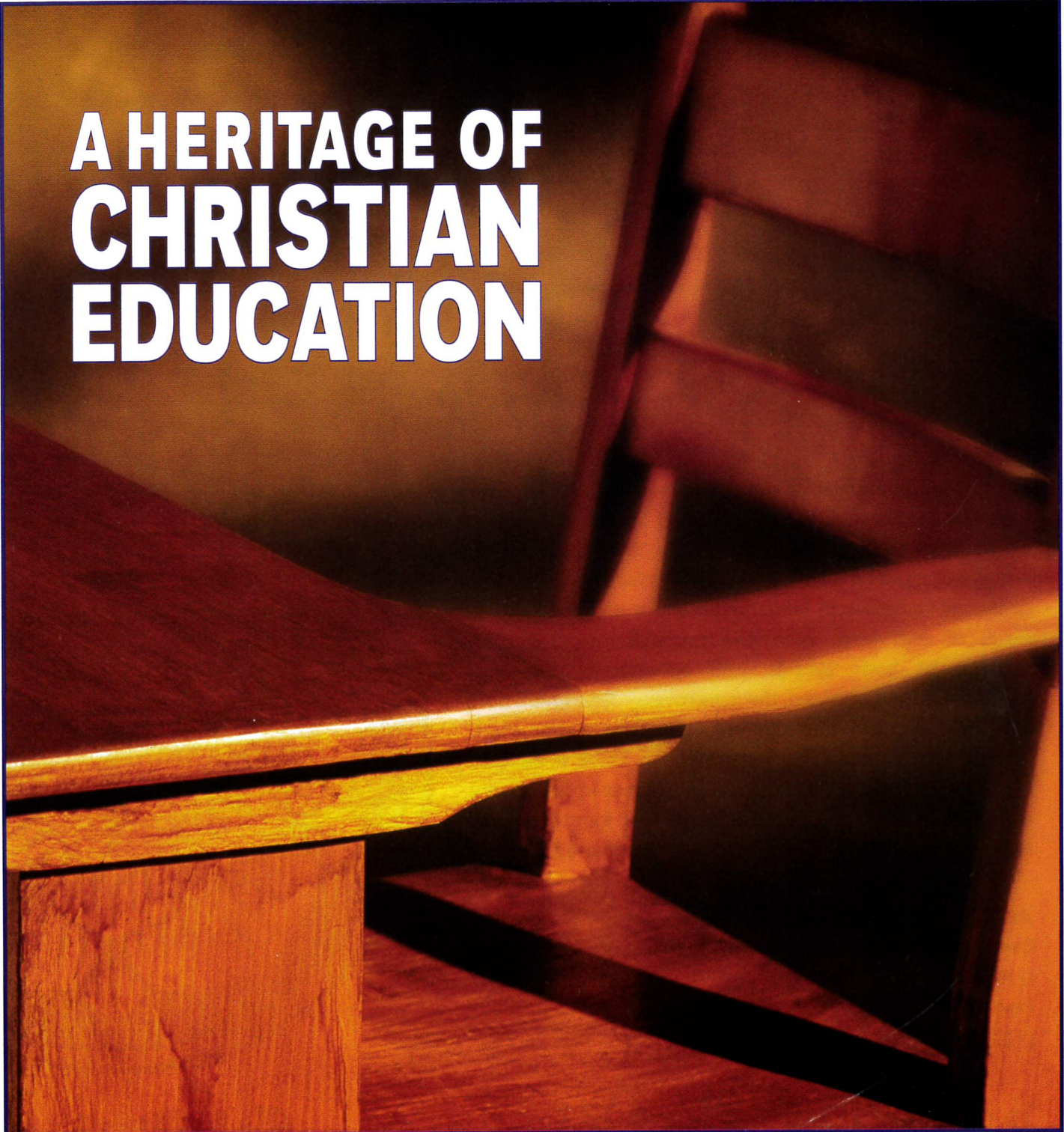


THANK YOU, PASTOR • SYNOD CONVENTION COVERAGE

OCTOBER 2005

Forward in Christ

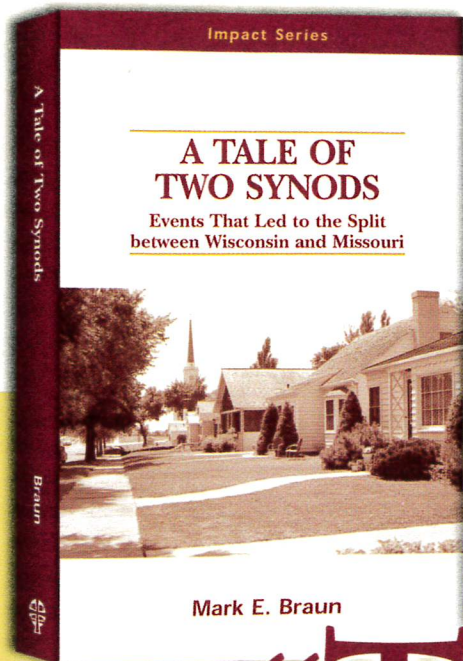
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Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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MAY THE LORD OUR GOD
BE WITH US AS HE WAS
WITH OUR FATHERS;
MAY HE NEVER LEAVE US
NOR FORSAKE US.
1 Kings 8:57

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POSTMASTER

Send address changes to Forward in Christ, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

Forward in Christ (ISSN 1541-8936) is published monthly through Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Individual: USA—\$14; Canada—\$14.98; all other countries—air mail \$45.20. Postage included, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House. Contact Northwestern Publishing House for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 800-662-6093, ext. 8. Milwaukee area, 414-615-5785. www.nph.net/periodicals.

ON AUDIO

Mission for the Visually Impaired, 651-291-1536.

OCTOBER

WHAT'S INSIDE by Julie Wietzke

I love to read "Top 10" lists. Whether it's the top 10 movies of the summer or the top 10 bestsellers of the week, I'm always curious to see how others rate different areas.

In his editorial, Pastor Ken Cherney brings up another controversial list—the Discovery Channel's list of the top 100 nominees for the title, "Greatest American" (p. 8). He muses about how others view the term "greatness" before sharing what the term should mean to Christians—humble service. Jesus is the ultimate example of this very concept. And, even though humble service may not get us on the nominee list for greatest American, it's an example we should strive to follow.

Humble service is also something that we should appreciate. October is Clergy Appreciation Month. Our pastors humbly serve us with the gospel every week as well as do countless other tasks that we may not even be aware of. In this issue, Laurie Biedenbender writes a letter to pastors, thanking them for their work (p. 12). I'm sure that you'll see parallels in your experiences with your own pastor. Don't forget to thank your pastor often for his service to you and to God's kingdom.

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PREDESTINATION

Adding to the thoughts in the Questions and Answers article [June], there is another way in which “we can find comfort in the doctrine of election when we see God doing in our lives right now what he has promised to do for his elect.” I am talking about the link in the chain that said we are “predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son.”

“We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We can see God fulfilling his election purpose in us when we are “strangers in the world” in whom the Holy Spirit has worked “obedience to Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1,2).

*Louise Wilde
New London, Wisconsin*

REPENTANCE

In “Lessons from the Creed” [July], Pastor Degner mentions that “there is room in the Father’s heart for everyone who repents.” It’s always good to keep in mind that that’s only a part of the truth. The full truth is that “There is room in the Father’s heart for everyone. Period.”

Repentance is not our way of working out a spot for ourselves in God’s heart. Repentance is God’s way of working out a spot for himself in our hearts. Without repentance there is no room in us for any notion about God other than that he is a capricious, mean-spirited bully who is forever poking his nose into our lives when he really has no business being there and is otherwise mostly inattentive when we could really use a little help in getting ourselves out of a tight spot. Once God works repentance in our hearts, we have no room in ourselves for any attitude toward God except one, i.e., that he is really a true Father to us in all that he does and the things that happen in our lives are actually the best things for us.

Jesus doesn’t turn God into our Father. He just makes us recognize that he’s been our Father all along.

*Steven Steiner
Waukesha, Wisconsin*

PANIC ATTACKS

The reason for my letter is the article “Panicked!” [July]. The clear thrust of this essay is that the writer once believed that this type of psychological suffering could be relieved by God’s Word—only to discover how wrong she was.

I am willing to accept that for some people “panic attacks” may have a neurological basis that is appropriately treated with pharmaceuticals. But, if so, what possible reason could there be for putting such a self-help article in *Forward in Christ*? How does this advance the gospel?

*Steven Seim
Beaver Dam, Wisconsin*

I was glad to read “Panicked!”. Mental disorders and chemical imbalances are as real and as deadly as any other disease. . . .

I am a middle-aged woman who has long suffered from depression and, more recently, anorexia. Meditation controls the depression. Treatment for eating disorders is virtually unattainable. Prayer, worship, and Bible reading are important to me and calm me in my worst moments, but the diseases are very real. The intense loneliness of anorexia is helped by the realization that Christ understands and suffers right along with me. It is not vanity, nor is it a choice. It is a daily struggle with feelings of fear and guilt.

But I do know that I have the sure hope of eternal life through Christ, despite my struggles in this “veil of tears.”

*Lori Thompson
Georgetown, Texas*

SEXUAL IMMORALITY

In the devotion, “A Christian celebrates the Fourth of July” [July], the

author makes a good point about our real strength coming from the God of Jacob.

I wish he would have phrased one sentence differently: “Marriage is dishonored as even Christian couples live together before marriage.” I would like that to read, “as even couples who call themselves Christian,” or “who claim to be Christian.” Passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; Hebrews 13:4; and Revelation 21:8 include sexual immorality among the sins that indicate the person committing them is outside the kingdom of God. In other words, this lifestyle reveals an impenitent attitude that cannot coexist with Christian faith in the heart. I understand the author’s statement, but, in the light of the epidemic of immorality among us, I believe we must speak in the strongest possible terms.

*Mark Porinsky
Dexter, Michigan*

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

It was so encouraging to read in the excellent article “Connect and confess” [July] by Beth Thompson that the four outreach churches who experienced success with the ESL program knew that their programs would be successful and that they planned for their success.

The unconditional love shown in teaching English to people who most often felt unloved and unwanted resulted in their feeling part of God’s family and wanting to formally join that family.

May this pattern of faith, love, and wisdom fulfill our hope for an abundant harvest of souls.

*Barbara Kruse
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin*

Send your letters to “Feedback,” *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 250 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers’ views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

No burden is too heavy

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. Romans 8:26,27

Stephen H. Geiger

Old player pianos are really heavy. How do you move almost one-half ton of a player piano out of a house when it's on the second floor? The slide down the stairs could threaten the health of a lone amateur trying to slow its movement. A team of muscular professionals can create a descent that is controlled and calm.

With help, a move is possible. Alone, one-half ton is too much.

We feel the weight of our burdens

Many challenges in life can feel like too much.

While we may not be shouldering an old musical instrument, we might feel the overwhelming weight of disappointment, an uncertain future, or a serious issue needing a decision. The health of a dear one may be failing. The word of one we trusted may have proven false. We may just be sad and have no idea why.

So we pray. Or at least we try to pray. How we long to cast our burdens onto the Lord, but every time we try, it feels like we aren't letting go. We speak to God, but with frustration. We call upon God, but without thanksgiving. In weakness we doubt. In weakness we are afraid. In weakness we can be so confused that we feel as if we don't even know what to pray for.

The weight of the burden seems ready to crush. We wonder whether God is letting us down.

What might God think about such a wondering when he has spoken rock-solid promises to the world and has made available all we need for life and godliness? God would rightly accuse us of not trusting him,

deserving to discover what true abandonment means.

What mercy that he addresses us, Christians who mourn their great weakness, with such gentleness and reassurance.

Our heavenly Father describes a love for the weak that sent a Son to carry guilt on shoulders strong. Justice crushed those shoulders. The punishment of eternity shattered strength, so it seemed.

But then a crucified, now risen Savior saw the light of life, assuring the crushed in spirit that a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. God has forgiven you.

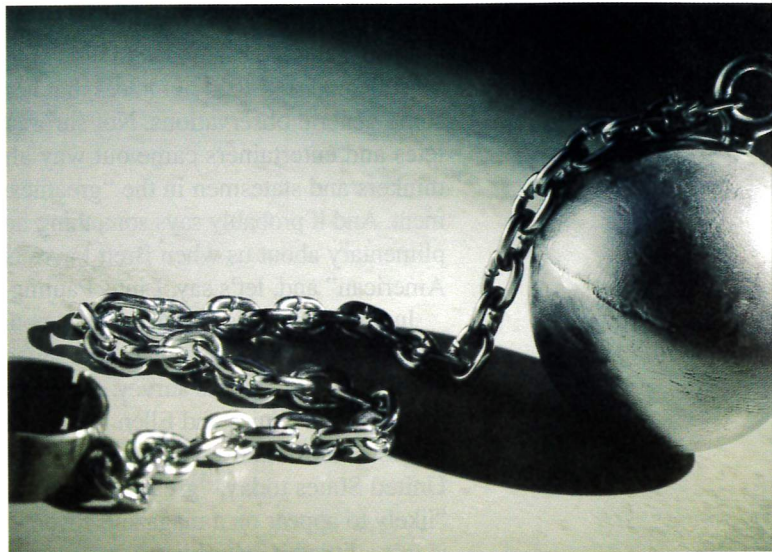
The Holy Spirit prays for our release

Yet still you may feel weight. Half-ton troubles press down.

As God the Father loved the world and God the Son died and rose for the world, so God the Holy Spirit adds his help as troubles weigh heavy.

He helps by doing the very thing God invites us to do when we have a burden—he prays. What's different? His prayers are linked to perfect knowledge. His heart does not wither when burdens are greatest. Never does he doubt or permit his eyes to drift from the loving and powerful will of our Father.

His prayers, then, take into account your struggles and ask for exactly the



right thing. His prayers are full of joy, as he knows the love of God in the midst of trouble. His prayers are full of thanksgiving, when you may be struggling to recognize any gifts from above. His prayers match the will of God, when your faint heart forgets even the truths of God you thought you knew so well.

The Holy Spirit loves you. His passionate groaning pleads for you. The perfect thoughts of the Spirit's mind are known immediately and are honored completely by your Father, who knows you perfectly too.

Is the weight too heavy? A half-ton burden too big for you to carry? You're right. It is.

But no burden is too heavy for the Spirit.

Contributing editor Stephen Geiger is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Are you a great American?

Kenneth A. Cherney Jr.

Somebody help me. At this moment, I'm more depressed than I've been in weeks. I've just seen the Discovery Channel's list of the top 100 nominees for the title, "Greatest American." As you might expect, the list reveals very little about the nature of greatness, but a great deal about contemporary America.

Who made the list, and who didn't? There were several laugh-out-loud nominees, but here are just some general observations. Not surprisingly, athletes and entertainers came out way ahead of thinkers and statesmen in the "greatness" department. And it probably says something not too complimentary about us when Brett Favre is a "great American" and, let's say, Linus Pauling isn't.

Judging from this list, Americans continue to confuse "greatness" with fame, or rather notoriety. For participants in this survey, the word "great" brought Tom Cruise and Ellen DeGeneres to mind, but not James Madison or Emily Dickinson. In the United States today, "great" apparently means "likely to appear on a magazine cover." That, too, is just a little bit disturbing.

This list will also cement our reputation as the people with the world's shortest attention span. Notice, for instance, exactly how long it took us to forget about Norman Schwartzkopf, who didn't make the list. Maybe his spot was taken by John Edwards or Michael Moore, both of whom did. Chronological chauvinism—the tyranny of the recent—probably explains why the list features two Clintons and four Bushes, but only three presidents (and no first ladies) from the entire 19th century. It's also the likely reason (though not the only one) why people surveyed found neither Noah Webster nor Sacagawea nor Ulysses S. Grant a match for the towering "greatness" of Oprah and Dr. Phil.

I realize that, by letting this list rile me up, I'm reacting exactly the way I'm supposed to.

At least on the Web site where I saw the list, the Discovery Channel is careful not to define what they mean by "great." That would defeat the purpose of the project, which is clearly to start arguments about what "greatness" is. And we could argue about that all day long, because most people believe it's purely in the eye of the beholder.

But is it?

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).

For Christians, there's no argument of what "greatness" is. It isn't notoriety, or talent, or wealth, or impact on society. It's humble service. It's willingness to put my energy and abilities at the disposal of people who need me, to roll up my sleeves and get dirty. It's a way of life that doesn't care if my needs go unmet, just so long as yours don't.

So that we could know exactly what this looks like, Jesus said, "Here, watch this." He served us throughout his life and with his last breath, to bring us life with God. Jesus Christ set a standard of greatness that no other human being has ever approached or ever will. Nor do we have to, to enjoy the benefits of Jesus' work. Eternal life comes, not from serving Jesus, but from having Jesus serve us.

But there still is such a thing as human greatness. It comes from learning to be like Jesus—in our own small, imperfect way. That may not get you recognized as a "great American." But it will get you noticed—in the kingdom of heaven, where it really counts.

**For Christians,
there's no argument
of what "greatness"
is. . . . It's humble
service.**

Contributing editor Ken Cherney is pastor at St. John, St. John, Antigua, West Indies.



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Unconditional love

It seems we're always asked to give "unconditional love" when confronting sin. Often this seems to mean acceptance of that sin. Could you offer guidelines for "loving the sinner but hating the sin" when one is confronted with blatant sin?

Since it colors the answer, may I be so bold as to correct a misunderstanding that's lurking in the oft quoted phrase, "loving the sinner but hating the sin"? That statement is a confusing mixture of Scripture's two main teachings, law and gospel. Sin doesn't exist apart from the rebellious hearts of sinners who produce it. Sin is the creature's arrogant rebellion against the Creator. God will condemn to hell not sins, but sinners. That's why David writes by inspiration, "The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong" (Psalm 5:5, compare also Isaiah 63:10, Jeremiah 12:8, and Hosea 9:15).

In fact, as those recreated in God's image through faith, we can even say with David in Psalm 139:21: "Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you?" Certainly, as sinful creatures, we easily distort this hatred into personal revenge and animosity. Yet this passage makes clear in another way that to say merely that God hates sin is to say far less than God's law declares. It's a dreadful thing for sinners—not sins—to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31).

But thank God this isn't Scripture's only message. God loves sinners! In fact, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God declared the wicked to be righteous in his sight (Romans 4:5). How often Jesus proved that during his ministry, as repeatedly the self-righteous grumbled: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). There is unconditional love!

So, does "unconditional love," if modeled after Jesus, mean "acceptance of that sin"? Hardly! Here's what it means. Even when we must confront persistent sin, unconditional love means that we approach others with a "gospel heart"—a heart whose ultimate goal is to win, not condemn. Unconditional love means that

we make sure that we hate our own sinful nature first. That means addressing the two-by-four in our own eye so we can humbly see clearly enough to assist others with the potentially damning speck in their own (Matthew 7:5).

Unconditional love means we know that "wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses" (Proverbs 27:6). Unconditional love means we believe James when he tells us, "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20).

Unconditional love means that we don't give up on another sinner until we've patiently exhausted every avenue personally and with others to lead that sinner to repentance (Matthew 18:15). When we make sure it's God's standard and not our own we're using, unconditional love means bearing the rebuke of being called judgmental or intolerant or worse.

Most of all, unconditional love means that when there is repentance, we fall all over ourselves to quickly proclaim forgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:7). Unconditional love means that we pray for gospel strength to imitate our God and drown those sins in the ocean's depth as if they never existed (Micah 7:19). While we may not be able to literally "forget" what happened, unconditional love knows that "forgiving and forgetting" (as people like to speak of it) really means we imitate our God and refuse to treat others as their sins deserve (Psalm 103:10).

Is this a million miles away from the world's definition of unconditional love? That helps confirm that we are on the right track!

Contributing editor Richard Gurgel, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.

Have a question? Send it to "Q & A," *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Look online at www.wels.net, jumpword "qa", for more questions and answers.

Passing the baton of faith

Just as Luther spoke clearly on the value of Christian education, each one of us needs to share God's Word with future generations.

James A. Brandt

Martin Luther was a master at asking and answering questions to teach important truths. Perhaps one of his greatest and most overlooked gifts was his ability to express difficult concepts in simple language. While the elementary teachers of his day dictated lessons and expected children to learn by rote, Luther used concrete illustrations to help young children understand his teaching. He once said, "When Christ wished to teach men, he became a man. If we wish to teach children, we must become children" (Walch 2, Vol. XXII, 1785).

When you think of Luther, perhaps you envision him standing before the Castle Church of Wittenberg, hammer in hand, boldly posting his Ninety-five Theses and igniting the Reformation. Upon hearing his name, your mind might project Luther standing before the Diet of Worms, conscience bound to defend the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. But take a moment to read about Luther and his children, and you will immediately be taken by the tenderness of this man. To picture the Luther who wrote to his four-year-old son, Hans, about "a most delightful garden where children play . . . sing and romp around



happily" (Erlangen, Vol. 54, 156f), is to see a shadow of Jesus who "took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:16).

For nearly five centuries the Lutheran church has followed in the steps of its namesake, establishing and maintaining Lutheran schools to bring up children in the training and instruction of the Lord. We praise God for his grace in allowing Lutheran congregations to maintain their commitment to the training of children for so many years, but we also recognize recent trends that raise questions about the future.

Membership in WELS has declined by nearly 20,000 people in the last 15 years. During that time the number of

children in our churches declined by more than 16,000. Enrollment in our Lutheran elementary schools has declined by 16 percent (6,000 students) since 1993. In fall 2004, we saw a net loss of 680 children in our elementary schools, but 900 fewer member children were enrolled. An increasing number of unchurched children and children from other church bodies are enrolling in our schools, while our own members are withdrawing their children. Reflecting on these trends, we find ourselves echoing Luther's age-old question, "What does this mean?"

A partnership between home and school

In Luther's day, learning had generally fallen into contempt.

Humanists were ridiculing old scholastic ways, and schools were being closed. In his 1524 *Letter to the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools*, Luther wrote: "We are today experiencing in all the German lands how schools are everywhere being left to go to wrack and ruin. The universities are growing weak, and monasteries are declining. . . . I beg all of you, my dear sirs and friends . . . not to treat this matter as lightly as many do, who fail to realize what the ruler of this world is up to. For it is a grave and important matter, and one which is of vital concern both to Christ and the world at large, that we take steps to help the youth" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 45, pp. 348,350).

Although Luther spoke clearly on the value of Christian education, he was hardly one to urge the preservation of institutions. Nor should we! Still, we find great benefit in preserving the Reformer's spirit. Commenting on the value of education, Luther once wrote: "True it is that human wisdom and the liberal arts are noble gifts of God. . . . But we never can learn from them in detail what sin and righteousness are in the sight of God, how we can get rid of our sins, become pious and just before God, and come to life from death" (*Weimar; Table Talk*, Vol. 2, #2459a).

Our heritage of Christian education began with Martin Luther's ability to explain the truths of God's Word in simple language and lives on in our Christian education ministries from early childhood centers to colleges and seminary. But that heritage finds its roots in homes where parents are committed not only to educating their children well but also to teaching their children the truths of God's Word so the Holy Spirit might bless them with saving faith.

Familiar to all who have studied Luther's Small Catechism is the introduction common to each of the six chief parts of Christian teaching: "As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household." Martin Luther envisioned Christian fathers and mothers teaching their children the truths of God's Word, while he also encouraged the development and strengthening of schools.

We owe an incredible debt of gratitude to our forefathers who recognized this important partnership between home and school as they passed to us the baton of faith. We praise God for the obedience that accompanied their confession of the gospel of Christ, and together with them proclaim, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Every member's responsibility

But just as Satan seeks to exploit the weaknesses of individual Christians in an effort to destroy their faith, he also attacks the collective weaknesses of generations to break the chain of our confession. I fear that Satan is working hard to destroy our generation's commitment to Christian education. There is ample evidence of his attacks on our homes. It's clear he has had our elementary schools in his sights for many years. Now it appears his efforts to undermine these twin pillars of our Lutheran education system may be poised to bear disastrous fruit.

At our recent synod convention, delegates learned how weakened financial support for the work of our church body has created a situation where even the viability of our school of ministry, Martin Luther College, is at risk. Delegates who began the convention asking, "What does this mean?" found themselves wrestling mightily to answer "What should we do?" They dug into God's

Word for guidance and learned that real answers about the future direction of our synod ministry will be realized with each individual member's response to the gospel

The life of every member in our church body contributes either to the preservation or the demise of Christian education in our midst. To see how your life is weighing in the balance, let me encourage you to spend a few moments holding a young child in your arms. Look into that child's eyes and contemplate how you are literally holding the future in your hands. One day, when you breathe your last breath, how will you know your life has mattered? I suspect you'll find your answer in the eyes of those you leave behind. Will they be looking back at you expressing a common faith that unites your hearts? Will you find in those eyes spiritual successors, children of God who will share the love of Jesus with everyone they meet?

The next few years in our synod's history will be a time when we must come together to wrestle with difficult decisions by answering a few simple questions in our hearts. Like Luther, we must stay focused on the one who obeyed God's will, suffered the punishment of our sins, and died to win our salvation. Live your life with your eyes focused on Jesus. Use your time, talents, and treasure to join the psalm writer in proclaiming, "We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done" (Psalm 78:4).

Jim Brandt, administrator of the Commission on Parish Schools, is a member at Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

Additional reference: Luther as Father and Teacher, an essay by Prof. Arnold Koelpin

Dear Pastor . . .

Call this an open letter to every pastor who's ever lifted his hand in blessing over me; poured water on my children; offered me bread and wine; unlocked Augustine, Luther, and Chemnitz; or shined light on Scripture—or rather, let the light of Scripture shine through him:

Thank you.

Thank you for law and gospel, those twins of truth you deliver with trembling hands to a world in need—without hedging on their raw and beautiful reality, without watering them down to make them more palatable, without cheapening them with billboard slogans or bumper sticker witticisms.

Thank you for that amazing story you told one Sunday many years ago. You know the one: about the little girls looking out the back window of the car? The way that you warm your preaching with human narrative—well, it seems a lot like Jesus to me. If you doled out only the meat of Pauline principle, without the spice and sweet of story, I just might starve to death.

Thank you for forcing me to memorize words of God—hundreds of individual passages and looming, potent chunks, too: Psalm 46, Isaiah 53, John 1, shimmering words that pulse in the currents of my subconscious and keep me alive. And the hymns! Those words inferior to God's own but muscular in their own way, artful translations, human echoes of divine truth. Some day when I rest on my bed in a little white room and feel my eyes closing and my systems shutting down, those words will carry me. I may not remember you—or my own husband, my own

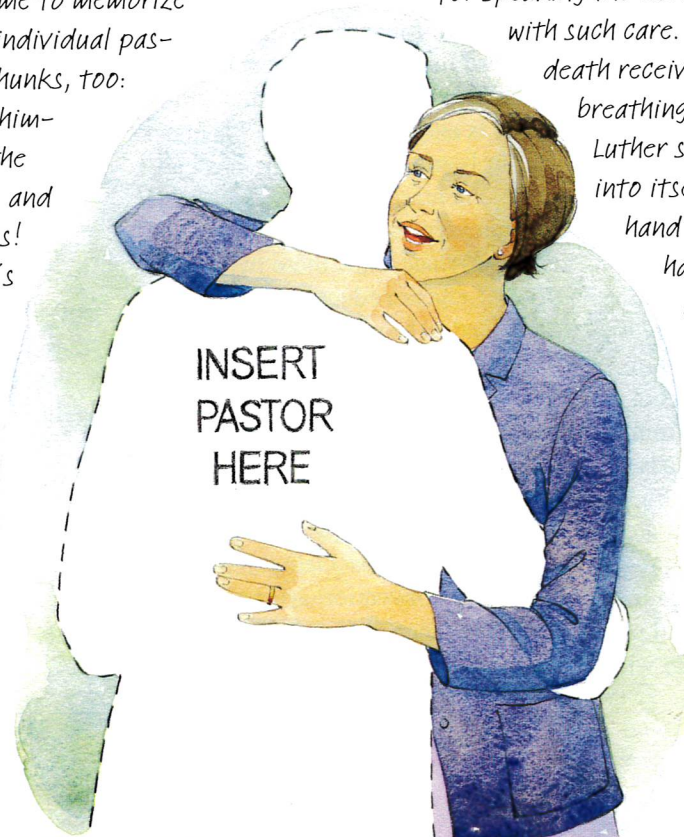
children—but I'll remember "I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus" and "Abide with Me—Fast Falls the Eventide."

Thank you for making worship your top priority, for coming well-prepared, for letting Word and sacrament have the spotlight, for balancing tradition and freedom, and for showing by example how we are to reverence holy things: rising for the gospel, bowing heads in prayer, accepting wafer and wine with watchful and wonder-filled hearts—a figurative removal of our shoes, for we are truly standing on holy ground.

Thank you for sprinkling water on my babies, for speaking the Word that works life, for making those special trips to our hospital room and our living room because you understood that we just couldn't wait until Sunday.

Thank you for tendering to me body and blood, for speaking the Word and handling the elements with such care. As my body of dust and death receives the body of the living, breathing God—a food so powerful, Luther said, that it transforms us into itself—it's no wonder your hand occasionally trembles and I have to hurry back to my pew and put my head low.

Thank you for coming to school on 9/11 and assuring all the children that, although they would hear adults frantically murmuring in the next few weeks, although they would smell the fear, God would keep them safe. The Lord of the nations knew all about the



who's served her and her family.

Laurie Biedenbender

bad men and the burning buildings, but he had everything under control and he would hold the children in his everlasting arms.

Thank you for the time you hauled my slouchy adolescent carcass into your office and said, "What's wrong with you? Tired? Bored? Well, boo-hoo. Snap out of it. There's a world of people out there you could do something for."

Thank you for answering my questions with the depth I crave and not patronizing me with Doctrine 101 answers. And thank you—thank you!—for saying "I don't know" when you don't.

Thank you for thanking others—teachers, musicians, brunch servers, staff ministers, ushers—and being careful not to use hierarchical language when speaking about the different members of the body of Christ.

Thank you for talking about heaven with my grandpa before he died and for taking my grandma out to lunch for her birthday every year.

Thank you for taking care first of your own family, for knowing you're the only husband and father they've got while the rest of us have others to lean on. And thank you for letting them be their own people, not just extensions of you.

Thank you for your transparency, for admitting that you too are one of the fallen. It's a mighty lesson of sin and forgiveness, maybe one of the best sermons you'll ever preach.

All right, the next ones are a little petty, but I'm going to say them anyway:

Thank you for saying "God," not "Gawd," in the pulpit.

Thank you for following up "brothers" with "sisters." I know I'm included in the brothers, but it's nice to be called what I really am.

Thank you for wearing flip-flops and ratty shirts on Saturday and polished wingtips on Sunday.

Thank you for having a drink with me on my birthday.

Thank you for not spending all of Bible class talking about how WELS is right and everyone else is wrong.

And **thank you** for preaching only 12 minutes that day the air conditioning went out, and we were all sweltering in our khakis.

They tell me October is Clergy Appreciation Month. Maybe it's just another Hallmark-created marketing ploy, but I'm going to go with it and send you my own simple greeting: "Pastor, I thank you, and I thank God for you. You do good work."

Laurie Biedenbender is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm, Minnesota.

FIVE WAYS TO ENCOURAGE OUR PASTOR

1

Be generous with praise. Wouldn't it be nice if we packed away that "We're-all-just-doing-our-duty" approach and started showering each other with compliments? Mark Twain—not someone often quoted in spiritual articles, but let's hear him out—said he could live for two months on a good compliment. If we hear ourselves saying something nice to someone else about the sermon or prayers, then let's go tell our pastor too. Or, better yet, jot him a note or e-mail. That way he can pull it out and reread it some other day when he's feeling less than effective.

2

Communicate each concern appropriately. That means first discerning whether our concern is just a personal preference or an actual problem. If it truly needs attention, we express it to the pastor himself, not our golf buddies. We use "I messages" ("I'm concerned about a budget item") instead of "You messages" ("You just don't know how we do things here"). We put the kibosh on gossip by encouraging others to direct their concerns appropriately, and we don't traffic in rumors at all.

3

Offer our services. We offer our talents to the congregation and community: maintain the furnace, deliver Meals on Wheels, sing in the choir. Instead of saying, "Pastor, you need to . . .," we say, "How about if I . . ."

4

Help his family with our resources. If we can fix cars, bake cookies, build bookshelves, or channel our financial blessings his way, we do.

5

Pray for him every day. We ask God to give him wisdom and maturity, hope and joy, energy and vision—whatever gifts he needs to serve.

LUKE: CONSCIENCE

LUKE WAS
MORE THAN
A DOCTOR
FOR THE BODY.
BY WORK AND
BY EXAMPLE,
HE WAS ALSO
A PHYSICIAN
OF SOULS.

“ON BYWAYS
WITH THE
BELOVED
PHYSICIAN”



It is commonly recognized that Paul treasured Luke's companionship for several reasons. One of them would be this friend's professional service as a doctor. That Paul was afflicted by a chronic illness or infirmity, he divulges in his second letter to the Corinthians (12:7-10). He calls it a thorn in the flesh that has persisted despite his prayers for relief. Thereby, he writes that God was teaching him that "[God's] power is made perfect in [your] weakness."

There have been several guesses as to the nature of Paul's malady. The best one identifies it as malaria, perhaps contracted on his first mission to Perga on the south coast of Asia Minor. Two events occurred there. Paul and Barnabas left this seaport city in a hurry for, it seems, the more salubrious inland mountain climate. Also, their young helper, John Mark, unexpectedly abandoned the mission and returned home to Jerusalem. At this time of year Perga may have been in the throes of a mosquito infestation.

But Luke's service to Paul extended beyond medical aid. Luke's ministry is immediately apparent when he first joined Paul at Troas. Here he not only reveals that he accompanied Paul by boat to Macedonian Philippi, but also writes that "God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10). Luke includes himself as a fully qualified partner in mission work. From all the evidence in his own writings and in Paul's letters, Luke proved himself a conscientious evangelist.

Proclaiming the gospel

The dimensions of his evangelism are threefold. In the first place, as

already indicated, he busied himself side by side with Paul at proclaiming the gospel.

When he joined Paul at Troas, Luke was no recent convert. Perhaps, like Timothy, he had been nurtured in the gospel from childhood. Perhaps he had come to faith during his training at one of the renowned medical schools in Tarsus or Antioch.

Whatever his background as a qualified evangelist, Luke could accompany this noble task also with the unique dividend of his vocation as a doctor. Medical mission has often served as an admirable accessory to gospel mission. Through accident, illness, or infirmity, the Lord often opens hearts to be receptive to hearing his Word and brought to faith. Thus Christian doctors and nurses have found themselves on the ground floor to bring Christ, when requested, into the sickroom. In the normal course of life, medical ministrations to women usually exceed those to men. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the beloved physician's gospel and Acts take note of women more than any other book in the New Testament.

Writing the gospel

What first comes to attention about Luke's evangelism, however, is not his speaking, but his writing. It confronts readers in the prefaces to both of his books. They are another testimony to his love of the gospel and his desire to share it with others.

He has undertaken the challenging labor of research, interview, and literary effort to gift the gospel's history to his friend Theophilus. With

ANTIOCHUS EVANGELIST

Theodore J. Hartwig

his name, which means “lover of God,” Theophilus is addressed as “most excellent.” It is a title reserved for high officials such as Roman governors. He may have lived in Antioch, which is possibly Luke’s birthplace or where Luke attended medical school. From Luke’s identification of places, however, Theophilus seems better acquainted with geography near Rome than in the Holy Land.

Some have supposed that Luke had once been his slave. It was not unusual for slaves in that society to be trained in the medical profession. Perhaps Theophilus’ newfound faith had constrained him to emancipate Luke. Then, in what better way could Luke express his gratitude than with the gift of his two books for the edification of his friend and of countless generations in the future.

Living the gospel

Luke displayed his qualities as a conscientious evangelist in yet a third way. He is to be admired for being a doer of the word and not a speaker only. As a vital adjunct to gospel ministry, Luke practiced what he preached.

This becomes conspicuous in an area of sanctification where Christians can be hypersensitive. Given the evil nature that keeps plaguing all of us, real generosity in giving to the Lord’s work often poses a nasty battle with that recalcitrant donkey of our Old Adam. It is so easy to find excuses for selfishness and stinginess. It is so easy to give preference to one’s superfluous standard of living that has turned our wants into our needs at the expense

of chiseling on our contributions to the Lord.

Encouragement to self-disciplined generosity for the Lord’s work requires the ministration of fellow believers. Here, quick, even spectacular, solutions promoted by human enterprise and its gimmicks will not achieve a genuinely sanctified sacrifice of material resources. Rote giving or law-motivated giving that appeals to the sinful flesh is abhorrent to the Lord, as Isaiah 1 impresses upon us. The gospel, and the gospel alone, opens hearts to God-pleasing giving, and this ministry is the responsibility of the communion of fellow believers rather than of exterior agencies.

As a vital adjunct to gospel ministry, Luke practiced what he preached.

We meet a gospel-motivated giving in the Philippian congregation that most certainly was served by Luke. Not only by his speaking but also by personal example, Luke must have been a major influence toward producing generous monetary support

for the Lord’s work at which this congregation excelled above all others. In his letter to the Philippians from prison at Rome, Paul writes that when he set out from Macedonia following the prison ordeal in Philippi, “not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again” (Philippians 4:15,16). Luke surely must have been a hidden prime mover toward this outpouring of love. That is why he seems the most likely candidate (2 Corinthians 8:18) whom, with Titus and another man, Paul dispatched to Corinth to help in the collection of funds for the needy in Jerusalem. Luke would have the distinction of pursuing his assignment at Corinth in a properly gospel-motivated way that would bear God-pleasing fruit.

In all of Luke’s work as an evangelist, his name remains conspicuous by its absence. On his travels with Paul, he identifies himself only with a pronoun. His name is missing from his gospel and Acts prefaces addressed to Theophilus. Only once is his identity divulged as the beloved physician. Yet he was more than a doctor for the body. By word and by example, he was also a physician of souls.

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

This is the fourth of a seven-part series on Luke. To read the other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net, jumpword “ficarchive”, and search by the author’s first and last name.

AMAZING

Though God made us all different, we all have the same purpose: to tell others about Jesus.

In one cubic foot of snow there are 18 million snowflakes, and not one of them is alike. Think of all the variety just in your own snowed-in driveway. Nobody else is going to see it but God. He loves variety.

You and I are like those snowflakes. No one in the world is like you. There never has been. There never will be. God does not create carbon copies; he only creates originals. Why did God make you different from every person who's ever lived? Because he wants you to know how special you are, how much you matter to him.

God made you special

"Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work" (Jeremiah 1:5 NCV). You were shaped for a special purpose. You're not here by accident. You're not just taking up space. God didn't sit down and randomly throw a bunch of components together and out came you. The Bible says clearly that you were purposefully, personally designed by God. His loving hand made you exactly the way you are—a complex combination of gifts, personality, experiences, and weaknesses.

When you understand that you aren't an accident, that builds self-esteem. I'm not talking about pop psychological self-esteem, which is based on raising yourself up. I mean genuine, biblical self-esteem, which is built on three things:

- God made you special by making you unique in this world. He has given you a unique combination of feelings, experiences, abilities, and all the rest.

- God made you special by dying on the cross for you and bringing you to trust in Jesus as your Savior. He elected you before time and ensured that you would be his child through baptism.
- God made you special by giving you a purpose in his eternal plan, laying out certain good works in advance for you to do (Ephesians 2:10).

God made you for a purpose

But we underestimate ourselves. Like so many of the heroes of faith, we succumb to the "onlys," "but I'm only . . ." It is, in fact, a whine that God has heard many times before.

- Moses tells God that he can't stand up to Pharaoh. "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh . . . I am slow of speech and tongue" (Exodus 3:11, 4:10). But God wanted the stuttering Moses to rescue Israel as a nation.
- Gideon tells God, "I am the least in my family," when God calls him to deliver Israel from Midian (Judges 6:15). But God wanted the leadership of Gideon to defeat an overwhelming enemy.
- Saul tells David that he can't go out there and take on Goliath. "You are only a boy" (1 Samuel 17:33). But God wanted David's slingshot to take on the giant.
- Solomon, when facing the challenges of being king like his father before him, got cold feet: "I am only a little child" (1 Kings 3:7). But God wanted him to be the greatest king there ever was.
- When asked for bread and water by Elijah, the widow of Zarephath replied: "I don't have any



AMAZING

VARIETY

John L. Eich

bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug” (1 Kings 17:12). But God wanted the widow of Zare-phath’s smidgen of flour and oil to feed three people for three years.

- Jeremiah, when called by God, protests: “I am only a child” (Jere-miah 1:6). But God wanted Jeremiah to be a prophet to his wayward people.
- The disciples, when told by Jesus to go feed the multitude, protested: “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish” (Matthew 14:17). But God wanted to feed 5,000 on the sack lunch of a little boy.

As Christians, we have each been called to bear witness to the greatest gift of love, the greatest sacrifice for our sake that has ever been given. Like Jeremiah, we are called to preach a message to a world that is so self-centered it refuses to hear the gospel and is downright hostile to the message of redemption.

When we become aware of the size of the mission God is asking us to undertake, we come down with a bad case of the “onlys:” only human, only ordinary, only young, only old, only half up to it, only an amateur, only a few years left, only one good lung/kidney/eye/hand, only me, only this, only that.

Haven’t we all at some time recited an “I’m only” litany about ourselves when feeling overwhelmed and under prepared? We grumble and complain why God made us the way he did. Why didn’t he make

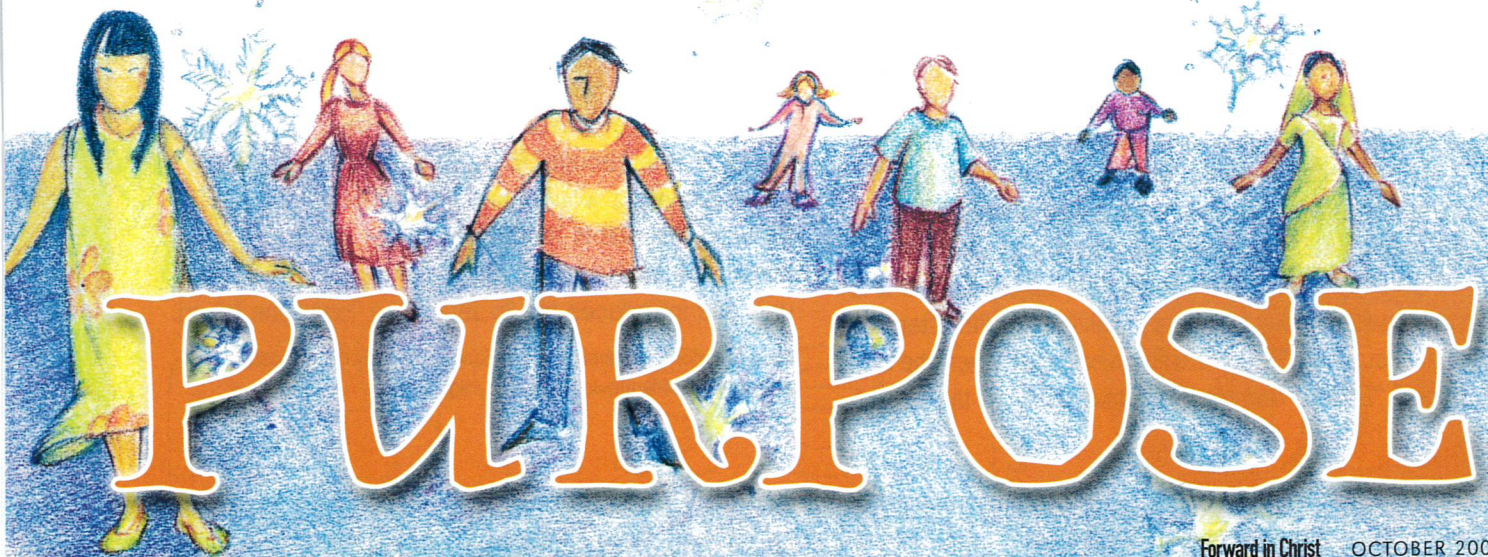
me smarter? More spiritual? More motivated? Without this disease? Without that limitation?

The “but I’m only” excuse can never stand up. Why? Because we forget on whom we are trying to use this dodge: God. He is the God who created us. Remember you are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by a loving God. As Ephesians 4:7 says, “Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift” (from the paraphrase *The Message*). “Each of us”—no one is forgotten. Each one of us has been given special abilities. We weren’t given the leftovers stuck to the bottom of the pot. We were given the best of the riches of heaven. God never calls us to do something that we can’t do with his help. As Paul writes, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). God’s grace is sufficient for us and in us.

One individual snowflake doesn’t amount to much. But several billion individual flakes together can shut down cities for days. Each of us is unique. But together we can blanket the world with the message of Christ.

John Eich is pastor at Good Shepherd, Alma, Michigan.

**God made
you special by
giving you a
purpose in his
eternal plan.**



WHATEVER

Strong and courageous

I thought my life would end when my mom died, but thanks to my family, friends, and my Maker, I am taking everything day by day.

Abby Crawford

I never expected my life to be where it is now when I'm 16. I am without my mother, the most important person in my life, and I feel lost. I don't know where to go in my life anymore, and I'm scared. There is, however, a strong feeling of reassurance that my mother is dancing and laughing with Jesus and the angels, because my mother was strong in her faith and she made sure that our family was just as strong as she was.

It all started at the beginning of eighth grade. My mom was going to have some routine surgery, but the doctor found some cancer in her ovaries. It was a terrible day, but my mom looked me in the eyes and said, "I'm going to be all right." I felt better that she had confidence, but I still knew that my life had changed forever.

During the time of my mom's treatments, we realized that the only thing keeping our family together was our faith in God. We knew he was guiding the doctor's minds and making their decisions. My mom's life was in God's hands. She had her treatments from fall until a little bit before spring.

It was almost confirmation, and I needed a verse that had a lot of meaning and reflected my mother. I chose Joshua 1:9: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." It portrayed how we should all lead our lives. I'm sure that Joshua had fears as he thought about leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, but God told him to be strong. We should also be strong, and we were.

My mom went into remission right before Easter. It is our favorite holiday because it talks about life after death with Jesus, our Savior. I will never forget when the organ played "I Know that My Redeemer Lives" at the end of

the service. We all had tears in our eyes, thanking God that my mom was healed.

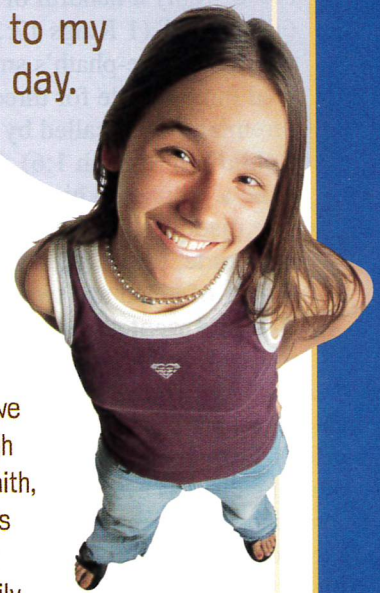
However, the cancer came back early in my freshman year of high school. It was discouraging, and I was frustrated that we were going to have to go through treatments again. We still had faith, but something was different this time. I had a gut feeling that it wasn't going to go away so easily.

It didn't. We tried many different treatments, and nothing worked. My mom decided that when Jesus wanted her, she would be ready. My family and I told her it was okay to go now.

Jesus carried her home to heaven on March 11, 2005. Before he took her, he let her tell us how much she loved us. She gave me confidence to grow up to be what I want to be, and I'm thankful to have known her. I thought my life would end when hers did, but thanks to my family, friends, and my Maker, I am taking everything day by day. When I really miss her and become selfish, I just try to imagine how happy and healthy she is now, resting in Jesus' arms.

All that I have gone through in the past three years has made me stronger in my faith. If I wouldn't know about heaven, I would have a troubled heart. But knowing that she is there and I will one day join her makes me more excited to see her again. I can't wait until she introduces me to Jesus, her long-time friend.

Abby Crawford, a member of Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, is a senior at Manitowoc Lutheran High School.



to heaven

Obituaries

Gladys Helen May Mischke 1922-2005

Gladys (nee Lindloff) Mischke was born March 10, 1922, in Tolstoy, S.D. She died June 29, 2005, in Sun Prairie, Wis.

A 1943 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Carl; three sons; one daughter; 10 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Ruth V. Smith 1917-2005

Ruth Smith was born Oct. 23, 1917, in Pikesville, Ky. She died July 17, 2005, in Neenah, Wis.

A 1944 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Trinity, Neenah, Wis.

She is survived by one brother, William Ratliff.

Wilma Lehmann 1911-2005

Wilma (nee Genz) Lehmann was born Sept. 9, 1911, in La Crosse, Wis. She died July 8, 2005, in Sheboygan Falls, Wis.

A 1932 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Bethlehem, Hortonville; Eastside, Madison; and St. John, Neillsville, Wis.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Victor. She is survived by two daughters, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Walter J. Koepsell 1913-2005

Walter Koepsell was born Jan. 13, 1913, in Coleman, Wis. He died July 1, 2005, in Madison, Wis.

A 1937 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Grace, Powers and St. Andrew, Goodrich, Mich; Grace, Ridgeway and St. Luke, Pickwick, Minn.; and St. Paul, Crandon; St. Peter, McMillan; and Immanuel, March Rapids, Wis.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Gertrude; one son; and one daughter. He is survived by two sons, 14 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.

District news

Nebraska

Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School (RMLHS), Northglenn, Colo., welcomed its first senior class of 17 students on Aug. 22. This year marks the fourth year that RMLHS has been in operation.

South Atlantic

Abiding Faith, Smyrna, Tenn., had a groundbreaking ceremony for its first church building on July 10.

Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn., dedicated its new sanctuary addition and fellowship/education wing on June 12. South Atlantic District President Pastor John Guse was the guest preacher. It also hosted a basketball camp in mid-June. The camp was led by Coach Dave Wenzel and eight students from Fox Valley Lutheran High School (FVL), Appleton, Wis. The FVL "staff" also canvassed 500 homes. Christ Our Savior is now in the process of following up on the outreach efforts.

South Atlantic District Youth Commission hosted its annual five-day summer camp for kids in grades 4-8. Seventy-four campers along with 10 counselors attended Camp South under the theme: "TGIF: Thank God I'm Forgiven."

Happy Anniversary

NE—Nancy Aaberg, St. John, Stanton, Neb., celebrated her 25th year in the teaching ministry in June.

PNW—Faith, Tacoma, Wash., celebrated its 75th anniversary on June 19.

CORRECTIONS

"North American Outreach Sunday set for fall" [Sept., p. 20] said that the 2003 convention made North American outreach the top priority for the next two years. It actually made North American outreach the top priority for the next four years.

In "Picture This" [Sept., p. 27], Loren Lindeman, not Darin Lindemann, participated in the Faster Pastor Race.

South Atlantic



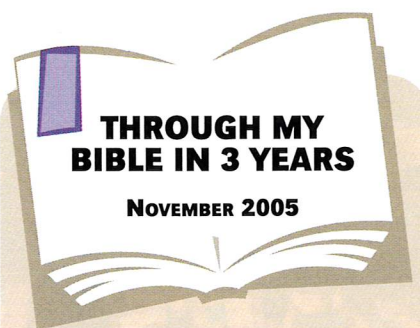
At a local Fourth of July parade, Linda Kruschel of Living Savior, Valrico, Fla., hands out a flag to promote the church's All Day Bible Camp. Nearly 70 percent of those attending the Bible camp came as a result of the information on the flags.

Our Savior, East Wenatchee, Wash., rejoiced in God's blessings as it celebrated its 25th anniversary on July 17.

SA—Pastor Martin Scheele, Christ, Keystone Heights, Fla., celebrated 40 years in the ministry in June.

WW—Grace, Dalton, Wis., celebrated its 90th anniversary on June 26.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: NE—Donald Wichmann; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Christopher Kruschel; WW—Martin Baur.



1. Romans 9:14-29	15. Ex. 23:20-24:18
2. Rom. 9:30-10:21	16. Ex. 25
3. Rom. 11:1-10	17. Ex. 26, 27
4. Rom. 11:11-24	18. Ex. 28
5. Rom. 11:25-36	19. Ex. 29
6. Rom. 12	20. Ex. 30, 31
7. Rom. 13	21. Ex. 32
8. Rom. 14	22. Ex. 33
9. Rom. 15:1-13	23. Ex. 34
10. Rom. 15:14-33	24. Ex. 35:1-36:7
11. Rom. 16:1-16	25. Ex. 36:8-37:9
12. Rom. 16:17-27	26. Ex. 37:10-38:31
13. Exodus 21:1-32	27. Ex. 39, 40
14. Ex. 21:33-23:19	28. 1 Corinthians 1:1-17
	29. 1 Cor. 1:18-2:16
	30. 1 Cor. 3, 4

Delegates determine core ministry for WELS' limited resources

"The Lord is now blessing us with limited resources." Those words, quoted in the first resolution to reach the convention floor, encompassed a three-fold message for the delegates to come to grips with in the five-day WELS' 58th biennial convention in New Ulm, Minn.:

1. The cost of our WELS' mission and ministry exceeds our income and threatens every facet of our work.
2. All that we have as a synod and as individuals is a blessing from God to be used wisely in his service. To the extent that we fail to exercise good stewardship on any level, we need to repent.
3. The best way to meet the challenges and opportunities that the Lord has placed before us and to avoid continuing cutbacks in ministry is to provide greater offerings in joy and thankfulness for his blessings to us and in response to the Great Commission.



The 447 voting and advisory delegates filled the gymnasium at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., determined to make decisions that would lead WELS through the next biennium.

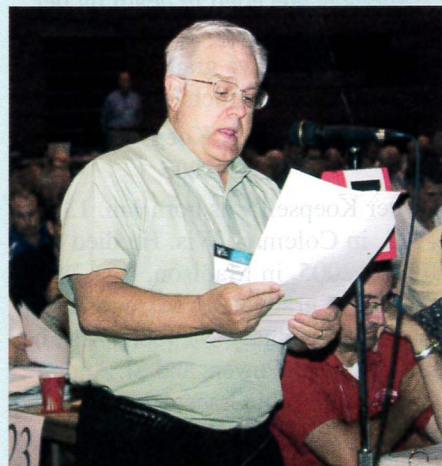
As a guideline for how to use the resources that WELS has, the assembly resolved that mission outreach (establishing and maintaining home and world missions and such charitable institutions as it deems appropriate to its calling), ministerial education (establishing and maintaining theological seminaries, colleges, academies, schools, and other institutions of learning), and publications (printing, publishing, purchasing, selling, and disseminating literature that maintains Lutheran doctrine and practice) "receive funding priority as essential ministries and as the synod's core work."

Ministerial education system reaffirmed

What started out as an apparent tug of war between preserving funding for worker training schools and funding mission outreach resolved into pulling together for both. WELS needs its schools, and WELS needs its missions.

In support of the ministerial education system, the convention adopted the Prep School Study Report that reaffirms the importance of the two prep schools and approves mission advancement offices for each school to seek additional funding to replace dwindling synodical operating subsidy. In four years there should be a reassessment of whether it is still necessary to reduce the subsidy as much over time as the study outlined.

Martin Luther College also received a vote of support in that the Synodical Council will take all necessary steps to ensure its continued operation in some form.



Delegates had much to say when the convention was discussing the Prep School Study Report. Delegates took turns sharing their feelings about the resolutions that were on the table.

Delegates adopt budget and make plans for increasing revenue

The synod in convention adopted balanced budgets of just over \$41 million for each of the next two years. However, it was pointed out that these budgets are flat and to keep them balanced will necessitate further cuts in ministry, such as the recalling of 10 more world missionaries, closing down our overseas chaplaincy program, and reducing Home Mission support for new ministry starts in North America, besides the funding strains in Ministerial Education.

A number of initiatives came out of the convention to help improve the outlook:

Stewardship Bible study. A plan will be set in motion to get every family in WELS to study stewardship. It will begin with Pres. Karl Gurgel going through a special stewardship Bible study with every district president. The district presidents will do the same with their circuit pastors, and they with the other pastors in their circuits, who will bring it to the families in their congregations.

The "10 – 10 plan." Gurgel appealed to all congregations to consider raising their congregations' mission offerings to 10 percent of their total offerings (the present average is about 7 percent). For those already at 10 percent or above, he asked for a 10 percent increase over last year's offerings.

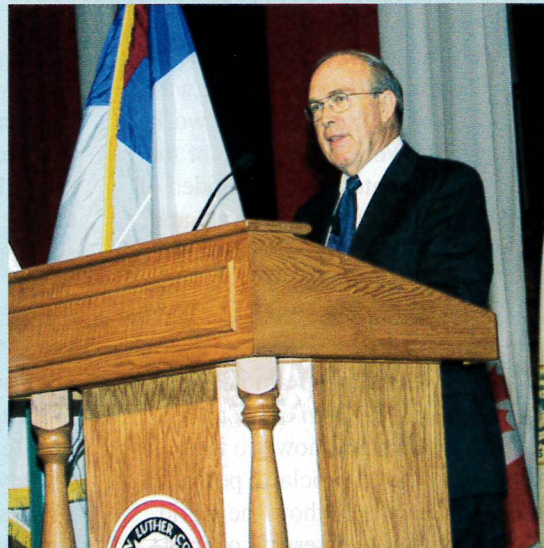
Improved fiscal services. To assure clear and accurate recording and reporting of the offerings of God's people in WELS, the accounting department needs \$600,000 worth of software and up to \$500,000 for personnel costs.

Convinced that the infrastructure needs those improvements, the assembly approved them to be funded from extra-budgetary money, including savings from adding one year to the repayment plan for WELS' internal borrowing debt.

Streamlining administration. Planning will move ahead to determine ways in which WELS may streamline its administrative structure to improve operations and save money. Suggestions are to be brought to the district conventions in 2006 for input and then presented to the synod in convention in 2007 for any constitutional changes necessary.

Endowments. The convention approved proceeding with the plan to seek \$150 million in trusts and endowments both for ministerial education and for mission outreach, plus another \$50 million for capital needs.

Gift planning counselors. The assembly encouraged getting more gift planning counselors in place to seek individual gifts of love and thankfulness and to help the newly formed mission advancement offices at the ministerial education schools. In the same resolution, they strongly encouraged every WELS congregation and pastor to place a stronger emphasis on ongoing biblical stewardship training in their congregational ministry



In his address to convention delegates, President Karl Gurgel reflected on WELS' ministry over the past two years and called for a recommitment to the work that WELS needs to accomplish. He also focused on how WELS needs to balance its budget over the next few years through revenue increases and expense containment.

plans and to give generous support to the congregations' mission offerings and Mission Partners.

Communications. As one way to improve ministry and to increase involvement, the delegates called for significant improvements in communications, as long as improvements can be done within the adopted budget. They approved a full-time director of communications to replace the retiring director (who also is the executive editor of *Forward in Christ* magazine), provided that the magazine's needs will still be met. They also approved pushing forward with the early development of an Internet broadcasting system that will stream video broadcasts to the world over various channels. The idea is to start small and proceed as money allows.

Worship: the backbone of synod convention

People often want to know what the overall spirit of the convention was. In brief, it was the Spirit of God working through his Word. Every step of the way, the delegates were reminded of God's presence through Christ, and they prayed for God's help.

The convention opened with a rousing service of praise at St. Paul in New Ulm. In his sermon, retired missionary John Janosek shared examples of his experience in Malawi and Zambia, Africa, to illustrate how we must all work together to proclaim peace through Jesus throughout the world.

Each convention session opened with gospel gems, first from the Old Testament and then from the New Testament. Thomas Nass, a professor from Martin Luther College, presented

messages from the book of Micah. Paul Wendland, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, shared thoughts from the gospel of Luke. "I didn't know what Tom was going to be talking about," says Wendland. "It just so happened that he was going through Micah and Bethlehem Ephrathah, and that fit in with my text on the birth of Jesus. We didn't check on that. That's just how God does things."

Pastor Jon Buchholz from Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz., led the delegates in a study of justification and provided Bible studies that delegates pursued further in committee sessions. The theme of justification fit in well with the synod's four-year theme, Proclaim Peace through Jesus. Says Buchholz: "Objective justification is the motivator, the basis that drives our outreach. We're motivated to reach the lost because Jesus has died for everybody. We don't do it because it's a command. We do it because we have the objective gospel and we want to share it."

There was another full worship service on the last night of the convention. Minnesota District President Larry Cross preached the closing sermon.



Paul Wendland, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, presented New Testament gospel gems at the convention.

First Vice President Wayne Mueller and Secretary Robert Pasbrig were installed into their offices in that service.

Delegates deeply moved by the message of God's amazing grace in Christ Jesus brought thank offerings to the worship services totaling more than \$24,000.

"We pray that this will be but the beginning of an outpouring of generous gifts of faith from all WELS people for the ministry and mission that God has given us to do," says Gary Baumler, director of communications.

FIND MORE
ONLINE AT

www.wels.net/convention



Twice during the convention, delegates broke into their respective committees for Bible studies on justification.

Missionaries tell about their work

Four WELS world missionaries—Jud Krohn, Thailand; Robert Wendland, Africa; Ernst Wendland, Africa; and Mark Sprengeler, Hong Kong—were delegates at the 2005 synod convention. Each of these missionaries gave a PowerPoint presentation about his mission field, including photos, facts, and stories. Delegates were excited to learn how the missionaries were sharing the gospel around the world.

"How powerfully God is working in these countries through the word

which our missionaries are proclaiming!" writes Pastor Mark Haefner in his convention blog.* "People are begging our missionaries in Africa to tell them about Jesus—quite a contrast to our country."

Two of the missionaries—Robert Wendland and Sprengeler—also participated in a live chat from the synod convention, in which they answered questions about the mission work they do.

*This and other convention blogs can be found at www.wels.net/imprint in the convention category.



Missionary Jud Krohn gave a PowerPoint presentation about his work in Thailand at the convention.

Did you hear?

Comments from attendees of the 58th biennial synod convention.

"Whenever I use a bottle of ketchup, I have to beat on the bottom of it, and it splashes out over everything making a huge mess. I know that some people think this 58th convention of WELS may splat all over the place as we beat on some touchy issues. That cannot be the case. With God and his Word as our guide, we will pray, praise, and plan in his name and for his glory!"

—Jeffrey Wiechman, principal at Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis., and one of five convention bloggers, in his first blog* five days before the convention began.

"If I made a bumper sticker for our convention, it would read 'Get Our House In Order.'"

—Timothy Gauger, pastor at Christ our Savior, Rockford, Mich., and chairman of the Ministry Direction Floor Committee.

"You can't outgive God."

—President Karl Gurgel, when discussing stewardship in his opening address.

"It's certainly an opportunity you can't pass by."

—Jed Falck, lay delegate from Peace, Shenandoah, Iowa, about serving as a delegate.

"Love is lovelier the second time around. What a gift of God it is to be reminded concretely, all of us called workers, that the form of ministry which we serve is not something we earn or deserve or have some kind of inherent right to, or that we should have because of our experience. It is a gift of what St. Paul calls his grace."

—Wayne Mueller, first vice president, after he was elected in the second round of elections for first vice president. Pastor David Kolander declined the call in the first round of elections.

"It's a privilege to be able to serve like this."

—Jon Buchholz, pastor at Emanuel, Tempe, Ariz., about presenting two essays and companion Bible studies on justification at the convention.

"For me, this was a convention of contrasts. There were highs and lows. There are challenges to be faced and opportunities to be seized. I left the convention with mixed emotions about the future of gospel outreach ministry in and through WELS, at least until I remembered one important detail . . . the Church belongs to Jesus Christ and he's still King!"

—Bruce Becker, administrator of the Board for Parish Services, in a blog* following the convention.

*These and other convention blogs can be found at www.wels.net/imprint in the convention category.

In other action

Other resolutions that were passed at the synod convention include:

FIND MORE
ONLINE AT

www.wels.net/convention

- That the Board for Home Missions suspend Level 3 traditional mission openings until the Lord chooses to bless WELS with the resources needed for such openings.
- That, if budgetary reductions occur, the Board for World Missions reduce the number of mission fields so that the remaining fields can be staffed in a way that promotes the development of indigenous churches.
- That the Board for World Missions carefully consider prioritizing the opportunities to staff existing fields for faster expansion and indigenization before adding new mission fields.
- That the synod encourage the Board for Home Missions and the Board for World Missions to work toward the goal of a single mission board.
- That, if a budget reduction is required for the Board for Parish Services, the European civilian chaplaincy (one full-time position and one part-time position) be eliminated from the synod budget; but that the single full-time European civilian chaplain be maintained as long as possible through non-budgetary funding and the chaplaincy be restored to the synod budget and expanded as warranted.
- That the synod encourage WELS members to support the needs of the WELS archives with their special gifts.
- That convention lists—voting and advisory delegates, convention committees, and nominations—be printed on the WELS Web site and via electronic news release instead of in *Forward in Christ* to allow for more timely and accurate information.
- That the offering received at the convention opening service be divided equally between the Walking Together synod special offering and Multi-Language Publications and the offering received at the closing service be designated for the Walking Together synod special offering.
- That Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., will host the 2007 synod convention.

FIND MORE
ONLINE AT

www.wels.net/convention

Election results

First vice president—Pastor Wayne Mueller
Secretary—Pastor Robert Pasbrig

Synodical Council

Member at-large, teacher—John Freese

Board for Ministerial Education

Chairman—Pastor Don Sutton
Teacher—Gerald Kastens
Layman—William Schmidt
Layman—Hogey Holtz

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board

Chairman—Pastor Thomas Westra

Board for World Missions

Layman—David Sauer

Latin America Administrative Committee

Pastor—Tim Otto
Layman—Carl Toepel

Native American Administrative Committee

Layman—Vernon Caulk

Africa Administrative Committee

Pastor—Kevin Schultz
Teacher—Jeff Dorn

Japan Europe Asia Administrative Committee

Layman—Craig Ruschmeyer

Southeast Asian Administrative Committee

Pastor—Michael Duncan
Layman—Mark Schulz

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors

Pastor—Robert Gurgel
Teacher—Phil Kuske
Layman—Eugene Baer

Board for Parish Services

Chairman—Pastor Joel Leyrer
Layman—Bob Stasny

Commission on Worship

Chairman—Pastor Mark Bitter

Commission on Special Ministries

Chairman—Charles Buege

Board of Appeals

Pastor—Robert Gurgel
Teacher—Karl Grebe
Layman—David Nommensen



Synod Secretary Steve Lemke, a teacher at Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis., taking minutes at the convention. Lemke has served as synod secretary for the past four years but decided not to run for reelection this year. He was replaced by Pastor Robert Pasbrig, director of mission advancement for Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc.



The synod presidium (left to right): Pastor Robert Pasbrig, secretary; Pastor Wayne Mueller, first vice president; Pastor Karl Gurgel, president; and Pastor Thomas Zarling, second vice president.



The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) presented a procession of flags representing countries that have WELS missions. Area LWMS members carried the flags. Here Clarice Fastenau, a member at St. Paul, St. James, Minn., displays the Malawi flag.

FIND MORE
ONLINE AT

www.wels.net/convention

Meet a delegate

Three hundred ninety voting delegates—118 pastors, 83 teachers, and 189 lay delegates—and 57 advisory delegates represented the 12 WELS districts at the synod convention. These delegates consisted of pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and laymen from across the United States, Canada, and the world. Meet just one of those delegates:

Name: Bob Kaylor, a first-time lay delegate

Congregation: Saving Grace, Mobile, Ala.

Committee: Serves as secretary of Committee #11, Special Reports

What do you do for a living?

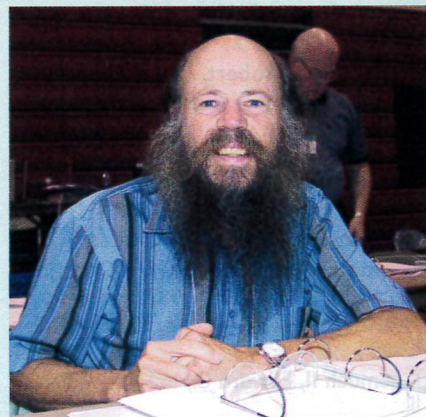
"I'm retired after spending 30 years in the U.S. Coast Guard. That was a haircut a week and a shave a day. That's why my grooming has changed dramatically."

What are your responsibilities as a committee secretary?

"I record, format, and route resolutions from the committee. I also assist the chairman with copies of different documents the committee needed. I've been not just a recording secretary but a gofer as well."

What do you think of the convention so far?

"I'm in awe of it. It's such a process. I see a huge diversity in background, experiences, and opinions of various delegates. I also see that we don't know each other very well. . . . For me it was amazing to see how many congregations there are in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. We think it's a big deal in the Gulf Coast to have five congregations within a three-hour drive."



Anything you want to share with your fellow WELS members?

"The synod is ours, and it takes participation to make it run. Make your views known to [your representatives at convention] because they are going to make tough decisions and they need to know your opinions. And pray for your leaders. It is tough, and it can't be taken lightly."

Convention coverage offered something for everyone

For the first time, WELS offered live Web video broadcast of some parts of the convention online at www.wels.net/convention. WELS members from around the world could watch President Gurgel present the opening address, Prof. Tom Nass offer a gospel gem, delegates debate about resolutions, and more, as it was happening.

"To be able to see and hear the events as they transpire is the next best thing to being there," says Martin Spriggs, WELS' chief technology officer. "Anything we can do to help our members better 'connect' with our work as a synod can only be a blessing."

WELS members definitely showed interest in the live coverage. During Wednesday's floor sessions the live broadcast maxed out at 71 users (the licensed limit due to bandwidth and cost). Others had to wait "in line" until somebody else dropped off.

But live convention coverage wasn't the only thing that visitors to the convention Web site were interested in. Overall, more than 6,500 people visited the WELS Web site each day during the convention. Convention coverage offered something for everyone:

For those who couldn't watch it live: Convention video coverage was archived so visitors could download the footage for viewing at any time.

For those who wanted to listen: Audio coverage—mp3 files for computers or portable audio devices—was also available for download. Visitors could even sign up for the files to be delivered right to their e-mail.

For those who like to read: Visitors could access news articles, worship materials from the convention, convention minutes, election results, and all the convention resolutions. Content was updated regularly

to keep the site fresh. Delegates received a daily four-page newsletter that highlighted news from the previous day.

For those who wanted to participate: Five convention bloggers shared their thoughts during the convention. These bloggers wrote in on-line journals about the issues the convention was facing as well as their own feelings toward what was happening. Visitors to the site could comment on these blogs. There was a single-day high of 1,026 visitors to the blogs during the convention.

Four convention chats gave participants an opportunity to interact with delegates at the convention. Visitors to the convention Web site could also take polls about convention issues.

"It's wonderful that God's people have such an interest in their church body and the work we all have before us in Jesus' name," says Spriggs.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

- Baerbock, Ronald E.**, to Mission to the Children, Mexico
- Eggert, Jan C.**, to Immanuel, De Pere/St. Paul, Greenleaf, Wis.
- Geistfeld, Ernest B.**, to retirement
- Green, M. Robert**, to Ascension, Harrisburg, Pa.
- Heiges, William D.**, to Emanuel, New London, Wis.
- Hennig, Richard F.**, to St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.
- Kante, Paul E.**, to St. John, De Soto, Wis.
- Rossman, Jonathan L.**, to Christian Giving Ministry, Milwaukee
- Satorius, Timothy J.**, to Grace, Falls Church, Va.
- Ungemach II, Edward C.**, to Faith, Antioch, Ill.
- Weber, Richard F.**, to retirement

Teachers

- Adickes, Penny K.**, to First, La Crosse
- Aguilar, Stacey L.**, to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.
- Baade, Carrie L.**, to St. John, Milwaukee
- Baehman, Lisa M.**, to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
- Belongia, Nathan J.**, to St. Peter, Plymouth, Mich.
- Boatman, Edith M.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee
- Braun, Jeremy**, to The Hope School (HS), Milwaukee
- Browning, Amber J.**, to Southern Lutheran Academy, Mulberry, Fla.
- Eiche, Jessica L.**, to St. Luke, Kenosha, Wis.
- Fischer, Sarah**, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee
- Hennig, Barbara M.**, to retirement
- Lauber, Nathan D.**, to East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.
- Nelson, Joshua J.**, to The Hope School (HS), Milwaukee
- Pahmeier, Fred W.**, to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.
- Paul, Terry L.**, to St. Philip, Milwaukee
- Reese, Peter M.**, The Hope School (HS), Milwaukee
- Stoering, Emily R.**, to Immanuel, Sault Sainte Marie, Mich.
- Stoffel, Donna**, to St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis.
- Stuebs, Philip P.**, to First, La Crosse, Wis.
- Tess, Jessica D.**, to Hope Middle School, Milwaukee
- Tjernagel, Julie L.**, to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.
- Vance, Duane**, to Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.
- Veach, Joy A.**, to Redeemer, Maple Grove, Minn.

Wrobel, Dominique, to St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

Zanto, Mary E., to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.

Staff minister

Favorite, Jonathan M., to CrossWalk Ministries, Phoenix, Ariz.

ANNIVERSARIES

Milwaukee, Wis.—Milwaukee Campus Ministry and Wisconsin Lutheran Student Center (40). Oct. 9. Service, 6:30 P.M. Catered dinner served 4:30-6:00 P.M. Dessert reception to follow service. Dinner cost, \$10 per person. RSVP, 414-963-2047 or paula@wisc.org.

Milwaukee, Wis.—St. Philip (50). Oct. 16. Service, 10:30 A.M. Fellowship to follow. Banquet, Oct. 15, 6 P.M. Bavarian Inn, Glendale, Wis. Tickets needed. Barbara Allard, 414-263-7614.

Frankenmuth, Mich.—St. John (125). Oct. 16. Service, 10 A.M. Noon dinner to follow.

Lomira, Wis.—St. Paul (150). Oct. 16. Services, 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. Catered dinner, 11:30 A.M. Adults, \$9.25; children 4-9, \$4.75; 3 and under, free. Light luncheon to follow afternoon service. Wendy Zahn, 920-387-3785.

Benton Harbor, Mich.—Good Shepherd (50). Oct. 16. Service, 9:30 A.M. Pig roast and potluck to follow.

Lansing, Mich.—Emanuel First (150). Oct. 30. Service, 2:30 P.M. Supper and music to follow.

COMING EVENTS

Faith Stepping Stones training seminars—Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Inc., will be hosting regional training seminars for a new family ministry program called Faith Stepping Stones. The training seminars are intended for congregational leaders (lay and called). Upcoming training events are in

- Golden Valley, Minn., Sept. 30-Oct. 1
- Nampa, Idaho, Oct. 21-22
- Middleton, Wis., Nov. 11-12
- Omaha, Neb., Jan. 26-27, 2006.

Find out more at www.wlcs.org.

A day at the Seminary—sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary. Oct. 1, 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. Worship, 9 A.M. Lee Abraham, 414-453-3320.

New chapel dedication—Reformation, Genesee Depot, Wis. Oct. 2. Service, 2 P.M.

Grand opening service—Crossroads, Chicago, Ill. Oct. 2. Service 10 A.M. in the auditorium of Stockton Elementary, 4420 N. Beacon St. Wendy Greenfield, 773-905-9363 or www.crossroadschicago.org.

Martin Luther College Ladies Auxiliary—annual meeting. Oct. 12. Opening devotion, 10 A.M. Noon luncheon. Babysitting provided. Elaine Steffen, 507-648-3335.

Congregational Team Workshops—sponsored by the commissions of the Southeastern Wisconsin District Parish Services. Oct. 15. Registration, 8-8:30 A.M. Workshops, 8:45 A.M.-4:35 P.M. Shoreland Lutheran High School, 9026 12th St., Somers, Wis. Register your congregation (500 or less, \$125; more than 500, \$175) plus \$10 per person or as an individual, \$50. Tammy Miller, tmiller@wels.net.

Eighth Annual Run for the Prize 5K Run & Walk—hosted by Immanuel, Findlay, Ohio. Oct. 15. Dave Braun, 419-348-7456 or www.immanuelfindlay.org.

Dedication—new church and school facility. Oct. 16. Service, 2 P.M. Meal and fellowship to follow. Trinity, 601 E National Ave, Brillion, Wis. Church office, 920-756-3738.

Christian Life Resources National Convention—Nov. 5, 9:30 A.M. to 5:15 P.M. Dinner, 6:30 P.M. Four Points Sheraton, Milwaukee, Wis. 800-729-9535 or www.CLRevents.com.

WELS Woodwind Festival—Nov. 17. Wisconsin LHS, Milwaukee, Wis. Workshops, 3:30 P.M. Concert, 7 P.M. All woodwind musicians invited. Sponsored by Soli Deo Gloria Institute for the Arts. Matthew Schlomer, 262-502-4158 or www.solideogloria institute.org.

WELS/ELS Ladies Retreat—Jan. 13-15, 2006. Spring Hill Suites, Sarasota, Fla. Retreat, \$75. Lodging, \$89. Judy Becker, 941-355-6591.

International WELS Brass Festival—Jan. 21-22, 2006. Fox Valley LHS, Appleton, Wis. All brass musicians are invited. Festival co-sponsored by Fox Valley and Soli Deo Gloria Institute for the Arts. Translators in Spanish, German, and French available. Dr. Patricia Backhaus, 262-549-1506 or www.solideogloria institute.org.

Christian Woman Today—March 24-26, 2006. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.

WELS Conference of Staff Ministers—April 21-22, 2006. Apostles, San Jose, Calif. Kristen Koepsell, 608-831-8540.

NAMES WANTED

Chicago, Ill.—Mike Borgwardt, 312-409-3204 or info@crossroadschicago.org.

West Point, N.Y.—Donald Tollefson, 908-876-5429.

Pinehurst, N.C.—David Schmidt, 910-868-1907.

Texas A&M University, College Station, Tex.—Beautiful Savior, Caleb Schoeneck, 979-693-4514.

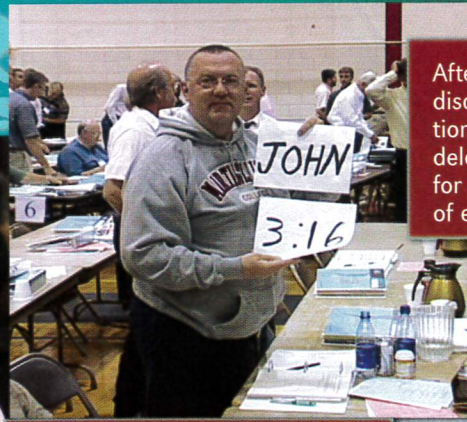
To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@sab.wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. An updated bulletin board is available at www.wels.net, jumpword "bulletinboard".

Picture this

These pictures show what happened at the synod convention when it wasn't officially in session.

This T-shirt, designed for the 2005 Youth Rally, also fit well at the synod convention.

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."
2 Corinthians 4:18

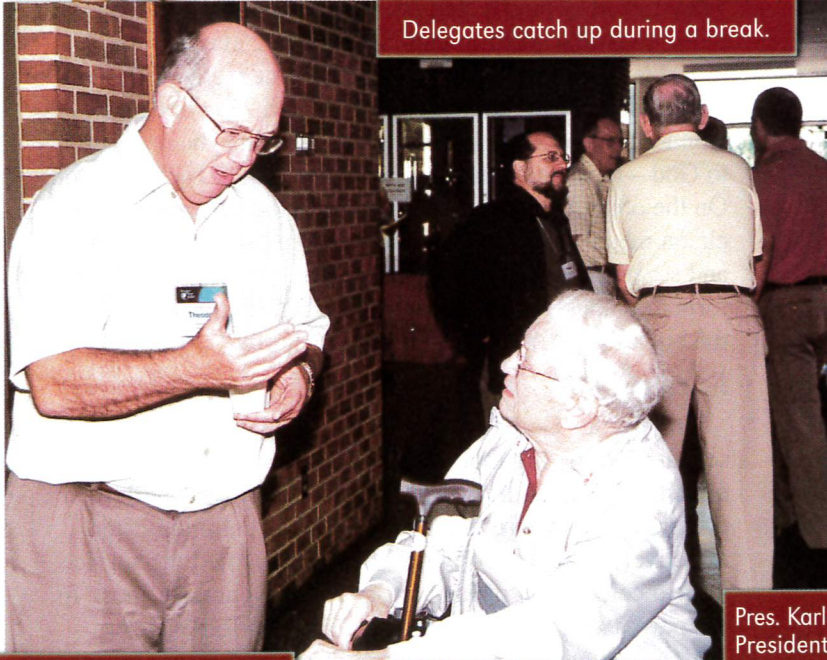


After an evening session discussing communication and Webcasting, a delegate hammed it up for the online broadcast of events.

Food service workers grilled burgers for the picnic-style meal at the end of the convention.



Delegates catch up during a break.

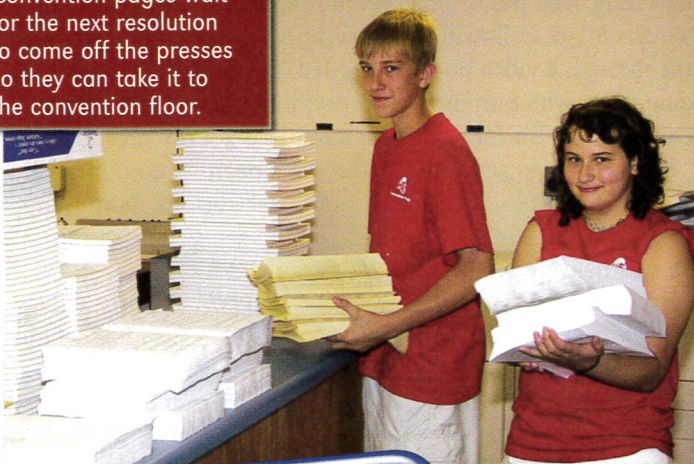


Delegates were able to get their blood pressure taken at the Parish Nurse display.



Pres. Karl Gurgel (left) and First Vice President Wayne Mueller reflect on the day's events.

Convention pages wait for the next resolution to come off the presses so they can take it to the convention floor.

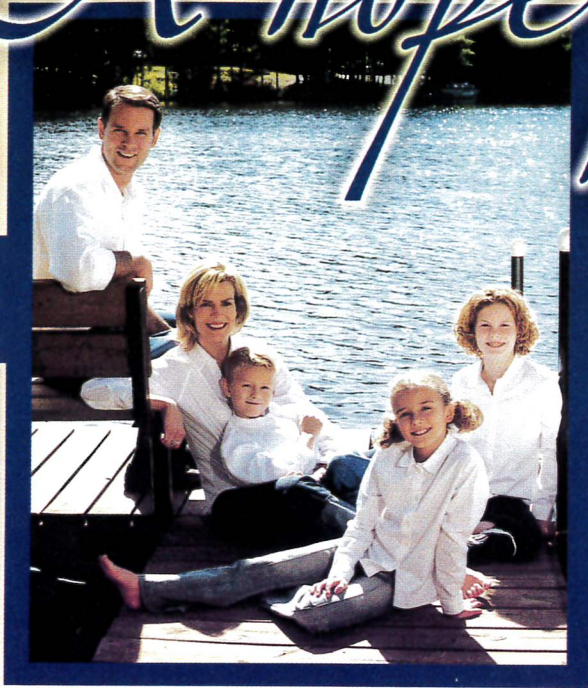


Masked Narren dancers from New Ulm entertained the delegates one evening during the convention.

FIND MORE ONLINE AT

www.wels.net/convention

A hope that will not disappoint us



The Farley family (left to right): Bob, Marie, Samuel, Michaela, and Lauren.

A man with terminal cancer shares his hope in Christ in his life and in his death. Adam M. Goede

If there is any upside to terminal cancer, it gives one plenty of time to think and to prepare.

“Cancer has truly been a blessing,” Bob Farley told family and friends who were gathered in the church for his funeral. He was talking to them via a video he had made before he died.

In life

Bob’s statement certainly must have caused some surprise. This was a man who had suffered from the disease or its effects for all of his adult life. When Bob was 18 he was diagnosed with a rare desmoid tumor in his right foot. The tumor spread up his leg, attacking tissue, until the only option was to amputate the leg just under the knee. He then had to undergo extreme radiation.

After the episode, years went by with no more cancer. Bob married Marie and they had two daughters and a son. He took over his father’s business, and it grew. God blessed Bob and his family richly. Years passed and it seemed Bob’s lower leg was the only casualty.

Then, at 34, the disease returned. This time, what started as colorectal cancer spread to his liver, brain, and lungs in six and a half years. There appeared to be no hope. That’s why Bob’s attitude amazed so many people.

What people saw of Bob in the last years of his life was a man full of hope because of his faith in God. Bob and

Marie talked to doctors and other cancer patients in support groups about salvation through Jesus and life after death. They talked to family and friends openly about it. Bob clung to God’s Word in church and Bible classes.

Bob’s thoughts during this difficult time were outlined in a letter he wrote a month before his death. “On one hand, I wonder if my death will help bring some (maybe many) souls to God—those that have currently turned their backs on God. On the other, how great would it be if God performed a miracle on me and took away the hundreds of tumors in my lungs and several in my brain? Wouldn’t that give me a great platform to witness for my Savior? Which scenario works to the bigger good of God? I’ll find out shortly.”

In death

Praying for God’s guidance, Bob prepared for the first scenario. Knowing that a wide variety of people would attend his funeral, he and Marie worked closely with their pastors to make sure that the gospel was communicated effectively to those Bob knew best. He wanted the service to be a celebration of his victory in Christ and for those in the pews to know they could also share in this victory.

Bob died on April 27, 2005. At his funeral Easter hymns were sung. The pastor preached a powerful sermon based on Romans 5:1-6. Following the service Bob reached out one last time through a video he had recorded. He thanked everyone for being there with him through everything but reminded them: “Don’t be sad for me, that’s for sure. I’ve got my reward.”

He went on to say how blessed he’s been. “I couldn’t ask for anything more, but I am going to ask for one more thing. Make Jesus part of your lives. I want to see you all at the gates of heaven and give you a big hug.”

Following the funeral, many people did turn to Christ. “It was God who opened hearts, and he used us as his tool,” Marie said. She continues to use the story of Bob’s “blessing” to bless others with God’s hope, a hope that will not disappoint.

Adam Goede is a member at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

Freedom

FROM SIN'S SLAVERY

Grace is liberating—it lifts our guilt and makes us children of God. That, not “weak and worthless sinner,” is our identity.

Paul E. Kelm

Busloads of senior citizens bound for casinos are sorry reminders that addiction is a growth industry. Twelve-step programs and support groups developed for chemical dependency have been adapted for people addicted to internet pornography, sports gambling, and more. Blue laws and prohibition couldn't stop the abuse of alcohol. At the same time, insistence on personal freedom has produced devastating slaveries. Paul said in Romans 6:16: “You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act” (from the paraphrase *The Message*).

We all struggle with sin

In differing degrees we all struggle with pet sins: anger, gossip, cursing, dishonesty, lustful fantasies, and more. When the failures in that struggle multiply, there's a satanic lie that can push us into slavery: “I can't help it.” Guilt intended by God to lead us to repentance is, instead, distorted into debilitating shame and self-hatred that make us feel even weaker in the face of temptation. We may resolve never to do it again, only to fall and feel more powerless, more guilty, more enslaved. Another lie, “That's just the way I am,” can make us angry at God.

Paul concludes a message about freedom from sin's slavery with the words: “Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

The law nags us about our sins, and without Jesus' forgiveness that

nagging becomes preoccupation with our sins (cf. Romans 7:7-11). The law confronts us with the demand of perfection; but without the gospel's assurance that Jesus' righteousness is ours, that demand becomes the delusion that we must overcome sin ourselves (cf. Galatians 3:1-3). The law condemns us; and apart from the gospel's proclamation that God has declared us not guilty, that condemnation will leave us defeated, weak, and helpless (cf. Romans 7:23,24).

The gospel can free us from sin's slavery

Grace is liberating. The guilt is lifted. The demand has been met. We are the children of God. That, not “weak and worthless sinner,” is our identity.

Grace is liberating. We don't have to do anything. We aren't on probation before God. We don't have to demonstrate that we are worthy of his love.

Grace is liberating. We are not helpless victims of our urges. We don't need another source of happiness or strength or approval. Jesus is sufficient.

Grace is liberating. We have a new life in Christ that raises us to better ways to spend our time, better ways to deal with frustration, better definitions of happiness. The Jesus who was everything necessary for us is also the Jesus who is everything necessary in us (cf. Romans 6:4-6; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 2:20).

Grace is liberating. The gospel is not just truth; it is power. St. Paul said to Titus: “The grace of God . . . teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions” (2:11,12). He reminded the Ephesians that God “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (3:20).

“Spirituals” developed out of the experience of African-American slaves. Many of these songs expressed the hope for freedom, if not here then in heaven. Slaves found in Jesus the one who's suffering sanctified their suffering. Jesus gave them the worth that slavery had taken from them. He assured a freedom that no mere “emancipation proclamation” could. That freedom is yours in Christ.

Paul Kelm is pastor at St. Mark, De Pere, Wisconsin.

This is the second of a six-part series on Christian freedom. To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net, jumpword “ficarchive”, and search by the author's first and last name.





AROUND EACH BEND

God's plan for the family of St. Thomas took it
down a winding road.

Laura C. Warmuth

In 1965 a family built its first home on a 2.3 acre lot along Thomas Road, a major arterial street in west Phoenix. Even though it was a four-bedroom house with a large living room (big enough for 60 folding chairs!), the family quickly outgrew it and moved into two double-wide trailers. God blessed the family with many new members, and in 1975 they built their third home, a 10,000 square-foot residence.

This "family" is St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church. Today St. Thomas has two campuses, two languages, a preschool, kindergarten through sixth-grade classrooms, and an assisted living home. As he does for all Christian families, God had a unique plan for the St. Thomas family, and he has guided them through the joys and obstacles along the way.

A growing family

St. Thomas began worship services in the living room of its first home in 1965. William Meier was assigned as its pastor in 1967. It was the eighth WELS church in the Phoenix area (which now has 25). St. Thomas was in the middle of a rapidly growing area of "starter" homes being purchased mostly by young Anglo families.

When the congregation built its worship and education facility in 1975, its trailers were transported to Texas to serve another new congregation. In 1978, Arizona Lutheran Academy (an area Lutheran high school) held its first school year in St. Thomas's education wing. The academy also quickly outgrew the facilities, jumping from 44 students the first year to 90 the second. St. Thomas's family continued to grow into the early 1980s when its membership peaked at around 400.

Members move away from home

"We didn't realize it then," Meier reflects, "but a decision by the City of Phoenix to add

an additional runway impacted us dramatically. About 25,000 people were re-located from a depressed neighborhood adjacent to the airport, and almost all were moved with government subsidies into our immediate neighborhood. Housing values plummeted, and the exodus began! Large numbers of our members began transferring to more stable neighborhoods and affiliating with new WELS missions, which were opening at the rate of one a year."

By 1993 the communicant membership had dwindled to around 150. So the congregation's strategic planning committee got together to explore various options to "fill their house" with family members again.

A new branch of the family tree

By this time the Hispanic population in the four miles surrounding St. Thomas had risen to over 50 percent (close to 90 percent in 2005). The strategic planning committee identified Hispanic outreach as the congregation's top priority. After consulting with the WELS Board for Home Missions, and with the support of the Arizona District Mission Board, St. Thomas offered to pay all operating costs and give full use of its facility for this new ministry. Upon graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Timothy Otto joined the St. Thomas family as pastor for Hispanic ministry.

Otto contacted members of the growing Hispanic community through several different evangelism efforts, including door-to-door house calls, English classes, and children's programs. St. Thomas advertised in a free Spanish magazine called *Segunda Mano*, which is distributed in grocery stores, barber shops, and restaurants. The ad that received the biggest response offered free baptisms, *quinceañeras* (15th birthday celebrations for girls), and weddings. These events fill the church and give opportunities to share the gospel.

As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:22, Otto strives to "become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." This means not only

learning about and understanding Latino culture and customs, but practicing them in his life. Because of the Latinos' fear of any non-Catholic church, it also means taking down barriers in the worship service. Otto wears a clerical collar and calls the worship service a "mass." Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday, and the members cross themselves "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Although Otto is flexible in the form of worship, he stands firm on the message of the gospel.

Around each bend the congregation saw new opportunities to reach out with the gospel.

The Hispanic family of St. Thomas has grown from 14 worshipers at the first mass in 1997 to an average of 150 per week in 2005. Leaders have emerged from among the men in the congregation, and members are sharing their faith with family and friends. "I haven't had to knock on a door in five years," Otto shares. "I stay busy with the prospects brought in by our members."

What about the original branch?

While the Hispanic family of St. Thomas grew, the original Anglo congregation was shrinking and aging in an area with no potential growth for an Anglo ministry. So in 1999, St. Thomas began to target the community of Goodyear, 14 miles west of the Phoenix campus. Just as in its infant years, the congregation made do with the facilities it could afford. They first worshipped in a public library and then in a remodeled garage/apartment building on the newly-acquired land. Now

with two services on Sunday mornings at Goodyear plus a third on the Phoenix campus, the English services usually match the attendance of the Spanish.

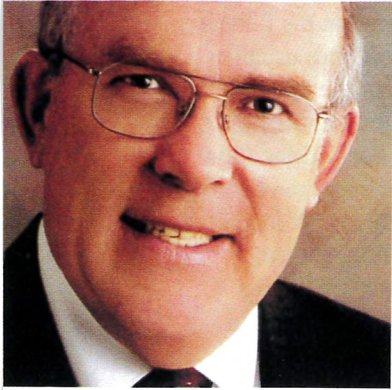
The Goodyear campus now holds a 6,500 square-foot Early Education Center where 44 students are enrolled in preschool to grade six. A large house on the property has been remodeled into an assisted living home for the elderly. It provides a unique opportunity for members to serve each other because it is staffed from the congregation and located near the school where children will be able to interact with residents.

Family togetherness

St. Thomas/*Santo Tomas* now has five worship services each week and sends praises up to heaven in Spanish and English. While they operate under two separate church councils and cultures, the branches continually pray for each other and share each other's triumphs and trials. They have just called a third pastor, Clayton Welch, who will serve as outreach minister in Goodyear and teacher in the Hispanic Evangelist Training Program. Demographic trends show more and more Latino families moving toward the Goodyear campus, so perhaps in the future the two ministries will overlap even more than they do today.

God's plan for this family took it down a winding road, but around each bend the congregation saw new opportunities to reach out with the gospel. "Without the support of our brothers and sisters in WELS through those assigned by God with the privilege of managing the resources and gifts of God's people, we would not be able to conduct the exciting multiple ministries God has entrusted to us," Meier says. "[Our ministry] is a tribute to the grace and mercy of our Savior God, working through Word and sacrament to gather his elect to be with him forever in heaven!"

Laura Warmuth is a staff writer for Forward in Christ.



Carl R. Langel

Trick or treat

Trick or treat? The literal meaning of those words is why my parents didn't let us go door to door trick or treating at Halloween. My parents didn't object to someone giving us a treat. However to "threaten" a trick if a treat was not given, in their minds, made anything received less than freely given.

Satan, the old evil foe, is full of tricks. He seeks to convince us that heaven can be earned by our own efforts or behavior. Deep down he knows it can't. But if he can trick us into believing it, either he makes us proud Pharisees, thinking we deserve God's favor, or pessimistic publicans, despairing of it.

Salvation is God's treat entirely. God's Son earned it for us by his perfect life and innocent death. And God's Spirit makes it ours through the gift of faith. There is no trick here; it's entirely God's treat.

Each year just about this time, when we celebrate the Lutheran Reformation, we are treated to the chief teaching of Scripture, justification. For the sake of Jesus Christ, God declares sinners to be innocent in his sight. Because of this primary teaching of the Scriptures, Luther believed every soul is a treasure. For Martin Luther, highlighting the importance of every soul was the teaching of the priesthood of all believers.

In many of Luther's reforms, you can clearly see how precious individual souls were to him. As he translated the Bible into German, he would search for days for just the right word to make God's saving truth readily readable in the language of the people. Luther wrote countless hymns so the common people could participate actively in the service.

While never disparaging the comfort of private absolution a troubled sinner

receives from his pastor as from God himself, Luther stressed the direct access every sinner has with our forgiving God. He underscored the meaning of "Our Father" as Jesus taught us to pray.

For Luther the privilege of teaching was a further treat from God to be used in the Christian training of others, especially the next generation. Luther, while always revering and honoring the office of the public ministry, at the same time would not be tricked by Satan into denying the priesthood of all believers.

That priesthood extends also to every Christian father and mother, who will teach their children of God's "treat" for us in Christ Jesus our Savior. And Luther can still help through his Small Catechism for parents to use.

It's a cruel trick of Satan to take out of our hands the tools God has given us. It's God's treat to restore them to us. As we emphasize synodically in the coming year that every soul's a treasure, may we who are called workers thank God for every man, woman, and child who, in serving the Lord, delights to exercise the priesthood of all believers.

Every soul is a treasure. As parents, from the moment a precious soul is committed to our physical care, may we especially be concerned about providing for them spiritually. As partners with the called workers in our congregations, may we be as active as possible in nurturing the faith of the members of our congregations. And treasuring every soul, may we join with others synodically, worldwide, in prospecting for souls, seeking to find other lost souls.

What a privilege it is to treat others to this glorious truth!

Lessons from the Creed

Did God create the world in six days?

Charles F. Degner

There are too many holes in the theory of evolution for it to be credible. A famous atheist in England, Anthony Flew, reversed his opinion that the world evolved. Since he was 15 years old, he believed in evolution. When he was 81, he changed his mind. He concluded from DNA studies that life was too complex to be explained by evolution.

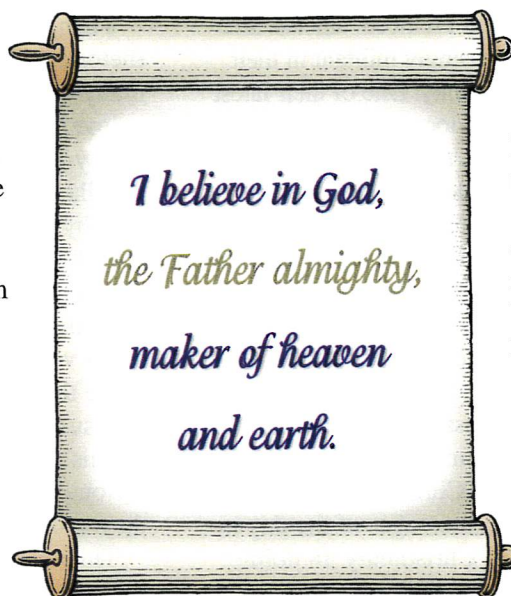
Evolution is unbelievable

A WELS scientist, Dr. Kevin Peil, points out that genetic studies make evolution unbelievable. There is a two percent difference between the DNA of a chimpanzee and that of a human being. This amounts to roughly 150,000 base pairs. Evolution states that chimpanzees and humans evolved from a common ancestor three million years ago. Assuming 20 years for each generation, this would require 100 beneficial genetic mutations for every generation. Unbelievable.

On a hike in Glacier National Park, an agnostic friend and I were watching a rainbow after a passing storm, framed by a snow-clad mountain. "When I look at this," he said, "I have to believe there is a god." When people come to such conclusions from observing nature, they prove the psalmist right. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1).

God explained creation in the Bible

That, however, is not why we believe that God created the world in six days. We believe it because God tells us exactly how it happened. Read Genesis 1:1–2:3. Read



the story the way God told it. It is the story of the world's genesis, or beginning. It is a factual account of how God spread forth the heavens and the earth in just six days.

God tells us the story of creation because he wants to teach us about salvation, not science. Yet there is science in the story. He gives us a lesson in genetics because he created living things according to their "kinds." The theory of evolution teaches a disorderly progression from one living thing to another.

There are too many holes in the theory of evolution for it to be credible.

He gives us a lesson in astronomy because he put the heavenly bodies in the universe in an orderly way to mark the times and dates and seasons.

If you accept the "big bang" theory, the universe was formed by accident and in a disorderly way. It's amazing we don't bump into things more often!

Of course, the crown of God's creation is man. God made man in his image, that is, holy (Genesis 1:26). God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a "living soul" (Genesis 2:7 KJV). This is where the theory of evolution undermines not only the teaching of creation, but also the teaching of salvation. If man evolved, when did he become responsible to God for his sinful actions? When did the animal stop being an animal and become a man, with a living soul? Atheism and evolutionism fit together well, because man does not need a Savior God if he is becoming better every day.

We cannot explain all the details of how and why God created all things. The Creator may have placed some of those bones in the ground or those fossils deep in the earth just so that man would understand what the words, "You will surely die" (Genesis 2:17) meant. It is enough to believe what God says about creation in his Word.

That's what faith is all about, isn't it? "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

Contributing editor Charles Degner is pastor at St. Peter, St. Peter, Minnesota.

This is the sixth of a seven-part series on the First Article of the Apostles' Creed.

To read other articles in the series, go to www.wels.net, jumpword "ficarchive", and search by the author's first and last name.



Gary S. Baumler

When Christians hurt the cause of Christ

In case you haven't noticed, atheists are becoming increasingly militant in their war against Christianity. One of their latest attacks comes in a documentary movie, *The God Who Wasn't There*. In it the intellectual giants of unbelief will argue that Jesus Christ never existed.

Beware of the insidious nature of their arguments. They start with assumptions and premises that grow out of unbelief to prove unbelief. Their points fit together, humanly speaking, very logically.

That's not necessarily the most disturbing element in their position, however. They also point to Christians today and to popular Christian messages of the day in their case against Christianity. In doing so, they distort what they see and present it in their distorted view, but many a Christian has done little to help them see any differently. Instead, we often feed their misperceptions.

How?

For starters, we engage the world on its own terms. Although armed with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we make our most public forays into the political arena. We hear the cry for a mighty army of Christians to rise up and lead our nation the right way. Although armed with the good news of free salvation in Christ, we put major energy into trying to legislate morality, teach laws, keep the Ten Commandments in public view. We take great pains to pass judgments on the "injustices" of world governments, as we see them.

Yes, these things can be good and worth fighting for. But they can also mislead and misinform about what Christianity really has to offer. Those whose politics differ and have a different vision for today's world may never hear of the vision God gives us for eternity. Even some within Christianity begin to believe that morality, and not Christ crucified, is the message.

Then, too, we seem to engage in a rhetoric of hate. At least, that's how many on the outside view it. "Yes, God is love," they might want to agree, "but then you Christians don't appear very godlike."

Why do so many think that Christians preach hate? Is it that we shout so loudly and incessantly about what's wrong with the world that we drown out the still, small voice that tells how Christ has made the world right with God?

Jesus said that people will know we are his disciples when they see our love for one another (cf. John 13:35). How do we show our love?

This matter is tricky. We have ample biblical reason to cry out against the wrongs we see around us. Even Jesus did that. But dare we let the smoke of our just anger blot out the light of God's justice fulfilled in Christ?

Furthermore, we get caught up in the shifting winds of popular teachings. We embrace books and movies with extra-biblical teachings, and soon the spotlight turns to what is fiction instead of what is fact. Is there a hidden code in the Bible? Will some of us be snatched up to heaven one day and the rest left behind?

We start looking for the answers to life's mysteries in the books of men instead of in *The Book of the Son of Man*. On that level, the unbelieving world has its way.

Let's not be giving the unbelievers so much advantage.

Still, with or without our help, the attacks keep coming and will until even the very elect might fall were God to let it go on indefinitely. But God will intervene and Christ will come and the atheists will then have to figure out how to deal with "the God who wasn't there."

*A song for
the heart
that is . . .*

lonely

*anxious about
finances*

*frustrated with
the wicked*

*anxious about
the future*

feeling guilty

fearful of death

*seeking purpose
in life*

*longing to be
close to Christ*

*seeking Christian
friendship*

peaceful

joyful

*thankful for
God's Word*

Songs for the heart

Donald W. Patterson

Have you ever seen a woman walking through a crowded store with a little toddler asleep on her shoulder? It is a peaceful sight. All kinds of things are happening around that child, but he is restfully oblivious. That little one is not too worried about the big things in life. He lets his parents worry about the big stuff. He knows that he is too small to handle it.

Sometimes, when we see those sleeping "weebitties," we will think, "Oh, to go back to when we didn't have a care in the world!" All of the things we adults have to think about often overwhelm us. Is there a way to find peace when there is so much to be concerned over?

Yes, there is. There is a psalm in which David calls us to be like a little toddler in our heavenly Father's arms. It is called Psalm 131. David, who had tremendous responsibilities as the king of Israel, still knew that God had to take care of the big stuff. David couldn't control everything the way he was tempted to. He also knew that God was controlling all things to bring the world a Savior some day. So, he wrote a song to sing to the Lord that would calm his heart, which was apt to take on more than it should. His song is a great little lullaby to bring us peace too. Read Psalm 131 a few times through and then answer the following questions.

Featured verses: Psalm 131

¹My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.

²But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

³O Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.

Points to ponder

- What sin had David discovered is often lurking below the surface of a restless heart?
- What are some matters that are too wonderful for us to be taking as our own responsibility?
- How does a weaned child aptly illustrate a peaceful child of God?
- How can a believer quiet his own soul as David described?
- How does verse 3 become the point of David's self disclosure?

Treasures to share

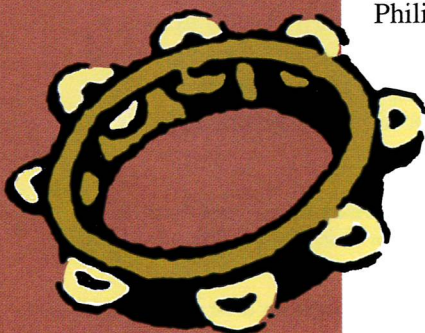
- Make a basket for your kitchen table that is for burdens too big to carry alone. Then during your family devotion have each family member write a burden to cast to the Lord. During the next meal add some more burdens. After three or four days read through those burdens that were cast upon the Lord so everyone will be reminded to leave the burdens to the Lord.
- Take a friend who is carrying some heavy burdens to lunch and study this psalm together. Lead your friend in prayer as you list each burden that you are giving to God.

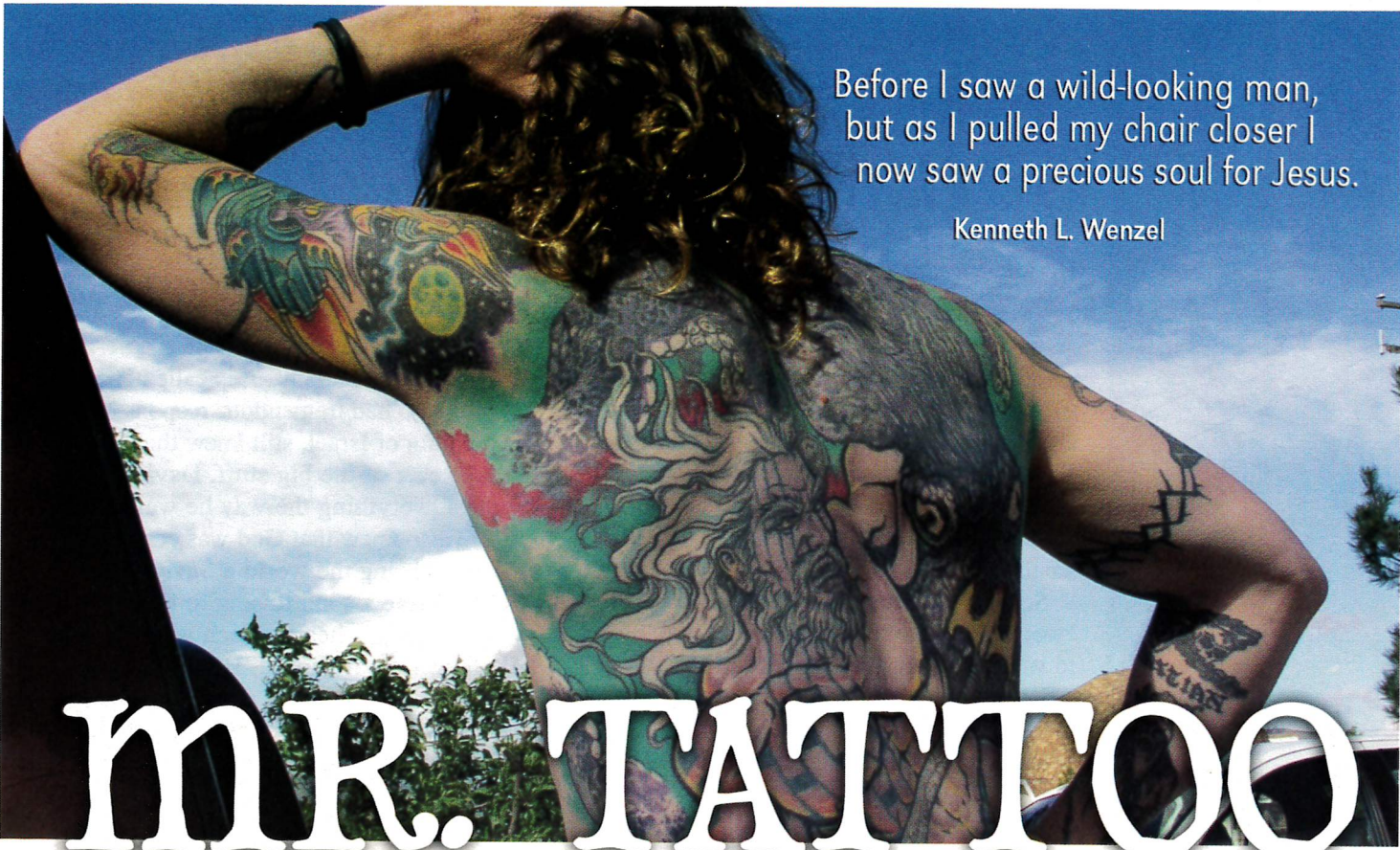
Other passages of Scripture about peace from God

Philippians 4:4-7; John 16:33; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 5:7; Matthew 11:28,29

Contributing editor Donald Patterson is pastor at Holy Word, Austin, Texas.

Find this article and possible answers online. Go to www.wels.net, jumpword "fic", and click on "Songs for the heart." Answers will be available after Oct 5.





Before I saw a wild-looking man,
but as I pulled my chair closer I
now saw a precious soul for Jesus.

Kenneth L. Wenzel

MR. TATTOO

Call him, “Mr. Tattoo.” His whole body was covered with tattoos like Queequeg in the novel, *Moby Dick*.

Some of the tattoos were pornographic. I would see most of them as he rested on his hospital bed in his gym shorts.

His skin was a deep brown color because his father was from Spain and his mother was an Apache Indian. His hair was long and bushy. With black and gray streaks, his hair stuck out straight like an Aboriginal bushman. His bushy beard was massive, and his eyes bulged brightly.

This wild-looking man in his 30s had asked for a chaplain visit. A bit uneasy because of his looks, I sat down at a safe distance.

Mr. Tattoo had lived a pretty rough life, and it was catching up with him. He had broken his back in an accident. The rest of his life would change. Now he had time to meditate on who he was and where he was going in life.

and Christian living. I even sketched out for him a picture of God’s great exchange for us.

Mr. Tattoo began to understand, and his precious soul was now in the arms of Jesus. He even looked forward to reading his Bible and learning more about his Savior.

I am told that getting a tattoo can be very painful. Today, people volunteer to go through this kind of pain to have marks on their bodies. They want to make some kind of statement. Some want to say something sentimental or about someone they love; others want something decorative or rebellious. However, all of their marks are only skin deep, and the meanings can change.

On the other hand, when Jesus says, “Look at the nail marks through my hands,” and “Look at my side pierced by a spear” (cf. John 20:27), Christ shows us the “tattoos” of his amazing grace. These marks are more than skin deep. These marks proclaim his saving death upon the cross for

THE “TATTOOS” OF THE CROSS HELPED MR. TATTOO TO HAVE REAL PEACE WITH GOD AND A NEW SPIRIT.

Amazingly, in that process, he had picked up a Bible and started reading. He had grasped the basic facts of Jesus’ life, but could not put together what it all meant for him.

Before I saw a wild-looking man; but as I pulled my chair closer, I now saw a precious soul for Jesus. His looks had really fooled me.

We talked for a long time about sin, Jesus, forgiveness,

all of our sins and God’s finished work of salvation.

The “tattoos” of the cross helped Mr. Tattoo to have real peace with God and a new spirit. He would go home with new strength and direction from Jesus. May the next tattoo you see, remind you how Jesus’ painful body marks saved you forever!

Ken Wenzel, a chaplain with Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Inc., is a member at Eastside, Madison, Wisconsin.