

# FORWARD IN CHRIST

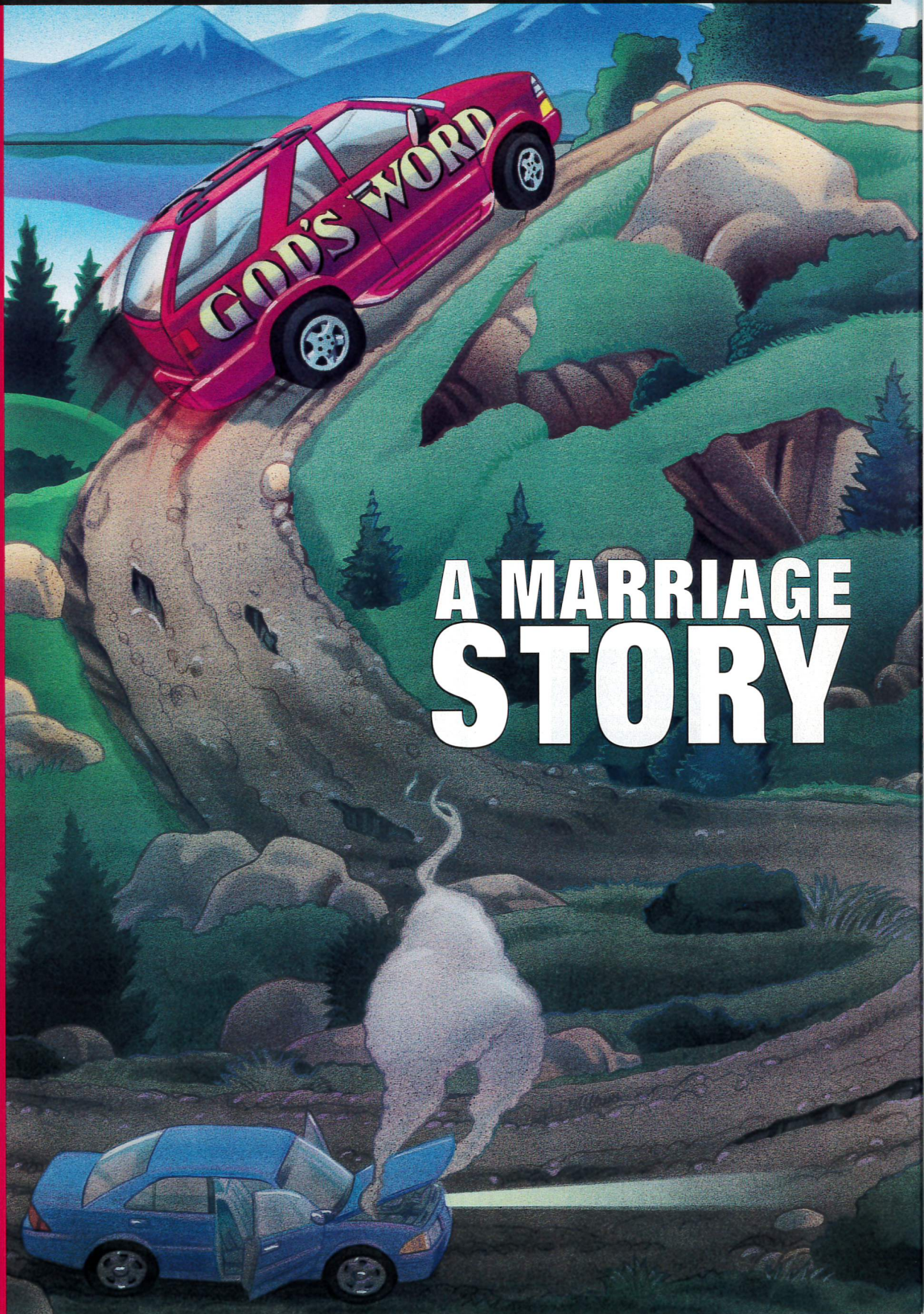
February 2004

The Word from the WELS

Do you give  
just to get?

“I need  
peace!”

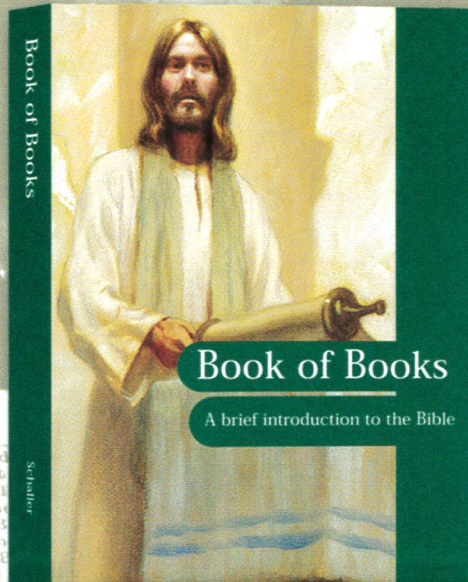
Spicing up  
women’s  
ministry



## A MARRIAGE STORY

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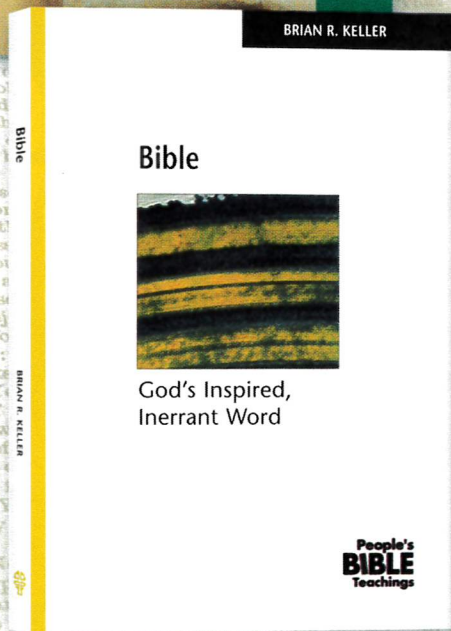
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# Not a single card

*“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” 1 John 3:16*

Stephen H. Geiger

**A** rose. A heart. Some chocolate. A kiss. What plots can be hatched for Valentine’s Day. The married can remind each other of affection. The unmarried may try to create a new connection.

Even little children join the fun. The currency of kindergartners is not roses but cards, colorful papers passed from one child to another. When these small children come home after school, they show off their collection. “Look how many I got!”

Can you imagine the hurt of a child who gets none? Imagine a youth who hands out 20 cards but receives none in return. An equation for disaster. A Valentine’s Day disaster.

Or is it?

## Giving to get

How easy it is, on the supposed “day of love,” to see love first as being loved instead of showing love. Can we look forward more to receiving affection than we look forward to showing it? Yes, we might show it by buying a gift. Yes, we might show love by plotting a surprise. But can we, the whole time, be thinking first and most about whether that love will be returned? Will he remember? Will she care? Will I be loved?

Surely it is not wrong to treasure companionship. Surely it is not wrong to rejoice in the blessing of a friend. Surely it need not be wrong to show kindness. But what a trick it is, when our longing to be loved makes out-



ward actions of love nothing but a mask hiding selfishness: giving to get instead of giving simply to give.

Have you ever given only so that you might receive? It’s so easy, isn’t it? Without even thinking, our flesh can persuade us to be so generous, all the while waiting for someone to be more generous in return. Others may imagine we have loved. The God who knows hearts is not so easily fooled.

## Giving in love

Love is sacrifice. Love is giving joyfully even when no one says thank you. Love is what we fail to do. Love is what God demands that we do. To fail at what God demands is to deserve what God threatens. It is surely not love that he owes us.

Yet here is the miracle. We are the kindergartner who received all the valentines but gave none in

return. We are the individual who has received so many blessings yet in return hasn’t honored God’s most simple command, to love. Still, our Lord gave us a valentine.

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.”

He didn’t think about how we’d react. He didn’t calculate how much love he’d get in return. He didn’t get frustrated as hours and days passed, his consideration going unrecognized.

He just loved us.

How supernatural is that! Such love we have not otherwise known. For such an unconditional act of kindness there is no parallel. That Jesus Christ would sacrifice everything for those who were still sinners.

You are forgiven. Your selfish masks of “love” are covered over. Washed in the waters of baptism, you stand before your God as perfect, the most loving individual that has ever walked this earth.

In Jesus you have loved perfectly. Love from the heart. Lay down your life for those around you. Ask not whether love will be returned. Ask instead whether you have love to share with someone who needs it.

You do. Someone needs it. Be a valentine.

Even if you don’t get a single card in return.

*Stephen Geiger is pastor at Prince of Peace, Yankton/Christ Our Savior, Vermillion, South Dakota.*

# FORWARD IN CHRIST

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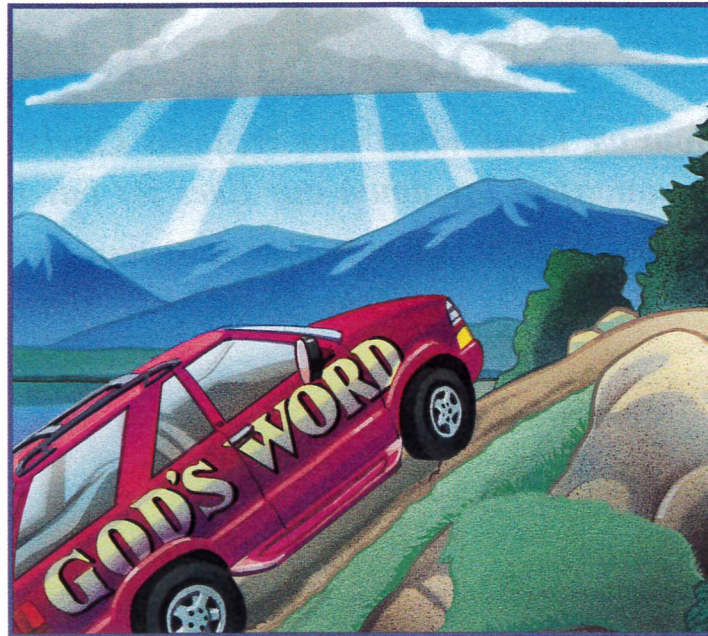
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God's vehicle  
can get you  
out of the  
slippery spots.  
Its engine  
never fails.

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## bits & pieces



As Christians, we all go through trials and temptations in our lives. Especially during these times, we need to remember that God is always with us, guiding us and giving us peace. Several articles this issue illustrate this point:

- He's there when your marriage breaks down and needs repair (p. 8).
- He will give you comfort and direction even when not receiving a divine call makes you ask the question, "Why?" (p. 12).
- He still provides rainbows—promises of blessings, seen and unseen—when your marriage can't be salvaged (p. 18).
- Peace through his Son is always yours, even when you struggle to see it after calamities strike (p. 20).
- He will never give you more than you can bear and will strengthen your faith through trials—even through a loved one's death (p. 22).



Just as God comforts us, so we need to comfort others. In his first article in his Bible study on 2 Corinthians, Paul Zell explores this concept (p. 30).



God promised that even with all our suffering, "the meek will inherit the land." When? Richard Gurgel answers that question in his monthly column (p. 32).



Looking for a way to spice up ministry for women in your church? Jane Schlenvogt's series gives you a recipe to follow for developing an active women's ministry. Check out her first article (p. 10).

—JKW

# features

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After Satan and our mixed-up priorities interrupted our marriage journey, my wife and I started over again in a new vehicle—the vehicle of God’s Word.

*Tim Niedfeldt*

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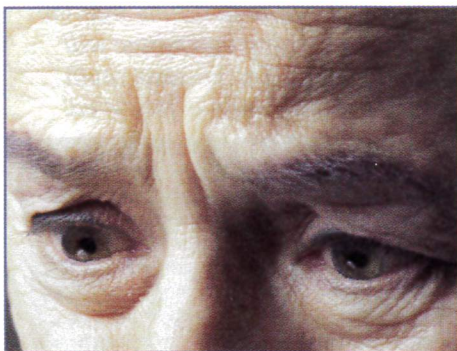
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*Karl R. Gurgel*

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*Frederick A. Kogler*

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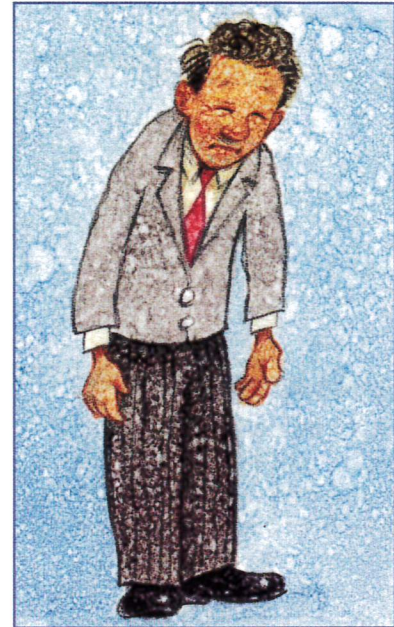
*Ashley Benson*

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*Bob Gove*



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“belt tightening”—this is amputating the body of Christ as ministries are discontinued. . . .

As adults we can handle the whole truth. Don’t sugarcoat it and squelch the desire of faithful Christians to respond in faith.

Raymond James  
Brooksville, Florida

It was a refreshing article on clapping in church [“Clapping in church,” Nov. 2003]. It was good to be reminded that even clapping in church can be a form of worshiping if done with a heart of thanksgiving to God. Thanks for this perspective.

Margaret La Due  
Prairie City, South Dakota

I greatly appreciated the article “Jesus, my public defender” [Oct. 2003]. It vividly brought out God’s justification of his children even while Satan seeks to dispute it.

One concern I had was the context that it was set in: “Judgment day has arrived. Now what?”

That judgment will not be in doubt, nor will there be any review of our sins on that day. Our iniquities and guilt will have long since disappeared “into the depths of the sea.”

The article’s context casts a shadow (albeit a small one) on the glorious hope that a judgment of perfect righteousness is to bring to the saint.

Jon Kuske  
Midlothian, Virginia

I found the article by Prof. Schuetze [“When does life end?,” Nov. 2003] very edifying, but I was wondering something. Certainly to know when a loved one has been taken by our Lord is a difficult matter for us, as is his will for us. Can’t even being partially alive still serve his purpose for our lives? Don’t misunderstand me, I do not wish to complicate the matter further, but couldn’t the argument be made that the faithful and loving presence of a Christian family, in any environment, benefits those around them? Couldn’t the support, prayers, and devotions have an effect on someone nearby and perhaps even lead to witnessing? Can’t even someone on life support still glorify God in such a way?

Matt Miskowski  
New Ulm, Minnesota

I admit that I’m a little behind the current news and issues, but I must say that I am quite disappointed on the lack of accurate information being presented about the synod’s budget crisis [“Convention 2003,” Oct. 2003]. In all of the reporting on the synodical convention in your special issue, I did not hear one note of urgency or even a modest attempt to inform the general WELS’ public about how bad our current budgetary crisis really is.

In your eagerness to reassure everyone that no one has been irresponsible, your relentlessly positive “spin” is leaving more missionaries without funding. This is more than

Prof. John Schuetze replies: *This is a point that is often overlooked today. What some may see as a “burden to society” can be an opportunity to put our Christian faith into action. This may involve caring for one who is sick, aging, or dying.*

Thanks for all the articles about thankfulness [Nov. 2003]. I sure needed to be reminded of 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Just the fact that we are saved by grace is reason enough to “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Silva Vähäkuopus  
Sweden, Europe

First, great news concerning the 2003 youth rallies [“Youth rally rocks,” Nov. 2003]. What was sown way back in the early 1970s by a few youth leaders has borne much fruit.

What rankles more than a little is the apparent lack of knowledge of the history of the WELS international youth rallies both by the current Commission on Youth Discipleship leadership and also the editors of your magazine.

The original 1974 international youth rally held at St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, was completely planned, managed, and carried out by a rally planning committee of five youth supported by their counselors and pastor. That event was written up in the *Northwestern Lutheran*.

To have such an inaccurate and incorrect statement about [three teens being part of the 2005 planning committee for the first time] does not bode well for our leaders or publishers.

Ernest Saar  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

The article should have stipulated that it will be the first time that the national planning committee will include youth. The Ottawa youth in 1974 did a fabulous job. —ed.

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.

# Spoiled Egyptians

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

**T**alk about chutzpah! Dr. Nabil Hilmi, dean of the faculty of law at the University of Al-Zaqaziq in Egypt, is filing a lawsuit against “all the Jews of the world.”<sup>1</sup> Not over land in the Sinai or the treatment of Palestinians. The Egyptians want their jewels back.

Dr. Hilmi estimates that, when the Jews left Egypt, they took about 300 tons of gold (Exodus 12:35,36). He doubles this figure for every year since the Exodus and arrives at a figure of 1.125 trillion tons. To this he adds 5,758 years of interest (where that number came from Dr. Hilmi doesn't say). He concludes that the world's Jews owe Egypt . . . well, some serious money.

Apparently Dr. Hilmi doesn't know what happened last time. The *Talmud*, the great compendium of Jewish tradition, tells how some Egyptians once presented a similar claim at the court of Alexander the Great.<sup>2</sup> Geviha ben Pessisa, “attorney” for the Jews, asked the Egyptians where they had learned about the missing jewels.

“From your own Law,” they replied.

“Fine,” said Geviha. “Our Law also says that up to 600,000 Jewish men worked in Egypt without compensation for 430 years. We'll pay up when you do.” The Egyptians fled the court in embarrassment.

The Egyptians' interpretive technique, then and now, was the same. They were selective. They seized on a few Bible passages that favored their case and ignored others that didn't. (For instance, they might have noticed that the Israelites didn't steal anybody's jewels. The jewels were given freely.)

The trouble is: you don't have to be an Egyptian to read Scripture this way. There's the liberal who wants to decide for himself which parts of Scripture are

God's Word and which are not. There's the quack theologian who hammers away at you with his three or four favorite proof passages, appearing not to notice others that don't suit his argument quite so well. A selective reading of Scripture is a trap anybody can fall into.

That's because, as Mark Twain said, “It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand” (*Following the Equator*). To all of us—not just hard-bitten skeptics like Twain—the Bible presents some highly bothersome things. It's supposed to. The message of God's holy wrath against sin is intended to shake us to the core of our being. The message of God sacrificing himself to earn our forgiveness is, if anything, more unsettling still.

Both law and gospel are meant to stop us dead in our tracks. They force us to step outside ourselves and see ourselves as God sees us. That's God's agenda when he comes to meet with us in his Word.

But that can't happen if, when we turn to the Scriptures, we're blinded by an agenda of our own. Dr. Hilmi's lawsuit shows what can happen when we're so determined to use God's Word that we forget to listen to it first.

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

<sup>1</sup>“A truly historic lawsuit,” *Jewish World Review* on-line, Sept. 3, 2003

<sup>2</sup>*Talmud*, Sanhedrin 91a

Dr. Hilmi's lawsuit shows what can happen when we're so determined to use God's Word that we forget to listen to it first.



# A JOURNEY

After Satan and our mixed-up priorities interrupted our marriage journey, my wife and I started over again in a new vehicle—the vehicle of God’s Word.

Tim Niedfeldt

In the summer of 2001 I took my family on a two-week vacation to explore some national parks, including Shenandoah National Park, Mammoth Caves National Park, and Gettysburg National Park.

Our vacation in retrospect was much like National Lampoon’s vacation. Our trek around the country was one calamity after another. First, we picked the only two weeks of the year where the daily highs were over 97 degrees. Our air conditioning went out. The alternator broke on the car. We got a flat on our camper. We plowed into another car, and my wife ended up in the emergency room with every muscle in her body seized up. We then drove our somewhat smashed car another 250 miles before the engine block cracked.

We were 300 miles from home and stranded. We had run out of money from the previous repairs. We were at the end of our rope. How much more could happen in one vacation to one family? Our journey was interrupted.

## **Our broken-down marriage**

This family vacation really was an analogy for our marriage: a journey started 18 years ago when I met my beautiful wife in high school. We married four years later as a young couple just out of college, and shortly afterward our son was on his way. Thus began our journey interrupted. What we didn’t notice was that another party had joined our marriage too with the goal of destroying it.

I believe that Satan’s tool of choice for attacking marriages is the rearrangement of priorities. He



# INTERRUPTED

works on your weaknesses and natural selfishness and capitalizes on them. It's so subtle yet so effective. Destroy our vertical relationship with God, and soon our horizontal relationships on earth will decay.

For me he worked on my intrinsic desire to succeed at all costs. I uprooted our family several times in the pursuit of the ultimate job, without necessarily discussing it with my wife. I put my career ahead of my wife. I expected her to want the same things. I took her silence as acceptance. Our marriage was losing power. We had a glitch in our journey, but after visiting with our pastor a few times, our alternator was repaired. We were powered up to continue our journey.

Oh, but we weren't ready for the accident that happened about three months after going to counseling. My wife took a lesson from my previous behavior and made a career decision without discussing it with me. I became bitter and turned my back on her. I dedicated myself to my new love, my career. I also spent time with the kids, and I did household chores. My wife fell low on my list of priorities. She was not even higher than doing dishes or laundry.

Satan started phase two of his plan. Now that our marriage was on a path of destruction, Satan worked on lowering God on the list. He did this with my good old friend "career" and soon to be new friends "leisure" and "money." I started my own company and worked up to 100 hours a week in the feverish Internet startup frenzy. The smell of money was in the air and

with it the opportunity to indulge in leisure. I started skiing with my kids, first once a week and later as part of a ski team five days a week. Then I started skipping church to do races on Sundays. Too much time at work and play left no time for church council anymore. I bought a bigger house and some nicer cars. God was moving down the list and being replaced with career, leisure, and money.

**When you feel you can never love your spouse, God will help you find love again.**

We had stumbled early on in our journey through poor communication and the failure of each of us to live up to the standards of Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 13. Later we had an accident of resentment and lack of forgiveness, yet we still continued on our journey in our banged up marriage vehicle. Finally, our engine cracked. We were broke after my business collapsed. There was no love in our marriage. We had each pursued our own affairs of body, mind, and soul. We were stranded on our marriage journey. What were we to do now? Certainly Satan had a suggestion. We were at the end of our rope.


## **Riding in God's vehicle**

Just as on our vacation, when the friends we were traveling with loaded our stranded family in their van and carried us the rest of the way home, God picked us up and started to carry us. He blessed us with a wonderful

pastor who showed us God's roadmap for the journey. Our pastor reminded us of the endless mercy and forgiveness that God gives us daily. God restored our priority list to the order it should be.

After abandoning our smashed up, broken Oldsmobile in Brewster, N.Y., we bought a new vehicle with 4-wheel drive, V8 engine, and off-road suspension, a vehicle that can drive through 18 feet of snow and tow a locomotive. Similarly, we started our marriage journey over again in a new vehicle—the vehicle of God's Word. God's vehicle can get you out of the slippery spots. Its engine never fails. It can pull you back on the road and help tow your burdens without wavering.

We were not a couple in love, but a couple completely out of love. The only thing we had was the commitment to stay together and even that seemed shaky at times. However, traveling in God's vehicle is a guarantee for success. When you feel you can never love your spouse, God will help you find love again. When you feel like you can never forgive, God will help you forgive.

When your journey is interrupted, jump into God's vehicle. Live in repentance and forgiveness. Start your journey with new commitment—and never, ever take a vacation with us. 

*Tim Niedfeldt is a member at St. Paul, Muskego, Wisconsin. He and his wife, Karen, started a marriage enrichment group called "The Marriage Journey." More information is available at <[www.themarriagejourney.com](http://www.themarriagejourney.com)>.*

# A new flavor of ministry for women



How to spice up your congregation's ministries for women.

Jane Schlenvogt

**A**re you enjoying the new and exciting spices in foods these days? Although salt and pepper are still staples, we now delight in sauces with chipotle, rice with masala, a burger plus onion soup mix. On my last trip to a local spice shop, I discovered there were seven different kinds of cinnamon. I thought, "There can't be a difference!" The distinctness became evident in the sniffing.

Ministries for women are as familiar as the scent of cinnamon. Traditional Ladies' Guilds have ministered

to women for decades. In this day of new flavors all around, maybe you are looking for ways to "turn things up a notch." Add a little zing, like chipotle! The following ideas might be just the seasoning you're looking for.

**Begin with prayer.** Pray that every ministry, large and small, has the Word of God at its heart and core. Ask God for direction and a vision for meeting the needs of women in your church. Let the Lord guide your every decision as you seek to add gusto to the service of women.

Next, look for the spiritual leaders among your women. Who among you demonstrates the importance of being in the Word and sets an example in worship and service? These are the women who will help you move forward and grow in your ministry. Meet with them, share your thoughts with them, and pray together about how you might take the next step in increasing spiritual growth and service among the women of your church.

**Compile a set of questions that will help you discover the needs**

**of the women in your midst.** Here are some examples:

- As a Christian woman, what is your greatest personal need for growth at the present time?
- Which group of women in our church do you believe needs attention (i.e., singles, single moms, widows, working women, moms, empty nesters, called workers)?
- What kinds of ministries for women would you like to see our church keep?
- What new ministries might we offer in the future?
- Which would you be willing to design and/or lead?
- Are there any particular topics that you would like addressed or speakers that you would like to hear in this ministry?

Now it's time to invite all your women together for a focus group. Give the questions you have prepared to the entire group and allow time for writing answers. Then share in small groups. Each group can pool answers into one list. Then, still in small groups, talk about which existing programs could meet those needs with a few changes. Brainstorm new ministries that could meet the needs that have been revealed. Prioritize the list of responses. Make a master list of the results.

**Your female leaders can now begin planning your programs based on the evident ministry needs.** If existing programs are functioning well, commend the leaders and thank them. Did 15 of your 20 women attend the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society national convention? You have an active group. Do you have several small-group women's Bible studies that meet regularly? Praise God and cheer on the leaders!

If another program needs enhancing, meet with the leaders and make suggestions based on results of the focus group. Maybe you had an active Cradle Roll Committee at one time, but the focus group revealed these children need attention. It could be that the leader has had major life changes and can no longer serve in that capacity. Could it be that the materials are in short supply? Some easy answers may reactivate the ministry.

Don't be afraid to set aside a program for a time. If you have few or no infants, you no longer have a great need for a large Cradle Roll Committee. If single women are not coming out in droves to the Bible study provided for them, maybe they are currently attending other studies and their needs are met. Concentrate energies on another area.

If needs are made evident and you have no program to meet those needs, start one. Maybe the results of the focus group made everyone aware of your high number of students in boarding schools or away at college. Tap the shoulders of women who enjoy gathering treats

### Women's ministry resource

The book *Designing Effective Women's Ministries: Choosing, Planning and Implementing the Right Programs for Your Church* may help you to spice up your women's ministry. It is especially helpful in organizing, hosting, and gleaning ideas from a focus group. It also contains chapters on training your leaders. This resource is available through <[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)>.

and supplies and do a mailing. Are there young women in your congregation who could benefit from the wise council of a spiritually mature older woman? You could begin a mentoring program. Do you have a high number of widows who need help with their finances? A CPA in your midst may be ready to guide them toward financial security. Did medical needs surface in your survey? Who are the doctors or nurses in your congregation ready to step forward and serve? Trained professionals among you could simply be waiting to be directed into service.

Be careful not to take on too many new programs at once. Start with one or two new ideas. Later, as the new programs are established, you can look at adding others.

**Be faithful in keeping the study of the Word central in your planning of programs.** Preserve the integrity of your ministry by carefully teaching the Word of God at large events and small meetings. Call on women with the gift of teaching to lead in Bible study. Watch for others with leadership ability whom you might encourage to teach. While everyone is deep in the Word, love for each other grows. Hearts of service are motivated. The unity that God intended deepens.

**Last, evaluate your programs often.** Hold an annual focus group. Adjust your questions as needed. Keep in mind: as there are many varieties of cinnamon, the ministry to women is different in every church. Continue to seek new ways to meet the needs of women the Lord puts in your path. Especially, savor the joy of being called to add spicy new flavor to the ministry among God's women.



Jane Schlenvogt is a member at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin.



# When there is no

Reactions from a graduate who did not get a call.

One of the first things you feel is that you don't feel anything. You are completely numb. Perhaps you shake your head in disbelief, but you don't remember it later. In fact, the entire day is a blur, and the next day isn't much better. Maybe you cry, not immediately, but sometime afterwards. You just cannot believe that it happened. You didn't get a divine call.

Now I realize that the above list of events doesn't apply to everyone. It doesn't even happen to the majority of called workers. But people should know what goes through the mind of someone who has been in training for four or five years, maybe even longer, and then doesn't get an opportunity to be called into public ministry. Plain and simple—it hits you hard and then even harder after that.

**Being a student at Martin Luther College (MLC) for a number of years, I witnessed the anticipation and eventual jubilation that surrounds Call Day.** I also witnessed the reactions of those who did not receive an assignment. In the same hallways where the newly-called walk on air to the various district rooms to find out more about where they are going, the non-called walk like zombies. Some can't stop sobbing. Emotions that have built up over an entire college life or even longer burst to the surface, whether full of joy or full of sorrow.

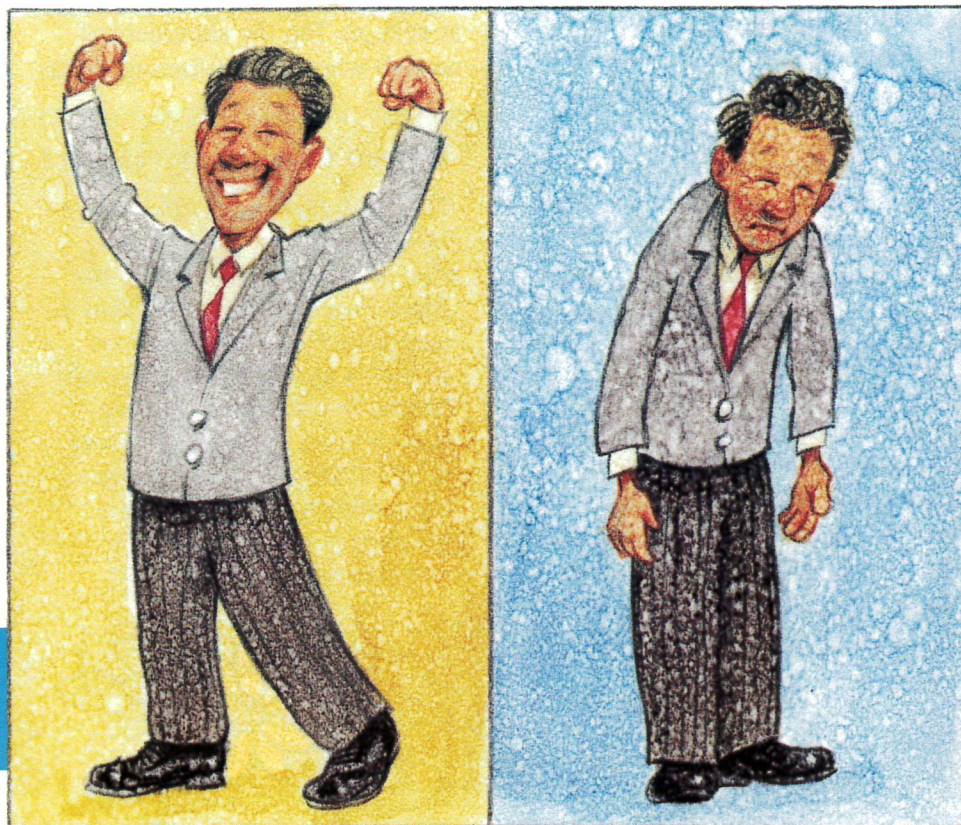
This is what happened to me at the last Call Day. I had been a student at MLC for five years plus a yearlong internship for staff ministry.

I had also received a temporary call to the synod offices for a year. And then: nothing. No new assignment. I had no immediate opportunity to continue using the skills that I'd spent years working on and no place in the public ministry. After years of being told how wonderful the work is and how it is more than a job because I'm working with eternal souls, I felt as if I wasn't needed.

**Of course it is easy to say that the Lord works in mysterious ways.** It is easy to say that your timetable is not God's timetable. It is easy to mention that the Lord will continue to provide. But trying to apply it is not so easy. Certain thoughts creep in that undermine God's grace: "Now what will I do? How will I live? I don't

have a job and my training isn't that applicable to the secular world of employment. Does this mean that God has no use for me in public ministry? Has he rejected me? Why didn't I know this sooner? Has my schooling been a waste of time?"

Now add in those thoughts that come because I not only didn't receive another assignment, but also because I am a staff minister who didn't get one: "Because the program is being reevaluated and may be phased-out, does this mean that I'll never get a call? I've heard that some are questioning the need for staff ministers. Why can't they see that staff ministers are there to help? Why did those who graduated after me receive a call, and I got passed over?"



# divine call

Benjamin Wink

I would be a liar if I said that those thoughts didn't come to me. They have and still do. I would be lying if I said that I never cried over this. When you get involved in work that involves all of your emotions and then you can't serve the way you want to (at least not yet), it definitely affects you. You try to rise above, but you realize that you can't do it alone.

**Trying to cope with this makes every day a struggle.** Only the Lord provides any sort of constant foundation. Chances to serve come and go, and programs can be cut. However, the Lord is with all of us, and that can be the only source of comfort we have. I know that believing that God is in charge of everything, including this, has been the only thing that has helped me keep my sanity.

Over the past year, the words of Jeremiah 29:11,12 have remained with me: "'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. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.'"

Those words comforted the Israelites who were in the Babylonian captivity. The exiles were definitely a people who knew emotional stress. Perhaps they even felt that God had rejected them. Those who don't receive calls don't know how it

feels to be an exile, but the emotional turmoil is there, and sometimes the sinful thinking that God has rejected you comes in loud and strong. But with prayer and even more prayer, and recognizing the words from Jeremiah and the greater message to all of God's people for all time, we can see that God will never leave or forsake us. He will be there even for those of us in an emotional gutter.

Sin can creep in any number of ways when the defenses are down. I am certainly susceptible to it and have failed many times since not receiving an assignment. The most prevalent question in my mind has been "WHY?!" and it is too soon to answer that. Only the Lord knows what is in store for all those who have been trained for public ministry but haven't received an assignment yet.

**Please take some time to pray for those of us who haven't yet received calls.** I know that I need that strength. I need to know that there are those who care and want the Lord to work according to his will, that God will provide that comfort that we know only he can provide. Every day will still be a struggle, but it will also be a struggle won because the Lord is leading the way.



*Ben Wink is a member at Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.*

Public ministry is a privilege not to be taken lightly. It is a rare occasion when our needs for public ministers of the gospel—pastors, teachers, or staff ministers—match exactly the number of candidates to be assigned. More often than not an individual (such as Ben) or a congregation (perhaps yours) must wait until long after college or seminary graduation to find out how God intends to carry out his plans for his kingdom through us.

At times like this, our picture of what it means to serve in the kingdom may be challenged too. There are many ways we can serve our God other than those that we have anticipated, and there are many ways we can make use of willing servants other than those with which we are long familiar. As you pray for Ben and others like him, ask God, "Lord, how can we make use of those gifts to your church?"

*Peter Kruschel  
Board for Ministerial  
Education administrator*

In the same hallways where the newly-called walk on air to the various district rooms, . . . the non-called walk like zombies.

# CROSS OF GLORY

## PEORIA, ARIZONA

**Building a home in a growing community**

**Janet Klann**

**A** field ripe for harvest. That's what the District Mission Board saw in northwest Phoenix when they decided in 1997 to target this area for a new mission effort.

Peoria, one of Arizona's fastest growing communities, boasts a population that exploded from 12,000 in 1980 to over 122,600 in 2002. The largest part of this new growth consists of people in the 30 to 44 age group. These young families who are buying a first home or a "move-up" home are drawn to Peoria by reasonably priced real estate, good schools, and approximately 280 days a year of clear, sunny skies. But as these families move into their physical homes, many of them have no spiritual home.

Today, over 200 souls in Peoria have found that spiritual home at Cross of Glory. Beginning with its first worship service on Easter 1999, Cross of Glory has experienced remarkable growth, averaging 10 adult confirmations per year. In its four-year history, the congregation has witnessed 55 baptisms.

Because its rented space in a professional building comfortably seats only 60, Cross of Glory holds three services—one on Saturday evening and two on Sunday morning, with attendance averaging 140 per week. Weekly Bible classes are well attended, both at church and in homes. An active youth ministry serves 65 children and teens through Sunday school, Lutheran Pioneers, and a teen group.

### **Growing a mission church**

What accounts for this remarkable growth? Why is Cross of Glory so blessed in spreading the gospel? Pastor Michael Nitz says, "It is God who blesses our efforts. All we can do is share the Word again and again and trust the Spirit to do his work through it."

A key factor in any mission effort is understanding the prospects. Nitz spent seven months canvassing Peoria's new housing developments, surveying residents who did not claim any church affiliation. He found that the optimum time for such canvassing was when people had been in their new home for a year or less. At that stage, families are adjusting to the relocation process—finding



On April 5, 2003, Tracie Zimmerman (left) and Tara Tucker (right) help young attendees at Cross of Glory's Easter for Kids.

new schools, stores, doctors, and dentists—and they are receptive to hearing about a new church. Nitz found that 50 percent of the families that he called on were willing to listen to him and 25 percent took the literature he offered. These figures are significantly higher than canvassing done in more established neighborhoods.

Volunteers from WELS Kingdom Workers helped survey emerging neighborhoods even before city maps were available. Teams knocked on doors and offered literature describing the church and Bible studies, resulting in a prospect list of over 300 names. These prospect families receive the church newsletter and other mailings as a way to learn more about Cross of Glory. They also receive special invitations to Easter and Christmas services and personal visits.

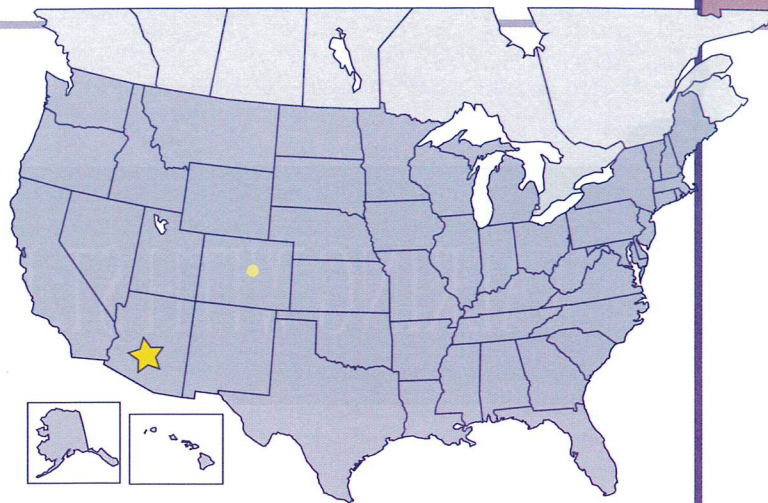
Once a family does visit, Cross of Glory has a well-thought out plan of welcome. Kim Peaslee says, "Immediately upon opening the door we were warmly met by greeters who said, 'Hello and welcome!' They held eye contact and didn't hurry us through the line to get the door closed. The pastor came over to welcome us, too, and we were met with smiles and nods from total strangers as we made our way to seats."

Cross of Glory uses a service folder containing all hymns, Scripture lessons, and liturgy, complete with explanations of how each portion of the service fits

into the design of worship. Coffee and refreshments are served after every service, giving guests a chance to get acquainted with members.

A church member delivers a welcome packet to each guest family shortly after their visit. This packet includes information about what Lutherans believe and about the Wisconsin Synod and small gifts imprinted with the name and location of the church.

Nitz also writes the family a letter initiating a home visit and offering Bible-based counseling and in-home Bible studies. Kim Harmon, a new member, says, "Pastor Nitz took the time to visit us at our home to introduce us to God's Word. I began to get so excited about what treasures I would discover next in the Bible."



## QUICK FACTS

Cross of Glory, <[www.crossofglory.org](http://www.crossofglory.org)>:

- organized a Core Group Committee in December 1998.
- had 99 people attend an outdoor service on Easter 1999 (a record cold snap plunged the temperature to 38 degrees).
- has 213 members.
- owns eight acres in northwest Peoria.
- plans to be in a new building by Easter 2004.
- plans to have a preschool and eventually an elementary school.



On March 1, 2003, new Marine and Cross of Glory member Jesse Torres led the congregation in the Pledge of Allegiance and "God Bless America."

### Much to offer

Members of Cross of Glory believe their church has much to offer those seeking a spiritual home. Michael and Kim Durler joined because "Pastor Nitz teaches Scripture in straightforward, uncompromising presentations." Rex and Kim Harmon and their three daughters have found "a variety of fellowship activities, several different Bible studies to choose from during the week, and youth activities that keep Christ as the focal point." Peaslee says, "Visitors and members experience the love of Christ in a cheerful, open, welcoming congregation. Talents and abilities to serve the Lord are developed and encouraged. We are one in the body of Christ."

### Challenges and blessings

Mission congregations face unique challenges. Often a major one is finding a permanent home. In February 2002, Cross of Glory purchased property but later withdrew from the process when the city restricted access from a major highway. In fall 2002 the congregation was evicted from its rented quarters, despite a valid

lease, because the building had been sold. Members had only weeks to find a new rental. When the congregation does begin to build a permanent home, many additional jobs will require hours of work from a relatively small number of people.

If the challenges are large, so are the blessings. Nitz's commitment to in-home Bible information classes has been possible only with the development of strong lay leadership. This is evident in Cross of Glory's Pioneer program, the Board of Education, and women's Bible studies. Kim Harmon got involved in Pioneers because "the biggest thank you I can give the Lord for his eternal love is to spread his Word."

There is also joy in watching a mission grow. Gus Koutia, a member of the core group, says, "This is an exciting time, planning and building our church and the preschool we want to open next year. It truly is a blessing to be a member of a mission church and to see the power of God's Word in action."

These members of Cross of Glory are eager to share their Savior so that more people will someday find another new home, a heavenly home.

*Janet Klann is a member at Shepherd of the Valley, Surprise, Arizona.*



## WALKING WITH ST. JOHN

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 5



# JESUS' FAREWELL

**At the Last Supper, Jesus prepared the disciples for his departure and for their future life and ministry.**

**Theodore J. Hartwig**

**T**his five-chapter unit consists of Jesus' farewell words to his disciples at the Last Supper. According to custom, the author assumes reader familiarity with the well-known events at that supper as written in the other Gospels. So he can focus on the intimate conversation in which Jesus prepared the disciples for his departure and for their future life and ministry.

### **I have set you an example (13:1-38)**

By stooping to the lowly service of foot washing, Jesus desired to teach the disciples not about a new ceremony they must keep but about an attitude they should adopt in serving one another. Instead of putting on airs over their acts of love, let these be done in humility without recognizing it as humility. True humility, Luther said, does not know it is humble, or it would become proud from thinking about so fine a virtue.

Before Jesus can embark on the intimacies of farewell with his friends, however, the foreign element in their

midst needed removal. With Judas' departure into the dark night to carry out his dark mission, Jesus sees his Father's plan of salvation, from betrayal to trial to death, going into fulfillment. With solemn joy he greets the unfolding events: "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him" (13:31).

### **After a little while you will see me (14:1-16:16)**

Since God's salvation plan required the teacher to be separated from his pupils, Jesus' farewell dwells on two topics of unsurpassed comfort.

First, he goes to prepare a place for their future reunion. The words were chosen to remind them of Jewish wedding celebrations as described in the parable of the 10 virgins. While bride and bridesmaids waited at home, the bridegroom had gone away to ready a place for the wedding festival. That done, he returned to lead the whole wedding party to the banquet hall. How comforting for the grieving disciples that

their Lord was leaving to prepare for a reunion of joyful celebration.

To such comfort Jesus adds the guarantee that during his absence, his words shall keep them secure. He had not only taught them about the way, the truth, and the life, but he himself, in his spoken promises, was their way, truth, and life. With this comforting possession, they remain attached to him as branches to the vine and draw from him the strength to be kept in the faith and to bear good fruit.

Finally, Jesus assures the disciples that his absence will last but "a little while." Let this be their memory verse when his departure overwhelms them with a sense of helplessness. The orphanage will be brief. After "a little while" they will see him again. Then the stone shall forever be removed from their hearts.

### **When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth (16:5-16)**

For his other comforting farewell message Jesus promises that he will





send the Holy Spirit to serve the disciples as their Advocate [“Counselor,” NIV]. The Holy Spirit is called by this name because he speaks for the followers of Jesus as they carry out their testimony to the world. In this mission they, too, must expect hostility, chiefly from the religious minded for whom the gospel of Jesus does not square with their own ideas about God.

The Holy Spirit will also clear up the teachings of Jesus. Against the claims of those who put later religious beliefs on a par with the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit does not reveal new teachings beyond what the disciples heard from Jesus and wrote in the New Testament. Rather, the Holy Spirit opens minds to grasp the full meaning of what, so opposed to normal thinking, Jesus taught about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

In popular notion, sin is a breaking of the moral law. But God’s Son paid the guilt of all that sin. Only one sin remains, that of unbelief, which rejects the Savior who removed the punishment of all other sin. Again, in people’s minds righteousness means living a virtuous life. But the Holy Spirit points to Jesus and declares that righteousness is found solely in the sinless person and saving work of Jesus. People also have their own

standards for judging between right and wrong, but the only true standard for judgment is to know that Satan is our enemy and to abide in Christ who has conquered him.

**I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me (16:17–17:26)**

Jesus’ farewell words to his friends close with a prayer in which, as a faithful priest, he intercedes for his present and future disciples, and then he offers himself for the sins of the world. His death will glorify him for making salvation a reality and will glorify the Father whose will has been fulfilled.

His prayer reveals the intensity of his loving concern for the disciples. An enormous responsibility rests on their shoulders. In carrying forward their assigned work as witnesses to Jesus, they will, with the prophets, be the foundation of the future Church that is built on Christ, the chief cornerstone. So Jesus prays for the disciples’ protection and their dedication to the work, his own example the dynamo for their dedication. So the mission will prosper to bring many others into the unity of one body with Christ, so that his house may be filled.

The deep emotion with which Jesus speaks offers a glimpse into the exalted relationship between

this Son and his Father. “Righteous Father,” the Son prays in closing, thus exposing the original lie in Eden that God cannot be trusted. How that lie ruined God’s creation, bent it out of shape, and saddled mankind with its bitter fruit of self-love, distrust, envy, greed, lust, and pride! “Righteous Father,” prays the Son, for he is a Father of holy love who does not deceive but wills only what is good. He wills that his chosen people share the love with which he has loved his Son from eternity.



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

*To read Prof. Hartwig’s commentary on the first 12 chapters of John, go to <[www.wels.net/nlarch/search.pl](http://www.wels.net/nlarch/search.pl)> and search the “author” category for Theodore Hartwig.*

# Thank God for rainbows

During a difficult time in my life, a simple rainbow reminded me of the many promises God has made and kept.

I was more depressed than I had been in years. **I was once again on the hour-and-a-half drive to pick up my kids for the weekend.** After ending my ministry when my marriage ended, weekends were all I had—at least for now. What would happen to my kids was only one of the many worries on my mind. It had been a rough day at work—a job that I didn't like anywhere near as much as I loved my previous one. Still, with a mortgage to pay and now rent for a new apartment, my lessened income wasn't enough to pay the bills. And after losing the respect of most of my former congregation, two of the people who had been closest to me had just deserted me.

Although I was anxious to see my children again, the drive seemed to go on forever. I could see the rain clouds gathering ahead. One of them was stunning, reminding me of the verse from Revelation, "Look, he is coming with the clouds."

I wished for Jesus to return right then to rescue me from all these troubles. But that thought didn't lift

my spirits. It just drove me deeper into my self-pity.

**Then God sent me a rainbow.**

Oh, I don't know that it was specifically for me, but it sure felt like it.

**I was reminded that I don't face problems alone and that every single one of them is part of a plan—God's plan for my life.**

I remembered all of the promises that I had learned so well, yet had so easily forgotten. There was, of course, the original promise connected with a rainbow, God's promise never to again destroy this sinful world with a flood. But so many of God's other promises came flooding back to me:

- "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).
- "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).
- "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

- "In all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28).
- "Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).
- "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3).

**Life didn't get immediately better.** All my problems didn't immediately go away. But I was reminded that I don't face these problems alone and that every single one of them is part of a plan—God's plan for my life. I was reminded that through Christ and his forgiveness, that plan ultimately ends in glory in heaven.

Thank God for the rainbows we can see.

More important, thank God for the promises of blessings we can't always see.



*Because of the personal nature of this article, the author remains anonymous.*

# A father's love

It's a poignant scene, a father and his son, walking up the hill, together—a unique kind of love scene. No, it's not the picture you may be visualizing, a little boy clinging with his whole fist to one finger of his father's hand. First of all, the father looks more like a great-grandfather and the son a teenager. But the scene still touches the heart. The father, at God's direction, is about to sacrifice his son.

I'm speaking about Abraham and his son, Isaac. "As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, . . . 'Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'" (Genesis 22:6,7). For the moment, all Abraham was prepared to say was, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering." Neither one of them could have envisioned the substitution for his son, the lamb, that God would provide or the sacrifice of his one and only Son that God would make for us.

A century-old Christmas hymn, "Of the Father's love begotten," sought to explain another unique love scene—that of the heavenly Father and his Son. This isn't a human generation of a son by a father, but a timeless, eternal generation, a relationship without beginning and without end. Its very essence is love, love of the Father for his Son, a love reciprocated by the Son.

Faith believes it; reason can't explain it. Nor can reason explain what the Father asks his Son to do. In the familiar Lenten hymn, "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth," Paul Gerhardt reflects on the Father's asking. "'Go forth, my Son,' the Father said, 'and free my children from their dread of guilt and condemnation. The wrath and stripes are hard to bear, but by your passion they will share the fruit of your salvation'" (Christian Worship 100:2).

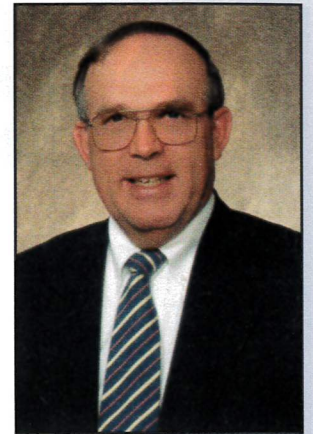
"Unthinkable," you say. "It's unforgivable for a father to ask his son to do this." Yes, if this were an ordinary father and an ordinary son. But this is the heavenly Father who truly loves not only his only begotten Son but also every other son and daughter begotten in the ordinary way.

Another hymn verse from Gerhardt explains the final outcome of the Father loving us through his Son. "Lord, when your glory I shall see and taste your kingdom's pleasure. Your blood my royal robe shall be, my joy beyond all measure! When I appear before your throne, your righteousness shall be my crown; With these I need not hide me. And there, in garments richly wrought, as your own bride I shall be brought to stand in joy beside you" (Christian Worship 219).

Here, truly, is a love out of this world! During February, with cards and candy and, yes, even with diamonds, we humans pledge our love for each other. Even under the best of circumstances, it's only until "death do us part." But here, because of the death the Father asked his Son to endure, it's eternal life he gives us.

"I love you truly," the Christian sings, because, as John wrote, "God first loved us." John was also inspired to write, "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

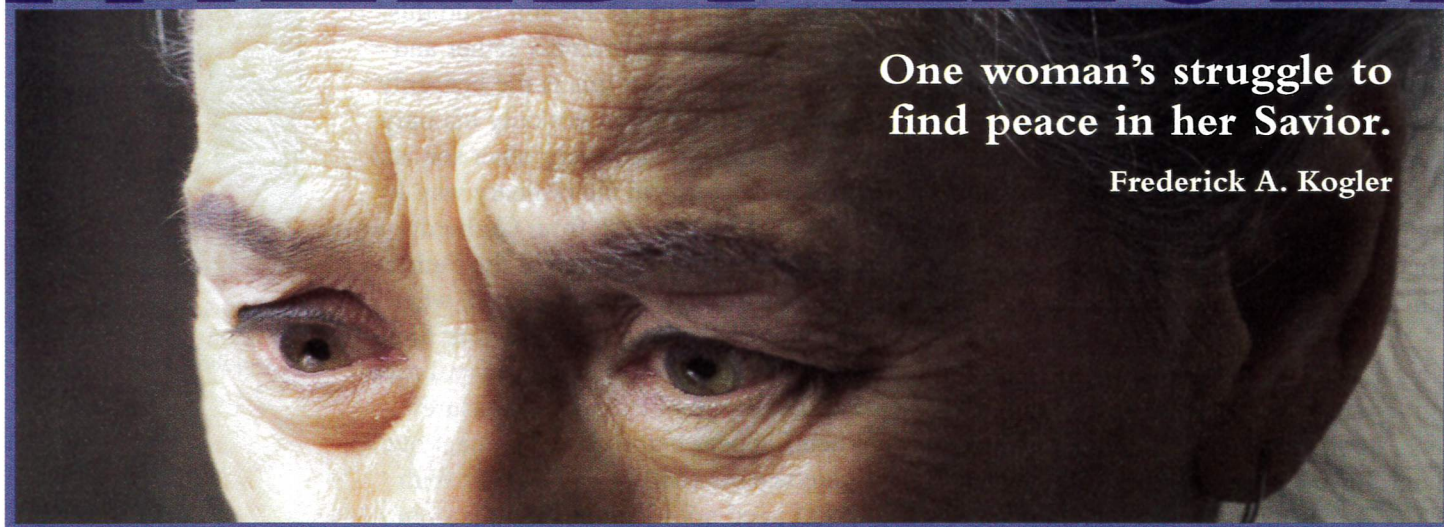
Yes, we can show love with cards and candy and maybe even diamonds. But much more lasting than a card or candy and much more precious than a diamond is the Father's love for us in his Son. We should love others just as God loved us. Sharing the Father's gift of his Son with another truly says, "I love you!"



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

Much more  
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# I NEED PEACE!



One woman's struggle to find peace in her Savior.

Frederick A. Kogler

Many years ago I served a husband and wife whom, with their three children, you might expect to see on the front cover of a family magazine. When I got to know them, they were already in middle age, and their children had left home and begun families of their own. I always knew when one of the children would return home to visit, because their mom would call to tell me they had been there or they would all be in church, crammed together in the "family pew."

**That family's peace was shattered, however, when the oldest son, a father of two, was killed in a tragic work-related accident.**

Both parents were plunged into deep sorrow. I remember that funeral vividly, because taken by the emotion of the moment I had stumbled over the words in the benediction: "The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and . . . give you peace." As I stumbled with my words, his mother's head lifted and her staring eyes met mine.

His mother, "Anne," mourned deeply for a long time. She said, "My son's death was out of order."

Gradually, however, she learned to accept her loss. She dealt with her sorrow by immersing herself in community service activities, socializing

with friends, and going dancing once again with her husband, "Bob." Through it all she remained faithful in her church attendance, served on the altar guild, and took her turn at Ladies' Aid luncheons.

**One day Anne asked me to come by their house just before dinner.**

She wanted me to bring my communion set. I thought it was unusual but didn't press for further explanation, assuring her that I would be there. When I arrived, her husband was just getting home from work, so we went inside the house together.

Anne greeted us with swollen eyes and a flushed face and quickly ushered us into the living room. As soon as I sat down, Anne went to her husband. Falling on her knees before him, she grasped his hands

and, sobbing uncontrollably, blurted out her confession of unfaithfulness and deceit. She had been seeing a man from the bowling alley during afternoons. When Bob and his friends went on fishing trips, she had talked the man into coming to their home.

I was stunned!

I watched as a shudder of rage went through Bob. The veins on his neck bulged, and his flush deepened. I didn't know what to expect. Suddenly he was on his knees next to Anne, comforting her, embracing her while his face was covered with tears of sorrow and love. He confessed that he had ignored her sorrow at their son's death. He acknowledged his lack of tenderness and compassion. He

spoke not of her mistake and unfaithfulness but of his own weakness and insensitivity to her needs.

They sought and received forgiveness from each other and then turned to me. Could God, would God, possibly forgive them? To be sure! I read from John 20:21: "Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'"

Bob and Anne received the assurance of Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice through the Lord's Supper. At the end I spoke the words: ". . . lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." Again Anne lifted her eyes to mine and stared.

They were reconciled and strengthened by their Lord in spite of their mistakes. It seemed to draw them closer somehow, and they were inseparable in worship, in service to others, and in generous support of their church. We grew closer as friends in Jesus.

**Some years later Bob died from a heart attack.** He died in the peace and the assurance of his Savior's gracious love. When he died, he closed his eyes with the arms of his beloved Anne wrapped around him.

Oh, how she mourned his passing. After his death she withdrew and seemed to shut down. At Bob's funeral, even though carried by the strong arms of her grandsons, she could hardly make it to her place. At the end I spoke the words of the benediction. Anne looked at me

with her now familiar stare and shook her head.

Shortly after that Anne moved to an independent living complex where she seemed to rally some. She played cards with her friends, did handiwork, and enjoyed sending cards to commemorate birthdays and anniversaries. I called on her frequently.

But things started changing, and she began withdrawing into a depression that all but smothered her spirit. I read psalms and Scripture passages to her, prayed long prayers with her, gave her the Sacrament, shared my sermons, and had members of the sunshine committee drop by, but it didn't seem to help. Her mantra had become: "Oh, Pastor, why can't I have some peace? I need peace! Pray that I might have some peace."

**Before long Anne moved into a long-term health care facility.**

One day I turned again to John 20:21. After the usual devotion, Sacrament, and inquiry about grandchildren, I left. Something had changed that day. Although I couldn't put my finger on it, I had a feeling that something was different about that visit.

Then Anne's daughter called for me to go see her mom, who was so excited that they were worried about her. Anne's daughter told me, "She keeps talking about peace and can't stop crying."

I thought to myself, "Lord, give me some help here. I'm running out of ideas."

When I got to her room, Anne was alone resting with her prayer book in her hands. As I stepped into her room, she looked up at me with the clearest sparkling brown eyes.

**"Pastor Kogler," she said, "now I have peace!** Do you remember the Bible passage you read to me last time you were here? I do because it's all about peace! You remember how I've struggled with you telling me that the Lord would give me peace. Every time you spoke the benediction I was so angry with you and God. You said he would give me peace, but he didn't, until now. Now I understand how Jesus gave peace to his disciples. They didn't deserve it, just like me, but he gave it to them anyway. He gave it to them because he loved them. That's why he died for them and me! Oh, Pastor, forgive me for being angry, forgive me for all the things that I've thought about how mean it was for you to keep asking for God to look on me with his peace. Forgive me for all the mistakes I've made. I know Jesus has. Will you?"

With tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat, I again spoke the benediction: "Now may the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious unto you, may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

As I lowered my hand, she took it and kissed it gently.

"Thank you," Anne said.



*Fred Kogler, a retired pastor, is a member at Emanuel, St. Paul, Minnesota.*

# WHATEVER

## A father's love is forever

My father's death brought me closer to my heavenly Father.

Ashley Benson

Lying on my kitchen table when I arrived home from school that Tuesday was a crisp white envelope with my name on the front. I opened the letter and found a bright white card. It read "A Father's Love Is Forever." The inside held a message and was signed by my aunt. Looking again at the table I found a copy of that day's newspaper. I slowly picked it up and paged through until I found my father's name—under the obituaries.

**For the past year or more, my father had been in poor health.** It started with a broken ankle. An infection, combined with his diabetes, led to a trip to the emergency room, a month in the hospital, and an amputation of half of his foot. But the infection spread to his other foot. It was decided that he would have a below-the-knee amputation to stop the infection.

He went into the hospital on Monday, April 15. His surgery went well, and we were told he would be home that Saturday. Because he was now wheelchair bound, we had to construct a ramp in our backyard. We spent all of the daylight hours after work and school building the ramp, and it was just about finished. Because of all the work, no one had been able to get to the hospital for visits. I last spoke to my dad Wednesday night. I left him with the words, "I love you. Goodbye." Little did I know that those would be the last words I would speak to him.

On Friday, April 19, we received a call saying that Dad had taken a turn for the worse. I was told to stay at home. My mom called my dad's sisters, and they headed to his side immediately. He passed away before anyone could get there. About 11 PM that night they all walked into the house.

Within the next 60 seconds I would learn that a blood clot had formed as a result of the surgery and traveled to his lung. He had died instantly.

**My entire universe was flipped upside down.** I felt as though I was living in slow motion, yet everything around me was happening twice as fast as normal.

Although my family did not regularly attend church or belong to one, a pastor from the church affiliated with my sister's grade school had been visiting my father. The night of the wake, he held a small devotion. He told us of his visits with my dad and how my dad had re-confessed his faith and in faith accepted God back into his life.

When the devotion was over, he came over to me and hugged me. He whispered, "Don't cry, sweetheart. Your daddy is in heaven." To this day, these words bring me more comfort than anything I have ever heard.

If it were not for that pastor, I would not be able to sleep at night. I would not know what my father's spiritual condition had been when he left this world. Instead, I have a peace that goes beyond all reason and explanation. My own faith has grown in immeasurable quantities. I have come to know and accept that God would not have allowed this to happen if he didn't think I could get through it.

**Over a year has passed since that fateful night.** I still have the card and the newspaper. The card is taped to my wall, and I begin and end every day by reading those words and taking comfort in the fact that both my dad and my Father hold in their hearts love for me that will last forever.

Ashley Benson is a junior at West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minnesota.

# is in heaven



## A way to train national workers

WELS' Latin America mission field is trying a new approach to training national church workers. Latin America Traveling Theological Educators (LATTE) is a "traveling seminary" in which five missionaries travel between Spanish-speaking Latin America missions to train nationals for the ministry.

These missionaries travel alone or in pairs to the different countries (Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Colombia), staying for up to six weeks as they teach a course. These trips began in July 2003.

Previously missionaries in each mission were responsible for the entire seminary-level curriculum. "Now people can specialize in areas such as church history, Greek, Hebrew, and practical theology," says Missionary Larry W. Schlomer, LATTE coordinator.

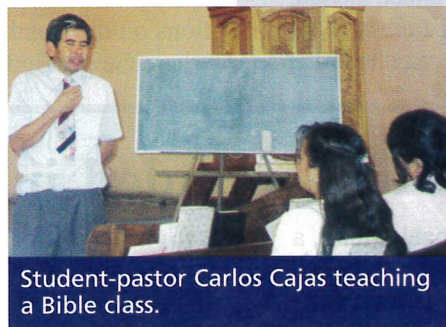
The work isn't easy. Students are at various levels, and most can only study part time because they hold full-time jobs as well as serve in national churches. The missionaries and their families are constantly on the road. Unrest in some countries makes travel difficult.



The LATTE professors (left to right): Larry Retberg, Phil Strackbein, Larry W. Schlomer, Nate Wagenknecht, and John Strackbein.

But the Lord is blessing this work. More than 50 students are growing in their knowledge of God's Word. Already LATTE has expanded to include French-speaking Haiti and Portuguese-speaking Brazil. The team is also exploring ways to use distance-learning technology.

Although this method won't work in many world mission fields (because languages vary between countries), for Latin America it will improve the training of national pastors and make each field more self-dependent.



Student-pastor Carlos Cajas teaching a Bible class.

### Meet Carlos Cajas

Missionary Larry W. Schlomer introduces LATTE student Carlos Cajas:

Carlos, from the southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas, moved to Puebla, Mexico, about 14 years ago and joined our church there. When the congregation lost its pastor, he became the lay leader. He didn't want to become a pastor because he didn't think he had the patience to be one.

Apparently the Lord granted him patience because he began studying for the ministry about five years ago. His congregation called him as its student-pastor.

The Lord also gave Carlos a real heart for his people. One family that he evangelized was a poor widow and her five children. When the Amayas were in danger of losing their small two-room house, Carlos divided his own house into two parts and allowed the Amayas to move in.

Today Carlos is a tireless worker for the Lord, studying with the LATTE professors two days a week and serving his congregation. He is taking advantage of a WELS-

sponsored English as a foreign language program in his congregation to reach new people. He will graduate from the formal seminary program during the second half of 2004.

## Looking back

**From the May 21, 1914, issue—**

*The Growing Divorce Evil*

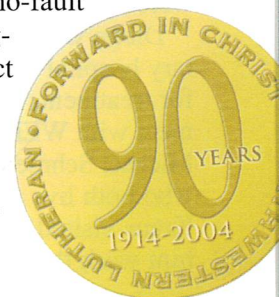
"In a recent speech in the United States Senate, in support of divorce reform, Senator Ransdell of Louisiana gave some instructive statistics concerning the progress of the divorce evil in this and other countries. He said: 'In the United States, the total number of divorces granted in 1867 was 9,937, or 27 for 100,000 population. Forty years later, in 1906, there were 72,062 divorces, or 86 per 100,000; thus, in actual numbers there were more than

seven times as many divorces granted in 1906 as in 1867, or, allowing for the increased population, divorce had increased 319 percent. To put it in another way, in 1867 there was one divorce for every 3,666 people, while in 1906 there was one for every 1,162. . . .

"To make a most striking comparison, during 1901 the total number of divorces granted in the United States was more than twice as great as in all the rest of Christendom combined.'"

**FYI:** Recent projections from both the U.S. Census Bureau and

the National Center for Health Statistics indicate that nearly half of all first marriages in the United States will now end in divorce. The *Journal of Marriage and Family* (1995) reports that "no-fault divorce law had a significant positive effect on the divorce rate across the 50 states," ensuring America's place as the leader in divorces worldwide.



## Meet the editorial staff—uncut

*Ever ask yourself, “Who are these people who write for Forward in Christ magazine?” Through this series you can find out. Read on:*

### Running on full

“Vermillion gas is cheaper, and I just wanted to save four cents per gallon,” recalls Steve Geiger. “But it ended up costing me 30 bucks.”

After the trip that left him stranded with an empty gas tank in remote southeast South Dakota, Geiger made sure to always keep a close eye on the fuel gauge. Just as cars can’t run without fuel, we can’t be messengers of God’s Word without the Lord. Referring to his new position as “Thought for today” writer for *Forward in Christ*, Geiger says, “Knowing that the focus is the Word is calming.”

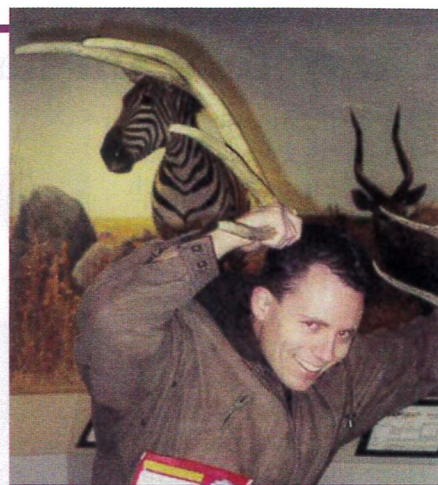
Born in South Dakota, Geiger moved with his family to Belmont, Calif., at the age of two after his father, Gerald, accepted a call. A true California boy, it was a shock when he came to Water-

town, Wis., in 1987 to attend Northwestern College: “It was way too cold, and all I had were shorts!”

Shorts and T-shirts soon had to make way for winter apparel, for after graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1995, he spent two years in Minnesota as a tutor at Martin Luther College. In 1997 he moved back to his birth state to serve as pastor for the dual parish of Prince of Peace, Yankton/Christ Our Savior, Vermillion, S.D.

Geiger enjoys many outdoor activities, from running to playing golf and tennis. Piano and organ, as well as singing, occupy much of his time. He also enjoys travel, whether it’s just driving around near home or venturing overseas. “I’ve been to almost all of Western Europe,” he says.

After each journey, it’s back to home and the two small but eager congregations on the South Dakota plains—where Geiger finds fulfillment despite



Steve Geiger writes: “This picture of me is from a Geiger extended family outing at the Watertown Zoo in Watertown, S.D. They have an indoor exhibit where kids can check out antlers and other animal stuff. Or I guess where adults can check out antlers and other stuff.”

some minor weather inconveniences. However, “especially after you go to school, you realize that [the location] is not what’s important—it’s spreading the gospel that counts.”

*Elizabeth Hudock*

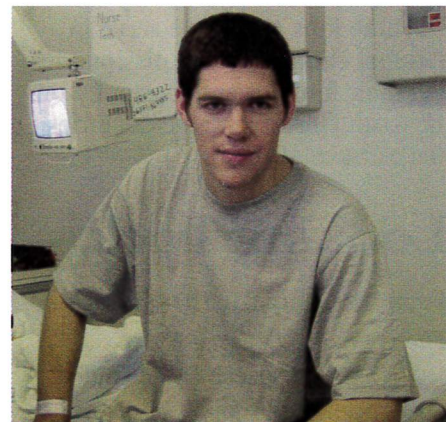
## WELS soldier wounded in Iraq

On Oct. 6, 2003, Michael Diehn, a 21-year-old Army soldier stationed in Iraq, was patrolling in a civilian sport utility vehicle (SUV) with four other soldiers. They saw something suspicious in a ditch, turned around to check it out, and backed over an anti-tank mine. The gunner in the back was blown out of the SUV and killed. Diehn suffered fractured vertebrae, broken ribs, and a ruptured spleen. The other men were only slightly injured.

Diehn was flown to the U.S. military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, for treatment. There he requested to meet with WELS military chaplains Michael Schroeder and Thomas Kraus, who both live nearby. Schroeder and Kraus visited with Diehn, helping him work through this difficult time.

Schroeder notes, “He said there were a couple of ‘strange’ things that happened that day. Their team leader had them wear the body armor that night for their mission. He said that normally they don’t so they can move faster. Also, he was originally going to be sitting in back with the gunner, but then they decided to have him sit up in the back seat so that the other guy there could help him work the radio. It is kind of a cool thing looking back with him on these ‘chance’ things and seeing God’s protective hand at work.”

Diehn returned to his hometown of Arlington, Minn., after his release from the hospital. From there he was redeployed back to Germany.



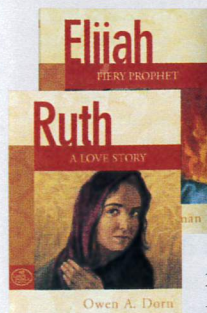
Michael Diehn, a member of St. Paul, Arlington, Minn., was wounded in Iraq when the vehicle he was in backed over an anti-tank mine. Here Diehn is pictured on the day of his release from a military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany. While in the hospital, Diehn was visited by two WELS chaplains serving in Europe through the WELS Special Ministries’ Military Services Committee.



# Booknook

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

## Getting to know God's people

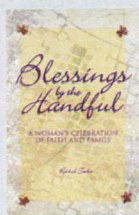


\$6.99 each

What is sometimes lacking in Christian literature is basic, easy-to-read texts that introduce characters and concepts of the Bible in a language and format that can be readily digested by those new to the faith as well as those who find the Bible to be overwhelming in its size, complexity, and language. *Elijah, Fiery Prophet* by James Aderman and *Ruth, A Love Story* by Owen Dorn, both part of the "God's People" series, capture the essence of the biblical account in a fashion that few will find intimidating.

In approximately 40 pages the authors recount the lives of the main characters in a free-flowing narrative that makes for an easy read of one hour or less. In spite of their brevity, the books give you a basic understanding of the people and the times in which they lived. Through the use of short subchapters inserted throughout the book, the authors introduce

## Blessings by the handful



\$11.99

The 12 chapters in the book *Blessings by the Handful—A Woman's Celebration of Faith and Family* are as unique as the landscapes in the many places the author has lived. Rachel Tacke's love for art is apparent as she skillfully paints her life stories into written words. She shares personal experiences dealing with issues challenging many women: childlessness, managing workloads in and outside the home, making educational choices for children, and finally, guiding and parenting "blessings" onto God-pleasing paths. She expresses how, as a Christian, she has learned to handle fear, find contentment, and nurture her faith.

As readers meet and watch Rachel's husband and three children grow phys-

ically and spiritually, they realize how much families have in common. The author throws open the front door of her home giving an honest look at the struggles and joys facing women and mothers in a rapidly changing world.

Although quickly read at 102 pages, this book is liberally dosed with Scripture, giving the reader much to hold onto. Ageless Bible heroes such as Ruth, Joseph, Peter, and Paul are woven through situations in the author's life, reminding us of the comfort gained by viewing all events in light of God's will for our lives. The God who cared for, preserved, and directed saints of old is still in touch with the families and problems of today—and yes, still richly gives us all blessings by the handful.

Robyn Smith

Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah

## Obituaries

### Patricia E. Luebke 1945-2003

Patricia Luebke (nee Mrotek) was born Aug. 4, 1945, in Manitowoc, Wis. She died June 28, 2003, in Manitowoc.

A 1969 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served at Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.; Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; St. John, Waterloo, Wis.; and St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Wayne; one son; one daughter; her mother; and two brothers.

### Louis A. Winter 1908-2003

Louis Winter was born Sept. 10, 1908, in East Bloomfield, Wis. He died Oct. 28, 2003, in Oshkosh, Wis.

He served congregations in Ogema, Plum City, Eau Galle, Elmwood, Prairie Farm, Manawa, Big Falls, Ridgeland, and Merrill, Wis.; and at Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Frances, and is survived by one son, two daughters, nine grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandson.

### Elizabeth M. Sebald 1935-2003

Bette Sebald (nee Koester) was born April 1, 1935. She died Oct. 30, 2003.

A 1956 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served St. John, Bay City, Mich., and St. James, Milwaukee.

She is survived by her husband, Walter; three sons; two daughters; and 16 grandchildren.

### Lydia A. Mahnke 1909-2003

Lydia Mahnke (nee Pickron) was born Sept. 30, 1909. She died Nov. 20, 2003.

A 1930 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served St. John and Mt. Lebanon, both in Milwaukee.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Jonathan, and is survived by two sons, one daughter, 11 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren.

## In the news



The Oct. 17, 2003, edition of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* featured an article about the Flying Knueppel Brothers, the three-on-three basketball team of **Klint, Klay, Kole, and Kon Knueppel**. All but Klint attended Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee.

The brothers have competed in nationwide three-on-three tournaments for more than 10 years. In 2003, they won the New York Hoop-It-Up Top Gun championship on Wall Street and the Gus Macker National Championship on Hilton Head Island. The Gus Macker Championship was the brothers' final game before they retired as a team from the circuit, and they were honored by being inducted into the Gus Macker Hall of Fame.

Scott McNeal, chairman of the Gus Macker basketball tournament, was quoted as saying, "They always seem to be in motion, and they are well disciplined. Most teams have individual stars, have athletic ability, or they are tall. Not very often

do you see a great deal of teamwork. They make up for the fact that they don't look like basketball players."

For more about the Knueppels, go to <[www.flyingknueppelbrothers.com](http://www.flyingknueppelbrothers.com)>.

The November 2003 *MetroLutheran* highlighted the ministry of **Brent and Wendy Baumler**, members at Bloomington Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., in the second of a series of "stories of faith from . . . Lutherans who meet daily life challenges informed by Lutheran conviction." The couple works for Christian Family Counseling, a division of Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services, in West St. Paul, Minn.

Kris Killian writes, "Wendy primarily counsels parents, younger children, and women, while Brent works more with married couples, adolescents, and men. . . . Brent and Wendy also conduct marriage enrichment seminars."

"We feel God has directed us to use our gifts and talents to serve and glorify him," says Wendy. "We feel [God] guided us to this profession."



Scott and Mitch McNeal (far left and right), founders of the Gus Macker three-on-three basketball tour, honored the Flying Knueppel Brothers (from left: Klay, Kon, Klint, and Kole) by inducting them into the Gus Macker Hall of Fame in October 2003.

## District news

### South Atlantic

Four adults and seven teenagers from **Faith, Prior Lake, Minn.**, helped **Amazing Grace, Myrtle Beach, S.C.**, with its summer 2003 vacation Bible school. With their help, this exploratory had 50 children enrolled in vacation Bible school. Three of these children are now taking catechism instruction in preparation for confirmation.

### Minnesota

The second annual **Area Lutheran High School Alumni Seminar** was held Oct. 24-26, 2003, at Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn. Ten WELS area Lutheran high schools sent representatives to the seminar. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, and Bethany also sent representatives.

### Nebraska

**Loving Arms Child Care Center** hosted a Thanksgiving feast at Messiah, Wichita, Kan. The children dressed as turkeys, pilgrims, and Indians. Over 120 people attended.

### South Atlantic



Faith, St. Petersburg, Fla., is bringing unchurched children to Jesus through a before- and after-school program for five- to 12-year-olds. In the past year, one child was baptized, and his parents joined the church.

### Happy Anniversary!

SC—On Nov. 16, 2003, **Trinity, Mountain Home, Ark.**, celebrated 20 years since its first worship service was held. Seventeen of the 41 members who were part of the preaching station nucleus attended.

NE—**Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.**, celebrated its 25th anniversary on Nov. 23, 2003.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Donald Wichmann; SA—Chris Kruschel; SC—William Gabb.

## WELS news briefs

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

### Conference of Presidents 414/256-3201

In response to resolutions made at the 2003 synod convention, the praesidium (in consultation with others) has appointed four convention ad hoc committees to address the issues raised:

- **Accounting Oversight Committee**—Building on the improvements that have been made in WELS' accounting procedures in the last two years, the Accounting Oversight Committee is helping guide new efforts to enhance our processes and reports so that they are more informative and easily understood. The committee will report to the Synodical Council on a regular basis.
- **Funding Study Committee**—The Funding Study Committee is examining all that our synod and other groups within WELS are doing in funding. The committee is to seek ways to improve coordination of funding efforts, enhance cooperation among those involved in funding, and seek broader involvement in funding. By March 31, 2004, this committee will be ready to make a recommendation to the Conference of Presidents.
- **Prep School Study Committee**—The goal of the Prep School Study Committee is "to evaluate the work of the system over against the continuing purpose and objectives (a) of the synod; (b) of the Ministerial Education area of ministry; and (c) of the two preparatory schools themselves." The committee has divided itself into three different teams, focusing study on the roles, contributions, and cost of the prep schools. The committee will make its recommendations to the 2005 synod convention.

- **Staff Ministry Committee**—The four tasks of the Staff Ministry Committee are to
  1. assess the success of the staff ministry program in achieving its current goals,
  2. assess the roles of existing staff ministers in the field,
  3. assess the state of knowledge of the Staff Ministry Program in WELS, and
  4. assess the future needs in WELS for staff ministers.

This committee will look closely at the Staff Ministry Program at Martin Luther College and evaluate whether to resume the program as it was, resume the program with modifications, or continue with a certification program only. By March 31, 2004, this committee will be ready to make a recommendation to the Board for Ministerial Education and the Conference of Presidents.

For updates on these committees' work, go to the WELS Web site, <www.wels.net>, jumpword "adhoc."

### Vice President for Mission and Ministry 414/256-3204

You may now access the synod's Yearbook on our Web site, <www.wels.net>, jumpword "yearbook." The Yearbook includes contact information for all synodical workers and organizations. This on-line posting includes up-to-date changes since the last printed Yearbook.

### Commission on Evangelism 414/256-3287

Several evangelism resources are newly available to congregations. They include:

- **Prospect Newsletter 2004 (#38-7865)**—This source of 12 devotional articles for each month of 2004 is targeted at the people on your congregational prospect list. The texts and illustrations are recorded on a CD in several formats to allow for flexibility of use. Additionally, texts translated into

Spanish are included. Order online, <www.shopwels.net>, or call 800/662-6022. Price is \$25.

- **Evangelism worship materials for 2004.** "Share the Gospel Feast With a Starving World" is the theme of the special evangelism materials prepared for congregations to use at a worship service they select for focusing on evangelism. Download the materials free from <www.wels.net/evangelism>. Click on "Congregational Tools," then on "Evangelism Resources."

### Commission on Special Ministries 414/256-3240

After seven years of work, *Sign to the Lord A New Song—A Religious Sign Language Dictionary (#38-8282)* has been published and printed. Unlike other sign language dictionaries, this one includes religious signs for words and terms commonly used by Lutherans. To order, go to <www.shopwels.net>, or call 800/662-6022. Price is \$22 until Easter (regular price, \$39.95).

**THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS**  
MARCH 2004

1. Matthew 12:22-50	17. Jer. 8:4-9:22
2. Matt. 13:1-23	18. Jer. 9:23-10:25
3. Matt. 13:24-52	19. Jer. 11, 12
4. Matt. 13:53-14:12	20. Jer. 13
5. Matt. 14:13-36	21. Jer. 14, 15
6. Matt. 15:1-20	22. Jer. 16:1-17:18
7. Matt. 15:21-39	23. Jer. 17:19-18:23
8. Matt. 16:1-20	24. Jer. 19, 20
9. Matt. 16:21-17:13	25. Jer. 21, 22
10. Matt. 17:14-27	26. Jer. 23
11. Matt. 18:1-35	27. Jer. 24, 25
12. Jeremiah 1	28. Matthew 19:1-22
13. Jer. 2:1-3:5	29. Matt. 19:23-20:28
14. Jer. 3:6-4:31	30. Matt. 20:29-21:22
15. Jer. 5, 6	31. Matt. 21:23-46
16. Jer. 7:1-8:3	

## Timber Team “saw” a need after disaster

White Mountain residents were forced to evacuate on June 22, 2002, because the Rodeo/Chedeski fire was heading our way. Eight days later, when we returned to our homes, members of our WELS congregation—Immanuel, Lakeside, Ariz.—had been spared, but many in our community were not. Four hundred sixty-two homes were lost, and over 500,000 acres of timber had burned.

Our congregation helped people in the burn area and became known as the Immanuel Lutheran Relief Team. By June 2003, disaster organizations were no longer visible, and help was no longer coming to these victims. We decided to hold a “Coffee Talk” in the fire sub-station in the hardest hit area of “Timberland Acres” every Thursday.

At first the residents talked about the fire, the insurance problems, and other issues around the fire, but nobody really needed any help. We directed the people to God whenever the chance was opened. As June evolved into the first part of August, we found the loophole that nobody seemed to be able to get over—the dead, burned trees.

The removal of trees was an overwhelming issue. Many cried at the insurmountable task. It was a constant reminder of the fire. So, at the end of August we formed the Immanuel Timber Team, an extension of the Immanuel Relief Team.

We bought two chain saws with funding from the WELS Committee on Relief, grabbed a few chain saws of our own, and left one Sunday afternoon after church to hit our first applicant.

More people showed up at “Coffee Talk.” By the end of August we had over 20 applications for help.

We were overwhelmed. Could the Committee on Relief send



The second Timber Team, which consisted of WELS Kingdom Workers volunteers and members of Immanuel, Lakeside/Taylor/Springerville, Ariz. The Timber Team helped clear dead trees from residents' property after fire destroyed the White Mountain, Ariz., area.

some help? God blessed our efforts by sending us our first WELS Kingdom Workers team funded by the Committee on Relief.

Applications from the fire victims kept coming in, and we were kept busy. Another Timber Team from WELS Kingdom Workers arrived. We successfully cleared 29 properties and removed over 1,000 trees.

Remaining work to be done is mind-boggling. Just in this little community alone 250 more lots and 28,000 burnt trees need to be cleared. God has blessed our efforts, though. We have a new member who will be confirmed, an adult instruction class of three people in the burn area, and at least 15 prospects.

Word has spread around the community that Immanuel doesn't just help Lutherans. They help everyone. Isn't that what God does? Isn't that what God wants us to do?

*Donna Ditter  
Immanuel Lutheran Relief  
and Timber Team coordinator*

### WELS Committee on Relief grants from July 2002-October 2003

#### Domestic:

\$ 75,000	Needy families (poverty, medical)
25,000	Arizona forest fires
5,000	Colorado forest fires
27,000	Tornado relief (four Midwest states)
80,000	Indiana flooding
10,000	Kingdom Workers Disaster Relief Fund
10,000	Hurricane Isabel
5,000	House fire
2,000	Project Share
22,000	Additional funding for Attack on America
<u>6,500</u>	Inner-city relief
<b>\$267,500</b>	<b>Total domestic</b>

#### Foreign:

\$20,000	Iraq humanitarian aid
18,000	World missionary grants
40,000	Zambia hunger relief
2,000	Nigeria Relief Fund
6,500	Latvia Revolving Relief Fund
25,000	Flooding in Europe
5,500	Aid to Native Americans
<u>25,500</u>	General World Relief
<b>\$142,500</b>	<b>Total foreign</b>
<b>\$410,000</b>	<b>Overall total</b>



## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

**Degener, Reed M.**, to Christ, Grand Island, Neb.  
**Hundley, Kevin D.**, to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.  
**Pearson, Bradley J.**, to St. James, Prairie du Sac, Wis.  
**Roebke, John D.**, to Peace, Wautoma, Wis.  
**Ruege Jr., John A.**, to Mountain View, Great Falls, Mont.

### Teachers

**Arndt, Heidi R.**, to Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn Park, Minn.  
**Baxmann, Wayne W.**, to retirement  
**Brands, Daniel S.**, to St. John, Lannon, Wis.  
**Ehlke, Roger W.**, to retirement  
**Gates, Terry A.**, to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.  
**Goessner, Sharon M.**, to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.  
**Humann, Amanda M.**, to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.  
**Hussman, Renee A.**, to Good Shepherd, West Allis, Wis.  
**Johnson, Michelle**, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.  
**Korte, Jean L.**, to Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**West Allis, Wis.**—Woodlawn (75). March 20. Service, 5 PM. March 21. Services, 8 & 10:30 AM. Dinner, 12:30 PM. Ticket required for dinner, must RSVP by March 1. March 22. Service, 6:30 PM. Contact Lois or Mary, 414/321-2126.  
**Manitowoc, Wis.**—Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale (40). March 28. Joint concert with Milwaukee Lutheran Chorale, 7 PM. Manitowoc Lutheran High School.

## COMING EVENTS

**Camps**—for students who have just completed grades 6-8.  
 • **Music**—June 14-18. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Two years of keyboard experience required. John Paulsen, 507/354-8221, ext. 352.  
 • **Music**—June 13-18. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Prof. Randy Bode, 920/261-4352, ext. 129.  
 • **Science & technology**—July 5-9. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. For students who have a strong interest in science and technology. John Paulsen, 507/354-8221, ext. 352.

### Martin Luther College choir tour

- Feb. 21—Saint Paul, Norfolk, Neb., 6:30 PM
- Feb. 22—Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb., 10:30 AM; Saint Mark, Lincoln, Neb., 7 PM
- Feb. 23—Nebraska LHS, 9:15 AM; Christ, Grand Island, Neb., 7 PM
- Feb. 24—Zion, Denver, Colo., 7 PM
- Feb. 25—Rocky Mountain LHS, 9 AM; Salem, Colorado Springs, Colo., 7 PM
- Feb. 26—Shepherd, Albuquerque, N.M., 7 PM
- Feb. 27—Trinity, El Paso, Texas, 7 PM
- Feb. 28—Our Savior, San Antonio, Texas, 7 PM
- Feb. 29—Our Savior, San Antonio, Texas, 8 AM; Holy Word, Austin, Texas, 7 PM
- March 1—Lord of Life, Friendswood, Texas, 7 PM
- March 2—Good Shepherd, The Woodlands, Texas, 7 PM
- March 3—Calvary, Dallas, Texas, 7 PM
- March 4—Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla., 7 PM
- March 5—Mount Olive, Overland Park, Kan., 7 PM

- March 6—Grace, Oskaloosa, Iowa, 7 PM
- March 7—Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, Iowa, 10:30 AM
- March 14—St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn., 3 PM
- March 21—St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn., 8 & 10:30 AM

### Martin Luther College study tours

- **Kenya and Tanzania**—June 13-29. Cost, \$4,350 including air, hotels, and meals. Credits, three semester hours.
- **France, Spain, and Switzerland**—June 14-July 2. Cost, \$3,000 including air, hotels, and most meals. Credits, three semester hours.

For more information, contact Martin Luther College's Special Services, 507/354-8221.

### Retreats or conferences

- **Mission & Ministry**—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon. Feb. 3-5. Register, 262/242-8100.
- **WELS marriage retreat**—Eagle Ridge Resort, Galena, Ill. Feb. 20-24. Peg Raabe, 414/256-3278. <www.welsmarriageretreat.org>.
- **Ladies retreat**—St. John, Watertown, Wis. Feb. 21. 9 AM to 1:30 PM. Cost, \$10. Mary Warnecke, 920/262-0789.
- **Christian Woman Today**—Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. March 19-21. Maureen Sertich, 262/784-0412.
- **Pathways to Christ**—Hawthorn Inn, Oshkosh, Wis. March 19-21. Dorothy Laabs, 920/235-6495.
- **WELS Church Librarians' Organization**—May 15. St. John, Lannon, Wis. Marilyn Lemke, 262/251-4145.
- **WELS/ELS couples retreat**—Lake Louise Inn, Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada. May 21-22. Jack and Stephanie Korfman, 780/460-5410.
- **Special Ministries in Lutheran Education Conference (SMILE III)**—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee. July 16-18. This conference is for individuals involved in the spiritual training of people with developmental or cognitive disabilities in their homes, schools, Sunday school classes, or Jesus Cares Bible classes. Bruce Cuppan, 920/922-8672.

**25th reunion**—of Dr. Martin Luther College class of 1979. June 19. Wisconsin Dells, Wis. If you have not received any information in the mail, contact Sue Ratzburg at 262/644-5302.

## NEEDED

**Scripture-based stewardship program**—that focuses on the use of time. Board of Stewardship, St. Paul, East Troy, Wis., 262/642-3200.

**RV couple**—for Camp Shiloh, Pittsburg, Texas. Twenty hours per week of light housekeeping and maintenance work. RV site provided. Dan Schmeling, 903/855-1800.

**Seminary pictures**—in observance of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's 75th anniversary at the Mequon campus. Pictures of seminary life will be used in an anniversary publication. Identify people and dates. Include your name and address with the pictures. Donated pictures will not be returned but placed in the archives. Pictures will be accepted until Feb. 15. Send to Leah Leyrer, 11831 N Seminary Dr, Mequon WI 53092.

## SERVICE TIMES

**The Villages, Fla.**—The Open Bible, Spruce Creek Professional Center, Hwy. 27/441

(across from Wal-Mart), Suite 502. Sunday service, 8:45 AM. Don Meier, 352/728-8492.

**Corpus Christi, Texas**—Gethsemane, 3434 Holly Rd. Sunday service, 9:30 AM. James Krause, 361/855-5275.

**Waukon, Iowa**—King of Grace (ELS), Farm Bureau Building, 14 NE 1st St. Sunday school, 9:45 AM. Sunday service, 11 AM. Harvey Abrahamson, 877/394-2296.

**Honolulu, Hawaii**—Community, 4429 Malaai St. Sunday service, 10 AM. Charles Gumm, 808/422-2933.

**Maui, Hawaii area**—Hawaiian Canoe Club. Sunday service, 5:30 PM. Charles Gumm, 808/422-2933.

## NAMES WANTED

**The Villages, Fla.**—The Open Bible (The Village Lutherans). Don Meier, 352/728-8492.

**Harlingen/Brownsville/South Padre Island, Texas**—Joel Sauer, 956/968-5228.

**Maui, Hawaii**—Charles Gumm, 808/422-2933.

**Sonora/Angels Camp/Copperopolis, Calif.**—John W. Berg, 510/793-8628.

**Chicago**—Crossroads Christian Church. 3550 N Lakeshore Dr (at Addison) in the party room. Bible study, first Monday each month, 7 PM. Wendy Greenfield, 773/878-9868.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

**Luther High School Association Resource Coordinator**—Advance the mission of Luther High School and provide leadership and assistance to individuals, congregations, support groups, and others to develop financial resources for Luther High School Association. Will assist with recruitment of students with a particular emphasis on educating families concerning financial assistance. Must be a member in good standing in a WELS/ELS congregation. Contact Paul Wichmann at 608/783-5435, ext. 100, for a detailed job description.

**Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.**—Faculty positions open for the fall semester of 2004-05 academic year in psychology and mathematics. Nominations or applications should include a resume, academic transcript credentials, and three letters of recommendation. Send to: Ronald Younge, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bethany Lutheran College, 700 Luther Dr, Mankato MN 56001. Candidate must be a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, WELS, or be willing to join one of these two synods. Application deadline, March 1.

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

## Correction

In "History of a Hymn" [Potluck, Dec. 2003], *Christian Worship Handbook* was authored by C. T. Aufdemberge, not C. F. Aufdemberge.

# Comforted to be a comforter

**“God . . . comforts us in all our troubles,” Paul announced, “so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”**

**Paul E. Zell**

**T**he deafening shouts of the silversmiths back in Ephesus still sent shivers up his spine. The vicious abuse against believers he had left behind in other cities brought tears to his eyes and etched worry lines on his forehead. Yet he began another letter to the church at Corinth with a doxology: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Was Paul out of his mind? Hardly! Jesus once predicted, “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33), and no one realized it more fully than the apostle whom Jesus appointed last of all. For instance, at one point the idol-makers in Ephesus were about to lynch Paul and his fellow disciples. “We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure,” Paul wrote, “so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death” (2 Corinthians 1:8,9).

## God brings us comfort

Still, every time Paul experienced trouble, “the God of all comfort” was at his side, lifting his faith with his Word.

When Paul felt defenseless, the Holy Spirit brought to mind the powerful presence of Jesus: “I am with you always!” (Matthew 28:20).

When Paul had no one to talk to, there was God’s standing invitation: “Call upon me . . . ; I will deliver you” (Psalm 50:15).

When the weight of his past hatred of the church lay heavy on Paul’s conscience, Jesus took those burdens away: “Come to me, . . . and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Even when Paul faced what he thought was certain death at the hands of a rioting mob, the heavenly Father assured him that there is a resurrection unto eternal life for everyone who believes in Jesus.

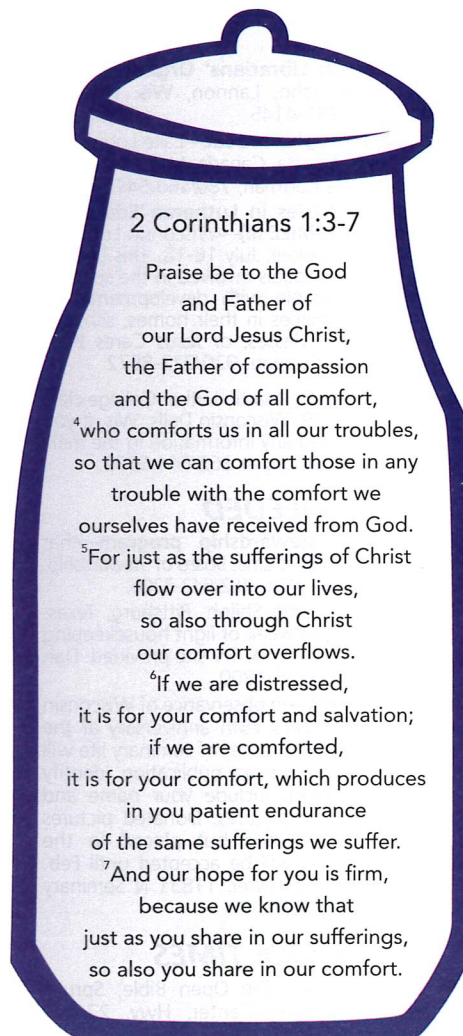
## We have the power to comfort

At what might have been the worst of times, Paul had compelling reasons to praise God. His doxology, in fact, was more than a private thank you to “the Father of compassion.” Paul wanted other troubled believers to experience the same comfort. This is the theme of the opening passage of 2 Corinthians: “God . . . comforts us in all our troubles,” Paul announced, “so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

When our Christian profession of faith brings us taunts or terrors or troubles, God’s promises don’t disappear. Instead, our hearts appreciate more the comforting words our Father speaks for Jesus’ sake. In addition, we receive the power to comfort others. After all, who is more qualified to encourage a troubled believer than the one who can say, “I know how that feels”? Who has more credibility in the eyes of a persecuted fellow disciple than the one who can say, “The Word of the Lord meant everything when the same thing once happened to me”? And who has a better opportunity to teach others to glorify God than the one who under difficult circumstances can confidently say with Paul, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”



*Paul Zell is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.*



# It's all about Jesus

Mighty Savior

Merciful Savior

Son of God

Savior of all

Liberator

Righteousness of God

Bringer of joy

Mediator with the Father

Sacrifice for sin

Word of life

Faithful witness

**Mark J. Lenz**

Speed, agility, power. It's what people look for in professional athletes. Not too many fans care to watch a professional sports team that is slow and weak and that loses all its games. Fans quickly make their way to the stadium exits or flip the TV channel.

In the first century people appreciated speed and power too. They had no room in their army for weaklings. Their empire was built on mobility and strength. Consequently, they would not be inclined to waste much time on a weak religious leader. That's why the evangelist Mark wrote to them as he did.

- Already in the first chapter, Mark relates things in Jesus' ministry that must have made a strong impression on his readers. As you read 1:9-45, make a list of adverbs or adverbial expressions that indicate haste. What amazed people about Jesus in 1:22 and 27?
- Matthew wrote his Gospel to convince Jewish readers that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Mark wrote for a different audience and purpose. What Jewish custom do his readers seem not to understand in 7:2-4? What Jewish festival is unfamiliar to them in 15:42? What Hebrew or Aramaic words do they not understand in 3:17; 5:41; 7:11; 7:34? In 15:16 Mark says that the soldiers led Jesus away into the palace. But his readers do not understand this term. What Latin equivalent to palace does Mark provide? Considering the evidence, to whom do you think Mark wrote his Gospel?
- The book of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels, yet Mark records 19 of Jesus' miracles. What do these eight miracles have in common: 1:31; 1:41; 2:3-12; 3:1-5; 5:25; 7:32; 8:23; 10:46? What do these five miracles have in common: 4:39; 6:41; 6:49; 8:8,9; 11:13,14? What do these four miracles have in common: 1:25; 5:1-13; 7:25-30; 9:26? What do these two miracles have in common: 5:42; 16:9? What is the common denominator in all 19 miracles? As masters of the Mediterranean world, why would the Romans be especially respectful of the miracles Jesus performed?
- Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as the fulfiller of promises and gives a great deal of space to his discourses. Mark's Gospel is more condensed, says little about prophecy, and reports only briefly on the discourses of Jesus. When you consider the people to whom he wrote, why do you suppose Mark's Gospel is so brief and to the point?
- A special feature of Matthew's style is that he organizes words and deeds of Jesus in carefully outlined groups. Such orderliness is not as important to Mark. Survey the events recorded in chapter 3. Would it matter if they were organized in a different way?
- Mark provides personal glimpses into the life of Jesus that are found in none of the other Gospels. In 1:13 who or what besides angels accompanied Jesus in the wilderness? In 4:38 on what was Jesus sleeping in the stern of the boat? In 5:3-5 how strong was the man who lived in the tombs? In 5:13 how many pigs rushed down the steep bank and drowned? In 5:42 how old was the girl Jesus raised from the dead? In 6:39 on what did the people sit? In 9:3 how white were Jesus' garments? How do the intimate details that Mark records help to corroborate his Gospel?
- List examples of the comfort you find in Mark's portrait of a mighty Savior.

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

Find this article and possible answers on-line. Go to <[www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net)>, jumpword "fic," and click on "It's all about Jesus." Answers will be available after Feb. 5.

# IN THE CROSS HAIRS

Richard L. Gurgel

## TOPIC: THE MEEK INHERITING THE EARTH

**Question:** Psalm 37:11 tells us that “the meek will inherit the land.” Jesus seems to quote that verse in the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). The meek are spoken of often in the Bible, but they seem to suffer more than others on earth. How then do we explain this to someone who is wondering when this inheriting of the earth will happen?

**Answer:** It already has! “The meek”—those not trusting in themselves but humbly placing their hope in Jesus—have already inherited everything. Listen to Paul’s bold declaration: “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). Did you catch that? “The world” is already “yours”!

How so? Since we belong to Christ and Christ is God himself, the Father’s eternal Son, everything that is our Father’s is also, through Christ, ours. Remember also that our Father has entrusted Jesus to rule over the entire universe (Ephesians 1:20). Therefore, everything must serve the good of Christ’s people. All the power, influence, and resources that the unbelieving world arrogantly wields against the Savior and us must actually work for us as our Savior unfailingly carries out his gracious plan. Paul isn’t exaggerating when he boldly proclaims, “All things are yours.”

But, of course, that’s something we know by faith, not by sight. Don’t go to Bank of America and demand the keys to the vault. The world considers our claim to be absurd.

Outwardly, I can understand why. As you mentioned, “the meek” seem to suffer more than the world does in this life. In this life we don’t look like heirs of our heavenly Father. Often we look more like easy targets.

Christian meekness, trusting in God’s care for us rather than selfishly “looking out for #1,” will often seem to leave us holding the (empty) bag. Our Father, for wise reasons often hidden from us, allows us to suffer outwardly. It may often seem that he is treating us worse than the unbelieving world that despises him. Though we possess everything, we may look like we have nothing.

Nowhere does God promise us that this side of the Last Day the fortunes of his people will be reversed so that our possession of all things becomes outwardly glorious. As we approach Lent, we recall that our path follows our Savior’s. It is the path of the cross. Though all things clearly were his, he laid aside the full outward enjoyment of that to win our salvation. As we follow him, we too take up our cross. Though in him all things are already ours, we follow the road of the cross on our way home to the salvation he won for us.

But the day will come when our possession of all things won’t simply be a truth we cling to by faith. On the last day Christ will present his bride with the eternal wedding present of the new heavens and the new earth. “He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Revelation 21:7).

So, when will “the meek inherit the earth”? Already now, through faith in Jesus, all things are ours. When our Lord makes all things new, visibly and gloriously and eternally, we will finally see how true that is.

Though we possess everything, we may look like we have nothing.

*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.*



## Picture this



Children from St. Paul Lutheran Child Care Center in Appleton, Wis., in front of an American flag flown in Kuwait on July 4, 2003.

The mother of Emily Vitteck (front row, center) was called to active duty in the Naval Reserves in late January 2003. While she was gone from home, the families and staff of St. Paul Lutheran Child Care Center supported the family with prayers, gifts, meals, and extra childcare. When Emily's mother returned in September 2003, she presented the flag and plaque next to the flag to the staff at the childcare center. The plaque reads as follows:

CAMP 93 SEABEES  
"Let's Roll"

Let it be known that this American flag  
was proudly flown over Camp 93  
during Operation Iraqi Freedom  
Tactical Assembly Area Coyote, Kuwait  
Flown for St. Paul Lutheran Child Care Center  
4 July 2003

*Diane Enter  
Appleton, 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.*

## THE PIANO PLAYER

Wishing to encourage his progress on the piano, a mother took her young son to a Paderewski concert. After they were seated, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her. Seizing the opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall, the little boy rose and explored his way through a door marked "No Admittance."

When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that her son was missing. Suddenly, the curtains parted, and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway on stage.

In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child, and he added a running obligato.

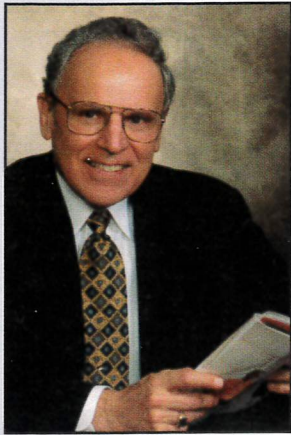
Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was mesmerized.

That is the way it is with God. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results are not exactly graceful flowing music. However, with the hand of the Master, our life's work truly can be beautiful.

Next time you set out to accomplish great feats, listen carefully. You can hear the voice of the Master, whispering in your ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Feel his loving arms around you. Know that his strong hands are playing the concerto of your life.

Remember, God does not call the equipped, he equips the called. Moreover, he will always be there to love and guide you on to great things.

*Author unknown*



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

We cannot,  
we dare  
not, remain  
lukewarm  
about any  
of God's  
teachings.  
Lukewarm-  
ness is an  
abomination  
to God.

## A camel in the tent

**W**hat's wrong with this picture? In a poll of U.S. adults (reported in Religion News Service, Oct. 28, 2003), only 38 percent thought that religious leaders should try to influence government policy on abortion. On the other hand, 60 percent thought that religious leaders should try to influence government policy on prayer in public schools.

Now, I'm not trying to make a point about Christian religious leaders trying to influence government policy versus tending to the spread of the gospel. (That's food for another meal.) In this case, I'm struck by the difference between the significance put on prayer in the public schools versus abortion. Even among people who go to church every week, addressing prayer in the schools ranks 16 percent more important than addressing our morally bankrupt abortion policy (67 percent vs. 51 percent).

Do you find that disparity disturbing? Look at the two issues:

- Abortion takes a child's life, while no prayer in public schools restricts a child's prayers in public school to personal/private prayers.
- Abortion removes personal accountability for immoral sexual activity, while no prayer in public schools makes true believers personally accountable for true prayer.
- Abortion takes a child's life, while no prayer in public schools keeps children from being asked (coerced?) to pray a generic prayer to a generic god with others regardless of their faith.
- Abortion takes a child's life, while no prayer in public schools prevents group prayer directed by a government agency.

Which of the two do you think is more important for our government to address? For our religious leaders to take a stand on?

A Middle Eastern proverb warns, "Never let a camel get his nose in the tent." Once the nose gets in, the head follows, then the hump, then the rump. Suddenly, you have a camel in your tent.

Some of us remember when a significant majority of U.S. citizens opposed abortion, even after it was made legal. But now in the United States the camel is in the tent. Even among almost half of weekly churchgoers, the camel is in the tent.

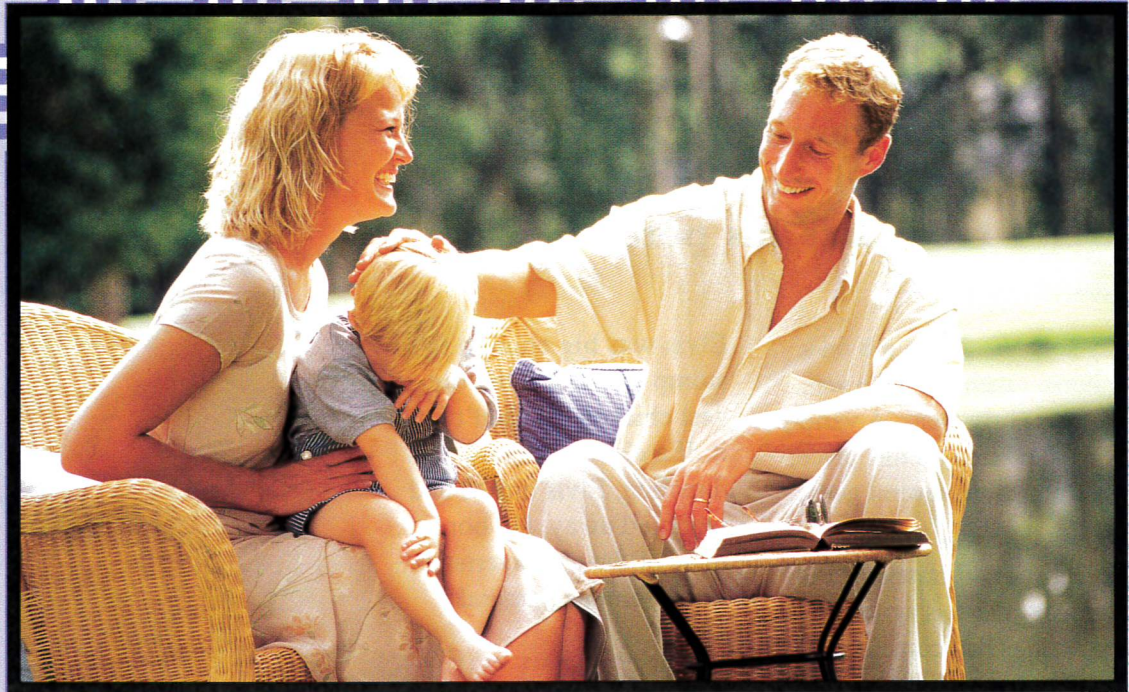
Maybe asking religious leaders to pay more attention to gospel ministry is a part of this matter after all. Where all of God's Word is clearly taught and the gospel of Jesus Christ shines, the question of abortion is not so easily dismissed. Where people are taught to understand the shame of sin and comfort of forgiveness in Christ, they will care all the more that our society stop taking unborn babies and discarding them in the trash. Where people are made alive in Christ, they will cease to be indifferent toward any human life.

Maybe this camel is in the tent to stay, or maybe we can make a difference by driving it out of our lives and letting others know how dangerous it is. In either case, we cannot, we dare not, remain lukewarm about any of God's teachings. Lukewarmness is an abomination to God. Godliness is a gift of God and great gain.

What we need is not so much to get government to intervene in moral issues but to get people in tune with God's governance. That will help clear up the picture dramatically.

*Gary P. Baumler*

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# Recognize who you are

Geese are normally pretty aggressive. But if a chicken came in Elvis's direction, he'd turn and wobble away. He just didn't recognize his potential.

Bob Gove

**M**y son, Vic, had a job on a horse ranch when he was in his early teens. A variety of poultry roamed free on this place, and among them were several geese.

One evening Vic was excited—a group of goslings had hatched. But the next evening, Vic was agitated—one of the goslings had come out of the shell with a foot problem. He fell frequently, couldn't keep up with his brothers and sisters, and mother goose wasn't inclined to wait for him.

By the next evening, Vic had the little buggler in a box. He explained that the gosling had been abandoned and would be a goner if we didn't rescue him. Vic already had some month-old chicks, and although I told him the crippled gosling didn't have a real good chance of making it, we took him home and put him in with the chicks.

We could tell that he was pretty intimidated by all these strange birds who were bigger than he was and who pecked him if he got in their way. But he started eating, and before long caught up in size with the chicks. His feet got stronger, too—although he always wobbled as he walked. Vic started calling the goose Elvis.

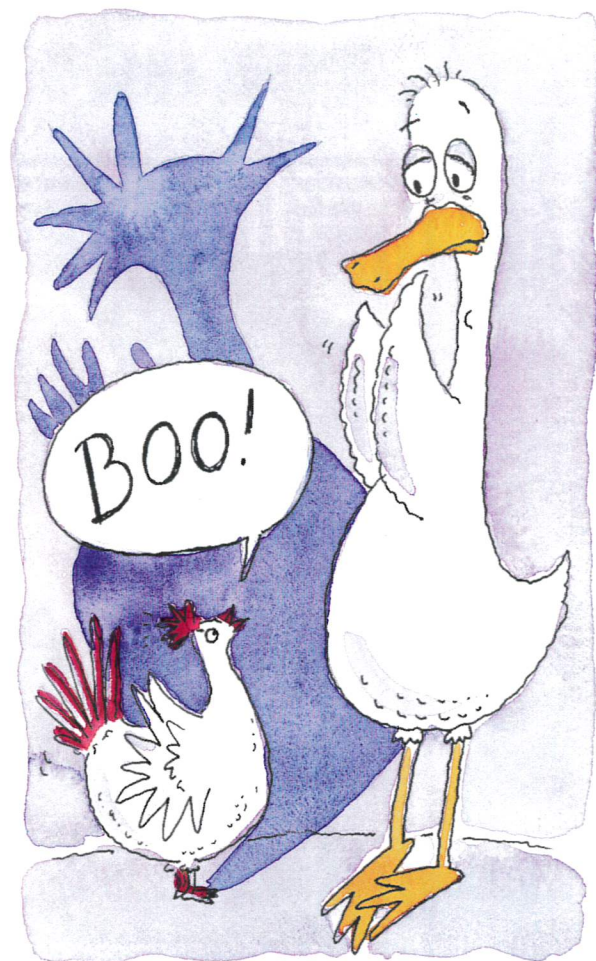
We knew that when Elvis and the chicks grew up, Elvis would be three times their size. We talked about how Elvis would show them who was boss—but that never happened. Although two months later

Elvis was big enough to stomp over even the biggest chicken, he didn't know it. If a chicken came in his direction, Elvis turned and wobbled away. He bore none of the characteristics of his famous namesake.

**I could see myself when I looked at the goose. I am a child of God . . . but I sit meek and silent while my Father is maligned and blasphemed.**

Elvis wobbled around our place for a couple of years, but he never realized who or what he was. Geese are normally pretty aggressive. I have had them beat on my legs with their wings. They seem fearless when they feel threatened. So every time I saw him turn in fear from a chicken (or even a kitten), I felt like screaming, "Elvis, you dummy—stand your ground!"

**The fact that the poor bird had no idea who or what he was—that he didn't recognize his potential—is what moves me.** I guess I could see myself when I looked at him. I am a child of God—or, to put it another way, a child of the King—



but I sit meek and silent while my Father is maligned and blasphemed. I have many amazing promises from him, but I am too timid to ask him to keep one. All around me confused people are rushing toward hell. I have the Word of Truth—the mighty sword of the Spirit—that has the power to cut through the chains of sin and bring lost sinners to reconciliation with God, but I am so fearful of ridicule that I never use it.

God tells me that I am a member of the holy priesthood appointed to serve him. Jesus said that if I would exercise a tiny amount of faith, mountains would move at my command. Yet, about all I do is look down at my shoes, wring my hands, and worry.

I have decided that it's time to recognize who I am in Christ and to live accordingly. How about you?

Bob Gove is a member at Messiah, Nampa, Idaho.

