

FORWARD

January 2000

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

V871
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

6633 W. WARTBURG CIRCLE
MEQUON, WISCONSIN 53092

Across Generations

Monk makes
a mark on
history

Sneak peek
into the
Southeastern
Wisconsin
District

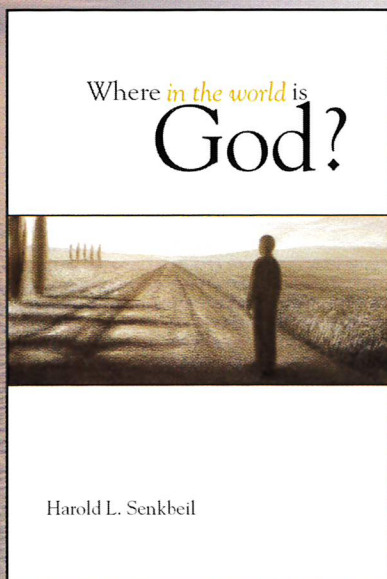
Staying
afloat in
Africa



DEC 29 1999
01 000595100 2001 2008
WISCONSIN LUTH SEMINARY LIBR
6633 W WARTBURG CIR
MEQUON WI 53092-1530

Things Are Looking Up!

At the end of the 20th century, Christians face a bright future. *Where in the World Is God* assures us of God's many promises, even in the face of uncertainty and fear. This collection of 70 devotions by Harold Senkbeil is written in a style that readers familiar with *Meditations* will enjoy. Each two-page devotion has comfortable easy-to-read print.



Where in the World Is God?

by Harold L. Senkbeil
Papercover, 158 pages.
LU06N0712
\$9.99


The sands of time keep slipping through the hourglass of history, but the child of God has a foothold on something rooted in eternity.

Available online at www.wels.net/nph or call 1-800-662-6022 (Milwaukee area 414-475-6600)

8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. weekdays. Or mail the convenient order form below.

Please place my order for *Where in the World Is God?*

Name (please print) _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Daytime Phone (____) _____

- Check or Money Order enclosed
(make payable to Northwestern Publishing House)
- NPH Charge Account (net 30 days)
If NPH charge, fill in 6-digit NPH Acct. No.
-   

Bankcard No. _____
Exp. Date _____

Stock #	Qty	Book Title	Price	Total
LU06N0712	___	<i>Where in the World Is God?</i>	\$9.99	\$ _____
		Merchandise Total		\$ _____
		Shipping & Handling*		\$ _____
		Subtotal		\$ _____
		5% Sales Tax—Wisconsin residents <small>Note: 5% on Subtotal required by Wisconsin law</small>		\$ _____
		.6% County Tax—Milwaukee County residents		\$ _____
		Total Amount		\$ _____

*SHIPPING & HANDLING CHARGES

Note: Bankcard and NPH charge customers will be billed actual postage plus \$2.00 handling.

If order totals	Add
up to \$ 10.00	\$ 3.70
\$ 10.01 to \$ 25.00	\$ 4.80
\$ 25.01 to \$ 50.00	\$ 6.25
\$ 50.01 to \$100.00	\$ 7.90
\$100.01 to \$150.00	\$ 9.40
\$150.01 to \$200.00	\$10.90
\$200.01 and up	\$12.50

We reserve the right to bill you for actual shipping costs when the charges exceed the schedule.

 **Northwestern Publishing House**
1250 North 113th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284

The revealing of the Word

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. John 1:14

Thomas A. Westra

When something is wrong, a baby cries. But crying can mean the little guy is hungry, tired, in pain, or had a bad dream. Then, as he grows, the child learns to use words. Words are better than crying. Now the little guy can say, "Mommy, my ear hurts." The words help. Words explain. Words reveal.

A mystery made known

Christmas is about a mystery. God became like us, but born of a virgin. The Almighty made himself dependent for survival on the nurturing care of a young woman. The holy God went to such lengths for rebellious sinners like you and me. All this is part of the mystery of Christmas.

But Christmas doesn't only mystify. It explains. It makes known. In his Gospel, John writes of Jesus: "The Word was with God and the Word was God." He calls Jesus the Word. A word is a thought, formerly hidden in the depths of someone's heart, now made audible—and therefore known—to others. Though God reveals his power and majesty in creation, his thoughts, formerly hidden in the depths of his heart, he now makes known in the Word, Jesus Christ.

Words reveal a person's thoughts and nature. God's words, too, reveal his thoughts and loving nature. Jesus, the focal point of all Scripture, is rightly called the Word. He reveals what God is like.

HOPE
LOVE
FORGIVENESS
REDEEMER
HOLY
SAVIOR
WORD
PEACE

So, what does God think about us?

All of us have been disturbed by an ugly truth about ourselves. We are sinners. We may polish up pretty well on the outside, but if you look at our inner thoughts it's obvious we don't always "fear, love, and trust" in God above all things. Living in a society that's committed to the philosophy "you've got to look out for #1," it's clear that we don't come close to loving our neighbor as ourselves. That's sin. And it's ugly.

But if it's ugly to us, imagine how it must look to a holy God—a God who sees every shameful thought in our heart. He must want to turn away from us with loathing. He must want to spit us out of his mouth, sinners that we are.

But that's not the whole picture. God is more than holy, and he doesn't just want to spit us out. "God is love," John writes. Faced with the mammoth challenge of showing his holiness and his love for us at the same time, God turned to his Son to make known God's inner thoughts.

The Word became flesh

Jesus had always existed as God. But when the right time came, he became human to live the perfect life for humans. He didn't stop being God. He was born with a body so that it could be nailed to a tree. He took on blood so that it could be poured out for us.

At the cross the Word showed the climax of God's holiness and love. Jesus was made sin for us. God forsook him and condemned his own Son. God did so because of the sins his Son carried—our sins. God loved us so much that he took the guilt and punishment of our sins and placed them on his own Son as our substitute.

Look at that baby in the manger. His human face reveals how God feels about you. Look at that face 33 years later, contorted with pain as he hangs on an executioner's rack. The Word there explains that he loves you so much he would suffer even this rather than spend eternity without you.



Thomas Westra is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio.

FORWARD

Northwestern Lutheran

Official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

January 2000 / Vol. 87, No. 1

www.wels.net

Editorial office

Forward/Northwestern Lutheran,
WELS, 2929 N Mayfair Rd,
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398

FAX, 414/256-3899

<nl@sab.wels.net>

Editor

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

<garyb@sab.wels.net>

Senior Communications Assistant

Julie K. Tessmer, 414/256-3231

<juliet@sab.wels.net>

Communications Assistant

Nicole R. Moline, 414/256-3232

<nicolem@sab.wels.net>

Seminary Consultant

R. D. Balge

Contributing Editors

J. A. Aderman, W. F. Beckmann, J. F. Brug,

J. D. Buchholz, J. C. Gerlach, E. S. Hartzell,

R. K. Hunter, P. M. Janke, M. J. Lenz,

A. J. Panning, T. A. Westra, P. E. Zell

Art Director

Paul Burmeister

Graphic Designer

Carianne Neu

Photographs and Illustrations

courtesy of Dave Arndt & Elton Stroh, p. 8;

Bill Frauhiger/Billustrations, p. 10; courtesy of

Bev Haar & Dave Hein, p. 12; Gerry Koser,

p. 14; Jane Dippold, p. 16; courtesy of John

Baumann & Terry Reich, p. 18; courtesy of Paul

Wegner, p. 20; Photo Disk, p. 36

FORWARD/Northwestern Lutheran

Forward/Northwestern Lutheran (ISSN 1526-2529) is published monthly by Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Rates: USA—\$9; single copy—\$1.50; large print—\$24. Canada—\$9.63; single copy—\$1.61. All other countries—air mail \$33; surface mail \$25. Postage included, payable in advance to NPH. Write for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. For single issues, Wisconsin add 5% sales tax; Milwaukee County add 5.6% tax. Also available on audiocassette from Mission for the Visually Impaired, 559 Humboldt Ave, St. Paul MN 55107.

Subscription Services

1-800-662-6093. Milwaukee area 414/475-6600. Or write NPH, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Forward/Northwestern Lutheran, c/o NPH, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

©2000 by Forward/Northwestern Lutheran.

Printed in the USA.



Cover photo by Corbis Images

Why and how the young and old should care for each other.

8

bits & pieces



Happy new year! Better yet, happy new millennium! What better time to reflect on the past and the future.

- Ever feel “old-fashioned” or “behind on the times?” Maybe that’s not such a bad thing. Check out Editor’s pen. (p. 34)
- Every year is our Lord’s year. Even the dating of our western calendar is based on his birth. Read more about it on p. 10.



Two articles this month talk about a topic not discussed much in WELS churches—self-esteem.

- Ken Cherney, our new editorialist, discusses how many churches misuse worldly concepts such as self-esteem. (p. 7)
- Rolfe Westendorf tells us how valuable the concept of self-esteem can be, if we use it correctly. (p. 16)



The new year is bringing in changes for *Forward/NL*.

- Two names leave our masthead—Linda Baacke, senior communications assistant, and Paul Ehlike, graphic designer. Though we’ll miss seeing Linda every day in the office, you’ll still periodically see her married name, Linda Buxa, on our pages. Paul brought creativity, vitality, and fun into our magazine for the past two years. We wish him God’s blessings as he continues his education in New York.
- We also say goodbye to Kris Longendyke, production assistant at Northwestern Publishing House. Her behind-the-scenes work helped keep our magazine on track.
- We welcome Nicole Moline as our new communications assistant, and Carianne Neu as our graphic designer. We’re excited about what they have to offer.

—JKT

Library

6633 W. WARTBURG CIRCLE
MEQUON, WISCONSIN 53092

features

INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRY

8 Crossing generations touches lives

Interaction between generations is part of God's model for ministry.

Joel A. Nelson

INSIGHTS

10 The year of our Lord

As the western calendar shows, history pivots on the birth of Jesus Christ.

Daniel N. Balge

A VISIT TO THE DISTRICTS

12 Blessings bring challenges

The Southeastern Wisconsin District: to whom much has been given, much is expected.

Linda R. Buxa

ALLEGED BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

14 Discrepancies of a doctrinal nature

Context can help explain alleged contradictions about doctrine.

Forrest L. Bivens and John D. Schuetze



10

SPEAKING MY MIND

16 The value of self-esteem

We want to reject the misuse and the distortions of self-esteem, not waste the value the concept provides.

Rolfe F. Westendorf

MISSION AND MINISTRY IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

18 From pure pagan to Christian

A Hmong pastor shares how God saved him spiritually.

Pheng Moua

PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

20 Getting my feet wet

A young missionary to Malawi waits to see why he is in Africa.

Paul L. Wegner

INSIGHTS

36 The simple life

Is it possible to be content with the simple life? It is if you remember the source of your contentment.

Kenneth A. Cherney



16

departments

3 THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The revealing of the Word

6 READERS FORUM

7 EDITORIAL COMMENT

Ignore Dr. Gedankenspritzer

22 WELS NEWS

28 WORLD NEWS

29 BULLETIN BOARD

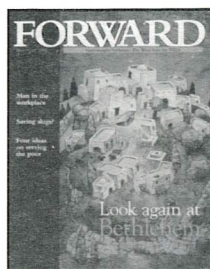
30 BIBLE STUDY
With friends like these . . .

31 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY

32 YOUR QUESTION, PLEASE
The end is near

33 POTLUCK

34 EDITOR'S PEN
Is it too late to turn back?



As members of the *Forward/NL* production staff at Northwestern Publishing House, it was our privilege to work with artist Bruce Bond,

who passed away suddenly on Oct. 21. Bruce put his heart into our assignments, creating many memorable pieces including the December cover. His passing also reminds us to recognize similar contributions from artists Bill Frauhiger and John Boettcher, and photographers Mrs. Kevin Scheibel, Gerry Koser, and Jerry Harders. God has blessed this magazine through their fine efforts. These unselfish professionals make our jobs easier.

Paul Burmeister, art director

Paul Ehlke, graphic designer

Kris Longendyke, production assistant

In “The head of the house” [Oct.] Wayne D. Mueller refers to our head, Christ, as the second Adam.

Scripture refers to him much more powerfully as “the *last* (emphasis added) Adam, a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45 NIV). Thus, there are no more Adams.

*Karl A. Sense
Galox, Virginia*

When I read about all the good things that delegates accomplished at the 1999 convention, it made me proud to be a WELS member. However, **I am disappointed that apparently no attention was given to the most serious problem facing us as a synod—the breakdown of the family.** From pew to pulpit our congregations are being torn apart by adultery and divorce. Forty years

from now, how many victims of divorce and single parents will need gift planning counselors to help them distribute their assets? God has given us the tools to deal with this problem. When will we set our minds and hearts to the task of learning how to use these tools effectively?

*Rolfe Westendorf
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

After reading “Africa—where religion makes headline news,”

[Oct.] I’d like to encourage our congregations to keep Pastor Hachibamba and the Lutheran Church of Central Africa in ongoing prayer, for we are called to encourage and strengthen one another who labor in the gospel.

*Marilyn Cooper
Aliso Viejo, California*

The article about Avinash Sallapudi [Nov.] reminded us about a letter that our daughter wrote about a year ago. She was eight years old. We adopted her from India in 1991.

to: My unknown Mother
Dear Mommy,

I guess you are wondering who I am. My name is Sarisha Lin Manthe. But you called me Divya. I live in the United States of America, Wis., Manitowoc.

I have a question. Do you believe in God and go to an Evangelical Lutheran Church?


I do. I hope you do.

Love, Sarisha

After we read this letter, we made it a point to take Sarisha and her brother Akasha, also adopted from India, to the commissioning of Pastor Lynn Wiedmann, a friendly counselor in India. As it happens he is working in the area where our

children were born. Sarisha saw firsthand that our synod has not forgotten her people, and we, her parents, can give her the hope that her unknown mother one day may be brought to faith through these efforts.

Just for the record, our book of Hindu names says that in death, Avinash has lived up to his name. It means “one which cannot be destroyed.”

 *Matt and Ruth Manthe
Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

I have a troubled heart. In fact, it aches as my family is denied Sunday school and Bible classes in the summer.

We are supposed to follow Jesus’ examples. I cannot find anything that says we are to teach only three seasons of the year. God has set the rules of continual teaching of his Word—yes, even in the summer.

Teenagers are confirmed in the spring and then told, “Good-bye, we’ll see you in the fall when we have Bible classes again.” Vacation from God? I don’t think so! Teenage temptations can deteriorate them morally and spiritually—even in the summertime. Is that Jesus’ plan for family life?

We entered the year 2000 with less instruction of God’s Word. I would hope elders, pastors, and teachers will do some soul-searching and again provide Sunday school and Bible classes in the summer.

*Myra Heyn
Penryn, California*

Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3899; <nl@sab.wels.net>. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity and conciseness. Writers’ views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward/NL*.

Ignore Dr. Gedankenspritzer

Kenneth A. Cherney

Andrew Greeley, I believe, came up with two rules for understanding the life of the Christian church:

1. Whenever the church adopts something from the world, the world has just abandoned it.
 2. Whenever the world discovers something precious from us, we have just abandoned it.
- For example: Just when the world began to hunger for things like order, transcendence, and mystery, many churches realized they had recently dumped what met those needs beautifully—the liturgy.

On the other hand, some churches' "cutting-edge" theology often sounds strangely like what secular philosophy was saying two weeks ago. When the self-esteem bandwagon rolled down the streets of secular psychology many people in the church could hardly wait to jump on. Self-esteem was going to bring a "new reformation" to the church. Students of the Bible worked to find self-esteem in the Scriptures. When they found that the Bible has little to say about self-esteem, and a whole lot to say about humility, many of them were undeterred. They continued to see self-esteem where it isn't—such as in Jesus' words about loving your neighbor "as yourself."

At last, the church had caught up with the world. But where is the world today on self-esteem? Psychologists now have serious doubts about whether there is such a thing, and about whether, if it exists, it can be measured. For instance, on one self-esteem test¹, you choose one of five responses: "always true," "sort of true," "sometimes true/sometimes false," "sort of false," and "always false," for statements such as, "I'm happy the way I am" and "I'm an important person." One wonders whether anybody who isn't a complete egomaniac could respond "always

true" to statements like those.

The value of the test, and others like it, is being questioned. One reason is that the tests are poor predictors of academic success. On the above test, the group whose self-esteem measured the lowest—white girls—is also the group that tends to do the best in school. Another study shows a connection between high self-esteem, as these tests measure it, and anti-social behavior² Maybe this is why Dr. Laura Schlesinger (of the popular radio program) has said, "Self-esteem is psychobabble. There is no such thing." Times are changing—and Christians mainly concerned with keeping up with them are in danger of looking silly.

How can we avoid looking silly? The answer is clear. God's Word, not the world, needs to set the agenda for the church. We're to be busy with the timeless truth, not the trendy. Instead of trying to jam the square peg of worldly ideologies into the round hole of Scripture, our mission is to bring Scripture's truths to the world—"in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).

When it comes to the world and its trends, remember churchman Martin Franzmann's words about the trendy (and fictional) scholar "Dr. Gedankenspritzer." Church scholars are being told, he said, "to take into account the epoch-making work of the great Dr. Gedankenspritzer. For whatever you may think of the great Dr. Gedankenspritzer, you simply cannot ignore him."

"Why not, for a change, ignore the great Dr. Gedankenspritzer?" was Franzmann's question.

"It might be a good thing, even for Dr. Gedankenspritzer."³

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

God's Word,
not the world,
needs to set
the agenda
for the church.

¹Test used in a study by the American Association of University Women.

²Study by Roy Baumeister of Case Western Reserve University. *First Things*, February 1999, p. 21-26.

³*Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets*, p. 54.

Crossing generations touches lives

Interaction between generations is part of God's model for ministry and benefits all ages.

Joel A. Nelson

“Adolescence has become a waiting period of enforced leisure with few responsibilities and little or no meaningful contact with adults.” (*Adolescent Rolelessness in Modern Society*, a report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development)

“More often than not, children are learning major value systems in life from the horizontal peer culture. The vertical structure is not there in adequate increments of time or intensity to do the job.” (*The Effective Father*, Gordon MacDonald)

“If the institutions of our society continue to remove parents, other adults, and older youth from active participation in the lives of children, and if the resulting vacuum is filled by the age-segregated peer group, we can anticipate increased alienation, indifference, antagonism, and violence on the part of the younger

generation.” (*Two Worlds of Childhood*, Urie Bronfenbrenner)

Separation of youth and adults

Newspaper headlines and television news clearly demonstrate that these statements accurately reflect what is going on in society today. Meaningful association between youth and adults is at abysmal levels, and the fallout is frightening. The Colombines, Jonesboros, and Colliers, which will remain etched on our minds for years to come, are just the tip of the iceberg.

Cornell University's Urie Bronfenbrenner cites nine specific changes during the past generation that have increasingly separated youth and adults:

1. Parents' vocational choices remove them from the home for long periods of time.
2. More mothers are working out side of the home.

3. The divorce rate is escalating.
4. Single parent families are increasing in number.
5. The extended family is steadily declining.
6. The evolution of the physical environment of the home with its large, segregated spaces limits family contact.
7. Peers have replaced adults.
8. Children are isolated from the work world of adults.
9. Schools are insulated from the rest of society.

An additional cause could be added. The church, without intending it, contributes to the disassociation of the generations when it provides and promotes separate and distinct children's and teen programs. Though this has been the youth ministry model for decades, research on what keeps youth in the church reveals that children and teens who are intentionally and positively connected with older generations remain more faithful to the church as they grow older.

One generation caring for another

The Holy Scriptures share encouragement on the subject of intergenerational contact and concern.

“One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4).

“I will utter hidden things, things from of old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have



Singing during family vacation Bible school in 1997 at Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis. Family VBS included other family activities such as Bible bingo and Bible trivia. Now the congregation “crosses generations” through WEBS (Wednesday, Evening Bible Study). Every Wednesday, families gather for a fellowship supper; Bible studies for youth, teens, and adults; and group singing.

told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done" (Psalm 78:2-4).

"Just as each of us has one body with many members . . . in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:4,5).

"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters. . . . If a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God" (1 Timothy 5:1-4).

These and many other passages teach God's model for ministry: one generation caring for another.

Many can share stories of how the concern of someone from another generation touched their lives or the life of someone they knew. When one generation cares for another, especially in spiritual matters, wonderful things happen. Crossing generations touches lives. Consider what some of the research says:

- A University of California-San Francisco study finds that youth are more resilient when they experience the nonexploitive interest, care, and support of at least one adult during childhood—a parent or grandparent, aunt or uncle, older brother or sister, coach or teacher, pastor or youth leader—an adult with no hidden agenda.

- A study cited in *Children of Fast Track Parents* concludes that, "time and again the consistent emotional support of at least one loving adult can help children overcome all sorts of chaos and deprivation."

- Studies of children of divorce demonstrate that academic performance is significantly higher when grandparents, other relatives, or adult friends are present to offer physical, emotional, and spiritual support.

- Research reveals positive effects on older people who remain involved with younger generations, particularly children.

All ages can benefit

More could be written to champion the cause for intergenerational ministry in our congregations. Clearly, all ages can benefit, and the love of Jesus can be shared in astounding ways.

What do you think? Could you reach out to someone from another generation? Do you think God can use you to touch the life of someone younger or older than yourself? Would you discuss this with the leaders of your congregation so you can touch the lives of more members and prospects?

May the Lord move us to answer, "YES!" and to say with the psalmist, "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:18).



Joel Nelson is the associate administrator for the Commission on Parish Schools.

An informational booklet on the Crossing Generations program, with suggestions on how generations can interact with each other, is available from the Commission on Youth Discipleship, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3274; <mateskeb@sab.wels.net>.



Lori Stuebs (left) looking at her daughter Sylvia's classwork after Sunday morning Bible class.

St. John, Two Rivers, Wis., came up with a creative way to cross generations.

Instead of having separate Sunday school and adult Bible classes, adults and children meet together to learn about Jesus.

The pastor uses an object lesson to teach the first Bible story in *Christ-Light*® for that week. Then the younger children divide out into separate classrooms. The seventh- and eighth-graders and the parents

further study the lesson together.

"We always go deeper with the parents. They're going to be the real teachers in the children's lives," says David Arndt, pastor at St. John.

He continues: "The children can look into their [parents'] faces and see them struggle and work through a Bible story."

Parents are asked to identify moments when they can talk about that Bible study with their children. They're also given memory work.

Arndt says this method has been successful, especially with families who have never been in Bible class before.

"We just want to teach the family the recipe," says Arndt. "Then we can put the ministry back into the family."

The year of our Lord



As the Western calendar shows, history pivots on the birth of Jesus Christ.

Daniel N. Balge

Dionysius Exiguus (Die-o-ni-si-us Ex-ig-u-us) didn't make history. He measured it. To say it another way, Dionysius Exiguus made his mark in history by putting his mark on history.

Dionysius: the man who numbered the years

The Christian monk enjoyed his scholarly prime in the early sixth century. Even if you have not heard of him before, chances are excellent that you have been quietly, if unknowingly, acknowledging him for a long time. All these years later Dionysius Exiguus (fancy Greek and Latin for "Dennis the Short") still gets daily tribute. In a sense, ever since the day the doctor dated your birth certificate, you have been giving Dionysius due credit for

important work. Any time you dated a letter, set a date, or noticed the date on *Forward/NL*, you nodded dutifully to less-than-tall Dennis.

Grace has granted us our (his!) year to reflect on—and to reflect—the love with which he first loved us.

It was Dionysius who set up our commonly used system of years. Dionysius gave each year the tag "A.D."—*Anno Domini*, Latin for "in the year of [our] Lord." So whether or not you write A.D. on your checks (most of us don't), you

have been regularly giving Dionysius a posthumous pat on the back. He deserves it. The A.D. reminds us that Dionysius numbered our years from the birth of Jesus Christ. He gave us the years as we know them, and his method has stood for about 1,500 years.

That said, it seems at least a bit picky to note that Dionysius' arithmetic may have been a tad off. One also hates to criticize when one thinks of his careful research of those many centuries after Bethlehem. Yet it merits mention that many scholars now date Jesus' birth at about 4 B.C. By such reckoning, the new year ought to be 2004, not 2000.

But it is easy to forgive Dionysius his figuring (easier certainly than fixing all our history books: the War



CREATION

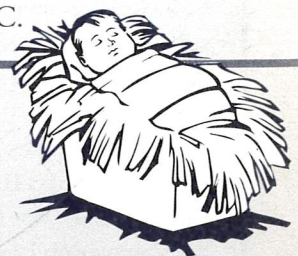


NOAH'S
ARK



TEN
COMMANDMENTS

4 B.C.



JESUS'
BIRTH

of 1816? the Spirit of 80? the Roaring Later '20's and Early '30's? "In 1496, Columbus sailed his ocean ships?") when you take into account the effect his work still has. Many other calendar systems exist—Jewish, Chinese, Islamic, to name a few—but the lap counter in general use for Earth's jogs around the sun is Dionysius's. Thus everyone—believer or pagan, agnostic or atheist—who dates anything even once by the Western common calendar, confronts this stark fact: history pivots on the birth of Jesus Christ. The Savior's birth is time's hinge.

Jesus' birth: time's ultimate reference point

One cannot miss Dionysius's logic in choosing history's benchmark. The birth of the baby of Bethlehem was the greatest moment in time, bar none. It is time's ultimate reference point, because it was the "fulness of the time" (KJV). It was just the right time. It was God's time to send "his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law (Galatians 4: 4,5). Every other happening in history is merely on the before—or the after—slope of that one unmatched, unmatched spike in history's timeline, when God's Son was born our

brother and Savior. The rise and fall of great nations, the life and death of great men and women, the discoveries, the disasters, the triumphs, the tragedies, the heroes, and the horrors are all pegged in time relative to that one amazing event, when the Word became flesh to dwell among us.

The Savior's birth is time's hinge.

Amazing it is. Amazing humility that the Son of God would trade his throne in heaven for a crib in a barn and ultimately a cross on a hill. Amazing grace that God the Father chose this way to buy the forgiveness of sins for all, his love paying the price that his holiness demands. Amazing power that God the Holy Spirit conceived this baby in a virgin's womb. Amazing accuracy that Jesus' birth fulfilled every detail of prophecies proclaimed centuries before. Amazing contrast between humble circumstances and glorious purpose.

2000: another year of our Lord

We think on these things as we greet new year 2000. Such consider-

ation is the proper focus as we enter a new century, as most call it, and move into the next millennium. Hoopla aside over this one particular turn of the calendar's page, we are being given one more A.D., one more year of our Lord, in which to live thankfully for him.

It is his year, and—just as with everything else he lends us—he expects and encourages us to be good managers of it. Unless Judgment Day comes in the next 12 months, we have another year steadily, faithfully, thoughtfully to serve our God's glory and our neighbor's good. This is another year to set aside regular and best portions of time for God's Word, his worship, and his work. Grace has granted us our (his!) year to reflect on—and to reflect—the love with which he first loved us, the love that brought Jesus to Bethlehem's manger, the love that marks our years in every way.

So farewell, A.D. 1999! Welcome, A.D. 2000! This is the year of our Lord. Dennis the Short won't let us forget it.



Daniel Balge is a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.



A.D. 325

NICENE CREED

A.D. 1517



MARTIN LUTHER

A.D. 1850



WELS FOUNDING

A.D. 2000



WELS' 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Blessings bring challenges

The Southeastern Wisconsin District:
to whom much has been given, much is expected.

Linda R. Buxa

Big numbers, small area. Amazing opportunities, creeping apathy. Old churches, “new breezes.” Blessings, challenges. Those contrasting characteristics begin to describe the Southeastern Wisconsin District of WELS.

Some of that may surprise you, but it shouldn't. Anything with 150 years of history cannot easily be classified or stereotyped.

Blessings

The district ranks near the top in numbers of members, churches, called workers, schools, and high school students.

However, geographically, the district is one of the smaller. “Compared to the Arizona-California District, we're compact,” says David Rutschow, president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District. “We only have hundreds and hundreds of miles to cover, instead of thousands.”

This geography is a blessing. Because WELS was formed in Milwaukee and spread from this hub, “it's a great district to be in for additional services,” says Rutschow.

Consider just a few of these opportunities:

Adult spiritual growth—With Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and the WELS administration building located in the district, seminary students and WELS administrators are available to assist congregations with worship and Bible classes.

Parasynodical organizations—A number of parasynodical organiza-

tions have offices in Southeastern Wisconsin: WELS Lutherans for Life, OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors), WELS Kingdom Workers, Jesus Cares, Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Lutheran Pioneers, and WELS-CLO (Church Librarians' Organization).

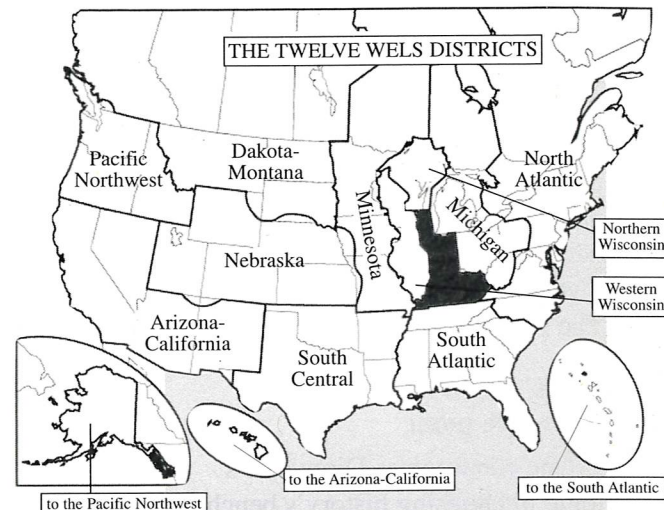
Christian counseling—Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service has offices in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Education—“Almost everybody in our district, if they're willing to drive a little, can get Christian education for their children.” That's not just early childhood and elementary schools either. Four area Lutheran high schools; Wisconsin Lutheran College; and Calvary Academy, a school for at-risk youth, are located here.

Retirement—WELS-affiliated communities such as Luther Haven offer seniors a place to live with those who share a common faith.

Conferences—Because resource people tend to be located in the Southeastern Wisconsin area, many conferences are held there. For example, the National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, which drew over 935 people, was held halfway between Chicago and Milwaukee. Also, a national men's retreat is being planned for the year 2000 with hopes to draw 1,000 participants.

Volunteering—All this activity



■ Southeastern Wisconsin District

Stats at a glance Southeastern Wisconsin District

Conferences: 6
Circuits: 15
Congregations: 145
Mission congregations: 9
Exploratory churches: 1

Baptized members: 64,596
Communicant members: 57,360
Average attendance: 45.7%
Pastors: 176

Adult baptisms: 86
Adult confirmations: 764

Sunday school enrollment: 5,767
Bible class attendance (teens): 732
Bible class attendance (adults): 7,439

Lutheran elementary schools: 78
Early childhood education schools: 75
Area Lutheran high schools: 4
Wisconsin Lutheran College
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Statistics taken from the 1998
Statistical Report and the Commission
on Parish Schools.



Beverlee Haar with preschool children from Little Lambs Child Care, Louisville, Ky. The congregation bought a building across the street from the church and turned it into a child care facility. There are 90-100 children enrolled. Haar is on sabbatical from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., to help the congregation build an even stronger child care facility.

gives members an opportunity not just to be served, but to serve. People can volunteer at their local church and also for synod-related activities: prison ministry, youth outreach, urban cross-cultural work, Bible classes for developmentally disabled, Synod Administration Building mailings.

“We have tons of opportunities to serve and be edified,” says Rutschow.

Still, the parable of the talents applies to this district: to whom much has been given, much is expected. That presents challenges.

Challenges

One challenge is not to become apathetic. “We could use more fire,” says Rutschow. “We have average attendance, and per communicant offerings are smaller than other, smaller districts.”

How do people get fired up and inspired?

“Sermons and Bible studies need to get priority and attention so we give God our best in worship,” he says. “They’ve got to have some-

thing that they really want to reach out with. If the gospel is ho-hum to me, I won’t do much with it.”

That leads to another challenge: going out with the gospel. For established congregations, that takes effort. In a church with 800 members, outreach may be the last item on the agenda, especially “when you need to take care of the urgent: marital problems, people hospitalized or dying,” Rutschow explains.

The unchurched are part of the urgent, but we don’t hear from them. They don’t leave messages on our machines asking for help.”

Making a concerted effort to reach out gets more challenging as neighborhoods change and people without church backgrounds move in.

“Big, older congregations can’t just get older,” says Rutschow. “If we keep doing that, we’ll die.”

These “grand old ladies,” as Rutschow calls them, can’t “fold up their tents or rest on their laurels. The past isn’t coming back. We need new breezes.”

And he feels new breezes. Urban outreach in Milwaukee is growing. In October 1999, 81 people from 11 Milwaukee area churches attended a School of Outreach to learn how to serve their communities.

Also, district congregations are starting daughter congregations, such as when Divine Savior, Indianapolis, helped start a church in Carmel, Ind.

Yet this outreach can’t happen without people. Because of called-worker shortages, “we need to get creative with staffing, and look in other directions,” Rutschow says.

This includes using staff ministers and finding more ministry for laypeople. All of this can be done using WELS materials and services.

“We must use these prepared

materials and let people do more—and have fun doing it,” he says.

One final challenge is to keep it personal. With 145 congregations, it’s hard for members and district officials to get to know everybody.

Rutschow doesn’t use this as an excuse. “We need to go to one another, encouraging and emphasizing power in the gospel. We need to take personal responsibility for each other’s actions. We need brothers and sisters providing correction and encouragement.”

The Southeastern Wisconsin District is 150 years old, but now isn’t the time to look backwards. Its blessings and its challenges will help the leaders and members go forward in Christ.



Linda Buxa, who lives in Kodiak, Alaska, is a member at Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage.



The adult information class at Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee. In October, the congregation confirmed four adults. Now, 10 prospects, as well as some members, take the class. This congregation’s membership declined throughout the 1980s and ‘90s. Now it is holding its own and needs to make a conscious effort to reach the people across the street. Its goal is “to again be a community church,” says Pastor David Hein. “We want to be recognized as a church that’s going to be there in the future.”

Discrepancies of a doctrinal nature

Context can help explain alleged contradictions about doctrine—things God tells us to believe and do.

Forrest L. Bivens and John D. Schuetze

David felt a subdued joy as he began talking with his parents. He was happy because this time he felt he had irrefutable Bible contradictions to show them. Yet he was sad because he didn't want to hurt their feelings. Besides, he still had feelings for the Bible, even though college conversations had eroded much of his confidence in it.

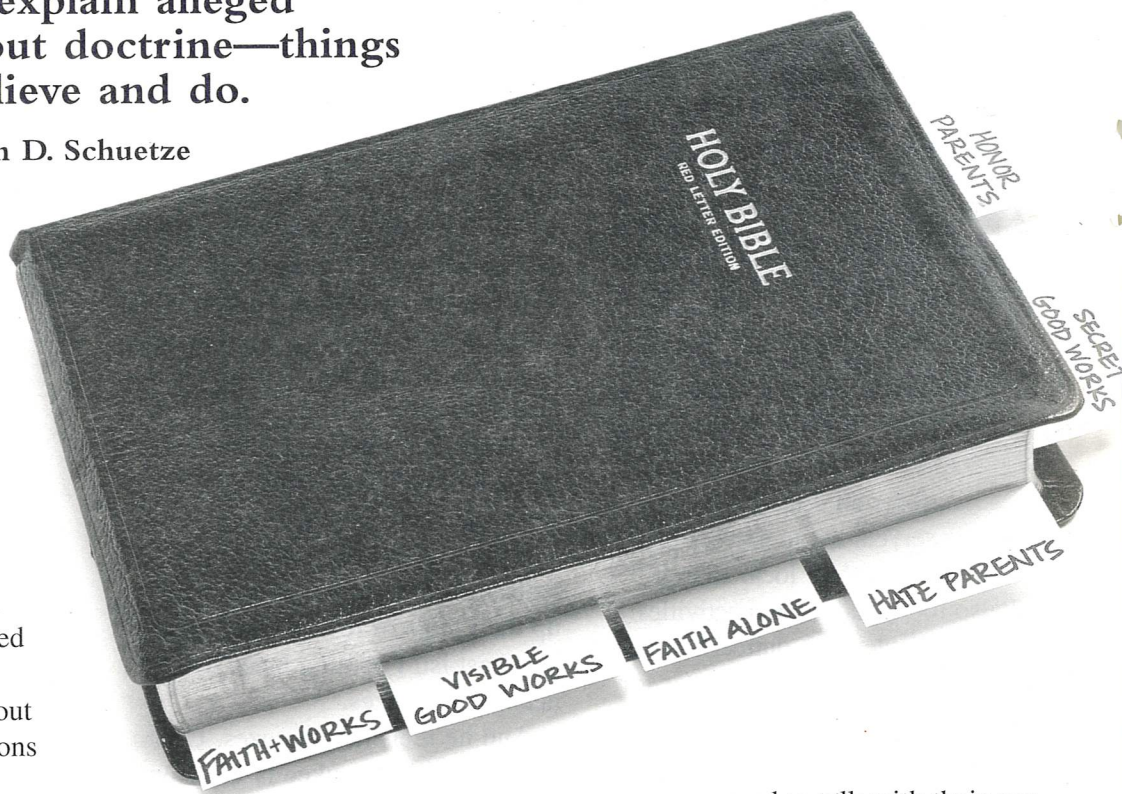
"Mom, Dad, I've learned about some *really* serious contradictions in the Bible."

Jim and Joan had the same reaction and almost responded in unison, "David, *all* contradictions in the Bible are serious to us!" Then Jim added, "But remember that they are only *alleged* discrepancies until proven."

"I meant I'm talking about doctrine—things God tells us to believe and do. You know, Christian faith and lifestyle!" David's voice was sincere and earnest.

"O.K.," replied Joan. "Tell us what you mean."

David proceeded. "I've got passages marked in my Bible to back up what I'm saying. First, the Bible tells us to do good works, and then it tells us not to do them.



Sometimes we are told to love parents, and sometimes to hate them. Maybe the most confusing thing is this: In one place we are clearly told that we are right with God through faith and in another place we are told we get right with him by good works. Don't you see? These are big time issues for Christians! The Bible goes against itself when telling us what's right and wrong."

Now it was Jim and Joan's turn to have mixed feelings. They felt happy because they had been reading one of the books their pastor had given them, and had examined these very accusations against Scripture. They

were prepared to talk with their son about them. Yet they felt sad because they realized just how impressionable he was while listening to whoever at his college was seeking to undermine the integrity of God's Word.

Jim began calmly. "Let's see those passages, Son."

The first two verses were close to each other, Matthew 5:16 and 6:1. The first read, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven," and the second said, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them."

At first glance they did appear to say opposite things. We are to do

good works publicly so people can see them, but then we are not to do good deeds openly, so people won't focus on them.

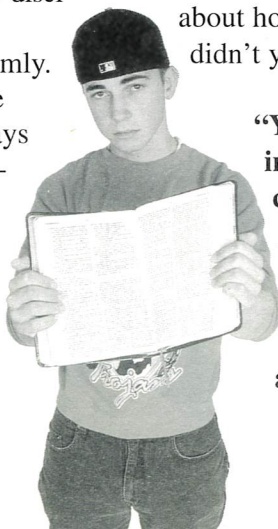
Joan continued, "Let's read them in the Bible with the verses that surround them. The context of what Jesus is saying there is important."

David soon saw the importance of doing that. In the first verse, Jesus was urging his followers to maintain lifestyles that would favorably impress people and lead them to give God glory. But the second section was clearly dealing with another subject—that of motive. Good works are not to be done for self-glorification or to feed personal conceit.

"Do you see that, David?" asked his mother. "Isn't it clear when you read the verses in their setting that they supplement rather than contradict each other? In one passage Jesus commands good works, but in the other he warns against wrong motives for doing good works." David slowly nodded in agreement.

"What about the things the Bible says about attitude toward parents?" David asked. "Honor your father and mother' is one of the Ten Commandments, but in Luke 14:26 Jesus says, 'If anyone comes to me and does not *hate* his father and mother . . . he cannot be my disciple.'"

Jim spoke gently yet firmly. "That last verse says more than that, David. It also says we are to 'hate' our spouses, children, and our own lives as we follow Jesus. And, yes, it may seem like a huge contradiction to all the commands that we love each other. But



fairness demands that we let the Bible explain the terms it uses.

"It is obvious from the context and from the parallel verse in Matthew 10:37 that it means we are to love parents and family members less than we love Jesus. The word 'hate' had that wider meaning in Bible languages. In Genesis 29:30, for example, we learn that Jacob 'loved Rachel more than Leah.' The next verse, as the Hebrew words read literally, says Leah was 'hated.' In Bible vocabulary, these are two ways of saying the same thing.

"This is not a real contradiction, but an example of how meanings of words can vary from one language to another. Last week, when your college football team won their game, you told us they 'killed' the other team, and just this morning I told your mother my shoes were 'killing' my feet. In our language, to 'kill' means more than commit murder. In Bible language, 'hate' sometimes has a wider meaning of loving someone less."

"I see the point," mumbled David, "so let's just forget I brought the subject up. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry," said Joan. "It's not wrong to voice concerns as long as we're willing to receive explanations. But we really can't drop the subject completely, can we? You mentioned alleged contradictions about how we get right with God, didn't you?"

"Yes," said David. "Paul, in Romans 3:28 and 4:5, clearly says that we are justified by faith alone, without works, but James 2:24 says that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone."

"Your mother and I have learned that it is best to read these chapters entirely, to let Paul and James explain themselves and the points they are making," Jim responded. "Paul insists that we are declared right with God solely through the gift of faith that clings to Christ. James does not deny that, but is concerned that people think they are justified through a 'faith' that is really no faith at all. True faith that embraces Christ and his work always produces good works. A false faith neither justifies nor leads to good works. When James says that we are justified by faith and works, it is his strong way of emphasizing that we are justified through true, living faith rather than some dead faith that never bears fruit."

"For the sake of honesty," Jim continued, "we should also add that many Bible students prefer to think that Paul is stressing how we are justified in the eyes of God (by faith), while James is talking about how believers are justified in the eyes of other people (by their works). This reminds us that all we have to do is show a reasonable, possible solution to supposed contradictions, and that is enough to satisfy fair-minded people."

"Well, Dad and Mom, you've helped me. I still have serious questions to ask, but they can wait until later," said David. His parents were glad that they could help—and anxious to do so again soon.



Forrest Bivens and John Schuetze are professors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.



The value of

Some years ago, social scientists recognized what most have known for a long time—people who are confident in their abilities usually make the most of their opportunities, while those who lack such confidence often waste gifts that could be put to good use. They gave this self-confidence the label “self-esteem” and set about to help people make better use of their talents and opportunities by trying to elevate their self-esteem.

The danger of high self-esteem

Unfortunately these social scientists were generally secular humanists and had only the tools of humanism at their disposal. As a result their therapies rejected the wisdom of the Bible, especially the teaching that human nature is sinful and essentially self-destructive. Since this teaching diminished human worth, it was denied and rejected, even by supposedly Christian preachers who diminished the grace of God by denying that we are as sinful as the Bible says we are.

Because the wisdom of God was rejected, the self-esteem therapies regularly failed until even secular humanists have come to denounce the “feel-good-about-yourself” idea as ineffective and counterproductive.

At the same time, concerned Christians recognized the unscriptural basis of the self-

We want to reject the misuse and the distortions of self-esteem, not waste the value that the concept provides.

self-esteem

Rolfe F. Westendorf

esteem movement and attacked it vigorously. They saw the danger of promoting human pride and demeaning godly humility, and warned against it with good reason. Human pride denies God the honor due him, and it rejects the sinner's need for a Savior. The humanistic promotion of self-esteem was a real danger to Christian faith.

The danger of low self-esteem

However, this reaction to the humanistic distortion of self-esteem has produced another kind of distortion that can also be harmful to Christian faith and life. Self-esteem is not necessarily the false pride that the humanists have promoted. Furthermore, low self-esteem cannot be equated with godly humility as some Christians have claimed.

The gospel declares God's unfailing love for us and tells us that we are worth more than many sparrows.

Positive feelings of self-worth tend to produce behavior that is both positive and God-pleasing, and negative feelings of self-worth tend to produce behavior that is selfish and self-destructive. To reject the concept of self-esteem because it has been misused and distorted by secular humanists is to

"throw out the baby with the bath water." We want to reject the misuse and the distortions. We do not want to waste the value that the self-esteem concept provides.

The breakdown of the family, and graphic sex and violence in the media send the message that you are worthless apart from your possessions and the pleasure you can snatch from an uncaring world. God's law condemns the behaviors that trash personal worth. The gospel declares God's unfailing love for us and tells us that we are worth more than many sparrows. The Psalmist declares that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" by a God who wants to be known to us as our Father in heaven. Scripture has the answer to the problems of low self-esteem that are crippling so many today. We can apply Scripture more directly if we recognize the problem that needs to be addressed, the problem of low self-esteem.

The danger of no self-esteem

Even if we recognize the problem and want to respond with biblical solutions, there are some difficulties with using a term (self-esteem) that has been so often misused and abused (similar to the phrase "the Holy Catholic Church"). On the other hand, "self-esteem" is the term commonly associated with feelings about personal worth. It may be counterproductive to address the problem without using the word that people commonly use to identify it. It may be more effective to

use the word properly and explain what it means, like teaching the meaning of "agape" love.

Whatever word we use, it is important that we do not throw away useful wisdom because it has been misused by secular humanists. If we denounce self-esteem as sinful pride and tell parents not to praise their children, as some have done, then we may literally be "throwing out the baby."

Rolfe Westendorf is pastor at Siloah, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



To give your child a healthy self-esteem

1. Give your child respect by giving him time and attention. Demand the behavior that makes you proud, and then praise him for it. Give him the joy of earning your respect, so that he will dread losing it and will avoid the behavior that would make you ashamed.
2. Chores are better than treats. Chores teach pride in accomplishment. Treats teach the joy of getting things so things become more important than people. Let grandparents give the treats. Let parents give the treat of useful behavior.
3. Teach your child that God is his Father and Jesus is his Savior, so that the love of both becomes clear to him. Then model God's unlimited and unconditional love to your child, so that he will know what God's love means. He who knows God's love has a healthy self-esteem.

From pure pagan to Christian

A Hmong pastor shares how God saved him spiritually.

Pheng Moua



Pheng Moua (right) and Jay Lo. Pheng and Jay were ordained as pastors in October 1999. They serve the Hmong in the Twin Cities.

My great grandfather moved from China about 100 years ago. Two brothers fled from China and settled in Laos because of war. We lack documents and records, so we did not have any specific information about locations or names of our relatives back in China. After all elders passed away, their children were left living in Laos and depending on farming.

Life was empty and hopeless

In my generation, war broke out again. The Hmong helped America as jungle fighters against the North Vietnamese. My family moved from place to place to survive. We had two choices—surrender or flee to Thailand. Some relatives surrendered and lived with the enemies. Some relatives, including our family, decided to risk our lives and escape to Thailand.

We gathered food from the forest like fish, fruits, bamboo shoots, birds. We suffered much. We cried out to heaven and called to god, “O, Sky, please rescue us.” My whole family was not Christians, and we did not know exactly which gods we were calling. We thought this god in the sky could help, so we called to him for deliverance.

We lived in the refugee camp in Thailand for six years before coming to the United States. While living in Thailand, I heard about Christianity but did not learn who Jesus is. I remember watching the movie “Jesus” in the camp and seeing some soldiers crucify a man. I did not know why they showed it. Life in the camp was empty and hopeless. Then my family decided to come to the United States.

God turned my heart

Since arriving in St. Paul, Minn., I started basic English classes. Many of my relatives had been in the United States and become believers. I was invited to churches and learned a few things, but I was not converted. Jesus stories or the Bible did not easily impress my background as a boy and as a Hmong man. In a couple of years, my sister went to an American church. I liked to learn English and different things so I went and was exposed to the Bible again.

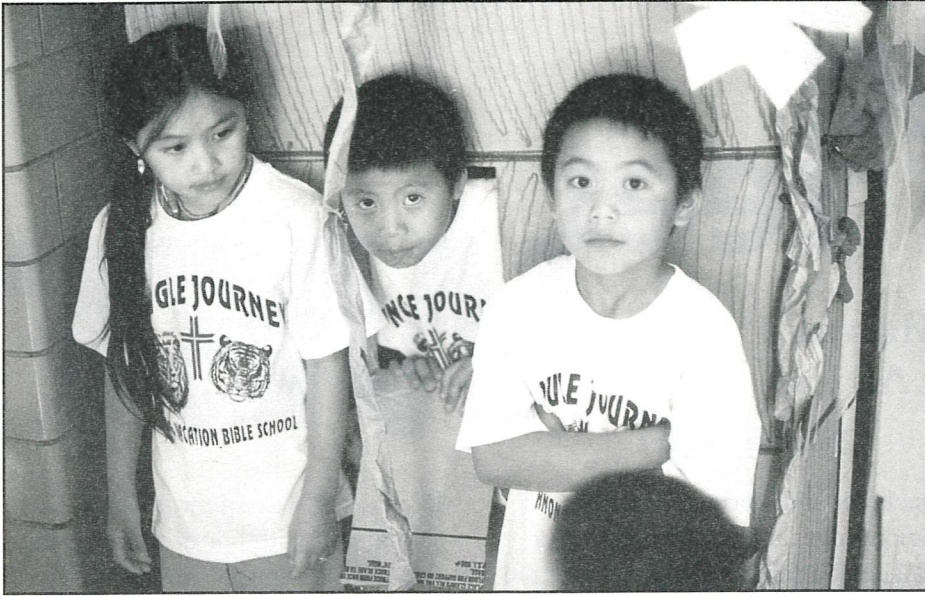
I believed there is a God and he is a true God, but my heart as

a Hmong man from a different culture didn’t accept this Christianity. My loyalty to my father strongly motivated my heart.

Since I was conceived, the shaman was dealing with my spiritual life. They believed my spirit had been wandering and now my spirit was called home to be united with my earthly family. Relatives and my parents were glad they bore a son and will one day have another family added to the clan. A man should keep his family together and all the things inherited from the older generation. Since I was born, I could not count how many animals were sacrificed for my spirit until I grew to be a man. These things were obstacles in my path for being Christian.

I did not have anybody to look up to except God.

I did not give up, but kept going to Bible classes and worship services. I believed God but did not want to be baptized. Finally, God turned my heart around and gave me peace. I knew that keeping the culture is one thing and serving the things controlled by Satan is another. I can be Christian and still keep my identity as Hmong. I will not be loyal to Satan and serve things that are controlled by him. I still will be able to do other things without



These Hmong children reflect the excitement that is generated by the work that WELS is carrying out in the Fox Valley. Pastor John Baumann, St. Paul, Appleton, Wis., coordinates programs like the Hmong vacation Bible school that these children attended in August and the Saturday school that many of those same children now attend.

shame and be proud to claim that I am Hmong Christian. I am free to celebrate feasts with relatives, like at New Year's. I am free from the devil. No one else can save me spiritually except God.

Then I was baptized and encouraged by members to pursue the ministry.

I would like to serve the Hmong

At first, I did not want to go into the ministry. I had gone to university and was happy. Life was not complicated, and I enjoyed it. Our church was going well; we had a leader who would be our pastor in the future.

During my third year in the university, things changed. Our leader, Ger Yang, went to Thailand on a missionary trip and did not return. Ger died mysteriously in the Hmong village.

Since Ger went to be with the Lord, who would be the leader for the Hmong at Emanuel, St. Paul, Minn.? Most of the people looked

at me and asked, "What should we do, Pheng?"

I did not know what to do, but I did not want to discourage the people. I said, "Don't lose hope, but trust in God because he will raise another leader for us." Three months after Ger's death, God brought two students to study for the ministry. I am one; Jay Lo is the other.

Some may question, "How did you finally choose this path, since you rejected it in the beginning?" When Ger died, it was hard, lonely, darkness, and no hope. I did not have any answer for our church. I did not have anybody to look up to except God. Why not me? I can do this with the help of God.

I decided to trash all I had

worked for and start a different path in life. I asked Pastors Loren Steele and Leon Piepenbrink to arrange me for the ministry. Maybe in their minds they could say, "Young man, you don't know what you are getting yourself into."

I carry a huge load on my shoulders, but the Lord will help me. For God says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). My training started in March 1996 and continued until now without summer vacation. While I studied, I served as preacher and teacher for the Hmong at Emanuel.

God-willing, after ordination and being called to be pastor, I would like to serve the Hmong in the Twin Cities because the mission is plentiful here. Other plans are to proclaim the gospel to the Hmong by letters, translated materials, and other means to get the message across. Millions of Hmong live in the United States, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, China, and France. We will keep on preaching the gospel and try our best, but the result is up to God.

We appreciate your support and prayers always.

Remember the Hmong are a small portion of the six billion populations that need Christ for salvation.



Pheng Moua, pastor of Emanuel, St. Paul, Minnesota, was ordained in October 1999 (see p. 22).

We can do more to reach the Hmong because many have settled close to our WELS congregations (the Twin Cities, the Fox Valley, and much of Wisconsin). God is also opening opportunities on our college campuses and across the nation among other Asian groups. For more information, call Pastor Terry Reich of the Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee, 651/771-6406.

Getting my feet WET

**A young missionary to Malawi
waits to see why he is in Africa.**

Paul L. Wegner

Although I graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary well over a year ago, I'm just now beginning to get my feet wet.

Impatient waiting

On May 18, 1998, I was assigned to Malawi, Africa, to do bush missionary work. You can imagine my frustration when I found out how long it would take before I could actually set foot on the "Dark Continent." First, there were birth certificates to find, passports to renew, and work permits to file. Then, it was buying,

packing, and storing personal belongings, and settling legal and financial affairs. Let's not forget the physical examinations and the long, painful series of immunizations. Throw into the mix the birth of our first child, Jason, and there was plenty to do. None of it, though, seemed directly related to helping the people in Africa know more about their Savior.

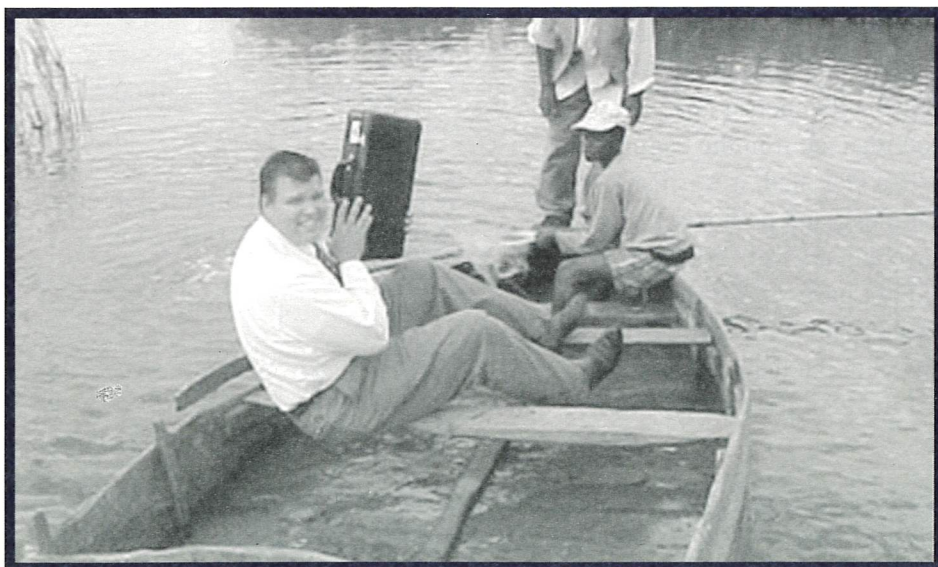
We finally arrived in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi, on Dec. 13, 1998. Four missionary families, who would soon grow to be our new extended family, greeted us.

December was spent getting acquainted with our new surroundings, while January and February found us unpacking our belongings and making our new house feel like home. March ushered in a more in-depth orientation to the work I would be doing, as well as a beginning study in Chichewa, the language I would need to know.

Although I had been out to a few of our Lutheran mobile medical clinics, I had not yet been able to get out into the "deep bush" to meet the people in the villages I would be serving. The only veteran missionary in Lilongwe, Mark Rieke, had his hands full teaching courses at the Lutheran Bible Institute (LBI), looking after 18 bush congregations, and orienting a new LBI teacher as well as me.

Happy arrival

The day finally arrived. Rieke and I hopped into his four-wheel drive pick-up and headed out toward two of the bush congregations I would eventually be serving. The congregations were only 50 kilometers (30 miles) away, but the trip took well over two hours. The one-lane dirt roads were riddled with potholes. Even when the roads were good, pedestrians or bicyclists made speedy travel diffi-



Paul Wegner crossing the Namitete River in Malawi. Wegner, a 1998 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduate, is "getting his feet wet" in his work with several bush congregations in Malawi.

cult. Rieke mentioned that in the rainy season (December-March) many of the roads to congregations become impassible. In fact, for the first congregation on our trip that morning, the problem was not so much the road as it was a river.

We parked two kilometers away from the congregation and made our way to the edge of the Namitete River, where makeshift boats were waiting to ferry us to the other side. As the boats set out across the small stream, water began to pour in. The small child who was bailing out water made us doubt the craft's buoyancy even more. When we reached the other side, we got out of the boat and headed up the hill toward our congregation in the village of *M'sokoneza*—Chichewa for “confusion.”

Rieke led the worship service and gave a sermon in Chichewa. As I tried to follow along and pick out words I knew, I wondered how long it would be before I would be able to tell these people the good news of Jesus in their own language. I began to envy my seminary classmates who had almost a whole year of ministry under their belts already.

Following the sermon, six babies were baptized, and Holy Communion was given to nearly all of the 80 people in attendance. As I saw God's gracious Word and both of his sacraments given to the members, I sensed the reverent joy among the people. Three different choirs sang with the fire of the Holy Spirit and filled the entire village with the sounds of praise to God.

As worship ended and we filed out of the decrepit brick building, I realized something that these people had already known—how important

Many months have passed since the writing of this article and its actual publication. In that time, I have been thrown headfirst into the work that God has called me to do. I have gone from “getting my feet wet” to “trying to stay afloat!”

I have visited all of my churches on a regular basis and have even driven through the riverbed of the Namitete River to *M'sokoneza* several times (although that will soon change now that the rains are beginning again). I have been working at the language every day and can speak and understand the very basics. I have prepared and delivered my first sermon in Chichewa, baptized over 70 children, and have been working with a national vicar who, God willing, will be

it was that I was here. No longer would they be thrown into the rotation with 17 other congregations. No longer would a vacancy missionary see them once every two or three months. Although I had been waiting almost a year, these people had been waiting for me for well over two years.

I no longer envied my classmates. Through all the obstacles and after all the delays, God brought me here at his proper time to meet these people face to face. As we walked back to the boat I was reminded of Moses, a shepherd in the wilderness for 40 years before God called him to free Israel from Pharaoh. I was reminded of the apostle Paul who spent eight years in Tarsus sewing tents before the Lord called him to begin his missionary travels.

ordained in July 2000. I have dealt firsthand with many of the problems and challenges that face the Lutheran Church of Central Africa on its road to running its own church. But I have also witnessed the countless blessings of God's grace in Africa with my own eyes.

A Chichewa proverb says, “*Pang'ono pang'ono ndi mtolo*,” which means, “Little by little makes a bundle!” Little by little God's Word is changing peoples' hearts. Here in Malawi, missionaries and national pastors are working to carry out our Savior's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. Pray for us and with us, that all people may hear and believe the good news that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

We climbed back into the boats, and water again streamed over my boots. The cool water awakened me to the joy I would have in seeing these people again soon, and even one day telling them in their own language more about their Savior from sin. I smiled with the understanding that after all this waiting, I was now finally getting my feet wet!



Paul Wegner is a missionary to Malawi.

Don't be afraid to get your feet wet. Find out more about the WELS mission in Malawi by going to <www.wels.net> under the World Missions section.

First WELS Hmong pastors ordained

Jesus came into the world to be the “light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32). Our mission work is based on that truth. There are moments in mission work when we see a spectacular showing of a powerful and loving God fulfilling this promise.

Oct. 16, 1999, was one of those moments. Pheng Moua and Jay Lo were ordained as the first two WELS Hmong pastors at Emanuel, West St. Paul, Minn. Over 300 people worshipped the Lord on this historic occasion, including over 100 Hmong—members at Emanuel and Divinity, St. Paul, Minn.; First German, Manitowoc, Wis.; and relatives and friends.

Pheng, reflecting upon the ordination, commented, “Being a pastor is not the most impressive thing to people in the world, but it gives me a sense of privilege to proclaim the gospel to people and to rescue them from Satan’s hands. It makes me happy to be called as a pastor in the Wisconsin Synod.”

This service came only after years of hard work, prayer, and some tears. WELS mission work to the Hmong

began 15 years ago when then Vicar Loren Steele reached out to a Hmong community in Manitowoc, Wis. Steele continued this work when he was assigned as pastor at Emanuel in 1986-87. Slowly but surely the light of the gospel reached the hearts of the Hmong. Then Ger Yang, a Hmong believer, expressed his desire to become a pastor and began studying in 1992. Three years later he died on a mission trip to Thailand.

Pheng and Jay, good friends of Ger, began studying for the ministry so they could continue that work. Along the way they experienced obstacles common to other ministerial students—struggling to learn biblical Greek and Hebrew, striving to overcome financial challenges. There were also additional trials—keeping up with English comprehension, dealing with ostracism and scorn by relatives, and even threats to their lives. But the light of the gospel burned brightly in their hearts and minds, too brightly to be extinguished by obstacles or enemies.

Both men have been called to minister to the Hmong community in St. Paul. Pheng is serving the Hmong



Pheng Moua (left) and Jay Lo. At their ordination service in October, the hymns and choir anthems—some sung in English and some in Hmong—praised the Lord of the nations for making his light shine.

congregation of 70 souls that meets at Emanuel. Jay is starting a new Hmong mission congregation at Divinity. Both also serve as resource people for Hmong mission efforts by other congregations.

Jay’s wife, Panyia, shared an important reminder after the ordination: “Remember that a fisherman catches living fish, and they die; an evangelist catches those who are dead in spirit and shows them how to have life.”

For an in-depth look at Pheng Moua’s life, see p. 18.

Leon Piepenbrink

Celebrating God’s grace to Puerto Rico

On Oct. 3, members of four congregations celebrated 35 years of God’s grace carried out by WELS in Puerto Rico.

This was not the first time Christians in Puerto Rico celebrated God’s grace. The celebrating began in 1964 when WELS commissioned missionaries Roger Sprain and Rupert Eggert to work there. Then, in 1970, the first group of Bible students was confirmed, including Sergio Cortijo.

During the next 25 years, the WELS presence in Puerto Rico grew to cover four different areas of the island, and several congregations on the eastern half of the island were formed.

On Aug. 15, 1999, Cortijo was

installed as the first national student pastor of *La Iglesia Luterana Cristiana* in Barrancas, Guayama. National leaders like Cortijo and others who are preparing for the ministry are committed to continuing the work that WELS missionaries began.

After 35 years of God’s grace in Puerto Rico, over 120 people gather to praise their Lord and celebrate his unending love every weekend. Over 30 children gather in Sunday school classes to hear stories about Jesus as their Savior.

Yes, we are celebrating in Puerto Rico. Our celebration, although growing, is by no means finished or complete. On an island reaching

nearly four million inhabitants, the celebration could include many more sheep who are wandering without a Shepherd.

This is on the minds of our members as they look for ways to share the gospel. During class, Miriam Torres, one of my catechism students, shared her joys and challenges to evangelize a friend at school. “Pastor, I have been taking my Bible to school to show my friend that we are saved by faith in Christ. She has been listening to me.” That is what we celebrate: God’s grace to us and the opportunity to share his grace with others.

Thomas E. Zimdars

FORWARD IN CHRIST

February 2000

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

Don't miss the February issue of *Forward/Northwestern Lutheran*! While the masthead will change to include the full theme of our anniversary celebration, Forward in Christ, the contents of the magazine will remain the same.

We apologize for any confusion this additional change causes. It became necessary when we discovered another periodical has been named Forward for many years. We decided to change our masthead at their request.

This change will last during the remainder of the two-year Forward in Christ celebration. We will address the question of permanent change during this period and appreciate any comments you may have.

So, spread the word about this change for the Word from the WELS, and keep your eyes open for the February issue where our masthead will read Forward in Christ.

*We have retained *Northwestern Lutheran* for the time and identify ourselves as *Forward/Northwestern Lutheran*. We will continue to use that combined name during the anniversary.

True to Life curriculum available

WELS Lutherans for Life has developed a life issues curriculum for kids. Through *True to Life*, WFLF wants to reach children with the message that life is a precious gift from God. This can help parents and teachers effectively teach pro-life Christian values to children.

True to Life offers five age-appropriate lessons per level that can be used for a single day, week, or month. It can be coordinated with a religion curriculum, in Sunday school, a midweek program, or Pioneers. Each also comes with activities that can easily be adapted for individual needs.

Contact WELS Lutherans for Life for more information, 414/774-1331; <wflf@clr.wels.net>.

**DON'T
KEEP THIS
MAGAZINE!**

Share it!

WELS missionaries commissioned



From left: Kathryn Strackbein, Philip Strackbein, Chris Cordes, and Rachel Cordes.

The three missionaries who were recently evacuated from Colombia were all commissioned into their new calls.

Chris Cordes and Philip Strackbein were commissioned on Oct. 25, 1999, at Nain, Milwaukee. Stephen Mueller was commissioned on Dec. 6, 1999, also at Nain.

Cordes now serves as Colombia mission coordinator from Phoenix, Ariz. He will provide theological education and materials for Colombian church leaders. Eight to 10 Colombians are interested in taking these courses so they can

become national pastors. These men work full-time at jobs, work part-time in their churches, and also study for the ministry. Cordes will also counsel WELS Colombian churches when they have problems and questions.

Strackbein and Mueller are now our third and fourth missionaries to the Dominican Republic. They both will be serving its capital city, Santo Domingo.

WELS evacuated its missionaries from Colombia in September 1999 because of escalating violence in the country.

WELS news briefs

These updates are from the offices at the synod administration building. You can contact these offices and administrators at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

Board for Home Missions

414/256-3286

At its September meeting, the Board for Home Missions (BHM) made the following decisions about the status of certain missions.

- **Mission status**—Mountain Valley, Eagle, Colo.; Beautiful Savior, Beaverton, Ore.; Faith, Radcliff, Ky.; Star of Bethlehem, Winston-Salem, N.C. (amalgamating with Greensboro, N.C., field.)

They also continued exploratory efforts in 28 different locations throughout the United States and Canada.

- **New/developing exploratory efforts**—Chino Hills, Calif.; Hmong ministry involving Jay Lo and Pheng Moua; Spanish work in Antigua, West Indies; Cora/Hispanic work in the Uncompahgre Valley area of Colorado; three years of financial assistance for additional manpower to Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla.

- **Land search authority**—Eagle, Colo.; Beaverton, Ore.

- **Facility planning authority**—Good Shepherd, Holmen, Wis.; Our Shepherd, Crown Point, Ind.; Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville, Tenn.; Our Savior, Strongsville, Ohio; Hope, Chino Valley, Ariz.

- **Early land purchase**—Criteria for purchase was adopted. Risen Savior exploratory, Orlando, Fla., was authorized to pursue early land purchase.

- **Subsidy withdrawal**—Light of the World, Vancouver, British Columbia; Living Hope, Mandeville, La.; Trinity, Englewood, Fla. (combined with Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla., as a dual parish for

a one year trial period).

Thank God for permitting us to help proclaim his saving Word in these places, and pray for the spiritual well-being of Christians there.

The BHM also discussed these two items.

- **Mobilizing Missions for Millennium Three**—WELS Home Missions Conference will be held in Chicago on July 24-27. Presenters are being recruited, and letters of invitation will soon be sent.

- The BHM approved the **Guiding Principles for Cross-cultural Ministry**. Representatives from the Board for Home Missions, Board for World Missions, and Board for Ministerial Education wrote the six principles with explanatory statements.

Board for World Missions

414/256-3239

The **Multi-Language Publications Program (MLPP)** is concentrating on three major projects this year. They are as follows:

- **Bible Stories in Pictures**. MLPP printed seven English booklets in 1999. Next they will produce a 320-page book that contains stories from the booklets plus 11 additional stories, and foreign language editions as requested by the mission fields. The Commission on Youth Discipleship is also working with this project.

- **An illustrated devotional book**. This colorful book, which contains 48 stories complete with artwork, can be used in our world mission fields and cross-cultural ministries. There will be three versions: special needs version, home version, and a blank version for international translators' use. MLPP is working with the Commission on Youth Discipleship and Northwestern Publishing House on this project.

- **Translating the People's Bible into foreign languages**. Translators

are working on Japanese versions of Genesis and Galatians/Ephesians, and Indonesian versions of Genesis, Exodus, Matthew, Galatians/Ephesians, and Revelation. Eleven volumes have already been translated into Spanish. Publishing all 41 volumes of the People's Bibles in Spanish by the end of 2002 is realistic. Grants from WELS Kingdom Workers and the Publications Coordinating Commission help make all these translations possible.

Board for Ministerial Education

414/256-3237

Since the double amalgamation at Watertown and New Ulm in 1995, **opening enrollments** at WELS' four ministerial education schools are up 16 percent overall and 25 and a half percent in the pastor track at Martin Luther College.

The four ministerial education schools include Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw (high schools that prepare students for full-time church work); Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. (college that trains teachers and prepares men for the seminary); and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon (seminary that trains pastors).

	95-96	98-99	99-00	Increase
WLS	111	103	117	+5%
(on campus)				
MLC	772	863	912	+18%
LPS	506	528	581	+15%
MLS	319	338	367	+15%
Total	1,708	1,832	1,977	+16%

North Central Association granted Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., a **10-year accreditation extension**, the maximum allowed.

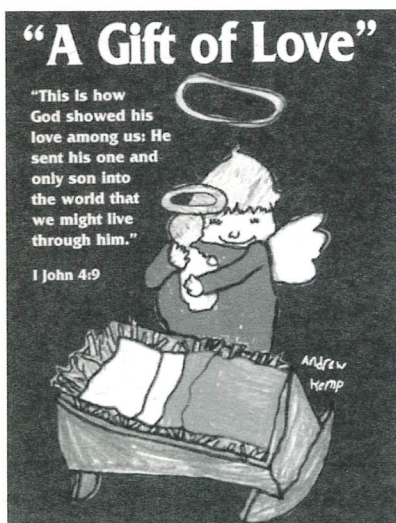
Commission on Evangelism
414/256-3288

WELS School of Outreach had a great 1999. The Commission on Evangelism held 11 different "schools" with 103 congregations participating. One school was all Canadian churches. Ten schools are already scheduled for 2000. Contact your district evangelism coordinator for more information.

Commission on Youth Discipleship
414/256-3274

Six regional youth rallies will be offered next summer in Michigan, Northern Wisconsin, South Dakota, Minnesota, Florida, and the South Atlantic District. Information will be distributed through district youth discipleship coordinators.

More Christ-Light® materials are available. They include the Old Testament cycle and four more topical Bible studies for grades seven and eight. These materials can be purchased from Northwestern Publishing House.



Andrew Kemp, a second-grader from Ascension, Jacksonville, N.C., won the 1999 children's Christmas card contest. Children were asked to submit artwork that went with the theme "A Gift of Love." The cards were part of the 1999 Christmas outreach initiative.

Committee on Relief
Philip Schupmann, 603/907-1333
Grants from October 1998 to October 1999 are as follows:

Domestic:	
Hurricane in the Carolinas	\$25,000
Tornadoes in Kansas, Oklahoma	95,000
Inner city aid	6,000
Flooding in Milwaukee	33,000
Church fire in Wisconsin	5,000
Medical expenses and personal needs	106,800
Total	\$270,800

Foreign	
Aid to Dominican Republic	\$10,000
Aid to Antigua	10,000
Hurricane relief in Caribbean & Central America	44,600
Aid to Brazil	2,000
Aid to poor in Indonesia	5,000
Aid to Kosovo	70,000
Aid to refugees in Albania	20,000
Aid to Korea	5,000
Earthquake in Turkey	50,000
Earthquake in Taiwan	40,000
Aid to Central America (mudslides)	50,000
Total	\$306,600

Total gifts of love & concern \$577,400

Commission on Special Ministries
414/256-3241

WELS members from Germany, England, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, France, and the Czech Republic met Oct. 29-31, 1999, for a **Reformation retreat** in Idar-Oberstein, Germany. They enjoyed Bible study, area tours, choir practice, and fellowship. The highlight of the weekend was a festival service, complete with organ, adult choir, children's choir, and Holy Communion. The Commission on Special Ministries supports Pastor Phil Kieselhorst, a chaplain in Germany, who ministers to WELS military personnel and other WELS members throughout Europe.

DEFINING RELIGION

Augsburg Confession: the statement of Lutheran beliefs written by Philip Melancthon and delivered by the Lutheran princes to emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. The reading of this confession marked the birth of the Lutheran Church. Its teachings remain authoritative for Lutherans today because the confession is a correct exposition of scriptural truth.

Apology to the Augsburg Confession: the defense of the Augsburg Confession written by Philip Melancthon and published in 1531. The Apology serves as the Lutheran response to the Catholic claim that the Augsburg Confession had been refuted by Catholic theologians. It also serves as an explanation of the biblical truths proclaimed in the Augsburg Confession.

German devotions available

Gott ist fuer uns (God is for us), a daily meditation booklet in German, is now available in the United States and Canada.

Pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) in Germany write these meditations. The ELFK is a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, a group of 16 Lutheran sister church bodies, of which WELS is a member.

Price is \$11.50 a year for four issues. Contact *Gott ist fuer uns*, Tree of Life Publications, Route 1, Busby, Alberta Canada T0G 0110.

New Bible videos for kids available

Three new videos have been added to the Mr. Whistle video series, quality Christian videos that tell Bible stories in creative and fun ways.

In these videos designed for children ages 2-10, Mr. Whistle, the lovable host, shares the story of Jesus.

• **Mr Whistle's Lamb—Jesus, God's Promise Kept** talks about Jesus' birth, perfect life, and wondrous teachings. One important message the video shares is how Jesus cares for us, like a shepherd cares for his sheep.

• **Mr. Whistle Cooks Out—Jesus, God's Promise Fulfilled** teaches us about how Jesus washed away all our sins. It focuses on the Passover, the crucifixion, and the resurrection.

• **Mr. Whistle Bakes Bread—Jesus, Good News Forever** tells about the days after Jesus' resurrection and how God wants us to share

the good news of salvation with all people.

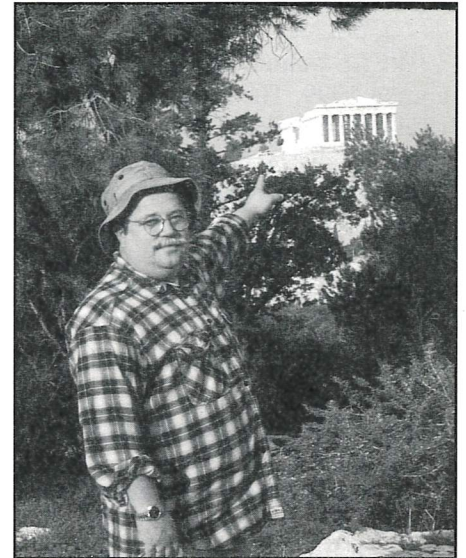
Portions of these videos include actual footage filmed in the Holy Land—footage that makes the stories come alive.

“So little has changed in the Third World over the centuries that it is possible to show children the reality of life in Bible times,” said John Barber, director/producer of the Mr. Whistle video series.

The Mr. Whistle series also includes **Mr. Whistle's Thistle—The Wondrous Story of Creation**.

The series was produced by WELS Outreach Resources, an organization that provides Christ-centered Christian materials for children, adults, churches, and special interests.

For more information, call 1-800-884-9312; <www.welsoutreach.org>.



Mr. Whistle at the foot of the Acropolis. This is by the Parthenon and Mar's Hill where the apostle Paul preached the gospel. Tony Schultz, pastor at Saint Luke, Watertown, Wis., portrays Mr. Whistle.

REAL TIME WITH A MISSIONARY

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

From Glen Hieb, missionary in Japan:

We had our first official worship service in the Ryugasaki area this evening [Oct. 31, 1999] in a rented wedding chapel, a cute little chapel that looks like a little white country church back in the USA.

We have been making contacts in this area mostly by offering ESL classes. Our mailing list has grown to 30 with a weekly average of 15-20 coming for these classes. . . . I felt that now was the time to begin offering worship. We encouraged our ESL students to attend and also put out 9,000 newspaper inserts in a target area that I felt was a more unchurched and also reachable group of people. We prayed and asked you to pray for and with us.

It is now past midnight. We just returned from our big night. Here is what the Lord has done. Nineteen attended. Of this group two came as a result of the

newspaper inserts. A third one called last Monday after reading the insert and asked to begin a Bible class. Another six came from our ESL classes. Of this group five had never been to a Christian worship service before. The other 11 were members of my church in Tsuchiura who came to help in the singing and witnessing. I don't know what I can say to express how big a miracle this evening has been for us. In Japan these are wonderful results for a first worship.

The story doesn't end here. At the fellowship after the service, we announced that a Bible class would begin on Tuesday for those interested in learning more about what they had heard. To our utter amazement, all eight and, of course, the ninth that called last Monday, wanted to continue to study. It appears that most if not all are free on Tuesday morning, which is another miracle here in Japan. . . .

Apparently a number of others wanted to come this evening but couldn't because of conflicts in their schedule. As we dream of what might have resulted if they had come, we are utterly astounded with what the Lord has done for us this first worship service.

Keep praying for us! But now I would also ask you to praise God with us.

District news

Minnesota

St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., dedicated its new church on Oct. 17, 1999. On March 29, 1998, a tornado destroyed the previous building.

South Central

Three outlying Texas congregations—Shepherd of the Plains, Lubbock; Good Shepherd, Midland; Our Redeemer, San Angelo—and a campus ministry have banded together to operate one Web site. You can find “**The WELS of West Texas**” at <www.wwwtx.org>.

Western Wisconsin

Joel Babinec, teacher at Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis., was elected president of the WELS Association of Lutheran Educators (WALE) Conference at its annual convention in October 1999.

Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, hosted the LWMS Great River Circuit fall rally.



Arizona-California

Teacher Appreciation Sunday was observed on Sept. 19, 1999, as part of the 25th anniversary celebration of **Ascension Lutheran School, Escondido, Calif.** Teachers from the past and present were honored with special certificates of appreciation. Back row left to right: Marcia Maggi, Anita Wallace, Kellie Watson, Jan Christianson, John Campbell, Carol Campbell. Front row: Heath Dobberpuhl, Diane Gullixson, Helen Bogue, Diane Castro.

Western Wisconsin



Hannah Mikels, student at St. Paul Lutheran School, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., was the sixth-grade champion in the National Handwriting Contest. Hannah chose to write the words of Psalm 91:11 as an example of her best cursive writing. Judges looked at size, shape, slant, and spacing of letters.

Arizona-California

Crown of Life, Corona, Calif., held its first service on Easter 1999.

Hope, Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., held its first service Oct. 31, 1999.

Reformation, San Diego, Calif., held a workshop for pastors and church musicians presented by Bryan Gerlach, administrator for the Commission on Worship, on Nov. 1, 1999. The workshop focused on helping smaller congregations choose music for worship.

Alameda Pregnancy Counseling Center, San Jose, Calif., set up their new Web site in April. This site allows them to reach people who wouldn't visit their center. For example, one letter allowed the center to refer someone to a WELS pastor in Miami, Fla. Another letter was received from a woman in India with problems. The Alameda center is affiliated with WELS Lutherans for Life. Its Web site is located at <www.alameda-pcc.org>.

Happy Anniversary!

AZ-CA—Prince of Peace, Yucaipa, Calif., celebrated its 35th anniversary on Oct. 24, 1999.

D-M—Apostles, Billings, Mont., celebrated its 30th anniversary on Sept. 18, 1999.

St. Paul, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, celebrated the 25th anniversary of its initial services on Oct. 17, 1999.

Trinity, Terry, Mont., honored **Betty Stepper** for 30 years of service as church organist on Dec. 5, 1999.

SEW—Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., celebrated its 25th anniversary with a special service on Aug. 29, 1999. A mass choir and band of students, alumni, parents, and friends of the high school joined together to praise God for his abundant blessings over the 25 years.

St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis., recognized **Leona Hauer** for 25 years in the teaching ministry on Sept. 12, 1999.

WW—Luther Preparatory School held a service on Oct. 17, 1999, to commemorate **Professors Jerome H. Braun** and **James A. Schneider's** 40 years in the teaching and preaching ministries.

On Oct. 17, 1999, St. John, Cold Spring, Wis., honored the 40th anniversary of **Russel Kobs' ordination** into the preaching ministry.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ-CA—Hermann John; D-M—David Wendt; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

Obituary

Herbert H. Kesting 1911-1999

Herbert H. Kesting was born on Jan. 4, 1911, in Pierce County, Neb. He died Oct. 23, 1999, in Mishicot, Wis.

A 1936 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Kesting served at First German, Manitowoc, Wis.; First, Minnesota City, Minn.; St. Luke, Pickwick, Minn.; St. John, Vesta, Minn.; Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn.; St. Peter and Rockwood, Mishicot, Wis.; and First, Green Bay, Wis.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Alice; two sisters, and one grandson. He is survived by one brother, three daughters, two sons, 15 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.



Senate introduces workplace accommodation bill—A bipartisan group of senators has introduced legislation that would strengthen laws calling on employers to accommodate workers' religious practices.

The legislation would require employers to tolerate workers' religious observances as long as this wouldn't impose an "undue hardship" on the employer.

In addition, employers could not prohibit workers from wearing faith-related clothing based on their religious beliefs.

The bill clarifies a provision of the 1972 amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that requires employers to "reasonably accommodate" a worker's religious practice. It would apply to businesses with more than 15 workers.

Holy Bible
How many Bibles do you own?—A survey of Bible shoppers has found that, on average, American book buyers own an average of seven to nine Bibles—and they may buy more.

Most of the 1,807 bookstore customers surveyed this year by Zondervan Publishing House said they expected to purchase another copy of the Bible in the next year, Publishers Weekly reported.

The survey was conducted in both the markets of the American Bookseller Association and the CBA, a Christian retailing organization.

Christian Coalition had right to distribute voter guides—A federal judge ruled in August that the Christian Coalition had the right to distribute voter guides in recent presidential and congressional elections.

U.S. District Judge Joyce Green rejected the claims in a 1996 lawsuit by the Federal Election Commission that the coalition's voter guides and get-out-the-vote initiatives were partisan activities aiming to help Republican candidates.

Iranian leader: Death to those who question the death penalty—Iran's supreme leader says anybody who questions the Islamic rationale for capital punishment deserves the death penalty themselves.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei upheld the Islamic principle of "*qisas*" during a speech to members of a paramilitary volunteer militia. His remarks came a week after a reformist newspaper urged the end of the death penalty in Iran.

The *qisas* principle, which is included in the Koran, Islam's scriptural basis, allows, in some cases, for the death of killers and apostates.

Ethics, morality, and family decline top the list of Americans' concerns—For the first time in a half-century of the public's top national concerns, "ethics, morality, and family decline" led the list.

In a Gallup survey asking the question, "What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?", Americans answered the following:

Ethics, morality, family decline	18%
Crime, violence	17%
Economic problems	13%
Education	11%
Guns, gun control	10%

These answers differed greatly from those given to the same question in 1950: war, the economy, unemployment, and Communism.

[*Emerging Trends*, September 1999]

Most Lutherans, Catholics sign document that says they agree on salvation—On Reformation weekend, top Roman Catholic and Lutheran World Federation officials signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. This document stated that the two faith bodies now hold similar views on salvation, a dispute that led to the Reformation in 1517.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and WELS both released

statements showing their regret of this position. A portion of the WELS release follows:

"The Joint Declaration is a carefully-worded, ambiguous statement that allows the Roman Catholic Church to agree without changing. The consensus the participants claim is a consensus Lutherans and Catholics have always had; namely, 'that all persons depend completely on God's grace for their salvation' (Declaration, Pt. 19).

"However, the document fails to address the all-important meaning of God's grace and how it works. . . .

"WELS, along with affiliated Lutherans and others around the world, regrets the compromised position taken by the members of the Lutheran World Federation.

Justification, how we are made right with God, is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls. Lutherans need to recognize that Rome still holds to the same false doctrine that was condemned by the Lutheran Confessions in the 16th century.

"Rev. Karl R. Gurgel, president of WELS, says, 'Martin Luther, with his earthly life on the line, opposed the Roman Catholic teaching—a combination effort between God and human beings. Luther, with eternity in the balance, found great comfort in the Bible's teaching—Jesus had done it all for him.

"Today, we Lutheran Christians in WELS take our stand with Luther solely on the Bible. For the comfort of us poor sinners, we will continue to proclaim the free and full forgiving love of God through Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior.'

"WELS, meanwhile, prays regularly and fervently that Christians everywhere might come together in true confessional unity."

For a copy of the release, contact WELS Communication Services, 414/256-3210; <usr73@sab.wels.net>.

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



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Frey, Edward A. Jr., to Trinity, Abita Springs, La.
Hilliard, Thomas H., to Zion, Gainesville, Fla.
Johnston, Paul R., to Faith, Anderson, Calif.
Reichow, Dennis A., to St. John, Glencoe, Minn.
Schumacher, Raymond W., to Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee
Spevacek, Kirby A., to Apache Lutheran Mission coordinator, Whiteriver, Ariz.

NOTICE FOR CONGREGATION TREASURERS

The cutoff date for Congregation Mission Offering (CMO) receipts in the synod's post office lock box is the last business day of each month. December 1999 lock box offerings will be credited as 1999 receipts through **Jan. 10, 2000** as long as they are received in the lock box on or before that date and are clearly labeled as "December" offerings on the remittance coupon. We ask that you continue to mail your offerings to the lock box. That location, our bank, will provide you with the fastest deposit process for your congregation.

Mark Meissner, director of finance

ANNIVERSARIES

Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.—St. Paul (100). Jan. 9. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM; meal to follow late service. 715/421-3634.
Spring Hill, Fla.—Grace (25). Jan. 9. Service, 4 PM; dinner to follow. 352/688-1057.
Fond du Lac, Wis.—Winnebago Lutheran Academy (75). Feb. 6. Service, 3:30 PM. 920/921-4930.
West Allis, Wis.—Good Shepherd (75). Jan. 23. Services, 7:45, 9:15, & 10:45 AM. Jan. 24. Service, 7 PM. Feb. 20. Services, 7:45, 9:15, & 10:45 AM. Catered dinner to follow. Ages 4-12, \$5; 13 & older, \$10. Send reservation & check by Feb. 1 to GSLC, 75th anniversary dinner, 1235 S 100 St, West Allis WI 53214. Feb. 21. Service, 7 PM.

COMING EVENTS

Ladies' retreat—WELS/ELS. Jan. 7-9. Montverde, Fla. Topic: How and why to pray. Cost: \$100. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.
Dedication—Risen Savior, Navarre, Fla. Jan. 16. Services, 10:30 AM and 6:30 PM. Dinner to follow 6:30 PM service. RSVP for dinner, 850/936-1005
Mission & Ministry Seminar 2000—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Opening service, Jan. 31, 7 PM. Seminar, Feb. 1-3, 7:30 AM-12:30 PM. "Go Forward as Christ's Witnesses." Nathan Wagenknecht, 262/242-8247.
OWLS tour—tour to Arizona, New Mexico, and the Apache Indian mission. Sponsored by the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors. Departs Feb. 7. Cost: \$1,300. H. Kaesmeyer, 517/652-8772.
Martin Luther College choir tour
Feb. 25—St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., 7:30 PM
Feb. 26—Eastside, Madison, Wis., 6:30 PM
Feb. 27—Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wis., 8:30 & 11 AM
Feb. 27—St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis., 7:30 PM

Feb. 28—Immanuel, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., 7 PM
Feb. 29—Emanuel, Tawas City, Mich., 7:30 PM
Mar. 1—Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., 10:09 AM
Mar. 1—St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich., 7:30 PM
Mar. 2—Michigan LHS, St. Joseph, Mich., 2 PM
Mar. 2—St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich., 7 PM
Mar. 3—Lakeside LHS, Lake Mills, Wis., 2 PM
Mar. 3—Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis., 7:30 PM
Mar. 19—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 7:30 PM

Regional campus rallies—

Mar. 3-5 Philadelphia, Penn.
Mar. 17-19 Columbia, Mo.
Mar. 24-26 Stevens Point, Wis.
Apr. 14-16 Tempe, Ariz.
Karen Marshall, 414/256-3279;
<usr20@sab.wels.net>.

Christian Women Today retreat—Mar. 24-26. Olympia Resort & Spa, Oconomowoc, Wis. Kathi, 414/521-1159.

Spiritual renewal weekend for women—Mar. 31-Apr. 2. Radisson Centerplace, Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866.

WELS handbell festivals—

Northeast region, Apr. 1-2
Southeast region, Apr. 1-2
Western region, Apr. 8-9
Michigan region, Apr. 8-9
Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.

Today's Christian Women retreat—April 7-9. Lansing Sheraton Hotel, Lansing, Mich. 248/391-1133.

WELS-CLO meeting—WELS Church Librarians' Organization meeting. Apr. 29. Grace, Prairie du Chien, Wis. Presentation about videos suitable for church libraries and how church libraries can serve visually impaired members. Joanne Weber, 414/256-3222.

China study tour—The history and geography of China. June 16-July 5. Registration deadline, March. Limited enrollment. Professor Earl Heidtker, 507/359-9774; <heidtker@mlc-wels.edu>.

AVAILABLE

Communion set—ceramic. Pitcher, chalice, and plate. Crown of Life, Fort Myers, Fla. <COL37@juno.com>
School desks & chairs—Zion, Sanborn, Minn. 507/648-3601.
Communion kneelers—4 padded, 5-ft. long. Free for the cost of shipping. Abiding Faith, Fort Worth, Tex., 817/294-9303.
Organ—old vacuum tube organ. Still works well. Free for the cost of shipping. Good Shepherd, Midland, Tex. Paul Hahn, 915/684-5970.
Chandelier lights—8 antique brass finished light fixtures, approximately 36" tall & 12" in diameter. Each uses 6 standard light bulbs & a 300 watt floodlight. Free for the cost of shipping. Immanuel, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Gordon Peters, 906/632-2640.
China—Set of 200 Iroquois china dishes. Tan with border stripe. Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis., 414/871-3744.
Choir gowns—50 light blue adult gowns in good shape. St. Stephen Lutheran Elementary School, Beaver Dam, Wis. Lee Robbert, 920/885-6484.

NEEDED

Volunteers—to teach English and religion at Martin Luther School (ELS), Plzen, Czech Republic, during 2000-01 school year. Airfare, apartment, & utilities provided. Matthew Luttmann, <meltof@sml.cz> or David Meyer, 608/243-3227.

Copyright holder—for Walter Sassmannshausen's *Two Marches: Marche Nuptiale and Marche Triumphant*. Copyright 1932. David Niemi, <fnsniemi@centurytel.net>.

SERVICE TIMES

Safford, Ariz.—Grace. Sunday service, 10:30 AM. Bible class, 9:45 AM. Paul Schulz, 520/428-7620.
Yuma, Ariz.—Prince of Peace. Sunday service, 8:15 & 10:45 AM. Bible class & Sunday school, 9:45 AM. Alan Gumm, 520/726-8716.
Benson, Ariz.—Bethlehem. Sunday, 8 AM. Steven Spencer, 520/458-5897.

NAMES WANTED

Naples, Fla.—WELS/ELS members looking to join mission congregation in Naples, Fla. Steven Brockdorf, 941/348-3624.

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210; FAX, 414/256-3899; <usr73@sab.wels.net>. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

February 2000

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Matthew 4 | 16. Nah. 2 |
| 2. Matt. 5:1-16 | 17. Nah. 3 |
| 3. Matt. 5:17-48 | 18. Habakkuk 1:1-2:5 |
| 4. Matt. 6:1-18 | 19. Hab. 2:6-20 |
| 5. Matt. 6:19-34 | 20. Hab. 3:1-15 |
| 6. Matt. 7:1-12 | 21. Hab. 3:16-19 |
| 7. Matt. 7:13-29 | 22. Obadiah |
| 8. Jonah 1, 2 | 23. Matthew 8:1-22 |
| 9. Jonah 3, 4 | 24. Matt. 8:23- 9:8 |
| 10. Joel 1:1-2:17 | 25. Matt. 9:9-34 |
| 11. Joel 2:18-3:21 | 26. Matt. 9:35- 10:23 |
| 12. Zephaniah 1 | 27. Matt. 10:24-42 |
| 13. Zeph. 2:1-3:7 | 28. Matt. 11:1-24 |
| 14. Zeph. 3:8-20 | 29. Matt. 11:25-12:21 |
| 15. Nahum 1 | |

With friends like these . . .

When you are called upon to touch someone's life with comfort, share the genuine comfort of the cross.

Jon D. Buchholz

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was (Job 2:11,13).

What should you say to someone who is hurting? When comfort or encouragement is called for, do you find yourself at a loss for words?

Nothing to say

Often in the face of illness or tragedy, friends fall flat because they don't know what to say. Watch people interact in the hospital. Well-intentioned friends and relatives drop in, perhaps bearing a card or flowers. They share pleasantries—maybe about the weather or the patient's condition. Then, almost invariably, the conversation dies. The well-meaning visitor fumbles around for further small talk. Finally, after an uncomfortable pause, the visitor decides that he or she "had better get going" and tells the patient to "hang in there." Sadly, no real encouragement has been shared, no meaningful comfort has been given.

Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, fancied themselves qualified both to comfort and

to counsel Job. In reality they were equipped to do neither. When they arrived, they said nothing for seven days and nights. It wasn't just that they wanted to suffer with Job in silence; they had nothing to say.

That became obvious when they finally spoke to comfort Job. Then it would have been better if they had continued to say nothing, because they gave such bad counsel it only made the situation worse.

What we should say

Job's comforters had nothing to share because they were confused and spiritually empty. Their mixed-up understanding of God led them to believe that Job's misfortune was the result of some sin Job and his family had committed. In their thinking, Job needed only to repent of his hidden sins, and God would reward him by restoring his health and prosperity.

Their flawed premise becomes apparent when we hear the "comfort" Bildad offered: "Does the Almighty pervert what is right? When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin. But if you will look to God and plead with the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse

himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place" (Job 8:3-6).

If a person doesn't know what to say to the sorrowing, it's best to say nothing at all. Better to say nothing than to give bad advice. In the face of tragedy, fluffy chitchat and empty platitudes don't cut it.

But since when do we Christians have nothing to say?

When you are called upon to touch someone's life with comfort, share the genuine comfort of the cross. Be a messenger of the full counsel of God, and encourage the hurting with the good news of peace and forgiveness in Jesus. Remind

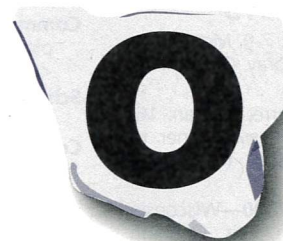
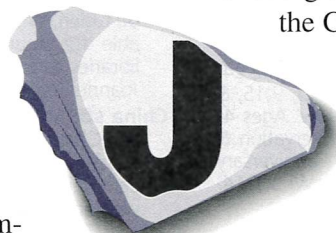
the Christian sufferer that in all our tribulations we are more than conquerors through God who loved us, that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

After all, what are Christian friends for?

Jon Buchholz is pastor at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Washington, and teaches at Evergreen Lutheran High School.

For further study: Read Job 4-10

Next month: I know that my Redeemer lives!





Inter-Act

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

Introduction

"We don't have to stop and ask for directions. I know where we are." Sound familiar? Maybe it's a guy thing. Or a pride thing. But it seems to be a common thing.

How about you? Have you ever considered a decision and concluded, "Let's just get started. We'll figure it out on the way"? Some say that's faith. Some say that's foolish.

For the next six months in these Inter-Act Bible studies, we'll encounter the Lord's way of leading his people "on the way." At times, the Lord has promised, "You just get started. I'll guide you once you're on the way." How would that change your life?

I. Text

Read Exodus 13:20-22.

²⁰After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. ²¹By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. ²²Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

II. Questions

1. Put yourself in Moses' sandals. After 40 years' absence, the LORD commands you to lead two million people over 500 miles of rough terrain. Why might you hesitate to begin?
2. The LORD didn't send the pillars until several days into their journey out of Egypt. They were already on the way. What does that tell you about the way he leads?
3. The LORD could have chosen any number of ways to lead them. How many reasons can you find in these verses for the LORD's choice of using two pillars?
4. Put yourself in the Israelites' sandals. You're journeying to the unknown. Would it mean more to you that the LORD is present or that the LORD is directing you?
5. At Succoth the pillars are silent. Later, on the way to the promised land, the LORD actually speaks from within the pillar. (Deuteronomy 12:5,6; 31:15,16; Psalm 99:6,7). What could the LORD accomplish through his voice that he couldn't through the mere presence of the pillars?

III. Applications

1. Recall a "journey" you began with no idea of where it might lead you. How did the Lord guide you on the way?
2. Our Lord can remind us of his presence any way he chooses, but he speaks to us most clearly through his Word. The psalmist wrote, "Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path." How is God's Word, the Bible, better than any other way he might lead us?
3. God still uses earthly objects to assure us of his presence. How do God's gifts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper assure you of his presence while you're "on the way"?
4. Sometimes we want numbers, data, or guarantees for the future before we begin. When is that good planning, and when is that evidence of a lack of faith?
5. "You can always trust an unknown future to a known God." How does that apply to your marriage? Career? Ministry? Witnessing?
6. More than one philosopher has observed, "The most difficult part of any endeavor is taking the first step." Jesus promised, "I will be with you always." How does that help you take the first step?

IV. Prayer

Lord, teach us how to pray aright,
With rev'rence and with fear.
Though dust and ashes in your sight,
We may, we must draw near.

We suffer if we cease from prayer,
Oh, grant us power to pray.
And when to meet you we prepare,
Lord, meet us on the way.
(*Christian Worship* 412 v. 1,2)

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

The end is near

John F. Brug

Every age thinks that the end is near. Since at our death our fate is sealed, I have often wondered if the imminence of the Last Day has to do more with the day of our deaths, which we cannot know, versus only the final Day of Judgment.

As you said, when people die they immediately go to heaven or hell (Luke 16:22; 1 Peter 3:19,20). Already at the time of their death, God can assign people to heaven or hell without any investigation or trial, since he knows the heart of every person.

In several places the Bible speaks of conscious reactions of souls in hell or heaven. The rich man is afraid that his brothers will join him in hell (Luke 16:22-23). Jesus descended to hell to proclaim his victory to the spirits of those who had died in the flood (1 Peter 3:19-20). Jesus promised the repentant thief that he would be with him in Paradise—today (Luke 23:43). The souls of the martyrs live and rule with Christ in heaven (Revelation 20:4) and pray for his justice to come upon the earth (Revelation 6:10). In this sense, “our fate is sealed” at the day of our death.

The Bible, nevertheless, teaches us to look forward to the day of resurrection and judgment. Our goal is not to die and to have our soul go to heaven. Our goal is to have our soul and body joined together again as God created them to be. Our goal is not just to escape the injustice of life on earth through death, but to

have injustice on earth come to an end. As we saw above, even the saints in heaven pray for Judgment Day.

The passages that refer to the nearness of Christ’s coming (such as James 5:7-9; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 1:3; 22:10,12) do not seem to be pointing so much to the day of our death as to the day of Christ’s appearing. If nearly 2,000 years have passed, how could this event be said to be “near” already in the days of the apostles?

In saying Christ’s return is near, God is not measuring days on a calendar, but completeness of the preparations.

Certainly, one factor is that God’s way of looking at time is not the same as ours (2 Peter 3:8-9).

But a more important factor from our perspective is that the Bible treats everything since Christ’s first coming as “the last days” (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2). To put it another way, we could say “Christ’s return is near” means “everything is ready for Christ’s return.” All of God’s plans for salvation have been completed except for the one event that remains, Christ’s return.

The clearest expression of this is in Hebrews 9:26-28. In saying Christ’s return is near, God is not measuring days on a calendar, but

completeness of the preparations. Everything is ready. God’s banquet is ready. He needs no more time to get ready. But in patience he is giving the people of the world time to get ready.

Yes, for all practical purposes the day of our death is the Last Day for us. But the Bible teaches us to eagerly await the Last Day for this earth when Christ’s assignment as Savior is completed and God is all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). That day is near.

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

Send questions to your question, please, Forward/NL, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. <nl@sab.wels.net>.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Later in the day, I was reviewing what Grandma had taught my two-year-old twins, Stephen and Katherine, about the Bible lesson of Adam and Eve. I asked them what happened to Adam and Eve when they took the forbidden fruit. My daughter looked up at me with a very serious face and said: “They got a time out.”

*Scott Oelhafen
Waukesha, Wisconsin*

Three fools

There sits three fools upon a fence
They know not what to do.
They'd like to move but know too well
They'd never see it through.

While one leans left, another right,
And all three hide their eyes,
They're blinded by the fear of things
That they don't recognize.

They clutch each other as they watch
The others who will flee
With firm resolve upon a road
Called Opportunity.

While some may often contemplate,
It really does no good.
In truth we'll never know the fate
Of Could, and Would, and Should.
—Anonymous

Many times people approach doing mission work as these "three fools" approach life. Don't let your fears paralyze you into coulds and woulds and shoulds. Get off the fence and follow Jesus' words: "So do not be afraid of them . . . What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs" (Matthew 10:26, 27).

FAST FACTS

Marrying someone from a different denomination makes it more likely that the individual will drift away from the church and that the marriage will end in divorce, according to a Creighton University study. Those who marry within their denomination have a divorce rate of 14% compared to 20% for interdenominational couples. Interestingly, if the bride and groom originally came from different denominations but later joined the same church, their divorce rate was only 6%.

(Statistics from *Pastor's Weekly Briefing*, quote by *Current Thoughts & Trends*, Nov. 1999)

Picture this

Three enthusiastic attendees of WELS Asian Call '99. The rally held at St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn., allowed people of all ages to learn about their Savior. Pastor Joel Lintner writes, "Minnesota might seem like a strange place to hold a conference for Asians, but actually the University of Minnesota boasts the largest population of ethnic Chinese of any university in America. . . . The people coming here are very brave but very lost."



Submitted by: Joel Lintner,
North Saint Paul, Minnesota

Send pictures to Picture this, *Forward/NL*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

For courage to share the gospel

Give me a caring heart, O Lord, to love and seek the lost. Overcome my fear, and grant me courage to share my hope of salvation with those who have no hope. Make me faithful in my daily life so that all I say and do may glorify you.
(*Christian Worship*, p. 136)

One-anothering

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on *one another*. (Romans 14:13)

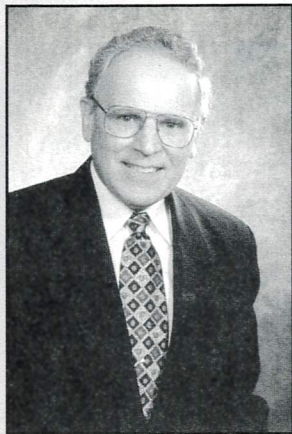
Serve *one another* in love. (Galatians 5:13)

Therefore encourage *one another* and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with *one another* in love. (Ephesians 4:2)

Live in harmony with *one another*. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. (Romans 12:16)

Be kind and compassionate to *one another*, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)



Gary P. Baumler is editor of *Forward/NL* and WELS Director of Communications.

Quality of life means having a roof over our heads, food on the table, and love in our hearts.

Is it too late to turn back?

I think I'm not ready for the 21st century. I haven't caught up with the 20th yet. Besides, it seems I am hopelessly out of place.

In my world, families still function as a vital part of society: you know—dad, mom, and the kids. The children learn their values and receive their spiritual guidance from home. Parents still spank their children. When a child gets in trouble at school (or elsewhere), he knows he'll be in double trouble at home.

Marriage is still meant for a lifetime, and spouses are determined to work through the tough times together.

We don't have pocket monsters (Pokemon) trying to destroy each other. We think it's enough to cope with the monsters in our childhood closets.

We still enjoy a good game of Monopoly or War (the card game).

Speaking of children: they are still a blessing from God and precious from the moment they start growing in the womb. Old people are precious, too. I can't imagine purposely ending the life of either.

Quality of life means having a roof over our heads, food on the table, and love in our hearts.

Witches, at worst, are cute-costumed kids at Halloween, and Wiccans are unheard of, instead of a movement growing in popularity for all ages.

My world enjoys the blessings of sexual satisfaction fulfilled in marriage. It sees lesbian kisses, promiscuous partners, and public intercourse as perversions, not as plot material to be offered up as prime-time pabulum on screens everywhere.

I like real relationships, real places, real outings, real space. Virtual realities and cyberspace are like cardboard cutouts of the real thing.

In this world, it is O.K. to say something is not O.K. or even that I'm not O.K.—at least when measured against unchanging standards. I live with absolutes, things like God's commands. I cope with the knowledge of my own inadequacies. I learn to accept full responsibility for my actions.

I don't want the world to move any faster than it already is. A little slower wouldn't hurt.

You don't have to prove the truth of God's Word to me. God has done that already in my heart. I welcome historic and scientific insights, but my faith is not anchored to them. Give me the unquestioning faith of my youth.

I don't consult Ouija boards, tarot cards, or astrologers for direction. My life is in the Lord's hands. Heaven is my home.

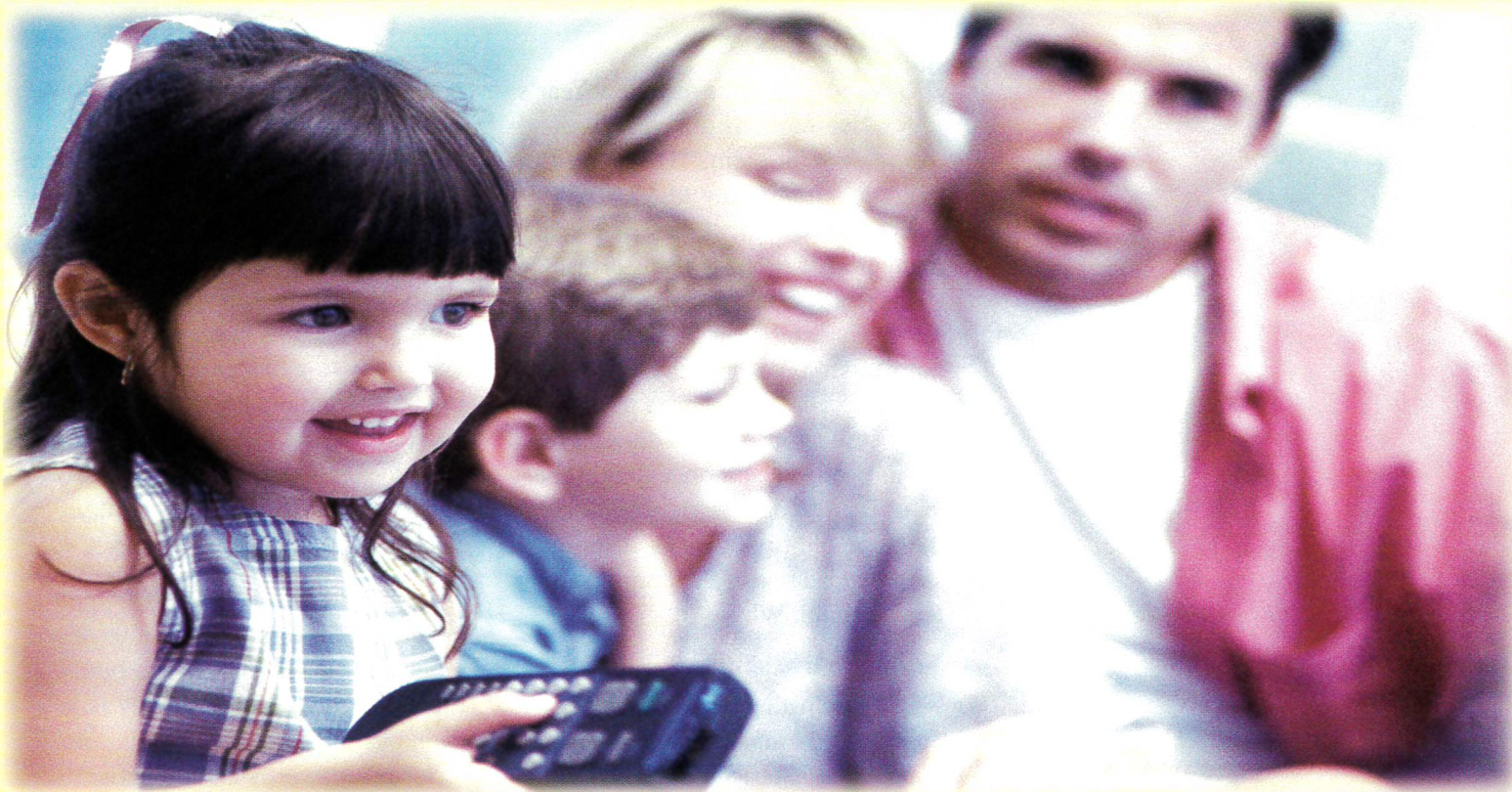
In my world, we pray at meals and at bedtime. Fast food does not become an excuse to bypass the Lord.

My world has dreams, goals, friends, hot fudge sundaes, and easy chairs. But it also has a few nightmares, detours, detractors, spilled milk, and backaches. With my age, the new century promises more aches.

So what am I doing here in the year 2000? I'm here as always with the Lord Jesus. He never changes—our Savior and our God. And that's a good place to be.

Gary P. Baumler

Provide . . .



for your family and for the Lord's work!

Through your estate planning, WELS gift planning counselors can help you provide for your family and for the Lord's work.

They can help
take the weight of your estate plans off your shoulders
through free, confidential counsel.

Call 800-827-5482

to get in contact with your congregation's gift planning counselor.



Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod - Ministry of Planned Giving
2929 N. Mayfair Road ■ Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398
800-827-5482 or 414-256-3881



The simple life

Is it possible to be content with the simple life?
It is if you remember the source of your contentment.

Kenneth A. Cherney

Did you make any New Year's resolutions this year? Was one of them, "This year, I'm going to simplify my life"?

You're not alone. Every new year, many people promise themselves: "This is the year I'm going to slow down. Cut back. Make fewer commitments. Make do with less." Every January, people rededicate themselves to the pursuit of a simpler life.

And before the month (forget the year) is over, they're right back in the same old rush-rush-rush and spend-spend-spend they promised to leave behind. Why?

Trying to live simply

In a fascinating book called *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture*, David Shi traces this craving for simplicity down through American history. It's been with us since the beginning, and it never seems to go away. Every so often it coalesces into a mass movement—which then loses steam, coughs, sputters, and dies.

The Puritans, for example, found that once their first harsh years in the New World were over, their people couldn't see the point of continuing to do without. To keep them in line, the Puritans enacted "sumptuary laws"—laws that prohibited hair ribbons and ruffled sleeves, for example. The Puritans believed a simple lifestyle would set people free—as long as it was forced on them relentlessly. Nobody seemed to catch on to the rather obvious flaw in this approach.

Then there were simplicity advocates like William Penn and Thomas Jefferson, who themselves lived in considerable luxury. They believed,

it seems, that simplicity was a great idea that other people should definitely put into practice. Sort of like a resident of modern Los Angeles who wants better public transportation, because then all those other slobs might get off the freeway.

Not long ago, I heard a man urging everybody to join him in rediscovering life's simple pleasures. He had done so himself after achieving financial independence, quitting his job, and buying a house in the country.

Nice work, if you can get it.

Living simply through Jesus

But is greater simplicity out of reach for the rest of us? Is a humbler, less hectic life possible? Is it even desirable?

Jesus' answer is an emphatic "Yes!" Even today, it remains true that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). It is still possible to slow down, to be happy with less, to use things without being used by them. There are still people—called Christians—who can say in all sincerity: "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Timothy 6:8).

You can, too. All you need is a source of contentment, of peace, that has nothing to do with what you own or what you accomplish.

That source of contentment is Jesus Christ. What he has accomplished for you. What he has given to you.

Focusing on that will help simplify your life. And then you can help others do the same.

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

