

# FORWARD IN CHRIST

August 2003

The Word from the WELS

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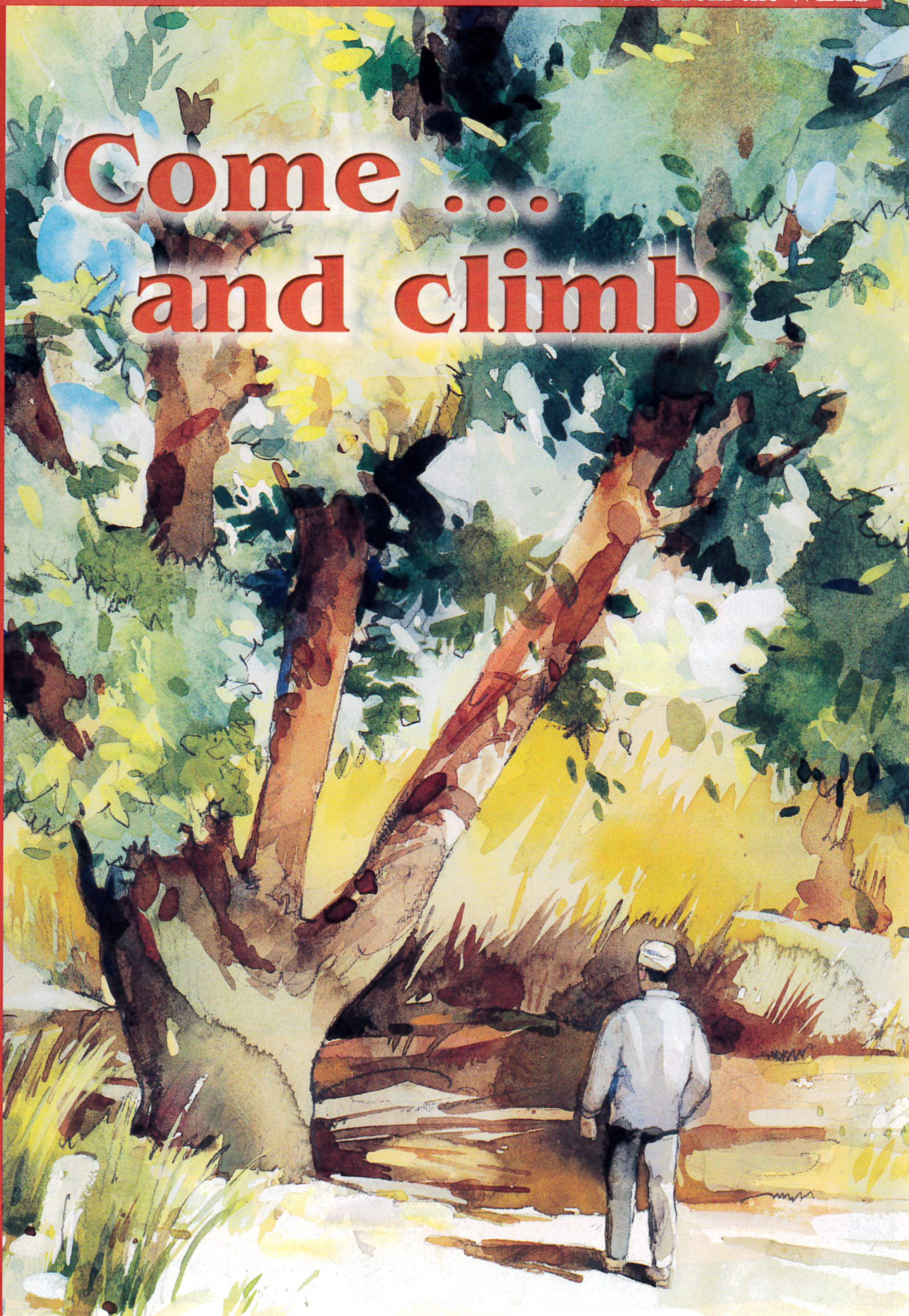


Does cultural  
discomfort  
prevent  
outreach?

Prayer in  
public schools

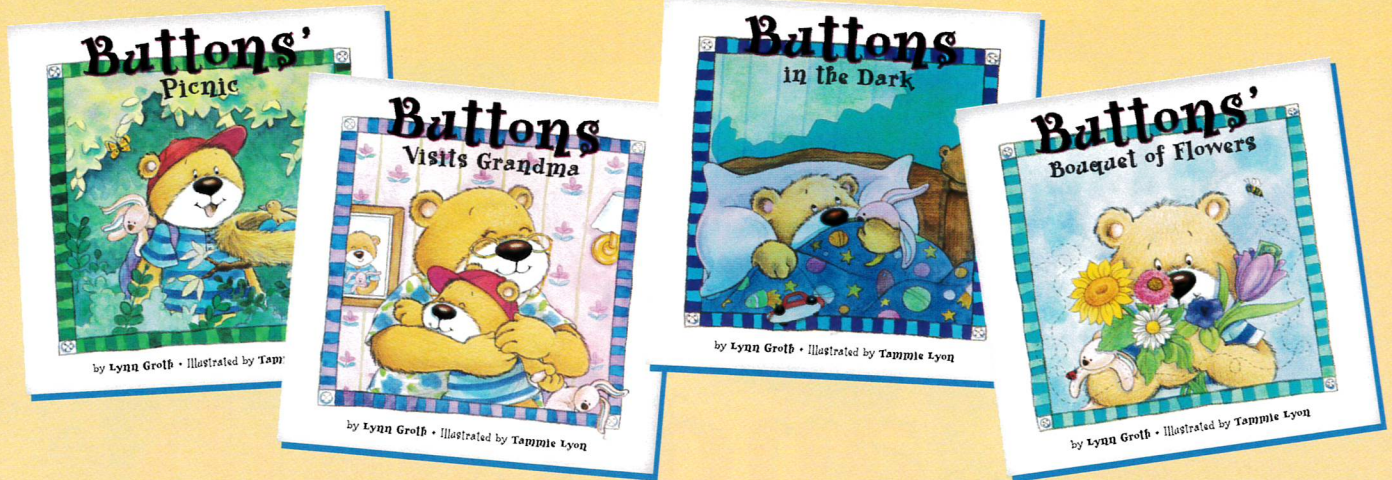
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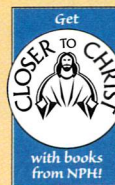
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# A perfect family

*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3*

Thomas A. Westra

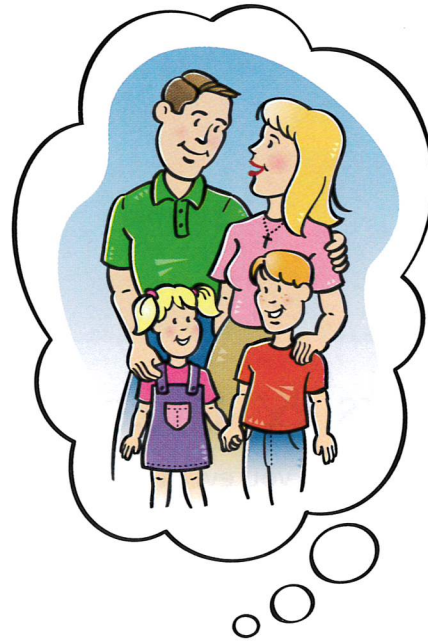
Advertisers like to use images of families to sell their products—happy families: mom and dad (in a deeply satisfying marriage), two kids (bright, athletic, well-adjusted), all smiling because they are driving in a certain model of minivan, or vacationing in a certain location, or whatever it is the advertiser is trying to sell us.

## Sin wrecks the perfect family

Sometimes we look at the ad and think, “Why doesn’t my family look like that?” We know it’s not the minivan because that’s the kind we drive, and it’s not the location because we’ve been there.

So why doesn’t our family look like the one in the ad? The answer, of course, is sin, and not just the wrong things we say or do (or the right things we fail to say or do). The problem is our sinful hearts—proud, stubborn, arrogant, slow to listen, quick to speak, rushing to criticize, unsympathetic, vengeful, cruel, self-centered hearts. We all have one. (Read Romans 3 if you don’t believe me.)

The result is that while real families are places where we experience some of the greatest joys and deepest satisfactions we will know on this side of heaven, they are also places where we will experience some of the most acute heartache and profound emptiness. The thoughts, words, and actions of our sinful hearts grieve us and those around us, even those we love the most.



## Jesus puts our families together again

It is only by God’s grace that a marriage, anyone’s marriage, survives. It is only by God’s grace that any parent and their teenager are still on speaking terms. God, in his grace, provided the solution to our dilemma. He did so at Jesus’ cross.

At the cross, in Jesus’ payment for our sins, I find peace for my troubled conscience. He has removed my sin from me. Here I find the strength to forgive those who hurt me, knowing that just as he died for my sin, he died for theirs. Here, at this most sacred place, a place I visit through Word and Sacrament, I can say those three most precious words in any family—no, not, “I love you”—but, “I forgive you.” By his work on the cross Jesus not only reconciled us to

his Father, but also gave us the means to be reconciled to one another.

So at the apostle’s urging, we make every effort to keep this unity of the Spirit in our families by staying close to our Savior and the message of his cross. We do this, together as a family, through regular worship in God’s house and through family devotions. Although we may not be like the family in the commercial, we are the perfect family, made perfect in God’s eyes by the blood of Jesus. By God’s grace our homes can be what God intended them to be: places where we are cared for and loved, where we share Christ’s love with one another, where we grow in his Word, and where we are encouraged and strengthened for the journey to our permanent home in heaven.

One more thought: We often call our church a “family”—and with good reason. About the time that this magazine is in the hands of its readers, representatives of our extended family will be meeting in convention. Pray that God would bless our “family,” that we “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”



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



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The sycamore  
tree is me.  
Ministering as  
the sycamore  
tree is the  
mission to  
which I've  
been called.

8

## bits & pieces



Have you ever thought about the role of a tree? Besides giving shade and being beautiful to look at, it can also give you a new perspective on life—if you climb it. In FIC's feature article, John Eich compares Christians to a sycamore tree because they can lift people up to see Jesus. Read "Sycamore tree Christians" (p. 8) to find out more.



Why are so many Lutheran churches moving out of the inner city? Rolfe Westendorf asks this and other hard questions as he explores the fate of the inner city church and the need for cross-cultural ministry to preserve it. Don't miss "Hard questions" (p. 18).



Have you checked out WELS news lately? This monthly department contains informational and inspirational stories about WELS, its congregations, and its members. This month look for . . .

- Pictures and assignments of our Martin Luther College graduates.
- A historical glimpse at Apacheland history.
- An inspirational story about high school teens from Wisconsin doing mission work in Tennessee.
- An article detailing Mission Partners, a new program that allows you to provide support for a specific WELS project.
- Recurring sections such as District news, Book nook, and Bible readings.

—JKW



# features

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Like the sycamore tree, our privilege is to lift people above the crowd so they might see the approaching Savior.

*John L. Eich*

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Dividing the synod into smaller groups allows more people to be involved in the work that we do together as a synod.

*Julie K. Wietzke*

INSIGHTS

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A meditation on the peace that my loving God and Savior gives to me.

*Eleonore Franzmann*

## 13 Answering why

An answer to a true "why" question is hard work.

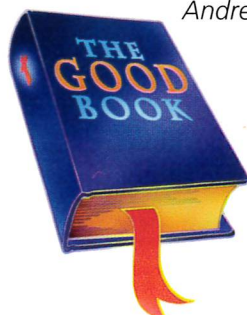
*Christopher J. Pluger*

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The Lord uses Christians to serve and to bring blessings to their fellow Christians in need.

*William R. Carter*



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*Richard D. Balge*

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## 17 It is my Father's world

No matter what others may think or say or do, my Father still has the final authority.

*Karl R. Gurgel*

INSIGHTS

## 18 Hard questions

Why are so many Lutheran churches moving out of the inner city?

*Rolfe F. Westendorf*

WHATEVER

## 20 Real comfort

Over a year has passed since my mother went home. I take comfort in knowing that she's in heaven and that one day I will be there with her.

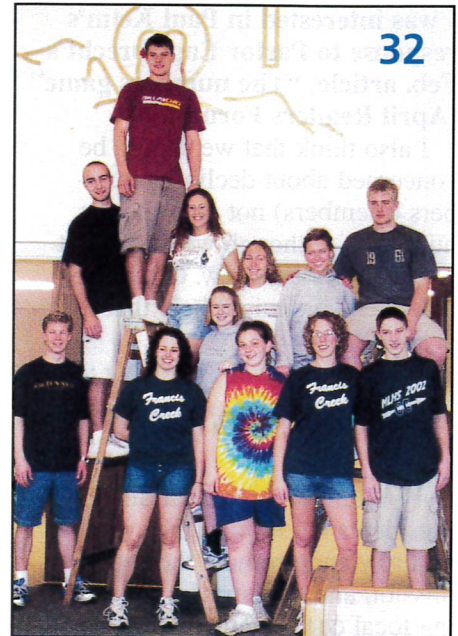
*Dan Lewig*

PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

## 40 It's God's love

God prepared Sandra and her family for the trial they were about to face.

*Andrew C. Schroer*



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**I was interested in Paul Kelm's response to Pastor Engelbrecht's Feb. article, "The numbers game" [April Readers Forum].**

I also think that we should be concerned about declining numbers (members) not only money numbers—although we know that is a real problem now. Of course, new members might help that problem too.

Lita Reif  
Kingston, Wisconsin

Gary Baumler wrote that district presidents are to fund the synod's ministry and promote the synod's mission and ministry by encouraging local congregations through their pastors ["Leaders among peers—assigning responsibility," May]. **However, pastors are not sharing with their entire congregation.** Is it *their* congregation or *God's* flock?

Walton A. Schuett  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

I have been following the excellent series by Prof. David Valleskey regarding the work of ministry ["My role in ministry," March–June]. These articles are meeting an important need in our church, namely to clear up misunderstandings regarding what God's Word says about this important matter.

**I take issue with one statement in the article, "Public Ministry" [May].** The statement was made that "... there is no direct command for the public ministry in the New Testament church." I have heard this statement before, based on an article by Prof. John Schaller, in the early 1900s. This, I believe, is not correct.

It is true that there is no word of institution for a particular form of the public ministry, but regarding the public ministry itself, we read in Titus 1:5: "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and

appoint elders in every town, as I directed you." There were different kinds of elders who carried out different aspects of the work of public ministry (1 Timothy 5:17), but there can be no question that they carried out the work of the public ministry of the church (Acts 20:17-28, 1 Peter 5:1-3).

In Titus 1:5 the word for "direct" in the Greek is a strong word, equal to a command. And the word "every" is all-inclusive. The argument that this is "descriptive but not prescriptive" can certainly not be used regarding Titus 1:5! This is a direct command for the institution of the public ministry in the New Testament church.

The other things that Prof. Valleskey mentions, the calling and training of the apostles directly by Christ and their regular practice of appointing elders, only serve to reinforce this. Thanks much for carrying the articles and for listening to different views.

Gary Haag  
Bulgaria

David Valleskey responds: *It would appear that this passage, along with the passages in 1 Timothy and Titus that list qualifications for "overseers" and "deacons," actually is descriptive rather than prescriptive. In saying "every town," Paul is talking about every town in Crete. Yet, by giving these directions, Paul is operating under the assumption that it is God's will that all flocks should have shepherds.*

**I want to thank and also commend Laurie Biedenbender for the fine article "To my husband on Father's Day" [June].** Some points she made "hit right between the eyes!" in areas where I could have done better. On the other hand, humbly speaking, I said to myself, "Yeah! I did that" or "We did do that together."

Her article reinforced my position that no day care center or babysitting

service can ever take the place of the father or parent in raising the children and being there for them.



Alan Ross  
Manitowoc, Wisconsin

As a retired confessional Lutheran pastor (Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod) whose WELS daughter shares *Forward in Christ* with me, **I was amused at Ken Cherney Jr., who has heard everything ["The 'Jesus Diet,'" April].** He referred to the anti-SUV campaign "What would Jesus drive?"

I've found the answer . . . from Scripture! He would drive . . . the moneychangers out of the temple!



Lee A. Butz  
Zionsville, Indiana

Send your letters to Readers forum, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398; FAX, 414/256-3862; <fic@sab.wels.net>. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ* magazine.

**THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS**  
SEPTEMBER 2003

1. 2 Sam. 15:1–16:14	15. Ps. 61, 62
2. 2 Sam. 16:15–17:29	16. Ps. 63
3. 2 Sam. 18:1–19:8	17. Ps. 64, 65
4. 2 Sam. 19:9–39	18. Ps. 66, 67
5. 2 Sam. 19:40–20:26	19. Ps. 68:1–18
6. 2 Sam. 21	20. Ps. 68:19–35
7. 2 Sam. 22	21. Ps. 69
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9. 2 Sam. 24	23. Ps. 72
10. Psalms 52–54	24. 1 Kings 1
11. Ps. 55	25. 1 Kgs. 2
12. Ps. 56, 57	26. 1 Kgs. 3, 4
13. Ps. 58, 59	27. 1 Kgs. 5
14. Ps. 60	28. 1 Kgs. 6:1–7:12
	29. 1 Kgs. 7:13–8:11
	30. 1 Kgs. 8:12–66





# Seeing both sides

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

In 1948 President Harry S. Truman called his chief economic advisors together for a read on the economy. None of them wanted to offer a rosy picture, but they didn't want to paint a gloom and doom scenario either. So each of them would begin by saying "Well, on the one hand, Mr. President . . ." and then cite some positive indicators. They would conclude by saying, "But on the other hand . . ." and refer to some downward indicators. After hearing a number of these "on the one hand . . . but on the other hand" reports, Truman slammed his fist on the table and said, "Would somebody please get me a one-armed economist!" Truman really wanted to see only one side of the issue.

When it comes to the matter of the Divine Call, it seems that there are too many "one-armed interpreters" among us these days—that is, too many who want to see only one side of the issue. As a district president who, unfortunately, has to deal with personnel problems in our congregations, it is clear that "one-armed interpreters" exist both among called workers and church members.

On the one hand, congregation members need to see the validity of the Divine Call. When the members of the early Christian church were called upon to replace Judas with someone who would share the gospel message of Christ, they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen" (Acts 1:24). They were convinced that the person whom the Lord wanted was already chosen by God, and that they would simply be God's instruments to bring Matthias into that ministry. It was not considered a hired position, but a Divine Call from God himself working through his church.

The members of our congregations also need to see that those who are called

through the church are not "hired" (and therefore not subject to "firing" at the whim of some), but "called" by God to be where they are to accomplish his purpose—whatever that purpose might be. It is the congregation's responsibility to accept its called worker—with all his strengths and all his weaknesses—as someone placed there by God. The congregation promises God to use its called worker's strengths for the good of the kingdom and to "hold up the prophet's hands" where there are weaknesses.

On the other hand, the Divine Call must never be viewed by the called worker as a divine right to do whatever he pleases or as an excuse for unfaithfulness or laziness. The statement, "I have a Divine Call," is not something to hide behind. It is a statement of privilege and responsibility. Every called worker should view his or her call as a wonderful privilege from God. Every called worker also should understand the responsibility that goes along with that privilege. It is a privilege that can be lost by the called worker's actions or lack of them. The called worker's cue comes from Jesus himself who said, "But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27). The called worker must have a servant's heart. He must realize that he serves, certainly and above all, the Lord who called him, but also the members of the calling body. It's never the other way around.

Let's pray to God that there be no "one-armed" interpreters of the Divine Call among either called workers or congregation members. The kingdom of God is served best when we see both sides!

*Doug Engelbrecht is pastor at Trinity, Neenah, Wisconsin.*


When it comes to the matter of the Divine Call, it seems that there are too many "one-armed interpreters" among us these days.



# Sycamore tree Christians

Like the sycamore tree, our privilege is to lift people above the crowd so they might see the approaching Savior and hear his sweet voice calling them.

John L. Eich



**Z**acchaeus in the sycamore tree. It was one of my favorite Bible stories as a kid. I laughed at this funny little man who had to climb a tree to see Jesus. Now, being older, I appreciate the difficulty that Zacchaeus may have had getting up into its branches. Now as a pastor trying to help this story become real for my congregation, I've wrapped myself in wonder thinking about how I would have felt if Jesus invited himself over to my home. I've praised the Holy Spirit for the transformation that occurred in Zacchaeus's heart after meeting Jesus.



# Where has God planted us so that others can climb above their crowds to see Jesus through us?

## The role of a tree

But oddly enough we often miss another role played out in this story, a role without which Zacchaeus may never have met Jesus. We forget about the role the sycamore tree played.

What would have happened if Zacchaeus hadn't climbed the tree that day? His song wouldn't be as much fun to sing! (You'll have to sing out loud to get the effect.)

Zacchaeus was a wee little man,  
A wee little man was he.

He started to climb in a  
sycamore tree

But he didn't . . .

And then . . . he went home.

(Not the greatest tune without Zacchaeus's upward journey, huh?)

At my church, we have a preschool and kindergarten. On the playground is an off-limits tree. A big tree. A tempting tree. It's as though God chose a playground and placed a tree in the middle and declared, "On every other structure you may climb, but on this tree you may not climb, for on the day when you do, you shall surely . . . be placed in time-out . . . or something." But something about that tree beckoned, "Come . . . and climb!" to every adventurer (that was until we cut the lower branches off).

What made it tough was that those who boldly had gone where no child was supposed to go told other children about the view. During recess they proudly (although quietly) boasted to those content with hopscotch: "I have been to the promised land and from it you can see up on the roof of the church!"

Every day I see wee little people looking up, peering through its branches in awe. I'm reminded that what they seek is a viewpoint so very different from their own. But without the tree, their quest is impossible.

## My role as a tree

That's when it hit me.

The sycamore tree is me. Ministering as the sycamore tree is the mission to which I've been called. Like the sycamore tree, my job is to lift people above the crowd so they might see the approaching Savior. The worship services I conduct, the Bible classes I teach, the counseling I do, the personal witness that I give, should help each person climb above the distractions that keep them from seeing Jesus.

How do I measure the success of my ministry? If it's only through numbers or pats on the back, the lost are seldom sought or saved. If what I want to hear is, "I enjoyed the sermon," "Great class!" or "Good pizza," then salvation will not likely come to the homes of those I serve. But—as a sycamore tree—I long to hear people say, "You've helped me see Jesus, and I know he sees me."

I remember a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary telling us the story about one sermon he had preached. He worked for hours putting his thoughts down. He had alliteration and illustrations. The sermon flowed. It moved. He preached it with great skill. He felt he had done a really great job that day. Then, after the service, an old gentleman approached him. Grasping his hand at the door and looking into his face, the young pastor expected a compliment about the sermon.

The old gentleman looked at him and simply said, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus."

My challenge is to be guided by the sycamore metaphor. Not as a formula for success or steps to a healthy ministry, but as a way to understand my role—our roles—in the kingdom.

Forgiveness is offered. Repentance is shouted. Salvation is delivered. It's the sycamore tree that provides the opportunity for this gospel miracle to occur. Like the sycamore tree, my privilege, our privilege, is to lift people above the crowd so they might see the approaching Savior and hear his sweet voice calling their name.

Where has God planted us so that others can climb above their crowds to see Jesus through us? How high have our branches reached to God in our personal worship, that others could climb higher to see their Savior?

If you are a Sunday school teacher, lift those little ones up so they can see Jesus personally. If you are a youth leader, work to create an environment where searching teens are given an opportunity to see Jesus. As a parent, lift your children so they can see Jesus from the branches of your life and words.

The Gospel writer Luke eventually tells the story of another tree. Zacchaeus's tree held a man living a lie, while on the second tree hangs a man dying for the truth. Zacchaeus climbed a tree to get the attention of Jesus. Jesus climbed a tree and died to get our attention.

Being a tree is easy.

Being a Savior is not.



*John Eich is pastor at Good Shepherd, Alma/St. Louis, Michigan.*



# Getting the JOB DONE

**Dividing the synod into smaller groups allows more people to be involved in the work that we do together as a synod.**

**Julie K. Wietzke**

**W**ELS isn't small. As an organization, it's actually quite large. We have 3,250 called workers ministering to more than 400,000 members in 1,250 congregations.\* (That's not even counting our world missions.)

When it comes to managing and supervising this organization, it's too much for one person. President Gurgel works hard, but he's only human. He can't be in all places at all times.

That's why the synod is divided into smaller groups called districts—it's the only practical way to get all the work done. Separating WELS into 12 districts also allows local ownership of the joint work that we do together as a synod.

## **Why districts are formed**

The first six districts were formed when four separate synods—Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Nebraska—merged into one (WELS) in 1917. As more congregations developed throughout the United States, new districts were formed—the last two in 1983. The names of the 12 districts suggest one reason why they developed—geographic proximity.

But that's not the only reason. "Grassroots" involvement is another important benefit. "It gives people the opportunity to serve and, as they serve, to grow in their personal spir-

itual lives," says Pastor John Guse, South Atlantic District president.

Different districts also can approach ministry in different ways, depending on the culture in that part of the country. "What's being done in Michigan doesn't always apply to us," says Guse. "We don't face a strong Catholic influence, but a strong Baptist influence. With all the different religious climates in the different parts of the country, districts can help address the issues that are pertinent to that area."

Separating the synod into districts also allows duties to be divided into manageable chunks. "The synod is too big both in area and in numbers for any one person to provide the service that each congregation requires," says Pastor Herb Prah, Western Wisconsin District president. Personal connections that are nearly impossible at a synodical level can also be more easily accomplished.

## **How a district works**

Even though each district has its own "personality," the setup of the districts is identical. Each district has a district president, first and second vice presidents, and a secretary. District Parish Services boards, committees, and commissions provide congregations with materials and aid in worship, evangelism, stewardship, and education. Each district also has

its own mission board to identify areas for outreach. All these district groups are in close contact with synodical boards and commissions. This allows the district boards to share ideas, maintain common goals, and have a say in synodical direction.

Because districts can be either too spread out or too large, they are divided into smaller groups to make them more manageable. For example, the Western Wisconsin District is divided into six conferences. Those conferences are broken down into 15 circuits. Overall WELS has 48 conferences and 129 circuits. Constitutionally, up to 15 congregations can be included in a circuit.

Each district meets in convention every other year. Here pastors, male teachers, and one male layperson from each congregation study God's Word, elect district officers and board members, hear reports on synodical and district activities, vote on issues, make recommendations to the synod, and enjoy fellowship. When the district doesn't meet, district representatives gather for a synod convention.

Different groups of people (teachers, pastors, other called workers, or a mix) within conferences and circuits meet regularly throughout the year for Bible study, education, encouragement, and fellowship.



## Who keeps a district running

Many people are needed to keep a district running smoothly. Each district president works within his district to

- oversee doctrine and practice,
- keep congregation members and called workers informed about synodical goals and programs,
- work with congregations when a called worker is needed,
- maintain as many personal connections as possible, and
- counsel (when necessary).

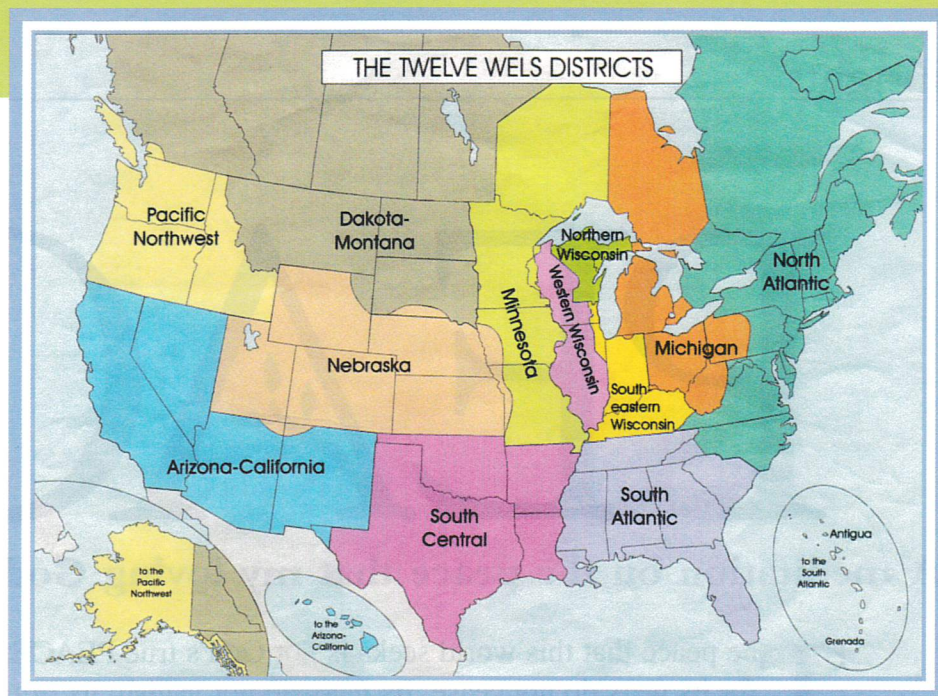
All this can keep a district president (who also ministers at his own congregation) going 24 hours a day. That's why each of the 129 circuits elects a circuit pastor to help out.

"The district president and the circuit pastors are a close-knit team," says Prahl. "They're our right-hand men. They can keep us informed and can deal with the issues when the issues are small and local."

Pastor Thomas Fricke, one of 15 circuit pastors in the Western Wisconsin District, sees a circuit pastor's duty as threefold:

- Represent the synod in your circuit. This means promoting and sharing WELS' programs and ministry.
- Act as the pastors' pastor. Once a month, Fricke's circuit holds meetings in which pastors gather for worship, Bible study, and fellowship so they can grow in the Word. These same pastors and their families also gather for periodic fellowship activities.
- Serve as the first contact level beyond the congregation if problems occur.

"Even though at times there are problems, I like doing it," says Fricke. "What's nice about it is that you do get to know people beyond the folks in your own congregation. . . . There is something that is refreshing about



having the opportunity to [share the message of Christ] beyond the congregation that you're serving simply because it grants you a new perspective. You're able to see things in other congregations and know that not everybody does things the same way."

## Why we work together as a synod

Even though each district functions independently, they all work—and walk—together.

"Together as a synod, we can accomplish what each congregation and what each district cannot do separately," says Guse. This includes educating our called workers; reaching out with the gospel worldwide; and developing and providing specialized resources and training for nurture, outreach, and education.

The 12 district presidents—along with the synod president and two vice presidents—meet regularly as the Conference of Presidents (COP) so they can coordinate the work that each district does and make sure that doctrine and practice are maintained. "Otherwise you have 12 little synods," says Prahl.

Even though each district is different, we all have a single purpose.

Says Guse, "When you get right down to it, it's still the Word of God

**The 12 districts:** Arizona-California, Dakota-Montana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Atlantic, Northern Wisconsin, Pacific Northwest, South Atlantic, South Central, Southeastern Wisconsin, Western Wisconsin

**Conferences:** 48

**Circuits:** 129

**Most (baptized) members:**

Northern Wisconsin (76,152)\*

**Fewest members:** North Atlantic (5,973)\*

**Oldest:** Northern Wisconsin, Southeastern Wisconsin, Western Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska (1917)

**Youngest:** South Central and North Atlantic (1983)

**Smallest (geographically):** Northern Wisconsin

that brings us together. . . . We are the synod. We are indeed walking together. We have one work and one goal in mind—one Lord, one faith, one birth. Even though we have different cultures, it's still sin and grace. . . . It's still the joy of salvation and the joy of sharing Jesus with others."

*Julie Wietzke is a senior communications assistant for Forward in Christ magazine and WELS Communication Services.*

\*From the 2002 Statistical Report



Eleonore Franzmann

# PEACE

**A meditation on the peace that my loving God and Savior gives to me.**

**T**he peace that this world seeks is not God's true PEACE. The world seeks in vain, for its wars do not cease. Its fears do not vanish; its troubles persist. Its sin and its lovelessness ever exist. The world seeks for peace through its wisdom and lies, whose actions confirm that God's laws it defies: its hearts filled with envy, with lust, and with pride that know not God's love and thus loveless abide. The world seeks for peace, but its search is in vain, for since Adam's fall it is Satan's domain. But Satan can't hold us. God grants us release. Our Savior has promised, "I give you true PEACE."

For Jesus descended to this wicked earth, and Satan recoiled when Mary gave birth. "All glory to God, to man PEACE and goodwill." The angelic message resounds clearly still.

We're clothed with Christ's goodness, our sins are erased, for God gave his Son, and on him our guilt placed. The PEACE that man lost in the first paradise through Christ is regained—the cruel cross was the price.

Divinely exalted, Christ now intercedes for us living on earth and fills all our needs. Thus we are serene even now in this life, secure in God's shelter, we walk amidst strife. Our dear Father watches. His strength will sustain and guide his dear children through trials and pain. On earth as mere pilgrims, we're thus not obsessed by triumphs or failures. God deems what is best.

We long for our true home where troubles will cease. We'll live with our Savior in heavenly PEACE. 'Twas he who prepared it, and now he awaits his blood-redeemed souls at the heavenly gates.

Then sing fervent praises, redeemed Christendom, to Jesus, our Savior, who PEACE for us won; and earnestly pray that each guilt-ridden soul who too seeks this PEACE may with us reach this goal.

*Eleonore Franzmann is a member of Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.*

Editor's note: The synod theme for 2003-05 is "Peace through Jesus: Know it. Live it. Share it." This meditation reflects that theme. For a logo slick or banner instructions for this theme, go to <[www.shopWELS.net](http://www.shopWELS.net)> or call 1-800-662-6022.

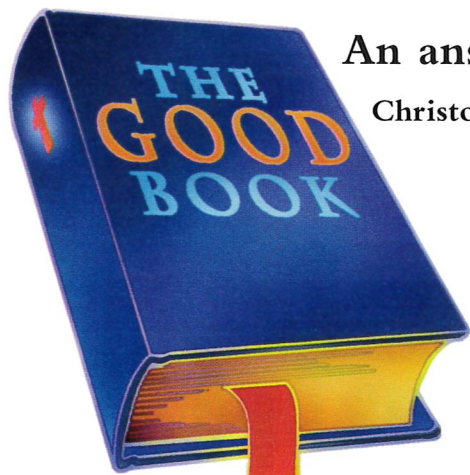
**PEACE**  
through  
**Jesus** †  
*Know it. Live it. Share it.*



# Answering why

An answer to a true “why” question is hard work.

Christopher J. Pluger



A friend of mine recently asked me, “Why do people not like to answer the question ‘Why?’” After musing for a second on the irony of the question, I came to the conclusion that people shy away from “Why?” because you have to know why. And not many people know why anymore.

**A true “why” question delves deeply into the substance of things.** “Why is *Arlington Road* a good movie?” cannot be answered by a simple, one-word reply. To answer that question, a person might have to start with a definitional explanation (“What is a good movie?”) and then explain that *Arlington Road* is suspenseful without being nerve-racking, that it makes the viewer care about the fate of the main characters and hope that the bad guys lose, that it is fast-paced but uses “slow” scenes effectively, and that the ending has just the sort of twist that a Hollywood-jaded audience is looking for.

But an answer to a true “why” question is hard work. You have

to support your answer. You can’t defer to science (look it up!), nor can you throw up your hands in despair (who knows!?). Someone might even disagree with your answer or attack the question itself (“Well, I think *Arlington Road* is a horrible movie!”). Then what? Then you have to defend your belief with an actual answer.

**Harder than defending your Friday night movie choice is defending your religious beliefs.**

Even if you haven’t yet had to defend (or even explain) your religious beliefs to an unbeliever, a skeptic, or a doubting student (or even yourself), I can almost guarantee that someday you will. Be ready for it!

The problem lies in this: “Why is the Bible a good book?” is not the same kind of question as “Why is *Arlington Road* a good movie?” See, in many ways, the Bible is not a very good book. It’s too long. It has a big cast of characters, some of whom are pretty hard to sympathize with. It teaches some inconvenient things, like selling all you have to give to the poor, loving your neighbor as yourself, and Jesus as the only way to heaven. Then it promises some pretty intolerant punishments for those who do not believe and do these inconvenient things.

**But the answer is quite simple. The Bible is a good book because the Bible is a true book.**

I can read all of the good books and watch all of the great movies that my friends recommend. I can be entertained, amused, scared, absorbed, engrossed, grossed, informed, afflicted, affected; yes, even inspired, motivated, or encouraged. But if that movie isn’t true, then it doesn’t really matter. Even if it’s “based on a true story,” I still know that the most poignant, dramatic parts are probably the product of a director’s keen eye or the figment of a scriptwriter’s imagination. I can be entertained, but I can’t really be changed.

Thank God that the Bible really is true—not in the sense that it is “based on a true story” or that it is “true because it works for you,” but really true because it means what it says about the existence of God, the condition of people, the life and work of Jesus, and everything else it talks about. Thank God that our religious beliefs don’t rest on our subjective feelings about “good” and “bad.” Thank God that the Word made flesh restored our peace with God and made us heirs of eternal life. Thank God that Jesus’ empty tomb—the truest, most wonderful news ever told—is also the answer to our most searching “Why?”



*Christopher Pluger, a member at Grace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee.*



**A**s a licensed emergency medical technician and a first responder for a volunteer fire department, I helped deal with the huge Quad/Graphics fire on July 12, 2002. Each article in this series will focus on a phrase or two that sticks in my mind as I recall what happened.

# Your assistance is requested for mutual aid

William R. Carter

**The Lord uses Christians to serve and to bring blessings to their fellow Christians in need.**

**T**he Brownsville Fire Company requests your assistance for mutual aid.”

That’s the phrase our county dispatchers use on the radio when a fire department needs more manpower or equipment to fight a fire.

“Mutual aid” is an important part of what makes rural firefighting work. Departments make promises—either verbal or written—to make their resources available to other departments when needed. Besides the obvious benefit of needed help at bigger fires, it also means that small departments with limited budgets don’t need to purchase every imaginable piece of fire equipment.

## **Working together at the Quad/Graphics fire**

The first call for mutual aid for the Quad/Graphics fire went out even before we got to the scene. From two miles away, our assistant chief, Paul Hoff, could tell that we were going to need lots of help and asked the

dispatcher to page out all available equipment and manpower from the three closest departments—Lomira, Knowles, and Theresa, Wis.

**The Lord who gave his life for you also gives you the ability and the opportunities to show love to others.**

By night’s end, that call had gone out to 22 different departments from three counties. Several were asked to bring an engine and manpower. Departments that had aerial ladder trucks were asked to bring them. The rest brought tank trucks to help shuttle water to the scene. Several other departments covered territory for departments that were on the scene. Because we didn’t know how many victims to expect, we also asked for nine ambulances and two medical helicopters to stand by at the scene.

One of the most vivid memories I have of that night is seeing the lights of all those emergency vehicles—lighting the night almost more than the fire itself—and knowing that each one brought a crew of volunteers that was ready to do whatever we needed.

That willingness to help was evident two days later when our commanders met with other chiefs from Dodge and Fond du Lac counties to ask them to continue sending crews to man the hose lines needed to monitor the fire and put out any hot spots that would be uncovered by the heavy equipment removing debris. By the end of the week, departments from other parts of the state were contacting us to ask how they could help.

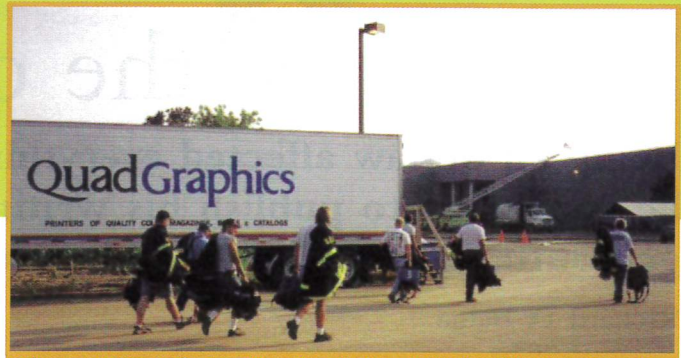
By the time we left the scene, 440 people from 55 different departments and a dozen other agencies had provided mutual aid. That doesn’t include the help we received from Quad/Graphics employees and many businesses, organizations, and individuals who provided food, water, and other



I was not the only WELS member involved at the Quad/Graphics fire. Seventeen other firefighters and first responders, including the two incident commanders, Brownsville Chief Jeff Bloohm and Assistant Chief Paul Hoff, are members at St. Paul. Sixteen other members of my congregation, including my wife, Claudine, belong to the fire auxiliaries and other service groups who helped in the food tent. At least 60 more people from other local congregations were on the scene.

All the departments that sent personnel come from areas with heavy WELS populations. If you're aware of any firefighters, first responders, EMTs, paramedics, law enforcement personnel, or auxiliary members who helped with the fire, contact me at <welsquad@hotmail.com>.

I am also interested in knowing how many WELS members serve their communities as members of their local fire department or EMS units. Contact me at <welsfire@hotmail.com> or <welsems@hotmail.com>.



The number of people who helped deal with the Quad/Graphics fire was substantial—440 people from 55 different departments and a dozen other agencies.

seriously injured child in the back of an ambulance.

Most often, though, it will be less dramatic, but no less im-

ports and abilities to develop materials or assist congregations in setting up programs. *Christian Worship* and the *Christ-Light*® curriculum and many other materials we use for worship, Bible study, Christian education, evangelism, and other special ministries are among the blessings we have through that kind of mutual aid.

God also blesses those who provide help to their fellow Christians. Maybe those blessings aren't so easy to see, but consider these: the joy of working together with fellow Christians, the privilege of watching the Lord's will get accomplished in someone's life, and the experience of seeing what happens when faith gets put into action.

God certainly knew what he was doing when he gathered us into congregations and a synod and told us to love each other. He knew about the blessings he would bring both for those who are helped and those who help. Let's look for more opportunities to provide mutual aid to each other. And whether we're on the giving end or the receiving end, let's remember to say thanks to the Lord a whole lot more than we already do for the blessing of the fellowship of believers.

Billy Carter is pastor at St. Paul, Brownsville, Wisconsin.



equipment or services. Perhaps the most aid came from the members of our own ladies' auxiliaries, who spent countless hours serving—and sometimes even preparing—the food for everyone at the scene.

Hoff tells me he said "Thank you" more that week than any other time in his life.

### Helping fellow Christians

In many ways, the fellowship of believers works a lot like a mutual aid agreement. You probably haven't ever signed any formal agreements to provide help to other Christians. I know I never have. What happens instead is that the Lord who gave his life for you also gives you the ability and the opportunities to show love to others.

Sometimes it will be an emergency where you need to respond as quickly as volunteer firefighters or EMTs respond to their pagers. Sometimes it will involve work as physically demanding as lugging hundreds of feet of hose or aiming that hose at an intense blaze. Sometimes it will be as emotionally draining as working on a

portant: a time you can encourage someone who is hurting, comfort someone who is grieving, or spend a few minutes with someone who is lonely. Sometimes you can serve just by standing by, being available in case you are needed. In situations like these, the Lord uses Christians to bring blessingsto their fellow Christians in need.

### Walking together as a family of believers

Our synod also works like a mutual aid agreement. It's implied in the name. "Synod" means "walking together." Since 1850, our congregations have agreed to make their resources available to each other so we can work together, especially on missions and worker training. Although each congregation certainly could develop its own worker-training curriculum and set up the administrative structure needed to send missionaries to foreign countries, it works much better to "walk together" with pooled resources.

Over the years, we as a synod have also called men with specialized inter-





# Luther: the outlaw

**Being an outlaw affected everything that Luther did, but he continued to publish his writings and support the civil government as well as the church.**

Richard D. Balge

**O**n Maundy Thursday 1521, the name of Martin Luther was solemnly read in St. Peter's at Rome, along with all others who had been excommunicated since the previous reading. Leo X's papal bull excommunicating Luther had been issued in 1520. By church law and tradition the next step would be the ban of the Holy Roman Empire, declaring him an outlaw.

## Declared an outlaw

On April 18, 1521, the excommunicated professor appeared before the Imperial Diet (the Empire's legislative body), meeting that year at Worms. Luther hoped for a theological debate but was simply commanded to retract the books and pamphlets he had published. When he refused to do so, he was placed under the imperial ban as a notorious heretic. In the view of Emperor Charles V, Luther was even more dangerous to the civil than to the ecclesiastical power. The Diet issued an edict forbidding anyone to harbor him, condemning his followers, and commanding that his books be eradicated. He was now an outlaw, no longer protected by imperial authority.

As Luther was returning from the Diet of Worms, he was "kidnapped" and taken to the Wartburg Castle. In fact, Elector Frederick had arranged to keep him in protective custody. Frederick made it a point not to know exactly where his illustrious subject was, so that he could honestly say he did not know Luther's whereabouts.

## Living outside the law

The ban was something Luther had to keep in mind for the rest of his life. As he accepted invitations to preach or lecture, attended meetings, and continued to publish his writings, the ban was a factor to be considered. When he contemplated marriage, he had to weigh what his outlaw status could mean to a wife and family.

Luther never again left Saxony. Three prince electors in succession protected him, and Emperor Charles V was never in a position to enforce the ban. As king of Spain he needed the support of the Saxon princes during a series of wars with France. As emperor of Germany he needed them whenever Turkish invasion threatened. He could not hope for their help unless he tacitly accepted the continued existence and activity of Luther. Between the Diet of Worms in 1521 and the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, Charles never set foot in Germany.

It is ironic that the man who understood and clearly taught the doctrine of God's two kingdoms—civil government and the church—never got a public hearing before a council or even a church committee. Lutheran doctrine did get a hearing at the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1530, but Luther could not be present (because he was an outlaw).

As a law-abiding citizen, Luther refused the early offer of German knights to lend their swords and

lances to the gospel cause. He condemned the Peasant Revolt (1524-25) even while he blamed the princes and nobles for their injustices. He endorsed the Emperor's campaign against the invading Turks, paid a special tax to support the effort, and wrote *An Appeal for Prayer against the Turks*. Not as a political ideologue but as a concerned citizen, he offered constructive criticism and counsel to his sovereign and to the city fathers of Wittenberg. He did these loyal and useful things, and many more, during the 25 years when his status in the Holy Roman Empire was "outlaw."

*Richard Balge, a member of Calvary, Thiensville, Wisconsin, is a professor emeritus at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.*

## Motion picture *Luther* to be released soon

The motion picture *Luther* will be released in theaters across the United States on Sept. 26. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans—with input from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and WELS—has been a major player in the development of this mainstream movie with a Christian message. For more information, check out <[www.lutherthemovie.com](http://www.lutherthemovie.com)>.



# It is my Father's world

I'll admit it. I grew up rather isolated. Our hometown was a small, Midwestern, farming community. We had one policeman, part-time. He could often be found sitting on the railing by the barber-shop, shooting the breeze with whoever happened to be passing by. I never saw Billy use his club. It was a law-abiding community.

As I remember the congregation my father served, the members were wonderful people. They cared for and about our family. I've never tasted better chicken dinners, cooked over a hot stove by a "farmwife," who had just come home from the hospital with her newly baptized baby. It was a hardworking, caring community.

My father's world, at least as I nostalgically remember it, was candy-coated. The local grocers often included a small sack of candy in the groceries they bagged for us. The Word seemed sugarcoated, too. People seem to be listening to it and living their lives according to it. At least I was not aware of any major problems people were having with their lives. It was a community that respected the Word and those who brought it.

But is it, or isn't it, still my father's world? Admit it, it isn't. Maybe it never was the way my boyish memory painted it. It surely isn't today! Terrorists' bombs explode, killing unsuspecting strangers. People wear facemasks, afraid of contracting SARS.

It seems like more people are in it just for themselves. Private property is trespassed or taken. The boundaries God sets for people in his Word are ignored or ridiculed. Political correctness, in some countries, even prohibits labeling sin as sin. (You can't say homosexuality is wrong in Sweden.) And so, with little

awareness of sin, correspondingly there is little assurance of forgiveness either.

It doesn't seem to be my father's world. Does it to you? Yet it is my Father's world, my heavenly Father's! No matter what others may think or say or do, he's still the final authority. No matter what others may think or say about you or me, his children, he loves us and cares for us. It is my Father's world.

But there's more, much more than his care for you and me, here and now. My Father's world extends way beyond the visible universe; it embraces heaven itself. By the power of his Word in my life—yours, too—his Spirit has brought us to trust the perfect merit of his Son, our Savior. The final chapter, far better than the first chapter I may faultily recall, is an eternity spent with our God in heaven.

It is my Father's world. You and I need that assurance each day as we struggle with our own imperfections in this imperfect world. It is my Father's world. We need that constant assurance as we labor together to proclaim the news about the world's Savior to people all around us. We can be confident of our message both for ourselves and those who hear us. It is my Father's world!



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

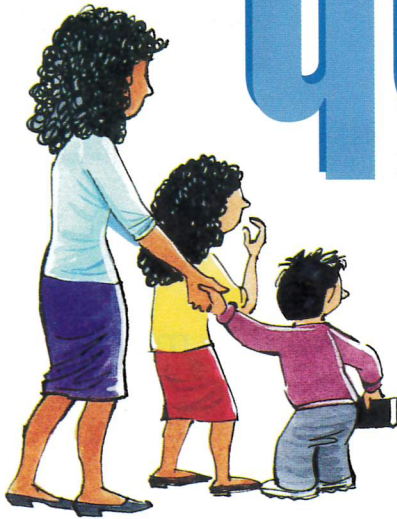
It is my  
Father's  
world, my  
heavenly  
Father's! No  
matter what  
others may  
think or say  
or do, he's  
still the final  
authority.



Why are so many  
Lutheran churches  
moving out of  
the inner city?

# Difficult questions

Rolfe F. Westendorf



“Why have so many Lutheran churches moved out of the inner city?”

That’s a hard question. It’s a painful one for those who no longer attend the church that was their worship home for many years, even many generations. They hated to leave the place that reminded them of baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals—where they sang in the choir, where they decorated the church for Christmas and Easter. They sincerely wish that they could have stayed at that church until the end of their earthly lives. But they moved. They left their old church home behind. Sometimes they joined other churches. Sometimes they got together with other members of the old church and built a new and beautiful house of worship. After a few years, the old church became a nostalgic memory.

## Why do people leave the inner city church?

Why did they leave their old church? Obviously, because they moved. It was too hard to get back to the old church home, especially when classes and rehearsals and meetings required multiple trips to church during a normal week.

## Why spend thousands to send missionaries to people on other continents, while we ignore the people who can hear our church bells every Sunday?

Then there’s “the neighborhood.” People are getting hurt and robbed, even killed, in the neighborhood of the old church. Of course, those things happen in other neighborhoods too. But perception is everything, and the perception is that the old neighborhood isn’t safe any more. Even if the old members think the old church is worth the risk, their children don’t. So they stop coming back to avoid the repeated nagging of their children.

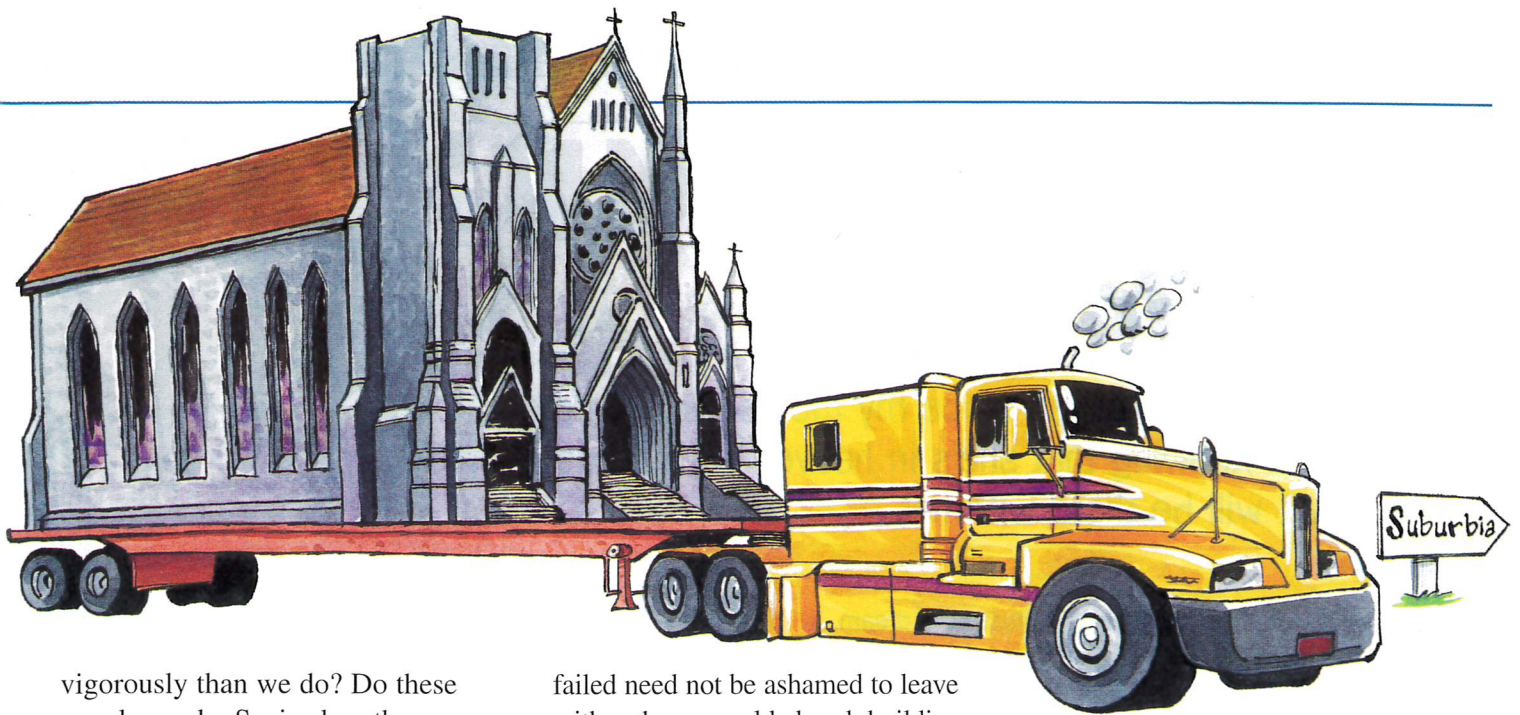
Because of risk and inconvenience, the old members leave until once strong and active congregations become a shell of their former selves. The congregations’ choices are simple. Either move or die. Some move. Some amalgamate with existing congregations. A few die. And the inner city is left without Lutheran churches.

## Why should Lutheran churches stay in the inner city?

For a time the trend seemed inevitable, until some Lutheran churches stayed in the inner city. They lost members, by the hundreds. There was no reason to maintain the old church for the sake of the few who remained. But there was another reason for staying. The old members had moved out, but other people had moved into the neighborhood.

As long as there were people who needed to hear the gospel of salvation through Jesus, a mission field was growing up around the old church. Why spend thousands to send missionaries to people on other continents, while we ignore the people who can hear our church bells every Sunday? Are these people loved by God any less than we are? Do these people resist the Holy Spirit by nature more





vigorously than we do? Do these people need a Savior less than we do? Does Jesus' Great Commission apply only to "nations" in other parts of the world?

If the obvious answers to these questions are true, then the obvious reasons for leaving the inner city are more excuses than explanations. Then every urban Lutheran church needs to stay and fight to win the souls of the new neighbors, however difficult that may be.

### **What is a church that can minister only to its own kind of people?**

No one is saying that this is easy. Real mission work never is. From the time of the apostles until now, Christians have struggled to bring the good news to the hearts of people who don't want it. The picture of heathen masses "calling us to deliver their land from error's chains" is somewhat romanticized to say the least. Cultural barriers create a level of discomfort for old Lutherans and new neighbors alike. Sometimes a language barrier stands in the way. Weakness of age and income make it difficult to support outreach to the new neighbors. Not every congregation has the human or financial resources to take on the challenge of cross-cultural ministry. Those who have tried their best and

failed need not be ashamed to leave with sadness an old church building and mission that they cannot maintain.

But no one should be too quick to excuse himself either. What is a church that can minister only to its own kind of people: middle class, well-educated, and preferably of European descent? Leave it to the Holy Spirit to judge hearts. He's good at it. We are not! But if we can't worship without being surrounded by cultural compatibility, we are at least suggesting that worship is more a matter of culture than a matter of faith.

Cultural comfort is important in our churches, more important than padded pews and air conditioning. But if cultural comfort competes with the mission that Jesus has given to his church, we need to take another look at our desire to be culturally comfortable. We can't expect to make new neighbors adopt our culture before they can become Lutherans. If our desire to be culturally comfortable gets in the way of our outreach to our new neighbors, we need to get rid of that as quickly as we would open the windows in a stuffy church.

The demand for cultural comfort exists not only in the declining churches of the inner city. Sometimes rural churches enveloped by suburbia find it difficult to share ownership of their

church with all the new people who are joining the congregation. There are explanations for such cold behavior, but in the kingdom of God there are no excuses. The love of God makes us all equally valuable in his sight. Love for our neighbor invalidates any excuses for failing to accept the new people in the congregation and neighborhood.

### **Why are so many Lutheran churches leaving the inner city?**

Why are so many Lutheran churches leaving the inner city? That's a hard question, because in some cases the answers call for repentance. We may need to repent of our failure to love across cultural barriers. We may need to repent of our neglect of a mission field that God has placed in our backyard. There are explanations for the Lutheran flight. Those explanations need to be respected. But excuses must be replaced with repentance. Then our new neighbors will be not a threat, but an exciting opportunity that gives new life to an old and feeble Lutheran church.

*Rolfe Westendorf is pastor at Siloah, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*





# WHATEVER

## Real comfort

Over a year has passed since my mother went home. I take comfort in knowing that she's in heaven with Jesus and that one day I will be there with her.

Dan Lewig

“This can't be happening. It must be a dream. It can't be real.”

These were my first thoughts when my mother was dying of liver failure.

You never think something like this will happen. It doesn't make sense—losing your mother when you're 17. But it happened to me on May 21, 2002.

**It started at the beginning of May, and the entire month was a roller coaster.** I still remember when my dad told me that he was taking my mother to the hospital because she was having bad back pains. Little did I know that she would never come back home again. Every day after that was never the same. The ups and downs, the hoping, the praying—I had never felt anything like it. It weighs you down, and you feel like you can't handle it anymore.

I was attending Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis., so I had a comfort zone. Never underestimate spiritual comfort. It forces you to focus on the cross and what Jesus has done for you. At times, that was the only thing that got me through the day. At other times, even that didn't seem like enough.

**As days went by, spending the day at school and the night at the hospital, I questioned God.** “Why? Why me? Why my mom and my family?” Then, when I had to spend Mother's Day watching my mom slip away in intensive care, I felt anger building up. I was studying to become a pastor, and God let this conflict enter my life? I wanted to confront God and ask him if he really knew what he was doing.

Then I realized how off-base my rationale was. Pastors, teachers, and friends reminded me of Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the

good of those who love him.” They pointed me to God's mercy, to Jesus.

I found it's easy to follow Jesus when things are going well, but how easy it is to drift away when things don't work so well.

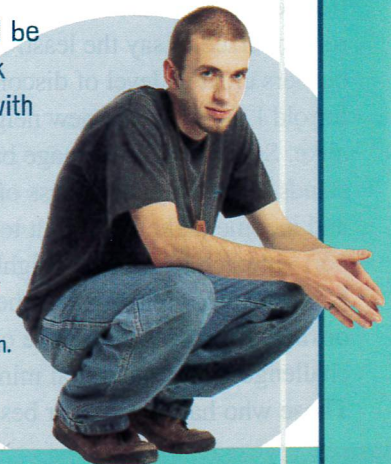
**Over a year has passed since my mother went home.** I take comfort in knowing that she's in heaven with Jesus and one day I will be there with her. I still deal with the consequences of this tragic event. Some days it feels like it's too much to bear. On those days, I remind myself that there's nothing I can't handle with the help of God. I am blessed to be his child. I take comfort knowing that he is on my side, regardless of how many stupid things I have done.

On May 21, 2002, my faith was put to the test. With God's help, I believe it is stronger now than before. I know I will face more tests and trials, but when I stay in the Word of God and keep my eyes on the cross, nothing can move me.

If you face troubles in your life and feel that no one understands what you're going through, someone does—Jesus Christ. He died for you so that your death would not be the end, but the beginning to your eternal happiness in heaven.

God never said this life would be easy. But we don't have to walk alone. God is with us. If he is with us, what do we have to fear? Thank God that his promises are not dreams, but reality.

Dan Lewig, a freshman at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.





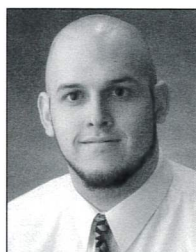
# MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE



Two hundred eight people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 17. Those receiving Bachelor of Science degrees were in the teacher track or the staff ministry program. Men who received Bachelor of Arts degrees were in the pastor track.



Sadie L. Alf ▲  
New Berlin, Wis.



Brett M. Baade ▲  
Milwaukee, Wis.



Sarah E. Backus ▲  
Hemlock, Mich.



Steven A. Backus ◆  
Hemlock, Mich.



Rachel C. Bain ▲  
Coon Rapids, Minn.



Jonathan M. Bare ◆  
Owosso, Mich.



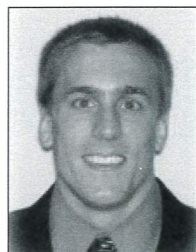
Amanda M. Bater ●  
Lansing, Mich.



Paul H. Becker ●  
Crete, Ill.



Crystal A. Benoit ▲  
Coleman, Wis.



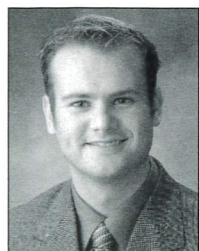
David J. Berg ◆  
Oshkosh, Wis.



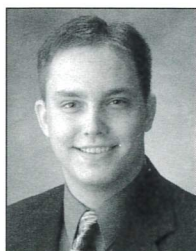
Derek A. Berg ▲  
Campbellsport, Wis.



Rebekah M. Berg ▲  
Waupaca, Wis.



Scott W. Bergemann ◆  
West Allis, Wis.



Benjamin J. Berger ◆  
Slinger, Wis.



Rebecca L. Bertolus ▲  
Watertown, Wis.



Timothy M. Biesterfeld ▲  
Crete, Ill.



Noelle A. Blumer ☆  
Orlando, Fla.

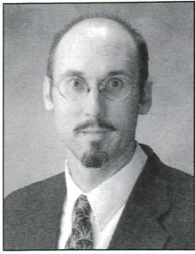


Sara J. Bode ●  
Hutchinson, Minn.

- ◆ Bachelor of Arts
- \* Seminary Certification Program
- ▲ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education
- ☆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Staff Ministry
- X Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
- ✦ Staff Ministry Certification



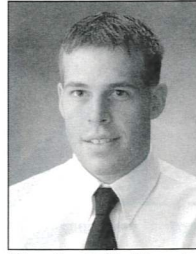
# MLC grads



**Jeffery G. Bolwerk \***  
Hartford, Wis.



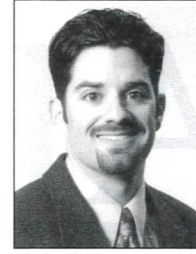
**Jeffery C. Breinling ▲**  
Stevensville, Mich.



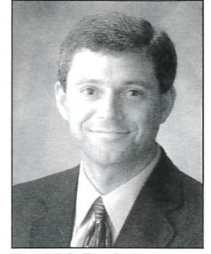
**Timothy A. Breitreutz ●**  
Watertown, Wis.



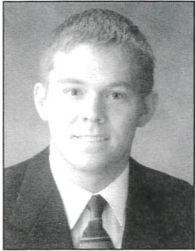
**Jacob R. Briney ▲**  
Stevensville, Mich.



**Emile J. Burgess ◆**  
Sacramento, Calif.



**Paul M. Burk \***  
Lafayette, Minn.



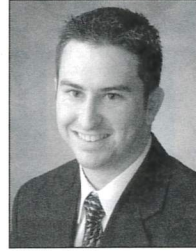
**Benjamin L. Carlovsky ▲**  
Crystal Lake, Ill.



**Jessica M. Carolfi ▲**  
Marshfield, Wis.



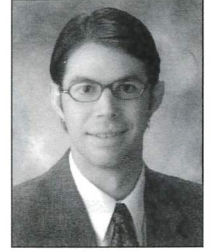
**Patrick J. Carran ●**  
Beaver Dam, Wis.



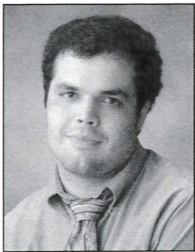
**Philip J. Casmer ◆**  
Phoenix, Ariz.



**Candice K. Choate ■**  
Citrus Heights, Calif.



**Benjamin P. Clemons ●**  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**James W. Corona II ●**  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**Luther P. Curia ▲**  
Citrus Heights, Calif.



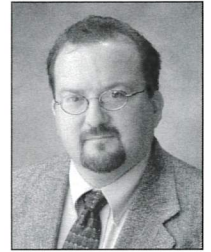
**Jeremy G. Delamarter ☆**  
Corvallis, Ore.



**Jason R. Diestler ●**  
Shawano, Wis.



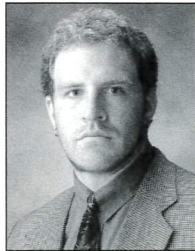
**Sara L. Dins ▲**  
Tempe, Ariz.



**Brian K. Diring \***  
Windsor, Wis.



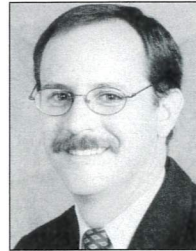
**Hayley J. Dittbenner ▲**  
Phoenix, Ariz.



**Kyle J. Dixon ●**  
Placerville, Calif.



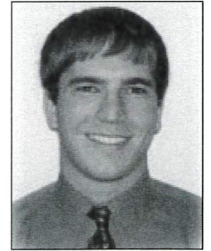
**Aaron J. Dolan ◆**  
New Ulm, Minn.



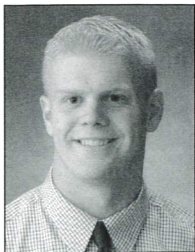
**Kevin L. Draper \***  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Sarah E. Duncan ▲**  
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



**Mark D. Ehlke ▲**  
Appleton, Wis.



**Mark S. Ehlke ●**  
Watertown, Wis.



**Mandy S. Erdmann ▲**  
Appleton, Wis.



**Stephanie A. Evanson ▲**  
Kenosha, Wis.



**Melissa M. Festerling ■**  
Marshall, Minn.



**Melissa A. Fillner ▲**  
Shelby Township, Mich.



**Melissa S. Frey ▲**  
Belleville, Mich.





**Leigh E. Gibson ●**  
West Saint Paul, Minn.



**Robyn E. Glaesemann ●**  
Saint Paul, Minn.



**Rebecca J. Gohr ▲**  
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



**Rachel L. Gosdeck ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Chadwick L. Graham ♦**  
Bay City, Mich.



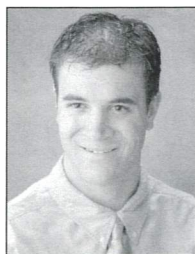
**Erin M. Gray ▲**  
Tempe, Ariz.



**Rebecca L. Greenlee ■**  
Baton Rouge, La.



**Sarah A. Groth ▲**  
Manitowoc, Wis.



**Joshua A. Gumm ♦**  
Rockford, Ill.



**John C. Gunderson ●**  
Wood Lake, Minn.



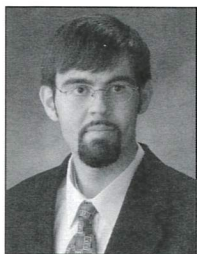
**Erin I. Haakenson ▲**  
Wauwatosa, Wis.



**Sarah A. Haberman ▲**  
Helenville, Wis.



**Brian P. Hackmann ♦**  
Greenfield, Wis.



**Luke J. Hartzell ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Sarah J. Hartzell ▲**  
Georgetown, Texas



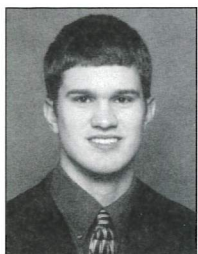
**Hattie J. Heller ▲**  
Madison, Wis.



**Brenda R. Hess ▲**  
Oshkosh, Wis.



**Angela B. Hieb ▲**  
Tsuchiura City, Ibaraki-ken,  
Japan



**Philip A. Hochmuth ▲**  
Watertown, Wis.



**Tina J. Hoernlein ■**  
Bay City, Mich.



**James E. Hofferbert ✦**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Christopher M. Holman ▲**  
Citrus Heights, Calif.



**Aaron J. Holub ♦**  
Brooklyn Park, Minn.



**Philip J. Huebner ♦**  
Wauwatosa, Wis.



**Tracey L. Hultman ▲**  
Lenexa, Kan.



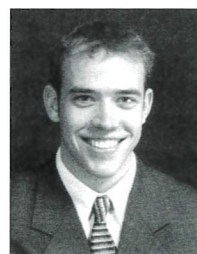
**Ethan S. Hutchinson ●**  
Sterling Heights, Mich.



**Jill E. Jabs ▲**  
Evansville, Wis.



**Brigitta L. Jacobson ●**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Philip E. Janke ♦**  
Iron Ridge, Wis.



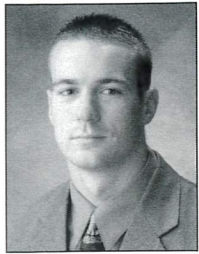
**Paul W. Jenkins ♦**  
Wauwatosa, Wis.

- ◆ Bachelor of Arts
- \* Seminary Certification Program
- ▲ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education

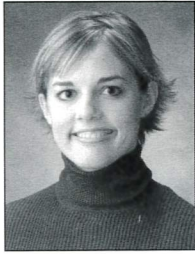
- ☆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Staff Ministry
- X Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
- ✦ Staff Ministry Certification



# MLC grads



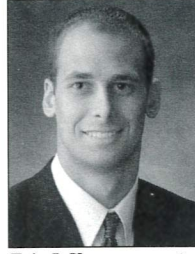
**Daniel R. Johnson ▲**  
Corona, Calif.



**Lesley J. Johnson ▲**  
Tyler, Minn.



**Nancy M. Johnson ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Eric J. Kaesermann ●**  
Watertown, Wis.



**Nathaniel D. Kallies ▲**  
Cudahy, Wis.



**Sarah M. Kassebaum ▲**  
Duncanville, Texas



**Janelle R. Kerkow ▲**  
Brisbane, Australia



**Alana J. Kirchner ●**  
Little Chute, Wis.



**Nyre D. Klug ▲**  
Beaver Dam, Wis.



**Heather J. Knoll ■**  
Appleton, Wis.



**Rebekah A. Koch ▲**  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



**Alyssa B. Kolb ▲**  
Prairie City, S.D.



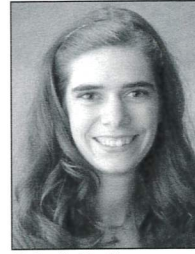
**Mary R. Korth ▲**  
Bay City, Mich.



**Christopher E. Koschnitzke ◆**  
Menomonee Falls, Wis.



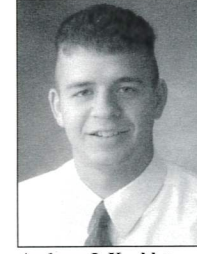
**Brad D. Krause ◆**  
Watertown, Wis.



**Erin C. Krell ●**  
Newburg, Wis.



**Nathan C. Krug ▲**  
Naperville, Ill.



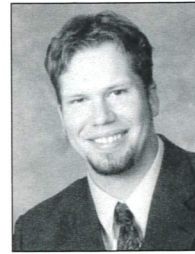
**Andrew J. Kuehl ▲**  
Hartford, Wis.



**Diane M. Kumm ☆**  
Round Lake Beach, Ill.



**Maura L. Kunz ▲**  
Burnsville, Minn.



**Michael J. Kuschel ◆**  
South Milwaukee, Wis.



**Kimberly A. Lacher ▲**  
Gilbert, Ariz.



**Jill M. LaViolette ▲**  
Manitowoc, Wis.



**Susannah I. Lawrenz ▲**  
Mequon, Wis.



**Sarah E. Learman ▲**  
Peshtigo, Wis.



**Carlita S. Lewis ●**  
Whiteriver, Ariz.



**Jennifer J. Lindholm ▲**  
Delano, Minn.



**Jeffrey J. Loberger ●**  
Manitowoc, Wis.

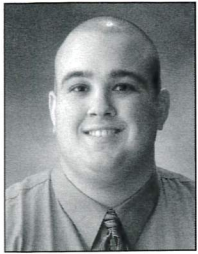


**Karen E. Lotito ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Erin E. Lowrey ■**  
Saginaw, Mich.

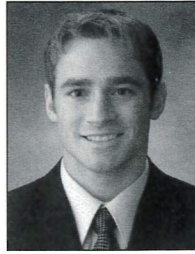




**Nicholas C. Maglietto** ♦  
Oceanside, Calif.



**Renee M. Marcouiller** ▲  
New Berlin, Wis.



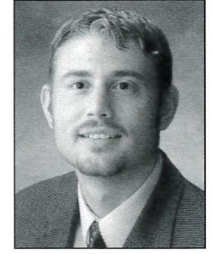
**Paul J. Mattek** ♦  
New Ulm, Minn.



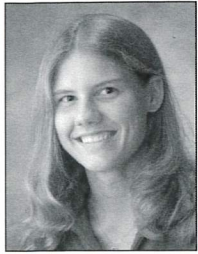
**Amanda J. Meier** ✕  
Phoenix, Ariz.



**Jessica L. Moldenhauer** ▲  
Jackson, Wis.



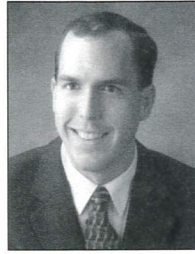
**Andrew J. Monday** ●  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Katie M. Mueller** ▲  
Livermore, Calif.



**Kiara R. Mueller** ▲  
Manitowoc, Wis.



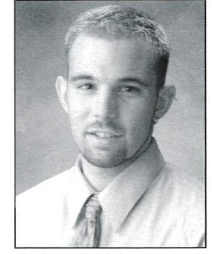
**Jonathan L. Munson** ♦  
Mesa, Ariz.



**Laura M. Nehmer** ▲  
Columbus, Wis.



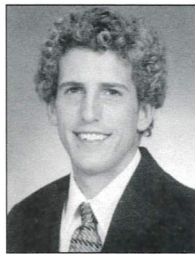
**Jocelyn E. Neitzel** ●  
Delafield, Wis.



**Joshua J. Nelson** ▲  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**Jennifer E. Noack** ▲  
Hudson, Wis.



**Michael T. Novotny** ♦  
Green Bay, Wis.



**Eric J. Oakland** ●  
Winthrop, Minn.



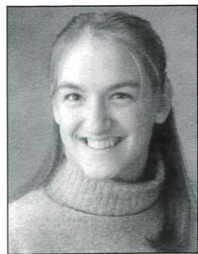
**Rebecca L. Olson** ■  
Royal Oak, Mich.



**Amy L. Palmer** ▲  
Oconomowoc, Wis.



**Gillian L. Paschal** ▲  
Oconomowoc, Wis.



**Rebecca M. Pate** ▲  
Wauwatosa, Wis.



**Adam D. Pavelchik** ▲  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**Mandy L. Pavelchik** ▲  
Oakfield, Wis.



**Garth A. Perry** ☆  
Phoenix, Ariz.



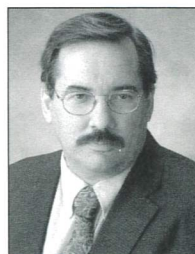
**Lisa M. Petermann** ▲  
Eau Claire, Wis.



**Rachel A. Petermann** ▲  
Saukville, Wis.



**Khrista J. Petrie** ▲  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
Canada



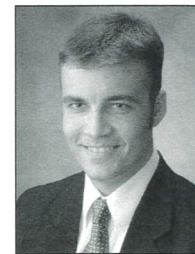
**Lynn Phillips** \*  
New Ulm, Minn.



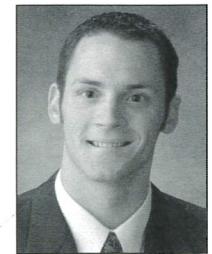
**Scott J. Pollesch** ♦  
Kingston, Wis.



**Nathan R. Raddatz** ♦  
Kaukauna, Wis.



**Benjamin A. Radtke** ♦  
Tucson, Ariz.



**Christopher J. Rathje** ♦  
Saginaw, Mich.

- ♦ Bachelor of Arts
- ▲ Seminary Certification Program
- \* Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education

- ☆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Staff Ministry
- ✕ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
- ♣ Staff Ministry Certification



# MLC grads



**Elisabeth L. Rausch ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Adam P. Reinhard ✕**  
Greenfield, Wis.



**Brian J. Richards ◆**  
St. John's, Antigua, West Indies



**Justin E. Riesop ▲**  
Whiteriver, Ariz.



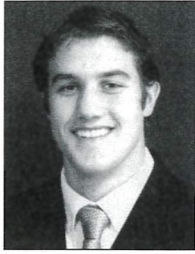
**Joshua T. Rimpel ▲**  
Crete, Ill.



**Nicole M. Roeller ▲**  
Lino Lakes, Minn.



**Clint A. Rogas Jr. \***  
Austin, Texas



**Nathanael R. Scharf ◆**  
West Allis, Wis.



**Renee C. Schiller ●**  
West Bend, Wis.



**Amy B. Schmeling ▲**  
River Falls, Wis.



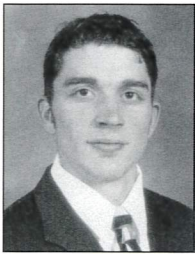
**Elissa E. Schmidt ▲**  
Janesville, Wis.



**Heidi R. Schmidt ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Julia K. Schmitz ▲**  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



**Eric D. Schroeder ◆**  
Appleton, Wis.



**Mark J. Schroeder ◆**  
Saginaw, Mich.



**Nathan F. Schulmeister ●**  
Antioch, Ill.



**Matthew E. Schultz ☆**  
Watertown, Wis.



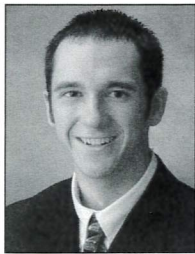
**Juliane A. Schulz ☆**  
Cottage Grove, Wis.



**Molly B. Schumann ▲**  
Prior Lake, Minn.



**Paul W. Schupmann ◆**  
Aurora, Ill.



**Mark E. Schutz ◆**  
Menomonie, Wis.



**Elizabeth A. Seeger ▲**  
Sioux Falls, S.D.



**Emily A. Seeger ▲**  
Sioux Falls, S.D.



**Stephanie J. Seeger ▲**  
Manitowoc, Wis.



**Nathanael P. Seelow ◆**  
Rice Lake, Wis.



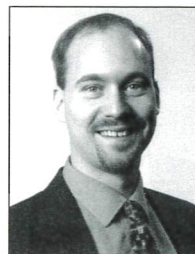
**Sarah J. Seifert ▲**  
Midland, Mich.



**Marsha L. Sheridan ▲**  
Sodus, Mich.



**Dustin D. Sievert ◆**  
Watertown, Wis.



**Adrian R. Smith ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Amy L. Snell ▲**  
Brookfield, Wis.





**Anneliese M. Spier ▲**  
Titusville, Fla.



**Kim A. Springstroh ▲**  
Appleton, Wis.



**Amy R. Steffen ▲**  
Glenwood City, Wis.



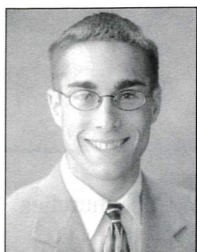
**Craig M. Steinke ●**  
Helenville, Wis.



**Jesse A. Stern ◆**  
Flagstaff, Ariz.



**Rachel M. Sternberg ▲**  
Rhineland, Wis.



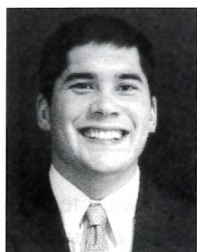
**Josiah D. Stoering ●**  
Courtland, Minn.



**Sarah R. Strackbein ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Jessica L. Tarver ▲**  
Kenosha, Wis.



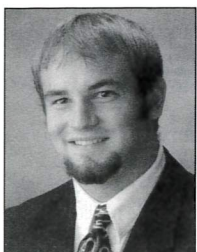
**Bradley P. Taylor ◆**  
Watertown, Wis.



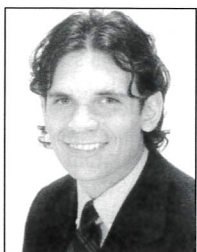
**Lucy H. Templeton ▲**  
LeSueur, Minn.



**Timothy J. Thies ▲**  
Schofield, Wis.



**Jason T. Toepel ●**  
Lake Mills, Wis.



**Daniel H. Tomczyk ◆**  
South Milwaukee, Wis.



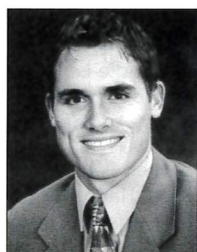
**Amy L. Towner ✕**  
Appleton, Wis.



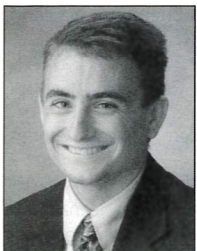
**Ann M. Uecker ▲**  
Neosho, Wis.



**Sarah M. Underwood ▲**  
Omaha, Neb.



**Karl T. Valleskey ◆**  
Houston, Texas



**Justin J. Vanderhoof ●**  
Appleton, Wis.



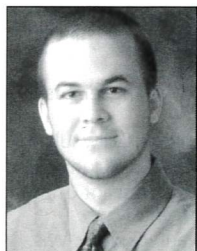
**Karyn M. Vik ●**  
Appleton, Wis.



**Timothy V. Vogel ▲**  
Kennewick, Wash.



**Kevin M. Walker ☆**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Kristian K. Walta ●**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Kelly J. Wardell ▲**  
Cambria, Wis.



**Katherine L. Warning ▲**  
Greendale, Wis.



**Crystal M. Wegner ▲**  
Morrison, Wis.



**David T. Wendland ▲**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Rebecca A. Wendt ▲**  
Neenah, Wis.



**Kathryn J. Westendorf ▲**  
Mequon, Wis.



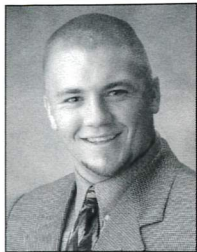
**Donald S. Weston ▲**  
Glendale, Ariz.

- ◆ Bachelor of Arts
- \* Seminary Certification Program
- ▲ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Secondary Education
- Bachelor of Science in Education—Early Childhood Education

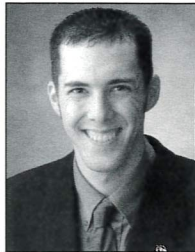
- ☆ Bachelor of Science in Education—Staff Ministry
- ✕ Bachelor of Science in Education—Elementary Education and Staff Ministry
- ✚ Staff Ministry Certification



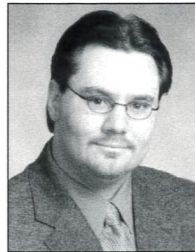
## MLC grads



**Bradley P. Wetzel** ●  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**Patrick J. Wilcox** ◆  
Seattle, Wash.



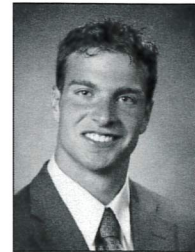
**Matthew A. Wolf** ◆  
Jarrettsville, Md.



**Matthew E. Wurster** ●  
Hillsboro, Wis.



**Deborah D. Zimmermann** ●  
Brooklyn Park, Minn.



**Jonathan G. Zimpelmann** ◆  
Eagle River, Wis.

### NOT PICTURED:

**John C. Berg** ★  
Winona, Minn.

**Nathan E. Lindemann** ◆  
Bismarck, N.D.

**Kevin S. Poston** ▲  
Watertown, Wis.

**Jonathan D. Quinn** ◆  
Watertown, Wis.

## Call assignments

Of the 208 Martin Luther College graduates, 158 were teachers or staff ministers who are now eligible to serve WELS churches or schools. Sixteen deferred assignment, choosing to pursue further education or other areas of service. On May 17, the Conference of Presidents assigned 80 new graduates to their first calls and reassigned 21 past graduates. About a dozen graduates who were available to take calls anywhere were not assigned calls at the May 17 call service. The Conference of Presidents plans to issue additional calls on July 15.

### Teachers

**Alf, Sadie L.**, to Zion, Denver, Colo.  
**Baade, Brett M.**, to Siloah, Milwaukee  
**Bater, Amanda M.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Becker, Paul H.**, to St. John, Newburg, Wis.  
**Berg, Hannah L.**, to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.  
**Biesterfeld, Timothy M.**, to Messiah, North Hollywood, Calif.  
**Breitkreutz, Timothy A.**, to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.  
**Carolfi, Jessica M.**, to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.  
**Clemons, Benjamin P.**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee  
**Corona II, James W.**, to Crete, Crete, Ill.  
**Dins, Sara L.**, to Trinity, Kiel, Wis.  
**Dittbenner, Hayley J.**, to Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa  
**Ehlike, Mark D.**, to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee  
**Ehlike, Mark S.**, to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.  
**Festerling, Melissa M.**, to La Crescent Christian Childcare Center, La Crescent, Minn.  
**Fillner, Melissa A.**, to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.  
**Frey, Melissa S.**, to Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Gibson, Leigh E.**, to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Gibson, Sara N.**, to St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.  
**Gray, Erin M.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.  
**Greenlee, Rebecca L.**, to St. Peters, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.  
**Grubbs, Paul J.**, to Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis.  
**Gunderson, John C.**, to Minnesota Valley LHS, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Hartzell, Luke J.**, to Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.  
**Hieb, Angela B.**, to Zion, Clatonia, Neb.  
**Hochmuth, Philip A.**, to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee  
**Hoernlein, Tina J.**, to Christ the Lord, Houston, Texas  
**Holman, Christopher M.**, to Martin Luther, Madison Heights, Mich.  
**Hultman, Tracey L.**, to St. Paul, Riverside, Calif.

**Hutchinson, Ethan S.**, to East Fork LHS, Whiteriver, Ariz.  
**Jabs, Jill E.**, to Zion, Columbus, Wis.  
**Johnson, Daniel R.**, to Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla.  
**Kaesermann, Eric J.**, to St. Paul, Arlington, Minn.  
**Kallies, Nathaniel D.**, to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.  
**Kassebaum, Sarah M.**, to Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, Nev.  
**Kerkow, Janelle R.**, to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.  
**Kirchner, Alana J.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Koester, Laura M.**, to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.  
**Korth, Mary R.**, to St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.  
**Lacher, Kimberly A.**, to Zion, Chesaning, Mich.  
**Loberger, Jeffrey J.**, to Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.  
**Lotito, Karen E.**, to Grace, Durand, Mich.  
**Lowrey, Erin E.**, to Good Shepherd, Cheyenne, Wyo.  
**Marcouiller, Renee M.**, to Siloah, Milwaukee  
**Meier, Amanda J.**, to Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M.  
**Mensching, Brian A.**, to St. John, Newburg, Wis.  
**Monday, Andrew J.**, to St. John, Newark, Del.  
**Mueller, Kiara R.**, to Palos, Palos Heights, Ill.  
**Noack, Jennifer E.**, to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.  
**Oakland, Eric J.**, to St. Andrew, Saint Paul Park, Minn.  
**Olson, Rebecca L.**, to Eastside, Madison, Wis.  
**Palmer, Amy L.**, to St. Peter, Balaton, Minn.  
**Pate, Rebecca M.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.  
**Pavelchik, Adam D.**, to Wisconsin, Racine, Wis.  
**Pederson, Joshua J.**, to St. John, Watertown, Wis.  
**Petermann, Lisa M.**, to St. John, Sparta, Wis.  
**Petermann, Rachel A.**, to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.  
**Petrie, Khrista J.**, to St. John, Minneapolis, Minn.  
**Poston, Kevin S.**, to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Rausch, Elisabeth L.**, to St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.  
**Riesop, Justin E.**, to St. Paul, Riverside, Calif.  
**Rimpel, Joshua T.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.  
**Rosenau, Andrew H.**, to St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis.

**Rosenau, Carrie L.**, to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.  
**Schmidt, Elissa E.**, to Grace, Falls Church, Va.  
**Schulmeister, Nathan F.**, to Taichung Gospel Center, Taiwan  
**Schumann, Molly B.**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee  
**Seeger, Emily A.**, to Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.  
**Seeger, Stephanie J.**, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.  
**Seifert, Sarah J.**, to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.  
**Spier, Anneliese M.**, to Northland LHS, Mosinee, Wis.  
**Steffen, Amy R.**, to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.  
**Sternberg, Rachel M.**, to Wisconsin, Racine, Wis.  
**Templeton, Lucy H.**, to Mt. Calvary, Kimberly, Wis.  
**Thies, Timothy J.**, to Good Shepherd, Midland, Mich.  
**Toepel, Jason T.**, to St. Peters, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.  
**Uecker, Ann M.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.  
**Underwood, Sarah M.**, to Salem, Colorado Springs, Colo.  
**Vanderhoof, Emily A.**, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.  
**Vanderhoof, Justin J.**, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.  
**Vik, Karyn M.**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee  
**Vogel, Timothy V.**, to Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
**Walta, Kristian K.**, to First, Lake Geneva, Wis.  
**Wendland, David T.**, to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.  
**Wendt, Rebecca A.**, to Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla.  
**Weston, Donald S.**, to Zion, Torrance, Calif.  
**Wetzel, Bradley P.**, to St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.

### Staff ministers

**Carlovsky, Benjamin L.**, to St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.  
**Reinhard, Adam P.**, to Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn.  
**Schultz, Matthew E.**, to Redeemer, Saint Croix Falls, Wis.  
**Walker, Kevin M.**, to Cross of Life, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada



## Becoming a mission partner

Have you always dreamed of traveling to Russia as a lay missionary—but you know that your life situation makes it unlikely that you'll be able to? What if you could, instead, partner with a missionary who is in Russia? You provide a mission offering to support God's work in Russia, prayers for that work, and information about yourself and how you're serving in God's kingdom. Then, this missionary will write you letters and send you pictures to keep you abreast of what's happening on this mission field.

Interested? Then you should consider becoming a mission partner. This new opportunity to support mission work allows individuals,



Here a student from Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., enjoys time with a child in Antigua during a Project Timothy mission trip. Students at all the WELS ministerial education schools—Luther Preparatory School; Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.—have the opportunity to gain mission experience before receiving their first calls. Students often cite these mission experiences as being a key motivation to continue studying for full-time ministry work.

Mission Partners offers you the opportunity to adopt a ministerial education student. With education costs rising across the country, financial aid has become even more important. If you adopt a student, you receive the opportunity to get to know someone who may serve you in the ministry one day.

congregations, or groups of members a chance to provide meaningful, focused support for a specific WELS mission. Donors know specifically how their gifts are being used, and they have the option of hearing first-hand reports of the triumphs and struggles encountered in spreading God's Word.

To become a mission partner, contact the Commission for Communication on Financial Support (CCFS). CCFS will share which projects are available so that you can choose the specific one that you want to support. Once your partnership is arranged, you can send information about yourself to your mission partner, and he or she will send information to you. As you develop a relationship as mission partners, you can share ministry ideas and prayers for one another's mission work.

A wide range of projects is available, including support of world and home missions, ministerial education students and professors, and administration projects. For more information, contact CCFS at 414/256-3881 or 800/827-5482.



When the Iron Curtain fell in 1990, God opened a door to bring the gospel to millions of people who had been denied his Word by atheistic governments. In 1992, a team of WELS missionaries settled in the Siberian capital of Novosibirsk.

Today, five legally registered congregations are established in Siberia with a total membership of 600 baptized souls. Michael Ewart, pastor of a congregation in Iskitim, Russia, serves as the mission field's coordinator and will keep his mission partners informed about the field's progress. Ewart's son, Nathan, is shown above (left) in a traditional Russian folk costume.



Risen Savior, Savannah, Ga., began as a mission congregation in 1997 and is now 110 souls strong. With numerous military bases nearby, members often are confirmed one week and transferred to a new location the next, which has led to the congregation's mission to "Equip 'em and ship 'em." The photo above shows a celebration the congregation hosted to welcome home a member who served in Iraq.

Risen Savior recently bought seven acres of land in one of the fastest growing areas in Georgia and is moving forward with plans for constructing a school in 2004. As a mission partner with Risen Savior, you can stay on top of the joys and frustrations that are a part of this building process.





## District news

### Dakota-Montana

On May 20, Vicar Ben Scherbarth was assigned to help Steve Geiger serve **Prince of Peace, Yankton**, and **Christ Our Savior, Vermillion, S.D.** Although these small mission congregations could not afford a vicar on their own, their sister congregations in the Dakota-Montana District rallied together to provide the extra funding.

### South Atlantic

On May 4, members of **Northdale, Tampa, Fla.**, broke ground for their new education facility.

### Southeastern Wisconsin

After a thorough inspection by the Department of Health & Family Services in May, **Wisconsin Lutheran Care Center**, a ministry of Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, received the highest rank possible for a skilled-nursing facility. Labeled "Deficiency Free," the Milwaukee care center surpassed all standards for quality of care and life, resident behavior, and facility practices.

### Arizona



Pictured above are many of the members who helped build the new sanctuary at Rock of Ages, Payson, Ariz. Because several retired builders and contractors are members at Rock of Ages, congregation members decided to do most of the work themselves, saving the congregation almost half a million dollars. "Many, many people have contributed in some way to the construction of the building and the things within it," says Darwin Bacon, volunteer foreman. "It has been a labor of love."

### Arizona



Reach the World, a WELS contemporary choir in Tucson, Ariz., presented a spring concert series. The donations collected from these concerts were given to WELS to help offset the budget deficit.

### Happy Anniversary!

**NW**—On June 8, members of **Friedens, Bonduel, Wis.**, celebrated the church's 125th anniversary.

Members of **Our Savior, Two Rivers, Wis.**, celebrated the church's 50th anniversary on June 8.

**WW**—On June 1, members of First, La Crosse, Wis., celebrated **Gloria Adickes** and **Vicki Riness's** 25th anniversaries in the teaching ministry.

### South Atlantic



Members of Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga., celebrated Palm Sunday by breaking ground for their new church building. Palm branches in the air, a cross inscribed in the earth, spades breaking the ground—the blend of old and new struck a chord in the crowd that gathered in the empty field.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: AZ—Kenneth Pasch; DM—Wayne Rouse; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Martin Baur.

## Science and society

About 100 people attended "The Christian, Society, and Science," a symposium for science educators, held at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on April 24-26.

WELS science teachers made 10 different presentations that covered topics such as stem cell research, scientific creationism, bioethics, intelligent design, and life and death issues. Each presentation started with scientific background followed by the implications of each issue.

"We often talk about trying to create a scientifically literate society," says MLC Professor Steven Thiesfeldt, symposium coordinator. "An important component in that for us as Christians is that our scientific literacy has to be tied to a biblical literacy otherwise we're going to be lost in how we cope with some of the issues that come up."

Most attendees were elementary and secondary teachers. A grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans paid for the symposium, allowing attendees to come for free.

But Thiesfeldt and the planning committee want the presentations to have a broader audience. That's why they're offering to repeat symposium presentations at pastor and teacher conferences during the 2003-04 school year. Grant money will cover speaker expenses for these presentations.

They also videotaped all the presentations and are putting together a set of DVDs as a resource for symposium attendees.

For more information about follow-up presentations, go to [www.mlc-wels.edu/](http://www.mlc-wels.edu/) and click on *MLC Science Symposium*. Or contact Prof. Roger Klockziem, [klockzrc@mlc-wels.edu](mailto:klockzrc@mlc-wels.edu).

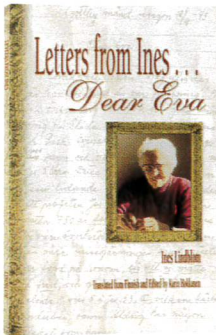


# Booknook



A look at new books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit <www.nph.net> or call 1-800-662-6022.

## Recapturing the art of letter writing



\$10.99

The art of letter writing has nearly evaporated from our lifestyle today. We hastily sit down at the computer and jot a note with just the necessary information in it.

A few of us left still enjoy writing letters of friendship and encouragement. But probably few write like Ines and Eva, two dear Christian friends in Finland, encouraging one another in their faith. Though separated by miles and water, Ines and Eva are joined in

their faith in the Lord Jesus and in friendship.

*Letters from Ines . . . Dear Eva* is a book of letters gathered by and translated by Karin Hokkanen. These letters express strong faith, a strong bond of friendship, loneliness, and a desire to be with our Savior in heaven. Though repetitive in some ways, each letter is an inspiration in one form or another. I think the book would be good as devotional material for someone who is ill, recovering from illness or surgery, lonely, shut in, or just moved to a new area. Each letter can be an uplifting thought for the day.

*Charlene Lauersdorf*

*Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wisconsin*

## Obituaries

### Loretta Leona Rupprecht 1905-2003

Loretta Rupprecht (nee Manthey-Zorn) was born Dec. 4, 1905, in Cleveland, Ohio. She died April 27, 2003, in Marinette, Wis.

A 1926 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served at Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis., and North Trinity, Milwaukee, Wis.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Herbert, and one daughter. She is survived by three daughters, one son, seven grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and two half-sisters.

### Joanne Ruth Rathbun 1954-2003

Joanne Rathbun was born Jan. 2, 1954, in Beloit, Wis. She died Feb. 16, 2003, in Dunedin, Fla.

A 1976 graduate of Doctor Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served St. Paul, Franklin, Wis., and Grace, St. Joseph, Mich.

She is survived by a brother, a sister, four nieces, and a nephew.

## Christian Life Resources marks 20th anniversary

To mark the 20th anniversary of Christian Life Resources (CLR), the slogan "Clearly Caring!" was adopted. It is a humble reminder that God wants us to put our faith into action. "Clearly Caring" reflects the CLR mission statement: "To use life and family issues as bridges to convey the love of God and to share the message of salvation through Christ."

CLR is currently planning for the Clearly Caring Convention, Oct. 17-19 in Milwaukee. This weekend of seminars and workshops will deal with today's important life and family issues. It promises to be the biggest CLR national convention.

The weekend begins with a Medical Ethics Seminar on Friday, Oct. 17, featuring nationally recog-

nized presenters on stem cell research, cloning, hospice care, birth control, and more. Anyone can attend, but medical professionals and clergy will especially appreciate this seminar. CME credits are available for medical personnel.

The convention continues on Saturday with workshops and plenary sessions. Improving on a successful 20-year formula, the convention will involve the entire family. Parents can learn how to incorporate life issues into daily parenting. Teens can take a stand on abstinence, learn how to deal with a depressed or suicidal friend,

learn how to make an impact in their schools and communities, make a Life Witness video, and more. Finally, children will enjoy a

full day of learning and projects. Babysitting also will be offered.

Sunday will be a special day of workshops dedicated to the WELS Lutherans for Life affiliates.

As 2003 passes, additional "Clearly Caring" projects will be unveiled. Among these projects will be a new teen Web site called SectionQ.com and a complete makeover of *Beginnings*, the official CLR publication.

For more information on the seminar and convention, call the CLR national office at 414/774-1331 or 1-800-729-9535. Or check out the convention Web site, <www.clrfocus.org>. For more information on CLR, call the national office or go to <www.ChristianLifeResources.com>.

*Tim Snyder*





## Donation to archive demonstrates Apacheland history

In an effort to preserve a part of WELS history in the Apache mission field, Grace, San Carlos, Ariz., donated 22 songs charts in the Apache language to the WELS Historical Institute and the synod archives.

Dr. Francis Uplegger, a WELS missionary to the San Carlos reservation from 1919 to 1964, prepared these song charts. During his ministry in Apacheland, Uplegger developed a written form of the Apache language and used it to instruct his people in God's Word. Besides translating Bible texts and stories, a catechism, and a Lutheran liturgy into the Apache language, he adapted many hymns and wrote a number of new hymns himself. These hymns were carefully hand drawn in Apache on large two- by four-foot charts and posted at the front of the church so everyone could sing along.

These song charts were used at least until 1984. Pastor Edgar Hoenecke wrote in the fall 1984 issue of the *WELS Historical Journal*: "The writer (Hoenecke) was surprised to hear the Apache congregation at the funeral of Pastor Alfred Uplegger on March 4, 1984, join with full voice and fervor in the singing of one of Francis Uplegger's Apache hymns posted on the chart before them."

Now the churches and schools on the Apache reservation use *Christian Worship*, but there is continued interest in the Apache language. The charts were in a storeroom at Grace before they were donated to the archives.

The synod archives, located at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, is a collection of information about the history of WELS,



Dr. Francis Uplegger with an original song chart in the Apache language.

its congregations, and mission fields. Its mission is to preserve these materials and to make information available to WELS members for research. The WELS Historical Institute maintains a museum at Salem, Milwaukee, and collects artifacts that help tell the synod's story.

Naomi Plocher

## Future church leaders

"Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" These words are spoken in almost every WELS church on Easter morning. Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville, Tenn., is no exception.

Early on Maundy Thursday, with an ice storm threatening to keep us from our destination, 12 Manitowoc Lutheran High School student council members and three chaperones embarked on a journey that would be eternally engraved in our hearts. After a 14-hour drive, we arrived at Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville.

On Good Friday our group began by cleaning the church's interior. We washed windows, dusted pews, and scrubbed floors.

We spent the afternoon at a daytime homeless shelter. We learned how the shelter is run and met some of the shelter's volunteers. We ended our trip to the shelter by singing hymns. In the middle of "Amazing Grace," a lady joined the group that was listening to us. The director of

the center told us that if she could have picked just one person to come and hear us sing God's good news of mercy, that lady would be the one. It was then that we sensed that God's hand was working through us.

On Saturday morning we handed out flyers in the church's neighborhood, inviting people to join us on Easter morning. Our goal was to



These 12 students traveled to Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville, Tenn., prepared to help the congregation. What they were not prepared for was the spiritual strengthening that took place once they arrived.

get one person to attend church on Easter Sunday. On Easter morning we received the good news that was being echoed by all the members at the church. Someone had come to the service because of the invitations we had handed out.

On this journey we realized that we are not only leaders of a Lutheran high school organization, but we are also future leaders of the church. We learned that even though we are all individuals, we also need to work together as a team. We are all blessed through Jesus Christ, who lived and died so that we might one day live with him. As the words on Easter Sunday remain in our hearts until next year, may we never forget: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!"

Krystal Krueger  
Manitowoc Lutheran High School





### CHANGES IN MINISTRY

#### Pastors

- Brohn, Jonathan D.**, to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
- Fastenau, Don W.**, to retirement
- Gumm, Charles F.**, to Community (St. Paul), Honolulu, Hawaii
- Hartman, Robert C.**, to retirement
- Kiecker, James G.**, to retirement
- Kleist, Dennis A.**, to Planned Giving Ministry, Milwaukee
- Kurtzahn, Stephen C.**, to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
- Liesener, Mark L.**, to retirement
- Mueller, Timothy P.**, to WELS Watertown Youth Ministry Director, Watertown, Wis.
- Rieke, Mark W.**, to Immanuel, La Crosse, Wis.
- Stuebs, William M.**, to Grace, Yakima, Wash.

#### Teachers

- Backus, Sarah E.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
- Baldwin, Lisa**, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
- Brockmann, Sue**, to St. John, Milton, Wis.
- Dressel, Gloria F.**, to retirement
- Dunsmoor, Lisa D.**, to Christ, Eagle River, Wis.
- Graumann, Rebecca L.**, to Bethany, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
- Gregorius, Justin T.**, to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.
- Hansen, Barbara J.**, to retirement
- Hewitt, Jeanette L.**, to St. Peter, Saint Peter, Minn.
- Hoffman, Paul C.**, to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
- Klug, Karen R.**, to Our Savior, Naples, Fla.
- Lemke, Jeffrey C.**, to St. Croix LHS, West Saint Paul, Minn.
- Marose, Sue**, to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.
- Mayer, Sarah L.**, to Kettle Moraine LHS, Jackson, Wis.
- Meyer, John E.**, to Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Monday, Earl W.**, to West LHS, Plymouth, Minn.
- Papllham, Jody**, to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
- Raymond, Kyle R.**, to King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif.
- Ring, Robert L.**, to retirement
- Scheer, Faith A.**, to Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.
- Skorzewski, Janinne**, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
- Straseske, Karen K.**, to retirement
- Warning, Kimberly A.**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee

**Correction:** Prof. Earl Monday and Prof. Judith Kresnicka did not retire from the teaching ministry as reported in the June issue. Their called positions were terminated, and both are teaching elsewhere. We apologize for the error.

### ANNIVERSARIES

- Naper, Neb.**—St. Paul (100). Aug. 3. Services, 9 AM & 2 PM. Noon meal. RSVP to Linda Goodman, 402/832-5665 or 832-5461.
- East Jordan, Mich.**—Faith (ELS) (100th anniversary of the building). Aug. 10. Services, 8:30 & 10:30 AM. Meal at 12:30 PM. RSVP to Jeff Londgren, 231/547-7992.
- Green Bay, Wis.**—St. Paul church and school dedication anniversary (50). Aug. 10. Services, 8 & 10 AM. Reception between services: Roy Rose, 920/435-8468.
- Chippewa Falls, Wis.**—Our Hope (20). Aug. 17. Service, 9 AM. Dinner to follow. Melanie Schaller, 715/723-9613.
- Gladstone, Mich.**—St. Paul (75). Aug. 17. Service, 4 PM. Meal to follow. 906/428-9756.

**Litchfield, Minn.**—St. Paul church building anniversary (50). Aug. 24. Service, 9:30 AM. Meal and program to follow. Church office, 320/593-6324.

**La Crosse, Wis.**—Mount Calvary (75). Sept. 6. Service, 6 PM. Sept. 7. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Ed Ungemach, 608/784-5324.

**Pigeon, Mich.**—St. John (125). Sept. 7. Services, 8:30 & 10:30 AM. Organ concert service, 3 PM. Potluck meal, 5 PM.

**Bemidji, Minn.**—St. Mark (30). Sept. 14. Program recounting history, 9 AM. Service, 10:15 AM. Pig roast picnic, 11:30 AM. Lon Kuether, 218/444-6334.

**New Ulm, Minn.**—Minnesota Valley LHS (25). Sept. 19-21. 507/354-6855.

- Sept. 19—volleyball games followed by social hour.
- Sept. 20—founders' brunch, all-school tailgate party, football game, banquet, and dance.
- Sept. 21—festival service, 2 PM. Pie and ice cream social to follow.

Smaller celebrations will be held during the year at concerts, the Association banquet, and graduation.

**Hadar, Neb.**—Immanuel (120). Sept. 21. Service, 2 PM. Refreshments to follow. Karl Schultz, 402/371-6939.

**Gladwin, Mich.**—St. John (100). Oct. 5. Service, 3 PM. Food and fellowship to follow.

**Brillion, Wis.**—Trinity Concordia Choir (100). Oct. 16. Service, 6:30 PM. Oct. 19. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Dinner following last service. RSVP, Sherry Derks, 920/864-7060.

### COMING EVENTS

**Dr. Martin Luther College alumni & friends get-together**—Aug. 14. Fox Valley LHS. Opening devotion, 11:45 AM. Followed by lunch. Food and table service provided. Freewill offering. RSVP, Norma Korthals Ring, 920/766-9869.

**WELS North Atlantic District Annual Labor Day Retreat**—Aug. 30-Sept. 1. Camp Taconic, Hinsdale, Mass. Program, recreation, and worship for all ages. Includes meals. Judy Becker, 518/210-5590.

**Life-a-thon run/walk**—sponsored by WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee. Sept. 13. Begins at Northwestern Publishing House, 10 AM. Individual, \$8; family, \$20. Peter Georgson, 414/933-7322.

**Sunday school workshops**—Sept. 13, 9-11:45 AM. \$30/congregation. Jerry Kastens, 920/261-3511.

- St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis. Classroom management skills.
- St. John, Sparta, Wis. Teaching memory work, singing, and missions in a Sunday school.
- Northland LHS, Mosinee, Wis. Assisting families and outreach through Sunday school.
- Trinity, Watertown, Wis. Preparing and teaching a great Sunday school lesson.

**WELS/ELS Singles Retreat**—Oct. 3-5. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. 262/534-7852 or <share@wels.net>.

**Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary meeting**—Oct. 4, 8 AM to 1:30 PM. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Registration, including lunch, \$10. Jan Lampe, 414/771-4622.

**WELS senior rally**—Michigan District. Jan. 16 & 17, 2004. Best Western Executive Plaza, Ann Arbor, Mich. Jerome Spaude, 989/799-3202.

**Luther tour**—sponsored by St. Peter, Appleton, Wis. April 30-May 11, 2004. Ronald Ash, 920/733-7225.

### AVAILABLE

**Furnishings**—pews, pulpit, baptism font, altar, communion rail. Free for the cost of shipping.

Bethel, Galesville, Wis. Fred Lintelmann, 608/582-4566.

**Spring-loaded candles**—three dozen. Free for the cost of shipping. Karen Stockdale, 734/729-7320.

**Christian flag**—in fair condition. Free for the cost of shipping. Beautiful Savior, Fort Wayne, Ind. Diane Hess, 260/637-3475.

### NEEDED

**Memory work books**—which were used before *Christ-Light*. Laura Shilling, 605/466-2449.

**Articles**—*LivingBold*, the WELS Web site for teens, <www.livingbold.net>, is expanding its layout and content to include original articles, stories, poems, music, and art. If you are a WELS teen and would like to submit your original work, send it to <cyd@sab.wels.net>.

**Christian couple**—to serve at the Lutheran Mobile Clinic in Malawi. Three-year commitment. One person must be qualified to take care of the medical aspect of the work. The other must be qualified to take care of the administration of the clinic. Kathie Wendland, 920/682-5694.

### SERVICE TIMES

**Austin, Texas**—Risen Savior, 4021 Tecate Trail. Service, 9:30 AM. Roger Zehms, 512/280-8283.

### NAMES WANTED

**Grand Junction, Colo.**—St. Paul is looking for students that attend Mesa State College for a WELS Campus ministry program. Jim Berger, 970/874-7009 or David Haberkorn, 970/523-5433.

**Great Falls, Mont.**—Paul Schuler, 406/707-1053.

**University of Wisconsin-Madison alumni**—Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel is looking for alumni or parents or friends of past students who attended from 1964-present and alumni from Calvary Lutheran Chapel from 1920-1964. Contact the campus ministry with your name, address, phone number, and years that you attended. <wlchapel@wlchapel.org>; 608/257-1969.

To place an announcement, call 414/256-3210; FAX, 414/256-3862; <BulletinBoard@sab.wels.net>. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

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# LIFE IN THE SONLIGHT: focus on what's important

**“What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. . . . For this world in its present form is passing away.”**

**Jon D. Buchholz**

**O**f all the things you possess, what do you value the most? Your home, automobile, family heirlooms—those things are just “stuff.” How about people—your parents, spouse, children? Or life itself—is that the most precious thing you possess? What about your soul?

Our world is quite disinterested in care of the soul. Self-help and how-to books tell you how to do just about everything else. You can go to the store and buy products for beauty care, healthcare, car care, home care, lawn care, and pet care; but you'll find the soul-care shelves poorly stocked. Looking at today's lifestyles, purchases, and priorities, we might conclude that most people don't place a high value on their souls.

## The time is short

“What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short.” The apostle is talking about the time between now and when we meet our Lord in eternity. The time remaining for this world is short. The time that we have to prepare for eternity is short. The world's doomsday clock is ticking, and nobody knows when the alarm bell will ring. Nobody knows when the Lord will pull back the carpet of the heavens and reveal himself with 10,000 times 10,000 of his holy angels as he returns in glory to judge the living and the dead.

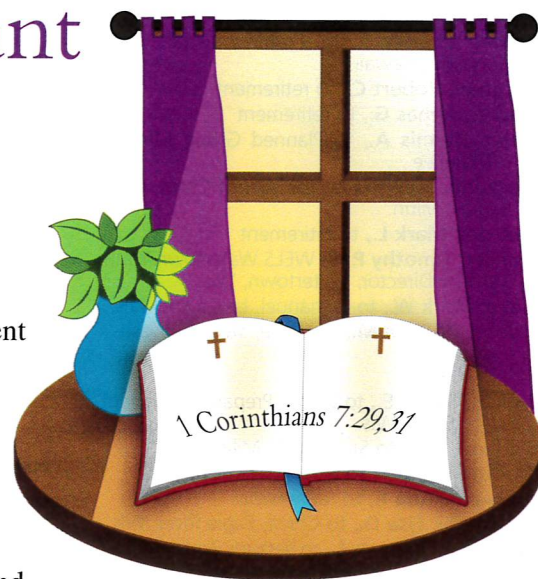
The apostle Paul had a different perspective from the cavalier approach of today. At any moment, Paul and the early believers expected the return of Jesus. They fully understood that they were living in the last days, and they prayed that the end of the world would come while they were still watching and waiting on earth for Jesus' return.

## Prepare your soul

Today, we see fulfilled the apostle Peter's prophecy: “In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’ ” (2 Peter 3:3,4).

The trend in modern religion is to seek something that relates to here and now. People are looking for something that is “relevant” to their lives. Folks are less interested in what's going to happen when they die and more concerned about what their religion is going to do for them right now. People think, “Forget the pie in the sky in the sweet by and by, and give me something practical, down-to-earth, and right here where the rubber hits the road.”

Scripture's inspired point is simple: Don't live for now. Focus on then. Don't let anything, not even the



people who are nearest and dearest to you, sidetrack you and take your focus off your reason for existing—to serve the living Lord, who has bought you with his own blood and destined you for the mansions of heaven. Let nothing take your focus off of the one thing needful!

Everything we have is just on loan from God. It's not ours to keep. Why be consumed with it? You already have the greatest treasure that any human could ever possess—the forgiveness of sins and the pledge of eternal life with your Savior. What else do you need? Christ is life! Everything else is just details.

A soul that is well-provisioned with forgiveness, well-fed with God's nourishing Word, and well-dressed in Jesus' beautiful righteousness is a soul that is well-prepared for eternity.

That's life in the Sonlight!



*Jon D. Buchholz is pastor at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Washington.*



# Getting to know God's story

Randy K. Hunter

**W**hat happens, ultimately, when a person or a nation persistently refuses to listen to God? Don't be too quick with your answer. We might, along with James and John, call down fire from heaven to consume such ingrates. In the process, though, we'd burn ourselves.

The truth is that when a person or a nation persistently refuses God's love, he sends more of it. He continues to send messengers to speak his word. Ezekiel and Daniel were such messengers. They served during a time

of exile. The nation of Israel—what was left of it—had endured several invasions and a forced march to a foreign land. The Lord went with them, though, and spoke through his messengers an invitation to repent and trust his promises of a brighter future.

Neither of these prophets lived long enough to witness God's promise kept and Israel restored. On the other hand, when you read their confident prophecies of deliverance, you get the feeling that they really did see it. That's what we call faith.

- One of the last kings of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was Josiah. Read how the nation had literally "lost" the Bible in 2 Kings 22:8-11. List three proofs you see that our nation has lost, or is losing, the Bible.
- Read about Josiah's death in 2 Chronicles 35:20-24. List lessons you learn from this story.
- Two key dates on our family tree are 722 BC and 586 BC. The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. One hundred forty years later, in 586 BC, the Southern Kingdom of Judah (sometimes also called Israel), fell to the new superpower, Babylon. The Northern Kingdom was never restored. The Southern Kingdom would return to its homeland in about 70 years, but it would never return to its former glory. Use a Bible map to locate Israel. Now put one finger on Africa, one on Asia, and one on Europe. Explain why other nations wanted to occupy Israel.
- We can read in the New Testament the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It was not always so. Read Ezekiel 1. Do some doodling. Draw what Ezekiel saw. Then explain what the picture means.
- Read about the scroll in Ezekiel 2:9-3:3. Explain how the scroll could be "filled with words of lament and mourning and woe" and still taste like honey.
- Ezekiel was unique. First he was a priest, someone who went to God on behalf of the people. But he was also a prophet, someone who took messages from God to the people. In the first 24 chapters of Ezekiel the Lord's message to his people was simple: repent. In the next eight chapters, the Lord pronounces judgment on the surrounding nations making life difficult for his people. Finally, chapters 33-48 paint lovely, if not bizarre, images of rescue and restoration. One of the most famously bizarre pictures is found in 37:1-14. If you're studying in a group, act it out. Discuss the role of the breath, or the Spirit.
- If studying with children, divide into groups and assign each group one of the following stories from Daniel: 1) 1:8-17 2) 2:5,6,16-19,47,48 3) 3:1,2,4-6,16-18,24,25,28 4) 5:5-9, 13,14 5) 6:6-9,20-22. Have each group draw and tell its story. Then post the masterpieces.

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

Find this article and possible answers on-line. Go to <[www.wels.net/sab/frm-nl.html](http://www.wels.net/sab/frm-nl.html)> and click on "current issue." Then click on "Getting to know God's story." Answers will be available after Aug. 5.

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# IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: PRAYER IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Question:** A recent survey asked whether I supported prayer in public schools. I answered yes. I wonder if I made the right choice.

**Answer:** Let's begin by clarifying the question. The question isn't whether a Christian can pray while attending public school. Christians can pray at any time and in any place. The question is about joint prayer led by a teacher or student. As Lutheran Christians we aren't against prayer. We are for a clear testimony to Jesus' gospel.

Prayer in public schools offends against the gospel in three ways. First, prayer is treated as a right everyone possesses as creatures of their Creator. Any such right was lost long ago when Adam and Eve declared independence from God. We, their descendants, are born as rebels who have forfeited the right to approach God in prayer. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

Only in Jesus is the privilege restored. "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence" (Ephesians 3:12). We approach our Father as his children because we possess Jesus' forgiveness and are clothed with his righteousness. Without Christ, prayer is self-deception. As Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Such prayers offend against the gospel in another way. In the typical classroom, some children may be from families who profess non-Christian religions. Certainly you will have representatives from the whole spectrum of Christian denominations. It is popular in our "pluralistic" world to state that such differences really don't matter. Many believe joint prayer is a beautiful expression of unity that bridges any gaps that divide us.

That argument is correct in one way. Joint prayer is a powerful statement of unity. But unity based on what? On a least common denominator spirituality? On agreeing to disagree? On proclaiming that the "differences" between

churches are nothing but cultural barriers that should have disappeared long ago?

What if we are convinced of the truthfulness and beauty of all of God's Word? What if we exclaim with the psalm writer, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path" (Psalm 119:103,104)? Which parts of God's saving Word are unimportant? If God has spoken, can we join in prayers that act as if some of God's truth is negotiable? Such prayers are travesties of the true unity of mind and heart God desires our prayers to express.

Finally, prayer in public school confuses the distinct roles of government and church. Look at Romans 13. God has ordained government for our physical welfare. Its tool is law with its promises and threats. God hasn't entrusted government with proclaiming the gospel. Whenever government meddles in the church's work (and vice versa!), political expediency always trumps theological accuracy. The needs of the state overwhelm the welfare of the soul.

God has entrusted the care of souls to his church. For that task he equipped his church with the gospel in Word and sacraments. Genuine prayer is a fruit of Jesus' gospel at work in the hearts of convicted and comforted sinners. Apart from that gospel, prayer is nothing but lip service paid to an unknown deity.

All of this may sound quite intolerant. But our goal is not to make the world safe for generic spirituality. Our goal is to proclaim a genuine Savior to the world.

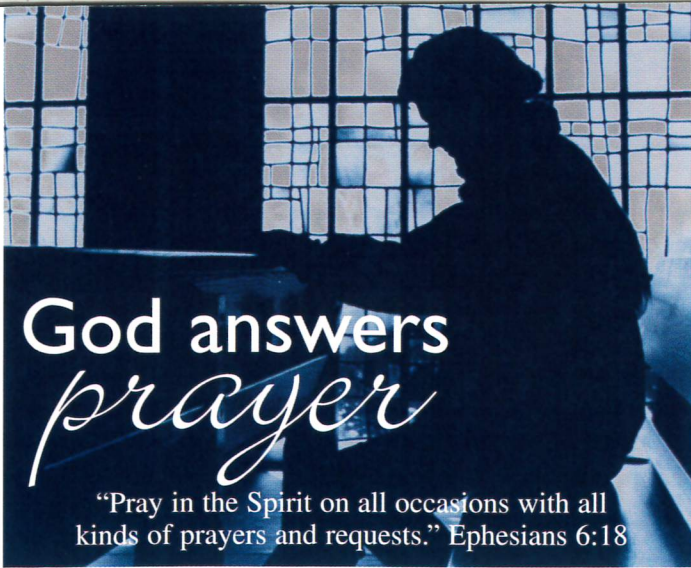


*Richard Gurgel is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.*

*Have a question you want answered? Send it to 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>. Look on-line at <www.wels.net/sab/qa.html> for more questions and answers.*

**Joint prayer is a powerful statement of unity. But unity based on what?**





# God answers prayer

“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Ephesians 6:18

*In the May issue, we asked you, “How does God answer prayers?” We offer here a few snippets\* of your blessings.*

In the early 1940s I was told I had an incurable cancer. X-rays burned off my left ovary and threw me into menopause in my 20s. I had two children but wanted more. One night I asked my husband if he felt God would answer a prayer. “Of course!” was his reply, so I (we) prayed for more children. Then he was gone for one and a half years of service duty overseas. Meantime my periods started again—after a fashion. After his return I became pregnant and had Dorothy, which means a “gift of God.” Two years later, I had twins.

I am now the grandmother of 17 and the great-grandmother of 30, believe it or not!!!

—Marguerite Warskow (90 years old)



While our daughter Nancy dated Steve, we learned that he had not known many Christians and didn't have much knowledge about Christianity. My husband and I prayed for him. We bought a Bible for Steve, and I will never forget the day we gave it to him. He gladly received the Scriptures and suggested that we read some of it right then. He was like a “sponge,” absorbing every bit of what was shared. In the year that Nancy and Steve were married, Steve was also baptized and became a child of God through faith. What answers to prayer!

—Leslie Schmidt



(In a faith struggle, this woman confessed, “I didn't know what I believed or if I even believed anymore.”)

One evening after my children were in bed and my husband had gone to a meeting, I felt such torments in my soul from the doubts I was having that I looked for something of God's Word to read. I found a devotional book in my dresser, and by God's grace it dealt with doubt. I remember getting on my knees and begging and pleading with God to remove this torment going on inside of me. I got into bed and sensed a “Presence” in the room with me. A peace came over me that was unbelievable and unforgettable. My doubts completely vanished and never returned.

—Dorothy Hildebrandt

(This man was told five years ago, “You have inoperable cancer.”)

That evening I talked to God about what was happening to me. I thought long and hard about what to say. Did he have a reason for allowing this disease to attack me? . . . Finally, I asked God to grant me understanding and peace of mind to accept that I had cancer, to put up with the pain and discomfort that the treatment would cause, and to accept the outcome without complaint.

God answered my prayer and more. . . .

—Dick Wilde



(This woman is also battling cancer.)

Prayers, the well thought-out, spoken-out-loud type; the quick thought that is directed to God in a fleeting second; or the groaning of a spirit that does not know what words to use, they are all heard and answered by our Father in heaven. We do not walk alone. He is with us every hour of every day.

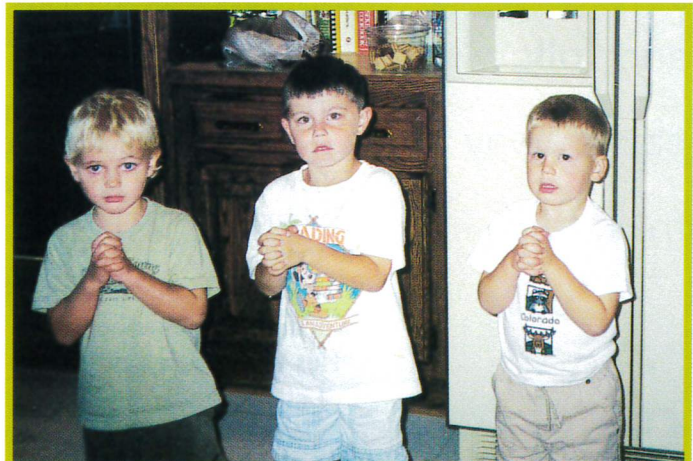
—Mickey McKay



Other readers tell of miraculous help in answer to prayer, being led safely through narrow escapes, being relieved of suffering, children protected, disease working for spiritual good, the gift of a child, a spouse coming to faith. Thank God for the gift of prayer, made certain for us through the gift of his Son, our Savior.

\*Some wording may be slightly changed for length.

## Picture this

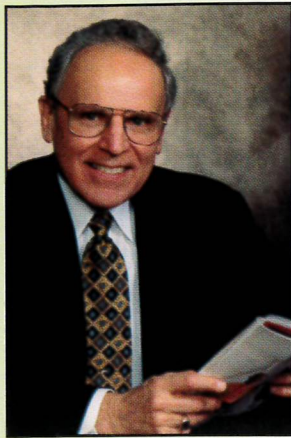


Three cousins: Sylas Rehbein, Connor Rehbein, and Martin Petersen patiently wait to pray before eating.

Submitted by Wilma Rehbein

Send pictures to Picture this, Forward in Christ magazine, 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.





Gary P. Baumler is editor of *Forward in Christ* magazine and WELS Director of Communications.

When God's people follow the ways of the godless, they defy God and follow paths away from him.

## God “understands”

The explanation went on for paragraphs, long paragraphs. It offered “irrefutable” reasons why the couple was living together prior to marriage: bad breaks, financial burdens, unrequited love, an understanding companion, desire not to rush into marriage, distance. . . . It even explained how God himself had guided things to this end by allowing everything to happen as it did. Boiled down, the message read: “God understands, doesn’t he?”

Understands? Yes! Approves? No!

However, there’s something to be said for this young woman’s attempt to justify her actions. She still seems to care about doing God’s will. By God’s grace she will accept the advice she received in reply and will repent and turn from this open sin.

I write this, I suppose, at my peril. What’s this about repenting? Why should that woman have to explain herself to anyone? Look around you. Unmarried people everywhere are living together without any moral stigma from society. Get with 21st century America. Watch some TV sitcoms, and learn how the world lives today.

Ouch! Dare I ask, “What about God’s will?”

Godless activity can be expected from a godless society. But when God’s people follow the ways of the godless, they defy God and follow paths away from him—to their peril.

Still, the implications of the young woman’s question beg to be heard: “Has God really said . . . ?”

Let’s see.

God really said that a man and woman “become one flesh” in marriage. That bond, said Jesus, must not be broken. Couples that simply live together lack the lifetime commitment of marriage. If they insist that the commitment is there, then they have no valid reason not to marry. Furthermore, commit-

ment commands work and sacrifice and trust that make a marriage complete. Without such commitment, the relationship is just a convenience and subject to changing whims.

God really said that we should “not commit adultery” or engage in immoral sex. Jesus even warned against looking at another person with lust. God said that marriage is the place for sexual harmony. Living together doesn’t qualify. Pretending that lust isn’t a factor in living together is hard to believe.

God really said that children are a blessing in marriage. Living together usually ignores that blessing altogether. When it doesn’t, more often than not abortion or single-parenthood results—hardly the blessing that God intended.

God really said, “Keep yourself pure.” God really calls for perfect, selfless love. God really wants you to listen to him and obey.

For those of you who let society dictate your morals, do you even see how the moral fabric of society is becoming torn and tattered? Do you sense the shame of it all and the decay that grows under the surface? Do you see how meaningless the world’s ways make life?

Oh, yes, God understands. He understood, too, when he sent the flood in Noah’s day. He understood when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

At the same time, he understood when he promised the seed of the woman to crush the power of Satan. He understood when in his perfect love he sent his one and only Son into this world. He understood when he turned away from his Son on the cross and then welcomed him in the resurrection. He understands when he says to you and me, “Repent and believe the gospel.”

*Gary P. Baumler*



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# It's God's love

God prepared Sandra and her family for the trial they were about to face.

Andrew C. Schroer

*“Todo lo puedo en Cristo que me fortalece.”*  
“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

Sandra would repeat those words often while in the hospital. The last few painful days her mother and I would hold her hand and repeat them to her as she lay intubated and semiconscious.

## *A girl with little hope*

I met Sandra two years ago. Her mother, Nubia, was an immigrant from Nicaragua; her father, Pablo, from Cuba. Sandra attended our first service at Divine Savior in Miami with her mother and younger brother. Her father soon began attending as well.

Sandra's mother, though raised in predominately Catholic Nicaragua, had some background in Protestant churches. She, however, had not been to church in a long time. Sandra, her brother, and her father had little experience in church and even less knowledge of the Bible.

Sandra seemed to be a normal 20-year-old. She was studying to be a physical therapist. She was outgoing and sweet and always talking on the phone. She loved to go shopping.

But Sandra, I soon found out, was not a normal 20-year-old. Three years before attending our church, Sandra was diagnosed with leukemia. She missed her last year of high school as she went through chemotherapy and radiation. When I first met her, Sandra had been in remission for almost a year.

## *A girl given hope*

Over the next few weeks I shared the good news of salvation with Sandra and her family. Then, in August 2001, Sandra got sick. The leukemia had returned.

During the following months, Sandra was in and out of the hospital. We celebrated her 21st birthday alongside her hospital bed. Then came more bad news. With chemotherapy Sandra would only

have a five percent chance of surviving. With a bone marrow transplant the odds would go up to about 30 percent.

As Sandra prepared for her bone marrow transplant, we continued to study God's promises. I remember one visit in which she cried tears of joy as we spoke of God's forgiveness. During those months, Sandra would often recite two Bible verses. At night before going to sleep, she would say (in Spanish), “I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8). When she was frightened, nervous, or in pain, she would recite Paul's words: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

## *A girl living in hope*

In May 2002, Sandra received her bone marrow transplant. Her body rejected the marrow. After two painful weeks, God took Sandra to her heavenly home.

A while after Sandra died, Sandra's mother brought me a page from Sandra's diary. It was written in April 2001, just a few months after she began attending our church.

She wrote: “Woke up this morning moody, and the fact that the leg of my eyeglasses broke got me real mad. That made me worse and I was giving attitudes to my loved ones. Anyway we got to church and was there listening to the Word of God. . . . We got out of church and I was happy again and with a huge smile! Honestly I like going to church and listening to God's words. . . . It is so beautiful to have this feeling of love, it's a special kind of love, it's God's love. Since we started going to church, I feel closer to God, and I thank him for this great feeling.”

God in his amazing love and wisdom prepared Sandra and her family for the trial they were about to face. Thank God that he allowed me to know Sandra and grow with her in God's Word. I glorify God's holy name every time I remember where she is.

Andrew Schroer is now pastor at Redeemer, Edna, Texas.



Sandra, about two weeks before she discovered her leukemia had returned.