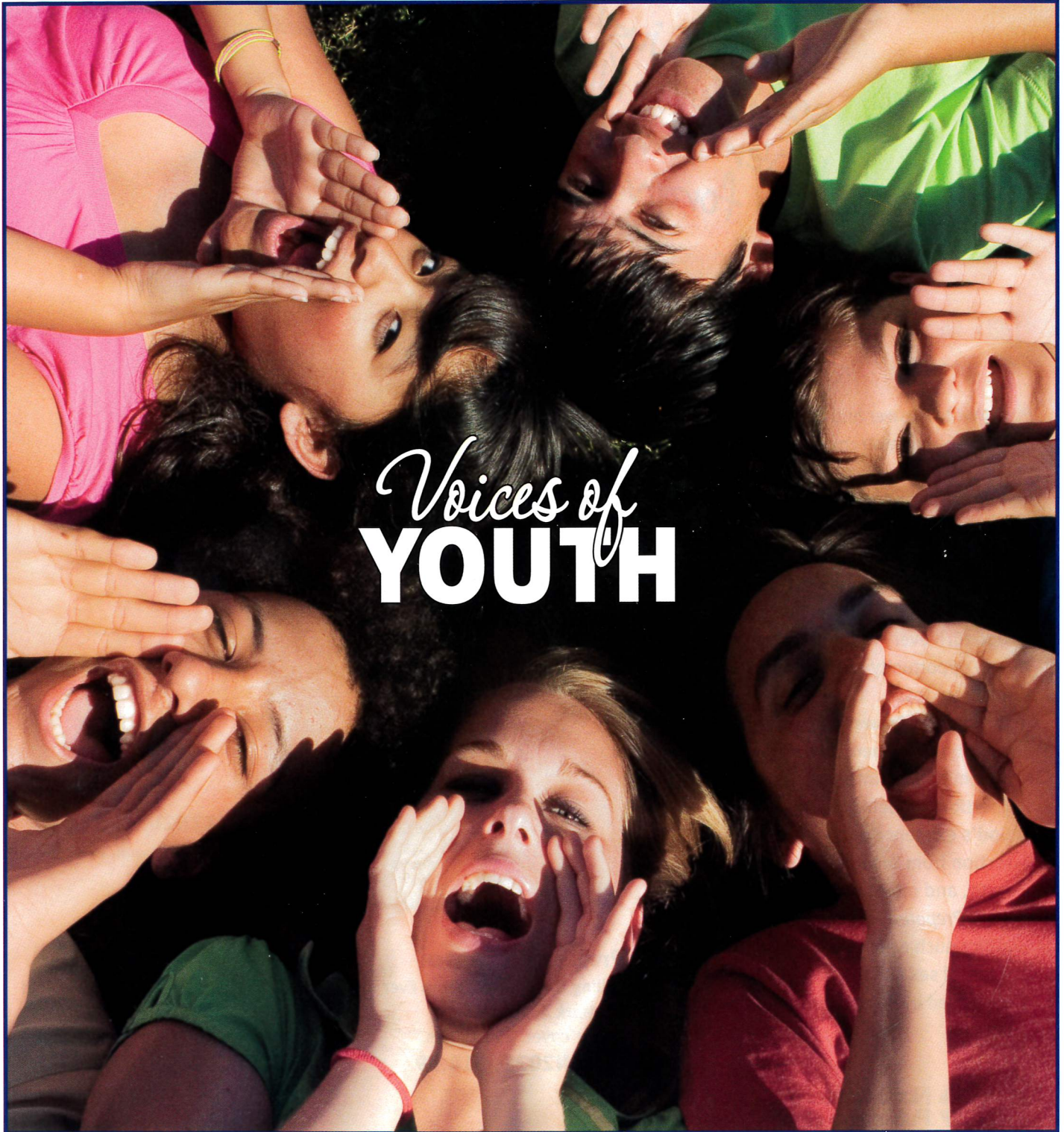


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SEPTEMBER 2008

Forward in Christ

God's wisdom, WELS' witness



Voices of
YOUTH

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"HE WAS WRONG! BUT DON'T HOLD ON TO THE HURT. FORGIVE HIM."

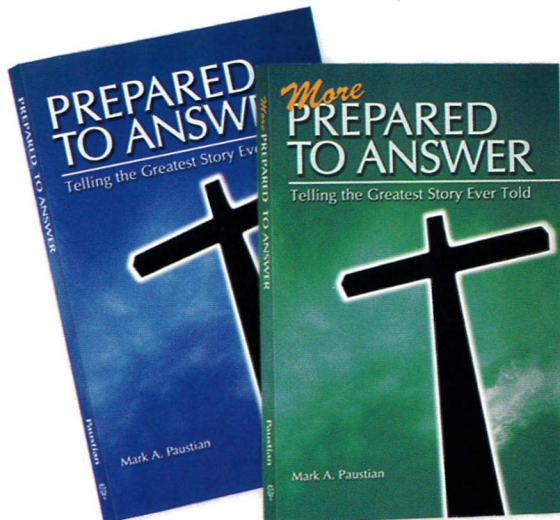
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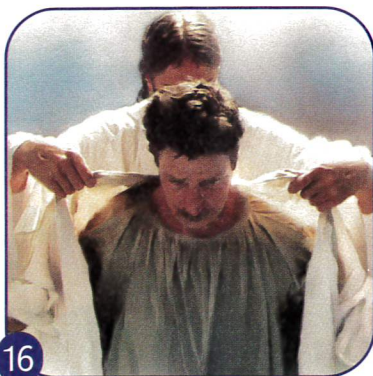
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“Teens are looking for adults to be mentors and role models, to advise and guide—but gently.”



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Forward in Christ

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Cristo Palabra de Vida

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NOR FORSAKE US.
1 Kings 8:57

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Forward in Christ magazine
WELS Communication Services
2929 N Mayfair Rd
Milwaukee WI 53222-4398
Phone: 414-256-3210
Fax: 414-256-3862
E-mail: fic@sab.wels.net
www.forwardinchrist.net

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Rev. John A. Braun
braunj@nph.wels.net

MANAGING EDITOR

Julie K. Wietzke
julie.wietzke@sab.wels.net

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Alicia A. Neumann
alicia.neumann@sab.wels.net

STAFF WRITER

Laura C. Schaefer
laurachristine@wels.net

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Daniel Leyrer

ART DIRECTOR

Karen Knutson

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

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SEPTEMBER

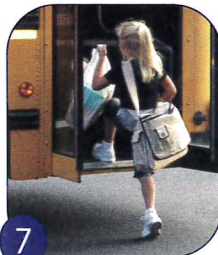
WHAT'S INSIDE *by Julie Wietzke*

For seven years, *Forward in Christ* has been giving teenagers a voice in its "Whatever" column, which is written by teens, for teens. What we've discovered is that many of our readers who aren't teenagers also appreciate the insights of our teen writers.

A series that starts this month will be looking again at what teens have to say—on topics like parental and church leadership, worship, and teen involvement (p. 28). Ideas in the articles are based on the 2005 report, "Why Young People Leave WELS" and an accompanying Bible study, "Creating Youth-full Churches." Find out more about these studies at www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy.

We are also starting a new column, "Campus Cornerstone," which will alternate with "Whatever." This column will feature articles written by college students. We pray that the stories will help students grow in their faith and also raise awareness of issues college students are facing. The first article gives advice to incoming freshmen (p. 18). To see the flip side of the coin—a mom talking about what it's like to send a child away to college—turn to the back page.

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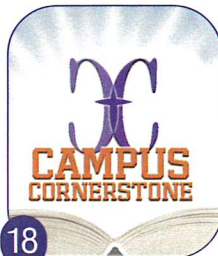
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LITURGY CHANGES

It's important to remember that many of the statements made in the article "The Lutheran Way of Worship" [July] are based on human preference, rather than biblical directive. For some people, changes in the liturgy distract from worshipping God; for others, variety promotes heartfelt worship by avoiding the pitfall of mindless repetition. It's really a matter of personal preference.

Examples can be cited of changes in the liturgy that have been detrimental to Christ-centered worship, but examples can also be cited where the motto "we've always done it that way before" has not been the wisest path to follow. Certainly we want to honor the worship experiences of the past, but God has also given us freedom to proclaim gospel truths and express heartfelt devotion to God with words and songs and melodies that God's people have developed in recent times, rather than originating centuries ago.

Good Lutherans, who love their Lord and remain faithful to the Bible, may disagree on which worship traditions to follow and which to change. The key is to make sure that our worship is always Christ-centered, using all of God's gifts and involving God's people in a heartfelt focus on what Christ has done for us. That's the way Lutherans worship, even when they disagree concerning the specific traditions to follow from the past.

*Robert Hein
West Bend, Wisconsin*

OTHER DENOMINATIONS

In the large city where we previously resided, my husband was a councilman for several years. The mayor, being the head of the team, made it clear that his people were never to speak of the opposition in any manner. They were to speak only of what their team's objectives were for

the city. Therefore I was somewhat taken aback by the Peter Dorn article regarding Episcopalians. There were some negative connotations. I am reminded of the adage, "One way of elevating yourself is to put down someone else." Is it that some WELS leaders and members find it necessary to put other denominations in a poor light in order to prove that we are the correct Christians? I would hope not.

*Georgia Browne
Sturgis, Michigan*

WEAR YOUR FAITH

Re: "Wear Your Faith" [June]. I want to express my sincere thanks for this much-needed article. It is distressing to see non-Christians dressing immodestly, but even more upsetting to witness those kinds of inappropriate clothing worn by members of our churches on Sunday mornings. Let us all remember that—even though we do not need to wear "formal" clothing when we enter the Lord's house—we certainly should show proper respect and reverence for God by dressing modestly and decently. As the author so aptly put it, we should "wear our faith." I pray that many folks will heed this important message and be good ambassadors for Christ not only with our words, but also with our dress.

*Vivian L. Weseloh
Moorhead, Minnesota*

MORMONS

The July issue contained two excellent and to-the-point articles: "Serve your nation" and "Even to old age." I cannot say the same for the "Question and Answer" concerning the Mormon religion. While there are no errors in the article, it is obtuse and not easily understood. The facts are there, but not stated clearly and concisely.

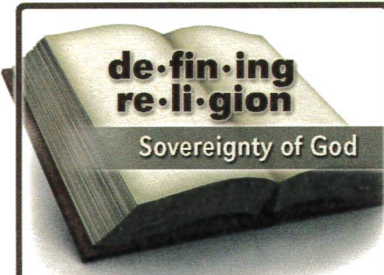
*Arthur Brandt
Mesa, Arizona*

I would like to add one comment to Prof. Bivens' excellent statement on Mormons [July]: Mormons do not confess a triune God. Christ is only the son of God. I don't know their understanding of the Holy Spirit, but only the Father is God. From this standpoint this belief makes Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and the apostles all liars. The Bible (theirs included) then becomes a book of lies and the devil's book.

The same can be said of those Christians (WELS included) who believe that the theory of evolution has *some* merit. As with the Mormon beliefs, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Father all become liars and the gospel becomes useless. The Mormons are not the only ones who fall into this trap of the devil.

*John Woidke
Farwell, Michigan*

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*.



de-fining
re-li-gion
Sovereignty of God

God's supreme, autonomous power and rule over the universe. Everything is ultimately subject to him, and he makes everything work out for the benefit of his people (Psalm 115:3; Ephesians 1:19-23; Philippians 2:9-11; Romans 8:28).

New school clothes

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. Proverbs 1:7-10

Stephen H. Geiger

The summer has added inches. August store ads claim the best of deals. When growing children head back to school, they often leave the house that first exciting day wearing brand-new clothes.

But are they wearing a garland—a wreath—on their heads? Is the decorative chain around their necks? Do they travel from home to classroom wearing an education they have been receiving every day?

Dressing a child spiritually

Fathers fill hours throwing a baseball to their sons. Mothers work for months to help their daughters master a craft. Parents spend years drilling spelling words. Parents are teachers. But athletics, artistry, and academics are not the first things on Solomon's mind as he speaks a proverb about a garland and a chain.

Solomon was well aware that the greatest threats to children are not striking out on a ball diamond, coloring outside the lines, or mixing up letters on a spelling test. The Holy Spirit, speaking through Solomon, was concerned about sin, about temptation, about peer pressure, about that eternal danger even the youngest face. So Solomon invites children to dress themselves in the words of their parents.

Parents might not always be proud of the words they have shared with their children. Parents may also be ashamed when recalling words they didn't share, words that Solomon encourages—instruction in the fear of the Lord.

Has each father seen the spiritual training of his children as his primary responsibility? Or can athletic success catch more attention than the need to share forgiveness and the love of Jesus with young souls? Have mothers looked for teaching moments, occasions for the Holy Spirit to touch tiny hearts? Or is it too easy to get frustrated with the press of responsibility that they have concluded there is little, if any, time for such instruction? Have Christian friends found opportunity to support families in making the Word of God key at home, or might we all confess that it is a struggle to keep priorities straight in our own lives, much less offer encouragement to others?

We confess our failings. So easily we all can permit the fear of the Lord to drift into the background.

Clothing of eternal worth

How comforting it is to know that the perfect "parent," our heavenly Father, invites us to pray, "Forgive us." What a miracle that he assures, "All is well." Through Jesus Christ, his perfect Son, we have our pasts, presents, and futures wiped clean.

This good news puts Solomon's encouragement in a beautiful light. For you to make the spiritual teaching of children a personal priority is to be able to say, "Children, fear the Lord—have an awe-filled admiration for his amazing love!"



Children need the assurance of forgiveness in Jesus. They will also continue to face temptation. Offer opportunity for additional growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus. Take time to listen, love, and share God's love. Parents are the daily instructors in each home.

Parents, grandparents, yes, all Christians offer such training. Join Solomon in longing for children who go back to school every day wearing something special—not just attractive shoes and shirts, but clothing of eternal worth.

Contributing editor Stephen Geiger, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Risen Savior, Milwaukee.

Take back Sunday

Joel V. Petermann

The Old Testament Sabbath Law required rest on the seventh day (Saturday). The Sabbath rest was to foreshadow the true and complete rest that we have in Christ (Hebrews 4). New Testament Christians are not required to rest on the Sabbath Day. So what does the Third Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy,” say to us? Luther explains: “We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.” Luther’s explanation says that our worship is important.

Two recent articles in one of our local newspapers questioned the importance of coming together to worship. One was titled, “Whatever happened to the Sabbath?” The other was subtitled, “Sabbath and sports: Religious observances can take a back seat to children’s games.” Among other things, these articles exposed the fact that many who used to set aside Sunday morning to worship no longer consider that to be more important than sports games, home projects, grocery shopping, and other activities. They also made it clear that while our society once tried to reserve Sunday morning for worship, now more and more public events and sports activities are being scheduled on Sunday mornings. One of the articles confessed, “If stores have become the new cathedrals of today’s manic society, youth sports are the new god . . .” (“Vying in unholy competition,” *New Hampshire Union Leader*, April 4, 2008).

Does this secular censure cause us to pause and ponder? First, let’s be clear that Scripture no longer dictates a specific time and day of the week that we must worship. We worship our Lord in Christian freedom. But let’s also be honest and recognize that when we have set a time to worship and the world begins to schedule its events at the same time, then what we

choose says something about what we believe is most important. Our choices are difficult—especially since our children are often victims of a world that sees little use for Jesus and has no qualms about scheduling a senior prom on Good Friday evening. Yet if we sit back and let the world continue to schedule without voicing our protest, then soon there will be no time that is sacred for worship.

I think it’s time for Christians to take back Sunday. When we hear about events scheduled on Sunday mornings we might write a letter asking for this to be changed. Perhaps the reason the world keeps scheduling on Sundays is because we keep on letting them. Now is the time for us to speak up. But more importantly, now is the time for us to act. We need to make choices that show our children that worship time is important.

Let’s also remember why. The Third Commandment reminds us that people gathered on the Sabbath to hear God’s Word. This is why our

Perhaps the reason the world keeps scheduling on Sundays is because we keep on letting them.

worship—at whatever time we set it—is so important. We gather to hear the good news about a Savior who sacrificed himself for us. Through that gospel God showers his grace upon sinners—sinners who sometimes have let other

things become our gods. Through his Word and sacraments the God of grace washes our sins away and fortifies us for the fight with the world. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Take heart, Christians! Don’t lose your courage! The world cannot overcome Christ’s kingdom. Take part in worship. Take back Sunday.

Contributing editor Joel Petermann is pastor at St. Paul, Amherst, New Hampshire.

QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

I commend you for asking the question with clarity and directness. There is evidence that others have grumbled silently, grown bitter, and gone their separate way without giving anyone the chance to address their concerns.

Generally, it's true

While there are exceptions, what you observe is true. Every worship service and every sermon among us has distinct reference to our sinfulness and natural unworthiness before God. The word “worthless” is not the most fitting way of expressing this, since, despite not deserving God’s love and favor, we remain of value to him and are deeply cherished. But sinners we are, with inherited and actual guilt, and we regularly highlight this in our private and public worship lives.

Furthermore, we freely confess that such reminders are neither pleasant nor designed to be so. We are echoing the frequent refrain of Scripture regarding our natural depravity, a message designed to crush and kill our sinful nature on a daily basis. Our sinful nature does not meekly submit to this ongoing execution, but files vigorous protest.

Hopefully, there's more

There may be regrettable exceptions, but the message of sin and guilt should never be the *primary* message proclaimed in our services and sermons. The main part of the Confession and Absolution is the absolution, and the dominant emphasis of law and gospel messages is God’s grace in Christ, not our sin. If this is not the case in typical sermons of a particular pastor, this issue should be addressed with the pastor sooner rather than later.

It is possible that the dominant emphasis may be on the gospel of grace but some listeners still walk away thinking all they heard was the message of law and sin. This phenome-

Q. Why do we say we are “worthless sinners” all the time? Do we need to hear this at every worship service?

non might stem from the Holy Spirit’s accentuating the law in a heart that has been hardening itself against divine truth. It might be simply a bad habit of not paying close attention. It may even come from a prejudicial aversion to any mention of sin and guilt. No matter. Our goal is to retain the combined

use of law and gospel, with the primary emphasis on gospel.

Thankfully, we have both

Filling our services and sermons with vigorous declarations of human guilt plus promises of divine grace is more than a cherished desire. It is necessary for spiritual life and health. Law and gospel are woven through Scripture from cover to cover because this is the Spirit’s tandem tool to expose and kill the sinful nature and feed and nourish the new self in its life of faith. Embracing and enjoying the gospel follows being exposed and convicted of damnable sin. Leaving out the emphasis on our being poor sinners does us no favors. The unconditional gospel is meaningful to the humbled, not the haughty.

Churches that have abandoned the mention of sin and guilt as an integral part of their services and sermons may be said to offer what can be described as more pleasant, mellow, and even entertaining events. It is socially safe and appealing to those seeking a “religious” experience on their own terms. But the truth remains: this is not God’s way of creating new creations in Christ, comforted by grace and committed to expressing new life in Christ. God uses his law and gospel for that. And we do well to seek—even insist on—this in every worship service.

Contributing editor Forrest Bivens, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.



Connecting to our COMMUNITIES

When pastors and congregations proclaim the gospel and focus on the six biblical principles, Jesus Christ will grow his church as he grows each member.

Stuart A. Zak



CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP

The Commission on Evangelism is offering seminars to help congregations build bridges to people in their area. For more information on seminars in your district, go to www.wels.net/jump/conncomm.

We both used the same recipe. When my wife prepared the dish, it was delicious. A few months later when I prepared the same dish, a family member asked if I had used the “recipe for disaster.”

Having the right recipe is not always a guarantee that a delightful dish will be put on the table. My wife has more experience in the kitchen and has learned that you can’t take shortcuts with your ingredients or in the time you spend.

When it comes to developing churches and connecting with communities, the Lord has also taught us that we can’t take shortcuts with his ingredients or in the time we spend.


Six ingredients for effective ministry

What ingredients help a congregation grow? God gives one answer to that question. He has promised to help Christians grow only through the gospel. If Christians grow through the gospel, then together the church grows. After all, the church is nothing more and nothing less than people who believe in Jesus. God promises to turn hearts from unbelief to faith in Jesus by the gospel, and he promises to strengthen believers by the same gospel. Without the gospel we will have a recipe for disaster.

But what ingredients help a congregation connect with its community? Popular consensus and common sense tell us it is important to have friendly people, devoted pastors, relevant worship, accommodating facilities, inclusive ministry, and convenient opportunities for members to get involved. While those things can add flavor to church life, the same things can also lead to a religious group without the central message of forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus.

When our focus is on the gospel, then we look for biblical principles that can create a recipe for effective ministry. Consider these six key ingredients:

- **Daily contrition and repentance.** 2 Corinthians 7:10 tells us, “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation.”
- **Devotion to Word and sacrament.** Matthew 28:19,20 reminds us that discipleship is centered around baptizing and “teaching them to obey everything.”
- **Trust in leadership.** Hebrews 13:17 holds up godly leaders to lead God’s people for our own good as we “obey . . . and submit to their authority.”
- **Spiritual talk.** Colossians 3:16 encourages us to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.”
- **Christian love.** 1 John 3:18 helps us re-evaluate our way of life: “Dear



children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

- **Members who understand their purpose.** 1 Peter 3:15 lays it out: “In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

When the recipe isn't followed

When pastors and churches move away from these biblical principles, two dangers affect their outreach. At one end of the spectrum stands “church growth,” which promotes a social gospel. At the other end stands legalism, which looks inward instead of outward toward the souls in need of the message of Jesus.

Even well-intentioned pastors and congregations have been seduced by the “success culture” of our generation. With an “end justifies the means” mentality we can produce multimillion-dollar facilities, engage in highly sophisticated master planning, and use some of the finest sound and visual equipment ever made. We can develop a meeting oriented ministry in a businesslike atmosphere where we try to accommodate a growing demand to create and develop greater churches. We can learn how to pacify “me-first” spiritual babies in our churches that constantly divert our priorities to the tyranny of the urgent. The result can be pastors and congregations who spend more

time in administration than in shepherding. Their outreach may be effective, but only in gathering people and not in sharing Jesus with the lost.

On the flip side, well-intentioned pastors and congregations have overreacted and become so interested in preserving their organization that they don't look to the fields white for the harvest. Their focus prevents them from reaching out to the unchurched and the dechurched. The result can be pastors and congregations that spend more time guarding the gospel than sharing it.

In both cases, it seems disciples of Jesus Christ no longer see each day with “harvest eyes.” At times, pastors and congregations may even look at the lost more as an intrusion to their ministry than a reason for their ministry.

Multiple ways to show compassion

But Jesus gives us a better way. He directs us to show compassion and love for the lost. He encourages us to follow his example. When the crowd came, “he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things” (Mark 6:34).

When pastors and congregations proclaim the gospel and focus on the six biblical principles, Jesus Christ will grow his church as he grows each member. “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:16). Jesus calls us to be his people and the salt of the earth. We fail and need to repent. That is simply turning from our failures and finding the Savior's forgiveness. In that forgiveness lies the power to grow and do better.

Then how do we connect our communities to their Savior? In the early Christian church, Tabitha appears to have done it successfully. Those attending her funeral testified to that. “[Tabitha] was always doing good and helping the poor . . . All the widows stood around [Peter], crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that [Tabitha] had made while she was with them” (Acts 9:36,39). People came to know Jesus when they heard Tabitha had been raised in his name. The message she sent with her loving actions was brought to fruition when the greatest gift of all was shared—Jesus Christ!

There are a multitude of ways to display God at work in our lives and in our congregations: summer camps for kids (soccer, gymnastics, music, etc.); fall or winter assistant teams that help the elderly with raking and shoveling; or a spring potted plant giveaway that helps spruce up your neighborhood. It would be great if there was a recipe for each congregation to follow with guaranteed success. But what works for one may not work for another, so we should try different things. We must determine what works best on our community.

We are believers in Jesus who desire to share him with those who do not know him. Like the early Christians we can be “devoted . . . to the apostles' teachings and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). As we connect with our communities, may the Lord add to the number daily those who are being saved.

Stuart Zak is pastor at Good Shepherd, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

This is the last article in a three-part series on connecting to your community.

The LUTHER

Luther's worship reforms weren't what some expected, but they were precisely what the church needed.

Aaron L. Christie

It has been said that Luther once quipped: "Wherever God built a church, the devil would build a chapel." God gives us money; the devil gives us mammon. God inspired his Word; the devil fathers lies. The church of Christ is a worshiping church, so the devil seeks to warp and wreck that worship. A chilling thought! Worship, the very place where God desires to bless us immensely, is precisely the place where the devil works intensely.

Worship sickness

The devil has always been a worship wrecker—whether it was Cain's offering or idolatry at the high places in the Old Testament, heretical hymns and prayers to the saints in the early church, peddling indulgences, or the "going through the correct motions" attitude of the Middle Ages. Lucifer has always enjoyed dabbling in liturgics!

In Luther's age, the worst worship abuse was in the celebration of the Sacrament. The Sacrament as instituted by Jesus was turned into man's sacrifice—a human effort at earning heaven. Communion was celebrated to help souls out of purgatory's fire and often celebrated without communicants. It's no wonder that Luther called the Roman Mass a "dragon's tail."

In spite of these errors, the early church had done wonderful things with their worship forms. Because they believed that God's Word was critical, they adopted the old synagogue service with its series of Scripture lessons. Because they believed in man's sinfulness, they confessed the publican's prayer, "Lord, have mercy!" Because they believed in the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world, they began to sing about the Lamb. Because Jesus said "Do this," the early church did. They celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly. The gospel produced an amaz-

ing order of service through God's people. This old Roman or "Western" rite read, proclaimed, prayed, and sang of Christ.

But the devil quietly built his chapel next door. Honoring the memory of martyrs morphed into prayers to saints. The merits of Christ were overshadowed by the "good works" of men. The elevation of the priesthood resulted in the devaluation of the laity. By Luther's time, people were literally kept away from the altar and priest with rails and screens.

The church's worship was sick, yet it survived. The gospel still received a hearing in the sacraments, the songs of the liturgy, the Scripture lessons, and the church year's themes. Worship survived, but it urgently needed surgery.

Worship surgery

Luther performed life-saving surgery on the church's worship, but his technique was conservative. With so many abuses, we would have expected Luther to wipe the slate clean and start over. Instead, Luther's approach towards worship was delicate, gradual, and deliberate. Many Lutherans are perhaps under a false impression that on Oct. 31, 1517, Luther pounded the 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church and Lutherans skipped off into the sunset whistling "A Mighty Fortress." That's not quite what happened. Luther did not reform the service in his church, St. Mary's, Wittenberg, until five years after he posted the 95 Theses. This service, the *Formula Missae*, was still in Latin.

Luther never made changes to the service for the sake of change. He made no sweeping changes to worship "partly because of the weak in faith, who cannot suddenly exchange an old and accustomed order of worship for a new and unusual one, and more so because of the fickle and fastidious spirits who rush in like unclean swine without faith or reason, and who delight only in novelty

and tire of it as quickly, when it has worn off" (*Luther's Works* 53:19).

AN WAY of worship

Luther's surgery on worship was done with a biblical theologian's scalpel held in a pastor's hand. The skeleton of Scripture lessons and the church year was sound. The organs—the great songs of the liturgy—were healthy. The cancer of prayers to the saints and the Roman theology of sacrifice were cut away from the Lord's Supper. This careful surgery allowed the gospel to freely breathe in worship again without upsetting the common man in the pew. It is likely that Wittenberg's worshipers would have noticed no outward changes.

But Luther was not done. His surgery on worship would continue—delicately, gradually, deliberately. Latin services continued in many major university cities, but things were different in the villages and countryside. Grinding poverty and illiteracy ruled there. German orders of service were popping up. Luther sensed that the devil could use this multiplication of worship rites as a seedbed for future division. He wrote: "Let us approve each other's rites lest schisms and sects should result from this diversity in rites—as has happened in the Roman church" (*Luther's Works* 53:31).

Luther's German Mass of 1526 provided the peasants with a service in their mother tongue. Using the ancient Western rite as its basis, it provided the Lutheran church with a pattern for future orders of service. Luther did not want his service, however, to become a new law. It was to be used in Christian freedom: "Do not make it a rigid law to bind or entangle anyone's conscience, but use it in Christian liberty as long, when, where, and how you find it to be practical and useful" (*Luther's Works* 53:61).

Laypeople were to have a role in worship, so Luther began to pen gospel-proclaiming hymns. Hymn singing would increase people's level of participation, teach them good doctrine, and reinforce the themes of the liturgy and church year. When it came to hymn tunes, Luther didn't turn to tavern songs as many falsely claim. A full 80 percent of Luther's melodies were based on the Gregorian chant! Luther used the

art music of the princely courts to carry his texts to people's hearts.

Other "reformers" of Luther's day performed their worship surgery with a meat cleaver. They smashed statues, shattered stained-glass, and tore out pipe organs. They did away with the traditional orders of service. Some even forbade the singing of hymns—claiming that one should make music in the heart not at church. They downgraded the Sacrament from a weekly privilege to a quarterly requirement.

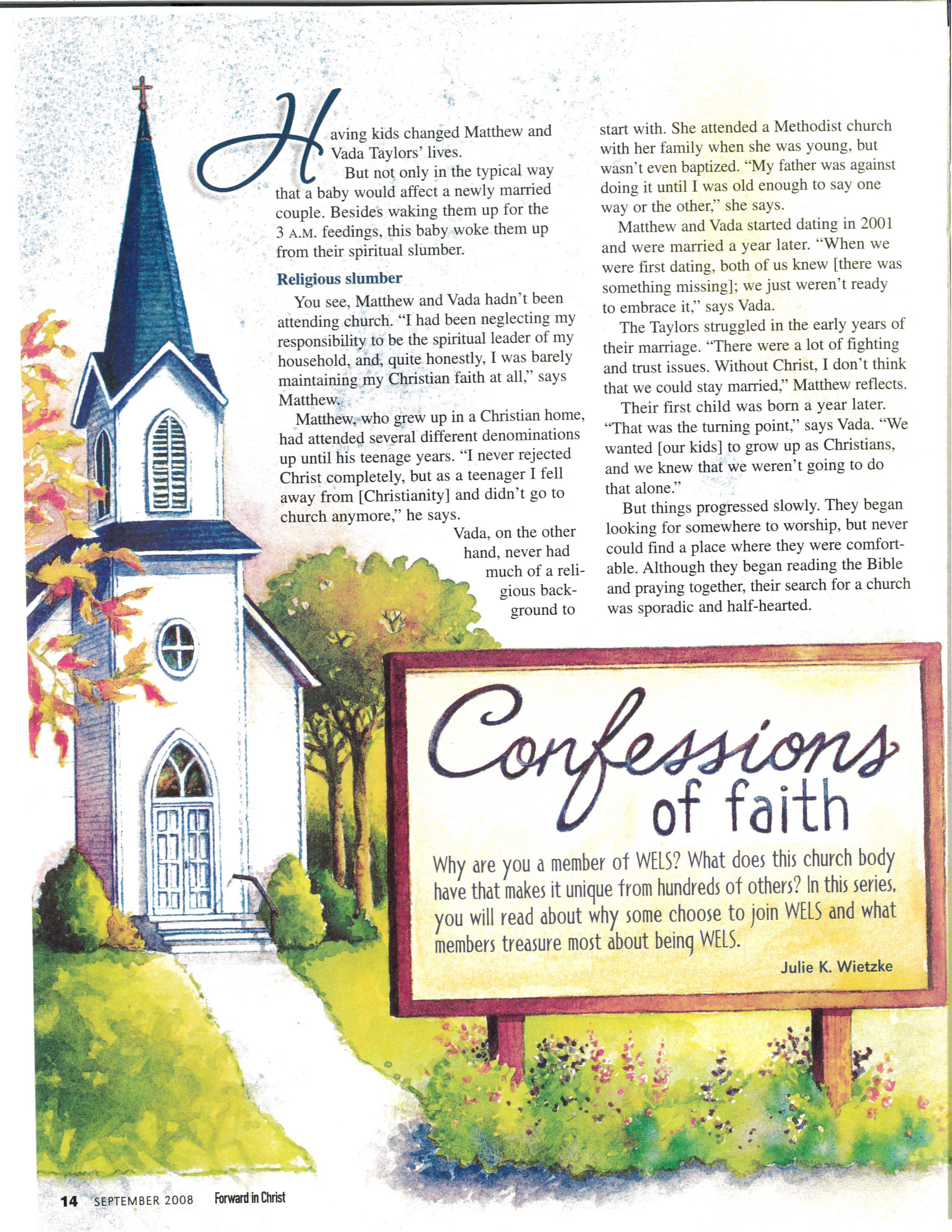
Luther was as different from the pope as he was from Reformed leaders like Zwingli and Calvin. Luther was fundamentally conservative in his approach to worship. He rightly viewed worship as a vehicle that carried the riches of the gospel to people in Word and sacrament, even as he gave the laity a more active role in the service. All of this was done in a spirit of Christian love and freedom. Luther was always a pastor at heart.

What can we learn from Luther's approach? Keep Christ at the center of worship! Let good biblical doctrine resonate in the liturgy and hymns. Treasure ancient worship forms and use them in freedom. Let God's people participate in worship. Good liturgical worship helps ensure this. And finally, give God the best you can: in art and music, sermon and song, architecture and liturgical structure.

Luther's worship reforms weren't what some expected, but they were precisely what the church needed.

Aaron Christie is pastor at Faith, Antioch, Illinois.

This is the fourth article in a nine-part series on Lutheran worship.

A watercolor illustration of a church with a tall, dark blue steeple topped with a cross. The church has white walls and a large arched doorway. To the right, a sign on two wooden posts reads "Confessions of faith" in a large, cursive font, with a smaller paragraph below it. The scene is set in a lush, green landscape with trees and bushes.

Having kids changed Matthew and Vada Taylors' lives.

But not only in the typical way that a baby would affect a newly married couple. Besides waking them up for the 3 A.M. feedings, this baby woke them up from their spiritual slumber.

Religious slumber

You see, Matthew and Vada hadn't been attending church. "I had been neglecting my responsibility to be the spiritual leader of my household, and, quite honestly, I was barely maintaining my Christian faith at all," says Matthew.

Matthew, who grew up in a Christian home, had attended several different denominations up until his teenage years. "I never rejected Christ completely, but as a teenager I fell away from [Christianity] and didn't go to church anymore," he says.

Vada, on the other hand, never had much of a religious background to

start with. She attended a Methodist church with her family when she was young, but wasn't even baptized. "My father was against doing it until I was old enough to say one way or the other," she says.

Matthew and Vada started dating in 2001 and were married a year later. "When we were first dating, both of us knew [there was something missing]; we just weren't ready to embrace it," says Vada.

The Taylors struggled in the early years of their marriage. "There were a lot of fighting and trust issues. Without Christ, I don't think that we could stay married," Matthew reflects.

Their first child was born a year later. "That was the turning point," says Vada. "We wanted [our kids] to grow up as Christians, and we knew that we weren't going to do that alone."

But things progressed slowly. They began looking for somewhere to worship, but never could find a place where they were comfortable. Although they began reading the Bible and praying together, their search for a church was sporadic and half-hearted.

Confessions of faith

Why are you a member of WELS? What does this church body have that makes it unique from hundreds of others? In this series, you will read about why some choose to join WELS and what members treasure most about being WELS.

Julie K. Wietzke

Wake-up call

In 2006, Vada saw a sign by Peace, Cottonwood, Ariz.—a WELS church just two miles from their home—that advertised a Toddler Power Hour. This program for parents and young children included songs, crafts, a snack, and a Bible story. She decided to take their children.

Vada immediately liked the pastor and his wife, who ran the program, and felt comfortable at the church. She told Matthew that she wanted to try attending a Sunday service. “It was easier [to attend a service] because I had met some of the people before,” says Vada. “It was nice to go in and know that there would be at least one person that I could talk to.”

Matthew liked the service as well. “The liturgical Lutheran service seemed very formal but also very reverent,” he says. “I was very pleased that there was no politics in the sermon.”

So Matthew and Vada started doing something that they hadn’t done before with the other churches they attended—they kept going back. Matthew also went online to find out more about the Lutheran faith and discovered the WELS Web site. “I found that I agreed with everything I read,” he says.

Matthew and Vada began taking confirmation classes in September 2007 and were confirmed in November. On that same day, Vada and their three children were baptized.

Active participation

Now the Taylors look forward to going to church. “The liturgical service has been a great blessing to my family,” says Matthew.

He also emphasized how he appreciated the use of both law and gospel



The Taylor family at Lorelai’s baptism. Back row (left to right): Matthew, Gwendolyn, Vada holding Lorelai, Pastor Paul Rutschow. Front row: Anna and Samuel.

in worship. “I like being convicted of my sin every Sunday—I need it,” he says. “I’m glad my pastor doesn’t water things down in his sermons. He always has the two parts: You’re a sinner and you deserve death. But then the other part is grace and forgiveness. It’s important for me to keep both parts in mind.”

Receiving that forgiveness in the Lord’s Supper is another blessing that the Taylors can’t get enough of. “The Sacrament of Holy Communion is a wonderful and humbling experience,” says Matthew. “I just wish we could have Communion every Sunday! . . . I find myself yearning every week to receive the real presence and the blessing of physical and spiritual communion with our Lord Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith that it imparts.”

The Taylors also discovered something new while attending Peace—a church year that follows the life of Jesus. They had never observed the season of Lent before or understood the significance of the Advent wreath. “Now we want to do

an Advent wreath in our home,” says Matthew. “We want to light the candles and do a devotion with our kids—you know, the kind of things to keep our faith in our day-to-day life.”

This is because they now realize how important faith is. “We don’t want to go back to our old ways,” says Matthew.

Those ways—and the regret they feel about their past decisions—still weigh heavily on the couple. “It’s hard for me to remember the state of mind that allowed me to make the decisions I made,” says Vada, “because it’s so far from that now.”

But now the knowledge that their sins are forgiven through Jesus and that they someday will spend eternity in heaven is foremost on their minds. “We’re damaged goods,” says Matthew. “But I was just saying to Vada recently that knowing that when we reach heaven we will be incapable of sin—it’s just awesome. That’s what I’m looking forward to. You know, we struggle every week with sin and repentance but knowing that in heaven we will be unable to sin—that’s just cool. It will be completely gone.”

“We won’t be able to remember it,” echoes Vada softly.

Matthew and Vada recently had their fourth child and will have to get up again for the early-morning feedings. But this time, spiritually, they’re awake—and raring to go.

Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ.

Do you have a story to share about how you became a WELS member? Send it to Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net.

Overseeing



God's people

Michael A. Woldt

Public ministers of the gospel represent God as they serve and protect his people.

*M*y wife and I took a special trip to celebrate our silver wedding anniversary. As we were checking into our hotel, one of the staff members casually asked, "What do you do for a living?" "I'm a Lutheran pastor!" An awkward silence followed as the man realized he was stuck in a conversation with a "man of the cloth."

As I sat in the bleachers before a basketball game, a parent turned around and said, "Pastor, why don't you use your special connections and say a prayer that our team wins tonight?"

There was a vacancy on the teaching staff at the Lutheran elementary school. A well-meaning member offered a possible solution: "Why don't we hire Mark's wife? She has her teaching license and is looking for a job." The Board of Christian Education chairman gently reminded his brother in Christ that Lutheran

teachers are "called" not hired. They serve as public ministers of the gospel.

Are called workers strange and mysterious creatures who are best kept at arm's length? Is a pastor someone with "special connections" to the Almighty? What gives anyone the right to serve as a called worker? Rigorous academic training? Unshakeable faith? Is a pastor still a pastor if he doesn't serve in a congregation? Are Lutheran teachers really "ministers of the gospel"? Can women serve in the public ministry? Do we even need full-time called workers in the church? Is a call to public ministry permanent? What if problems arise?

Good questions! Let's spend a little time reviewing what God's Word says about the public ministry and the called workers who serve in it. I hope you'll see

that God established the public ministry to serve and protect his people.

Citizens asked to serve and protect fellow citizens

“To serve and protect.” That phrase sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Police departments throughout the United States use this well-known motto to summarize their mission. It will also provide the framework for our look at public ministry. I realize that every analogy limps a bit. Pastors don’t carry a badge. Lutheran teachers don’t wear sidearms in the classroom. Staff ministers don’t issue citations. Yet, noting a few parallels between peace officers and called workers might help us better understand the public ministry of the gospel.

Every citizen of the United States has the Second Amendment right to “keep and bear arms.” However, most of us leave the day-to-day gun-toting to professionals who are hired to serve and protect us. How many of us would choose to return to Hollywood’s version of the Wild West? You’ve seen the movies! Every cowboy had a six-shooter strapped to his side. Rugged individuals defended their personal property from rustlers and thieves. As communities developed, so did organized law enforcement. Citizens banded together and deputized others to maintain law and order on their behalf.

Every citizen of God’s kingdom has the right to “keep and bear arms” too. God’s weapon is the sword of the Spirit, that is, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Every Christian carries it. God wants individual believers to share the “good news” of salvation with others (Matthew 28:19,20). In catechism class we label this biblical teaching the “universal priesthood of all believers.”

If you believe Jesus is your Savior from sin, you are a priest of God. The Holy Spirit has given you your own “special connection” with the Lord. You have personal access to God’s throne of grace through Jesus (Ephesians 2:18). You don’t need someone to stand as a priest for you before God. Every child of God—women and men, old and young—are ministers or servants of God. Yet, not every Christian has been called to what we call the “public” ministry.

The Bible teaches that the same Lord who made every believer a priest also established the public ministry of the Word. “It was [God] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). The public ministry is more than a good idea that developed as the Christian church evolved. God himself determined that individual believers should be called to serve other Christians publicly with Word and sacraments.

The “call” to public ministry comes through God’s people. Christians, walking together in faith, ask some of their fellow Christians to serve them with the gospel. No one can serve in the public ministry without a call from God’s

people. Graduates from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary are called “Candidates for the Holy Ministry.” They don’t become “pastors” until they receive a call and begin to serve God’s people.

We believe that the Lord is acting when his people issue a call. That’s why we commonly refer to calls into the public ministry as “divine.” When Paul spoke to a group of congregational leaders in Miletus, he emphasized that the Holy Spirit made them “overseers” of God’s flock (Acts 20:28). God calls public ministers to serve and protect the people he loves.

Qualifications for those who serve and protect

Law enforcement personnel need to meet standards. Qualifying tests are routinely used to identify people who possess the skills to be effective police officers. Candidates need to complete written tests, physical tests, skills tests, and psychological evaluations. They even submit to background checks. We want our officers to be men and women of good character who understand their profession and have the mental and physical abilities their vocation requires.

God sets standards for those who serve in the public ministry of his church. Take time to read through the pastoral epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus). Public ministers must be people of good reputation, well-grounded in faith and in the truths of Scripture. Public ministers need to reflect Jesus’ love in their relationships with family members, fellow believers, and the community at large. Public ministers must possess skills to communicate the saving truths of God’s Word to others and correctly handle the Word of Truth.

The Lord sets the bar high! Public ministers of the gospel represent him as they serve and protect. Thankfully, our gracious God also supplies what he requires for public ministry. Paul wrote, “Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:4-6).

The Lord doesn’t require public ministers of the gospel to be the most intelligent, most gifted, most outwardly sanctified citizens of his kingdom. If that were true, few could serve. Our Lord has chosen to put the treasure of his gospel into “jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

What a privilege to be a public minister of the gospel! How blessed God’s people are when public ministers faithfully serve and protect.

Michael Wolde is pastor at David’s Star, Jackson, Wisconsin.

Find a related Bible study on this topic after Sept. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net



Ashley Timmerman

Welcome to college

A college sophomore offers incoming freshmen some words of advice.

Well, you've done it: you finished high school! Congratulations. I'm sure by now you're tired of hearing the oh-so-many questions, including: "What college are you going to?" "What's your major?" "Are you excited?"

But that's the past. Now you're all about college. You're embarking on a new journey. This isn't high school anymore, and, if you're like me, you say thank goodness for that! The next few years are bound to hold more memories, laughs, tears, and nights cramming than any other years you have had or ever will.

I know I was scared when I heard others talking about college. I had a brother, two close friends, and a WELS church whose pastor used to be my seventh-grade vicar waiting for me in College Station, Texas, and I was still scared. Who would I be friends with? Where would I meet people? Would anyone want to be my friend?

The best piece of advice I can give you is this: just about everyone else in your position feels the exact same way! You're scared? So are they!

You want to be friends? You never know who is thinking the same thing about you.

Let's take a simple elevator ride with an unfamiliar student, the whole time tinged with awkward silence. But how different do you feel when the other person smiles, says hello, comments randomly about the day. This small act changes the way you see that person and creates a connection even for a few seconds. What a precious gift.

People want to be friends with friendly people! Don't be afraid to let your God-given smile shine. You never know whom you might meet. God has a reason for bringing each and every person into your path. We never know what that purpose is, but we do know that we can make the best of each opportunity.

I made it a point to talk to people at new student conferences, orientations, and class—people I'm still great friends with today.

I'm not what you would call a shy person by any means, but I get nervous meeting new people just like everyone else. Put yourself out there. Don't invite yourself along, but don't be afraid to mingle.

Cliques in college are not the same as high school cliques. Sure they get noticed but, trust me, typically not in a good way. Rekindle your high school friendships, because if they're true friends they'll encourage you to spread your wings at your new college.

Now for the most important advice, the one that gave me ground to stand on and strength to smile when I thought I had none: find your brothers and sisters in Christ. Go to church, even though your mom and dad aren't making you. Make your faith your own. You don't have to beat down people with the Bible to show them you are a Christian. Christ wants us to shine his light. After all, they'll know we are Christians by our love. People love to be loved; God may use you to show them the way to the greatest love of all.

So go out, my fellow collegiate Christian, and love.

Ashley Timmerman, a sophomore at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, is a member at Holy Word, Austin, Texas.

Campus Cornerstone, a new department in Forward in Christ, explores issues that college-aged students are experiencing. Read more about this column on p. 24.

Obituaries

Margaret I. Lindemann 1922-2008

Margaret Lindemann (nee Gurgel) was born June 5, 1922, in Wonewoc, Wis. She died June 16, 2008.

After attending Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. Peter, Appleton, Wis., and First German, Manitowoc, Wis.

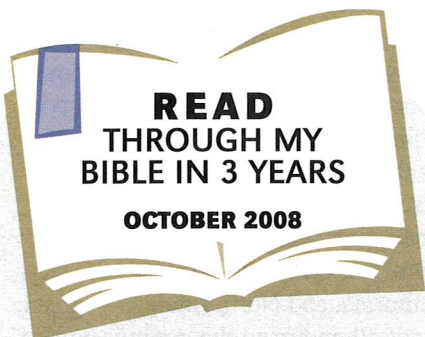
She is preceded in death by her husband, Oscar. She is survived by seven children, 24 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

LaVern N. Holz 1940-2008

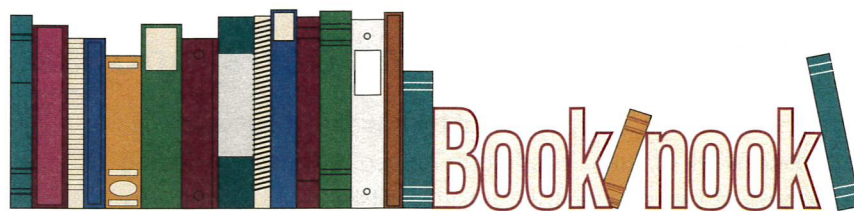
LaVern Holz was born April 20, 1940, in Appleton, Wis. He died July 8, 2008.

A 1970 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Grace, Clear Lake, Wis.; Zion, Almena, Wis.; Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.; and St. Paul, Ridgeland, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his brother. He is survived by his wife, Elaine; three sons; one daughter; 11 grandchildren; one sister-in-law; one nephew; and one niece.

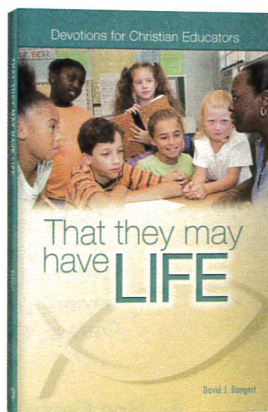


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| 1. Proverbs 10: 1-11:13 | 17. Rom. 1:18-32 |
| 2. Prov. 11:14-12:28 | 18. Rom. 2:1-16 |
| 3. Prov. 13:1-14:21 | 19. Rom. 2:17-29 |
| 4. Prov. 14:22-15:23 | 20. Rom. 3:1-20 |
| 5. Prov. 15:24-16:33 | 21. Rom. 3:21-31 |
| 6. Prov. 17, 18 | 22. Rom. 4:1-15 |
| 7. Prov. 19:1-20:13 | 23. Rom. 4:16-25 |
| 8. Prov. 20:14-22:16 | 24. Rom. 5:1-11 |
| 9. Prov. 22:17-23:35 | 25. Rom. 5:12-21 |
| 10. Prov. 24 | 26. Rom. 6:1-14 |
| 11. Prov. 25:1-26:12 | 27. Rom. 6:15-7:6 |
| 12. Prov. 26:13-27:27 | 28. Rom. 7:7-25 |
| 13. Prov. 28, 29 | 29. Rom. 8:1-17 |
| 14. Prov. 30 | 30. Rom. 8:18-39 |
| 15. Prov. 31 | 31. Rom. 9:1-13 |
| 16. Romans 1:1-17 | |



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.

Devotions for teachers



\$13.99

Christian bookstores abound with books of devotions aimed at schoolchildren. Christian teachers have a wide variety of options when it comes to choosing material that will enhance their classroom devotions or help their students understand God's love better. However, when it comes to devotions written specifically for the Christian teacher to use in his or her own personal life, the selection narrows considerably.

David J. Bangert's new book, *That They May Have Life: Devotions for Christian Educators*, helps to fill this gap. An experienced teacher and administrator himself, Bangert is well aware of the challenges and joys unique to Christian educators. His devotions are

a reflection of that "insider's view," telling teachers what God has to say to them, and telling them in a way that is meaningful and engaging.

The devotions in this book each begin with a Bible passage and vary in length from one to three pages. There are about 70 devotions in all, giving a busy teacher enough material for about two devotions per week during the school year. One of the things I appreciated most about this book is that the devotions are arranged chronologically to follow through the academic year, including sections for the beginning of a new year, homecoming, Advent, Christmas (and Christmas break!), Lent, etc., with a healthy number of "general" devotions as well. An example of Bangert's experience showing through is the section entitled "May"—which, as any teacher can tell you, is in a category all by itself!

Any Christian teacher would appreciate Bangert's book as solid, biblical, law-gospel devotions artfully suited for his or her particular calling in life. I know that I will have my own copy on my desk when the new year starts in August!

Chris Pluger
Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio

On the bright side

I was driving my son to preschool the other morning. He is very inquisitive, so I was trying to answer his questions about life as best as I could. He asked, "Mom, did the disciples live in Brookings, [S.D.], before we were born?" I told him that the disciples lived a long time before we were ever born and that they didn't live in Brookings, but that they lived far, far away in another country halfway around the world.

He thought about that for a moment and then his eyes got big, and he said with excitement, "Were they from Chicago?!"

Jodie Fenske
Brookings, South Dakota

Districts convene, consider synod issues

Each of the 12 WELS districts held their biennial conventions the second week of June. In addition to local business, including the election of two new district presidents (see p. 23), there was discussion on two weighty issues that have synodwide implications: the launch of the Year of Jubilee, an offering designed to eliminate the synod's \$22.4 million debt, and the presentation of the preliminary report of the Ad Hoc Commission, which was established by the 2007 synod convention to analyze the synod's problems and potential.

Year of Jubilee

At the conventions, district presidents outlined the Year of Jubilee—the reason for the celebration, how the offerings will affect our synod's finances, and the timeline for congregational participation. Delegates were also the first to watch a Year of Jubilee DVD, which was sent to all congregations in June.

WELS President Mark Schroeder, who attended several district conventions, says, "Delegates across the country joined in prayer that God would bless this effort to eliminate the synod's

long-term capital debt—not for the purpose of simply being 'debt free,' but to enable us to utilize our precious resources in the best possible way. The support for this effort to retire the synod's capital debt seems to be widespread and enthusiastic."

David Birsching, pastor at St. Paul, Tacoma, Wash., agrees. "The atmosphere among those gathered [in the Pacific Northwest] was relaxed, positive, and joyful," he says. Several districts, including the Pacific Northwest, took a special offering to be designated for the Year of Jubilee.

Although the overall tone seemed to be optimistic, some delegates had mixed reactions to the presentation. "While such an offering is good to reduce the large capital indebtedness for our synod . . . Nebraska Lutheran High School will also be doing a major debt drive push," says Matt Kanzenbach, principal at St. Mark Lutheran School, Lincoln, Neb. "Local congregations may struggle with the economy being what it is."

William Gabb, pastor at Atonement, Plano, Tex., says attendees of the South Central District Convention were reminded of the reason for celebrating. "The purpose for observing a Year of Jubilee is to provide [God's] people with the opportunity to place our faith in him, who has done everything for us both in this life and for all eternity, through his Son, Jesus our Savior," he says.

Find out more about the Year of Jubilee at www.wels.net/jump/jubilee.



In addition to district business, delegates enjoyed fellowship and worship. Along with presentations that revolved around each convention's theme, there were opening and closing services. "The [North Atlantic] convention ended as it began, gathering around the Word of God in praise and thanks for the grace shown us in his Son, Jesus our Savior," says Harland Goetzinger, pastor at St. Paul, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Ad Hoc Commission

Many districts reported that a majority of their discussion focused on the Ad Hoc Commission's report. Pres. Schroeder, an advisory member of the commission, noted the reactions to the report at the conventions he attended. "Each district approached the discussion in its own way," he says. "One thing was consistent, however. Discussion and debate in all districts was varied, lively, and brotherly."

District structure

Some of the most lively debate came from the commission's recommendation to form three new districts from portions of the five largest districts: Northern Wisconsin, Western Wisconsin, Southeastern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan.

Two of the districts that would be affected by this change—Northern Wisconsin and Michigan—asked for more time to review the report and for further study by the commission. Many of the outlying districts—Pacific Northwest, Arizona-California, and North Atlantic—agreed with the idea, though not all endorsed the commission's exact proposal. Dakota-Montana and Nebraska said that instead of adding new districts, the Midwest districts' circuit pastor systems should be strengthened.

"Our district voted to retain the present structure, as we believe that the additional cost does not justify the change or address the problems voiced by the committee," reports Tim Kennitz, pastor at Mt. Olive, Lincoln, Neb.

Although there were mixed reactions regarding district structure, one-third of the districts did endorse the commission's proposed changes to the current circuit pastor system to help alleviate the workload of the district presidents.



Board for Parish Services

There were also many questions in response to the commission's recommendations to reconfigure the Board for Parish Services—in particular, that the Commissions on Youth Discipleship and Parish Schools be combined, and the oversight of Campus Ministry be moved from the Board for Home Missions to the Commission on Special Ministries.

Several districts did not react positively to these recommendations; others questioned the rationale or asked the commission to study some of the points more in depth.

"The [Northern Wisconsin] convention delegates struggled with the preliminary report from the Ad Hoc Commission," says Joel Lillo, pastor at Trinity, Appleton, Wis. "They expressed their appreciation of the commission's effort and praised the general tone of the report. There was a plea, though, to give members of the district more time to examine the document before giving the synod more direction on this report. There was a bit of nervousness about a couple of points, especially about the proposal to break up the larger districts of synod. . . . All of this inspired quite a bit of discussion."

The cost of ministerial education

There was widespread support for the commission's recommendation to make tuition fees at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., comparable and competitive with other schools in the region over the next six years. The commission had a similar recommendation regarding the synod's preparatory high schools, in that they be more comparable to the cost of attending area Lutheran high schools.

Reducing these up-front costs may encourage those considering enrollment. "It would appear to be more beneficial to help early as opposed to letting these young people incur a major debt," said a delegate to the Nebraska convention.

A second option to make ministerial education more affordable, according to the commission, would be to

implement a reimbursement program based on how many years a graduate serves in the ministry.

Continuing education

Overall, delegates seemed to agree with the commission that continuing education is important for pastors; however, several districts felt a flexible continuing education program should be encouraged instead of being required, as the commission recommended.

All of the feedback from the conventions is being formally presented by each district's president to the Ad Hoc Commission for consideration at its October meeting. The commission plans to incorporate comments and suggestions from the districts and present its final report at the 2009 synod convention.

"I know that many here [at the Minnesota convention] were thankful for the work of the Ad Hoc Commission," said Mr. Michael Plocher, teacher at St. Paul, New Ulm. "Many also feel that the work of the commission will help to make our synod stronger as we work together to serve the Lord."

To read all of the commission's recommendations and rationale, visit www.wels.net/jump/rtd and download the commission's preliminary report. Feedback can be offered about the report until Oct. 1 via e-mail: adhoc@wels.net or via mail: 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222.

All information was provided by the district reporters for Forward in Christ: AZ—Frederick Casmer; CA—Hermann John; D-M—Wayne Rouse; MI—John Eich; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Harland Goetzinger; NE—Tim Kemnitz; NW—Joel Lillo; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SC—William Gabb; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer. Read their full reports online at www.wels.net/jump/diconventions.



Among the items delegates at the North Atlantic District Convention discussed were the Ad Hoc Commission's report and the Year of Jubilee.



Michael Enderle, new second vice president of the Dakota-Montana District.



New officers of the Arizona-California District: (l to r) Jon Buchholz, president; Steve Degner, first vice president; Snowden Sims, second vice president; and David Clark, secretary.

District convention election results

Arizona-California District

President: Pastor Jon Buchholz
First vice president: Pastor Steve Degner
Second vice president: Pastor Snowden Sims
Secretary: Pastor David Clark

Dakota-Montana District

President: Pastor Peter Naumann
First vice president: Pastor Douglas Free
Second vice president: Pastor Michael Enderle
Secretary: Pastor David Bitter

Michigan District

President: Pastor John Seifert
First vice president: Pastor Paul Naumann
Second vice president: Pastor Carl Otto
Secretary: Pastor James Seelow

Minnesota District

President: Pastor Charles Degner
First vice president: Pastor Joel Luetke
Second vice president: Pastor Mark Schwertfeger
Secretary: Pastor Michael Hatzung

Nebraska District

President: Pastor Joel Frank
First vice president: Pastor Philip Zarling
Second vice president: Pastor Mark Voss
Secretary: Pastor Phillip Sievert

North Atlantic District

President: Pastor Joel Petermann
First vice president: Pastor Donald Tollefson
Second vice president: Pastor Eric Roecker
Secretary: Pastor Jeffrey Wegner

Northern Wisconsin District

President: Pastor Doug Engelbrecht
First vice president: Pastor Mark Gass
Second vice president: Pastor Joel Zank
Secretary: Pastor Ron Szep

Pacific Northwest District

President: Pastor Theodore Lambert
First vice president: Pastor John Steinbrenner
Second vice president: Pastor Joel Nitz
Secretary: Pastor Scott Mews

South Atlantic District

President: Pastor John Guse
First vice president: Pastor David Priebe
Second vice president: Pastor Larry Zahn
Secretary: Teacher Kurt Rosenbaum

South Central District

President: Pastor Vilas Glaeske
First vice president: Pastor Donald Patterson
Second vice president: Pastor John Vieths
Secretary: Pastor Christopher Goelzer

Southeastern Wisconsin District

President: Pastor David Rutschow
First vice president: Pastor James Huebner
Second vice president: Pastor David Kolander
Secretary: Pastor William Carter
Synodical Council representative: Mr. Tim Snyder

Western Wisconsin District

President: Pastor Herbert Prah
First vice president: Pastor Mark Lindner
Second vice president: Pastor Steven Staude
Secretary/treasurer: Pastor Daniel Sims
Synodical Council representative: Mr. John Tappe

WELS vice president accepts call



Pastor Wayne Mueller

Pastor Wayne Mueller, first vice president of WELS, has accepted a call to be lead associate pastor at St. John, Jefferson, Wis.

"I'm as excited as an old man can be—not about leaving [the Synod Administration Building], but about going to St. John," says Mueller. "There's no doubt I'll miss a lot of things, but whenever you're convinced that this is where God is leading you, you never look back. . . . You just follow the Spirit and do his will

and serve those in front of you with the Word."

Mueller's duties as first vice president concluded Aug. 31. Pastor James Huebner, second vice president of WELS, will assume some of the duties until an election for a replacement takes place at the synod convention next summer.

Mueller has served as first vice president since 2001. He also has served at two large congregations, as a professor

at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, and as administrator for the Board for Parish Services. "Everything that I have done since I left the parish 24 years ago has helped me gain even greater insight and perspective in parish work," says Mueller. "I cannot work as hard as I did when I was 25 . . . but I am hoping that I can work wiser."

WELS President Mark Schroeder says, "We'll miss his voice and his leadership. But it's always been clear that he has a real love for parish ministry. . . . I'm happy that this gives him the opportunity to get back to doing something that not only he loves but also that he is very good at and for which God has really equipped him well."

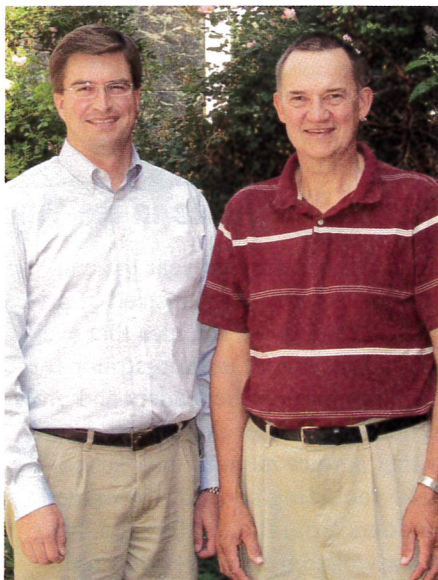
Mueller is thankful for the many opportunities he has had. "I want to thank the whole synod constituency for the privilege of being able to serve the church at large for the past 24 years, for being able to see the largest, conservative, evangelical, Lutheran church body in the world function from different angles," he says. "We know that all glory belongs to God."

Pastors in Arizona, Minnesota take on presidential roles

The Arizona-California and Minnesota Districts both elected new presidents at their biennial conventions in June. Jon Buchholz, pastor at Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz., was elected to replace Pastor Paul Janke, who did not stand for reelection after serving as district president for 10 years. Charles Degner, pastor at St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., took the place of Pastor Larry Cross, who retired after 16 years of service.

“The whole thing was a blur of excitement, uncertainty, apprehension—it’s kind of hard to describe the whirlwind of emotion,” says Buchholz of being nominated at convention. Since being elected, he says things have been pretty hectic. “It’s been a lot of full days trying to get up to speed, making phone calls, trying to learn how this or that process works, and trying to get to know some of the people I’ll be working with and serving.”

Degner says he’s also had a busy schedule since convention. “It’s going to be kind of a year of adjustment—and I’m sure some of my duties as a district president I’m not even aware of yet.” Degner says he knows traveling will be



Pastor Jon Buchholz (left), president of the Arizona-California District, and Pastor Charles Degner, president of the Minnesota District.

a big part of his job—and in the next two years, he hopes to visit as many church council and congregational meetings in the district as possible. “I want to go out there and see, to what degree, the office of district president can provide leadership and what direction we want to go. So rather than having any distinctive goals, I’d like to take the time to listen.”

Degner says he wants to encourage people in the Minnesota District to support Martin Luther College in New Ulm as well as help them realize the many opportunities for cross-cultural outreach to the Hispanic, Hmong, Cambodian, and Chinese populations—many of them in the Twin Cities. “I think too often we just overlook the crowds and the people who need to hear the gospel,” he says. “We have to open our eyes and see these opportunities because they are there.”

Buchholz says there are also cross-cultural opportunities in the Arizona-California District. “There are some really neat things happening in congregations and schools, as our fellow Christians are reaching out with the good news of Jesus,” he says. “I’m impressed by the commitment I see everywhere to preserving the truth in our midst, while sharing that precious truth with others. The thing I’m looking forward to most is working with, encouraging, and supporting all of these faithful people who express their devotion to the Lord in so many ways.”

Buchholz and Degner will continue to serve their calling congregations in addition to their new district duties. They also will serve with the other 10 district presidents on the Conference of Presidents, a group charged with supervising and maintaining the synod’s doctrinal unity. “The people I’ve known on the Conference of Presidents are some of the most respected men in our synod,” says Degner, previously the first vice president of the Minnesota District. “Just to serve with them will be a real joy.”

New president at Wisconsin Lutheran College

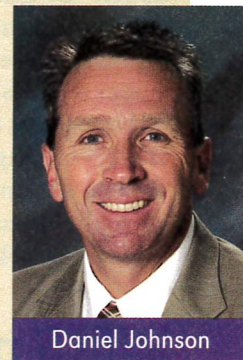
Daniel W. Johnson has accepted the call to be the next president of Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC), Milwaukee, Wis. Johnson is the third full-time president of WLC in its 35-year history, succeeding Dr. Timothy Kriewall, who retired in June.

“I am humbled and excited to join Wisconsin Lutheran College in its mission to prepare students for lives of servant leadership,” said Johnson. “It is a God-given privilege to ready students with not only academic excellence, but with the values, know-how, and desire to serve and be difference makers in their workplaces, communities and the world.”

Johnson, currently a member at Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz., has served in multiple levels of education over the past 20 years, including Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.; Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.; and Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb. He most recently served as principal at Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.

Johnson will defend his doctoral dissertation “Qualities of Christian Schools that Impact Enrollment” in fall 2008, earning his Ed.D. from Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. He is current president of the WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools and holds a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction from National-Louis University, Chicago, Ill., and a bachelor’s degree from Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

WLC is an independent, Christian liberal arts college of about 700 students. It is affiliated with WELS, but not financially supported by the synod’s operating budget. Learn more about WLC at www.wlc.edu.



Daniel Johnson

New column focuses on college students

Forward in Christ magazine (FIC) is working with the Campus Ministry Committee to offer a new column called Campus Cornerstone, which debuts in this issue (p. 18).

The column will touch on topics relating to college students today. The goal is twofold: to help college students grow in the faith as well as to raise awareness among FIC readers of some of the issues college students are dealing with.

“We want people to remember that college students are part of our synod as well,” says Pastor Caleb Schoeneck, campus pastor at Texas A&M and a member of the Campus Ministry Committee. “By reading [the column], they will get a glimpse of some of the things that are going on in college students’ lives.”

The column title, “Campus Cornerstone,” highlights where WELS college students can find their true strength. “Jesus is our cornerstone,” says Schoeneck. “This title is timely

for college students who are faced with new challenges of how to balance their freedom and manage their lives as they begin a new chapter.”

College students will be the main authors of the articles. The column, which will run every other month, shares space with the teen-written “Whatever” column.

The Campus Ministry Committee, a part of the Board for Home Missions, exists to help WELS college students grow in their faith so that they, in turn, can reach out to other college students with the gospel. Providing printed materials (along with electronic media) is one of the ways the committee reaches out to the more than 8,000 students in its database.

“It has been the longtime practice of the Campus Ministry Committee to send out FIC to college students,” says Schoeneck. “So it just seemed a natural fit to include campus ministry material in FIC.” The column



will replace *Lightsource*, a newsletter produced by the committee in the past.

For more information about Campus Ministry, go to www.wels.net/jump/campusministry. Here college students also can sign up to receive *Forward in Christ* for free.

WELS news briefs

Board for Home Missions

414-256-3284; bhmadmins@sab.wels.net

In order to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness, one administrator of operations is now serving both the offices of WELS Home and World Missions. Mr. Melvin Schuler, previously serving as associate administrator for Home Missions, began serving as the **director of missions operations** in July. This new position is under the auspices of the Joint Mission Council, a coordinating group authorized by both mission boards and ratified by the Synodical Council. Schuler will partner with the pastoral administrators of the two boards—Pastor Harold Hagedorn of Home Missions and Pastor Dan Koelpin of World Missions.

Home Missions has filled its **fourth mission counselor position**—a position that has been vacant for almost four years due to funding issues. Pastor Peter Kruschel, administrator for WELS Board for Ministerial Education, accepted the call to be the mission counselor in the Pacific Northwest and southwestern regions of the country. This call for a fourth mission counselor, part of Home Missions’ efforts to expand the mission counselor program, was supported by resolutions from last year’s synod convention.

Commission on Parish Schools

414-256-3222; cps@sab.wels.net

About 450 people—including principals, Lutheran elementary school teachers, early childhood ministry teachers and directors, public school teachers, pastors, and school board representatives—attended the **2008 WELS National School Leadership Conference** in June. This is the first year the conference was targeted toward all educators, instead of primarily toward principals. “It builds off the idea that every teacher is a leader,” says Jim Brandt, administrator for Parish Schools. “We need to nurture the leaders and grow more leaders in our schools—whether that means future principals or teachers that partner more in their school’s leadership.” Materials—including several videotaped presentations and handouts from the conference—are available online at www.wels.net/jump/leaderconf.



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

District news

Arizona-California

Cory Hunt, member of Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev., and his barbershop quartet OC Times, took home the gold at the 70th Annual International Convention, held in Nashville, Tenn., in July. Cory and his quartet-mates won both the Society's International Quartet Championship, as well as the chorus gold medal as members of the Masters of Harmony.

Michigan

Trinity, Bay City, Mich., recently opened the doors of its new Amazing Grace Christian book store. The store is led by laypeople and staffed by volunteers from the congregation. "It's amazing the talent that the Lord put at our disposal at just the right time for this," says Richard Starr, pastor at Trinity. "It gives us an opportunity to nurture our own members and reach out to others—that's the main purpose.

It's also a way to get good, biblically-sound Lutheran materials into the hands of more people."

South Atlantic

A two-acre lot of land owned by **Our Savior's, Port Orange, Fla.,** was transformed this spring into a community-friendly nature trail by the local WELS Boy and Girl Pioneers group. Approximately 30 children ages 5-13 worked on cleaning up this protected section of land. Local nurseries donated or gave discounts on plants used for the site. The trail, which was dedicated May 27, includes a butterfly garden and deer feeder. "It was a wonderful learning experience for the children," says Beth Dobberstein, one of the Pioneer leaders.

Nebraska

Former students and teachers of **Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb.,** returned for fellowship, worship services, and a

program as Gethsemane celebrated 60 years of Christian education during the weekend of May 31-June 1.

Happy anniversary!

SEW—Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., celebrated 35 years Sept. 7.

MI—Bethel, Bay City, Mich., celebrated **Florence Oblender's** 36 years in the teaching ministry on June 29.

The district reporters for this month are: CA—Hermann John; MI—John Eich; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NE—Timothy Kemnitz; SA—Chris Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

Minnesota



Approximately 40 members from Petra Lutheran Church and School, Sauk Rapids, Minn., participated in the Sauk Rapids parade June 27 and distributed information about the church and school and vacation Bible school materials. Since then, several families have pre-registered for vacation Bible school, and five new children may be enrolling in the school. "We hope that the parade materials have made our church and school's name more familiar to the community," says Geraye Menk, member at Petra.

Southeastern Wisconsin



Sarah Horvat, member at Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis., is one of the few artists from the Midwest whose artwork has been accepted into a juried exhibition celebrating the 400th birthday of John Milton and his famous work, *Paradise Lost*, Sept. 27-Nov. 2 in Brooklyn, N.Y. Some of Horvat's work will be showcased, including "Tree of Knowledge" (pictured). "Major magazine editors, Milton scholars, and publishers are attending the extravaganza, so I'm determined to get there," Horvat says. "My Eve series is Christian-based, heavily symbolic, and is certainly an evangelism tool."

CHANGES IN MINISTRY**Pastors**

Aderman, David D., to retirement
Cornelius, William L., to Battlement Mesa, Grand Junction, Colo.
Daley, Stephen E., to Petra, Sauk Rapids, Minn.
Huehn, Burgess A., to Rockwood, Manitowoc, Wis.
Kruschel, Peter H., to mission counselor, Board for Home Missions
Schwanke, Myron L., to retirement
Unnasch, Peter L., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Wigley, Brandon A., to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Zickuhr, John G., to retirement

Teachers

Beilke, Jacob A., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Bernard, Carolyn A., to Jesus Loves Me Learning Center, North Mankato, Minn.
Biesterfeld, Kirsten, to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.
Bourman, Melanie B., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
Bush, Kerri A., to Wisconsin, Racine, Wis.
Ebeling, Angela M., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Endorf, Annaliese J., to Prairie, Gibbon, Minn.
Falck, Kari A., to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.
Hansen, Heidi C., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kaiser, Paul E., to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
Klein, Wendy N., to Hope Christian School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Lauber, Nathan D., to Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis.
Mayfield, Craig, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Meyer, John E., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Pieros, Liz, to Hope, West Jordan, Utah
Raddatz, Timothy R., to Hope Middle School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Riesop, Reginald C., to East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Sellnow, Stephanie L., to Trinity-St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.
Slattery, Richard T., to retirement
Spanovich, Andrea M., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, Minn.
Wendland, Margaret A., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.

Staff minister
Loewen, Rick, to CrossWalk Ministries, Phoenix, Ariz.

COLLOQUY NOTICES

Rev. Norman Schell of Omaha, Neb., formerly a clergyman in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has successfully completed the final

step in the WELS pastoral colloquy program. He is thus declared eligible for entry into the WELS ministerium as a retired pastor and as such may participate in part-time service in our pastoral ministries.

Rev. Daniel Iwinski of Milwaukee, Wis., formerly a clergyman in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has successfully completed the final step in the WELS pastoral colloquy program. He is thus declared eligible for entry into the WELS ministerium as an active pastor and as such may participate in service in our pastoral ministries.

Mark Schroeder, president

ANNIVERSARIES

Wausau, Wis.—Salem (100). Sept. 7. Worship, 3 P.M.; dinner and entertainment to follow. Richard Russo, 715-845-2822; RussowRnK@aol.com.
Jenera, Ohio—Trinity (125). Sept. 14. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; fellowship to follow. Oct. 12. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; fellowship to follow. Arleen Bolwerk, 419-420-5504; arnjeff@gmail.com.
Burlington Wis.—St. John (150). Sept. 21 and Oct. 26. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; coffee fellowship between services. 262-763-8229; office@stjohnsburlington.org.
Allegan, Mich.—St. John (140). Sept. 21. Worship, 3 P.M.; open house and light luncheon to follow. Ron Kruse, 269-673-2079; lutheron@charter.net.
Fond du Lac, Wis.—St. Peter (150). Sept. 28. Anniversary worship, 10:30 A.M.; catered meal to follow. RVSP requested. Dedication service, 2 P.M. Bonnie Baerwald, 920-922-6563; bbaerwald@charter.net.
Kendall, Wis.—St. John (100). Oct. 5. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. Don Yahnke, 608-463-7536; orot2@yahoo.com.
Marinette, Wis.—Trinity (125). Oct. 5. Worship, 9 A.M.; German meal to follow. 715-732-9868.
La Crosse, Wis.—Mount Calvary-Grace school (50). Oct. 12. Worship, 11 A.M.; meal to follow at All-Star Banquet Hall. RSVP requested by Sept. 1. Pictures and memories requested ASAP. 608-784-8223, principal@mcglutheran.org or excare@mcglutheran.org.
Green Bay, Wis.—St. Paul (125). Nov. 2. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; luncheon to follow. RSVP requested. Carla Hoffmann, 920-435-8468; stpaul@new.rr.com.
Louisville, Ky.—Hope (35). Nov. 2. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; potluck to follow. RSVP requested by Oct. 19. 502-423-1211; pastor.lange@insightbb.com.

COMING EVENTS

New church dedication service—Sept. 6, 4 P.M. Shepherd of the Hills, Duluth, Minn. sothadmin@dulutheran.org.
WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall conference—Sept. 13, 8:30 A.M. Star of

Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis. Jan Fleming, 262-547-1961, jrflaming@wi.rr.com or Howard Wilsman, 920-682-5351, hbwilsman511@sbcglobal.net.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium—Sept. 22-23. Theme: "The Church." 262-242-8100; Web site, www.wls.wels.net.

Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.—920-787-3202; office@campphillip.com.

- Sept. 26-28. Fall Teen Retreat
- Oct. 3-5. Women's Retreat
- Oct. 10-12. Women's Scrapbooking Weekend
- Oct. 17-19. Confirmation Retreat
- Oct. 24-26. Singles' Retreat

Golf tournament—Sept. 27, 2 P.M. Site, Glencoe Country Club. Host, Trinity Lutheran School, Belle Plaine, Minn. Jeff Vinkemeier, 952-873-3487.

11th annual Life Banquet and Auction—Sept. 28. 3 P.M. Hosted by Waukesha Chapter of WELS Lutherans for Life. Site, Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Kathy Gates, 262-513-9590.

Oktoberfest—Oct. 4, 6 P.M. Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis. Web site, www.risen-savior-luth.org.

Martin Luther College Ladies Auxiliary annual meeting—Oct. 8. Registration, 9 A.M. Meeting, 9:30 A.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. 507-354-8221. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu.

WELS Historical Institute annual meeting—Oct. 26, 3 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Chapel, Mequon, Wis. Mark Braun, 414-443-8849.

Metro-Milwaukee area Reformation service—Nov. 2. 4 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.; meal and ministry presentations to follow. Sponsored by Greater Milwaukee Area Chapter of WELS Kingdom Workers. 414-771-6848.

A Dance with the Lord Pastors' Wives' Renewal—Nov. 7-8. Burnsville, Minn. Valerie Johnson, 612-267-3017; coordinator@true-northwels.org. Web site, www.choicesforyou.org/pwrenewal.

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries annual meeting and conference—Nov. 8, 8 A.M.-4:30 P.M. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. 414-259-8122; wlwm@wlwm.net. Web site, www.wlwm.net/news.

NAMES WANTED

Beaumont/Banning, Calif., area—Rick Johnson, 951-734-0923.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Choir accompanist—Lord of Love, DeForest, Wis., needs an accompanist for choir rehearsal on Tuesday evenings and for Sunday services. Elaine Wilson, 608-846-9830; or Jerry Ewings, 608-846-9036.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@sab.wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date. View an updated bulletin board at www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard and a calendar at www.wels.net/jump/calendar.

Picture this



Alejandro Sánchez (right) graduated from the Mexican Lutheran Seminary on July 20, 2008. Here Missionary Mike Hartman is handing Sanchez his degree. Also pictured is Señor Jesús Vega, the president of the Mexican Lutheran Church. The graduation ceremony was held in conjunction with the closing service for the national convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church in Mexico. Now a total of seven Mexican national pastors serve that church body.

Submitted by Rachel Hartman

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.

FACTS ABOUT MEXICO

Population: Almost 109 million

Number of states: 31 states and 1 federal district

Approximate geographical area: 1/5 of the size of the United States, or three times the size of Texas.

Capital city: Mexico City

Languages: Mexico has no “official” language. Spanish is the most common language spoken. Additionally, more than 60 other languages, mostly indigenous, are spoken.

Religious affiliations:

Roman Catholic – 76.5%	Protestant – 6.3%
Unspecified – 13.8%	None – 3.1%

FACTS ABOUT

the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church in Mexico

People

- Baptized nationals – 621
- Missionaries – 2
- Vicars – 1
- National pastors – 7
- Seminary students – 3
- Mission layworkers – 2

Places

- Congregations – 8
- Preaching stations – 9

LIFE IN MEXICO

In the World Missions blog, Rachel Hartman, wife to Missionary Mike Hartman who serves in Torreón, Mexico, shares what is going on in the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church as well as what it is like living in Mexico.

EXCERPT FROM JULY 21 BLOG

The convention last week was one of the best ones in the history of the Mexican Lutheran Church. Excitement filled the air as pastors shared statistics from their congregations. They tallied up the numbers, and realized that the Mexican Lutheran Church has grown significantly during the last year. . . .

What’s the reason for the growth? We have more Mexican pastors than ever before, so the increase in manpower has helped get the message out. Many of our pastors are very evangelism-minded. But most of all, it is evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in our congregations.

The pastors left the convention feeling recharged. They are eager to get back to work spreading the gospel!

EXCERPT FROM JULY 9 BLOG

Last week we had a great break from the hot Torreón sun. On Wednesday afternoon and evening, they sky grew cloudy and the wind picked up. Then it started raining! It rained on and off for the next three days. The temperature cooled down considerably with the rain.

This was the first time it had rained for a long stretch of time since October. Needless to say, we ere extremely excited.

Torreón is not well equipped to handle rain, so some of the streets by our house flooded. A good chunk of the plaster on our ceiling fell off, too, which it usually does when it rains. But all of this was well worth getting to watch the rain and enjoy the cool weather. Trinity [the Hartmans’ daughter] liked it so much she sat right down in a puddle to play!

Read more of Rachel’s updates as well as those from other missionaries around the world at <http://missions.wels.net>

Voices of youth

David D. Sellnow



This imagined dialogue about engaging youth in the church's work includes active and inactive young adults of St. Barnabas Lutheran Church. The comments are based on the 2005 report, "Why Young People Leave WELS."

Rev. James (St. Barnabas' new pastor, recently installed):

"Let's start with a basic question. What has spurred you to remain active or caused you to drift away?"

Tim (active teen): "My parents really are the ones who have kept me involved.

We've always had devotions at home. My sisters and I can ask Mom and Dad spiritual questions anytime. So it's not just church on Sundays; faith is a way of life for us."

Jacki (inactive, in her 20s): "We never talked about religion at my house. I just was forced to attend church on Sundays. My parents made me feel that I had to go to church if I wanted to go to heaven. When I moved out on my own, I stopped going altogether."

Nate (high school student, inactive): "The church itself can contribute to the problem. Our previous pastor at St. Barnabas was very aloof. He never took the time to be involved with the children or youth of the congregation. Once, I even tried going to him with some troubles I was having, but he said he was busy and then never got back to me. That really hurt."

Gina (active teen): "Other adults are part of the equation too. I've stayed active, but I wonder when I see many members just going through the motions. After confirmation, I started going to adult Bible classes . . . and realized that only a handful of adults participated. I'm not saying adults must be perfect. We just want them to be as genuine about their faith as they want us to be."

Abby (university student): "It's easy to say, 'It was my parents' fault,' or, 'It was the church's fault.' But honestly, I've got nobody to blame other than myself. Since going

off to college, I've barely been involved with church. I stay busy studying and working a part-time job. And there's so much social life to enjoy with friends. It seems like I hardly ever get enough sleep . . . so I tend to sleep in on weekends. I get to church only when I'm home with my family."

Rev. James: "I wonder if we could connect you with a pastor who does some ministry on your campus. A campus ministry group can be a source of solid social connections as well as spiritual support."

Tim: "I appreciate the spiritual support we're getting right here at this retreat. What Nate and Gina said is true; spiri-

tual leaders ought to be compassionate and concerned. The fact that our church leaders have arranged this retreat for us—to listen to us and talk with us—is a wonderful way to build our relationships with one another and with God."

Abby: "We do need to be built up. I'll admit that my love for Jesus has grown kind of cold. I can't keep myself fired up spiritually. I need others to encourage me."

Mrs. Bonita (Sunday school teacher): "It sounds like you are saying, 'We want you to lead us.' You're looking for adults to be mentors and role models, to advise and guide—but gently. You want us to care for you in Christ, to speak the truth in love. Am I right?"

(Heads nod around the room.)

The conversation is just beginning. Come back and listen to more conversations from St. Barnabas in future issues of Forward in Christ. Meanwhile, start your own conversations in your congregation! See resources at www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy.

David Sellnow, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm.

we want you to
lead us

Next month: **Worship**

Prepare the next GENERATION

Parents are a key influence for the next generation of believers.

John A. Braun

"We try to keep Jesus as the cornerstone of our lives,"

write Dan and Jackie Moyles. That's a good goal for any Christian and especially for every parent. Children pose challenges for parents at every stage of their development, but when the natural desire for independence and experimentation blossom in the teen years the challenges grow.

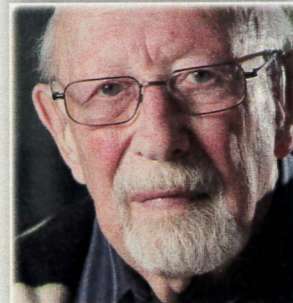
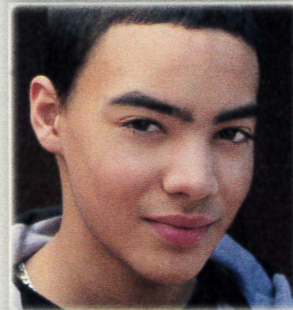
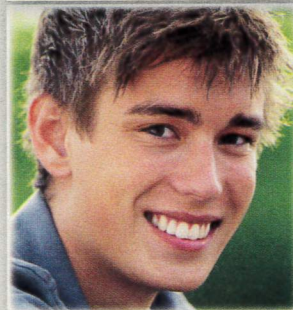
In spite of all the literature that seems to suggest that teens think their parents are dinosaurs or worse, teens want direction, love, and advice from their parents. Of course, even the best parents can experience the dark side of teen rebellion. Some sadly swallow bitter pills of heartache and anguish. But the fact remains that parents have a greater influence on their children—teens included—than anyone else.

An ancient task

No more important task finds its way on a parent's agenda than sharing Jesus with their children and helping their children remain faithful to Jesus. "Our children are our most precious earthly treasure. Their welfare, both spiritually and worldly, is important to us as parents," the Moyles write. "Our Lutheran-based beliefs, our focus on Jesus, and our church environment—including school, worship, Bible study, and church-family fellowship—are key ingredients to reinforcing with our children how important our faith and corresponding belief system are to us."

Teaching, modeling, and mentoring faith is a full-time job—an ancient task assigned to parents of all time. Moses wrote long ago, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:6,7).

Who is up to such a task? "We have failed miserably and often," the Moyles confess like so many other parents. "When we do fail, we remind our children that our sinful fabric must



be beaten back daily, and that we must understand, admit, and receive forgiveness for those actions."

Surrounding your children with other Lutheran influences can help. Often others can provide another model for teens to emulate, and perhaps those leaders can become mentors on your teens' Christian journey. When children fail and sin breaks into their own lives, the supporting Christian environment reinforces the seriousness of sin, the reality of temptation, but most importantly the comfort of grace in Jesus and his forgiveness.

A task plagued with challenges

But the challenges are real. Teens like all the rest of us receive a seemingly unending barrage of suggestions that pound away at morality, faith, and Jesus. Immorality often appears to be the norm. Again and again temptation attempts to lure children from the one thing needful. Parents making an effort to have family devotions on a regular basis try to combat these influences.

What advice would the Moyles give to other parents? "Provide opportunities and encourage them to put their faith into action . . . but I can say that Christian teens in general are reluctant to jeopardize their social standing by participating in many public Christian witnessing events unless they can be supported by other teens." The Moyles also decided to make sure their children would attend a Lutheran school regardless of where they worked or lived.

But mostly the Moyles thank God for what they see in their own children, who "don't reject what the Lord teaches, often participate in activities that place their faith in action, generally respect and honor their Christian leaders" and who, they believe, "will continue to serve the Lord for the rest of their lives."

John Braun is the executive editor of Forward in Christ.

This is the first article in a five-part series on keeping youth involved in the church.

OVER

A bus ride home brings tragedy and strength.

Alicia A. Neumann

Ten friends sat together in a ski lodge, tucked away in southwest Colorado. They were ready to head home after their weekend get-away, but an impending blizzard threatened to keep them in Telluride. The group decided to try to beat the storm. They and approximately 40 others filed onto the charter bus and began their journey down the mountain. Relief spread through the passengers as the bus finally stopped to remove the chains from the tires. The worst part of the journey seemed to be over—that is, until they approached the notorious pass formerly known as Highway 666. Instead of following the rest of the buses back to Phoenix, the driver decided to navigate the dangerous road. It was a very dark night, and soon it began to sleet. . . .

That's how David Hartzell described the events preceding the tragic bus crash near Mexican Hat, Utah, in January—a crash that took the lives of nine people and seriously injured many of the other passengers.

"It was just like a movie," remembers Hartzell, a member at Shepherd of the Hills, Phoenix, Ariz. "On our way [to Telluride], we were priding ourselves on being the first bus to get there. We were so fast, and the driver was awesome—he was a 72-year-old guy named Welland. And we were all like, 'Yeah Welland!' So on the way home we were going fast as well. We could feel the bus kind of swaying as we went around the corners. Then we went around one corner and we started hearing rocks kick up on the side of the bus. People were saying, 'What's going on?'" So I stood up and looked out of the front of the bus, and I could see we were veering off the road. The back slid out and then there was a [guard] rail that kind of undercut us. I just remember the initial roll. . . ."

Finding friends

According to police reports, the bus tumbled more than 40 feet down an embankment and rolled several times. The top of the bus was ripped off, and all but two passengers were ejected.

Hartzell also flew out of the bus and was knocked unconscious from the impact. "I woke up, and it was dark," he says. "It was cold, and my shoes had flown off. I don't remember who was around me, but people were

saying, 'We need to get help.' We were down in the middle of nowhere—there was no cell phone service or anything. So I walked up the hill in my socks. When I got to the top, I saw my other friend there, and he was waving down traffic. There were people scattered everywhere. . . ."

Hartzell says a few cars and a truck had stopped and begun helping the passengers. "It just seemed like a dream," says Hartzell. "People were strewn all about. There were all different sorts of injuries, and there were dead people around. It was terrible. People were screaming and moaning. I thought, 'This can't be happening.' And so many thoughts were running through my mind—I was thanking God that I was alive, and I was worried about my friends."

Local and national media reports said nine people died that night; thankfully all of Hartzell's friends survived, but Hartzell wouldn't find that out until later. He was still at the top of the hill, now lying down. "After I got to the top, I was like, 'Oh man, I do not feel good,' because I think everything was catching up to me," remembers Hartzell. "Another [charter] bus came along, and I had this 'shining angel' come to me. Her name was Denise and she sat with me the whole time. I was lying on the ground for four hours because we were out in the middle of nowhere and it took forever for the ambulances—they had to come from everywhere, from all four states. Denise just sat with me the whole time and tried to get help for me."

Hartzell was finally loaded into a van and after an hour's journey through a blizzard, he was admitted to a tiny hospital in Colorado. Since there was not enough space for everyone, Hartzell was placed in a makeshift room. "I was lying there in the storage room, and I could hear one of my friends in the hallway," says Hartzell. "He was walking around, wheeling his IV, and visiting everybody in their rooms. I was like, 'Joel!' And he's like, 'Dave-o! What's up?' So he came in and said, 'I'm so thankful we're alive,' and we had a prayer for our friends and everybody."

Hartzell was soon transported to another hospital for his injuries: a broken leg, a separated shoulder, and a hematoma (a collection of blood resulting from a break in the wall of a blood vessel) on his back. He was hospitalized for three days. During that time, he found his cell phone and contacted his family. "I usually don't cry that often, but just hearing my sister's voice . . . I don't know.

THE

I just started crying after that. I was so glad to hear her," says Hartzell.

Going home

After being released from the hospital, he flew to Arizona and stayed with his sister. The following Sunday he went to church. "Some of our friends were still in the hospital, but there were four of us there," says Hartzell. "And Pastor Eckert [at Shepherd of the Hills] had the most heartfelt prayer. Following the service he said, 'David, I feel that God has seriously brought you guys back from the dead.'"

Another member of the congregation, Brian Terrell, a certified counselor, took Hartzell and his friends through therapy. "We all got together and told our version of the story. He asked us questions like, 'What have you taken away from this? What are you feeling?'" Hartzell remembers. "I did get a little depressed for a while there, and I had some weird thoughts go through my mind. So I talked to my pastor and my parents about that. Just talking about it helps."

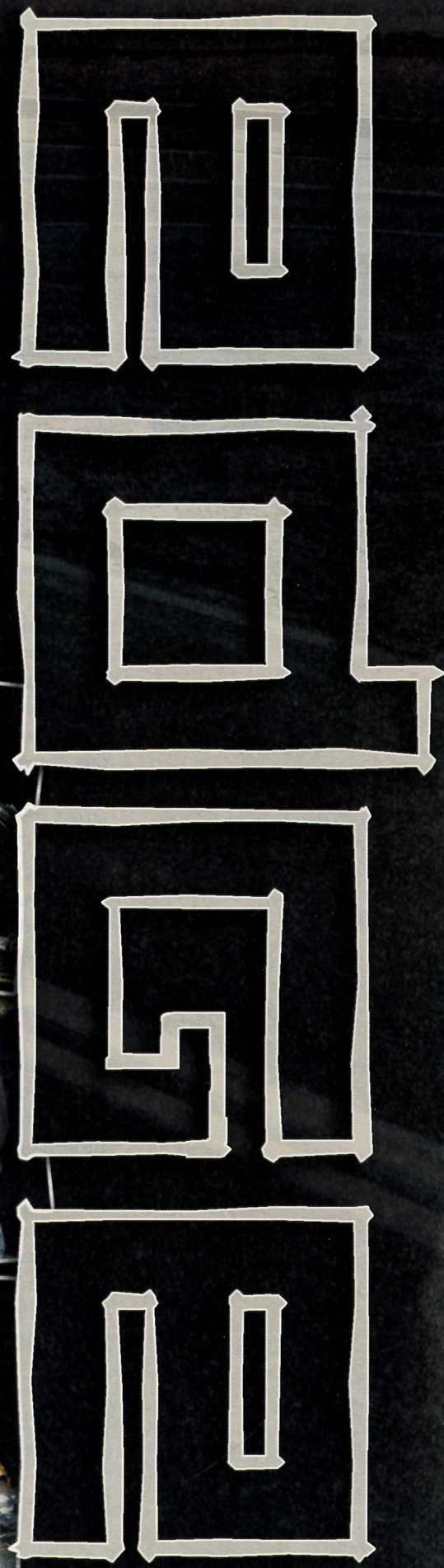
But more than anything, Hartzell says his faith helped him cope. "You know, some people said they asked God, 'Why? Why did this happen to me?' But I knew it was God's will. The [crash] didn't weaken my faith; if anything it strengthened it. I'm thankful God brought me through this and that he has a purpose for me. He could have just as easily taken me right then and there; we were all that close [to death]. But he kept us around for a reason—and he does that every day."

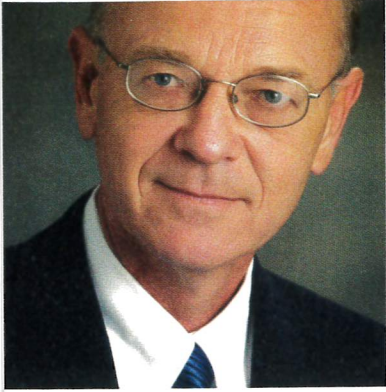
Looking back on the crash, Hartzell says that it really put things in perspective for him. "I worry about stuff all the time, like what I'm doing in life," he says. "But this has [allowed]

me to kind of step back and see the big picture. I just have to remind myself that God has something coming for me, and it's going to be good. He's promised great things for us."

Alicia Neumann is assistant editor of Forward in Christ.

Read an uncut interview with David Hartzell after Sept. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net.





Mark Schweden

A synod that is relevant to life in today's world

Perhaps like never before, Christian churches want to be seen as “relevant.” Several independent congregations in Florida have even used that word as a part of their name. The Relevant Church in Miami describes itself in this way: “We started a little over a year ago with a desire to create a church where people could feel comfortable and loved. We wanted to build a church that was real, genuine, and dealt with relevant issues” (www.relevantchurchmiami.com). Other churches have worked to create an image in which they are seen as “in touch” with today’s culture, concerned about timely issues, and able to provide answers to the struggles people face every day. In a desire to offer relevance, those leaders stress relationships over doctrines and tips for Christian living over solid biblical teaching.

You may have read such descriptions and wondered, “What’s wrong with those goals and strategies?” Nothing. But all too often the all-consuming desire for relevance and popular appeal produces solutions that do more harm than good. Instead of relevant churches, these strategies often produce churches that are little more than reflections of a changing popular culture. Instead of encouraging Christians to be different as they serve as salt and light in a hostile world, they inadvertently encourage Christians simply to blend in to a culture and a society that is anything but Christian.

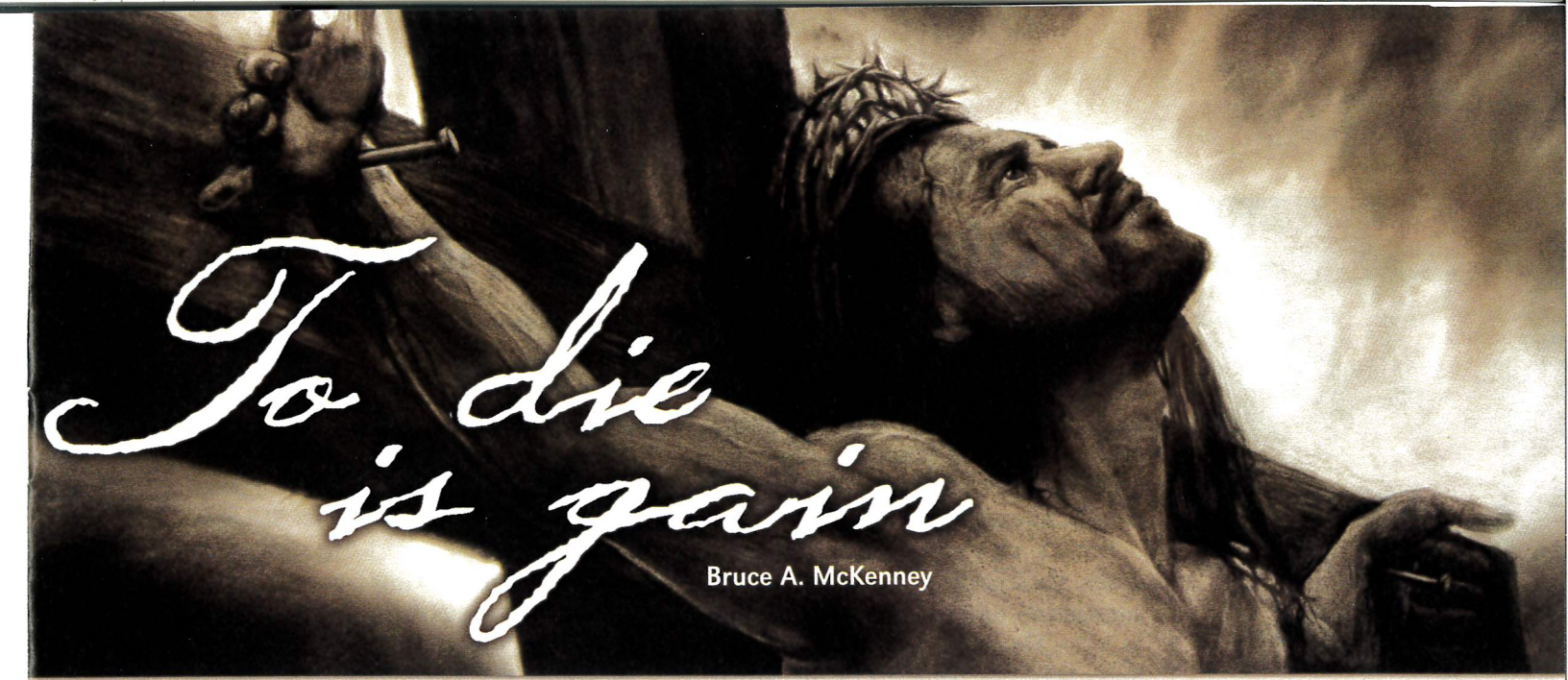
If you belong to a WELS congregation, it’s safe to assume that you believe that your congregation and your synod are relevant to your everyday life. It’s likely that you recognize that the true relevance of the church is not characterized by what everyone seems to want on a given day.

Instead true relevance lies completely and entirely in the message proclaimed in the pulpits and classrooms of our churches.

What are some things that are important for your life in today’s world? You need to know that there is something called absolute truth. You need to know that you are a sinner who deserves the punishment of a righteous God. You need to know that this righteous God has revealed a way for sinners to have eternal life with him in heaven. You need to know that this way is found only in Jesus Christ and in his perfect life, his innocent death, and his glorious resurrection. You need to know the joy that comes from knowing God’s full and free forgiveness in Christ. You need to be reminded of your mission in life. You need to be encouraged to live your life as husbands, wives, children, workers, friends, and citizens in a way that reflects the love that God has shown for you in Christ. You need to know the importance of prayer, the power of God’s sacraments, and the joy of worshiping with your fellow believers.

These truths are proclaimed and taught in our congregations. Admittedly, they are not new or trendy or creatively different. They are simply the timeless truths that our gracious God has preserved for us in his Holy Word. If you are hearing these truths, then you belong to a church that is offering what is truly relevant to your life as a redeemed child of God living in a sinful world. That’s the kind of relevance that does not change with the times or with the whims of a fickle world. That’s the kind of relevance that comes only as a gift of God and will continue as long as his Word is faithfully preached and taught among us.

Next: We are a synod that is joyful and optimistic.



To die is gain

Bruce A. McKenney

*K*ayla had been my daughter's best friend in first grade. They not only spent time together in the classroom and on the playground, but also would often spend time together playing at each other's house. On the Friday of Mother's Day weekend that year, Kayla's house was destroyed by fire. Although she had gotten out safely with her mother and younger brother, Kayla ran back into the house to wake up her older brother, who was sleeping upstairs. He jumped to safety, but Kayla never made it out again. She died saving her brother's life.

My daughter was listed in Kayla's obituary as a surviving friend. What a testament to their young Christian friendship. As she began to write a note for the bouquet of flowers we were going to send Kayla's family, she looked up at my wife and said, "Mom, Kayla's the luckiest one in our whole class."

My wife asked, "Why would you say that?"

My daughter answered, "She's the first one in our class to get to see Jesus!"

Losing a child in death

Ask anybody who's seen it and they will tell you that there is no grief like the grief parents experience when they lose a child in death. It seems so out of order. Usually children bury their parents. Rarely do parents have to bury a child. But it does happen. When it happens, no one can really know the depths of such sorrow, except another parent who has gone through the same sorrow. Such a death tears our hearts. It's a painful reminder that our children really don't belong to us. They belong to God. He gives them to us for a time so that we can get them ready for heaven.

That's the very reason we can turn to God at such a

difficult time. You see, God the Father knows what it's like. His own Son, Jesus Christ, died. He died not only to take away sin but also to conquer death so that people, old and young, would have the hope of seeing Jesus in heaven. Because this is so, no one should think that God's people are "shortchanged" when they die at a young age. With the psalmist we confess, "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11).

Bringing up children in the Lord

That's what we talked about at Kayla's funeral. She laid down her life so that her brother could live. But Jesus laid down his life that we all might live. That's why it's important to bring our babies to Jesus in Baptism. They are conceived and born in sin and need the forgiveness that God bestows through Baptism. Jesus promised, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16).

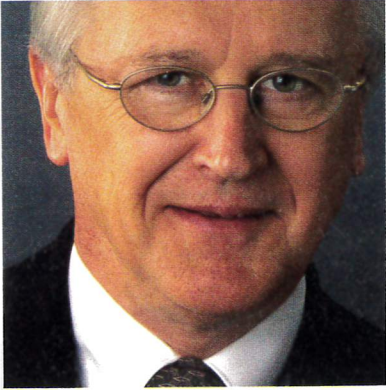
It's also important to bring them to church regularly and share God's Word with them at home. They need to grow in their faith in Jesus so that when they grow old and die, they can go to heaven and live with the Savior forever. Recall what Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy: "From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

But . . . if they don't grow old and Jesus calls them to himself in heaven sooner than what we would expect or want, they can be "lucky" just like Kayla. Because whenever children of God die, young or old, they will get to see Jesus in heaven!

Contributing editor Bruce McKenney is pastor at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

What comfort can we take when a child dies?

Whenever children of God die, young or old, they'll see Jesus in heaven.



John Ortberg

Strategy of darkness

Satan knows it. So do you. The gospel of Christ crucified is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). God has chosen to work miracles every day with the gospel—a power frequently underestimated by Christians and non-Christians alike.

But it’s not a power Satan underestimates. He sees the power of the gospel consistently turn hearts from sin to faith in Jesus. He understands that the Holy Spirit preserves believers by the gospel in Word and sacrament.

What do you think Satan might do in the face of such power? It’s not difficult to imagine what kind of strategies Satan might employ to oppose God. Of course, he can’t use a frontal assault. That would be foolish in light of God’s superior power. Instead, his tactics are subtle and devious.

The most obvious strategy is to keep the gospel away from people. In a few places, the Bible and Christian worship are illegal. But in most of the world, the Word of God is not an underground power. Instead the Bible is everywhere. So Satan must adapt his strategies. And he’s very good at it.

First, he manages to distract our attention by the busy flow of everyday life. Work, family, our recreation, our troubles, and even the world’s troubles all seem so important. We watch the news, read the papers, worry about gas prices and the economy, and then allow ourselves the needed distraction of the weekend or a vacation. At the end of a week, a month, or even a year, we can’t remember when we were in church. We think we know Jesus, but we have no power to sustain the thought or come to him instead of attending to our own worldly affairs.

Working with our own sinful flesh, Satan also convinces us that we don’t really

need the power of the gospel. With his help, some conclude that the gospel is impractical or boring. Even when people go to church, they find ways to avoid God’s powerful gospel. They complain about the pastor, the unfriendly people, the long service, or something else and decide that they can do without the gospel. The strategy has kept thousands—no millions—from the power of the gospel through the centuries.

And don’t forget that Satan makes it appear that the gospel is for the old and the weak. The young, sexy, successful, and powerful appear to do just fine without it. At least that’s what the media report. And the temptation suggests that only a minority—and a narrow-minded stodgy one at that—go to church, pray, or have any time for the gospel of Christ crucified.

Another strategy has been around as long as Satan: offer an alternative. After all, Satan has suggested for thousands of years that other religious ideas are better. The world has always been filled with false teachers that keep people from God’s message of truth. They are like a plague of mosquitoes or locusts and will disturb us as long as the world endures.

Our old foe might even convince us that the gospel is not enough. “More is needed,” he whispers in our ears. “Look at the church’s decline. The gospel alone is not working.” Once we’re convinced, other methods replace the gospel or overshadow it to give members emotional highs. But without Christ crucified, such methods only provide a false sense of spirituality.

And our response? We stay connected to the gospel. It’s the only power God has promised to use in order to keep us through life’s ups and downs until we enter his presence. Never underestimate its power.

GOD'S tool belt for unity

Donald W. Patterson

What needs to be fixed?

Lack of gentleness

"I'll never work in the kitchen with her again, Pastor. She's just too bossy and pushy with orders." That's how one woman removed herself from long-loved Christian service at her church. She had silently quit helping for several weeks, and no one knew why. The pastor stopped by her home one day to ask her. It turns out that she had slipped away because another woman in the kitchen lacked gentleness.

Has that ever happened at your church? A man in the Sunday Bible study makes a true statement but says it so coarsely that others are offended. Or a youth group member scoffs at the teachings of another denomination on the very Sunday you had brought a visitor to the youth Bible study. You cringe. Or in a voter's assembly someone makes a strong statement accusing others. You can hear a pin drop, and it splits the unity that was flourishing there.

A lack of gentleness can send stress fractures throughout every foundational relationship in the church. It's true: how we say things is just as important as what we say. Sometimes we Christians think we can take our cue from the Old Testament prophets and just let it all hang out when we speak to each other. But before you thunder your viewpoint in God's church, you had better make sure the situation warrants it. Otherwise gentleness is always in order. Gentleness is the music that the Holy Spirit has created to carry the gospel into our hearts. It is one of the nine fruits we received from him when we came to faith in Jesus (Galatians 5:22,23).

The apostle Paul urges us to be gentle with one another because gentleness preserves and promotes unity in God's

church. Look at these two different passages from Paul's letters and explore how gentleness is a uniting force in the body of Christ.

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near (Philippians 4:5).

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

Familiarize yourself with the tool

- Why does God want everyone to see our gentleness?
- Why do we tend to be less gentle with family and friends than we are with strangers?
- How does remembering that the Lord is near help us to remain gentle in all circumstances?
- Why is gentleness so important when we are trying to restore a sinner to God?
- What kind of spirituality makes a gentle saint?
- What temptations could overtake us when we try to restore another fallen Christian?

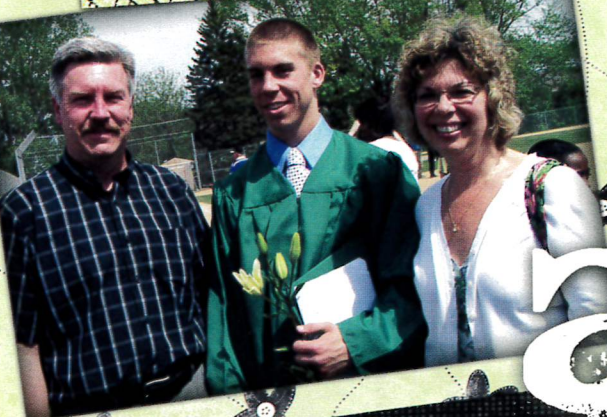
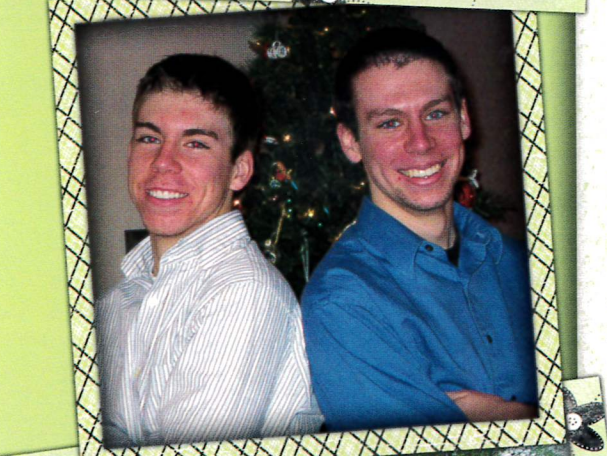
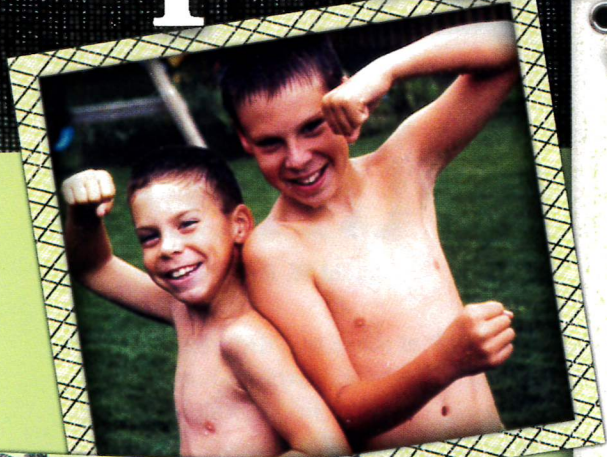
Use the tool

- Ask family members and close friends if they see you as a gentle Christian. Ask them to give examples and do not try to vindicate yourself.
- Think of someone you are concerned about who is caught in a sin. Write a gentle e-mail to them. Save the e-mail. Reopen it in a few days and look for truth, gentleness, and Christ-centeredness. When it has all three, prayerfully send it.
- Describe why a face-to-face meeting allows gentleness to be seen more than an e-mail.

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

This is the ninth article in a 10-part series on Christian unity. Find this article and answers online after Sept. 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net

Spread your wings



I have felt the whole summer tick quickly by, minute by minute. Our son leaves for college in two weeks, and I fear my heart will stop.

Today I read again the schedule for welcome week, trying feebly to commit to my memory the parent parts of the week . . . and suddenly, once again, the tears come. They surprise me. I can't stop them. Sometimes I can't seem to get my breath, and I think to myself that I must be losing my mind.

If only I could go back in time, back to when he wanted to be read to, when he would sit on my lap, rock with me, laugh with me, and I'd hug him and he'd hug me back. His time this summer has been spent with friends and work, and very little with us. I know this is normal . . . if there is such a thing the summer before college. At least everyone keeps telling me it is normal . . . that they are just breaking away, getting ready to go, finding their own way. We know he'll be home for the summers, but we also know it will never be the same.

But what is normal for me? Normal to want a hug? Normal to want to cry? Normal to want to write down all the things I'm not sure I taught him over the past 18 years and make him read it? Normal to feel I didn't do enough, didn't teach enough, didn't love enough?

I know he will do wonderfully. He is smart. He has friends, and he is excited to go. He attended Sunday school, Lutheran elementary school, and a Christian high school. He has been fed with God's Word from infancy, and he knows Jesus as his Savior and Lord. He will continue to be fed as he now will attend a Christian college. We are sure that the One who started the good work in him will bring it to completion as he promises. My mind knows it is good for him to go. But my heart screams for him to stay. I want to make sure he knows how much we love him. How we feel so blessed that God shared him with us for this short time. How excited we are to see just what plans the Lord has worked out for his life. How he will be a blessing to others.

So to you, Son, and to all the sons and daughters out there whose mothers are "normal" like me, we love you more than you can possibly understand right now. Although we will cry as we say good-bye (or more likely in the car on the way home), we truly are happy for you and pray that God will bless you with good gifts of wisdom, love, kindness, gentleness, hope, and faith and bring you even closer to him. We pray that he will give you the strong desire to share Christ's love wherever life takes you. Remember to change your underwear, brush your teeth, get some sleep, and please call or e-mail or text us every once in a while, and help keep our hearts beating.

Kathy Lobdell is a member at Ascension, Plymouth, Minnesota.

and fly

Kathy Lobdell