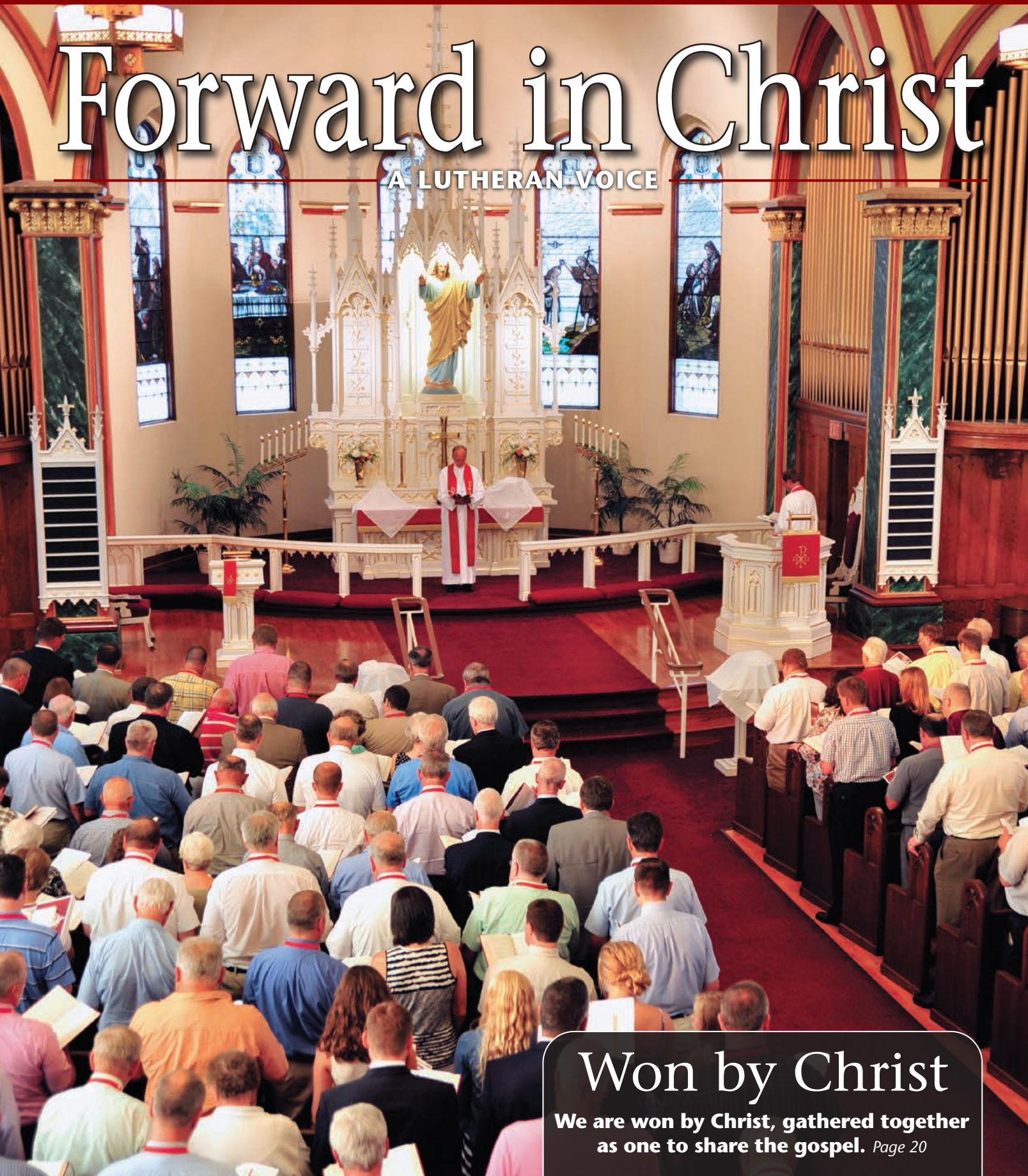


Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE



Won by Christ

We are won by Christ, gathered together
as one to share the gospel. *Page 20*

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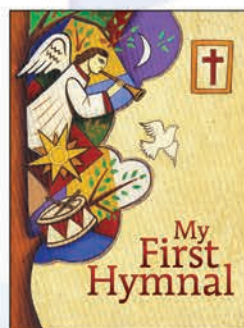
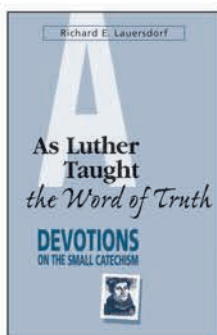


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*May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors;
may he never leave us nor forsake us.* —1 KINGS 8:57

WHAT'S INSIDE

Lutherans around the world remember Oct. 31, 1517, as the day that Martin Luther, a lowly monk, took a stand against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. But that date was just the beginning. Many others read Luther's writings and joined his efforts to reform the church and return it to its origins. They were called to confess their faith in Augsburg. In this issue, Pastor Jerry Ewings explores the Apology to the Augsburg Confession (p. 10) and how it relates to us today.

As part of his address to the synod convention this past July, WELS President Mark Schroeder reminded delegates—and all WELS members—about the importance of cherishing our heritage as confessional Lutherans. He also highlighted how that history can guide us in the future as we continue to share the message of God's grace. Read more of his convention message on p. 8. Then check out our full convention coverage (pp. 20-24). Also meet one of the convention delegates whose life was changed after discovering why Jesus really came to this earth (p. 14).

Finally, in this month's Question & Answer, Prof. James Pope further explains a phrase confessional Lutherans use often—*sola fide*, by faith alone—as he delves into Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats (p. 9).

Julie Wietzke



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THIRD CULTURE KIDS

Thank you for the article “Where I am from” [Aug.]. Sarah Habben, daughter of Missionary Walter Westphal, writes with keen detail about her life as a Third Culture Kid.

When she writes about leaving Africa at age 15 after living there for 10 years, her words tugged at my heart. “. . . the stress of leaving a mission field is akin to losing a close family member—and that unresolved grief clings like pine sap.” Sarah writes that after 24 hours of various flights home, “. . . our lives had changed forever. There was no weaning process, only an absolute good-bye.”

This story certainly humbled me and reminded me of the selflessness of our missionary *families* who live such different lives in order to be our representatives to the world with the gospel. And then they disrupt their lives again as they return to the USA. May we thank them all for going in our place. God bless them all.

*Lois Kluender
Hartland, Wisconsin*

I just wanted to tell you how very impressed I was with Sarah Habben’s article [Aug.]. She has a phenomenal style, and her whole article was poetry. It was an interesting article about TCKs, which gave us an outlook we might not otherwise have. But she did it in such a beautiful way, I had to comment.

*Charmaine Greanya
Burton, Michigan*

SPIRITUAL ROOTS

My sister took special note of the picture of the outdoor service with the pastor standing in the bed of the pickup truck [“Feedback,” July]. She thought a woman in the black hat in the background was our grandmother.

After asking around, another relative reported to my sister: “Just to let you know that John Jordan confirmed that your Grandma Panitzke (he called her Louise) was the one in the photo. St. John’s [Redwood Falls, Minn.] has that picture hanging in the hallway across from the church office.” . . .

Thank you to FIC for helping me appreciate my spiritual roots! My grandma went to heaven over 50 years ago, but I know that I’m a pastor largely because of her and my grandfather’s faith! All their children (my aunts and uncles) were faithful Christians and encouraged me to study for the ministry.

*Peter Panitzke
Muskego, Wisconsin*

THANKS, FIC

Our Christian lives are so simple and yet so complex. The older I get (71) the more I realize that God has wonderful daily plans for each and every one of us. FIC provides on a monthly basis 30-plus pages of outstanding articles and timely news that help me to better understand and make daily use

of God’s life plan. Thank you, and I thank God for you. Special thanks to JB and JW for their excellent production leadership.

*Jim Hennig
Zumbrota, Minnesota*

ABOUT THE COVER

Delegates at the 2015 synod convention gathered for opening worship at St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich. The overall theme of the convention, “One in Christ,” was echoed in the sermon, which stated, “Because Christ won, we are one in Christ.” See more about the synod convention on pp. 20-24.

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*.

OMISSION: We failed to note that Alicia Neumann wrote the article “Nearly 50-year-old ministry looking for new ways to serve” [Sept.]. Thanks, Alicia, for your work!

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OCTOBER 2015

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. 1 Kings 9:1–10:13 | 12. 1 Kgs. 22 | 23. Jn. 6:1–21 |
| 2. 1 Kgs. 10:14–11:43 | 13. John 1:1–18 | 24. Jn. 6:22–40 |
| 3. 1 Kgs. 12:1–32 | 14. Jn. 1:19–34 | 25. Jn. 6:41–71 |
| 4. 1 Kgs. 12:33–13:34 | 15. Jn. 1:35–51 | 26. Jn. 7:1–24 |
| 5. 1 Kgs. 14 | 16. Jn. 2:1–22 | 27. Jn. 7:25–52 |
| 6. 1 Kgs. 15:1–16:7 | 17. Jn. 2:23–3:21 | 28. Jn. 7:53–8:29 |
| 7. 1 Kgs. 16:8–34 | 18. Jn. 3:22–36 | 29. Jn. 8:30–59 |
| 8. 1 Kgs. 17, 18 | 19. Jn. 4:1–26 | 30. Jn. 9 |
| 9. 1 Kgs. 19 | 20. Jn. 4:27–54 | 31. Jn. 10:1–21 |
| 10. 1 Kgs. 20 | 21. Jn. 5:1–29 | |
| 11. 1 Kgs. 21 | 22. Jn. 5:30–47 | |

Faith to conquer fear

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

Steven J. Pagels

The community where I serve puts on an annual haunted house, and even though I have never been to it I get the impression that it is a pretty big deal. Last year, for four consecutive weekends in October leading up to and including Halloween, visitors could buy tickets to the “Dark Carnival” and walk through a winding maze with creepy clowns lurking around every corner.

I was unwilling to pay the \$15 cost of admission to be frightened out of my wits. I probably wouldn’t go to a haunted house even if someone else paid me to do it. As much as some people enjoy the thrill of being scared, that isn’t my idea of entertainment. Besides, there are plenty of other reasons, legitimate reasons, for people to be afraid.

WHAT MAKES US AFRAID

King David understood the meaning of fear. He was a powerful ruler, but he also had powerful enemies. In Psalm chapter 27 he identified them as “wicked” men who were advancing to attack him, as “false witnesses” who were “spouting malicious accusations” against him. Because Israel was surrounded by hostile nations, they were under the constant threat of enemy invasion. And because David was Israel’s leader, he was their number one target.

If Israel’s enemies weren’t enough to keep David awake at night, he also had to deal with the threats that came from the members of his own family. His son Absalom rebelled against him. David was forced to leave Jerusalem. He was forced to flee for his life, and when he looked over his shoulder he would have had good reason to be afraid.

How about you? What keeps you up at night? What are some of the challenges



you face that make you afraid? Will I get into the right school? Will I be able to find a good job? Will I ever find a

**You don’t have to
be afraid of the dark
because the Lord
is your light.**

spouse, or will I always be alone? Will the treatment I am receiving work, and what if it doesn’t? Will I have enough money to retire? Will I outlive my money after I retire?

WHAT MAKES US UNAFRAID

Instead of letting yourself be overwhelmed by your fears, listen to David, who expressed his trust in God with two rhetorical questions of his own: “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”

You don’t have to be afraid of the dark because the Lord is your light. His Word is a light for your path. God lives in unapproachable light, and you can look forward to the day when you will bask in the glow of his glory.

You don’t have to be afraid of death because the Lord is your salvation. Jesus has rescued you from your sins. He lived a perfect life in your place. He sacrificed his life on the cross, and because he did you will live forever in heaven.

You don’t have to be afraid of anyone or anything because the Lord is your stronghold. He will protect you from your enemies. He will keep you from all harm. He will watch over your life. And he will provide you with everything you need to live your life, including the faith to trust in him, to follow him, and to conquer your fears.

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



Mark Schweden

We need to rededicate ourselves to holding on to what is valuable and never letting it go, celebrating and cherishing our heritage as *confessional Lutherans*.

Holding on to our heritage

In my report to the synod convention in July, I outlined some of the values and principles that will, God-willing, guide our synod as it carries out its mission. The convention expressed its agreement. What your representatives at the convention affirmed should be of interest to all WELS members.

As the congregations of our synod face the challenges of an increasingly hostile culture, it is vital that we hold on to the heritage that has been passed down to us. This does not imply that we will remain focused on the past or consumed by nostalgia for a bygone era. Nor is it simply a matter of preserving the history of our synod. Rather, it means that for us to carry out our mission faithfully in the future, we need to rededicate ourselves to holding on to what is valuable and never letting it go, celebrating and cherishing our heritage as *confessional Lutherans*. Rather than diluting that heritage and reshaping our identity into something more generic and less distinct from other types of Christianity—or worse, abandoning it—we need to sharpen and clarify for ourselves and for others what makes our synod distinct and different. How will we do this?

- *Sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), *sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone), and *solo Christo* (by Christ alone) will not be an empty slogan but will remain the focus and foundation of all we believe, teach, confess, and practice.
- We will train men not just as theologians, but as pastors—caring shepherds who will use their knowledge of God's Word to lead and guide God's people more deeply into the Scriptures, which teach the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. We will train teachers as servants who recognize that their main role is to feed Jesus' lambs with his precious Word.
- Our preaching and teaching will continue to be Christ-centered and grace-

proclaiming rather than an attempt to entertain, to pander to emotions, or primarily to provide guidance on how to live a happy and fulfilled life.

- We will commit ourselves to thorough instruction of the young. We will do all we can in our families and schools to provide them with a foundation that cannot and will not be shaken.
- We will emphasize the centrality of the means of grace in our lives as we worship regularly and share in the Lord's Supper often. We will joyfully bring our children to the font where the Spirit grants forgiveness, salvation, and new birth.
- We will treasure and teach our heritage of Lutheran worship. We dare not abandon something that has been a blessing for centuries for the generic, shallow, and emotionally-based worship of Christian churches around us.
- We will hold on to the teachings of Scripture no matter how the culture may change and no matter how strongly our beliefs may be challenged. We will never grow complacent in our knowledge of the Scriptures, but we will look to grow continually in our knowledge and depth of understanding.
- We will be zealous in sharing the treasure of our gospel heritage with as many people as possible, recognizing that the mission God has given us is not an obligation but a privilege.
- We will look together with eager anticipation to the return of our Savior, because we know that his final victory will be our victory.

All of this we can do if, and only if, we place ourselves, our families, our congregations, and our synod into God's gracious care and depend on his blessing on our work together.

Learn more about what happened at the 2015 synod convention (pp. 20-24).

Light for our path

The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) has always confused me. How do I know if I am doing enough to be regarded as one of Jesus' sheep?

James F. Pope

The parable you cited illustrates why it is important to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Isolating the parable from the rest of the Bible, one might mistakenly think the parable teaches that people who do good things will go to heaven while people who fail to do good things will go to hell. An old axiom of the church will help us understand Jesus' parable correctly: "Faith alone saves, but faith is never alone."

FAITH ALONE SAVES

The Bible's teaching from beginning to end is that faith alone saves. Two millennia before Jesus Christ entered our world as a child, Abram "believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). The Lord had promised Abram that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars overhead, and Abram's Spirit-worked response was to receive that promise in faith. The Lord credited Abram's faith, not his works, as righteousness.

In the New Testament one of the clearest statements that faith alone saves is Ephesians 2:8,9: "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Countless other Bible passages teach that people enjoy salvation through God-given faith in Jesus Christ and not because of anything they have done. Faith alone saves, and unbelief condemns. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). God alone can perceive whether faith or unbelief resides in a person's heart. He will judge accordingly.

But the perfect judge will supply evidence for his judgments. That is where Jesus' parable enters the picture.

FAITH IS NEVER ALONE

You and I cannot look into another person's heart. We cannot observe faith in

the heart of a fellow Christian or unbelief in the hearts of the lost. What we can see is evidence of faith or unbelief in everyday living. That is what Jesus described in his parable. The sheep in Jesus' parable were going to spend eternity with the Lord because of the saving faith that was in their hearts. God alone could see that faith in their hearts, but others could witness that faith in everyday acts of love and kindness. The goats in Jesus' parable were going to spend eternity apart from the Lord because of the unbelief that was in their hearts. God alone could see that unbelief in their hearts, but others could recognize that unbelief in everyday acts of selfishness and sinfulness.

You notice that the sheep—as well as the goats—expressed amazement by the recounting of their lives. The believers were surprised with the evidence of faith Jesus supplied. The Lord informed his followers that whatever acts of love they had shown others, they did to him. And they did that out of gratitude for God's gift of free salvation.

This parable and the rest of Scripture teach that your salvation is not dependent on the good things you do but on the good things Jesus Christ did in your behalf: keeping the law of God perfectly and suffering sin's punishment. Jesus' parable is not intended to be a checklist to determine if you are a sheep of Jesus' flock or a goat. You are one of Jesus' sheep because of the work of the great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20).

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 wels.net/questions. 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



Stand up FOR THE TRUTH

The Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession both proclaim the truths of Scripture believed by the church since the time of the apostles.

Jerry Ewings

On June 25, 1530, a layman stood before the congress of the Emperor, the Pope's delegates, and the nobles. Chancellor Beyer filled the hall with his clear and ringing voice; he read the Augsburg Confession to the assembly. Persuasively and gently, it called for a restoration of the saving work of Jesus Christ to center stage in the church's work. The Confession called the church to be truly catholic again—one worldwide confession of God's grace in Christ.

No longer was this a dispute between a Wittenberg monk and the papacy. This was an evangelical *movement*, a confession that would roll through history under the name "Lutheran." The evangelical laymen, together with their pastors and theologians, would not retreat from this faith. The threat of prison or burning at the stake could not silence them, because Jesus Christ freed them from the threat of death.

In the aftermath of the Augsburg Confession, the papal delegates sought to squelch this evangelical voice. The Lutherans responded through the pen of Phillip Melanchthon. The formal defense (or Apology) of the Augsburg Confession provided deep biblical and historical explanations and support for the confession Chancellor Beyer read at Augsburg. It floated under a banner of peace, but they knew that by not backing down, it might bring the papal and imperial armies against them. It did not matter. The truths of what God had done for all people in Christ had to be confessed, whatever the cost.

In less than a year, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession went to the printer. In that same year (1531) the evangelicals pledged themselves to both the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. Both confessions remain foundational documents of true Lutheranism today.

What was so important in the Apology? We consider just three of the articles that confess those truths on which the whole Christian faith hinges.

ARTICLE II: ORIGINAL SIN

Article II on original sin may seem like an odd place to proclaim the faith, but without understanding it, we would miss the need for a God-in-flesh Savior. And without it, we'll never understand ourselves either.

Original sin is the nature we inherit from Adam. It is neither a blank slate nor a "good soul" waiting for behavioral modification. Instead, our nature is without true fear or love of God. It is so corrupted that it is dead to anything pleasing to God. The Apology confesses that humans are born corrupted and dead. It confesses that original sin is the root sin and it damages us so severely that we don't just need help to help ourselves. We need complete and full rescue. That thought was out of step with its time—and ours too. It is, however, in step with the Scriptures.

Thankfully God does not leave us at that dark and hopeless truth.

ARTICLE IV: JUSTIFICATION

In reading Article IV on justification, you will notice the repetition. Melancthon is something of a one-note trumpeter in this article, but what a note! Again and again he goes back to the work of Christ, the merits of Christ, and the saving blood of Christ. He will not let any doctrine of the church obscure what Christ has done for sinners. Jesus Christ rescued all sinners; they are justified by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith.

As true as that simple summary reads, those were fighting words; they were condemned by the Council of Trent 16 years later. Nevertheless, Christ's work to justify sinners is the only thing that overcomes the original sin we have from birth and the actual sins we commit every day. Here is the good news: With Christ Jesus as your Savior, in spite of all the failures you've had at trying to live right, you cannot end up anywhere except in heaven. Sinners are justified only by his work.

The Roman Church condemned and still condemns this teaching of justification by faith alone. We are not surprised that the devil wants to say that the work of Christ is not enough, that it is only the beginning of our way to heaven, or that we need to add our charity to his work to be saved. What surprises us is that anyone makes those claims in the name of the church. The Apology reaches its highest level in order to preserve the central teaching—Christ did everything to rescue sinners; humans add nothing.

ARTICLE V: LOVE AND THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

Article V deals with the question that is always asked of Lutherans: If we are saved without works, what is the place of good works, of acts of love, of Christian charity?

Article V upholds and honors good works; it just will not let them take the place of Christ. Good works do not cause or contribute to our justification. However, justification causes good works. To keep this straight is one aspect of properly dividing law and gospel. The unearned and undeserved grace of God allows a terrified conscience to find comfort in Christ and comforted children of God to find the reason for loving others the rest of their lives.

Loved by God, we love God and others. With earnest repetition and rapier insight, the Apology refuses to let our acts of love play any part in making us acceptable to God. Instead it turns Christian hearts toward true charity. Along the way, it leaves Christ as the sole mediator for salvation.

The Apology also turns us to "another Counselor," the Holy Ghost, who now indwells and guides us. Being raised from death to life is clearly the work of God. It is also the work of God that those raised to life now breathe a life of love; it's his power living in our reborn hearts. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

These correct understandings of human corruption and God's grace help Christians understand themselves. Original sin does not disappear from us once we know God's grace in Jesus by faith. Believers have new life in Christ, but they are at war with the sin that still remains inside. We struggle, and that struggle will never abate while we breathe.

We grow weary in this struggle. We think that yesterday's sins should not be repeated. But the same sins return, at times with more power. We must fly to the mercy of God in Christ for the assurance of forgiveness and the strength to continue the struggle. We need divine grace daily. But the struggle will only last a lifetime. We shall overcome, for he has overcome.

We've only scratched the surface in this brief introduction. When you read the Apology, hang in there. You'll need a little background to understand everything. Yet your personal journey through the Apology of the Augsburg Confession will take you to the same place where the confessors ended up: "Who would not joyfully die in the confession of these articles, that we receive the forgiveness of sins through faith freely for Christ's sake?"

Jerry Ewings is pastor at Lord of Love, De Forest, Wisconsin.



Touching heaven

PRAY IT FORWARD

All blessings come from God, but through prayer we are able to ask God to pass his blessings on to others.

Stephen M. Luchterhand

At the pick-up window in the drive-through of your favorite coffee establishment, the server informs you that payment for your order was made by someone in the vehicle ahead of you. How thoughtful! You now have a choice: Keep the “pay it forward” chain going or end it by choosing not to pay for the order of the person behind you.

Choosing to pay for the \$5 triple-shot espresso drink of the person behind you would hardly be considered an act of charity. It is a simple, small act of kindness and generosity and can fill the giver with joy . . . for a brief time. Such gifts are often one-time events.

But are we able to do more than just “pay it forward,” engaging in polite but ordinary random acts of kindness? Why not offer a more powerful and meaningful gift, a gift that you can keep on giving? Why not, instead, “pray it forward”?

OTHER-CENTEREDNESS

The concept of selflessly considering the needs of others has a powerful model in Jesus Christ. Everything he said and did was carried out for others. Jesus’ prayers concern two key entities: his Father and everyone else.

Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer (John chapter 17) is often called his greatest prayer. His two primary concerns are the Father’s glory and the protection of believers. In an example of literally “praying it forward” into the future, Jesus prays, “My prayer is not for [the disciples who first heard his prayer] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message” (v. 20).

In the prayer regarded as his model prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus establishes a pattern of focus on others. Not until the Fourth Petition, “Give

us today our daily bread,” does our attention turn to self, while the Father’s glory (the First Petition, “Hallowed be your name”) and the welfare of others (the Second Petition, “Your kingdom come,” and the Third Petition, “Your will be done”) take precedence.

Perhaps the ultimate example of Jesus “praying it forward” on behalf of others comes from his lips while on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). He prayed for those who neither knew nor cared what they were doing. But Jesus made this request to the Father so that one day they might know and care and, by grace, repent and believe in him.

Of course, as Creator and Redeemer, Jesus is able to do more than cover someone else’s overpriced latte at a drive-through window. Forgiveness and life with God are gifts of unsurpassed value. All blessings ultimately come from God, but through prayer we are able to ask God to pass his blessings on to others.

MORE THAN WORDS

As we have been blessed by God in so many ways, we want to pass on the knowledge and blessings of this God. So we pray for others. Are these prayers mere words? Only if they are delivered in a mindless, unthinking way. But when offered by a heart of faith that thrills to be in the presence of the Father, prayers are more than words.

But when I pray for others, I wonder. Am I telling God something he doesn’t already know? Is it appropriate for me to inquire about this particular need? Am I using the right words? Will my solitary prayers even make a difference?

What is wrong with the previous paragraph? My focus has subtly shifted to self. But prayer isn’t about me or my “form” or my fears and inadequacies. It’s about others, especially about the

God whom I am addressing. Prayer taps into God’s power and strength. We dare, by faith, to ask God for his undivided attention. And he gives it. We dare, by faith, to ask God to direct his unlimited resources to another precious soul. And he does so according to his will.

Prayer taps into God’s
power and strength.
We dare, by faith,
to ask God for his
undivided attention.
And he gives it.

When I pray for others, something happens within me. As I think about others and their needs, my awareness grows. When I contemplate the needs of others, my compassion grows. When I ponder the needs of others and imagine all the ways God may respond, my appreciation for God’s mastery of all things and his goodness in all things grows. Awareness and compassion may actually lead me to offer more than words in prayer. I find that I may be part of the answer to someone else’s need, as I offer myself and my resources in Christian love.

WHEN THERE IS NO MORE “FORWARD”

It was Dr. Seuss who wrote, “How did it get so late so soon? It’s night before it’s afternoon. December is here before it’s June. My goodness how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon?” Sometimes, life only seems to have a fast-forward button. It’s a relentless rush to the next thing, the next event. We’re constantly on the move, always pushing to get to “forward.” But suddenly, one day, there

will be no more “forward.” One day, life will come to an end for all.

For God’s people, there is a “next thing,” something to look forward to at the end of this life: life forever in heaven with Jesus. This is, in fact, the end goal of all our prayers. We ask that God keep us in his care so we will arrive safely at our Savior’s side. Our prayers for others also have this overarching goal: that they too will be able to enjoy life with Jesus forever.

The apostle Paul had reached an immovable wall, the place where there was no more “forward” for him in this life. Apparently soon to be put to death at the command of the Roman emperor, Paul speaks directly and lovingly to young Timothy. The entire letter resonates with relentless urgency as Paul offers final encouragements and blessings to his young friend.

Make his words your own as you look forward to the time when there will be no more “forward,” only eternity in the presence of Jesus. Share these words with others. Forward these words so all may have a similar confidence. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. . . . The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:7,8,18).

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

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

The Holy Spirit through the Word changed a man's life and his eternal future.

Julie K. Wietzke

"I love talking about my faith."

Mark Stair, a delegate representing St. John, Oak Creek, Wis., at the 2015 synod convention, has come a long way from the boy who skipped catechism class so many times he never was confirmed. "[My Sunday school teachers] didn't get through to me," he says. "It just didn't interest me."

Fifty years later, he jumped at the chance to learn more about his synod and help shape its direction. "My pastor said the opening service is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and he wasn't kidding," says Stair. "It's humbling and hard to believe that I'm sitting among so many pastors and missionaries."

The Holy Spirit through the Word, he says, changed the way he thought about everything—and changed how he lives his life.

CHANGED HEARTS

Stair was baptized and grew up as a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. His parents sent him to Sunday school and his mom

attended church, but his dad "was kind of a wedding and funeral guy," he says.

As Stair grew older, he stopped going to church. "I didn't know anything about Jesus. I remember the Sunday school stories about Palm Sunday but I didn't know why he was here," Stair says. "I never put it together—that he was here to pay for our sins."

Fast forward 35 years. Stair's second wife, Jackie, who also had fallen away from the Lutheran church, was interested in going back to church. Stair had no problem with that, but he wasn't planning on going with her—until he ended up in the hospital with pancreatitis.

"They didn't know what caused it, so I was going through all these tests," he says. "Right away you think it's cancer or a tumor or something like that."

So Stair prayed. "But I didn't know what I was doing," he says, "so I tried to make a deal. I prayed, *If they don't find anything and I come out of this okay, I'm going to start going to church.*"

Looking back, Stair says he knows now that you don't make deals with God, "but I know a lot more now than I did then," he says, chuckling.

Stair did get better and told his wife

he wanted to look for a church because he felt he owed that to God. "It just about floored her," he says.

Though the plan was to visit many churches to determine which one they liked best, Stair and his wife only visited one—St. John, Oak Creek. A woman with whom his wife worked was a member there and invited them to worship. "We went to church there three or four times and the next thing I know, Pastor was in our living room and we started going to Bible information class," he says.

As a truck driver, Stair says he had a lot of time to think about what he was learning. "I had a lot of complicated questions, and Pastor always had some pretty simple answers," he says. After about ten weeks, Stair says everything just came together for him. In 1997, he and his wife were confirmed and joined the church.

CHANGED LIVES

After retiring early due to medical issues, Stair says he became even more active in church, including going to Bible classes, ushering, and serving on the church council. "I'm getting closer and closer to my Savior—just by hearing the Word," he says.

That's a big change from his earlier life. His first marriage ended in di-



Confessions OF FAITH

voice, and his children weren't raised in the church. Stair says sometimes he reflects on how his life would have been different if he had been a believer. "There are a lot of things I've done that I'm not proud of and I can't go back and change them," he says. "But it's such a great feeling to know that you're forgiven. It's amazing!"

He continues, "Before I came to faith, I thought that I had a great life. Now I look back on it and it wasn't that great. I wanted to have a purpose and something to put my trust in."

Having a Savior in whom he can put his trust has helped him and his wife live their lives for the Lord—even through hardships. "It changes everything, even the way you think," he says. He shared how in 2009, he was dealing with heart problems, and his wife was going through chemotherapy to combat breast cancer. "She never even cried a tear," he says. "We just had faith."

The Lord took care of Stair and his wife. "It's one of those stories that changes someone," says Stair. "But I feel like we were already changed before it happened."

"I feel sorry for people who don't have faith that have to go through this; they're basically alone. But when you have your God to lean on and your

Christian friends and church members, it's amazing."

CHANGED PRIORITIES

Now instead of dwelling on the past, Stair looks to the future and how he can share his faith with others.

At church, he is the chairman of the Board for Spiritual Life. He leads services at a local nursing home, something he never expected he would do. "Now it's one of my favorite things," he says. "They need to hear the Word too."

Stair also is reaching out in his personal life. "I worked with truck drivers. At first I didn't tell them [when I started going to church] because I didn't want to be made fun of," he says. "Eventually that changed. I know what the truth is, and maybe I can help some of those guys." Stair is trying to get in touch with one of his past truck driver friends who is sick to share the hope of salvation.

He is most concerned, however, about his adult children. "One of the things that I pray about the most is that they all come to faith," he says. Stair shares his faith with his children in both his words and his actions. He also is writing a book that relates how he came to faith and looks at his past experiences through his new spiritual sight. "If one of my kids reads what I have



Mark and Jackie Stair

written, it might make a difference," he says. "I know it's up to God and his grace, but I feel like I would really have done something if it affects just one person—especially one of my own kids."

He continues, "God uses people where he can use them. Maybe all my life experiences before will come in handy as I try to spread the Word."

Because Stair knows, the Word works and does make a difference.

Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ.



heart to heart
parent conversations

In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus calls his followers the “light of the world.” Then he encourages them, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (v. 16). As Christian parents, we not only want our lights to shine, but we also want to help show our children how to let their lights shine. Sometimes, though, we want to hide our children from the world so that they aren’t exposed to worldly influences. So, how do we balance Jesus’ call with our instinct to protect our children?



Join the conversation!

Visit 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 CAN I HELP MY CHILD BE IN THE WORLD BUT NOT AFRAID OF THE WORLD?

“Be a light!”

It seems like the world is getting darker. Maybe it’s that, as my children get older and they are in the world more, my eyes are more sensitive to the darkness of this world. What is the world saying to them? How is it being said?

We know that our children have to be in the darkness. In fact, Jesus says, “My prayer is NOT that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:15-17, emphasis added).

The evil one is very crafty. He uses so many regular things, and often good things, to cast shadows. Stress,

“I’m shiny with bright scales, now give me a try. I swim up the river and jump toward the sky. Who am I? I’m a . . . SALMON!”

It’s one of my boys’ favorite pop-up books. Each page offers a short, rhyming riddle where they have to guess, “Who am I?” with each answer being a different Alaskan animal.

But as my 9- and 11-year-olds have outgrown pop-up books, the question becomes less of a game and more of a critical puzzle in life. “Who am I?” is something they ask more and more.

“Who am I? Am I a cool kid? the smart kid? the boy whom girls will like? Am I an athlete? a musician? Am I . . . a loser? a dork? a kid whom nobody likes? Am I really loved . . . by Mom and Dad? by God? Do I meet their expectations? Am I really forgiven?”

Raising children to have compassion for this tainted world without undue fear and to love God’s blemished people without prejudice is a monumental task. Scripture gives us guidelines, a dos & don’ts list for living in this world yet not being of the world.

It is this perilous journey that my husband and I saw as we raised our children. Or as my very wise Christian father said to me, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” We wanted to raise our children to function as children of God and lights in this world without falling prey to its sinful temptations.

Scripture makes it clear that God is to be first in our lives. This will most likely evidence itself in the priorities we model for our children. The frequency of God’s name and Word may range from mealtime prayers to regular devotions and Bible study. Connecting our children to God’s Word outside of the home is also a directive from Scripture. Studies show that what we do has a greater impact on children than what we say. Consequently, living our Christian-

movies, relationships, books, family, video games, peers, and conflict are just some examples of sources of shadows.

It would be nice if we could keep all the worldly darkness out of our children's, and our, lives, but that just isn't possible. As parents, we can be intentional with teaching them how to hear God's voice and see his light. Reading Scripture, prayer, and solitude time with God are rhythms we do in our home that still us enough to hear God's voice and refresh our light.

Not only do we want to teach our children these things, we want to model them as well. It isn't just our children who are in the world. We are too. We want to be prepared as much as they are, if not more so, to stand and be a light in this world.

When as a family we hear God's voice, we can be a light of his love in this world.

Whenever my children leave to go into the world, you will always hear me repeat my tagline: "Be a light!" I have found this to be a good reminder for our family to be in the world but not of the world. Light looks different. Light shines. Light attracts. Light warms. Light shows direction. Light reveals.

So the encouragement I give to my children I also pass on to you: "Be a light!"

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



They don't often voice these questions, especially since boys don't usually talk about such deep subjects. But I know that they're asking these questions because every kid does.

"How do we prepare our kids to be in the world and not of the world?" That's a question every parent ought to consider. And I believe our kids will be ready when they can answer the question "Who am I?" with the right response: "I am a forgiven child of God who lives to show my thanks to him in all that I say and do."

We all have the privilege of finding our identity in Christ. Instead of wondering, "Who am I?" we can trust in God's answer: "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are

the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9,10).

"Who am I? I am chosen by God. I belong to him. I'm special to him. He calls me holy. He gives me purpose. He defines who I am. I am a Christian. I am a little Christ. And though I may be considered a weirdo or a dork by others for following him, I don't care. I care what other people think about me because I want to serve them. But I care far more about what God thinks of me. He is the God who loves me, who saved me, and that's why I want to live my life for him."

How do we prepare kids to be in the world but not of the world? We keep telling them and ourselves where we find our true identity: in Christ.

*Rob Guenther is a pastor in Kenai, Alaska. He and
his wife, Becky, have four sons ages 11 and under.*



ity as parents, husbands, and wives becomes our children's textbook. Our hunger for God's Word and the application of its tenets are a powerful example.

In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul tells us that he became all things to all people so that some might be saved. John wrote that we are not of the world (John 15:19). The balance of being approachable Christians and at the same time being different in a way that others know we are Christians is difficult in application. We open our arms and our ears to embrace and listen to those who are different but retain the one thing needful—Jesus. The Lord works his miracles, making believers of all kinds of people: a professor at Martin Luther College; an openly Christian neuro intensive care nurse; and a pink-haired, pierced, and tattooed behaviorist for autistic children who is on her church's Board of Education.

Self-righteous segregation is not a good witness tool. Neither is allowing our children to participate in questionable activities for the sake of fitting in. In John 15:19, Christ tells his dis-

ciples, "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." Helping our children cope with the reality of the persecution and mockery of Christians in this world is the inevitable, yet necessary, role of the Christian parent.

When we as parents have a sense of true joy in our faith, it shows itself in our parenting and in our homes. A guilt-ridden sense of obedience can produce fearful, resentful children who are quick to rid themselves of what they perceive as an unloving church or system of values.

A hurting world out there needs what we have. A gospel-filled heart teaches our children by example how to navigate this world, how to live a godly life, and how to share this good news with others.

*Mary Clemons lives in Tucson, Arizona,
with her husband, Sam. They have three
grown children and four grandchildren.*





teentalk

Bring it on

Don't stress about the future. God will guide you and take care of you.

Maddie McKenna

You've probably thought about what you want to be when you grow up at one point or another. Scratch that. I know you have. Whether you have thought about it recently or back when you were in preschool and wanted to be a Power Ranger or a princess, you have given it a thought at some point in your life.

I'm a junior in high school, and many of my friends have an idea of what they want to be, maybe even what college they would like to attend. On the other hand, I have no clue whom I want to be in this world. I'm uncertain about the future, and that might seem like a very scary thing.

For many people, the thought of growing up and moving out is a scary one. For me personally, I was terrified of going to high school. I was scared that I wouldn't be able to get to my classes on time, my friends would leave me for a better group of people, and I wouldn't be able to open my locker. In some cases, those worries were true. However, what I didn't realize at that time was that I didn't need to stress about these things. I

also don't need to be stressing about what will come after high school; God will provide.

I have an older brother, and college life is definitely working out for him. Seeing him move out and do well has given me reassurance that the future can't be that scary, though I'm still a little bit worried about how I will do out on my own. He still attends church and is strong in his faith. God has planted a seed in everyone, and I thank God that those seeds are prospering.

At times when I feel anxious about my future, I remember what Jeremiah wrote, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (29:11). I don't have to freak out about what's ahead of me because God will take care of me and he knows what's best. God has watched over me since the day I was born, and he will continue to do so until and even after the day that I join him in heaven.

High school can be challenging at times, but God takes care of the hard times. My Savior has

blessed me with an amazing support system. So many have helped me through my struggles in high school. Why wouldn't they help me when I have troubles down the road?

God works in mysterious ways. Sometimes things don't go the way you have them planned out in your mind. God may have a different idea for you. Don't be discouraged or become frustrated. I completely understand that sometimes it's hard not to worry. It can be so easy to get wrapped up in things that you aren't certain of. Satan tries so hard to distract you and make you forget about God's saving grace. But you are clothed in Christ's armor. He takes care of you all the time.

The next time you catch yourself worrying and being stressed out about the future, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Maddie McKenna, a junior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member at St. John, Newville, Wisconsin.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Arnold Jr., Gerald P., to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Blum, Jay S., to retirement
Fischer, Wayne L., to St. Paul's, Valley City, N.D.
Holub, Curtis J., to retirement
Huet, Kelly B., to St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis.
Kehl, David A., to Multi-Language Publications, Waukesha, Wis.
Kehren, Jonathan P., to Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.
Langebartels, James L., to retirement
Schleis, Keith A., to Abiding Faith, Smyrna, Tenn.
Schwerin, Richard C., to retirement
Werner, James E., to retirement
Westphal, Erich W., to Brooklyn, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
Wietzke, David H., to Crown of Life, Pueblo West, Colo.

Teachers

Aguilar, Stacey L., to Southern California Lutheran Elementary School Association, Inc., Temecula, Calif.
Aiken, Deanna, to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Berg, Jennifer M., to Eastside, Madison, Wis.
Biedenbender, Catherine J., to Sienna Lutheran Academy, Missouri City, Tex.
Black, Kristin K., to Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.
Briney, Rebecca L., to Zion, Monroe, Mich.
Carter, Jennifer L., to St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis.
Diehm, Rachel B., to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Dittrich, Nathan K., to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
Dusseau, Catherine E., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Gierach, Brandon, to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
Gonzalez, Joanna I., to St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif.
Gorte, Rebecca K., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Hemmelman, Patricia K., to St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.
Hesse, Mark A., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Hinz, Rachael L., to St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Hochmuth, Keturah E., to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.
Horn, Sarah C., to St. John, Watertown, Wis.
Johnson, Rachel, to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Klug, Kirstie D., to Lakewood, Lakewood, Wash.
Knepel, Amy, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kramer, Randall A., to retirement
Kufahl, Theodore W., to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.

List, Samantha J., to Trinity, Marinette, Wis.
Meitner, Merlin A., to St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif.
Naker, Karna E., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
Naumann, Dina R., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Nehls, Bradley G., to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minn.
Ocampo, Jacalyn, to Zion, Columbus, Wis.
Ohrmundt, Marla R., to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.
Panning, Samuel, to Divine Peace, Largo, Md.
Peek, Kara L., to Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
Prater, Megan E., to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
Radloff, Ryan, to Zion, Columbus, Wis.
Rahn, Deanna R., to Wisconsin Lutheran Elementary School, Racine, Wis.
Rasmussen, Margaret G., to Wisconsin Lutheran Elementary School, Racine, Wis.
Roecker, Elizabeth M., to St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis.
Root, Cheryl A., to St. Mark, De Pere, Wis.
Schmidt, Karen E., to retirement
Schwartz, Erin, to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
Seelhoff, Wendy L., to Trinity, Bangor, Mich.
Theiler, Alexandra, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Treder, Michelle K., to Southern California Lutheran Elementary School Association, Inc., Temecula, Calif.
Van Houten, Susan M., to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.
Vik, Jennifer, to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Willitz, Josiah D., to Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.
Winkler, Carol, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.
Zietlow, Caitlin S., to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.

Staff ministers

Meyer, Mark S., to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.
Niemi, Rachel J., to Christ Our Savior, Rockford, Mich.

ANNIVERSARIES

Madison, Wis.—Eastside (90). Oct. 4. Service, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. Website, www.eastsidelutheran.org.
Manitowoc, Wis.—First German (160). Oct. 4. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow. 920-684-0101.
Whitewater, Wis.—St. John (150). Oct. 4. Worship, 9 A.M. Oct. 18. Worship, 9 A.M.; meal to follow. Website, stjohnsevluthchurchwhitewater.org.
Colorado Springs, Colo.—Salem School (30). Oct. 11. Worship, 9 A.M.; anniversary presentation, 10:15 A.M.; potluck meal, 11:30 A.M. 719-599-0200, salemlutheran@q.com.
Lincoln, Neb.—Mt. Olive (75). Oct. 11. Wor-

ship, 4 P.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 402-484-8711. Website, www.mtolivewels.org.
San Jose, Calif.—Apostles (50). Oct. 11. Worship, 8:45 and 11:15 A.M.; meal to follow. Nov. 1. Reformation worship, 8:45 and 11:15 A.M., bratfest to follow. RSVP requested. Website, www.apostles-lutheran.net/50yearsofgrace. 408-225-0107.

Columbia, Mo.—Grace (40). Oct. 18. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; special service, 4:30 P.M.; meal to follow. 573-474-8755. Website, www.gracecolumbia.com.

Marshfield, Wis.—Trinity School (40). Oct. 18. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. 715-676-2121; TLISMfld40@gmail.com.

Mukwonago, Wis.—St. John (125). Oct. 18. Worship, 9 A.M.; meal and program to follow. RSVP requested. 262-363-4999.

Website, www.stjohnslutheran-muk.org.
New Ulm, Minn.—St. Paul's (150). Oct. 17–19. Worship, Sat., 6 P.M.; Sun., 8, 9:30 & 11 A.M.; and Mon. 6:30 P.M. Website, www.splnewulm.org.

Phoenix, Ariz.—St. Thomas (50). Nov. 8. Worship, 4 P.M., meal to follow. RSVP requested, 623-933-4666.

Watertown, Wis.—Luther Preparatory School (150). Nov. 15. Worship, 3 P.M. The event will be livestreamed. Website, www.lps.wels.net.

COMING EVENTS

At peace? women's retreat—Oct. 3. Peace, Loves Park, Ill. 608-290-0631. Website, www.peacelp.com.

Dedication—of recent addition of Christ, Merrill, Wis. Oct. 4. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; meal to follow. Open house, 12–3 P.M. 715-536-3313. Website, www.christmerrill.com.

MLC Ladies' Auxiliary annual meeting—Oct. 10. 9 A.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, www.mlc-wels.edu.

Women's retreat—Oct. 10. Divine Peace, Milwaukee, Wis. Website, www.PHM1Six.org.

Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention—Oct. 13–15. Days Inn, La Crosse, Wis. Website, wels.net/events.

Parish nurses fall gathering—Oct. 24. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Website, www.welsnurses.net.

Christian Life Resources national convention—Nov. 7. St. Paul, Slinger, Wis. Website, www.CLREvents.com.

"Three Strands" couples retreat—Nov. 7. Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis. Website, www.threestrandsretreat.org.

Women's retreat—Nov. 14. David's Star, Jackson, Wis. 262-677-2412 x302. Website, www.davidsstar.org.

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



Resolutions set the synod's course for the next biennium

Twenty-seven floor committees worked to accomplish the business of the 63rd WELS Biennial Convention. Floor committee chairmen read reports and presented resolutions upon which delegates could discuss, consider, and vote.

The Ministry Financial Plan proposed by the Synodical Council was adopted. Floor Committee #10, Finance and Budget, noted that the plan “not only maintains existing ministry but also provides for careful growth.” Resolution 10-02, which was also adopted, encourages congregations to prayerfully consider increasing their Congregation Mission Offerings to help sustain and grow ministry. The current Financial Ministry Plan is based on a one percent increase in Congregation Mission Offerings in both 2016 and 2017.

Funding for a full-time archivist is included in the Ministry Financial Plan for the next biennium. The position is being funded by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Floor Committee #8, WELS Archives, resolved “that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary proceed with its plan to fund for two years a qualified archivist who can oversee the relocation of materials from its campus to the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry.” The resolution was adopted.

Floor Committee #21, the Ad Hoc Commission 2 Floor Committee, presented ten resolutions, which were all adopted, and one report. This Ad Hoc Commission was established by a resolution from the 2013 synod convention to “look at all areas of the synod structure and programs especially in the areas not addressed by the previous commission.” The commission addressed 13 topics in depth, and the floor committee addressed each one.

In Resolution 21-01, delegates approved the recommendation from the Ad Hoc Commission 2 to have the Synodical Council's Compensation Review Committee develop a draft proposal of revised guidelines. The current compensation guidelines were developed in 2003.

Resolution 21-02 rejects the Ad Hoc Commission 2's recommendation for delegates to serve at two consecutive conventions to help provide better preparation and continuity. The resolution encourages the Conference of Presidents to investigate other methods to better prepare delegates for synod convention.

Resolutions 21-03 and 21-04 affirm the current practice of electing district and synod praesidium by taking nominations from the convention floor. The adopted resolutions also encourage districts and the synod to develop procedures to allow delegates to become better acquainted with the list of nominated candidates.



Jeremiah Gumm, pastor at Cross of Christ, Liverpool, N.Y., shared his floor committee's resolutions and reports about worship, congregational counseling, and evangelism.

The first resolution presented by Floor Committee #14, Congregation and Ministry Support Group A—Worship, Evangelism, and Congregational Counseling, recommended that the Conference of Presidents make the call of the Commission on Congregational Counseling director permanent. The resolution notes that the Commission on Congregational Counseling is currently serving 41 congregations in the Self-Assessment and Adjustment Program with 81 more waiting to be served. Delegates adopted the resolution.

Floor Committee #2, Conference of Presidents, presented a resolution titled “WELS TLC (Translation Liaison Committee),” which was passed by delegates. The resolution asks the Conference of Presidents to direct a review of the upcoming revised edition of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) with the results of the review to be shared at the 2017 synod convention or the 2019 convention, if necessary.

Floor Committee #2 also presented a series of resolutions supporting and encouraging continuing education for called workers. All new WELS teachers will now participate in a program of new teacher induction, while all new graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will participate in a three-year mentoring program for new pastors. Congregations are encouraged to provide the resources of time and money for all called workers to “pursue ministry-long spiritual and professional growth.”



For more information on all the resolutions, visit wels.net/2015synodconvention. To read the full Ministry Financial Plan or reports from the areas of ministry, refer to the 2015 *Book of Reports and Memorials* at wels.net/official-reports.

Blessings and thanks

When WELS meets in convention, delegates react to and adopt many resolutions. While those resolutions that provide direction for the work of the synod can sound businesslike with words like “whereas” and “resolved,” there are many statements of faith as well. Many reports and resolutions offer thanks to God for specific blessings or petition the Lord with particular requests.



Charles Vannieuwenhoven, pastor at Northdale, Tampa, Fla., served as chairman of the floor committee that reviewed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Commission 2.

The following is a sampling of those expressions of gratitude or petitions to the Lord from the convention reports and resolutions. They are offered here so that you can participate in these expressions of faith, just as your representatives did at the convention.

Resolved to give thanks to the Lord . . .

- for providing the annual funding for an archivist through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.
- for the work the Lord is doing through the ongoing work of Christian Aid and Relief.
- for the work that the Conference of Presidents does in encouraging congregations to support our synod's Ministry Financial Plan.
- for the many opportunities to share the gospel with those around us and through the world.

- for the many opportunities to expand WELS ministry as reflected in the list of unfunded priorities.
- for the blessings bestowed upon new missions through WELS Church Extension Fund.
- for the unique blessings of our three-tiered ministerial education system.
- that many WELS congregations have taken advantage of more than two hundred Schools of Outreach since 1993.
- for the faithful work done by the Commission on Lutheran Schools in the area of developing Lutheran school leadership.
- for the faithful service of our leaders in WELS.

Resolved to ask the Lord for . . .

- his blessings on the doctrinal discussions the Commission on Inter-Church Relations has with individuals and churches around the world who are seeking to take confessional Lutheran stances.
- courage and protection for those called to serve in places we ourselves cannot go and for those who live in these lands, often under dangerous conditions.
- generous hearts for his people to provide for the Ministry Financial Plan.
- his blessings on the gospel ministry envisioned by the Ministry Financial Plan.
- his blessings on the faithful work of the Christian giving counselors, who encourage and help Christians grow in the grace of giving.
- his blessings on the special offering to retire the synod's \$4.7 million debt.

Thanks to convention delegate and FIC contributing editor Prof. James Pope for ideas and his help with this story.



Many presentations helped delegates learn about the work of the synod. Jon Hein (right), director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling, shared more about the commission's work with congregations. Michael Hintz (left), director of the Commission on Evangelism, previewed the next WELS movie *My Son, My Savior* (see p. 25). Delegates also heard about the four ministerial education schools, WELS mission work, and plans for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.



Delegates asked questions and made comments on the almost 50 resolutions that were presented by 25 floor committees.



Three hundred eighty-nine voting delegates attended the 2015 synod convention. This included 108 pastors, 3 world missionaries, 64 teachers, 5 staff ministers, and 209 lay delegates. There were also 49 advisory delegates and three special guests in attendance.



Schroeder reelected as synod president

Synod convention delegates reelected Pres. Mark Schroeder to his third four-year term as WELS synod president on the opening day of the synod convention.

Schroeder “thankfully, joyfully” accepted the call. “I am truly humbled that God in his wisdom would see fit to give this clay jar the opportunity to serve you again as synod president,” he says, “and I am truly humbled that you have placed that trust in me once again.”

Schroeder notes that it has been a joy and a privilege for him to serve in this capacity for the past eight years. “Not a day goes by that I don’t marvel on God and his continued grace to us as individuals, to us as a church body,” he says. “I ask for God’s continued blessings on his church, on our dear Wisconsin Synod, completely trusting in his promises to do what he always does—to bless his Word.”

In his president’s report to the delegates, Schroeder pointed out the blessings God has given to WELS over the past two years and shared the importance of hanging on to our heritage as confessional Lutherans.

He concluded, “May God continue to bless the small corner of his church that we call the Wisconsin Synod. May he keep us faithful, may he give us joy in our labor, and may he always keep our eyes focused on the cross where he died for us and on the heavens from which he will come again to take us home.”

Read more of Schroeder’s report in his FIC article this month (p. 8).



Pres. Mark Schroeder was reelected to his third four-year term at the 2015 synod convention.



At the convention, delegates voted for synod president and second vice president as well as representatives for numerous other synod boards and commissions.

ELECTIONS

The following people were elected at the 2015 synod convention to serve on various boards and commissions:

President

Rev. Mark G. Schroeder

Second vice president

Rev. Joel R. Voss

Board for Home Missions

Chairman—Rev. Charles A. Westra

Board for Ministerial Education

Parish pastor—Rev. John P. Bortulin

Teacher—Mr. Kurt E. Rosenbaum

Layman—Mr. Kyle K. Koltz

Board for World Missions

Chairman—Rev. Howard O. Mohlke

Board of Appeals

Pastor—Rev. John A. Vieths

Teacher—Mr. Stephen L. Schultz

Layman—Mr. Gregory G. Galler

Commission on Adult Discipleship

Chairman—Rev. Gary A. Pufahl

Commission on Congregational Counseling

Chairman—Rev. David G. Scharf

Commission on Special Ministries

Chairman—Rev. Joel P. Gaertner

Commission on Worship

Chairman—Rev. Jon F. Zabell

Commission on Youth and Family Ministry

Chairman—Rev. John H. Boggs

Martin Luther College Governing Board

Chairman—Rev. Michael A. Woldt

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors

WLS professor—Rev. John P. Hartwig

Layman—Mr. Christopher J. Snyder

Mich., July 27–30, under the theme “One in Christ.”



More than 700 delegates and local congregation members attended the convention's opening worship service at St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich. WELS President Mark Schroeder presided, and MLC Professor Paul Koelpin preached. Local congregation members served as a choir and as instrumentalists.

Worship, essay highlights at convention

Worship and the study of God's Word is an important part of the work being done at the synod convention. That's why worship service opportunities, daily devotions, and an essay are key focuses when the convention is being planned.

This year's convention theme “One in Christ” was highlighted in these worship opportunities, coordinated by Bryan Gerlach, director of WELS Commission on Worship.

“The synergy between essay and worship reinforces the impact of each,” he says. “Some delegates will take home key thoughts from the essay, some will remember important thoughts from a sermon, some will never forget the power of so many people singing together. All of these will be translated into renewed commitment to our Lord's work in the many churches of WELS.”

The convention started Monday evening with an opening worship service at St. Paul, Saginaw, a service that more than 700 delegates and area congregation members attended. Paul Koelpin, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., preached the sermon, proclaiming, “Because Christ won, we are one in Christ.”

“It's such a wonderful feeling—a gift—to hear all those voices praising the Lord in

unity,” says Dennis Malenke, a lay delegate from Trinity, Campbellsport, Wis.

Daily devotions continued to emphasize the convention theme, stressing we are one with God, one in faith, and one in purpose. John Seifert, Michigan district president, rounded out the message in the closing worship service with a sermon themed “One in service.”

James Huebner, first vice president and pastor at Grace, Milwaukee, Wis., presented the convention essay “One in Christ” on the opening day of the convention. The essay focused on the book of Ephesians. “That book is really about being one in Christ,” he says. “As diverse as that congregation in Ephesus was, we are also diverse. And yet the apostle wrote that you are one—thanks to Jesus—with your God and in faith and in purpose.”

Huebner says that having an essay at the convention is much more than following tradition. “I think it's an important thing that our spiritual fathers in our church body have always found that when they gather, it's the work of God's church; it's not just business,” he says. “It's really how do we get the message of Jesus' love out to more people.”

Watch for an FIC series based on Huebner's convention essay in 2016.



While at the convention, delegates heard about the synod's Ministry Financial Plan, which included information on the “One in Christ” debt elimination campaign. The campaign's goal is to retire the synod's \$4.7 million debt by June 2016, two years ahead of schedule. Campaign resources, including a video, promotional materials, worship helps, a Bible study, and an offering brochure, have been mailed to congregations.



Delegates ranging in age from their 20s to their 90s helped set the direction of the synod for the next two years. Ninety-year-old William Hayes (inset), a layman from Lola Park, Redford, Mich., was declared the oldest delegate to ever serve at a synod convention. A son and his father—William Mayhew (left), pastor at New Salem, Sebewaing, Mich., and Daniel Mayhew, a layman from Zion, Valentine, Neb.—also were delegates.

Greetings from Ukraine

"Stay firm in your faith. Don't give up. Stay strong in the Lord and he'll provide and he'll keep you strong and effective."

That's the message V'yacheslav Horpynchuk wants to share with WELS members. It's also a message he takes to heart and follows daily in his work as bishop of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC) and pastor at Resurrection, Kiev. The ULC, a church body of 700 members, 20 pastors, 20 congregations, and 3 missions, is the newest church body under WELS Missions.

Horpynchuk was a special guest at the convention this year. "I feel like a Jew who comes to Jerusalem from a distant land," he says. "Here you have an established confessional Lutheran church body that confesses *sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solo Christo*. That's a joy. That's a great inspiration."



Bishop V'yacheslav Horpynchuk

That encouragement will go with Horpynchuk as he returns to Ukraine, a country plagued by war. Horpynchuk shared several wars with which the Ukraine is dealing in his presentation to the delegates.

One war is the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Two ULC congregations were lost after the Crimea was annexed to Russia—one combined with a ULC congregation in Sevastopol, while another joined the WELS' sister church in Russia. Millions of refugees from the Eastern Ukraine come to other parts of

Ukraine, and hundreds come to ULC churches looking for help. Horpynchuk says the ULC is thankful to WELS and Christian Aid and Relief for aid that was sent to provide food and clothing for these refugees. "People are seeking answers and comfort," he says, which is providing opportunities for the ULC to share the source of our true comfort.

Horpynchuk says ULC congregations are also fighting the war against sin and the devil and his lies. The weapon they use, he says, is the gospel. "We find strength at our church to withstand all attacks," says Horpynchuk. "The Lord does not change. His protection never goes away, and his gospel never loses its power to save."

That gospel message is needed in Ukraine, whose religious culture is dominated by a legalistic Russian Orthodox Church. Yet reaching out is difficult. Most ULC congregations don't own their own buildings so are often looked at as sects. Horpynchuk says Ukraine is also a closed society. "We survived Communism, but that brought about a society of mistrust," he says.

The best outreach methods are through radio, books, the Internet, and friendship evangelism. The ULC started publishing volumes of *Luther's Works*, which are popular with other denominations. "This is how we promote reformation through pastors," he says.

Other challenges the ULC is facing are providing for the pastors, who often have to work other jobs to support their ministry, and training future pastors after the seminary closed for financial reasons.

Through it all, Horpynchuk shares, the Lord is with them and will provide. He is thankful to WELS for its prayers and support. He says, "The Lord will continue to bless WELS and the Ukrainian Lutheran Church as we are faithful to him."



Daily video newscasts helped keep WELS members up to date on what was happening throughout the convention. Special daily issues of the synod's biweekly e-newsletter "Together" also recapped presentations and important decisions. Find the news stories and the videos online at wels.net/2015synodconvention.



Professors and staff from Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) and volunteers from area congregations helped serve the delegates during their stay in Saginaw. A choir made up of current MLS students and MLS alumni sang at one of the morning devotions. Local teens also served as pages.



The synod praesidium: (left to right) Robert Pasbrig, secretary; James Huebner, first vice president; Mark Schroeder, president; Joel Voss, second vice president.

Obituaries

Judy G. Barckholtz 1942–2014

Judy Gladys Barckholtz was born Nov. 3, 1942, in Saginaw, Mich. She died Dec. 10, 2014, in Saginaw, Mich.

She taught at St. John, Pigeon, Mich., and St. John, Juneau, Wis.

She is survived by a brother.

Joyce M. Varnum 1953–2015

Joyce Varnum was born Aug. 4, 1953, and died June 29, 2015.

A 1975 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Salem, Stillwater, Minn., and St. John, Waterloo, Wis.

Laverna L. Everts 1916–2015

Laverna Louise Everts was born Nov. 11, 1916, in Geneva, Neb. She died Aug. 5, 2015, in Geneva, Neb.

She taught at Grace, Geneva, Neb., and St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.

She is preceded in death by her brother and sister.

Carroll J. Lorenzen 1932–2015

Carroll Lorenzen (née Sperber) was born May 17, 1932, in Mequon, Wis. She died Aug. 9, 2015.

She taught at Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.; David's Star, Jackson, Wis.; St. John, Mequon, Wis.; and Building Blocks Christian Learning Center, Mequon, Wis.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Karl, and one brother. She is survived by 5 daughters, 15 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Duane M. Behm 1946–2015

Duane Marlyn Behm was born Dec. 25, 1946, in Waupaca, Wis. He died Aug. 16, 2015, in Tempe, Ariz.

A 1970 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served Grace, Geneva, Neb.; Mt. Olive, Appleton, Wis.; and Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.

He is survived by his wife, Karen; one son; one daughter; four grandchildren; and one brother.

A Mother Remembers

On July 29, synod convention delegates were given a sneak peek of the trailer for WELS' newest outreach movie, *My Son, My Savior*. The movie portrays Mary experiencing the miracle of Jesus' coming. The film is scheduled to be released in October so that it can be used initially for outreach during Advent.

Congregations can expect a number of resources to be available that will complement the movie, including a four-session Bible study, a small group study resource, and an Advent by candlelight program. The Advent by candlelight program is titled *A Mother Remembers*. It is a first-person narrative told from Mary's perspective.

As Kristi Meyer, the author of the program and a member at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., explains, "Advent by candlelight programs often focus on the events surrounding Jesus' birth. This program will look back at Jesus' whole life through the eyes of his mother, and attendees can hear Mary's reflections on her memories of her special child."

In addition to the program, Advent by candlelight events often include music, fellowship, and dessert. Naomi Schmidt, a member of the WELS Women's Ministry Committee, believes that Advent by candlelight can offer important ministry opportunities.

"Advent by candlelight serves so many important purposes," says Schmidt. "Women often find themselves under tremendous pressure during the holidays. We want things to be meaningful, beautiful, and memorable. . . . The blessing of Advent by candlelight is the opportunity to sit quietly at the feet of Jesus and listen to his Word. Being reminded of the true message of Christ



brings hope, calmness, and clarity as we face frenzy in the world around us."

Schmidt also adds that Advent by candlelight programs offer a great opportunity for outreach. "Inviting friends, neighbors, or coworkers to an Advent by candlelight has many blessings. Participants hear the message

of Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior. They meet other women who struggle with sin and life's hardships but who also dwell in the richness of grace and forgiveness. They become familiar with the church and hopefully will return to hear more about our blessed Redeemer. It's a great step in encouraging unchurched women—and one that might seem less intimidating because of the more casual setting."

To find out more about *My Son, My Savior* and *A Mother Remembers*, visit wels.net/evangelism. If your congregation would like resources on how to plan an Advent by candlelight event, visit wels.net/women. The WELS Women's Ministry site offers information, guides, and examples.

MORE ABOUT MY SON, MY SAVIOR

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.



Luther Preparatory School, the high school on the Watertown campus, is a normal high school with a special purpose—preparing young people for the public ministry.

Matthew A. Crass

If you are a member of WELS, you own Luther Preparatory School (LPS), along with our other three ministerial education schools—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis.; Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.; and Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich. Approximately 35 percent of Luther Prep's financial support comes directly from WELS Congregation Mission Offerings. WELS is the only church body that operates such a blessed ministerial education system. Yes, LPS is yours. Whenever you pray for the spread of the gospel, you are not only praying for its reach into your community, throughout our country, and to all foreign lands. You are also praying for LPS.

Why does our church body make such an investment in LPS? The answer to that question remains the same today as it was 150 years ago. At the dedication of this school in September of 1865 Johannes Bading, the second president of the Wisconsin Synod, spoke on behalf of the synod and the board and "praised God for the assured training of preachers of the gospel." Luther Prep's seal located at the entry of the chapel trumpets its purpose. God's Word with Christ crucified at the center of it is the foundation of LPS.

The prep department on the synod's Watertown campus began in 1865. In 1995 former prep school Martin Luther Preparatory School, Prairie du Chien, Wis., amalgamated with Watertown's Northwestern Preparatory School to form Luther Preparatory School. For the past 20 years more than 55 percent of LPS graduates have continued their preparation for ministry at Martin Luther College. Over that same period of time more than one-third of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's student body has comprised former LPS students.

Students from at least 47 states and more than two dozen foreign countries

have enrolled at this synod school. LPS has been blessed to witness its enrollment increase from 333 in 2008 to 450 in 2015.

NORMAL HIGH SCHOOL, BUT DIFFERENT

LPS is a "normal" high school in that it provides a college prep curriculum for all students and it offers a full array of cocurricular activities—sports, music, drama, forensics, and various clubs.

Yet it differs. Some differences are small. Ninety percent of LPS students live in one of the three dormitories. Some of the students will say, "It's like having a sleepover with your friends every night." For the past 150 years the students on this high school campus have enjoyed a two-hour study hall Sunday through Thursday nights. They eat three meals each day with their friends in the cafeteria. All the students take Latin in order to prepare them for future language study, especially as pastors for the Bible's original languages of Greek and Hebrew. LPS never cancels school for snow days.

Other differences are monumental. Every teacher and dorm staff supervi-



sor has graduated from MLC or WLS. Every class is taught in the light of God's Word. Religion classes, covering the vast majority of the Old and New Testament along with Christian doctrine, meet daily. LPS recognizes the need and desire for future musicians in our Lutheran congregations and classrooms, so more than 95 percent of the students take piano lessons. The organ program produces the most organ students for MLC and perhaps more organists than any other high school in America.

The Word of God is central in all LPS does. The entire faculty and student body worship together every morning throughout the week. The students gather together in chapel every weekday evening before bedtime to hear the Word again. The 200-plus students who remain on campus for the weekends walk in groups to one of four WELS churches in town.

FUTURE PASTORS AND TEACHERS

LPS does not ask 14-year-old boys and girls to sign up for the preaching or teaching ministry when they enroll. How could it? They are not adults yet. Statistics prove that the majority of 18 year olds—adults!—who enter college change their minds about what vocation they want to enter when they graduate. LPS simply asks its students to understand that they will be prepared for public gospel ministry and to be open to the encouragement toward ministry during their four years at LPS.

In today's world it is especially abnormal for a young boy to desire the noble calling of pastoral ministry. Yet, this year 25 LPS graduates will be entering MLC for pastoral studies. This is a testimony to God's grace, and it is by the

same grace that LPS fulfills its synod-given purpose.

Everything that happens at LPS is done with an eye toward ministry. LPS offers age-appropriate ministry experiences to its students. All of the seniors take part in the Taste of Ministry program, in which prospective pastor students spend two days with an area WELS pastor and prospective teacher students spend two days in a classroom with an area elementary school teacher. Supported by the Antioch Foundation, Project Timothy is designed to provide mission, ministry, and cross-cultural experiences to LPS students. Approximately 50 students assist with outreach and education programs of mission congregations in St. Lucia, Antigua, California, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, and Canada.

Each year the entire junior class visits Martin Luther College. By the time LPS students graduate, each one will have met at least four times with an MLC recruiter. At the annual Ministry Day an array of missionaries, professors, teachers, pastors, and MLC and WLS students present topical ministry workshops to the entire student body. Sophomores also take an annual trip to the seminary, and seniors in the LPS pastor track visit the seminary in fall for worship, class visitation, and a tour.

Parents encourage their children for ministry. Pastors, teachers, and laypeople across the synod encourage their congregation's "sons and daughters" for ministry. The LPS faculty is completely committed to the purpose of LPS, as evidenced by their teaching and preaching. Students regularly encourage one another toward ministry. Even more, the Holy Spirit transcends everything

Luther Prep does to encourage and prepare high school students for full-time gospel ministry. It is his gentle working through the gospel that continues to open young peoples' hearts.

The LPS 40-acre park-like campus is safe, well maintained, and beautiful. But it is not as though God has carved out a little slice of real estate in Watertown, Wisconsin, that is immune from the onslaughts of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Where there is sin, grace abounds all the more. A holy, crucified, and risen Savior has won the victory over the enemies. This is what LPS students believe and confess. Someday, Lord willing, many of them will stand in classrooms and pulpits proclaiming that victory.

Matthew Crass, president of Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wisconsin, is a member at St. Luke, Watertown, Wisconsin.

This is the second article in a three-part series discussing 150 years of ministerial education on the synod's Watertown campus.

A sesquicentennial celebration of praise to God will be held at the Luther Prep gymnasium at 3 P.M. CST, Nov. 15. The synod's four ministerial education school choirs will participate. The event will be livestreamed. Learn more at www.lps.wels.net.

From snake worshiper to Christian pastor

David Beckman

He was born the son of a snake worshiper. His mother led villagers in the worship of the cobra. *Nahgah* is the word for cobra in his native language. He still knows the song of praise to the cobra, a god in Hinduism. *Deekoo, deekoo, deekoo, deekoo, nahgah, nahgahna!* His mother taught this song to all the children of the village, her son included. They sang it as they walked out to the cobra nests on the edge of the village.

This trip to the cobra nests was a part of their indigenous ritual. Their brand of Hinduism chose to venerate the cobra as a god. They believed a cobra could give them blessings. Therefore the worshipers had to keep the snake god happy by offering it gifts. The worshipers would place little bowls of milk and honey near the cobra hole. They would offer songs and prayers to the snake. This was especially important for young girls. If they offered their gifts and prayers faithfully, then the snake god would make it possible for them to have children later on in life. No gifts, no children, so they said; so they believed.

Sometimes the snake god would visit one of their homes. He would slither into a corner of the house and curl up. "What a blessing this is," they said. "A god is visiting our home!" But in one of the homes a ten-year-old boy got too close to the guest god. The cobra bit him. He was dead in less than 20 minutes. So it goes with false religion. Satan giggles as people worship "gods" that kill.

BECOMING A CHILD OF GOD

Into this satanic trap, Badavathu Balaji was born. But he did not remain there. Our gracious God led him out of the trap of Hinduism and cobra worship and placed him into the gracious arms of Jesus. We now know him by his

Christian name—Pastor Yacob Naik. The path to get there was not an easy one.

Yacob is a "tribal person," India's version of indigenous peoples. Their residence in South India predates peoples who migrated from the north. A skilled eye can still pick out a "tribal." Their features are slightly different. They have their own dialect of the local language. They dress differently. Most noticeably to an Indian is that they are on the bottom rung of the caste "ladder." Most live in the hill country. Most live in poverty.

As if life wasn't difficult enough for Yacob, he faced a severe health issue at age nine. A blood vessel in his brain was bulging, and he needed brain surgery to survive. The surgery left behind not only a scar on his head, but it also impaired the use of his left arm and leg for life. Yacob walks with a limp, and his left hand is nearly useless. But God had a plan to make this young man strong!

When Yacob was 15 years old, a Christian preacher visited his village. He gave Yacob a Bible. Yacob started reading it, and he found a gracious Savior. The words drew Yacob into that Savior's loving arms. No longer did Yacob have to live in fear. No longer did he have to offer gifts to a snake and hope for the best. Yacob believed that God's Son crushed the serpent and all of the devil's power. The Holy Spirit led Yacob to believe that he is God's child through faith in Christ's forgiveness.

God's first task for Yacob was to lead his own family to Christ. The gospel did its miracle, and Yacob and his parents were baptized into the Christian faith.

SHARING THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

But God wasn't finished with Yacob yet.

Another pastor came to Yacob's village—a Lutheran pastor who knew about the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Ministries (CELM) seminary in Guntur. CELM is the Lutheran group assisted by WELS in

India. The missionary urged Jacob to attend, but it was a long way away from his village. It was a seven-hour bus ride to get there. It was also a long road to finish the training—seven years of part-time classes (one week per month for two years, and two weeks per month for five years). In spite of the long bus ride and the years of study, Jacob attended faithfully and completed his seminary training, graduating in July 2012.

It wasn't easy for Jacob. Each month he had to leave behind his young, growing family of a wife and four children. Sometimes he would miss the bus and have to hitch a ride with a truck driver. Imagine climbing up into the truck's cab with an

impaired left side, a book bag, and duffel bag slung over your shoulder. Even in the classroom, the matter of keeping two Bibles (Telugu and English) open while writing in a notebook was a major task. Yet nothing could hold Jacob back. He was determined to finish his training. His family supported him. He has a passion to release people from Satan's grasp. He knew the tragic bondage of worshiping other gods. He had been there. He knew how sweet that release is!

Gifts from WELS make it possible to reach and teach people like Jacob. These gifts also enable Jacob to reach others. Shortly before his graduation, Jacob's new church building was dedicated to the glory of God. It's a simple structure in the village of Kuchipudithandi. The price tag was quite low. The dividends, however, are as high as the heavens. In that simple church building Christ is preached.

Pray that Jacob's faithful proclamation of Christ leads many others to "change their tune"—from *Deekoo, deekoo, nahgah* to "Glory be to Jesus!"

Dave Beckman serves as a friendly counselor to Christ Evangelical Lutheran Ministries in India.

Jacob, his wife, and one of his daughters (on left), Holly and Dave Beckman (center), and Jacob's parents (right). Jacob became a Christian when he was 15 years old and then told his family about Christ as well; Jacob Naik; *Nahgah*, or the cobra, is considered a god in Hinduism and is worshiped by many Hindus in India; Jacob graduated from the CELM seminary in 2012 (back row, far left). He studied for seven years to become a national pastor, traveling seven hours by bus every month to the seminary in Guntur.



CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

Baptized souls: 5,500

Congregations: 120

National pastors: 45

Gospel workers: 48

**WELS friendly
counselors: 2 couples**

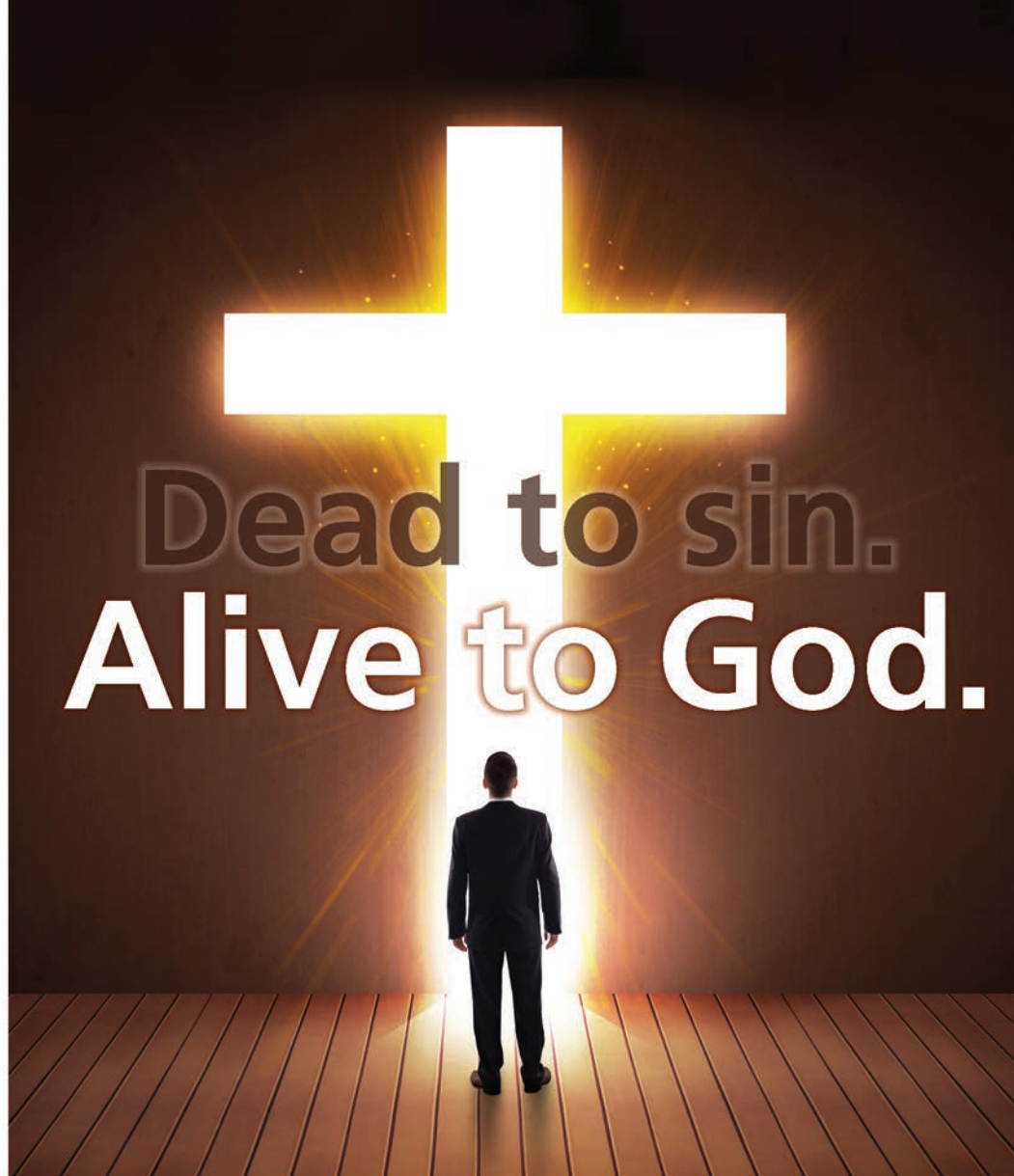
Seminary students: 16

Pre-seminary students: 24

Unique fact: WELS individuals and groups support seven children's homes in India, which care for the physical and spiritual needs of more than two hundred children. They also fund Gentle Shepherd Lutheran School, which provides a Christian education for 220 children.

Learn more at wels.net/missions.





Anger is not a vice to put off. It's an emotion to handle with self-control.

James F. Borgwardt

By the time you read this article, the Pixar movie *Inside Out* has enjoyed at least a three-month run that has perhaps made it one of the highest grossing movies of all time. Almost universally, critics and movie-goers alike have applauded its creative brilliance: it engages young and old equally well, it's masterfully told, and it shows a deep understanding of the complex human experience.

That last point is especially true of *Inside Out*. If you're one of the handful of people who haven't seen either the movie or its previews, Pixar imagines for us how the five core emotions of Joy, Sadness, Fear, Disgust, and Anger

work inside the control center of an 11-year-old in a way that influences her decisions, memories, and identity. What happens on the inside affects how she behaves on the outside and reacts to events in her life. As you might guess, psychologists love the movie and think that many folks will learn a lot about how the interaction of our emotions affect our behavior.

CHRISTIAN LIFE INSIDE OUT

This series on sanctification was initially going to be titled "Living Your Life Inside Out," because Christian living begins in the heart and mind before it shows itself in outward be-

havior. We've loosely followed Paul's specific guidelines on Christian living in the last half of Ephesians chapter 4. There the apostle encourages believers to actively "put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). And because nature hates a vacuum, Paul tells us 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 4:23,24).

Paul starts on the inside with motives and attitudes before considering the outward behavior that follows. And so must we. This series began with God's conversion of us from death to

life and understanding our new identity in Christ. Then we considered specific actions: speaking truthfully and giving generously. Next in Paul's list is anger.

But anger is different. It's an emotion, unlike the vices of lying, miserliness, and greed. Our basic emotions are all important elements of our make-up, both as humans and as Christians.

It's fascinating how *Inside Out* begins the movie with Joy as the default emotion. That is so American, isn't it? Who wouldn't want to be happy all the time? Our most beloved founding document declares that we have the "unalienable right" to "the pursuit of happiness." Even many Christians adopt the skewed notion that "God just wants me to be happy" to rationalize sin.

This idea that we must be happy all the time is dangerous both spiritually and psychologically. People treat sadness as an unwanted emotion and therefore push it out of their lives. Not only is that a bad idea, but it's also not even possible! Telling a depressed person to cheer herself up is just as effective as an insomniac telling himself to fall asleep. It's genuinely sad that countless people have suffered long-term emotional damage by being trained in childhood never to display sadness.

The movie is countercultural in a very good way. It teaches us that sadness is often essential to our overall well-being. It even serves our long-term joy.

EMOTIONS FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

God's Word is countercultural in the very best way. It teaches us how our God-given emotions serve our eternal well-being when they find their direction from the Bible. And that direction is clear.

God certainly experienced human sadness. "Jesus wept" (John 11:35) at Lazarus' death when he saw how death, the intruder into God's perfect creation, devastated the hearts of the mourners.

His deepest sadness—deeper than you or I will ever know—was suffering his Father's abandonment on the cross. All the while he knew that most people would reject his gracious gift of salvation.

God knows joy. Remarkably, his greatest joy is to spend eternity with us! When we come to know God and appreciate his salvation, our greatest joy is spending eternity with him.

He is, therefore, filled with disgust at anything that threatens our eternal relationship or that perverts his intentions for the earthly gifts he's given us. As we grow in his likeness, we're filled with that same disgust over sin—especially our own sin. That guards us against self-righteousness when dealing with the sin of others.

Be angry when God's will is trampled underfoot. But don't sin

And while we wouldn't say that God feels fear, Jesus certainly wrestled with a real and natural human aversion to his approaching crucifixion. His sweat in the Garden proves it. But through his resurrection, he has removed our fear of sin's power, death's dominion, and eternal condemnation. Those devilish fears are now replaced with one that serves our eternal good: We now fear losing the forgiveness, life, and salvation God has so richly given us.

Finally, God gets angry. Consider Jesus when he cleared the temple (Mark 11:15-17). He wasn't on the receiving end of the whip, but on the giving end! His Father's house had been turned from the place where a person received the gift of God's forgiveness into a place of transactions and price-gouging. Of course he got angry! His Father was dishonored and his people abused.

CONTROLLING OUR RIGHTEOUS ANGER

As God's children restored to his image, he expects us to get angry too. We don't blindly pass by human cruelty, like the abuse of children or spouses. We don't become comfortable with the ongoing tragedy that 50 million God-given lives have been cut short in this country through abortion.

So Paul doesn't tell us to "put off" anger, because anger's not a vice to put off. It's an emotion to handle with self-control. Yes, be angry when God's will is trampled underfoot. But don't sin.

Ah, that's the hard part! We admit that most of our anger is not the righteous kind, but the selfish kind. God knows this, so he had the apostle add more guidance: "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. . . . Get rid of all bitterness, rage and [sinful] anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (vs. 26,27,31). Don't hang onto anger, or the devil will lead you into bitterness, which can consume you. Learn how to deal with it properly. Focus your anger on the devil who is working to destroy your relationships. Then work through a conflict with your spouse or your friend. Ask for help, if you can't do it yourself. It's that important.

Most of all, look again and again at how your God handles anger. He gets angry but never bitter. He hates our sin but bears us no ill will. He has forgiven you a far greater debt than any debt someone might owe you.

That leads us to next month's final topic in these articles on sanctification. It's also the most countercultural: forgiveness.

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

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

Many methods to share the message

Kenneth L. Brokmeier

With all the resources available today not only can you say, “Christ lived and died and rose for you,” but you also can text it, like it, broadcast it, and forward it.

“Hark! The voice of Jesus crying, ‘Who will go and work today? Fields are ripe and harvests waiting; Who will bear the sheaves away?’”

For nine years of my ministry that hymn, *Christian Worship* 573, was almost always sung when I was guest preaching as a recruitment director. The last line of the first stanza raises the question, “Who will answer, gladly saying, ‘Here am I—send me, send me?’”

Centuries before Daniel March penned those words, God asked that same question of his Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Having just seen the King, the Lord Almighty, Isaiah rightly lamented, “Woe to me! I am ruined!” But an angel touched Isaiah’s lips with a live coal, and the prophet heard the sweet gospel pronouncement that his sin had been taken away. And then God asks, “Who will go for us?” (cf. Isaiah 6:1-8).

God is still asking with that hymn, “Who will go and work today?” Technology has opened many new ways for the child of God to answer with Isaiah, “Here am I, send me,” even in our own circles.

In July I attended the WELSTech Conference 2015. Dozens of individuals attended, both to share with some and learn from others. The theme “Where Technology Meets Ministry” appropriately captured the purpose of the conference.

Those who know me verify that I’m not on the cutting edge of technology. In short I had little to share. Instead, I was hopeful my attendance would provide me with some pointers and tools for sharing Jesus by using technology. It certainly did. Statistics such as each minute about three hundred hours of video are being uploaded to YouTube or the average person spends about 2.5 hours per day on social media screamed to me opportunities to share Jesus. With so many bytes of information shared, I left the confer-

ence almost with the feeling that the hard drive of my brain had reached capacity. The sheer volume of information available and distributed on the Internet is staggering. With millions connected to the World Wide Web, individual Christians and our congregations can use resources to share Jesus—often without ever leaving their homes.

We return to that hymn and sing, “If you cannot speak like angels, If you cannot preach like Paul, You can tell the love of Jesus; You can say he died for all.” The message remains Christ-crucified; however, the methods to proclaim it are numerous.

During my eight-hour drive home from the conference, my head was spinning much like a hard drive—in a good way. As I tried processing information shared by the presenters, I was forced to ask, “Where does technology meet ministry for me? Where do I start?” I suspect the first disciples had similar feelings when Jesus told them to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). The whole world? But how? The disciples began with what was familiar to them—Jerusalem.

In our world we can do the same. Technology, especially social media, can afford those who use it, including those who may not be gifted at public speaking, the opportunity to boldly and confidently proclaim Christ. With all the resources available today not only can you say, “Christ lived and died and rose for you,” but you can also text it, like it, broadcast it, and forward it.

“Let none hear you idly saying, ‘There is nothing I can do.’”

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

Want to learn more about what was presented at WELSTech Conference 2015? Visit wels.net/welstechconf.

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

Even though you may think you have been dealt a bad hand, God knows exactly what he is doing.

What a bad hand Ruth had been dealt! She'd taken a chance; even though she was from Moab, she had married into an Israelite family, a family which was already struggling. Her husband's family had left Bethlehem because of a famine, hoping to find better fortunes in Moab. But then his father had died! That meant that Ruth's husband had a double duty—to care both for his mother, Naomi, and for her. But that was okay. Love conquers all, right? Her husband had one brother, and he also married a Moabite woman, Orpah.

But then . . . ough. Both her husband and her brother-in-law died! So there she was, a widow. And both her sister-in-law and mother-in law were widows too! What a bad hand she'd been dealt!

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUTH

Except for one thing. Through all of this Ruth became a believer in the true God. So when her mother-in-law Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem, Ruth wanted to go with her. Naomi tried to dissuade her, but Ruth said, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). So the two women traveled to Bethlehem.

Now put yourself into Ruth's shoes. She's a widow and has left her homeland to go to a place where she knows one person: Naomi. It's a different culture, and since she is Moabite, it will likely be difficult for her to break into that culture (cf. Deuteronomy 23:3,4, where God says, "No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of

the LORD, not even in the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you"). Her life was filled with difficulty, even tragedy.

And how did she respond? She worked hard and faithfully! She was willing to listen to advice from her mother-in-law. She was willing to move forward, not continually to look back!

Long story short, she ended up marrying Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi. In doing so, she became not only part of Israel but also one branch in the family tree of the Savior! Ruth became a believer in the true God and part of the line of the Savior through famine; the deaths of her father-in-law, brother-in-law and husband; and a journey that uprooted her from her homeland and family to move to another culture. Wow!

GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU

Yes, sometimes we feel like life has dealt us a bad hand. That doesn't mean that God has abandoned us or that God doesn't know what he's doing. God knew exactly what he was doing every step of Ruth's life. He was making sure that Ruth became a believer in him and that the line of the Savior was extended.

Lest we forget, that's *your* Savior and *mine* whose family history extended through Ruth! Yes, God was working every step of the way—through what looked like a really bad hand—to make sure that the gates of heaven would be opened to you and me!

He was working for your benefit, way back then! And he's working for your benefit today too.

Contributing editor Thomas Kock, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Atonement, Milwaukee.

This is the third article in a nine-part series on people in Jesus' family tree.



REALPEOPLE REALSAVIOR

Thomas D. Kock



Has God given
us answers? If he
has, where will you
go to learn them?

How do you know?

Who is God? What, if anything, does he expect of us? What does he think about us?

The questions have a variety of answers: “I think that . . .” or “I feel that . . .” or even “A lot of people say . . .” or “My pastor says . . .”. But does anyone actually know, or are they just as much in the dark as everyone else?

I would like someone to ask, “Well, how do you know that what you think and feel or what others say is true?” The answers can’t be based on personal experience. The people we talk to have never met God face-to-face. I’m pretty sure that they haven’t discussed their opinion with God the way we discuss the best grass seed to buy or what car to drive.

Of course, one way to answer those questions is to say that no one knows the answers so everyone’s opinion is just as valid as everyone else’s. But what if we are all in the dark and we’re just speculating about what we can’t know by science, research, or even meditation? Where is the standard for us to determine which opinion is right or if they are all wrong or all right?

Another way to respond to the questions is simply to ignore them. The job, the family, the lawn, the football game or soccer match, and then the vacation all need attention; there’s just no time to think about these things. The paycheck matters; questions about God don’t rise to importance. Is that okay? Who says so? Is that approach all there is to life? Maybe that person is just as much in the dark as everyone else.

When life comes to an end, we’re left with the same dilemma: What happens when we die? We all go to heaven, right? Says who? How do they know? Is there some standard to know what we’re getting after this life is over? Is there some way even to know that we get something after this life? Where’s the research? The

proof? And can we measure those things with technologies, probes, and observations that only measure atoms, molecules, and physical forces? How do we know if any opinion about these things is true?

Has God given us answers? If he has, where will you go to learn them? Will you climb the mountaintop to talk to the hermit who lives there? Is there anyone closer to consult and listen to? We believe there is. Someone who is God himself and came to tell us what we need to know—Jesus. God asserts quite boldly that “he has spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:2). When the disciples were a little confused about God, death, and all the things they could not know, they asked Jesus. Jesus reminded them that his words were not just his own but his Father’s and that if they saw him they saw the Father (John 14:8-14).

Of course, not everyone believes that Jesus is the standard for truth. But how do they know he is not? It’s a big gamble at the moment of death—or anytime for that matter—to say, “I think that . . .” or “I feel . . .” or “everyone says . . .”, and then ignore what Jesus says. “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Knowing Jesus is knowing that God cares for us, loves us deeply, and wants us to live with him eternally. God’s directions and standards are intended for our good. Jesus knows. We listen.

“We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.”

Joel D. Otto

Throughout the history of the church, there were many false teachings about Baptism. In the early centuries, some thought that the validity of a baptism hinged on the person administering the baptism. If the pastor had fallen away during a time of persecution or lived an immoral life, any baptism he performed was invalid. Everyone he baptized had to be baptized again.

During the time of the Reformation, some denied the need for infant baptisms. In their view, anyone who was baptized as an infant wasn't really baptized. You had to be old enough to make a conscious decision to be baptized.

One of the most popular false teachings about Baptism today is that it is simply a ceremony to show that you are a Christian. Baptism doesn't really give you the forgiveness of sins. It is just something you do to demonstrate your commitment to Christ—a picture or sign that you became a Christian. Then the emphasis shifts to what is the only right way to baptize: to dunk someone completely under the water or immerse them.

All of these false teachings miss the point. Baptism has nothing to do with the commitment level of the person being baptized or the moral character of the one doing the baptizing. Rather, Baptism has everything to do with the activity of the triune God.

Jesus commanded his believers to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Baptism is one of the tools God uses to make people disciples of Jesus. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit works faith and new life in the heart of a spiritually dead, sinful, unbelieving enemy of God (John 3:5,6; Acts 2:38,39; Galatians 3:26,27; Titus 3:5-7). Through Baptism, our sins are washed away and forgiven (Acts 2:38,39; Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11). Through Baptism, God rescues us from the terrors of a guilty conscience and

the power of death and hell by connecting us to the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:13,14).

It seems like such a simple act. A handful of water and a few words, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” But God's saving power and limitless grace were directed at you in your baptism. The Father claimed you as his beloved and forgiven child. The Son cleansed you with his blood and clothed you in his righteousness. The Spirit miraculously worked a simple, childlike trust in Jesus in your heart, a trust that has grown as you have been taught the truths of God's Word (Matthew 28:19).

So we join believers, past and present, in acknowledging “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4-6) for the forgiveness of sins. And we continue to do what believers have always done: We baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, trusting the promises of God that the water and the Word bring amazing blessings.

EXPLORING THE WORD

1. Give scriptural answers to the following objections to infant baptism.
 - a. Babies don't need to be baptized. They are not accountable for sin.
 - b. Babies can't believe in Jesus because they can't confess their faith.
2. Describe how your baptism can continue to help you in your Christian life.

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



This is the 12th article in a 13-part series on the Nicene Creed. Find this study and answers online after Oct. 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.

We
believe
as all
believers
have



YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

As God's salt, we can share God's saving message with those who are spiritually suffocating.

Michael H. Nitz

Have you ever tasted the salt of the ocean wafting in the air? I always felt more energized when running at the beach or swimming in the ocean. Now I know why. There's evidence that salty air is "energizing," especially for those suffering from allergies or asthma.

There's an 800-year-old salt mine in Poland, retrofitted to look and feel like a fashionable day spa. It's reputed to offer remarkable help for asthmatics who breathe in air that's even more salty than the beach. But you don't have to travel to the Old World to find such treatment. Recently the news in Austin, Texas, featured the opening of a "salt center" that promises help for those suffering from allergies.

WE ARE GOD'S SALT

I know that the ancient world valued salt for its ability to preserve food, especially meat. But could Jesus have had salt's asthmatic-healing properties in mind when he declared to his followers, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13)? After all, as the Almighty Creator compressed into the carpenter-turned-teacher, Jesus did have a hand in formulating the chemical properties of NaCl.

Notice what Jesus did *not* say to believers. He did not say: You could be the salt of the earth, or you might be the salt of the earth. He made a declaration. He stated as a fact, "This is what you are when you trust in me: You *are* the salt of the earth."

WE CAN HELP THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY SUFFOCATING

The majority of the world is spiritually suffocating from the allergens and pollution of the common but poisoned idea that good works can make us right with God. In spite of the Bible's declaration that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), the majority still hope that God will receive them if they're morally superior to the worst of society. The fact is, without Jesus, I and you and everyone will end up with the worst of society in the same dreadful place. The passage says "all" so there aren't any exclusions or exceptions. If we don't trust in Jesus as the one who paid for our sins, we are included with all other humans. Jesus has provided the only escape.

But this exclusivity of Jesus Christ is foreign to a world wheezing and chok-

ing from political correctness and its cousin, tolerance for all ideas. To the world an exclusive claim is arrogance. So when a Christian speaks about Jesus being the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, at first this may be a turn-off.

But the more people are exposed to the message of how Jesus suffered for our sins on the cross, the more the air clears. The more people see you and me breathing easy in a spiritual environment salted with the promises of Jesus, the more others will be moved by God to want what makes us breathe easy. And God, through us, extends his saving work to others.

Here is your true value and importance, as measured by God: You are the salt of the earth! This good news is more energizing than taking a vacation beside the ocean.

Michael Nitz is pastor at Bethany, Saginaw, Michigan.