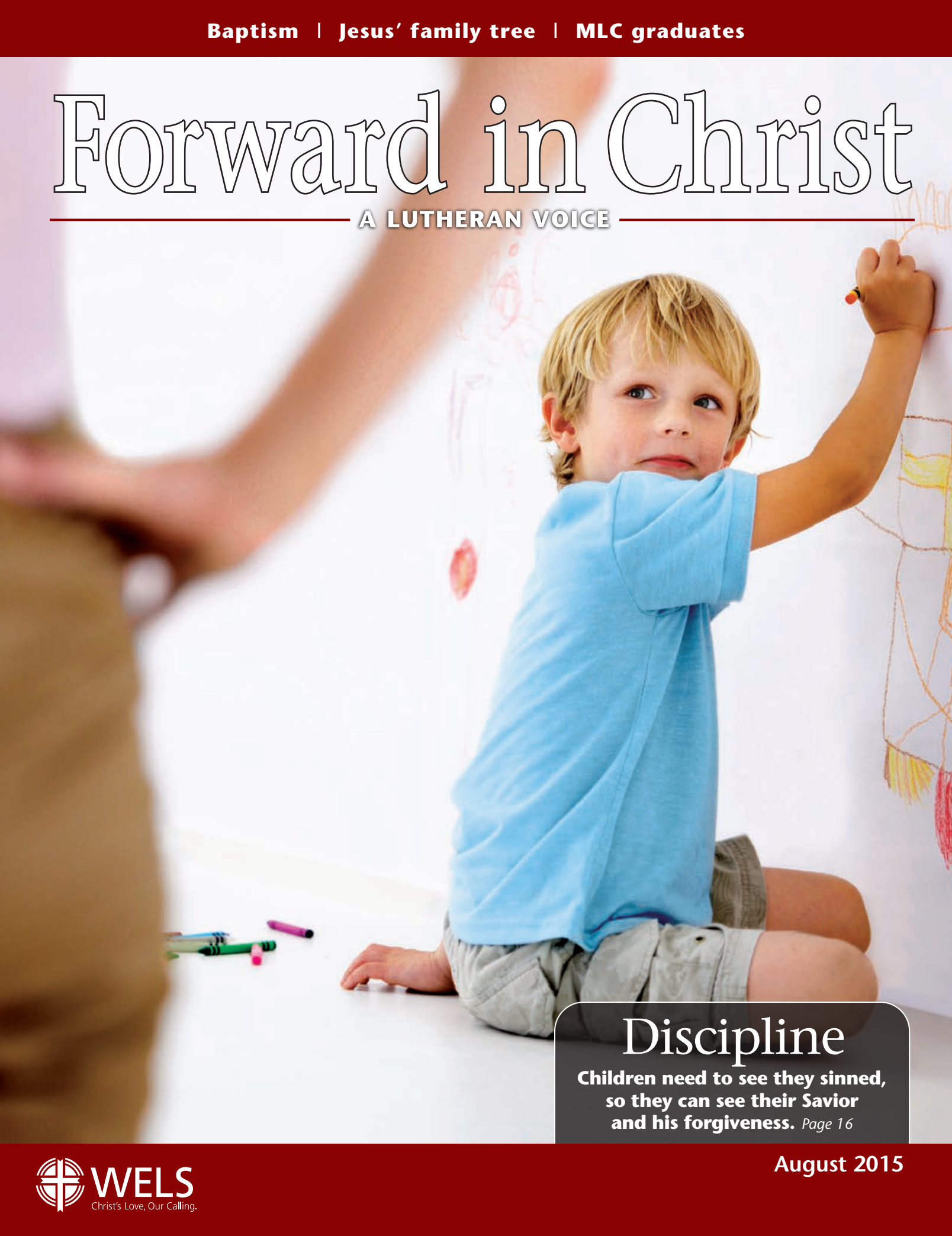


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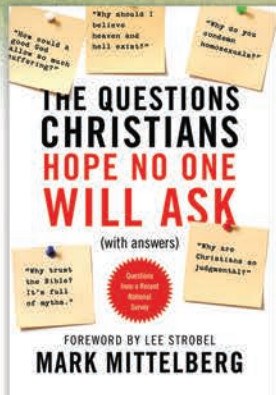
A LUTHERAN VOICE



Discipline

Children need to see they sinned,
so they can see their Savior
and his forgiveness. *Page 16*

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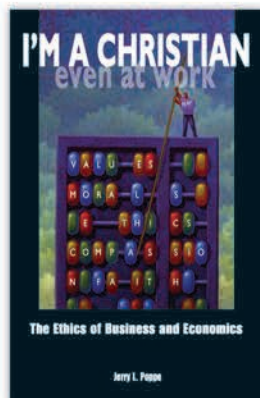


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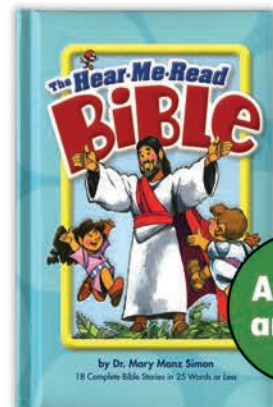
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FEATURES

- 10** | **Dead to sin. Alive to God.**
Christian living is a daily battle over who rules the territory of our lives.
James F. Borgwardt

- 12** | **Touching heaven: Where there's a will, there's a way**
God hears and answers in his own time and in his own way.
Stephen M. Luchterhand

- 14** | **Confessions of faith**
A man originally from Colombia studies to be a pastor and shares the gospel with Latinos in the United States.
Rachel Hartman

- 16** | **Heart to heart: Parent conversations**
How do Christian parents deal with discipline?

- 28** | **Mission stories: Nepal**

- 30** | **Where I am from**
A missionary's daughter learns that God never forgets where we are from or what we need.
Sarah M. Habben

- 36** | **Celebrating friendship**
Real friendships are built on the same kind of love that Christ showed us.
Thomas C. Spiegelberg II



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

WHAT'S INSIDE

This month we have a new contributing editor joining our magazine. Tom Kock, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, is starting a new Bible study in which he will introduce us to some of the ancestors of Jesus (p. 33). Meet Prof. Kock on p. 25.

Here are a few more of your brothers and sisters in Christ whom you will meet this month:

- The new class of graduates from Martin Luther College (pp. 21-25). Pray for them as they continue their lifelong service to our Savior.
- Three parents who offer examples from their lives to show what discipline can look like for Christian parents (p. 16).
- A confused peacock. Okay, this isn't actually a person, but you will be interested to learn how it relates to the daily battles we fight in our Christian life (p. 10).
- Prasad and Raju, two Christians from Nepal who are leading the church there in reaching out in a country that is only one percent Christian (p. 28).
- A Third Culture Kid who tells us what it's like growing up in a foreign land—and what it's like leaving it (p. 30).
- A man from South America who now ministers to the Hispanic community in northwest Milwaukee (p. 14).

Julie Wietzke



7



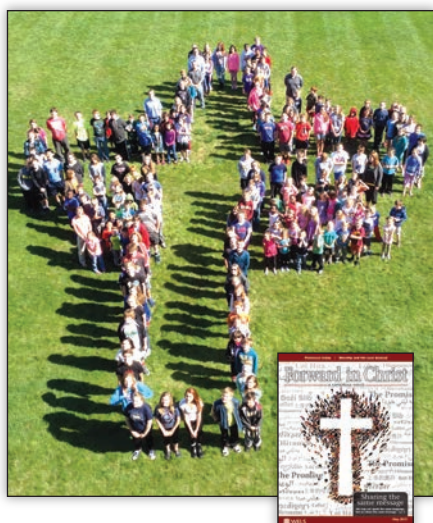
15



30

IN EVERY ISSUE

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 6 | Feedback
Readers share their opinions | 20 | News
What's happening in WELS |
| 7 | Devotion
Celebrate your baptism! | 32 | Editorial comment
How to make your church irresistible |
| 8 | From the president's desk
Marriage under assault: A clear confession | 33 | Bible study
Real people, real Savior |
| 9 | Light for our path
Infant baptism | 34 | A thought
You hypocrite! |
| 18 | Teen talk
Reaching out with Christ's love | 35 | Interactive Bible study
We believe as all believers have |
| 19 | Bulletin board
Announcements from around the synod | | |



COOL PHOTO

This is our attempt at the cross photo on the May cover. This is King of Grace School in Golden Valley, Minnesota (ELS), and we are all centered around the cross of Christ. We had several photographers on our gym roof and almost got straight lines from grade school children! Thank you.

*Bonnie Nielsen
Golden Valley, Minnesota*

LETTER OF APPRECIATION FROM A PRISONER

I grew up attending a different denomination church. But when I met my wife, I began going to church with her at her WELS church in Pardeeville, Wisconsin.

The pastor and entire congregation made me feel welcome and wanted me to know I was invited to become every bit a member as they were.

When I was arrested and sent to prison, I was under pressure from my parents to contact a church from their denomination, to have one of their pastors visit me or a member of their denomination correspond with me. I sent letters to seven of those churches that were close to the prisons I was incarcerated at over the years and received responses from only two of those churches, saying that "we do not have any prison ministry and do not wish to expose ourselves to victimization by prisoners." I was hurt as well as shocked at the response.

But, to my surprise, my wife's church sent me monthly copies of *Forward in Christ* magazine, which was full of interesting and helpful articles that inspired me and helped me in my spiritual growth and Christian walk. They also sent me copies of *Meditations*.

I have been so blessed by this as I read every line and then share the magazines with others as well. So it is a double blessing.

The church has faithfully sent me these copies each month for the past 20 years of my incarceration and will occasionally include a note of encouragement as well, letting me know I am not forgotten and that they pray for me and my family. That is so encouraging and not at all like my parent's church or the rejection that I received from those other churches.

Then I learned that WELS has a chaplain who will come for a pastoral visit as well as regular Bible studies. So I signed up for that and have been richly blessed as a result of the very faithful Christian service of Rev. Isles, who comes regardless of the weather.

Then St. John's sent my name in to receive correspondence Bible studies. I just about completed the entire series. The studies make it easy to grasp

the biblical truth and have real meaning to my life.

I am so blessed to know I am a member of a WELS church that emphasizes practicing the truth of God's Word and becoming more Christlike in how they reach out and treat others and where I was not turned away due to the sin of my past.

*Duane Bull
Fox Lake, Wisconsin*

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*.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

We decided to watch the call service for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, in my classroom at St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich. When WELS President Mark Schroeder was introduced, one of my kindergarten students leaned over to me and said, "Sooooo . . . what-ever happened to Obama?"

—Christine Krieger

Through my Bible in 3 years

Read or listen online at www.wels.net.

AUGUST 2015

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Job 11, 12 | 12. Job 36, 37 | 23. 2 Samuel 1 |
| 2. Job 13, 14 | 13. Job 38:1–40:5 | 24. 2 Sam. 2, 3 |
| 3. Job 15–17 | 14. Job 40:6–42:6 | 25. 2 Sam. 4:1–5:16 |
| 4. Job 18, 19 | 15. Job 42:7–17 | 26. 2 Sam. 5:17–6:23 |
| 5. Job 20, 21 | 16. Psalm 42, 43 | 27. 2 Sam. 7 |
| 6. Job 22–24 | 17. Ps. 44 | 28. 2 Sam. 8, 9 |
| 7. Job 25–27 | 18. Ps. 45 | 29. 2 Sam. 10, 11 |
| 8. Job 28, 29 | 19. Ps. 46–48 | 30. 2 Sam. 12:1–13:37 |
| 9. Job 30, 31 | 20. Ps. 49 | 31. 2 Sam. 13:38–14:33 |
| 10. Job 32, 33 | 21. Ps. 50 | |
| 11. Job 34, 35 | 22. Ps. 51 | |

Celebrate your baptism!

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5

Steven J. Pagels

My mother was beaming as she looked down at the little bundle of joy in her arms. My dad was standing next to her, just as excited about the new life the Lord had brought into the world.

It's the kind of scene you would expect to see at a hospital birthing center, but my mom wasn't the one wearing the gown that day. I was. And the family picture wasn't taken in a hospital room. We were gathered around the baptismal font.

Because I was born in the hospital on a Sunday and baptized in church the following Sunday, it's easy for me to remember the date of my baptism: August 20, 1972. How about you? When were you baptized? Do you remember that day? How do you celebrate that day?

REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY

As a pastor, I have been involved in dozens of baptism celebrations. New parents are filled with joy, and they invite their family and friends to the service to rejoice with them. It is a blessing to see so many new faces in church, but sometimes I wonder how many of those guests grasp the significance of what is taking place at the font.

Baptism is much more than a spiritual rite of passage. When parents bring their child to the font, they are not just fulfilling a time-honored Christian tradition. Paul wanted Titus to know—and he wants us to remember—that every baptism is a rescue mission. Babies may look cute and cuddly, but they are born dead in their sins. Every human being enters the world stained by sin, and we desperately need someone to wash us and make us clean.



Enter God. As unlovable as we are, God still loves us. Even though you and I have done nothing to deserve it, he saved us. He rescued us from the curse of our sin. He snatched us out of the clutches of Satan. Using

Baptism is much more than a spiritual rite of passage.

only a few drops of water and a few powerful words, the Holy Spirit made us children of God and heirs of eternal life. When I stop and think about all the blessings the Lord poured out on me on the day of my baptism, I can't help but celebrate.

REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISM EVERY DAY

Later this month I will celebrate the 43rd anniversary of my baptism, but you don't have to wait for your own "rebirth day" to join the festivities. And you don't have to feel bad if you

can't remember the exact date of your baptism because God wants you to remember your baptism every day.

You can start by locating your baptismal certificate. Instead of putting it away after you look at it, put it in a frame and hang it in a prominent place in your home. Let it serve as a visible reminder of the miracle the Holy Spirit has worked in your heart. Ask your parents if they have any pictures from that day and add them to the display. Highlight the date of your baptism in your planner. Give thanks for your baptism in your daily prayers.

No matter what you do, remember that the goals are to remember everything the Lord has done for you, to remember the blessings of your baptism, and to celebrate your baptism!

Contributing editor Steven Pagels is pastor at St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.



Mark Schweden

Congregations would do well to adopt a written policy that articulates our long-held doctrine [on marriage] as well as how that doctrine is applied in our congregations.

Marriage under assault

With the rapid changes in society regarding views on marriage, it is a virtual certainty that the congregations of our synod will face situations and challenges that they have not faced before. In that context, our called workers and members will need to be ready to give a clear and bold confession regarding the biblical teachings about marriage and homosexuality.

In addition, one can safely assume that there will be those who will challenge our synod's position and practice in court. Since our synod's teaching on marriage and its practices regarding marriage are clear and consistent, congregations would do well to adopt a written policy that articulates our long-held doctrine as well as how that doctrine is applied in our congregations.

The President's Office has consulted with the synod's legal counsel. The following is a sample of such a statement that can be adopted by congregations. There is no need to incorporate this policy into congregational bylaws; it can stand alone as a separate congregational policy.

Doctrine and Policy Regarding Marriage

(Congregation's name)
Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Bible teaches that marriage was established and given by God at the time of creation. As he designed and instituted it, marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). It is a relationship that is to be honored and kept pure (Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 5:22-33). As a man and woman promise lifelong faithfulness to each other as husband and wife, God himself joins them as one. Marriage is not simply a contract between two consenting individuals, nor is it merely a creation of human society, culture, or tradition. God himself instituted marriage at the time of creation, and God himself joins a man and woman in marriage today.

The biblical teaching on marriage emphasizes the blessings God intends to convey to those joined together in the marital relationship. Through marriage God provides partners well suited and complementary to one another. In marriage, God provides a partner who will provide encouragement and support. Marriage is also to be the God-ordained means to procreate and to establish a stable environment in which children can be nurtured both physically and spiritually. Marriage is the one context God intended for the use of the blessing of sexual intimacy, where the sexual union of one man and woman is an expression of love and oneness rather than a sinful satisfaction of lust. Finally, since we live in a fallen world, in marriage God provides a restraint for selfishness and sin as each partner strives to live the pure life that God intends for his people (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

This is the Bible's teaching about the origin, definition, and nature of marriage. For that reason it is also the doctrine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Every congregation and called worker accepts the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice. That marriage is the God-ordained union of one man and one woman is the clear teaching of the Bible, and, therefore, is the teaching and confession of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The policy and practice of (name of the congregation), a member congregation of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, is consistent with the synod's beliefs and teachings regarding marriage. We believe that marriage is the sacred, lifelong union between one man and one woman. Therefore, our pastors will not officiate in any marriage ceremony or celebration and our church sanctuary may not be used for any activities related to a marriage ceremony or celebration that is inconsistent with these beliefs.

Download this policy at www.wels.net.

Light for our path

A friend who belongs to another church asked me where the Bible specifically speaks of baptizing infants. I could not find a verse like that. Can you help?

James F. Pope

Your search came up empty because there is no Scripture verse that specifically commands the baptizing of infants. However, that does not mean we are to withhold Baptism from them. On the contrary, the Bible lists compelling reasons why infants are to be baptized.

THE RECIPIENTS OF BAPTISM

When Jesus instituted Baptism in Matthew 28:19,20, he did not limit Baptism to adults. He said “all nations” were to be instructed in his Word and baptized. Think of all the people who comprise a nation. Think of who is counted as a citizen of a nation when a census occurs. All people are counted. If infants were to be excluded from Baptism, Jesus’ words in Matthew 28 would have been an appropriate place to indicate that. Because in every sense infants are included in “all nations,” they are to be the recipients of Baptism.

More than being people who are part of a nation, infants are to be baptized because they have a need for the forgiveness of sins. The Bible does not speak of any age of innocence or any time in life when infants and children are not sinners and not responsible for their sins. Just the opposite, Scripture speaks of people being conceived and born in sin. King David spoke for the entire human race when he confessed, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). Jesus reiterated that truth when he informed Nicodemus that “flesh gives birth to flesh” (John 3:6). In other words, sinful parents have sinful children.

A final reason for baptizing infants is that the Bible reveals to us that children and infants can believe. Passages like Matthew 18:6; Luke 18:15-17; and 2 Timothy 3:15 provide proof of that.

So rather than a single verse addressing infant Baptism, it is the case of numerous Bible passages demonstrating why little ones too are to be baptized.

THE POWER BEHIND BAPTISM

Additionally, we baptize infants because we understand from Scripture how Christian faith originates.

A common reason used to reject infant Baptism is the child’s lack of intellectual development. That objection reveals a serious misunderstanding of the nature of faith. Who, after all, is responsible for faith? How does faith originate? Is faith an intellectual process that results in people making a decision for Christ or inviting him into their hearts? Not at all. God the Holy Spirit is responsible for creating faith. People—young and old—are the objects of the Spirit’s powerful working through the gospel (Ephesians 2:10).

The Bible explains that “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (Romans 10:17). God uses the gospel—the Word alone or the Word connected to an earthly element, water—to call people to faith in Jesus. When it comes to conversion, people are on the receiving end of the Holy Spirit’s work. Faith is God’s gift to people (Ephesians 2:8). God can give that gift to young and old alike, and he does.

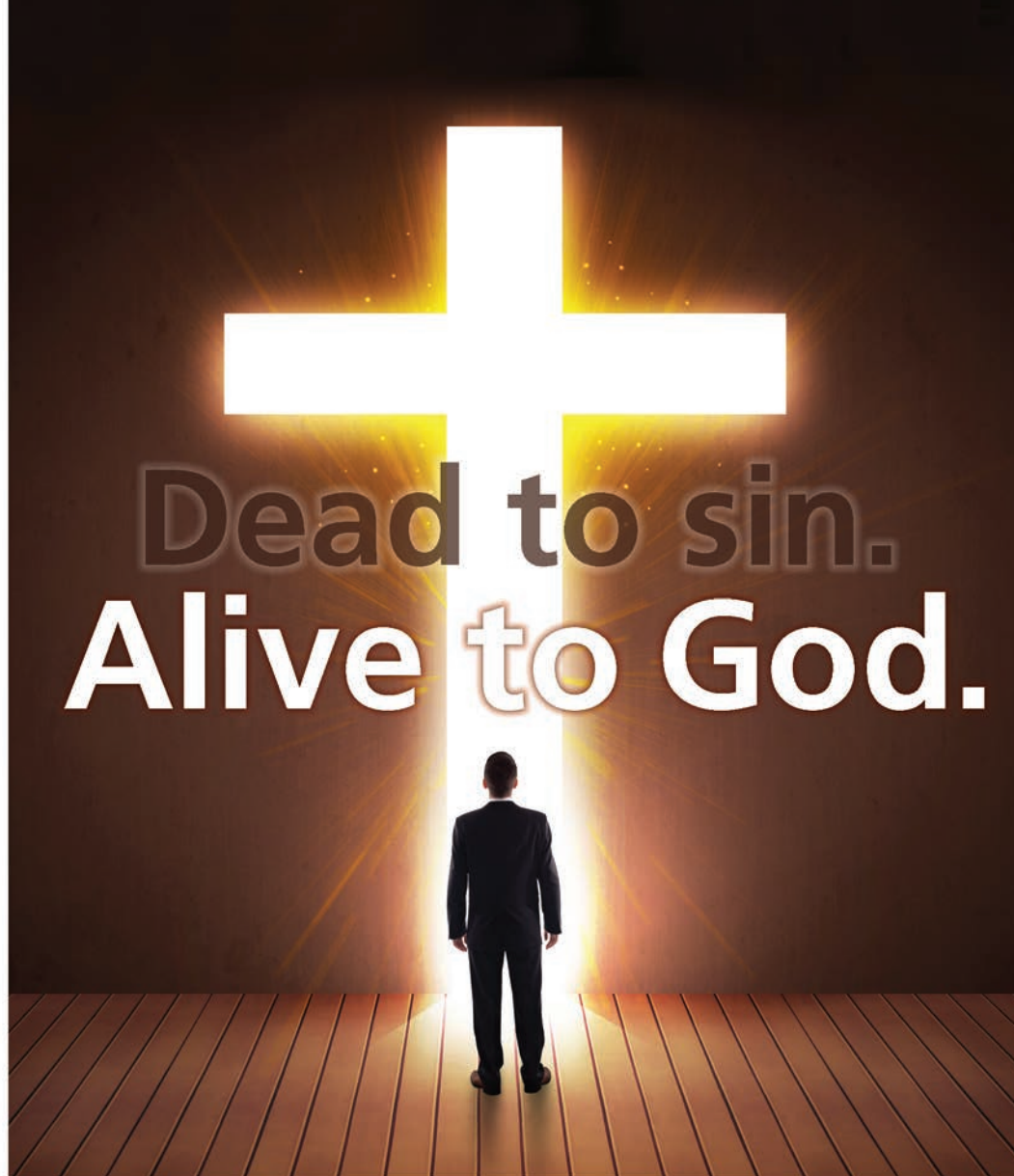
So the next time you witness an infant Baptism in church, marvel at the grace of God in providing a way through which he can come into the hearts and lives of his littlest ones! Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me” (Matthew 19:14). That’s just what happens in Baptism.

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. Submit your questions there or to fic@wels.net.

Your word
is a lamp
for my feet,
a light on
my path.

Psalm 119:105



Christian living is a daily battle over who rules the territory of our lives.

James F. Borgwardt

"Beloved in the Lord: let us draw near with . . ." Thud!

" . . . I confess that I am by nature sinful and . . ." Thunk!

" . . . But I am truly sorry for my . . ." Crack!

"Pastor, go ahead and see what that is. The devotion can wait."

I had just begun private Communion with a homebound member when one loud noise after another interrupted the Confession of Sins. The sounds came from just outside her open window. At first I thought it was someone chopping at a tree, but I hadn't seen

another soul in her rural neighborhood for the last two years. The only living things I ever saw roaming the grounds were the wild peacocks that nested nearby.

When I stepped out the door, I heard another thud come from the far side of my car. My car was a black sedan with a shiny clear-coat finish that could serve as a perfect mirror for anyone who was two feet tall. Like a peacock.

As I walked around the front bumper, I saw the alpha-male bird lining himself up for another slam into the car door. His beak stained with blood, he was clearly agitated that his rival was

giving no ground. The car had received eight to ten peacock punches. Its door was smeared with blood and small feathers.

I received a quick lesson in ornithology. Peacocks are territorial. This male bird saw a new rival in the car door's reflection. When he advanced, so did the imposter. The reflected bird was not backing down, seeming to stake a claim on the real bird's turf. The peacock had a choice. He could yield to the second bird or he could fight him off. Compromise wasn't an option. He chose to fight.

There's an obvious illustration here,

and you may have already beaten me to it. Peacocks are proud and beautiful birds, but in their pea brains, they lash out at others in pride. They often only end up hurting themselves. Just like some people.

But consider the peacock story from a different angle. Though the bird may have looked awfully stupid—which is exactly what I called him as I wiped off his blood and feathers from my scratched-up car—there was something admirable about his instincts. He saw a rival claiming his territory, and he refused to give ground, even if it meant a painful battle.

Just like the Christian life.

FIGHT THE BATTLE

Christian living is a daily battle over who rules the territory of our lives. Christians want to serve the King who reigns in our hearts. “I believe that Jesus Christ . . . is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil . . . that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom” (The explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed, Luther’s Small Catechism).

Once we’re redeemed by Christ and made alive in him, our new self does everything in love and allegiance to him. The apostle Paul spoke for all Christians when he wrote: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

But the old self refuses to surrender. A resilient enemy, it rises up daily within us to rebel against the King and to reclaim the throne of our lives. When we notice it trespassing on Christ’s turf, we know that no compromise is possible. Either we yield to it or we fight it off.

Paul encouraged the Ephesian Christians to fight. “You were taught, with

regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). Paul went on to give numerous examples of wrong behaviors we are to put off: lying, sinful anger, and stealing.

PUT OFF THE OLD SELF

The sequence is essential. If we don’t put off the old self first, we could end up performing the “right” behavior, but for wrong, selfish reasons.

Consider Paul’s first example of the right kind of behavior: “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor” (Ephesians 4:25). What happens when you focus only on the behavior without first putting off the old self?

Good works are much
more than behavior.
They’re all about the
motivation behind
the behavior.

Let’s say you’re training your child to tell the truth by using the tool of fear: “You’d better tell the truth, boy, because if you don’t, I’ll punish you. Start now, because if you lie when you get older, you’ll lose your job, you’ll lose your friends, and no one will trust you.” The boy learns to tell the truth all right. But he does the right thing for self-serving reasons.

You might use pride the same way: “Look at all those liars on the news. We’re not that kind of people. Our family is known for its integrity. You should tell the truth because you

don’t want to be like those other people.” What’s the motivation? It’s all about how good your family looks in the eyes of others. The old self is happy with this kind of truth-telling because it’s ultimately about you and not about Christ. And when the old self can look like a Christian while serving self, so much the better!

CHECK YOUR MOTIVATION

Good works are much more than behavior. They’re all about the motivation behind the behavior. So how do you check your motivation? Ask the questions: Am I doing this for God’s glory and the good of others, even if no one else notices? Or am I doing this to ultimately serve myself?

Admit it. Christian living is hard! But that’s not surprising. Our King was perfectly up front and truthful about that. He even used a tool of execution to symbolize a life devoted to him: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

What do you do when you yield to the old self rather than deny it? Go back to the cross of Christ and confess the failure. Use your own words. Or you could use the familiar ones my friend and I were saying before being interrupted by that peacock: “Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions.”

Then soak in the absolution: “God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” You are forgiven, Christian. Your old sinful self was buried in Baptism. One King rules your life. Jesus lives. The victory’s won!

James Borgwardt is pastor at Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

This is the third article in a six-part series on sanctification and good works.



Touching heaven

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY

**God hears and answers
in his own time and
in his own way,
always with our
best interests
in mind.**

Stephen M. Luchterhand

Does God answer prayer? How do we know? Can we be sure? Before we can find the answers to these questions, we must begin with another, “Is God able to help me?”

God commands us to pray. He offers guidance, structure, patterns, and words for prayer. He promises to hear our prayers. But, we want to know, is he able to answer? Is he able to help?

GOD IS ABLE

The Bible overflows with accounts of God’s power in response to prayer: Israel’s deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17–14:31), Elijah calling down fire from heaven in his duel with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:16–46), Hezekiah’s 15-year life extension (Isaiah chapter 38). Scripture praises God for his absolute power: “Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him” (Psalm 115:3). Mary,

the mother of Jesus, heard and experienced this firsthand: “No word from God will ever fail” (Luke 1:37).

No doubt about it: God is able. But is God able to help us today? Who are we that he should hear and help us? What are our problems that he should bother with them? We don’t need seas parted or the mouths of lions closed. However, we do need God’s help. Anxiety afflicts, finances falter, health fades, relationships need repair.

“[God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20). The apostle Paul piles on the terms in this powerful passage as he attempts to express the inexpressible and describe the indescribable power and mercy of God.

Another way to look at this passage is to take each thought and add it, one

at a time. This produces a pyramid effect, which maximizes the impact of the verse. God is . . .

Able

Able to do

Able to do what we ask

Able to do what we think

Able to do what we ask or think

Able to do all that we ask or think

Able to do above all that we ask or think

Able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think

Able to do exceedingly; abundantly above all that we ask or think

What a blessing to be able to simply say, “My God is able.” And we’re able to say even more, because God is able to do “immeasurably more” because of his great power.

Prayers offered to our God are neither a waste of time nor breath. God is able. He hears and answers in his own time and in his own way, always with our best interests in mind.

PRAYER CHANGES THINGS

Jesus spends more time teaching us to be bold and confident in our prayers than telling us what words to use. His story of the annoying person pounding on a friend’s door at midnight because he needs food for guests—remember, no 24-hour convenience stores in first-century Israel—ends with “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need” (Luke 11:5-8).

Jesus offers an executive summary of why prayer matters: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:9,10). *Ask, seek, knock* are words of increasing intensity. Know that God hears. Know that God loves to have us come to him in prayer. Be bold. Be persistent. Pester him. Bother him. Harass him. Storm his heavenly throne with your prayers.

Look at Abraham praying for Sodom in Genesis chapter 18. “Lord, will you spare the city for the sake of 50 . . . 45 . . . 40 . . . 30 . . . 20 . . . 10?” He was like a little child who just won’t stop. “Please. Pretty please?” Could Abraham be any more annoying? What a pest. What a bother. But not to the Father.

In the end, Abraham did not receive the answer to his prayers that he wanted. It would appear that his fervent prayers ended in failure, as the city was destroyed. But God heard Abraham and did answer his prayers. And something else happened, something amazing. God sent his angels to rescue the members of Abraham’s family

who were living in Sodom. Abraham saw firsthand that God had listened. His trust in God was fortified, a necessity for the challenges that were yet to come.

When you are engaged in prayer, something will always change. You may pray that the people who bug you or the things in life that bother you the most will change and then get frustrated because they never seem to change. Maybe that’s because God is changing you to have a little more patience, a little more love, a little more sensitivity. He is preparing you to talk to someone or deal with a difficult situation.

NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR WILL

Still, all the asking and seeking and knocking at the door of our heavenly Father’s office does not gain for us the specific answers we want and the timing we prefer. Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is essential to understanding how God answers prayer. With the weight of the sins of the world on his shoulders and the time of his most intense suffering and death near, Jesus prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

We pray the same way, “Not my will, Father, but your will be done. You know what is best. I trust you.” Indeed, “this is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14,15). Our Lord will not necessarily give us what we want, like a child in a candy store or a sportsman in Cabela’s, but he will give us what we need according to his will. The more time we spend in God’s Word, the more we will know and understand God’s will. Our prayers will more closely zero in on the Father’s plan for our lives.

Martin Luther declares, “As [a Christian] undertakes to pray in compliance with God’s command and in reliance on His

promise, he offers it to God in the name of Christ, and he knows that what he asks will not be denied him. And he actually experiences God’s help in every need. Even if he is not immediately delivered from his distress, he knows nonetheless that his prayer is pleasing to God and is heard; and he knows that God enables him to bear and overcome his distress” (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 24, p. 241).

Don’t worry about the answers. Just pray, and keep on praying. “The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer” (F. B. Meyer).

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

This is the fifth article in a seven-part series on prayer.

After grasping the life-changing message of the Bible, a man originally from Colombia studies to be a pastor and shares the gospel with Latinos in the United States.

Rachel Hartman

What's it like growing up in Latin America as a Catholic?

"I was baptized when I was about one year old," explains Luis Acosta, a WELS pastor currently serving in Milwaukee.

Acosta was raised in what he refers to as a traditional family. Born in Colombia and raised Catholic, he says that the church did not play a big role in his early years. He recalls a little preparation for first Communion.

Overall, however, he says his memories of religion are "kind of vague."

His situation is pretty typical of those in areas south of the US border. In Latin America, 84 percent of adults report they were raised Catholic, according to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey. It's important to understand that the Catholic church in this region takes on a different form than in other places, such as the United States, explains Acosta. "What we have in Latin America is very shallow."

For instance, growing up, Acosta remembers having a strong interest in

knowing God. At the same time, he always felt God was a distant figure.

CHANGING PLACES

As a child, Acosta moved with his family to Venezuela. There he continued his education, eventually finishing high school and then studying engineering at a university.

While in Venezuela, he got in touch with a group of Presbyterians, which renewed his desire to learn about God. He even enrolled in a setup similar to a long-distance seminary. "I took theology classes, and it was interesting. It was a very liberal theology," he says.

He also started working in advertising at a liquor company and received ongoing promotions, eventually becoming a regional manager for one of the brands. "I was doing really well," he says.

As the 1990s drew to a close, Acosta moved to Miami with his family. There he worked in advertising and traveled extensively. "I was in Miami about 50 percent of the time and in Latin America about 50 percent," he explains.

While living in Miami, Acosta's wife, Carolina, started looking for a church. She came across a WELS church in the area, and the two of them attended a service there. The focus on God's Word really struck Carolina. "She was so satisfied and filled with the message," Acosta recalls.

Acosta, however, wasn't as sure and talked to the pastor about some theology concerns. Some of the teachings

at the WELS church didn't coincide with the messages that had been taught in the previous theology courses he had taken. "I found myself defending my position based on what I think and what I say," he says.

These differences led Acosta to evaluate what he had learned in South America. He found himself looking into God's Word on his own to justify what he had been taught. However, he often couldn't find Bible passages to back up the beliefs that had been outlined in previous theology classes. "I realized I didn't know my Bible as I should," he says. Being in the Word, however, helped him grow.

In addition to studying the Bible, Acosta continued attending the WELS church. "The pastor was honest, and everything that he said he was able to defend with the Bible," he recalls. "I couldn't deny it."

Over time, Acosta found himself deeply drawn to the Bible and its teachings. "It was just amazing," he says. "The Holy Spirit was doing his job, making me come back and learn more and more."

CHANGING LIVES

Acosta and Carolina, a mental health counselor, became members of the church. As they grew more involved in the congregation, Acosta found a new sense of stability. "The security and peace in your heart is awesome, and it's a joy to live that way," he says.

After being active in the church for some time, Acosta started studying at the Institute Cristo Palabra de Vida.



Confessions OF FAITH

He completed the congregational assistant program and became a staff minister at Divine Savior, Doral, Fla., in 2004. He also quit his other job. "From that point I was serving the Hispanic community in Miami," he explains.

In order to continue his studies, Acosta faced a couple of options. One was to study through the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI), which helps non-traditional students train to be WELS pastors. The other option was to move to Wisconsin and attend Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Acosta decided to head to the seminary in Mequon, where he completed his studies and graduated in 2013. While at the seminary, he helped at a couple of area churches.

Looking back on this time of his life, Acosta notes that being in the ministry full time wasn't a clear vision he had had. "The idea of becoming a pastor wasn't there," he says. "I wanted to know God."

Today, he serves at Risen Savior in Milwaukee. He appreciates and marvels at the journey God has led him on. "It is impossible to put the pieces together yourself."

CHANGING THE FUTURE

Acosta and Carolina have been blessed with two children. Acosta is grateful for the chance his children have had to learn about God and his Word from early on. He especially loves hearing them learn their memory work. "What

a blessing it is to be able to grow in faith from day one," he says.

In addition, referring to his children, Acosta says, "They are an important part of the ministry. The Lord has blessed them with a very active faith."

Carolina is involved too. She currently is a licensed professional counselor and is part of WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions. "Today we work together," notes Acosta. "My wife is an extremely important part of my ministry."

As a bilingual counselor working mostly with Hispanic children and families, Carolina counsels families who have undergone different types of trauma. "There are a lot of things that need professional care," explains Acosta. But oftentimes when people seek counseling, they learn after looking at the situation that they need something more. "They realize the real problem is a spiritual one," he says.

Looking back on his past, especially regarding some of the early theology classes he took while living in Venezuela, Acosta reflects, "God allowed that for the sake of the future. I now know where people come from and understand other people's point of view."

And he is eager to move forward. "One of the benefits not only for a pastor but anyone who takes on the Great Commission is to be able to see, firsthand, the spark of life that comes to people when they come to appreciate the gospel," he says. "It's my biggest reward."



Luis Acosta and his family at his graduation from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 2013.

He is also committed to the church's focus on Christ's saving work. "It's fine to see what others are doing with music and technology, but never ever rely too much on that. Those should come second place, and [we should] serve the only one thing that works: the gospel."

He continues, "In our church the treasure is that the Word of God is the center of worship. That is amazing."

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



heart to heart
parent conversations

Three parents offer examples from their lives to showcase what discipline can look like for a Christian parent. Do you have a story to share? Send it to fic@wels.net and it may be featured on Heart to heart's blog.

Have you had a chance to view Heart to heart's latest webcast? If not, check it out. Visit www.forwardinchrist.net and choose "Webcasts" from the drop-down menu. One segment features a more in-depth conversation with Ann Jahns on her insights about discipline.



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.

HOW DO CHRISTIAN PARENTS DEAL WITH DISCIPLINE?

Discipline. The past 14 years of Tad's and my parenting adventure have included many trials and errors. Just when we thought we had it down, a different child with a different personality—and, therefore, different needs—showed up. But here are a few basic, underlying things that we strive to do.

We start early. The battles when they are little may seem difficult at the time because who doesn't want to give that cute two-year-old whatever she wants? The earthly consequences when they are little aren't that big, so it is easy to cave. However, that same behavior looks much different when they are in their teen years *and* the earthly consequences are much greater. The truth is, disciplining when they are little is much easier than when they are older.

We follow through with consequences. Sometimes that means we, as parents, miss out as well, although, Tad and I are getting better at picking consequences for

I wish I could tell you it's never happened, but it has. I've rounded a corner to find my two-year-old daughter about to start dancing on the counter. Yeah, she's that kind of kid. Wow, do I love her for that!

What do you do with a daughter like that? Sometimes my wife and I just grin when we see her antics. How can you not when she looks at you with her big blue eyes and her classic, "What, Dad? This is totally safe" kind of look? Other times a grin couldn't be more out of place—where there's something far more insidious going on, where we just know. We know it's more than just innocent curiosity and it's more than just vibrant wonder. When we see the look that says, "Dad, I know you told me not to and I don't care," we know it's open rebellion.

For us, how we discipline is often decided by her attitude—the why behind it all. We have lots of patience for her fearless approaches to climb whatever she's after next—metaphorical or otherwise. We're happy to teach and guide with all the gentleness and tenderness we can muster. We're happy to

As our kids become older, I have come to realize that discipline doesn't have to be a negative thing, fraught with tears and drama and anger. After all, the root of *discipline* is *disciple*—a student who is guided by a wise teacher and spreads that teacher's beliefs.

What if we start to look at *discipline* as *discipling*? It changes the focus. It becomes less on punishment and anger and more on correction and guidance. What a blessing for our children when we discipline in love, according to God's perfect wisdom! "Blessed is the one you discipline, LORD, the one you teach from your law" (Psalm 94:12).

Do you remember the first time you held your newborn? So perfect. So innocent. Discipline was the last thing on your mind. But then the dreaded day arrived: the first time those pureed peas came flying right back at you, or the first toddler tantrum during the quietest part of the sermon. Even our precious babies are sinful from conception (Psalm 51:5).

our children that don't punish us in the process.

As our children get older, **we let them have a say**. As much as possible we share with them why we have the rules and consequences that we do. If they can understand and be part of the process, we believe this helps teach them discernment. This wisdom will be with them even when we are not with them.

We choose what hill we're willing to die on. Our house rules really fall into two categories: Love God and love others. If a rule doesn't fit under one of these, then we look at the reasoning behind it. Is it because of our personal preference? Because that's the way we've always done things? Because we are concerned about how the outside world will view our parenting?

We let our creative 10-year-old girl go out in public with the most unique choices of clothing. We let our older boys grow their hair out way, way longer than we'd like. If it isn't a character issue, we won't die on that hill. If it involves how we love

God and/or how we love others, that's a hill on which we will stand, fight, and die.

We try to model our heavenly Father. He disciplines out of love for us. He wants the very best for us, which is a relationship with him. Our discipline is out of love for our children. We want the very best for them with Christ as the center of their lives. None of this works if we don't have a loving relationship with our children.

As much as we know these concepts work for our family, we still struggle with our own flesh and our own agendas. Only by God's grace are we able to implement these things out of love for our children. We know that the work pays off. We enjoy our children as they grow in God's grace.

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



parent her like that as long as she is innocently learning her world, but never when she's trying to overthrow it. When she becomes self-willed, "whys?" us to pieces, or has that rebellious glint in her eye, we never tolerate it. We move swiftly and firmly to let her know that's never okay. We love her too much not to.

I suppose everybody's anxious to know what that looks like. In my experience, it always looks different. I've found that it's a judgment call based on (1) the danger level of the activity, (2) her level of understanding about that activity, and (3) her attitude about whatever it is that she's up to. Once I've ascertained those things, I'm ready to discipline her.

What is the right way to do that with your two-year-old? Yours is different than mine, so I can't tell you. Does any open rebellion demand some sort of physical reminder? Is a time-out the most attention-grabbing strategy? Do you have a tender little conscience in your care that only requires a verbal reprimand? I'm not sure. And what happens when your two-year-old becomes a more nuanced and sophisticated preteen? What does discipline look like then? Ah, somebody help me!

No matter what you and I decide as parents, we're probably after the same thing. We want our children to "get it" when they sin so that we can comfort them with the gospel until they "get" that too.

When my little girl grasps the seriousness of her situation, there's no greater joy than asking her in that same moment, "What did Jesus do with your sin?" and having her respond, "He wash it all gone."

I'm convinced that's why Elliana lives with so much pep and confidence. Sure, sometimes I've rounded a corner only to find her expressing that gospel confidence with an attempted counter dance, but, hey, that's in the job description too. I'm always more than happy to grab my little Cinderella, explain the danger in a clear and animated way, and be her Prince Charming by dancing with her on the living room floor.

Jonathan Bourman is a pastor at Peace, Aiken, South Carolina. He and his wife, Melanie, have a two-year-old daughter.



I admit that discipline is tough for me as a parent, since my nature cringes at conflict. Thankfully, my husband, with his quiet spiritual wisdom and practicality, has balanced me out as we do our best to discipline our boys in love as a united team, using God's Word as our guide.

As our boys have aged, our methods of discipline have changed. No longer does a time-out alone in the bedroom cut it. That is every teen's dream. Our disciplines have taken on age-appropriate forms, like loss of the car keys, not being able to attend a concert or game, or the loss of technology privileges. These disciplines are customized to the age of each child and each situation. They are designed to get this message across: We love you and God loves you, and his Word is very clear on right and wrong. If you break the house rules and God's rules, there will be consequences. But there is always forgiveness as well.

Parents, let's hang in there when it comes to discipline in the home! We all want our kids to be honest and hardworking citizens. We want them to be faithful witnesses of God's

Word, living embodiments of Christ. It is our duty and privilege as Christian parents to discipline those we love (Proverbs 3:12) as we guide our kids in God's truth. This is so easy to say but often so hard to do—especially as our society increasingly blurs the lines between right and wrong and dismisses moral absolutes.

As our boys become adults, it is getting even trickier to discipline as their choices become bigger and more life-impacting. And sometimes kids simply make poor choices, despite our best efforts and despite hours spent in family devotions, prayer, and worship. That's when we need to hang on and pray like crazy. We need to keep showing them our love and forgiveness, while not compromising what God's Word says in all its perfect wisdom.

Ann Jahns and her husband, Thad, have three sons: two in college and one in high school.



teentalk

Reaching out with Christ's love

High school students share their outreach experiences.

Students (pictured) from Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.; Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.; and Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., traveled to Texas in March to participate in an outreach event with four Houston area congregations. Truth in Love Ministry provided training to help them engage people and share the gospel. Here students from Illinois Lutheran High School share thoughts about their experience.

“‘For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.’ This was most certainly true for our mission trip in Texas. God’s presence was more than evident during our canvassing and through everything we did for the church. He was working through people who had never shared the gospel with anyone before. God blessed our work, and everything is credited to him. We will remember this experience for many years to come.”—Janelle, senior

“I have never done anything like this before in my life. At first I was very shaky

on how it was going to go. Going out in the neighborhoods and actually talking to people was really great. It was interesting to see and hear how many people haven’t heard about Jesus. That was the most surprising to me. It was really cool to see how excited and interested they were to hear and learn about God. Canvassing was a great experience, and I can’t wait to do some more.”—Hannah, sophomore

“I was terrified at first, but then after I did the first couple houses, I got a lot more confident and knew that God was right there with me. I got more comfortable because I knew that God was giving me the words to say. I realized that the canvassing really worked because the Sunday that we invited people to come, the church had 30 visitors.”

—Emma, freshman

“Let me tell you it was an amazing experience! We had great training from our instructor and then we were sent out! We went into the neighborhood and told people about our church. The Lord was

truly speaking through me to spread his Word. I loved sharing my faith with strangers. It was just such a cool experience to be able to tell people about my faith and what amazing things the Lord has done for us.”—Sophia, freshman

“To say that being a part of this program was a huge blessing would be true, but it goes way beyond that. It has given me lots of confidence to just share God’s Word in my everyday life, not only when I’m on a specific trip to do just that. Some people you meet while canvassing are 100 percent not interested, which is so very sad. But there are also those that you get to talk to that just totally open up to the message. Those are the moments in which you can really just see the Holy Spirit working through you. There was one lady I talked to who said that after she read the brochure she got in the mail, she passed it on to a family member. That in itself was super exciting, but it got even better! She asked for a couple more because she thought she could keep sharing it! Isn’t that so cool? To sum it up, I feel so much stronger in my faith, and I can’t wait to do this again next year!”—Hannah, sophomore

Kingdom Workers coordinated the student volunteers for this trip. Interested in participating in a mission trip in the future? Find out more about Kingdom Workers at www.kingdomworkers.com.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Backus, John D., to Christ the Lord, Clearwater, Fla.
Getka, James J., to Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash.
Hartman, Paul J., to retirement
Henrich, Mark W., to Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Hoepner, Robert L., to retirement
Holub, Curtis J., to retirement
Langebartels, James L., to retirement
Neumann, Joel D., to Faith, Black River Falls/Cataract, Wis.
Vik, Matthew T., to St. Paul's, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

Teachers

Arndt, Christopher W., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Babler, Bruce A., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Baird, Andrea, to Divine Peace, Largo, Md.
Bodi, Patricia M., to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.
Bohl, Adam R., to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.
Borgwardt, Emily B., to Trinity-St. Luke West, Watertown, Wis.
Dierker, Monica G., to Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.
Durkee, MacCartney L., to St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis.
Emmrich, Sara, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Falck, Karena S., to Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo.
Fisher, Kimberly A., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Gauger, Jonah, to Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.
Gephart, Ruth C., to retirement
Gierach, Jessica M., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Grow, Cindy M., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
Hildebrandt, Rebekah, to Abiding Word, Houston, Tex.
Hintz, Kathryn L., to retirement
Hueske, Tracie A., to St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb.
Iles, Rebecca C., to Good Shepherd's, West Allis, Wis.
Johnson, Joshua A., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kneser, Mariah R., to Lamb of God, West Allis, Wis.
Knox, Jeffrey L., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kock, Carissa B., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kolander, Anna M., to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kopp, Cheryl L., to St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.
Kruck, William H., to retirement
Krueger, Terry O., to Peace, Green Lake, Wis.

Krull, Kara L., to Eternal Love, Appleton, Wis.
Learman, Candice K., to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.
Lindloff, Julie A., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
List, Lance R., to St. John, Peshtigo, Wis.
Marten, Thomas E., to retirement
Meihak, Kathryn T., to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Meyer, Douglas N., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
Meyer, Lawanda, to Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Muchka, Katie N., to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.
O'Laire, Sandra L., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Paggi, Christina A., to St. John, Caledonia, Minn.
Pavelchik, Adam D., to Peace, Kissimmee, Fla.
Ramstack, Joanna H., to retirement
Rebernick, Gregory A., to Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis.
Saatkamp, Joanna M., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Scharrer, Jody L., to St. John, Hemlock, Mich.
Schmiel, Carin L., to Bloomington, Bloomington, Minn.
Schroeder, Jana L., to St. John, Caledonia, Minn.
Schwartz, Beth, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Sternaman, Roxanne, to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
Steuck, Erika A., to Salem, Milwaukee, Wis.
Stromquist, Karen, to Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.
Taylor, Marvel, to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Venus, Brittany A., to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.
Weiland, James, to St. John, Libertyville, Ill.
Welle, Nicole, to St. Paul, Bloomer, Wis.
Zondag, Scott J., to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

New Ulm, Minn.—St. Paul's (150). Aug. 15–17. Worship, Sat., 6 P.M.; Sun., 8, 9:30, and 11 A.M.; noon meal and open house to follow; Mon., 6:30 P.M. Website, www.splnewulm.org.
Tomah, Wis.—St. Peter (150). Aug. 23. Worship, 10 A.M. and 2 P.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested for meal. 608-372-2984.
Minocqua, Wis.—Trinity (100). Aug. 23. Worship, 9 A.M. Website, www.trinityminocqua.org.
Osceola, Wis.—Zion (150). Aug. 30. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal, noon; program, 2 P.M. RSVP requested for meal. 715-294-3489. Website, www.zionosceola.com.
Reedsburg, Wis.—Faith (50). Sept. 13. Worship, 9 A.M.; meal to follow. faithreedsburg@hotmail.com; 608-524-6353.

Vassar, Mich.—St. Luke School (25). Sept. 13. Worship, 4 P.M.; meal and special activities to follow. stlukesvassar@sbcglobal.net; 989-823-7923.
Yorba Linda, Calif.—Grace (40). Sept. 13. Worship, 3 P.M.; meal to follow.
Buffalo, Minn.—Immanuel (125). Sept. 20. Worship 10 A.M.; meal and special activities to follow; worship, 2 P.M. Website, www.myimmanuel.org.
Milwaukee, Wis.—St. Matthew (150). Sept. 20. Worship, 2 P.M. Website, www.stmattwels.com.
Loretto, Minn.—Salem (150). Sept. 27. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow; special service, 2 P.M. bettylange52@gmail.com, 763-498-8507.
Saline, Mich.—Trinity (150). Sept. 27. Worship, 10 A.M. Website, www.trinity-lutheran-saline.org.

COMING EVENTS

17th annual retired called workers reunion—Aug. 5, 10 A.M. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. 262-677-2602; jffenske@gmail.com.
WELS Historical Institute presentation series—Aug. 6. 8 P.M. CDT. "The War to End All Germans" presented by Steve Gurgel. Live online streaming event. Website, www.welshistory.org.
Ordination and commissioning—for Brock Groth, new friendly counselor to India. Aug. 8. Service, 2 P.M.; light refreshments to follow. Christ, Pewaukee, Wis. Richard Krause, pastorkrause@christpewaukee.org.
WELS night at Miller Park—Aug. 14, 7:10 P.M. Milwaukee Brewers vs. Philadelphia Phillies. Deadline to purchase tickets, Aug. 3. Order tickets at reduced rates at www.brewers.com/wels.
WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall conference—Sept. 19. Good Shepherd, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis. Website, www.welslibrarians.org.
"Fix your eyes on Jesus!" woman's retreat—Oct. 3. Peace, Loves Park, Ill. 608-290-0631. Website, www.peacelp.com.
Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention—Oct. 13–15. Days Inn, La Crosse, Wis. Website, www.wels.net.
Parish nurses fall gathering—Oct. 24. Theme: "Always be prepared." Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Registration begins Sept. 1. Website, www.welsnurses.net.

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

Call assignments

On May 16, the Conference of Presidents assigned 86 new and previous teacher and staff minister candidates out of the 90 who were available for assignment to any location. Twelve May 2015 graduates deferred assignment, choosing to pursue further education or other areas of service (many electing international service opportunities). Due to marriage plans or living in specific locations, 26 new and previous candidates are available for calls from congregations through their district presidents. Additional calls/assignments have been made since May 16. To see a list, go to www.mlc-wels.edu/assignments.

Babinec, Erica M., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Becker, David P., to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.

Beyer, Hillary N., to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.

Busch, Daniel A., to Good Shepherd, Burton, Mich.

Danell, Joshua M., to Grace, Geneva, Neb.

Dorn, Elizabeth M., to Abiding Peace Academy, Simpsonville, S.C.

Dorn, Nicole R., to Samuel, Marshall, Minn.

Dovnik, Aleah M., to Jesus Loves Me Learning Center, North Mankato, Minn.

Edmundson, Benjamin A., to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.

Ellingboe, Lauren R., to Shepherd of the Valley, Menasha, Wis.

Fischer, Alexandria L., to Good Shepherd Lutheran Academy, Deltona, Fla.

Foelske, Micah J., to Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz.

Galecki, Charles G., to St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio

Geidel, Jacob L., to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.

Gossen, Brittney A., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.

Hackbarth, Hannah H., to Lord and Savior, Crystal Lake, Ill.

Hahn, Eric J., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.

Hoffmann, Joy L., to St. John, Lewiston, Minn.

Holzhueter, Galen C., to Risen Savior, Mankato, Minn.

Hussman, Rebecca A., to Grace, Yakima, Wash.

Jahns, Josiah E., to St. Paul, Algoma, Wis.

Jensen, Dyllan A., to Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Kehl, Karla E., to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.

Kim, YoungKwang, to Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich.

Koltz, Emilee I., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Krause, Harmon L., to New Hope Lutheran Academy, West Melbourne, Fla.

Krug, Cassandra K., to Lord of Life, Friendswood, Tex.

Kuznicki, Sarah J., to Building Blocks Christian Academy, Los Angeles, Calif.

Lai, Emily L., to St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich.

Lemke, Ryan A., to Michigan Lutheran High School, Saint Joseph, Mich.

Lendt, Kristy L., to Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.

Lorge, Kevin R., to St Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.

Loroff, Patrick J., to St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.

Luedtke, Aaron E., to St. John, Pigeon, Mich.

Maasz, Miranda J., to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.

Maertz, Lauren L., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Marggraf, Emily R., to St. Peter's, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Mittelstadt, Melissa K., to Faith, Anchorage, Alaska

Mundstock, Christopher A., to Peridot-Our Savior, Peridot, Ariz.

Nitz, Haley M., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.

Nofftz, Jesse D., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.

Pichardo Gomerez, Edili A., to Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis.

Rehberger, Rebecca E., to Beautiful Savior, Cincinnati, Ohio

Roekle, David J., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Rue, Brittany L., to Zion, Valentine, Neb.

Scharf, Annette E., to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.

Scharf, Nathan L., to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Schoch, Garrett J., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minn.

Schwecke, Luke J., to St. John, Fremont, Wis.

Seiltz, Amanda V., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

Shank, Emily S., to Lambs of Grace Child Development Center, Charlotte, N.C.

Smith, Katelyn M., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.

Thao, Petra S., to Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis.

Tharman, Valarie R., to Trinity, Jenera, Ohio

Unke, Jacob J., to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.

Unnasch, Naomi F., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.

Veith, Rachel E., to Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb.

Waldek, Emily K., to Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.

Wendland, Ruth L., to Brooklyn Bridge Preschool, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Wine, Alison A., to Little Lambs Early Childhood Center, Sault Ste Marie, Mich.

Wohlrabe, Megan C., to Michigan Lutheran High School, Saint Joseph, Mich.

Zabel, Hannah M., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.

Ziel, Jacob E., to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.



GRADUATES

One hundred thirty-four people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 16. Ninety-two were in the teacher track, and two were in the staff ministry track. Twenty-five completed the preseminary program, and five received seminary certification. Ten received master's degrees.



Christopher W. Arndt
Rosemount, Minn.



David P. Becker
Phoenix, Ariz.



Jordan P. Bence
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Jessica M. Berg
Volga, S.D.



Hillary N. Beyer
West Bend, Wis.



Jacob R. Bode
Saginaw, Mich.



Luke J. Bramstedt
Howards Grove, Wis.



Daniel A. Busch
Rapid City, S.D.



Michael H. Cherney
Mequon, Wis.



James F. Christensen Jr.
Milwaukee, Wis.



Joycelyn N. Christmas-John
St. John's, Antigua



Daniel R. Cordrey
Bancroft, Wis.



Sara K. Cordrey
Rothschild, Wis.



Heather M. Danell
New Ulm, Minn.



Elizabeth M. Dorn
Lewiston, Minn.



Nicole R. Dorn
Crete, Ill.



Aleah M. Dvnik
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Benjamin A. Edmundson
Burlington, Wis.



Lauren R. Ellingboe
Wrightstown, Wis.



Abigail J. Fischer
Watertown, Wis.



Alexandria L. Fischer
Appleton, Wis.



Bethany M. Fleischmann
Austin, Minn.



Matthew D. Foley
Greenville, Wis.



Charles G. Galecki
Waukesha, Wis.



Jacob L. Geidel
West Bend, Wis.



Brandon T. Gierach
Brownsville, Wis.



Pedro R. González
Albuquerque, N.M.



Brittney A. Gossen
Hilbert, Wis.



Lauren M. Grove
Rochester, Minn.



Eric J. Hahn
New Ulm, Minn.



Gretchen A. Hintz
Westfield, Wis.



Joy L. Hoffmann
Buffalo, Minn.



Michael D. Hollmann
Hustisford, Wis.



Galen C. Holzhueter
North Mankato, Minn.



Isaiah W. Horn
Mazeppa, Minn.



Jackson P. Hunter
Middleton, Wis.



Ethan S. Hutchinson
Appleton, Wis.



Dyllan A. Jensen
Juneau, Wis.



Nathanael J. Jensen
Ixonia, Wis.



Elizabeth H. Jeske
Milwaukee, Wis.



Martin S. Johnston
Watertown, Wis.



Nicolas J. Jones
Mesa, Ariz.



Jason M. Jooss
Omro, Wis.



Karla E. Kehl
Columbus, Wis.



Jacqueline M. Keller
Thiensville, Wis.



Amanda L. Kelly
Saginaw, Mich.



Erin E. Kelly
Zion, Ill.



YoungKwang Kim
Suwon, South Korea



Caleb M. Klatt
New Hope, Minn.



Jesse L. Knox
Manitowoc, Wis.



Carissa B. Kock
Johnson City, Tenn.



Emilee I. Koltz
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Kendra M. Korth
Beaver Dam, Wis.



Kirsten L. Kowitz
Inver Grove Heights, Minn.



Harmon L. Krause
Eau Claire, Wis.



Jessica A. Krause
Edina, Minn.



Christian M. Kuether
Bemidji, Minn.



Stephanie M. Kuether
Neenah, Wis.



Sarah J. Kuznicki
Saginaw, Mich.



Emily L. Lai
Yakima, Wash.



Adam D. Lambrecht
Pueblo West, Colo.



Nathan R. Laska
Winona, Minn.



Ryan A. Lemke
Elkhorn, Wis.



Kristy L. Lendt
Nicollet, Minn.



Sarah J. Lofsness
Libertyville, Ill.



Patrick J. Loroff
Lake Mills, Wis.



Paul E. Lutze
Sturgeon Bay, Wis.



Alexandria P. Maas
Lake Mills, Wis.



Miranda J. Maasz
Sleepy Eye, Minn.



Lauren L. Maertz
Watertown, S.D.



Ruth E. Mann
Zillah, Wash.



Jessica M. Mau
Loveland, Colo.



Megan R. Melott
Rockford, Minn.



MacCartney L.
Mendolla
Green Bay, Wis.



Luke A. Miller
Indianapolis, Ind.



Melissa K. Mittelstadt
Richfield, Wis.



Christopher A.
Mundstock
Phoenix, Ariz.



Jared W. Natsis
Saline, Mich.



Andrew M. Nemmers
Allen, Tex.



Haley M. Nitz
South Milwaukee, Wis.



Jesse D. Nofftz
La Crosse, Wis.



Jacalyn E. Ocampo
Linwood, Mich.



Rachel E. Olah
Deerfield, Wis.



Kimberly C. Olson
Brookfield, Wis.



Stephen J. Pankow
Cape Coral, Fla.



Tristan D. Paustian
Racine, Wis.



Edili A. Pichardo
Gomezey
Bronx, N.Y.



Aaron J. Platzer
Olivet, Mich.



Nathanael D. Plocher
Vassar, Mich.



Tyler P. Prekop
Brookfield, Wis.



Bradley R. Price
Flower Mound, Tex.



Timothy T. Prieue
Milwaukee, Wis.



Matthew A. Proeber
Janesville, Wis.



Joy A. Reeder
Menomonie, Wis.



Stephanie A. Rehbaum
Watertown, Wis.



Rebecca E. Rehberger
Burlington, Wis.



Jacob M. Reich
Hutchinson, Minn.



Ethan R. Rixe
Hoskins, Neb.



Daniel L. Rodewald
Simpsonville, S.C.



Ruth L. Roehr
New Ulm, Minn.



David J. Roekle
Racine, Wis.



Annette E. Scharf
Hot Springs Village, Ark.



Nathan L. Scharf
New Ulm, Minn.



Danica R. Scharlemann
New Ulm, Minn.



Sarah G. Schmiede
Madison, Wis.



Garrett J. Schoch
Merrill, Mich.



Paul E. Schulz
West Bend, Wis.



Naomi J. Schwark
Manitowoc, Wis.



Tingting Z. Schwartz
New Ulm, Minn.



Amanda V. Seiltz
Colorado Springs, Colo.



Jay T. Selle
Appleton, Wis.



Emily S. Shank
Saint Joseph, Mich.



Katelyn M. Smith
Grove City, Ohio



Autumn E. Somerville
Saginaw, Mich.



David N. Spaude
Antigo, Wis.



Benjamin D. Springer
Manitou Beach, Mich.



Jeremiah S.
Strassburg
Phoenix, Ariz.



Aaron R. Stokke
Inver Grove Heights,
Minn.



Petra S. Thao
Appleton, Wis.



Valarie R. Tharman
West Bend, Wis.



Hans J. Thomford
Chesaning, Mich.



Naomi F. Unnasch
Milwaukee, Wis.



Phillip Valdez
Chula Vista, Calif.



Carlyn E. Waggoner
Rockford, Ill.



Emily K. Waldek
Trumbull, Conn.



Ruth L. Wendland
Watertown, Wis.



Allison J. Wessel
New Ulm, Minn.



Andrew P. Westra
Columbia, Tenn.



John M. Wildauer
Port Washington, Wis.



Craig T. Wilke
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



Alison A. Wine
Saginaw, Mich.



Megan C. Wohlrabe
Peyton, Colo.



Michelle M. Yotter
Lake City, Minn.



Jacob E. Ziel
Ixonia, Wis.

Class of 2015 Congratulations!

Meet the editorial staff—uncut

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

When questioned about his new Bible study series for *Forward in Christ*, Tom Kock replies, “You’re writing a series of articles on the genealogy section of Matthew 1?!” Yeah, I can hear the incredulity. But those people who are listed there are, well, people! And some of them have incredibly fascinating stories. . . . Sometimes from their life experiences we’ll be reminded of God’s love; from some of their life experiences we’ll be forced to check our own life priorities.”

Kock has plenty of experience writing Bible studies and devotions. A 1992 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., Kock began his ministry by establishing a congregation in the Tri-Cities area of Tennessee. Kock led the congregation, which became known as Living Word, for 22 years, and the Holy Spirit blessed his work as the congregation grew to include almost three hundred members

while also helping establish a congregation in a nearby town.

Kock has served for six years as a member of the Commission on Adult Discipleship and has helped coordinate the commission’s efforts to provide live, interactive Bible studies online. Kock himself led an online study titled “Who am I, and why am I here?” He also was instrumental in creating the daily devotions that are sent out by the WELS Commission on Evangelism.

In 2014, Kock began serving as a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. “My call is primarily to help train future pastors how to teach,” he says. “I taught the senior education class this past year, which is primarily training the men how to write and teach good adult Bible studies. Seeing their growth in understanding how and why to do it and watching them grow in their ability has proven to be very satisfying.”



Tom Kock and his family enjoyed WELS night at the Brewers in August 2014. Back row: Jonathan, Adam, and Carissa. Front row: Beth, Tom, and Daniel.

Although parts of his heart still ache for the people that he served at Living Word, Kock says he loves watching the seminary students in chapel and thinking, *How many lives will they touch? How many people will come to know Jesus through them? Where will they serve?*

See how Kock puts what he teaches into practice in the first installment of “Real people, real Savior” (p. 33).

New WELS movie: *My Son, My Savior*

"Only one woman had the unique privilege to call Jesus her son," notes Mike Hintz, director of the WELS Commission on Evangelism. "WELS' newest outreach movie, *My Son, My Savior*, portrays Mary experiencing the miracle of Jesus' coming and then humbly growing in her understanding that her son is also her Savior. The good news is that Jesus is our Savior too. He is the one whom God gave to rescue people from sin and death."

Filming for *My Son, My Savior* took place in late May and early June, and the film is scheduled to be released in October so that it can be used for outreach during Advent.

"*My Son, My Savior* will help Christians prepare for the celebration of Christmas by pondering, like Mary, the miraculous birth of Jesus and God's saving purpose for sending him into the world," says Hintz.

Congregations can expect a number of resources to be available that will complement the movie, including a four-session Bible study, Advent by Candlelight materials, and a guide for those who want to use the movie during a worship service. Because the movie is designed to be an outreach tool, the Commission on Evangelism will provide suggestions for congregations and members on ways to distribute the movie and will offer

copies of the DVD at a quantity discount as well as a postcard inviting people to Christmas services.

Families can use a study resource for small groups to discuss and apply the scriptural truths depicted in the movie. A personal reflection guide will help individuals focus on the movie's main thoughts. In addition, Northwestern Publishing House will sell a booklet of seven devotions based on the movie's themes and a book entitled *The Mom God Chose*.

My Son, My Savior is the third in a series of four outreach movies that are planned as a collaboration between WELS Commissions on Evangelism and Adult Discipleship, Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Multi-Language Publications, and Boettcher+Trinklein Television, Inc. The first two movies, *Road to Emmaus* and *Come Follow Me*, have been distributed worldwide and received critical acclaim from a number of Christian film groups.

Steve Boettcher, the director and producer of all three movies, says that the goal behind this series of movies is to create a modern outreach tool that can be seen and understood by people all over the world.

If you missed *Road to Emmaus* or *Come Follow Me*, both movies are available through Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022 or www.nph.net.



Filming for the new WELS movie, *My Son, My Savior*, took place in late May and early June. This movie, told from the perspective of Jesus' mother Mary, details the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus.

ADVENT BY CANDLELIGHT PROGRAM

This Advent by Candlelight program focuses on Jesus' life as seen through the eyes of his mother, Mary. Written as a first-person narrative, the program invites the audience to reflect with Mary on familiar stories of the Savior, which take on new meaning when viewed from a mother's perspective.

The program will be available at www.wels.net/evangelism in October.

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE MATERIALS

Northwestern Publishing House has two products that will complement the film *My Son, My Savior*. Both will be available when the movie is released in October.

Sarah Habben wrote a book titled *The Mom God Chose*, which explores Mary as the mother of Jesus. The book strives to show that the same promises that God made to Mary can buoy every mom. Each chapter closes with questions to ponder and a prayer. The book also includes interviews with contemporary Christian mothers who, like Mary, sometimes make mistakes and other times wow us with their witness—moms whose true strength lies in their Savior's love.

Pam Holz wrote a collection of seven devotions with prayers as a companion piece for the video. Written for mothers, the devotions could be used by others as well.

Look for more information in upcoming months.

More funding from Home Missions for outreach opportunities

In June the Board for Home Missions (BHM) authorized funding for a new mission as well as for enhancing a self-supporting ministry. The new mission is a multi-site effort of Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz. The self-supporting congregation looking to enhance its cross-cultural outreach is Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.

Home Missions already had authorized the establishment of six new home missions in 2015. After reviewing current finances, looking ahead at future budgets, and evaluating incoming special gifts, the BHM determined it was able to authorize one more mission as well as enhance one ministry for a year.

Cross of Glory, a congregation of 269 members in the greater Phoenix area, is planning to establish a second site in nearby Vistancia, a growing community eight miles west of the congregation. The community's current population is 16,000, but it is projected to grow to more than 70,000 people; currently only

one Protestant church is in the area. Cross of Glory already has been canvassing in that community. Funding will allow the congregation to provide the necessary facilities in Vistancia and to call a second pastor to lead outreach efforts, do prospect follow-up, and eventually begin Bible study and worship services at the new site.

Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis., located on the northwest side of the city, ministers to a mix of people that represents its multicultural community: Anglo, African-American, and Hispanic. The congregation began outreach to the Hispanic community ten years ago. Currently about 80 attend the church's weekly Spanish service and 150 its English service. Its school is at capacity with 240 students—40 percent of which are Hispanic, 40 percent African-American, and 20 percent other cultures. The school offers many opportunities for outreach to the children and their parents, though not

all become supporting members of the congregation. A one-year ministry enhancement grant from Home Missions will "give us the opportunity to make plans for the longer-term stewardship development of the ministry," says Risen Savior's pastor Charles Papenfuss, which includes financially supporting its Spanish-speaking pastor, Luis Acosta (see p. 14).

Keith Free, BHM administrator, says there are more requests waiting for funding. "We are encouraging the district mission boards to work closely with the core groups in these potential new missions so when there is funding and a pastor has accepted a call, these missions are ready to go," says Free.

One of Risen Savior's teachers is a recent graduate from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. Learn how MLC is training its teachers for urban ministry in the August edition of *WELS Connection*.



Obituaries

Steven Paul Voigt 1957–2015

Steven Voigt was born July 2, 1957, in Manitowoc, Wis. He died Apr. 28, 2015, in Oconomowoc, Wis.

A 1980 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served at St. John, Lomira, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his father. He is survived by his wife, Karen; one son; three daughters; one grandchild; his mother; one brother; and one sister.

Elaine May Slates 1930–2015

Elaine Slates (née Hartley) was born Apr. 6, 1930, in Kawkawlin, Mich. She died May 1, 2015.

She taught at Salem, Owosso, Mich., and St. John, Bay City, Mich.

She is preceded in death by her hus-

band, Vannel. She is survived by one daughter, three grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

Alvira Martha Petersen 1931–2015

Alvira Petersen (née Reckelberg) was born Dec. 28, 1931, in Montpelier, Wis. She died May 5, 2015, in Green Bay, Wis.

She taught at St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.

She is preceded in death by one brother and one sister. She is survived by her husband, Wayne; one son; two grandchildren; six sisters; and two brothers.

Robert R. Wasser 1943–2015

Robert Wasser was born Sept. 4, 1943, in Harvard, Ill. He died May 8, 2015, in Nashville, Tenn.

He was certified as a staff minister

by Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. He served as executive director of Calvary Academy Ministries and president of Calvary Academy Foundation, both in Mulberry, Fla.

He is survived by his wife, Bonnie; 17 daughters; 8 sons; 37 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild; 1 brother; and 1 sister.

Jerome Frank Harders 1931–2015

Jerome Harders was born July 28, 1931, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died June 3, 2015, in Milwaukee, Wis.

He taught at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Elisabeth; three sons; two daughters; eight grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.



Mission stories

Jesus loves all the people of the world

Imagine a country where most people are Hindu, a country where people believe your status in society is based on your previous life. If you are poor, you were an evil person in your past life; if you are rich, you were a good person. The poor deserve the suffering they are experiencing. The rich deserve comfort and pleasure. The poor are told: Accept your status in life. Do not try to better yourself. Do not complain. Then when you die, you will be reincarnated and come back at a higher level.

This country is Nepal, where 80 percent of the people are Hindu, 12 percent are Buddhist, 4 percent are Muslim, and only 1 percent are Christian. We are sharing the good news of Jesus with this remote nation.

One boy enjoyed many of the advantages of this Hindu society. His name is "Prasad." He was born into one of the highest castes. His future was bright until he learned he had leprosy. His family expelled him from his household.

Most lepers live in an isolated hut or cave and will never see their families again. Prasad found his way to a Christian hospital where he received medicine and was cured of his leprosy. While he was at the hospital, he learned about Jesus.

After he was healed, he could not return to his home and family. He moved to an area where lepers live. While there, he shared the good news of the gospel of Jesus. He had a heart for other lepers and started a church for lepers. He says, "People come from many areas and speak many dialects. Some received treatment too late and lost their fingers and toes, nose and ears. Some are unable to walk. First they sought the help of their gods or witch doctors. I teach them about Jesus with whom there is no caste. Jesus loves all the people of the world—rich or poor, healthy or sick. Everyone who believes in Jesus is a dearly loved child of God."

While at the hospital, Prasad met "Raju," who had been cast out of his home for converting to Christianity. Raju's father—like Prasad's—was

a Brahmin priest. These two men became close friends and loved studying God's Word together. Raju is the contact for WELS' mission work in Nepal.

Shortly after Raju became a Christian, he accidentally found his cousin's wife at the hospital. He was surprised to discover she was a leper. All he heard from his family was that she was having "some trouble." She had been expelled from the home, and her husband had taken another wife. Her leprosy was greatly advanced. She had no fingers. In love she offered Raju two boiled eggs to eat. Brahmins never take food from someone in a lower caste. They are meticulous about the preparation and ritual purity of their food. Also, a Brahmin will never eat an egg. Now this woman stood before him with nubs for fingers, holding out two eggs. He was repulsed. But he did not want to hurt her feelings, so he accepted the eggs from her hands.

He didn't know if he should eat the eggs, so he went and talked to a pastor. The pastor pulled his two hands out of his pockets and showed them to Raju. They were deformed like the woman's hands. The pastor was a leper too! He kindly explained that the woman was now cured of leprosy and there was no danger of him contracting the disease from her hands. Raju gave one egg away—and then proceeded to eat the remaining egg. He says, "I could not sleep the entire night because I was afraid of what the egg might do to me. But I was fine."

Today these two men—Prasad and Raju—work side by side in leading the mission field in Nepal. Raju says, "Prasad is completely committed to the teaching of God's Word in its truth and purity. I can rely on him. He is a faithful pastor and cares deeply about being true to the Scriptures. He is also passionate in sharing the gospel with the lost. He travels with me to many remote places. He is a respected leader amongst all of our churches."

The church in Nepal is growing outwardly and inwardly. As one experienced veteran of world missions said, "Nepal has kingdom balance. They are passionate to share the truth and passionate to learn the truth. The people will travel for days to attend a workshop and then sit for days learning God's truth. When they return to their villages, they teach the people what they have learned at the workshops."

In May one man traveled two and a half days on foot and two and a half days by bus to attend the first-ever seminary training. He lives near the remote Tibetan border with his wife and four children where he serves one of our congregations. In this seminary training, 13 men spent seven and a half hours in instruction every day, in temperatures well above one hundred degrees without the benefit of air conditioning. Prasad was one of those men.

Besides offering seminary training, the church in Nepal has a Bible institute where more than one hundred people have been trained as church leaders in workshops held twice a year for the past seven years. Courses will be

CONFESSIONAL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF NEPAL

First contact made: 2002

Baptized members: 4,000

**Churches: 45 churches and
65 study groups in 32 of
Nepal's 75 districts**

Sunday school children: 300

Friendly counselor: 1

Leaders: 102

Unique fact: On their own initiative the members of this church body began reaching out to Tibetan refugees. Some refugees returned to Tibet—one of the darkest places in the world—to share the gospel with Buddhists who are isolated from Christianity.

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

repeated in the Bible institute through workshops held in various villages.

Through WELS Multi-Language Publications, a wealth of religious materials also has been translated into Nepali. More than 30,000 people in Nepal have enrolled in the Scripture Learning Program, which is a Bible correspondence course.

Recently our church in Nepal took relief aid to remote villages in the Dhading district, close to the epicenter of an earthquake that hit in April. Our people were the first to arrive on the scene. Every one of the villages was destroyed. Not one house remained standing. All nine churches had collapsed, and 39 of our members perished. The people had only the clothes they were wearing. Even their Bibles and hymnals were lost beneath the rubble. Before distributing aid in one village, the people asked for a church service. Together they sang God's praises and found comfort in the gospel of our Savior. In June, we brought Bibles and hymnals, food and medicine along with tents to these villages.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." By the grace of God and the Spirit's power, that is what we are doing in one of the most remote places on earth—the country of Nepal.

Article written by the WELS friendly counselor to Nepal and Pakistan (name withheld for security reasons).

Photos: Prasad (far left) and his family; copies of *The Promise* are distributed at medical clinics through the church's humanitarian aid program. More than 422,000 pieces of biblical literature have been distributed in Nepal since 2006; Prasad studying at a Bible institute. More than one hundred people have been trained as church leaders through these workshops; one of the 65 study groups that uses materials from the Scripture Learning Program.





WHERE I am from

A missionary's daughter learns that God never forgets where we are from—whether it's a village in central Africa or a small town in Wisconsin—or what we need.

Sarah M. Habben

South of the equator there is a *kalulu* in the moon. The hare sits on his haunches, ears tipped back, tail flared, snuffling at his field of stars.

That's the moon I came to know when I was five. My father, a pastor, made an announcement over breakfast in our Colorado parsonage. He smiled at us, his three young children, still in our pajamas. He said, "Who wants to go live in Africa?"

And that is how we became a missionary family in Malawi.

We arrived in the "warm heart of Africa" in 1980, at the tail end of the rainy season. My new classmates were the offspring of business owners; government workers; teachers; and specialists in irrigation, infrastructure, and healthcare. Some were native to Malawi; others had blown in from every corner of the world. We buttoned into crisp blue-and-white uniforms that smelled like Indian stores and mothballs—uniforms that quickly thinned and faded from the impartial African sun.

At international school, what we mostly had in common were our differences. Our legs, noodling out from sagging white socks, were every shade, from clotted cream to scuffed ebony. Our birth countries lingered in our vowels and the way our tongues worked around an R. I learned how to eat with a knife in one hand, to stand in the presence of adults, to address them as Sir and Miss, and to apologize for US foreign policies I'd never heard of. The revolving door of school friends who returned to their roots after a few years in Malawi was an ongoing exodus that trained me not to get overly attached.

Some months after we arrived in Malawi, we learned that our entire shipment, including many precious personal items, had sunk. My siblings and I watched our parents register their loss and then cast themselves on God's providence. And God was faithful. In a land gripped by poverty, we recognized that we had all—and more—than we needed.

Soon I couldn't recall a time when Malawi hadn't been "home." It became routine to check for mealworms and weevils in our oatmeal and for geckos before showering; to see the sun swell, quiver, and drop at day's end like a bead of water from a faucet; to watch for the *kalulu*-in-the-moon to rise. I fell asleep to a cacophony of crickets and frogs and tinny *kwela* music wafting from a local bar. I woke to the dawn melismas of a muezzin at his microphone.

At church, we learned to check our North American impatience at the door and sing hymns the Malawian way, by sliding our notes into their proper places, with

a tempo somewhere between largo and languid. We curtsied our greetings, holding one forearm when we clasped hands. When we sat in a sea of dark heads, we thought of the great multitude in heaven, from every nation and tribe and language, standing before the Lamb.

Being white in Africa meant we drew attention—our hair and eyes and skin were weirdly unsuitable shades for equatorial life. It also meant we were “wealthy”: we had a Malawian gardener, night guards, and a housekeeper. As a child, I was ashamed to walk by the beggars on the street and desperately glad that I wasn’t one of them—blind, malnourished, twisted by polio. Oh, I knew I wasn’t African, not in the way of the village children with their bellies like small balloons and their bare feet, who splashed naked and gleaming in the *dambo* while their mothers spread their clothes on rocks to dry. But I had clambered into Auntie Africa’s arms, never supposing I was anything but another of her adopted children. She winked at my appearance, blowing the same dusty breath on me as on everyone, blessing or cursing us each with her temperamental rains, and pulling mangoes from the folds of her impartial bosom for us all: those of her womb, the orphans, and the exiles alike.

Though I would not have recognized the term, I was a Third Culture Kid (TCK) in the making: unconsciously assimilating elements of both my parents’ culture and the one I lived in, yet belonging to neither. Soon enough, I would learn that it was easier in some ways to be a foreigner in a foreign land than an invisible immigrant in my own land. I would learn that the stress of leaving a mission field is akin to losing a close family member—and that unresolved grief clings like pine sap.

In 1989, when I was 15, my father carefully informed us that we were returning to the States. We began the slow process of erasing a decade of family history—we scrubbed and packed and gave away. We boarded various airplanes, and within 24 hours our lives had changed forever. There was no weaning process, only an absolute good-bye.

My family swapped the feral red dirt of central Africa for the fertilized farmland of Wisconsin. Down the road from our new parsonage, Holsteins belched and munched. Sea-

sons were upended. The wind smelled different. What surrounded me made me feel superior and lonely—grocery shelves laden with a dozen versions of the same product, closets filled with shoes, immoderately smooth highways. The red dirt and flat blue skies of Malawi were so out of reach; thinking of them made a hole in me. I tucked away my grief, but a whiff of wood smoke could reawaken it.

I entered Northwestern Prep in Watertown, Wis., as a junior. I was a little off-kilter in a community of largely monoculture classmates, fair-skinned and light-eyed—like me. Never mind that nine thousand miles and an ocean separated our childhood experiences. I had missed the ’80s and was hopelessly uncool. All-American sports like baseball and football put me in a coma of incomprehension. But my bigger differences were invisible. I came to dread the impossible question, “Where are you from?”

But God had not forgotten where I was from or what I now needed. During my years in international boarding school, I hadn’t realized how thirsty I was for God’s Word and Christian peers. I could hardly believe I was one in faith with a whole campus of people. And my professors and peers weren’t just *learning* about Bible truths; they were discussing and applying them to their lives. Using them to guide and counsel. Singing about them! I had never experienced anything like it. I felt my heart grow a couple sizes during my first year at Prep. I realized that my heavenly Father was not just a God who so loved the *world*, his harvest field; he was a God who loved *me*—enough to kneel down and tenderly replant my roots.

In time, I married a fellow TCK, a pastor who was called to a congregation in Alberta, Canada. We’ve lived here over 15 years. My four daughters’ nostalgia will come in the color of mountain summits and canola fields.

And me? The other day I was pulling apart a whole grain bun and peering at it absently before taking a bite. “Why do you always do that, Mom?” one daughter asked.

I suppose after all these years I’m still checking for weevils.

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(Left) Sarah and her family with their donkey, Eeyore, in Malawi, Africa, in 1983. (Left to right): Betsy, Diane, Erich, Sarah, and Walter Westphal.

(Right) Sarah’s family now. (Left to right): Maya, Jolie, Dan, Sarah, Jemimah, and Maureen.

How to make your church irresistible

Earle D. Treptow

The Spirit
is in the Word,
not the
methodology.

Did it work? Did the title grab your attention and compel you to read?

If you're feeling like you've been hooked by a title, allow this confession: I got hooked by that title once myself. It was the subject line in an e-mail. With a double click, the e-mail came up advertising a workshop that would "forever change the way you think about church." In "just three hours," it promised, "your ministry will be more effective than ever at reaching people with God's love."

This is the way advertisers operate. They wave something so useful and desirable before our eyes that we can't help but reach out and grab hold. Who wouldn't want an irresistible church? What Christian doesn't want to have more people come through the doors of the church who actually want to come back the next week?

The devil is always eager to "help" us. The Liar points out what we need to do to make the church more attractive. He directs our attention to the latest, greatest program that almost guarantees growth. "If you practice these four principles," he promises, "you will change the culture of your congregation and you will have a steady stream of new people coming through your doors." He highlights ways to soften some of the teachings that offend people, suggesting that the growth of the church rests at least in part on our ability to craft a message that appeals to the masses. Soon he has us thinking that the noble goal of reaching people validates almost any approach.

You can see through the lies, can't you? First, the church's future does not depend on us and what we do to engage the people around us. The One who never lies says that "the gates of Hades will not overcome [the church]" (Matthew 16:18). Though the devil may win some skirmishes along the way, the battle belongs to the Lord. The Lord will preserve his little flock

even when it appears to us that the church has gone the way of the dinosaur.

A second lie is that the primary goal of the gathered people of God is the numerical growth of the visible church. The ascended Lord commissioned us, not as his salespeople charged with "getting people to say yes," but as his witnesses. We simply speak the good news Jesus has given us to proclaim. The results of that preaching belong to the Lord. The Spirit creates faith when and where it pleases him. He may bring thousands to faith, as he did on Pentecost; he may also use the Word we proclaim to harden the hearts of those who reject it.

The apostle Paul teaches us, "Faith comes from hearing the message" (Romans 10:17). He doesn't say, "Faith comes from innovative programs," or "Faith comes from outside-of-the-box thinking," or "Faith comes from an upbeat worship style." When we focus more on methodology than the message, a lie has begun to take root in our hearts. The Spirit is in the Word, not the methodology.

At the same time, while it is true that the Lord will gather his people only through his gospel in Word and sacrament, we need to bear in mind that the devil often twists that truth too. He argues that if we look for better ways to reach people, we are responsible for their conversion. The truth is that our ascended Lord has chosen to work through us to gather his people. He does the work of converting sinners; we simply carry out our task as his witnesses. We do it with joy and gratitude for the privilege.

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Matthew chapter 1 lists the ancestors of Jesus. You will learn more about your Savior as we trace through segments of his family tree.

New challenges can make us worry, but God will strengthen us to handle anything, just as he did for Joseph.

“It’s all so new!”

I had thoughts like that when I started college so many years ago. I remember thinking it again when we sent each of our kids off to kindergarten and later when we dropped them off to go to prep school or the university. So new.

Perhaps August is a “new” month for you. Millions of students are starting grade school, high school, and college. Millions of parents are experiencing new things along with those new students. There are even some new pastors, teachers, and staff ministers just getting started in their ministries!

Sometimes life’s newness is exciting, like getting married or getting that first job. Other times life’s newness can be worrisome, even daunting, like facing life after a cancer diagnosis or a job layoff. Perhaps we find ourselves wondering, *How can I handle this new challenge?*

JOSEPH’S CHALLENGE

Do you think that Joseph might have wondered that same thing? Let’s put ourselves into his shoes for a moment. Joseph and Mary were engaged. “But before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18).

Can you imagine how the conversation between Joseph and Mary might have gone?

“Joseph, I haven’t been unfaithful. The Holy Spirit caused me to become pregnant in a miraculous way.”

“Really, Mary?! I should believe *that*?!”

We don’t know exactly how Joseph reacted, but we are told that Joseph planned to end their engagement quietly.

Then God stepped into the picture in an

extraordinary way. God brought his word directly to Joseph, saying, “‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’)” (Matthew 1:20-23).

“Wait, what?!? You want me to be the stepfather to . . . God? How do I do that?”

Yeah, that’s exactly what God was asking Joseph to do. So, to whom do you speak to get advice on that? There aren’t many “Support groups for parents of God” out there! Talk about new. This was brand-spankin’ new!

GOD’S STRENGTH

But what did God do? God strengthened Joseph to do exactly what he had placed in front of him. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him: he married Mary. He raised Jesus. God strengthened him to do it!

And God will strengthen you. He’ll remind you that he’s the Immanuel-God, the God who came to live with us, as one of us, and who remains with us now. He’ll drive fear out of your heart and replace it with confidence that your God is the miracle-worker God. Most important, he’ll remind you that the child born to Mary and raised by Joseph is named Jesus. His name means that your sins are forgiven and that you’re at peace with God.

And like Joseph, you’ll be strengthened to handle any new thing, whatever it might be.

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This is the first article in a nine-part series on people in Jesus’ family tree. Learn more about Tom Kock on p. 25.



REALPEOPLE

REALSAVIOR

Thomas D. Kock



What is hypocrisy then? Jesus says it is not doing what you preach.

You hypocrite!

We are familiar with the word *hypocrite* and the condemnation that comes with it. More than others, we know the harsh and critical words of Jesus: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! . . . You snakes! You brood of vipers!” (Matthew 23:13,33). Brutal words. They should strike our hearts as well as anyone who does “not practice what they preach” (23:3).

In recent days, the accusation of hypocrisy has been leveled at some Christians who have stumbled and fallen in their journey of faith. We can expect two reactions. First, the accusers want to proclaim that all Christians are essentially hypocrites. You see, they say, here’s just another example. The second reaction is from Christians who grow defensive and see the accusation as a threat.

But let’s explore the issue a bit. Christians stumble and fall. It’s a daily occurrence. Some fall in public while watched by non-Christians who are looking for an opportunity to discredit Christian morality and faith. Others fall in public, watched only by their fellow believers and friends. Still others fall privately, hidden from the eyes of others while the Lord’s eyes are fully on them. If every one of them is a hypocrite because they fail to live up to the demands of God’s law, then all Christians are indeed hypocrites.

But that’s not so! Hypocrisy is not stumbling. If I should fall and disgrace my Lord, my fellow believers, and the name Christian, I may have to endure the charge of hypocrisy. But then, by the grace of God, I will go into the corner, too embarrassed to raise my eyes to heaven, and plead, “Lord have mercy on me a sinner.”

The Christian message does not exclude the fallen. Christianity is a loving and comforting hand of forgiveness that lifts us up to do better. Repentance—turning away from sin and turning toward the

Lord Jesus who offers that hand of forgiveness to penitent sinners—is a daily activity of Christian faith. Churches—true Christian churches—are full of sinners. Churches are not shrines where the good are on display.

What is hypocrisy then? Jesus says it is not doing what you preach. In our daily lives that means professing one thing and doing the opposite. “You hypocrite!” applies then to all who live and profess Christianity but hide a completely different life and profession.

Consider the public fall of David—murder, adultery, and cover-up. He was a hypocrite as long as he kept up the charade. Nathan exposed his hypocrisy and assured the penitent David of forgiveness. Like Nathan, there are times when we must judge and call sin a sin. That approach, as Jesus outlined, is to win your brother or sister back to the Savior’s forgiving hand, not to puff out your chest in arrogant indignation (Matthew chapter 18).

Some will remain hypocrites—unexposed—because they are good at hiding their duplicity. We will not be able to identify them. No one can perceive the heart of another. We can only make assumptions on the basis of a person’s confession of words and deeds. Beyond that we have to wait for the behavior of hypocrites to give them away or wait even longer until the Lord reveals the truth at the end of time.

So maybe from time to time the behavior of Christians will be viewed as hypocrisy—perhaps even correctly. But perhaps those leveling the charge of hypocrisy should be a bit more careful. Jesus suggested that we ought not point out the speck in the eye of another and ignore the log in our own (Matthew 7:3). Imagined superior moral ground is a dangerous place from which to judge.

"We believe in the Holy Spirit . . . who has spoken through the prophets."

Joel D. Otto

During the early centuries of the church, numerous "prophets" tried to pass off their writings as worthy of inclusion in the Bible. Some looked and sounded similar to the gospels and Paul's letters. But they contained teachings that contradicted known apostolic and prophetic writings. Others were very fanciful in nature, claiming to record events from Jesus' childhood or recounting the adventures of apostles and martyrs. Again, it was clear that these writings were not "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16).

By the time the Nicene Creed was completed (A.D. 381), there was general acceptance of all the books of the Old and New Testaments in all parts of the church. To affirm that these books were indeed the Word of God, these Christians confessed that the Holy Spirit "has spoken through the prophets." He had given specially chosen human authors the words he wanted them to write (2 Peter 1:20,21; 1 Corinthians 2:13). Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God.

During the last several centuries, skeptics and scholars have attempted to call into question the truth that the Spirit "has spoken through the prophets." They have claimed that the Bible is nothing more than a collection of ancient human writings and therefore can contain errors. In fact, in their minds the Bible is full of errors because it recounts miracles as though they actually happened. It reveals a God who is beyond our complete human comprehension. It demands a morality that doesn't fit with modern society. It proclaims a salvation by grace alone that is utter foolishness to the sinful mind (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

Yet, denying that the Holy Spirit guided the prophets and apostles and gave them the words to write breeds uncertainty. If someone believes that the Bible merely contains the Word of God, then human beings become the judge of what is and what is not the Word of God. No teaching is safe from criticism and rejection. How can we be certain about anything the Bible

says? The account of creation and the fall into sin? The plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea? The virgin birth of Jesus? His miracles? His resurrection? All of these have been questioned and rejected by so-called Christian theologians and churches over the past several centuries.

However, for the vast majority of history, the church has believed what we still believe. The Holy Spirit "has spoken through the prophets." This confession of biblical truth brings with it certainty. What the Spirit inspired the apostles and prophets to write is divine truth (John 17:17). God keeps his promises; he does not lie to us. We can be sure that his Word is profitable and powerful (Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:15,16). When we face attacks against the Christian faith or we struggle to make sense of some of the teachings of the Christian faith, we take comfort that the Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible and the Bible is reliable.

EXPLORING THE WORD

1. This teaching that the Holy Spirit "has spoken through the prophets" is called verbal inspiration. The Spirit "breathed into" the writers the exact words he wanted them to write. What implications does the teaching of verbal inspiration have on the way we interpret the Scriptures?
2. How does the teaching of verbal inspiration affect the way we proclaim and teach the truths of Scripture?
3. In what ways is this a comforting teaching?

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



Celebrating friendship

Friendships change through the years, but real friendships are built on the same kind of love that Christ showed us. Thomas C. Spiegelberg II

"That was last month? Are you sure, Jen?"

"Yes, the best man in our wedding—and supposedly your best friend—has his birthday every year on the same day: April 18."

"What day is it now?"

"It's May 18."

I am really a bad friend.

Summertime is a great time for friendships, whether it is visiting someone you haven't seen for years or meeting the new buddies you discovered at camp. Summer always flows a little sweeter with a good friend.

The Lord speaks a lot about friendship in the Bible. It's not surprising that the hymn writer of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" spoke of Jesus as a friend. But Jesus is not just an example of a good friend. He's much more than that. He gave up his life while we were still sinners, before we could claim him as a friend (Romans 5:8). He showed that true, deep love for others. We are justified by his blood, and his sacrifice awakens us to love others.

But we're so bad at friendships sometimes. We are far from perfect when it comes to human relationships. And our

friendships change over the years. Interests shared with others fade. I stopped my subscription to *Corvette Monthly* when I was in eighth grade. I rarely talk to any of my buddies who used to read it with me during morning recess.

Memorable experiences are replaced by other equally memorable times. I have a picture of a camping trip from 1989. I can't even remember everyone in the picture. At the time, though, I probably would have asked them all to be in my wedding.

Friends we thought were cool when they were seniors in high school because they had a tape deck in their 1980 Plymouth Volare and knew every word to every top-10 song don't seem to be as cool as we once thought. We no longer look cool when we sing old top-10 songs to our kids.

Friendship is built on more than shared experiences or interests.

Friends are certainly more than what we can get from them if we hang around them long enough. The book of Proverbs reminds us that friendship is built on the same kind of love that Christ showed us: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity" (17:17).

First Corinthians chapter 13, which we probably all will hear at a wedding this summer, is not talking about the love of a husband or wife when it says, "Love never fails." It is talking about love between one another.

Try these five things to celebrate real friendship based on the love of Christ:

1. Talk to your Lord tonight. Ask him to help you be a better friend.
2. Pick a friend you haven't talked to in a while. Drop him a note or a WhatsApp message quoting Proverbs 17:17 or send him a copy of this article.
3. Do something for one of your friends that is completely unselfish.
4. Talk to your children or grandchildren about what a true friend really is.
5. Send the best man in your wedding a birthday card, even if it's late.

I admit that I'm a bad friend, but I have a Good Friend. And he keeps me close to my earthly friends.

And by the way, to the best man in my wedding, your card is in the mail.

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