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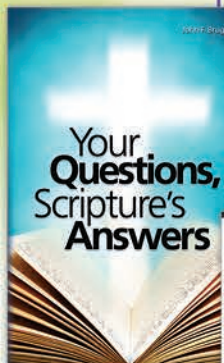
Our victory isn't found in death but in the resurrection from the dead. *Page 10*



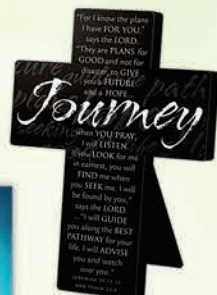
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VICAR IN MISSIONS



Students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary spend their third year, not in the classroom, but full time in congregations throughout North America. This vicar year gives them an opportunity to put classroom lessons into practice and assist congregations' ministries.

Through the Vicar in Missions program, funded by the seminary and the Board for Home Missions, students learn and serve in mission congregations or established congregations with a mission mindset. These opportunities increase students' excitement and commitment to share Jesus with everyone they meet.

For more information, visit www.wls.wels.net/vim.

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May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. — 1 KINGS 8:57

WHAT'S INSIDE

God invites us all to pray to him, to ask him for whatever we want in Jesus' name. For the last six months, *Forward in Christ* has been exploring Jesus' prayer life and how that relates to us (p. 33). This month we start a related series that further examines what God has to say about prayer in the Bible (p. 26).

As you think about your prayer life, here are a few more things to add to your prayer list:

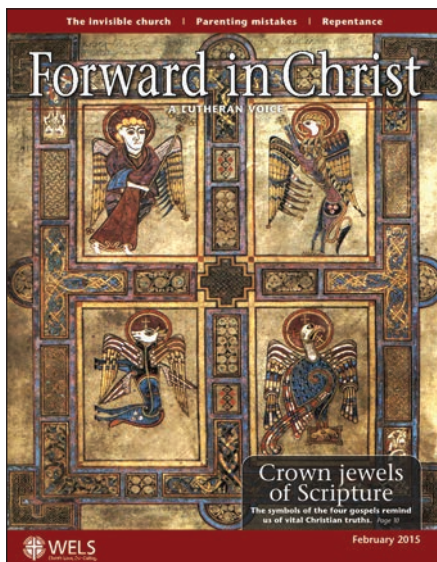
- Pray that God blesses the Christian church as it continues the work of proclaiming the gospel message to all people (p. 12).
- Pray for the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Pakistan as it reaches out to a country that is less than 1 percent Christian (p. 28). Also pray for the safety of Christians everywhere, especially in areas of persecution. Pray that God gives them strength and boldness to stay close to their Savior no matter what the circumstances.
- Pray for opportunities to show Christian love to those in your community and the world, always with an eye to pointing more people to Christ's perfect love for all creation (pp. 22 & 30).

Julie Wietzke



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HOW DO YOU READ FIC?

Usually I read FIC from cover to cover after church. Feb. 15 was different—I read the articles out loud to my husband on our two-hour drive to Mankato to visit family. All were very interesting and informative!

It is always good to find articles by former DMLC Prof. Theodore Hartwig, and we enjoyed the details in “Scripture’s crown jewels” [Feb.]. One question: What is the original source of the cover art depicting the symbols of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?

*Trudy Madetzke
Marshall, Minnesota*

The cover artwork for the February issue was illustrations from the Book of Kells, a 1,200-year-old illuminated manuscript containing the four gospels in Latin—ed.

In response to your question about what people read first, my wife and I are pretty unimaginative in that we begin on page 1 and work our way to the end. As my wife expresses it, “I don’t want to miss anything.” I don’t know how representative we are of most readers, given our demographic.

It would be interesting to know the difference in reading habits between life-long WELS members vs. new converts. How about MLC/WLS students? Are they making use of FIC on a regular basis? If so, electronically or in print? Reaching them and connecting them to the magazine, the website, and other WELS publications makes sense in that they will be more likely to continue to use these resources and encourage others to do so once in the ministry.

*Brian and Sue Heinitz
Henderson, Nevada*

BRAIN WORK

I thoroughly enjoyed your 20-question, multiple choice memory quiz [March]. I did quite well but missed a couple, which shows that I needed to reread the Bible to find the answer on

the missed questions. It is easy to miss some key items from previous readings and listening to sermons. The method of the quizzes gets the brain to work plus forces us to open the Bible. Let’s provide some more of these memory quizzes in the future. We all need some stimulation of our brain from time to time.

*Jack Herrick
Burnsville, Minnesota*

Send your letters to **Feedback**, *Forward in Christ*, N16 W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; fic@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*.



Have you been reading *Forward in Christ*’s parenting column? Check out this month’s column on p. 16 and see how three families are handling jealousy.

To catch up on past columns, go to www.wels.net/forwardinchrist and look for the link to the *Heart to heart* site. Read about how parents are adjusting to life in the digital age, learning to forgive themselves when they make mistakes, and talking about Jesus with their children.

The *Heart to heart* site also features extra online content, more information about the column’s authors, and an area for comments so that you can join the conversation. Visit the site today!

Questions?
Contact fic@wels.net.

Through my Bible in 3 years

2015
APRIL 2015

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Numbers 33–36 | 11. Mk. 5:21–6:6a | 21. Dt. 2 |
| 2. Mark 1:1–15 | 12. Mk. 6:6b–30 | 22. Dt. 3 |
| 3. Mk. 1:16–34 | 13. Mk. 6:31–56 | 23. Dt. 4:1–40 |
| 4. Mk. 1:35–2:12 | 14. Mk. 7:1–23 | 24. Dt. 4:41–5:33 |
| 5. Mk. 2:13–3:6 | 15. Mk. 7:24–37 | 25. Dt. 6 |
| 6. Mk. 3:7–19a | 16. Mk. 8:1–26 | 26. Dt. 7 |
| 7. Mk. 3:19b–35 | 17. Mk. 8:27–38 | 27. Dt. 8 |
| 8. Mk. 4:1–20 | 18. Mk. 9:1–29 | 28. Dt. 9:1–10:11 |
| 9. Mk. 4:21–34 | 19. Mk. 9:30–50 | 29. Dt. 10:12–11:32 |
| 10. Mk. 4:35–5:20 | 20. Deuteronomy 1 | 30. Dt. 12, 13 |

Read or listen online at www.wels.net/spiritual-help/through-my-bible.

Hang on to Easter joy

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 1 Peter 1:3-6

Michael A. Woldt

There's no mistake. It's a special day. The worship space is filled with flowers, brightly colored banners, and people. Musicians support triumphant songs. Happy Christians greet each other with ancient proclamations of good news: "Christ is risen!" And they respond, "He is risen indeed! Alleluia!" It's Easter Sunday!

Sadly, Easter excitement is often short-lived. If only Easter joy would linger beyond the benediction at the end of the service. If only Easter would permeate our lives as we head back to our homes, to school, to work, and to the daily routines that occupy so much of our time. How easily we forget the Easter truth we boldly declare: "He is risen indeed!"

NOT A ONE-DAY EVENT

The devil smiles when we treat Easter as a one-day event and then pack away its message along with the seasonal decorations. Easter's message impacts our daily lives and our eternity. Easter empowers us to live each new day in hope and joy, no matter what sorrows or disappointments we may face.

The apostle Peter wrote to believers who were suffering "grief in all kinds of trials." These first-century Christians were under tremendous pressure to renounce their faith in Jesus. When they faced the harsh reality of imprisonment and persecution, many were tempted to conclude that God had abandoned them and that their faith in Jesus was worthless. Peter lifted their eyes beyond present realities to the blessings they enjoyed through faith, blessings that were tied inseparably to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Suffering is temporary. Grief comes to an end. God had given them new birth into a living hope. In Jesus, they possessed an inheritance kept in heaven "that can never perish, spoil or fade." Peter pointed to the empty tomb and proclaimed, "Here's where you find your hope! Here's where you discover your reason for joy!"

A MESSAGE TO CELEBRATE EVERY DAY

How can we hang on to Easter joy beyond the special worship services on April 5? How can we live in hope on May 7, July 19, Oct. 13, and all the other days on the



Easter empowers us to live
each new day in hope and joy,
no matter what sorrows or
disappointments we may face.

calendar? Spend time in God's Word! Listen as Jesus says to you, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). Remember your baptism! "We were therefore buried with [Jesus] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4). Receive Jesus' body and blood in the Holy Supper for the forgiveness of your sins and assurance of God's love for you. Be encouraged by your brothers and sisters in Christ as you celebrate Easter joy every week in public worship.

The Easter flowers wither and the special music dies away, but the message of Easter continues to bring joy to forgiven sinners each new day. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Contributing editor Michael Woldt is pastor at David's Star, Jackson, Wisconsin.



Mark Schweden

In place of
guilt and fear
and confusion,
the living Savior
gave his disciples
the kind of peace
that only he
could give.

Peace unlike any other

It was Sunday evening. They sat behind locked doors and shuttered windows, fearful that the same enemies who had killed their master and friend would come looking for those who had followed him.

Added to their fear was the lingering horror of what they had experienced in the days before. They recalled how they fled all too quickly when he was arrested in Gethsemane. They had watched as he was beaten and whipped. They cringed at the sound of the hammer blows that nailed him to a cross. They tried not to look as the cross was raised, bearing the one whose words had filled their ears with calls to repentance, with assurances of God's grace, and with patient instruction about what he had come to do.

With their fear and with their troubled memories of those events also came confusion. Some of their friends had gone to his tomb that morning and found it empty. Others spoke of angels who announced that their friend and master was not dead but very much alive. Still others reported that Jesus had appeared to them, spoken with them, ate with them. What did it all mean? Could it really be true? What was in store for them?

That Sunday night, they were given answers to their questions. Jesus came to them. His greeting said it all: "Peace be with you." In place of guilt and fear and confusion, the living Savior gave his disciples the kind of peace that only he could give. He gave them the peace of sins forgiven; the peace that came from knowing their Savior accomplished exactly what he had come to do; the peace of knowing that with the greatest enemy of all defeated and disgraced, no enemy could harm them or tear them from the protecting arms of their victorious Savior.

The words of Jesus to his first disciples are words that he still speaks to us. They are words that lift the guilt from the hearts of sinners who all

too often run away from their Savior. They are words that remind us that the horrible things Jesus suffered were all for the purpose of saving and redeeming us from what we deserve. They are words that dispel any confusion we may have about who we are, what God has done for us, and what future awaits us. They are words that set the stage and lay the foundation for us, just as it did for his first disciples, to set out on the mission he has given us—a mission to trust, a mission to worship, a mission to serve, and a mission to proclaim.

Many things still threaten to bring horror, fear, and confusion into our lives. Watch the evening news. Listen to the voices of popular culture. See the effects of sin as lives are destroyed and families are shattered. Look into your own heart and your own life to see the corrosive and destructive power of sin. We have every reason to sit huddled in fear, paralyzed with guilt, uncertain of the future.

But then we hear those same words. "Peace be with you!" With those words the same living and victorious Savior comforts our horrified hearts, drives away our fear, and replaces our confusion with faith-filled understanding. And, just as he did with those first believers, he sends us out into a world, holding on to his words and promises, rejoicing in his victory that has become our victory, and proclaiming the same peace to sinners that the Savior has proclaimed to us.

That is peace unlike any other.

Light for our path

Why do we say in the Apostles' Creed that Jesus "rose again" from the dead? And are the descent into hell and the resurrection listed out of sequence?

James F. Pope

The confession of faith we know as the Apostles' Creed has that name not because the apostles wrote it, but because it summarizes the teachings of the apostles. A high point of their teaching—and our faith—is Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. So, your questions are important.

"ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD"

In our language the word *again* can be used in different ways. It can mean "once more," "another time." If that is the meaning of the word at this point in the creed, then we are saying that we believe Jesus rose from the dead at some point before his resurrection on Easter Sunday morning. But the Scriptures say that Jesus experienced only one resurrection from the dead.

Again can also have the meaning of "in addition." And so, after confessing that we believe that Jesus died, we declare that, in addition, Jesus rose from the dead. In other words, his death was not the end of his life. In addition to laying down his life for our sins, Jesus took up his life again just as he had said (John 10:18). The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is absolutely vital to our salvation (1 Corinthians 15:12-22), and the creed rightly emphasizes that glorious event.

Now, on to your next question about the sequence of events.

"HE DESCENDED INTO HELL, THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD."

On the surface, it looks like Jesus descended into hell before he rose from the dead. That wrong impression disappears when we consider what the Bible says about Jesus' body coming to life and his descent into hell. "[Christ] was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached

to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built" (1 Peter 3:18-20). That section of Scripture speaks of Jesus descending into hell after his body became "alive" in the tomb. With his resurrected body Jesus entered hell to proclaim ("preach") his victory over Satan, the evil angels, and those people who rejected the only true God during their time of grace.

Then, on the third day, Jesus "rose again from the dead." Theologians have distinguished between Jesus' body and soul being reunited in the tomb and his appearances to people on earth with his resurrected, glorified body. The phrase from the creed that states Jesus "rose again from the dead" has in mind those appearances to people on earth.

So, perhaps it might be useful if I paraphrased this part of the creed: We profess that Jesus' body came to life in the tomb. He descended into hell to proclaim his victory over his enemies. He appeared to his followers on earth.

No matter how a man-made confession of faith like the Apostles' Creed may be worded, it does state important facts and details that comprise our faith. When it comes to the momentous events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday, we happily join the confession of Paul, Silas, and Timothy: "We believe that Jesus died and rose again" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

Contributing editor James Pope, professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.

James Pope also answers questions online at www.wels.net/what-we-believe/questions-answers. Submit your questions there or to fic@wels.net.

Your word
is a lamp
to my feet
and a light
for my path.

Psalms 119:105



The **VICTORY** remains with life

Christ Jesus has conquered death, but that victory was not won by his death. It was secured by his resurrection from the dead.

Peter M. Prange

Death is no picnic. Anyone who has experienced the unexpected and tragic death of a loved one knows that. Anyone who has had to endure years of a long and painful journey to their final day will confirm it. Death is no picnic. Even young children who have “their whole lives in front of them” lumber around in a “body of death” (Romans 7:24) and are ultimately subject to the ravages of corruption (Romans 8:22,23). The same deadly curse that was spoken by the Creator over our first parents because of sin hangs over us all (Romans 5:12). No less a person than our Savior himself trudged through the Garden of Gethsemane, staring down the heavy curse of death laid on him because of our sin, and

expressed the same sentiment: Death is no picnic (Matthew 26:38,39; Hebrews 5:7).

The reason we feel that way about death is because our God did not create us to die. He desires us to “have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Nothing remotely compares to life.

THE WORLD MAY CELEBRATE DEATH

Recently, however, there has been a troubling trend in our culture to celebrate death. Perhaps the most notorious example of this phenomenon came into the American consciousness through “Dr. Death,” Jack Kevorkian, in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1998 Kevorkian reportedly helped 130 terminally ill people end their lives prematurely through suicide. Death was not seen as a curse; it was considered a blessing, a “self-inflicted victory.” Compared to the pain that these people were experiencing or would experience, death was viewed as the best and only option. With Kevorkian’s assistance, people took matters into their own hands. More recently the American media hyped the plight of a photo-

genic 29-year-old Oregon woman who was suffering from an inoperable brain tumor. She used various social media platforms to advocate for her dream that “every terminally ill American has access to the choice to die on their own terms with dignity.” Dead dignity is to be preferred to “undignified life.”

Faithful Christians know better. We know, first of all, that our times are in God’s hands (Psalm 31:15), and we rightly respond that those who advocate for hastening death artificially are rushing in where angels fear to tread. We also know and believe that the most undignified and ignominious life ever lived was the life our Savior lived for us and for the world. Already in his incarnation, Christ “made himself nothing” (Philippians 2:7). His life was never photogenic; his daily work and walk were not Facebook worthy. It would have garnered few “likes.” He was forever being “despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3). If anyone ever had a right and reason to end his life prematurely for the sake of dignity, it was Jesus! After all, consider who he was—the Lord of glory—and what he had become—“like one from whom men hide their faces” (Isaiah 53:3)! But he lived the life he was called to live, willingly and patiently, under his Father’s perfect will. He understood to the end that death was no victory, but even in death he was convinced that his reward was with his God and that he would not be abandoned to the grave.

OUR VICTORY IS LIFE THROUGH CHRIST’S RESURRECTION

But it is no easy task to convince the world that death is no victory. If anything, our corrupted hearts and minds are truly tempted to nod in agreement. The world’s stealthy arguments tempt us. We might unwittingly give rise to the impression that we Christians ultimately think no differently than the world does about death. For instance, have we ever described the completely natural death of a Christian as a victory? Yes, fighting the good fight and keeping the faith until the end of life (2 Timothy 4:7) with the Spirit’s help is indeed a victory, but is death itself a victory?

We might be tempted to describe death as a victory, but the apostle Paul didn’t describe Jesus’ own death that way. In fact, he tells us that had Jesus only died and remained dead, the church’s preaching would be “useless” and so would our faith in him. If Jesus’ victory was completed in death, his words from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), would ring hollow, because one enemy would have remained standing on the battlefield, death itself. Then,

Paul writes, “Your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men” (1 Corinthians 15:14,17-19).

Simply put, death is no picnic, nor is there any victory in death. As God’s ambassadors in this world of death, we should be careful never to give the impression that death is a desirable alternative to life or that in dying any child of God has won a victory. The Lord tells us that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). How on earth can we then describe death as a victory? It’s not. In his 2012 book *Luther and the Stories of God*, Robert Kolb points out that Martin Luther “did not indulge in

romantic pictures of death as a sweet escape. Death had invaded God’s good creation as part of the curse upon sin. Luther frequently added death to his list of the enemies of the sinner and the believer, alongside the devil, the world, the sinful inclinations of the sinner, guilt, and other evils” (170).

So where is our victory to be found? Not in death but in the resurrection from the dead. That’s why we celebrate Easter. Without Easter, Good Friday could hardly be good! But because of Easter and Christ’s bodily resurrection from the dead, Paul wrote to the Corinthians with glee: “‘Death has been swallowed up in victory’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory?’ ” (1 Corinthians 15:54,55). Christ Jesus has conquered death once and for all, but that victory was not won by his death. It was secured by his resurrection from the dead.

And Christ’s victory over death by his resurrection from the dead is already ours by faith right now, even though in our earthly bodies we continue to languish under the curse of death. “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). As Paul wrote when he faced his own departure from this world, because of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead “now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on [the great day of resurrection]—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8).

Death is no picnic, and it is nothing to celebrate. But our victory over death most certainly is. Thanks be to God that by Christ’s resurrection from the dead, “the victory remained with life; the reign of death was ended” (*Christian Worship* 161:2).

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



GOD'S CHURCH

WORKING WHILE WAITING FOR GLORY Richard E. Lauersdorf

"We have a deal with the bank," reads the sign on the pizza parlor wall. "We don't cash checks, and they don't make pizzas." If I want a pizza, I am in the right place. If I want to cash a check, I should go to the bank. Each place has its own purpose, its own role to fill.

THE GREATEST WORK ON EARTH

What is the role of the church on earth? What assignment has God given to believers as they live in this world?

We don't have to guess or speculate. The head of the church outlined our mission very clearly. Shortly before his ascension Jesus told his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). In what is called the Great Commission, he added more details: "Go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20). The early believers understood Christ's command. When persecution scattered them from Jerusalem, they, as individuals, "preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4). As a group of believers, like the church at Antioch, they sent out missionaries such as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2,3). Their mission, their role, given to them by Christ, was to preach to needy sinners the good news of salvation through Jesus' atoning work.

Today there seems to be more confusion than ever about the mission of the church. In some church bodies nurturing the saved and reaching the lost with God's gospel message has taken a backseat to other concerns. More important to them than preaching the good news is working with the temporal needs of people. For them the church's heavenly

mission has become an earthly one. Some think that clearing up social injustice, dispensing food and water, or bringing the light of education to backward people is more important than proclaiming how God's holy justice has been satisfied by his love in Christ Jesus. The task Jesus gave his church is to bring the light of salvation to others.

Of course, Christians are to show concern for the poor and needy. We dare not, however, forget that deeds of love to the needy are fruits of the gospel in hearts that have first been touched by God's love. Nor dare we forget that the church's primary mission is and always should be preaching the good news of salvation. There is no greater work, no more important message than this. If the church into whose hands Christ has placed this good news fails to share it, who will?

We need to be careful, though, when we say Christ has given this news to the church. A danger for us is thinking that means an organization, an institution like our congregation or our synod, instead of the believers who belong to it. Such thinking reduces individual believers to spectators sitting in the bleachers, cheering for the team on the floor. It can make individuals into "shopping cart" Christians who use their church like a supermarket where they can go down the aisles and take from the shelves with little concern for stocking those shelves. It can reduce believers into only being "takers" instead of also being "workers," busy in the greatest work on earth.

That is not what Peter saw when he looked at God's people. He wrote, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). What beautiful terms Peter used to describe us as believers. Note, though, besides the meaningful labels, he also

put forward a meaningful task for us. We are to declare God's praises. That's what God desires from those whom he has brought out of darkness into the light of salvation.

The task Jesus gave his church is to bring the light of salvation to others.

We can get a pizza from our favorite restaurant and cash a check now even electronically at our bank, but we cannot get the good news of salvation except through God's saving Word. Doesn't that make our work with that Word important, so important that we call it the greatest work on earth?

THE GLORY YET TO COME

Even as we work here on earth, we glance toward heaven. The day is coming when the church now invisible on earth will be fully visible in heaven. What will it look like? Who all will be in it? How will it be different? Haven't we often wondered?

First of all, we might be surprised as to who is in God's church in heaven. John saw a "great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). In heaven we'll see people we know and people we have never met, people who look and speak like us, and people who are far different. From the east and the west, the north and the south, they will have come to stand before the throne and in front of the Lamb, who shed his blood for them.

We might also be surprised at the complete unity of God's church in heaven. Here on earth there are dif-

ferences and divisions. Yes, we want unity even here on earth. We pray for, long for, and work for agreement in teaching and practice. In heaven it will be so. Knowledge and understanding will be complete. Mind and faith will be made perfect. The image of God will be restored fully in each of us. And we will be as Adam and Eve once were, knowing God's will completely and following it fully. We can throw our list of questions away because we'll see how God's love had led us on a straight line to his home even when on earth it seemed to be one detour after another. We can leave behind the imperfect harmony of our earthly praise as we sing forever with the heavenly hosts about his wondrous love. And at the heart of all our praise will be deep appreciation for the good news he proclaimed to us and used us to proclaim to others.

We might ask how God's church in heaven will be different. John again gives us a hint. He writes, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:3,4).

Gone will be all that caused our tears in this world. No more sin means no more temptation. No more troubles that sin once brought into the world. No more death or mourning or crying or pain. The old has passed away. The new has come.

That's what waits for us in heaven. But while the Lord leaves us here, he has work for us to do.

Richard Lauersdorf is pastor at Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wisconsin.

This is the final article in a four-part series on the holy Christian church.

After trying out a variety of religions and practices in a search for contentment, a dog trainer finds that God's Word alone fills his soul.

Rachel Hartman

Buddhism, Mormonism, and Episcopalian teachings. West Todd has experience with all of them—and many more. “I constantly tried to find something that made sense and that I could hold to,” he recalls. Nothing stuck.

When he came across WELS during his adult years, however, a long pattern was broken. “The fact that I don’t have to be 100 percent perfect to be a child of God was the most wonderful message to me,” he says. “The peace of forgiveness came shining through.”

A LARGE SAMPLING

Todd grew up in Virginia. As a child, he spent a lot of time with his grandparents, who attended a Southern Baptist church in the area. He became particularly close to his grandfather during this time. “My grandparents were very religious, and I went to church with them almost every Sunday,” says Todd.

He also went to other churches with his father. “Dad was always looking for God,” he recalls. With his dad, he attended a Methodist church and an

Episcopalian church for a while. But even though he went to church services, Todd found it difficult to connect to a particular religion.

When he was in high school, Todd’s father and stepmother at the time became Mormons. Todd did too. He was even called to go on a mission as a Mormon, but he declined. “I didn’t think it was the right thing,” he explains.

Finding what was right proved to be difficult. Todd was active in theater during his high school years and loved singing too. He grew attached to these activities and not to anything related to the church. “I memorized poems and plays, but not spiritual things,” he says.

Then, when Todd was in college, his grandfather passed away. “I took it really hard,” he notes. Overwhelmed with grief, Todd searched for something to help him feel better. “I tried everything—drugs, alcohol—to feel whole,” he says. Instead of healing, he sunk down further. “I felt worthless and guilty and that I had made so many mistakes I wouldn’t be able to get out of this hole.”

HITTING BOTTOM

Todd’s life continued to dip into a downward spiral. He says, “I realized if I continued on that track I would kill myself.” Finding a solution seemed impossible. Todd turned to Eastern

religions for a while and delved into Buddhism. “Everyone seemed so happy and peaceful, but even with meditation and yoga and trying to find myself, I never felt peace and never felt good enough.”

The rocky path kept going. Todd entered into a marriage that soon failed. “After that, I worked with a therapist for quite a while,” he recalls. Together they came up with a list of ten things that Todd’s future wife would have to have. “The list was so long I thought, *There’s no woman in the world that can meet all these things*,” says Todd.

At the time, Todd was working for a company in Virginia. He earned an award at the company and was invited to attend an event to receive it. The event brought in employees from a number of different states. During the event, Todd met another employee, Jennie, who was from Wisconsin. She was there to receive an award as well.

The two hit it off right away. “I grilled her for six hours and couldn’t find a single reason not to like her,” Todd remembers. She met all of the criteria he had mapped out with his therapist, and there was another interesting fact about her: she was Lutheran. “I loved the fact that she was religious—it was very grounding to me,” says Todd. “She told me church was important to her, and I said, ‘Not a problem. I’ve been to church before, and I can learn.’”

Confessions OF FAITH



The two began dating, and Todd soon moved to Wisconsin. He took Bible instruction classes and became a member. Then, in 2007, West and Jennie got married.

GROWING IN FAITH

Todd's initial impression of WELS was that it focused on truth. He appreciated that its stance on certain issues, such as creationism and homosexuality, was based on the Bible. "I had seen other religions that followed the Bible but pretended parts of it didn't exist if they didn't fit with an issue," he says.

At the start of their marriage, West and Jennie continued to attend a WELS church. Then their daughter was born, and the couple knew they wanted her to attend a Lutheran school.

When his daughter turned three, Todd went to sign her up at a nearby WELS school for preschool. While there, he began chatting with the pastor. "Pastor Marggraf asked me, 'What spiritual things do you do with your daughter besides pray at the table and pray at night?'" The question struck Todd to the core. "I wasn't doing anything more than that and thought I was doing a great job," he says.

That conversation did more than just take Todd aback; it made him think about what he was doing in the home for religion. He started more daily activities, such as reading from a children's Bible and sharing Bible stories

with his daughter. "She was still really young, but it started me on the right track," he explains.

Not long after, the family moved because of a promotion Jennie received. At the time, the couple had a daughter and a son—and a baby on the way. The shift took them to South Carolina. "We started our home search by looking at where the churches were," says Todd.

With the help of the WELS locator, the family found a church, Hope, Irmo, South Carolina, to attend. When they arrived, without any family in the area, they were immediately welcomed with open arms by the congregation.

And they, in return, found ways to help out. Todd taught a class to the teens at church, an activity he grew to love. "I told them about my past and let them know God will always be there for them," he states.

Thirteen months later, the family moved to Michigan, again due to Jennie's job. They were able to find a house that was close to a WELS school and church.

After ten months, the family relocated once more, this time to Indiana. As before, with the help of the WELS locator, they found a congregation and school in the city of Granger. Now Todd stays at home during the day with the family's three young children. He works as a dog trainer in the evenings and



West and Jennie Todd and their family

on the weekends. He and Jennie are active in church.

Getting into the Word and learning about Jesus' amazing forgiveness has motivated Todd to show love to others. He is involved in the "Please Open the Door" initiative, which looks for ways to reach out to Mormons. "When I was a Mormon, no one pointed out to me where I was wrong in the Bible," he explains. "I want to help plant the seed and try to help others see how happy they can be too."

Rachel Hartman and her husband, Missionary Michael Hartman, serve in León, Mexico.



heart to heart
parent conversations

Since Cain and Abel, the devil has used jealousy to drive a wedge between siblings and make parents crazy. What can we do to help equip our children—and ourselves—for this battle? This month's authors provide their perspectives. For a deeper look into the account of Cain and Abel, read "Sin that entangles" at blog.nph.net.

Did you miss the column's first live webcast? Watch it now by going to www.wels.net/forwardinchrist and clicking on the link to the archived program.



Join the conversation!

Visit www.wels.net/forwardinchrist and look for the *Heart to heart* link. Read uncut versions of the articles, learn more about the authors, and give us your thoughts and reactions.

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN OUR CHILDREN STRUGGLE WITH JEALOUSY?

God's timing is always perfect. I received an e-mail asking me to write about jealousy among siblings right after I received the call from the director of the upcoming young actors' production. The news came in; Micah didn't receive a part, and his brother Silas did. Micah is the one who has been in a number of productions. Silas has only auditioned once before. This was setting up to be the perfect scenario for a great article on jealousy. All I had to do was watch and see what happened.

The first day of rehearsal came. Silas got ready to go. Micah got up from his video game, walked him out, and said, "Have fun, Silas. You will have a blast."

Wait, what? Where was the drama? Where was the anger? And most important, where was the jealousy?

When I had a chance to talk to Micah one-on-one, I asked him, "How are you doing it?"

"It's not fair," my granddaughter insisted. "He's playing with the toy I want!"

Jealousy. It's inextricably woven into the fabric of family life. Siblings constantly compare who has the biggest or the best, who is most loved or most favored, who got the largest piece or the lesser penalty.

"It's not fair!" Anger radiated from her stance. Eyes glared. Lower lip pouted. Elbows flared from her hips like flying buttresses.

Jealousy springs from the sin-infected core that festers in us all. It's more obvious in children because they haven't learned to mask it as well as adults. It's apparent in the 7-month-old who doesn't want anyone else, even Dad, to hug Mom. It's in the 27-month-old who insists that the toy he tired of ten minutes ago still belongs to him. It's in the 7-year-old who has learned to cover over her jealousy by calling for fairness. It's in the seventh-grader who didn't make the cut for the basketball team and is

On our son's first night home from the hospital, then three-year-old Anna, truly thrilled to be a big sister but exhausted from all the excitement, proclaimed angrily, "Everything is not fair!" I've spent the last two-and-a-half years trying to convince her that she is right.

Nobody warned me that I'd need a training course in refereeing to parent two children. My life has suddenly turned into constant repetition of the phrases: "Work it out!" "Get off of your sister!" "Use your gentle hands!" and "I love both of you very much, neither more than the other." Though my kids adore each other—it's truly a blessing how well they usually play together—neither of them likes to feel that the other is getting a larger share of attention, fun, or other good things.

Anna had a loose tooth. Henry pretended his teeth were loose. Anna got mad that Henry was trying to steal her thunder.

Henry and I went to the zoo on a sunny morning to give him something to do other than systematically destroy our house. Anna found out after she got home from school and

“Doing what?”

“Every day you are watching Silas do something that you love. And you are being so gracious and encouraging. How are you doing it?”

He replied, “I don’t know. I guess I just focus on him more than myself.”

Our conversation led to the old Cherokee legend that talks about the battle going on inside each one of us. In the legend there is the battle between a good wolf and an evil wolf. The battle is won by the wolf that we feed.

As Christians we know this battle. It is the battle between our flesh and the Spirit. One is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, pride, superiority, and ego. The other is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Which one wins? The one that we feed.

angry with those who did. It’s in the 17-year-old who contends that he alone, of all his friends, lacks a cell phone.

“It’s not fair!” she shouted again. This time her right foot punched against the floor . . . once, then a second time.

You might expect some advice at this point about helping kids recognize how jealousy has clawed out of their hearts, but this article is heading in another direction. A more personal, introspective direction.

I’m uncomfortable seeing jealousy in my grandkids because I know that I wrestle with it. We never outgrow sin’s selfishness, so none of us ever outgrows jealousy. Worse, jealousy is more infectious than the flu. I recognize that at times I teach everyone around me more about being jealous of others than about being content with the gifts my heavenly Father has given me.

I have to face it: My granddaughter’s selfish indignation was, to some degree, a reflection of the jealousy she had seen in me. I taught her how to grumble about a friend

Micah knows who he is in Christ. He gets what it means to love others. He gets what it means to put others before himself. The fruit of this child shows his relationship with his heavenly Father is living and active. Ah, if only I could “get it” like my 12-year-old son.

This doesn’t mean that tears have not been shed. It doesn’t mean that Micah doesn’t struggle when he thinks about seeing his brother on stage while he will be in the audience. What it does mean is that in these struggles, he knows he has a choice: a choice to walk in the flesh or to walk in the Spirit. Our most important job as parents is to cultivate our children’s relationship with their Savior. The more they know who our God is, the more they know his voice, and the more they walk with him.

*Jenni Schubring and her husband,
Tad, have four children.*



who has a larger bedroom, a newer doll, or a faster computer. I demonstrated for her how to express pained injustice when someone else stole “my parking place” at Walmart. She even might have seen me pout when the family voted down my choice for the last Netflix movie.

Helping my grandchildren overcome jealousy means I must face my own jealousies. My apology for failing to set a better example will go further than the wag of an accusing finger. Even better is rejoicing together over God’s forgiving grace.

But why stop there? Think of the power in teaming up against jealousy. My grandkids and I can commit to encouraging each other to be content, whatever our circumstances. How wonderful to hear, “Papa, quit complaining. Jesus always provides everything that’s important.”

*James Aderman and his wife, Sharon,
raised three daughters and are now
enjoying their eight grandchildren.*



was angry she didn’t get to go along. Henry saw her reaction and talked about nothing but lions for the rest of the day, resulting in Anna seething not-so-silently throughout dinner.

Anna, as a first-grader, enjoys school, Lutheran Girl Pioneers, and birthday parties. Henry often has a hard time understanding that younger siblings are not always welcome at these events and that his time for these activities is coming.

Determining my role in their developing relationship has been tricky for me. I want them both to be happy. Don’t all mothers wish that for their children? But happiness is not a constant, nor a guarantee. So I try to focus on teaching them to deal in healthy ways with the frustrations and disappointments that come with the many great blessings of having a sibling. There will be times when things aren’t equal. There will be situations that are unfair. But I want them each to have the stability of knowing they are loved, regardless of what is going on in the moment.

I want them to enjoy the same experiences and to know that I want to spend time with them both. I hope they grow from

this playmate/enemy relationship into a close friendship like I now enjoy with my adult brother and sister. But there’s only one of me. And between trying to keep us all fed, in clean clothes—at least until a spill or fall change that—and somewhat entertained, balance is a bit hard to achieve. Henry, as most two-year-olds are apt to do, requires a lot more of my attention than six-year-old Anna does. Some days she handles this well. Other days, I’m thankful she doesn’t have access to eBay to rid herself of her sweet but pesky brother.

It’s normal and natural for siblings to fight and argue. My goal is to teach them that, while life isn’t always fair, they are, regardless of circumstances, loved immensely by God and their parents. My hope is that by loving them each for who they are, they will grow into adult siblings who can love and support each other.

And maybe along the way the “stop looking at me!” fight will die out. A mom can dream. . . .

*Kerry Ognenoff and her husband,
Andy, have two young children.*





teentalk

Death is nothing to be afraid of

Even though it can be sad when someone dies, take comfort knowing that Jesus has power over death.

Mason DeNoyer

Picture yourself sitting in one of the church pews listening intently to the sermon for a loved one's funeral. What goes through your mind at that time? Is it sadness? Joy? Maybe a little bit of both?

Death is a scary thing to think about, but because of what Christ did for all people on the cross we no longer need to be afraid or sad because of death.

I had a grandparent who was near and dear to my heart pass away after three long and hard years of battling cancer. It was a challenging time for my family and me because we knew that we would not see him again until we were reunited in heaven. But we know he is in heaven because Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25,26). It is a comforting message during times of death. For the people who loved my grandfather but do not believe in God, it was much sadder. It was their last time seeing him at all. They do not believe the comforting message God gives to

us Christians. Our job as Christians isn't just to keep the good news about heaven and eternal life to ourselves. No, we want to go out and proclaim the good news of heaven to others so that others will realize that the deaths of loved ones don't have to be all about sadness.

Here's something else about death. When you go to a funeral, you can tell the difference between a believer's funeral and an unbeliever's funeral. It's obvious. A believer's funeral is Christ-centered. Don't get me wrong. Both kinds of funerals are sad! Both are sad because they won't see the loved one again on earth. But believers find hope in Christ.

Two thousand years ago Jesus encountered the death of a dear friend. When Jesus heard that Lazarus had died, he did not control his emotions. He cried. It isn't wrong to cry when death occurs. Jesus called his friend's death a temporary sleep and then raised Lazarus from the dead. This shows how Jesus has power over death.

In Revelation God reminds us that Jesus will wipe away our tears because there

will be no more death. We won't have to worry about death.

Here on earth if God chooses that it is time for a person to die, God has his reasons and knows what is best for that person. We have no right to question why God does what he does because he is God and knows what is right.

The next time you are at a funeral, your thoughts and emotions may be mixed. But take comfort knowing that Christ won the epic battle on Calvary and then rose again from the dead. Death is no longer such a scary thing to think about but rather a happy time knowing that the person who died is with Jesus in heaven and that we will have a wonderful reunion in heaven.

And remember, don't keep this precious truth to yourself but spread it to others so that there are more joyful reunions. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

Mason DeNoyer, a junior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member at Peace, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

DeVries, Eugene M., to Immanuel, Hutchinson/Zion, Hutchinson, Minn.
Falck, Mark H., to retirement
Horton, David T., to Beautiful Savior, Petoskey, Mich.
Pries, David C., to Eternal Love, Appleton, Wis.
Schroeder, Andrew B., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Seiltz, Nathan C., to Multi-Language Publications, Waukesha, Wis.
Siemers, Ronald E., to Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis.
Stern, Paul H., to St. Paul's, Livingston, Mont.
Strong, Dennis K., to St. Paul, Grand Junction, Colo.
Tomhave, Douglas C., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.
Valleskey, Stephen P., to retirement
Vogel, Joel T., to St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb.

Teachers

Baganz, Peter A., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
Balfour, Alysia, to St. Peter's, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Battermann, Brittany, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.
Buelow, Nicole M., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
DeNoyer, Anne, to Good Shepherd, Deltona, Fla.
Ernst, Lindsay E., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Fitzsimmons, Seth J., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Harvey, Amanda M., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Hussman, James E., to St. Paul, Algoma, Wis.
Ihde, Paul S., to St. Paul's, Stevensville, Mich.
Kamps, Rachael L., to Little Lambs Preschool, Lake Geneva, Wis.
Knuth, Glenda J., to Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Kopp, Matthew B., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Krause, Aaron A., to Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.
Laete, Melanie, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Mangini, Jennifer M., to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.
Mays, Tabitha D., to Ascension Preschool, Plymouth, Minn.
Mielke, Penny R., to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Nelson, Joshua J., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Payne, Timothy S., to St. John's, Newburg, Wis.

Scharenbroch, Erin, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Scriver, Bailey A., to Lord and Savior, Crystal Lake, Ill.

Selle, Amanda N., to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Tess, David G., to St. Croix, West Saint Paul, Minn.

Treder, Timothy S., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.

Watson, Ian P., to Peace, Kissimmee, Fla.

Woldt, Jon D., to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.

Staff minister

Schwartz, James F., to retirement

ANNIVERSARIES

Kewaunee, Wis.—Immanuel (150). Apr. 19. Worship with guest organist Charles Bonow, 10 A.M.; brunch to follow. July 19. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. Website, www.immanuelutherankewaunee.org.

Neenah, Wis.—Trinity (150). April 19. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; open house, 2-5 P.M. Website, www.trinityneenah.net.

Garden Grove, Calif.—King of Kings School (50). May 9. Worship, 11 A.M.; meal to follow. office@kingofkingsgg.org.

Bangor, Mich.—Trinity School (40). May 17. Outdoor worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. Koiné concert after meal. Kevin Lemke, 269-427-7102.

Appleton, Wis.—Mount Olive (100). May 17. Worship, 8, 9:30, and 11 A.M.; meal to follow. Website, www.mountoliveappleton.com.

Saline, Mich.—Trinity (150). May 31. Worship, 10 A.M. Website, www.trinitylutheran-saline.org.

Brillion, Wis.—Trinity School (100). June 7. Worship, 8 and 10 A.M.; open house to follow; program at Cobblestone Creek, 1 P.M. RSVP requested. 920-756-3738. Website, www.trinitybrillion.org.

Moorhead, Minn.—Ascension (50). June 14. Worship, 9 A.M.; meal to follow at Dilworth Community Center, Dilworth, Minn. Trish Dominguez, wxgrl18@gmail.com.

Twin Lakes, Mich.—Camp Lor-Ray (50). July 4 weekend. Mike Brenner, camplorray@gmail.com. Website, www.camplor-ray.org.

COMING EVENTS

Martin Luther College Choir mini-tour—Website, www.mlc-wels.edu.

- Apr. 10, 7 P.M., Trinity, Watertown, Wis.
- Apr. 12, 3 P.M., Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

Church Librarians' Organization spring conference—Apr. 18, 8 A.M.-2:45 P.M. St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn. Debbie Filter, 507-387-2737.

The Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee spring concert—May 3, 2 and 4:30 P.M. St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis. Mary Prange, 414-861-7092.

Life-a-thon—May 9. Two locations: McCarty Park, West Allis, Wis., and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Hosted by WELS Lutherans for Life, Metro-Milwaukee. 414-727-8176. Website, www.life-a-thon.org.

WELS Historical Institute presentation—May 16, 10 A.M. Salem Landmark Church Museum, Milwaukee, Wis. Topic: "Hymns Old and New." Presenters: Michael Schultz and Carl Nolte. Dan Nommensen, welshistory@gmail.com. Website, www.welshistory.org.

Martin Luther College Wind Symphony tour—Website, www.mlc-wels.edu.

- May 17, 10:30 A.M., Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- May 18, 9 A.M., St. Paul Lutheran School, Rapid City, S.D.; 7:30 P.M., Apostles, Billings, Mont.
- May 20, 7:30 P.M., Peace in Jesus, Boise, Idaho
- May 21, 2 P.M., Grace Lutheran School, Yakima, Wash.
- May 22, 9:45 A.M., Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash.; 2 P.M., Holy Trinity Lutheran School, Des Moines, Wash.
- May 23, 4 P.M., Loucks Auditorium, Central Library, Salem, Ore.
- May 24, 8 A.M., Immanuel, Salem, Ore.; 9:30 A.M., Grace, Portland, Ore.; 9:30 A.M., Peace, Vancouver, Wash.

Music camp—June 14-19. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. For WELS/ELS youth who have completed grades 6-8. Participants need two years of keyboard lessons to be accepted. Registration deadline: May 29. Enrollment is limited. Website, www.lps.wels.net/musiccamp.

WELS National School Leadership conference—June 15-18. Hosted by WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools. Country Springs Hotel, Waukesha, Wis. Website, www.wels.net/events.

52nd annual Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention—June 25-28. Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, S.D. Hosted by the Black Hills and Central Dakota Circuits. Website, www.lwms.org.

WELSTech conference—July 9-11.

Hosted by WELS Technology. Country Springs Hotel, Waukesha, Wis. Website, www.wels.net/welstechconf.

Regional youth rally—July 13-16. Villanova University, Philadelphia, Pa. Hosted by the North Atlantic and Michigan Districts. For teens entering grades 9-12. youthrallyfreedom513@gmail.com. Website, www.welsyouth.net.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

New coordinator of Multi-Language Publications

Nathan Seiltz has accepted the call to serve as coordinator of WELS Multi-Language Publications. Seiltz will replace Paul Hartman, who is retiring after serving in this position for 14 years as well as 10 years as director of publications for Latin America missions prior to that.

Multi-Language Publications (MLP), sometimes referred to as the “hidden jewel” of WELS outreach, assists in the production of confessional Christian literature and other mass media in more than 45 different languages. Increasingly, MLP produces digital publications in addition to print publications.

Sean Young, director of Missions Operations, says, “Paul Hartman’s dedication and perseverance have helped MLP grow into what it is today. From the very beginning, Paul has nurtured and grown the portfolio of offerings within MLP and has worked tirelessly to ensure that the synod’s ‘hidden jewel’ gets uncovered and shared with everyone looking for solid material sharing the saving message.”

As Hartman reflects on his time at MLP, he notes, “The means by which gospel publications are presented to

the world will change as World Missions strives to keep pace with rapid technological changes. But the message must remain faithful to Jesus Christ and his Word so that more people come to know him as their Lord and Savior.”

Seiltz will be charged with continuing to spread that message in as many languages as possible. A 1994 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Seiltz is currently serv-

ing as principal at Evergreen Lutheran High School in Tacoma, Wash. His past service includes time as a world missionary in the Dominican Republic. In July 2014, he became chairman of the Europe Administrative Committee of the Board for World Missions.

As Seiltz transitions to his new role, the office of the MLP coordinator will move from El Paso, Texas, where much of MLP’s work is currently performed, to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis.

Larry Schlomer, administrator of the WELS Board for World Missions, explains that having the MLP coordinator near other WELS resources that can support and strengthen the reach of its materials will be “a welcome connection.” Connecting with the missionaries and national workers who travel to the Center for Mission and Ministry also now will be easier.

As Schlomer notes, “It is time to make sure WELS sees and uses this gem. The treasure of materials, the experience of production, and the help of many brothers and sisters in many cultures is the strength MLP brings to WELS efforts to reach the lost in the world.”



Nathan Seiltz will take over as the new coordinator of Multi-Language Publications in July.

UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN JEWEL

Multi-Language Publications (MLP) offers a variety of outreach materials that many WELS members may not realize are available. Paul Hartman, MLP’s retiring coordinator, recommends these to supplement your gospel ministry:

- The Bible Teachings Series is available in English and 11 other languages. These self-study booklets cover basic topics of Christian faith such as prayer, sanctification, and the Trinity.
- Time of Grace devotional booklets are available in Chinese and Spanish on a wide array of topics.

Both these series are available from Northwestern Publishing House at www.nph.net or 800-662-6022.

Hartman also suggests that you direct your Spanish-speaking contacts to Academia Cristo at www.academiacrsto.com. The Spanish-language site, which just launched this year, offers courses for new Christians and helps train those who want to share their faith. Audio and video Bible studies are a main component of the site.

Learn more at www.wels.net/mlp.



NPH to publish Lutheran Bible translation

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) will be publishing a new translation of the Bible produced by the Wartburg Project, an independent Lutheran Bible translation effort by WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) pastors and professors.

Since late in 2013, more than 90 WELS and ELS pastors, professors, and others have been working through the Wartburg Project on the translation. The goal is to publish a New Testament and Psalms special edition in 2017, with a future date for the complete Bible yet to be determined.

NPH was chosen from among other publishers to publish this new translation. "Printing this translation aligns with NPH's mission to 'deliver biblically sound, Christ-centered resources within WELS and beyond,'" says Bill Ziche, NPH president. But he stresses that this will not be the only translation used by NPH in its materials. "NPH will continue to pursue an 'eclectic approach,' as directed by synod resolution, utilizing the best translation for the context of any given work. The Wartburg Project translation will be one translation option among others."

Not funded, owned, or directed by WELS, the Wartburg Project formed

after the 2013 synod convention. While convention delegates defeated a resolution calling for the synod praesidium to appoint a committee to explore producing a Lutheran translation of the Bible, discussion on the floor was encouraging for those who wanted to work on a translation on their own. "There were a number of groups doing that," says Prof. John Brug, general editor and Old Testament editor for the Wartburg Project. "We thought, why not try to bring everyone together under one umbrella in a purely positive project."

Brug says the Wartburg Project's goal is to aim for the "middle road" in its translation. "We feel there are some translations that depart fairly freely—not necessarily from the biblical meaning—but they don't preserve a lot of the traditional biblical language. On the other hand there are some [translations] that are kind of wooden and hard to read, but they're quite close to the biblical language. We're trying to aim for the middle spot." He says that means they will preserve traditional biblical idioms like "the glory of the Lord" and "manger" but also look for better ways to say things that may be confusing in other translations.

While the translation is based on the original Hebrew and Greek texts, translators also will be building on the heritage of the English translations that already are available. "From the beginning, I've enjoyed saying that we are standing on the shoulders of giants," says Pastor Brian Keller, New Testament editor. "We are not trying to reinvent the wheel. Copyright laws are certainly being honored. But there is this long tradition of English Bible translation that provides a base to work with."

They also are taking into account the language used in our current hymnal and catechism. "We want to be fresh, but we also want to be rooted in the language of worship and the hymnal and what people already know," says Brug.

About 20 pastors and professors are the main core of translators and technical reviewers. More than 70 other pastors and professors as well as additional teachers and laypeople are helping with readability. All are volunteers, working on the project in their spare time.

"One of the blessings of the Wartburg Project is the great opportunity which it is providing to many of our pastors for continuing education in the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible," says Brug. "The knowledge they are gaining will provide rich dividends to the church as it works its way into their preaching, teaching, and writing."

Members of the Wartburg Project are excited that the translation is progressing so quickly. "We appreciate all the support, encouragement, and prayers," says Keller. "We thank God for his blessing and ask for his help. If this translation turns out to be a blessing for many, may God alone have all glory and praise!"

Learn more about the Wartburg Project at www.wartburgproject.org. Download a complimentary Passion History developed by the Wartburg Project and learn more about NPH's publishing plans at www.nph.net/wartburgproject.



The Wartburg Project recently chose Northwestern Publishing House to publish its Lutheran Bible translation. (Left to right): Bill Ziche from Northwestern Publishing House with three members of the Wartburg Project: Pastor Brian Keller, Prof. John Brug, and Pastor John Seifert.

Relief efforts for Malawi flood victims

Relief efforts have been ongoing in the flood-damaged areas of Malawi. WELS missionaries in Malawi, leaders from the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi (LCCA), WELS Christian Aid and Relief, and WELS Kingdom Workers have been collaborating to meet the needs of affected LCCA members from WELS' sister synod in Malawi. So far, Christian Aid and Relief has designated \$50,000 to relief efforts, but initial assessments indicate that needs are extensive and ongoing.

In January, Malawi experienced damaging floods that destroyed or damaged the homes of an estimated 3,200 LCCA families and nearly 20 LCCA church buildings. The floods also washed away crops, depleting the local food supplies, and increased the threat of diseases such as malaria and cholera.

So far, Kingdom Workers volunteers and LCCA leaders, working with Christian Aid and Relief, have been distributing supply buckets with sheet plastic, nails, and blankets to provide temporary housing to affected families. To help expedite the travel and delivery process, Christian Aid and Relief is funding two more Kingdom

Workers volunteers to rent additional trucks in Malawi and get supplies to members more quickly.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief Director of Operations Mark Vance traveled to Malawi in March to assess the damage and to determine ongoing relief needs, particularly food and medical needs in addition to the structural damage to homes and churches.

LCCA members are thankful for the support. "How can we thank God enough for you, our brothers and sisters in America! You have poured out your earnest prayers like a mighty flood before God's throne. You do not know our names and we do not know yours, yet you have come to our assistance," says Riphath Matope, president of the LCCA–Malawi Synod. "These gifts of love do more than warm our bodies in the cold hours of the night. They warm our hearts, for now we know that you are one with us in Christ!"

To help support relief efforts, you can donate online at www.wels.net/give (choose Christian Aid and Relief) or send checks to WELS, Re: Christian Aid and Relief, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive, Waukesha, WI 53188.



A woman receiving her allotment of supplies. Each family received 15 meters of plastic sheeting, 1/2 kg of 3-inch nails, one plastic bucket, and one blanket. You'll notice the roll of plastic spread out on the floor. A length of 15 meters was marked on the floor, and elders used that mark to cut the rolls to 15-meter sections.

Tool kit helps cross-cultural outreach

"Lots of congregations want to reach out with the gospel to the ethnic groups in their communities," says Paul Prange. "They're just not sure how."



Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev., reaches out in its cross-cultural community, including having an active Korean ministry and providing physical and spiritual aid to African immigrants.

To help congregations witness to their cross-cultural neighbors, Prange has developed a Domestic Tool Kit as part of his role as the synod's coordinator for global cross-cultural outreach under the WELS Joint Mission Council. "Some congregations have just a few members who are aware of the immigrant groups around them," says Prange, "and those congregations could probably use some training in cultural competence to get more members ready to welcome new people."

That kind of training is already available from WELS' Schools of Outreach, Congregational Assistant Program courses, or certificate courses offered by Martin Luther College. Sometimes the training also can be done by a WELS member from the ethnic group that the congregation wants to reach out to. Prange says that one of his roles is connecting such people to such congregations.

But what if a congregation has already done something like an English as a Second Language program and not seen many results? "That is a typical problem," says Prange. "The solution is simple on paper but often tricky in real life." Prange says the solution is to identify members of the ethnic group that the

pastor and congregation members already know, find a meeting time and place for them, and ask them to answer a simple question: What are the needs of the immigrant group?

“It doesn’t usually take long to list the needs,” observes Prange. “The interesting challenge comes when the congregation asks itself which of those needs they are in a position to address, and how to turn that activity into an opportunity for people to come into contact with the gospel in Word and sacrament.”

That’s where the Domestic Tool Kit comes in. As part of the tool kit, Prange has identified WELS mentors who are willing to work with congregations in finding contacts, facilitating the meeting to develop a list of needs, and helping the congregation tailor existing programs or start new ones to meet these needs of the immigrant groups.

When it comes time for worship and Bible classes in a language other than English, WELS has a wonderful resource in its Multi-Language Publications (MLP) program. “What people don’t realize about MLP is that if it does not have something for outreach, instruction, or worship in a particular language, it has a process to develop those materials,” says Prange. (See more on Multi-Language Publications and its new director on p. 20.)

Prange adds, “I think people are afraid to get started because they are afraid that the effort will outstrip their resources. But many of the tools in the tool kit have minimal costs associated with them, and some are absolutely free, provided by our pooled resources from Congregation Mission Offerings. With increasing ethnic diversity in our communities, the Domestic Tool Kit may be an idea whose time has come.”



For more information about the Domestic Tool Kit, contact Prange at paul.prange@wels.net or 414-256-3236. To see examples of the cross-cultural outreach already happening in our synod, check out the monthly mission PowerPoint slideshow at www.wels.net/images.

WELS news briefs

WELS HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

The WELS Historical Institute recently received a **complete set of Luther’s Works** published from 1729–33 in Leipzig, Germany. The 24-volume set was given to the institute by the John Hoenecke family. It was originally pur-



chased by Pastor Otto Hoenecke, long-time director at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, and given to his grandson, Pastor John Hoenecke. These books arrange Luther’s writings in topical fashion, with two volumes bound together, for a total of 12 large pigskin books. Published by Johann Zedler in the German language, they are among the earliest complete compilations of all of Luther’s writings. This collection was added to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary’s Rare Book Room at a ceremony in November 2014. In addition to members of the Historical Institute Board, several members of the John Hoenecke family were present, including John’s widow, Arline, and four sons, Jon, David, Mark, and Joe (pictured).

COMMUNICATION SERVICES

414-256-3210; csc@wels.net

WELS members now can **support WELS’ operating fund when they shop online at Amazon**. Through the program AmazonSmile, you’ll find the same products and deals as on the online shopping site, www.amazon.com, with the added benefit that the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price

from your eligible purchases to your selected charity. To choose WELS as the charitable organization you wish to support, go to www.smile.amazon.com/ch/39-0842084. Then when you shop, go to smile.amazon.com.



Through using www.GoodSearch.com as their search engine, WELS members also can support WELS. Simply choose “Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Waukesha, WI)” from the pull-down menu when you search. Each search will generate approximately \$.01 for WELS. More than \$10,000 has already been earned through use of this search program.



The date for the second annual **WELS Night at Miller Park** is Aug. 14. Mark your calendars and plan to attend the Milwaukee Brewers’ game against the Philadelphia Phillies. Last year more



than 1,700 members enjoyed the evening and fellowship together. The Brewers are again offering WELS members 50 percent off the price of tickets. Seating will be in a block for WELS members. The pricing is Field Outfield Box for \$21/ticket, Loge Outfield Box for \$17/ticket, or Terrace Reserved for \$9/ticket. Visit www.brewers.com/wels to learn more and to purchase tickets.

Vicar program a blessing to more than just the vicars

St. Paul's, Columbus, Ohio, has been participating in Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's vicar program for almost 50 years. The vicar program allows third-year seminary students to spend a year studying at a WELS congregation. Vicars preach, lead worship, teach catechism and Bible classes, lead and attend various church meetings, and visit hospital patients and shut-ins—all under the supervision and with the support of the congregation's pastor.

At St. Paul's, support for the vicar program is strong. Hear firsthand from those involved:

SNOWDEN SIMS, PASTOR AT ST. PAUL'S:

"The congregation has grown to enjoy watching young men come in unsure of themselves, in many cases, then see them grow and mature in different areas just in time to return to the seminary for their final year. The vicar program has also been a great help for the pastors. The vicars provide assistance so that more work can be done for the congregation.

"Personally, I have been blessed to work with young men who get me back to the basics. Having been out for some time now, you tend to let some things go by the wayside. Having to check their preparation for sermon writing has kept me focused on my own practice."

DARA BAUMANN, MEMBER AT ST. PAUL'S:

"My husband and I feel it is a privilege for St. Paul's to be able to supplement the years of formal instruction these men have had with the sort of real world, interpersonal experiences that will let them reach people where they are spiritually.

"Our vicars are usually in their mid 20s when they arrive at St. Paul's, and with that youthfulness we think they bring a certain energy or zeal for doing the Lord's work. They are ex-

cited to put their training into practice, and they work tirelessly to serve and to improve their service.

"One of the things we appreciate the most from our vicars, on a personal level, is the fine role model they represent to our kids. In fact, one day while driving around on errands, I asked my son who he would most like to be like. I fully expected him to say he'd like to be like his favorite athlete or his uncle—typical teen answers. Instead, he named a vicar who served at St. Paul's that our family became very close to. Coming from a teen, that is quite a testament to the impact these young men have on our kids!"

BEN ZIETLOW, CURRENT VICAR AT ST. PAUL'S:

"On call day, [you feel] the nervous excitement and anticipation all the previous vicars and pastors talk about . . . yeah, words are an understatement . . . especially when your

last name starts with a 'Z.' At last I heard my name, followed by 'St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Columbus, Ohio,' and my heart was torn. In the back of my mind, I had been hoping for somewhere exotic, somewhere warm, somewhere not in a big city. I met with Pastor Sims right after the call service, and somehow I must have not been in the right frame of mind, because all I could remember from meeting him was how worried I was.

"And then I moved here with my amazing wife, Caitlin. I came in with the attitude, 'Well . . . if all else fails, at least God has blessed me with her.'"

"He must have thought that was funny, because I've been blessed beyond belief here at St. Paul's.

"The members here are unbelievably supportive. I don't know if there's yet been a weekend where we haven't been invited to do something! And there isn't a better pastoral mentor in WELS than Pastor Sims. The insights I've learned from him together with his attitude toward learning *together* has been a huge part of what has made this year the best year of my life.

"The whole experience has been such a blessing. If you're looking for one phrase that sums up vicar year, I believe my classmate and friend Daniel Slaughter, who is serving as a vicar down in southern Columbus (Grove City), summed up vicar year the best when he said, 'I went into this vicar program thinking about how I will be able to serve the members of my church. It turns out that the members have been serving me more than I could ever possibly dream of serving them.'"



Ben Zietlow (left) is currently serving as a vicar at St. Paul's, Columbus, Ohio. Zietlow is pictured here with Christopher Baumann, whose family enjoys getting to know all the vicars who serve St. Paul's. Christopher's mom, Dara, says, "We truly think of the young men who come to St. Paul's as part of our little family."



Learn more about the vicar program—including how some vicars are placed in home mission settings—in the April edition of *WELS Connection*.

Obituaries

Robert W. Schlicht 1931–2015

Robert Schlicht was born July 7, 1931. He died Jan. 7, 2015.

A 1957 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at St. John, Neillsville, Wis.; Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.; and The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn.

He is survived by two sons, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Paul S. Soukup 1941–2015

Paul Soukup was born Nov. 9, 1941. He died Jan. 28, 2015.

A 1967 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at St. Paul, North Platte, Neb.; Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.; Eastside, Madison, Wis.; and WELS Ministry of Christian Giving, Waukesha, Wis.

He is preceded in death by a foster son. He is survived by his wife, Sandra; 4 sons; 1 daughter; 16 grandchildren; 6 great-grandchildren; and 1 brother.

Eleanor A. Lester 1917–2015

Eleanor (née Zitzow) Lester was born June 4, 1917, in Frazee, Minn. She died Feb. 4, 2015.

She taught at Eastside, Madison, Wis.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Dick; two brothers; and one sister. She is survived by one daughter, two grandchildren, and one sister.

Janet L. Mischke 1949–2015

Janet (née Albrecht) Mischke was born Oct. 31, 1949, in New Ulm, Minn. She died Jan. 13, 2015.

A 1971 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught

District news

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

NW—Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis., is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year with a series of special services.

NE—On Feb. 8, Living Word (formerly St. John), Montrose, Colo., celebrated its 75th anniversary.

The district reporters for this month are: NE—Timothy Kemnitz; NW—Dennis Kleist; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



A 3-week-old, a 57-year-old grandmother, 4 other adults, and 14 St. Marcus Lutheran School students were all part of the 26 baptized at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis., on Feb. 8. Of the students, 11 were eighth-graders who requested to be baptized because they had been learning about Baptism in catechism class at school. Six other eighth-graders have scheduled private baptisms. In the last year, 118 baptisms have taken place at St. Marcus, most of them related to the school. Pictured is one of the students who was baptized on Feb. 8 (middle), along with two of his mentors, including St. Marcus Lutheran School superintendent Henry Tyson (left).

at Salem, Owosso, Mich.; Grace, Glendale, Ariz.; Good Shepherd, Phoenix, Ariz.; Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.; and St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Joel, and three sisters. She is survived by one daughter, three grandchildren, and two sisters.

Ronald Norman Tischer 1933–2015

Ronald Tischer was born Feb. 9, 1933, in Minneapolis, Minn. He died Feb. 20, 2015.

A graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Trinity, Grafton/St. Mark, Sutton, Neb.; St. Paul, Broken Bow, Neb.; St. John, Brewster, Neb.; and Zion, Cambria, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his brother and sister. He is survived by his wife, Judi; one son; two daughters; nine grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and one sister.



Touching heaven

PERMISSION TO SPEAK FREELY

We may be intimidated to speak in the presence of powerful and important people, but God invites us to speak and share what troubles us.

Stephen M. Luchterhand

The mysterious package arrives by expensive Next Day Air shipping. Inside, a beautifully decorated invitation beckons. This is more than a mere electronic invite, more than a home-computer-generated invite twice folded, much more than a casual request for your presence at a friend's birthday party or neighborhood barbeque. Beneath the elaborately papered and layered production is an invitation to the White House.

You are invited to meet the President of the United States! It's a once-in-a-lifetime honor, one that few people ever receive. Excitement soon gives way to anxiety as questions begin to form: What will I wear? What is the proper etiquette? What will I say? Will I even have a chance to speak? Will I be able to ask questions? I have so many.

Such visits are carefully controlled. The President's time is valuable and his schedule busy. Aides and Secret Service personnel maintain constant

vigilance. Any conversation will likely be light and brief and directed by the President himself.

Fortunately, any breach in protocol at the White House will not be met with an immediate response. Such was the fate of many who dared to speak improperly or without permission in the presence of kings and dictators in centuries past. A visit with the President will be exhilarating, but limited.

A STUNNING INVITATION

An even more stunning invitation awaits. God invites people to speak to him. The Almighty Creator of the universe, who is far above all rulers and authorities and presidents, invites people to come to him in prayer.

But who can pray? Only believers have permission to speak to God. Because sin separates us from God, only those whose sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus can be heard. Isaiah de-

clares, “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (59:2).

God’s only Son earned for us the right to pray to the God of heaven and earth. Jesus Christ paid the price for sin with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. Baptized into his death and resurrection, we are covered by his grace with the righteousness of the One who took our place. All this comes to us by God’s gift of faith. With our sins forgiven and adopted as God’s children, we have the right to come into his presence and speak. Because of Christ’s saving work, God invites us to talk with him and pour out our hearts to him.

COMPLETE ACCESS

God’s Word leaves no doubt about this. “Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (Romans 5:1,2). “In [Christ] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).

No password or PIN number is needed. No security questions or Social Security number are necessary. There’s no automated menu of options to wade through before the connection is finally made. Jesus gives us complete, immediate access to the throne of God and ushers us into the presence of the Lord God himself.

In the presence of dignitaries such as the President of the United States, people speak formally. First names and nicknames are not allowed. “Mr. President” is the respectable standard of address.

How may we address the God of the universe? He is described as immortal, invisible, and incomprehensible. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. What form of address is proper in the presence of the King of all? Jesus taught his disciples, “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven’ ” (Matthew 6:9).

Modern ears fail to pick up on the shock of this familiar address. To call God “Father” was shockingly intimate for the Jews of Jesus’ day. In the Old Testament, God is called “Father” only a handful of times. Then Jesus comes along and uses the term “Father” more than 180 times in the gospels, 120 times just in the gospel of John. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus uses the term “*Abba*,” an especially close term of endearment.

With our sins forgiven and adopted as God’s children, we have the right to come into [God’s] presence and speak.

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther summarizes the beauty and privilege of this form of address: “With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.”

PERMISSION TO SPEAK FREELY

Now that we’re in the presence of God, what do we say? What can we say? Is there anything that is off limits? Do we speak only when spoken to? In the presence of the President or in a military setting, people have to wait for permission to speak. God grants his people permission to speak freely. In fact, he is eager to hear our prayers.

Jesus invites, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Peter encourages, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). King David declares, “The eyes of the

LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry” (Psalm 34:15).

In an intriguing Scripture reading that indicates increasing intensity, Jesus says, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). These are present tense, continual actions: Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking. Prayer is not an item that gets checked off the list of things to do. It’s a priority. It’s a privilege. It’s continual. Morning, noon, and night. Driving, working, playing. Eyes closed, eyes open. At any moment, we can be ready to engage the Father in prayer about anything.

Anything? Jesus says, “Yes.” “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21:22). “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24).

“Whatever” leaves no doubt that we have permission to speak freely to God in prayer. It is important to remember, however, that prayer must be offered in faith in Jesus’ name and according to God’s good and gracious will revealed in his Word (1 John 5:14,15). As this is done, the Father hears and answers with his children’s best interests in mind.

If our home galaxy, the Milky Way, were scaled down to the size of the entire continent of North America, our solar system would fit in a coffee cup. Somewhere in that coffee cup are the planets, the sun, and you and me. It would seem that our prayers are at best infinitesimally small. But to the Father’s ears, they are big prayers—important prayers of his children who belong to him through Jesus.

Speak freely. Your Father hears and answers.

Stephen Luchterhand is pastor at Deer Valley, Phoenix, Arizona.

This is the first article in a seven-part series on prayer. See more on Jesus’ prayer life on p. 33.



Missionaries

SOWING THE SEED

Imagine a land where only one in one hundred people is a Christian, a land where converting to Christianity and being baptized is a crime punishable by death, a land where the few Christians who do exist are often the “poorest of the poor.” This land is Pakistan.

The Christians who live there typically have the worst jobs. They are street cleaners, brick kiln workers, and toilet cleaners. Usually their children will not attend school. Only a few will learn to read or write. In this place WELS is sharing the gospel in unusual ways and with surprising results.

“Nasreen” was a nominal Christian in Pakistan who believed in black magic and did not attend worship services. She worked as a cleaning lady in a hospital at night. Into her hands came the book, *Jesus the Christ*. This guided self-study book is the first book in a Bible correspondence course given to people who wish to learn about Jesus. She was “very much scared,” our contact told us, to read this book in front of her Muslim colleagues.

So when everyone was sleeping late at night, she took the book out and studied it. But she did not have any place in the hospital to keep the book. She needed to find a place to hide it. In her culture, a book with holy writings is placed on a high shelf and shown great respect, but this was not a Muslim book. At last she found a place to show respect for the book and to keep this book. She found a place high and hidden on top of a wall between two toilets.

At late hours when she cleaned the toilets, she took the book out and read it. When she finished the book, she contacted the person who gave her the book and asked for another. In a short time she finished all 12 books in the first series of this Bible correspondence course. She

learned the truth about Christianity and became a believer in Jesus.

But then while she was reading one of those books, she discovered it was gone from the hiding place on the wall. She learned that the book was taken by a Muslim lady who lived in the same village. But to her surprise the Muslim woman did not report her to the authorities. Instead she asked Nasreen for more books. Soon the woman’s entire family started reading the course. Today, by God’s grace, the two families believe in Christ “very strongly.”

More than 44,000 people in Pakistan have enrolled in this Bible correspondence course since 2006. At the end of every chapter there is a quiz and at the end of the book a test. The student completes the test and returns it to the person who shared the materials with them. Most students then go on to complete the next book in the series. WELS Multi-Language Publications has translated 21 books like this into Urdu for use in Pakistan.

In this land, God has blessed the sowing of his Word with a beautiful harvest. There are 56 house churches in Pakistan. The head of the household conducts a worship service for friends and neighbors on Saturday evenings. To teach the people he uses Luther’s Catechism, which has been translated into Urdu.

Currently WELS is working on a songbook for these churches. Recently representatives from Multi-Language Publications met in Dubai to produce hymns with a Lutheran message sung to a Pakistani-style of music.

Children attend one of 17 Sunday schools where they receive a high level of instruction as they learn the stories of the Bible, memorize Scripture, sing songs, and enact plays based on Bible lessons. One visitor from America said, “I have never seen such impressive Sunday school plays. They are exceptionally well-done and teach powerful lessons.”

WELS has opened six non-formal schools for the Christian children who work in the fields and who otherwise would not receive an education. The schools meet from 3 to 6 P.M. One girl runs breathless into the classroom as she hurries from the fields where she has been working all day.

The small church in Pakistan produces a weekly 30-minute television broadcast to the Muslim world. Each broadcast has a 10- to 15-minute illustrated Bible history account, a 10- to 15-minute lesson from Luther's Catechism, and sometimes a

10-minute puppet show. Two satellite channels and 19 television stations broadcast the program. Soon the show will direct viewers to a website, **godslovestheworld.net**, where they can access the rich treasure of Christian materials WELS has produced in English and Urdu.

Finally, WELS shows the love of Jesus by providing humanitarian aid through WELS Christian Aid and Relief, including providing relief for refugees and victims of bombings, floods, and earthquakes, as well as offering free medical clinics. Usually Christian literature is distributed as aid is dispensed to the body.

When two suicide bombers attacked a church and killed 127 men, women, and children and wounded 250 worshipers, Christian Aid and Relief provided help to the surviving family members. When a mob attacked a Christian community and burned down more than 50 Christian homes, WELS brought supplies, blankets, and Christian literature to the survivors.

In the medical clinics we help people of all religious backgrounds. One man said, "Your God is the true God because I see his love in you."

In a land where only one in one hundred people is a Christian, God's Holy Spirit is producing a bountiful harvest.

Article written by the WELS friendly counselor (names withheld for security reasons).

Images removed for security concerns.

CONFESSIONAL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF PAKISTAN

**Established: 2010; first
contact made in 2002**

Baptized members: 128

House churches: 56

Friendly counselor: 1

**Average weekly worship
attendance: 728**

**Average weekly Sunday
school attendance: 460**

**Number of people enrolled
in Bible correspondence
courses since 2006: 44,410**

**Unique fact: Through WELS
Multi-Language Publica-
tions, religious materials
have been translated into
Urdu, the main language of
Pakistan, and also Pashtu,
the language spoken in the
Northwestern Tribal Fron-
tier Province (also known
as Waziristan), which is
the most lawless area of
Pakistan and a stronghold
for the Taliban.**

Go to www.wels.net/missions to
learn more about WELS missions.

Surrounded by LOVE

An African immigrant finds support and love from different WELS congregations in the United States.

Linda R. Buxa

Anna and her husband lived in Kenya with their three children. Then Anna's husband died—and everything changed. Her Mungiki brother-in-law, believing in the African traditional practice, felt he had the right to inherit Anna as a wife. The Mungiki religion, which is officially banned, began in the late 1980s. Part mafia, part cult, part political group, the Mungiki reject westernization and Christianity. They support a return to indigenous African traditions. Many live in fear of the Mungikis' corruption and violence.

Because Anna was involved in a Christian congregation in Kenya, she refused to move to her late husband's ancestral home and denounced Mungiki beliefs and practices. When she refused to move, she was attacked and beaten. Her brother-in-law threatened to kill her.

With the help of a Christian pastor in Kenya and her cousin in the United States, Anna sought sanctuary in the United States. "I fled Kenya to protect my life," she says.

Once she arrived in the United States, Anna was supported by relatives, fellow Kenyans, and eventually the members of Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla. That's where she met Pastor Steve Nuss—and started a journey across the country. That journey had stops at other WELS churches where she found loving support and encouragement.

In Clearwater, Anna was working as a nanny and would walk past Christ the Lord as she pushed the stroller. "I think we were a church of convenience at first," Nuss says. "Between our two teachers, myself, and our whole congregation, we wrapped her up in love and made her part of our church family."

Anna jumped right into congregational life. "She came to our work party; hopped on a riding lawn mower; and mowed our lawn, even when it started raining," says Nuss.

When Anna started information classes, the language barrier—her native language is Swahili—posed a challenge.

Nuss searched online and found the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, which sent him a copy of Luther's Catechism in Swahili. He gave that to Anna. She started reading it eagerly. Nuss remembers, "One day, she came right up to me and said, 'You know what, Pastor Nuss, I think everybody should have one of these!'"

But Anna's journey was not finished. She soon found a new job and moved to Pennsylvania. The move brought her to another congregation, Prince of Peace, King of Prussia—a new place and a new pastor, Pastor Roger Huffman. "She was remarkable. After everything she had endured, hearing God's Word was important to her. It was very clear how much depth she had to her faith. It sustained her," says Huffman. "She was so excited to be involved in our congregation and be part of our family of believers." Although her income was meager, she continued to send money back to Kenya. Though barely getting by, "she didn't ask much of us, other than love," says Huffman.

Anna stayed in Pennsylvania no more than six months. She was working for fellow Africans, but the situation became abusive. Sadly, abusive relationships are not uncommon. Because immigrants are vulnerable and have little resources and few other relationships, people take advantage of them. But Christian love finds a way. Huffman explains, "As believers, we can't separate Christian love from the gospel, and immigrants will know we are Christians by our love." So members of Prince of Peace helped her leave and escape to the state of Washington.

That stop lasted only a short time. Anna moved again and ended up in Maryland, working as a nanny for a family from Kenya. With their help, she found an immigration agency that also helped improve her English, and she earned a certificate as a certified nursing assistant. And Anna found another place of refuge and love. She

joined Atonement, Parkville, and became part of a church family again.

Their love embraced her and acted to help her. When her nanny employment ended and her visa expired, the members supported her in her efforts to receive asylum status. She got a Social Security number and a Maryland driving license. She found a job as a certified nursing assistant and bought a car.

Once she was established, she worked to bring her grandchildren, whom she and her husband had legally adopted, to the United States. This meant almost another year and more money until the children, who were tweens and teens at the time, could legally join her. Now Anthony, 23; Anne, 20; and Elizabeth, 17, live with Anna in a one-room apartment.

The members of Atonement were not experts in the laws and regulations of immigration, but they did not let that stop them. Newt Trimmer, pastor at Atonement, says, "I am learning as the process continues." The process has been a blessing. It "helps us appreciate the great blessing of being a United States citizen," says Trimmer—and it offered members the opportunity to show Christian love. The congregation started discussing how they could offer English to those who speak an African language.

Anna's story is unique, but it is not unusual. Immigrants continue to move to areas all across the United States, creating the perfect opportunity for congregations and members to open their doors and their hearts the way these three churches did with Anna. As churches reach out with the love of Jesus, more immigrants will grow closer to Jesus, become part of the community, and then join in the work of sharing the gospel with even more people.

Linda Buxa is a member at St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

Want to reach out to immigrants in your church's neighborhood? Here are some ideas from Paul Prange, the WELS coordinator for global cross-cultural outreach, and Prof. Allen Sorum, director of the Pastoral Studies Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

- "See immigrants not as Lazarus sitting by the side of the road comfortless but as future mission partners that can broaden and enhance the local congregation's outreach, diversity, fellowship, and loving vitality," says Sorum.
- Enlist caring and thoughtful retirees, who have the time needed to mentor and help new immigrants. Sorum explains, "This is a great way to provide meaningful service opportunities to people who have the kind of skills and compassion that immigrants would be blessed to received."
- Get ideas from the Domestic Tool Kit. "The Domestic Tool Kit is really a networking resource for congregations who want to put together a good plan for taking the gospel to people of other ethnic groups," Prange says.

He continues, "The key insight for those congregations is to ask the members of the ethnic group what needs they have and then to match the resources of the congregation to at least one of those needs."

Start with what is doable with the resources and helpers available as you work to provide spiritual, emotional, and physical support to future mission partners. Once they are part of our worldwide mission, they can take the gospel back to their homelands to bring still more people to the Savior.

Learn more about the Domestic Tool Kit on p. 22.

Get out the salt

Kenneth L. Brokmeier

In some ways I laud Christensen's desire that religion have an important influence in public life. . . . However, the influence of any such religion must be based on truth.

Recently I read a reflection in our local paper about the importance of religion in public life. The author referenced a YouTube presentation by Clayton Christensen, a professor in the Harvard Business School. I typed in the address and watched the video, which was first uploaded in the spring of 2014.

In the 90-second clip, Christensen relates a conversation he had with a Marxist economist from China. This man was in the United States studying on the Fulbright Fellowship. At the end of his stay, Christensen asked him if he had learned anything that was surprising or unexpected. The man stated that he had no idea how critical religion is to the functioning of democracy.

This economist's observations were that democracy works not so much because of the political enforcement of law. Instead it works because individuals, in general, see themselves as accountable to God and therefore they choose to obey the laws. The economist credited religious institutions for helping to preserve not only morality but also democracy. The question was for how much longer would religion in America continue to hold such sway?

Christensen concurred and concludes the video by stating, "If you take away religion, you can't hire enough police."

I watched a few more YouTube postings/interviews involving Christensen and discovered that he is willing to express his beliefs. He appears to be a man of high moral character and would like to see our country also have those kinds of standards. Logically he concludes that if America continues down the path of immorality, democracy will soon become a casualty.

As I listened to Christensen, something was notably missing. Further research uncovered that Christensen is a Mormon. What was missing is Jesus. What was absent is a clear understanding of what it means to be a Christian living in our

world. What was missing is a correct understanding of law and gospel.

In some ways I laud Christensen's desire that religion have an important influence in public life. After all Jesus does tell us, his followers, to be salt and light in this sin-darkened world (Matthew 5:13-16). However, the influence of any such religion must be based on truth.

Not all religion is proclaiming truth. Ironically, in that very same newspaper which published the reflection on the importance of religion in public life, were two other articles: one religious and the other a political opinion by a national journalist.

The political headline read, "LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community fighting for the right to be ordinary." The article noted that gay marriage is already sanctioned in 36 states, where about 70 percent of Americans live. As the headline hinted, the rest of America should see the lifestyle of the LGBT community as ordinary.

The other headline, the religious one, noted that a local congregation had voted to become "open and affirming." The article stated, "This means that the congregation has declared that all people including members of the LGBT community are welcome . . . and invited to receive all sacraments and rites of the church, including marriage."

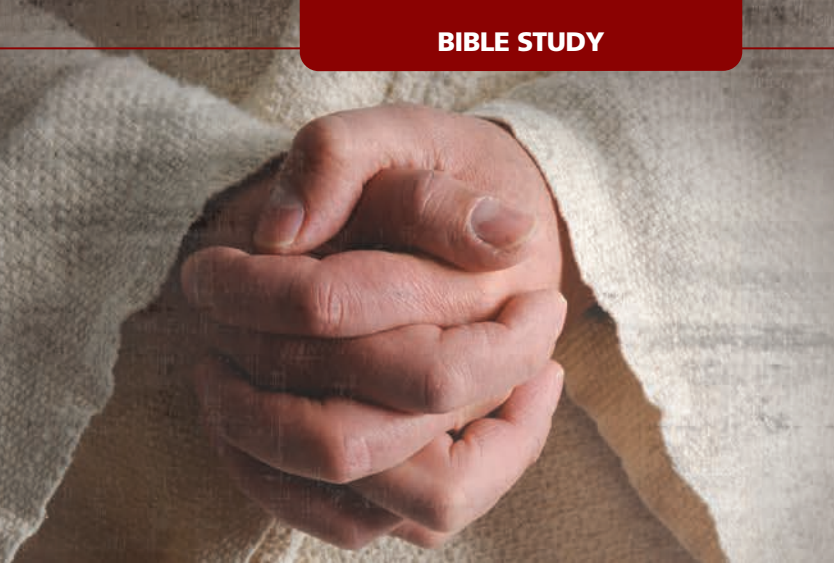
This kind of religion will certainly have an influence on public life. However, it won't be a positive one, at least not from God's vantage point.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we, as God's children, live like the salt of the earth, as Jesus told us. But we do so not just somehow to preserve democracy but to preserve and share the truth: "Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!"

Contributing editor Kenneth Brokmeier is pastor at Our Savior, Brookings, South Dakota.

JESUS

PRAYED FOR US



Jesus prayed according to his Father's will.

Samuel C. Degner

Husband and wife are deep in discussion, seated at the kitchen table in their cramped apartment. After weeks of shopping for a house of their own, they have finally found their dream home. Actually, *homes* . . . and that's the problem. Each one has fallen in love with a different house. For days now, they have gone back and forth, poring over the pictures, listing pros and cons, gently trying to change each other's mind.

Finally, they realize that a decision has to be made. They look at each other across their tiny table. The wife breaks the silence. "Whatever you want, honey. You're the head; I trust you to decide what's best for us." Wonderfully loving and submissive words . . . but her lack of eye contact, her cool tone of voice, and her abrupt exit from the table all join in concert to add: "But you better choose the one I want."

YOUR WILL BE DONE

Have you ever caught yourself praying that way? We know that God invites us to ask for whatever we want and asks us to be willing to accept whatever we get. So we say, "Lord, if it's your will." Yet even as we say the words, our sinful heart adds, "But I sure hope you don't disappoint me." We say, "Your will be done," but we know that if God's will doesn't match ours, a part of us won't be happy. In fact, these words can even start to feel like a ploy, as if we think that saying what God wants to hear will make him more likely to give us what we want. We must often sound like the house-hunting wife when we say to God, "Whatever you want."

That's not what it sounds like when Jesus prays. Follow him to a garden called Gethsemane. Step over three

sleeping disciples and walk about as far as you can throw a stone. There, in the darkness, you'll find him with his face on the ground. Sneak up close to listen as he prays. "*Abba*, Father . . . everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). Your will be done, he says—and he means it! This is no attempt at manipulation.

This is no act, either. Jesus is in real distress. He knows what he is about to endure. Its weight is almost unbearable. He is

strengthened by angels, and even then his anguish increases to the point that his sweat is like blood.

But if this is the cup his Father has given, he will drink it to the dregs! It's not just "whatever you want, God." It's "Father,

whatever you want *is what I want too*."

GOD'S WILL IS PERFECT

Daylight brings the proof. Friday finds Jesus obediently submitting to a Jewish council and a Roman governor. The Son complies with his Father's will all the way to the end. His actions show that he was sincere when he said, "Your will be done." His perfect obedience to that will, even to the point of death on a cross, atones for our failures to say the same.

When we see what God's will has accomplished, we cannot help but want to pray as Jesus did. God's will was for his own Son to suffer and die in our place so that we can live forever with him. *Abba*, Father, if that's what your will looks like, then let your will be done every time!

Contributing editor Samuel Degner is pastor at Bethel, Menasha, Wisconsin.

This is the sixth article in a nine-part series on Jesus and his prayer life. Read more on prayer on p. 26.



The wonder of
God's love is that
there are no barriers
to his thoughts
about us.

Breaking the barriers

Most of the time we think of life with two barriers. The first is birth or conception. Life begins. Before that we do not exist and may only be a vague notion in the mind of our parents. A child! A new person! From the moment we have life and then onward each day we collect our identity and wrap memories around that identity until we reach the second barrier. Death ends the journey of life.

From all our experiences we do not know anything different. Each one of our obituaries sees life in this way. We are born and have a birthday we celebrate year after year. Then we have a date of death when birthdays cease and we have achieved the measure of our days marked by years, months, and days. There is nothing more—at least from all human perception and experience.

But Easter removes one of those barriers. Jesus arose from the grave; he came back to life. His enemies would not believe it; they had never experienced the breaking of that barrier. The evidence they had witnessed said it couldn't happen. Death has no exceptions.

Even the disciples of Jesus had difficulty believing that Jesus had come back to life. The women trembled and were bewildered (Mark 16:8). When they told the disciples what they saw and heard, "their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11). Thomas needed proof. But soon they all were convinced that Jesus had shattered death's barrier to life. Life stretched beyond the burial.

The comfort and hope of the resurrection remains the message of the Christian church. Christians see more than life between birth and death. In Christ we see beyond death to resurrection and life forever with him. It's a message that's tied to Jesus. He is the only one who has the power to carry any human through death to life.

What about that first barrier? God tells us that even birth is not a barrier to his care for his people. He comforts us with the assurance that even before we were born, he knew us. "He chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Where we are today and who we are today God saw before we were born. God chose us before we were even that vague notion in the minds of our parents. We were loved before we entered life at birth.

The wonder of God's love is that there are no barriers to his thoughts about us. He knew us before we were born and sent his Son to break the barriers that would keep us from life with him.

When we travel our short journey from birth to life's end, God sees things differently than we do. He does not see only the 70 or 80 years we live here on earth. Our trials, our joys, our pains have all been considered in terms of our eternal life. That's God's vision. We don't think that way very often. We're lucky if we can see ourselves to the next birthday—sometimes only to the next day, the next paycheck, or the next weekend. That vision is too short and narrow. We are God's children adopted from eternity and bound to live in his presence eternally.

Does that take your breath away? It should comfort you no matter what temporary challenges or pain you have. It also changes the way we think about God's promise that everything will work out for our good. He's always had us in his mind and heart. Through Christ we are visitors headed for a long, long victory lap.

"For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried."

Joel D. Otto

The original Nicene Creed was written at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. The ensuing decades saw more controversies related to the person of Christ and the Holy Spirit, so another council, the Council of Constantinople, met in A.D. 381 to settle the doctrinal debates. What we call "The Nicene Creed" today is the expanded and amended version from the Council of Constantinople. The wording about the two natures of Christ was clarified, and the article on the Holy Spirit was greatly expanded.

Several other key phrases were also added. The original Nicene Creed simply stated, "He suffered death." The expanded Nicene Creed confessed, "For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried." The additions give a more complete confession of what the gospel accounts relate.

But the most important addition is the three words (two in Greek) "for our sake." These three little words convey why Jesus suffered so horribly. It was not merely a matter of injustice under the auspices of a weak ruler. He was not simply a victim of circumstances beyond his control. "For our sake" he endured unspeakable horrors.

The little phrase "for our sake" has several nuances of meaning. He was crucified and suffered death "for our sake," in our place (1 Peter 3:18). We deserved the cross. But in love for us God gave up his Son into death instead of punishing us (Romans 8:32).

His suffering and death were done for our sins, as the just payment that our sins earned. The entire Old Testament sacrificial system illustrated that a payment in blood was needed for sin. The blood of animals sacrificed by priests, however, was not sufficient. That only pointed ahead to the sacrifice of the promised Lamb of God. He is the true High Priest who offered himself for our sins (Hebrews 7:26,27; 9:12-14).

He endured suffering, death, and the judgment of hell for our benefit. He became sin in our place so that we are declared righteous in God's sight (2 Corinthians 5:21). He suffered the curse of sin so that we are set free from the curse and condemnation of our sins (Galatians 3:13). He gave himself into death for us so that through baptism we are holy, cleansed, and forgiven (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Lent and Holy Week remind us of these truths each year. The truth that "for our sake [Jesus] was crucified under Pontius Pilate" is the beating heart of the gospel and the sure hope onto which our faith holds for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This is what Christians have been confessing since the day of Pentecost.

When you confess the Nicene Creed, may the little words "for our sake" bring joy and comfort to your heart.

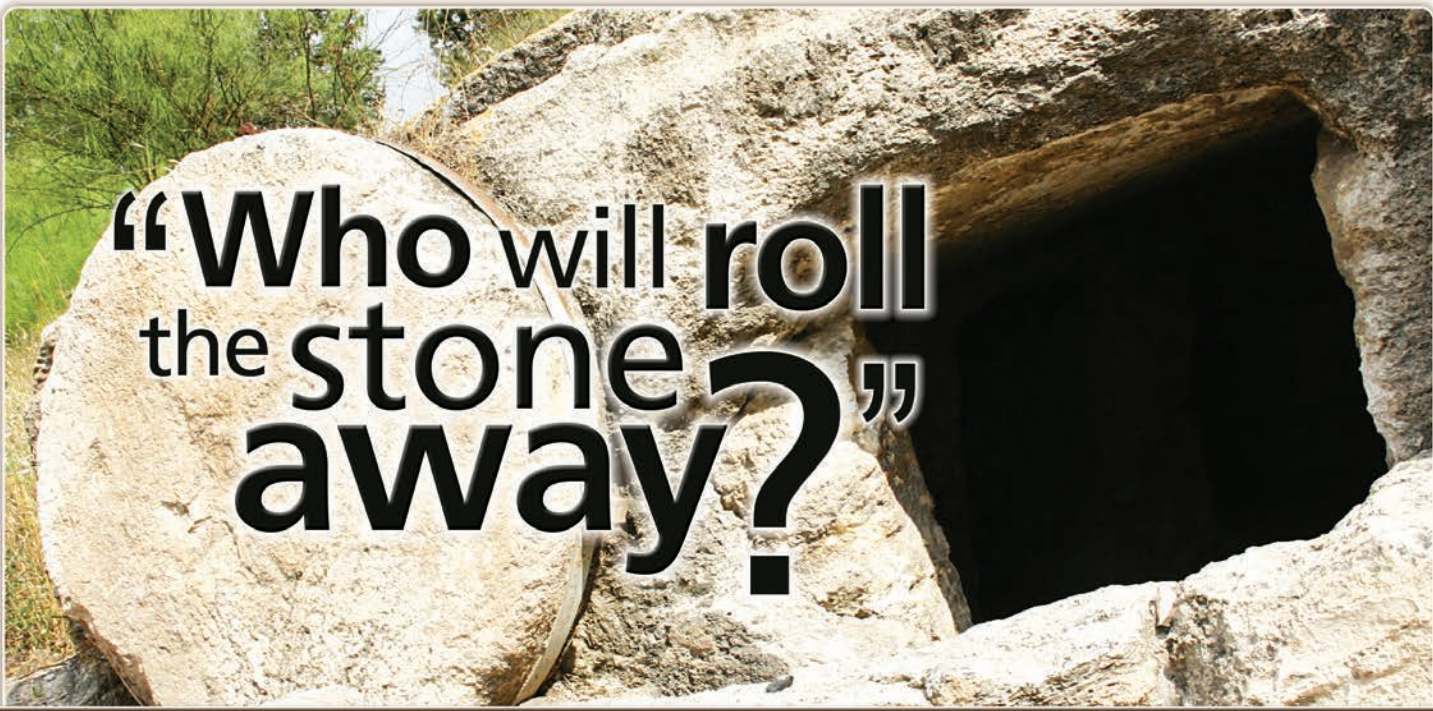
EXPLORING THE WORD

1. Read Romans 8:31,32. How does Paul connect Jesus' death for us with the ongoing challenges we face each day?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Jesus' suffering and death for the sake of all people is an objective truth. Why is this objectivity comforting for us when we are troubled by our sin and guilt?
3. How does the objective nature of Christ's saving work for the world inform the mission of the church?

Contributing editor Joel Otto, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Salem, Milwaukee.



This is the sixth article in a 13-part series on the Nicene Creed. Find this study and answers online after April 5 at www.wels.net/forwardinchrist.



“Who will roll the stone away?”

God has the answers for all the difficult questions in life. Timothy J. Spaude

Their hearts were broken. Jesus was dead. They faced tragedy or loss as we often do. They decided to do something. Do anything.

Mark tells us that when the Sabbath was over (6 P.M. on Saturday) Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to prepare Jesus' body for burial. Just after sunrise they hurried to Jesus' tomb. But on the way they experienced one of those “oops” moments. “Who will roll the stone away?” they asked each other.

Good question. The typical tomb for a wealthy man like Joseph of Arimathea was hollowed out of rock. A large, round, quarried stone several inches thick and four to five feet in diameter was positioned near the entrance. Then the heavy stone was rolled over the entrance. The women needed more help to open the tomb than they brought. “Who will roll the stone away?” *Good question.*

God answer! When they got to the tomb, the stone had already been rolled away, but not by any man-power. It was God power. An angel of the Lord had rolled the stone away. All their worries and concerns over the problem of the stone had been needless. God had things under control. Their tears and sadness, doubts and fears had been needless too. Jesus was not dead! “He is risen, just as he

said,” the angel told them. God's answer to their good question was more than they could have imagined or hoped for.

That same God is active in our lives too. Easter gives us an opportunity each year to revisit the empty tomb and be reminded of the power of God, who is able to do more than we can ask or imagine. We have our own good questions that come from trying times. “How will I go on without him?” the grieving widow asks. *Good question.* Death hurts. *God answer!* “You won't live without me. I will be with you and provide you with what you need to go on until you see me and him again.”

Easter gives us an opportunity each year to revisit the empty tomb and be reminded of the power of God.

“What's going on in our world? Where will it end?” *Good question.* Morality disappears. Division and lawlessness grow. It seems we are spiraling out of control. *God answer!* “I am in control. I have been raising up and tearing down countries for thousands of years to advance the plan of salvation. This too fits in my plan.”

“How will we make it?” the Christian couple asks after a downsizing leaves the breadwinner jobless. *Good question.* There are bills to pay. *God answer!* “Don't worry. Look at the birds in the air and the lilies in the field. I take care of them and I take care of you. Sometimes I hide behind jobs. Sometimes I hide behind other means of income. When you pray for daily bread, I provide.”

We don't know exactly how God will take care of our dilemmas any more than the women on Easter morning did. But did you notice something? The women kept going! Look how God worked that out!

I wonder if the women learned from their experience. The next time they faced a dilemma, did they smile to themselves? Did they remember that when they are facing something out of their control they can count on the God of Easter to fix their problem in just the right way?

Will we learn? Will we learn from the God who sacrificed his Son for us? We can. Live each day with Easter in mind.

Who will roll the stone away? God will, of course. Jesus lives!

Timothy Spaude is pastor at St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wisconsin.