

Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE



The gospel in
the written word

Northwestern Publishing House celebrates
125 years of Christian publishing. *Page 10*



Create memories. Strengthen *faith*. Enjoy life.

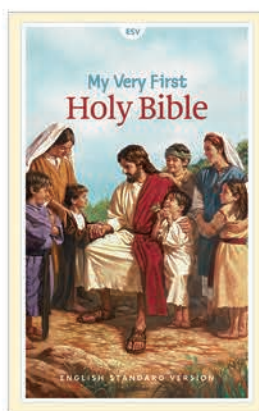
With **books and gifts** from
Northwestern Publishing House

My Very First Holy Bible (ESV)

Help the next generation grow in faith with this complete children's Bible! Features 120 vibrant illustrations, plus "Seek and Find" sections for added learning. Includes book introductions, a dictionary, maps, timelines, and much more! Designed for ages 5-12.

Hardcover, 1888 pages.

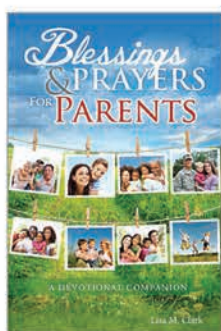
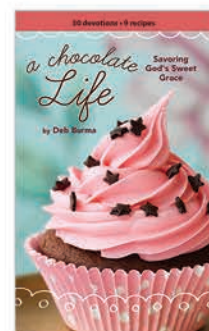
LU0102397, \$29.99



A Chocolate Life: Savoring God's Sweet Grace

From sweet morsels of joy to bitter nuggets of sorrow, this uniquely themed booklet tackles a variety of important topics. Each of the 30 devotions will help you connect to the saving grace of Christ and satisfy your spiritual hunger. Also includes 9 delicious recipes!

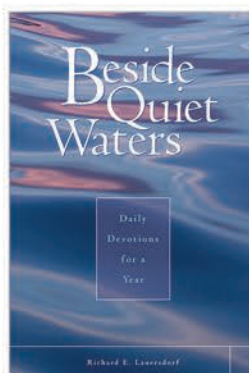
Softcover, 63 pages. LU064065, \$1.25



Blessings and Prayers for Parents

Though you may not always get it right, your good and perfect Father walks with you every day. A reminder of God's forgiveness and peace, this pocket-sized devotional will offer constant encouragement as you seek to fulfill a role he also holds: parent. Softcover, 191 pages. LU064117, \$4.99

Ideal as the kids head back to school!



Beside Quiet Waters: Daily Devotions for a Year

When life's storms rage around you, turn to the one who provides true peace: Jesus, God's own Son. This uplifting devotional relates Scripture to everyday events, helping you hear—and heed—the call of the Good Shepherd in everything you do. Softcover, 370 pages.

LU060735, \$18.50

Let them choose their favorite Christ-centered gift! **NPH Gift Cards** are great for any occasion and can be purchased in any dollar amount.



To order, call **1-800-662-6022** or visit **www.nph.net**.

Availability and prices are subject to change without notice. All orders are subject to shipping and handling fees and sales tax where applicable.



**NORTHWESTERN
PUBLISHING HOUSE**



**NPH CHRISTIAN
BOOKS & GIFTS STORE**

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

**NPH
EXTRA
PROGRAM**

f Find us on
Facebook

FEATURES

- 10 Printed comfort and strength**
The gospel is central to the mission of Northwestern Publishing House.
Raymond W. Schumacher

- 12 Sustained by Jesus' promise to return**
While we do Jesus' work here on earth, we treasure his promise to return.
John A. Vieths

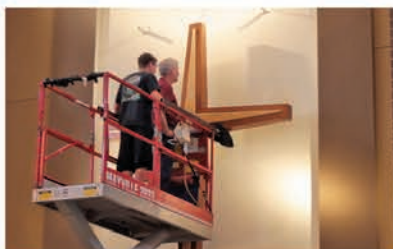
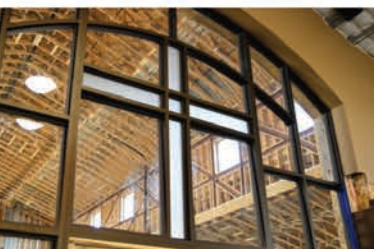
- 14 Confessions of faith**
A man rediscovers the truths he learned years ago.
Ann M. Ponath

- 16 Heart to heart: Parent conversations**
How does being a Christian affect my parenting?

- 28 Mission stories: Zambia**
Sharon K. Hartmann

- 30 A story of God's grace**
An author shares her amazing life story, a story that can't be told without talking about God's grace.
Julie K. Wietzke

- 36 We have arrived!**
Through Jesus, we can escape our selfish desires and live a life of service.
Donald W. Patterson



Build your future. Build your church.

WELS Church Extension Fund (WELS CEF) and the Board for Home Missions work together to help build churches for future generations.

The money WELS CEF uses to provide loans and grants come from investments and gifts. Currently more than 3,500 investors have entrusted WELS CEF with more than \$79.4 million. During 2016, WELS CEF provided more than \$29 million in loans to 19 congregations and \$2.9 million in grants to 11 mission congregations.

Learn more at wels.net/cef.

The purchase of WELS CEF securities is subject to risks, which are described in our Offering Circular. This is not an offer to sell, nor the solicitation to buy our securities. We will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The offering is made solely by the Offering Circular.

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
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

©2016 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

I love books. I love holding them in my hands, turning the pages, and sneaking quick peeks ahead to find out what's going to happen next. I also love talking about books with others—the plot developments, the characters, the portrayed messages, the feelings the book elicited.

So I was very excited to interview Mahtob Mahmoody, a WELS member who just released a book about her life. (Or course, I read the book first!) The book has a strong Christian message, but what struck me was that she told me she didn't set out to write a "Christian" book. She just told her life story, and God's grace shone through, eliciting comments from around the world. Read more on p. 30.

Sharing the gospel message through the written word is a blessing, an honor, and a responsibility. The Holy Spirit works through these messages—whether in printed books or online—to create and strengthen faith. Northwestern Publishing House is celebrating 125 years of producing and publishing solid Christ-centered materials that are used in our congregations and around the world. *Forward in Christ* magazine is just one example. Discover others on p. 10, and pray for continued blessings on NPH's future endeavors.

Julie Wietzke



7



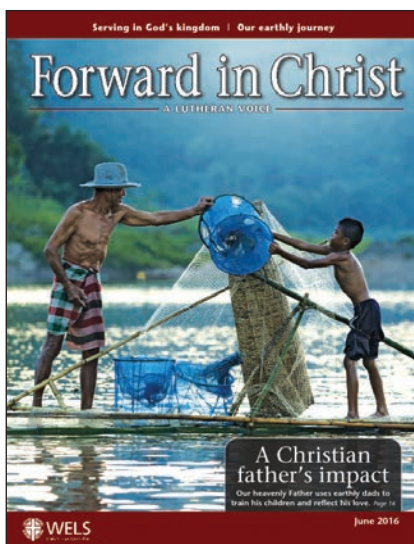
28



30

IN EVERY ISSUE

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 6 | Feedback Readers share their opinions | 20 | News What's happening in WELS |
| 7 | Devotion A supply list for success | 32 | Editorial comment Are you a people-pleaser? |
| 8 | From the president's desk Obeying God rather than man | 33 | Bible study The ripple effect: Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus |
| 9 | Light for our path The true religion | 34 | A thought Violence |
| 18 | Teen talk Dancing with God | 35 | Interactive Bible study Great stories of the Bible |
| 19 | Bulletin board Announcements from around the synod | | |



FATHER'S DAY ENCOURAGEMENT

I appreciated the encouragement for fathers in the Father's Day issue of FIC [June]. But I regretted the failure to address the plague of fatherlessness, which is leaving half of all newborns vulnerable to poverty, drugs, violence, and crime. Fatherlessness does not happen without flagrant sins against the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Commandments. Does the Lutheran Voice have a responsibility to address this disaster?

Rolfe Westendorf
Dalton, Wisconsin

NEW TESTAMENT FREEDOMS

Perhaps in his article on "halal" meat ["Light for our path," May], Prof. Pope should have considered the directives in Acts chapter 15, often referred to as the first Christian Council. There the "apostles and elders," along with the Holy Spirit (v. 28), required that the Gentile believers (us?) "abstain from food sacrificed to idols." What is "halal" but the dedication (sacrificing?) of an animal to Allah? It sounds to me like the Jerusalem Council is telling us to avoid such food. What kind of testimony are we giving when people see us eating food dedicated to Allah? Just wondering.

Gary Cox
Appleton, Wisconsin

Through my Bible in 3 years



Read or listen online at wels.net/bible3.

AUGUST 2016

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Ne. 12 | 12. Ps. 103 | 23. Zec. 8 |
| 2. Ne. 13 | 13. Ps. 104 | 24. Zec. 9 & 10 |
| 3. Psalm 90 | 14. Ps. 105 | 25. Zec. 11 |
| 4. Ps. 91 | 15. Ps. 106:1-33 | 26. Zec. 12 & 13 |
| 5. Ps. 92 & 93 | 16. Ps. 106:34-48 | 27. Zec. 14 |
| 6. Ps. 94 | 17. Haggai 1 | 28. Malachi 1:1-2:9 |
| 7. Ps. 95 & 96 | 18. Hag. 2 | 29. Mal. 2:10-3:6 |
| 8. Ps. 97 & 98 | 19. Zechariah 1 & 2 | 30. Mal. 3:7-4:6 |
| 9. Ps. 99 & 100 | 20. Zec. 3 & 4 | 31. James 1:1-18 |
| 10. Ps. 101 | 21. Zec. 5 & 6 | |
| 11. Ps. 102 | 22. Zec. 7 | |

Prof. James Pope replies: The Jerusalem Council (Acts chapter 15) addressed the question of whether or not Gentile converts needed to observe any Old Testament ceremonial laws to become members of the Christian church. The council affirmed that faith in Jesus Christ alone saves. At the same time the council directed Gentile converts to abstain from activities that would have been offensive to Jewish Christians who were transitioning from Old Testament obligations to New Testament freedoms. When we see in 1 Corinthians chapter 8 that the apostle Paul acknowledged that Christians, in good conscience, could eat meat sacrificed to idols, it becomes clear that the directive of the Jerusalem Council was not a universal law of God that applies to us today. There are no New Testament ceremonial laws.

PROCLAIMING WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR

Thanks for "For People" [June]. I'd like to suggest expanding on those issues.

What does our New England, or New Mexico, or new American neighbor hear when we say "God graciously invites us . . ."? Even, or especially, if he consults a dictionary or a thesaurus.

Dealing with struggling English-as-a-second-language immigrants—and homegrown electronic media literates—should make us alert to ways our in-house vocabulary often doesn't proclaim what people need to hear.

Robert Hochmuth
San Jose, California

CORRECTION

Prof. Bill Tackmier—not Prof. Dan Leyrer—served as our seminary consultant for the July issue of *Forward in Christ*. We thank Prof. Tackmier for his monthly service of reviewing the magazine.

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*.

A supply list for success

Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Psalm 25:4,5

Steven J. Pagels

This is the time of year when millions of American families participate in the annual ritual known as back-to-school shopping. I don't have to tell you how expensive that can be. Last year the average cost of school supplies for an elementary school student surpassed \$100. Add on sports fees, instrument rentals, and field trips, and the cost jumps to more than \$500.

Most parents bite the bullet and buy everything on the teacher's list because they want to give their children the tools they will need to succeed. There is no guarantee, however, that having a desk full of supplies will lead to academic success. If you want to excel in the classroom, you don't have to spend all kinds of money. According to David, what every student really needs is a good attitude and a good teacher.

AN EAGER STUDENT

When I picture David, I see a shepherd boy with a staff in his hand or a king wearing a golden crown. I have never imagined David as a student sitting behind a desk, and yet that is how the psalmist describes himself in Psalm 25. He is eager to learn. He is asking for guidance. More than anything else, he wants the Lord to lead him down the right path.

It wasn't always that way for David, though. There were times when he charted his own course, when he chose to go his own way, when he put his trust in his own instincts and intelligence. David pleaded with God not to remember the sins of his youth and his rebellious ways (Psalm 25:7) as he struggled to move on from his less-than-perfect past.

Can you relate? Do you wince when you recall some of your past sins? Do you



ever wish you could go back in time and undo what you did? Do you get frustrated because nothing you do is able to remove those permanent marks from your record? There is a way to get rid of your guilt, but you don't need to be better or try harder to do it. Instead, David invites you to take a seat next to him at the feet of the master teacher.

Jesus' disciples called him "Teacher" . . .
But the lessons Jesus taught went far beyond the classroom.

MORE THAN A TEACHER

Jesus' disciples called him "Teacher" because he was a teacher. Jesus was the world's greatest teacher. He spoke with perfect clarity because he was perfect. He always spoke the truth because he is the truth. But the lessons Jesus taught

went far beyond the classroom, and the words of David remind us of that.

Some teachers do nothing more than stand in the front of the class and tell their students what they need to do to pass. Better teachers roll up their sleeves and do everything they can to help their students succeed. But only one teacher in the history of the world took it upon himself to do something his pupils could never do. Jesus took our place to rescue us from eternal death. He passed every test. He has erased every mistake. He has defeated every enemy.

As a result, we have hope. Like David, you and I have hope "all day long" because our Teacher is also our Savior.

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



Mark Schweden

Our synod
will continue
to insist on our
constitutional
freedom to
practice our
religion in
keeping with
our beliefs.

Obeying God rather than man

As Americans, we have enjoyed the blessing of freedom to practice our religion according to our beliefs and conscience. The First Amendment to the US Constitution states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The double intent of those words was to prevent the government from establishing an official state religion and to prevent the government from restricting the right of Americans to worship and believe according to their conscience.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is deeply thankful for this constitutional protection of our religious liberty. The freedom to believe and to proclaim what the Scriptures teach without fear of restriction or retribution has been a precious blessing to us.

When that liberty is threatened by government laws and policies or curtailed by a hostile culture, our synod will continue to insist on our constitutional freedom to practice our religion in keeping with our beliefs. If anyone attempts to restrict or limit that freedom in any way, to silence our message through threat or accusation, or to impose penalties, we will continue to hold to the truths of God’s Word without compromise. Like the apostle Paul who appealed to Caesar, we will seek to have our freedom protected through legal means. But if we are ultimately placed in the position of making a choice, we will echo the words of the apostles who said in the face of pressure to be silent, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29 ESV).

We will hold to our beliefs because we are convinced that they are rooted in the word of God himself. The principles and values that God has established do not change with society or culture, nor are they shaped by human law. God’s truths remain unchanging and constant, and we will not depart

from those truths. We also will hold to our beliefs because that word of God reveals the only solution to what human beings need most: the saving good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. To fail to hold to all the truths of God’s Word would be a shameful and unloving abandonment of fellow sinners who need to know God’s love and forgiveness in Christ. Far from being hateful or bigoted (those accusations have already been made), holding to the truths of God’s Word and sharing those truths is the ultimate expression of love and concern.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod believes that every person is a sinner in need of God’s forgiveness in Christ. We believe that every person needs to hear God’s call to repentance for every sin, regardless of the type or nature of that sin. We also believe that sinners, once they have realized their sin and come to know God’s forgiveness in Christ, will strive to turn from those sins and live their lives in keeping with the values and principles that God has established in his Word. We will teach God’s values in our churches and schools and will welcome all who desire to be instructed in those values and to adopt those values as their own.

We are confident that one of the founding principles of our country is the right of all religions to practice their beliefs without constraint imposed by a hostile culture or by governmental authority. But even if those freedoms are taken away, the gospel of Jesus Christ will continue to be proclaimed and confessed boldly and faithfully as he has promised.

Light for our path

There are so many religions that claim to be the true religion. How can I be sure that what I have been taught is the truth?

James F. Pope

The Bible provides instructions like this: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1). I see your question as a way of following through on that advice. I can suggest three courses of action:

CONSIDER THE SOURCES

Only a few books in the world claim to be foundational for a particular religion. Some of those books include the Qur’an (Islam), the Vedas (Hinduism), Tao Te Ching (Taoism), the Tripitaka (Buddhism), and the Book of Mormon (Mormons). An examination of these books reveals numerous problems. Different versions exist. Inaccuracies abound.

The Bible has no equal when it comes to books associated with religions. That is true especially when it comes to the content of those books. Despite being written by some three dozen people over a period of 1,500 years, there is complete unity in the Scriptures; all of it points to Jesus Christ as Savior. In addition, God’s guiding hand has preserved his inspired Word with remarkable accuracy over the years.

CONTRAST THE MESSAGES

Page through the “holy books” of non-Christian religions and you will find a common theme. The gods of those religions are demanding, not giving. Adherents are told what they must do and not do to get in on the god’s good side. But will people be able to do enough to please their god before life on earth comes to an end? Uncertainty reigns. Fear dominates.

How different the God of the Bible is! After the Israelites passed through the Red Sea on their exodus from Egypt, the assembly asked in song: “Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?” (Exodus 15:11). Yes,

which God has rescued people who were naturally opposed to him? None but the true God, the God of the Bible. Only the God of the Bible has shown sacrificial love to sinners. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

CONVINCED BY GOD

While I can show you differences between Christianity and non-Christian religions, only God can convince you that what you have learned is the truth.

See if you can identify with Jeremiah in the Bible. When life’s circumstances tempted the prophet Jeremiah to withhold God’s Word from other people, he observed: “But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name, his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot’” (Jeremiah 20:9). Consider the two men on the road to Emmaus. When they heard Jesus speak to them, they said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32).

If your reaction to reading the Bible is different from reading any other book, that is not a chance happening. Because the Bible is “alive and active” (Hebrews 4:12), it has the power to convince and convict people of the truth. In that regard, God himself assures you that you have been taught the truth—his truth.

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

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

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

Psalm 119:105

1891-2016



1 2 5 YEARS AND COUNTING

Printed comfort and strength

The gospel was central to the mission of Northwestern Publishing House 125 years ago and still is today.

Raymond W. Schumacher

The fields are ripe for harvest. Jesus reminded his disciples of that in Samaria. They are still ripe. Our task is always to put the gospel in contact with people.

With a clear understanding that the spiritual harvest fields are ripe, a Christian immigrant from East Asia works to translate Bible study materials to train church leaders in her native land. She marvels at the ability of the citizens of the United States to be able to worship freely, and at the abundance of materials we have at our fingertips—Bibles, as well as devotional books, Bible studies, commentaries, and worship materials that are faithful to the Scriptures. She recognizes the importance of the written word for spreading the message about Jesus and for training and encouraging fellow Christians back home.

The written word is a critical part of sharing the gospel. It places the gospel in the hands of people so the Holy Spirit can convert, strengthen, and comfort. One hundred twenty-five years ago, another generation understood its importance. On June 23, 1891, our forefathers resolved to open

a bookstore and print shop. Two months later, on Aug. 28, Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) was officially incorporated. In the century and a quarter since, NPH has prepared printed materials that maintain Lutheran doctrine and practice. Those materials have been translated into many languages and spread around the world.

MEDITATIONS SHARES THE GOSPEL

But what happens at NPH doesn't only find its way into world mission fields. It also reaches the hands of people in our own country. Four times each year, a truck backs up to the loading dock on the east side of the NPH warehouse and unloads seven pallets stacked high with *Meditations* devotional booklets.

The staff packs and ships the 90,000 printed copies to the congregations of the synod. In many homes, husbands and wives benefit from the spiritual interlude as they read the devotions together. In other homes, entire families use *Meditations*. Some church groups reflect on the message of a devotion as they gather together for a meeting. Some booklets are left in nursing homes or hospital waiting rooms to be read long after the date stamped on the cover. Only God knows how many hearts are encouraged through these devotions.

THE GOSPEL AND OUR CHILDREN

Each week more than 20,000 children in Lutheran elementary schools—and thousands more in Sunday schools—study the Bible using the Christ-Light religion curriculum. This sizeable army of young people is being prepared to find its way in a world scarred by sin, where dangerous and confusing messages bombard impressionable minds. Teachers use the materials to combat a variety of distractions that threaten to derail faith.

In addition, this last year alone, an estimated 14,000 sixth- through eighth-grade students grew in their understanding of Christian doctrine as they focused on the six chief parts of Luther's Catechism.

If those numbers seem impressive, keep in mind that we live at a time when the student population is lower than in the past. It fills us with awe to think of the sheer numbers of those who have prepared for confirmation, Communion, and service in the church using catechisms and curricula developed as a result of a decision made in 1891.

SING AND MAKE MUSIC

God's people come together to worship the God who has saved them. The gospel has touched their hearts and moved them to sing praises. Not only



do they sing praise, but in their worship resources they also find comfort and strength. Christians of all ages wrap their arms around their hymnals and carry them—along with their Bibles—in good and bad days. Music for organ, piano, and other instruments inspire and lift up the hearts of God's people. Working with the synod's Commission on Worship, NPH has produced a hymnal that has sold more than 469,000 copies—a resource that is common in almost all of the synod's 1,270 congregations.

The familiar red book, along with its blue supplement, provides the structure for worship services that are built around the confession and absolution of sins. They are a source of liturgies as well as hymns that place before us a satisfying musical feast that refreshes us by pointing to Jesus and the forgiveness hungry souls crave.

MORE RESOURCES TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

The NPH Board of Directors, made up of one professor each from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College, one teacher, two pastors, and four laymen, recognizes that the appetite and need for solid Bible-based material extend beyond Sunday worship and Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school classes. For that reason, the board has tasked six theologically trained editors with the development of books and resources that will help church leaders carry out their

ministries on the solid foundation of God's Word.

Pastors, teachers, and church leaders have benefited through a wide array of professional resources: biblical commentaries; Bible studies; doctrinal studies; as well as books on biblical counseling, evangelism, stewardship, preaching, youth ministry, and church life.

The written word is a critical part of sharing the gospel.

The editors at NPH also seek to develop materials that will assist God's people in applying God's Word to the variety of challenges and issues they face. One such project is a series of devotional books for those who have learned they are terminally ill, those grappling with grief at the loss of a loved one, or those troubled by loss of other kinds. So far those devotions have benefited thousands of families and individuals. After weeping beside a freshly opened grave, grieving loved ones have found rest for their aching hearts in God's words of comfort from those devotions in the quiet hours afterward. They are reminded of a greater comfort than that their loved one's memory will live on in those left behind. The greater comfort,

rather, is the promise that the loved one now enjoys the bliss of worshipping at the throne of the Lamb, the same Savior worshiped while on earth—the Savior whose words assure us, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

God's pledge to us is that he will bless this gospel message, whenever it is proclaimed. "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). We can only speculate about the great things God has accomplished over the course of 125 years of publishing. Souls found comfort. Marriages were saved or strengthened. Hearts were given courage to face spiritual challenges. Generations of pastors, teachers, and church leaders were encouraged to stand solidly on the truth.

Today, we can't help but wonder if our forefathers had even an inkling of how God would bless that decision made 125 years ago and bless the church as a result of that decision.

Ray Schumacher, an editor at Northwestern Publishing House, is a member at St. Peter, Helenville, Wisconsin.

This is the first article in a two-part series on Northwestern Publishing House and the printed word.

Learn more about Northwestern Publishing House at www.nph.net.



SUSTAINED

BY JESUS' PROMISE TO RETURN

**Jesus ascended and started a new chapter for us,
his disciples. While we do his work here,
we treasure his promise to return.**

John A. Vieths

Ten years ago we took our oldest child, just a 14-year-old girl then, a thousand miles away from home to prep school. After a weekend of unloading luggage, working through registration lines, attending orientation meetings, and gathering for the school's opening worship, the time came. We all went to the car. We talked, somewhat uncomfortably, about schedules and whom to contact and when we would see each other again. We knew what was coming next: saying good-bye. There were hugs and tears. Then hugs and tears again. It was time to stop delaying. It was only making it harder. I told my wife to get into the car. I began to drive away. In the rearview mirror were my daughter and a friend, crying, watching

us go. They didn't move until we were out of sight. I don't know how long they stayed there, looking down the street after our car had disappeared, before they finally turned and went to start this new chapter in their lives.

It's not hard to understand why it took some time for Jesus' disciples to leave the Mount of Olives on the day he ascended. The angels didn't ask them, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?" because they were confused. It was a gentle way of telling them that it was time to go, time to start the new chapter in their lives.

The angels' urging came with a promise. "This same Jesus, who has been taken

from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Jesus has promised to return, and that sustains us in this long wait while he is away.

UNCHANGED BY TIME

Time has a way of changing us, sometimes for the better, but not always. Time also has a way of changing our relationships. No doubt you have known the awkward moments when you meet up with a friend or family member after long years apart. Something seems unfamiliar. Sometimes pauses and short silences punctuate the conversation. As you get reacquainted you sense different views, different values, a different person than the one you remember.

Something has been lost.

That is not a worry while we wait for Jesus to return. “This same Jesus” is coming back, not a different one. He “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He “loves me every day the same,” we learned to sing as Jesus’ little lambs. That is still true. It will be true on the day he returns. He once came and loved us all the way to the shameful cross and an ugly death. The same love brings him back to raise our bodies and take them home to live with him.

Time also has a way of aging us, and with each passing year our powers fade. By the time we reach the end, we are often just a shadow of the person we were in the glory of our youth. The reality of the slow but certain changes becomes troublesome to us. But time has no such effect on Jesus while he is away. It cannot reach him there. He is no longer bound by earthly time, aging, sin, and death.

VISIBLE FOR ALL TO SEE

The disciples watched the mighty victor over sin and Satan ascend from the Mount of Olives to claim his heavenly throne. He will appear in power and glory undiminished on the day he keeps his promise to return. Visually, he will return in even greater glory than he left.

Then, finally, our long wait of faith will be replaced by sight. Then we will see what now we can only believe. Even now his cross asserts that all our sins have been forgiven. His resurrection seals the promise and makes us doubly sure.

But who can see their sins forgiven? We don’t see them fall from our bodies like dust shaken from our clothes.

“Your iniquities have separated you from your God,” Isaiah once warned (59:2). That, we might think, is a truth about sin we can see. After all, haven’t we been separated from Jesus for nearly

two millennia? Doesn’t our world seem more godless as more people abandon all that is good and wholesome? A vast canyon appears to stretch between us and the Almighty.

Still, Jesus has left us with promises that not all things are as they appear. “You who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13). “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). “Surely I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). God has reconciled us and brought us near. Sin is not keeping us apart, in spite of the apparent separation. Invisibly, Jesus is still here, still with us. For now, we take God’s promises on faith.

Jesus has promised to return, and that sustains us in this long wait while he is away.

At Jesus’ return, we will see. The apostle John already gives us a little glimpse of what will be. Those who once were soiled with sin “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). Those to whom God once seemed so far away “are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence” (Revelation 7:15). Cleansed of sin, we will see God face-to-face and live in his presence with glorified bodies.

READY TO TAKE US TO HEAVEN

So we look forward to the room waiting for us in our Father’s house and cling to Jesus’ promise: “If I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3).

Have you ever met anyone famous? Are you the kind of person who would not wash your hand for a week if you shook hands with your idol or hero? My personal encounters with the rich and famous are limited—a couple of retired NFL hall-of-famers, a relative of a well-known politician. Our meetings were polite, but brief. I’m certainly not going to be invited for dinner anytime soon.

However, the most influential person in all of world history, the founder of the world’s biggest world religion, the Creator of the Universe and Savior of the human race holds out more than a dinner invitation. He has prepared a room in his Father’s house, the most magnificent home ever imagined. Better than having a luxurious place of our own somewhere down the road, all alone, we will live at home with him, surrounded by the love and laughter of the great extended family of faith reunited in his presence. He will move us in permanently. He promised to return to take us there himself. The time is drawing near.

That makes our waiting now a little easier to bear. The days outside, the days away, the days of work and travel are almost over. Jesus will come back soon. His promise keeps us going until he does.

John Vieths is pastor at Grace, Norman, Oklahoma.

This is the final article in a four-part series on Jesus’ ascension and the work he continues to do for us.

A man rediscovers the truths he learned years ago at a WELS Lutheran elementary school.

Ann M. Ponath

God tells us that his Word “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). As Christians, we want to see results, but God reminds us that we are simply to proclaim the gospel. We do not always see the results of that work, and we may wonder if the Word had any impact at all. But sometimes it just takes time to see the fruit of the sowing.

PLANTING THE SEED

Quinton Presley was born and raised in Milwaukee, the third of four children. When he was ten, Presley and his siblings were enrolled at Mount Lebanon Lutheran School and soon afterward became members of the church. Presley says that this was “a beneficial opportunity for me. It helped my faith become stronger.” He recalls participating in Bible study every morning and in prayers throughout the school day. “I really enjoyed the stories from the Bible when I was younger. It helped me gain a great moral understanding of how I should lead my life,” he says. “During those times, learning about Christ and

showing appreciation for what he had done for us was the norm.” Extracurricular activities like basketball and track taught Presley “to be a team player and develop good sportsmanship,” and “Christmas and Easter plays and events brought great excitement, as we would prepare for weeks to present in front of all of our families and friends.”

Although things were going well at school, when Presley was 12, “things at home, unfortunately, began to fall apart with my parents.” After just two years at Mt. Lebanon, the Presley children were transferred to Young Leaders Academy, a local YMCA school. The school environment changed significantly. The biggest setback was the division of church and religion from academics. “Though the learning environment was not the same, my background from Mt. Lebanon allowed me to adapt to the changes,” says Presley.

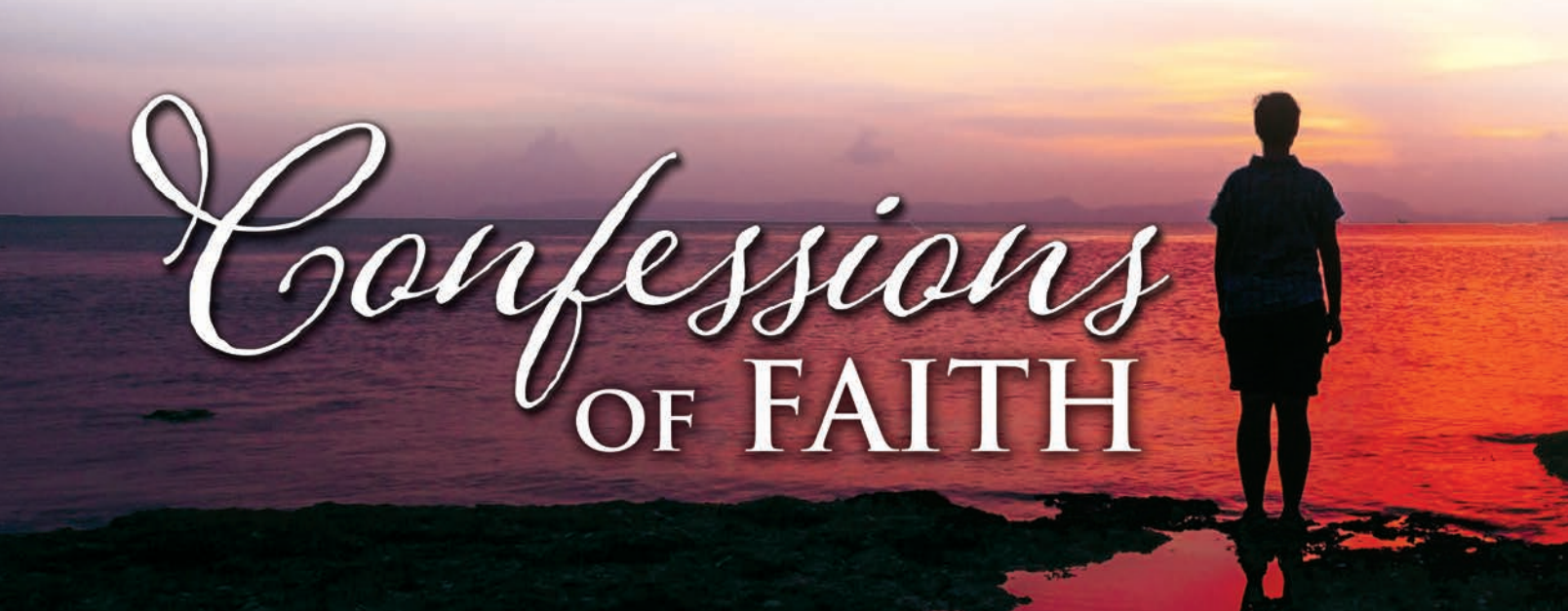
At Young Leaders Academy, Presley learned “more about my heritage and ancestral background, which was also priceless to me.” He says, looking back, “I was blessed to learn and get mentoring from teachers who influenced me positively. There was limitless guidance it seemed to me in the world, and I have always loved to learn.” Presley graduated from high school and continued his education in the field of electrical engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

HARVESTING THE FRUIT

But Presley’s story is not over yet. In his junior year of college—“due to stress from a combination of working full time third shift at a local casino, family issues, and school work overload”—Presley developed alopecia, a type of hair loss. “One day I woke up with just one patch in my hair, the next with another, until eventually ninety percent of my hair had fallen out. This was very tough,” he says.

At the age of 22, Presley had completely lost all of his hair. Multiple doctors could find no cure, which caused Presley more stress. But it was a blessing in disguise: “During my early period of losing my hair I realized my approach to handling my problems was completely flawed,” he says. “I had succumbed to the ways of the world and not the ways of God.”

Through all of this, Presley was dating a woman who was at the time Muslim. “Though my girlfriend and I were of different religions, we shared all the same moral values . . . the only separation was my love for Christ. So, with our shared passion for learning and myself mentally fighting alopecia, we were directed to Siloah Lutheran Church through a mutual acquaintance.” It was Presley’s girlfriend who added his name to the prayer list. “This was something I was deeply embarrassed about, but at the



Confessions OF FAITH

same time, I knew through my religious background that prayer is the way to overcome my mental struggles,” he says.

He continues, “I had the opportunity to present myself to Pastor Tullberg within the first couple of months, and I gained a great appreciation for his structure of prayers, service, and loving support. My girlfriend and I had visited churches prior to coming to Siloah, but immediately she and I were attracted to Siloah and felt a bond.” Eventually, Presley and his girlfriend became members.

ENJOYING THE HARVEST

But another chapter soon unfolded. Presley moved to Phoenix to find a job and within a month “was blessed to receive a position as an electrical design engineer.” He has begun to attend two WELS churches in the Phoenix area regularly, although he “still has yet to decide which one I will set as my church home.” Presley says, “What I enjoy most is that the WELS churches are consistent. The churches have been extremely warm and friendly, providing the same structure.”

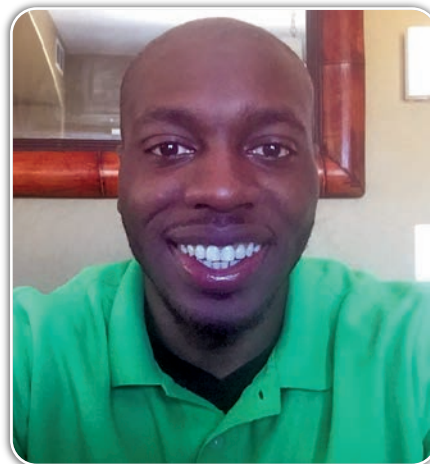
Presley says he appreciates what he learned at a WELS school. “Mount Lebanon had a significant impact on my early years of life because I was introduced to Christ at an early age and, therefore, was taught how to live according to the Bible. I always stressed

that my morals and ethics were a direct reflection from learning the stories of the Bible and what God commanded of us. I have received many blessings such as being able to complete college as a first-generation member in my family, having multiple job opportunities, and meeting my best friend who became my girlfriend.”

He continues, “I would like readers to know that I have learned that we are all part of God’s family and no matter what your background is, you can find the foundation and the path of your life through Christ.”

Presley still has alopecia. “It’s something I continue to pray about, but I am very healthy physically and I appreciate what I do have more than what I don’t have,” he says. Perhaps this continuing trial fits under Presley’s favorite Bible theme: perseverance. “I believe in the darkest days of my life that through my trust in God and following his ways, I have been able to persevere through many obstacles and achieve my goals,” he says.

Back in Milwaukee, Presley’s former teacher, Roger Kramp, was excited to hear about his past student. “Hearing Quinton’s story brings me great joy. As Lutheran educators, often the faith we see growing in young people becomes routine. We don’t always get to see the fruits of faith produced from the seed



Quinton Presley

that has been sown in the hearts of those children who don’t sit beside us in the church pews every Sunday. Mostly, though, it is a testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word. From simple childhood truths, Bible passages, and hymn verses to faith in an adult—what a miracle of God!” Yes, God’s miracle comes through the Word. It is the means through which God keeps us faithful to Jesus.

God’s Word will not return empty. He has promised. May he continue to bless Presley and all in whom his Word has been sown.

Ann Ponath is a member at Christ, North Saint Paul, Minnesota.



It's a label many of us wear with pride: "Christian parent." What does it mean, though? How does a Christian mom or dad parent differently than a non-Christian one? Our authors this month give us some examples from their lives, which may help us as we continue on our Christian parenting journeys.

Have you checked out Heart to heart's blog site lately? In addition to each month's articles, monthly webcasts and podcasts are also available. Visit forwardinchrist.net today.

Nicole Balza

Join the conversation!

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

HOW DOES BEING A CHRISTIAN AFFECT MY PARENTING?

How does Christianity affect my parenting? How does it not? Maybe there's a bigger question for me, though. Maybe the question is: How does *looking* like a Christian parent *hinder* my parenting?

If you have been a lifelong Christian like me, you may have a mental picture of what good, Christian parents look like. I did.

My picture: They are married. They have respectful and well-behaved kids. If they have to discipline, they do it with love and logic. They send their kids to the Lutheran elementary school. Their children are active members of the youth groups—not only for themselves but also for the example they set for the other youth. You could probably put a few more thoughts in there. I could too.

If you look at my list, it paints a pretty picture. My husband and I worked hard at painting it. It's not a bad painting. However, striving for this painting started to overshadow real Christian parenting.

It's been said that we get our view of God from our relationship with our earthly father. If that's true, then we parents, and especially fathers, want to do the best we can to give an accurate view of God the Father. We want to parent our children the way that God parents us.

Here are some observations I've made about the way God parents me and some things I've done as I try to father my sons the way God has fathered me.

- God takes his law seriously. He makes that clear by allowing and even sending consequences into my life. Likewise, as a loving father, I will allow and give my boys consequences for their sinful actions when they rebel against God and me. These consequences are given in love, not anger, and are meant to teach my boys that God's way is always best.

It was Friday night. My wife was at an event for church, and my daughter was at a sleepover at a friend's house. My son and I had a night off together. We decided to go to a movie and looked at the options. There was one superhero-type movie that I thought looked good. My son thought it looked "awesome!" Then I saw the rating: "R."

My son asked, "Dad, why can't we go to an R-movie?"

That question reminded me of this *Heart to Heart* topic. Is there a difference in how a Christian versus a non-Christian parent might respond to my son's question? Couldn't we both reply by pointing out that the movie has sexual content, vulgar language, and extreme violence, and that's inappropriate for young children? I think we could—and that was *part* of my response.

We all have non-Christian friends who do a great job of

What do we look like to the other families of our congregation? What kind of example are we to our neighbors? These questions aren't bad questions, but they became more important than questions like: Are we loving God? Are we loving others? Are we modeling those things to our children?

Stripping away our concerns of how we think others view our parenting gives us freedom to live under God's grace. We find that focusing on our own relationship with Christ compels us to love others and therefore model that to our children. Sound familiar? "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

My husband, Tad, and I have since made choices that may not look like what good, Christian parents would do. For example, we just finished our sixth year of homeschooling, even though we have a wonderful Lutheran elementary school. We take very seriously the command to "bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Our choices are prayerfully deliberated with this as our goal. For us, the reason is simple. Because Tad accepted a call to be "The Youth Guy," he is

gone nights, weekends, and chunks of summers. Fridays are his day off, which is when the kids were in school. How can Tad be a part of "bringing them up" if he isn't home when they are? We realize how much impact we can have if our kids are home with us.

Finally, I learned to be careful of my opinions when others painted a different picture of good, Christian parenting. Just because it doesn't look like my painting doesn't mean it's wrong or even not as good as mine. I know some people questioned our decision to homeschool. I appreciated the people who asked me about our decision process or why we chose what we did. Those people sought understanding.

Seek God first. Bring your children up in the training of the Lord. Let's encourage parents, as our picture is always changing.

Jenni Schubring and her husband, Tad, have three sons and a daughter.



- But, even as I suffer the consequences of my sin, God regularly assures me of his unconditional love based on Jesus' work in my place. I am forgiven. I am always his dearly loved child. Likewise, I want my boys to know that my love for them is unconditional. I always try to be quick to assure them of my forgiveness and of God's. In our house we don't answer "I'm sorry" with "It's okay." It's not okay. It's a sin. Instead, we say, "I forgive you, and so does God." We live confession and absolution on a daily basis.
- God makes it clear that he's not too busy running the universe to make time for me and to listen to my prayers. Likewise, I want to show my boys that I'm not too busy for them. To get to know my boys' hopes and dreams, worries and fears better, I've been occasionally taking each one out for breakfast—just the two of us. They promise to answer my questions honestly. I promise to try not to embarrass them.

Role models have an important place in the lives of those who are seeking to grow. But it's not just children who need role models; parents need them too! And what better model can we find as we seek to grow as parents than our heavenly Father who parents us perfectly? So we study his Word to know him better, to be assured of his forgiveness for our failures to be like him, and to find the gospel motivation to mimic him more closely. Just as God loves me and parents me, so I want to love my children and parent them. We want to "follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children" (Ephesians 5:1).

Rob Guenther and his wife, Becky, have four sons ages 11 and under.



instilling basic morals and values in their children. After all, everyone has a natural knowledge of God's law and can use that in their parenting as they train their children not to hurt others (or watch others do so in a movie), steal, lie, etc.

But as Christian parents, we have something more! We not only have God's law, but we also have the gospel. We know that there is no way we can keep the law perfectly, but Christ did for us—and gave his life to pay the penalty for our sin. By God's grace, we are forgiven and heirs of eternal life. Everything we do now is not merely motivated by God's law. The law has been fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice. Now what we do comes as a joyful response to the gospel message.

"Dad, why can't we go to an R-movie?"

We can! But let's think about how we can show our love to God? By watching a movie filled with sexual content, vulgar

language, and extreme violence? Or by staying home with a bowl of popcorn and watching *Star Wars*? We chose *Star Wars*—and I ate most of the popcorn.

These teachable moments of gospel opportunity are always before us. Let's admit that we likely err on the side of being more law-based than gospel-based in our parenting. It happens, but what truly sets us apart as Christian parents is that we strive to motivate our children with the gospel. Remind yourself of your overwhelming thankfulness that despite your sin and imperfections, the Holy Spirit has led you to know Christ's love. Then guide your children in demonstrating that thankfulness in their lives.

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





teentalk

Dancing with God

Waiting for the right person to be your spouse is trusting God to lead you.

Katelyn Edwards

Imagine: You gaze into the eyes of your fiancé on your wedding day. It's the day you've been waiting for all your life. You've finally found that someone special who loves you with all of his heart, someone with whom you can spend the rest of your life.

Many teenagers eagerly await the day when they will meet their future spouse. Romance and dating are something popular in high school. Yet your actions now will affect the future. You may not know your spouse yet, but you will one day, and he or she will care how you have treated those of the opposite gender before you met. It is tempting to fall for the first cute boy or girl you see, but you need to keep in mind that God wants the best for you.

Keeping yourself pure for your spouse goes far beyond the obvious in God's Sixth Commandment. It also includes your thoughts, words, actions, and even the way you dress. God says in Proverbs 5:15-17, "Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of

water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers." It's not wrong to have boys and girls as friends, but keep in mind who is yet to come. One person deserves intimacy.

I once heard an amazing phrase that struck home: "Dance with God, and he will let the perfect man cut in." This relates more to the girls' side of things. I like to think of it this way: In life, dance with God. Let him guide you and learn to follow his footsteps. Don't look around for others on the dance floor. As tempting as it is, such a distraction could cause you to stumble or even fall. Keep your eyes on him and, when the time is right, he will let the perfect man cut in. In turn, you will know how to dance as the partner, one who submits and follows your special man's lead.

Turning to the guys' side of things, the same idea can be considered with a little twist. Guys are "in training." God is teaching you how to dance with gentle leadership. You learn how to lead the girl as you dance and take her with you every step of the way. When you

are fully trained, God will lead you to the perfect partner. Trust him; he's danced with her himself.

Popular Christian singer Jamie Grace sings it perfectly in her song "White Boots." Don't get your "white boots" dusty by testing out every girlfriend or boyfriend you have. Trust God and wait in patience. It is good to get to know others to see if he or she is the one God has chosen. However, leave the ultimate decision up to God. He'll let you know when the time is right. Stay pure and untouched, so that you will have nothing shameful to hide. Choose to love your spouse before you've met him or her. Make it so that he or she smiles and says, "Thanks for remaining loyal to me, even before you knew me."

"Thank you for dancing with God."

Katelyn Edwards, a junior at West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minnesota, is a member at Salem, Greenfield, Minnesota.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Cortright, Charles L., to retirement
Cortright, Ryan C., to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.
Free, Caleb K., to Risen Savior, Lakewood Ranch, Fla.
Martin, Micah A., to St. John, Mukwonago, Wis.
Moldenhauer, Thomas M., to Our Saviour's, Bismarck, N.D.
Nowak, Matthew P., to Trinity, Jenera, Ohio
Schmidt, Daniel J., to Christ, Denmark, Wis.
Schultz, Robert E., to retirement
Swenson, Troy S., to Illinois Lutheran Schools Inc., Crete, Ill.
Tiefel, Mark W., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.
Wilke III, Russell A., to St. Paul, Mauston, Wis.

Teachers

Aden, Karla M., to St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.
Avila, Lisa N., to St. John, Red Wing, Minn.
Bloomquist, Denise S., to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
Briney, Rebecca L., to St. Paul, Plymouth, Neb.
Detro, Sarah M., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Fischer, Jamie, to Roots to Wings Learning Center, Lake City, Minn.
Freese, John R., to Zion, Hartland, Wis.
Gawel, Sadie L., to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Goelz, Sara A., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Green, Carol M., to Shining Light Preschool, Maple Grove, Minn.
Gunderson, Jessica, to Mt. Olive, Mankato, Minn.
Gumm, Joseph B., to Trinity, Nicollet, Minn.
Gut, Kyle P., to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.
Hagedorn, Jill, to Mt. Calvary-Grace, La Crosse, Wis.
Holderbecker, Joy, to St. Mark, Bemidji, Minn.
Kassulke, Kara B., to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Kaulitz, Sarah J., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
Kramp, Roger W., to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.
Krause, Paul K., to East Fork Lutheran High School, Whiteriver, Ariz.
Lund, Kendra, to Little Lambs Early Childhood Center, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.
Matthies, Jared T., to Trinity-St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.
Melso, Jennifer D., to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.
Moore, Alex R., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Moore, Heather B., to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Naumann, Dina R., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
Otto, Jacalyn E., to St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.

Panzer, Carole L., to Peace Lutheran Preschool, Holiday, Fla.
Rehberger, Phillip E., to St. Paul, Appleton, Wis.
Roloff, Jeffrey L., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Roloff, Sarah M., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Schaser, Sarah E., to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Schultz, Annette F., to The Shepherd's Little Lambs, Duluth, Minn.
Soloviyov, Lori L., to Trinity, Minocqua, Wis.
Stahmann, Kristy K., to Emanuel, New London, Wis.
Stannard, Shaun W., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Ulrich, Christine M., to St. John's, Jefferson, Wis.
Van Sice, Andrea L., to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.
Wait, Sarah J., to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.
Walker, Patrick D., to Concord Lutheran Academy, Temecula, Calif.
Wilson, Ann M., to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.

Staff minister

Nagel, Levi A., to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Delavan, Wis.—Christus (125). Aug. 7. Worship, 9 A.M. and 2 P.M.; pig roast, 10:15 A.M. Website, christuswels.org.
Wilson, Minn.—Trinity (150). Aug. 14. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal and special "Voices of the Past" walk to follow. 507-452-3764.
Houston, Tex.—Christ the Lord (50). Sept. 4. Worship, 4 P.M.; meal and program to follow. 281-778-3003. Website, facebook.com/CtL50thanniversary/.
Grass Lake, Mich.—St. Jacob (175). Sept. 18. Worship, 10:15 A.M. and 3:30 P.M.; meal to follow, 5:30 P.M. Oct. 23. Worship, 10:15 A.M.; Oktoberfest meal to follow. Website, stjacobgrasslake.org/.
Mosinee, Wis.—Grace (100). Sept. 18. Worship, 11 A.M.; meal to follow. 715-457-4727; gracelutheranmosinee@gmail.com.
Readfield, Wis.—Zion (150). Sept. 18. Worship, 9 A.M.; refreshments to follow. Sept. 25. Worship, 9 A.M.; refreshments to follow; 1 P.M., dedication of new addition; meal to follow. 920-667-4368. Website, zionlutheranreadfield.org.
Waukesha, Wis.—Mt. Calvary (75). Oct. 2. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal and presentation to follow. RSVP appreciated. 262-547-6720; church@mountcalvarywaukesha.org. Website, mountcalvarywaukesha.org.
Frontenac, Minn.—St. John's (150). Oct. 9. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 651-345-2757.
New Orleans, La.—recovery of Crown of Life following Hurricane Katrina (10). Oct. 30. Rededication service. Special invitation to those who helped with the recovery. Website, crownoflifefenola.com.

COMING EVENTS

WELS retired called worker reunion—Aug. 4. Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis. Robert Fischer, rfischer@fvlhs.org, 920-560-5107.

Bus tour—Aug. 5. Explore historic Lutheran churches in the Milwaukee area. Sponsored by the WELS Historical Institute. Dr. Joel Pless, 414-443-8930; 262-677-2109; joel.pless@wlc.edu. Website, welshistory.org.

Christian Educators for Special Education summer conference—Aug. 10. Country Springs Conference Center, Waukesha, Wis. Lois McKenney, loismckenney@gmail.com.

WELS national physical education conference—Sept. 22–23. La Crosse Center, La Crosse, Wis. Website, mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/2016-wels-pe-conference.

Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention—Oct. 11–13. Ramada Plaza Hotel and Convention Center, Omaha, Neb. Website, wels.net/events.

MLC Ladies' Auxiliary annual meeting—Oct. 15. 8:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary/.

WELS Nurses: A gathering of professionals—Oct. 22. St. Peter's, Fond du Lac, Wis. Website, wels.net/events.

WELS Historical Institute annual meeting—Oct. 23. 3 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. 414-443-8930.

Celebration of Life—Nov. 5. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Host, Christian Life Resources. Website, clrevents.com/celebration-of-life-event.html.

Three Strands couples retreat—Nov. 7. Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis. Website, <http://threestrandsretreat.org/>.

WELS national multi-site conference—Nov. 14–16. Grace, Tucson, Ariz. Registration open. Daron Lindemann, daron@holyword.net. Website, wels.net/events.

NAMES WANTED

College students—Register college students with WELS Campus Ministry for free helpful materials, including *Forward in Christ* magazine and *Meditations*. Website, wels.net/campus-ministry.

Hot Springs Village, Arkansas—people living in the area, retired or visitors. Living Water, Hot Springs Village, Ark. Website, livingwaterhsv.com.

Chattanooga, Tenn./North Georgia—people living or relocating to the area to join a Bible study and look into starting a new mission. Mary, packerfan67@hotmail.com.

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



GRADUATES

One hundred fifty-three people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 14. Ninety were in the teacher track, and two were in the staff ministry track. Thirty-eight completed the preseminary program, and two received seminary certification. Twenty-one received master's degrees.



Desirée R. Alge
Jenera, Ohio



Hannah M. Apt
Crete, Ill.



Bethany J. Arndt
Rosemount, Minn.



Joshua P. Arndt
Fort Atkinson, Wis.



Catherine C. Backer
Farmington, Minn.



Benjamin J. Balge
Milwaukee, Wis.



Christopher J. Becker
Kennewick, Wash.



Jonathan G. Beilke
Saint Michael, Minn.



Ethan S. Boese
New Berlin, Wis.



Erin M. Bohl
Oakdale, Minn.



Santiago D. Botero
Bogotá, Columbia



Alison M. Boulden
Watertown, Wis.



Paul W. Bourman
Rochester, Minn.



Paul H. Braun
Neenah, Wis.



Jacob C. Brohn
Hudson, Wis.



Rachel A. Brokmeier
Brookings, S.D.



Ethan T. Brooks
Janesville, Wis.



Evodia S. Cassius
Castries, Saint Lucia



Rebecca K. Christensen
Bowler, Wis.



Charles T. Crass
Rock Island, Ill.



Grey J. Davis
Lake Mills, Wis.



Nathan P. Deering
Elkton, Mich.



Elijah A. Ehlert
Black Creek, Wis.



Austin P. Eisenmann
Appleton, Wis.



Hannah M. Ellingboe
Wrightstown, Wis.



Mateja O. Eppler
Niles, Ill.



Jessica M. Eternick
Waterloo, Wis.



Benjamin S. Ewings
De Forest, Wis.



Anna C. Flunker
Salem, Ore.



Julianne Foelske
Concord, Wis.



Edwin J. Fredrich
Peoria, Ariz.



Sarah C. Frost
Appleton, Wis.



David P. Fulton
Oshkosh, Wis.



Kathryn O. Furr
Knoxville, Tenn.



Jason T. Gibson
Neenah, Wis.



Charis L. Goelzer
Oakfield, Wis.



Philip M. Gustafson
Eau Claire, Wis.



Benjamin W. Haferman
Brookfield, Wis.



Matthew D. Hatzung
Maplewood, Minn.



Timothy J. Hemling
Beaver Dam, Wis.



James D. Hemmelman
Winona, Minn.



Marcus I. Henning
New Ulm, Minn.



Hannah J. Holzhueter
Waterloo, Wis.



Christopher D. Hosbach
West Allis, Wis.



Christina M. Hussman
Greenville, Wis.



Matthew J. Ivan
Freeland, Mich.



Nicolas J. Jenswold
Hortonville, Wis.



Erin J. Keese
Milwaukee, Wis.



Keely M. Keese
Lake Geneva, Wis.



Julie C. Kent
Milwaukee, Wis.



ChiSeon Kim
Seoul, South Korea



Alexander J. Kirchenwitz
Weston, Wis.



Caleb M. Klatt
New Hope, Minn.



Brian A. Knepprath
North Mankato, Minn.



Katherine E. Kobs
East Tawas, Mich.



Kristi L. Koelpin
New Ulm, Minn.



Micah J. Koelpin
Dallas, Texas



Kyara M. Koepsell
Sleepy Eye, Minn.



Michael J. Koester
South Bend, Ind.



Elizabeth J. Kogler
Phoenix, Ariz.



David F. Korthals
Sparta, Wis.



Joel M. Koschnitzke
Jackson, Wis.



Andrew J. Krieger
Tecumseh, Mich.



Amanda C. Kroll
Saint Michael, Minn.



Josiah C. Kroll
Zumba, Cameroon



John M. Kujath
East Troy, Wis.



Seth A. Lange
New Ulm, Minn.



Alyssa A. Lawrence
Yorktown, Va.



Matthew T. Lehne
Burnsville, Minn.



Kristin E. Lemke
Jefferson, Wis.



Megan E. Lepke
Chaseburg, Wis.



Jacob W. Limpert
Rochester, Minn.



Kathryn T. Marquardt
Racine, Wis.



Joshua J. Mose
Iron Ridge, Wis.



Christopher S. Mueller
Watertown, Wis.



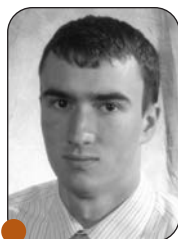
Jacob M. Mueller
Flagstaff, Ariz.



Rachel C. Naumann
Morton Grove, Ill.



Thomas J. Neider
Lakeview, Ore.



Jonathan P. Neumann
Pueblo West, Colo.



Thomas A. Nicholson
Portage, Wis.



Amara E. Olson
Inver Grove Heights,
Minn.



Matthew J. Olson
North Saint Paul, Minn.



Samuel J. Otto
Baraboo, Wis.



McKinzie L. Paulsen
Wheaton, Ill.



Michael E. Paulsen
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Colin J. Paustian
Racine, Wis.



Ron A. Pile
St. John's, Antigua



Thomas A. Plitzuweit
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Emilee V. Plocher
New Ulm, Minn.



Michael D. Plocher
New Ulm, Minn.



Monica E. Quinnett
Greenfield, Wis.



Nicholas A. Quinnett
Colwich, Kan.



Janelle L. Radue
Waukesha, Wis.



Joshua J. Rathje
Mount Pleasant, Mich.



Chester C. Reinemann
Maplewood, Minn.



Emily M. Renner
Watertown, S.D.



Kenneth D. Reschke
De Pere, Wis.



David N. Retzlaff
Burnsville, Minn.



Haley L. Rieck
Caledonia, Minn.



Thomas J. Rockhoff
Wichita, Kan.



Kristin E. Rodrigue
Clifton Park, N.Y.



Stephen O. Roekle
Racine, Wis.



Steven J. Rosenbaum
Wildomar, Calif.



Haley G. Roske
Willmar, Minn.



Jacob M. Rothe
New Berlin, Wis.



Christopher J. Royce
Green Bay, Wis.



Casey C. Sauer
Green Bay, Wis.



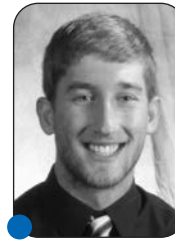
Hannah E. Schlomer
Moorhead, Minn.



Daniel L. Schmidt
Bittern Lake, Alberta,
Canada



Kayla N. Schoeneck
New Berlin, Wis.



Nathan A. Schoenherr
New Ulm, Minn.



James A. Schuette
Manitowoc, Wis.



John E. Schuette
Manitowoc, Wis.



Katherine R. Schultz
Elkhorn, Wis.



Cassandra L. Schwark
Elkhorn, Wis.



Jacob A. Seelman
Sturgeon Bay, Wis.



Sarah J. Selle
Neenah, Wis.



Elizabeth N. Sherwood
Glendale, Wis.



Joanna J. Smith
Moline, Ill.



Leah G. Snyder
Jefferson, Wis.



Caleb J. Solofra
Laveen, Ariz.



Lori L. Soloviyov
New Ulm, Minn.



Ashley N. Sonntag
Janesville, Wis.



Matthew P. Sonntag
Phoenix, Ariz.



Megan A. Stein
New Ulm, Minn.



Melissa S. Stibb
Beaver Dam, Wis.



Christopher A. Stollfus
Pickett, Wis.



Alyssa R. Stuebs
Appleton, Wis.



Tyler D. Swiderski
Minneapolis, Minn.



Orie J. Thomford
Chesaning, Mich.



Zachariah D. Thooft
Marshall, Minn.



Jason E. Threlkeld
Milwaukee, Wis.



Wesley S. Towne
Bay City, Mich.



Andrew S. Tramp
Green Bay, Wis.



Sarah L. Tryba
Weyauwega, Wis.



Jordan D. Uhlhorn
Scottsdale, Ariz.



Anna M. Ungemach
Manitowoc, Wis.



Megan N. Ungemach
Manitowoc, Wis.



Zachary D. Unke
Howards Grove, Wis.



Ashley L. Van Calster
Green Bay, Wis.



Duane J. Vance
Morton Grove, Ill.



Zachary A. VonDeylen
Friendswood, Texas



Timothy J. Walsh
Onalaska, Wis.



Rebecca A. Wasser
Kaukana, Wis.



Lacey J. Waters
Watertown, Wis.



Jessica C. Welke
Winnebago, Ill.



Leah E. Wendland
New Ulm, Minn.



Erin M. Westendorf
Watertown, Wis.



Emily L. Westra
Fairfield, Ohio



Sara C. Willems
Mount Pleasant, Wis.



Melissa J. Wolff
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Karim Yaghleji
Joplin, Mo.



Jessica L. Zahrt
Rothschild, Wis.

Congratulations!

Class of 2016

Call assignments

On May 14, the Conference of Presidents assigned 106 new and previous teacher and staff minister candidates. Six May 2016 graduates deferred assignment, choosing to pursue further education or other areas of service (some electing international service opportunities). Due to marriage plans or living in specific locations, 28 new and previous candidates were available for regional assignments. Ten of those candidates were assigned on May 14 with the remaining candidates available for calls from congregations through their district presidents. Additional calls/assignments will be posted at mlc-wels.edu/events/commencement/.

TEACHERS

Babinec, Erica M., to Grace, Lowell, Ark.
Backer, Catherine C., to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
Botero, Santiago D., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
Boulden, Alison M., to The Shepherd's Little Lambs Preschool, Duluth, Minn.
Braun, Paul H., to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.
Brokmeier, Rachel A., to Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla.
Crass, Johannah R., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Davis, Grey J., to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Deering, Nathan P., to Trinity, Marinette, Wis.
Dutcher, Jason M., to Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kans.
Eisenmann, Austin P., to St. Matthew's, Winona, Minn.
Ellingboe, Hannah M., to Christ-St. John's, West Salem, Wis.
Eppe, Mateja O., to St. John, Sleepy Eye, Minn.
Eternick, Jessica M., to Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Eternick, Justin M., to Trinity, Jenera, Ohio
Ewings, Benjamin S., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Frost, Sarah C., to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.
Gephart, Brian M., to Immanuel, Hutchinson, Minn.
Hansen, Benjamin T., to Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.
Hein, Rachel K., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Hengeveld, Carrie L., to Faith, Antioch, Ill.
Holzhueter, Hannah J., to Zion, Greenleaf, Wis.
Ivan, Matthew J., to Peridot-Our Savior, Peridot, Ariz.
Ivan, Stephanie M., to Peridot-Our Savior, Peridot, Ariz.
Jeske, Elizabeth H., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Keese, Erin J., to St. John's, Dowagiac, Mich.
Kelly, Erin E., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kent, Julie C., to St. John, St. John's, Antigua
Kim, ChiSeon, to Jerusalem, Morton Grove, Ill.
Koelpin, Kristi L., to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kujath, John M., to Our Savior, Zion, Ill.
Lange, Seth A., to Trinity, Jenera, Ohio
Lepke, Megan E., to St. John, St. John's, Antigua
Marquardt, Kathryn T., to St. John, Hemlock, Mich.
Miller, Rachel E., to Redeemer, Rice Lake, Wis.
Mose, Joshua J., to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.
Naumann, Rachel C., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Nottling, Ruth L., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Otto, James E., to St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.
Otto, Samuel J., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Paulsen, McKinzie L., to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
Paulsen, Michael E., to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
Paustian, Colin J., to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.

Peavy, Douglas M., to Bethel, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Plocher, Emilee V., to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.
Radue, Janelle L., to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Rodewald, Lucas A., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
Roekle, Stephen O., to Zion, Egg Harbor, Wis.
Rothe, Hannah D., to Christ Our Redeemer, Aurora, Colo.
Rothe, Jacob M., to Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Rush, Ryan A., to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.
Schmeling, Sara A., to Lord of Life, Friendswood, Texas
Schoeneck, Kayla N., to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.
Schoenfeld, Andrew J., to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.
Schoenherr, Nathan A., to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
Schuette, James A., to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
Schultz, Katherine R., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Schwark, Cassandra L., to Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.
Selle, Sarah J., to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.
Sherwood, Elizabeth N., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Snyder, Leah G., to Faith, Anchorage, Alaska
Stein, Megan A., to Zion, Toledo, Ohio
Steinbrenner, Tarah J., to Martin Luther College Early Childhood Learning Center, New Ulm, Minn.
Stob, Thomas W., to Zion, Denver, Colo.
Stollfus, Christopher A., to Word of Life, Milwaukee, Wis.
Stuebs, Alyssa R., to Lord and Savior, Crystal Lake, Ill.
Thooft, Zachariah D., to Bethel, Bay City, Mich.
Towne, Wesley S., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Tryba, Sarah L., to St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis.
Ungemach, Anna M., to St. John—Precious Little Blessings, Glencoe, Minn.
Ungemach, Megan N., to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.
Van Calster, Ashley L., to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Wasser, Rebecca A., to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.
Waters, Lacey J., to Bloomington, Bloomington, Minn.
Welke, Jessica C., to Divine Peace, Largo, Md.
Westendorf, Erin M., to Beautiful Savior, Las Vegas, Nev.
Westra, Emily L., to Divine Savior Academy, Doral, Fla.
Willems, Sara C., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
Wolff, Melissa J., to St. Paul First, North Hollywood, Calif.
Zabel, Hannah M., to Michigan Lutheran High School, Saint Joseph, Mich.

STAFF MINISTERS

Keese, Keely M., to Abiding Love, Cape Coral, Fla.
Kock, Daniel T., to Grace, Crivitz, Wis.
Pankow, Stephen J., to St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif.

Working together

"We were all working together—the district mission board, WELS Church Extension Fund, and us," says Bob Giebelhaus, president of Our Shepherd, Cornville, Ariz. "We were all going for the same thing. And to me, God was leading the way."

Our Shepherd, an unsubsidized home mission, recently bought land with an existing house and shop and is renovating the buildings to serve as its new church in the Verde Valley. The 82-member congregation which started as a satellite of Christ, Prescott Valley, Ariz., in 2014, held its charter service in October 2015.

The congregation currently worships in a local elementary school. "We need to show that we're going to be here for the long haul," says Giebelhaus, "so that's the reason we started looking for property."

Our Shepherd worked closely with its district mission board through the process, which included becoming an unsubsidized home mission. This allowed the mission to apply for a loan and grant from the WELS Church Extension Fund (WELS CEF). The congregation plans to have an open house for its renovated facility this fall.

WELS CEF and the Board for Home Missions are excited to work together in this way to help congregations build churches for future generations. Our Shepherd is just one of 19 congregations that received a loan from WELS CEF in fiscal year 2016. Each congregation has a unique story:

Redemption, Watertown, N.Y.—This relatively new mission started in 2014 to reach out to a largely unchurched city as well as serve military personnel at nearby Fort Drum. The congregation meets weekly on Sunday for worship and Bible study at the local community center but has no place to go during the week for fellowship and community outreach events. "People are really skeptical of religion here," says Harland Goetzinger III, Redemption's pastor. "I knew we needed a permanent place because it was too great of an obstacle for people otherwise."

Because rental properties are expensive in this area, the congregation began looking for a building to buy. It purchased an old furniture store in December 2015 and is working on renovations. Loans and grants from WELS CEF is making that possible. "To get a loan from a normal bank would have been impossible because we have no credit history," says Goetzinger. "To have this resource [in WELS] is just immense."

Living Word, Montrose, Colo.—Living Word is a veteran in terms of working with WELS CEF. It received its first loan in 2011 to build its original facility and is now working with WELS CEF to finance a 1,900-square-foot addition. The congregation originally worshiped in a storefront but built a church so that it could start a preschool. That preschool has grown and serves 28 children, only one of whom



Living Word, Montrose, Colo., broke ground this spring on an addition to its church so it could have dedicated space for its growing preschool.



is a member. "As the preschool grew bigger and our congregation grew bigger, we decided we would like to have dedicated space for the preschool as well as extra space for bigger events," says Matt Frey, Living Word's pastor. Builders For Christ, a division of Kingdom Workers, built the original church and is now constructing the addition.

Living Promise, Morristown, Tenn.—Matt Westra, Living Promise's pastor, arrived in 2011 to start this home mission with nine core members. Now the almost 80-member congregation has outgrown its second rental facility. When members began looking for a new space, they discovered that it wasn't that much more expensive to build their own facility, especially after receiving a special grant from WELS CEF to purchase land. In October 2015, Living Promise broke ground on its new building, which includes space for a future early childhood ministry. It plans to hold a grand opening this August.

Westra says that since construction started, the congregation's website traffic has tripled and a dozen people have visited for the first time. "There are three dozen storefront churches in our town of 30,000, most of which don't last more than a few years," says Westra. "Having our own facility just gives us a bunch of legitimacy. Morristown is Living Promise's home, and we pray we're going to be here for generations to come."

He also is thankful for partnerships. "Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School students came down to hand out fliers that a Lutheran Women's Missionary Society group helped pay for that promote a project that would not be possible without WELS CEF. Thank God that we can walk together as a synod!"



Learn more about WELS CEF at wels.net/cef and in this month's edition of *WELS Connection*.

Obituaries

Constance L. Burow, 1951–2016

Constance Burow (née Krohn) was born Jan. 26, 1951, in New Ulm, Minn. She died April 5, 2016, in Stevens Point, Wis.

A 1973 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Jim; two sons; one daughter; three grandchildren; her mother; two brothers; and two sisters. She is preceded in death by her father.

Reuel J. Schulz, 1933–2016

Reuel Schulz was born June 18, 1933, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died April 7, 2016, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1959 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Good Faith, South Cle Elum, Wash.; Good Hope, Ellensburg, Wash.; and Woodlawn, West Allis, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Charlette; 3 sons; 3 daughters; 13 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren; and 1 sister. He is preceded in death by two brothers and one sister.

Evelyn R. Drews, 1934–2016

Evelyn Drews was born May 5, 1934, in Akron, Ohio. She died April 30, 2016, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis., and St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.

She is survived by two brothers. She is preceded in death by one brother.

Frederick T. Mueller, 1928–2016

Frederick Mueller was born Sept. 3, 1928, in La Crosse, Wis. He died May 11, 2016, in Marinette, Wis.

A 1953 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis.; St. John's, Nodine, Minn.; and Trinity, Marinette, Wis.

District news

MICHIGAN



Members of St. Paul's, Sodus, Mich., celebrated the congregation's 100th anniversary on May 1.

The district reporter for this month is John Eich.

He is survived by his wife, Lois; one son; one daughter; four grandchildren; and one brother. He is preceded in death by one infant son and one infant daughter.

Verna F. Minzlaff, 1924–2016

Verna Minzlaff (née Engel) was born May 1, 1924, in Forest Junction, Wis. She died May 15, 2016.

She taught at Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis.; Trinity, Brillion, Wis.; St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.; and Trinity, Marinette, Wis.

She is survived by one son, one daughter, two step-grandchildren, and two step-great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her husband, Clarence, and four brothers.

Donald D. Laude, 1931–2016

Donald Laude was born April 7, 1931, in Black Wolf, Wis. He died May 22, 2016, in Marquette, Kan.

A 1956 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Grace, Burke, S.D.; Trinity, Coleman, Wis.; Trinity, Jenera, Ohio; Messiah, Wichita, Kan.; Faith, Russell, Kan.; and St. Mark, Salina, Kan.

He is survived by his wife, Phyllis; 3 sons; 3 daughters; 10 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by one son.

Elisabeth A. Bauer, 1924–2016

Elisabeth Bauer (née Johannes) was born April 5, 1924, in Two Rivers, Wis. She died May 25, 2016, in Jefferson, Wis.

She taught at Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis., and St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.

She is survived by 5 sons, 2 daughters, 25 grandchildren, 39 great-grandchildren, and two brothers. She is preceded in death by her husband, H. Paul.

Grace L. Kolander, 1931–2016

Grace Kolander (née Hillemann) was born Oct. 27, 1931, in Red Wing, Minn. She died May 26, 2016, in Wauwatosa, Wis.

A 1953 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis. and St. John, Montello, Wis.

She is survived by 3 sons, 1 daughter, 13 grandchildren, 1 great-grandchild, and 1 sister. She is preceded in death by her husband, Paul.



Missionaries

Watching a mission church mature

Sharon Hartman

There's no doubt about it. Raw mission work—sharing the gospel message with people in a foreign country for the very first time—is exciting. Seeing the dramatic change in peoples' lives after they hear and believe the gospel message for the first time is amazing and visible to all.

A MATURING CHURCH BODY

Seeing the growth and maturing of a relatively young church may not be quite so obvious, but it is just as amazing. The maturing of a church takes a long time, a strong commitment, and experience. The WELS mission in Zambia, through the Holy Spirit, has been working for more than 60 years to establish, build, and assist the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Zambia (LCCA–Z) in growing and maturing a strong evangelical Lutheran church that can withstand the tests of an everchanging, sinful world. It is a mission field with four WELS missionaries who have well over one hundred years of combined African experience (and another hundred if you include the wives!).

The LCCA–Z has been blessed with a membership of more than 12,000 souls and continues to grow and mature in the service of its Savior. It is exciting to see the following blessings:

A 40-year-old established congregation calling and supporting its own national pastor for the very first time.

A congregation—without any help from the outside—adding on to its worship building because it needs the room.

Relatively poor, rural congregations giving heartfelt offerings to help support their synod.

Second- and third-generation church members being active in their home congregations and on synod-level boards and committees.

National pastors participating in the translation and review of vernacular Bibles and study Bibles.

A national pastor and his wife comforting a grieving family.

Sons and grandsons of national pastors studying to be pastors themselves.

Members standing firm in their faith and belief in the Bible against deep-seated traditional beliefs and cultural pressures.

Congregations standing firm on their foundation of Christ alone when the pressures of a materialistic world are trying to tear them down at every turn.

God's Word continuing to work through enthusiastic participation in worship, Bible studies, Sunday school, lay-leadership training workshops, camp meetings, choir gatherings, youth gatherings, ladies' group conventions, and regular pastors' meetings.

These things could sound like everyday life in congregations in the United States, but all this is taking place thousands of miles away in a place much different from our own world. It takes place where most people do not have access to a car or public transportation, a place that probably does not have electricity or running water, a place where most people live on \$1 a day. God has done amazing things!

A THRIVING WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM

God also has moved the hearts of WELS members to support a strong combined worker training program in Zambia and Malawi. The program starts at the congregation level by identifying candidates for pastoral training through a pre-Lutheran Bible Institute program consisting of several weeks of training over two years' time. These candidates then study for three years at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Malawi and then another three years at the Lutheran Seminary in Zambia. They spend a final year of supervised vicar training back at the congregational level.

This is just the basic training. Each year a week of pastoral continuing education is offered, taught by visiting professors from Martin Luther College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. A high percentage of pastors in both Zambia and Malawi participate in this program. An advanced, four-year theological training program called GRATSI (Greater Africa Theological Studies Institute) offers pastors further training. Professors from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary together with resident sem-

inary professors teach these courses. All these programs, along with ongoing mentoring and support by missionaries, provide the national church with well-trained men to shepherd the souls of their congregations and teach the truths of the Bible.

A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP

In our fast-paced world of instant gratification, we might be tempted to give up on an old mission field or think there is nothing more to do because we've been there for so long. But a maturing mission field is still fragile, and it takes time, energy, and resources for work that is not always immediately obvious.

Relationships are everything in Zambia, and good relationships take a long time to build. Because of the long-term commitment, the presence of resident missionaries, and the support given by WELS, good relationships have been built, maintained, and are flourishing. These relationships have allowed for a unique partnership arrangement with the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Zambia. The WELS

mission in Zambia works with the national church to tackle the challenges that come with being a maturing church. Each missionary serves on LCCA–Z synod boards and committees to help with the transparent and orderly administration of the synod. On behalf of WELS, they offer experience and resources for complicated issues involving land titles and deeds so that congregations do not lose their land and buildings to illegal squatters. They also work alongside national pastors to tackle unique tribal or traditional challenges in the light of the gospel. They give ministerial and logistical support for regional outreach, campus ministry, and prison ministry. The work of the church is tackled within the partnership framework of mutual love, honesty, and trust created throughout the past 60 years of mission work in Zambia.

As the writer of Hebrews says, “Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity” (6:1). Zambia is moving on to maturity. At first glance, it may not seem too exciting, but it is extremely important and long lasting. As God wills and with the prayers and support of WELS members, this exciting work in Zambia will carry on for many years to come.

Sharon Hartmann, wife of Missionary John Hartmann, lives in Lusaka, Zambia.

Photos: Fifteen men (pictured with their families) currently are enrolled at the Lutheran Seminary in Zambia, part of the combined worker training program for our sister churches in Malawi and Zambia; a national pastor is installed in Zambia; a bush choir during worship at one of the 121 organized congregations in Zambia; Missionary John Hartmann visiting one of the bush congregation in Zambia. Four missionaries work with 35 national pastors to share the gospel with more than 12,000 members in the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Zambia.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CENTRAL AFRICA-ZAMBIA

Baptized national members: 12,473

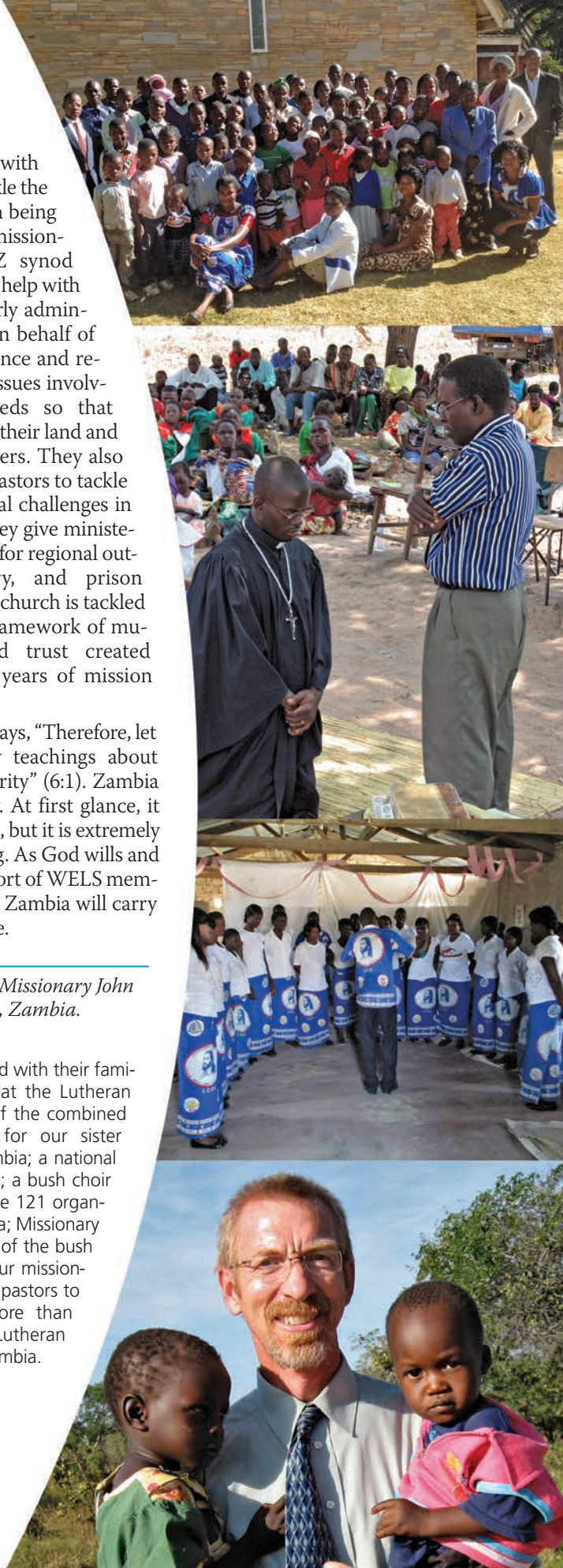
Organized congregations: 121

Preaching stations: 14

Missionaries: 4

National pastors: 35

Unique fact: God continues to prepare his people for doing works of service in Zambia as well as for reaching out to the nearby countries of Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



A story of God's grace

An author shares her amazing life story, a story that can't be told without talking about God's grace.

Julie K. Wietzke

They said they only made some "minor" edits.

When an international publishing company contacted Mahtob Mahmoody about printing her memoir, *My name is Mahtob*, the editors mentioned they made a few changes—they wrote God out of the book. It seems there were no words in their language to express the concepts of God's will and God's grace.

Needless to say, Mahtob, a WELS member from Michigan, disagreed with the edits. "You can't tell the story of my life without God's will and God's grace," she says. "That's a part of it. That's a part of all of our lives." So those changes were discarded.

That grace is apparent throughout the book and throughout her life—a blessing she feels she shares with every Christian. "God is gracious, and he does have a plan for us," she says. "He is taking care of us in big ways and in small ways every day."

Many have heard a part of Mahtob's story from the book *Not Without My Daughter*,

written in 1987 by Mahtob's mother, Betty. The book recounts the story of how Dr. Sayed Mahmoody, Betty's husband and Mahtob's father, took them for a two-week trip to visit his family in Iran. That trip led to spousal abuse, an 18-month imprisonment for Betty and six-year-old Mahtob, a harrowing escape, and their journey back to the United States.

While that book closed one chapter of their lives, it was just the start of their spiritual journey.

While Betty grew up Christian and went to church with neighbors as a child, she wasn't active in organized religion as an adult. But fearing that her husband would kidnap Mahtob after their escape back to the United States, Betty decided to send Mahtob to a small, private, Lutheran school—Salem, Owosso, Michigan.

While Betty chose this school for safety reasons, God had other plans in mind. Mahtob learned about her Savior and was baptized while a student. Betty went through Bible information class, was also baptized, and was confirmed. "What really resonated with Mom was the education our pastor had," says Mahtob. "He wasn't just spouting rhetoric. He could go back and read the Greek; he could read the



Hebrew. She felt like this was really genuine.”

Having that Christian education helped Mahtob begin dealing with her strong emotions still within after being kidnapped by her father, a man she had once trusted. She hated her father for what he did and didn’t know how to forgive him.

But being immersed in God’s Word every day and seeing God’s love—and her teachers’ love—softened her heart. “While my teachers really took an interest in me and tried to help me personally through this, on another level this was just the standard curriculum [of the school],” says Mahtob. “They shared God’s Word with me, and God’s Word doesn’t return to him empty.”

Learning about God’s almighty power also made her feel safe. “In those days it was just a foregone conclusion of mine that my dad would eventually kidnap me,” she says. “So to learn that there’s no place on this earth my dad could take me where he was taking me away from God’s love and protection—that was just a valuable lesson at that point in my life. I was so thankful that God put Mom and me in that environment where we were constantly being reminded of God’s care for us.”

As she got older, Mahtob needed that reminder of God’s care for a different reason. When she was 13, Mahtob was diagnosed with lupus, a chronic inflammatory disease in which the body’s immune system attacks its own tissues and organs. She nearly died after being diagnosed but survived after an experimental treatment in Germany.

At her confirmation, Mahtob’s pastor chose Ephesians 2:8,9 as her verse: “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.”

“That verse was true of my life in so many ways,” Mahtob writes in her book. “God had saved me from my father. He had saved me from the

war between Iran and Iraq. During our escape, it had been God who delivered us safely home. Through my baptism, he had saved me from my sins. And whether I recovered or whether lupus took my life, I would be eternally saved because of God’s grace.”

Mahtob continued her Christian education at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., and then went on to Michigan State University. Through those years, she and her mom continued to be threatened by her father and his friends. “My dad was constantly trying different tactics. He was so persistent,” she says. “I would feel so threatened and afraid and angry and have to work through the process of forgiving him all over again.”

“You can’t tell the story of my life without God’s will and God’s grace”

Mahtob never did see her father again. He died in 2009. “I’ve had people ask me how I can say I forgave him when I still wouldn’t communicate with him,” Mahtob says. “But there’s a difference between forgiving and trusting. Those constant intrusions were reminders that he still couldn’t be trusted. Forgiveness doesn’t necessarily repair the relationship.”

Mahtob never intended to write a book about her experiences—she never even read her mom’s book. But, finally, because of the continued encouragement of a close family friend, she decided to share her memories of their escape from Iran, but more so to relate how God has blessed her life after that escape.

“I didn’t set out to write a Christian book,” she says. “I was just writing the story of my life. But I was aware

that as I was writing this there will be people around the world who may have access to my book who will never have access to a Bible. That’s an honor and a responsibility. I felt really blessed to be able to witness in this way.”

Not only did she witness her faith through her book but also through the many interviews about her work with the media around the world.

“When [my mom and I] speak, we don’t necessarily quote the Bible, but it’s unmistakable that God has a hand in the good that has happened in our life,” she says. Mahtob remembers an unbelieving journalist in Australia who told her that after reading the book she understood for the first time the comfort Christians get from their faith. “Thanks be to God for all this,” Mahtob says.

Mahtob continues to struggle with lupus. In fact, she was in the hospital and then confined to her home after completing her book. “I was so close to not surviving but felt completely at peace,” she says. “Death isn’t a scary thing when we know that Jesus earned salvation for us.”

Mahtob doesn’t feel that her and her mother’s story is that different from anyone else’s story. “In so many ways, our lives are so normal. We’re just Betty and Mahtob,” she says. “I think that is what makes our story so universal—everyone faces challenges.”

And trusting in God’s love and grace and power helps us get through whatever challenges come our way.

Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ.

Photos (top to bottom): Mahtob around the time of her and her mom’s escape from Iran; Mahtob awaiting an experimental treatment for lupus in Germany; Mahtob and her mom, Betty; Mahtob and her father; Betty (with scarf) and Mahtob in Iran; Mahtob and Betty at one of Betty’s first book signings in Michigan.

Are you a people-pleaser?

Earle D. Treptow

We are free
to be people-
pleasers too—
not so that we
can *get* something
from [people],
but because we
want to *give*
something
to them.

People-pleasers, as we commonly use the term, are individuals who do whatever is asked of them to ensure the happiness of others. Though they probably belted out the word *no* with gusto as two-year-olds, they find it exceedingly difficult to use that word with their bosses, their friends, and some members of their family. Even when they lack the time or the ability to do what is asked, they can't say no.

Why can't people-pleasers say no? Perhaps some worry that others will perceive them as selfish or self-absorbed. Others can't say no because, by their way of thinking, dealing with the stress of another item on their lengthy to-do list is easier than dealing with the feelings of guilt sure to wash over them later. Perhaps, whether they realize it or not, they're actually hoping to get something from others. They want to feel loved and needed; they're seeking validation.

There's a far better place for us to find validation. Through faith in Jesus, we are clothed in Christ's righteousness. God declares that he is well pleased with us, because Jesus accepted our guilt and endured our punishment. Gone, in Christ, therefore, is the pressure of having to perform to get God to be pleased with us. Secure in the Lord's unwavering love, we need not live by the approval of others. We don't have to be people-pleasers. How freeing!

At the same time, however, God wants us to please the people he has placed in our lives. St. Paul writes, "Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me' " (Romans 15:2,3). Rather than saying, "I don't really care about my neighbors since God rejoices over me," the child of God says, "I want to serve the people in my life. Since the Lord committed himself to me in Baptism, promising to bless me and care for me throughout life, I am free to commit myself to others."

The apostle Paul points us to our Savior as both model and motive. Jesus, the delight of his Father, never used his power to guarantee a life of ease. Instead, he tirelessly loved and blessed those whom most people despised—the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the sinners—and found himself despised as a result. The leaders of the Jews were none too pleased with him. Yet, for them too, Jesus willingly sacrificed himself. He was pleased to do what was in the best interest even of those who didn't appreciate him at all.

Because Jesus was a people-pleaser, that is, because he did what was good for sinners, including us, we are free to be people-pleasers too—not so that we can *get* something *from* them, but because we want to *give* something *to* them. We can be people-pleasers, eager to do what will be in their best interests. We can say yes to putting the needs of others before our own, to bless them because God has so richly blessed us. We can serve even those who don't appropriately appreciate our efforts, because the Lord has served us first.

With that kind of people-pleasing, God is most pleased!

Contributing editor Earle Treptow, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville, Wisconsin.

The RIPPLE EFFECT

STEPHANAS, FORTUNATUS, & ACHAICUS



After Jesus' ascension, believers spread the gospel around the world in widening ripples.

Daniel N. Balge

Ancient Ephesus thrived as a commercial hub for successive empires—Persian, Greek, and Roman—for three reasons: location, location, location. Several busy Asian trade routes reached their end at Ephesus (on the western coast of today's Turkey). Ephesus' port then provided easy access to a web of sea lanes that fanned to southern Europe and North Africa. While the apostle Paul lived and worked three years there, he knew well the city's bustling Square Market, newly renovated by Caesar's decree. The market stretched some 120 yards on each side, edged by graceful pillars and rimmed by stalls and shops. Everything about Ephesus said, "Open for business."

A PROFITABLE EXCHANGE

Yet for all the goods ever traded in that great city—all the grain, wine, olive oil, precious metals, all the glass going east and the silk coming west, all that camels could carry and ships could haul—there was never a more profitable exchange at Ephesus than the one made between Paul and the Corinthian Christians. They swapped letters in about A.D. 55.

What a bargain for the Corinthians! Those struggling Christians traded hard questions about difficult problems for good and enduring answers.

Three men from Corinth, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, apparently enabled this exchange. Circumstantial evidence within Paul's first letter to the Corinthians points to them as the bearers of "the matters you [Corinthians] wrote about" (7:1). Paul happily noted, "They have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also" (16:17,18).

In other words, the three added nuance and clarification to what the Corinthians had written about their difficulties. They filled in what Paul could not read between the lines of the letter from Corinth. Then the three carried Paul's letter back to Corinth (16:12), words inspired by God's Spirit and preserved by him to this day.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE-BEARERS

Who were Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus? The first name is Greek; the second two, Latin, but that tells us little, other than that they were probably Gentiles, like nearly all Corinthians. We know a bit more about Stephanas: his household had been baptized by Paul (1:16). They were the first converts to the faith in Achaia (16:15). Stephanas and his family had thereafter devoted themselves to service.

We don't know whether the three Corinthians walked to Ephesus, a journey of about 900 miles, or spent a week or more crossing the Aegean Sea by ship. We can't even tell whether the trip to Ephesus was a specially commissioned assignment or a regular part of other responsibilities that brought them to the area anyway.

But this we know: Out of love for Jesus, they served God and people well in a humble, but vital, task. They reliably carried two letters and linked a pastor to his people. Thus, in his letter, Paul could speak timely words to urgent problems and timeless truth to every generation.

By the rippling power of Pentecost, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had come to faith and had taken their places among Jesus' "witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). For the words they spoke to Paul, for the miles they walked or sailed, and for the deliveries they made, the apostle wrote, "Such men deserve recognition" (16:18).

Contributing editor Daniel Balge, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm.

This is the fourth article in a 12-part series on lesser-known New Testament witnesses.



Violence

With cell phone cameras available in almost every situation, we get pictures of unguarded moments in the lives of many people. Some of those moments are funny, like *America's Funniest Home Videos*. Others are embarrassing, but maybe that's the same thing. Still others reveal the dark side.

More than a few of the dark videos make their way to television news departments. We see road rage, fights, protests turned violent, and a lot more. Sporting events turn into brawls, and not just in professional sports where a lot of money complicates the conflict. Too often it includes Little League games, which are supposed to be fun and learning experiences.

Then add guns, and disagreements aren't just hostile, aggressive confrontations—they suddenly destroy life. Often we hear that the absence of guns will stop the violence, but I think that the violence stretches beyond guns. As a society, even if we would outlaw all guns, the violence will continue. It might be a little like Prohibition in a previous era of our American history. Banning alcohol solved very little. We sometimes only grasp for solutions so it seems like we are doing something to bring safety.

On the issue of gun control, there can be some spirited debate and disagreement. No matter what one's opinion, all want brutal outbursts to stop. Yet road rage; violent protests; domestic disturbances; brawls; and bloody, unexpected shootings persist. So where does all this come from?

When children sit with their devices and improve their score by increasing the body count, are we encouraging or discouraging peace and safety? When movies become box office successes because, at least to some extent, they are bloody and violent, what's the lesson? My grandmother sent her sons off to war and never let us play with guns—even pretend guns—but we played with them anyway. My rifle sticks of the past

have become realistic toys with a small bright orange mark somewhere to indicate it is a toy. Have we blurred the boundary between pretend and real? Where does that lead?

Bursts of violence and confrontation are everywhere—in our competitive business practices, in our entertainment choices, even in the way we respond to disagreements in marriage. Some control the bursts of anger before they turn to violence. They exercise self-discipline in contentious exchanges. Others channel their competitive impulses to outlets that do not bring pain and bloodshed. I like to think that my grandmother's aversion to guns was a warning for my budding personality.

I also heard a better voice. His voice warns not just about violence but also about the source of violence and all evil. Jesus says, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:19). His thought stretches back to the beginning when God observed that "every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). But his words seem to have little value today when we deny the evil that sits in a corner of all our hearts, something we think is a little thing. It's not. It remains powerfully violent, easily provoked.

His diagnosis is painfully noted, not embarrassingly and angrily dismissed!

Then I hear his voice again. He does not leave me only with the violence and evil within identified. He creates something new within me. His love forgives. It makes me want to be like him. The new forces within motivate me to work toward "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23).

When we fail to understand the source of the problem, we can only treat the symptoms.

[Jesus'] voice warns
not just about
violence but also
about the source
of violence
and all evil.

GREAT STORIES OF THE BIBLE

BABY MOSES

Joel S. Heckendorf

“This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.” Even though no child has ever believed those words, parents know the grim truth: Sometimes it hurts to love.

Moses’ mother knew this all too well. Baby number three was on the way. If it was a girl, she would have three mouths to feed. If it was a boy, by government decree she’d have to feed that child to the Nile River. And then he was born. She loved the child. And that’s what made it hurt. It hurt to think what might happen to this child. It hurts to love.

But it’s also that love-’til-it-hurts attitude that leads people to act in extraordinary ways. The love of the mother of Moses drove her to great lengths. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to give birth and not tell anyone? Parents today can’t go 24 hours without posting about their child: “Johnny smiled today,” “Faith rolled over,” “Timmy likes carrots.” Out of love, Moses’ mother muffled her infant’s cries for three months. Imagine the energy and determination that took. Every knock at the door she’d have to hide not only her son but also every evidence of his existence.

When hiding his existence no longer seemed viable, love drove Moses’ mother to take another risk. She was willing to give him up, hoping and praying that someone else might take him. By the grace of God, that’s exactly what happened. The Egyptian princess adopted Moses, trained him to be a leader, and even found his very own mother as the nanny. Read the amazing story in Exodus 2:1-10. God’s providence is usually the focal point of this familiar story, but don’t miss the display of love. The love-’til-it-hurts display from Moses’ mother is tremendous.

How could she do it? She knew another’s love. She knew the love of her God. If there is ever a parent who knows that love hurts, it’s our heavenly Father. As children of his creative hand, he has a deep bond

with each and every one of us. Imagine how it hurt him to know that because of sin we weren’t just headed for the river, we were heading to the lake of fire. Thankfully, he wasn’t content to just say, “Oh well.” His love drove him to great lengths. His love drove him to offer up his Son to rescue us. Like Father, like Son. Jesus loved ’til it hurt as well. He loved us to hell and back so that he could say, “This hurts me more than it hurts you.”

Because he loved ’til it hurt, we can love. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

EXPLORING THE WORD

1. Tell the story in your own words. Then read the account. Which details did you omit or mistakenly add?
2. Why do you think this story is one of the most popular stories included in children’s Bibles?
3. Trace the many displays of God’s providence in this account.
4. List times when it has “hurt” to show love to someone.

Contributing editor Joel Heckendorf is pastor at Immanuel, Greenville, Wisconsin.



This is the ninth article in a ten-part series on the top ten stories included in children’s Bibles and how they apply to our lives today. Find answers online after Aug. 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.

We have ARRIVED!

Through Jesus, we can escape our selfish desires and ambitions and live a life of service to Christ and others. Donald W. Patterson

What does it mean to have “arrived” in life? For some, it’s finding that recognition, acclaim, respect, success, and contentment.

NOT BY EARTHLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I have wasted way too much time finding out what it does not mean. I remember the backyard football games and fighting to “arrive” by desperately trying to win every game. I used to think that when I finally scored a touchdown in a pee-wee football game that I would “arrive.” After four years of hard work I did score, but I did not “arrive.” I wanted more. I thought if I could knock a homerun over the fence in Little League baseball that I would “arrive.” I did hit a homer when I was 12. It cleared the fence by two feet! (I used to think that was a lot.) But I still didn’t “arrive.” I wanted more.

I thought learning to drive would do it. Nope. Maybe getting a scholarship would do it. Nope. How about marriage? Not that either. When we had children and someone called me “Dad,” maybe then I would feel like I had

“arrived.” It still eluded me. Would home ownership do it? Nope. How about more responsibility at work? Not there either.

The realization of countless wasted years and misspent moments saddens me.

BY SERVING OTHERS

For a Christian, “arriving” is not seeing all of your self-centered ambitions come true. It’s coming to that place where you step off the path of selfish desire to find a whole new path with Jesus. “Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25). You lose yourself in serving Christ and everyone else. In this way, you find your life when you lose it. In other words, human beings don’t “arrive” until they stop striving to arrive and start serving.

Being a servant changes everything. You no longer worry about how you look in the eyes of others. Instead, you’re always thinking about how you

can make their lives better. You don’t want to be known as the best servant either. Exploited service is not service at all. Serving is truly considering others better than oneself. It is nipping in the bud every thought of how someone will return your love. It is selfless and self-forgetful at the core. It is freedom from all the ways that envy and ambition make you angry with others.

How could any of us ever hope to be this kind of selfless servant? It only happens by meeting Jesus. He has the power to show us how to serve while giving us the love that makes us want to.

Jesus “arrived” the day he was born. “Arriving” meant he would serve everyone. When you look at Jesus, you see love and feel love changing you from the inside out.

What does it mean to “arrive”? It means to find freedom in Christ from your selfish desires to live a life of joyful service to everyone else. Anyone can “arrive” on any day of their lives as long as their hearts are focused on Jesus. That’s what Jesus meant when he said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31,32).

Jesus doesn’t just free us from our sin and guilt. He also frees us from ourselves.

Donald Patterson, the South Central District president, is pastor at Holy Word, Austin, Texas.