

FORWARD IN CHRIST

October 2003

The Word from the WELS

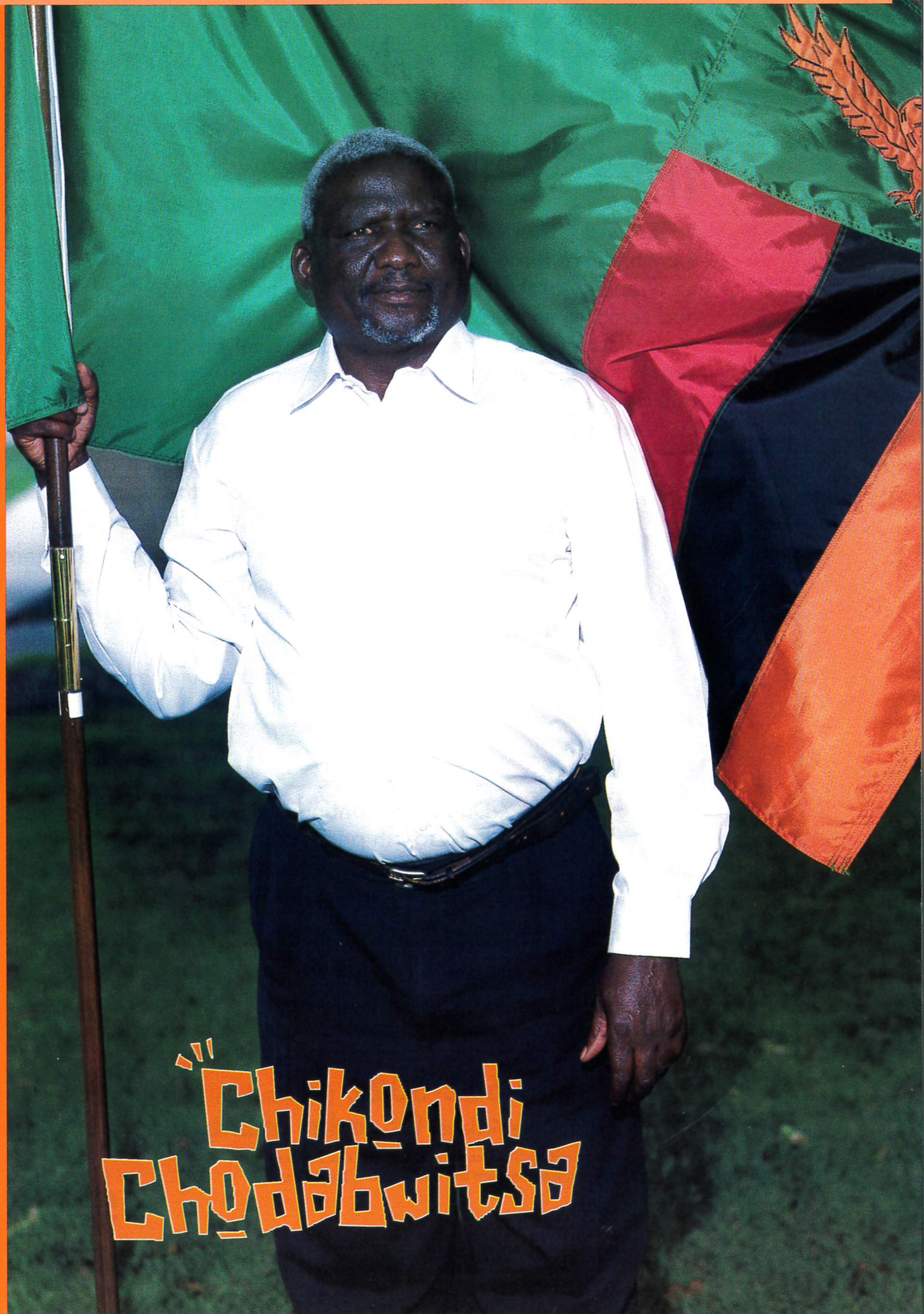
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Can you
marry
yourself?

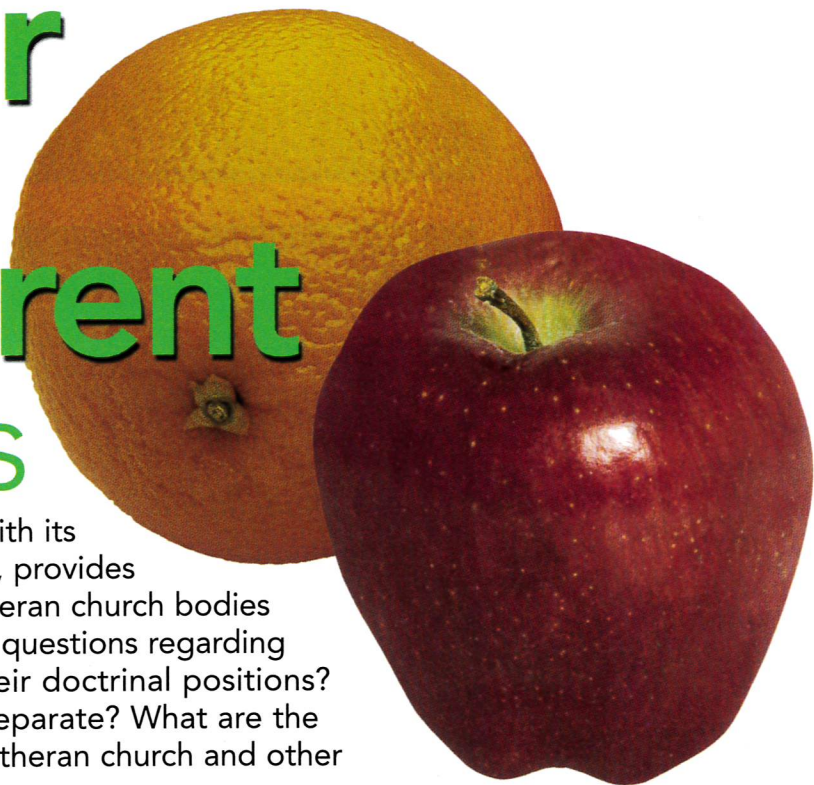
The junk
man

Halloween
treats for
Christians

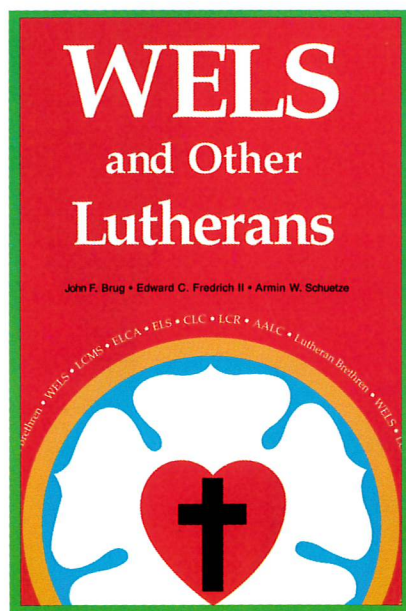


"Chikondi
Chodabwitsa

Similar in name, but different in beliefs



WELS and Other Lutherans, with its easy-to-read, three-part format, provides an overview of the various Lutheran church bodies and seeks to answer important questions regarding their distinctions: What are their doctrinal positions? What causes them to remain separate? What are the real differences between my Lutheran church and other Lutheran churches?



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God's plan

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

Thomas A. Westra

One hears the notion from time to time that if you love the Lord and serve him faithfully, trouble will stay away from your door.

You'll always have troubles

I don't know about you, but in the lives I have observed, I have not found that to be true. In fact, many times it seems that God's people catch the most grief. Scripture, on more than one occasion, poses the question: “Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?”

Like the food on your grocer's shelves, trouble comes in all sizes and varieties: big troubles and small troubles, troubles that seemingly won't quit, and troubles that come out of nowhere and hit you like a truck. Sometimes it's a crippling and debilitating illness. Sometimes it's financial woes. Sometimes it's family stress with a child or a spouse. Sometimes it's the loss of someone you love.

God has a plan for you

Especially in those times of trouble, God's promise that he has a plan for you (Jeremiah 29:11) is precious.

God's plans for you began even before the foundations of the universe were laid. The apostle Paul writes, “For [God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through



Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will” (Ephesians 1:4,5).

Think of it! God knew from eternity precisely when and where you would be born, who your parents would be, your DNA. It was all part of his plan. Knowing your sin, he provided a Savior, Jesus, to be your substitute in keeping all the law and also in dying guilty of all your sin. Yes, Jesus was thinking of you in love as he hung on the cross. He planned all of this so that you could be free from death and live forever with him. He chose you to be adopted into his family through the work of the Holy Spirit when he brought you to faith.

Your troubles are part of his plan

Are your troubles also part of his plan? Yes. Again, Paul writes,

“... in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Even when trouble has left your heart broken and your mind dazed—as it did for the disciples on that day when it appeared that Satan had won, when the Son was abandoned by his Father as he was dying on an ugly, horrible cross—even then, God's plan is being worked out. God used the tragedy of his Son's crucifixion to bring about your salvation. Because Jesus died guilty, you live forgiven. Your all-seeing, all-knowing, all-loving God uses every trouble that comes into your life as part of his plan to bring you safely home to heaven.

What a wonderful promise from God that you have to take with you: “I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Christ be my leader by night
as by day,
Safe through the darkness,
for he is the way.
Gladly I follow, my future
his care;
Darkness is daylight when
Jesus is there.
(Christian Worship 367:1)

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

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On the 50th anniversary of WELS' work in Central Africa, Pastor Salimo Hachibamba attended the 2003 synod convention and thanked WELS for sharing the news of God's amazing grace.

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bits & pieces



Oct. 31 marks both a religious and a secular holiday.

- Lutherans commemorate the Reformation on this day. Mark Paustian reminds us of the importance of the word "only" in this celebration in " 'Only' means everything" (back page).

- Richard Balge concludes his series on the Reformer, Martin Luther, in this issue (p. 16). We thank him for helping us get to know Luther better and for reminding us of the significance of Luther's actions and his writings.

- The world better knows Oct. 31 as Halloween. So how should Christian parents deal with this secular holiday? In "Trick or treat" (p. 10), Linette Scharlemann shares how she uses this holiday as an opportunity to share the gospel.



This special 40-page issue contains coverage of the WELS 57th biennial convention (pp. 17-24). Make sure to look for

- stories relating important decisions made at the convention, including making North American outreach our top priority;

- an interview with Pastor Salimo Hachibamba from the Lutheran Church of Central Africa as well as information about the 50th anniversary of WELS' work in Africa; and

- a talk with President Karl Gurgel about the opportunities and the challenges that WELS will face over the next two years.



Convention delegates called for WELS to have a mission-minded attitude. Two articles this month stress how important it is for all of us to be committed to proclaiming God's love to all people. Be reenergized by reading "The courage of our conviction" (p. 35) and "The face in the mirror" (p. 38).

—JKW

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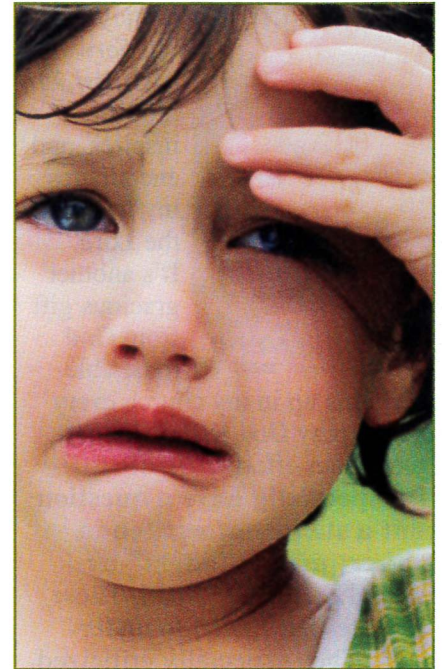
Karl R. Gurgel

REFORMATION

40 "Only" means everything

We don't see some things in fullest color or finest detail until we inject that one little word and fully feel its weight.

Mark A. Paustian



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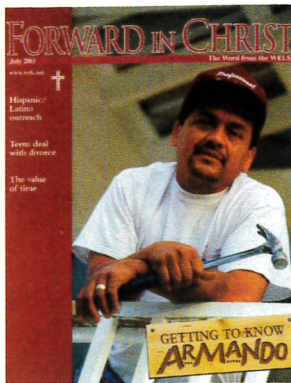
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The face in the mirror




I enjoy reading *Forward in Christ*. It motivates, inspires, and encourages my walk in the Lord. It's another gracious gift from God to be able

to pick this up in my church every month. I pray God will continue to bless your efforts!

I respectfully have a question about a statement written in "Luther: man of letters" by Richard D. Balge [July]. There is a quote that I need to understand: "They especially criticized his rendering of Romans 3:28, 'by faith alone.' Luther knew that the word 'alone' does not appear in the Greek original, but he pointed out that when Paul excludes deeds of the law that leaves faith alone."

I do not understand why Martin Luther would exchange Paul's words for one of his own. Luther, more than most, knew what Christ says in Revelation 22:18. I do understand his explanation—it's a human, common sense conclusion, but how does that justify changing a sentence inspired by God?

Thank you very much for helping me with this question.

 *Christine Wentzel*
Norfolk, Virginia

Richard Balge responds: *An ancient proverb says, "The translator is a traitor," meaning that a strictly literal translation from one language to another might not clearly or fully convey what the original language said. That would be "changing" the original.*

Skilled translators will sometimes add a word or use an idiom that is not a literal translation but that

does communicate what the author had in mind. If the translation communicates nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different from the original, that is not "changing" it.

God used the languages of the Jews (Hebrew and Aramaic) to communicate his truth in the Old Testament. He used Greek, the "universal" language of the Roman Empire, to communicate his truth in the New Testament. Even literal translation into other languages (German, English, etc.) might be thought of as "changing a sentence inspired by God." But if the translation communicates in English what God intended the original to communicate, that is not changing the inspired Word.


Luther's own longer explanation for how he translated Romans 3:28 can be found in Luther's Works, American Edition, Volume 35, pp. 188-190.

The article "The sight is glorious" [May] seemed to imply that the problem lies with worshipers who find WELS pastors' sermons and worship services boring. Many of the points made are 100 percent true. Often worshipers don't come to church with the correct attitude, which I believe should generally be to praise God. Also, many people think that they are coming to church to be entertained and moved, just like the best TV shows and movies do. Therefore, at times, when a church worshiper thinks that a sermon or church service is boring, the fault lies in the worshiper himself.

But what about worshipers who do come to church with the right attitude, don't come to church to be entertained, and do come to praise God—but still are bored? Is it possible that these WELS pastors and churches are not using any of the resources available? Are they using the many fantastic materials and worship service aids available from the WELS

Commission on Worship? All of this information is available free or at a low cost. I would suggest that all WELS pastors and churches should be using the materials and suggestions from the WELS Commission on Worship. Why? Because its purpose is to know and suggest the best types of WELS services. Not using its services would be like a TV station producing shows in black and white instead of in color.

My prayer is that every church not only preaches God's Word in its truth and purity but also does it in a way that best conveys God's Word to WELS members in 2003.

Phil Wagie
 *Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

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
NOVEMBER 2003

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“I, (state your name), take me . . .”

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

“It was probably inevitable,” says commentator Richard John Neuhaus.* On May 28, in a ceremony in the Netherlands, Jennifer Hoes apparently pledged to love, honor, and cherish—Jennifer Hoes. That’s right. She married herself. (A friend of mine thinks that this one is headed for a really nasty divorce.)

“It is logical that one promises to be faithful to oneself,” Hoes explains. Of course it’s “logical.” Who is it that almost everyone finds it easiest to “love, honor, and cherish”? When you look at it that way, for someone to marry herself makes perfect sense.

Let’s go a step further. Hoes’s position is simply one current view of marriage taken to an extreme. We shouldn’t limit ourselves to narrow, traditional ideas about what “marriage” is, this argument goes. Marriage can be whatever we’d like it to be—a man and a woman, a man and several women, two men, two women, and now a woman and herself. Once a society rejects God’s definition of “marriage” as “the lifelong union of one man and one woman,” on what basis can it fault Hoes’s arrangement?

Moreover, Hoes is just an unusually clear example of something we see all around us. Every day thousands of people marry the person they are counting on to meet their every need and make them happy. A marriage like this is just as much about “me” as Hoes’s is. Inevitably these people discover that no human being is going to meet all their needs or guarantee their happiness. So they conclude that something must be wrong with marriage or at least with theirs.

There’s nothing wrong with marriage as God designed it. There’s everything wrong with latching onto a spouse like a parasite and demanding to have my needs met, while I go along for the ride. The problem, in other words, isn’t marriage. It’s selfishness. The solution lies in the selfless one who “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

For followers of Jesus, Hoes has it exactly backwards. The way to a happy marriage isn’t to make yourself your spouse. The way is to make your spouse your “self”—in other words, to give your spouse the kind of love that by nature we reserve for the person in the mirror. “He who loves his wife loves himself” (Ephesians 5:28), says Paul, in one of the most beautiful sections on marriage in Scripture—a section that spells out what to “become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24) really means.

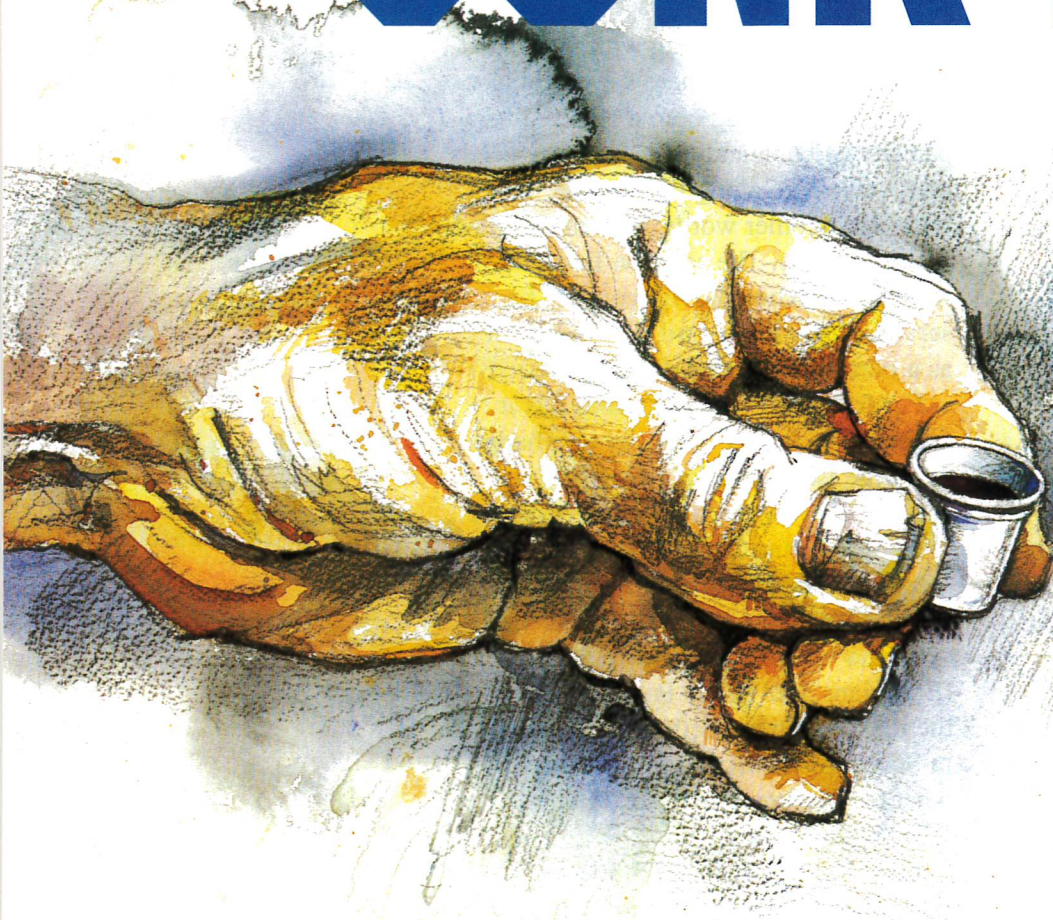
Read Ephesians 5:22-33. Ideally, read it together with your spouse. You’ll see why a marriage isn’t Christian as long as it’s all about “me.” You’ll see why a Christian marriage is one of God’s most beautiful creations. It’s not just a happy living arrangement. Christian marriage is a living poem by God about Christ and his bride—the greatest marriage of them all.

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

**First Things, June/July 2003 (#134), 68f.*

A marriage
isn’t Christian
as long as it’s
all about
“me.”

THE JUNK MAN



Twenty years ago we used to drink coffee and smoke at the kitchen table. He was the long-time rebel toying with me. Now his fingers can barely grip the tiny silver communion cup I offer at that same table.

Fred Fedke III

He waves his hand and ends pointing with his index finger, his other fingers hanging down like God's hand in the Sistine Chapel. It is a powerful and muscular hand, shaped by years of hard and heavy work. His fingernails are wide, broken, and dirty.

I stare at his hand thinking God must have a hand like this, maybe even with the dirt and clay of creation still under his fingernails.

He looks at me with small blue eyes, his deep, growling voice speaking of how he could die in an instant.

He snaps his big fingers. "Like that!" Then with that Sistine index finger he traces his neck artery up to his ear. "Hundred percent on this side," he says. He swings his big hand to the other side of his neck. "Seventy-five on this side." He puts his hand on the table in a fist, not slamming it in anger, but slowly, gently.

His wife, white-haired, white-bloused, wearing white shorts, eyes me and nods. "I thought of getting a second opinion . . ." Her voice fades off.

"If they go in," he says with a

deep rattle, "they can kill you that fast, and you won't even know it." He seems glad I came. They both are.

I set up my small communion ware on the kitchen table and begin the service with a prayer.

Twenty years ago we used to drink coffee and smoke at this table. He would offer me a Camel, and I would take it. I was the eager new pastor. He was the long-time rebel toying with me. He would speak of everything and anything to distract me from my purpose in coming, telling me stories of his

youth, and pranks he did, and how he was mean and bad, and all the late dance nights and carousing, and seeing Chicago gangsters heading up north in their black cars, and how he rode with his uncle running moonshine during Prohibition, and how he was still mean and bad. Then he'd look at me out of the corner of his eye, those small blue eyes, to see if I believed any of it. I believed it all.

He always sat at the table, leaning against the wall with his good side. He was a giant of a man, large head, powerful neck, big girth but not fat, a grizzly bear sitting in light-blue-striped bib overalls and grimy T-shirt. His voice was more growl than voice. Words rattled out with a deep vibrating timbre, like a slow lion roar, soft, close-up, and hair-raising.

His big arm was often raised in gestures, ending with his emphatic pointing at some invisible object. I once saw him thrust his hand in a violent backward motion, and he said, "I just cold-cocked him, you know what I mean." I didn't, but I had a good idea.

When he was especially excited, speaking about his prodigal son or something else equally troubling, the shoulder stump of his missing arm would occasionally jerk under his pinned sleeve. That's when it became noticeable, more than that hand or his rumbling voice—he was handicapped. He was long past embarrassment over it. He was nearly proud of it, not his injury and deformity, but that he could do with one arm what few could do with two. He once lifted an oil drum full of metal parts onto a pick-up box. He held it with his arm, started it moving with his knee and belly and then with a

great heave, bounced it and threw it onto the truck all in one motion.

I had once come for a piece of aluminum. That was the first time I saw him with his "blue wrench." That's what he called his acetylene torch. It was lit and hanging over his bad shoulder, the blue flame hissing inches away from his body. He found an orange road construction sign, the kind that folded. He stepped on the edge of the sign, grabbed the handle of the torch, squinted, squeezed the trigger, and started cutting off a hinge. A shower of pink sparks flew onto the sign and his battered shoes. When the metal was on fire he swung the torch over his shoulder, flame still lit, pulled at the sign with his hand and kicked at the red-hot hinge until it broke off. Then he did it all over again with the second hinge. At last he turned off the torch with a loud pop and gave me the two aluminum pieces, smoking, foul smelling, one still glowing red.

He ran a junkyard and had the personality for it. The yard was endless piles of wrecked cars, refrigerators, giant rusting gears, a few old buses, huge coils of wires, lots of things I couldn't identify—brown, rusting, metal junk everywhere. It was impossible to walk without stepping on something. From that turf he roared and scolded people and after the slightest grin would eventually let on that he had the part they were looking for. He knew it all, exactly where everything was and what was a fair price.

At his kitchen table our talks would be interrupted with phone calls. He would put the phone up to his ear, holding it with his

shoulder stump, and bellow out his conversations as if the people on the other end were hard of hearing. The calls were mostly about car parts, some guy looking for a Model-A fuel pump or a Studebaker door handle or a Pinto wheel rim. He'd tell them where to find it, then get back to me and how he was a bad guy with terrible language—I already knew that—and how others had tried to get him to church and how he knew that he should start coming someday.

These past few years I sat with him in the hospital more than in his kitchen. Mostly heart problems. One big surgery. A stroke once, two years ago. That was the scariest, when he'd sit in the hospital wheelchair and gesture with that big hand of his and repeat over and over, "I can't . . . I just can't . . ."

Now he takes the fragile communion wafer in that big hand. His fingers can barely grip the tiny silver communion cup. He sips softly and leaves most of the wine for his wife.

All the junk is gone. I wouldn't have believed it was possible. Now flowers and paths and a neat lawn grow where the piles and wrecks were. His wife specializes in irises. Only the tall, deep brown ones are still blooming.

"Yeah," his voice rumbles, "come again. Anytime." He extends his big hand with the Michelangelo fingers and dirty nails.

Fred Fedke is pastor at St. Matthew, Ontario, Wisconsin.



Trick or treat

Is Halloween a trick or a treat for the Christian parent?

Linette Scharlemann

I used to love Halloween when I was a kid.

I grew up on a farm in rural Minnesota with my six older brothers and sisters. Halloween was a big event back then. It began early in October when we brought down the costume boxes from the storeroom. The seven of us would try the costumes on and decide who would go as what. I'll never forget the year I went as a butterfly. You can just imagine the trouble I had getting in and out of the car with my huge cardboard wings strapped to my back and the wire antennae tied onto my head.

But my fondest memory of Halloween is the candy. Even though we only went to a handful of houses back

then, I can still remember the excitement of coming home and emptying my bag onto the floor. What a thrill! Halloween was the best.

Now that I'm a mom, my view of Halloween is quite different.

Like most moms, I tend to worry. I worry about the kids going out after dark. I worry about pins in candy bars and pranks done by teens out for a good time.

Most of all, as a Christian mom, I wonder if it's even right for our family to celebrate this "holiday." When you think about it, Halloween is probably the most non-Christian day of the year. From what historians tell us, the celebration of Halloween began with the ancient Druids, who

lit fires on the eve of All Saints' Day to ward off the evil spirits called forth by Saman, the lord of the dead. This fear of returning spirits continued through the ages, and so it is that dressing up as ghosts and witches is a common Halloween custom today.

It may be common, but does that make it right? I say no. My kids don't agree. "Nobody gets any of that stuff anyway, Mom," they tell me. "It's just fun."

I know they're right, because I was just like them once. I loved Halloween just as much as they do.

For years I wondered how I could make our family's observance of Oct. 31 into something that didn't plague my conscience with guilt.

Making Halloween a treat. Try one of the creative ideas



Using pumpkins donated by a local pumpkin farmer, members of The Hosanna Circle, a women's group at St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn., asked the sixth- through eighth-graders of their school to help "gut" 15 large pumpkins. The women then carved out a letter on each one to spell out this gospel message. The pumpkins were displayed at a church hayride and were later moved to the yard in front of church in time for Halloween night.

My first idea was to omit the door-to-door begging for treats with some sort of party at our church—a Reformation Party or a Harvest Party perhaps. I ran this idea by several people, and at first they seemed to like the idea. But when they realized I wanted to hold this party on Halloween night, the response was mixed. “Do you think anyone will come if we do it on Halloween? They’ll all be out trick-or-treating.”

I tried to tell them that that was the whole idea—to replace our traditional customs with newer, more God-pleasing customs. I soon realized these nay-sayers were probably right. In the words of the old proverb, “You can’t fight tradition.”

But another proverb says, “If you can’t beat them, join them.” After giving the whole issue more thought, I finally came up with a way that I could celebrate Halloween without sacrificing my beliefs. I knew Halloween night would bring scores of little ones to my door in search

of treats. What better treat to give them than the gospel message!

The first year I made a little seek-and-find on the computer, with a short Bible passage on the side. I rolled up the puzzles and wrapped them around crayons, playfully tying each one with a colorful piece of yarn. Suddenly, Halloween was fun again.

So many times in life we see how God can take something negative and turn it into a positive. For me Halloween is an example of this too.

Now I get excited each year coming up with new ideas for my treat bags. In doing so I’ve discovered lots of ways to take the traditions of Halloween and use them to spread the good news. The pumpkin picked from the field, cleaned, and carved

with a smile, can represent the Christian’s life of being chosen by our Lord, cleaned from sin, and left with a smile of peace and forgiveness. The practice of going from door to door in search of free treats can be used to symbolize the door to heaven, always open, always free, and always good.

I’ve finally learned how to celebrate Halloween with joy and thanksgiving.

So many times in life we see how God can take something negative and turn it into a positive. For me Halloween is an example of this too. I used to think of Halloween as an unavoidable evil. I now see it as an opportunity to spread the good news. Any opportunity to do that is worth celebrating.

Linette Scharlemann is a member at St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota.

below, or make up your own Christ-centered activity for Halloween.

Go trick-or-treating for charity—

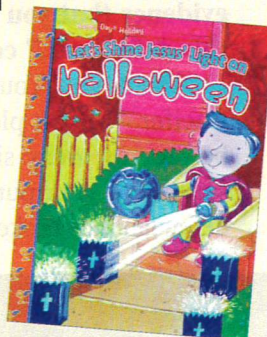
Rather than have the kids collect candy for themselves, begin a new tradition of giving. Dress your kids in the usual festive costumes, and go door to door asking for donations of nonperishable food items for the local food pantry.



Get Halloween books for Christian children—

Young children will enjoy the colorful pictures and comforting message in Diane Stortz’s book, *Let’s Shine Jesus’ Light on Halloween* (Standard Publishing). *The Pumpkin Patch Parable*, a board book by Liz Curtis

Higgs (Thomas Nelson Publishers), is another fun book that presents Halloween themes from a Christian perspective.



Jesus, my public

Gregory G. Galler

You, the defendant, sit in the most ornate and beautiful courtroom in all of creation. The enormous judge's bench is covered with intricately detailed carvings depicting scenes from the Bible. The gallery is abuzz with conversation. You hear the whisperings that judgment day has arrived.

A tall, physically-fit prosecutor enters the courtroom. He wears an expensive silk suit and is consummately groomed and manicured. Well-known for being as ruthless as he is shrewd and cunning, he carries a look and feel of confidence. Several assistant prosecutors follow, carrying his briefcase and volumes of large, leather-bound books. He sneers at you as he takes his seat at a table nearby.

The courtroom is called to order by a host of angels blowing trumpets. An archangel announces: "All rise, this court is now in session. All persons having business before this court shall come to order. The Most Holy, the Heavenly Father, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, is presiding." God the Father enters the courtroom. His judicial robes flow with grace and dignity as he takes his seat behind the bench.

"Are you the defendant?" asks God.

You stammer, "Yes, Your Honor."

God states, "I see that Satan, the accuser, is here on behalf of the prosecution. Satan, are you ready to proceed with your case?"

"I certainly am," he states with confidence.

God turns to you and asks, "Where is your attorney?"

"I'm not sure," you timidly answer.

From the back of the courtroom, a modest voice speaks, "May it please the court, this defendant qualifies for the public defender, and I am ready to proceed on his behalf."

"Very well," states God, "please come forward and sit with your client."

You turn around to see a humble and somewhat plain-looking man come forward. He isn't sharp and polished like the prosecutor. His clothes are lightly dusted with wood shavings. "Are you an attorney?" you ask.

"Actually, I'm a carpenter. But don't worry, you are going to be just fine," he reassures you.

"I can't afford to pay you anything," you state.

"That's OK, I never accept payment," he says.

Unlike the prosecutor, your public defender does not have a briefcase or any assistants. He carries no law books. He didn't even bring a pen or a pad of paper. Yet, somehow, his voice sounds familiar, and you trust him.

God asks your public defender, "Is the defendant ready to proceed to answer the charges?"

"We are," says your public defender.

"OK then, Satan, outline the evidence that you have against this defendant," commands God.

"Thank you, Your Honor," states Lucifer. "May it please the court, before you today sits a sinner deserving of your punishment. This defendant has broken virtually every

commandment that you have set out. In fact, it is written, 'For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it' (James 2:10). As you will see, he is not deserving of mercy. He should be sent to me in hell.

"I have before me, Your Honor, dozens of thick volumes recording the sins of this defendant. May I proceed?"

"You may," states God.

Satan then painstakingly works his way through the enormous volumes. He reads with delight the words that describe every sin that you have committed since you were born. You are ashamed and dismayed. How could he know so much? Had so many sins really been committed? In your heart you know that each accusation is true.

You look at your public defender, but he does not seem concerned. You wonder if he is even listening to the evidence. Why doesn't he object? Why doesn't he rebut the claims? Why isn't he doing something?

After countless hours of testimony, Satan closes the last volume. "That, Your Honor, is the prosecution's case against this defendant. As you can see, the defendant is a sinner and deserves your judgment of guilt and a sentence of eternity in hell. The prosecution rests."

God the Father turns to your public defender and asks, "How do you respond to these charges?"

"My client will admit that each and every allegation is true," states your public defender.

defender

Judgment day has arrived.
NOW WHAT?

Satan smiles with confidence as he begins to close his briefcase.

“However,” your public defender states, “this defendant cannot be punished because he is my client.”

At this, Satan jumps up and angrily protests, “I object, Your Honor. That is irrelevant. The fact that this sinner is represented by the public defender does not address his sins.”

Undisturbed by Satan’s outburst, your public defender continues. “Your Honor,” he begins, “I am Jesus, and this makes all the difference in this case, because this sinner is one of my sheep, one whom I was sent to earth to save.”

You notice that in his voice and in his heart is the pure sound of truth and righteousness. You can see and feel his love and passion.

He stands up and continues, “Heavenly Father, this is one for whom I was sent to earth. This is one for whom I was beaten, mocked and ridiculed, spat upon, whipped and flogged. This, Your Honor, is one for whom I was nailed to the cross and died. This is one for whom I rose again. I took all of my client’s sins upon me and received the judgment and punishment that my client would otherwise deserve.”

The courtroom is now totally silent.

Jesus continues, “Your Honor, because of my innocent suffering and death, the spilling of my blood, and my resurrection, my client’s sins are as far removed from this courtroom as the east is from the west.

Though my client’s sins were as red as crimson, they are now as white as the snow. I am the Lamb of God. I have taken away the sins of this defendant and will remember them no more. Accordingly, this defendant is innocent of the charges that have been made. I submit that there can no longer be found any record of any sin committed by my client.”

At that, Satan furiously reaches for his stack of books. “But it is all here, Your Honor,” he desperately wails. “I presented all of the evidence.” However, when he reopens the volumes, he sees that each page is empty.

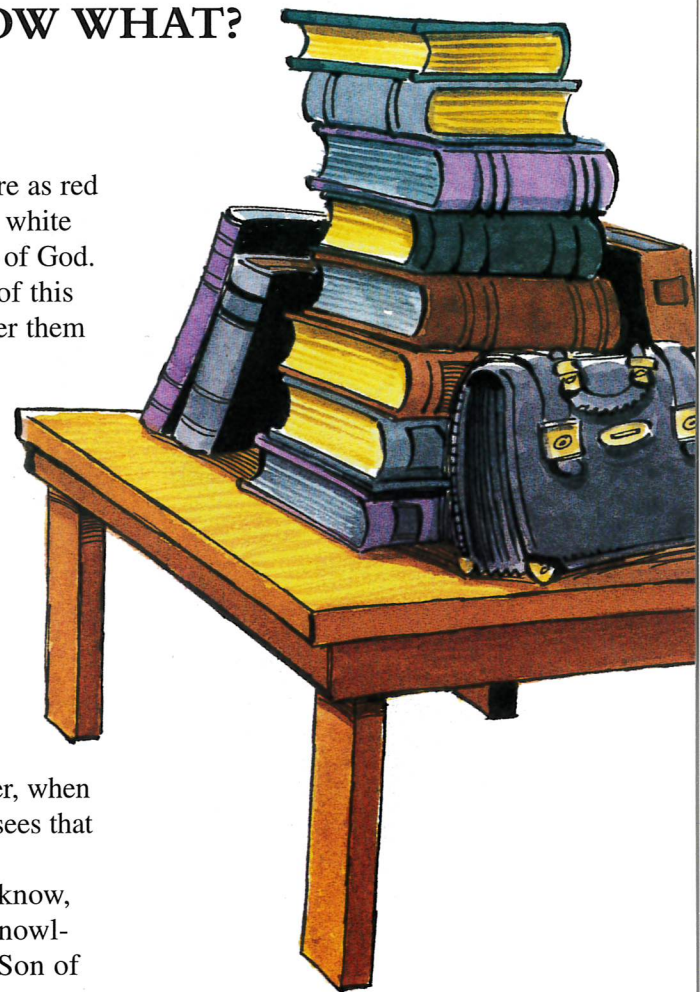
Jesus resumes, “As you know, Your Honor, ‘whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God’ (Luke 12:8,9). I acknowledge this defendant here today as my client. This is one of my sheep. Accordingly, the only possible judgment is innocence.” Jesus then calmly sits down.

God turns back to Satan. “Do you have anything else to add?”

Dejectedly, Satan, who knows he has been beaten, concedes.

“No, Your Honor.”

God then smiles at you and states, “Rejoice, the judgment of this court is innocence. Your



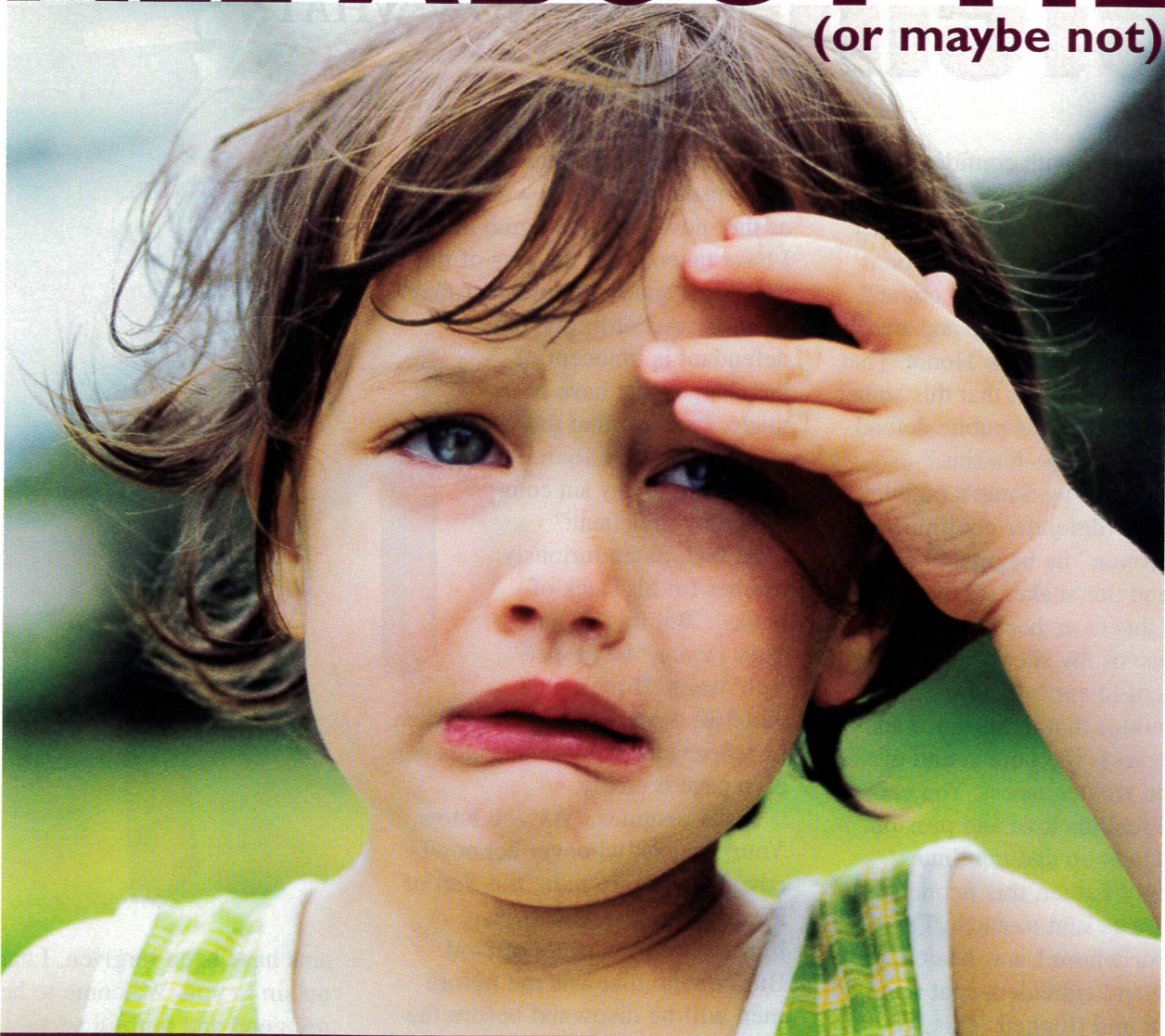
sins have been forgiven. I can find no sin in you. Welcome to heaven, my good and faithful servant.”

The gallery erupts in cheers as Jesus embraces you. Instead of being condemned to hell, you are ushered into a mansion that has been prepared for you by your Savior. Satan and his minions slink out of the courtroom in defeat.

Greg Galler, a district court judge, is a member of Salem, Stillwater, Minnesota.

ALL ABOUT ME

(or maybe not)



Five little lessons that God has taught me.

Ruth DuFore

Recently a friend asked me if I would give a brief background of my life for the ladies group in the church where I teach. I decided to tell them all about me (or maybe not) with five little lessons that God has taught me so far.

Lesson 1

I'm two-and-a-half years old. (My mom told this story to me, by the way. I don't remember it.) My family and I had just returned home from a Lenten service. Being farmers, my dad and brother had to finish chores in the barn. Even at the tender age of two, to me the barn was "where it's at!" So the story goes, after screaming my head off

didn't work to get me there, I held my breath until . . . I passed out!

This lesson, perhaps, isn't obvious, but my parents taught us right from wrong and stuck to it. Maybe you noticed that we were returning from a Lenten service. Not only did they teach us kids right from wrong, they took us to Jesus and showed Jesus to us in their lives and ultimately in their deaths. They showed us that Jesus is the only important part of our lives.

So you see, at the age of two, I just thought that it was all about me, but it was really all about Jesus.

Lesson 2

I'm 19 now and in college. Sad to say, I'm doing my best to get kicked out. I didn't like it. I was homesick. I thought the things that they were teaching were irrelevant. (You must remember that this was the 1960s.) My, oh my. What a classic case of all about me!

Truthfully, I don't remember anyone setting me down and talking to me with any great words of wisdom. What I do remember is God sending faithful and doctrinally true professors and friends into my life with his words of wisdom.

Sometimes I think God just caused the faculty and staff to ignore my little fits of rebellion and gave them no inclination to expel me. Whatever, I do know this: God had mercy on this sinful young rebel and kept me on the path he intended.

I thought for sure that it was all about me at 19. But God taught me a lesson about forgiveness—about Jesus. To top it all off, he guided my life down an avenue in which I would teach others about him. Once again, it was all about Jesus.

Lesson 3

Lesson 3 came in three parts, actually: three healthy, beautiful

babies. (Well, my son wasn't so pretty, I guess.) What a blessing! What a joy! What a job! What a worry! Am I too lenient? Do I discipline them correctly? I don't think that I can do this! Wait a minute, God. The children's father is not a believer—I'm alone here!

Enter God: "My dear young mother, this isn't about you. As a matter of fact, these three, they're not even yours—they're mine! I just had in mind for you to love them and care for them and bring them to know their Savior, my Son."

When I kneel at the altar and commune with my children, I know for sure that these three are not all about me. They are all about Jesus.

God showed me emphatically that it's not at all about me. It's all about Jesus!

Lesson 4

Oh, lesson 4 was a tough one! Eleven years ago, I learned that the man I had been married to for the past 22 years was a child molester. My children! Shocked? Not nearly as shocked as I was. The guilt. The shame. The horror. I think if there was an "all about me" land you can go to—I went. I refer to that year and a few that followed as the "war of my life." What was God doing here? Not in my family!

There was a faithful pastor, a Christian counselor, a dear friend, and a psalm (Psalm 27):

The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?
When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh,

when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.

Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord . . .

to seek him in his temple.
For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle, and set me high upon a rock.

I think somewhere a million lessons were learned in this one. But mostly this: God will do whatever it takes to keep me faithful and bring me home to him in heaven. Let me put that a different way. He has done all it takes to get me home to heaven. He sent his Son to suffer my guilt, my shame, my horror. God showed me emphatically that it's not at all about me. It's all about Jesus!

Lesson 5

Lesson number 5 came recently—just this past Sunday. The day before I had made a proverbial life-changing decision. I retired from the teaching ministry. Am I doing the right thing? Am I using selfish reasons? Am I leaving God? Then one of God's own messengers informed me in a sermon that I'm wearing God's name—always. Christ's name. In fact, he gave it to me.

God grant that whatever is done in my life be done to his glory. Because, you see, my life is not all about me. Thank God, it's not anything about me. Thank God, it's all about Jesus!

Ruth DuFore is a member of Atonement, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Luther's last days

Martin Luther remained active in his faith until the very end.

Richard D. Balge

Considering Martin Luther's medical history, we marvel that God enabled him to be as productive as he was for as long as he was. At various times he suffered serious digestive problems, kidney stones, anemia, depression, and gout. In 1533, he complained of vertigo, with ringing and buzzing in his ears. In 1537, he had to leave the meeting of Lutheran princes and theologians at Smalcald when he showed symptoms of uremia. He almost retired to Mrs. Luther's farm in the summer of 1545, suffering from congestive heart failure. Both his sight and his hearing were in decline.

His death

In the last months of his life, Luther returned twice to Eisleben, the city of his birth. In 1545, the three counts of Mansfeld, brothers who shared a tiny territory that included Eisleben, were involved in a lengthy property dispute. They asked Luther, 62 years old and ailing, to arbitrate the case. Partly because some church property was involved, he agreed. In late 1545 and early 1546, he advised the counts. Before agreement could be reached, the brothers went on a military campaign against a common enemy, so Luther returned to Wittenberg.

In late January the counts were ready to renew their efforts and asked Luther to rejoin them. He took his sons and their tutors to Eisleben with him. By Feb. 14 his patient efforts had brought the counts to agree in principle to a

settlement. During the three weeks of negotiations he took care of other business, wrote several letters to Katherine, and preached four sermons. At the end of his last sermon, he said: "There is so much more to say about the gospel, but I am tired."

Late on Feb. 17, Luther experienced an irregular heartbeat. Between 2 and 3 A.M. the next day, his colleague, Justus Jonas, spoke with him for the last time. "Reverend Father," he said, "do you wish to die steadfastly in Jesus Christ and in the faith as you preached it?" Luther answered, "Yes." Martin Luther went home to his Lord and Savior early on Feb. 18, 1546.

At the end of his last sermon, [Luther] said: "There is so much more to say about the gospel, but I am tired."

His burial

The Mansfeld counts wanted Eisleben's illustrious native son to be buried in Eisleben, but Elector John Frederick overruled them. There was a funeral service at St. Andrew's in Eisleben, and then the return trip to Wittenberg began. En route, the village churches tolled their bells as the funeral party passed through town. On Sunday morning there was a funeral service at Halle.

The procession reached Wittenberg on Tuesday. It made its way to the Castle Church, the official church of

the university. Entrance was through the side door, where Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses in 1517. Luther's pastor, John Bugenhagen of the City Church, preached a German sermon. Philip Melancthon, rector of the university, delivered a Latin address. The Reformer's body was buried near the pulpit and still rests there.

When Melancthon announced the death to the students of Wittenberg University, he said: "Alas, now has died the charioteer and the chariot of Israel who guided the Church in this last age of the world." He reminded the students that "it was not through human wisdom that the teaching of the remission of sins and the faith of the Son of God was perceived, but it was disclosed by God through this man." He exhorted them, "Let us therefore cherish his memory and the doctrine which he delivered."

Master Philip's words speak also to us.



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

Want to learn more about Luther's teachings?

Check out this book from Northwestern Publishing House:

- *As Luther Taught the Word of Truth* (#06N0722). A devotion book on Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism.

To order, call 800/662-6022

(Milwaukee area, 414/475-6600).

Or order on-line at <www.nph.net>.

Convention 2003

PEACE
through
Jesus
Know it. Live it. Share it. ✝



President Sutarno and his wife, Tutik, catch up with Pastor Gary Schult, a former missionary to Indonesia who came to the convention to witness the declaration of fellowship with *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia*. Read more about the Sutarnos inside in the article "Blest be the tie that binds."



The 57th biennial convention was held on the campus of Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Four hundred forty-five men attended—373 voting delegates, 54 advisory delegates, and 18 special guests. Of the 373 voting delegates, 181 were laymen, 113 were pastors, and 79 were teachers.

SETTING DIRECTION—NORTH AMERICAN OUTREACH

Going into this synod convention, WELS Christians were asking many questions. How did our financial situation deteriorate so badly? What are we doing to turn things around? Most important: What direction will we go from here?

The challenge was and is huge: to find a way to do more with less. We have fewer people and less money, with increasing opportunities to serve God's kingdom.

The answer came directly: make less more. Exercise your faith, roll up your sleeves, and go to work right where you are. For the next four years, make outreach in North America the top priority.

We have the Savior's Great Commission and a growing mission field in our own neighborhoods. We have well-trained and highly-committed workers graduating each year, and we need to have places for them to serve. It's time to see what can be done to reverse the prolonged decline in WELS membership and to do more outreach in the rapidly expanding parts of our country.

This outreach initiative goes well beyond raising more money for missions, as important as that is. It calls for making evangelism a priority and a strategy in all of our WELS churches and using our Lutheran elementary schools for outreach to the communities. It directs our attention to the increasing opportunities for cross-cultural witnessing. It directs the Board for Home Missions (BHM) to "expand creative, cost-effective ways to plant churches, assist existing congregations to develop daughter congregations, and to revitalize plateaued missions begun in the last two decades." It seeks, under the direction of the BHM, the Board for Ministerial Education, and the Conference of Presidents to develop a strategy for bi-vocational (tent) ministry.

President Karl R. Gurgel, reelected for another four-year term, said, "I'm grateful for the mission-minded direction provided by the delegates. It's exciting to be a leader in a church that still recognizes the Great Commission as its mandate."

President Karl Gurgel presented a three-part, state-of-the-synod address titled "Reclaiming our first love: Peace through Jesus."



RESTORING CONFIDENCE

Just when we thought WELS had hit bottom financially, the earth shifted and another gaping hole appeared. In the midst of sometime dramatic new ministry initiatives and increasingly complex financial activity, millions of dollars of internal borrowing went unnoticed over the past two years, and almost \$8 million must be paid back.

Even more urgent than "How did this happen?"—WELS Christians are asking, "How can we be sure it won't happen again?"

To get the answers, the WELS Synodical Council engaged an outside accounting firm, Grant Thornton LLD, to study our accounting and reporting procedures, suggest ways to improve them, and report its findings to the synod in convention.

Grant Thornton reported that the problem arose due to lack of communication or communication that was not understood. All spending went for appropriate ministry. The report went on to detail several recommendations to strengthen the accounting and reporting procedures. The synod in convention fully endorsed the report and called for its timely implementation.

The first steps, already underway, will create and fill the position of Chief Financial Officer of WELS and an independent oversight committee for WELS financial services. Attention will be given to careful monitoring and reporting of budget performance, employing a surer means of revenue forecasting, and consolidating and coordinating financial procedures and statements.

The convention also endorsed a 10-year payback plan for the borrowed moneys, phased in to have a minimal impact on present WELS ministries.



Michael Hartman (left), a WELS missionary in Mexico, discusses the business of the convention with a fellow delegate. Delegates from world mission fields shared mission presentations with other delegates so they could see the scope of mission opportunities throughout the world.

ELECTION RESULTS

President—Pastor Karl R. Gurgel

Second vice president—Pastor Thomas Zarling

Synodical Council

Member at-large, pastor—Jon Bitter

Board for Home Missions

Chairman—Pastor Mark Cares

Board for World Missions

Chairman—Pastor Philip Koelpin

Latin American Missions

Layman—Allen Stueck

Native American Missions

Pastor—Martin Spaude

Teacher—Lynn Kuether

Africa Missions

Layman—Donald Whitlock

Japan Europe Asia Missions

Pastor—Stephen Valleskey

Layman—Kenneth Westlund

Southeast Asian Missions

Teacher—James Holman

Layman—David Habben

Board for Ministerial Education

Pastor—Richard Kogler

Teacher—Stephan Rodmyre

Layman—David Bastyr

Martin Luther College Governing Board

Chairman—Pastor Ralph Scharf

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor—John Schuetze

Layman (1 of 2)—Jerome Bentz

Layman (2 of 2)—Kenneth Hull

Board for Parish Services

Layman—Mark Naumann

Commission on Youth Discipleship

Chairman—Pastor Thomas Schneider

Commission on Adult Discipleship

Chairman—Pastor Randy Hunter

Board of Appeals

Pastor—Larry Ellenberger

Teacher—Alan Draeger

Layman—Peter Dorn

PAYING THE WAY

Giving thanks to God that, even in these difficult economic times, he moves his people to generously support the church and its ministry and trusting the Lord to carry us through these trying times, the delegates adopted budgets of \$64,454,710 for 2003-04 and \$64,886,671 for 2004-05.

The budget figures represent a 10 percent cut from last year's already-reduced budget and rely heavily on revolving/restricted funds. The synod in convention, furthermore, warned that the financial crisis we have experienced is not necessarily over. The threat looms for further cuts in ministerial staffs and programs.

The delegates resolved "that we encourage every congregation in the synod to prayerfully and generously increase their congregational mission offerings so that we might faithfully carry out the mission and ministry that God has entrusted to us as a synod." They called for our congregations to give mission offerings that reach and surpass 10 percent of the congregation's total offerings. The present average is 8 percent, down from 19 percent in earlier years. Each congregation is urged to make ongoing stewardship training a part of that effort.



The synod also called for strong support of Mission Partners, a program that allows individuals, congregations, and groups of congregations to direct additional offerings to specific projects that are already in the budget. The success of this program is essential to meet the budget revenue forecast.

The financial needs are great. However, President Karl Gurgel, calling on all of us to reclaim our first love, pointed out, "Our challenge is more than just financial. It's a ministry challenge. How are we going to use our churches and schools in reaching out to those all around us? That, really, is our greatest challenge, carrying out the Savior's Great Commission to the ever growing number of people in our country and the world."

DIRK DELEGATE'S DAILY DIARY

The following is a feature that ran on the WELS Web site during the synod convention. The diary was updated daily. Two entries are printed below. To read more of Dirk's diary, go to <www.wels.net>, jump word "convention."

Monday, July 28 (introduction)

Hello! I'm Dirk Delegate, here to give you a bit of personal insight on what it's like to be at the convention. . . . Okay,

"Dirk" isn't my real name. (I doubt it's actually anybody's real name.) I'm concealing my identity because I don't want the focus to be on me. But I am a real delegate, serving you here. I'll try to be your eyes and ears on the scene, giving you a glimpse of what's taking place on and off the convention floor.

Thursday, July 31

You know those pre-flight safety talks given by flight attendants? "In case of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop down. If traveling with a child, first take the mask to administer oxygen to yourself. Then, administer oxygen to your child."

That seems counter-intuitive. Every mother with a baby on her lap wants to take care of that baby first, herself second. But the reality is different. If the mother is left gasping for air and passes out, she

will be of no help to her child, and both will be in danger. The parent must remain strong if she is to supply air to her offspring.

Something like that is what happened in the big decision of our synod today. Floor Committee #11 was charged with setting the key priority for our synod as we go forward from this convention. We voted today that North American outreach will be our top priority for the next four years. That sounds somewhat selfish. Is there not a world of people out there in need of the gospel? Are there not whole continents with hardly any Christians on them? Why should we make our own backyard the most urgent target of our evangelizing efforts?

But think again. It makes sense. WELS has been shrinking in the size of its membership over the last decade. We were told that half of our congregations had zero or only one adult confirmation in the last five years. We need to reenergize our existing congregations. We need to breathe spiritual vigor into our ministry at home. If we can't do that, we won't have any strength or resources left to do mission work elsewhere.

The parent church needs a dose of Spirit-administered oxygen. It is a time of emergency. May God renew the strength of our pastors, our people, and our missionaries on this continent, so that we can renew our ongoing commitment to reach out with the gospel everywhere.

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS

On the door of a mission post in central Java, Indonesia, hangs a WELS world mission map. This, according to President Sutarno of *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia* (GLI), is to remind the church's members that people all over the world are praying for and supporting the GLI.

Delegates reiterated this fact at the synod convention by voting to declare formal fellowship with the GLI. By singing, "Blest be the tie that binds," delegates reminded the 651 GLI members that although many miles separate the two church bodies, they are one in doctrine and in Christian fellowship.

Pastor Sutarno and his wife, Tutik, traveled 37 hours (with lay-overs) to Watertown, Wis., for the event. "We're happy to have the sound teaching based on God's Word," says Pastor Sutarno (in English, his fourth language). "We're happy we can walk together to share God's Word. We're happy that we are one in Jesus."

WELS first sent missionaries to Indonesia, a country of 210 million people, in 1979. Then it was still legal to talk about Jesus. When the seminary in Indonesia was forced to suspend operation in 1993, all three missionary families left the field because their work permits only allowed them in Indonesia as theological instructors at the seminary. The Lord opened the door for Missionary Pieter Reid and his family to return in the fall of 1994. In September 2001, the Reids were pulled from the field when radical Islamic groups threatened to take Americans hostage. Now they serve the GLI from Sun Prairie, Wis.

Even though this Christian church body faces persecution, the Lord is blessing the GLI. Over the past three and a half years, GLI membership doubled to 651. The number of congregations and exploratory posts grew from 11 to 22, and the number of national pastors and evangelists has increased from 10 to 31.

Pastor Sutarno became president of the GLI in 1996. Born and raised a Christian, he approached former Indonesia missionary Bob Sawall in 1985 with the request to study to be a church worker. Sawall started classes with Sutarno and five others—the formal beginning of the seminary in Indonesia.

Now, besides his role as GLI president, Sutarno is pastor at Shepherd of the Islands, teaches at the seminary in Jakarta, and visits congregations and exploratory posts throughout Indonesia. He and Tutik have two children—a seven-year-old son, Gamalael (named after the teacher of apostle Paul) and a 21-month-old daughter, Catherin von Bora (named after Martin Luther's wife. Born at the end of October, she would have been named Martin Luther if she had been a boy!).

"Thank you very much to help our Indonesian church," concluded Pastor Sutarno. "We want the oneness and working together to continue for a long time. You help our church in offering, support, and prayer. All the glory to God."



(From left) President Sutarno, Missionary Pieter Reid, Synod Secretary Steven Lemke, Friendly Counselor John Vogt (head of the World Mission floor committee), and President Karl Gurgel sing "Blest be the tie that binds" after WELS declares fellowship with *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia*.

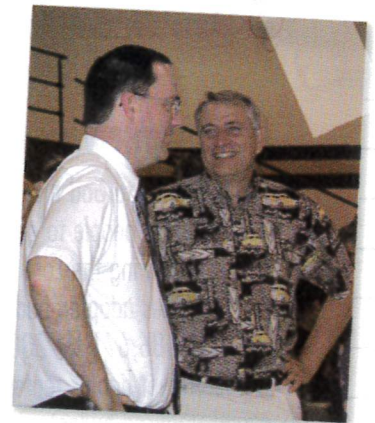
RIGHT SIZING

In view of fiscal issues and needing to operate within our means, the delegates discussed at length what our priorities should be. Should we abandon Parish Services before cutting any more missionaries or professors? Do we need to run two prep schools in Ministerial Education, or will one do?

In the end, the voting delegates endorsed both Parish Services and Ministerial Education along with Home and World Missions as essential to our ministry. However, the mood does not assume "business as usual." Parish Services, for example, is tasked to give increased emphasis to outreach, particularly to the multi-ethnic population around us. Youth Discipleship and Parish Schools are to partner in an effort to strengthen families and retain our children, teens, and young adults.

Rather than make any quick decisions about the future of our prep schools, the synod in convention commissioned a prep school study suggested by the Board for Ministerial Education. The study, to be completed in time for the 2005 synod convention, is to be comprehensive, considering the philosophy that sustains the prep schools, the contributions of the schools, the available resources, the advantages and disadvantages of the system, and alternate possibilities.

Should more cuts in ministry be necessary during the biennium between conventions, the Synodical Council is asked, in keeping with its responsibility, to make them prayerfully, while weighing the many concerns and cautions voiced at the convention and the long-range implications of further reduction in ministry.



(From left) Paul Prange, president of *Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw*, and Peter Kruschel, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education.

IN OTHER ACTION

In other action, the synod in convention resolved that . . .

- In anticipation of a surplus of pastors and teachers in the foreseeable future, our synod, districts, and churches pursue alternative forms of ministry that go beyond our traditional roles (e.g., team tent ministry, joint ministry between neighboring churches, joint ministry within districts, use of trained workers for English as a Second Language), and we encourage our congregations to strive to bring their churches to a full complement of staff.
 - Martin Luther College (MLC) initiate its masters degree program by the summer of 2004, and the Board for Ministerial Education proceed with its planned assessment and research in regard to the staff ministry program at MLC.
 - The Synodical Council and the Board for Ministerial Education reexamine the synod's current level of financial support for ministerial education.
 - The Board of Control of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary on behalf of WELS seek and appoint someone to act as synod archivist and historian who will help develop proposals for the future of the archives.
 - As a part of the restructuring plan, telecommunications and technology continue to be served by a chief technical officer and a supporting committee and continue to receive budget support for research and development in technology.
 - The 2005 synod convention be held on the campus of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
 - The Conference of Presidents coordinate with the Synodical Council to determine the best way to handle creation and distribution of stewardship materials so that there is a unified, coordinated stewardship program.
 - Youth Discipleship research and publish a report on the extent of and reasons for teen and young adult losses in our church body.
- We encourage all congregations to supply needed information to the student database for campus ministry to our college students.
 - We pray that the use of "Mission Partners" as a means to help fund mission work will lead more members of the synod to learn about world missions and take personal ownership in them.
 - Prior to each synod convention, the Synodical Council present detailed two- and five-year ministry plans, including budget projections, to the district conventions for analysis and reaction.
 - We encourage the members of the synod to wholeheartedly accept and totally fund the compensation package as proposed by the Synodical Council that phases in the increases over a period not to exceed three years.
 - We authorize the Synodical Council to explore and implement the use of tax-exempt municipal bonds for capital projects.
 - A one-time pension increase of three percent be provided to current retirees and beneficiaries.
 - The Synodical Council appoint a study committee to look into restoring a buffer fund to help us through future lean years.
 - The Communication Services Commission keep pace with the ever-expanding forms of communications, and the called workers and congregations use and promote our WELS communication services.



When a resolution was being discussed, delegates could step to nearby microphones to express their views.



Steve Zambo, WELS media communications director, tapes the convention so that WELS members can view it on the WELS Web site.

JUMP WORD "CONVENTION"

For the first time ever, WELS members could watch portions of the synod convention on the WELS Web site only hours after they took place. Want to hear President Gurgel's three-part speech or see WELS declare fellowship with *Gereja Lutheran Indonesia*? Want to watch the closing service's sermon, given by Zambian pastor Salimo Hachibamba? Just log onto <www.wels.net>, and use the jump word "convention." The videos are archived, so you can still watch any portion of the convention that you might have missed.

If your computer can't handle streaming video, you can read the convention reports posted throughout each day. Snapshots, human-interest features, election results, and Bible studies are also posted on the convention site.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH PRESIDENT KARL GURGEL

President Karl Gurgel reflects on the convention and the focus set by the delegates for the next four years.

What was the spirit of the convention?

I think very forward looking, realistic, and confident. [Delegates] wanted to get on with the mission. They also recognized that we have some large challenges. But they were confident that with God's blessing we can accept the commission, meet the challenges, and keep the commitment.

The delegates set North American outreach as the focus for the next four years. Why is this significant?

It might seem self-serving. But as I reflect on that, I don't think that's what we're saying. North American outreach includes people from all over the world. It's an acknowledgement that God is bringing a sample of the world's population right here. . . . We're recognizing that we have to open our eyes to see that the fields are white for harvest. Maybe that's the wrong color. The fields are a different color than we have traditionally been seeing. We shouldn't be frightened by that but excited about the prospect of having so many different people with whom to share the gospel.

What are the plans for going forward with North American outreach?

The administrators and the synod officers are taking the direction the convention gave us and identifying themes for the various areas of ministry. The areas of ministry then will be identifying

how they're going to carry that through in their particular area, conscious of the whole picture. . . .

I think that North American outreach will be a unifying emphasis for all the areas of ministry.

What challenges do you see for WELS in upcoming years?

We need to be more conscious of the many ethnic groups all around us who need the gospel as much as we do. We also need to become more creative in finding ways that groups of congregations can establish new mission ministry.

We need to clarify how we're going to train competent workers for the future.

We also have a challenge to help our people rekindle their zeal for all of the lost. When I mention all the lost, I mean also those in our own congregations who are slipping away from us. If we aren't concerned about them, why should we be concerned about those we don't even know?

What was your favorite part of the convention?

I had a lot of them. One was the warm expression of gratitude to Gary and Carol Schroeder for their work in Hong Kong. There was also the tearful acknowledgement of the Indonesian people of their fellowship with us. And then the celebration of 50 years in Africa.

Even if these aren't North American things, they tie in with the joy that outreach brings. If we don't care for the person missing from the pew, we're not going to care for the person outside the church, and we're not going to bring the money to send someone halfway around the world. . . . We have to open our eyes to what's near to us because that will inspire us to reach out as far as we can.

What do you see for the future of WELS?

Retreat is the wrong word. Reevaluation is the right word—to be sure that we're making the best possible use of what God has given us. The delegates, realizing that we had to trim things, also really want to expand the work. They want to go forward with the Word.

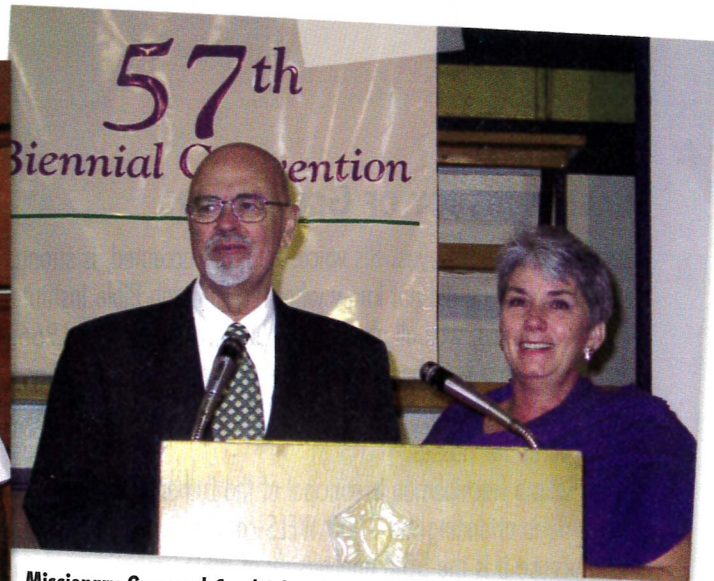


President Gurgel talks to the chairmen of the floor committees. Each voting delegate is a member of one of 15 floor committees. Each floor committee studies different sections of the *Book of Reports and Memorials* and brings resolutions to the convention floor for the delegates to vote on.

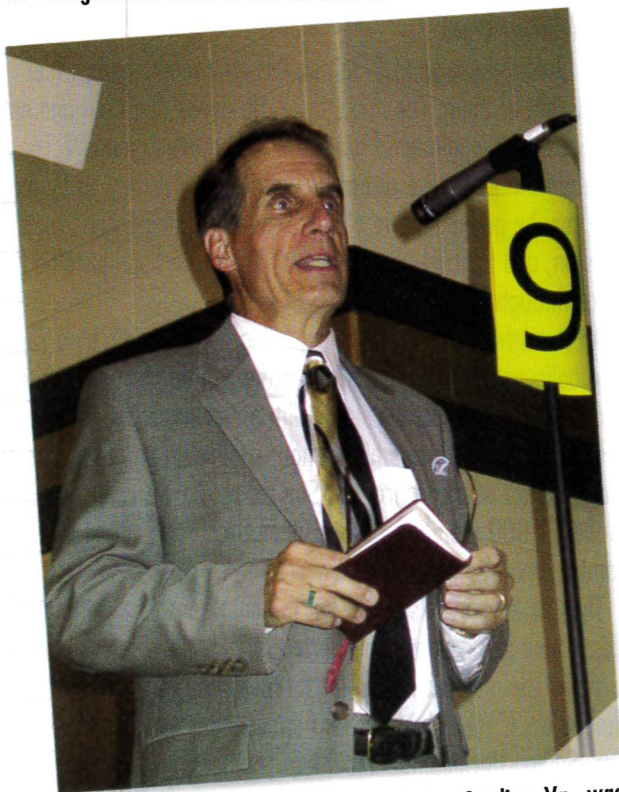
Look for the first in a series of articles about the direction that WELS is taking in North American Outreach in the November issue of *Forward in Christ*. If you do not receive *Forward in Christ* magazine and are interested in subscribing, call Northwestern Publishing House, 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8. Or order on-line, <www.nph.net/periodicals>.



Martin Luther College Professor Emeritus Jerald Plitzuweit (left) and Pastor Tom Franzmann take a break during the busy convention. Plitzuweit and retired Pastor John Jeske presented nine "Gospel Gems"—devotions based on gospel texts from the Old and New Testament—during the convention. Pastor Don Patterson from Holy Word, Austin, Texas, presented the convention Bible study, based on the biennial theme, "Peace through Jesus: Know it. Live it. Share it."



Missionary Gary and Carol Schroeder received a standing ovation after they talked about their 27 years of work in Hong Kong. Gary retired for health reasons earlier this year.



Thomas Zarling, pastor at Christ Our Savior, Sterling, Va., was elected second vice president at the convention. In this position he will become a member of the Conference of Presidents and secretary of the Synodical Council. With North American outreach and stewardship being important issues for WELS over the next few years, Zarling will fit right in. "Outreach and stewardship are two of my favorite topics," he says.

A 1969 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Zarling has served in such positions as circuit pastor, second and first vice president of the North Atlantic District, and chairman of the Board for Parish Services. He and his wife, Mary, have four children: Elisabeth, Paul, David, and Jon. The incumbent, Pastor Jon Mahnke from Apostles, San Jose, Calif., decided not to run for reelection.



Each day, young pages sorted and passed out a hefty amount of paperwork to keep delegates informed about the topics being discussed.



Northwestern Publishing House Vice President John Braun (right) presents veteran missionary Ernst H. Wendland with a gift for his work on the People's Bible series. Begun in 1981, the People's Bible series is now complete. At the convention, Braun honored each book's author for helping produce this series of Bible commentaries.

SHARING THE JOY OF GOD'S WORD

A light sparkles in his eyes. His voice, clear but accented, is strong. He explains that he did not know what the Lutheran Bible Institute in Lusaka, Zambia, was all about when he enrolled there in 1966. In fact, he hadn't even been baptized yet. But, WELS missionary Ernst H. Wendland said, "We'll try him," and let him stay when he showed up for classes.

Now Salimo Hachibamba is principal of the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka. He is attending the 2003 WELS convention as an honored guest because it is the 50th anniversary of WELS' mission work in Zambia. He is preaching at the convention's closing service.

I try to pry out of him what the topic of his sermon is, but all he'll give me is the Bible text he's preaching on—Romans 5:1. With a mischievous look in his eyes, he tells me, "You'll have to listen and see."

50 YEARS OF AMAZING GRACE

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA), past and present missionaries to Zambia and Malawi spoke at the convention on Thursday evening, including Theodore Sauer, Raymond Cox, Ernst H. Wendland, Paul Nitz, and John Gierach. Sauer, Cox, and Wendland helped establish and shape the LCCA back in the fifties and sixties. Nitz currently coordinates the mission in Malawi, and Gierach recently served in Zambia.

Wendland noted that the LCCA's anniversary celebration is titled "Chikondi Chodabwitsa" ("Amazing Grace")—but 50 years ago there was not a word in the African language of Chewa that accurately por-

"Chikondi Chodabwitsa"

trayed the grace of their heavenly Father, a Son who died for them, and a Holy Spirit who spoke to them through the Holy Scriptures.

Today the LCCA in Zambia has 11,000 members, and the LCCA in Malawi has 39,000. The fields share a Bible institute and a seminary. National pastors and churches are taking on more and more responsibility for their work.

WELS congregations will receive a packet of information this fall to help them celebrate the 50th anniversary of WELS' work in Africa.

(From left) Phil Koelpin, chairman of the Board for World Missions, and Missionaries Raymond Cox and Theodore Sauer. Sauer coordinated WELS' work in Central Africa from 1961-1964 and again from 1971-1976. In 1976, Cox took over as superintendent.



So, I do. I listen with rapt attention during Hachibamba's sermon, not because I have to, but because I want to. This talented man's words, powered by the Holy Spirit, wrap around me and pull me in: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

How many times have I heard these words? Yet, as this man reads them, I feel the weight of them. The importance. He draws them out and emphasizes the magnitude of them. He then reads Romans 4:16: "Therefore the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring." Ahh . . . a light goes on, and Hachibamba proclaims, "We have been justified by grace through faith."

A thoroughly Lutheran teaching, being taught to me by a Zambian who believes those words just the same as I do. Joy wells up in my heart, as I realize that we share faith in the same God of grace.

Hachibamba continues his sermon, expanding on the picture of a loving Father who sacrificed his Son for us. He works his way around to the 11,000 members of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa in Zambia who also believe these words.

Then he says it: "I say this not to boast, for this is not my joy. This is your joy, because you started it."

Wow. The reality of his words hit me, and I can't help but get choked up. If WELS had not sent missionaries to Zambia 50 years ago, Salimo Hachibamba and 11,000 other Zambians may not have heard the truth about God's grace. While feeling joy, though, I also feel an urgency—an urgency to reach out to more people, so that more souls can be saved by grace through faith.

"We say thank you very much for coming to us with the Word," concludes Hachibamba. "Your money has not been wasted. The fruits are there to see. That's your joy."

That's your joy—and mine.



Salimo Hachibamba was in the first graduating class of the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1972. He is now principal and professor at the same seminary.

The ELS celebrates mission beginnings

In 2003, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) is celebrating several important anniversaries: the 150th anniversary of the organization of its spiritual forebear (commonly known as the Norwegian Synod) and the 35th and 10th anniversaries of the synod's mission work in Peru and Chile.

For many years, the ELS had provided both financial support and manpower for Synodical Conference mission work in India, China, and Africa. After the Synodical Conference dissolved, the synod supported the foreign work of its sister synod, WELS. In 1967 the ELS resolved to establish its own mission fields and to spread the gospel as God opened doors.

The Board for Missions first looked southward. In 1968 its first missionary began to work among the *barriadas* of Lima, Peru. Lay missionaries, volunteers, and other called workers soon followed. Over the years, many WELS members have been called or have volunteered to serve in this field.

What changes have taken place in the Peru field since the early days when missionaries mounted public address systems on their

cars and traveled dusty streets in search of an audience! Today the work has progressed to the point where the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Peru is a full-fledged member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, taking its place among 18 sister church bodies around the world.

Presently four ELS missionaries serve alongside the six national pastors, who are graduates of the seminary in Lima. The missionaries, national pastors, vicars, and seminary students together serve over 30 congregations and preaching stations scattered around Lima, in the Andes Mountains north of Lima, and in the Upper Amazon Basin. Worshiping in modern buildings, adobe houses, and thatch-roof huts, over 1,000 of our brothers and sisters in Christ learn of their Savior and then, in turn, proclaim the gospel in their communities.

In addition to the seminary in Lima, missionaries teach extension classes in the mountains and rain-forest. God also has blessed the mission with two Christian elementary schools and a Therapeutic Community for drug rehabilitation.

Though the political climate is relatively safe today, in the 1980s social unrest moved the Board for Foreign Missions to establish a sister mission in Chile as an escape hatch for the missionaries in Peru. Today several hundred members are found in three congregations in the southern regions of Santiago, and other work is in progress in towns and villages south of that city. Because Chile is somewhat more prosperous than Peru, missionaries here reach into middle-class communities through radio broadcasts as well as the traditional outreach methods of personal evangelism, Bible study, and worship services.

Anticipating God's blessing on its worker-training program, we see the day coming when Chilean national pastors are trained to serve a sister church in Chile.

Join us in praying for God's continuing blessing on those who "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18).

Steven P. Petersen
ELS missions counselor



Missionary Terry Schultz performs an emergency baptism in a jungle village in Peru.



A child from the Linares congregation in Chile.

District news

South Atlantic

Members of **Living Word, Johnson City, Tenn.**, celebrated the ground-breaking of their first facility on June 30. Living Word held its first public worship service in March 1993 and now has 135 members.

Amazing Grace, Myrtle Beach, S.C., held its second vacation Bible school this summer. Two Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary students recruited children by going door to door, passing out flyers. A group of young people and adults from Faith, Prior Lake, Minn., also helped.

Southeastern Wisconsin

Time of Grace, a multi-media Christian ministry organized by a group of WELS laymen, currently broadcasts a half-hour TV program in the Milwaukee metropolitan area on Sunday mornings. As of Oct. 5, the program will also air in Minnesota on KSTP ABC Channel 5.

Happy Anniversary!

SC—On Aug. 31, Holy Cross, Oklahoma City, Okla., celebrated the 40th anniversary of **John P. Gaertner's** ordination.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MI—John Eich; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

Southeastern Wisconsin



On May 17, six graduates of Good Shepherd Lutheran School, West Allis, Wis., graduated from Martin Luther College. Back row, from left: Joshua Gumm, Scott Bergemann, Paul Jenkins, Nate Scharf, and Phil Huebner. In front stands the boys' grade school principal, Orville Hando. Not pictured is graduate Renee Marcouiller.

Michigan



Members of Christ, Saginaw, Mich., celebrated the congregation's 100th anniversary on July 27. Items from throughout the church's history were on display.

Southeastern Wisconsin



In June, 152 children attended vacation Bible school at Siloah, Milwaukee. Ninety percent of the children were not Lutheran. Here teacher Jon Schaefer poses with some of his students.

South Atlantic

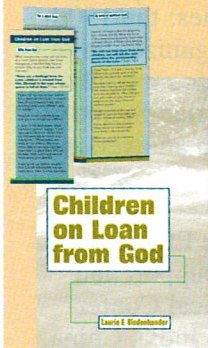


Members of Risen Savior, Orlando, dedicated their 7,000-square ft. facility on June 22. Risen Savior began as an exploratory in 1998 and has grown to include 150 souls.

Booknook

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

Helping today's families



The American family has undergone significant changes from a generation ago. Parents are working longer, earning more, and yet are spending less time with their children. Meager savings mean that even the slightest change in income

could push many families into financial ruin. Most devastatingly of all, today's family is spending less time in church, devotions, or in the study of Scripture.

Responding to this reality, NPH is offering the *Family Life Series*, a set of eight booklets addressing many of the challenges facing today's family. Easy to read, with thought-provoking questions, the *Family Life Series* is ideally suited for Bible class. The booklets offer scriptural advice for prioritizing our lives, raising our children, managing our finances, and even dealing with in-laws.

To the Christian family, enduring the typical trials of this sinful planet, the *Family Life Series* will be of immeasurable assistance. My only criticism of the booklets is that they do not explicitly acknowledge, much less address, many of the greatest dangers confronting families: unfaithfulness, domestic violence, child abuse, gambling, and alcohol and drug addiction.

My suggestion would not be to change these valuable booklets but to develop a set of *Family Life Series* booklets that offer guidance to Christian homes struggling with horrors far greater than a dispute over how to spend the family entertainment budget.

Victor Vieth

Trinity, Woodbridge, Virginia

Editor's note: *The Family Life Series* includes eight booklets (\$3 each), eight bi-folds that review concepts from the booklets (\$.50 each), and a Leader's Guide that provides an expanded study, student copy masters, and a CD with student lessons (\$69.95).

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

Gosdeck, Ronald H., to retirement
Harbach, Dennis J., to St. John, Dakota, Minn.
Helwig, Michael D., to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
Holz, Kent D., to Word of Life, Appleton, Wis.

Teachers

Datka, James L., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
Ehlers, Tama A., to Christ, Oakley, Mich.
Ellenberger, Caley J., to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Fager, Matthew W., to Bethany, Port Orchard, Wash.
Festerling, Julie A., to Samuel, Marshall, Minn.
Freer, Rachel L., to Our Saviour, Lake Havasu City, Ariz. (ELS)
Groth, Arleen R., to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.
Juergens, Valerie M., to Faith, Anchorage, Alaska
Kramp, Beth A., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee
Loberger, Elizabeth A., to Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.
Pavelchik, Mandy L., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Peterson, Jalena M., to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
Plitzuweit, Rachel S., to Grace, Glendale, Ariz.
Prahl, Jill S., to Holy Word, Austin, Texas
Vogt, Angela, to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.
Yax, Jeanine, to Holy Trinity, Wyoming, Mich.

COLLOQUY NOTICE

Clark Brown, Petoskey, Mich., formerly a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has requested a colloquy for the purpose of serving in WELS' pastoral ministry. Correspondence related to this request should be addressed to Pastor John C. Seifert, President, Michigan District—WELS, 907 Mattes Dr, Midland MI 48642-3708.

ANNIVERSARIES

Plymouth, Minn.—West LHS (25). School office, 763/509-9378.
 • Oct. 3, homecoming football game, 7 PM.
 • Oct. 4, alumni soccer game.
 • May 8, 2004, all-school reunion.
 • May 9, 2004, service of thanks, 2 PM.
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.
Sebewaing, Mich.—New Salem (150). Oct. 26. Service, 10 AM. Meal and fellowship to follow.
Milwaukee, Wis.—Risen Savior (30). Oct. 26. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Light refreshments after each service. Don Zimmerman, 414/355-9595.
Saginaw, Mich.—Christ (100). Nov. 2. Service, 10 AM. Brunch to follow.
La Crosse, Wis.—Mount Calvary (75). Nov. 15. Service, 6 PM. Nov. 16. Service, 10 AM. Catered dinner to follow. 608/784-5324.

COMING EVENTS

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.
WOW Retreat—hosted by the Chicago District of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. Oct. 4-5. Wyndham-Drake Hotel, Oak Brook, Ill. Thea Buege, 708/672-6806.

Martin Luther College Ladies' Auxiliary—Oct. 8. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Registration, 9 AM. Meeting, 10 AM. Diane Brutlag, 507/354-8221.

Christian Growth Seminar—Oct. 11. Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. Linda Williams, 888/378-2182.

Medical Ethics Seminar—presented by Christian Life Resources. Oct. 17. Milwaukee. 800/729-9535.

Christian Life Resources National Convention—Oct. 17-19. Milwaukee. 800/729-9535.

Run for the prize 5K run/walk—sponsored by Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. Oct. 18. Dave Braun, 419/365-5770.

Area Lutheran High School Alumni Seminar—Oct. 24-26, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn. Cost, \$250. Jerry Kieselhorst, 507/354-6855.

Women's retreat—Oct. 24-26. Holiday Inn Beach Resort, Melbourne-Oceanfront, Fla. Janice Horvath, 407/291-6100.

Women's fall retreat—Nov. 1, 9 AM-3 PM. Trinity, Minocqua, Wis. Sue, 715/356-7542.

Capital Area Christian Women's Retreat—Nov. 7-9. Devil's Head Resort, Baraboo, Wis. Joy Strutz, 262/898-3244.

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

Christian Woman Today retreat—March 19-21, 2004. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen Serlich, 262/784-0412.

Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Women—March 26-28, 2004. Radisson Plaza Hotel, Rochester, Minn. Bonnie, 507/931-1866.

AVAILABLE

Popular Commentary of the Bible—by Paul Kretzmann. Two Old Testament and two New Testament volumes. Free for the cost of shipping. Vern Redlich, 715/468-2437.

God so loved the world—Sunday school material for primary through upper level. Free for the cost of shipping or pick up from St. John, Montello, Wis. James Wachholz, 608/297-7109.

Pulpit, altar, and font—white with gold trim. Free for the cost of shipping or pick up from Bethel, Galesville, Wis. Fred Lintemann, 608/582-4566.

NEEDED

Translators—Multi-Language Publications is looking for people to translate basic Lutheran Christian materials into the following languages: Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Urdu, Nepali, and Burmese. Paul Hartman, 800/876-1388.

Green altar parament—for a Nigeria mission congregation. Stacey Leggat, 703/771-4196.

SERVICE TIMES

Columbia, Mo.—Grace, 4540 N Oakland Gravel Rd. Sunday service, 9:30 AM. Micah Ernst, 573/474-8755.

Austin, Texas—Risen Savior, 2811 Aftonshire Way. Service, 9:30 AM. Roger Zehms, 512/280-8282.

The Villages, Fla.—The Open Bible, Spruce Creek Professional Center, Hwy. 27/441 (across from Wal-Mart), Suite 502. Sunday service, 8:45 AM. Herb Schaefer, 352/753-7515.

NAMES WANTED

College Station, Texas—Beautiful Savior is looking for students who attend Texas A&M University for a WELS campus ministry program. Caleb Schoeneck, 979/683-4514.

Adrian, Mich.—St. Stephen is looking for students who attend Adrian College, Hillsdale College, or Siena Heights University for a WELS campus ministry program. David Koehler, 517/265-5605.

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

Columbia, Mo.—Micah Ernst, 573/489-0746.

Lake of the Ozarks/Osage Beach, Mo.—Micah Ernst, 573/498-3547.

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

Carson City/Mineen/Gardnerville/Dayton/Stagecoach, Nev.—Michael Langbecker, 775/841-4987.

The Villages, Fla.—The Open Bible (The Village Lutherans). Herb Schaefer, 352/753-7515.

To place an announcement, call

414/256-3210; FAX, 414/256-3862;

<BulletinBoard@sab.wels.net>. Deadline

is eight weeks before publication date.

**Reformation:
a time to recommit**

In keeping with the resolution passed at the 2003 synod convention, President Karl Gurgel calls for Reformation 2003 to be a day of repentance, rejoicing, and recommitment for all WELS churches. Our mission is to seek the lost, including those straying from our own congregations. We need to repent of whatever has kept us from our mission, rejoice in God's abundant pardon, and recommit ourselves to the tasks and with the strength God gives to each one of us.

As a part of recommitment, congregations are encouraged to look at some aspect of increasing material support for our Savior's mission through WELS. It might be a special synod mission offering, a resolution to increase the congregation's mission offering, or getting involved as individuals or as a congregation with Mission Partners (see p. 19). Whatever your congregation does, do it in the peace of Jesus.



WALKING WITH ST. JOHN

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 5



TESTIMONIES ^{OF} THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Through a variety of testimonies in the first few chapters of his Gospel, John previews the entire book and shows the mission of the Christian church in this world.

Theodore J. Hartwig

Testimony” summarizes the record of Jesus’ life and ministry in the fourth Gospel, testimony the reason for its writing. “Testimony” embraces the mission of the Christian church in this world. “Testimony” describes the proper use of the gospel. Indeed, gospel is testimony.

“Testimony” also defines the name that John gives the Savior at the beginning of his work. That name is “Word,” which in common understanding means speech, communication, revelation, testimony.

The first lap of our journey through the fourth Gospel presents in its prologue the author’s private testimony to the person and ministry of Jesus. Then follow the first testimonies from Jesus, from friends, and from the public at large. The various reactions to these testi-

monies—friendly, hostile, uncommitted—furnish a foretaste of things to come. They preview the entire fourth Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word (1:1-5)

Approaching the Gospel’s prologue is like stepping to the edge of Arizona’s Grand Canyon and peering into its depths. The prologue carries its audience beyond the Bible’s first chapter and first creation day back, back into the deep recesses of eternity before creation. In that eternity it reveals startling truths about him who is named the Word. He is both his own person, the Son, as well as identical God with the Father. In his office he serves as instrument of God’s creation and agent of God’s salvation, the gifter of life

and light to a humanity dead in sin and darkness.

So, at the great turning point of time and history, this Word became flesh. God took to himself our humanity, the infinite joined with the finite in a single person—the mystery of all ages and beyond our understanding, before which we silently bow and adore!

We have seen his glory (1:6-18)

John the Baptist heralded the Son’s presence. Though a national hero, John was not beguiled by earthly fame. He remained humble. With Jesus this world’s pomp and prestige count for nothing. What counts is his gift of grace. When the fourth Gospel’s author writes that he and his fellow disciples saw the glory of Jesus as the glory of the Father’s only Son, he



is describing not Jesus' external appearance, nor his miracles, but his words. They comfort. They make alive. They are full of grace and truth.

Thus John assures his audience through all future generations: You come behind the eyewitnesses of Jesus in no way. You too taste and see the glory of Jesus, full of grace and truth; you see and taste it in the message of his Word. You too hear that message. It is with you; it is in his Word.

Come and see (1:19-51)

Now follow the remaining testimonies on this first lap of journeying through the fourth Gospel. They begin with John the Baptist's self-effacing deposition to delegates from headquarters at Jerusalem where deadly opposition to Jesus would soon bare its teeth.

Then over an interval of four days appear the first fruits of the Baptist's perceptive outcry so full of Old Testament images, so prophetic of Jesus' manner of redemption: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Starting with two of the Baptist's disciples (the fourth Gospel's author as the unnamed one), five men are drawn into the circle of Jesus by the simple attractive power in the word. Indeed, he who is the incarnate Word will, through his

words and works, provide the ladder by which Nathanael and his friends even now shall taste and see the glory of heaven.

The first of his miraculous signs (2:1-23)

The friends of Jesus soon witnessed such glory at the wedding in Cana. There the Master worked his first miracle, water blushing into wine. As a meaningful sign it strengthened the disciples' faith by manifesting the might of Jesus' word and the exquisite lavishness of his help.

A further sign and testimony of Jesus' glory happened with the temple cleansing, when the Lord of the temple (Malachi 3:1) came to his temple, exhibiting a passion for his Father's house and calling to mind the messianic promise of Psalm 69:9.

You must be born again (3:1-21)

The temple cleansing may have spurred Nicodemus to his nighttime visit with Jesus, which led to a conversation that became the pattern for Jesus' testimonies through the rest of the fourth Gospel.

There is a preaching of repentance: you must be born again, have your whole way of thinking turned around, and this happens only from above. Human flesh, intellect, and will are helpless. The change must come about by the Spirit through the good news of God's love and

the gift of his Son come into flesh for the salvation of all who believe. It comes by water and the word.

This is God's way of achieving his gracious will. He does it through visible signs. Once, for example, by a snake in the wilderness, now by the Son of Man, who walked on earth in the sight of many witnesses so that, through this human being of flesh and blood, hearts may be won to believe that he is God's Son and their Savior. In Luther's description, the humanity of Jesus is "our holy ladder by which we ascend to knowing him as God."

He must become greater; I must become less (3:22-36)

The final testimony in this unit belongs again to the Baptist. The worry of his own disciples that their teacher was losing out to Jesus in the popularity poll moves John to his valedictory. It is a confession appropriate for every friend of Jesus: Now that the bridegroom has come, my joy is complete. "He must become greater; I must become less."



Theodore Hartwig, a member of St. John, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a professor emeritus at Martin Luther College, New Ulm.

As 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.

You fail to understand the authority of command

We all need the constant reminder that nothing can change the truth that the gospel is the power of God for salvation and that it never returns to God without achieving the purpose for which he sent it.

William R. Carter

One of the privileges of getting appointed public information officer for the fire departments at the Quad/Graphics fire was the chance to sit at the table in the command tent. Because I would be representing the incident commanders every time I spoke to the press, it was important for me to be in regular contact with them. Then I would always have accurate information about what they were doing and planning, and they would always be aware of what I was telling the press.

Exercising authority at the Quad/Graphics fire

It was fascinating to listen in on all the discussions that took place as the command staff (the officers from our department and the three neighboring departments who spent most of the week with us) made all the important decisions that needed to be made that week. At the height of the fire, those men were easily making dozens—if not hundreds—of decisions every hour.

Some of those decisions were tactical. How do we fight this fire? Where do we position the engines and personnel to best contain the fire and prevent it from spreading? Some were logistical. What other equipment and resources do we need—from tow trucks and cranes to tents and telephone lines to food and water and cots—and how do we get them here? Others were safety-related, especially when plant managers and investigators started needing access to areas we had previously designated as restricted.

Four days after the fire started, while we were monitoring the debris pile for the hot spots that were still getting uncovered, I asked the commanders around the table a logistical question. After several days of blistering heat well into the 90s (which had already been the focus of quite a few discussions), the weather forecast was calling for a cold front and the possibility of strong storms. I asked the commanders what they planned to do

with the command tent and the rehab tent if those storms came.

One of the chiefs said we'd probably tell the plant managers to make room for us somewhere inside the building and that they'd have to do what we asked.

That's when I asked, naively, "We can do that?"

He replied, "Son, you fail to understand the authority of command."

He said it like he was quoting a line from an old movie or an old command instructor, but he was right. I didn't understand. I had been aware that some authority went along with the responsibility of being in command and that commanders could expect that orders they issue would be carried out. I had been watching these men exercise some of that authority all week. But I didn't realize that state laws give fire commanders complete control of the entire fire scene and any adjacent property, even if it belongs to a multi-billion dollar corporation.

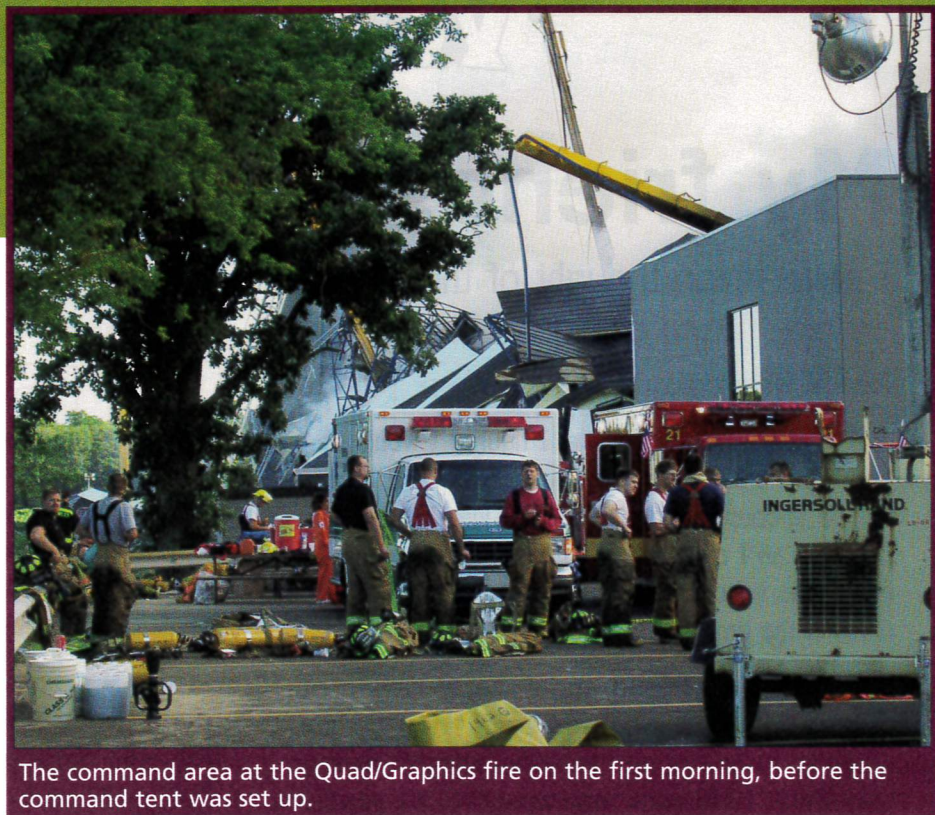
Exercising God's authority at church

I have dreamed about what it would be like to have that kind of authority in a congregation, to be able to just issue orders instead of having to wait to get approval from the council and the voters. Whenever I start thinking like that, I need to control my ego and remember what a mess the congregation would be in if its pastor was more concerned about getting what he wanted than he was about accomplishing God's will.

I also need to remember that the Word of God that I have the privilege of sharing with the congregation has the power to accomplish God's will, which is far more powerful and has more authority than any incident commander. I shouldn't need to be reminded of that power, but sometimes I do. Why? There are several reasons:

- The power of God's Word is not as easy to observe as the authority of an incident commander. In the command tent, as soon as a decision is made, someone gets assigned to make it happen, and it does. But God's Word does its work deep within human hearts, where human eyes can't see what it's accomplishing.

- Seeing firsthand what happens to peoples' lives and congregations' ministries when they decide to reject the authority of God's Word makes it easy to conclude that the Word didn't have much power, at least in those situations.



The command area at the Quad/Graphics fire on the first morning, before the command tent was set up.

- I can get so wrapped up in the tactics and logistics of doing ministry that I end up trusting my own decisions and efforts to get God's work done instead of depending on the power and authority of the gospel.

All these things can make us fail to understand the authority of God's Word. Sometimes they can even keep us from using the Word the way that we should—to do God's work and accomplish his will in our lives. We all need the constant reminder that nothing can change the truth that the gospel is the power of God for salvation and that it never returns to God without achieving the purpose for which he sent it.

The more I was exposed to the authority of command at the Quad/Graphics fire, the more I began to understand how it worked. I even got a small taste of it for myself later in the week when a suggestion I made in the command tent to observe a

moment of silence for the collapse victim became an order for all the firefighters, equipment operators, and plant employees. Some of the men on scene have told me that this was the most moving experience of the whole week.

The same is true for God's Word, isn't it? The more we get exposed to its power and see the way it changes hearts and lives (ours and others), the more we understand how it works, and the more we'll remember to use it when it's time to do his work.

You don't even need to get appointed public information officer for a huge fire to get a taste of it. Just open your Bible and start reading.



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

WHATEVER

My friend, the atheist

I never even thought of the possibility that my new college friend could be an atheist.

John W. Woodington

When I left for college, I figured I would be lonely. After a few weeks, however, I had made a couple of good friends. One of them was a guitarist, as I am, and would play with me every once in a while. I thought of him as a good friend and enjoyed the time I spent with him.

One day, my friend and I were playing our guitars together when he said, "Hey, do you want to hear my anti-religion song?" My mind went blank. I had never even thought of the possibility that this person could be an atheist. He played the song for me, spilling words of disbelief over a catchy melody. It made my soul feel sick. Here was one of the few people that I got along with in college, and he turns out to be an atheist.

We went to dinner a few nights later, and I forced myself to bring up the topic of religion. I was surprised to find that he was not only an atheist, but an informed atheist—someone who could back up his beliefs with multiple examples from popular philosophers. He had a retort for every explanation I posed for such things as creationism, heaven and hell, and even sin itself.

At this point I knew I had to turn to God for guidance. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). I didn't want this person to be sucked into disbelief for the rest of his life and end up in hell just because I didn't try to help him.

I didn't go right to the Bible at first, because I had used well-known Bible passages in our first conversation. He didn't believe me because he didn't believe that the Bible itself was true (this, too, stung me deeply). I turned to a servant of God, a Christian

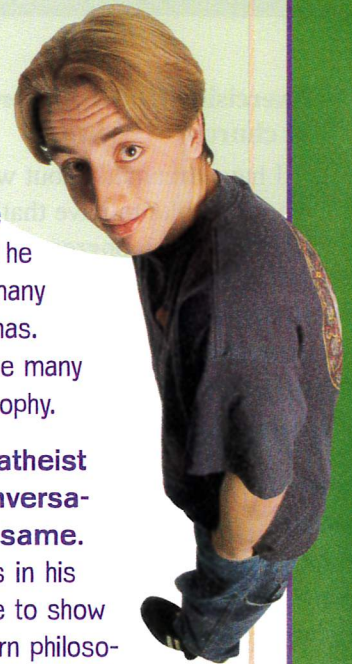
named C. S. Lewis. I knew that he wasn't WELS, but I also knew that he was an influential writer and had many of the Christian values that WELS has. His book *Mere Christianity* gave me many insightful points in Christian philosophy.

When I next talked to my atheist friend about religion, the conversation was almost exactly the same. There were, however, a few places in his thought process where I was able to show him how Christianity proved modern philosophy to be wrong. By no means did I turn this person into a Christian, but I do think that through my witness to Christ the Holy Spirit will work on his heart.

That night, after our second religious conversation, I remembered a passage that the Lord had spoken to his disciples just before his ascension into heaven after the resurrection. "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation'" (Mark 16:15).

We have to remember that no matter where we are, we must always be willing to share our faith with others, especially those who don't have it. It is not our job to turn atheists into Christians but rather to plant the seed of the Holy Spirit that he may work in their hearts and bring them to him. I am not positive that in planting the Holy Spirit's seed in my friend that faith has taken root, but I still have three or four years of gardening left with him.

John Woodington, a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, is a member at Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minnesota.



atheism

Getting to know God's story

Randy K. Hunter

“You can never go back.” Ever said that? Your childhood home seemed mammoth when you were five; now you wonder how you squeezed into it. Main Street was bustling then; now it's abandoned. Of course, you can go back, but quite likely doing so will produce two emotions: sadness that the old place has lost its shine and gladness that you got to see it again.

God's covenant people had been promised the land of Canaan, but they had abandoned

God. Out of love for them, the Lord allowed an ungodly nation to force them out of Canaan and into Babylon (modern day Iraq). The discipline did its work. The people repented. The Lord changed the world's political landscape, and soon those exiled children of Israel, 42,360 of them (not counting 7,337 servants and 200 members of the Israeli choir), were making their way back home. When they arrived, they felt that strange mix of sadness and gladness. Two books tell the story: Ezra and Nehemiah.

- Cyrus, the king of the thoroughly pagan Persian empire, worshiped many gods, but his words in Ezra 1:2,3 could have come from an Israeli prophet. It's one example of how God will do whatever he needs to do and move whomever he needs to move—willing or not—to accomplish his purpose. List as many examples as you can of times God used ungodly people for his purpose (from Bible times, history, or modern times).
- The book of Ezra is very much about a building: the temple. Even the setting of the foundation was cause for great celebration. Read about it in Ezra 3:10,11. Then read 1 Corinthians 3:9,11,16. Explain God's intense interest in the Old Testament temple.
- Many people shed tears as the building took shape (Ezra 3:12,13). Describe possible reasons for the tears.
- If you're an artistic person, design an invitation to be sent out for the dedication of the temple described in Ezra 6:13-18. Some items to include: purpose, food served, people invited, agenda, plan for music, worship, etc.
- To fully understand the problem of chapter 10, first read Deuteronomy 7:3. If you're studying this in a group, divide into two groups and prepare to debate in classic “point-counterpoint” style. One group will defend Ezra's recommendation, the other oppose it. Appoint one person in your group to be the moderator and keep time.
- Nehemiah was struck by the sadness of his people's plight. Read about it in Nehemiah 1:1-4. Then read his prayer in 1:5-11. Summarize the thoughts of his prayer in your own words.
- Graphic artists exercised their creativity in a previous question. This time those gifted in dramatic arts have the opportunity. Mime the scene in Nehemiah 2:1-6.
- List as many principles of good leadership that you see Nehemiah demonstrate in 2:11-18.
- Some blessings are obviously the result of God's intervention. Name as many as you can from Nehemiah 6:15,16.

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> and click on “current issue.” Then click on “Getting to know God's story.” Answers will be available after Oct. 5.

Creation & promise

Patriarchs

Freedom from captivity

Wandering

Promised Land

Kings

Major prophets 1

Major prophets 2

Minor prophets

Returning home

Wisdom books

Preparation for the coming Messiah

LIFE IN THE SONLIGHT: do whatever it takes

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”

Jon D. Buchholz

How far will you go to show your love for someone? Would you climb the highest mountain, swim through shark-infested waters, or cross a burning desert without shoes? The answer is simple: you'll do whatever it takes.

Paul did what it took to share Christ

You are part of a love story. It's the story of a love so high, so wide, so broad, so deep, that it transcends human comprehension. It's the story of God's love for the entire human race, his eternal, passionate desire that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now, when it comes to communicating that love and touching lives with the good news of Christ, how are we going to do it?

Paul did whatever was necessary to share Jesus. He set aside his Christian liberty and submitted to Jewish legal requirements about what he could eat and when he could work and all the rituals one had to follow, so that he could mingle with the Jewish community and relate to Jews. He moved easily among non-Jews as well. Wherever Paul went, whether to Athens or Corinth or Philippi or Jerusalem, he adapted to the local customs and way of life.

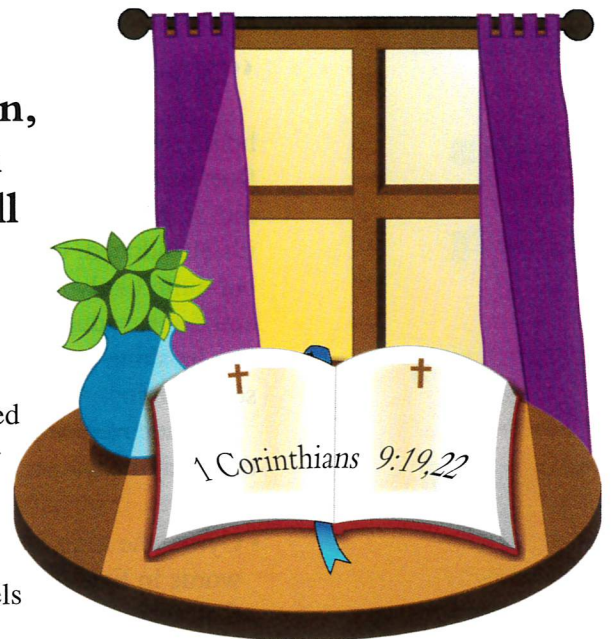
Why would a well-educated man like Paul leave his comfortable life and travel the Greco-Roman world sharing the gospel? He tells us simply, “Christ's love compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Paul knew that life is a dangerous proposition. A person only goes around once, and then he dies. Before the judgment seat of God there are only two types of people: those who have been led by the Holy Spirit to repent of their sins and trust Jesus for forgiveness and those who have not heard or have not believed in the Savior.

We need to take risks

Is it worth doing whatever it takes to reach people with God's love?

We can't sit back and wait for people to come to us. We need to roll up our sleeves and go to work. We might feel comfortable surrounded by generational Lutherans who are “just like us.” But that's not the commission of Christ. Jesus told his disciples, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Go! There are hurting people out there who don't look like us or talk like us, who have different cultures and backgrounds—but who all share the same need for the Savior from sin.



After all, it's Christ we serve, and that's what he did for us. Our heavenly Father asked his Son, “What will you do to complete the salvation of the world?” Jesus replied, Whatever it takes.”

Jesus climbed the highest mountain. It wasn't Everest. It was Calvary. He made his way up the mountain, loaded with our guilt, burdened with our sins. Suspended between heaven and earth, he cried, “It is finished!” Our guilt was removed. Our sin was paid for. We are forgiven! The cost was the innocent life of our Savior and the innocent blood that poured from his wounds. That's what it took!

Being a Christian involves taking risks. It means stepping outside of the known and the comfortable and doing whatever it takes to reach people where they're at with God's love in Jesus.

That's life in the Sonlight!

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

The courage of our conviction

Under the cover of darkness a solitary figure stealthily creeps toward the church in the center of town. He's dressed in a long robe, with a cowl hiding his face. As silently as possible he attaches a notice to the village bulletin board. He believes in what he is doing, but the challenge is not to draw attention to himself. He's not committed enough to his cause to die for his beliefs.

That's not how Luther acted on Oct. 31, 1517, as he posted the Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Boldly, in broad daylight, he strode to the church, hammering his notice to the door. He believed strongly in what he was doing. He felt a divine commission to boldly assert the truth of God's Word. He challenged others to debate the issue, publicly. It would be God's truth vs. human opinion.

Luther was fully committed to the task. He knew his prince, at whose university he taught, might not be pleased with his actions. He could have known the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire might put him on the 10 Most Wanted List, giving people license to kill him. But he was committed to the challenge because, as Luther saw it, God's commission was to proclaim peace through Jesus.

Millions of people will be eternally grateful that Luther, by God's grace, was given the courage of his convictions. He was committed to standing against emperors and princes, even against as many devils as there were shingles on the roofs in the German city of Worms. He was not afraid to commit himself to the gospel challenge, taking up God's Great Commission to proclaim the gospel of God's free and full forgiveness, peace through Jesus.

God's Great Commission remains unchanged in our day. It is the Bible's

first promise, the promise of a Savior made to Adam and Eve to crush the devil's head. It is a promise fulfilled when "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The forgiving love of Jesus inspires our love for him and for all those around us who could also benefit from Jesus' love. His love begets our love to recommit ourselves to proclaim his pardoning love, in keeping with his Great Commission.

Oh, there are challenges! Eighty to 90 million new people every year, many of whom do not speak our language and observe our customs, need our Savior. We, the men, women, and children of WELS, are not a large group of people—only about 400,000. And recently we have been financially challenged to even maintain what we are doing, not to mention doing more.

It will take renewed commitment on our part, a renewal by his Spirit of the knowledge of God's abiding love for us. Only God-inspired faith can meet the challenge to accept the commission God is giving us to proclaim peace to those who are near and those who are far away from us.

So on this Reformation Day, we pray for the courage of our conviction. May we recommit ourselves to the commission God has given us. Let us accept the challenges he gives us to speak to our neighbors about the Savior and to give generously of God's monetary gifts, so others can tell and hear of the Savior's love. Just like Luther, commissioned by our God, undaunted by the challenges we face, may we commit ourselves with renewed vigor to proclaim peace through Jesus.

For more on recommitting ourselves this Reformation, see p. 27.



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

Only God-inspired faith can meet the challenge to accept the commission God is giving us.

IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: CHILDREN'S SERMONS

Question: During Bible class we discussed the history of worship in the synod. The subject of children's sermons came up. We were divided as to their appropriateness during worship. Jesus singled out children and used simple stories to teach complex issues. What advice do our pastors receive during their training?

Answer: It's not hard to imagine your discussion! This topic is debated on our seminary campus as well.

However, we who teach preaching make sure our seminary students understand that a children's sermon isn't an issue of right or wrong. Jesus gave his church great freedom in designing "forms" for proclaiming the gospel. Of course, in selecting such "forms," we must remember that the power is in the gospel in Word and sacraments, not in our forms.

When it comes to including a children's sermon in worship, much depends on a congregation's ministry situation. Yet, even when such sermons seem to meet ministry needs, children's sermons are not a one-size-fits-all substitute for a thorough evangelism or youth nurture plan.

There are other concerns we generally raise with our students. In many congregational ministries we subdivide Christ's body into children, teens, and adults. Certainly the Gospels show Jesus making time for children. There's wisdom in such focused attention, especially in education—and especially in the home! Yet too often we design little for God's family gathered as a whole. Worship is typically aimed at the whole family of God— young and old, single and married, male and female.

That's why our primary encouragement to our students is to preach the "regular" sermon so as to appeal to all ages. Sermons seldom fail because they were too clear. Jesus pointed at birds of the air and lilies of the field to make biblical truth transparent to all. A pastor commented that his father often reminded him, "You had a very good sermon, but there was not enough for the kids." Such preaching for all ages is easier with some texts than others. Yet it's always a worthy goal.

Our primary encouragement is to preach the "regular" sermon so it appeals to all ages.

If ministry situations and pastoral gifts combine to make a regular children's sermon a wise addition, congregations must remember the considerable time it takes to craft an edifying children's sermon. Children's sermons fare no better than regular sermons when produced as "Saturday night specials." Clear gospel is often the first casualty. Anything included in regular worship must be worthy of the gospel.

Our professors also raise a couple of other concerns. Some children's sermons seem to make the regular sermon anti-climactic. After the children's sermon, that Sunday's key point of law and gospel has already been made. Any sense of "discovery" may be gone.

Also, does the desire for children's sermons arise in part from unwillingness to put in the work necessary to listen to an extended exposition of God's Word? Many comment that they learn more from the children's sermon than the regular sermon. Is that statement necessarily a ringing endorsement of children's sermons? Does the shorter children's sermon appeal because watching television

has trained us to expect quick punch lines delivered in short sounds bites with commercials every six to seven minutes? The entertainment appeal of children's sermons may reflect our entertainment-obsessed culture.

Children's sermons are an adiaphoron. We can have different opinions and remain one in Christ. But labeling something an "adiaphoron" doesn't make such decisions unimportant. Especially in worship we must wisely exercise our freedom. The key is always: what faithfully proclaims

the gospel? Worship at its best highlights the wonderful things God has done and continues to do for us in Jesus.

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.



Susanne Hanson and Lydia in January 2000.

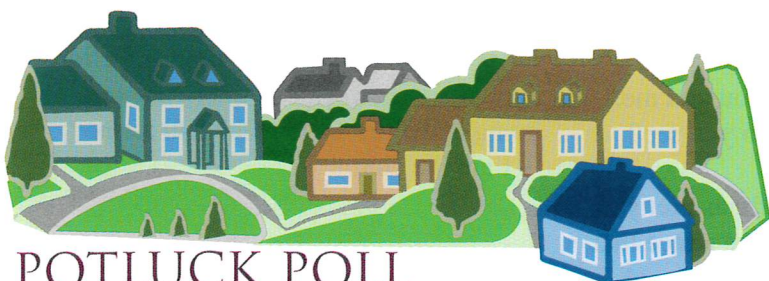
I met Lydia in the fall of 1990 when she was 82 years young. I had just moved to Fort Worth, Texas, with my family. Lydia had moved there just a year before after becoming a widow while living in Minnesota. Her daughter lived in the Fort Worth area and felt it would be better to have Lydia live closer to her. I had lived in Minnesota at one time and in somewhat the same area as Lydia had lived—we connected immediately and began our special, “age difference doesn’t matter” friendship.

Now I am bending over her, singing “Jesus loves me.” At 93, Lydia is being called home to heaven. Why sing this song at this time? Because although it’s a song of simple truths for little children, it’s also a song of grace and peace for all ages—the perfect choice as Lydia leaves this world and enters the joys of heaven.

Jesus loves me, he who died
 Heaven’s gate to open wide
 He will wash away my sin
 Let his little child come in
 Yes, Jesus loves me.
 Yes, Jesus loves me. . . .

Susanne Hanson
 Plover, Wisconsin

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.



POTLUCK POLL

Send us stories of how you’ve shared your faith with a neighbor, or how a neighbor has shared his faith with you. All stories must be sent by Nov. 15 to Forward in Christ magazine, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; <fic@sab.wels.net>. Snippets from some of these stories will be published in the January issue. Stories must not exceed 300 words.

Things to do for the diesel queue

An apple, a natchie,
 Water bottles times two,
 Necessary and nice for the diesel queue.

A mystery novel and patience,
 Hours two times two,
 Just what you need for the diesel queue.

A fistful of kwacha at the pump,
 hopefully, should do,
 “Only 20 litres, Madame, at this diesel queue.”

“But our bush clinic, my patients,
 what will they do?”
 “Sorry Madame, such is the diesel queue.”

So back to Mwembezhi
 with my precious fuel.
 Only hospital runs for now
 is our new rule!

A full pantry and patients that are never too few
 Should cover me a week
 until my next diesel queue!

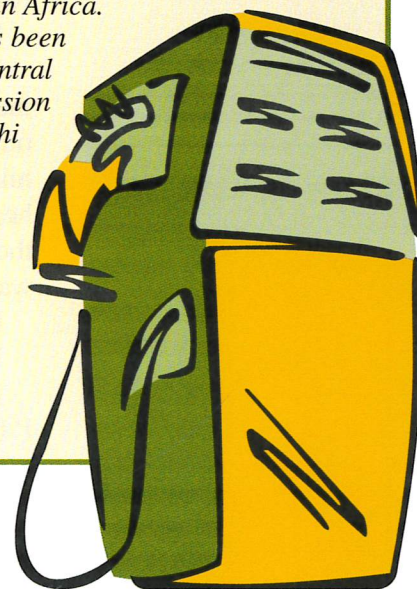
Zambia’s run out of fuel,
 In case the news hasn’t hit you.
 One more African adventure—
 the diesel queue!

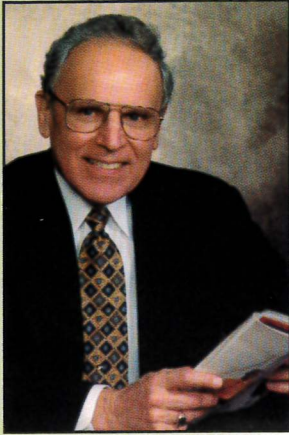
Rebekah Carey

The Central Africa Medical Mission is a WELS women’s organization that supports two medical mission programs in Africa.

Rebekah Carey has been on the field as a Central Africa Medical Mission nurse in Mwembezhi since June 2001.

“Things to do for the diesel queue” describes the long lines she had to wait in to buy gas for the medical mission’s truck.





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

Look in
the mirror.
What do
you see?

The face in the mirror

It's been a tough two years, and some rocky roads still lie ahead.

Does that statement describe your life these days? If it does, you're not alone. However, the words are meant to describe the ministry we are doing together in our church body.

Nonetheless, the two thoughts are related.

You have probably heard by now about the financial woes of our church body. The enclosed report on this summer's synod convention will remind you. We have terminated the positions of missionaries, other called workers, staff people. We're operating on a severely strained budget. The synod in convention has called for all of us to rally and to help us keep God's work going among us and by us. North American outreach is to be our top priority.

So, how do we make our way?

Many are looking to the synod's leaders to answer that question. What good are they if they don't lead? Yet, leaders need an army of people with them to get things done.

Many will expect the "big donors" to step forward with the kind of money that will smooth the way for us. Yet, big donors, too, have their limits.

Many will expect someone else to step forward to help.

Now, there's the rub.

What do we need even more than the money it takes to train workers, send out missionaries, and otherwise support gospel ministry? We need God's people with a heart for blood-bought souls, a passion for those who don't yet know whose blood was shed for them. We need you and me.

Look in the mirror. What do you see?

I'll tell you what I see.

I see a face that is not nearly as pretty as I'd like it to be. Worse yet, I see a face that hides a heart that is just ugly—as is said, "ugly as sin." That face in the mirror, even

in hard times, receives many more blessings than it deserves.

I see a person prone to be selfish: "I need to take care of me first." Prone to procrastinate: "I can do that tomorrow." Prone to complain: "Everything would be fine if it weren't for . . ." Prone to many more things much worse. Woe to the face in the mirror! How can anyone love a face like that?

Then I remember who does love that face and why. I see a person living in Christ's forgiveness. I see a face that God counts a saint because of Jesus' perfect life. A face that deserving nothing has everything. A face that will live forever. A face that needs to share what it knows and trusts.

Now I look hard, and all the ugliness is covered. In place of the ugliness is the face of Jesus.

That's when I know that I must do something to help.

From another angle, I see countless faces in the mirror, faces of all ages, sizes, colors, and shapes. For all the differences, they all look much the same as my own. Again and again, however, something is missing. Some see Jesus, but not clearly. Large numbers don't see Jesus at all.

I must help. I must serve.

I can talk to the young person at church who doesn't always see Jesus fitting into her life. I can invite my neighbor to a Bible study. I can volunteer to do outreach for my church. I can pray for missionaries. I am the one who needs to give time and effort and gifts to keep North American outreach going and allow us to reach still further.

I am the church.

Gary P. Baumler

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"ONLY" MEANS EVERYTHING

We don't see some things in fullest color or finest detail until we inject that one little word and fully feel its weight.

Mark A. Paustian

Not your favorite word, "only"? "Whites Only" is plainly disgusting. "Members Only" hurts your feelings. "Kids Only" is downright disheartening. The word is forever drawing lines and making distinctions. "You, come on in. You, you, and you, stay out." And when you have "only three dollars," it's clearly not enough. And when you hear, "Only a little longer," you might as well take a seat. It's going to be a while.

But then, ah then, you remember the Reformation, its hymns and hammer blows and "Here I stands" . . . all for the fierce defending of that Word we honor behind the plush velvet cords of Christendom. It is true enough to say that we are saved by grace, through faith, according to the Scriptures. Yet there are things, breathtaking things, we don't see in fullest color or finest detail until we inject our little word and fully feel its weight.

"Only!"

Only by grace

Salvation is by grace alone. Our deliverance into the joy of God is only by the merits of the dying and rising Christ. What that "only" eliminates is just everything we brought to the table. It shuts the door on every imagined worthiness, effort, or contribution of ours. All boasting in God's presence, and all uncertainty as well, are

excluded. Pharisees peer in the window, not comprehending. Arrogance lands on its ear. Shame is shamed and dismissed. Fear is reduced to the absurd, while death slinks away. We are only here inside Jesus, wrapped safe in the kindness of God, by grace.

In this Reformation spirit we speak from baptisms to deathbeds the humble "alone" that is only everything.

Only by faith

Salvation is by faith alone. Faith is not decision. Not work. Faith is faith. Remember the thunder of Paul in Galatians 3:1: "Before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified." Only call Jesus fully to mind: not arching his back against the wood, not pushing hard on the nails, not drawing that last breath, not crying, "It is finished!" until it was. Did you receive God's own gentle Spirit "by human effort" or by "believing what you heard"? You only believe. By a power not from you, you take him in your two hands. It is enough.

Only by Scripture

Saving grace is revealed by the Scriptures alone. This "only" is nothing else but the persistent shushing of

every voice save the divinely accented Word. Let tradition, human experience, and reason know their places and keep silent as God fleshes out the portrait of salvation. If we let them, they would put the fear back into death, usher the shame back into life, crack the door to every other joyless thing, and obscure Christ's lovely face. "Not on our watch" is the resolve behind our *Sola Scriptura*. For Jesus comes soon. We have his word on it. And an "only a little while" from him means . . . "only a little while."

Only by Jesus

We best celebrate this heartening Reformation by determining to do in our time what Luther did in his, echoing his eloquent "*allein*," ever vigilant against that something more, whatever it may be, that would intrude on grace and faith and the Word. In this Reformation spirit we speak from baptisms to deathbeds the humble "alone" that is only everything.

In this spirit we pray: O Lord Christ, to whom shall I listen in terrors of conscience, and hearing, to whom shall my thank-you fly? To whom these shouts of "Glory!" from a sinner so serene?

Only you.

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

