

# FORWARD IN CHRIST

November 2000

Northwestern Lutheran • The Word from the WELS

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Thanking  
God for  
“invisible”  
blessings

You are a  
target

Taking time  
to be Mary



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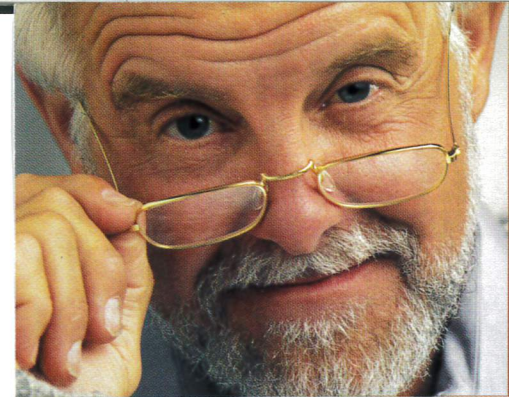
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*Lesson in love*





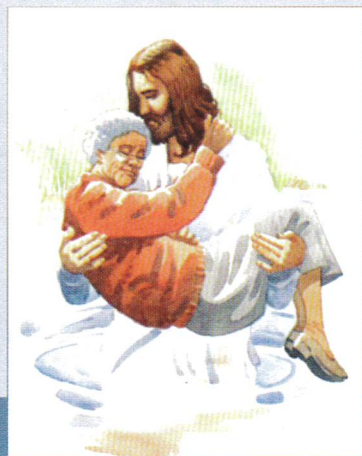
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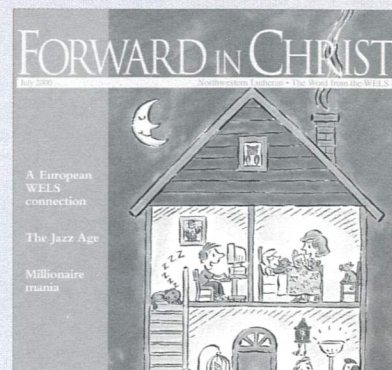
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# Hearts that can see

*I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. Ephesians 1:18,19*

Paul M. Janke

**Y**ou are rich and powerful and live in joyful certainty about your future.

Does that describe you? It does—as a believer in Jesus.

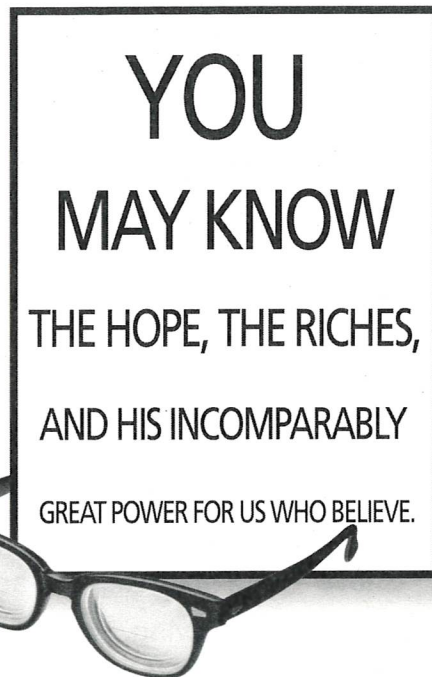
But even believers have trouble detecting the blessings that God has given them. Chalk it up to a vision problem—not caused by a disease or deformity of the eye, but by an inability to fully discern God’s glorious grace. Those who are only dimly aware of God’s grace will have difficulty living in gratitude to God.

God wants you to have eyes in your heart. These eyes are as keen and sharp as an eagle’s. With perfect clarity they see God’s grace.

## Seeing hope

Paul’s procedure for correcting the vision of our hearts is to proclaim the gospel of grace. He reminds us of the hope to which we have been called.

According to Dante’s *Inferno*, an inscription at hell’s entrance reads, “Abandon every hope, you who enter here.” But many abandon hope long before they reach hell. Paul reminded the Ephesians that before they were “brought near through the blood of Christ,” they were “without hope and without God in the world.” Too many are still in that condition. They try to relieve that gloom by traveling, indulging themselves, or escaping into computer-driven fantasies or mood-altering substances. To them the future is unknown and unknowable.



In Christ we know a God who planned in eternity to give us hope and a future. Jesus’ righteous life and the blood he shed to cover our sins ended our exclusion from the people of hope. Through faith we expect a glorious future in God’s presence.

## Seeing riches

Many have visions of riches. Their hearts skip a beat over a sweepstakes offer. They wager their incomes on lottery tickets. But their paltry take on payday or the monthly MasterCard memo brings reality back home.

Paul warned of the spiritual folly of making it one’s ambition to get rich. Yet in Ephesians he describes a vision of riches—a heavenly

treasure, purchased with the blood of the Lamb and distributed as an inheritance to God’s children. These assets include forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and everlasting life.

When the eyes of our heart have focused on these riches, greed for earthly wealth recedes.

## Seeing power

Christianity doesn’t seem like a promising path to power. Jesus described himself as gentle and lowly. His way is poles apart from the predator model for success. He pledged blessings to the meek. Paul noted that the worldly wise, the influential, and the highborn were not represented well in the ranks of Christians.

Yet Paul’s prayer implies that we could benefit from a better understanding of the power God places at our disposal. God the Father exerted amazing power when he raised Jesus from the dead. Satan proved to be no match for God’s might. Since we are joined by faith to Christ, Jesus’ power is being used daily on our behalf. Nothing can thwart his will to save us and to bless us.

Can you see it? In Christ we are rich and powerful and live in joyful certainty about our future. When the eyes of our hearts are open to God’s grace, thanksgiving will overflow in our lives.



*Paul Janke is pastor at Saint Peter, Modesto, California.*



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Neighborly  
love begins  
at home.

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## bits & pieces



Paul Wendland starts a new three-part series on loving your neighbor. This month he focuses on the proper kind of self-love, and how you can foster this love—and share God's love—with your children and your neighbors (p. 8).



This Thanksgiving, two authors remind us to give thanks for things we may not always think about.

- We tend to remember the blessings we can see, touch, and lose. Stephen Geiger tells us to “look” at things a little differently—focusing instead on those blessings we can't see. Check out “Thank you, Lord, for what I cannot see” (p. 18).

- John Eich reminds us not to forget the little things that make life enjoyable and to thank God for these blessings every day (p. 36).



As the busy holiday season approaches and you prepare to join in on the frenzy, take a few minutes to sit down, relax, and read Laurie Biedenbender's latest: “Mary and Martha and me” (p. 10). Then be still and know that he is God.



Our newest Bible study writer, Paul Zell, finishes his first series on 1 Thessalonians this month (p. 30). We thank him for his messages on faith, love, and hope.



Since we didn't receive many letters this month, we replaced readers forum with an editorial (p. 6). But never fear, readers forum will return to its regular spot next month.

—JKT



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# Cereal CD sacked

James L. Hoff

Cheerios and General Mills Company apologized this summer for including a copy of the Bible on a reference-resource and game CD used in promoting its cereal. According to the news, the man who put together the CD package included the Bible. Either General Mills okayed the project and flip-flopped, or they did not carefully check the product before giving the go-ahead. Disney, Inc., which owned other software to be included on the CD, protested when they found out and insisted that the project be halted. Cheerios stopped the promotion, saying that they did not want to offend anyone.

As the news covered the subject, I noticed that, once again, the Bible proved itself true.

Didn't Jesus say, **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"** (Matthew 10:34)? General Mills wanted to avoid controversy over the Holy Scriptures. They found out that was impossible. As soon as Scripture, God, and Jesus are mentioned, a line is drawn. People must stand on one side or the other. Neutrality is impossible. The Word of God is powerful and effective. It evokes a decision and causes a division. For that reason the Lord gave his Word—to sanctify, to set us apart from Satan and the unbelieving world through faith in his Son as Savior. This powerful Word generates that faith. The Word is never inactive. It is always doing something—convicting, convincing.

Disney too may have wanted to avoid controversy. Also, I'm sure, it wanted no part in promoting Scripture. Many would like to slow down, discredit, take away, and ban the spread of the Bible. But in grace God will not let his Word be extinguished. That doesn't stop people from

trying, but, come what may, the Word will endure, even beyond this world. **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"** (Matthew 24:35).

My sinful nature would like to join the debate, to prove the unbelieving world wrong. But I don't need to prove the Bible right, good, or useful. It stands on its own merit. Unbelief will be proved wrong, once and for all, when Jesus comes again. **"But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless"** (Titus 3:9).

As a Christian I ought not to fret too much over the decision of General Mills. The Bible will still be accessible. God doesn't need a cereal company for that. This is not even a victory for Satan. But what would be a victory is if Satan gets me so involved in the debate that I don't have time to pick up my Bible. Even Paul would not dismiss that possible tragedy, asking God that **"after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize"** (1 Corinthians 9:27).

I think of the familiar hymn:

"God's Word is our great heritage [It's a gift from God to me.]

And shall be ours forever; [No one can keep it from me.]

To spread its light from age to age Shall be our chief endeavor. [I'll spread it, not argue about it.]

Through life it guides our way; In death it is our stay. [By it, God supplies my every need.]

Lord, grant, while worlds endure, We keep its teachings pure Throughout all generations." [Lord, cause me to hang on to it.]

*James Hoff is pastor at Saint Paul, Livonia, Michigan.*

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# Freedom of religion

Walter F. Beckmann

The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States begins, "Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." It's generally agreed that this amendment guarantees the freedom of religion and mandates the separation of church and state. Unfortunately, we don't always agree on where to draw the line between the separation of church and state and the separation of our nation from God.

This became evident after the Supreme Court's 6-3 decision forbidding pre-kickoff prayers at public high school football games. The majority of the justices decided that this was an issue involving the separation of church and state. Many people, however, saw this as another attempt to separate the nation from God. Even the three dissenting justices expressed the opinion that this decision "bristles with hostility to all things religious in public life."

Some powerful forces of evil are at work in the United States trying to destroy everything good and godly in public life. Their efforts are not without results—including millions of abortions, sex and violence on television and in the movies, and the breakdown of the family. But before we call this decision another victory for the powers of darkness, let's consider a few facts.

This decision is not like the decree that the enemies of Daniel tricked King Darius into signing that made it illegal to pray anywhere at anytime. It doesn't forbid a mother in the stands from asking God to keep her son from being injured or one of the players from asking God to let him play a good clean game. I don't think it forbids a Catholic basketball player from crossing himself before shooting a free throw.

It doesn't prohibit two WELS high schools from praying before their joint

activities. Lutheran high schools are an activity of the church, not the state. For the state to forbid such prayers would be violating the separation of church and state.

This decision didn't even say that church-sponsored activities and prayers could not be conducted on state-owned property. Many churches worship in public schools before they have their own facilities.

One of the majority justices explained his vote by saying that prayers at activities like public high school football games "tell members of the audience who are non-adherents that they are outsiders." It also exerts a subtle pressure on them to join in the prayer so that they don't look like outsiders. In the opinion of the majority of the justices such pressure at a state-sponsored activity is a form of establishing religion.

If the state is going to sponsor religious activities, whose religion should it sponsor? The prayers that brought this issue before the Supreme Court were probably Christian prayers, so many Christians were upset by the decision to forbid them. But what if those prayers were Christless prayers or if Christians were asked to face Mecca and pray to Allah? Would they feel the same way?

Are many godless people pleased with this decision? Probably. But does that mean it was a victory for the devil? I don't think so. Was this another attempt to drive God out of the nation? I don't know. But I like to think it was an honest attempt to keep the state from establishing a state religion.

Jesus told his disciples to preach the gospel in Jerusalem. When the civil authorities forbade them to do it, they said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." But God never commanded us to pray before football games.

*Walter Beckmann is the retirement pastor at Grace, Falls Church, Virginia.*

If the state  
is going  
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sponsor?



# A CIRCLE OF LOVE

If your parents gave you a proper self-love, share it—along with God’s love—with your neighbors.

Paul O. Wendland

The car slows to a stop at the curbside, and a 12-year-old girl gets out, suitcase in hand. She’s been living with her father. Her mother had a problem with the bottle, and after the divorce the girl’s dad thought it best for her to live with him. The judge agreed. But Dad’s found himself a new girlfriend, and three’s a crowd. That’s why Dad is dropping her off now in front of her mom’s house to stay. It’s not that her mom has suddenly sobered up and become a great parent. This girl has become an inconvenience. Worse: she knows it.

## Being given a proper self-love

“Love your neighbor as yourself,” our God says. In giving us this command, God is telling us that there is a proper kind of self-love that he built into the human design. God assumes its presence and uses it in his law to help us understand the true measure of the love we owe our neighbor.

But like every other aspect of our nature, this proper kind of self-love

has been corrupted by sin. How can this young girl, for example, ever have any normal sense of her worth as a human being? God wanted her parents to serve her as channels of his love, but instead of nurturing her and cherishing her, by their actions they’ve made it plain that she’s nothing but a burden and a chore.

It’s as if there’s this blank space left inside our hearts when we are born, a space that’s waiting to be filled with love from parents who care about us. When parents don’t deliver on what God says they owe, their children are more than likely to have trouble connecting to anything normal in society. “I will never be sane; I will always be weird!” laments one current songwriter. His father walked out



when his boy was 10. Children

like this often grow up having a hard time knowing what normal is. Their restless hearts may wander from one thing to the next, searching for a love they should have been given when they were little. But nothing else seems to fill the void within.

An African friend of mine once said to me, “You have such rich parents!” At first I wondered what he meant. My mom and dad didn’t have a lot of money, and my friend knew it. Why then would he call them rich? After thinking about it a while, I finally understood. He



called them rich because they were rich in the love they gave to others, their own children included.

From what I've observed in looking at this Wisconsin Synod of ours, I'd say that most of us were blessed with rich parents. We had moms and dads who loved us. From that love we gained a sense of our own worth as human beings and a measure of self-respect. "Love your neighbor as yourself," God says. Wealth like this is wealth to share.

### **Being deprived of a proper self-love**

Mistreatment of the young has reached epidemic proportions in America. I don't mean the kind that causes social services to spring into action or that leads to lurid headlines. I mean the far more deadly and pervasive mistreatment that occurs every day in even the best neighborhoods.

With no adults around to set limits, children daily drink in toxic doses of what currently passes for entertainment. By the flickering glow of their monitors and television screens, children learn to see sex as an act in which we please ourselves rather than a means by which we give ourselves to lifelong mates. And though our young may observe some people around them still getting married, they quickly learn that the marriage vow is a paper promise. It's easily torn apart and tossed away. Judging by the shocking teen-pregnancy rate, we see that newborn babies have become little more than toys for the bigger babies to play with—and discard when they get bored.

Why should they think any different? Can't they simply look around to learn what a child is worth in our

society? Consider the American day-care center. No doubt there are many fine ones out there. And no doubt many loving parents have gone through agonies before deciding to send their children to one of them as the best of a set of difficult choices. Yet the fact remains that many children are thoughtlessly whisked away to understaffed daycare centers where underpaid, overworked "caregivers" struggle to provide them with the basics of human kindness. And by the time those warehoused children have grown to adulthood, they will have learned from the only constant voices in their lives that image is everything. That getting lots of stuff is better than finding a genuine love.

### **When we show a neighborly love, we often find opportunities to share that deeper kind of love.**

#### **Being given a still nobler love**

In such a society, what can it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves? If we who have been blessed with rich parents fail to share our wealth with others, what will our God say to us? He has called us to serve. The first step toward service is simply to open our eyes. It seems to me that a lack of love is not so much caused by our having this great icy fist in our chests where others have a heart. More often it comes about by a simple failure of the imagination. We don't open our eyes to see the great suffering around us. When we do see it, it's not enough just to wring our hands. We need to roll up our sleeves.

Someone might say, "Well, repairing a broken child and giving her a sense of self-worth won't bring her into the kingdom of God!" True enough. Even in those who have had a good upbringing, the human nature is still utterly corrupt. We are all like planets facing the sun. All our light, all our heat, all our life comes from a power outside of us. Someone can be said to have a proper kind of self-love only when he is conscious of his worth as a being who has received all good from God. As things are, our natures are so fallen that we inevitably mistake and misuse every good gift. Without Christ, the self must collapse in upon itself. Without Christ, all love becomes entirely self-seeking. We can agree, then, that even if we show concern for others in their earthly pain, we still aren't helping them in their deepest need. Only Christ can free us from self to serve God and our neighbor.

All the same, when we show a neighborly love, we often find opportunities to share that deeper kind of love—the love of a God who demonstrated his power to us in Christ when we were still God's enemies.

That young girl who was abandoned by her father eventually found love and acceptance from teachers in a special-education classroom. One of them was a Christian. After a while, the girl began to attend the church's youth group. Now she has come to know the One whose love will never fail her.

It may have started with a neighborly love. But it ended in the love of God.

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

'Everclear "Father of Mine," Capitol Records. Released April 1998.



# Mary and Martha and Me

Have you fallen into a pattern of being more like Martha than like Mary? Perhaps it's time for a change.

Laurie Biedenbender

I think I understand Martha. She was working so hard, trying to put out a nice spread for Jesus. Ran to the market that morning to get the freshest vegetables. Made her mental list of when to put what on the fire so that everything would be hot at the same time. It was always a tough job feeding company, but today she had Jesus. A prophet, the Christ, her Savior! She wanted to show her love for Jesus in the best way she knew how.

Hospitality is a great gift, even more prized by the Jewish culture than by our own. Martha was doing a good thing.

But then she started to get ticked off, and I understand this completely. She would never get the bread made if she had to tend to the meat. And there sat the vegetables—when would she have time to chop them up? When she had made her list, she had figured on

a little more help from Mary.

Where was that sister of hers? Sitting around talking to Jesus.

"I'd like to talk to him too!" Martha must have thought. "It's just that serving him takes so much time! Surely Jesus must see this situation

for what it is. I'll just mention it to him, and he'll get Mary going."



**Yes, I understand Martha because, for years at a time, I am Martha.**

I'm Martha when I clean up the cereal bowls, make the lunches, get the kids dressed and off to school before 8, put in a full day of work (serving the church, of course), get home, cook supper, listen attentively to my husband talk about his day, do a load of wash, help with homework, clean up the supper dishes, make and freeze the casserole for Sunday's potluck, go to a church committee meeting, write a card to my grandma, call a friend who's down while I iron clothes for tomorrow, and crash at 11.

Just like Martha, I do it all for the love of Jesus. I know who he is and what





he's done, and I want to serve him by doing all these things for others.

But when I'm working so hard to serve him, I seldom have time to listen to him. Or talk to him.



**That's when I realize that maybe I'm not doing all these things out of pure-as-the-driven-snow love.**

Maybe it's something else.

Like guilt. I have to work hard because I know I'm not a good person, and somehow Jesus will see what I'm doing and love me more. Or an even more convoluted sense of guilt: God has given me so much—church, family, friends, house, talents, opportunities—I'd better not take them for granted. I'd better work hard to show my gratitude.

Maybe I serve out of fear. If I don't use this talent, if I bury it, God will take it away. If I don't make a healthy breakfast for my kids and read with them and tell them I love them five times every day, they'll get run over by a car and I'll blame myself and never get out of bed again.

Maybe it's pride. I want people to notice me and say, "Look at all she does for the church! What a great lady!" I want my kids to "rise up and call me blessed." I want my husband to see that I'm not just his wife—I'm my own person too. Or maybe, just maybe, I have to keep going at 100 miles per hour because I know somewhere down deep that if I stop, I'll actually have to think about who I am and why I do what I do.

Being Martha is so complicated.



**So I'm asking God to help me incorporate a little more Mary into myself.** Recently

I said no to "an opportunity to

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).



serve." I had the time, talents, and treasure, but I said no. My friend was silent for a split-second too long before she said, "No problem, I'll find someone else." Later she said, half-jokingly, "Yes, I found someone. There are still people who are willing to serve."

How could I explain that I want to be a little more like Mary right now?

How could I tell her that when I'm Martha, when I'm so busy serving my Savior, I don't notice the tulips he's bringing up, much less say thank you for them? I don't give a thought to my baptism. The Word doesn't dwell richly in me—it doesn't even dwell poorly. My prayers are no more than a guilty "Forgive me" and a strangled "Help me." I don't think

about the life to come . . . because I'm so caught up in this one.

I want to be like Mary.

I want to take time to sit at Jesus' feet. I want to read John 1 out loud and think hard about the Word who was in the beginning with God and who was God and who became flesh and tabernacled among us. I want to take 20 minutes and memorize a new psalm. I want to pray—at length—for every single person whose picture is on my fridge. I want to read a book and think about the nature of the human race. I want to walk in the sunshine and count all the different kinds of tulips God summoned up just in my little spot of earth. I want to talk to my troubled friend right now instead of telling her I'll call her back when I have more time. I want to sit in absolute silence and solitude and not do a single thing except be still and know that he is God.



**But if I'm going to do this Mary thing, I'm going to have to cut back on the**

**Martha thing.** Maybe I am just right for your committee, but I'm going to say no this time. Maybe those toys do need to be picked up, but let's read some Bible stories together instead. Maybe I am behind on the laundry, but I'm going to take a sabbath.

And the rest of you Marthas—I know you're out there—you can all shake your heads and tsk-tsk-tsk at me because I'm not willing to serve and you've got more work than ever. Or you can put down those casseroles, pick up your Bibles, and join me. ✨

*Laurie Biedenbender is a member at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.*



# “The times

The turbulent 1960s provided  
*The Northwestern Lutheran*  
writers with an assortment  
of topics to examine.

Mark E. Braun



On Aug. 28, 1963, more than 400,000 people at the March on Washington heard a young Atlanta pastor lament that “the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society.” But Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. also had a dream that one day his children would “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

A 22-year old folk singer from Hibbing, Minn., performed at Washington that day. Soon after, Bob Dylan wrote a new song that became an anthem for the turbulent 1960s:

Come mothers and fathers  
throughout the land,  
And don't criticize what you  
can't understand.  
Your sons and your daughters  
are beyond your command.  
Your old road is rapidly agin'.  
Please get out of the new one  
if you can't lend your hand  
For the times they are a-changin'.

## Civil rights

“For years everyone has known about segregation,” wrote Carleton Toppe in *The Northwestern Lutheran* (TNL) in 1964, but pending civil rights legislation was now forcing Americans to confront Jim Crow

laws and separate schools and lunch counters for whites and blacks. We owe “no less consideration for the soul of a neighbor of another color than we do for the souls of men whose skin is the same as ours.”

By 1965, a TNL reader asked why our pastors had not joined clergymen in Selma, Ala., demonstrating for civil rights. Though God has not assigned his church the responsibility of improving society, Armin Schuetze insisted, “The heart of the Christian has no room for racial prejudice or hatred.” A white Christian won't say, “That's only a Negro, why worry about his health and his life?” A Negro Christian will not say, “What do I care if my white neighbor suffers the loss of his property?”

## Space travel

Immanuel Frey remarked that some in the United States had scruples about a 1959 attempt to land a rocket on the moon. “They feel that man is trying to play at being God” and that such an attempt was “a repetition of the Tower of Babel episode.”

Was space travel against God's will? “Sending rockets into space, putting satellites into orbit involves more than playing with expensive

toys about which you can boast; it can well play a vital role in our national defense.” Yet “God will let man know when he exceeds his bounds.” Again citing Babel, Schuetze warned that when men use their building skills in defiance of God or for their own glory, he can intervene to frustrate their plans.

After Neil Armstrong made “one giant leap for mankind” on July 20, 1969, TNL hailed the moon landing as “a magnificent achievement of man's inventive genius and of his engineering skill.” Yet “the stubborn facts of human existence remain the same.” The moon exploit would not change the human race any more than did the feat of Columbus or the invention of radio or television.

## War debates

During two world wars, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans supported their country and fought bravely, but in 1964 TNL had to discuss whether pacifism was unchristian. By 1968 readers were asking, “Shall I burn my draft card?” and, “What if I doubt that a war is just?”

When resistance first arose against the United States's role in a faraway civil war, a TNL writer told readers



# they are a-changin'”



These pictures (above and right) from the Jan. 23, 1966, *The Northwestern Lutheran*, show scenes from two of WELS' first three missions in what is now the North Atlantic District: Grace, Falls Church, Va. (above) and Peace, King of Prussia, Pa.

E. E. Kowalke in 1963: “Dr. Timothy Leary, former Harvard professor of psychology, has been experimenting with volunteers to whom he has been administering certain drugs that produced awesome

‘religious revelations.’ Over 75 percent of the persons he experimented on reported intense religious reactions, and more than half claimed they had had the deepest religious experiences of their lifetime. Fortunately the drugs he used are not available at the corner drugstore, one of them in particular, called LSD, being extremely dangerous. Religion by the pill—it had to come to that.”

Immanuel Frey, commenting on John Lennon’s 1966 remark that the Beatles were “more popular than Jesus” and the protests and record-burnings that resulted: “If we value our religious freedom, let us beware of supporting or even approving of efforts to suppress by force the expressions of religious or irreligious opinions by others. It will do nothing to make Christ less of a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense in America or anywhere else. It will, however, have the effect of placing our own religious liberty in jeopardy.”

to refrain from “a sanctimonious second-guessing of the government.” But as losses mounted and explanations grew less convincing, second-guessing the war in Vietnam was no longer dismissed as “sanctimonious.”

In a particularly thoughtful response, seminary professor Irwin Habeck acknowledged that a Christian could be convinced that it was wrong to be involved in a given war, and he may decide he “must refuse to serve in this war, let come what may.”

May we protest? Yes, but only within legal limits.

To absolve oneself of responsibility for the country’s sinful course of action, must a conscientious objector also renounce his American citizenship? “We do not want to be hasty about sitting in judgment as God over our government,” Habeck wrote. We must be “very sure, and then very consistent, before we invoke the principle, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’”

## Mission expansion

For WELS, the 1960s became “a decade of decision for home missions.” The synod was opening new stateside churches “at a rate proportionately double that of other major Lutheran bodies in our country.” In only seven years, the number of states containing WELS churches doubled from 16 in 1961 to 33 in 1968.

This church body, which once questioned whether God ever intended it to do external mission work, now reported the names and addresses of 53 world missionaries.

“The Wisconsin Synod today supports missions in places in which it had no intention of going a few years ago,” Immanuel Frey noted. This aggressive mission expansion was “literally forced upon us, in large part as a direct result of the liberal trends which have developed in once conservative churches.” Forced, maybe; but begun. In the next decade WELS would enter the rest of the states.

Mark Braun is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee.





# Bull's-eye!

A lesson in being a target.

Kelly S. Koepsell

I again find myself temporarily away from home in service to my country. As I live in northern Italy and travel throughout the Balkans, I find the events in my physical life closely mirror the situations in my spiritual life.

## You are a target

**“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).**

While deployed in support of NATO operations in the Balkans, we realize that there are “bad guys” around. Upon arrival, all new personnel are told that Serbs live in the local area. Servicemen have been attacked in the area, but no attacks have been linked directly to that Serb population. Other elements operating here, including the ethnic Albanians, the Italian purists who want a divided north and south Italy, and a few other recognized terrorist organizations, would also like to see the NATO operation in the Balkans come to an end.

Knowing this leads us to act differently in public than if we were walking down Main Street in our hometowns. It leads us to take action to reduce exposure to terrorist acts and to be able to react or escape if something happens.

When I walk out to my vehicle

each morning, the thought of a car bomb goes through my mind. As I drive to work, each day I consider taking a different route so as not to build a pattern that could be exploited. When I go for a run, I never run the same route twice and always run at a different time of day.

When we go out to eat at night, we dress like Europeans. We don't wear Nebraska Cornhuskers sweat-shirts and New York Yankees baseball caps. When we pay for the meal we only take local currency out of our pockets and leave the American dollars out of sight.

We also do things like this as Christians, in an attempt to avoid the attacks of the world and the devil. Through our parents, pastors, and the teachers, we know about the threat to our souls that the world and the devil can pose. Knowing this causes us to take action.

We try to avoid television shows and movies with sex scenes, violence, and bad language. We try to walk away from off-color jokes at work. We try not to allow our children to continue in habits that put their souls at risk. We do our best to ensure that sin does not get a foothold in our lives.

But having a sinful nature, we are not always successful. We do not have that perfect nature to resist completely the attempts of the world

and the devil to drag us into their world of sin.

When we do feel the pressure, the temptation, we have a place where we can go to be reminded of the perfect nature of Christ and the wonderful promise he fulfilled to allow us into heaven.

## You can use help

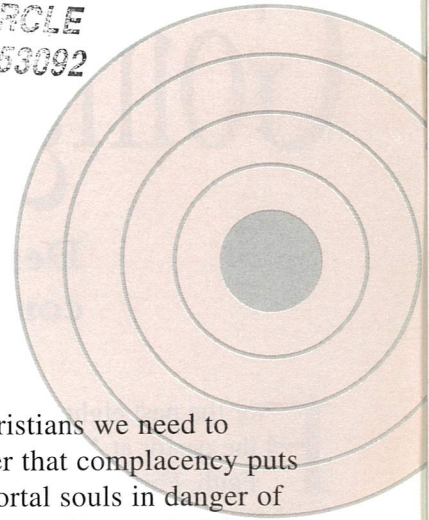
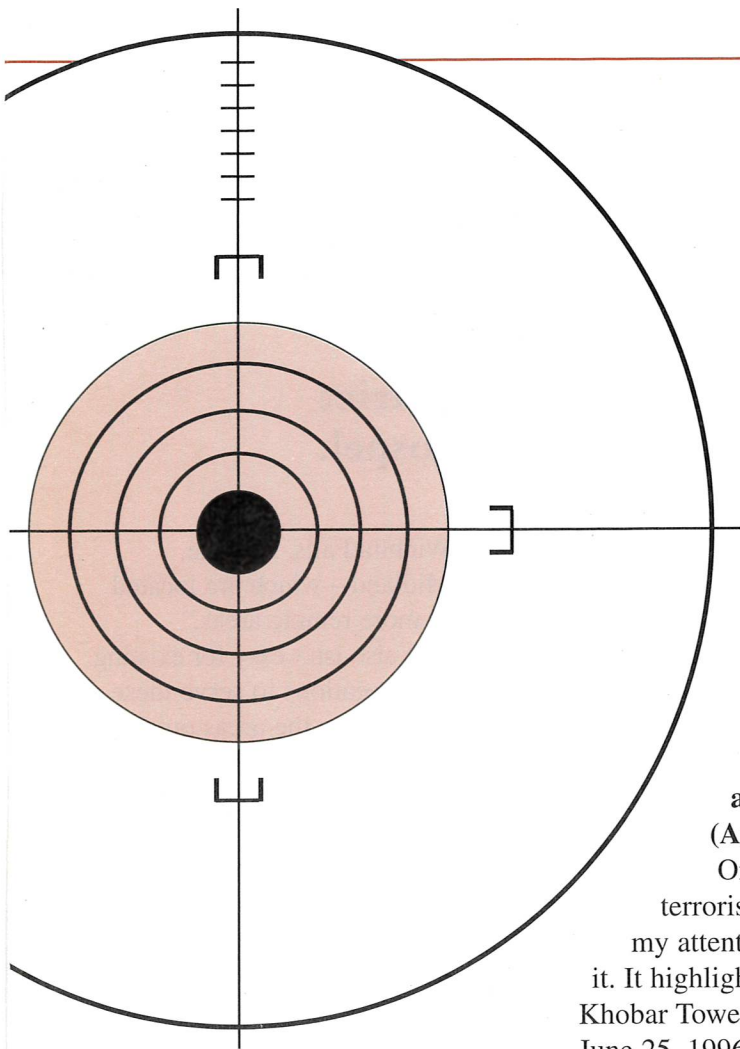
**“Let us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:25).**

When we get comfortable, we are tempted to relax and enjoy. After all, we're in northern Italy, home of great wine, amazing architecture, and wonderful hospitality.

When one of us does start feeling relaxed, it is his buddy's job to remind him of the dangers he faces. Usually it only takes a short, curt statement to snap someone back to reality.

In addition to our buddy system, the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) uses what seems like continual public service messages, reminding us of the threat of terrorism. Instead of commercials, we are reminded of previous terrorist attacks and methods to avoid being an easy target.





Christians use the buddy system, too, to help each other avoid sin. One of the most wonderful blessings of church membership is fellowship. Getting to know our fellow worshippers and sharing with them the hope and joy we find in Christ is a true blessing, often taken for granted.

As church members, we also have several "public service messages" that remind us that we are saved. We go to church to worship God and to hear that Christ has lived his life for us and died on the cross for our sins. We go to Bible study to be reminded, again and again, of the Savior who already paid for all our sins. We go to potluck suppers and fellowship hours to build up that buddy system with which Christ blessed us. We use and exercise these tools

to keep each other and ourselves strong and out of trouble.

**Complacency kills you**

**"Woe to you who are complacent"**  
(Amos 6:1).

One of the AFRTS terrorism reminders gets my attention every time I see it. It highlights the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia on June 25, 1996. Nineteen soldiers lost their lives, and almost 100 were injured. I lived in that compound from May to October 1994. That could have been me.

We need to be reminded that being complacent here could lead to a successful terrorist attack. Our lives are at risk. Further, we need to understand that if we are complacent, the mission of bringing peace to the Balkans is also at risk. Each of us here fills a critical role in providing airlift and air operations missions to maintain the peace in this area of the world.

The loss of one of us causes a loss of effectiveness and a slowdown in our ability to maintain peace. We need to be reminded of that terrorist threat because complacency will not only affect us but also the people we are here to protect.

As Christians we need to remember that complacency puts our immortal souls in danger of losing out on the wonderful glory that Christ died to give us. Our souls can be put in danger by ignoring the Word of God when faced with temptation or a situation that we know we need to avoid.

We show Christ's love for us and do what God wants us to do when we avoid that movie because we know it has violence and bad language, when we walk away from that sexual joke at work, and when we lovingly remind fellow Christians who are struggling with similar situations.

Christ died on the cross for us. He bore the sins of the entire population of the world, every person who ever lived. He took it upon himself to save us. This great love is the reason that we are under constant attack. But, it is also a constant reminder that God has given us the strength to look toward the cross and bear up under the attack.

We cannot rid ourselves of our sinful natures, but we have the ability through Christ to daily "mark and avoid" that temptation that we know will lead us to sin.



*Kelly Koepsell, a 1987 graduate of Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, is a captain in the United States Air Force and a member at Gethsemane, Omaha, Nebraska.*



# Going the EXTRA mile

Despite large distances, South Central District congregations work hard to spread the gospel.

Julie K. Tessmer

**F**or the past eight years, the pastor at Abiding Faith, Fort Worth, Tex., has been making house calls once a month to a family outside Fort Worth.

What's so different about that, you say? The pastor travels over 100 miles one-way to make that visit.

The geographical vastness of the South Central District is just one factor that makes ministry in the district challenging. Yet its congregations and called workers are going that extra mile to spread the message of God's grace.

## Distance-wise

It is over 800 miles from the northernmost congregation in the district to the southernmost. It would take over 10.5 hours to drive from east to west. Congregations are scattered throughout, some over one hundred miles from their nearest neighbor. This makes interaction difficult.

Yet, even with the large distances, the South Central District consists of only one conference. "Every time we meet as pastors we meet as a district," says Vilas Glaeske, district president.

This helps keep the district close knit, although the challenge is maintaining that unity as the district grows.

The district is growing, but more in the number of members than in



A child at the Bible study club that started in September for the Vietnamese at Christ the Lord, Houston. Although Pastor James Bourman and congregation members had been meeting with the children in their homes, this effort will bring the children to the church on a regular basis. Thirty-four attended the first class.

the number of congregations.

That's not from lack of places that need WELS churches. The five major metropolitan areas of the district—Houston, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas/Ft. Worth, and Oklahoma City—as well as the area between the cities have potential for mission openings. Yet lack of manpower and money makes opening the missions difficult.

Large distances don't help either. "Over the course of time, we've had difficulty with some of our far-flung missions," says Myrl Wagenknecht, chairman of the district's mission board. "We had to close in Tyler,

Wichita Falls, Abilene, Midland—which are located in more remote areas."

It also isn't easy for existing congregations to serve these areas, even the areas outside the big cities. "If we want to serve an area like Carrollton [a suburb of Dallas], it's just far enough away from any of our established congregations that it's difficult to go in and do straight missionary work," says Glaeske. "As a result the people would have to drive 15 to 18 miles to where the mission is, going by 15 to 20 non-WELS churches on the way."

## Effort-wise

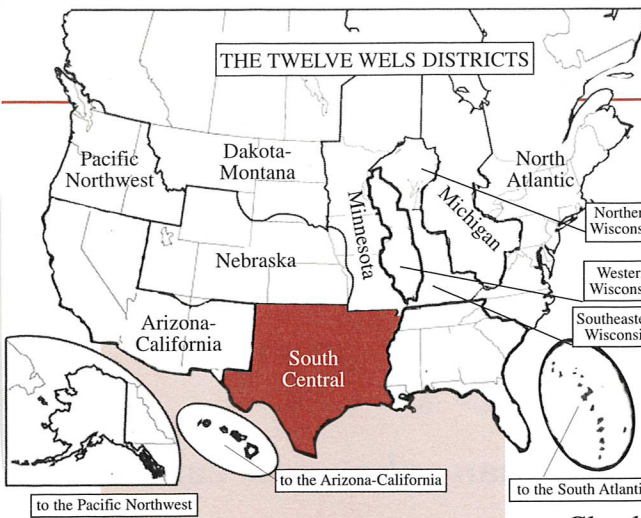
Even though serving the distant congregations poses challenges, the district is going the extra mile to share that message of God's grace.

Whether through vacation Bible school, Sunday school, English as a Second Language classes, Lutheran elementary schools, Christmas and Easter Bible schools, or door-to-door canvassing, congregations and called workers show their desire to reach whomever they can.

### • Historical outreach

The district's history demonstrates that mission spirit. Missions sprouted from a number of the first congregations in Texas, then part of the





■ South Central District

**Stats at a glance**  
**South Central District**

Conferences: 1  
Circuits: 5  
Congregations: 41  
Mission churches: 22  
Exploratory churches: 3  
  
Baptized members: 6,651  
Communicant members: 4,710  
Average attendance: 52%  
Pastors: 43

Adult baptisms: 36  
Adult confirmations: 147

Sunday school enrollment: 929  
Bible class attendance (teens): 212  
Bible class attendance (adults): 1,290

Early childhood education schools: 11  
Lutheran elementary schools: 8  
Area Lutheran high schools: 0

*Statistics taken from the 1999 Statistical Report, Commission on Parish Schools, and Board for Home Missions.*

Arizona-California District. The domino effect continued as more and more congregations were started. Constituted in 1983, the South Central District now consists of most of the state of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana west of the Mississippi River.

• **Using evangelists**

To make up for the called worker shortage, three different congregations in West Texas use an evangelist to do outreach. Supported by WELS Kingdom Workers, this man does canvassing and follow-up as well as conducts Bible classes.

• **Outreach to Spanish-speaking people**

Being so close to the Mexican border, congregations, especially south of Austin, encounter many Spanish-speaking people. “It would be good if every one of our pastors could speak Spanish,” says

Glaeske. “It would not be wasted.”

Pastor Joel Sauer and his wife, Renee, at Abiding Savior, Weslaco, Tex., are working toward that goal. Joel recently spent five weeks in a Spanish immersion study in Mexico City so that he could better reach out to the Spanish-speaking people who make up 95 percent of Weslaco. This unique congregation, located about six miles from the Mexico border, swells in size in winter because of northern visitors.

• **Outreach to others from foreign lands**

The district isn’t only concentrating on Spanish-speaking people. When Christ the Lord, Houston, saw more Asians moving into its neighborhood, members decided to do something about it. “The congregation saw such a vast field that they wanted to attack it in as a significant and as big of a way they could,” says James Bourman, the missionary whom the congregation and District Mission Board jointly called in 1995 to reach out in the neighborhood.

Bourman, his wife, and several congregation members visit and teach the Word at an apartment complex where recent Vietnamese refugees and immigrants end up when they come to Houston. “They’re glad to meet us. Many have few or no American friends so they are honored when we take time and go out of our way for them,” says Bourman. “And they’ll listen to

us. They’ll hear the gospel. That’s all the Holy Spirit needs.”

Christ the Lord is also ministering to the Chinese, and Divine Peace, Rowlett, Tex., spreads the Word to the Japanese.

• **Family ministry**

Abiding Word, Houston, is doing a different kind of reaching out—to the youth within its congregation. The church has two pastors, one dedicated fully to family ministry and outreach. Recently Abiding Word also dedicated a family life center and school to give itself more room for activities and programs to strengthen parents and their children. “The key to retaining youth,” says Stephen Valleskey, one of Abiding Word’s pastors, “is the building of strong families.”

Whether driving 100 miles to share the gospel or coming up with unique ways to minister, the South Central District continues to go the extra mile to make sure all will reach the ultimate goal—heaven. ✨

*Julie Tessmer is senior communications assistant for Forward/Northwestern Lutheran and WELS Communication Services.*

Part of going the extra mile is persistence. Grace, Lowell, Ark., agrees with that. Part of its philosophy for outreach is “Don’t quit and be very patient.”

The church has a variety of outreach methods from the basic (cold calling, knocking on doors, media work, networking, and mailings) to the unique (display sign, opening up the church for polling, Spanish classes to help members reach out to the Spanish-speaking population, and an emphasis on evangelism in Sunday school).

But all carry the same message: “If it’s not sin and grace, it’s not worth proclaiming,” says Charles Huebner, Grace’s pastor.

He continues: “If you preach the Word and do the work, the Lord will take care of you. That’s where faith comes into play.”

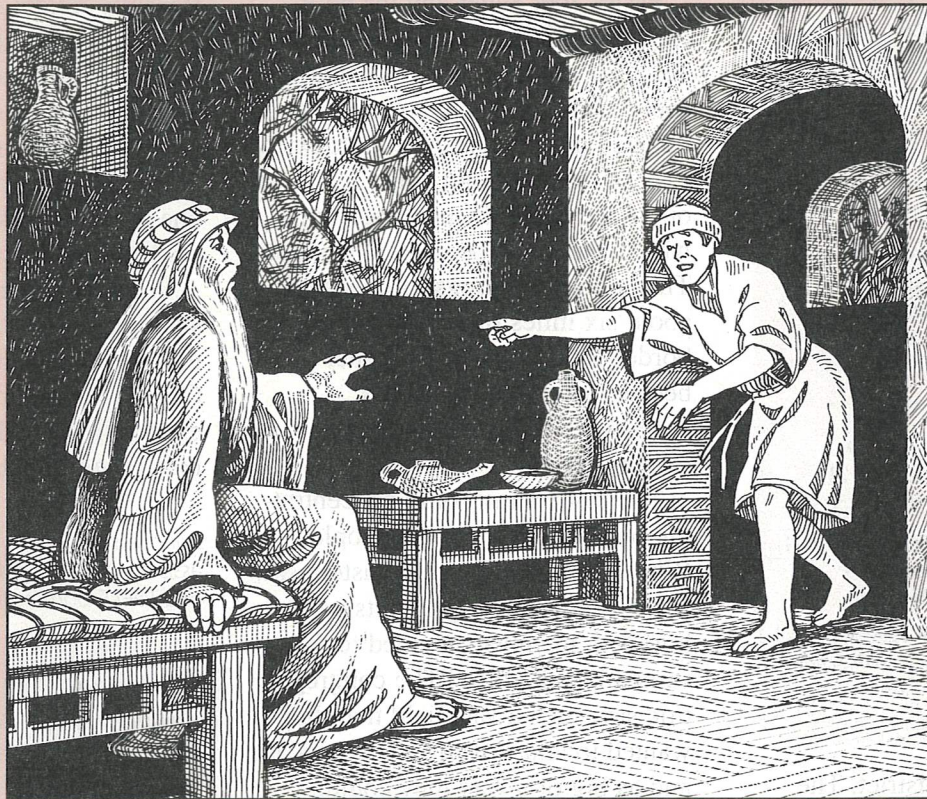
Faith and persistence.



# Thank you, Lord, for what I cannot see

Sometimes what you can't see is more real than what you can.

Stephen H. Geiger



**T**his bully came at a crawl, yet its pursuit frightened the very stars from the sky. Pinpoints of distant light gave way to orange glow.

So the morning sun welcomed Elisha's servant to a new day. We might imagine him stumbling, rubbing eyes, walking, savoring crisp morning air . . . hearing noises, strange ones, in the distance. Inner alarm bells quickly melt mental cobwebs. Not long and his sense of foreboding retreats in face of real

fear. Eyes catch their glimpse of an army. The army of Aram, in the middle of the night, had marched to surround the city of Dothan.

Their target? Elisha, who by the power of God had been revealing to the king of Israel the exact movement of Aramean troops. The enemy commander had enough. He would force the Dothanites to surrender their prophet.

Elisha's servant approaches his master: "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:8-23).

## Trying to focus on visible blessings

Not exactly a day of thanksgiving, was it?

To the human eye, life had taken a turn for the worse. Lives were in danger. God appeared the loser. The future was uncertain at best, short at worst.

Has Thanksgiving Day ever fallen on a day like this? In worship you sang songs of thankfulness and praise, in your oven you baked honeyed hams and sugared yams, but in your heart was a throbbing plea,



“Oh, my Lord, what shall I do?”

What shall I do when the seat at my table filled last year by husband or child stands vacant, never to be filled again? What shall I do when the sins of those I love have stressed and pummeled my soul, making earthly peace a distant memory? What shall I do when my greatest desires for here remain unfulfilled, while so many of my friends appear to have it all?

Sometimes we try to console our troubled hearts by reminding ourselves of all the things for which we can be thankful. We play a heart-wrenching balancing act, trying to convince ourselves that we can outweigh the things we hate by thumping into our heads all that we should appreciate.

For the children we may put on a show, for our friends we may wear a smile, but when the curtains of our mind are pulled and our thoughts are given free rein, we begin to weep and ask why. We remember good times, only because they are past; we dwell on bad times, their emptiness vast.

We look into the distance, as the morning sun chases darkness away, and see a dark future, surrounded by the armies of the Arameans.

We can say “thank you” to God, but we don’t really mean it. We can’t truly feel it. And for sure we don’t see it.

We ask, “Oh, my Lord, what shall we do?”

### **Understanding the blessings that can’t be seen**

The prophet Elisha, whose life was the one pursued, looks with confident yet understanding eyes and speaks, “Don’t be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those

who are with them.”

“But we are surrounded,” we and his servant might say.

So Elisha prays, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. Where did they come from?

They were there all the time.

But I didn’t see them.

What would you see if you could see what can’t be seen?

## **To see what can’t be seen is to discover the secret of being thankful always.**

So often at Thanksgiving we focus our thanks on the visible, the blessings we can count or touch or lose. We set ourselves up for that Thanksgiving Day when we are surrounded by the enemy, and all we can count or touch has been lost.

You may know that feeling. You may know the fear of that servant who saw enemy armies poised to strike. You may know those doubts expressed when disappointment lurks. You may know the inner anger directed at the Lord for taking a blessing most dear.

You may know the arrogance of human eyes, insisting that all they see is all there is to see.

As you drip the tears of a broken heart now frightened by its questioning of God’s care, hear Elisha pray for his weak friend: “Lord, open his eyes.”

Those who are with us are more than those who are with them—even when human eyes say otherwise.

Soldiers and Sadducees wielded

swords and insults. A governor condemned and criminals ridiculed. God himself forsook his Son. If ever eyes were put to the test, this was it. Yet unseen, the bulging vessels of a body wracked with pain were pouring out an eternal price to set free you and me.

Who would have known that in that moment our Savior was suffering terror for sins yet to be committed millennia in the future? Who would have known that his death was our eternal life? Who could have known, had God not revealed in words through his Spirit, what our eyes would never have imagined? So too, we know that he who did not spare his only Son but gave him up for us all will graciously give us all things.

We may not see them all with our eyes. This is the way God is accustomed to working: behind the scenes, in disguise. With power and purpose often cloaked from human vision.

Yet more real than all we can see.

To see what can’t be seen is to discover the secret of being thankful always.

Thankful, truly thankful, even when everything appears lost. When trouble or dread, longing, or the armies of Aram surround, know that the horses and chariots of your Savior God are protecting, caring, and defending.

We can be thankful, no matter what our eyes can see, when it’s what they can’t see that really matters.

Thank you, Lord, for what I cannot see.



*Steve Geiger is pastor at Prince of Peace, Yankton, South Dakota.*



# CHURCH SHOPPING

Shopping List



Bread

milk

butter

church

cheese

## How should you determine which church to join?

Robert F. Raasch

**B**ill and Gloria have been members of the same congregation for years. Recently, however, they have noticed a change in the messages coming from the pulpit. The sermons are becoming more political, less scriptural. They feel that their faith just isn't being fed the way it once was. After months of deliberation, they make the painful decision to begin visiting other churches.

Tanya was not raised in a church-going family. The last time she was in church was for a friend's funeral. But she's been listening to the preachers on TV. She's looking for answers. She opens the Yellow Pages to "Churches."

Jeff recently moved to town. He's found a new job, new house, new doctor—now all he needs is a new church. He logs onto the Internet to begin his search.

All these people have one thing in common, don't they? They are all "shopping" for a church.

### It's all right to church shop

Is it wrong to "church shop?" Not necessarily. The Bible says to "seek the Lord while he may be found" (Isaiah 55:6) and to "not give up

meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25). The question is "How should a person determine which church to join? What criteria should a person use to choose the right church?"

### A church is only as good as its teachings.

Some people choose a church on the basis of appearance. Is the lawn well-kept? Is the facility impressive? Are the pews padded?

Others judge a church by personalities. Whom do I know there? Is the preacher dynamic? Are the members friendly?

Some rely on their own emotions. Was I moved by the worship service? Did I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit? Did I laugh or cry or speak in an unknown language?

Still others evaluate churches on the basis of programs. What activities does the church offer for children, teens, singles, divorced, parents, elderly, grieving, addicted, etc.?

Finally, some shop for a church purely for convenience. Is the church close to my home? Do the worship times fit my schedule? Is there adequate parking for my car?

### Be sure you know what to look for

Granted, all these elements may affect a person's decision regarding church membership. But to use them as the primary criteria for evaluating a church is to ignore the most important characteristic of a Christian congregation, namely, its teaching.

In its very essence, a church is defined by its message. Christians gather into congregations in order to be spiritually fed by the timeless truths recorded in Scripture. Take away those truths, and a church loses its purpose. In other words, a church is only as good as its teachings. That means the smart "shopper" must practice doctrinal discernment.

I'll admit that judging a church by its teaching takes some work. It requires a person to ask questions and search the Scriptures for answers. But the time invested in this kind of "spiritual homework" pays dividends in a person's relationship to God now and forever. Remember the Savior's promise, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31,32).

Robert Raasch is pastor at Mount Olive, Appleton, Wisconsin.



## Mission opportunities through Forward in Christ

A part of WELS' 150th anniversary celebration is the chance for members to give thanks to God for all his blessings by giving back so his Word can be spread. A special Forward in Christ offering is providing that opportunity.

From \$19.5 to 31.6 million of that offering will go toward mission outreach. The following is the initial round of projects that this portion of your Forward in Christ offering will fund:

**Outreach assistance for Billings, Mont.** \$20,000

Advance gospel outreach efforts in Billings by providing manpower to help train members of Apostles to carry out continued outreach efforts.

**Inland Empire team** \$50,000

Provide people experienced in worship, education, and discipleship to help congregations in the Inland Empire of Southern California plan programs and provide training so the plans can be implemented.

**Sabbatical in ministry in Las Vegas** \$20,000

Help train and encourage new missions in outreach, discipleship, stewardship, and administration.

**Caribbean mission team** \$150,000

Provide manpower to help enhance outreach in the Caribbean islands of Antigua, St. Lucia, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Grenada.

**Spanish immersion** \$100,000

Organize and support immersion opportunities for front-line workers for Spanish language study.

**Apprentice in Mission (AIM) teams** \$37,000

Provide 30 opportunities for students to have a summer experience doing ministry.

**Timothy/Titus field experience** \$76,000

Continue to give students of the two preparatory schools (Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw) opportunities to do mission work.

**Martin Luther College cross-cultural study experience** \$25,000

Take minority cultures' classes to St. Paul/Minneapolis, Minn., for cross-cultural experience weekends.

**Outreach to youth through youth** \$17,000

Bring together three congregations—Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla.; Bethany, Fort Atkinson, Wis.; and St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.—for two weekends of planning youth ministry.

**Mentoring musicians** \$22,000

Allow experienced musicians with demonstrated abilities to mentor less experienced musicians in areas that will achieve improved worship.

**District lay evangelism training teams** \$24,000

Develop and mentor district lay evangelism training teams who in turn will train congregational lay evangelists for law and gospel witness as follow up to congregational outreach.

**Professor to India** \$15,000

Send Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary or Martin Luther College professors to teach at the seminary/pre-seminary in Guntur, India.

**Professor to Albania** \$10,500

Send a professor and his wife to teach lay leaders in Albania for three months (three times).



Your Forward in Christ thank offering can send WELS professors to the seminary in Guntur, India, where they will help train pastors who will teach these children about their Savior.

**Martin Luther College graduate to East Fork LHS** \$45,000

Have an MLC graduate serve as a religion instructor at EFLHS, giving that person experience in a world mission setting and EFLHS an additional qualified instructor.

Total: \$461,500

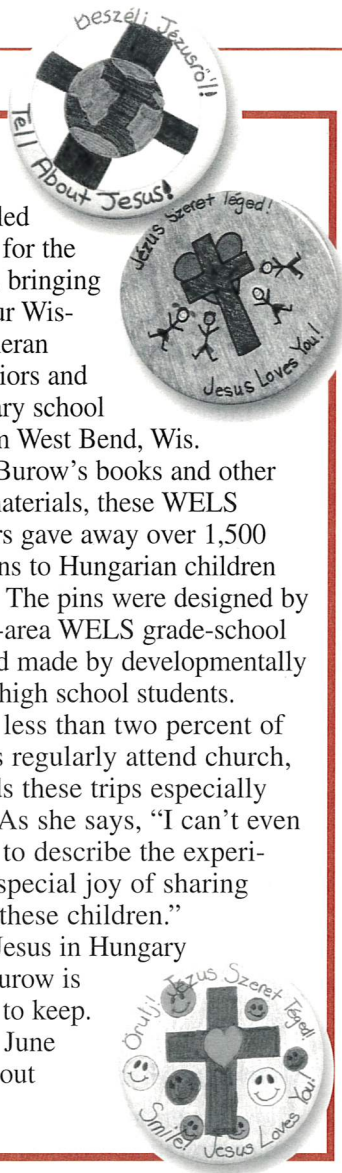
For more information about these projects, contact the Forward in Christ director, President Karl R. Gurgel, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3201; <PresWELS@sab.wels.net>.

### ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

The day's Bible story was about Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery in Egypt. In order to see if these young ones understood what a slave was, I questioned, "Why would anyone want to buy a person?" The first-grader in a wheelchair raised his hand immediately, "To love him," he sweetly responded—obviously only knowing the warmest of love in his young life.

Beverly Bornschlegl  
Waco, Nebraska





## Where are they now?

In Forward/NL, we report the news but aren't always able to follow up. "Where are they now" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

"A habit in Hungary" ran in Dec. 1998.

### Here's a recap:

Sharon Burow, a teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran College, spread the gospel in Hungary during the summers of 1997 and '98.

Burow had her children's books, *And I Can Go and Tell* and *Christian Countdown to Christmas*, translated into Hungarian and was invited to distribute them at public schools in Hungary. While in Hungary, Burow spread the gospel to Hungarian educators, administrators, and students. When she returned for her second trip, she gained their trust.

But this second trip wasn't the end. "God has more for me to do in Hungary. I know that," says Burow. "Hungary in June—a habit."

### So, where are they now?

Burow has not gone back on her word. This summer, from June 8-July

3, she traveled to Hungary for the fourth time, bringing with her four Wisconsin Lutheran College seniors and an elementary school teacher from West Bend, Wis.

Besides Burow's books and other Christian materials, these WELS ambassadors gave away over 1,500 religious pins to Hungarian children on this trip. The pins were designed by Milwaukee-area WELS grade-school students and made by developmentally challenged high school students.

Because less than two percent of Hungarians regularly attend church, Burow finds these trips especially important. As she says, "I can't even find words to describe the experience—the special joy of sharing Jesus with these children."

Sharing Jesus in Hungary is a habit Burow is determined to keep. Hungary in June 2001? Without a doubt.

## Obituaries

### Harold William Schwertfeger 1914-2000

Harold Schwertfeger was born June 23, 1914, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died Aug. 8, 2000, in New Hope, Minn.

A 1937 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Schwertfeger served congregations and taught at schools in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and North Carolina.

Schwertfeger was preceded in death by two brothers and one son. He is survived by his wife, Marvel; one sister; two sons; six daughters; 12 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and many other relatives and friends.

### Frederick W. Heidemann 1921-2000

Frederick Heidemann was born Aug. 25, 1921, in Kiel, Wis. He died Aug. 22, 2000, in Appleton, Wis.

A 1945 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Heidemann served his entire 48-year ministry at Emanuel, New London, Wis.

Heidemann is survived by his wife, Lucille; three daughters; six grandchildren; and two sisters.

## World missionaries go back to school

World missionaries gained new insights about reaching out through two schools of outreach held this past summer. The Commission on Evangelism conducted these schools.

In June, WELS missionaries from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Colombia, and Publications for Latin America and Evangelical Lutheran Synod missionaries from Peru and Chile attended a school held in the Dominican Republic. Separate workshops were sponsored for their wives. Over 70 people attended.

Over 30 world missionaries and members of executive committees of the Board for World Missions attended the other workshop at the Schwan Retreat Center, Trego, Wis., in August.

Most schools of outreach focus on the team-approach to congregational outreach and are attended by both pastors and laypeople. The theme was slightly modified for the world missionary schools.

"The purpose was to get the missionary to evaluate how he can best use his skills and the skills of his people in community outreach," says Bob Hartman, administrator for evangelism. "The principles are universal. It's how they apply those principles to their local fields that counts."

The principles include the "seven pieces of the evangelism pie," which are congregational awareness and a commitment to outreach, community identity, locating prospects, nurtur-

ing prospects, friendship witnessing, worship welcome, and assimilation.

Another world missionary school of outreach is in the works. This Native American school of outreach will be held in Apacheland and will include missionaries and laypeople who are reaching out to the Apache, the Navajo, and the Lakota.

Four hundred thirty-six congregations have participated in the 55 schools that have been conducted within the districts since 1993. The two schools this summer were the first ones exclusively aimed at world missionaries.

For more information, contact the Commission on Evangelism, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 414/256-3288; <usr12@sab.wels.net>.



## Meet the editorial staff—uncut

Ever ask yourself, “Who are these people who write for Forward/NL?” Through this new series you can find out. Read on:

### A tall tale

Tall.

That’s how 6 foot 5 inches tall Paul Edward Zell, a Bible study writer for Forward/NL, would describe himself. “Like any child who loves to play basketball, I often prayed that I would grow tall. Little could I suspect how generously the Lord would answer those prayers,” he says.

Although Zell doesn’t play basketball as much anymore, he still has plenty to keep him busy. As first vice president of the South Atlantic District; pastor at Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga.; member of the WELS Committee for India Missions; husband; and father of three, Zell needs to keep the ball moving so he can get everything done.

Zell grew up in Watertown, Wis. His dad, William, was a German

professor at Northwestern College and Preparatory School.

“Growing up as a ‘prof’s kid,’ I became acquainted with a lot of pastors in town and on the campus. These were gifted, humble men who obviously enjoyed what they did. I’m sure that had quite an influence on what I wanted to become,” says Zell.

A 1983 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Zell’s love for the ministry is still evident.

“What could be better than to proclaim the love of Jesus as one’s full-time profession?” he says.

He cites proclaiming Jesus’ love in India through a Bible seminar for Indian church leaders as one of his most memorable experiences.

“To walk city streets that burst with pedestrians at all hours of the day or night, to see the overwhelming evidence of poverty and the terrible public sanitation, to realize that nearly all of the people whom



Paul Zell (back) and his family (from left): Emily, Cathy, Heidi, and Joseph. Zell met Cathy while at the seminary. “I cannot honestly say it was love at first sight as far as Cathy was concerned, since it required five years and much groveling on my part before she saw things my way and agreed to marry me,” says Zell.

you are observing do not know the good news of salvation—what an experience for an American Christian,” he says.

When Zell isn’t busy with church work, he works hard at “keeping a clean garage floor and a well-manicured lawn,” before moving inside and trying to keep the house just as neat. “My wife prays that I might find other hobbies or pastimes.”

Maybe basketball?

## The gospel at work

Jesus said to go into all the world. Sometimes, though, he brings the world to us.

Paul and Connie Wong and their sons, Victor and Eric, moved to the United States from Malaysia a few years ago. They found work at a Chinese restaurant in Columbus, Ohio. A customer at the restaurant asked Connie to come to church with her at Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio.

Connie visited Beautiful Savior and began instruction classes with Pastor Mark Wessel. Halfway through the instruction, though, the Wongs bought a restaurant in Dayton, Ohio.

Connie continued her instruction classes with Pastor Martin Wildauer at Peace of Our Savior, New Carlisle,



The Wong family, from Malaysia, was invited to a WELS church by a Chinese-restaurant customer in Columbus, Ohio. Martin Wildauer (back middle) confirmed each member of the family at Peace of Our Savior, Carlisle, Ohio.

Ohio, until she was confirmed. Victor and Eric were also baptized and confirmed, though communicating during

class was a struggle because of their limited English vocabularies.

After a few years of encouragement, Paul agreed to take instruction classes. The classes were held in the back of the restaurant during slower hours because Paul had to be there whenever the restaurant was open. Sometime classes were interrupted because Paul needed to make a delivery. Every concept had to be explained, re-explained, and reviewed because of the language difference. Though it was a slow process, it was worth it. On July 16, 2000, Paul was confirmed, and the entire Wong family joined Peace of Our Savior.

*Martin Wildauer*



## 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.*

### Communication Services Commission

414/256-3210

**Free road signs are still available** from Northwestern Publishing House (NPH). The first sign is free (an \$80 value). Additional signs are half-price, \$36.48. The sign, which includes the WELS logo and directions to your church, is either 24"x30" or 18"x24" in a new, highly visible design. Thanks to a gift from Lutheran Brotherhood and the cooperation of NPH, this offer is valid during the Forward in Christ celebration (until July 31, 2001) or while supplies last. To order, call NPH at 1-800-662-6093 ext 7.

**A \$40,000 grant from Aid Association for Lutherans and the**

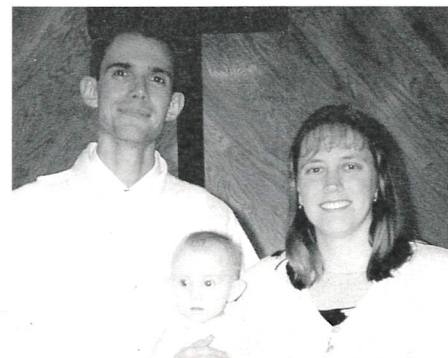
**Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation is helping fund WELS Tech 2001**, a comprehensive technology conference being held July 15-18, 2001, in Appleton, Wis. WELS Tech 2001 pre-conference planning was funded in part by Lutheran Brotherhood. This conference will help pastors, teachers, and laypeople use the latest technology to enhance their ministries. To find out more about WELS Tech 2001, visit the conference Web site at [www.wels.net/welstech2001](http://www.wels.net/welstech2001).

### Board for Ministerial Education

414/256-3237  
Aid Association for Lutherans and the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation awarded \$40,400 to the Board for Ministerial Education. The grant will provide **opportunities and assistance to in-service teachers to become licensed by their states so they can serve as student-teacher supervisors**. This first step will

enable Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., to seek approval of its teacher education program by the state of Minnesota.

### Board for World Missions



**Joshua Stahmann**, pictured here with his wife, Lynette, and their daughter, Rebekah, was ordained into the pastoral ministry and commissioned as a missionary to Japan on Aug. 27 at Zion, Gainesville, Fla. WELS has five missionaries in Japan.

## Serving missions in their golden years



**Sue and Ted Zuberbier are serving as a husband/wife team at the Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Lilongwe, Malawi.**

On July 8, Barbara Welch was commissioned to serve at Mwembezhi Lutheran Rural Health Center, located 50 miles west of Lusaka, Zambia. Welch served in 1961-'62 as the first medical mission nurse at Mwembezhi. Now, 40 years later, she is returning to serve again.

This time around, Barbara was

especially moved by the AIDS and orphan problems in Africa after reading the study "AIDS in Central Africa—Is there Hope" by Prof. E. H. Wendland.

Ted and Sue Zuberbier were commissioned on July 16 to serve as a team at the Lutheran Mobile Clinic based in Lilongwe, Malawi. Sue will be acting as nurse while Ted serves as administrative coordinator.

Some might ask, "Why would Ted and Sue and Barbara leave family and the comforts we all strive for in the 'golden years' of our lives to serve the Lord 10,000 miles away?"

Sue comments, "This has been a lifelong dream dating back to the days of my youth when the missionaries and nurses would speak."

The Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM), supported by women's organizations of WELS churches, supports the two medical

mission programs in central Africa.

*To learn more about service with the CAMM, contact Kathie Wendland, Nurse Coordinator; 920/682-5694.*

*Irene Brug*



From left: Heidi Meyer, Barbara Welch, and Irene Brug. Meyer and Brug are Central Africa Medical Mission members. Welch is currently serving as a nurse at the Mwembezhi Lutheran Rural Health Center for a second time.





## In the news . . .

**David Cole**, a member at Star of Bethlehem, Santa Maria, Calif., was featured on the cover of *Your Money* in Sept. Cole, a former city administrator, is making a successful living by investing directly in stocks and following the market on a regular basis. He says, "There's definitely no safety net [in buying stocks], so it isn't for everyone, and it takes a lot of time to do the necessary leg work. But that's what I like about it."

**"135-year tradition ends at rural church"** states the July 15

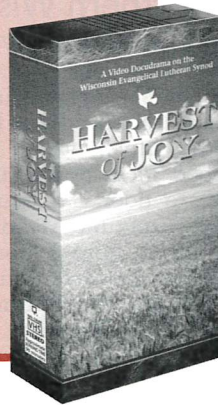
headline of the *La Crosse Tribune*. The headline is referring to the closing of First Portland Evangelical Lutheran Church, Portland, Wis.

This tiny WELS church had five active members when the decision to close was made. The building, which was heated with wood until 1972, had no electricity until 1956, and still lacks indoor plumbing.

As the closing lines of the story state, "The closing of the Portland church is a sign of the times and should not be construed as a failed ministry. That ministry is history, and the faith it engendered in generations of believers will likely withstand many church closings."

Trying to get a Christmas gift for that hard-to-buy-for relative or friend? Why not order *Harvest of Joy*, a two-video docudrama that celebrates WELS' rich 150-year history. A perfect gift for your children or grandchildren, your parents, your pastor, or new members of your church. Costs only \$19.95 (plus shipping and handling).

Mass Media Ministry, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; 1-800-884-9312; <usr12@sab.wels.net>.



## Attention all teen writers!

*Forward in Christ/Northwestern Lutheran* is working on a new way to incorporate articles for teens in the magazine. We think the best method is for teens to write to teens about teen issues.

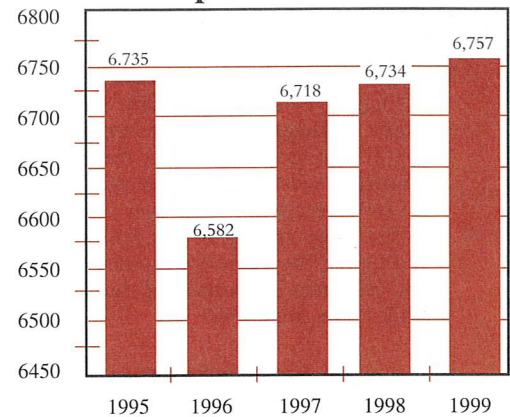
So, pick up your pencil or turn on your computer and send us your 600-word article about important teen issues by Dec. 15. Remember, all articles should have a Christian focus.

If you are a student of an area Lutheran high school (ALHS) or preparatory school, you can receive contest information from the head of your religion or English department. Each participating ALHS and preparatory school will send two contest entries. All other students, contact *Forward/NL* at 414/256-3210 or <fic@sab.wels.net> to receive further contest information.

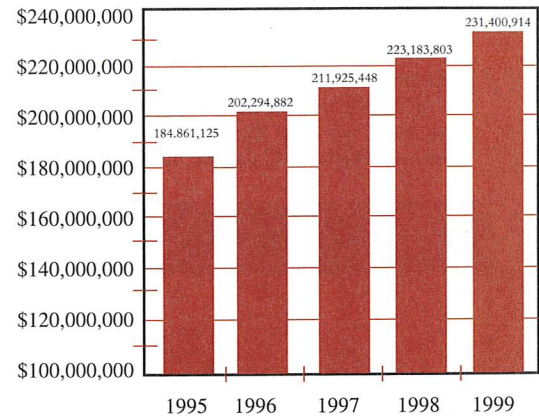
## WELS stats

August's graphs showed a decrease in attendance to Bible classes and church among WELS members in 1999. At the same time we are seeing a rise in their Spirit-filled response to the gospel message—more monetary gifts, more confirmations, and fewer back door losses. To God be the glory.

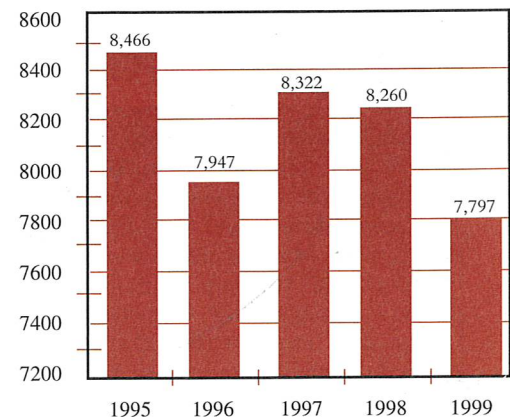
### Adult confirmation and profession of faith



### All-purpose giving



### Back door losses



Statistics from the 1999 Statistical Report



## District news

### Dakota-Montana

**Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.**, broadcasts its Sunday morning worship services on the radio on KWSN AM 1230. KWSN then provides an audio broadcast at <www.KWSN.com> so anyone anywhere can access it through the Internet. Click "listen live" on KWSN's homepage, and you can listen to a WELS worship service when away from a WELS church.

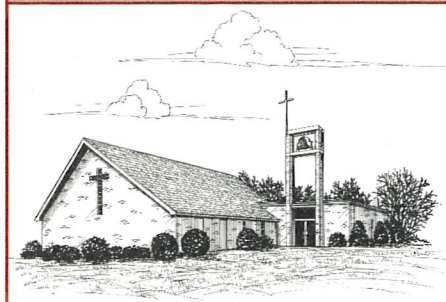
### Minnesota

The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society of Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn., honored **Mary Lindgren** at their spring luncheon. Lindgren, a lifelong member of Pilgrim, contracted polio at age 10 and has been in a wheelchair ever since. As a teen, Lindgren sang in the junior choir and played the piano for Sunday school. She has been a member of the Pilgrim adult choir since 1963.

### North Atlantic

The Billy Graham Center Museum in Chicago, Ill., purchased a religious work of art created by **Barb Janisch**, member of Bethlehem, Manassas, Va. Janisch opened an exhibit at the Lutheran Brotherhood Art Gallery in Minneapolis, Minn., in June and was featured on the Public Broadcasting Station's Artbeat Calendar in Chicago.

### Minnesota



When St. John, Vesta, Minn., (above) and St. John, Hancock, Minn., celebrated their 100th anniversaries this year, Lutheran Brotherhood (LB) presented them with pen-and-ink drawings of their church buildings. The gifts are offered through LB's Congregational Anniversary Program 100+ that recognizes Lutheran congregations founded 100 or more years ago.

### Southeastern Wisconsin



The cross on Holy Scripture, Fort Wayne, Indiana's, steeple was struck by lightning on Aug. 26. Fort Wayne's fire department volunteered to reposition the cross. As a small crowd of members and neighbors watched, one fireman operated the controls to maneuver two other firemen close to the steeple. After the cross was replaced, the firemen let the children explore the inside of the fire engine.

### Northern Wisconsin

**St. John, Princeton, Wis.**, was undergoing remodeling in August when a carpenter heard meowing coming from an area that had been bricked in with cinder blocks three weeks earlier. Robert Pless, pastor at St. John, went door to door and found a neighborhood family, the Mahoneys, whose cat had been missing for three weeks. Workers removed a cinder block, and four-year-old Matthew Mahoney crawled into the space and rescued his cat, Tinkerbell.

### Pacific Northwest

On Aug. 20, members of **Kodiak Lutheran Mission, Kodiak, Alaska**, voted to change the congregation's name to **Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church**. Holy Trinity is conducting a local outreach campaign announcing the name change.

### South Atlantic

**Living Word, Johnson City, Tenn.**, bought five acres of land in July.

### Southeastern Wisconsin

**Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.**, kicked off its building expansion with a groundbreaking ceremony on July 23.

### Happy Anniversary!

**DM**—On Sept. 10, members of Immanuel, Elgin, N.D., held a special service in honor of **Wayne Rouse's** 25th anniversary in the pastoral ministry.

**SEW**—On Sept. 10, Wisconsin Lutheran High School (WLHS), Milwaukee, Wis., praised God for the anniversaries in the teaching ministry of four WLHS teachers: **Gerhard Gilbert**, 40 years; **Mark Probst**, 25 years; **Steven Zellmer**, 25 years; **Karen Kilchemann**, 25 years.

Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis., held a thanksgiving worship service on Sept. 10 to celebrate **Rolf Westendorf's** 40 years in the pastoral ministry.

**Alfons Woldt** celebrated his 50th anniversary in the teaching ministry on Sept. 24 with a special service at Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis. Woldt is the WELS Special Ministries administrator.

**WW**—The **Ladies Aid Society of St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.**, celebrated its 100th anniversary on May 24. The society was first organized in 1900 to earn money for the new church built in 1901.

### Minnesota



Ten people joined the Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., faculty for the 2000-2001 academic year. From left: Paul Seager (religion and dormitory assistant), David Sellnow (philosophy, religion, and history), Earl Monday (English), Philip Leyrer (English), James Pope (religion and history), Jodi Hermanson (music), Kenneth Rupnow (math), John Mattek (religion, history, and sociology), John Boeder (campus pastor), and Timothy Westendorf (religion and dormitory assistant).



South Central



Immanuel, Fort Worth, Texas's, youth group helped Abiding Savior, Weslaco, Tex., with its vacation Bible school (VBS) program. The VBS had a high attendance of 29, only three of which were members of Abiding Savior. Immanuel's youth group also canvassed about 1,000 homes for Abiding Savior.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: DM—David Wendt; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Kevin Schultz; NW—Joel Lillo; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Mark Haefner; SC—Peter Snyder; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Elton Stroh.

THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

December 2000

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. 2 Peter 3:1-10 | 17. Dan. 11:2-20 |
| 2. 2 Pet. 3:11-18 | 18. Dan.         |
| 3. Jude 1-16      | 11:21-12:13      |
| 4. Jude 17-25     | 19. Psalm 139    |
| 5. Daniel 1       | 20. Ps. 140, 141 |
| 6. Dan. 2:1-30    | 21. Ps. 142, 143 |
| 7. Dan. 2:31-49   | 22. Ps. 144      |
| 8. Dan. 3         | 23. Ps. 145      |
| 9. Dan. 4         | 24. Ps. 146      |
| 10. Dan. 5        | 25. Ps. 147      |
| 11. Dan. 6        | 26. Ps. 148-150  |
| 12. Dan. 7        | 27. Revelation   |
| 13. Dan. 8        | 1:1-8            |
| 14. Dan. 9:1-19   | 28. Rev. 1:9-20  |
| 15. Dan. 9:20-27  | 29. Rev. 2:1-7   |
| 16. Dan.          | 30. Rev. 2:8-17  |
| 10:1-11:1         | 31. Rev. 2:18-29 |

CONGREGATION MISSION SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE

Three Months Ended June 30, 2000

	Total Subscription		Offerings Received			Percent of Subscrptn	Annldz Ave Per Commun
	Communicants 12/31/99	2000	Year to Date Projected	June Offerings	Six Months Offerings		
Arizona-California	17,808	\$1,053,434	\$478,940	\$85,216	\$517,427	108.0%	\$58.11
Dakota-Montana	9,121	451,567	180,457	32,872	191,504	106.1	41.99
Michigan	36,334	2,191,120	942,901	149,717	950,908	100.8	52.34
Minnesota	43,184	2,479,623	1,023,550	135,601	948,178	92.6	43.91
Nebraska	10,414	629,355	265,357	48,739	280,361	105.7	53.84
North Atlantic	4,116	360,014	168,246	29,716	177,649	105.6	86.32
Northern Wisconsin	60,948	2,684,766	1,144,644	174,521	1,158,070	101.2	38.00
Pacific Northwest	5,133	278,700	114,750	20,673	123,509	107.6	48.12
South Atlantic	7,060	536,797	248,587	48,468	256,239	103.1	72.59
South Central	4,710	481,855	217,415	43,797	244,845	112.6	103.97
Southeastern Wisconsin	57,211	3,430,462	1,395,854	230,531	1,322,436	94.7	46.23
Western Wisconsin	59,598	3,232,908	1,385,791	219,615	1,435,559	103.6	48.17
Total - This Year	315,637	17,810,601	7,566,492	1,219,466	7,606,685	100.5	48.20
Total - Last Year	315,431	17,389,497	7,354,968	1,344,099	7,445,039	101.2	47.21

CURRENT BUDGETARY FUND

Statement of activities  
Year ended June 30

	2000 Actual	1999 Actual	2000 Budget
<b>Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets</b>			
<b>Revenues:</b>			
Congregational Mission Offerings	\$17,581,715	\$17,249,146	\$17,651,000
Gifts and memorials	5,064,015	5,190,840	5,988,000
Bequest/planned giving	1,158,676	1,450,048	1,246,000
Tuition and fees	10,330,179	9,403,311	10,649,380
Other	156,239	261,316	171,000
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	10,000	-
Transfers-endwmt earnings	327,568	307,309	288,000
Transfers-gift funds	11,133,422	6,695,474	11,648,420
Transfers-continuing programs	3,698,585	4,651,443	3,858,400
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>49,450,399</b>	<b>45,218,887</b>	<b>51,500,200</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>			
Home Missions	9,842,276	9,903,968	10,273,600
World Missions	8,877,607	8,924,536	8,825,600
Ministerial Education	22,643,886	20,762,042	23,215,100
Parish Services	2,153,214	1,919,150	2,160,500
Administrative Services	5,373,730	5,907,995	6,335,400
System Wide	581,304	-	690,000
<b>Total expenditures</b>	<b>49,472,017</b>	<b>47,417,691</b>	<b>51,500,200</b>
<b>Changes in unrestricted net assets</b>	<b>(21,618)</b>	<b>(2,198,804)</b>	
<b>Changes in Temp Restricted Net Assets</b>			
Gifts and memorials	143,000	212,000	
Bequest/planned giving	6,000	5,000	
Change in value of trust agreements	44,800	222,600	
Satisfaction of restrictions	-	(10,000)	
<b>Change in temp restricted net assets</b>	<b>193,800</b>	<b>429,600</b>	
<b>Net assets - beginning of year</b>	<b>4,170,081</b>	<b>5,939,285</b>	
<b>Net assets - end of period</b>	<b>4,342,263</b>	<b>4,170,081</b>	

Statement of Financial Position

	June 30, 2000	June 30, 1999
<b>Assets:</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 325,642	\$ 657,306
Due from other funds	36,104	44,817
Accounts receivable-cash adv.	124,250	125,250
Other accounts receivable	274,139	188,982
Cash advances-schools	89,161	54,684
Contributions receivable	3,648,200	3,454,400
Mortgage note receivable	11,764	13,895
Allowance for doubtful accts	(45,100)	(92,000)
Prepaid expenses	3,700	50,489
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>4,467,860</b>	<b>4,497,823</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets:</b>		
Accounts payable	125,597	327,742
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>125,597</b>	<b>327,742</b>
Unrestricted	694,063	715,681
Temp restricted	3,648,400	3,454,400
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>4,342,463</b>	<b>4,170,081</b>
<b>Total liab. and net assets</b>	<b>4,468,060</b>	<b>4,497,823</b>

Mark Meissner, director of finance





**Who's answering the phone?**—In 40 percent of the nation's Protestant churches you won't get to talk to a person when you call on the phone, according to a recent Barna survey. And at 44 percent of those churches, you won't even reach an answering machine.

Barna Research Group found it took an average of 2.1 phone calls to reach a person at a church during weekday business hours.

Researchers also discovered that the larger the church was, the more likely someone answered the phone—even on the first call.

Data was based on telephone interviews of a nationwide random sample of 3,764 Protestant churches. The study had a margin of error of plus or minus two percent.

[Barna Research Group, Ltd., Aug. 22, 2000]

**Marriage for homosexuals approved in the Netherlands**—In September, the Netherlands became the second country to approve full marriage rights for homosexual couples. Denmark was the first.

If the measure receives approval from the upper house of parliament, it will go into effect in early 2001.

In the United States, only Vermont has approved marriage-like "civil union" benefits.

**Global religious leaders commit to peace**—Nearly 1,000 global religious leaders signed a "Commitment to World Peace" at the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders held in New York in August.

This statement calls for ending religious-based violence. It includes, among other things, promises to work for global peace, education, and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In one portion of the statement,

signers pledged to "appeal to all religious communities and ethnic and national groups to respect the right to freedom of religion, to seek reconciliation, and to engage in mutual forgiveness and healing."

Other business at the summit included talk of setting up a global religious advisory group to the United Nations, which hosted two days of the conference.

**How important is a strong family?**—According to a recent poll, 59 percent of Americans think the state of the family is "not very strong" or "weak and losing ground." But 92 percent believe we can go forward in this country if families and family values are strengthened.

Seventy-seven percent believe that strengthening families is more important than creating a cleaner environment. Sixty-four percent said strengthening families is also more important than increasing job opportunities.

The Wirthlin Worldwide poll surveyed 1,030 American adults and had a margin of error of plus or minus three percent.

**A response to federal funding for stem cell research**—The National Institute of Health (NIH) announced guidelines in August that allow federal funding for research with stem cells that have been removed from human embryos, killing the unborn child.

Stem cells form early in the gestation of a human being. Scientists have found that stem cells can be prompted to develop into specific types of cells found in different organs of the body.

New research has shown that these cells can be taken from sources such as bone marrow, placental tissue, umbilical cord blood, and even adult stem cells.

"When a loved one or friend struggles with a life threatening ailment it is not uncommon to become

desperate for a cure. In that desperation, however, a Christian will always take care not to compromise biblical principles and to always conduct himself in a manner that glorifies God," says Pastor Robert Fleischmann, national director of Christian Life Resources, a WELS organization proclaiming God's Word on the value of human life.

He adds, "We ask that agencies like NIH please afford the unborn their dignity and do nothing that would in any way lend value or credibility to the gruesome work of killing unborn children."

Scientific research has made recent breakthroughs that eliminate the need to harvest embryonic stem cells and the killing of unborn children.

[LifeWire, Aug. 24, 2000]

**Vatican document says salvation comes only through the Roman Catholic Church**—According to a 36-page document released in September, the Vatican said that the Roman Catholic Church is the only "instrument for the salvation

of all humanity."

"If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the church, have the fullness of the means of salvation," the Vatican said of non-Christian religions. It called non-Catholic Christian bodies "defective."

The "Declaration Dominus Iesus" also said, "With the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ, God has willed that the church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity."

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**

**Seelow, Jeffrey M.**, to Redeemer, Rice Lake, Wis.  
**Seifert, Robert P.**, to Trinity and Faith, Austin, Minn.

**Teachers**

**Brigowitz, Melody**, to Hope Preschool, West Chicago, Ill.  
**Borck, Hollie E.**, to St. Peter, Helenville, Wis.  
**Dziczek, Kathleen M.**, to Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.  
**Fleischmann, Kimberly**, to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.  
**Greanya, Charmaine I.**, to Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.  
**Hatzung, Deborah J.**, to Christ, North St. Paul, Minn.  
**Holter, Sharon J.**, to Siloah, Milwaukee  
**Kretz, Heather**, to Zion, Toledo, Ohio  
**Landvatter, Debra R.**, to St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.  
**Loewen, Cyndi S.**, to St. John, Newburg, Wis.  
**Marggraf, Margaret R.**, to Mt. Olive, Delano, Minn.  
**Miller, Jeannie**, to St. John, Red Wing, Minn.  
**Mittelstaedt, Cara L.**, to Lord and Savior, Crystal Lake, Ill.  
**Most, Lois A.**, to Ascension, Rochester, Minn.  
**Rabideau, Michelle M.**, to Cross of Glory Preschool, Washington, Mich.  
**Retzlaff, Sondra J.**, to First, Green Bay, Wis.  
**Rixe, Heidi A.**, to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.  
**Ruddat, Donna Jean D.**, to Christ, Pewaukee, Wis.  
**Whitney, Laura L.**, to Hope Preschool, West Chicago, Ill.  
**Yenish, Jeanine**, to Emanuel, West St. Paul, Minn.

**Staff minister**

**Bruns, Steven M.**, to Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga.

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The Synod Nominating Committee will meet at 7 PM, Jan. 3, 2001, at the synod administration building. The committee will propose three candidates for each position:

- Synodical Council member (teacher)
- Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors: three board members (layman, teacher, pastor)
- Board for Parish Services: chairman, board member (teacher), commission member for Evangelism (pastor) and Parish Schools (teacher)
- Board for Ministerial Education: chairman, two board members (one area Lutheran high school representative, one layman)
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary Board of Control chairman
- Luther Preparatory School Board of Control chairman
- Board for World Missions board member at large
- Board for World Missions administrative committee members: Latin America (pastor & teacher), Native American (pastor, layman), Africa (pastor, layman), Japan Europe Asia (pastor, teacher), Southeast Asia (pastor)
- Synod Board of Appeals: chairman, three pastors, three teachers, and three laymen.

The list of candidates nominated will be published in spring 2001. The delegates will elect one candidate for each position at the synod convention on July 30-Aug. 3, 2001. Any synod voting member is invited to send names with pertinent information by Dec. 15,

2000, to Pastor Douglas Bode, 1005 E Broadway St, Prairie du Chien WI 53821; phone/FAX, 608/326-4899.

**REQUEST FOR COLLOQUY**

John Weaver-Hudson, Birmingham, Mich., a pastor who was in the LCMS colloquy process, has now requested a colloquy for the purpose of serving in the pastoral ministry in WELS. Correspondence related to this request should be addressed to President John C. Seifert, Michigan District, 907 Mattes Dr, Midland MI 48642-3708.

**The synod administration building will be closed:** Nov. 23 & 24, Thanksgiving; Dec. 25, Christmas. Callers may leave voice mail messages, 414/256-3888.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

**Amherst, N.H.**—St. Paul (25). Nov. 5. Service, 9:30 AM and anniversary/Reformation service at 4 PM with dinner to follow. RSVP for dinner to Joel Petermann, 603/880-8574.

**Burlington, Iowa**—Our Savior (25). Nov. 12. Service, 10 AM with dinner to follow. RSVP for dinner to Daniel Cole, 319/752-7224.

**COMING EVENTS**

**Women's fall retreat**—Trinity, Minocqua, Wis. Nov. 4, 9 AM-3 PM. Cost, \$15. Sue, 715/356-7542.

**Lutheran choral festivals**—West regional at Great Plains LHS, Watertown, S.D. Pops concert, Nov. 10, 7:30 PM. Sacred concert, Nov. 12, 2 PM. East regional at Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis. Pops concert, Nov. 17, 7 PM. Sacred concert, Nov. 19, 2 PM. Jim Grasby, <jgrasby@kml.k12.wi.us>.

**Concerts**—Lutheran Chorale, Dec. 3. 3 and 7 PM, Atonement, Milwaukee. Mary Prange, 414/873-9105.

**Living nativity**—St. Paul, Muskego, Wis. Dec. 8-10, 6-9 PM. Presentation every 20 minutes with fellowship. Heidi Schuh, 262/679-4284.

**Concerts**—Lutheran Festival Chorus, "Celebrating 25 Years of Spreading God's Word Through Song." Dec. 10. 3 PM, Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.; 7:30 PM, Trinity, Crete, Ill. Marvin Koch, 847/437-8187.

**Women's retreat**—Jan. 12-14, 2001, Montverde, Fla. Cost: \$110. Judy Becker, 941/355-6591.

**LWMS 2001 WOW retreats—**

Jan. 19-21, Winter Park, Fla., area. Jennifer Rosenbaum, 321/453-1000.

Mar 2-3, Mishicot, Wis. Kathie Wendland, 920/682-5694.

Apr. 27-29, Williamsburg, Va. Lynnette Hupman, 703/361-1419.

May 4-6, Otter Crest, Ore. Char LaForest, 541/388-2405.

Sept. 21-22, Escanaba, Mich. Betty Warning, 715/484-4405.

Mid September, Larkspur, Colo. Tiphonie Figurski, 719/534-9697.

Oct. 5-6, Trego, Wis. Betty Ruffedt, 715/568-1248.

Oct. 12-13, Davenport, Iowa. Deonne Titus, 815/273-2780.

Nov. 9-10, Milwaukee, Wis. Sarah Malchow, 414/389-0010.

TBA, Toledo, Ohio. Ruth Kemerley, 419/365-5503.

TBA, Atlanta, Ga. Cherry Simpson, 334/607-0296.

**WELS Christian couples' retreat**—Feb. 16-18, 2001. Green Lake, Wis. Pam See, 262/691-1989.

**Women's retreat**—Pathways to Christ Retreat,

Mar. 16-18, 2001. Pioneer Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.

**Christian Woman Today retreat**—19th annual. Sponsored by Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis. March 23-25, 2001, at Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Brochures available in January. Kathie Mueller, 262-521-1159.

**Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women**—Mar. 30-Apr. 1, 2001. Radisson Hotel, Rochester, Minn. Bev, 507/931-1866 (AM only).

**Today's Christian Women's retreat**—Mar. 30-Apr. 1, 2001. Radisson Hotel, Toledo, Ohio. Brochures available in January. Laurie, 248/391-1133.

**WELS handbell festivals—**

Northeast region, Apr. 21-22, 2001, Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.

Southeast region, Apr. 21-22, 2001, Shoreland LHS, Somers, Wis.

Western region, Mar. 31-Apr. 1, 2001, Great Plains LHS, Watertown, S.D.

Michigan region, Apr. 28, 2001, St. Paul Lutheran School, Livonia, Mich.

Cheryl Diener, 715/258-7203.

**AVAILABLE**

**Schober recital organ**—2 manuals, full pedals, 2 large speakers, and headset. Free for the cost of shipping. Dee Carruthers, 603/434-4765.

**School desks**—one-piece desks in small, medium, and large sizes. Free if you pick them up. Contact principal at St. John, Watertown, Wis., 920/261-3756.

**NEEDED**

**Name for MLC Chapel**—The Martin Luther College (MLC) Board of Control requests that WELS members submit suggestions for a name for the MLC Chapel that is to be a gift from WELS as a result of the Forward in Christ thank offering. Please give the reason for the name(s) you submit. E-mail Theodore Olsen at <olsentb@mlc-wels.edu> by Dec. 1.

**Music**—easy tone chime/handbell musical resources for two-octave set of tone chimes. Joan, <jjames1@email.mot.com>.

**Information**—about a Windows program to track attendance, communion, mailing labels, etc. Larry Clark, 608/784-5324.

**SERVICE TIMES**

**Cottonwood, Ariz.**—Peace, service change effective Oct. 1. Sunday services, 8 and 10:30 AM. Fellowship, 9 AM. Sunday school and Bible class, 9:30 AM. 520/634-8727.

**Yuma, Ariz.**—Prince of Peace, 2500 S 8 Ave. Sunday service time for Dec.-Mar., 8:15 and 10:45 AM; Apr.-Nov., 9 AM. Alan W. Gumm, 520/726-8716.

**NAMES WANTED**

**Clarksville, Tenn.**—Also Fort Campbell and Hopkinsville, Ky, area. Matt Brown, 931/358-5949.

**San Antonio, Tex.**—Living Hope exploratory. Family Bible Night, Wednesdays, 7 PM. Christopher Goelzer, <cagoelzer@earthlink.net>.

**Smyrna/Murfreesboro/Nashville, Tenn.**—Abiding Faith, Smyrna, Tenn. Mark Kaesmeyer, 615/220-9528; <abifaith@bellsouth.net>.

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



# Love in Christ is strong and living

In the last verses of 1 Thessalonians, Paul encourages us to love because Christ first loved us.

Paul E. Zell

One cannot read any of Paul's epistles without marveling at the Lord's love for sinners. His first letter to the Thessalonians is no exception.

The apostle addresses his readers with "grace and peace." He then demonstrates the amazing love of the Savior who rescued us from God's righteous wrath, adopted us into God's family, protects us from our enemies, and promises to return and take us to be with him forever.

As he concludes his Spirit-breathed letter, Paul tenderly encourages a strong and living love for all because of that strong and living Christ.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28: ". . . for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. . ."

## Love one another

Start with your shepherds. These are men "who are over you in the Lord" (v. 12). While it is easy to complain about their faults, do not. Instead, "hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work" (v. 13). After all, your pastors admonish you for your sins when no one else dares to. They work hard with the gospel, preaching and teaching the priceless comfort of God's forgiveness.

Show a similar love, Paul insists, to fellow church members.

• Many God-given talents can be wasted in a congregation. Many saints may be unwilling to work or witness because they are fearful. Speak up. "Warn those

who are idle, encourage the timid" (v. 14a).

• "Help the weak, be patient with everyone" (v. 14b). Fellow church members are like you and me. They can be weak both physically and spiritually, and they can be slow to progress in Christian living. These people are opportunities for our love in Christ.

• "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong" (v. 15). Such simple instructions, but we need to hear them, don't we?

As we read these instructions, we learn that among our Christian brothers and sisters we have countless opportunities to "love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

## Love Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

It is God's will that his children "always" live a joyful life (v. 16), "continually" engage in prayer (v. 17), and "in all circumstances" be thankful (v. 18). Yet how can that happen consistently when every human heart is naturally unhappy and ungrateful?

Paul reminds his readers that this happens only "in Christ Jesus."

In Christ we have a new heart and mind. In Christ we know where we stand with our Father. In Christ we know that we have a Savior. In Christ we know that we have heaven. In Christ we know that in all things God is working for our good. What a pleasure to be loved in Christ and to return that love to our God!

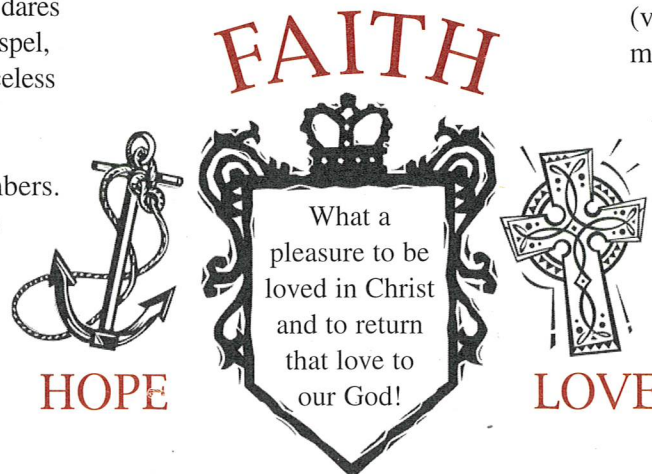
Because faith in Christ is fanned into flame by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, "do not put out the Spirit's fire" (v. 19). When someone proclaims God's Word to us, those prophecies must be tested. "Do not treat prophecies with contempt" (v. 20) by putting God's Word on a par with the teachings of men.

In the 17 concluding verses, this epistle contains 20 directives. Perhaps too many commands? An impossible burden that we must love others and our Lord so much? Not as the Lord graciously hears the prayer to "sanctify you through and through" (v. 23). Not as "the one who calls you is faithful" (v. 24a). Not as God plainly promises that "he will do it" (v. 24b).

Praise God, fellow saints! Along with faith and hope, love in Christ is strong and living!

Paul Zell is pastor at Messiah, Alpharetta, Georgia.

**For further study:** Read The People's Bible: *Thessalonians* (p. 57-69).







# Inter-Act

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

## Introduction

In 1944, a soldier fled to a cave on the island of Guam where he lived for 28 years, coming out only at night to scavenge for food. He was afraid that if he came out of hiding he would be executed. He didn't know that the war was over.

Have you ever felt that you were still at war with God? Have you ever wished that you could find a cave in which you could hide? Do you sometimes live in fear of what God or someone else might do to you? Part of the solution is to gain a greater appreciation of what it means to be reconciled with God.

## I. Text

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18,19.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup>that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

## II. Questions

1. To what is Paul referring when he says, "All this is from God" (verse 17)?
2. How did God take the initiative in our redemption (Romans 5:8 and John 3:16)?
3. The Greek word for reconcile comes from a word that means change. God did not change. He remains the just and holy God who must punish sin. We did not change. We are still sinners who deserve God's wrath. What, then, did change?
4. Reconcile means "to restore to friendship or harmony." What special comfort is there in knowing that God has reconciled us to himself? The world to himself?
5. Why does God not count our sins against us (Colossians 1:20)?
6. What does it mean that God has given us "the ministry of reconciliation"?

## IV. Prayer

Father, sometimes I live in fear of you. I know how wrong that is because you have told me that you are my dear Father in Christ Jesus. You loved me so much that while I was still lost in sin, you sent Jesus to die for me. Thank you for making peace with me through the death of your Son. You have united me with Christ and made me a new person in him. Help me to be reconciled with others. Keep me from bearing a grudge or from being angry. Fill me with the desire to spread the message of reconciliation. Hear me for the sake of Jesus, my precious Redeemer. Amen.

## III. Applications

1. When there is a dispute between management and labor, an arbitrator is sometimes hired to bring about a reconciliation. How is this similar to the reconciliation of which the Bible speaks? How is it different?
2. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs his followers to be reconciled with their adversaries (Matthew 5:24 and Luke 12:58). Why will believers always want to be reconciled with others?
3. Why are bearing a grudge, harboring evil thoughts, being angry, or being hateful incompatible for those who know they have been reconciled with God? What is the remedy for overcoming such thoughts?
4. "I just can't seem to get along with him. We must have a personality conflict." Is this a justifiable reason for not associating with someone? Explain.
5. "I know I have some rough edges, but that's the way I am. Don't expect me to change." Have you said that or heard someone say it? Is there a solution? If so, what is it?
6. Agree/disagree: Since it's impossible to be friends with everyone, it's better to concentrate on maintaining a close relationship with just a few people.
7. Before it came down, the Berlin Wall divided a church's property in half: the building in the East, the front yard in the West. Ironically, the church's name was The Church of the Reconciliation. Why would it be ironic for a church that proclaims the reconciliation to be split by divisions and factions?
8. If God has already reconciled the world to himself in Christ, why does he still command us to spread the message of reconciliation throughout the world?

Next month in our study of "-ion" words: sanctification.

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



# A woman's "right" to vote

John F. Brug

*In order to avoid exercising leadership over men contrary to "the order of creation," WELS women do not vote in church meetings. By what right then do women exercise leadership over men and vote in political elections?*

There is no biblical basis for claiming that such actions and participation are a God-given right. We would approach the question not from the point of view of right, but of how to best fulfill our duty to uphold the biblical principles.

The reason we do not have women voting in the governing bodies of the church is the scriptural command that women should not exercise authority over men, which is, as you say, based on an order established by God at creation. The voters' assembly in our form of church government is the highest authority of the congregation under the Word of God.

Concerning actions in society, WELS' statement on "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles" says, "Christians also accept the biblical role relationship principle for their life and work in the world. . . . We therefore strive to apply this role relationship principle to our life and work in the world. Scripture leaves a great deal to our conscientious Christian judgment as we live the role relationship principle in the world. In Christian love we will refrain from unduly binding the consciences of the brothers and sisters in our fellowship. Rather, we will encourage each other as we seek to apply this principle in the world" (Theses 20 and 21).

Since the principles of male and female roles are a good thing established by God at creation, we have no basis to limit their application only to religious matters. But since the Bible does not give us a set of rules and regulations specifying the application of these principles to work in the world, the church does not make such a set of rules. Rather, the church teaches the principles and gives its members help in applying the principles in their lives.

**The principle is not "don't vote." The principle is "don't exercise authority over men."**

Christian women may have many motives that would lead them to vote in national elections other than a desire to exercise authority over men—for example, to oppose the voice of women who are advocating abortion or other causes contrary to Scripture.

The principle is not "don't vote." The principle is "don't exercise authority over men." There might be out-of-the ordinary occasions, even in the church, where honoring the principle might allow or even require women to vote. In one such case, in a church that allowed women to vote, several women who normally didn't exercise that privilege voted when it came time to uphold the biblical principle and change the constitution to disallow their

voting. They correctly understood the principle and acted in a way that would uphold it.

When we encounter a situation in which we find it difficult to decide what to do, we can find help in determining the best course of action by stepping back and asking, "What is the principle?" and "How will my action defend it or undermine it?"

In the church we are working with Christians whom we can expect to work together in trust and love, according to the principles that God has established. We should be able to establish forms in governing the church that will show concern for the needs and desires of all the members without violating the principles of God's Word.

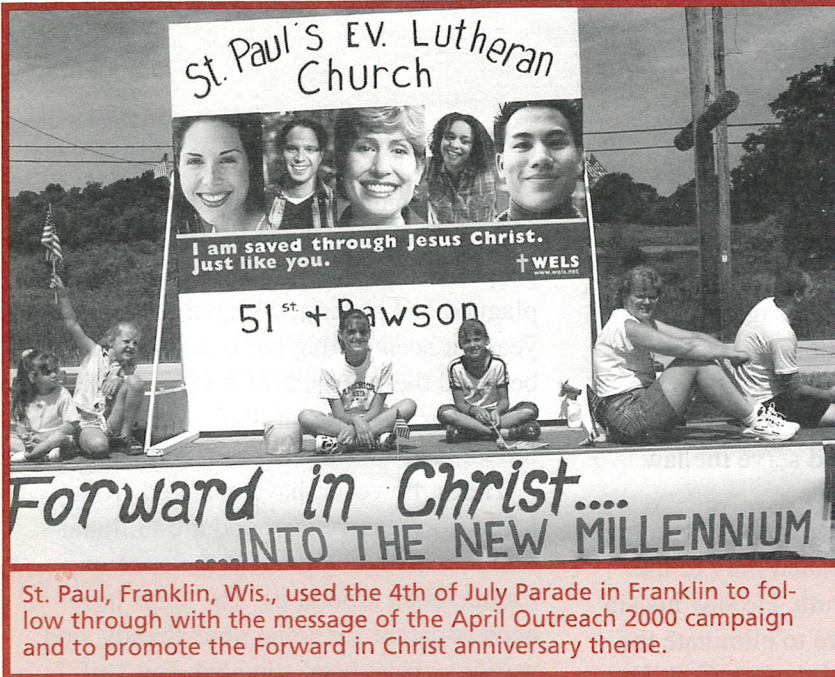
The church, however, cannot control the form and methods of the state. A Christian woman will have to conscientiously examine her aims and motives for political activity and voting and evaluate her decisions in the light of the biblical principles.

*Other practical problems in applying the biblical principles in society are discussed in Chapter 10 of the Bible class "Man and Woman in God's World," available from Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6022.*

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

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





St. Paul, Franklin, Wis., used the 4th of July Parade in Franklin to follow through with the message of the April Outreach 2000 campaign and to promote the Forward in Christ anniversary theme.

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.

“There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.” (Proverbs 21:30)

“When you look at America today, you see a country awash with saying yes. There is a famous statement that comes from the French student revolt of 1968 when French students scribbled on walls, ‘It is forbidden to forbid.’ That is the situation in America, awash with all sorts of people, saying yes to the weird. The taboos no longer are in place. America has lost the capacity to say no to evil, and that is a very dangerous place to be.” (Os Guinness, *Current Thoughts & Trends*, June 2000)

“Man is flying too fast for a world that is round. Soon he will catch up with himself in a great rear-end collision, and Man will never know that what hit Man from behind was Man.”

James Thurber

“Younger people in the United States are redefining religion as something more inner-directed or ‘spiritual,’ detaching themselves from traditional Christian concepts such as the belief in Jesus as the ‘unique Savior of mankind’ or the idea of moral absolutes.” (“America’s Ever-changing Religious Landscape” by Richard N. Ostling, Brookings. Review quoted in *The Futurist*, August-September 1999)

## What about WELS!

“Synod” means walking together. Although congregations operate independently of the administration and each other, they voluntarily walk with each other, subscribing to the doctrines of WELS.



WELS works in 35 different languages.

WELS has a Committee on Relief. Through extra-budgetary gifts the committee offers cash grants, food, clothing, and medical supplies to victims of tragedy.



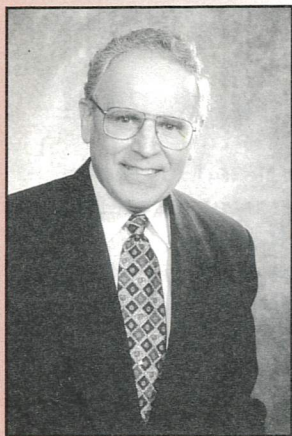
About 385 pastors work through the WELS Campus Ministry Committee to bring God’s word to 8,000 students on college campuses in the United States and Canada.

At least 21 WELS churches have services that are signed for the deaf.



You can hear Message from the Master on the WELS Web site. Check it out at <http://www.wels.net/sab/ra/message.html>





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

Whatever other differences have plagued and separated Lutherans over the years, it seemed that we at least knew and believed the full truth of S O S.

## S O S!

When you studied the teachings of the Lutheran Church, did you learn the S O S memory device to remember the main message of God's Word? S O S tells us about God's law: it Shows Our Sin. S O S tells us about God's gospel: it Shows Our Savior. All other teachings grow from and serve the law and the gospel. S O S.

Martin Luther struggled mightily in his early life because he related only to the first part of that twin truth. He saw his sin all too clearly. He strove to eliminate the sin and to make up for it before God. He never succeeded, and he knew it—knew he couldn't. God had to be angry with him. God was a severe taskmaster.

Only when Luther learned the true meaning of the gospel did he become happy and content in his faith. He saw his Savior in all his love and forgiveness. Luther's slate was made clean with God through Christ. Being right with God meant having Christ's righteousness count for him and Christ's death atone for his sins. Luther didn't owe God anything. Such was the undeserved love of God. God was his loving Father.

Only then, too, did Luther become the man whom God would use to lead the Reformation. Only then did he become the man whose name we perpetuate in the title of our churches.

If anything specific can be said to mark the influence of Martin Luther on the church, it was his understanding of the gospel for our lives. Revelation 14:6 is said to typify, if not specifically refer to, Luther: "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on earth. . . ."

We call ourselves Lutheran primarily because we share the comfort of that gospel. Whatever other differences have plagued and separated Lutherans over the years, it seemed that we at least knew and believed the full truth of S O S. We needed to see our sins, repent, find comfort in the Savior, and live a new life in Christ.

Times, however, have changed. Today, I find it necessary to sound a traditional S O S, a distress signal, at the state of Lutheranism around us. The signs have been apparent for some time already, and warnings have been sounded. But still, I hoped, we all knew the gospel.

Do we? An article on same-sex unions in *The Lutheran*, the official magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, raises considerable doubt. The subject matter is disturbing enough by itself, but it was the subhead that caught my attention and prompted this editorial. It reads, "ELCA synods struggle to define what the gospel means."

I am not writing to take issue with the article. This is not a polemic. I am writing to lament the confession made there. Do Lutherans corporately still struggle to define what the gospel means? Didn't Luther already define it most clearly? Isn't Scripture clear? I am writing to invoke your prayers that those who do struggle in defining the gospel may find exactly what Luther found, and clearly confess it.

S O S!

*Gary P. Baumler*





# Your Window to **WORSHIP** is on the Web

This is just a sampling of the wonderful articles and resources that you will find online from the Commission on Worship.

## The Wonder of Worship

- Two-Dimensional
- Approaching a Majestic God
- Informal Formality—Not Boring

## Sacraments

- Celebrate the Real Presence
- Communicating Baptism's Power

## Evangelism and Worship

- Strive for a Warm and Caring Atmosphere
- Liturgical Worship and Evangelism

## Worship Styles

- Liturgical Style of Lutheran Worship
- No Apology Needed

## Altar Guild

- Sample Altar Guild Mission Statement

## Hymns

- Hymns Nobody Likes

## Liturgy

- The Blessing
- The Sermon is a Cooperative Effort

## Organ

- Cherish Your Church Musicians
- The Little Girl Sat at the Piano

## Worship Planning

- Building New Church Buildings for Worship

## Survey and Suggestions

- Survey of Organists: Suggestions from Organists

## Showing Appreciation for Your Organist

- Church Musicians—a blessing
- Why is the organist playing THAT music before the service

## Instruments

- Timpani for the Asking

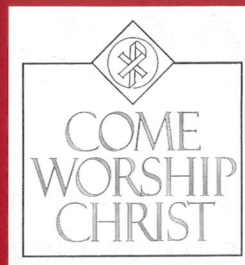
## Children and Worship

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Have any questions? Contact our office—we're happy to help!

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# A good cup of coffee

Many times it's when we no longer have the little things in life to enjoy that we realize just how important they are.

John L. Eich

I like coffee. My congregation has come to expect seeing me with my Bible in one hand and a cup of hot coffee in the other. The aroma fills the hallways of the church, and parishioners who stop by are always invited to have a cup with me. Coffee is one of those pleasures I enjoy.

## Noticing the blessings of life

One scene in Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town* takes place in a graveyard where ghosts try to comfort Emily, a young woman who recently died.

Emily longs for her life. She wants to be able to visit an ordinary, unimportant day in her life. She gets her wish and realizes just how much she had always taken for granted. Things that normally went unnoticed suddenly became important.

Eventually, it all became too much for her. "I didn't realize," she confesses mournfully, "all that was going on, and I never noticed. . . . Good-bye, world. Good-bye, Grover's Corners . . . Mama and Papa. Good-bye to clocks ticking . . . and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths . . . and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you."

It's a good story, but the truth is that the dead can't give thanks to God for the blessings of life. Living people do that. Well, living people could do that if we paused long enough to think about it.

## Giving thanks for the little things

The sad thing is that we often miss the little things, the simple things that add so much pleasure to our lives: a child's smile, the smell of laundry fresh off the clothesline, the song of a thrush at first light. Often it's too easy to focus on the sad things, the failures, or the disappointments of life. Other times we are looking for the big blessings so that we pass right by a boatload of enjoyable little blessings of life. We don't even notice. Sadly, like Emily, it's only after we no longer have them to enjoy that we realize just how important they were and how much "life" they added to our existence.

As I read again the illustration from Wilder's play, I was, of course, enjoying a good cup of coffee. I took a few moments to taste it with the same enthusiasm that Emily would have. You know, that was a really good cup of coffee.

Is coffee important? I suppose not, compared to some other things. But if you want to talk about the multitude of life's pleasantries and experiences, I'd count good coffee as one of those I'd miss if I couldn't have it.

I hope I can see people, experiences, and the other things around me with fresh eyes. I don't want to ignore or miss the enjoyable things God gives me.

Perhaps we all need to wake up and smell the coffee.



John Eich is pastor at Grace, Alma, Michigan.

