

Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE



Lives prepared for service

For 150 years, pastors, teachers, and lay leaders have received training on the Watertown campus. *Page 26*

The road to a greater understanding of God's Word starts here.

BIBLE
Discovery
series

This one-of-a-kind series will remove the speed bumps of confusion as you travel deeper into the pages of Scripture.

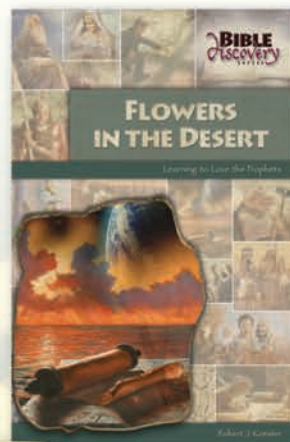
Flowers in the Desert

Learning to Love the Prophets

by Robert J. Koester

Laws, warnings, and God's wrath seem to dominate the Old Testament landscape, and prophets are often channels for this righteous judgment. However, when we look closely, we see that it is through these men that the beauty of the gospel starts to bloom. Discover these flowers and grow in your understanding of the prophets in this new volume. Softcover, 128 pages.

LU1500760, \$16.00



NEW TITLES
AVAILABLE 9/1!

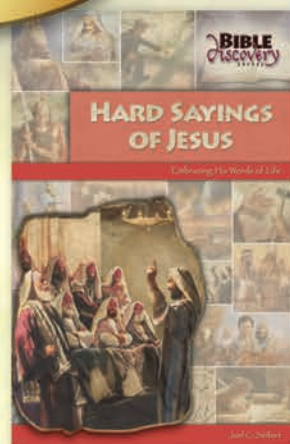
Hard Sayings of Jesus Embracing His Words of Life

by Joel C. Seifert

Many people in Jesus' day found certain words and sayings of his to be confusing or challenging. Perhaps you've run into that difficulty as well? While some of Jesus' words are indeed hard, they are well worth the struggle! This book will clarify many of the Savior's difficult or controversial statements and lead you to embrace all of his life-giving words.

Softcover, 83 pages.

LU1500762, \$13.50



Future series offers will not exceed this 25% discount off the regular cover price. No further discounts apply. Prices are subject to change without notice. All orders are subject to shipping and handling fees and sales tax where applicable.

SUBSCRIBE NOW
and get
25% OFF
the cover price!

Find out more and
see all 13 current titles
at www.nph.net/BDS.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY! Call 1-800-662-6022 or visit www.nph.net/BDS.


**NORTHWESTERN
PUBLISHING HOUSE**



**NPH CHRISTIAN
BOOKS & GIFTS STORE**

www.nph.net 1250 N 113th Street · Milwaukee WI 53226 800-662-6022

NPH
EXTRA
PROGRAM

 Find us on
Facebook



FEATURES

- 10** **Dead to sin. Alive to God.**
Let your new self give to God first, trusting that God will take care of you.
James F. Borgwardt
- 12** **Touching heaven: When God seems far away**
Does God seem too busy to answer your prayers?
Stephen M. Luchterhand
- 14** **Confessions of faith**
Conversations between friends lead to a life-changing experience.
Alicia A. Neumann
- 16** **Heart to heart: Parent conversations**
In how many activities should my children be involved?
- 26** **LPS 150—Lives prepared for service**
Training the next generation of full-time church workers in Watertown, Wisconsin, began 150 years ago.
Matthew A. Crass
- 28** **Mission stories: Apacheland**
Marietta Chapman
- 30** **Honor thy father**
Life often gives us challenges to our Christian faith and life. Sometimes those challenges do not disappear easily or quickly.
- 36** **Joy lives**
A bottle full of dead leaves offers an opportunity to remember our Savior's resurrection.
Jane Schlenvogt-Dew

CORRINA
GRADE

BRUCE
MARCHIANO

MY SON MY SAVIOR

COMING THIS FALL

For more information about the movie
and additional materials, visit MySonMySavior.com.

An outreach film by the makers of *Road to Emmaus* and *Come Follow Me*.



WELS Evangelism
N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive • Waukesha, WI 53188
www.wels.net/evangelism

 **WELS**
Christ's Love, Our Calling.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Forward in Christ magazine
WELS Communication Services
N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr
Waukesha WI 53188-1108
Phone: 414-256-3210
E-mail: fic@wels.net
www.wels.net/forwardinchrist

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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

MANAGING EDITOR

Julie K. Wietzke
julie.wietzke@wels.net

STAFF WRITER

Nicole R. Balza
nicole.balza@wels.net

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Bill Tackmier

ART DIRECTOR

Karen Knutson

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

COPYRIGHT

©2015 by Forward in Christ. Printed in the USA. Forward in Christ grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a WELS church, school, or organization, provided that copies are distributed free and indicate Forward in Christ as the source. Artwork may not be reproduced except in the context of its article. For other copyright questions, contact Kristine Laufer, 414-615-5706; lauferk@nph.wels.net.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to Forward in Christ, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284.

Forward in Christ (ISSN 1541-8936) is published monthly through Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Print: USA—\$17; Canada—\$17.85; all other countries—air mail \$62.12. Digital: USA—\$15; Canada—\$15.75; all other countries—\$15. Premium: USA—\$18; Canada—\$18.90; all other countries—air mail \$63.12. Postage included, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House. Contact Northwestern Publishing House for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 800-662-6093. Milwaukee area, 414-615-5785. www.nph.net/periodicals.

ON AUDIO

Mission for the Visually Impaired, 375 Bridgepoint Dr, South St. Paul, MN 55075; 651-291-1536.

 Indicates additional online content

*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

Training men and women to be pastors and teachers is one of the main goals of the work we do together as a synod. For 150 years that training has been happening on a campus in Watertown, Wis. Now the home of Luther Preparatory School (LPS), one of the synod's two preparatory high schools, this campus has housed many facets of the synod's ministerial education program. Matthew Crass, LPS president, reviews the storied history in the first article of a new series (p. 26). Future articles will share what is happening on the campus today as well as the continued need for called workers. Our cover features a recent LPS graduate on a mission trip in Antigua. Read more about the cover in Feedback.

Another goal for WELS is sending out gospel workers so that more people can hear the saving message of Christ crucified. In 1893, two missionaries began reaching out to the Apache in Arizona—the first WELS world mission field. Meet one of the Apache Lutheran Mission members and hear how WELS missionaries touched her life in our mission story this month (p. 28). Then get to know the newest national pastor for that mission, Kirk Massey (p. 22).

Julie Wietzke



IN EVERY ISSUE

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 6 | Feedback
Readers share their opinions | 20 | News
What's happening in WELS |
| 7 | Devotion
At one with God | 32 | Editorial comment
They have had too much whine |
| 8 | From the president's desk
Standing firm, speaking the truth | 33 | Bible study
Real people, real Savior |
| 9 | Light for our path
Living in an antagonistic world | 34 | A thought
The heart of Abraham |
| 18 | Campus cornerstone
There's no app for that | 35 | Interactive Bible study
We believe as all believers have |
| 19 | Bulletin board
Announcements from around the synod | | |



HEARTWARMING STORY

My wife and I enjoyed reading the Manian family story ["Confessions of Faith," July]. It was a heartwarming account. The strength of great-great-grandfather Kaspar's faith, whose response when asked to renounce his Christian faith for Islam was "Christ lives. Muhammad is dead. I will never renounce my Savior," is one we can pray to have for ourselves.

Tim and Karen Johnson
Tucson, Arizona

THANKS!

I wanted to comment on how much I look forward to reading the *Forward in Christ* magazine each month! I feel I have the best of both worlds, as I have my daily Bible reading in the morning and look forward to reading an article or two in the magazine each evening, so each day starts and ends on the right note. It keeps me connected with what is happening in our synod, and it is also such an encouragement to see how God is blessing his work in and through the lives of his people around the world through the gospel!

I especially appreciated John Braun's article on the Christian church ["Getting past denial," July]. Despite what may be happening around the world, Christians can rest in peace, knowing that the Lord of the church is working all things out for the benefit of his church on earth. Just as faithful Christians witness and confess their faith in the pages of this magazine, it is an example for all of us to stand tall and confess our faith in our powerful Lord, because in Christ, the victory is already ours! We have the greatest story to tell!

Susie Padfield
Shakopee, Minnesota

CAPITALIZED PRONOUNS

When and why has it become the norm to not capitalize pronouns for Jesus and/or God? So many authors and column writers do not capitalize the "He" and "His" when referring to Jesus or God. I believe this to be a mistake considering publications are not published just for Christian reading but, hopefully, more important, for reading by unbelievers. I would like to see this capitalization revived. After all, Jesus and God are truly worthy of having pronouns capitalized.

Dave Dahlke
Port Orchard, Washington

This question comes up from time to time. Northwestern Publishing House and Forward in Christ do not capitalize those pronouns simply because we have adopted the Chicago Manual of Style, the AP Style Guide, and the precedent of the New International Version, which our congregations have been using for many years. Other style guides capitalize the pronouns, so there are different usages and no standard approach. Some Bible translations, including the English Standard Version and the King James Version, do not capitalize these pronouns, but the Holman Christian Standard Bible does. All of these translations have a deep respect for God;

some honor him with capitalized pronouns, and others without capitalized pronouns.—ed.

ABOUT THE COVER



Featured on the cover is Jamie Spaude, a 2015 graduate of Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., on a Project Timothy trip to Antigua in 2014.

During that trip, eight LPS students helped members of St. John, St. John's, Antigua, canvass the neighborhoods and teach vacation Bible school. About 50 students each year participate in Project Timothy, a program that enables students to gain personal experience in mission work and provides students with a positive encouragement to continue training for the public ministry. Jamie, a member at St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis., will be a freshman at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., this fall.

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*.

Through my Bible in 3 years



Read or listen online at www.wels.net.

SEPTEMBER 2015

- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. 2 Samuel 15:1–16:14 | 11. Ps. 55 | 21. Ps. 69 |
| 2. 2 Sam. 16:15–17:29 | 12. Ps. 56, 57 | 22. Ps. 70, 71 |
| 3. 2 Sam. 18:1–19:8 | 13. Ps. 58, 59 | 23. Ps. 72 |
| 4. 2 Sam. 19:9–39 | 14. Ps. 60 | 24. 1 Kings 1 |
| 5. 2 Sam. 19:40–20:26 | 15. Ps. 61, 62 | 25. 1 Kgs. 2 |
| 6. 2 Sam. 21 | 16. Ps. 63 | 26. 1 Kgs. 3, 4 |
| 7. 2 Sam. 22 | 17. Ps. 64, 65 | 27. 1 Kgs. 5 |
| 8. 2 Sam. 23 | 18. Ps. 66, 67 | 28. 1 Kgs. 6:1–7:12 |
| 9. 2 Sam. 24 | 19. Ps. 68:1–18 | 29. 1 Kgs. 7:13–8:11 |
| 10. Psalms 52–54 | 20. Ps. 68:19–35 | 30. 1 Kgs. 8:12–66 |

At one with God

The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

Steven J. Pagels

Do you have any plans for Yom Kippur this year? If you aren't Jewish, there is a good chance you aren't even aware that it will begin at sundown on Sept. 22. Also known as the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur is a Hebrew holiday that goes by unnoticed by most Christians. We may or may not see "Yom Kippur" printed in tiny letters on our calendars, but because Christians don't follow the Jewish calendar, we won't pay much attention to it.

Maybe we should. Even though New Testament believers are no longer required to participate in all the rites and rituals associated with Yom Kippur, we have good reason to remember what those events foreshadowed and what their fulfillment means for you and me.

A DAY OF SYMBOLIC SACRIFICE

For God-fearing Israelites, Yom Kippur was the holiest day of their year. It was the one day every year when the high priest was allowed to enter the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle, called the Holy of Holies, to offer sacrifices for his own sins and the sins of the people. That meant this holy day was also a very bloody day. The high priest sacrificed a bull and a ram for himself and his family. He sprinkled blood on the cover of the ark of the covenant. He sprinkled more blood on the horns of the altar.

The high priest offered similar sacrifices on behalf of the people, with one exception. Instead of sacrificing a bull for the sin offering, he selected two male goats. The first goat was slaughtered, and its blood was sprinkled on the atonement cover and the altar. The second goat, however, was not killed. Instead the high priest placed his hands on the goat's head and confessed all the sins of the people over it. He then sent this goat, called the scapegoat, far away from the camp to die in the wilderness.



These ancient religious rites might seem a bit strange or even brutal to present-day believers, but we begin to appreciate them when we see the symbolism. The killing of animals and

Old Testament
sacrifices pictured and
pointed God's people
ahead to another
sacrifice, a sacrifice
that would make
atonement for sin.

sprinkling of blood couldn't forgive a single sin. The letter to the Hebrews confirms it (10:4). These Old Testament sacrifices pictured and pointed God's people ahead to another sacrifice, a sacrifice that would make atonement for sin, a once-for-all sacrifice that would remove sin forever.

A ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE

Good Friday is one of the most sacred days on the Christian calendar, and, like the Day of Atonement, it was a very bloody day. Blood trickled down from the crown of sharp thorns that pierced Jesus' head. Blood flowed from his hands and feet when the soldiers nailed him to the cross.

On Good Friday Jesus was the victim of a series of brutal acts of violence. Or was he? He knew what was going to happen. He had predicted what was going to happen. And yet he willingly went to the cross. He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for us. The blood of goats and bulls never forgave a single sin, but the blood of Jesus, God's Son, purifies us from all sin.

Because Jesus took the sins of the world on his shoulders, you are forgiven. Like the scapegoat, he carried your sins away. Because your Savior has made full atonement for your sins, you are at one with God.

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



Mark Schweden

We pray that
God would use
us to speak his truth
and give the
reason for the
hope we have.

Standing firm, speaking the truth

The U.S. Supreme Court decision in June requiring all states to recognize same-sex marriage really was not a surprise. And it's a decision that is not likely to be reversed.

What are the ramifications for Christians who believe that marriage is a God-instituted union between one man and one woman? What challenges will congregations face as this newly court-legislated reality sets in? We certainly don't know all that may happen, nor do we know the timeline.

Evidence for that can be found north of our border in Canada, where same-sex marriage was legalized ten years ago. While the vast majority of same-sex couples in Canada were happy to be able to marry legally, activists were anything but content. In British Columbia, a conservative Christian college that wanted to start a law program was not able to do so because legal organizations claimed that any college that affirmed discrimination against homosexuals could not adequately train people to serve in the Canadian court system. Again in British Columbia, a local chapter of the Knights of Columbus (a Roman Catholic charitable organization) refused to allow its facilities to be used for a lesbian wedding celebration because such a relationship was against church teaching. The group lost its court case and was fined for discriminating against the couple. One can assume that similar challenges to Christian churches, schools, and organizations will take place in the United States.

It is unlikely that we will experience some kind of government action to forbid us to teach what the Bible says about marriage. But activists have already begun to talk about whether organizations (including churches and schools) that hold a biblical view of marriage should retain their tax-exempt status. Congregations that make their facilities available to community groups

may find that by doing so, depending on the state, they fall under "public accommodation" rules, which forbid discrimination of any kind. Churches and individual Christians will likely be characterized as being against equal protection under the law. Statements affirming a biblical view of marriage are already being described as bigoted, unloving, and homophobic.

What are we to do? We begin with repentance—for the times that we have failed to be clear and loving witnesses to God's truth and for the times that we have neglected to appreciate God's gift of marriage and the spouses he has provided. We place those sins and failings at the cross, and there we receive the continuing assurance that our sins have been forgiven.

Then, we regard marriage as what God intends it to be. We continue to testify to the truth of God's Word. We speak, not like the Pharisees, but as the Savior spoke, with genuine love and concern for sinners of all kinds. We faithfully proclaim both law and gospel, not seeking to change society but to change hearts. We honor and serve our God-given spouses in love that flows from faith in Jesus, setting an example of how marriage can be. We teach our children what God says, preparing them for the time when they will go out into an adult world that neither knows God nor listens to his Word.

Then we pray. We pray that God would give us the faith of Paul, the courage of Stephen, and the zeal of Peter. We pray that God would use us to speak his truth and give the reason for the hope we have. And we pray that Jesus, in these last days, will enable us to be faithful and loving witnesses of his truth, no matter what the challenge and no matter what the cost.

Light for our path

How are we Christians to live in a world that is becoming increasingly godless and antagonistic toward us?

James F. Pope

Your assessment of life in these last days is accurate and in harmony with what the Bible says: “There will be terrible times in the last days. . . . Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:1,12). Let’s see what other guidance Scripture provides to answer your question.

REVEAL YOUR IDENTITY

As Christians, you and I have an identity that is worth noting. The Bible calls us “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Peter 2:9). That description applies to us because God has worked in our hearts through his Word. The Spirit of God connected us to Jesus Christ in faith, bringing us into God’s family and changing our lives forever. God has transformed our hearts and minds, leading us to view him, sin, and life in general differently than people who are still living in unbelief.

As Christians, we are different from unbelievers, and that difference is to be evident in our daily lives. The Bible exhorts us: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world” (Romans 12:2). “Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1 Peter 1:15). Failure to display our faith will be of no help to unbelievers. On the other hand, when we do exhibit our faith, we enable unbelievers to see the love of Christ in action and give them a reason to explore what Christianity is all about.

Still, do not expect the unbelieving world to pat you on the back for being a Christian. The Bible makes it very clear that we can anticipate just the opposite reaction from a world naturally opposed to God.

EXPECT HOSTILITY

Jesus was up front with his followers about the treatment they would receive in life: “You will be hated by everyone because of

me” (Matthew 10:22). “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 15:18). One of the disciples who personally heard those words wrote, “Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you” (1 John 3:13). As an aside, isn’t it interesting how unbelievers wrongly call Christians “haters” for their scriptural positions, when, in reality, they are the haters?

The Lord spoke of us taking up our cross and following him (Matthew 10:38; 16:24). The Christian cross is whatever we suffer for being a follower of Jesus Christ. Your question is a reminder that our crosses are likely to become more numerous as time goes on, but we are still to bear them as we follow the Lord through life.

There is one final word from Jesus to consider. After explaining a parable, our Savior asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). It is a haunting question that gets us thinking about the extent of unbelief and godlessness in the last days—and on the Last Day.

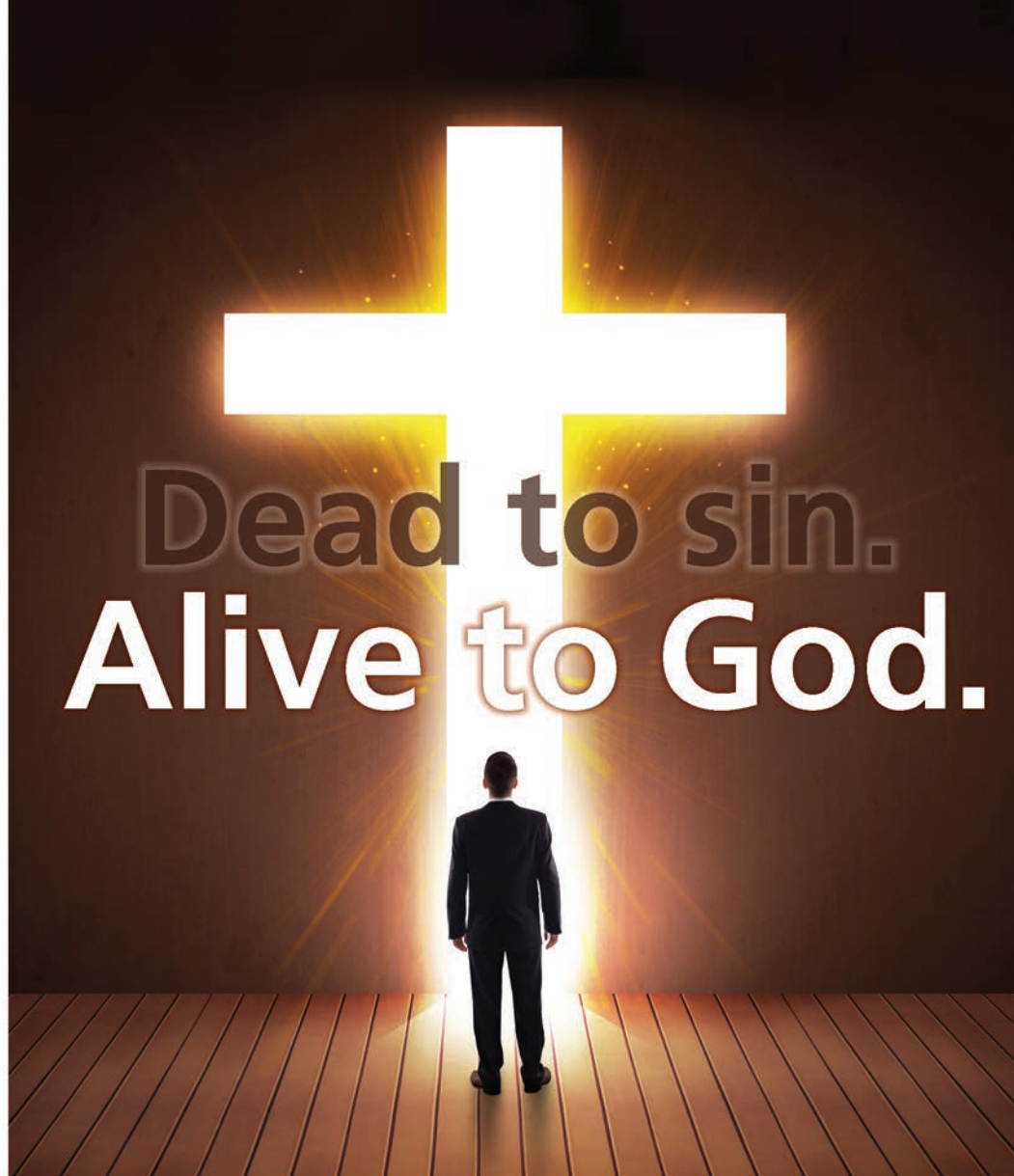
So, how are we Christians to live in a world that is becoming increasingly godless and antagonistic toward us? We continue to live our faith. We do so, not with a persecution complex that leads us to imagine troubles, but with a realistic expectation of persecution and, of course, with confidence in the Lord’s powerful love!

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

James Pope also answers questions online at www.wels.net. Submit your questions there or to fic@wels.net.

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

Psalms 119:105



Instead of your old self rationalizing reasons not to give, let your new self give to God first, trusting that God will take care of you.

James F. Borgwardt

"God always pays for what he orders," a generous member once told me. He was irritated when he'd hear of couples limiting or delaying having children because of finances. He related a time much earlier in his life when money was tight and his wife was expecting yet another baby. They had continued to tithe their income, a discipline learned from his father. They trusted that God would provide. And God certainly did.

"They need my money more than I do." The poorest woman I've ever known said this to me as she gave her money away. You'd be surprised at what little income she lived on. I occasionally ate

a fast-food lunch with her. More than once she left a \$5 tip with a thank-you card for an elderly "busboy" cleaning the tables. Anyone would argue that she needed the cash more than the worker did. But even with her limited means she lived out Jesus' words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

There's no snappy quote from my parents about giving. Their giving lessons were caught more than taught. As a kid, I peeked a couple times at the number they wrote on their regular offering checks. I was astounded! How did my parents—a pastor and a part-time teacher—

cover housing and food costs for a family of eight, pay for high school expenses and most of six college tuitions, and still have that much left to give to the Lord? Because they didn't give to God what was left over. They gave generously to the Lord first—before mortgage, groceries, tuition, and everything else—and God provided the rest.

They knew well Jesus' words: "Seek first [your heavenly Father's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). Jesus was true to his word. I lacked nothing growing up in the '70s (except good fashion sense).

YOUR OLD SELF HAMPERS GIVING

I need these giving lessons from others because trust, generosity, and priority aren't part of my sinful nature. I was born selfish, and that old self still continues to express himself through multiple self-destructive personalities:

- **He's a control freak.** He insists on running my life. He worries and frets about every little detail outside his control, showing his utter lack of trust that God will provide.
- **He's a miser.** He lives a delusion that I deserve all the financial blessings in my life. His tight-fisted grip on money squeezes generosity out of my life.
- **He's a thief.** He wants to rob God by grabbing the best for himself and leaving only the leftover scraps for work in God's kingdom.

You have to call your sinful nature what it is: your old self. And your old self, like mine, will always remain an enemy of God that lives within.

But there's a new self. God has given you freedom from your sin and your sinful nature by giving you his Son Jesus. In fact, the freedom Jesus gives from your old self is so complete, you can describe your salvation in the past, present, and future:

- Long ago, God saved you from the punishment of your sins when he transferred them to his Son, who suffered the divine penalty for you.
- Daily, he saves you from the power of sin when you drown your old self in the waters of your baptism by repentance, and he gives you a new self.
- Ultimately, he will save you when your old self will be forever buried in the dirt of your grave.

It's that second point that refers to your life of good works and how you intentionally live as one dead to sin and alive to God. Until your old self is buried for good, you have to daily turn from him and cling to God's forgiveness in Christ. That's how your new

self asserts itself. Your new self is your true identity before God

YOUR NEW SELF REJOICES IN GENEROUS GIVING

Some complain that Christianity is all about giving. Go ahead and agree with them! Giving is the central message of the Bible: "God so loved the world that he *gave* his one and only Son" (John 3:16). "The *gift* of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will *give* you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "He who did not spare his own Son, but *gave* him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously *give* us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

In our churches, you'll always hear about God's giving to you. Occasionally, you'll even hear about your giving to him.

In our churches,
you'll always hear
about God's
giving to you.

One message I hope you don't hear is this popular excuse not to give: "Some people don't have any money to give, but they can give their time instead." That may be true for a few people in this world, but unless you're reading this magazine from your cardboard box shelter in the woods, it's not true for you. If Jesus applauded the faith of the widow who gave her last two coins (Mark 12:41-44), he rejoices in your giving too.

Instead of your old self rationalizing reasons not to give, let your new self take these words of the apostle Paul to heart: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13 ESV). This passage is often

quoted by athletes. But Paul's not talking about playing basketball. Read all of Philippians chapter 4 and you'll see he's speaking of generous giving and contented living. So quote the passage if you must when you lace up your shoes. Far better, repeat it when you fill out your offering envelope: "I can give to God first and trust he'll take care of me. I can give 10 percent or even more to God's kingdom, because 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me.'"

Yes, Christian, you can because of the promise that Paul shares next: "My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

And as you raise your children to live their own lives of good works, teach them the right way to give: first God's kingdom, then your own. And then be ready for the lessons your kids will teach you.

One of my most memorable lessons on giving occurred in our family kitchen. It came from one of my young children at a time when our congregation was going through a stewardship appeal that focused on God's giving grace to us. Our son knew the riches he has in Christ, and he wanted to respond. He was eager to be part of what the church does—bringing the gospel to more souls. So he asked us how he could express all this with the little money he had. His simple question reminded me that all this is done from a joyful heart: "Can I give too?"

Funny. He was waiting on my answer, not realizing he was the one teaching the lesson.

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

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



Touching heaven

WHEN GOD SEEMS FAR AWAY

Does God seem too busy to answer your prayers? Do the answers you receive make it seem as if he never even listened?

Stephen M. Luchterhand

We sometimes think that the almighty Creator and Sustainer of all is quite busy. He must have bigger priorities to tend to than the infinitesimally small and insignificant chirpings, tweetings, whinings, postings, and pleadings by the likes of us. God just doesn't always message back as quickly as we think he should.

Communication, then, would seem to be better with people we can actually see and hear. In our digital age, we communicate with more people in more ways, more often, and more clearly than ever before. Because we are so connected, miscommunication and misunderstanding are at a minimum. Right?

We wish! Not even close. When we're not communicating well with one another, it's ugly. The question isn't so much "Can you hear me now?" Raised, angry voices can be heard. The question is "Are you listening to me now?"

If we have trouble communicating with people we can see and know and love, we're going to have trouble communicating with God. Why? And how do we keep the lines of communication open so we can touch heaven with our prayers?

PRAYER BLOCKERS

What hinders communication with God? Are there so-called prayer blockers that keep us from praying and prevent our prayers from reaching God's ears?

For starters, we're busy. We allow other things to get in the way of taking the time to pray. We may spend more time thinking about prayer than actually doing it.

Another impediment to prayer? We're selfish. Review your prayers and ask, "Am I telling God what to do or am I asking him? Do my prayers follow the

example of the prayer Jesus taught us to pray?” Not until the Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer—halfway through—do we pray, “Give us today our daily bread.” Do our prayers concentrate first and only on our personal needs? Are we forgetting other important concerns like our church, our missions, our young people? The list goes on.

Another prayer blocker is doubt, a lack of confidence. “When you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:6,7). Our prayers should be spoken in confidence, knowing that our heavenly Father wants his children to bring our requests to him. He promises to listen and respond. Trust his invitation and promise.

But of all the things that sabotage communication with God, the number one prayer blocker is sin. Isaiah emphasizes this: “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). Sin separates us from God. We’re not referring to a few slipups a day but to sins of thought, word, and deed as countless as grains of sand on the beach, every one of which deeply offends God.

Isaiah spends most of chapter 59 highlighting our natural spiritual condition and how we act on that sinful nature. Later, he writes, “Our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities” (59:12). Three different words for sin appear in this one verse—a testament to the stunning ability and creativity of humanity to explore the depths of depravity. The meaning of the Old Testament Hebrew word for “offense” is a rebellion against the love and faithfulness of God and his standards. “Iniquity” is to follow a crooked path or to deviate from God’s standards. “Sin” means to miss the standard set by God.

When your home wireless Internet connection goes down, it seems as though the world has come to an end. This is only a slight exaggeration. Smartphones revert to satellite links and chew up data. Laptops and iPads become less useful, and Netflix streaming comes to a halt. No effort is spared to remedy a broken wireless connection. There is no rest until the connection is restored.

Whenever we search in vain for answers, we will remember the wondrous ways of our God.

God spared no effort to solve our spiritual dilemma. He planted a tree on a skull-shaped hill: a dead tree, two pieces of wood lashed together in the form of a cross. He placed his Son there, and on his shoulders put our rebellion against him, our crooked actions, our misses and failures, and our sins—my sins, your sins, the sins of the whole world. Before we ever asked him to, before we ever said we were sorry, before we were even born, God carried out his plan of love. “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). A risen Christ assures us of forgiveness and life with him forever. God has removed the barrier to our communication with him. We have access; we pray.

RESPONSES TO UNANSWERED PRAYERS

And yet we have questions. In the trenches of daily life, in the midst of the ongoing battles we face, how can we reconcile a God who is able to do anything and everything with a God who often seems far away? God, it seems, remains silent or at least takes considerable time to answer prayer.

When prayers seemingly go unanswered, rather than complain to God or look elsewhere for help, we will do

what God’s people have done since the beginning of time: we will seek God’s clear counsel in his never-changing, life-giving Word.

In times of trial, rather than question God or blame him for things I don’t understand, I will remember that he sees the big picture. He holds me in the palm of his hand and close to his heart. I will praise him for promising that he won’t give me more than I can handle and for promising that he will answer my prayers in his own time and in his own way—always for my best. Sometimes God will leave the problem in my life, and his answer is simply, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

When someone dies despite prayers for healing or when we ourselves face death despite fervent prayer, we will not second-guess our Savior. Remembering that our times are in his hands, we will praise him with the words of Job: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21).

Whenever we search in vain for answers, we will remember the wondrous ways of our God: “ ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’ ” (Isaiah 55:8,9).

In the end, there is only one way to think of God’s responses to our prayers: “I prayed, and I got exactly what I needed.”

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

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

Conversations between friends lead to a life-changing experience.

Alicia A. Neumann

"I thought they were restrictive and that the people were stuffy and cliquy."

That's how Kelsey Robbins, member at Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho, says she previously felt about churches. Growing up, she says she didn't have much of a church background. She attended a Methodist church with her family on major holidays and remembers completing a three-day confirmation class. "But I hadn't really picked up a Bible after that," she says. "I guess I was just very hostile toward church." But that all changed when Robbins moved with her family to Boise, where she met Kristie Breckon.

THE REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT YOU HAVE

Breckon had also recently moved to the area and had a young daughter. Robbins says they became great friends and talked about everything. Oftentimes discussions on current events would turn to religion. "Her security in life didn't come from money or from her husband's job or her house; she had a sense of security I didn't have," says

Robbins. "At that point, I had a small child and an uncertain future, and I started to become interested in why she felt that she'd be okay. It piqued my interest."

Robbins said it was great having someone who would listen to her and ask her questions. "Kristie never tried to convince me. She just gently told me what she believed," says Robbins. "It can be intimidating to have conversations like that with someone who doesn't believe what you do, and sometimes it's just easier to stay silent—but she didn't. And I'm so thankful for that."

Breckon eventually invited Robbins to a women's retreat and then told her about the preschool at Cross of Christ. Robbins says she wasn't sure she agreed with the church's teachings, but the preschool was nearby and it was affordable. So she and her husband, Donovan, enrolled their oldest daughter, Chloe.

A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

Robbins says she felt Chloe was getting a great education, but she still wasn't sure about the church. "I remember attending a 15-minute chapel service for the preschoolers, and Pastor told the kids that 'Jesus washes the naughties away.' I was offended that someone would tell my child that she was naughty. I thought

maybe I didn't want her to go there anymore. But it made me think, and we stuck with it," she says. Not long after, Breckon invited the Robbins family to the kids' Christmas service, and then later to the summer picnic. "My husband was so impressed by how relaxed and nice everybody was; it wasn't what we thought a congregation would be like," says Robbins.

They started attending worship services, where they saw an invitation to Bible information classes. Robbins was interested in being in a group with other people who wanted to ask questions. "We started going to that, and it was a life-changing experience," says Robbins. "It was never presented as 'We want to convert you' or 'This is why you are wrong.' It was an open discussion about the Bible."

She says she appreciated being able to ask all of her questions—from dinosaurs to evolution—and having them answered in an open, honest way. But the biggest "aha" moment for her was understanding that no one can be perfect. "My idea of what it meant to be a Christian was that you were required to do selfless good works to earn a spot in heaven and that the goal of your life was to become as good and perfect as possible," says Robbins. "Hearing that God himself declares, 'No one is

Confessions OF FAITH



righteous, no not one,' lifted an enormous burden from me. I didn't have to try to be perfect for myself or others or God. I couldn't be. The good news that I was already perfect because Jesus did it for me—that changed the way I thought about everything."

Robbins says after the class on Baptism, she and her husband had both of their daughters baptized right away. "Even before the Bible information class was done, I just knew this was going to be the place for us," she says.

COUNTING HER BLESSINGS

After becoming a member, Robbins served for four years on the pre-school board. While in that role, she told many other parents about the preschool. "It was great because my friends had kids that were preschool age, and I could tell them about our excellent program and get them the information they needed," she says. "It was very gratifying to work for the ministry that got our foot in the door."

She and her husband also are involved with vacation Bible school and worship services—Kelsey is in the choir and Donovan works in the sound room. "When I need to be at church early in the morning for a music rehearsal, Donovan makes sure the girls get ready and are on



Donovan and Kelsey Robbins and their daughters, Chloe and Sophie.

time," she says. "I love to see him be active and involved. It's a huge benefit for our two girls to see a man who loves God and has felt the forgiveness of Christ in his life."

Robbins says she's also thankful for the network of Christian friends they've made. "I've leaned a lot on the support of Christian friends who were patient and kind enough to encourage me to rely fully on God," she says. "I think it is so important not just to hear the Word but for other people to remind you of it and lift you

up with it and share their own experiences. It's been such a gift finding this church and this group of people."

And the greatest gift of all? "Faith," she says. "I didn't have that before; it didn't exist. Now I have something black and white, something to get me through the hard times—faith in a living God."

Alicia Neumann is a member at Resurrection, Rochester, Minnesota.



heart to heart parent conversations

How can we as parents help our children achieve balance in their lives? How much is too much when it comes to extracurriculars? How much is too little? Is there such a thing as too little involvement? How can you help your children make wise choices about their activities? This month's Heart to heart authors give us their perspectives—and plenty of things to think about.



Join the conversation!

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

IN HOW MANY ACTIVITIES SHOULD MY CHILDREN BE INVOLVED?

I'm happy to share some thoughts on how my family has adjusted to the myriad of activities and opportunities for our kids. First, though, I want to point out that I believe every family is different and there are no right or wrong answers. I can't recall ever hearing a magical number of activities that are recommended or required for kids. I think we can all agree that the number of options for activities has exploded.

Back when I was a kid in elementary school, it seemed my athletic options were basketball and softball. I also played baseball in a community league. The only other activity or group option that I can recall was Lutheran Pioneers or Buckaroos. I rarely remember having practices for my teams in grade school. I'm sure we had some, but I really don't think they were three nights a week.

Now we could fill this page with nothing but structured activity options through school, church, the community, summer sports camps, etc. Our temptation as parents, and on the part of our kids, is to be involved in more than we can handle. Perhaps there is even a bit of worry as parents that if our children are not taking advantage of the plethora of activities that other families are, maybe our kids won't grow up as well-rounded adults.

We have the same conversation with other parents about our same age about 12 times a summer: "Remember when we were kids? Our moms pushed us out the door after breakfast, and we didn't come back in until the streetlights came on."

You can hear us rehearsing this back-in-the-day shtick while sitting at our seventh soccer game of the week, trying to figure out who can take the boys to swimming tomorrow so we can get the girls to dance. Childhood is just different now. Parent-scheduled. Parent-coached. Parent-spectated.

I'm writing this in mid-June, in the interlude between my stepson's morning baseball practice and his afternoon basketball camp. He'll just have time to eat lunch, play 10 minutes of piano, change from cleat to court shoe, and leave a quarter-cup of the baseball diamond on the carpet before we head to the gym. After basketball, he'll eat dinner in the car as we drive an hour to a baseball game—for one of his three leagues this summer.

As you're reading this, school is starting, and I bet your schedule's even crazier. Choir. Band. Math team. Forensics. Soccer. Oh, yeah—and school.

Having only one child to transport at the moment, I shake my head in wonder at the family of eight. Many questions come to mind, all of them variations of, "Is this crazy or what?"

Story: This summer I asked why Billy Schmidt wasn't playing baseball. Someone explained that the Schmidts went camping on weekends. I'm ashamed to admit that while my mouth said, "Oh, that's nice," my mind said, "But Billy's such a great hitter!"

Good friends just signed their son up for the community lacrosse team. Now that sounds fun! I didn't even know that opportunity existed. Should I mention that to my son?

With no easy answers, how do we make decisions on activities? To be honest, my wife's and my efforts usually fall on trying to limit participation rather than having our kids overinvolved. Here are a couple priorities we try to keep in mind:

Priority #1: Love

Probably the most important thing we have tried to do is make it clear to our kids that their participation and success in any activity are not things they need to do to get our love. God's love for us through his Son is unconditional. We don't need to perform—or be the best—in order to receive God's love. What we do as Christians is simply a demonstration of our love for God. So in that light of Christian joy and freedom, priority #1 is that the activities the kids choose can be seen as other ways to show love for God and not ways to win Mom's and Dad's approvals. That comes free!

Priority #2: Balance

This can get tricky. As adults it seems balance in life can be hard to find, and our own activities and responsibilities feel overwhelming at times. If our kids watch us closely and learn from us, what are we teaching them? Are we teaching them

to live a balanced life or a life filled with stress and anxiety? What's the lesson as we move hastily from one thing to the next, getting short and angry with one another because we always feel late and behind?

I think family balance is important. People tell us that the time when the kids are young will go by fast. I definitely agree! Our family needs time. We need time simply to be together, go for a bike ride, watch a movie, and even do some chores together. (Well, maybe I wish we'd do more chores together!) This is time just to be with one another and nurture our relationships. It's the time needed to teach and show them God's love. If the outside activities infringe on the family connectedness, then it's time for us to pull back.

Looking back in my life, with comparatively few activity options, what did I do with all my time? I wasn't bored. I have great memories of participating in unstructured activities with friends and family. I'm certainly not calling for us to bring back the good ol' days. I think all the varied activities offered now are amazing, but developing a few simple priorities has helped our family maintain balance.

Dan Nommensen and his wife, Kelly, have a daughter and a son.



Another story: Years ago, a dad brought his daughter to her first flute lesson with me. He said, "She probably won't practice much, but that's fine with us." I concentrated on keeping my eyebrows in place. What? They'll pay for lessons and a fine musical instrument, but they don't care whether she practices? What about self-discipline? commitment? stewardship of God's gifts?

Years later, I think those parents were on to something.

How busy should kids be? That depends on your view of childhood. Which of these sound right to you?

- Kids should dip their toes into many activities—from music to drama to sports to chess.
- Kids should choose just a few activities and fully commit to them.
- Kids should be busy and challenged.
- Kids should just have fun.

And more specifically about each of your kids:

- This kid needs reining in, because she'll sign up for everything and then whine all year.
- This kid needs a nudge because he'll play Xbox all day if left to his own devices (no pun intended).
- This kid's a dabbler, not a committer, and that's wrong. Or is it?
- This kid only likes the social aspect of teams, which makes sports a waste of time and money. Or does it?
- This kid would do nothing but read, so we need to get her out more. Or do we?

Maybe the ultimate question is this:

- What's our goal—raising healthy, successful 12-year-olds or healthy, successful 35-year-olds? And how does our answer to that question change our perspective on today's baseball game or piano recital?

What if we asked the kids? Maybe on that hour-long trip to the game, we could have a discussion—one where we don't give our opinions at all; we just listen to theirs.

1. What's your favorite team or club? What do you like about it?
2. What's your least favorite? What do you dislike about it?
3. Are you doing any of these activities because you think other people—your friends, teachers, or parents—want you to do them?
4. Do we support you enough—driving, watching, cheering, encouraging you, etc.?
5. Do we ever embarrass you at an event? How?
6. Do we ever pressure you too much? How?
7. If you could make one change to your schedule of activities, what would it be?

Our kids are pretty insightful. Their answers might surprise us.

Truth is, I don't know what's right for your family. I seldom know what's right for mine, so I'm not going to judge you.

Maybe the important thing is, whatever we decide, we do so consciously. We don't thoughtlessly sign every form that comes home in the backpack. And we don't project our own childhood fantasies onto our kids—not to mention our dreams for their Division I scholarships or the New York Philharmonic.

I'd like to say more, but it's time for basketball camp. And that quarter-cup of baseball diamond on the carpet won't vacuum itself.

Laurie Gauger-Hested and her husband, Michael, have a blended family that includes her two 20-somethings and his preteen son.



There's no app for that

Campus ministries rely on simpler technologies to give us the names of WELS students attending the colleges we serve.

Glenn L. Schwanke

It's an exciting time of year. The sleepy little town of Houghton, Michigan, which boasts some 6,500 residents, is waking up from another summer slumber. The fall semester at Michigan Technological University is starting. That means more than seven thousand students are back in town for classes.

This time of year, one of the challenges for our campus ministry is the same one faced by some 375 Wisconsin Synod congregations with campus ministry opportunities.

How do we identify the WELS students attending college here so that we can invite them to join us for worship, Bible studies, and fellowship activities? Contacting these young men and women at the start of the school year is critical! Otherwise students can be swallowed up by the hectic nature of their school schedules. Bad habits can get started, and time in God's Word and worship may be pushed off to the side.

So what do we do? Like many campus ministries, we'll participate in orientation events tailored for first-year students. But when those 1,500 first-years file by our table—more than a few somewhat dazed by information overload—how can we make sure that not a single WELS student passes by without realizing we're here to serve them with God's Word?

I have an idea! We need an app for that. We can model it on the "Merlin Bird Photo ID." This software is currently under development by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in collaboration with Visipedia. Its purpose is to help casual birdwatchers tell the difference between a pileated woodpecker and a ruby-throated hummingbird. To use the software, you take a picture of the bird; load the picture onto your computer; draw a box around your little feathered friend; click on the bird's beak, eyes, and tail; then identify where and when you saw the bird. Upload this data to the website and, voila, within seconds you'll get back a list of the best matches, including recordings of the sounds and songs the bird makes.

We need an app like that! Then when those first-year students pass by our table during orientation week, members of our ministry team can click a picture of each student. Other helpers can quickly transfer that data to notebook computers; put a box around the head of each student's picture; click on the beak (nose), eyes, and mouth; and upload the data to the "WELS Campus Ministry Student ID App." Ta da! In seconds we'll know the student's name and address.

Alas, there's no app for that.

So our WELS campus ministries rely on simpler technologies to give us the names of WELS students attending the colleges we serve. Pastors, teachers, family members, and caring friends can forward the names of students to WELS Campus Ministry by surfing to www.wels.net and clicking on the "sign up with campus ministries" link. Or they can fill in and return the yellow cards that our congregations receive each year in the packet of materials from WELS Campus Ministry.

Why bother? Because every day, young Christians on secular campuses are wading through a quagmire of temptations, many that these young people never faced when they still lived at home. Our Lord himself tells us what these young people need to stand strong in the faith: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word" (Psalm 119:9 ESV).

Please help us! Send in those names. You are our app for that.

Glenn Schwanke, pastor at Peace, Houghton, Michigan, serves as a campus pastor at Michigan Technological University.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Ehlert, Leon R., to Beautiful Savior, Green Bay, Wis.

Ellenberger, Larry G., to retirement

Fleming, James S., to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.

Frelitz, Don F., to Trinity, Union Grove, Wis.

Gawrisch, Joel J., to New Life, Shoreview, Minn.

Grosnick, Roger A., to retirement

Hannemann, Mark E., to retirement

Lyon, Gregory C., to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

Ody, Aaron, to Zion, Van Dyne, Wis.

Prahl, Steven H., to new mission, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Schlenner, Mark L., to retirement

Schroeder, Allen K., to retirement

Sievert, David R., to retirement

Strong, Aaron M., to Grace, Milwaukee, Wis.

Varnum, Neil R., to St. Paul, Crandon/Christ, Hiles/St. John, Enterprise, Wis.

Witte, Daniel A., to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.

Teachers

Ausen, Cameron R., to Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.

Bakken, Richard E., to St. Paul, Bangor, Wis.

Bodendorfer, Laura, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.

Bohme, Amy L., to St. John, Red Wing, Minn.

Bramstedt, Megan, to St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis.

Danell, Kelly E., to Grace, Geneva, Neb.

Ebsch, Julia A., to Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich.

Esmay, Kerri L., to Beautiful Savior, Topeka, Kan.

Frelitz, Amber M., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.

Frey, Kimberly J., to St. Bartholomew, Kawkawlin, Mich.

Gorske, Ronald C., to retirement

Haemker, Lois A., to retirement

Hartwig, Paul M., to retirement

Hintz, Michelle M., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.

Klinger, Sharon A., to retirement

Klug, Theodore A., to Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash.

Koestler, Patricia R., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.

Leerssen, Rosemary C., to Salem, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Lemke, Carl M., to retirement

Lemke, Kim Marie B., to Bethany, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

Malliet, Gabriel J., to St. John, Burlington, Wis.

Meihack, Marc J., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.

Nottling, Kristen M., to St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.

Novotny, Kim A., to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.

Pasillas, Stephanie A., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.

Ring, David M., to Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.

Roecker, Roberta J., to Grace, Oshkosh, Wis.

Ross, Jessica R., to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.

Ross, Michael D., to Ascension, Escondido, Calif.

Schiebel, Rebecca, to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.

Schroeder, Alissa L., to St. John, Watertown, Wis.

Schroeder, Kathleen M., to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.

Schwartz, Armin J., to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.

Snyder, Jenell D., to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.

Springstroh, Amanda M., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.

Sulzle, Heather L., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.

Swanson, Janet L., to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.

Thies, Timothy J., to Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis.

Treichel, Alaina, to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.

Van Brocklin, Frank C., to Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis.

Walker, Alanna, to Immanuel, Waukegan, Ill.

Zabel, David J., to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.

Zabel, Susan K., to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.

Staff minister

Kneser, Rick, to Ministry of Christian Giving, Waukesha, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

New Ulm, Minn.—St. Paul's (150). Sept. 12–14. Worship, Sat., 6 P.M.; Sun., 8, 9:30, and 11 A.M.; noon meal and open house to follow; Mon., 6:30 P.M. Website, www.splnewulm.org.

Reedsburg, Wis.—Faith (50). Sept. 13. Worship, 9 A.M.; meal to follow. faithreedsburg@hotmail.com; 608-524-6353.

Vassar, Mich.—St. Luke School (25). Sept. 13. Worship, 4 P.M.; meal and special activities to follow. stlukevassar@sbcglobal.net; 989-823-7923.

Yorba Linda, Calif.—Grace (40). Sept. 13. Worship, 3 P.M.; meal to follow.

Buffalo, Minn.—Immanuel (125). Sept. 20. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal and special activities to follow; worship, 2 P.M. Website, www.mymmanuel.org.

Dalton, Wis.—Grace (100). Sept. 20. Worship, 10:15 A.M.; meal to follow at Town Hall. RSVP requested. 920-394-3293; allan_nancy@hotmail.com.

Manitowoc, Wis.—Grace (75). Sept. 20. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; special worship, 4 P.M.; meal to follow. Website, www.gracelutheran-church.com.

Milwaukee, Wis.—St. Matthew (150).

Sept. 20. Worship, 2 P.M. Website, www.stmattwels.com.

Elizabeth, Ill.—Faith (50). Sept. 27. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 815-858-4405; vonniesandprairie.net.

Loretto, Minn.—Salem (150). Sept. 27. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow; special service, 2 P.M. bettylange52@gmail.com; 763-498-8507.

Saline, Mich.—Trinity (150). Sept. 27. Worship, 10 A.M. Website, www.trinitylutheran-saline.org.

Waukegan, Ill.—Immanuel School (50). Sept. 27. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP appreciated. stradunz@aol.com.

Madison, Wis.—Eastside (90). Oct. 4. Worship, 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.

Lincoln, Neb.—Mt. Olive (75). Oct. 11. Worship, 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 second service. RSVP requested. Website, www.apostles-lutheran.net/50yearsofgrace.

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

COMING EVENTS

WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall conference—Sept. 19. Good Shepherd, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis. Website, www.welslibrarians.org.

"Fix your eyes on Jesus!" women's retreat—Oct. 3. Peace, Loves Park, Ill. 608-290-0631. Website, www.peacelp.com.

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

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, www.wels.net/events.

NAMES WANTED

Atsuti-Yokosuka, Japan—WELS members in the area. Brad.stair@rocketmail.com.

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

Students share international experiences

This year, 13 graduates from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., elected international service, bringing the number to 60 MLC students and graduates who work in foreign settings.

According to Thomas Hunter, MLC director of International Services, this connection between MLC students and mission outreach is natural. “[It’s] rooted in the heart of the Great Commission,” he says. “This command moves the mission-minded servant to go beyond familiar borders and into places they have often never experienced firsthand before.”

As a way to both inform and encourage others in worldwide outreach, the MLC International Services Office sponsors an annual Thalassa Contest, in which MLC students and graduates share a picture and a personal reflection on their ministry overseas. This year’s winner is Sara Schmeling, a 2011 graduate who served in Novosibirsk, Russia, teaching English and leading Bible studies and other church programs. The MLC International Services Office funded the \$1,000 prize, awarding \$500 to Sara and \$500 to the mission she chose, Daylight in Russia.

Here is Schmeling’s submission:

God’s light in a world of darkness

Dark. Cold. Dreary. Those are words commonly associated with Russia. Having adventured through frigid Siberian winter and traveled through several days of Arctic night, I can attest to this.

Walking in sub-zero temperatures, on a January night, in St. Petersburg, was a moment that brought those words to my mind. Ahead was my destination, the Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood, a giant Orthodox church engineered to inspire awe. However, the information plaques surrounding it focused more on its historical significance than the Savior of its name. Floodlights illuminated the church with a blinding intensity when compared to the night.

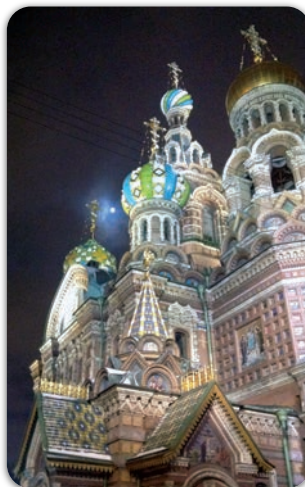
That wasn’t what caught my attention however. The moon was holding its own, shining down and spreading its glow, even as the church and the rest of the city lights tried to drown it out.

God’s love works just the same here. The darkness of the world, the inaccuracies of the Orthodoxy, and shadows of logic over faith try to obscure God’s grace. But there is always the glow, the glimmer—no matter how faint—of the gospel being faithfully proclaimed.

John 8 declares, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.” From the missionaries welcoming us with open arms and the church members that are always ready with a smile and helping hands, to the joyful children who are learning to appreciate an oasis of love, God’s light and love is evident everywhere. For those we came to serve, we pray that they see God’s light in us.

Light. Warm. Loving. When I hear the word *Russia*, those will be the words that I think of, and I pray that HIS Light will keep shining in this country and all others.

Read the articles of past winners at mlc-wels.edu/thalassa.



Obituaries

Kathleen A. Fuhrmann 1938–2015

Kathleen Fuhrmann (née Hilty) was born May 31, 1938, in Thiensville, Wis. She died June 11, 2015, in Little Chute, Wis.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Mt. Calvary, Menasha, Wis., and Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis.

She is preceded in death by a brother. She is survived by her husband, Verlyn; one son; one daughter; two grandchildren; and a sister;

Lisa A. Rittierodt 1969–2015

Lisa Rittierodt (née Vogel) was born June 9, 1969, in Milwaukee, Wis. She died July 6, 2015, in Auburn, Wash.

A 1991 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash., and Light of Life Preschool, Covington, Wash.

She is survived by her husband, Paul; two sons, one daughter; her parents; and five brothers.

Daniel W. Malchow 1927–2015

Daniel Malchow was born June 19, 1927, in Neenah, Wis. He died July 10, 2015, in Waukesha, Wis.

A 1953 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.; Trinity, Eugene, Ore.; Northwestern Preparatory School, Wauwatosa, Wis.; St. John, Caledonia, Wis.; St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.; Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Mobridge, S.D.; Martin Luther Preparatory School, Prairie Du Chien, Wis.; and the Commission for Communication on Financial Support, Milwaukee, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his first wife, Elaine, and one daughter. He is survived by his wife, Ruth; 3 daughters; 2 sons; 16 grandchildren; and 8 great-grandchildren.

Nearly 50-year-old ministry looking for new ways to serve

It was 1969. Richard Nixon was president. The median household income was \$8,500. Elvis Presley, Stevie Wonder, and The Beatles were on the radio. The war was still going on in Vietnam, and Neil Armstrong became the first human to step foot on the moon.

That same year in WELS, there was a push to develop materials for the visually impaired. WELS President Oscar Naumann asked for Luther's Catechism to be transcribed into Braille, and an appeal for Brailleists was sent throughout the synod.

"A close friend and I, as young mothers, felt the need for some mental challenge in our daily routine so decided to give it a try. We began training by correspondence and were certified by the Library of Congress. It was truly a most enjoyable challenge," says Sue Holzhueter, a WELS volunteer who has transcribed Braille for the past 47 years.

That transcription work was the start of WELS' Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI), which serves people who are unable to read normal print. Manned by volunteers, the MVI produces devotional and other materials in Braille, large print, and cassette

tape, which are then distributed free to people throughout the world.

"*Meditations* and *Forward in Christ* on cassette had always been the most requested of our items," says Cathie Humann, general manager for the MVI. She says although the number of requests for cassette tapes has decreased over the past decade because of changes in technology, the production of Braille materials has nearly doubled—and those same changes in technology are making it easier to both produce and consume the materials.

"We recently received a letter from a woman who stopped receiving devotional materials on cassette because her tape player broke, but she is now listening to the daily devotions on the WELS Web site podcast channel (www.wels.net/news-media/podcasts)," says Humann. "She made that effort because those devotions were that important to her. That letter made my day because she is using another means to get that message."

The MVI is hoping for more success stories like that. In fact, James Behringer, director of WELS' Commission on Special Ministries, has assembled a group of volunteers who help with techno-

logical projects, such as making sure the newly redesigned WELS website is accessible for visually impaired people who use Internet screen readers. "Blind people are becoming more independent now; they can get most things on the Internet," says Behringer. "The group of volunteers I regularly consult with is helping us get into the 21st century—but at the same time, we still need experts in Braille."

Mary Price, a Brailleist who has served for the past 45 years, says even though the technology has changed, the need for the gospel hasn't. "I pray that this work at the MVI will continue," she says. "It may take forms other than Braille and tapes, but it should continue. When I began transcribing 45 years ago, there was always someone telling us of the new advances that would make our work obsolete. That prediction may come true, but there will always be those who need our service, and God expects us to serve them by telling them the story of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord."

To learn more about this ministry or browse the catalog of resources available through the MVI, visit www.wels.net/visually-impaired.



The volunteers for the Mission for the Visually Impaired. Three of the volunteers have served for 45 years or more: Gen Baumeister (second row, fourth from the left), Sue Holzhueter (not pictured) and Mary Price (not pictured).

Q&A with a Native American pastor

Kirk Massey graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., in 2015 through a joint program of the Apache Christian Training School (ACTS), East Fork, Ariz., and the Pastoral Studies Institute. Over the past 20 years, he and his wife, Sheree, has been involved with the Apache Lutheran Mission, especially in youth and family ministry. Kirk also served as field director, working with leaders in both the southern and northern reservations. Now he is one of two national pastors and two evangelists for the mission. Here he shares his hopes and goals in his new position.

Q Why did you decide to become a pastor?

A About ten years ago, one of the retired missionaries serving half time on the field encouraged me to consider becoming a pastor. It took a few years to finally realize that God was calling me to serve his people on the Native American field. It was in 2011 when the talk of becoming a pastor started to resurface, and the director of ACTS approached me with a plan. After praying about it for a while, I was led to take up the challenge.

I wanted to become part of a team and work alongside my brothers and also to be an example to the other Native American brothers and encourage them to take part in the work on the field.

Q How did you feel when you graduated?

A I felt happy, grateful, relieved, and humble. I was glad the official studying part was over and happy to get involved in full-time service to the church. I was grateful and humble to be walking through the ceremony on the campus where thousands of others walked after completing their studies.

Q Where are you serving now? What are your responsibilities?

A I am serving the whole Native American mission field but working closely with Open Bible Lutheran Church and Shepherd in the Pines Lutheran Church in McNary. . . . I will also teach in the Apache Christian Training School. But the biggest part will be to mentor the men in both congregations and walk and learn with them with the goal of one day getting them into the pastoral or evangelist tract of ACTS. Lord willing, maybe one day in a few years, there will be five to ten men getting ordained and commissioned to serve the churches on both reservations.

Q Why do you feel it is important to have Apache men serve as pastors/leaders in Apacheland?

A When the Wisconsin Synod sent missionaries to the San Carlos and Fort Apache Indian reservations, they were following Christ's commission. . . . The Native American men whom we will be mentoring and encouraging can take the gospel message to members of the



Kirk Massey with his wife, Sheree, on his graduation day from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., in May.

reservations not only here in Arizona, but across the United States. I want my brothers to share in the joy of spreading the gospel to places that need to hear about their Savior.

Q What opportunities does ACTS provide for Apache students?

A The opportunity that ACTS offers to the students is the flexibility it has. . . . If a student has a full-time job and is available for only a few hours a week, the program can be delivered in a way to fit the student's time but also can accomplish the goal of training the student in God's Word. There are several levels in the ACTS program to train people to become a Bible teacher, evangelist, youth and family counselor, deacon, pastoral assistant, teachers, and pastors.

Currently, there are no men entering the evangelist or pastor tract, but there are many men who attend the classes to strengthen their Bible knowledge of law and gospel and ways to show their faith in Jesus and serve others. It will be an emphasis of the team as we work to move the Apache field forward to identify, mentor, encourage, and train more men and women on the field to become teachers and pastors to carry the name of Jesus to this reservation and to other reservations in the United States.

Q Anything else you want to add?

Please continue to pray for the Apache field as it reaches inwardly to the members of the Apache field to strengthen their relationship with Jesus but also as we make plans to take this message to other tribes in America.

Learn more about the Apache Lutheran Mission and meet one of its members on p. 28.



Grace in Grenada becomes an aquaponics hub

“It’s not just raising fish but fishers of men,” says Daniel Rautenberg, pastor at Grace, Grande Anse, Grenada.

Rautenberg is referring to Grace’s aquaponics project, which was launched in May. Aquaponics is the practice of raising fish and growing vegetables in a self-contained system.

Dr. Robert Anderson, professor of biology at Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC), Milwaukee, Wis., developed the idea of implementing aquaponics at Grace. Anderson is the son of a missionary and spent his first nine years in Venezuela, so he has had a love for missions throughout his life. As a member of the WELS Board for World Missions since 2007, he has visited many WELS mission fields and talked with nationals about their church and community needs.

“What I have noted,” says Anderson, “is that a key aspect of spreading the gospel is the need for methods to engage with the local community. On

some mission fields, community engagement involves teaching English or providing study centers. As I became aware of aquaponics, it occurred to me that aquaponics could be an outreach tool for . . . congregations in developing countries.”

Anderson secured a grant from WLC to pursue the idea of developing a simplified aquaponics system that could be built by nationals. Anderson partnered with Kingdom Workers and targeted Grace in Grenada as the first congregation to begin this project because there is a Kingdom Workers coordinator on the island.

As Ryan Hellpap, Kingdom Workers’ field manager in the Caribbean, explains, “One of the key roles I play in helping Grace is to alleviate the strain on local mission resources when an outside project like aquaponics is introduced into an outreach program. My biggest role then was to network on the island for membership, government, and community support; plan

the event with the WLC team; and facilitate the training events.”

Anderson, with the help of WLC student Marilee Gloe, met with government officials and local farmers in Grenada in 2013 to gauge the potential for aquaponics in the community. Then this May, Anderson traveled to Grenada with 2015 WLC graduate Zachary Pappenfuss, who led five workshops on the technical aspects of aquaponics for members of Grace and its community. By the time Anderson and Pappenfuss left, a fully functional aquaponics system was in place on Grace’s campus.

“In just one week,” Hellpap reports, “aquaponics brought 54 residents to the campus who had not known or been to Grace before. Twenty of them attended worship at the end of the week of training. Six participants have begun attending Bible information classes intending to join the church. These are the immediate blessings. Behind the scenes, the relationships that were created through the development and execution of the program will enable Grace to conduct beneficial programs in the future.”

Hellpap also says that the aquaponics system is a blessing to the community because it is “providing a sustainable food source that is resilient enough to provide sustenance through natural disasters like hurricanes, while helping to alleviate the problems of overfishing and degradation of the coral reefs. At the same time the process allows for a home-based business to help address the 20 percent-plus unemployment rate of the island.”

Future aquaponics sites may include Indonesia, Zambia, and Malawi.

Pappenfuss concludes, “A project like this . . . offers the benefit of reaching out using not only spiritual nourishment and sustainability, but also physical nourishment and sustainability. By incorporating aquaponics, Grace has positioned itself to be an aquaponics hub for the island of Grenada.”



Zachary Pappenfuss (right) trains participants (left) how to build and care for the aquaponics system. Dr. Robert Anderson, creator of the aquaponics project at Grace in Grenada, explains how the system works: “Aquaponics combines aquaculture (fish farming) and hydroponics (growing plants in water) in a semi-closed system. Water from the fish tank that contains waste produced by the fish is pumped into a grow bed where plants are suspended in the water and use the fish waste as fertilizer. In this way the plants clean the water so it can drain back into the fish tank. One pump circulates the water through the system over and over again as the fish and plants grow, so you can produce good protein and vegetables and use only a small amount of water.”

Summer conferences provide learning opportunities

Three conferences this past summer gave attendees opportunities to learn more about the work we do together as a synod as well as to strengthen their skills and network with other WELS members.

More than four hundred teachers, principals, school leaders, and presenters met at the Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis., for the Na-



Lee Plath was honored at the 2015 National School Leadership Conference for 60 years of ministry to Lutheran schools, including serving as a teacher, associate administrator, and mentor for new teachers and principals. Pictured are Lee and his wife, Fern.

tional School Leadership Conference June 15-18. "The conference was designed to help school leaders reflect and improve upon their spiritual, mental, and physical well-being," says Shawn Herkstroeter, principal at Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis., and conference co-chairman. Based on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the conference centered on the theme of soul, mind, and body. Attendees also had the opportunity to network and interact with other WELS professional educators from preschool through college.

Ben Carlovsky was excited to attend the conference as the new assistant principal at Abiding Word, Houston, Texas. "The title of school leader is fairly new to me. For the past 11

years, I had served as youth minister in Wisconsin," he says. "My new call as assistant principal has me looking for ways to improve upon the excellence of our WELS school."

He says one area he was interested in learning more about was facilitating teacher development through standards. The conference helped him start to put a plan in place. "Our school is planning on using Individual Ministry Development Plans based on the WELS Teaching Standards. The purpose is to help each teacher grow professionally and spiritually in a method that follows a plan, holds everyone accountable, and is transformational through the gospel."

The next school leadership conference will be held in 2018.

From June 25-28, more than 1,200 women learned about and showed their support for WELS mission work at the 52nd annual Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) convention in South Dakota.

"[The convention was] exciting and inspiring, awakening understanding and renewing our efforts to share the good news with everyone. Renewing friendships and making new friends with like-minded ladies from all around is truly inspiring," says Sola Millet, who has attended 47 of the 52 LWMS conventions. "The smiles and hugs and the shared concerns do unite us. There is nowhere else that we can receive so much information about the mission work of our synod."

During the convention, more than \$25,000 was collected to support WELS mission work. Throughout the year, LWMS chapters collectively offered \$38,350 for Asia Lutheran Seminary and \$38,350 for the Tools for Outreach project from Home Missions. The k.i.d.s. care Russia project received about \$65,000, including a \$15,000 matching grant.

New LWMS President Karen Fischer says, "This convention was warm and friendly while still being global in scope and impact. What a joy and privilege to experience the love and heart for missions from so many women of the LWMS."

Next year's convention will be held in St. Charles, Ill. Registration opens January 2016. For more about LWMS, visit www.lwms.org.

Attendees learned about where technology meets ministry at the third large conference this summer—WELSTech Conference 2015. About 250 people attended the July 9-11 event in Pewaukee, Wis.

"We envisioned the conference as a chance for people to share their experience and expertise across several different tracks—church, communication, office and productivity, outreach, school, system administration, tools, and web," says Sallie Draper, WELS technology trainer and conference co-planner. "Many who attended told us they had problems deciding what to attend because there were so many great options."

Draper and Martin Spriggs, WELS chief technology officer, broadcast the 400th episode of WELSTech at the conference. This weekly show explores the use of technology to further the spread of the gospel. "We've seen the WELSTech community grow steadily as more and more people contribute their experience and expertise to the show," says Draper. "The conference was a great opportunity to gather this virtual community for some face-to-face sharing and fellowship."

Download the presentations and watch the archived livestream of the conference at www.wels.net/welstechconf. View the latest WELSTech episode at welstech.wels.net.

District news

SOUTH ATLANTIC

Abiding Grace, Covington, Ga., is starting a second site in neighboring Henry County, Ga.

DAKOTA-MONTANA

St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D., celebrated the opening of a second worship site on June 6.

MICHIGAN

Shepherd of the Lakes, Roscommon, Mich., purchased its first building after 23 years of renting a community center. Formerly known as St. Martin, the congregation is thankful for its new, more visible location, which is attracting more visitors. Ten new members have already joined the congregation since its move.

Ascension, Macomb Township, Mich., purchased a new church building in January and dedicated it on June 28. The new location will give the church an opportunity to expand and do outreach in many different areas, according to its pastor, Daniel Simons.

SOUTH ATLANTIC

Beginning this fall, **King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.**, will include German immersion classes as part of its school curriculum. This program is the first of its kind in the greater Orlando area.

NORTHERN WISCONSIN



Twelve teens from First German, Manitowoc, Wis., and Trinity, Kiel, Wis., volunteered at Shepherd of the Plains, Lubbock, Texas, from June 22–26. The young people prepped, taught, and led vacation Bible school. The week concluded with a block party hosted by Shepherd of the Plains that was attended by nearly 450 people, the majority of them non-members.

ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA

The Board for World Missions approved the reopening of **East Fork Lutheran High School, Whiteriver, Ariz.** The school is beginning with ninth grade for this school year.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

NW—Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis., has celebrated its 100th anniversary throughout 2015 with special church services, fellowship events, and community service projects.

DAKOTA-MONTANA



Because churches and families are spread out in the rural areas of the Dakotas and Montana, pastors in the district began a Catechism Camp for kids in sixth through eighth grade called CAT camp. Located in the Black Hills of South Dakota and not your typical summer camp, the goal of CAT camp is to connect kids to fellow Lutheran Christians, augment the instruction given at individual congregations, and train students to be future leaders in their congregations. At the six-day-long camp, students review their entire year of catechism with four to five hours of lessons/Bible study each day while also having fun.

MI—Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich., celebrated its 50th anniversary on July 19.

SEW—On July 26, Grace, Waukesha, Wis., celebrated the 50th anniversary of the teaching ministry of **Jim Martens**.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ-CA—Michael Schroeder; D-M—David Ruddat; MI—John Eich; NW—Dennis Kleist; SA—Jonathan Kuske; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

WELS news briefs

FAMILY AND YOUTH MINISTRY

youthrally2016@wels.net

The next **WELS International Youth Rally** will be held June 28–July 1, 2016, at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colo. Kris Snyder, rally coordinator, says, “The campus offers centralized accommodations for two thousand attendees to eat, sleep, worship, learn, and play within walking distance. The buildings have a variety of meeting space options for flexibility in our schedule, and there is quite a bit of open space outdoors for fun nightly gatherings. It is also near the Rocky Mountains, so we can offer some excursion adventures.” More than 1,600 teens attended the 2014 youth rally in Tennessee.

ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

cad@wels.net

Keith Wessel, professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., will lead the next Interactive Faith Bible study, streamed online live each Wednesday, Sept. 9 through Oct. 7, at 6 P.M. and 8 P.M. CST. His study will focus on the life and ministry of Elisha. Adult Discipleship sponsors the Interactive Faith Bible online study twice a year. As many as three thousand people viewed the last Bible study on the book of Judges by David Scharf, pastor at Immanuel, Greenville, Wis. Learn more at www.wels.net/interactivefaith.



Training the next generation of full-time church workers in Watertown, Wisconsin, began 150 years ago.

Matthew A. Crass

It was the early 1860s. One can almost imagine some words from a well-intended letter: “Dear President Bading, with our church body being in existence for only a little more than a decade, it does not seem as though we are ready to undertake an endeavor of such magnitude.”

One can almost hear President Bading’s friends speaking to him: “What are you thinking? The members of our fledgling synod are immigrants. They don’t have that kind of money. How can we possibly expect them even to build such a campus let alone pay for the ongoing operation of it? Oh, and you certainly are also well aware of the fact that we are in the midst of a civil war, right?”

Some might have called him a visionary, while others might have said he was innovative. But Johannes Bading,

WELS’ second synod president, preferred to think of himself as a gospel servant. Bading sought support for a plan—to build a campus in Watertown, Wisconsin, to prepare and train the next generation of pastors and teachers for spreading the gospel.

A SMALL BEGINNING

The pastors coming from Germany were few and often unreliable. In his report to the 1862 synod convention, Bading wrote, “We must dig a well in our land, in our synod, from which workers flow to us. . . . Let us make a small beginning, with faith in the Lord’s help.”

Even though Bading’s idea was at times met with apathy, uncertainty, or disagreement, he continued to plod, prepare, plant, and procure gifts. Above all, he proclaimed Christ. He knew that the Spirit would work as he willed through such preaching.

A small beginning was made. And the well was dug.

On Sept. 14, 1865, the campus of ministry in Watertown, Wisconsin, was dedicated. The school was established to serve as a seminary and a

college, which would include a prep department. The five-acre campus had only one building known as the *Kaffeemuehle* because its shape resembled a coffee grinder. Within the *Kaffeemuehle*, 6 seminary students and 66 prep students (no college students yet because there were very few young men who had a high school education in 1865) ate, attended classes, worshiped, studied, and slept. At the dedication, Bading publicly praised God for the assured training of preachers of the gospel. He said, “The Lord will carry out to a glorious end the work that we have begun.”

A SOLID BASE

This profound truth is stated with these rather simple words: “The work of a minister of the gospel is this—to know the Word of God and the soul of the human being he serves. Then connect the two.” Of course, it is the Holy Spirit working through the gospel in Word and sacrament who makes such a connection. That is precisely why the Word of God remains paramount in the work of our WELS pastors, teachers, and staff ministers.



That's what our forefathers thought and believed in 1865. The ministerial education of the students meant a heavy emphasis on Bible, doctrine, history, English, German, Latin, and even French. In 1524, Martin Luther wrote, "In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages. For it was not without purpose that God caused his Scriptures to be set down in these two languages alone—the Old Testament Hebrew, the New Testament Greek. Now, if God did not despise them but chose them above all others for his word, then we too ought to honor them above all others." As it is today, the study of Greek and Hebrew was critical to the formation of a gospel servant in 1865, so much so that Greek was taught in the prep department.

Martin Luther continued with his compelling words, "Let us be sure of this. We will not long preserve the gospel without the languages." On the occasion of our seminary's 150th anniversary two years ago, Board for Ministerial Education administrator Paul Prange wrote, "I am unaware of any other Lutheran seminary that has remained orthodox for 150 years." God has preserved the gospel among us. This is a testimony to God's grace and the rich blessings he has given us as a synod in our ministerial education system.

A RICH HISTORY

The seminary graced the Watertown campus until 1870, before moving first to St. Louis, then to Milwaukee, and then to Wauwatosa. For the past 86 years it has resided in Mequon, Wisconsin.

The college and prep department were modeled, not surprisingly, after the German Gymnasium schools. This included four years of study in the prep

department and two in the college. Remnants of 1865 remain today as the high school students on the synod's Watertown campus, known today as Luther Preparatory School, still use the Latin names from the German Gymnasium to identify their year of study. For example, the sophomores are called *Quintaners* (from the Latin for "fifth") because in 1865 they would have looked forward to five more years of education at Watertown.

The college was first known as Wisconsin University and then Northwestern University. In 1910 the governing board changed its name to Northwestern College. Northwestern College remained the anchor of the Watertown campus for 130 years, until it was amalgamated in 1995 with Dr. Martin Luther College, our synod's teacher training college in New Ulm, Minnesota. Since then our synod's single college of ministry bears the name Martin Luther College (MLC).

Last May the Northwestern College Alumni Society held its annual meeting on the Watertown campus for the first time since the amalgamation. Daniel Balge, MLC's academic dean for the pre-seminary program, addressed the group. In his remarks he related that "the spirit of Northwestern College lives on at MLC." This continuing spirit is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who worked in the hearts of young men to offer themselves for the gospel ministry 150 years ago in Watertown, continues to work today in the young men and women at MLC.

BLESSINGS FROM GOD

The prep department has remained on the campus for 150 years and still continues with the same purpose: preparing students for the public ministry of the gospel.

In 1865, the people of our synod dug the well from which countless bless-

ings have flowed from the hand of the Almighty. More than 3,500 pastors have received their training on the Watertown campus. The same is true for several thousand teachers and dedicated laypeople.

Ministerial education in WELS endured some challenging years in the late 1860s. But by 1872 the enrollment had grown to 156 students. The total enrollment of our synod's four ministerial education schools today numbers approximately 1,500. The well has been dug very deep.

Johannes Bading served as synod president until 1889. He served on the governing board of Northwestern College until shortly before he entered glory in 1913. We still echo his words today: "The Lord will carry out to a glorious end the work that we have begun."

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

This is the first 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.



Mission

God's saving grace in Apacheland Marietta Chapman

This story is about an Apache girl that found her Lord and Savior through tremendous hardship and struggle. At the same time, this message is truly about God's victory and love. Life for any Apache was tough during the 1950s. As a people, they were striving to find hope. This young Apache woman grew up in poverty in an alcoholic home, but she found solace in the Word of God. After becoming a student at the local Lutheran mission school, God's love rescued her, and today she continues to put God first in her life.

A ROUGH CHILDHOOD

My mother, Carlotta Stanley, was born and raised on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation in Bylas, Arizona. Carlotta is the firstborn of Etta Nelson, a single parent who raised three other children. She was born in an Apache wickiup (makeshift shelter) by a cotton field near the Gila River. My mother was born in tough conditions, but it was considered normal to our people at the time. Apache families would often move off the reservation to seek work and assist local farmers in harvesting cotton. Etta and her family were following the work when Etta had Carlotta in 1949.

Carlotta grew up in poverty in a one-room wooden house. Alcoholism was always a prevalent shadow throughout her life. Carlotta's mother, aunts, uncles, and cousins were constantly drinking around the house. She remembers being neglected numerous times and feeling forgotten.

PEACE AND COMFORT AT CHURCH

One positive was that her home was located next to the Bylas Lutheran Church or mission school as it was referred to in the community. One day she saw all the children living near the school enrolling for the upcoming school year. Carlotta was five years old at the time, and she remembers being baptized at the church. She remembers being so excited because she also was going to begin school as a kindergartener.

She recalls how many other Apache children were being baptized

along with her. She says, "The Holy Spirit brought faith and hope into my heart." From that moment on she attended church every Sunday with her aunt and cousin. At the time, her mother was still living with alcoholism and did not attend church with her.

My mother, Carlotta, found peace and comfort being at church and in school. She grew close with every pastor and teacher who came to serve in Bylas while she was growing up. She used to enjoy visiting the pastor's house because they always offered her food and clothing. The clothing was from a room full of "mission clothes." She felt like she was in a store picking out outfits for herself and is grateful for the care she was shown.

For Carlotta, being at church was an escape from her life of poverty. She played with the children of called workers and babysat them when she was older. She remembers Pastor Carl Polanski and his wife, who had their first daughter while in Bylas. They named their daughter Sandra Lynn. Carlotta admired that event so much that when she had her second daughter, she named her Sandra Lynn. She also remembers one principal whose children learned how to speak Apache fluently. Communicating in Apache created a bond like no other. My mother felt like each missionary family was her own. She remembers seeing a Mayflower truck parked at the church. She saw a pastor's family moving their belongings and packing up their things. She saw them drive off and began crying because she felt like her family was moving away.

There were a lot of sad memories for Carlotta, but there were comical times as well. One time at school, she remembers her teacher, Mrs. Sauer, telling them to go outside for recess. It was the first day and the children did not understand English yet, so they presumed she said to go home. Every child went home and did not return after recess. There were a lot of communication breakdowns similar to that throughout the year.

A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

As Carlotta got older and graduated from eighth grade, she wanted to attend East Fork Lutheran High School in Whiteriver, Arizona. Her wish became reality, and East Fork Lutheran became her new home for the next few years. Her mother had no job and no money to send her, but Carlotta was determined and resilient. She

worked in the school cafeteria washing dishes. She also worked at the nursery on weekends. That is how she paid for her tuition. She remembers the cost to attend school at that time was \$80 a year. She paid her own way, working during summer break and weekends caring for infants and toddlers. She graduated from East Fork Lutheran High School in 1968.

After high school, Carlotta married Wilfred Stanley, and they had six children—four daughters and two sons. Wilfred and Carlotta have been married for more than 45 years and now have 18 grandchildren. Carlotta always took her children to church. All her children graduated from Bylas Lutheran Mission School.

Etta saw how Carlotta was taking her own children to church and being a positive role model.

APACHE LUTHERAN MISSION

Baptized members: 3,595

Congregations: 8

Preaching stations: 1

Lutheran schools: 2

Missionaries: 5

Teachers: 9, three of whom are Apache

National pastors: 2

Evangelists: 2

Bible Institute students: 90

Unique fact: Apacheland is the first WELS world mission field, established in 1893. Mission work is conducted in eastern Arizona on the White Mountain Apache Reservation and the San Carlos Reservation.

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

It was only then that Etta stopped drinking and became a devoted member of the church. She began taking confirmation classes and was confirmed on Christmas in 1976. We, as her grandchildren, only remember Etta as a sober, loving grandmother. She cooked, cleaned, and cared for all of us as Carlotta and her husband were working.

GOD'S SAVING GRACE

Carlotta is so thankful for God and his love. She believes that God's will brought every missionary family to Bylas, and they will remain in her heart forever. Carlotta says, "If WELS never brought God's Word to Apacheland, I would be a lost soul."

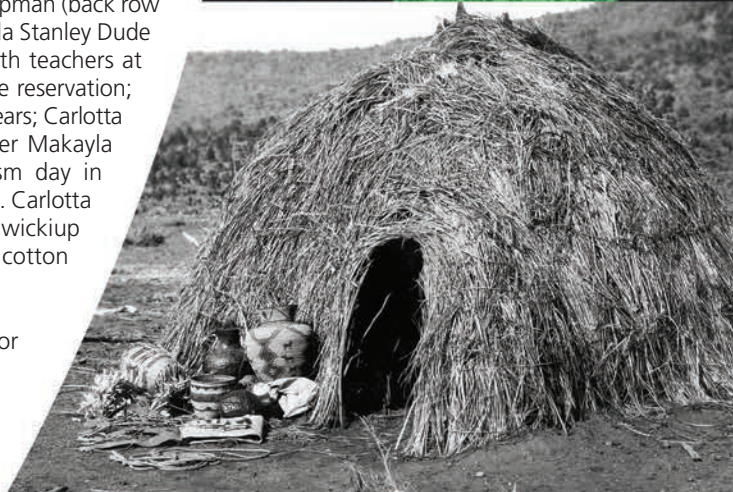
One individual stood out the most in my mother's life. Mr. Willis Hadler taught in Bylas for more than 40 years, and he impacted many lives while on the reservation. He taught my mother and all of her children about God's Word. He was a great teacher and father figure in the community.

Carlotta continues to be a devoted Christian, and she shares God's Word with all of her loved ones. Two of her daughters—myself and my sister Angela Stanley Dude—teach at Peridot-Our Savior's Lutheran School in Peridot, Arizona. My mother is proud of her six children for earning college degrees and contributing positively to their communities. She believes that this story would not be possible without God's saving grace.

Marietta Chapman is a member at Our Savior's, Peridot, Arizona.

Wilfred and Carlotta Stanley on their 45th wedding anniversary with their daughters and families. Marietta Chapman (back row in red) and her sister Angela Stanley Dude (front row in blue) are both teachers at Peridot-Our Savior's on the reservation; Carlotta in her early teen years; Carlotta holding her granddaughter Makayla Etta on Makayla's baptism day in 2008; a traditional wickiup. Carlotta was born in an Apache wickiup (makeshift shelter) by a cotton field near the Gila River.

Meet a new national pastor for the Apache Lutheran Mission on p. 22.





HONOR *thy father*

Life often gives us challenges to our Christian faith and life. Sometimes those challenges do not disappear easily or quickly.

If you're anything like me, you learned the commandments as a child. The one that was drilled into my head the most was the Fourth Commandment, "Honor your father and mother." I knew that I had to be obedient to parents and authority figures because God put them into place to help me and take care of me. But I have had a tough time keeping this commandment. No, I was not a rebellious child. I love my mom and other authority figures in my life. However, I always had a beef with God's commandment when it came to my dad.

My dad was never there for me. Yes, he was there physically, kind of, but never emotionally. He would not come to my piano or dance recitals. He didn't show up for my sports games. He didn't talk to me about my day. I never once remember him telling me he loved me or that he was proud of me. Additionally, he hardly ever went to church with us. Work, television, or sleep were more important to him than spending time with his family. I watched how my father treated my mom, my brother, and me. I witnessed his deception and greed and

saw his lack of concern for us. How was I supposed to honor a father who did not care, repeatedly told lies, and continually acted selfishly? I could not understand how to do this.

The inevitable happened. My parents divorced when I was in high school. Feelings of anger and hurt bubbled to the surface in me. The beef I had with God about my father didn't end. During my years of growing up and going through the divorce, I didn't know how to love and obey my father. I realized during this stressful time that no matter how hard I tried to please my father and make him proud of me, I could not gain his approval.

Trying to let go of the anger and hurt hasn't been easy; in fact, they are still lingering in my heart.

Obviously, my relationship with my earthly father is very strained. I am not perfect, and he is not perfect. Yet I know I am commanded to obey him. It is incredibly hard to honor and obey a parent who has not lived up to the standard God set for him. It is difficult for me in spite of God's command.

Scripture states, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). I am more than exasperated. I have been infuriated with my father for the kind of father he is. I am frustrated with how his sins have affected my life.

But I also realize that I am sinful. God does not see my father's sins differently than mine; all sins are sins in God's eyes (James 2:10). How then can I be vengeful toward a man who is the same as me in God's eyes? I cannot return an evil for an evil. Holding a grudge against my father isn't going to make anything better. It won't hurt him; in fact, it will only hurt me. As the apostle Peter advised us, "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil" (1 Peter 3:17). Peter was speak-

ing to Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. He was urging them to love their enemies and to suffer for doing good. As I see it, this also applies to those children who have had a parent like I've had.

It's easy to want revenge on those who have hurt us. But how much better could life be if instead of doing evil or thinking evil, we do good and think positively about those who hurt us? How much better could life be if we forgive others as God forgives us? Understandably, this is easier said than done, but God calls us to no longer see anyone from a worldly point of view (2 Corinthians 5:16).

By showing grace to
a parent who has
hurt us, we are
honoring and obeying
our parents just as
God has commanded.

I have learned how important it is to extend forgiveness to a parent who has left scars. Our Father extended forgiveness to us when he sent his Son to live the perfect life that we could not, to suffer death in our place, and to rise victorious over death and the devil. Our heavenly Father showed us his mercy; through him we are able to show mercy and grace to people who may have hurt us. By showing grace to a parent who has hurt us, we are honoring and obeying our parents just as God has commanded. They don't deserve this, but we didn't deserve to be saved by Jesus either.

By showing forgiveness to someone who has done us wrong, we not only show our faith but also share the love of Christ. I know my father has to hear God's law, but now I realize he also

needs to hear the gospel. He needs to be shown how to be loved again after years of hate and anger. Showing love to my father is not going to come from my own power, but from my Father above.

Currently, I am extending a line of communication to my father, letting him know I do not want to talk about the hurt. I simply want to be able to have a plain conversation with him, something we have not been able to do since the divorce happened. I wrote a letter stating that I pray for a real heartfelt apology, but I know I may never receive one. I just pray that we will be able to talk, that I will be able to forgive him for his transgressions, and that we can try to have a "normal" relationship that flows from forgiveness—Christ's forgiveness for all our sins and the forgiveness we give to those who have hurt us.

So to those of you reading this who have experienced the same kind of hurt I've had from a parent and struggle with keeping God's commandment, extend love, forgiveness, and understanding. Forgive and love a parent who has caused so much hurt . . . because God loves you. Honoring a parent who has failed to be a godly parent may take a different form than what we would have wanted, but we can still honor them in Christian love. Pray for your parents, however they may have behaved. Pray for yourself, asking God to give you a forgiving heart. Look for the opportunity to do good because of how good Jesus has been to you. Extend the love that Christ has given you.

Because of the personal nature of this article, the author's name has been withheld.

They have had too much whine

Jeffrey L. Samelson

The last thing
we want to
present to
unbelievers
around us is
a woe-is-me,
whining witness.

Maybe it's only a spelling error, but I think it's much more than that.

You see, as the beneficiaries of Christ's redemption and resurrection, we believers are supposed to see ourselves as victors over everyone and everything that opposes our Savior and his church. Yet it seems more and more Christians in our society present themselves as victims. "You can't treat us this way!" they cry. "This isn't fair!" they complain. "Feel sorry for me!" they plead.

These "Why me?" moments come in response not to real persecution or martyrdom but to changes in the law and society. Respect, which our faith used to command, decreases as Christianity's influence decreases and others increasingly deem us irrelevant, or worse. Things believers took for granted—the recognition of Christian holidays, a favored relationship with the state, a shared and stable understanding of what is moral—have slipped away and have left many saying, "Stop! You can't do that—we're Christians!" When that doesn't work, "Waah! Everybody hates us. Everything is going wrong. There's no hope left, society is doomed, and the sun will never shine on us again." (Okay, I exaggerate—a bit.)

But what examples do we have in Scripture? Did the first martyr, Stephen, who felt the stones of his enemies, say, "Stop! You can't do this to me; I follow Jesus!" When the apostle Paul listed all the times he had been attacked, abused, and imprisoned, did he say, "If things don't improve soon, I'm quitting!"?

That's not the way you remember it, right? Let's remember instead the truth of what we're experiencing now in our society. Jesus, who was "punished . . . , stricken . . . , and afflicted" and who before his oppressors "did not open his mouth," remained silent "as a sheep

before its shearers" (Isaiah 53:4,7). Jesus tells us to expect crosses, not comfort, as we follow him. He reminds us that his kingdom is not of this world, so we should not expect this world to bow to the beliefs he gave to his disciples. And Paul, who suffered untold abuse as an apostle in hostile environments, seems to be speaking directly to our situation today when he says, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.' Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life" (Philippians 2:14-16).

We shouldn't expect the Christian perspective to be at the top of our society, culture, or government. We are not entitled to special treatment because we follow Jesus, unless you count being "handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and . . . hated by all nations" as special. As we see wickedness increase around us, Jesus does not tell us that it's time for Christians to rise up and reclaim their lost advantages. Instead, he tells us that "the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:9,12).

This should not lead to despair but to a renewed focus. The gospel of salvation by grace through trust in Jesus Christ is needed all the more by everyone, us included, as the world gets increasingly unfriendly to our faith. The last thing we want to present to unbelievers around us is a woe-is-me, whining witness. Let's show them something better: that rather than victims, we are victors in Christ—and they can be too.

Contributing editor Jeffrey Samelson is pastor at Christ, Clarksville, Maryland.



The hearts of Abraham, Daniel, and the disciples were centered on the promises of forgiveness and life eternal through Jesus the Messiah. Our hearts should be as well.

The heart of Abraham

Abraham had just received the assurance that he would have a son in his old age. His joy was not just that he would have a son to fill the empty spaces of his life with Sarah. It was also the assurance that this son pointed to the coming of a greater Son who would bring forgiveness, life, and salvation for all humanity. This was God's promise.

Abraham's heart was filled with peace and joy, but God also pointed Abraham to the judgment that would come on the cities in the valley. Abraham's heart broke with the news of such judgment, "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23).

Made bold by the promise of a Savior, he bargained with God. If there are 50 righteous in the city, will you destroy the city? Then with respect and deep humility he asked again and again. For 45? 40? 30? 20? 10? "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it," the Lord said (Genesis 18:32).

We live in a world of believers and unbelievers. Daily we interact with those who are righteous by faith in Christ as well as with those who are unrighteous—those without any understanding of Christ and perhaps even animosity toward him and his followers.

Abraham came to mind as I thought about the direction of the world in which we live. He had a deep concern for the believers—the righteous—who lived among the unrighteous. He knew that before God he was as unrighteous as anyone else, including all those who lived in the cities facing judgment. But he also knew that God had credited his faith to him as righteousness. God declared him righteous by faith in the promise of God. Outside that promise, all were unrighteous.

So Abraham prayed for them. Yes, first he prayed that the righteous be protected from the judgment to come. But consider that his prayer was also

for the unrighteous. The unrighteous would be spared for the sake of the righteous. Therefore, they would still have time to know God's promise of righteousness through the Messiah.

Are we looking at the cities in the valley today? What do we do in a world that turns away from the Lord of grace and his will? Pray with the heart of Abraham. Like him, our prayers first consider God's people: Protect them from difficulty and from any judgment God has in store for those who reject him. Also like Abraham, we pray for all others as we do in the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We plead for God to lead people to repentance and entrance into his kingdom as he did with the thief on the cross.

But we also realize that our society's laws allow us all to live together—righteous and unrighteous—safely and in tranquility, in spite of our differences. Those laws, however, do not make right what is contrary to God's will, even if the highest courts claim so—abortion and distortion of marriage included. We have the example of the disciples arrested in Jerusalem for proclaiming Christ crucified for sinners. Another example is Daniel, who continued to pray to and worship his Lord knowing the dire consequences of his actions.

The hearts of Abraham, Daniel, and the disciples were centered on the promises of forgiveness and life eternal through Jesus the Messiah. Our hearts should be as well. Everything else is garbage, as Paul reminded the Philippians (3:8). Such hearts then pray for all others and treat them with respect and dignity.

Lord, give me a heart like Abraham.

"We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church."

Joel D. Otto

Catholics. Baptists. Methodists. Presbyterians. Pentecostals. Several flavors of Lutheran. With all of these different church bodies, how can we believe that there is "one holy Christian and apostolic Church"?

There have always been divisions in the church on earth. It is a reality because of false teachers, as Jesus warned (Matthew 7:15) and the apostles wrote (Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 John 4:1-6). When the Council of Nicaea met in A.D. 325, there were Arians who taught that Jesus was not equal to the Father and Donatists who believed that the validity of the sacraments hinged on the moral character of the clergy.

Yet down through the centuries, the church has confessed, "We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church." So what is meant by these words?

We first need to understand what the word *church* means. It is translated from a Greek word that means "called out." Those who belong to the church have been called out of the darkness of unbelief to the light of faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14). Believers in Jesus are the only true members of the one holy Christian and apostolic church.

That's why we believe that there is only *one* true church. This one church isn't equal to a visible organization. We cannot point to a church body or congregation and say, "There is the one true church." Members of the one church will be found in church bodies and congregations where the gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's command.

We believe that there is only one church because the only way to be a member is to believe in Jesus as the only Savior. He is the only way, truth, and life (John 14:6). Jesus himself said, "There shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16). So Christ is the only foundation and cornerstone of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The church is also described as "apostolic" because the only way to learn about Jesus is through the Word of God, the writings of the apostles and prophets. God's Word—the inspired words God gave to the apostles and prophets—tells us of Christ and is the only source of truth in the church.

Since the Holy Spirit has brought us to faith in Christ, we are a "holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21). By faith in Jesus, we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Peter 2:9). We have an incredible status because the Spirit has brought us into the one church.

Even though false teachers continue to divide the visible church, the one true church will not be overcome because the gospel will continue to be proclaimed (Matthew 16:18; 24:14). And so we continue to confess with confidence as all believers have: "We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church."

EXPLORING THE WORD

1. What are the differences between the invisible church and visible churches?
2. Describe the importance of the apostolic nature of the church.
3. In the original Greek of the Nicene Creed, the word translated "Christian" is actually "catholic." Literally, the word *catholic* means "universal." In what ways does the Roman Catholic Church misuse this word? Why is a proper understanding of this word a comforting concept?

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



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

A hummingbird moth with a green and brown body and long proboscis is hovering near a cluster of small purple flowers. The background is a soft-focus field of similar flowers.

Joy lives

A bottle full of dead leaves offers an opportunity to remember our Savior's resurrection.

Jane Schlenvogt-Dew

"There was a cocoon inside," he claimed. It was a large plastic bottle full of leaves. Reaction in the classroom was subdued. We didn't see it. Even turning the bottle and peering in at every angle brought no satisfaction. We never did see it, even as the leaves dried up and turned brown. Fall turned into winter. The bottle was set aside in the classroom library, forgotten in the busyness of classroom life.

It was a Wednesday in April, seven months later. First and second graders had just returned from a long Easter weekend. Our new study was insects. After an introductory story, it was a satisfying moment as peace settled over the classroom while all were busy creating fanciful stories about how the zebra butterfly got his stripes or why the morph moth turned blue.

From the back of the room I heard

a soft whoosh. I looked up to see something black make a wide swoop just over the heads of the children and then land on the classroom window. No one else seemed to notice; heads bowed intently over their stories. I was quite puzzled as to where it had come from when all the windows and doors were closed.

An idea came to me, and I quietly stepped to the library and picked up the abandoned bottle. All appeared unchanged until I noticed on the inside a few drops of fluid. That was all. But somehow I knew.

I softly called to Brian and held up the bottle. He looked up, then instantly dropped his head and said, "Go ahead, you might as well throw it away. Nothing is going to happen." I calmly called to him again and pointed to the window where the creature rested. Hope appeared in his eyes. Then a broad smile broke across his face.

What happened? Research answered our questions: The hummingbird moth drinks the nectar of flowers, such as honeysuckle, just like those in Brian's home flower garden. It hides its eggs

in fall leaves, and the adults emerge the following spring!

This was also a wonderful opportunity to teach more than insects!

After his crucifixion, Jesus was laid in the grave at a very dark hour. That was it; his followers looked for nothing more. They went home. Only Jesus did not stay in his tomb. Three days later he rose. Life came from a body everyone knew to be dead.

How thoroughly I enjoyed the gasps, smiles, and lights in the eyes of the children. We saw that life had emerged from what we all had thought were just dead leaves. How thoroughly God must enjoy the gasps, smiles, and lights in the hearts of his children as faith in the Savior comes alive! How much joy there will be as we too are made alive again for eternity! "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you" (Romans 8:11).

Jane Schlenvogt-Dew is a member at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin.