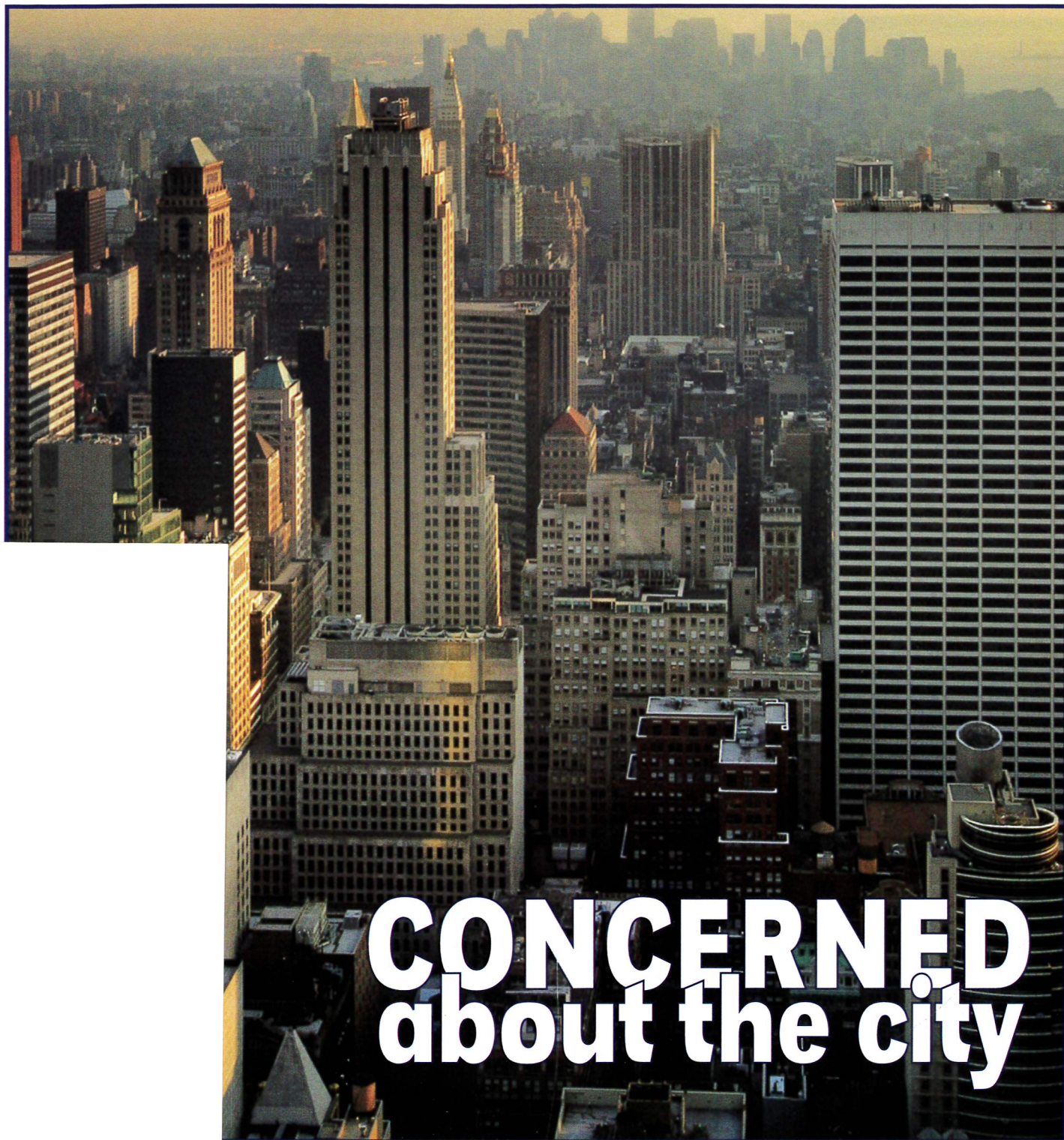


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SEPTEMBER 2007

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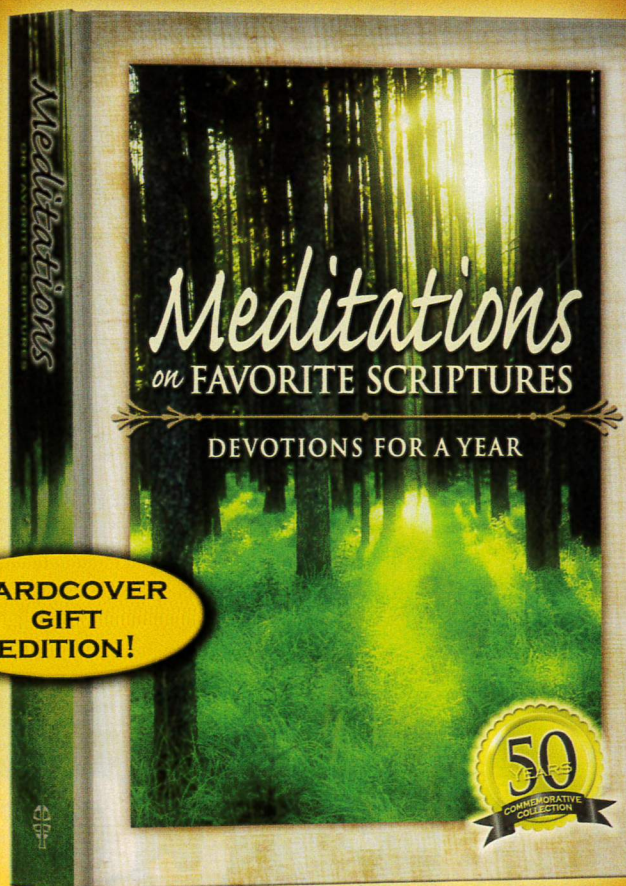
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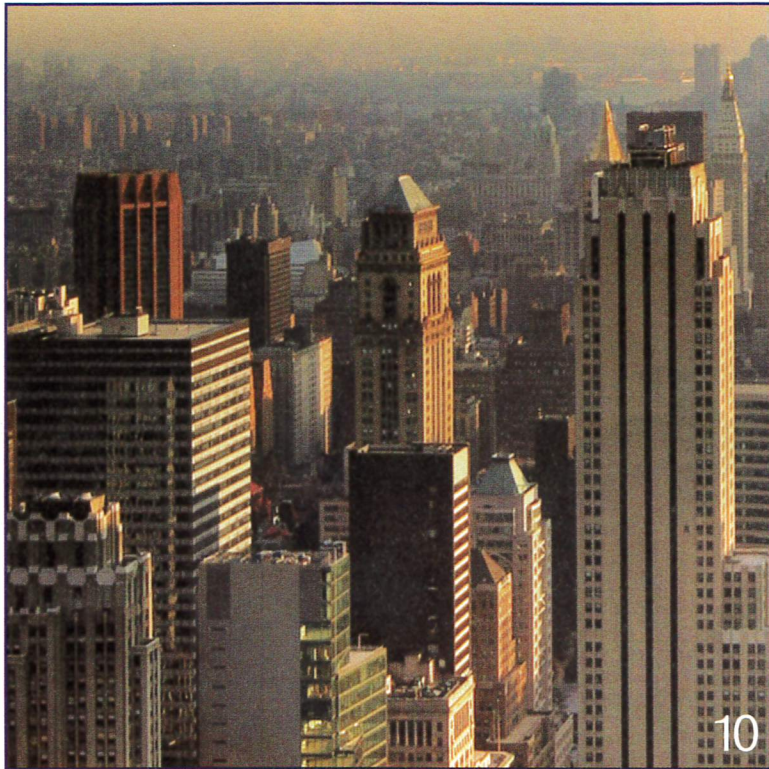
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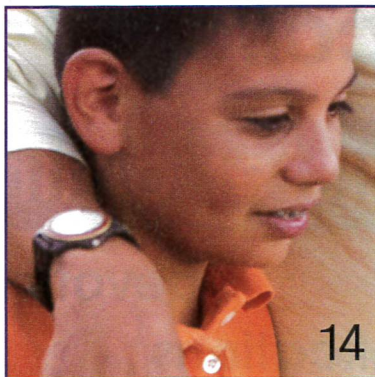


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“God is still concerned about cities for the same reason he was in Jonah’s day: he cares about people.”



SHUTTERSTOCK



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Forward in Christ

✠ The official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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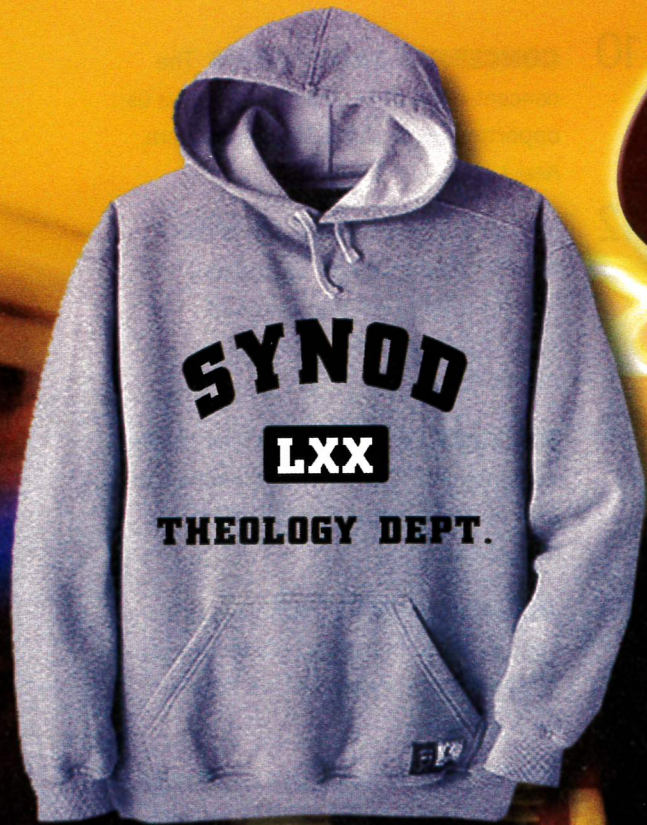
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WITH OUR FATHERS;
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NOR FORSAKE US.
1 Kings 8:57

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SEPTEMBER

WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

Have you ever had a really bad day (or week) and then someone unexpectedly sends you an e-mail or a card that compliments you or thanks you? That little pick-me-up can carry you through the rest of your day. I've been on the receiving and on the giving end of these messages, and I'm not sure which is more rewarding.

John Braun's final article on vocation (p. 28) reminded me of those e-mail compliments. His article concentrates on doing those little things that show your love for Jesus and for your fellow man.

Sometimes those little things turn out to a big deal. Look at Edna Woodard (p. 30). While struggling with her own cancer, she talks to fellow patients and even the medical staff and offers hope and joy in the knowledge of the Savior. It's just a part of her daily life—something many would not even notice—but it's something that can make an eternal difference.

In another article, Mark Paustian shares how something small—comments by laypeople about how important his father (a pastor) was in their lives—encouraged him to become a pastor (p. 14).

What can you do today to help or encourage someone?

DEPARTMENTS



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PAIN & FORGIVENESS

I recently read an article in your magazine called "Pain & Forgiveness" [June], and it truly touched my heart. Although my current situation is different, I feel the same pain.

At the end of this article in bolder letters it reads, "There are so many things in this world that are unimportant; our faith and family should be top priority." Since reading this I've done a lot of thinking. For years I wasn't much into family and not into faith at all. I'm currently incarcerated for choosing to help friends instead of putting family first. I feel I've failed my family big time. . . .

I've read the Bible and do Bible study courses and read all sent to me by WELS, and I've read how God works in mysterious ways. Sometimes he puts you in prison or punishes you to help you. . . . Your magazine shows me that people care and believe.

Name withheld

MEDITATION & YOGA

Once again FIC teeters on offending WELS members, particularly younger generations that are already leaving the synod at an alarming rate. I can't personally speak on meditation, and as a Christian I have no interest in such classes. But to imply that every yoga class out there must be avoided is unfair to this form of exercise. This article ["Meditation and yoga," July] leaves readers with the impression that WELS members must add yoga to our long list of things to avoid. Faithful Christians everywhere feel the stress of this sinful world, and stress takes an incredible toll on our bodies even when God is as much a part of our daily lives as the stress. I personally find relaxing activities like yoga keep my body a healthy and happy temple for my Lord, and I wish FIC wouldn't imply this is wrong.

*Kimberly Parten
Republic, Missouri*

"MEETING" A SEMINARY STUDENT

I enjoyed your article "Q&A with Phil Casmer, seminary student" [June]. An article like this is valuable for all WELS members. We are not aware of what goes on in a seminary student's life. The article elaborated on a typical day; required classes like systematic, biblical, and historical theology and their descriptions; and how a student learns to preach.

I wish our congregation was closer to [Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary] so we could tour the campus. I am sure more people would be encouraged to support our educational facilities (including prep schools and Martin Luther College) if they were more aware of them, how they functioned, and the wonderful Holy Spirit-inspired results. I would strongly encourage congregations to find ways for teens in their churches to visit these campuses. If they decide to not continue their education in WELS, fine; at least they are aware!

We are indeed blessed with the quality of pastors and teachers we have in our synod. This is a result of the quality of education and training we offer them.

I sincerely pray that you continue to offer articles like this in *Forward in Christ*. The results could be countless. . . .

FIC is a wonderful way of communicating. The articles by pastors, the Bible studies, and question and answer sections are all valuable. Again, I applaud your efforts; thank you for the interview. When I received the July issue of FIC, I immediately checked to see where God had led Phil Casmer to accept his call.

*Duane Timm
Pompano, Florida*

DON'T DESPAIR

This is in response to your article titled "No Reason to Despair" [July].

On March 23, 2002, I was in an automobile accident that resulted in both of the bones in my lower left leg being broken and a two-and-a-

half-week stay in the hospital. During this stay in the hospital and during my recovery period afterward at home, one thing I never ever did was to feel sorry for myself or pity myself or blame God because of what had happened to me.

Two things got me through my crisis. First and foremost, my faith in God. Without it, I have no idea what would have happened to me. Second, I developed a philosophy concerning being in an adverse situation, such as breaking my leg: "When in an adverse situation, do not complain about it. Find a way to take advantage of it." . . .

*Daniel Wortman
Rhinelander, Wisconsin*

I have often pondered why certain of God's children suffer calamities such as that described by Cari Bade in "No Reason to Despair" [July]. What more powerful testimony can there be than her story about how tragedy can teach us of God's grace, wisdom, and plan for our lives? Who of us can bemoan our petty little problems in the light of what this servant of the Lord has endured? I wept from the beginning to the end as I read of Cari's senseless tragedy but her most sensible and phenomenal growth in spiritual virtues and Christian faith as she triumphed through her struggles. EVERYONE should read this article. It can point all of us in the proper direction and attitude in our Christian journey. Rarely has such a moving, purifying life story been so perfectly told about why we have "no reason to despair" and can "rejoice in tragedy." Thank you, Cari! You have deeply blessed everyone who reads your story!

*Frederick Beiderbecke
Rancho Cordova, California*

Send your letters to **Feedback**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. Letters between 100 and 200 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*.

The solution is sacrifice

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:17

Peter A. Panitzke

Many Christian congregations and denominations are facing a financial crunch. Our church body is no exception. We look for solutions. I am certain the solution will always involve sacrifice. But sacrifice what?

Resources aren't enough

Will we save our synod if each of us sacrifices the cost of a cup of coffee every day? Should congregations sacrifice dreams of new local ministries or new church buildings in order to redirect that money to the synod? Which synodical program do we sacrifice to reach a balanced budget? Those sacrifices leave us the same as we were.

God says he doesn't need those kinds of sacrifice. "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills . . . If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it" (Psalm 50:9-12). Our God has plenty of resources!

A broken spirit creates a new attitude

So what sacrifice is the solution? After the prophet Nathan condemned him with the words, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7), King David offered the sacrifice God desired: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." That sacrifice changes us.

Do you hear the same words of condemnation? "You are the man!" "You are the woman!" Nearly 3,000 years ago, the Lord spoke through

Amos: "I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished" (Amos 3:15). God's people enjoyed a higher standard of living than their ancestors, but they had forgotten to whom their money and their houses belonged. Are North American churches struggling financially because North American Christians have lost sight of why the Lord has entrusted great wealth to us?

The solution is sacrifice!

Let us offer to God the sacrifice he desires, the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart that confesses, "Lord, I have failed to dedicate my life to you. I have failed to dedicate my finances to you." No comparison with others. We compare ourselves only with God's standard. That comparison crushes us. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

The solution is sacrifice! Recognize the selfish sin within and reclaim the sacrifice that your Savior offered for you. What the Lord said to adulterous King David, he also says to you: "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die" (2 Samuel 12:13).

As God works in us the sacrifice of the broken spirit and also faith in the Lamb's sacrifice, he creates in us hearts that desire to bring "righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you" (Psalm 51:19). A new attitude arises within our hearts. Sud-



denly the concept of offerings isn't limited to 10 percent of our income.

Offer the "whole burnt offering" of your entire life! Dedicate everything you are and have to God's goal. Then the question isn't "What amount will solve our financial dilemma?" Instead the question becomes "How can I use everything God has entrusted to me to lead others to know his sacrifice?"

Yes, sacrifice is always the solution. The sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. The sacrifice of the Lamb of God for sinners like us. The joyful, willing, purposeful sacrifice of our entire lives.

Contributing editor Peter Panitzke is pastor at St. Paul, Muskego, Wisconsin.

Live closer to God

Douglas J. Engelbrecht

In Art Linkletter's book *Kids Say the Darndest Things*, he tells the story of a man who took his grandson to church. During the service, some of the people began praying—almost wailing—rather emotionally and loudly. The little boy asked what they were doing. His grandpa said, "They are praying to God, who is way up in heaven." He turned to his grandpa and said, "You know, Grandpa, if those people would live closer to God they wouldn't have to pray so loud."

Yes, kids do say the darndest things. But sometimes they express something very spiritually deep. If you would live closer to God—not in the physical sense but in the sense of being spiritually closer to his Word—you wouldn't have to pray so loud. If you did live closer to God, you would be more confident that your future is in his hands.

Jews of Jesus' day didn't understand that Jesus was God and man. They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" (John 6:42). Had they been closer to the Word of God, they would have understood that the promised Messiah would be God made flesh. Isaiah wrote clearly, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), which means "God with us." It should have been no surprise to them that Jesus was supposed to be a man, so that he could act as their substitute on the cross. But Isaiah revealed that Jesus also had to be God so that his sacrifice could be sufficient to pay the price for all mankind.

The closer you and I live to God, the more confident we will be that the future is in his

hands. Why is it that some people pray so loudly and get so emotionally upset and so distraught over things that don't go the way they want them to go? Often it's because they are not living close enough to God to know that the man who died on the cross for their sins is also the God who is in control of all things and with whom nothing is impossible. So many people today, like the Jews of Jesus' day, fail to understand that Jesus was both true God and true man.

If some believe that Jesus is just the kid from down the block, like the Jews claimed—the carpenter's son and no more—is it any wonder that they pray awfully loud and wring their hands and go to pieces when things in their lives take unexpected turns? They don't understand that the Jesus who gave up his life for their forgiveness is also the God who is in heaven controlling all things for their good.

They don't have that confidence that the man who could bleed and die for their sins is also the God who can do anything to get them through even the toughest of times.

Do you find yourself praying awfully loud, wringing your hands, and losing your grip when things take a turn for the worst? Maybe you

need to live a little closer to God, that is, a little closer to his Word. Then you'd be more confident that your future is in his hands . . . in the hands of not only the carpenter's son, but also the Son of God with whom all things are possible.

Do you find yourself praying awfully loud? . . . Maybe you need to live a little closer to God, that is, a little closer to his Word.

Contributing editor Douglas Engelbrecht is pastor at Trinity, Neenah, Wisconsin.



at the foot of the cross. Richard L. Gurgel

TOPIC: Canon of Scripture

How do we know the books we have are indeed part of the canon, that they are written by those who claimed to have written them, and that they are truly inspired?

For readers not familiar with the term, the “canon” of Scripture is the list of books that God’s Old and New Testament people learned to recognize as given by inspiration through God’s prophets and apostles.

Your question is exceedingly practical for every Christian. If Scripture is our guide for faith and life—and we stake our eternal life on what it tells us—we want to make sure that we are paying attention to the very words of God himself.

In both Old and New Testament times many books that were not included in the canon claimed inspiration. So how do we know that the Old Testament and New Testament church accurately evaluated which books God had given by inspiration?

For the Old Testament canon we have an advantage. The canon of the Old Testament was firmly set before the time of Christ. Jesus confirms that they got it right. For example, Jesus told the disciples on the first Easter evening, “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). What is fascinating is that Jesus used the threefold division of the books of the Old Testament canon that was common among the Jews at that time. Consider also his words in John 5:39. As he taught some Jews, he made this statement, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.” By speaking of the “Scriptures,” Jesus uses the single comprehensive name for the Old Testament canon and urges the Jews to go back to those books to find Scripture’s witness to him.

We don’t have the same direct confirmation from Jesus’ mouth for the New Testament canon. Yet God didn’t leave the church in the dark. The books God intended for the New Testament canon were all written before the death of the last surviving apostle, John. This “disciple whom Jesus loved” was of great value to the early church in sorting out authentic inspired writings from counterfeits. All the books of the New Testament existed before the end of the first century. Some of them were written by those who were eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus.

However, the most powerful testimony is the books themselves. The books of the Bible have the power within themselves to establish their inspiration. As the writer to the Hebrews tells us, “The word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus tells us why that is so: “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63). The power of the Spirit is always at work in and through God’s inspired words. He who gave that Word to the apostles and prophets still inhabits it so that it has the power to “make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:16).

God’s love for fallen humanity was so great that he took upon himself our flesh and blood, suffered, died, and rose again for us all. Surely the God who loved us with this “everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3) would not fail to make sure we received his inspired words that make that salvation available to us. Such is the awesome faithfulness of our saving God.

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/jump/qa, for more questions and answers.

CONCERNED ABOUT CITIES

Great numbers of people fill large and small cities. The concentration of people gives us opportunities to share Jesus with them.

Peter J. Leyrer

They didn't use the sirens this time, but the red and blue lights did interrupt a good night's sleep. Then again, we were already awake. Was that the sound of gunfire? Firecrackers? The police didn't find anything and left after a few minutes. Back to bed.

I live in South Minneapolis, Minn. Contrary to well-meaning advice, I don't own a pit bull terrier, and I don't carry a concealed weapon. I'm here because I love the city, because I believe God loves the city, and above all because he's called me to minister in and to the city.

Can you name a city in the Bible? Maybe your first thought would be the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by God when not even 10 righteous people could be found there. Or you thought of Babylon, the city of the captors of God's Old Testament people. Babylon is also used throughout Scripture to stand for everything evil.

Don't forget Nineveh, the city whose wickedness moved God to send the prophet Jonah. But sometimes our recollection of that story gets a little fuzzy. We tend to remember Jonah's misadventures with the great fish and forget the story's happy ending. The people listened to Jonah and repented. As the story closes, God asks, "Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4:11).

God was concerned about that city. I believe that he continues to be concerned about cities because he's concerned about people. And if God is concerned about cities and the people in cities, we should be too.

Christians in the city of Antioch

The city of Antioch may not be on the tip of our tongues when we think of biblical cities, but maybe it ought to be.

Founded in about 300 B.C. and dedicated to the Greek god Zeus, Antioch was considered one of the greatest cities of its day. At its peak, perhaps 500,000 people lived there. Trade routes and a nearby harbor brought in business opportunities as well as a mix of cultures. Art and

architecture flourished, and, as is often the case in busy, economically successful cities, Antioch had a reputation for immorality.

When persecution forced the followers of Jesus to leave Jerusalem, they moved to other cities. In each of those cities believers spread the good news of Jesus, and they naturally sought out fellow Jews as their first audience. In Antioch the Jewish believers took an additional approach: they began to speak to Greeks. The Lord blessed his Word, and many of these Gentiles came to faith. The city took notice of a change—Jews and Greeks joining together in faith and worship—and coined a new word: “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

Scripture does not tell us the names of the disciples who first broke the cultural barrier and brought the gospel to the Greeks of Antioch. I wonder, though, if they thought about reasons not to settle there. They could have considered that the whole city was dedicated to an idol and that idolatry still flourished there. They could have listened to tales of brothels and crime and concluded that they needed to settle somewhere else. But since the God who had raised Jesus from the dead was greater than any obstacle, they had nothing to fear.

Bringing the gospel to as many people as possible

The Christian church continued to grow in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas worked together there, and the church there sent them off on their missionary journeys. As they traveled, and later when Paul traveled with Silas instead of Barnabas, they showed a preference for cities. Thumb through the book of Acts, and you’ll see the names: Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and so on.

In some cities people received the gospel message with joy. In others, the missionaries faced opposition. But it’s not difficult to see why they focused on cities: their mission was to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible. In cities, they would reach the most people in the shortest amount of time. It’s no stretch to say that the book of Acts portrays Christianity as a distinctly urban phenomenon. Perhaps as the missionaries entered a new metropolis they quoted Jonah to each other: “Should I not be concerned about that great city?”

In the years since Antioch, it seems many of us Christians may have lost that concern. Like Antioch, urban areas today have a reputation for immorality. Addiction, prostitution, violence, and more flourish in the city. Those certainly aren’t things Christians condone. As a result many Christians decide that the city isn’t for them. But Jonah, Paul, Barnabas, and others who came to minister to cities didn’t come to condone sin. They came to proclaim the one name that redeems us from sin.

I love the city. I love the convenience of it, the cultural opportunities, and the pace of life. I love the diversity; the neighbors on our block are African American, African immigrant, Latino, and Caucasian. Life in the city forces me to think about

what it means to be a Christian as I come into daily contact with people who don’t look, think, or believe like I do. When I think of each of them as a precious soul to be won for Jesus, I have to leave behind whatever judgmental attitudes I might have about people who aren’t like me. I see the needs of people trapped by poverty and addiction, and the city forces me to think about them as Jesus did. I love it.

If we focus on the cities’ problems and conclude that the right thing to do is retreat and isolate ourselves, I think that we sell God

short. God is still concerned about cities for the same reason he was in Jonah’s day: he cares about people. His Word is still powerful to bring people to repentance and faith.

In the Bible, we read of another great city—Jerusalem. It was the capital of Israel, the holy city, and the home of the temple. In Revelation, heaven is called the “new Jerusalem.” Like the people in my city, the citizens come from “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9). They will stand shoulder to shoulder and sing praise to the Lamb who saved them.

Heaven is a city. We’re not there yet. But we have the name of the One that makes all things new and unites us. For heaven’s sake, let us work together and claim our cities for that great day when we will all walk the streets of our heavenly Jerusalem.

Peter Leyrer is pastor at Pilgrim, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**GOD IS STILL
CONCERNED
ABOUT CITIES
FOR THE SAME
REASON HE WAS
IN JONAH’S DAY:
HE CARES
ABOUT PEOPLE.**



Much has changed since 1993. Back then the word “Internet” was mostly unknown and unused, cellular phones were the size of large paperback books, and a young 11-year-old girl named Britney Spears was the newest member of the *New Mickey Mouse Club*. Yes, 1993 is so long ago that the seventh- and eighth-graders to whom I now teach Luther’s Small Catechism weren’t even born, making this relatively young pastor feel pretty old. Though the Scriptures teach that for the Lord a thousand years is like a day that has just gone by (Psalm 90:4), for human beings 15 years can seem like an eternity.

It was at the 1993 synod convention that the first public copy of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* was presented to the synod president. Since that day *Christian Worship* has been adopted by nearly every WELS congregation.

That “new” hymnal will soon be 15 years old. That makes it the oldest hymnal in primary use among the four largest Lutheran church bodies in the United States. But *Christian Worship* is far from being outdated.

Since 1993, new hymns have appeared that enrich the language of the church’s worship. New orders of service, sensitive to worship needs and sensitive to human sin and God’s grace, support a faithful proclamation of the gospel. Others have enthusiastically welcomed instrumental variety that makes faithful use of God’s manifold gifts. Though the gospel in Word and sacrament will remain forever unchanged, the forms of our gospel proclamation and our songs of thanksgiving continue to evolve. God’s people find different yet equally rich ways to confess their Christian faith in word and song.

Recognizing this, the WELS Commission on Worship

has been working on *Christian Worship: Supplement*, scheduled for publication in July 2008, just in time for the next National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts. The commission worked on this hymnal supplement partly with an eye to the future; a hymnal’s “lifetime” is often said to be about 30 years. That means *Christian Worship* would be in line for a complete make-over by about 2023.

Before jumping headlong into such an intensive project, however, we should ask this question: Do hymnals still serve a purpose?

Recipe for future hymnals

- Traditional hymns of faith
- New hymns and liturgies
- Instrumental variety



Choose traditional and new songs and music that teach the truths of Scripture. Practice often so hearts treasure God's truth.

What's the future of hymnals?

Though the gospel in Word and sacrament will remain forever unchanged, the forms of our gospel proclamation and our songs of thanksgiving continue to evolve.

Peter M. Prange

Part of our heritage

Before we consider whether or not hymnals can serve a purpose for the future, we need to understand what purpose they have served in the past.

Our Lutheran church has been blessed with a rich heritage of hymns and hymnals, beginning with Jobst Gutknecht's publication of the *Achtliederbuch* (Eight Song Book) in 1524. Among Luther's many Reformation rediscoveries was his emphasis on congregational song. The reformer strongly suggested that all Christians—not just the clergy and choirs—should be given the opportunity to offer their voices in public worship. After all, singing is a natural expression of Christian faith. He conveyed the wish that “we had as many songs as possible” in the language of the people (*Luther's Works* 53:36). It

was not simply so that the congregation would have something to do during worship. No, Luther was convinced that music—combined with the truths of Scripture—becomes the very living voice of the gospel. “After all,” he wrote, “the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both words and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words” (*Luther's Works* 53:323-324).

As a result of Luther's energetic leadership in the area of hymnody, the Lutheran church soon became known as “the singing church.” Some of the Lutheran Reformation's harshest critics grudgingly acknowledged the power of the sturdy Lutheran hymns. One Catholic theologian even complained that the innovative Lutheran songs won more converts to the Reformation faith than Luther's writings and sermons. Because complete Bibles were generally too expensive to purchase, Lutheran hymnals and catechisms soon became the two chief books for teaching the Lutheran faith to young and old alike.

From the beginning Lutheran hymnals have had a decidedly catechetical purpose; they were published to teach the faith. Lutheran hymns are not simply “songs of praise,” which say very little about what God has actually done. Lutheran hymns tend to de-emphasize subjective feelings. Instead of making the worshiper feel warm and comfortable, they focus a Christian's heart on the objective truths of Scripture, especially God's work of salvation for us in Christ—justification by grace through faith. Lutheran hymnals have contained the rich storehouse of these scriptural, Christ-centered treasures for nearly 500 years. Clearly, they have served an important purpose and have been an indispensable part of our rich Reformation heritage.

More than tradition

But do hymnals still serve a purpose today? Some people—even Lutheran Christians—don't think so. They argue that the words and thought patterns are too difficult for contemporary use. They complain that the music is not learnable. They suggest that our Christian worship needs to communicate a message of “relevance” to the people of this world, and Lutheran hymnals and Lutheran hymns just aren't relevant to a vast majority of the population.

Really?!

While readily acknowledging that worship forms can and do change—and that many Lutheran hymns might not become songs you sing in the shower—what part of the gospel message that these hymns proclaim has become irrelevant?

- Is it the mystery and majesty of Christ's virgin birth? A hymn like “All Praise to You, Eternal God” (*Christian Worship* 33) teaches it.
- Is it the unfathomable victory that Christ has won over death and hell? Shall we discard the hymn “Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands” (CW 161), which so boldly expresses it?
- Does the history of our salvation presented in “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” (CW 377) become obsolete?
- Don't we still need a song of unyielding Christian faith in the midst of earthly troubles taught in the hymn, “If God Himself Be For Me” (CW 419)?

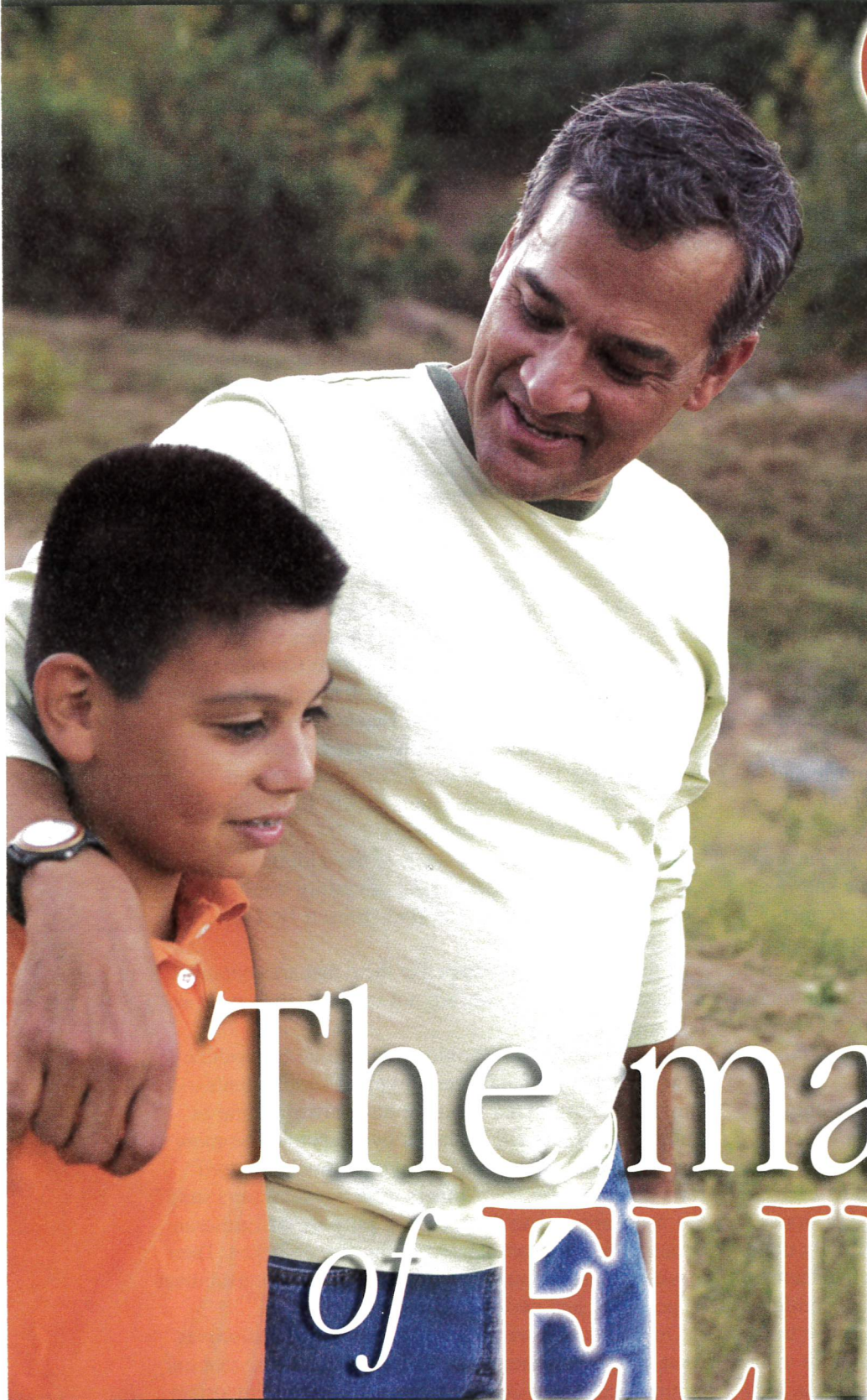
If these hymns and others like them that are contained in our Lutheran hymnals are not relevant, then what is relevant?

Still we must ask: Should we continue to produce new Lutheran hymnals—and hymnal supplements—simply because that's what we have always done as Lutherans? Not at all! Lutheran hymnals must be more than a tradition, and Lutheran hymns should be used for a better reason than “this is what we've always sung.” We must appreciate the teaching purpose of Lutheran hymns. The power of their words must be unlocked. Their message must be taught and pondered. Their music must be practiced and performed well.

Only then will we begin to discover and rediscover what so many Lutherans before us have known: that our hymnals can serve and will serve a decidedly important and divine purpose in our ever-changing world.

Peter Prange is pastor at Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Illinois.

Lutheran hymnals
must be more
than a tradition.



God sent a chariot and horses of fire down from heaven to take Elijah home. Elisha stood and watched as Elijah went up in a whirlwind. Then he shouted, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” (2 Kings 2:12). The event impressed the new prophet with the power that was always watching over Israel.

Elisha picked up the mantle that fell from Elijah. He wore it until he grew old and tired. Then when Elisha was lying sick, spent, and ready to die, the king of Israel himself knelt down beside Elisha. “‘My father! My father!’ he cried. ‘The chariots and horsemen of Israel!’” (2 Kings 13:14). The king also recognized the power that was always watching over Israel and the power of the Word in the mouth of God’s prophet.

What laypeople say about their called servants

I’ve been asking myself how I came to wear the mantle of public ministry. I realize that at least part of the answer came at the funerals of called workers I’ve known. If you’ve ever been to one of those funerals, you know that they ought to sell tickets to witness the joy and the glory. The chariot dipped low and gathered up a teacher or a pastor to take him home. The people all lined

The mantle of ELIJAH

The Lord’s work needs young men and women to pick up the mantle of public ministry and serve the next generation of God’s people.

Mark A. Paustian

up down the center aisle of the church and out the door.

"I was far from the Lord, but this man brought me back," a man says, tapping the coffin of my Uncle Gerhardt, who died in a church parking lot on Easter Sunday.

"She taught me everything that means anything at all." My cousin Ruth died in a car accident getting donuts for the children's Christmas practice.

The people of God still know and experience the power of God delivered through the humble medium of the public ministry. This is how they still cry, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And it makes an impression on a little kid.

And so, the fuller answer to how I was recruited into the public ministry lies entirely with laypeople and the things they say. There's a scene in the courtroom at the end of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* in which a man sitting behind a little girl whispers, "Stand up, child. Your father's passing." People were whispering things like that to me throughout my young life. "Your dad baptized me." "Your dad married us." "I loved his preaching . . . you always knew there'd be grace." "Your dad sat up with me that whole night, that whole terrible night." I was recruited into the public ministry by laypeople who let me know how important my father was in their lives, how significant he was in the lives of their families.

Stand up, child. Your father's passing.

I know of a family where four sons of a faithful lay couple are serving as pastors. My friend, one of those sons, explained it to me. It was the way their dad would say at Sunday dinner, "You know, boys, what you saw the pastor doing today? It's a very special thing." A special thing it is.

Asking someone to take Elijah's place: Finding Elisha

Doesn't this role that laypeople play seem pretty vital to you? They are the ones who maintain humble

respect for the office regardless of the rather mediocre people who fill it. Then there's also a very special conversation they might have. They take a fifth-grade boy or girl aside and say, "I've seen something in you, and have something for you to think about . . ." And they encourage that young person to take up the mantle laid down by older called workers.

**"You know, boys,
what you saw the
pastor doing today?
It's a very
special thing."**

Now, we know how God feeds the world. It is through the divine vocation of farming. He shelters the world through the vocation of the construction worker. We could go on and on. A professor at Martin Luther College used to counsel young people, especially if they felt guilty about *not* choosing the ministry, by saying, "Every day is Christmas for God." You walk into a store with shelves lined with beautiful things. They stand for the countless ways you may freely choose to serve your God—countless vocations. So you choose one, and you offer it to the Father like a child offering a Christmas present to his dad who, of course, has already paid for it himself. The Father unwraps the gift . . . and is delighted! The gift came from faith, and the Father is pleased.

Yet this need not, and must not, keep us from saying about the public ministry, "It is and remains *a very special thing*."

Consider what we ask God's called servants to do. We ask them to see the fullness of God in a feed trough in Bethlehem. We ask them to recognize the Lord of Glory hanging on a cross outside Jerusalem and stepping alive out of his own death. Called servants observe how all of history has turned in such a way as to arrive at each baptism,

including their own. As they study, they hear divine accents of ultimate truth, in the words of the Scriptures. They know that in them they encounter the very person of God, pointing to his own crucifixion, whispering, "Take this. This is for you." Then these called servants have the joy of sharing that treasure with others.

But they also recognize that this gleaming treasure is concealed in a jar of clay, that is, an all too ordinary minister of the gospel. They are the Elijahs who hold out the word of forgiveness to us. This is the word that brings life. That refreshes and sets free. That holds us and ushers us home. By the power of Christ's own Spirit, the impossible love of God for us makes sense to our ears, and we are ready to endure the disgrace of the world. The Holy Spirit works through the message of these called servants. We grip it with our feeble hands and give thanks. A teacher did that for us. A pastor. A staff minister. Then we look for Elishas to take their place: "Boys and girls, the ministry is a very special thing. You know, . . . you could think about doing that."

Just where do they come from, these ministers of the gospel? There's much more that could be said. But if there's any sort of bottom line to the question, isn't it this? The desire in young people to handle the Word of Christ and serve people with it for their whole life comes from knowing what it is to be served with the Word of Christ. Elishas come from the faithful ministry of Elijahs. One generation of called servants speaks the severe message of God's law to another generation, breaking their hearts because of their sin. Then they treat them to the extravagant grace and mercy of Jesus. Consistently. Daily. The Lord of the harvest does the rest within them.

If, instead, we faithlessly wring our hands and retreat to our caves as Elijah did, then the Lord's still, small voice still whispers, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

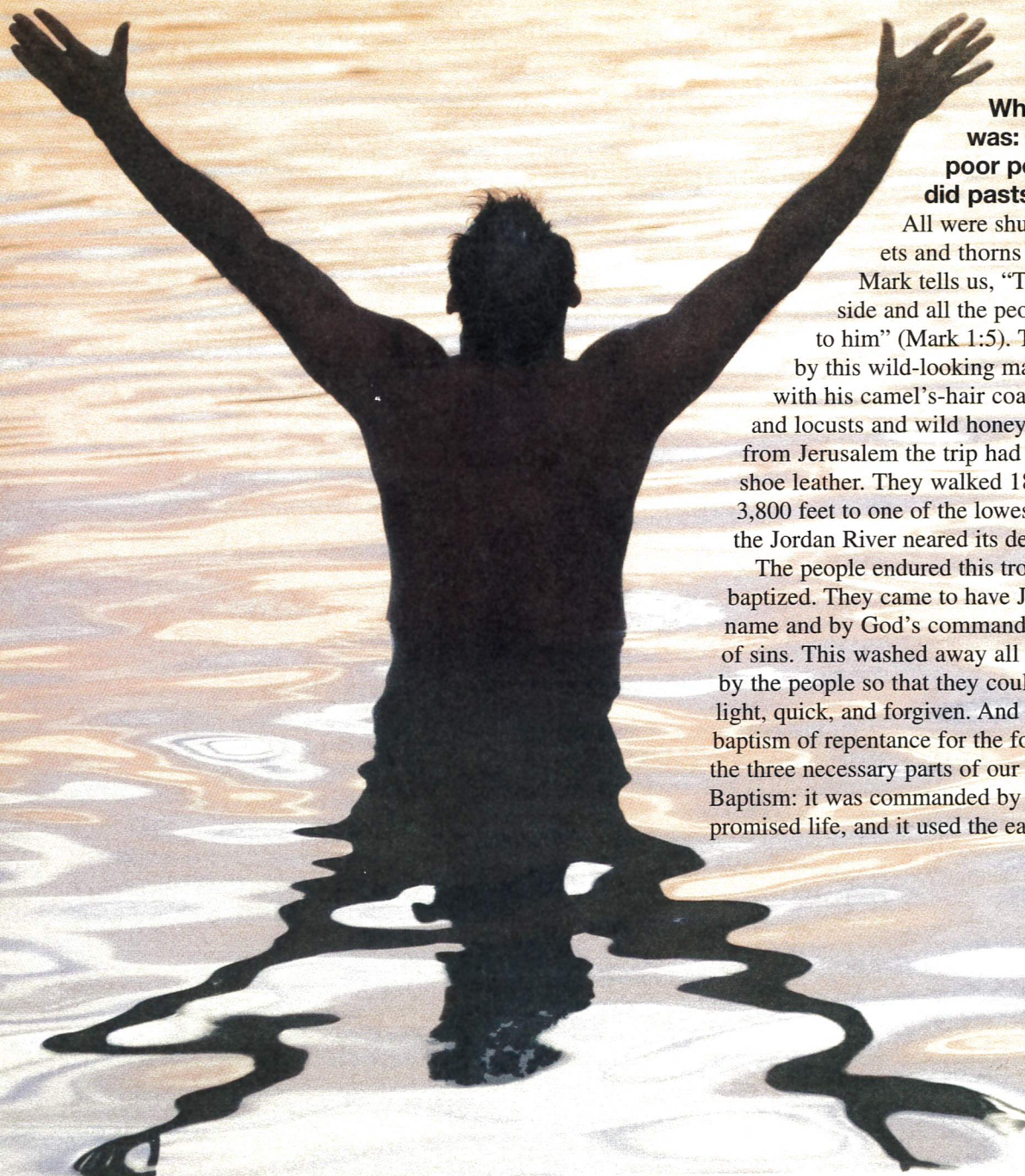
Go find Elisha.

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

Jesus was BAPTIZED

Jesus connected our shining and glistening forgiveness to the water of his baptism.

Eric S. Hartzell



What a wonderful sight it was: soldiers, tax collectors, poor people, people with sordid pasts, and future disciples.

All were shuffling down into the thickets and thorns along the Jordan River.

Mark tells us, “The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him” (Mark 1:5). They went to be baptized by this wild-looking man—John the Baptizer—with his camel’s-hair coat and untrimmed beard, and locusts and wild honey on his breath. For those from Jerusalem the trip had cost them calories and shoe leather. They walked 18 miles and descended 3,800 feet to one of the lowest places on earth, where the Jordan River neared its destination at the Dead Sea.

The people endured this trouble and this trip to be baptized. They came to have John apply water in God’s name and by God’s command to receive the forgiveness of sins. This washed away all the sins lugged downhill by the people so that they could return to their homes light, quick, and forgiven. And even though it was John’s baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, it had the three necessary parts of our present-day sacrament of Baptism: it was commanded by God, it forgave sins and promised life, and it used the earthly element, water.

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.” There he was—perfect God in the flesh—among the tainted and stained lives of all those people. There was Jesus, who said to John when his turn came, “I want you to baptize me.” When all the other people were being baptized! Surely he proved his humanity to all of us that day. Surely the God made flesh was shown to us all. God’s Son being baptized there that day among all the people! Water streamed down his back and shoulders and dripped back into the waters flowing south toward the Dead Sea. Already then Jesus connected our shining and glistening forgiveness to the water of his baptism.

Baptism connects us to the cross and empty grave of Jesus

A cross towered over all these people who were baptized and had their sins washed away. From where they stood at the Jordan the cross was 3,800 feet in altitude above them, on an ugly hill called Golgotha.

Jesus’ cross is visible from our baptism too. If you look you can see it. His grave in Joseph’s new tomb is visible too. To these two, the cross and the grave, the apostle Paul draws a connecting line to Baptism when he says, “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:3,4).

God’s Holy Spirit connects us in Baptism to God’s greatest good news:

Jesus’ resurrection. This news is ours too! Peter said it: “Repent and be baptized. . . . for the forgiveness of your sins. . . . This promise is for you and your children” (Acts 2:38,39).

Baptism brings blessings for our children too

God’s Spirit brings our children into this resurrection picture too. Mark tells us that Jesus “took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them” (10:16). It has to be a very young and small child for you to venture bending over, picking him up in your arms, and holding him. Kindergartners would be too big for most people to pick up in their arms. But you can hold little infants and babies in your arms and bless them. You can make them heirs of your estate.

God blesses little children too. He blesses them with his premiere blessing: Baptism. It is his gift to them. If we understand that Baptism is God’s gift to us and not our gift to him through some obedience on our part, then we don’t have any trouble believing that the Bible says we should baptize our babies. This gift is for us and for our children.

When God commands to baptize “all nations,” children are surely part of that command. We know children have the need for Baptism because they are born sinful and have not only their parents’ genes but also their parents’ sin at conception.

Baptism isn’t magic

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new

life” (Romans 6:4). The good of Baptism doesn’t come because of our act of obedience. We don’t get the credit for the goodness of our friend’s jacuzzi just because we showed up with our sore back and got into the water. Baptism unites us with Jesus in his death. The only thing Lazarus got credit for when he was raised from the dead was four days of decomposition. But in our baptism, Jesus gives us the credit for his complete righteousness. It started already that day, “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.”

Baptism isn’t magic. If we truly believed that all we had to do is put water on someone in the name of the Triune God, we would be—and should be—in some large nationwide shopping chain right now, running up and down the aisles baptizing people. The Bible nowhere maintains that a mindless act on an unknowing person is what God had in mind when all the people—as well as his one and only son, Jesus—were being baptized in the Jordan River.

Jeremiah saw Jesus as our righteousness: “This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness” (23:6). We see him that way too in our baptism. By Baptism we receive God’s gift of righteousness in Jesus. He is our righteousness by faith.

Eric Hartzell is pastor at Cross and Crown, Georgetown, Texas.

Read more about Baptism in Baptism: My Adoption into God’s Family, an NPH publication written by Gaylin Schmeling. Find a related Bible study on this topic after Sept. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.” Luke 3:21

WHATEVER

Love confronts

It's easy to let the sinful and destructive behavior of others slide by, but love seeks to intervene and correct.

My brother and I had a typical brother-sister bond, including yelling and shouting at each other daily. But we also trusted each other. I looked up to him. I was going to be the hot-shot eighth-grader; my brother was a senior. He was my role model, and I never could help bragging about him.

One day my brother said, "Let's take a walk." We walked in silence around half a block when he pulled a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket. I stared at him. My brother glanced at me as he held the cig in his mouth. I shook my head, and just watched him light the "cancer stick" hanging from his lips.

Then he dumped his life story on me. In fifth grade he started smoking cigarettes with a few friends he'd met at a public school. This led to smoking pot and, further down the road in high school, using hash and other drugs. He had a stash in his locker and a pill bottle lined with cotton.

That summer, things just continued to get worse. I prayed harder as I watched my brother's life spiral downward and waste away. He would come home pink-eyed almost every night, claiming his eyes were just dry. He and my parents would scream at each other at night. Doors would slam, and I would lie in my bed as my parents wondered what went wrong. He stopped going to church.

Finally one night, I decided to do something. My brother was home in his room, and I was in bed. I quietly walked into the dining room with a tear-stained face and started explaining to my parents.

The next thing I knew my dad was yelling at my brother. My parents went into my brother's room while he was gone at school and started packing. They were sending him to a Christian rehab center. While they packed, I stayed at a friend's house; I never got to say good-bye.

For three months, my brother stayed at rehab. He was allowed 30 minutes on the phone with his family *per week*. I would try to talk to him, but he normally wouldn't talk back. I felt so much guilt and wondered if my brother would ever talk to me again. What if he came out of rehab still addicted? Does he hate me for telling our parents? I prayed so hard those three months, just praying that my parents hadn't wasted thousands of dollars. I almost regretted telling my parents. But I kept praying for my brother.

He graduated on Dec. 29, one day after my birthday. We went to visit him, and, for the first time in three months, I looked at my brother. So much had changed. I walked up to him. We both happened to be wearing red, long-sleeved shirts.

"Nice shirt," he said.
"You too."

"I missed you. Thank you, so much," he said. I hugged him. And for the first time in three months, I felt no guilt.

Doing the right thing is not always easy. But in those three months, I grew closer to God. I felt like I could not go to anybody—no one would understand this situation. But my Lord did. He was always there, listening to me, comforting and soothing. He answered every single one of my prayers. And as I look back, I realize I don't regret anything.

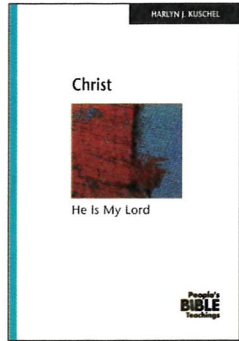
Due to the personal nature of this article, the author has asked to be kept anonymous.





A look at new books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit www.nph.net or call 800-662-6022.
Note: These reviews are not meant to represent the opinions of WELS or Forward in Christ.

Who is Jesus?



\$13.99

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord." These familiar words from Luther's explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed describe the dual nature of Christ that is accepted by orthodox Christians.

The person and nature of Christ have been under attack more than usual lately. A number of popular books and movies such as *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, *The Jesus Dynasty*, and others call into question the biblical account and description of Christ. Thankfully, Pastor Harlyn Kuschel has brought us back to Scripture and reminded us of the true nature and work of Christ in his book, *Christ - He Is My Lord*.

In 150 pages, Kuschel faithfully addresses the question "Who is Jesus?" in four major parts: the person of Christ,

the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, the threefold office of Christ, and the work of Christ. Those who have taken a Bible information class or catechism instruction will be familiar with the doctrines addressed in each part. Kuschel reinforces and extends that basic knowledge as he logically walks us through the biblical evidence and details the orthodox position on each doctrine. He writes in a straightforward style most laypeople will find easy to read, yet doesn't "dumb down" his explanations of some more difficult doctrines. I especially appreciated the descriptions of the common false teachings associated with each doctrine and how they developed.

This book is part of the excellent People's Bible Teachings series, a series written primarily for laypeople that addresses the main doctrinal teachings of the Bible. I found *Christ - He Is My Lord* especially confirming and comforting in an age when the doctrine of the biblical Jesus Christ, the God-man, is often misunderstood and rejected.

Kurt L. Austad
Abiding Word, Highlands Ranch, Colorado

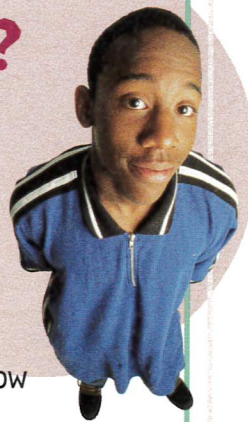
GOT A STORY TO TELL?

Teens, let us know what's on your mind. We're looking for 600-word articles with a Christ-centered focus to print in **Whatever**, a *Forward in Christ* department that's written by teens for teens about teen issues.

Tell us what issues you're dealing with and how your faith helped you face them.

Share your experiences by sending your stories to **Whatever**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.

Or you can submit stories online at www.wels.net/jump/whatever.



Whatever

READ THROUGH MY BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

OCTOBER 2007

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Psalm 119:1-24 | 17. Ps. 137, 138 |
| 2. Ps. 119:25-48 | 18. 2 Chronicles 1, 2 |
| 3. Ps. 119:49-80 | 19. 2 Chron. 3:1-5:1 |
| 4. Ps. 119:81-104 | 20. 2 Chron. 5:2-6:11 |
| 5. Ps. 119:105-128 | 21. 2 Chron. 6:12-42 |
| 6. Ps. 119:129-152 | 22. 2 Chron. 7, 8 |
| 7. Ps. 119:153-176 | 23. 2 Chron. 9, 10 |
| 8. Ps. 120, 121 | 24. 2 Chron. 11, 12 |
| 9. Ps. 122, 123 | 25. 2 Chron. 13, 14 |
| 10. Ps. 124-126 | 26. 2 Chron. 15, 16 |
| 11. Ps. 127-129 | 27. 2 Chron. 17, 18 |
| 12. Ps. 130, 131 | 28. 2 Chron. 19, 20 |
| 13. Ps. 132 | 29. 2 Chron. 21:1-22:9 |
| 14. Ps. 133, 134 | 30. 2 Chron. 22:10- |
| 15. Ps. 135 | 23:21 |
| 16. Ps. 136 | 31. 2 Chron. 24 |

WELS member on Minneapolis bridge during collapse

A WELS member and an eighth-grader at a WELS school were on the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, Minn., when it collapsed on Aug. 1.

Garrett Ebling, a WELS member being served by the pastors at St. John, New Ulm, Minn., was severely injured when his car plunged 64 feet into the Mississippi River after the bridge collapsed.

Jeff Bovee, pastor at St. John, New Ulm, visited Ebling soon after the accident. "When I got there, I thought a good devotion to share would be from

Isaiah 43 when God says 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.' Because that's what happened to him," says Bovee. "As I was having the devotion with him, all of a sudden he starts trying to open his eyes—as swollen as they were—and I could tell he was listening."

Bovee continues, "The hope and the comfort that I was giving to him was

that God remains faithful to his promise no matter what happens to us. He never leaves us or forsakes us. More than that, come what may he has redeemed us with the blood of his Son. We belong to him. No one can pluck us from his hands."

Ebling has gone through multiple surgeries but is recovering well.

An eighth-grader at Pilgrim Lutheran School, Minneapolis, Minn., was on a school bus full of children that crashed during the collapse. He was uninjured as were most of the people on that bus.

LWMS delegates vote down name change

At the annual Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) convention, held June 21-24 in Detroit, Mich., delegates voted down the proposal to change the name of the organization.

About 300 delegates were asked to consider the proposed name, "Women of WELS" with the tagline "a heart for missions." The organization has been considering this name change since 2002 "as part of a greater strategy to energize, invigorate, and expand its active membership by updating its image," says Sarah Malchow, outgoing LWMS president.

Some delegates, however, were afraid of losing the organization's identity.

"The biggest thing was that they wanted to keep the word 'missionary' in the title," says Lynnette Hupman, LWMS president. "They feared a dilution of our focus."

That focus on supporting mission work in WELS was obvious throughout the convention. Mission presentations from six keynote speakers from six different countries captivated more than 1,000 women and men who attended the convention. Under the theme, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands," the convention also

featured seven workshops, including several Bible studies.

"Through personal spiritual growth you'll want to be more involved in mission work because you'll realize that it's your calling—to go and tell," says Hupman.

Even though delegates voted down the name change, Malchow was happy that the organization examined its

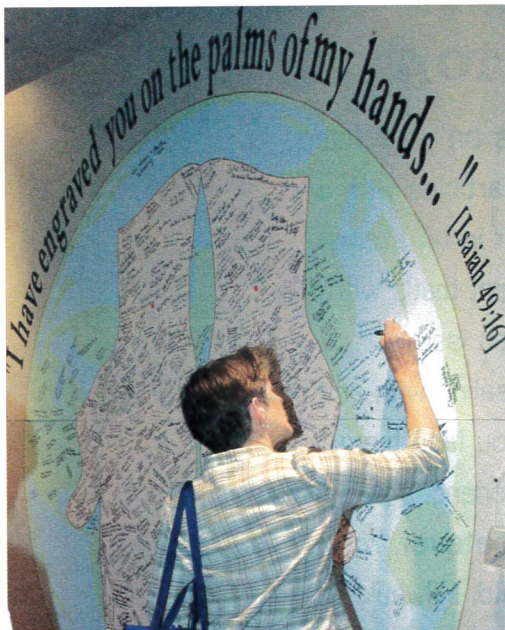
name and image. "It was an exciting, relevant process," she says. "This self-examination will help equip us as we move forward as the LWMS."

The delegates did accept several bylaw changes related to restructuring the board, including having two pastoral advisors instead of three and realigning duties to include a communications coordinator.

"We need to get more communication out there with our women so they understand that this is not your grandmother's organization," says Hupman. According to Hupman, the board will be working on revamping the LWMS logo and other materials as well as using the Internet and its tools even more to reach out to young women.

"We looked inside, and we decided that we like who we are and we like what we call ourselves," says Hupman. "We just need to start telling more people about it."

The next LWMS convention will be held June 26-29, 2008, in Tucson, Ariz. To learn more about the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society, go to www.lwms.org. Look for more information on this year's convention in the Fall 2007 Mission Connection.



An attendee at the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention signs a banner that coincided with the convention theme, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

International students find a home at St. Croix Lutheran High School

As a student leads the closing prayer at St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn., those gathered are perceptibly engaged, and many are moved to tears. The group is assembled for the 1999 graduation service, and the speaker is valedictorian Tao Tao Yan, a student from China. Yan has just given testimony of his newfound faith in Christ. He was baptized the day before in the presence of his dorm friends.



2007 St. Croix Lutheran High School international grads—(left to right in robes) Won Jin (Chloe) Choi, Jung-Mi Kim, and Mi-Jung Kim—with underclassmen friends from South Korea.

Yan's is just one of the hundreds of unique stories about international students at St. Croix. This area Lutheran high school enrolls 65 to 70 students from Taiwan to Thailand, Colombia to Croatia (to name only a few) each year. As part of the 400-strong student body, these international students attend math, science, and history classes as well as daily chapel services and religion classes.

When St. Croix moved to its current location in 1992, the campus had two existing dormitories. "I remember Merlyn Kruse [former principal/president] remarking that the Lord not only blessed us with a new campus, but he also gave us the blessing of dormitories—so we had better find a way to fill them with students," recalls Bev Leier, communications director at St. Croix. Through the WELS Chinese mission in the Twin Cities, Dr. Yue

Him Tam, a professor at Macalester College in Minneapolis, became involved. Dr. Tam knew of families in Hong Kong and China who wanted their children to be educated in an American high school.

After much planning and the support of an anonymous monetary gift, the first dormitory opened in 1995 with two international and 14 American students. Yet today, Dr. Tam is helpful with recruitment in Hong Kong

and China and assists with communications with Chinese families.

St. Croix's admissions department now makes at least two overseas recruitment trips a year and also works with student placement agencies. Students are drawn to St. Croix because of "the quality of the educational program and the safety of being

in a Christian school," explains Jeff Lemke, admissions director. "Although they don't understand Christianity, they do trust Christians to take good care of them."

Academically, St. Croix's goal is to prepare international students to successfully continue their education at a college or university. Spiritually, they strive to use every opportunity to lead students to know their Savior. Living and studying alongside young people from around the world, American students have daily opportunities to witness to others about Jesus and gain knowledge of other cultures. Each year, two or three international students have come to faith and been baptized.

Leier reflects, "There is no greater reward than to witness even one of our international students coming to faith in Jesus as Savior and professing that faith to others."

Global theological education discussed

Seminary leaders from nine different seminaries associated with the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) met in Leipzig, Germany, in June to discuss global theological education on the postgraduate level.

"One of the goals is to produce more national theological professors who can teach in national church seminaries and best communicate the gospel within the context of their own culture," says Dan Koelpin, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions and participant in the discussion. Providing continuing education for national pastors and professors around the world is another goal.

At its triennial convention in 2005, the CELC—an organization of 20 confessional Lutheran national churches, including WELS—resolved that a committee study this issue.

"We need to pool ideas and resources to leverage our ability to provide theological training from such a small pool of professors," says Koelpin.

Currently in WELS, eight national pastors teach theological courses in seven WELS mission fields. Missionaries and visiting professors and pastors do the rest of the training. But with recent cutbacks, providing that training is getting more difficult. Training national professors is one way to be certain that pastoral education in each field will continue. "We won't have arrived in a culture until we have a theological professor who is able to serve as a teacher and a role model for future church workers," says Koelpin.

The committee that met in Leipzig proposed that a commission be established to investigate and facilitate global theological education in participating seminaries of the CELC. The proposal will be discussed at the CELC convention in Kiev, Ukraine, in 2008.



Most of the men (and their wives) who met about global theological education.

Women come together in the Word at the first National Women's Leadership Conference

WELS' first National Women's Leadership Conference was held July 7 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. The conference, titled "A Leader . . . Who? Me?", included

a keynote discussion; worship; and group participation in a new Bible study developed by the WELS Women's Ministry Committee, "Heirs together of God's gracious gift of life."

"It was an awesome privilege to be here, surrounded by all of these women who clearly have a very servant-minded heart," says Anne Mundt, convention attendee and part of the brainstorming group that proposed a national women's conference five years ago. "It was exciting to see a culmination of what started back in 2002 and just see what it could be. [This conference] allowed so many people the opportunity to really dig into God's Word."

Discussions touched on unique callings, irreplaceable gifts, leadership, and our lives as God's agents. "All of these women came for the sake of studying God's role for women," says Sarah Owens, convention presenter and deaconess for Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries in Milwaukee. "[These women] didn't come with an agenda, saying, 'This is what we want to happen.' But instead

they got together with the Word and said, 'God show us how you want us to serve you in this church body. Show us how we can be your servants.'"

This conference is just one of the ways the WELS Women's Ministry Committee (part of WELS Adult Discipleship) is encouraging men and women to work together by using their God-given gifts to glorify the Lord Jesus and build his kingdom. The committee is developing future ministry plans based on conference survey responses.

"There are ways to train and to equip and find opportunities for women to do things with their gifts of leadership," says Owens. "So I would love to see more of that happening . . . because obviously God is blessing it. [The women on the committee] are watching to see how the Lord will lead them to the next steps."

For more information, go to www.wels.net/jump/women.



Convention presenter Kathie Wendland talks to participants during her presentation. Wendland gave the keynote address, "A leader . . . Who? Me?", and led the group through sections of a new Bible study developed by the WELS Women's Ministry Committee, "Heirs together of God's gracious gift of life."

In the news



The ordination of **German Novelli Michado** was featured in the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* on June 16. A native of Venezuela, Novelli is a 2007 graduate of the Cristo Palabra de Vida Training Program, a satellite program under the auspices of the Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Novelli, the first foreign-born Hispanic to complete this training program, will serve Gethsemane and St. Peter, Milwaukee.

Paul Thao, a recent graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute, was featured in the June 30 issue of the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*. Thao was ordained on June 17 as the pastor of the Hmong congregation at St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.

Jesse Adams, member at Trinity, Marinette, Wis., was featured in the *Eagle Herald* for winning the 2007 Wisconsin High School Bowling Tournament. Competing in the boys' singles division, Adams went on to represent Wisconsin at the national competition in Buffalo, N.Y.

DEFINING RELIGION

Propitiation—a sacrifice of atonement to pay for sin and appease God's anger. Jesus "gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" for our sins (Ephesians 5:2; Romans 3:25).

CORRECTION:

Justin Barkhurst, who wrote the "Whatever" column for the June issue, is a member at Zion, Crete, Ill., not Trinity, Crete.

In July, Pope Benedict XVI clarified the Roman Catholic doctrine about the church. Forward in Christ asked Professor John Brug from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to respond.

Do you belong to a church?

To which church do you belong? You might answer, "Saint John's Lutheran" or "the Wisconsin Synod." But did you know that neither of these groups are churches in the opinion of the pope? He says Lutheran churches are really not churches at all but only "ecclesial communities."

When I was on vacation early in July, I turned on the TV to catch the news. The story was about comments made by Pope Benedict. He asserted that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church, and his comments stirred controversy among Christians. My first reaction was, "Why is this news?" This has always been the position of the Roman church, and both John Paul II and Benedict XVI have been emphatic about stating this position publicly.

There is, of course, nothing new about this declaration. It has been the public doctrine of the Roman church for centuries. In 1302 in the papal bull *Unam Sanctam*, Pope Boniface VIII asserted, "We declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff." This has remained the teaching of the Roman church to this day.

Even Vatican II did not change the doctrine. The Council declared, "The Roman Catholic Church is the one true church which does not err" (VII, *Lumen Gentium* 8). "Whoever refuses to enter or does not remain in the Roman Catholic Church cannot be saved" (*Lumen Gentium* 12).

The most emphatic affirmation of this teaching was presented in two more recent documents.

The first document is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, issued in 1992 as an official guide to Catholic doctrine. It states, "The sole Church of Christ is that which our Savior, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's

pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostle to extend and rule it. . . . This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him" (Paragraph 816).

The one significant change since *Unam Sanctam* is that Rome now recognizes that Protestants can be saved as "anonymous Catholics." Those who are baptized may be in

that the pope did not even regard them as real churches? They objected, but in an interview published in the online journal *TCR News*, the pope said, "I find the claim of our Lutheran friends frankly absurd, i.e., that we are to consider these structures resulting from chance historical events [i.e., Lutheran churches] as the Church in the same way that we believe the Catholic Church, founded on the apostolic succession in the Episcopate, is the Church.

The Bible teaches: the church is the assembly of believers where the gospel of Christ is proclaimed and the sacraments are correctly used.

an imperfect communion with the Catholic Church as long as they do not knowingly reject the pope.

At the same time the Roman church teaches that non-Christians who try to please God by works can be saved as "anonymous Christians" (*Documents of Vatican II*, p. 35).

If we take these teachings literally, non-Christians who try to live a moral life are in better standing than Lutherans who trust in Christ but reject the headship of the pope.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Lutheran churches are not regarded as churches by the pope. This was made clear in another document, *Dominus Iesus*, issued in 2000: "The ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense."

Did Lutheran churches like the ELCA, who negotiated "agreements" on justification with Rome, realize

The pope says Lutheran churches and other Protestant churches are not churches at all because they don't accept the Roman pontiff as the head of the church. Confessional Lutheran churches have asserted what the Bible teaches: the church is the assembly of believers where the gospel of Christ is proclaimed and the sacraments are correctly used. We are among such confessional Lutherans.

Prof. Brug recently has revised a Bible study entitled Catholicism Today that looks at the teachings and practices of modern Roman Catholicism and compares them with what the Bible teaches. Order it online at www.nph.net or by calling Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022.

WELS membership declining

From its high of 421,396 souls in 1990, membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has fallen to 395,947 souls in 2006, according to the *2006 Statistical Report*. WELS has lost 5,743 communicants over these years.

“The shrinking membership makes an impact on the work that congregations do locally and the work we do together as a synod because you’re operating with a continually smaller base,” says Bruce Becker, administrator of WELS Parish Services.

But where WELS has seen the greatest decline is in the number of non-communicants in the synod, with a loss of 19,706 from 1990 to 2006.

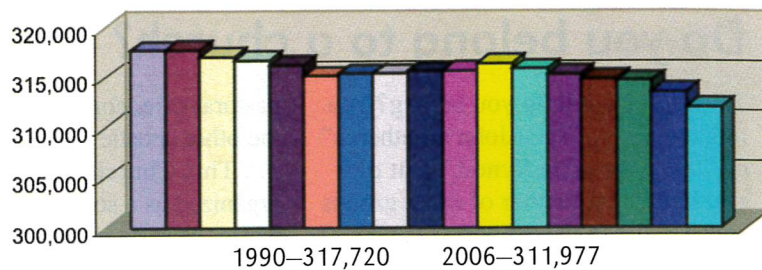
However, over the past 16 years, WELS has confirmed 96,817 children and 66,125 adults. But more than 150,000 people have been released from membership because they were removed by their congregation or asked for release.

These trends follow those of other denominations, although WELS’ percentage of decline may be slightly less than others.

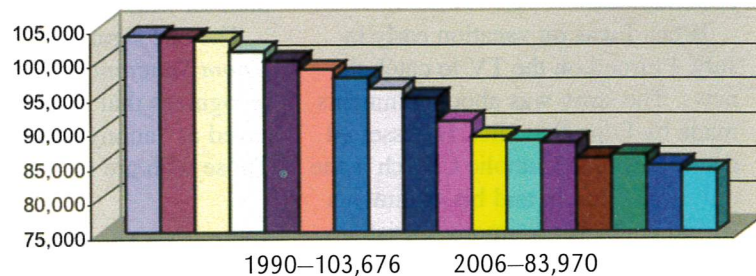
According to Becker, analyzing membership trends in the synod and in local congregations can be important. He says, “It is an indication of where we are as a church body . . . and makes you aware of what is happening in your local congregation. It also helps you plan where to put your emphasis in the future.

For more WELS statistics, check out the 2006 Statistical Report at www.wels.net/jump/statistics.

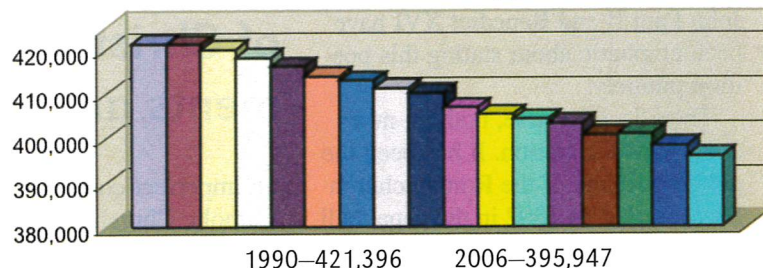
WELS total communicants by year



WELS total non-communicants by year



WELS total souls by year



NAO emphasis draws to a close

Under the banner “Proclaim Peace through Jesus,” WELS has been emphasizing North American outreach for the past four years. Themes included Every church a mission, Every soul a treasure, Every member a missionary, and Every life for Christ. “In each [of the themes] the word ‘every’ is really important,” says former WELS President Karl Gurgel. “It reminds us of the individual opportunities that we all have to be a witness for Christ.”

The goal of North American outreach was to equip and involve every WELS church—and every member—in outreach. “Mission work is done not just by Home Missions or World Missions or

the synod. It’s done by each and every one of us individually and in our congregations,” says Bruce Becker, administrator of WELS Parish Services and North American outreach coordinator. “North America is a growing mission field because the world is coming to us. And that mission field begins right next door to where we live.”

To equip and prepare congregations for outreach in their own communities, worship and outreach resources were provided for each phase. Materials included Bible studies, videos, devotions, and witnessing tools.

Although congregational participation in this initiative seemed to

wane in the past two years, Becker encourages churches and individuals to continue reaching out. “Even though the four-year emphasis of North American outreach is over, it still remains a top priority in our synod to proclaim the living Jesus to a dying world.”

Pastors are encouraged to utilize resources and incorporate materials from all four phases into their worship plans. To access these resources, visit www.wels.net/jump/nao or call 800-567-8669.



District news

Michigan

Cody Harlacher, a recent graduate of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., won first prize in a citywide poetry contest in Saginaw. Harlacher appreciated the opportunity to present his poem, "Poetic Trilogy of Salvation," and share his faith with others.

Nebraska

Staff Sgt. Matthew Hefti, member at Light of the Valley, Layton, Utah, was named one of the United States Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2007. Nominees were selected for their superior leadership, job performance, and personal achievements. Hefti is currently serving in Afghanistan.

Southeastern Wisconsin

More than 100 students from **Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.**, worked on the school's outdoor environmental classroom in April. Many trees were planted, bark chips were laid to create wheelchair-accessible walking



Many guest pastors participated in the ordination of the Lor brothers (front row, l to r): Ger, Daniel, Dewid, and Bounkeo. At the service, held June 10 at Mount Olive, Overland Park, Kan., Dewid was commissioned as instructor and mission developer for Hmong ministry in Thailand. Bounkeo was also installed as associate pastor (Hmong ministry) at Rock of Ages, Kansas City, Mo. The Lor brothers all graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute in May.

paths, and a pond was created. Work on the classroom will continue until the ribbon-cutting ceremony this month.

Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis., together with WELS' Church Relations Committee, recently compiled an "expert guide" for media. This guide was sent to principals of area Lutheran high schools and active pastors in the synod. The guide includes names of Wisconsin Lutheran College professors that are available to give presentations in congregations. For a copy, contact Ron Muetzel, vice president of institutional advancement and church relations at Wisconsin Lutheran College, 414-443-8594.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

D-M—Karen McGraw, member at Peace, Clark, S.D., celebrated 50 years as a WELS organist on July 15.



Three called workers—(from l to r) David Brohn, Donald Holzhueter, and Pastor William Balza—completed their service at St. Paul, South Haven, Mich., in June. Brohn retired after 39 years as principal; Holzhueter taught for 25 years; and Pastor William Balza accepted a new call after serving for 32 years in South Haven.

These pastors are the reporters for the districts featured this month: D-M—Wayne Rouse; MI—John Eich; NE—Tim Kemnitz; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

WELS news briefs

Ministry of Christian Giving

800-827-2237; joyce.tucek@sab.wels.net

WELS Connection, the monthly video of news and stories in WELS, now features a new section aimed at congregational leaders. Congregational Leadership Resources includes short informational segments appropriate for a council or board meeting—or any gathering of leaders. This tool was designed to help decision-makers learn more about the resources WELS provides to individual congregations. The first segment highlights WELS Investment Funds, Inc.

Commission on Youth Discipleship

414-256-3274; cyd@sab.wels.net

More than 1,500 teens and 500 leaders attended the WELS International Youth Rally, held July 4-7 in Dallas, Texas, under the theme: "Laugh out loud." During the course of the rally, teens were given opportunities for large-scale worship, education, fellowship, and recreation. About 200 teens also participated in service projects. "This rally, witnessed hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of teens and leaders having fun, learning, speaking their minds, singing, worshiping, serving others, and growing in their faith," says Dr. Joel Nelson, administrator for the Commission on Youth Discipleship. "I and many others inside and outside of our rally population have been truly amazed, impressed, and humbled by the spirit, attitude, and faith shown."

Three teenagers—Bethany Wehrenberg, Apple Valley, Minn.; Kayla Mundstock, Phoenix, Ariz.; and Stephen Vandenberg, Appleton, Wis.—served on the rally planning committee.

For more rally highlights or to nominate a teen to serve on the 2009 International Youth Rally Planning Committee, go to www.welsyouthrally.net.

These updates are from the offices of the synod administration building at 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Abrahamson, Harvey S., to retirement
Adomeit, James A., to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
Forss, Don N., to Faith, Oshkosh, Wis.
Gerlach, Joel C., to retirement
Habben, Kermit D., to retirement
Johnson, Christopher, to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.
Snyder, Gordon J., to retirement
Straseske, Anthony L., to Trinity (Wilson Twp), Winona, Minn.
Teske, Melvin F., to retirement
Vaccarella, Lee L., to retirement

Teachers

Bertolus, Elizabeth, to Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Bintz, Bruce M., to retirement
Callies, Ruth M., to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Carey, Rebekah E., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Evenson, Naomi R., to St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.
Garbow, Keturah E., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.
Gilbertson, Kelly, to Hope Middle School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Goessner, Sharon M., to Zion, Hartland, Wis.
Gorsline, Kristi B., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Grulke, Joel A., to Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.
Gurgel, Douglas J., to St. John, Jefferson, Wis.
Harvey, Adam A., to Hope Middle School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kufahl, Theodore, to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Lindemann, Jonathan E., to St. Paul, Ixonia, Wis.
Marquardt, Paul C., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Natalie, Amy L., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Schlicht, Sarah B., to Good Shepherd's, West Allis, Wis.
Schram, Margaret L., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.
Seeger, Megan B., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Sievert, Nathan P., to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.
Sievert, Scott R., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Stellick, Douglas L., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Stellick, Karin R., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Strand, Dawn C., to Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis.
Strusz, Naomi M., to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.

Tessmer, Deborah E., to Prairie, Gibbon, Minn.
Trapp, Peter C., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Unke, Jacqueline D., to St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis.
Wockenfuss, Jennifer, to Messiah's Children, Nampa, Idaho
Staff ministers
Hella, Dale E., to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.
Jahns, Thad C., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Malnes, David H., to Truth in Love Ministry, Nampa, Idaho

ANNIVERSARIES

North Hollywood, Calif.—St. Paul's First School (60). Sept. 9. Worship, 10 A.M.; a meal will follow the service. RSVP, 818-763-2892; school@stpaulsfirst.org.
Rural Boyd (Omro Township), Minn.—St. John's (125). Sept. 16. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; dinner to follow. RSVP by Sept. 10. Allen Lonquist, 320-855-2401, alonnq@frontiernet.net.
Reedsville, Wis.—St. John St. James (150). Sept. 16. Worship, 8 and 10 A.M. and 3 P.M.; dinner at 12:30 P.M. RSVP required. Dan Duchow, 920-754-4751; adduchow@tm.net.
Onalaska, Wis.—Luther High School (50). Sept. 16. Worship, 2 P.M.; open house to follow. 608-783-5435.
Neillsville, Wis.—Immanuel (125). Sept. 16. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow. 715-743-2480.
Van Dyne, Wis.—Zion (125). Sept. 23. Worship, 10 A.M.; catered meal to follow. RSVP requested. Bob and Carol Jackson, 920-922-5418.
Fort Worth, Tex.—Abiding Faith (25). Sept. 30. Worship, 5 P.M.; dinner to follow service. RSVP requested by Sept. 15. Laura Myles, 817-253-1177; lmyles@cccinc.net.
Brookings, S.D.—Our Savior (40). Sept. 30. Worship, 8:30 and 11 A.M.; meal to follow. 605-692-6989; osavior@brookings.net.
Salem, Ore.—Immanuel (40). Oct. 7. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; catered lunch at noon with program to follow. RSVP requested. Robert Presser, 503-393-0945.
Pomona, Calif.—Our Savior (50). Oct. 14. Worship, 4 P.M.; dinner to follow. RSVP requested. 909-627-1235.

COMING EVENTS

35th annual WELS North Atlantic District Labor Day Retreat—Sept. 1-3. Great Berkshire Mountains. Hope Meyer, labordayretreat@gmail.com. Web site, www.welslabordayretreat.org.
WELS Church Librarians' Organization conference—Sept. 15, 9:30 A.M. Grace, Manitowoc, Wis. \$10 per person. Charlene Hartlaub, 920-682-3993; charlene.newby@sbcglobal.net.
Northeast Wisconsin Lutheran Ladies League Rally—Sept. 26, 8:30 A.M. Immanuel,

Kewaunee, Wis. Ruth Siegmund, 920-388-0294.
South Dakota State University Lutheran Collegians reunion—Sept. 28, 6-9 P.M. at Student Center. Sept. 29, 9 A.M. at Student Center. Held in connection with the 40th anniversary of Our Savior, Brookings, S.D., on Sept. 30. RSVP requested. Ken Brokmeier, 605-692-6989; osavior@brookings.net.
Capitol Area Christian Women's Retreat—Sept. 29. Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis. Theme: "Who is your service provider?" \$10. Sheree Mattke, 920-484-3271; Sheree100@centurytel.net or Karen Frank, 608-837-3008; heyluwe@yahoo.com.

10th annual Life Banquet and Auction—Sept. 30, 3 P.M. Hosted by Waukesha Chapter of WELS Lutherans for Life benefiting Tomorrow's Choice Resource Center. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Kathy Gates, 262-513-9590.

Creating a Legacy with Retirement Assets presentation—Oct. 4, 8:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. Speaker: Christopher Hoyt, Professor of Law at the University of Missouri. Sponsored by Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. CE credits are being applied for. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu.

A day at the seminary—Oct. 6, 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. Worship, 9 A.M. Sponsored by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Auxiliary. Barb Bergquist, 414-476-2384; barbie33@netzero.net.

2007 Congregational Team Workshop—Oct. 13, 8 A.M. to 4:15 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis. Sponsored by Southeastern Wisconsin District Parish Services. Web site, www.wels.net/jump/ctw.

Clergy familiarization tour of the Holy Land—Nov. 5-15. Jim Lillo, 907-349-3589.

Christian Woman Today Retreat—April 4-6, 2008. Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, Wis. Theme: "Be Strong in the Lord and in His Mighty Power." Maureen Sertich, 262-784-0412.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Preschool teacher (3- to 5-year-olds)—Precious Lambs Early Learning Center, Raleigh N.C., is seeking a WELS member (MLC graduate or Early Childhood Degree preferred, but not necessary). Early Childhood certification and/or degree will be paid for while you work with the children. Tammy Reget, 919-847-2650; tammy_reget@hotmail.com. Reference "employment" in the subject line.

RN Nurse Manager/Wellness Director—RN to manage new Residential Care Apartment Complex at Luther Haven and coordinate the wellness program for all Luther Haven residents. 24-32 hrs/wk with on-call duties. Send resume to dtanck@wlcsf.org; call 414-354-4600; or apply in person at Luther Haven, 8949 N 97 St, Milwaukee, Wis.

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/jump/bulletinboard.

Faith isn't a big fan of "if"

If. It is such a small word but it can be so devastating. It can take some perfectly good statements and destroy them. . . . It breaks the heart when it turns "she loves me" into "if she loves me." And it destroys relationships when it corrupts "I will love you always" into "I will love you always if . . ."

It can be equally disastrous when we introduce that word "if" when it comes to God. We can take a statement of fact and turn it into a question of doubt. "God loves you!" becomes "If God loves you . . ."

A man that Jesus ran into had trouble with this one little word. He looked to Jesus for help, but he had to add a little "if." Jesus reminded him that faith isn't a big fan of "if," and that with God and his power and love there is no "if!"

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit. . . . I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

"Oh unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. . . .

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Mark 9:17-23

College students can receive spiritual support like this devotion while away at school. Visit www.wels.net/cm to sign up for e-devotions; read Lightsource, the official magazine of WELS Campus Ministry; and find the nearest WELS church to your college.

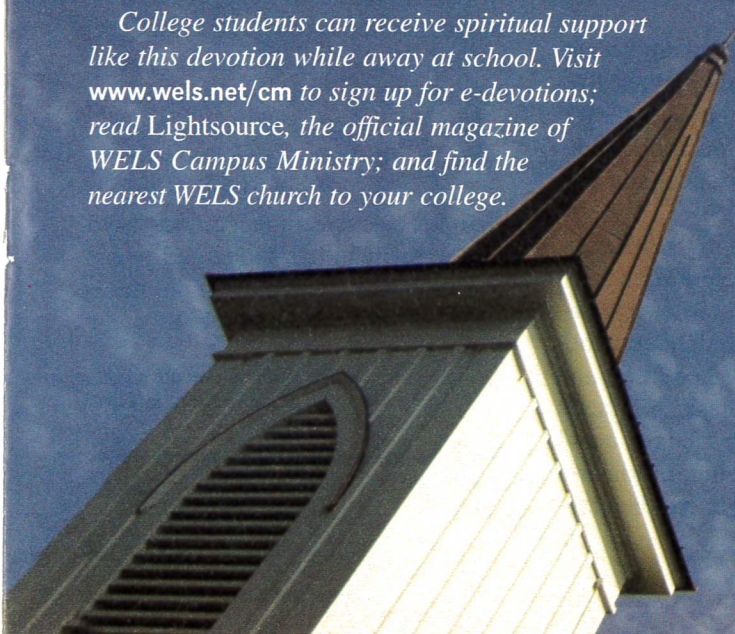
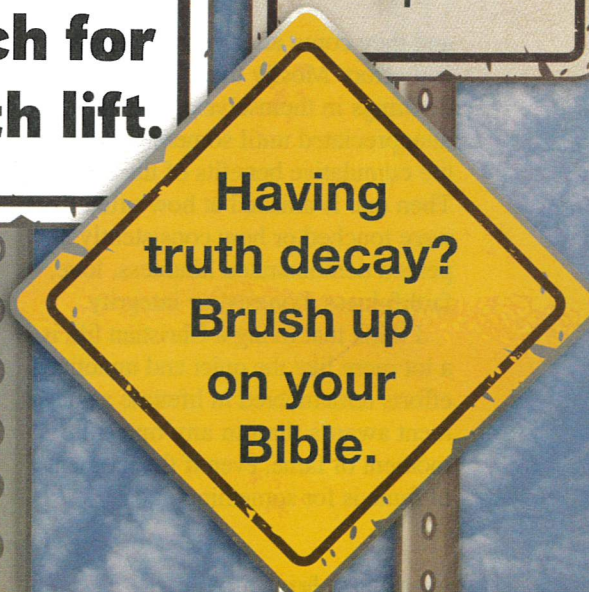
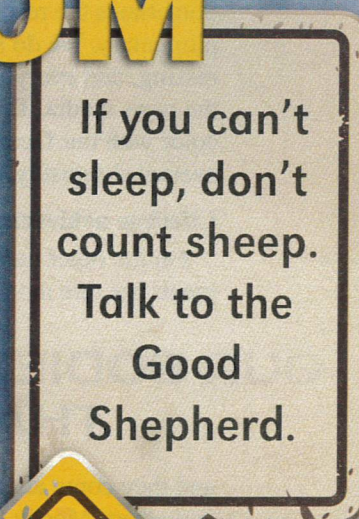
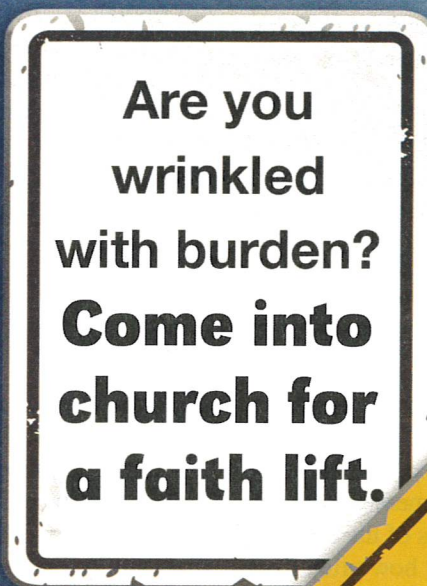
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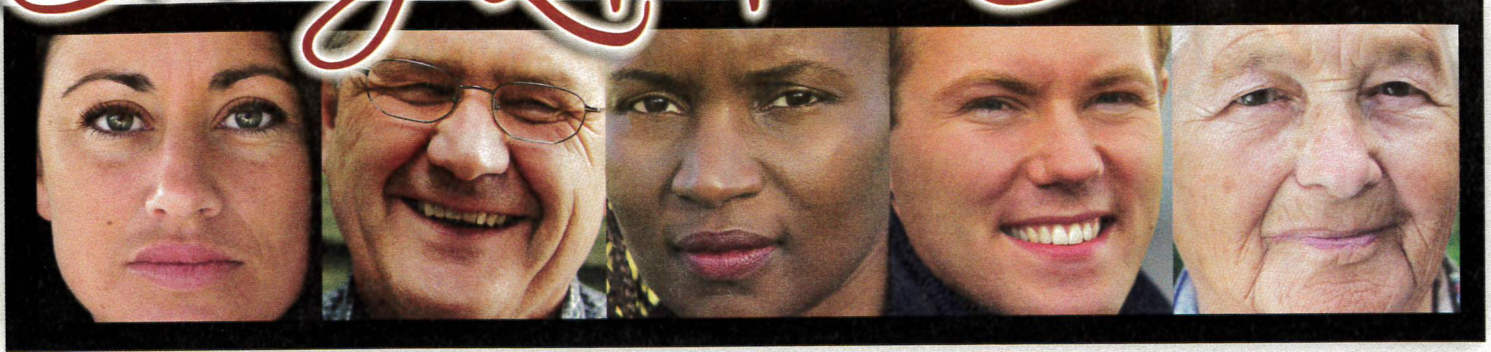
Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich., gave thanks for its new outdoor sign this past spring.

Send pictures to **Picture This**, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

Church sign WISDOM



Every Life for Christ:



John A. Braun

DOING GREAT THINGS IN SMALL WAYS

Part of our life for Jesus is doing the little things that demonstrate love for Jesus and for others.

Someone once said that each of us gets 15 minutes of fame. Some suggest fame endures only a few seconds. Others claim fame lasts longer. We sometimes look for that moment—our time in the spotlight.

Most of us never achieve more than a few fleeting moments of recognition. Sometimes the recognition is not complimentary. We do something embarrassing, and everyone notices—even the news media. There we are in living color with our faces red and our eyes averted sheepishly.

Lifetime achievement as a Christian

On the other hand, lifetime achievements are rare moments of recognition,

Christians come to church regularly. Few notice. Even family members take the effort for granted. Believers love their spouses and their children every day. No news cameras come to record the effort. The only time anyone notices is when someone makes a mess of things.

Living sacrifices to Jesus

The apostle Paul urged us to offer our bodies as “living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.” We are not to conform to the pattern of the world but do as God desires us to do no matter what our vocation in life (Romans 12:1,2).

Think about that for a moment.

ing how to catch. Arms reach out to embrace a loved one or a friend. The voice on the phone carries the sound of concern or the laughter of friendship.

Sometimes there are larger moments for the sacrifice our bodies offer: the conception and birth of a child in the bond of marriage, the sweat of hard work to earn resources for family life, and even interposing a body between a loved one and danger to offer protection. At other times it’s just being there for special moments and beaming with a warm smile. Or it’s the example of Christian faith believers give as they sit in God’s house and contribute their resources for the spread of his gospel.

All these things we can do as believers washed by the blood of Jesus and ready to live for him. Part of that life for Jesus is doing the little things that demonstrate love for Jesus and for others. Our bodies carry out the faith that lives in our hearts.

But don’t expect the news departments to flash your image on the evening news. Think rather of the lifetime achievement recognition from the Savior who has redeemed you and who will say, “Well done, my good servant!” (Luke 19:17).

John Braun is executive editor of Forward in Christ.

This is the last article in a nine-part series on vocation.

OUR BODIES CARRY OUT THE FAITH THAT LIVES IN OUR HEARTS.

and they come after years of consistent effort. Mostly those efforts are little things in themselves. They often go unappreciated until someone notices the cumulative benefits of the effort. Then one is amazed at how often lives were touched or how consistently a person demonstrated kindness, love, faithfulness, honesty, or integrity.

I think that living a Christian life is a lot more like the quiet and unnoticed efforts remembered in lifetime achievement awards than in any one-time moment of fame, even if the moment of fame is for something good.

Christians are acquitted of sin because of Jesus. They still mess up their lives and transgress God’s law, but they turn to the grace of God and his forgiveness again. They repent and rise from sin to service.

Their bodies are living sacrifices. Hands reach out to help a friend or neighbor. A mother cradles a newborn in her arms or balances a toddler on her hip while her free hand is busy with another task. A father’s legs run behind the bicycle until a child can master the balancing, or his arm throws the ball to eager hands learn-

ROSA YOUNG:

Lutheran missionary

An African-American Lutheran made a difference by teaching in Alabama.

Theodore J. Hartwig



The name of Rosa Parks, honored as mother of the civil rights movement, has become a household word in America. About 40 years earlier, another Rosa achieved a more enduring blessing for African Americans. She was the first Lutheran black missionary to her fellow blacks in the South. No published work of her life exists except her brief autobiography, *Light in the Dark Belt*. Her name is Rosa Young.

Discovering the importance of education

The daughter of a Methodist circuit rider, she was born in Rosebud, Ala., on May 14, 1890. Fourth in a family of 10 children, she was a precocious youngster and began her formal school education in the fifth grade. Because of her delicate health, her parents decided to send her to high school also. Her spiritual education, however, had been sadly neglected. Taken to church for the first time at the age of 10, she was baptized and received into the African-Methodist Church, in her own words a presumably converted Christian.

She attended high school in the nearby city of Selma, and, given her country background, she was badgered by the city children. Her high grades in school made things worse. Nevertheless, her dedication to her studies won her the honor of class valedictorian.

After graduation in 1909, she began to pursue her childhood dream as a

teacher but soon became disenchanted with the public school system. She was determined to build a school of her own that would serve not only for training the head and hand but also the heart. With financial assistance from leading citizens, both black and white, she opened her school at Rosebud in October 1912, with two assistants. In two years, enrollment reached 215.

Discovering the Savior

Then the boll weevil blight struck. It decimated the cotton crop. School attendance drastically declined, and teachers' salaries could not be paid. When she offered her school to the African-Methodist-Episcopal Church, she was turned down.

In this crisis, she wrote to the famous educator Booker T. Washington for advice. He suggested that she contact the Board of Colored Missions of the Missouri Synod in St. Louis. Her letter bore fruit. Missionary Nils Bakke was sent to Rosebud in 1916, and, with synodical support, Rosa's school was rescued both financially and spiritually. Now school lessons included Bible history, Luther's Small Catechism, and Lutheran hymns. In Rosa's words, "This is where I first learned to know what my Savior meant to me and where I became a Lutheran. I was no longer in darkness." In a roundabout way, the boll weevils helped her discover Lutheranism.

From Rosebud the Lutheran mission spread throughout the region,

and Rosa kept busy with travel and teaching. God's Word had not returned empty. By the close of World War I, there were 29 Lutheran congregations and 30 schools in Alabama. Rosa describes what miracles the gospel wrought: "In homes where parents and children once lived in hellish riot, where hatred, anger, violence, sin, adultery, fornication, and theft prevailed, there has been a great change through the power of God, and they have become Christian homes."

In August 1918, because of declining health, Rosa was persuaded to leave her teaching regimen and serve as matron at the Lutheran college in Selma. Her autobiography traces her life to 1927. In spite of her bouts with poor health, she lived another 44 years. Unfortunately, except for personal memorabilia such as letters, little is known about those years. She died on June 30, 1971, at the age of 81.

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

Discovering the joy in **CANCER**

Alicia A. Neumann

The word “cancer” evokes many emotions in people, such as fear, sorrow, and even despair. But how about joy?

“Most people just don’t understand when I say cancer has been a wonderful experience; in fact, the look on their faces say, ‘Have you lost your mind?’ But let me tell you what they can’t comprehend . . . it is possible to find joy in this dreaded disease.” So says Edna Woodard, a member at Shepherd of the Hills, Fredericksburg, Texas.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

On an early December morning in 2001, Edna Woodard rushed her husband to the hospital. He was bleeding internally, and she watched as his blood pressure dropped to a dangerous level. “Six doctors and nurses were working on my dear husband as I looked on and prayed,” she recalls. The surgery that followed was even more successful than any of the medical staff dared to hope. “Yes, we were being watched over,” Woodard says.

As her husband recovered, Woodard went to the doctor for her yearly physical. She waited to hear the results of her tests, which would include information about the growth on the side of her neck. “I thought it was a lipoma (fatty tumor) matching the one I’d had on my back for 35 years,” she says. Her doctor thought the same, but suggested more testing to be sure.

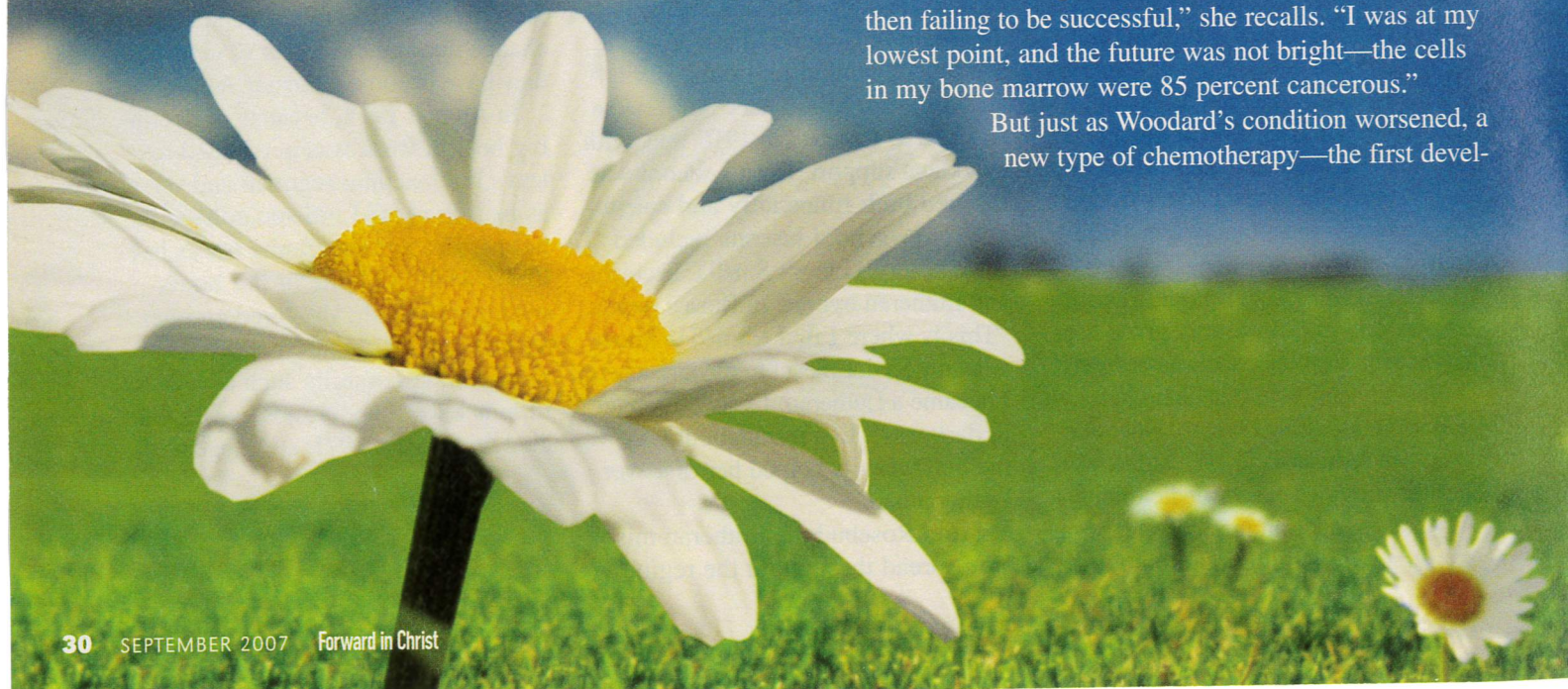
What was thought to be a bothersome yet harmless tumor turned out to be a rare form of cancer called multiple myeloma, or cancer of the plasma cells. “When diagnosed, I immediately called upon the Lord and asked that his will be done,” says Woodard. “I asked that he grant me peace to accept his will. I felt such a load lifted from my shoulders as God gave me the peace of knowing that he was in control and that I needed to spend no time worrying about what would happen to me.”

BLESSINGS IN THE MIDST OF TRIBULATIONS

During the months that followed, in the midst of radiation treatments—and the burns, sores, and difficulty swallowing that came with it—Woodard thanked God for her blessings. “My husband was now well, and he [took] care of me.” He was by her side for every doctor appointment and treatment and took over day-to-day activities like grocery shopping. “And as bad as I looked and felt during those times, I was determined the last thing I would give up was the joy of weekly worship services,” says Woodard. “My husband made sure we were always there.”

Once the radiation was finished, Woodard started chemotherapy. “For the next year I was treated with several chemo regimens, each working for a while and then failing to be successful,” she recalls. “I was at my lowest point, and the future was not bright—the cells in my bone marrow were 85 percent cancerous.”

But just as Woodard’s condition worsened, a new type of chemotherapy—the first devel-



oped specifically for multiple myeloma—became available. “This is just an example of how our Lord looks after and takes care of his children in their need, [just] like knowing the number of hairs on our heads,” says Woodard.

Thanks to the new chemotherapy, Woodard’s cancer seemed to be under control for the next three and a half years. She even experienced a temporary remission. Like the others, however, this treatment eventually lost its effectiveness. Woodard’s cancer cell count soared, and her treatment was switched again.

“I started [the new treatment] on Easter Sunday [of this year], and right now my cancer cell count is down from 6,000 to 2,400,” says Woodard. “The normal range for those cells in a person is anything below 1,500, so this is wonderful news! I just found out—I am still on cloud nine about this!”

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS WITH OTHERS

Since she was first diagnosed, Woodard has met many patients and their families as she went through treatment. “Sometimes I would see the same person several times, but more often it was only once that I would see them,” she says. “Soon I realized that God was using me to give some hope to many of these people—persons I probably would never have met if it were not for our common illness—persons with whom I could share the joy of knowing Jesus Christ, my Savior!”

Woodard remembers one patient, in particular—a woman from her hometown in Ohio. “As soon as she got out of high school, she left the small town where we lived and took off. She eventually got a law degree and lived in California and had a pretty decent life.” The woman moved back to Ohio with her two sons, where she was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. After hearing the news, Woodard wanted to offer some encouragement. “But I had no phone number; I just had an address,” she remembers. “I just started writing. At first she always wrote back, and we corresponded a lot. . . . I detected fear and uncertainty in her comments—I was praying for her every day.”

As their relationship grew, Woodard noticed a change. “I could tell by

her notes she was softening up,” she recalls. “When Thanksgiving came, I got a card from her, and she said, ‘This has been a truly remarkable year. It’s not how I intended to spend this year, but I had to do what I had to do. I can’t believe the number of people from ocean to ocean, from Alaska to Florida, who have been praying for me. . . . The year has brought me many blessings, and you are one of those blessings.’”

Since then, the woman has given up her law practice. “[She] decided there were lots of things more important than a big business,” reports Woodard. “It’s been a joy to correspond with [this woman], and recently being able to meet with her face-to-face and realize how her faith has grown.”

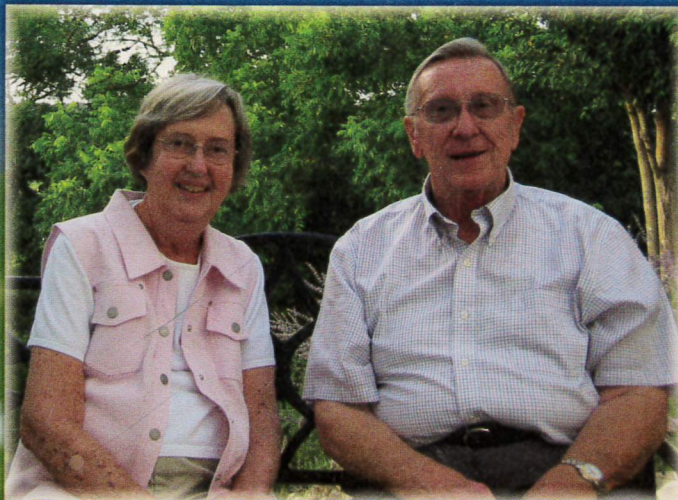
Woodard continues to find ways to let her light shine. “I’m so surprised at how many doors the Lord keeps opening. . . . I talk about my faith when I see a doctor or somebody like that,” she says. “When I went in for surgery, the nurse who prepped me said, ‘Are you all ready for this?’ and I said, ‘Yep, I sure am!’ And she just looked at me. My husband was sitting there and said, ‘She has a very strong faith.’ The nurse said, ‘I could tell there was something there!’”

THE JOYS OF CANCER

“When I look back at the joy that I have found in these five and a half years, I realize how richly God has blessed me,” says Woodard. “I lived 66 years with no serious health problems, and the ‘down’ times I’ve had physically [from cancer] have given me more time to spend meditating and studying God’s Word.”

With God’s Word as her constant, Woodard has not only discovered the joys of cancer, but also has been able to cast her cares on the Lord. “You know, [these past few years] I have not worried!” she says. “My husband has worried a lot, and I keep telling him, ‘You don’t have to worry. God is in control.’”

She continues, “I’m so thankful that I have that faith . . . and have the greatest joy of knowing that Jesus is my Savior. By his death and resurrection I will one day be with him eternally!”



Alicia Neumann is assistant editor at Forward in Christ.

BACKGROUND PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

The law and gospel of giving

Alan W. Gumm

I wonder if it would be good for us to read the words of God's Old Testament prophet Malachi as our congregations and our synod confront some financial challenges.

First, we read God's unconditional gospel: "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed" (3:6). God's grace, his love, and his gifts to us are new every morning. He promised through the prophets to bring a Savior into the world. He did not change his mind in spite of the repeated unfaithfulness of his people. If the Lord chose to give to either the Old Testament people or to us as we give to him, we would perish.

God's Old Testament people knew the unconditional gospel of grace. But a second message comes through God's prophet Malachi: harsh law.

The Lord has some serious, eye-opening, and shocking words for his people. There was no political correctness in his words. He said, "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me" (3:8). That accusation knocked his people down. They couldn't believe it. How were they robbing God? The Lord answered, "In tithes and offerings."

God wasn't complaining about the money they returned to him. God really doesn't need anything we give to him. He was asking them to think about what their giving to him demonstrated—their love or the lack of it. They were guilty of giving God the leftovers—the lame and injured of their animals—instead of their best (1:6-14).

Such lack of love required the harsh words of the law. It still does. The selfish, sinful nature inside all of us needs the brutal message of the law: "You are robbing me." We may be shocked by such words. But consider this: our promised synod offerings for 2007 are 1.4 percent higher

than those given in 2006 or an increase of about 50 cents per communicant for the year—for the YEAR! That's less than a penny a week. We have more change than that in piggy banks and car ash trays, under couch cushions, or in junk drawers. God wants to wake us up. Are we giving the leftovers?

But God's harsh law is intended to show us the depths of our selfish natures. He wants to shake us up and make us realize our failure to reflect his love for us in our giving. He challenges us to repent and turn away from our fascination with the stuff of this world and the easy way we slide into spending on life's little extras while allowing his gospel to go begging.

Then the prophet returns to God's promises again. This time he attaches specific promises to giving: "'Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it'" (3:10).

It's the same kind of promise Jesus made when he said, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [that is, food, drink, and clothing] will be given you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

God never asks us to give what we don't have. He loves us unconditionally in Christ. That love fills our hearts and compels us to turn from sin and live as his people (2 Corinthians 5:14). The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians to excel in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7). We need law and gospel too, so that we can examine how our love shows in our giving.

Alan Gumm is pastor at Hope, West Chicago, Illinois.

God never asks us to give what we don't have.

LESSONS FROM THE CREED

Charles F. Degner

“On the third day he rose again from the dead.”

On March 26, 1978, the Easter Sunday edition of the *Minneapolis Tribune* ran an article on Jesus’ resurrection. The article concluded: “Did Jesus—hair, teeth, and all—come out of the tomb on the Sunday after his execution? Despite the strenuous efforts of the best minds of a hundred generations, eight Twin Cities seminary professors confessed last week that the answer to the question is still, ‘We really don’t know.’”

How we know Jesus rose from the dead

Silly professors, you should have read your Bible! All four gospels record the story of Jesus’ resurrection and his appearances to his followers. In 1 Corinthians 15:5-8, Paul takes great pains to mention the verifiable witnesses. Are the gospel accounts confusing? Mark mentions one angel at the tomb, and Luke mentions two. It is not difficult to account for these discrepancies if you remember that not everyone arrived at the tomb at the same time. If all four gospels recorded every detail in the same way, you could suspect

the story to be contrived. The differences in the four accounts only support their authenticity.

But why should we even talk this way? This is the Word of God we are talking about. We know Jesus rose from the dead, because the Bible says so.

Did he rise from the dead “hair, teeth, and all?” Yes, he did. Job found comfort in his Savior’s resurrection in the moment of his greatest suffer-

DID [JESUS] RISE FROM THE DEAD “HAIR, TEETH, AND ALL?” YES, HE DID.

ing and sorrow. “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another” (Job 19:25-27). Job believed in a resurrection that was “hair, teeth, and all.” He believed this, because he knew by faith that his Savior would also rise from the dead—hair, teeth, and all.

What that means

What does Jesus’ resurrection mean for us?

It proves that Jesus is God. Jesus was

“declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). It shows us that we are right with God. “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25). And finally it shows us that Job’s faith and our faith are not in vain. We, too, will rise from the dead on the last day.

Remember how Jesus comforted Martha when Lazarus died? “‘Lord,’ Martha said to Jesus, ‘if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.’”

“Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’”

“Martha answered, ‘I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’”

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die’” (John 11:21-26).

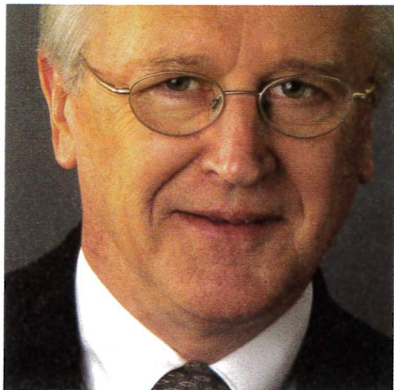
The next time you are at a funeral, and you don’t know what to say to your grieving friend, say what Jesus said. Your loved one will rise again—hair, teeth, and all.

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

This is the seventh article in a 10-part series on the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. To read other articles in the series, go to www.forwardinchrist.net and search by the author’s first and last name.



JESUS.



John A. Zeman

Christianity without Christ

“Yes, I believe in God,” she said. It’s a simple confession of faith spoken and thought by almost everyone. Sadly even the demons believe in God. Of course, James reminds us that they shudder at the thought of God (James 2:19).

I wonder if we have been guilty of confessing a faith in God without thinking carefully. I see it in the manuscripts we receive. When people who don’t share our confession of faith want to share their ideas, they often talk about God in vague terms without mentioning Jesus.

Sometimes even people within our fellowship speak of God in general terms. I notice it especially in the manuscripts we receive from young Christians. The name of Jesus is often missing when they refer to God’s work and activity. Perhaps it is because they are trying to find their way in a world that acknowledges God but has very little time for Jesus and his cross. I wonder if they are trying to avoid the offense of the cross by referring blandly to God in general. Are they looking for acceptance and approval in a world where Jesus, sin, death, and purifying blood seem so out of focus and foreign? I can’t answer for them, but I wonder.

Lately, I’ve been reading and seeing more references to God without Christ. We would expect this kind of thinking from public news media that must embrace all religious expressions. But I’ve been noticing it in the messages of Christian groups that should embrace a more careful and specific understanding of the God who has expressed his love and forgiveness in Christ.

The most disturbing comment came from an Episcopal priest in Seattle, who said, “I am both Muslim and Christian, just like I’m both an American of African descent and a woman. I’m 100 percent both” (Religious News Service, 6/19/07). Certainly not all Episcopalians would

agree. The only way one can be a Muslim and a Christian at the same time is to turn both religions into a common code of behavior. Then one can perhaps accept Islam’s submission and Christianity’s principle of selfless love. But neither of them can be reduced to such a low common denominator.

Another problem quickly arises in citing this comment and challenging it. Some believe that challenging the sentiment demonstrates intolerance of someone’s deep religious belief. They suggest that we should never confront wrong religious thinking even when it is shallow and foolish. They scream that we all believe in the same God and that every tradition simply has a different way to God.

But if we turn Christianity into nothing more than another way to lead quiet, productive, and healthy lives, we lose what is distinctive about Christianity—Jesus Christ. Then, I think, Christianity becomes just another entrée at a great spiritual buffet where we can choose whatever pleases us.

Christianity is about Jesus Christ. He is God come to earth, taking on our flesh and blood to rescue us from our own folly, stupidity, and sin. His death on the cross paid the penalty for all humanity’s failures. His resurrection from the grave means we have real hope in the face of what awaits us all at life’s end. Without Jesus, I do not know the depth of God’s love toward me or anyone else. Without Jesus, forgiveness becomes only a way past conflict; the penalty God exacts on human sin remains.

I cling to God’s declaration that I am free of sin because of Jesus. I embrace the life he and he alone can give, and then I resolve to live my life for him. I’ll pass up God in general. Jesus is God. God without Jesus is nothing.

Jacob worked without wages for 14 years. Faced with a large and growing family, Jacob needed money. It's easy to think that the greatest physical and spiritual challenges afflict the poor. But Jacob found out that much money brings its own problems. What can we learn about keeping money in its proper place as we watch Jacob wrestle with newfound wealth?

Read Genesis 30:25-43

1. Everyone could see how much money Jacob had made for Laban. Why didn't Jacob ask for a cut of the profits when he asked to leave (v. 26)?
 2. Agree or disagree: It's sinful to try and renegotiate a contract that you agreed to in good faith.
 3. The wage Jacob suggested seemed quite modest. The cattle he asked for were irregularities, making his prospective pay low. So would you agree or disagree with the following sentence: Jacob's request was a fruit of faith in the God of Bethel.
 4. What do you learn about Laban's attitude towards material possessions in verse 34? In verses 35 and 36?
 5. Agree or disagree: Using branches and breeding, Jacob tried to cheat Laban, the man who cheated him. (See also Genesis 31:38-42.)
 6. Jacob earned a great deal of money. How do you see him keeping it in its proper place?
3. What did Jacob recognize about all the material possessions he had?
 4. What was Jacob's reason for wanting to return to Canaan? Why did Rachel and Leah want to go to Canaan?
 5. Rachel and Leah did what God commanded because it made financial sense. When are we guilty of the same?
 6. Why did Rachel steal Laban's household idols?
 7. Rachel felt she had been cheated by her father, and she rationalized her theft as evening the score. When was the last time you were tempted to rationalize breaking the Seventh Commandment?
 8. When Jacob was poor, Laban used him. When he was rich, Laban feared him. What pretense did Laban give for pursuing Jacob's family (v. 26-30)? What was another reason he gave? What was the real reason (v. 43)?
 9. What was Laban's ultimate concern regarding Jacob's new wealth (v. 51-53)?
 10. People often project their own faults onto other people. How do you see that in Laban (30:35,36; 31:7; 31:51-53)? When is the last time someone projected his fault onto you? When was the last time you did that to someone else?

Read Genesis 31

1. The love of money can ruin relationships. Explain how it ruined these relationships:
 - The sons of Laban and Jacob.
 - Laban and Jacob.
 - Rachel and Leah and Laban.
2. The LORD told Jacob to return to Canaan and promised to be with him. Why was this promise especially poignant and comforting?

Bringing it home

Of all the people in this account, only Jacob kept money in its proper place. What are some lessons we can learn from him about the following:

- Providing for our family.
- Working for our employer.
- Remembering the source of our blessings (Deuteronomy 8:17,18).
- Giving thanks to God for material blessings.

Contributing editor Jonathan Schroeder is pastor at Faith, Sharpsburg, Georgia.

This is the ninth article in a 12-part Bible study. Find this article and possible answers online after Sept. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net.



WRESTLING WITH GOD:

KEEPING MONEY IN ITS PROPER PLACE

An interactive study of Jacob Jonathan E. Schroeder

Standing firm on God's Word on church fellowship is tough, unappreciated, and truthfully even under attack by our own members. But church fellowship is God's practice. He binds us together with those who hold to all of God's Word and directs us to separate ourselves from those who continue to believe differently. Church fellowship is never a judging of hearts, only a judging of professions of faith and actions using God's Word as the rule.

One way to appreciate church fellowship is to understand that God gives it to keep you healthy and to make the sickly in faith seek spiritual doctoring.

Carelessness endangers lives

The television show *ER* once gave a great example of the fellowship principle. The episode was about a staff infection. The infection was running rampant in the ER, and the doctors were trying to figure out why. Staff is a terribly infectious disease spread most often by human contact with human excrement. Yuck! After testing doctors and nurses and reviewing programs and procedures, they finally figured out how it was being spread. A non-medical employee who touched all the paperwork handled by the medical personnel did not wash his hands after visiting the men's room. Double yuck! I remember the line he said, "What, you mean I have to wash every time?!"

The lesson simply is that a little carelessness often repeated endangers many lives. So God says it is true of those who continually hold to false doctrines and practices of faith. They endanger those they touch. If they will not abandon their false doctrines even after

they know what God says, the Lord says to keep away from them (Romans 16:17).

Maintaining a healthy church

Why practice church fellowship? It is to keep our own good spiritual health, but also to give witness to those who do yucky things with God's truths and endanger themselves and many others. It is in love for all involved that God says keep away from them. Think what would happen in the ER if no one tried to put a stop to the staff infection. Many people would have become sick; some would have died.

Patients would avoid the hospital. The ER would have become ineffective in saving the very lives it existed to save.

So also the church. If it does not address false doctrines, it will finally become ineffective. If the false teachings are allowed to coexist with the healthy work and sharing

of God's Word, even the healthy church will be regarded as a place of confusion and illness. That's why, by God's grace, we ask God to help us lovingly reprove those who infect God's Word with false ideas. We jealousy guard God's Word so that healthy souls grow healthier and sickly souls are kept safe. We need to help sincere but misguided souls recognize the need to use God's Word correctly.

May the Christians to whom we give such warnings understand and say, "What, you mean use God's Word right every time?!" When they do, we'll have the joy of knowing we helped clean up their faith and the faith of those touched by them.

Mark Mammel is pastor at Prince of Peace, Yucaipa, California.

Clean up your faith!

We need to practice church fellowship to keep our own spiritual health, but also to give witness to those who do bad things with God's truths.

Mark T. Mammel

