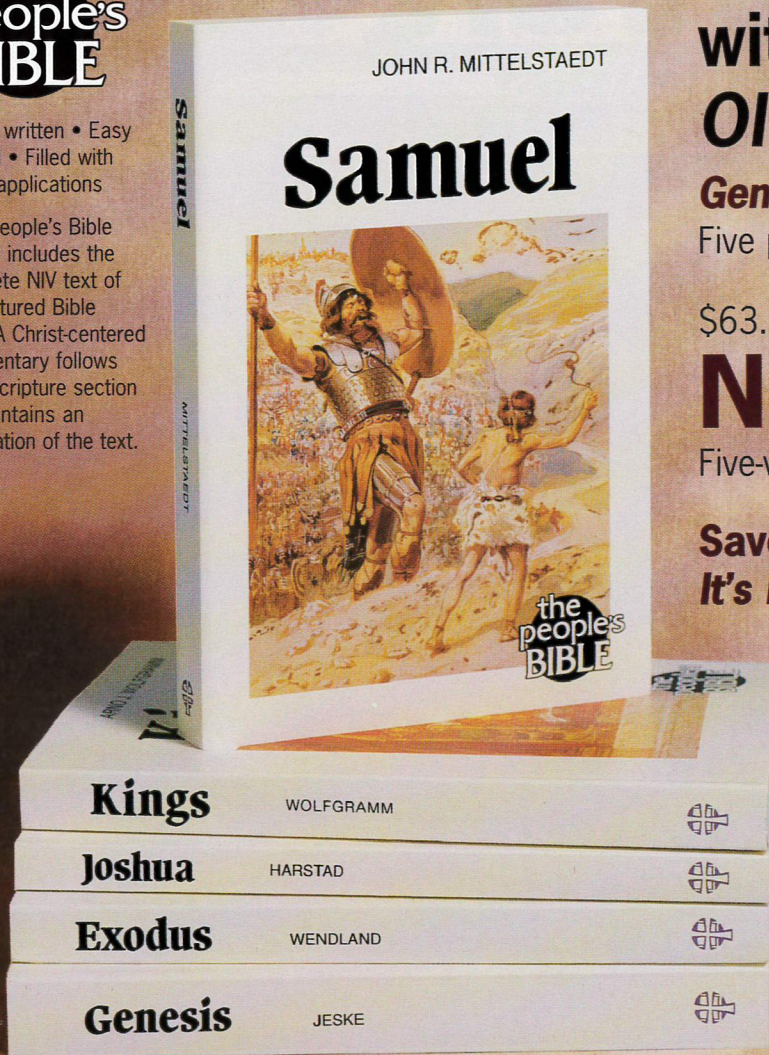
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Kindness conquers evil

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:20,21)

Paul M. Janke

“I’d like to throw the switch myself.” So said a man whose wife and daughter had been brutally murdered. A reporter had asked him how he felt about the murderer. The man’s desire to throw the switch in the execution chamber was predictable, even understandable, given the magnitude of his loss. But it was not the response the Bible encourages. Time and again the Bible instructs us to steer clear of vengeful thoughts and plans.

Thoughts of revenge come naturally

The spirit of revenge manifests itself early. In the nursery, at the sandbox, and on the playground, those who get hit respond frequently by hitting back.

We may gain more self-control as we mature and learn to conform to the norms of civilized society, but the spirit of revenge dies hard. It’s one thing to be kind to those who are kind to us. It’s more of a challenge to be kind to those that have hurt us or hurt our loved ones. Delivering some kind of payback, even if it’s just the silent treatment, seems like the reasonable thing to

do. “Don’t get mad, get even,” says the popular maxim.

Take vengeance, and evil conquers

Even mature Christians can find it supremely difficult not to repay evil for evil. In fact, we may be most apt to sin when we’ve been provoked by someone who has sinned against us. But the fact that we were victims of someone’s sin is no justification for sinning ourselves. Taking revenge keeps sin alive and multiplies its effect. To give in to thoughts of vengeance is to be overcome by evil.

A look at the world scene reveals how poorly vengeance solves problems. What has the long series of revenge bombings and assassinations done to improve relations between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, or between Jews and Palestinians in Israel? With each act of revenge the tide of evil only rises.

With kindness, good conquers evil

Heaping burning coals on an enemy’s head* sounds like vengeance, but it’s not. Food for a hungry enemy or water to quench his thirst are far more effective at

conquering the enemy than vengeance is. Kindness kills our enemies, not by doing them harm, but by leading them to repent of the evil they have done to us.

Jesus not only said, “Love your enemies,” he did it. Do you remember how Jesus reattached the severed ear of Malchus in Gethsemane? It was remarkable kindness toward a man who had come to arrest him unjustly. As the soldiers were fastening his body to the cross, Jesus prayed for his executioners, “Father, forgive them.” This was the perfect love that exceeds our capabilities. It was love that met the Father’s expectations for us to the fullest.

More than modeling a spirit that refuses to take revenge, there at the cross Jesus was paying the debt for all our vengeful thoughts and actions. In his forgiveness we find the power to forgive rather than to retaliate.

NL

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

* Burning coals on one’s head apparently is a picture of blushing with shame or feeling pangs of contrition.

If you’re close enough to read this, I forgive you.

Don't get mad,
GET EVEN!

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN

Official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

June 1999 / Vol. 86, No. 6
www.wels.net

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courtesy of Charles Westra, 16
courtesy of Lester Ring, 18
courtesy of Dennis Valleau, 20
Mrs. Kevin Scheibel Photography, 36
correction: The photo on p. 12 of the May NL
was provided by Joel Mischke, not Jim Aderman

Subscription services

1-800-662-6093 ext. 8

Milwaukee area 414/475-6600 ext. 5

Northwestern Publishing House

1250 N 113 Street

Milwaukee WI 53226-3284

USA—\$9. Canada—\$9.63. Large print—\$24. All
other countries—air mail \$40; surface mail \$24.
Write for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates.

Available on audio cassette
from Mission for the Visually Impaired,
559 Humboldt Avenue, St. Paul MN 55107.

Northwestern Lutheran
(ISSN 0029-3512) is published monthly
by Northwestern Publishing House,
1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.
Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to *Northwestern Lutheran*,
c/o Northwestern Publishing House,
1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

©1999 by *Northwestern Lutheran*.

Printed in the USA.



Cover photo by Susan Tolonen

Raising a teenager is not easy. Learn how to react when your teens don't turn out the way you planned.

8

bits & pieces



The shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., shook our nation. Images of mourning, suffering teenagers cannot be brushed aside. Many asked "What went wrong?" While no easy answers exist, some suggestions have been offered.

- Some blame uninvolved parents. But what happens when parents are involved and children still rebel? What if children choose a different path? Turn to "When things go wrong" on page 10 for tips on coping when problems come.

This article ends our series on teens. Our thanks to the six authors who brought fresh insights and ideas to parents raising teens in today's society.

- One author blames Satan. While Satan occasionally "wins," remember that Jesus is ultimately victorious. Read "In the face of death" on page 25. On this page, you'll also find out how our WELS congregations were affected by the shootings.

- Another group blames our society, which is full of angry rhetoric, strife, and hate. It sometimes spills over into our lives or our churches. How should Christians react? Four articles address different facets of dissent, anger, evil, and hatred.

- ✓ "Kindness conquers evil" (p. 3)

- ✓ "When problems come" (p. 14)

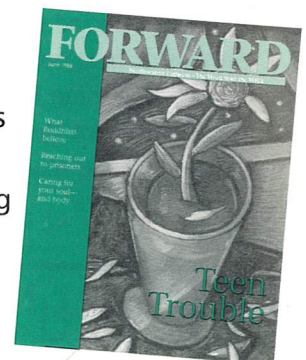
- ✓ "I hate this subject" (p. 34)

- ✓ "We aim to proclaim" (p. 36)

- No matter what terror strikes, God's love is faithful. See "Safe in the shelter," p. 30.



Over the next two years, we'll be celebrating our synod's 150th anniversary with the theme "Forward in Christ." At NL, we wanted to be part of the celebration too. So, starting next month, we are adding the name "Forward" to our cover. While the magazine may look a little different on the outside, rest assured, it's the same magazine on the inside.



—LRB

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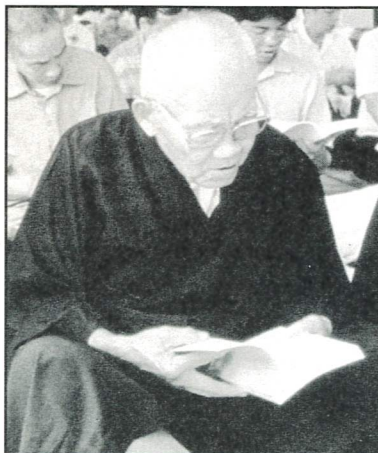
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I hate this subject

I'm glad that Kettle Moraine LHS [Mar.] put their acreage to good use by creating habitats for learning and enjoyment. I don't wish to detract from the point of the article regarding stewardship of creation, but I would like to offer some ways in which the students could further benefit during their environmental studies.

The students could learn the difference between unfounded environmental theories and scientific evidence. For example, the article mentioned global warming as an effect of sin that corrupts creation. The theory of global warming is not proven by scientific evidence—even one of its original proponents admits that. Like evolutionary theory, it is an issue raised by people with their own social and political agendas who have a distinct secular humanistic worldview.

The article also mentioned "evoking environmental activism" as a benefit for the students. Perhaps the science classes could also take a moment to examine the agendas of different environmental activist groups. When these students get to college they will need to be prepared to face people who use the desire for a clean environment as a mechanism for restricting political freedom and enforcing greater governmental control over private property.

Another good class project would be coming up with a Christian alternative to the slogan "think globally act locally." Every time I see that, I think of people who hold funerals for trees. The distinction between the Christian view of God's good earth and the humanistic view of a fragile planet that will collapse if we don't save it has never been sharper. Hopefully all our students will be able to see that as well.

 Dan Krueger
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Tom Mellon should be careful not to teach as fact the questionable theories of global warming and ozone depletion. If he teaches Creation Appreciation class every day, let him be careful not to teach radical, tree-hugging, green ideas that despise technology. **We don't need more activism in students, unless it is activism for the Word.**

Arthur E. Brandt
Mesa, Arizona



Greetings! I am writing you about the article "Because he lives" [Apr.] It was a great article. I am a pen pal for WELS Special Ministries through New Ulm, Minn., and I am

going to send the article to my pen pal.

I always look forward to the issues of *Northwestern Lutheran*. I want to share this article with other people because so many people don't understand the reason behind Jesus' resurrection. What he did for us was absolutely amazing! We would be nothing without him! God bless you!

Tricia

Last name withheld for privacy.—ed.

I was concerned with the content of "Life after confirmation" [Apr.] I feel that the tone could lead readers to move away from the importance of memorizing God's Word through the catechism, its meanings and explanations, and the Scripture passages that support these teachings.

If these things are not the main things in confirmation instruction, then what is? We cannot relate in a Christian manner to life situations if we do not have a secure knowledge of God's Word. We cannot do true acts of service in our church without the understanding that they are done

in thanks to what God has given us. God's Word when taught in its truth and purity is timeless. It is as valid, certain, and pertinent today as it was at its inception and as it will be to all future generations.

Unfortunately, I believe the high percentage of confirmand absences so soon after confirmation is directly related to the decline of the importance of faith in our families. The deterioration is serious. How many parents set a Christian example for their children by attending adult Bible classes, leading home devotions and family prayers, reviewing/studying the catechism and Bible verses with their child, or even just attending church on a regular basis? We cannot expect our children to be faithful if we adopt a "do as I say, not as I do" attitude. I am quite certain that the percentage of family church attendance is directly related to the percentage of confirmand dropouts.

God himself encourages us in Hebrews 6:11,12 to crave instruction in his Word. It is my prayer that families will turn back to their Bibles and truly become partners with their church. I pray that our churches do not back away from the important task of engraving God's Word on the hearts and minds of our children, but continue to do so with the help of God. If we stay true to God's Word, it will be life-relating to our youth and their service will be from the heart.

Rita Stolt
Bloomer, Wisconsin

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Plant some trees

Armin J. Panning

I have vivid recollections of a senior colleague who made the observation: "Only old men plant trees." That's not entirely accurate, but it makes a point. Young people take the future for granted. They assume that everything will always be there. They assume that there will always be trees for shade, for fruit, for lumber. Older folks aren't quite so complacent about the future.

It's a sign of maturity (hopefully not senility) to look back and reflect on where we've come from. On a national level, the bicentennial celebration in 1976 did much to encourage an interest in the history of our country. It encouraged preserving historic buildings and marking important sites. More people started researching their genealogical roots and documenting them in carefully constructed family trees.

Such interest in the past is seen also in WELS. We're planning a major observance of our church body's 150th anniversary. Also, many congregations are reaching the 50th, 75th, or 100th anniversary of their existence. Some have done an excellent job of documenting their history. But by and large, much more can and should be done at the congregational level.

Let me be so bold as to suggest that perhaps an agenda item at your next council meeting or congregational meeting should be "Plant some trees!" Take some forward-looking steps to preserve your congregation's history for future generations. Simple and uncomplicated measures will serve nicely. Let me suggest four basic steps:

- **Gather whatever records the congregation has:** old constitutions, membership lists, dedication folders and anniversary booklets, written histories, etc. Scattered materials tend to deteriorate and get lost.

- **Provide a safe storage place for these materials.** Most records involve

paper, which is very vulnerable to moisture and rough handling.

- **Put someone in charge.** Having a congregational historian is a fine option. Appointing a small standing committee that reports regularly to the congregation is perhaps likelier to assure continuity.

- **Share significant material.** Anniversary and dedication folders, congregational histories, etc., are of great value to the synodical archives, currently housed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Give artifacts of historical significance to the WELS Historical Society for its museum, located in the Salem Landmark Church in Milwaukee.

Why should we preserve a record of our past? Enjoying history is a legitimate interest purely for its own sake. But there's a much more important consideration: reflecting on our history gives glory to God. It shows us how God has kept his promises. Without fail he has sustained us through difficult times in the past. Knowing our history leads us to say with the psalmist, "In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them" (Psalm 22:4).

Evidence of such deliverance in the past gives us the courage to trust God also for the future. When we're appalled by the present and apprehensive of the future, it's good to look back. Then we see how faithfully God has been keeping his promise given 2,000 years ago when he assured us, "Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Relying on God's sure promises, every Christian "is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers" (Psalm 1:3).

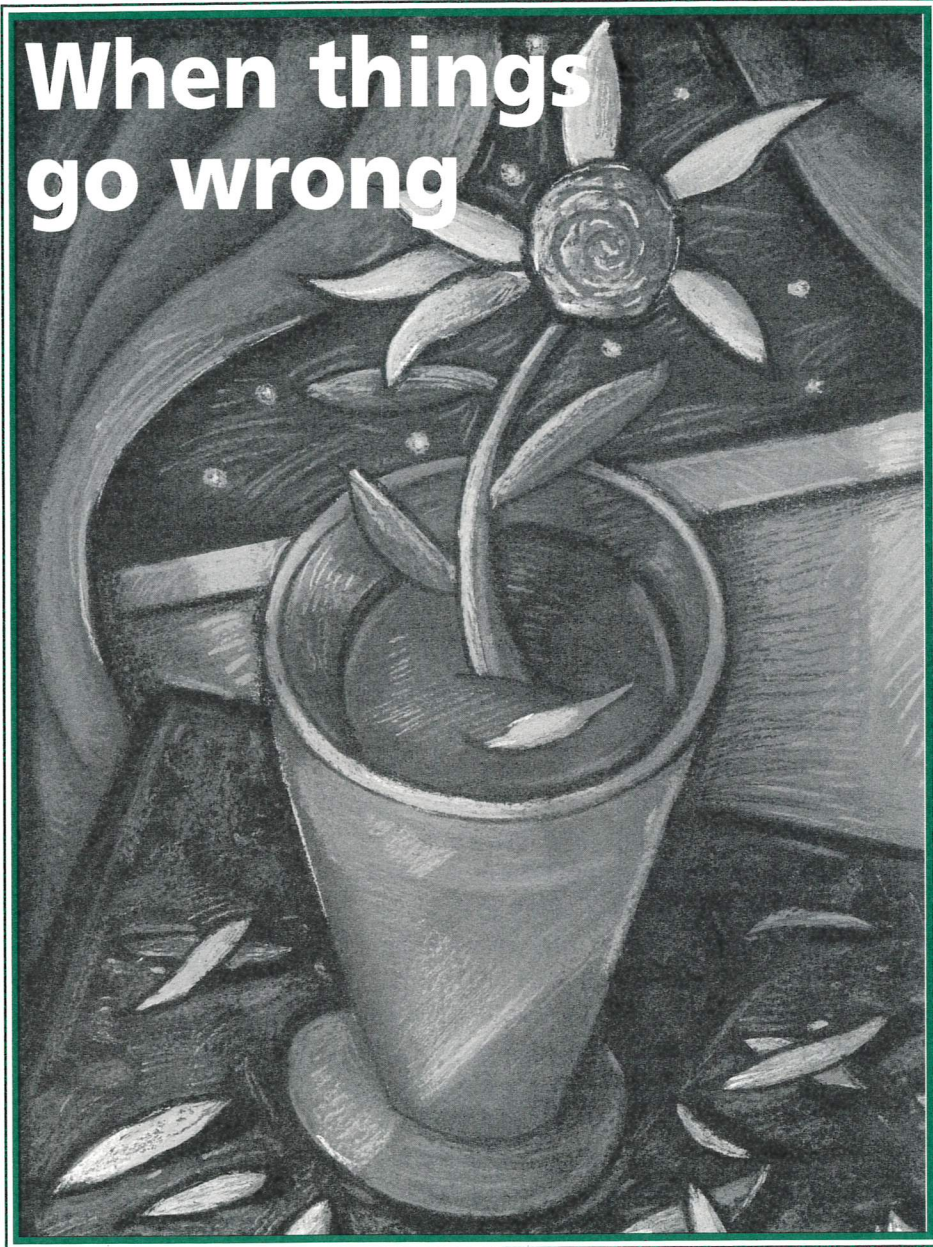
Armin Panning is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.



Reflecting on
our history
gives glory
to God.



When things go wrong



with strong athletic abilities, he is a valuable asset to his school's sports teams. Off the playing field, however, you'll find him at the latest party, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol.

"How can two boys raised in the same home by the same parents be so different?" their father laments. "Where did we go wrong?" questions Mom.

As our children grow up and become more independent, they move out from under the protective umbrella of our homes. They are faced with more options, greater temptations, and the freedom to choose from a wide range of self-serving to God-pleasing decisions. We pray that they will choose wisely, but they don't always. There is nothing more painful than watching a son or daughter set out upon the wrong path.

Although we all struggle with sin, different personalities struggle in different areas. Something that may be a strong temptation to one may be easily resisted by another. Some behaviors have more obvious and harmful consequences than others, but all sin puts us equally at the foot of the cross. As parents we need to recognize the weaknesses and temptations that our children are vulnerable to and equip them to resist those temptations.

Avoid behaviors that don't help

1. Self-blame. We are not responsible for the decisions our children make using their own free will. Just because a child makes a poor decision doesn't mean that we are bad parents. Every parent faces failures and shortcomings, and for these, we find forgiveness in the cross of Christ.

What to do, and not to do, when your child goes down the wrong path.



Susan Bondow

David and Dennis are brothers. They share the same Mom and Dad and grew up in the same household, but that is where the similarities stop.

David is an above-average student, hardworking and industrious.

He takes things seriously and readily expresses his faith.

Dennis, on the other hand, is a magnet for trouble. A mischief-maker throughout grade school, he continues to gravitate toward the wild crowd in high school. Blessed

God uses all things—even our mistakes—for the good of his children. It is most helpful to look ahead, not back, and to deal with the present.

2. Anger. God's Word tells us, "In your anger do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). Wrong behavior in a child is upsetting. Yet we must maintain a spirit of love and concern in dealing with an errant child. Our goal is to point out how the offense is not acceptable to God and then lead him to repentance. Then we can assure him of the peace of forgiveness that is ours through Christ.

There may be a long time where you can't do much besides pray.

We may also be tempted to be angry at God. "How could you let this happen, Lord?" When these thoughts strike, we must get back to the Word, for it is there that we are reminded of how God: "is the same yesterday, today, and forever;" "will never leave us or forsake us;" and "makes all things beautiful in his time."

3. Enabling behavior. It is tempting to want to rescue our child from the consequences of her actions. We must resist this temptation, or we will remove the natural teaching tools that God would use. Actions have consequences: what we sow, we will reap. Consequences bring pain but also valuable lessons for life.

Engage in behaviors that do help

1. Allow yourself to grieve. When a child makes poor decisions and engages in wrong behavior, there are losses to be grieved. There may be the loss of a close relationship, loss of communication, loss of trust, and feelings of hurt, disappointment, and betrayal. Some people keep a journal, recording their emotional roller-coaster ride, as well as answers to prayer and the comfort and assurance received along the way from God's Word. Don't rush this process. Give yourself time to heal.

2. Don't hide. Often our first reaction is to run and hide. We don't want to face the judgments and criticisms of others. Don't go it alone. Seek out those who can offer wise counsel, support, and encouragement—relatives, friends, pastor, people who know your child well. Stay involved and connected at church, giving others an opportunity to nurture and support. You may be surprised at how big your support system really is.

3. Communicate. Stay connected with your child. Continue to be a role model of the faith that is in you. Let your life express your reliance and confidence in your God. Share your heartfelt concerns with him at every opportunity—face-to-face, cards and letters, care packages, e-mail, telephone. Don't leave God's Word out of your speech or writings for God

tells us, "It [the Word] will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

4. Prayer. There may be a long time where you can't do much besides pray. Just like the prodigal son, your child may need to reach rock bottom before she comes to her senses and sees the light.

Imagine yourself taking the child you love and placing her into the arms of your heavenly Father. See the care, concern, and compassion on his face as he scoops her up and holds her close. Leave your burdens at his feet as well and continue on in faith and hope. Rest assured of God's love and faithfulness.

Never give up

God doesn't give up on us, and we need to follow his example. God knows and loves your child more than you do. He is far more powerful than you are in working changes in the heart. "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18:14).

Hold on to the hope that all is not lost and that your child still has the possibility of returning as did the prodigal son: "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24).

NL

Susan Bondow is a member at St. Peter, Appleton, Wisconsin.



He “ate bitterness”—for me!



For all its talk of merit and compassion, Buddhism knows little of the love that saves from sin and rescues from eternal suffering. Robert A. Siirila

Buddhist monks.

The goal of Buddhism is to find enlightenment by looking inside for truth.

“I just don’t know why my life is so bitter,” Pi-Yun, a Taiwanese woman told me recently. “I must have harmed someone in a former life. Now I’m suffering what I deserve.” I wasn’t sure how that thought was a comfort to her. I could only wonder where it came from.

It comes from Buddhism. This worldwide religion provides answers like these to over 600 million people, including several million in the United States. I encounter Buddhism every day in Taiwan. It is more than yellow-clad monks, meditation, and eating vegetarian food. It grapples with issues that have perplexed people for ages. Why is there suffering? How do I escape it?

The Enlightened One

About 560 BC, Prince Siddhartha was born in northern India. Raised in luxury, he later forsook his wife, child, and inheritance. After meditating for 40 days under a tree, he had a sudden insight that desire is the cause of all suffering. Eliminate desire, he said, and you eliminate suffering. Faithful followers named him Buddha, “The Enlightened One.”

While Paul was spreading the gospel in Asia Minor and Europe, Buddhist monks were bringing the new religion to China, Japan, Tibet, and elsewhere in Asia. Each region developed slightly different philosophies and techniques. In Taiwan, popular Buddhism is often an eclectic

mixture of Buddhist thought, Taoist gods, and traditional religious practice.

Buddha declared that the path to enlightenment was the Noble Eightfold Path: right belief, right purpose, right speech, right behavior, right occupation, right effort, right thinking, and right meditation. The cornerstone of Buddhism is meditation. The concept sounds very modern: look inside for truth. Buddhism offers “enlightenment” to any and all who take the time and have the patience to wholeheartedly commit to the process.

The cycle of death and rebirth

When Pi-Yun called, I found out she was wondering how she could change her fate. According to Buddhism, her suffering is the result

of “karma.” Karma means Action-Cause-Effect. One’s soul or character is the sum result of all previous thoughts and actions, in this or previous lives. A person who has more virtues than vices has good karma, which results in a relatively pleasant life. Sins such as greed and killing—which includes eating meat—result in bad karma and suffering. By purifying one’s thoughts and actions, a person can eventually negate bad karma. At the end of the path is nirvana—a kind of “virtual heaven” in which one is assimilated into the “cosmic consciousness,” just as a drop of water is absorbed by the ocean.

Such self-purification usually requires many lifetimes to realize. Reincarnation, a continuous cycle of death and rebirth, makes this possible. Much as college credits can be transferred, so Buddhist merits or demerits are transferred from one life to the next. One can be reborn as a saint or a sinner, depending on how much merit one has stored up.

A Buddhist would tell Pi-Yun, “You need to work harder to produce enough merit to outbalance the bad karma in your life. Be kinder. Offer more money at the temple. Burn better incense. In the next life you will have a better fate and be one step closer to escaping the cycle of death and rebirth.”

The karma apple

Self-reliance is an obvious trait of Buddhism. A student came to one of our Bible classes a while ago. She heard about how Jesus saves us because we are unable to do so ourselves. She wagged her head. “You Christians have to rely on God. We Buddhists are not so weak. We save ourselves.”

Satan once said to Eve concerning the forbidden fruit, “When you eat

of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” That voice still speaks today. “Become enlightened. Take control of your own fate. Become your own god. All you have to do is take a bite of the karma apple.”

I talked with a taxi driver who shared a commonly-held opinion in Taiwan: “All religions are basically good. They teach you to do good deeds.” I told him, “Good deeds are good, but not good enough to save us. Buddhists trust in their own good deeds. Christians trust only in the good deeds Jesus did.” This was the first time he heard this concept.

The concept of one person saving another is contrary to the worldview of a Buddhist. He wonders, “How can one person eat and make another person’s belly feel satisfied?” Buddhists agree that every person deserves suffering for his own sin. The idea they can’t accept is that Jesus “eats and we are filled.”

Looking inside for enlightenment

Buddha is quoted as saying, “Work out your own salvation with diligence.” Can this be done? A Buddhist scholar once visited a famous Zen Buddhist teacher and asked him, “What’s the greatest teaching of Buddhism?” The priest simply said, “Do not do evil things. Do good things.” The visitor was puzzled and replied, “Well, even a three-year-old child knows that!” The scholar solemnly replied, “But to do it is beyond the ability of an 80-year-old grandfather.”

Nevertheless, great masses of people in Asia and elsewhere know nothing better. Without Jesus, they look inside for enlightenment. Unfortunately, it is like being in a dark cave, without a flashlight,

searching for a flying bat. “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Enlightenment is an elusive target, but even if you could grab it, would it be worth it?

The light has shined

Truly, we need enlightening. Try as we might, there is no meditation technique that can overcome spiritual blindness. The law can only show us how far we fall short of God’s standard. The light must come from outside ourselves. The gospel points us to Jesus who says: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

A former Buddhist, who is now in our church, told me, “Jesus is love. Buddha only tells me what I have to do. Jesus did what I cannot do.” For all its talk of merit and compassion, Buddhism knows little of the love that saves from sin and rescues from eternal suffering.

Suffering, in Chinese, means “eating bitterness.” Buddhism tells my friend Pi-Yun that she has to eat her own bitterness. She must pay for her own sins. The gospel, however, declares that someone ate all the bitterness that she, and we, deserve. “The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus won for us not just relief from suffering, but forgiveness for our sin and eternal life. Jesus freely offers his merit for us. It’s ours for the believing.

Pi-Yun, are you listening?

NL

Robert Siirila is a missionary in Taipei, Taiwan. He has been there since 1984 and is the team leader of the WELS Taiwan mission.

For more information on our Taiwan mission, check out the summer issue of *Mission Connection*.

Healthy body, active service

How taking care of your body can bring glory to God.

Linda R. Baacke

Face it! Many are obsessed. Screaming headlines don't help: Lose 10 pounds. Build better biceps. Win the fight against fat.

With society's frenzied obsession for physical perfection, it's tempting to look at yourself and think: Yuck! Seriously, when was the last time you looked past your body's "flaws" and saw only a beautiful creation?

Never? Well, that's not the way it

should be. Psalm 139 reminds us that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." God formed us, he knows us, he *knit* us. He tells us that we—and this includes our bodies—are special to him.

Our bodies—just like our talents, our money, our time, and our world—are blessings that God gives us to use wisely. How we use them is one way Christians can give glory to God.

Here are three examples of how some Christians are being good stewards of their bodies. See how whether they eat or drink or exercise, they are doing it all for God's glory.

Caring for the body

Matt Schwartz, a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, knows the importance of being healthy. While Schwartz was a vicar in Anchorage, he changed his eating and exercise habits and lost 60 pounds.

"My grandfather went into the hospital for his fourth bypass surgery," says Schwartz. "They say

heart disease is genetic, and I had the feeling it could be passed my way."

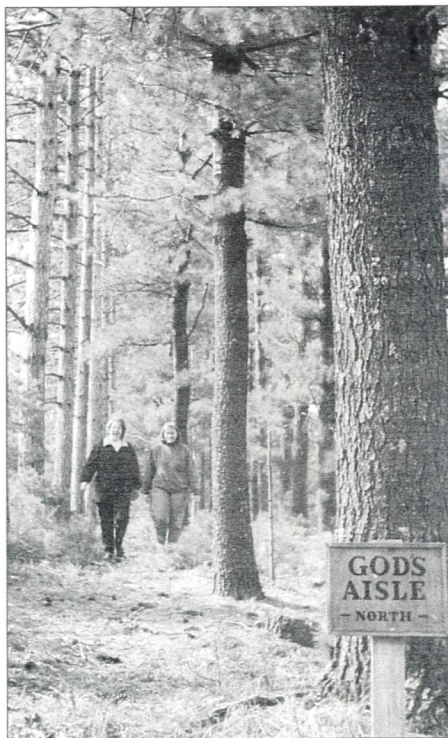
Feeling the need to live a healthier lifestyle, he began losing weight by cutting out fast food from his diet, and by eating healthier meals, including more vegetables. In addition, he joined a health club for exercise.

He sees the spiritual benefits of his lifestyle change. "It gave me more energy to do more work. Hopefully the Lord will use my healthier lifestyle to keep me around a bit longer to serve him in my ministry."

Caring for the body of Christ

Members at Good Shepherd, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., want to stay healthy so they can do more ministry too. So at this church, physical health is not only a personal issue. It's become a congregational topic too.

They formed a Health Cabinet that consists of 10 members from all age groups and interests—nurses, a dietician, a school counselor, a social worker, two retired members, and two youth group members.



(Above) Barb Matthews (left) and Cindy Zanzow on the walking trail at Good Shepherd, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis. The trail, over a mile long, was built by the youth group and dads.

(Right) Members from Grace, Kenai, Alaska, take a break on one of their "Graceful Hikers" outings. These hikes offer time for physical fitness, fellowship, and outreach.



As part of their work, parish nurse Kathy Lee offers blood pressure tests once a month at church, and she includes an article about a health-related topic in the church newsletter. She also uses free materials from the National Cancer Institute, the American Heart Association, and the free government information from Pueblo, Colo., to help promote good health.

The health cabinet has other plans too, including tying in the health promotion program to the community in two ways. For their community health fair, they are bringing in community resources, such as the hospital staff, to offer cholesterol screening and body composition analysis. The other is to invite the community to these programs.

“By bringing in people from the community for health topics, we are providing opportunities for unchurched members of our community to come into our church building. They can interact on a friendly basis with God’s people,” says Paul Tullberg, pastor at Good Shepherd. By the way, Tullberg’s rising blood pressure was detected through the monthly screenings.

But a parish nurse isn’t simply a nurse placed into a church setting. “In this role, we have a prayer and spend time with God’s Word,” says Lee. “People appreciate the difference”—the difference of not just being treated as a body with an illness, but as a child of God. This keeps members focused on what Jesus has done for them—body and soul.

Lee admits that this is an unusual ministry for most churches. “We’re not used to thinking that physical, spiritual, and mental health can all be related.”

But she points out that the body is

a blessing from God: “When you’re not taking care of it, you’re doing a disservice to God. When you are taking care of it, you are bringing glory to God.”

Reaching out to add to the body

At Grace, Kenai, Alaska, a group of members brings glory to God by combining physical fitness, fellowship, and outreach. The “Graceful Hikers” gets together about once or twice a month in the summer and a few times in winter, and have even taken overnight backpacking trips.

The group, now entering its third year, began because “a lot of people like the outdoors, and we were looking for church activities to do with our kids,” says Cindy Wentzlaff. “And with our bear situation, we didn’t want to hike alone.”

This great idea for fellowship quickly became an outreach activity.

“The kids and adults find it easy to invite friends along,” says Wentzlaff. The friends then see Christian faith in action. The hikers pray before meals and often end up talking about church. They also sing the kids’ Sunday school songs, which is not only a witness, but also helps keep bears away. On overnight hikes, the group has Bible study or reads *Meditations*.

“This opens the conversation to invite guests to church—or at least talk about Jesus Christ our Savior,” Wentzlaff says. “We’ve had some kids come to vacation Bible school because of the hikes and others have come to worship.”

Thomas Schmidt, pastor at Grace, agrees: “We do it because we like to get out. It’s just gorgeous in Alaska, and to go with Christian friends is great. And it is good for our body. If our bodies are in tune, we can serve the Lord better, whether it’s as a pastor or husband or wife or student or child.”

That’s the whole point of stewardship—using the blessings God gave you to serve him better and bring him glory. Even if you never lose those last 10 pounds.

NL

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

The Internet is loaded with information about achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Here are a few links to get you started.

American Dietetic Association

<www.eatright.org>

The creators of the Food Pyramid bring you even more information on their Web site.

Five a Day

<www.dpcp.nci.nih.gov/5aday>

Learn how to get five servings of fruits and vegetables into your diet—recipes are included.

American Heart Association

<www.amhrt.org>

Discover how to fight heart disease and stroke.

American Cancer Society

<www.cancer.org>

Find the latest information about cancer and what you can do to prevent it.

Mayo Clinic Health Oasis

<www.mayohealth.org>

You’ll find tips for everything from illnesses and medicine to nutrition and health.

American Lung Association

<www.lungusa.org>

Everything from allergies to asthma to quitting smoking is covered here.

These are intended for information only and are not a direct endorsement of everything found on these sites.

WHEN PROBLEMS COME

Spiritual leaders anticipate and confront obstacles.

Paul E. Kelm

Spiritual leaders recognize which issues need surfacing because they are significant . . . and which issues should be ignored because they are distractions.

Leaders challenge Christians with the "should be" of Christ's mission for the church and demonstrate the gap between that ideal and what really is.



Every leader is, to some degree, a target.

Murphy's Law says that if anything can go wrong, it will. You've probably read some of the corollaries of Murphy's Law, maxims such as: "There's always one more imbecile than you counted on." Murphy's Law is simply an application of the biblical truth that the fall into sin has had destructive consequences in nature, in human nature, and in every project worth doing. Christian leaders recognize this, and they anticipate and confront obstacles.

Let me recount some of the obstacles Nehemiah faced in his monumental project of rebuilding Jerusalem and its walls. There were the usual obstacles of raising sights and raising dollars, moving materials and moving city hall. There were skeptics who laughed at the project and ticked off all the reasons it wouldn't succeed. When it was underway, opponents tried to stall the project with politics and meetings and memos. There was a campaign to smear Nehemiah and impugn his motives. There were threats, intended to intimidate supporters, when it became apparent that Nehemiah wouldn't be intimidated. There were insiders who didn't want to lose their privileged position, and there were outsiders who wanted to take advantage of the project and make a buck. As if relocating millions of tons of stone wasn't challenging enough!

Facing opposing ideas

Too many people in the church seem surprised when not everyone goes along with their ideas. Some even think that if they ignore opposition, it will go away. That seldom works.

There are reasons why people oppose even the best of ideas in the church. Cautious people resist anything that isn't fail-safe and funded. Conservative people are afraid that something valuable will be lost when we tamper with the tried and true. Traditional people oppose change, on principle. People born during or shortly after the depression look at life through a different window than their "baby-boom" offspring.

Church members have different agendas and priorities, different assumptions about the way things are and the way they should be. It takes some people longer than others to wrap themselves around an idea and get comfortable with it. Every new idea means some risk, some loss, some anxiety.

Listening to objections

Christian leaders anticipate the questions and objections people will raise. They listen. They do the research and clarify the issue. They challenge Christians with the "should be" of Christ's mission for the church and demonstrate the gap between that ideal and what really is. They affirm the values of the past and root change in those treasured values. They build their case with answers to people's concerns, and they demonstrate a willingness to make adjustments. They build consensus and forge a coalition of leaders. They give people time, and they give people information.

Nehemiah did "problem prevention analysis" with a checklist of

things that could go wrong and needed to be done, before he ever left Persia. He gathered input and consulted leaders on site. He eyeballed the project himself, to look for problems and weigh options. When the threat of armed intervention surfaced, Nehemiah had a defense plan in place. Before pressures to do business on the Sabbath developed, Nehemiah had already solemnly committed people to the laws of Moses. When the defense of the city required repopulation, Nehemiah had a plan already prepared.

It was Jesus, you recall, who urged his followers to be both shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Nehemiah could have been his example. When the nobles in Jerusalem were impoverishing their brothers with crushing loan rates, Nehemiah confronted them with their wrong. When the triad of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem tried threats and blackmail and an assassination plot, Nehemiah ignored them and armed his builders. He shrewdly distinguished weak believers from wicked antagonists, and with prayer he faced them both.

Handling problems head-on

There are still weak believers who create problems and must be met head-on by spiritual leaders. And there are still antagonists who will derail vital projects of ministry if leaders let them dominate the agenda or undermine the unity of Christ's church. Spiritual leaders recognize which issues need surfacing because they are significant, with widespread concern and far-reaching consequences . . . and which issues should be ignored because they are distractions. Spiritual leaders pray for the wisdom to admonish erring brothers

Seven principles for overcoming obstacles

1. Replicate Jesus' mind and heart in people, by the power of Jesus' Word.
2. Listen. Look. Understand what you're up against.
3. Clearly identify the obstacle, so others understand.
4. Intentionally ignore what won't make a difference and/or troubles few.
5. Tackle significant problems head-on, with strategic wisdom.
6. Confront people whose opposition is sinful privately, until their offense becomes public.
7. Focus the church on her Lord's mission and a positive future. and "Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

and sisters gently and to confront destructive people firmly.

Every leader is, to some degree, a target. The farther out front he is, the more he looks like a target. The greater the threat he is to the status quo and those who have a vested interest in the status quo, the bigger the target he is. Nehemiah had a bull's-eye on his back. But he had the Lord at his side. Don't try to lead Christ's church unless you're sure that the Lord is at your side. And don't call it leadership if you aren't willing to anticipate and confront obstacles.

NL

Paul Kelm is a parish consultant for the Board for Parish Services

It's all in the name

Christ Our Savior actively teaches and shares Christ, our Savior, in Tennessee. Julie K. Tessmer

How did Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn., make itself known in the middle of the Bible belt, an area where Lutheranism is largely unknown?

Its name answers the question.

It emphasized Christ, our Savior, rather than the church Christ Our Savior.

The Word

The congregation started by picking a name to show others what it believed. Mike Jacobs, one of the church's original members, suggested Christ Our Savior because it made a strong confessional statement, a statement no one could misunderstand.

Some people in the area didn't have a full understanding of the beauty of the gospel. As they learned more about the one after whom the congregation was named, the change was obvious.

"It's a tremendous joy to see people who have been enlightened by the wonderful truth that Jesus died

for their sins and that there are no strings attached," said Charles Westra, pastor at Christ Our Savior.

Even those who don't attend Christ Our Savior know what the church teaches. A Baptist minister, during canvassing, asked a recent adult confirmand of Christ Our Savior, "If you die tonight, are you confident you would be in heaven?" When the man answered, "Yes," the minister asked, "How can you be sure?"

The man answered, "I believe Jesus Christ is my Savior. His death on the cross has paid for my sins."

The Baptist minister replied, "You must belong to Christ Our Savior because I haven't run into anyone from that congregation who hasn't answered that question correctly!"

Teaching and sharing that answer is what Christ Our Savior is about.

Teaching the Word

Christ Our Savior, located between Columbia (about 30,000 people) and

Spring Hill (about 1,500 people), is largely made up of younger couples with kids. Some are transplants from the North and around the country, coming to work in the Saturn plant. "It's a melting pot of sorts," said Westra.

Education for their children is important. About 50 to 60 children attend the church's Sunday school program weekly, and the congregation is talking about starting a Lutheran elementary school in the future. The church just finished adding an educational wing to provide more room for fellowship, Sunday school, and its preschool.

Christ Our Savior started the preschool four years ago, in keeping with its mission of nurture and outreach. Now 33 children—including 29 non-members (five of whom are unchurched)—attend.

Besides preparing the children for kindergarten, Cindy Kom, the preschool director, uses Bible studies, prayers, and songs to teach them about the one thing they really need—Jesus.

Said Kom, "One of my favorite things is to hear them sing Bible songs, songs that they otherwise wouldn't have known."

Christ Our Savior also reaches out to the parents.

"I always try to send home some sort of project so they can take the story home to their moms and dads," said Kom.

Vacation Bible school "song time" at Christ Our Savior. About 80 to 100 children have attended VBS every year for the past three years.





Children at Christ Our Savior's preschool are not afraid to share the Word. Here they carol at the local nursing home with teacher Cindy Kom.

One child, who was unchurched, even took a Bible home. As he was looking at the Bible with his dad, they came to the story about Zacchaeus. When his dad didn't know how to pronounce the name, the little boy said, "Dad, that's Zacchaeus!" and proceeded to tell him the story. Little children pick up the stories they hear and are not afraid to share them.

The preschool meets in the narthex of the church. "It's an easy way to make a transition into church," said Kom. "It [the preschool] makes the church non-threatening."

Some families have made that transition. Kom estimates about two families every year join because of initial contact made through the preschool. One three-year-old attended preschool all of last school year. The second year she attended, her Mom asked when church services were. By December 1998, all three of her children were baptized.

But sometimes you don't see those results.

Kom visited one family last summer to invite their daughter to vaca-

tion Bible school. Their daughter had attended preschool that year, but the family never attended church. Kom also invited them to church. "It may have been my last chance to invite them directly," she said.

She continued, "As I was leaving, I asked Devon, 'Do you remember the song Jesus loves me?' And so we sang the song right in front of her mom. But I haven't seen them since."

At least a seed was planted.

Sharing the Word

Having non-members involved in its preschool is just one way Christ Our Savior is making its name—and the Savior's name—known.

The church is in view of at least 17,000 people daily—even if they just drive by. It's located right off a major highway leading to the Saturn plant (which employs 8,000 people), making it highly visible. "People know who we are, and where we are," said Westra.

People also know when services are. Through mass mailings, the congregation "advertises" all of its major outreach events. Members also use a unique prop at the county fair booth—puppets.

Christ Our Savior keeps its prospects informed by sending a newsletter to the 400 names on its list. The names are taken from the weekly Wednesday night canvass, conducted from spring to fall. "Wednesday is church night in the South," said Westra. "This leaves the unchurched at home." Westra, the vicar, and trained laymembers then follow-up on prospects.

Besides canvassing, members are spreading the Word to neighbors, friends, and relatives. All these things have helped Christ Our Savior start to overcome its chal-

Christ Our Savior

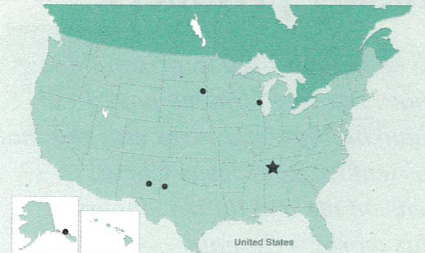
Founded: 1990

Communicants: 234

Souls: 344

Pastor: Charles Westra

2494 Nashville Hwy, Columbia TN
38401-7236



★ = featured congregation
• = congregations already featured

lenge of being unknown. "As the church grows," says Westra, "the network of contacts grows. Friendship evangelism is a natural occurrence among God's people."

What attracts most people is the preaching of the true Word of God.

John Maloof, a former lifelong Episcopalian, and his family joined Christ Our Savior two years ago. "When we first attended Christ Our Savior, we knew it was the church we wanted to be in. The Word is preached there. You know it's the right thing—there's no deviation."

He continued: "The Episcopal church tried to be all things to all people. But the Lutheran church says, 'This is what we are, and this is what we believe in. If you like that, come.' The church is supposed to teach the Bible, and that's what Christ Our Savior does."

People are coming to Christ Our Savior—especially because it concentrates on its namesake.



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

FINDING TRUE FREEDOM

Through prison ministries, WELS has shared the gospel with 10,000 prisoners.

Linda R. Baacke

Even though I am in prison I know that I am free from my past. I am thankful that God loves me, and that he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to redeem me and all the sinners of this world. —Ronald

A few years ago, Ronald didn't know who Jesus was. Now he does, thanks to WELS prison ministry. His story is just one of the amazing, almost unbelievable stories that flood the prison ministry office each day.

This ministry—now one of the largest prison ministries in the nation—began quietly. In 1993, the Institutional Ministries Committee of the Commission on Special Ministries handed over the coordination of outreach to prisoners to the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS). They began by reaching out to the 110 WELS members—men and women—in prison.

In 1995, they expanded the work and made Bibles and Bible studies available to 565 prison chaplains across the country. Requests poured in.

Today, through Bibles, Bible studies, newsletters, and a pen pal program, the numbers of prisoners served are staggering—10,000 prisoners have heard the gospel, more than 24 have been known to be baptized, and 10 have been confirmed. Also, 1,076 chaplains around the nation receive materials to share with prisoners. Here are a few of the prisoners' stories.

Bibles

The God's Word Bible is easy to understand. I feel that I am here to get into the Bible. That's a way of God showing me what it was lacking in my life before its too late. I'm only 31, but I'm glad to have found God's Word. —Bobby

Bobby got his Bible free. And that's where he found that he gets something else free: salvation.

In 1995, a grant made it possible to give these Bibles away. This version is popular for prison ministry because it is written on an eighth-grade reading level and prisoners can easily comprehend its important message. To date, 125,000 God's Word Bibles have been sent into prisons.

Bible study guides

I liked this last booklet the best out of all the rest because it reminds me just how much Jesus really loved us as humans to give up his own life for the sins of us. —Daniel

I was dealing with a known sin when this course came. It gave me help to turn away from it. God is so merciful, and, for that, I am thankful. —Eunice

Eunice and Daniel are two of 9,673 prisoners who have completed one of the nine self-study books available. So far, 260,000 self-study books have been mailed to chaplains and prisoners. These Bible study books cover basic doctrine and teach law and gospel. When prisoners complete a book, they take a test on what they have just learned. The tests are returned to the prison ministry office, where 112 volunteers throughout the United States correct 20 tests at a time and return the results to the prison ministry office. The corrected test, a certificate of completion, and the next self-study



Volunteers at the prison ministry office. These volunteer mail out Bibles and Bible studies, send completed ones on to test correctors, and send diplomas back to the prisoners. About 70 people (15 each week) volunteer their time at the office.

book are sent to the prisoners by volunteers in the New Ulm area.

These Bible study materials are also being translated and used in missions in Japan, with Spanish outreach, and plans are being made to serve the Hmong population.

Pen pals

Your letters tend to brighten my way. God is truly good because he knows how much I appreciate hearing from you. —David

Thank you very, very much for writing, and I know there is a God above, because this was a real blessing to hear from all of you. —Ken

Ken and David look forward to every letter from their pen pals. They're not the only ones. About 1,430 prisoners are linked to 1,350 WELS pen pals.

Though this is the most popular aspect of prison ministry, it's also the one that most desperately needs your help. Over 1,000 prisoners are on a waiting list, wanting to hear from a Christian friend.

The system is safe: You do not use your last name, and all mail is relayed through the PO box number in New Ulm. The ministry even provides the stationery, envelopes, and guidelines. Contact Harold Runke, PO Box 452, New Ulm MN 56073, for instructions.

Blessings

I want to thank you for reaching out to me. May God richly bless your life. —Wayne

Prison ministry has reached more people than any of the Special Ministries efforts, is completely run by laypeople, and has the largest number of volunteers of any WELS organization.

While these facts are astounding, no one is in this for personal glory. All volunteers believe that what they

Not all of the prison ministry work is being done through the postal service.

Personal contact is important too. In a separate WELS prison ministry, Chaplain Ken Lenz, from Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, has been visiting inmates for 28 years. Why? "This ministry's mission is to win souls for Christ," he says.

"More than 95 percent of those in prison do return to the community sooner or later. Would you rather have them come into your community as thieves and prostitutes or as penitent believers?" he asks.

But the jump from prison cell to church pew is not necessarily an easy one.

To help prisoners make the adjustment and stay close to Jesus, two WELS congregations developed programs for ex-offenders.

Every Friday, Grace Oasis at Salem (east side), Milwaukee, offers a place for worship and Christian friendship.

Members of Project Share at Trinity, Bay City, Mich., use the materials produced by prison ministry and also visit prisoners in jail. Eight women from an LWMS chapter at New Salem, Sebawing, correct tests and process diplomas. Once prisoners are released, Project Share provides a transition support group that helps ex-offenders find jobs and housing, and sometimes provides legal and financial advice.

do for people like Wayne, they are doing for Jesus.

They also do it because they believe that every prisoner who meets Jesus is truly free.

NL

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

The prisoners' letters were reproduced exactly as written.

Prison ministry is not cheap.

Each month the postage and materials cost \$6,000.

The Bibles are slightly under \$4 each. Each Bible study costs 75 cents. *Living Water*, a quarterly newsletter sent to 25,000 people, is \$450 plus postage for each edition.

None of this is supported by the WELS budget—it is all funded by donations. These are some of the special gifts made to prison ministry:

- For the past five years, the Treasure Haus resale shop in New Ulm, Minn., has given \$2,000 per year.

- One prisoner tithes his income and sends it to prison ministries.

- Students at Samuel Lutheran School, Marshall, Minn., donated their second quarter offerings.

- One day a man stopped by Lester Ring's house to make a donation. He heard about the work being done with prisoners and felt it was an important mission field.

The man said, "I have some money I would like to give. Do you mind taking cash?"

"I thought he would give us \$25 or so," says Ring, the coordinator of the OWLS prison ministry program.

However, the man came back with 11 \$100 bills. He had designated one steer from his livestock. When he sold the steer, he gave the money to prison ministry.

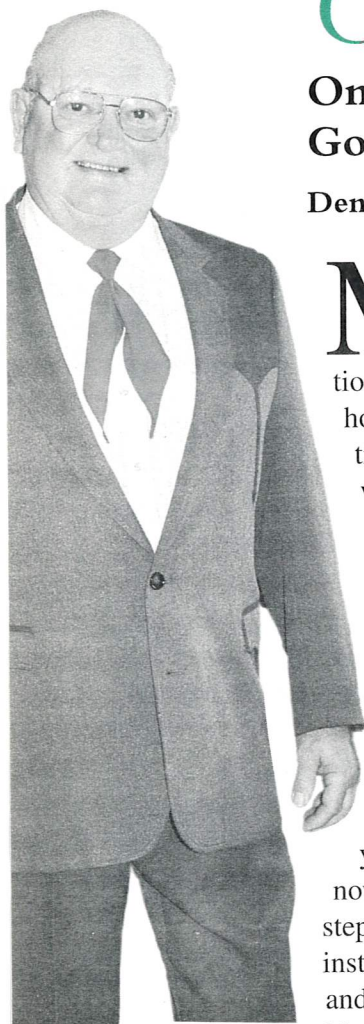
"Even livestock can help spread the gospel," says Ring.



Comforting news at last

One man's stepfather appeared to have walked away from God. But God called this straying sheep back to the fold.

Dennis J. Valleau



Don Stade, Valleau's stepfather. Stade became inactive, but through a serious illness, his family, and a pastor, God called him back to the fold before his death.

My stepfather's relationship to his home congregation began when he married my mother. The local pastor, who had provided a great deal of comfort at my father's death five years earlier, now took my stepfather through instruction classes and confirmed him as an adult. Then, my stepfather was very active in the church, as was our entire family.

His faith faltered

But when the pastor died several years later, much of the closeness my stepfather felt toward the church began to disappear. He began to resent giving up his lodges to join the church. When a congregation member didn't greet him warmly at work one day, he overreacted and figured he shouldn't bother coming to church if "they" were going to treat him that way.

He then complained that the church preached too much about death. But when you only go to church a couple of times a year, including Easter and funerals, you are likely to hear about death. The real problem was that death was a subject he didn't want to face, so he let his personal fears get in the way of hearing God's Word and receiving communion. Over the years he became less active. He became so inactive that at one point the church was ready to remove him. He went to communion once, just to stop the church from removing him. A move to Arizona removed him further from his home congregation in Wisconsin.

God intervened

Then, serious back surgery turned bad for my stepfather. It appeared his life was in danger.

Fearing for my stepfather's life and more for his spiritual welfare, I called the pastor nearest the hospital. My mother wouldn't have called because she wouldn't want to "impose on the pastor." She also felt reluctant to ask the church to serve my stepfather when he wanted nothing to do with the church.

The pastor gladly visited my stepfather. In the following weeks, he had more opportunities to share the gospel with him. He heard a clear confession of faith and at the time of my stepfather's death said that he was confident my stepfather was a true believer and was with the Lord in heaven.

We received comfort

My stepfather received a Christian funeral back in Wisconsin. As we listened to the sermon, we knew that our comfort did not rest in knowing my stepfather. It didn't come from learning that he was a great Christian or had served the Lord faithfully. As with every other truly Christian funeral, the message of comfort was found in God's Word. It was found in the cross of Jesus Christ.

My stepfather appeared to have walked away from God. He let personal feelings, disappointments, and the actions of others get in the way of his relationship with his Savior. Still, the Lord loved him. Through his illness, his family, and the faithful service of a pastor, God called this straying sheep back to the fold and finally to his home in heaven. How different the funeral might have been had my stepfather not heard the gospel in the last weeks of his life!

My heart goes out to those who allow hurt feelings, disagreements, or personality conflicts to get in the way of their relationship with their Savior. But when it happens, remember that your pastors are always happy to serve whenever they are needed. It is our privilege and honor to serve. Call us, especially in emergencies. We, with you, need to reach out to every soul in need, so all can hear comforting news at last.

NL

Dennis Valleau is pastor at St. John, Lake City, Minnesota.



Inter-Act

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

Introduction

It often seems that this world is getting worse, but we seem to be getting better in our attitude toward those with disabilities. We have a long way to go, but generally it seems that we're more sensitive to their needs. What evidence of such sensitivity do you see?

I. Text

One way Jesus proved his deity was by his compassionate ministry to the disabled. Mark 2:1-12 records an example:

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralytic, ¹¹"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

IV. Prayer

Lord Jesus, you showed compassion toward the sick and disabled. Teach us to do the same. Hear our prayer for those who are suffering or disabled in some way. Give them and us faith to accept your answer to our prayer. What we think is a curse might be your blessing. Give your people joy and purpose in glorifying you. Amen.

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

II. Questions

1. The paralyzed man's friends cared for him in a dramatic way. Why?
2. The house probably had a flat roof with outdoor stairs leading up to it. These four friends lugged the man up the stairs, tore away a section of roof and used ropes to lower the man. What risks did these friends take?
3. The men were looking for healing, not forgiveness. Why did Jesus say, "Son, your sins are forgiven"?
4. Jesus could have healed every disabled or sick person he ever met. He didn't. From this story, how did Jesus decide whether or not to heal? What other criteria do you think played a role in his decision?
5. Sometimes God healed so that people would be impressed and believe. Other times God didn't heal so that people would be impressed and believe. What happened as a result of God's decision to heal or to not heal in these cases?
 - Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
 - The sick woman (Luke 8:43-48)
 - Samson (Judges 16:28)
 - Hannah (1 Samuel 1)

III. Application

1. Helen Keller felt that of all her disabilities, deafness was the most difficult. It left her always alone. What permanent disability would you consider the most difficult?
2. Speak with someone who is physically disabled or the parents of a child with Down's Syndrome or the family of an Alzheimer's victim. Ask what's difficult for them. Find a way to care.
3. The Bible never mentions this man again. But we know he eventually died. What mattered then was not his ability to walk, but his faith in Christ. Only through faith in Jesus could he walk in eternity. Faith comes through the message of Christ. How do we share the good news of forgiveness with those who are disabled?
4. Disabled or not, our purpose on earth is to glorify God—to give him credit for who he is and what he does. How might Christians with disabilities glorify God?

Called workers study to improve ministry

The committee on Continuing Education for Church Workers (CECW) has met three times during the past year to plan various types of continuing education for pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. The synod's second vice president, Jon Mahnke, chairs this subcommittee of the Conference of Presidents.

The CECW has focused on the study of Scripture as well as opportunities for church workers to improve their practical ministerial skills. The types of continuing education available include: a) courses, workshops, and institutes that are

offered on campus at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, or at various sites in the United States upon request by small groups of church workers; and b) items that can be pursued in study clubs or in private study.

To equalize the costs for church workers across the country, the CECW will pay the cost of the presenter's transportation, meals, and lodging. This is done if the fees for those attending a course or workshop don't cover these expenses because the group of church workers is small or the transportation cost is quite large.

The CECW hopes that congregations will recognize the importance of continuing education for the church workers who serve them. Congregations can also encourage their workers to participate by providing the time and financial help that will enable their pastors, teachers, or staff ministers to do so.

A listing of all the types of continuing education available for church workers will soon appear on the WELS Web site under CECW.

David Kuske

A sign for our times



The new sign for Good Shepherd, South Attleboro, Mass., resulted in immediate visibility. Since the sign was put up, the child care center went from struggling to near capacity.

Good Shepherd, South Attleboro, Mass., had a visibility problem. Although the church property fronted a major highway leading to a regional shopping center, no one could see the church. The church was completely hidden from the sight of the approximately 30,000 to 40,000 cars that passed by the corner every day.

The church had a 6-foot by 4-foot sign at the corner of Highway 1 and May Street and a very small sign at the entrance to the driveway on May Street. A project team started out to erect a new sign at the driveway entrance. After looking at other church signs, the team decided to take advantage of the traffic on Highway 1 and expand the project.

The existing sign on Highway 1 was moved to the driveway entrance, and a 30-foot by 8-foot lighted sign was constructed on Highway 1. This sign is divided into four sections—two 4-foot by 8-foot sections, one for the church and the other for the child care center and two 3-foot by 8-foot message boards that are changed bi-weekly.

The blessings were immediate. The child care center was struggling financially. There were not enough children enrolled to break even. When the new sign was constructed, the child care center staff began receiving calls from people on their cell phones on their way to and from work. As a result, the child care center is now close to having the maximum number of children enrolled.

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, the child care center children participated in the worship service and invited their parents, relatives, and friends. As a result of this outreach effort, there were 82 visitors in Sunday worship—cars were double-parked. The parents, relatives, and friends of the children heard the wonderful message of salvation.

The sign stands tall. Every day, thousands of people will glance up and will, for a moment, be reminded of Jesus, through a message posted at the corner of Highway 1 and May Street.

Ruth Ladner

“Life” in Antigua

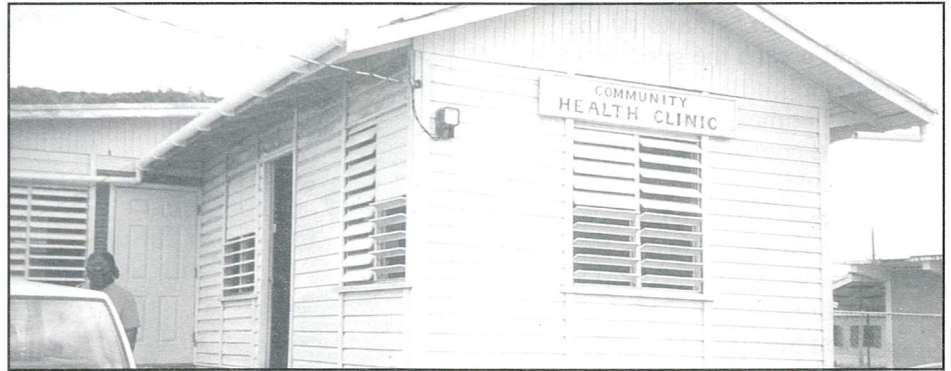
“Any abortion is too many,” said Evelyn “Avon” Wade, a member at St. John’s, Antigua.

Keeping this in mind, the West Indies/Antigua branch of WELS Lutherans for Life (WLFL) has decided to open the first, and only, pregnancy counseling center on the island this September.

Abortion is illegal in Antigua, but women still have them, even though medical technology in Antigua is about 30 years behind the United States. Sexually transmitted diseases are also an issue.

Mary Snyder, an RN working at the WLFL national office, went to Antigua in February to determine the feasibility of opening a counseling center. She said: “The love is there. They want to reach out and help.”

The members of St. John’s can help in many ways—advertising the center, manning the hotline, serving as mentors, collecting and sorting clothing, and doing other odd jobs. A government-owned health clinic



The health clinic in Antigua where the first, and only, pregnancy counseling center will open. The West Indies/Antigua branch of WELS Lutherans for Life decided they wanted a center because “any abortion is too many.”

will house the center. Wade, a nurse at the clinic, will be the counselor.

This center will differ from those in the United States. As a nurse and a midwife, Wade will be able to diagnose the pregnancy as well as provide pre-natal care and a post-partem check-up. In the United States, counselors cannot even confirm pregnancy, but must refer women to their doctors.

To open the center, the West Indies/Antigua branch must become

a chapter. This is also a first—all other WLFL chapters have more than one church.

The members of St. John’s aren’t the only ones excited about the center. According to Snyder, Wade’s supervisor at the health clinic keeps asking when the center will become a reality.

WLFL has 26 pregnancy counseling centers in the United States, as well as medical clinics in Ukraine and Bulgaria.

Helping students with their careers

“Drive carefully and call when you get there!” you yell as the muffler scrapes on the driveway and the car pulls onto the street. You can barely see the smiling face and the wave goodbye through the window of the overloaded car.

Long before the “College or bust” sign was put in the back window, questions have been nagging you: “Is she prepared for this big change in her life? Has she picked a major? What can she expect at her first job? More important, is there any Christian guidance for the answers to these questions?”

WELS Campus Ministry started the WELS Weavers program in January 1999 to help answer these questions. Now students, through the Internet and e-mail, can ask church members about college and careers. The name

“Weavers” was chosen to reflect how Christianity is woven into all aspects of our lives—including our job.

“Most people in our congregations would love to help our students by answering college and career oriented questions, but they don’t know which students are interested,” said Nathan Torgerson, head of the publicity committee for WELS Campus Ministry. “Likewise, students would love to ask church members about their jobs, but they don’t know who to ask. Now a student in Tucson interested in engineering can ask an engineer in Minneapolis what it’s like to develop pacemakers.”

There are two ways to volunteer to be a WELS Weaver for college and high school students:



**WELS
WEAVERS**

1) Go to <<http://www.wels.net/sab/cm/frm-cm.html>> and select Weavers in the Registration Building. You can also access the current volunteer Weavers from this page.

2) E-mail WELS Campus Ministry at <usr20@sab.wels.net> and a form will be e-mailed back to you. Any questions about the program

can also be answered through this e-mail address.

The Weavers program will send this strong message to our youth: there are hundreds of fellow Christians who care and want to help. So volunteer! Let’s change those “College or bust” signs to “College with trust”—trust in their future that comes from Jesus and his followers.

Nathan Torgerson

Opportunities for outreach

Christ told us to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

But sometimes, especially in an established congregation, it’s easy to get distracted.

“When you’re a ‘teenage’ congregation, the greatest threat is forgetting your mission,” said Mark Birkholz, pastor at Lord of Life, Thornton, Colo. “You lose your focus. You get into building programs and forget the unchurched people around you. You end up becoming an institution and not a church.”

To help congregations and members keep that focus and also to help reach the lost, the Synodical Council has distributed almost \$400,000 in fiscal year 1998-99 through outreach opportunity grants. These grants helped about 70 churches implement new or expanded outreach efforts.

Lord of Life received \$5,500 for a Christmas for Kids and an Easter for Kids program. Teenagers from the congregation ran the programs—including publicity and teaching.

The number of children who came to their Christmas for Kids was a surprise. “It was a horde,” said Birkholz. “We expected 25 to 30, and we had 55 attend.”

Two families from the program are attending worship and Sunday school; one woman has started instruction classes.

Lord of Life—along with 15 other churches in the Denver area—received another outreach grant. These 16 churches bought cable TV spots on four cable networks (including USA and A&E) to air “The Promise” campaign for two weeks. They used cable TV because 89 percent of the homes in the Denver area have cable—one of the highest percentages in the United States.

They also purchased space on nine billboards in outlying areas of Denver.

These congregations are encouraging their members to be involved in



Teens from Lord of Life, Thornton, Colo., planned an Easter for Kids program that included a Bible story, crafts, and dyeing Easter eggs. Money for this event came from an outreach opportunity grant.

the outreach. Lord of Life held a witnessing seminar for 55 people from eight congregations to better prepare them to share the Word with their friends. Each congregation also purchased bumper stickers and yard signs for their members.

Other congregations also developed innovative plans for outreach. St. Mark, Watertown, Wis., a 145-year-old church in an old German community, is using grant money to do work among area Hispanics. Trinity, St. Paul, Minn., an inner city congregation, is targeting children via a Saturday morning kid’s club. Several congregations are focusing on community service—going to the people rather than bringing them to the church. A unique example of this is Hope, Markham, Ontario, Canada, who bought more instruments for their 15-member steel band. This way they can reach out to the Caribbean community by playing at community events and festivals.

Funds for these grants are available from the synod budget.

Does your congregation want to apply for an outreach opportunity grant? About \$231,000 is available for outreach grants in fiscal 1999-2000. Criteria include an outreach focus, innovation, involvement of members, and good planning. Applications are available from

Pastor Warren Widmann, 7610 NE Fremont, Portland OR 97213; 503/253-7338; FAX 503/253-1808; <pnwdp@aol.com>. The first deadline for 1999-2000 is Oct. 1.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

July 1999

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. 1 Samuel 4:1b-22 | 15. 1 Sam. 23, 24 |
| 2. 1 Sam. 5:1-7:2 | 16. 1 Sam. 25, 26 |
| 3. 1 Sam. 7:3-8:22 | 17. 1 Sam. 27, 28 |
| 4. 1 Sam. 9:1-10:16 | 18. 1 Sam. 29, 30 |
| 5. 1 Sam. 10:17-11:15 | 19. 1 Sam. 31 |
| 6. 1 Sam. 12 | 20. Ephesians 1:1-14 |
| 7. 1 Sam. 13 | 21. Eph. 1:15-23 |
| 8. 1 Sam. 14 | 22. Eph. 2 |
| 9. 1 Sam. 15 | 23. Eph. 3 |
| 10. 1 Sam. 16 | 24. Eph. 4:1-5:2 |
| 11. 1 Sam. 17:1-54 | 25. Eph. 5:3-6:9 |
| 12. 1 Sam. 17:55-19:24 | 26. Eph. 6:10-24 |
| 13. 1 Sam. 20:1-21:9 | 27. Job 1-3 |
| 14. 1 Sam. 21:10-22:23 | 28. Job 4, 5 |
| | 29. Job 6, 7 |
| | 30. Job 8:1-9:24 |
| | 31. Job 9:25-10:22 |

In the face of death

After the murders at Columbine High School, Littleton, Colo., on April 20, KOA, a Denver radio station, broadcast interviews with students who witnessed the killings.

One student told of her friend, Cassie Bernall. As the two assassins roamed the school selecting their victims, they purposely sought people of color, athletes, and those who had faith in God.

When they came to Cassie they asked, "Do you believe in God?"

What would you say with a gun pointed at your head?

Here's Cassie's answer: "Yes."

And they shot her.

It has been reported that the young men who murdered Cassie were followers of Satan. Surely their deeds were satanic.

Television showed another young person at the scene wearing a black tee shirt with a circle and slash sign over a cross. Though he might not have been a participant in the heinous deeds in Littleton, his dress expresses the attitude of many.

We can expect more such news in the days to come. The Book of Revelation tells us that in the last days Satan will be loosed for a sea-

son. Those who committed the atrocities in Littleton remind us that in these last days Satan will rage.

However, there is no reason for those who believe in Jesus to be depressed. Satan "is judged. The deed is done." Christ by his death and resurrection has already won the victory.

The confession of Cassie Bernall indicates that she will enjoy her Savior's victory long after Satan is shut away in hell for good.

Eugene F. Ahlswede, a WELS home missions counselor, is a member at Lord at Life, Thornton, Colorado.

Congregations affected by Littleton shooting

Although no WELS member was killed or injured in the Littleton shooting, the WELS congregations in the Denver area are responding to the crisis.

Many of the Denver area pastors are offering counseling, says Kurt Ebert, pastor at Abiding Word, Highlands Ranch. One man waiting at the bus stop outside Abiding Word noticed the church. "He walked in and asked if we had counseling available."

To help people cope, the members at Abiding Word gathered on Sunday, April 25, to talk about struggling in the middle of grief. "We want to express our heartache, yet hear God's hope in the middle

of it," says Ebert.

"We grieve for those who lost children," he says. "Yet as Christians, we can get hit by something and still say, 'All right Lord, you're going to see us through this, and we'll be fine.'"

The Lord did see one Columbine student through it. William Saggau, a member at Zion, Denver, was hiding in a closet with 30 other students and a teacher.

"He was right off the hallway where the teens were, and he heard them shooting and screaming," says his father, Ken. "He was very, very close."

While the Saggaus waited at a nearby elementary school, they received less information than people

around the country who were watching it on TV. "We have family in Seattle, Minnesota, and Indiana. We had a nationwide prayer chain without even realizing it," says Ken. "That's a blessing."

God answered yes to the family's prayers and Will made it out of the building safely. But how is Will handling it now?

"Will didn't enjoy the experience. And he wouldn't volunteer for another one," says Ross Ulrich, pastor at Zion. "But he's not as troubled as many of his classmates still are."

Ulrich credits Will's faith and foundation in Jesus. That foundation is what helps Christians in Littleton—and everywhere else—cope.

WELS churches survive tornadoes

Oklahoma: Holy Cross, Oklahoma City, was not damaged by the tornado's winds, but was damaged by baseball-size hail, reported Pastor John Gaertner. No members were injured. Several members' homes were damaged, one house and vehi-

cle totally destroyed, and one small business lost. The members who lost everything were spared injury by taking refuge in a closet.

The church and members of Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, were not in the tornado's path.

Kansas: At Messiah, Wichita, the church was not damaged at all. Five to six member-families live in the area where the tornado hit, but only one home suffered any damage.

District news

South Atlantic

Victory, Jacksonville, Fla., held its first public worship at the University of North Florida on Mar. 21. Seventy people attended. During the weeks leading up to the service, 20,000 invitation cards were sent out along with 7,000 open letters to the community. A prospect list of 550 homes was established through the canvassing efforts of Phil Hoyer, Brent Bitter, and members of Good Shepherd, Orange Park. For more information about this exploratory contact Phil Hoyer at 904/821-0258. . . . **Abiding Faith, Smyrna, Tenn.**, also held its first public worship service on Mar. 21. They had 95 in attendance. . . . **King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.**, is operating a summer day camp—the King’s Daycamp. It will run daily during June and July. Administered by staff at King of Kings, it will be run by four students from Martin Luther College. The camp will feature on-site educational, recreational, and religious experiences, and field trips will be taken regularly to area attractions to experience what Orlando has to offer. They will also offer three week-long sports camps—boys’ basketball, girls’ basketball, and cheer-

leading. These will be held in the evenings after the King’s Daycamp empties for the day. The goal is to reach out to the community in a fresh way and launch into sharing the message of a resurrected Christ. This project is funded in part by an outreach opportunity grant through the Synodical Council. . . . **Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla.**, did a Walk-a-thon for All Children’s Hospital this last year. They’ve had a number of students from their school use All Children’s for everything from broken bones to leukemia. They will also be doing a Jump Rope For Heart jump-a-thon for the American Heart Association. Bay Pines also had a groundbreaking ceremony for their new classrooms in April.

Pacific Northwest

On the Saturday before Palm Sunday, **Peace In Jesus, the Vietnamese mission in Boise, Idaho**, dedicated the storefront that they will lease for three years. About 130 people attended, the majority from the other three WELS congregations in the Boise area. Because many Vietnamese work on Saturday, only 35 Vietnamese attended.

On Easter, their opening service

was held. Approximately 60 Vietnamese attended the service, which was conducted in Vietnamese.

North Atlantic

“Oh, deer!” No “deer” is not misspelled. It was quite a day when a doe crashed through the glass of the front door at **St. Paul, Amherst, N.H.**, on Jan. 21. She ran around in the entryway between the chapel and the fellowship hall until she finally went back through the broken glass and disappeared into the woods. Fortunately no one was injured, and other than the glass she did no other damage (although the doe must have had one large headache). This does put a new wrinkle on the idea of having an open door policy at church. . . . In March, **Living Hope, Midlothian, Va.**, purchased five acres for the site of its future church. The property had been pursued by the congregation less than a year ago but taken off the market and declared “sold.” Just before Christmas, it became available again. . . . **Hope, Markham, Ontario**, dedicated its new worship facility on Apr. 25. With its new location, the congregation will now be known as Hope Lutheran of Toronto (Scarborough). The area is largely Caribbean and Sri Lankan. Ten thousand flyers were mailed out before Easter advertising the presence of a WELS church in the area as well as the Holy Week schedule and dedication service. Several new families attended on Good Friday and Easter in response to the flyers. . . . **Messiah, S. Windsor, Conn.**, has hired an architect and begun planning to expand their facility. They are also embarking on a new evangelism project, a booth at the Wapping Fair.

Happy anniversary

NA—Grace of God, Dix Hills, N.Y., celebrated its 25th anniversary on Holy Trinity Sunday, May 30.



Trinity Christian Academy, located just south of Washington D.C., regularly takes advantage of the cultural and educational opportunities available in our nation’s capitol. In December, the upper grade art class enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity as they viewed 70 of Vincent Van Gogh’s original works at the National Gallery of Art.—*Timothy Unke*

Southeastern Wisconsin

To express support for people serving in urban settings, the WELS Board for Home Missions sponsored a **retreat for inner city workers** on Feb. 26. About 160 pastors, teachers, and lay workers, and their families came. Congregations from Milwaukee included Siloah, Salem, St. Philip, Zebaoth, Garden Homes, St. Marcus, Redemption, Christ, and Northside and Southside Ministries. In addition, three congregations from Michigan came: St. Matthew, Benton Harbor; Zoar, Detroit; and Paul the Apostle, Detroit. The group heard speakers including graduates from inner city schools, and Mrs. Henry Grigsby, who experienced Lutheran ministry in the deep South.

Dakota-Montana



Members at James Valley, Jamestown, N.D., honored **Delores Rath** for serving as organist for 50 years. She began playing on a pump organ and said, "We only had enough energy for one service per Sunday." She now owns that original church organ. She is pictured here with Jeff Verbeke, pastor.

Western Wisconsin

Two exploratories had their first public worship on Palm Sunday, March 28. In **Roscoe, Ill.**, Pastor Tim

Gumm has been working at an exploratory as a satellite of Peace, Loves Park. This mission serves the fast-growing population of Roscoe/Rockton, located between Beloit and Rockford. **Star of Bethlehem, Urbana, Ill.**, is a restart and relocation of Bethlehem, Urbana. Pastor Tim Glende led this group of Christians into its first service in the heart of their parish area. Since Palm Sunday they have been worshipping at the new location.

These are the reporters for this month's featured districts: CA—Herman John; D-M—Jon Hadler; NA—Kevin Schultz; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Mark Haefner; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh

Anniversary update

From the 1999 synod convention to the 2001 synod convention, WELS will celebrate its 150th anniversary. Here's one idea for celebrating the anniversary.

"A Heritage Shared," an eight-minute video, describes the three phases of the WELS Historical Institute's work. Consider using it in the 150th anniversary celebration, and **emphasize our WELS heritage under God.**

The video was sent to all WELS churches in the United States and Canada, ministerial education schools, and area Lutheran high schools for use in church services, meetings, and classrooms.

If it has not been used in your congregation, please contact your pastor.

Watch also for a new WELS historical video to be produced in the year 2000 as part of the anniversary.

Obituaries

Elmer H. Semenske 1921-1999

Pastor Elmer H. Semenske was born on May 6, 1921, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died March 9, 1999, in Ripon, Wis.

A 1947 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Semenske served Zion, Reeder, N.D.; St. Peter, Goodwin/St. Paul, Havana Township, S.D.; St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.; and Mt. Zion, Ripon/Zion, Omro Township, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Irene; three children; six grandchildren; and two sisters-in-law.

Reinhart John Frederick Pope 1918-1998

Reinhart John Frederick Pope was born Nov. 30, 1918, in Rock Springs, Wis. He died Dec. 3, 1998, in Racine, Wis.

A 1943 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he served Milwaukee Lutheran High School; Grace, Crivitz, Wis.; and First, Racine, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Carol Jean; three sons; one brother; eight grandchildren; five sisters-in-law; two brothers-in-law; and nieces and nephews.

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present?*

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Survey: Christian radio popular—Four out of 10 adults listen to Christian

radio in a typical week, a survey by Barna Research Group has found. Each week, 39 percent of adults listen to Christian programming on the radio, a net audience of 75 to 80 million adults per week.

Although programming is basically created by and for Protestants, the audience is more diverse. Seventy-five percent of listeners are Protestant, but 10 percent attend Catholic churches. The remaining 15 percent are atheists or affiliated with non-Christian faiths.

Germans: few consider Ten Commandments important—

According to a survey published by *Der Spiegel* magazine, only four of the 10 commandments are considered significant by almost all German men and women.

“You shall not kill” was agreed on by 97 percent of those surveyed. The other commandments “Honor your father and mother” and “You shall not steal” were near the top. “You shall not commit adultery” was agreed on by 75 percent of people.

The one considered least important was “You shall have no other gods.” Only 33 percent considered it important.

The Emnid-Institute in Bielefeld, Germany, conducted the survey.

Atheist’s Bible sold—More than three years after the mysterious disappearance of Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the nation’s most famous atheist, her personal belongings were put up for auction.

An O’Hair trademark—a penny with the “In God We Trust” logo crossed out—fetched \$10 at the auction. After fierce bidding, a Bible, a surprising possession, sold for \$2,000.

O’Hair founded several atheist

organizations, including the Austin, Texas-based American Atheists, Inc. Her battle against religion led to the landmark 1963 Supreme Court ruling banning organized prayer in the public schools. The auction was held because of her debt to the Internal Revenue Service.

Questioning evolution—A Detroit-area school district will add books questioning the validity of evolution to its junior- and senior-high school libraries for voluntary use.

Board President John Rowe, a self-described creationist, defended the texts as legitimate works of scholarship. He said the board wanted students to know that evolution is a theory and not proven fact about the origin of life on the planet, the Associated Press reported.

The Supreme Court ruled more than a decade ago that public schools cannot teach creationism.

Cohabitation increases problems—In 1997, the number of couples living together outside of marriage in America was 4.1 million, up from 439,000 in 1960.

That number continues to grow, according to a report by the National Marriage Project of Rutgers University.

The report, “Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know About Cohabitation Before Marriage,” notes that the rate of divorce among couples that lived together before marriage is higher than for those couples that did not. Also, the instances of child abuse among such couples are higher.

[Church & State Update, Feb. 5, 1999]

Pregnancy centers vandalized—Clinics in Union City, San Francisco, San Jose, and Concord, Calif., all of which promote alternatives to abortion, were vandalized on Jan. 21—the eve of the historic Roe v. Wade

decision. Each clinic was sprayed with graffiti, some reading “Abortion is a Right” and “Lies Told Here,” and pro-choice pamphlets were pasted on the buildings’ walls. There was also a bomb threat at the Union City clinic, and all of the building’s locks were jammed with “an epoxy-like substance.” [Pro-Life Infonet, Jan. 25. Reported on WELS Lutherans for Life’s LifeWire]

LCMS studies possible name change—

In October 1998, a task force was appointed to study the possibility of a name change for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The task force will survey the church body’s various constituencies, partner churches, and people outside of the church body to determine if a change is necessary.

A recommendation is scheduled to go to the 2001 synod convention. A name change would have to be approved both by convention delegates and by two-thirds of the congregations that make up the LCMS. [LCMS Board for Communication Services]

Financial costs of gambling—

Americans placed roughly **\$586 billion worth of legal wagers** in 1996, according to the figures compiled by the International Gaming and Wagering Business. This is more than the U.S. Bureau of Census says Americans spent on **clothes (\$318.4 billion), cars (\$117.6 billion), and groceries (\$437.9 billion)**. In their fever to wager, people spent eight times more money gambling than they spent on movie tickets. [“The Social Costs of Gambling” Newhouse News Service]



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

**CHANGES IN MINISTRY****Pastors**

Allwardt, William H., to St Peter, Goodwin/Our Savior, South Shore, S.D.
Bartz, James S., to Trinity, Morenci, Mich.
Bell, Patrick C., to Zion, Toledo, Ohio
Carter, Roger A., to Peace, Santa Clara, Calif.
Henning, Paul J., to Peace, Echo/Bethany, Granite Falls, Minn.
Kuschel, Kieth B., to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.
Meyer, Ib V., to Risen Savior, Chula Vista, Calif.
Plitzuweit, James A., to Rock of Ages, Kansas City, Mo.
Prange, Paul T., to East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz. (1 yr.)
Purdue, Guy R., to St. Matthew, Freeland, Mich.
Schmidt, David W., to Beautiful Savior, Fayetteville, N.C.
Siverly, Keith H., to St. Mark, Mankato, Minn.
Vomhof, Roger E., to The Lutheran Home, Belle Plaine, Minn.
Wagenknecht, Steven W., to Cuba
Werre, Alvin G., to retirement
Workentine, Paul M., to Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla.

Teachers

Ash, Richard F., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Beagle, Jon M., to Grace, Durand, Mich.
Becker, Edward J., to Illinois LHS, Crete, Ill.
Berg, Sarah R., to Zion, Columbus, Wis.
Bogue, Helen L., to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.
Carlson, Lisa A., to Good Shepherd Little Lamb preschool, Holmen, Wis.
Castro, Diane, to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.
Corlett, Sandra L., to Eastside, Madison, Wis.
Dankert, Steven W., to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Detjen, Julie L., to WLC, Milwaukee
Dressel, Gloria F., to Precious is the Child, Rochester, Minn.
Durst, Deborah J., to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.
Gehrke, Myra M., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee
Gibson, Richard A., to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Gregorius, Maxine, to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Gruenewald, Cynthia, to St. Paul, Livonia, Mich.
Hackbarth, Jennifer L., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Hahm, Daniel B., to Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Helwig, Amy B., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
Hildenbrand, Shelley, to Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.
Hoenecke, Henry E., to Trinity Christian Academy, Woodbridge, Va.
Hoenecke, Rachel S., to Trinity Christian Academy, Woodbridge, Va.
Hopman, Dorothy J., to retirement
Jirikowic, David, to Manitowoc LHS, Manitowoc, Wis.
Kobleske, Kristi B., to LPS, Watertown, Wis.
Koch, Deborah J., to Lord of Life, Friendswood, Tex.
Kolander, Donald P., to Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee
Krug, Kristine A., to Hope, Penryn, Calif.
Kuchenbecker, Brenda, to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.
Lange, Cynthia L., to St. Luke, Vassar, Mich.
Lauber, Nathan D., to Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.
Learman, Kristine M., to St. John, Peshtigo, Wis.
Lueneburg, Karen C., to retirement

Martens, Linda K., to St. John, Dowagiac, Mich.
Mundstock, Catherine, to St. Paul, Arlington, Minn.
Nolte, Beth A., to St. Andrew, Milwaukee
Poehlman, Cheryl L., to retirement
Potratz, Robert C., to MLC, New Ulm, Minn.
Rahn, Leilani A., to TLC preschool, Merrill, Wis./St. Matthew preschool, Marathon, Wis.
Raymond, Kyle R., to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.
Richards, Robin A., to St. Paul, Livonia, Mich.
Scheibe, Patricia A., to Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis.
Scherzberg, Alfred P., to retirement
Schram, Margaret L., to St. Lucas, West Allis, Wis.
Sielaff, Ann L., to Memorial, Williamston, Mich.
Snyder, Patricia A., to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
Sonnenburg, Charles G., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
Storm, Jay S., to St. John, Watertown, Wis.
Thiesfeldt, Jeremy J., to WLA, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Traucht, George L., to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
Voigt, Timothy A., to Atonement, Milwaukee
Weisheim, Carlton R., to Calvary Academy, South Milwaukee
Welke, Dawn M., to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Wentzel, Peter A., to St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis.
Zabel, Heidi M., to St. Peter, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Zanto, Mary E., to Grace, Eau Claire, Mich.

COLLOQUY NOTICES

Kenneth Bartelt, formerly a pastor in the LCMS, after having successfully completed the steps of our colloquy program, which included two quarters of study at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, was declared eligible for call into the ministerium of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Richard E. Lauersdorf, First VP
 Paul Janke, District President
 Prof. David P. Kuske

David W. Schmidt, formerly a pastor in the Church of the Lutheran Confession, after having successfully completed the steps of our colloquy program, which included study at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, was declared eligible for call into the ministerium of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Jon M. Mahnke, Second VP
 Prof. Richard D. Balge
 Walter F. Beckmann, District President

ANNIVERSARIES

Phelps, Wis.—St. John (50). June 20. Festival worship, 10:15 AM. Picnic dinner in the park, 11:30 AM. 715/479-8307.
Brighton Township, New Ulm, Minn.—Zion (100). July 11. Service, 11 AM. Catered meal at Courtland Rec Hall follows. Lorenz Wischstadt, 507/359-4167.
Gibsonia, Penn.—Bethany (25). July 18. Worship service, 10 AM. Anniversary worship, 4 PM, with dinner to follow. Galen Riediger, 724/443-3890.
Duncanville, Tex.—St. Mark (35). July 25. Anniversary service, 4 PM; dinner follows. 972/298-0891.
Herrick, S.D.—St. John (75). Aug. 29. Service, 3 PM. Keith Petersen, 605/775-2462.

COMING EVENTS**Lutheran Vanguard 1999 performances**
920/269-4729

June 11—Brillion, Wis., 9 PM
 June 12—Appleton, Wis., 2 PM; Menasha, Wis., 7:30 PM
 June 20—Fort Atkinson, Wis., noon
 June 24—Brooklyn Center, Minn., 6 PM
 June 25—South Saint Paul, Minn., 6 PM
 June 26—St. Cloud, Minn., 10 AM
 June 27—Alexandria, Minn., 1:30 PM
 July 3—La Crosse, Wis., Riverfest
 July 4—Winona, Minn., noon
 July 5—Wauwatosa, Wis., 9 AM
 July 8—Traverse City, Mich., 7 PM
 July 10—Traverse City, Mich., 10:45 AM

Convention—LWMS national convention at La Crosse Center, La Crosse, Wis. June 25-27. Lois Jensen, 608/781-1134; Patricia Peters, 608/372-7572; LWMS central office, 414/321-6212.

CESE Summer Conference—August 17, 8:30 AM-12:30 PM. WLC, Milwaukee. Dr. Alan Spurgin: "All children can learn but at what rate." Eileen Schlavensky, 414/781-0685.

AVAILABLE

Hymnals—50 copies of TLH. Will pay for shipping. Herbert H. Freise (LCMS), 206/726-1852.

Pulpit and Lectern Paraments—in 5 colors. Measurements: (pulpit) 60" long x 18" wide; (lectern) 34" long x 4" wide. Free for cost of shipping. St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich, 517/265-5605.

Organ—older Wurlitzer electric organ with percussion in good working condition. Free for cost of shipping. Don, 573/442-9131.

NEEDED

Communion ware—Hope, Fremont, Calif. Will pay for shipping. John Berg, 510/793-8691.

Information, photos, or artifacts—about the military company that was at Northwestern College from 1892 until 1929. David S. Neumann, 1501 Division St, New London WI 54961-2301; 920/982-4668.

Music—"United We Stand" by Jill and Michael Gallina. Need full score and tape. Would like to borrow or rent for St. Paul LES, Livonia, Mich. Carol Nielson, 734/421-9022.

SERVICE TIMES

Grove City, Ohio—Beautiful Savior worship services—Thursday, 7:30 PM; Sunday, 9 AM. Bible study, 10:15 AM. From June 6-August 31. 614/875-9637.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Thoughts of Faith (ELS)—two positions:

Management team—husband/wife team whose primary role is to oversee the mobile medical and life center programs in Ukraine.

Stateside coordinator—oversee the mobile medical and life center ministries in Ukraine.

Contact Thoughts of Faith administrator, 608/243-3227.

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

Safe in the shelter

God's faithfulness buffers us from the threats and terrors of life.

James A. Aderman

At the height of the Cold War in the 1950s, some Americans built underground bomb shelters to protect them should a nuclear holocaust rain down on the United States. Frightened families filled these backyard bunkers, buried under tons of dirt, with food and water sufficient to keep them safe for months. Supposedly they slept better with safety only a few feet from their back door.

God's dependable protection

The Spirit-inspired sage who penned Psalm 91 compares God to such a shelter. The difference is that God's protection is proven dependable. The believers' assurance is that God's love, faithfulness, and forgiveness so buffers us from the threats and terrors of life that there's no need to fear anything. **Read Psalm 91:5-8.**

Sheltered in the trauma-proof protection of the LORD's grace, there is nothing in life that can harm us: no "terror of night" or "arrow that flies by day," no "pestilence"

or "plague." No 2 AM phone calls; no metal-crunching, tire-screaming car crashes; no just-to-be-safe tests for cancer. **The tragedies of life "will not come near you."** "You will only observe with your eyes," our psalm says. We remain as safe from harm as when we are watching the evening news accounts of Balkan bombings or Honduran hurricanes.

God's powerful love

But what about when it feels like life's terrors have struck deep into our bomb-proof bunker? What about the doctor's solemn pronouncement, "The news is not good"? The police-woman's introductory words, "I'm sorry . . ."?

About 10 years ago, the comic strip "Peanuts" pictured Charlie Brown on his pitcher's mound. As he heaved in his pitch he quoted, "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the pestilence that walketh in darkness. . . ." In the next frame, he's thrown into the air as another home run explodes past him. Finally, face down on the

mound and sockless, Charlie mutters, "But those line drives will kill you!"

Yet even the line drives of life are nothing for us to fear. God's love is too powerful to allow anything to serve any other purpose than to benefit us. "This is how God

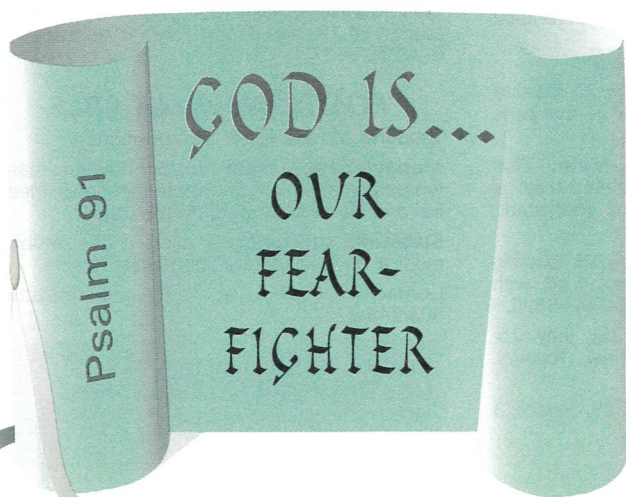
showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him," John writes and then waves away our anxieties by reminding us, "There is no fear in love. [God's] perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:9,18). It's logically indefensible to believe that God is so committed to us that he became Emmanuel and still doubt that he cares enough for us to protect us. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Three years ago an 11-year-old from my church died in a car accident. God's promise of protection didn't fail her. Nor did it fail my member who's been unemployed for almost a year. Nor did it fail my believing friend whose business collapsed. Jesus' cross and tomb guarantee not only heaven but also our Father's unbreakable commitment that everything happens to help, never to harm—even when our bomb shelter takes a direct hit.

James Aderman is pastor at Fairview, Milwaukee.

For further study

1. Describe how God's fear-destroying love gave courage to David (1 Samuel 17), to the three men in the furnace (Daniel 3), to Paul facing his death (2 Timothy 4:6-8).
2. Are your fears more like terrors of night, arrows, pestilences, or plagues? How does God's perfect love calm those fears?



Turning back the clock

It's the season for high school graduations. Where has the time gone? What will our young people do with the time in front of them, the rest of their lives?

For many, the immediate answer is more education. They have probably already decided which school to attend, undoubtedly influenced by their career path.

What else influenced our young people in their choice? Some were lured to a particular school or career by an attractive recruitment brochure or an impressive campus visit. For others it was the gentle pressure of peers, the pleasant prospect of attending school with friends. Or it may have been following the example or advice of parents.

Parents have much to do with a career or college choice. And, once it is made, they may be responsible for keeping a young person in school or on course to a career.

Recently, I heard a story about the role my grandmother played in my father's education and career choice. As a young teenager, he had gone away from home to the synod's preparatory school at New Ulm, Minn. He was very homesick. At the end of Christmas vacation his first year, on the evening before he had to catch a train to New Ulm, he set all the clocks in the house back one hour, hoping to miss the train. Somehow, Grandma awakened early, sensed the problem, scrambled to get everyone up, and got him to the train on time. If she hadn't, today there might be fewer called workers in WELS.

You can't force someone into a mold for which he or she is not fitted or inclined. Being a called worker, like almost any other profession, requires a personal, inner commitment. As parents we don't take our students to Watertown, Saginaw, or New Ulm; lock them up; and throw away the key, forcing them to become called workers. There needs to be a measure of self-

determination, increasingly so as they grow older. And yet there is a proper place for parental urging, guidance, and support.

The opportunity to influence our children to become called workers starts early. Family devotions and active participation in congregational life frames the whole picture. The spoken and unspoken support of our church's called workers helps our children see the public ministry in an attractive light. Directly expressing our desire to have our children become called workers is also important. We could point out the glorious opportunities to serve their Savior as full-time public ministers of the gospel. It won't hurt, either, to emphasize the critical need for more public ministers right now.

This is being written before Assignment Day, when the graduates of our ministerial education college and seminary are assigned to their first calls. I can safely predict, however, even after Assignment Day, in almost every category of called workers—pastors, teachers, staff ministers—there will still be vacancies.

Permit me to turn back the clock to an earlier time when full-time church work was one of the first occupations urged on able young people. Let's do that again. Christian men and women can serve their Savior in many other ways. However, until it becomes obvious that the Lord has given them an interest and aptitude for something else, let's actively encourage them to consider the public ministry.

We thank God for every one of you who serve the Lord in so many ways. You are all a blessing to the church. May we together thank him as much for every person, young or old, whom God moves to serve the Lord full-time.



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

The
opportunity
to influence
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Life and death issues

John F. Brug

Cloning of animals (may have) been discovered and done. Men boast humans are next. Through my Bible reading, I do not believe this is possible, but is another lie of Satan. Does it not take God to install our souls in us? Would it, therefore, be impossible to clone a complete man with an exact soul? If this process results in an impostor of man, would God be bound to give it a soul? Is there any biblical insight or would it be speculation? I believe cloning of man may be a result of man's sinful nature or of Satan's desire to make man in his image without a conscience, and either a soul from Satan or soulless. Am I being too fanatical or speculating too much about this?

Exactly how God creates the soul of each new human is a mystery that has long been debated. Some believe that God directly creates the souls that he places in each new human. This is called creationism. This does not seem to be correct, since God rested from his work of direct creation at the end of the six days. He now creates new lives through the processes he set in motion during the original creation. It also is difficult to understand how the soul could come into the world corrupted by sin if it was a direct creation of God.

For this reason most Lutheran theologians believe that the soul of the newly conceived child is somehow derived from that of the parents. This is called traducianism.

We can't say with certainty what would happen if an attempt were

made to clone a human (which is one reason it shouldn't be done). Perhaps it cannot be done at all. Perhaps only some sort of monstrous being would result that was not truly human. Perhaps a real person would be the result. A clone is basically a being derived from only one parent.

Cloning of humans should not be done because it is a dangerous intrusion into the beginning of human life.

The only example we have of this is Christ, who was a true human with body and soul derived from one parent, Mary. His was a unique case involving the intervention of the Holy Spirit and does not give any assurance that other humans could be derived from one parent. On the other hand, it cautions us not to proclaim too certainly that this is impossible.

There are a number of things we can say.

1) Any being without a soul is not human.

2) Satan cannot create a soul, or any being, for that matter.

3) If it is possible for cloning to produce a real human, that person would be subject to the same principles of sin and grace as any other human.

4) Cloning of humans should not be done because it is a dangerous

intrusion into the beginning of human life, which departs from the way that God established for such life to begin.

God has granted governing authorities the right to take the lives of wrongdoers. The government hires people as soldiers, who are trained to kill in the event of a war. War, of course, is the product of evil. Is it a sin for a soldier to devote his life to learning how to kill, just as a farmer devotes his to farming?

The best book on this is Luther's classic work *Can Soldiers Too be Saved?* Soldiers should not knowingly fight for an evil cause, but to protect the innocent against aggression. They should not obey orders that they know to be evil and immoral. In practical terms it will often be impossible for citizens to judge whether their government is telling the truth about the causes of the war. In such cases, they should obey their government and leave the judgment to God.

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

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

About today's WELS college freshmen:



- The Iranian hostage crisis occurred before they were conceived.
- They have no meaningful recollection of the Reagan era.
- As far as they know, stamps have always cost about 32 cents.
- They've never been without MTV.
- They see "Family Ties" as something middle-aged ladies watch.
- They never heard of the Synodical Conference.
- WELS has always been in (or close to) all 50 states.
- They never attended a wedding reception in the church's fellowship hall.
- They don't remember when Africa, Japan, and the Apaches were the only world missions of WELS.
- They don't know any King James Version Bible passages from memory.

"Faith is not a drowsy thought of a human imagination but a living confidence of the heart in God's grace and a spring whence everything good wells up."
—Martin Luther

What next?

The Nebraska Supreme Court threw out a judge's sentence of a child molester because the judge, from the bench, cited some Bible passages.

Next:

The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case on appeal.

"It seems that quoting the Bible is an offense that trumps child abuse."

cited in *The Religion & Society Report*, April 1999

"Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice" (Proverbs 24:17).



Picture this

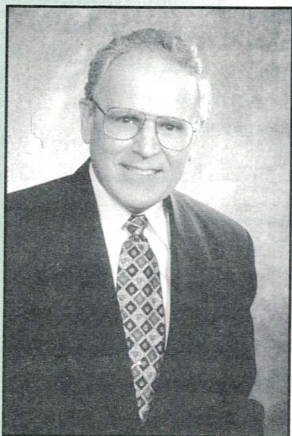
Talk about milestones that give glory to God! Ellen Avonson, in her 100th year of grace, reads her father's Swedish Bible, which he brought to the United States from Sweden. One of the first settlers in Lincoln County, Minnesota, her father housed many ministers who came over from the old country. The picture was supplied by Avonson's niece, Lois Winter, a member at Zion, Island Lake Township, Minn.

Church trends

"The century which began in the United States as a much heralded 'Christian Century' appears at its conclusion to have been the 'Century of Religious Pluralism.'"

"The poll numbers tell us that the will to believe is alive. But they offer no evidence that religious institutions have the same degree of influence over people's lives that they exercised 30 years ago, or that many people have kept up an attachment to the denominational bodies that served to organize and guide religious life throughout much of this century. A problem for national church organizations these days is that we live in a time suspicious of institutions and their authority."

Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches 1999



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

It is not only proper, but vital to hate evil. Still, Jesus has taught us how to act in faith toward evildoers—with love, not hate.

I hate this subject

Hatred! It's a despicable thing. It creates violence and injustice. It bombs embassies and abortion clinics. It breeds unresolved anger and bitterness. It eats at your soul. "Kill off all sinners," it cries, but often it saves its worst hate for certain kinds of sinners.

Still, some people stir up hatred and invoke the name of God in their support. They use Psalm 5:5: "You [God] hate all who do wrong."

"God hates all who do wrong," goes the reasoning. "So should we who are God's children. Besides, 'to fear the Lord is to hate evil'" (Proverbs 8:13). So, some preach hatred and promote violence.

There is a godly hatred. The Bible says so. Truth is we feel a blast of it every time God condemns one of our pet sins: like gossip, like greed—like hate.

Say what? How can hatred be a godly trait and a sin? It can because of the difference between God's justice and God's mercy, God's law and God's gospel. It can because of the difference between God and us.

God hates the sinner (notice, not just the sin). But in love he took steps to satisfy the just ends of that hate (which would be to kill all the sinners). Even while we were still sinners (not deserving to avoid death), he in love toward us had Christ die for us (Romans 5:8)—and not only for us, but for the rest of the undeserving world too (John 3:16).

So, do any people still remain the objects of his divine hatred? Yes, all who in impotence and unbelief refuse his love.

I said above, "I hate this subject." That wasn't just a play on words. First, hatred is most often hateful. Second, it can get confusing when we try to see God's justice

and his love at the same time (okay, that doesn't generate hate for this subject, it's just a reluctance to try to explain the unexplainable in about 600 words). And it can be confusing to speak of hate and love in our own lives.

But, when in doubt, turn to Jesus. We live in our faith under the gospel. God has not negated Proverbs 8:13. It is not only proper, but vital to hate evil. Still, Jesus has taught us how to act in faith toward evildoers—with love, not hate.

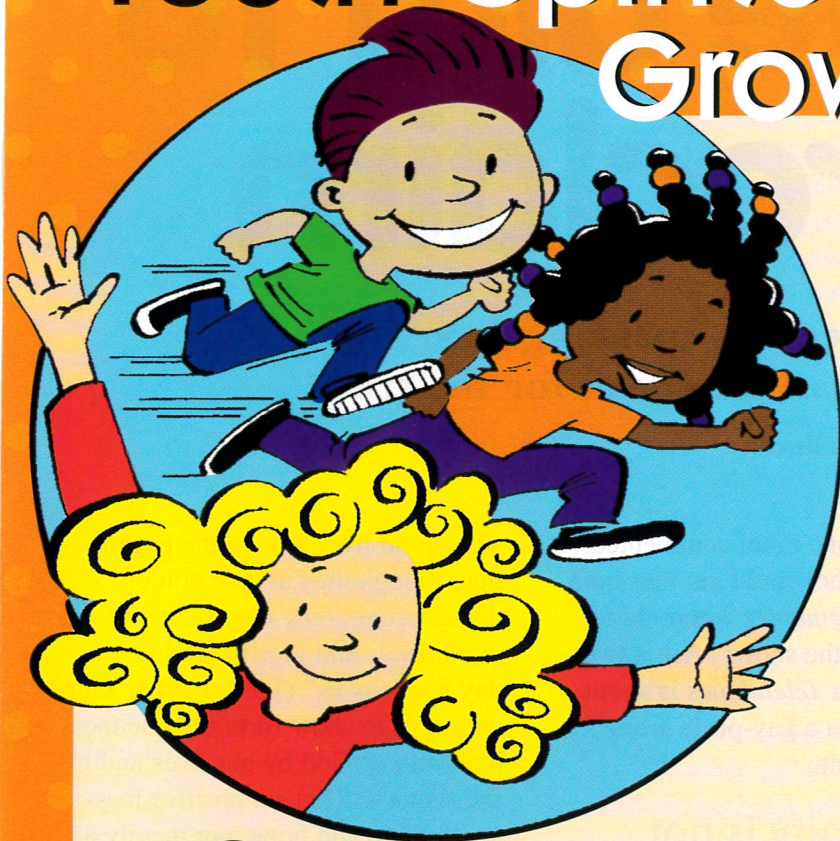
Jesus tells us to love our enemies, to do good to them who hate us, to pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36). That's a tall order. It leaves no room for vengeful hatred. It runs counter to our natural inclinations. He even says to turn the other cheek to those who try to hurt us and to lend to our enemies without expecting to get anything back.

Can anyone who has caught the spirit of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan advocate or participate in planned violence against abortionists, homosexuals, alcoholics, bigots? Can anyone who knows the evil inclinations of his own heart be quick to throw stones at others? Can anyone who has heard Jesus pray at Calvary, "Father, forgive them," fail to pray for those whose sins are particularly odious in Anytown, USA? Can anyone who, in the afterglow of Jesus resurrection, sees heaven as our welcome home wish hell on anyone? Shouldn't it be enough that God in Christ will satisfy justice in his final judgment?

Yes, hate evil, but live in love. That's the gospel way. That's God's way.

Gary P. Baumler

Youth Spiritual Growth Matters!



1999

Youth Counselors Workshop

October 1-3, 1999

YMCA Camp Matawa

Campbellsport, Wisconsin

A weekend for

- Addressing current issues in Youth Ministry
- Gaining new ideas and strategies
- Networking with new and experienced youth leaders

track **1** one

Youth Ministry

Suggested for all first-time attendees

Learn about the basic components of a balanced Christ-centered youth ministry.

- A welcome explanation for leaders new to teen ministry
- A refreshing review for experienced leaders
- Return home with many new, exciting ideas
- Receive a youth ministry handbook
- Participate in a hands-on approach to planning youth ministry
- Develop strategies for involving parents in the lives of teenagers

Presenters are:

- *Gerald F. Kastens*, Commission on Youth Discipleship Administrator
- *Pastor Michael Turiff*, Youth Discipleship Coordinator for Southeastern Wisconsin District
- *Jeff Scheibe*, Youth Leader and Member of Southeastern Wisconsin District Youth Discipleship Commission

track **2** two

Youth and Family Ministry

Suggested for previous attendees of a Youth Counselor Workshop

Topics include:

- **Restarting a Youth Ministry**
Pastor Ross Henzi
Chairman of the Northern Wisconsin Commission on Youth Discipleship
- **Counseling Teenagers**
Dr. John Johnson
Professor of Psychology
Wisconsin Lutheran College
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

For more information, please call:

(414) 256-3224 or (414) 256-3274

Or E-mail:

gkcyd@sab.wels.net

Tuition: Affordable.

Registration: Fast & Easy!



We aim to proclaim

Too often, we speak against things more than we speak for the truth.

David D. Sellnow

local radio, one mom commented: “Anybody who would get that from watching *Teletubbies* is too old to be watching the show!” Ask a two-year-old what *Teletubbies* is about. You won’t get a gay-pride press announcement.

Christianity is not essentially about protesting . . . it is about proclaiming.

I’m not writing about this because I feel it is my calling to be a defender of purple (or other-colored) children’s TV characters. To me it’s simply another example of how too many religious leaders focus their ministries in the wrong direction. They speak *against* things more than they speak *for* the truth. They seek to enforce law more than they understand or offer gospel.

Christianity is not essentially about protesting . . . it is about proclaiming. What did Jesus say? “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Jesus did not command us to go out and protest every wrong behavior that is exhibited in the world. Instead, he calls us to “live

such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12). Our calling is to show forth the goodness and truth of God by our lives and by our witness. That’s a positive message of life and hope, not merely an exercise in negative finger-pointing.

Yes, we object to the immorality that is prevalent in the world. We oppose the evils that others condone. But that is not our first or only message. Our main mission is to proclaim Christ. Only Christ’s gospel can change the hearts of people in this world. No amount of screaming or protesting by us can do that.

Oh, by the way . . . as I am writing this, the altar in our church is covered in purple. That’s not a gay-pride statement. It’s a penitential color for the season of Lent. And when one of the kids brings a Teletubby doll to church, we don’t cast the doll—or the child—out.

Dave Sellnow is pastor at Shepherd of the Plains, Lubbock, Texas.

For more insights from Pastor Sellnow, subscribe to the “Electric Gospel,” a weekly e-mail devotion, by e-mailing <wels@arn.net>.

Early this year, the ministry of Rev. Jerry Falwell made news by protesting the program, *Teletubbies*. A Falwell ministry publication, *National Liberty Journal*, contained an article claiming that Tinky Winky (one of the Teletubbies) may be a subliminal gay role model because

- he’s purple—the gay-pride color;
- his antenna is shaped like a triangle, the gay-pride symbol;
- he carries a purse.

Admittedly, the *National Liberty Journal* did not come up with this interpretation of Tinky Winky and was simply quoting *Time*, the *Washington Post*, and *People*. But the comments made by Falwell’s ministry were the ones that generated so much controversy.

Still, I’ve got to agree with a Lubbock radio listener. When the controversy was being discussed on

NL