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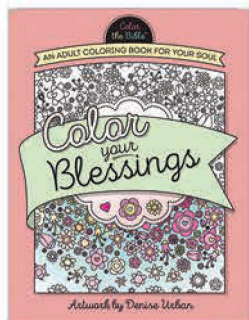
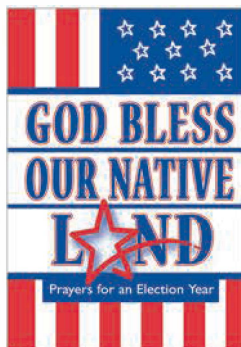
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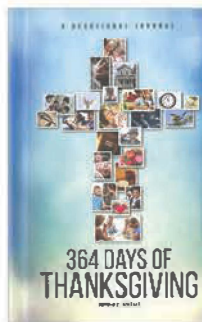
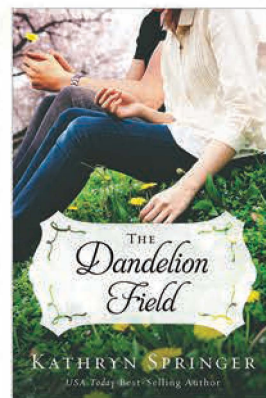
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Reflecting CHRIST'S LOVE

The mission of WELS Christian Aid and Relief is to reflect Christ's love and compassion to souls suffering from disasters and hardships. Through humanitarian aid projects around the world, WELS Christian Aid and Relief works with congregations and world mission fields to build bridges to proclaim the gospel. Some projects include:

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View a Lifeline video and learn more about humanitarian aid projects and how you can be involved at wels.net/relief.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief • 414-416-6396
N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive • Waukesha, WI 53188-1108



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. Dan Leyrer

ART DIRECTOR

Karen Knutson

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

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

WHAT'S INSIDE

God is in control. Those four words should bring us comfort and relief, no matter what situation we are in. So how come it's so easy to worry when we see chaos and problems in the world around us? Or when an unexpected tragedy happens in our life? Or even when things just aren't going the way we planned?

Several articles this month remind us that not only is God in control of what is happening around the world but he also has our best interests at heart, even when bad things occur.

- Need a reminder of Jesus' power to control the whole world but also of his love and his promise to be with us always, even when we feel all alone? Read "Jesus has secured the universe" (p. 10) and "Dust and ashes" (p. 34).
- Worried about the upcoming presidential election? Check out "Our God reigns" (p. 32).
- Want to see some personal examples of how God works in an individual's life? First, remember Joseph's story and how God worked even the bad things in Joseph's life for good (p. 35). Then read "Confessions of faith" and discover how a man's newfound relationship with God helps him deal with any challenges that come his way (p. 14).

It's hard not to worry, but pray to God for strength and remember that God is in control.

Julie Wietzke



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The uniqueness of the education of our pastors and teachers as described in President Mark Schroeder's article [May] is something for which we can all thank our God. However, it may discourage some from entering the ministry. Many teens are not certain which career to follow. After reading the article, they may think they missed the boat when it comes to becoming a pastor because they did not attend the synod's schools. What steps can these late bloomers take to enter the ministry?

*Marjorie Penhalegon
Findlay, Ohio*

More than a few pastors who started their training later in life now serve our congregations. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary conducts a program called the Pastoral Studies Institute to help prepare second-career men and men from other cultures to serve as pastors, and Martin Luther College also welcomes those in whom the Holy Spirit has created a desire to prepare for ministry. The first step is for these men to talk with their own pastors and explore the possibilities. Those pastors will be happy to serve as guides to explore what needs to be done to achieve the goal of serving as a pastor.—ed.

OUTREACH IN VIETNAM

A couple of years ago I heard that WELS had received a request for help from a group of Hmong Christians in Vietnam. Without knowing any details, I've been praying about this situation ever since.

Imagine my joy and excitement at learning how this connection came about, the tremendous sacrifices these believers make in order to learn more about the Savior, and that there are even further opportunities to reach Hmong Christians in South Asia ["New outreach opportunities in Vietnam," March]. We know the fields are ripe, but that the Lord is using our tiny church body to bring the gospel into more and more countries and ethnic groups astounds me. What a hunger there is for biblically sound training at home and around the world! Surely this will motivate us to pray fervently, encourage present and potential missionaries, and give generously to fund the costs of mission work.

Now I can pray specifically for Rev. Lor, for the Hmong Fellowship Church, for the training sessions in Hanoi, and for Mr. Wu as he perseveres in his theological training. Thank you!

Karla Jaeger
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Through my Bible in 3 years

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JULY 2016

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|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Ezekiel 42:1–43:12 | 12. Philemon | 23. Ne. 4 |
| 2. Eze. 43:13–44:31 | 13. Ezra 1 & 2 | 24. Ne. 5 |
| 3. Eze. 45 & 46 | 14. Ezra 3 | 25. Ne. 6 |
| 4. Eze. 47:1-12 | 15. Ezra 4 | 26. Ne. 7 |
| 5. Eze. 47:13–48:35 | 16. Ezra 5 & 6 | 27. Ne. 8 |
| 6. Colossians 1:1-14 | 17. Ezra 7 | 28. Ne. 9:1-21 |
| 7. Col. 1:15-23 | 18. Ezra 8 | 29. Ne. 9:22-37 |
| 8. Col. 1:24–2:7 | 19. Ezra 9 & 10 | 30. Ne. 9:38–10:39 |
| 9. Col. 2:8-23 | 20. Nehemiah 1 | 31. Ne. 11 |
| 10. Col. 3:1-17 | 21. Ne. 2 | |
| 11. Col. 3:18–4:18 | 22. Ne. 3 | |

Serious sins, strong Savior

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:7,9,10

Daniel J. Habben

Looking for something lighthearted to read before bed? The New Testament book of James is probably not the first thing you'd grab. That's because James had to write stern words to Jewish Christians who acted as if Christianity was nothing more than a Sunday-brunch ritual. They may have been on their best behavior at church, but in private they shrugged off their niceties as easily as kicking off a pair of dress shoes. These Christians were showing favoritism to the rich, cursing, coveting, quarreling, and spending their money on pleasure!

SIN ISN'T A LAUGHING MATTER

Do you go to church with members like that? Of course you do. Whenever Christians gather, sinners meet—including you. Tell me, have you ever caught yourself coveting a pair of shoes that passed your row on the way to Holy Communion? Ever wonder why you can't afford such a nice pair, as if God never gives you good things? How can it be that we Christians entertain such sinful thoughts at such a sacred time in worship?

It's true. Christians past and present are far from perfect. But James' main issue with his readers was their attitude. James' readers thought that their sins were harmless—funny even, like the tantrum someone else's three-year-old throws in the middle of the mall. But there's a time when laughter is not the best medicine. God seeks our eternal happiness but wants us to mourn, wail, and hate our sins.

James came down hard on his readers, but he also encouraged them. He urged them, "Humble yourselves before the



**Armed with that Word,
we have the power to
resist the devil.**

Lord, and he will lift you up." God's desire is to welcome home his prodigal sons and daughters with a joyous party. That's not because our sins are inconsequential. God doesn't brush off our crimes the way we carelessly scrape the crumbs from our supper plates. No, God has severely punished our sins by punishing his own Son. He forgives us because next to us stands Jesus, whose innocent blood shed on the cross is a holy bath that leaves us clean in God's sight. Jesus does not wish to blame and condemn us. He took the blame for our sins so that we are forgiven. In him, there is no condemnation (cf. Romans 8:1).

GOD HELPS US RESIST SIN

So now what? Look again at the opening verse above. "Submit yourselves,

then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Submitting to God is like falling in line behind a police escort as you flee the dangerous enemies that pursue you. What a sense of relief that brings! You no longer need to throw glances over your shoulder, fearing an ambush.

In the same way, we can eagerly put ourselves under God's care and direction. The devil may lie in wait, but we can fling God's Word at him, like a soup can hurled at a sneaking rat. Armed with that Word, we have the power to resist the devil so that he must run from us as fast as his hideous legs can carry him!

Now that's something to lighten our hearts.

Contributing editor Daniel Habben is pastor at St. Peter, St. Albert, Alberta, Canada.



Mark Schweden

The 12 men
who serve as
district presidents
... have been asked
by God and his
people to fill a very
important role.

A word about district presidents

Last month, four new men were elected to serve as presidents of their respective districts. Of the former district presidents, three chose to retire from their office. One accepted a call to serve as a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

A turnover of one-third of the district presidents is rare. Let's review exactly what the role of the district presidents is and what weighty responsibilities are entrusted to these men.

A district president is, in many ways, the pastor of his entire district. He is elected to his position at a district convention by delegates who represent every congregation in the district. His election is not just a selection by called worker and lay delegates. It is, in fact, a divine call from God himself.

First and foremost, the district president is charged with overseeing the doctrine and practice in the congregations of his district. Doctrine is what is taught; practice is how doctrine is applied and carried out. For a synod to remain faithful to the Word of God and to the Lutheran Confessions, its doctrine must faithfully reflect scriptural truth and its practice must carefully apply the teachings of Scripture in the life and ministry of the congregation. The district president carries out his responsibility of overseeing doctrine and practice in two ways: proactively, as he sets the tone by his words and example, and reactively, as he addresses situations in which false teaching may occur or in which the practice of a called worker or congregation departs from faithfulness to biblical teachings.

If a called worker or even an entire congregation begins to stray from the truth, it is ultimately the responsibility of the district president to provide evangelical admonition and correction. Circuit pastors and district officers assist and advise him in this, but, ultimately, faithful teaching in his district is a responsibility that rests on his shoulders.

A district president has an important role in the call process. When congregations experience a vacancy—of pastors, teachers, or staff ministers—they turn to the district president. He consults with the congregation to determine its specific needs and then provides a call list. The district president places candidates on that list because he is convinced each candidate can meet the needs of the congregation.

The synod's constitution has charged the Conference of Presidents with encouraging congregations and individuals to provide the financial support necessary to carry out the work we do together as a synod. In that role, the district president is the primary voice in the district, making congregations aware of the financial needs of the synod and then encouraging congregations to support that work through their Congregation Mission Offerings.

The 12 men who serve as district presidents receive no additional compensation for their important work. They have been asked by God and his people to fill a very important role. They do so with a deep sense of awe at the trust that people have placed in them. They carry out their duties faithfully, spending many hours in meetings and many days on the road. And we would not want to neglect the faithful support of their wives, who provide encouragement to their husbands as they carry the weight of their office and who willingly sacrifice time with their husbands for the good of God's church.

Take a moment in prayer to thank God for these faithful servants and to ask God to give them wisdom, strength, and joy in their service.

Look for news from the 2016 district conventions and information about the new district presidents in upcoming issues.

Light for our path

How does one recover from a failed evangelism opportunity?

James F. Pope

Yours is the experience of many a Christian. Whether the door of opportunity opened just a crack or swung wide open, failing to take advantage of that opportunity to witness can fill Christians with guilt and regret. I am going to suggest that you can recover by looking in different directions.

LOOK BACK TO CHRIST

When we fall short of God's expectations and requirements of us, we might shrug it off with this attitude: "That's the way it goes. Nobody's perfect." We could wallow in self-pity and guilt, thinking, "I'll never get this right. There's no use in trying." Or we can take our sin and burden to God and find forgiveness and strength in Jesus his Son.

There is forgiveness for every sin, including our sins of omission—those times when we fail to do what God commands. There is forgiveness for those occasions when we hide our faith for whatever reason and fail to testify about our Savior. There is forgiveness because Jesus was a "faithful witness" (Revelation 1:5) in our place. He seized every opportunity to share the truth of God's Word with people—from a Samaritan woman to a Roman governor. What we have failed to do, Jesus did.

More than that, Jesus willingly endured the punishment our sins of omission and sins of commission deserve. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus sacrificed himself, and now his blood "purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

A starting point, then, in recovering from a failed evangelism opportunity is knowing that you are forgiven. Completely. The slate is clean.

LOOK BACK AND LEARN

But before we look ahead, let's look back once more.

Without getting bogged down in the past, ask yourself, "Where did it go wrong? Why

did it go wrong?" Was it fear of people's reactions that led to your silence? Was it a problem of not knowing what to say? Was it a failure to recognize a witnessing opportunity?

Whatever the reason might have been, look back and learn. Learn what you might do differently. Then, armed with God's forgiveness and power and equipped with a greater understanding of what happened in the past, look in a different direction.

LOOK AHEAD, CHRISTIAN

Remember Peter. As Peter cozied up to a fire on a cool spring night in the courtyard of the high priest, the door of opportunity to testify about his Lord opened so wide you could have driven a Roman chariot through it. But rather than telling people about the Jesus of Nazareth he knew, Peter vehemently denied any association with him.

Sometime later, after shedding tears of sorrow and hearing words of forgiveness from his Savior, Peter displayed a bold outlook on evangelism opportunities. He shared it with the recipients of his first inspired letter: "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). Those are not the words of a man who lived in the past—the past of failed witnessing opportunities. Those are the words of a man who looked forward to more witnessing opportunities. You can look in that same direction, Christian.

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.

Psalms 119:105



JESUS HAS SECURED THE UNIVERSE

**All things are under the power of Jesus,
even when they seem to spiral out of control.
Everything he does is for our benefit.**

John A. Vieths

We crave security from the moment we are born. Infants find it in their mothers' arms. Toddlers and preschoolers look for it in a blanket or a stuffed animal. The older we get, the more we look to the acceptance of friends or classmates for a sense of security. As adults, we hope to find security in landing the right job or making the right investments.

The concept of security takes another twist for soldiers fighting a war. When they move forward, they speak of securing first an area, then a city, and finally an entire country. These things are "secure" when there is little threat of the enemy launching a successful counterattack.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, he had secured more than a strategic crossroads, a city, or even an entire country. He had secured the universe. The whole thing was and is under his power, for his people.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul described Jesus' position this way: "[God] raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church" (1:20-22). It's hard to

imagine a description of more absolute power. Jesus has "all things under his feet." When an ancient conqueror invaded new lands, defeated the king, and claimed the territory, he sometimes stood on the neck of the defeated king, literally putting him "under his feet." It was a public sign of total domination.

Not everything under Jesus' total domination is fighting against him. The forces of nature have always served him. He does not humiliate those whose hearts he has conquered by faith. He has led those hearts to surrender through love rather than violence. Still, Paul's picture makes an emphatic point: All things are under

Jesus' power. From where he sits in heaven, Jesus has complete control of the universe and everything in it.

THINGS STILL SEEM TO SPIRAL OUT OF CONTROL

Is that hard to believe? Many things challenge this faith. Every day it seems as though the forces of evil are gaining the upper hand. In just a few years, we have seen sweeping changes in how most of America—even “Christian” America—views gender, sex, and marriage. Do any of us believe that we will reverse it? Fundamentalist Islam is said to be growing faster than Christianity worldwide. It spreads its message of oppression and violence faster than Christians can spread God's forgiveness and love. Visible Christianity crumbles from the inside as church after church caves in to secular culture, gives up its biblical heritage, or joins hands with those who worship gods that don't even exist. Does that look like everything is under Jesus' power? Can we really say that Jesus has secured our little planet, much less the entire universe?

The apparent contradiction often strikes closer to home. If Jesus is actively running the show and he claims that he loves me, why does he let my son land in the hospital or allow a host of other problems to come just when we need help? That's how my Savior runs things!?

The temptations at this point run in a number of different directions. We can sit and sulk and feel sorry for ourselves. We can get mad and complain that Jesus isn't being fair. We can declare open rebellion and try to wrestle him for control of our lives and the world. We can simply despair that he loves us at all.

JESUS IS HEAD OVER EVERYTHING FOR THE CHURCH

None of those responses lead us anywhere good. They cannot improve our situation. Worse yet, they undermine our faith. They cut us off from Jesus just at the time we need him most. The truth remains that Jesus is in power. He has secured control of the universe. The answer to our trial of faith is not found in greater demonstrations of Jesus' power. Rather, we find the answer in his promises and in his love. Paul made it clear that Jesus secured the entire universe for us, his people. “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.”

From where he sits
in heaven, Jesus has
complete control of
the universe and
everything in it.

For a moment, look away from how he has been running our lives. Look at how he ran his own. Why did he leave heaven and become one of us? He wasn't improving his own living conditions. He did it to save us. Why did he expend so much of his time and energy healing the sick? He was not padding his own pockets like some today who sell promises of a miracle. He was showing genuine compassion and mercy. Why did he spend time with the outcast, the sinners, and the poor? He was not building his personal social standing. He sincerely wanted them to be his people. Why did he let enemies use him

as a punching bag, shred his back with whips, and nail him to a cross? He owed no debt to society. He did it because he loves us, the church, and gave himself up for us to make the church “a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). Jesus has always been *for* his people.

That didn't change when he returned to heaven and secured the universe under his power. God placed all things under his feet and appointed him head over everything *for the church*. It's true his own living conditions improved immensely when he returned to heaven, but Jesus hasn't forgotten us. Once he gave it all up for his people. Now he has taken it all back, but still for his people.

I may not understand why he runs the world the way he does. But, then, I don't have to. I don't understand either why he suffered hell for an unappreciative, self-centered sinner like me. It is enough to know that whether he is making the ultimate sacrifice or securing and running the universe, he does it for me and for you and for everyone else who belongs to him by faith. In the end, everything he does will serve and benefit us.

Blankets and teddy bears, popular best friends and hefty bank accounts can't give us lasting security. Jesus can. He has secured the entire universe under his power—real security for the people who know his love.

John Vieths is pastor at Grace, Norman, Oklahoma.

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

SERVING as God made me

Christ's love compels us to serve in his kingdom, but how can we serve?

Andrew Chisel

So often we have been asked to fill an open spot on a committee or board or serve in some other way. We feel pressured to say, "Okay, put me down. I'll do it." But we know we are not going to like doing what we volunteered to do. We felt obligated to accept. When it's all over, we might think that we just couldn't do the task. We feel like a failure.

No one likes to fail, so our reaction is to avoid committing ourselves to serve again. But we remember Christ's love compels us to serve. Then we ask: Is there another way to serve? a better way? another opportunity?

How do we overcome the negative experiences of serving? Three things can help us find our best place to serve. I call them the trifacta of life in the body of Christ. First, we need to do everything for the right reason. That right reason is because Christ has purchased and won us from sin, death, and the power of the devil so that we might serve him. That's the reason. But it helps if we also discover how to do the right things in the right way.

FINDING THE RIGHT THINGS

The second part of the trifacta is finding the right things to do. We are not all the same. Jesus has redeemed us

all equally, but we are not equally gifted. Paul reminds us, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them" and "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:4,7).

The goal of our service is "the common good" of Christ's kingdom. But we are all different and we don't use the same gifts for the common good. The church is like a human body with many different parts, all serving the welfare of the body. God has given each Christian different gifts.

Paul goes on to describe some of the gifts the Holy Spirit gives. Some have wisdom, others have knowledge, others have the ability to distinguish between what's right and wrong, and still others have faith (1 Corinthians 12:8-10). In Romans chapter 12, his list is a bit more like what we need

in the church today: serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, and leading (vv. 6-8).

So what's right for you? You might find that there are multiple places where your hobbies and interests help identify what your gifts are. You might talk with a loved one to get a more objective analysis of your skills and interests. There are spiritual gift inventory analyses online that also can help identify your strengths.

You are looking for the right things to do based on your gifts. All gifts are needed. Consider your talents prayerfully so you can understand the gifts God has given you to use in his kingdom. Doing the right thing will be important to you and to the church. Each of us has at least one gift to use for the good of the body of Christ. It might be simply a humble and quiet



gift of encouraging others or serving your family and other Christians. As Paul reminds us, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us” (Romans 12:6).

FINDING THE RIGHT WAY

The last part of the process is to find the right way to do the right things for the right motive. God has created each of us personally and uniquely. Not only do we have different gifts, but we also have different personalities. Psalm 139 reminds us of the care God has taken to make us: “You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (vv. 13,14). Except for sin, God made us the people we are. Our unique personalities are his doing too.

In the world of human behavioral science, the terms *personality traits* and *temperaments* are synonymous and have been used for more than 2,400 years. Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, first gave personality traits Greek names: Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, and Melancholy.

A model used today is the DISC behavior model. You can find the DISC assessment inventory many places online, and it usually only takes a few minutes to work through the questions. The assessment tool helps people to understand themselves better

so they can adapt their behaviors to working with other people. In other words, it may help members of the body of Christ to work with one another for the common good. You can consider the unique way God shaped you. That understanding will help you assess how to use the gifts he has given you in the right way for you.

Consider your talents prayerfully so you can understand the gifts God has given you to use in his kingdom.

The four letters of DISC stand for four personality profiles: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. The questions in the assessment help identify the general characteristics and the natural motivation of each trait.

It’s interesting to think of how biblical characters fit these traits. A dominant person emphasizes accomplishing results, can be blunt, gets straight to the point, and has confidence. That person is usually motivated by challenges and time. The apostle Peter might fit here. A person who has the bent to influence and persuade others

is open, optimistic, and enthusiastic. Paul might fit here. The third type is steady, sincere, and dependable. This person’s supportive attitude, calm approach, and humility might be like Silas, Paul’s companion on his second and third missionary journeys. Finally, the cautious and conscientious person is interested in the details and makes decisions based on objective reasons. Thomas might be like this person. He wanted to see and touch Jesus before he would believe Jesus rose from the dead.

So often we fail in our service to our Savior when we try to use our gifts in exactly the same way others use their gifts. Your gifts need to be expressed through your God-given personality—using the right gift in the right way for you. Even if you have the same gift as someone else, you might use it in a slightly different way. A “D” personality might have the gift of sharing the gospel like Peter, boldly and directly. Another person with an “S” personality might use the gift to share the gospel like Silas, using a calm one-on-one approach and supporting others who also have the gift of sharing Jesus.

God equips us with everything we need through his Word, giving us spiritual gifts and creating our personalities that will use those gifts in our own way. Then he compels us with his love to do our part in the body of Christ. It all fits together: the right reason—Christ, the right thing—God’s special gifts, and the right way—our unique personalities.

God has a place for you to use your gifts in his body of believers.

Andrew Chisel is a member at Immanuel, Greenville, Wisconsin.

This is the final article in a two-part series on serving Christ and his church.



An ex-football player learns that God is in control of all things—whether good or bad.

Alicia A. Neumann

“I was so naïve and arrogant to complain about only getting to play in the NFL for a couple of seasons—many people never get that opportunity,” says Doug Skene, reminiscing about his years playing professional football. Little did he know that the end of his football career would eventually lead him to a newfound relationship with God.

THE EARLY YEARS

Looking back on his childhood, Skene describes his relationship with God’s Word as “loose at best.” He was raised in the Methodist church, but his family moved to Texas when he was 10 and never found a new church home. “In my adolescent years, there was no relationship with God,” he says. “We weren’t going to church on a regular basis.”

In middle school, Skene started playing football. “I had the God-given size to be good at it,” he recalls. “I was much taller and bigger than the other kids, so football came easy to me. It became a large portion of my identity—

and looking back at it, an unhealthy proportion of my identity.”

He finished high school as one of the higher rated players at that time and went on to play football at the University of Michigan. “I had a challenging experience, but it was great that I had a chance to do that,” he says. During this time, he says his faith life hadn’t changed. He didn’t have much of a relationship with God, and he only attended church on Easter and Christmas. “When a family member or friend was in an accident or there was an illness, then there was a prayer or two at those times,” he says. “But there was no regular relationship, talking, or praying to God. I was a college guy getting a chance to play football, and I was enjoying it. I didn’t think I had a need for God.”

A DREAM COME TRUE

After college, Skene got a chance to play in the NFL. First he was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles; then he was picked up by the New England Patriots, where he became a starter. “I was a starting player in the NFL; I had made it!” he says. “I wasn’t a highly paid player—I was making the league minimum—but I was playing with the expectation that I’d sign a contract and start making good money. All I had to do was make it to the end of the season.”

But that never happened. He ended up injuring his leg and was unable to play for the rest of the season. He was eventually cut from the team and missed out on signing his big contract. His plans and expectations took a dramatic turn. “I couldn’t understand why this was happening to me,” he says.

ANOTHER STRUGGLE

Shortly after Skene’s injury, his sister—who was married with three small children—was diagnosed with cancer. “It was a pretty difficult year,” he says. “My relationship with God became contentious at best.” Why was God sending all this trouble?

Two years later, his sister passed away. “Those were the dark days,” he says. “It was a crushing blow for me to lose a sibling. For a family that wasn’t religious, there were a few of us who had a harbored anger and hostility toward God. I was one of them.”

During this time, Doug got married. Although his wife, Tracy, had been raised in an active Catholic family, she and Doug hadn’t been attending church. But when Tracy got pregnant, they both knew their child would need a relationship with God, and that pushed them to start looking for a church home.

“A lot of that energy came from her,” says Skene. “I told Tracy, ‘You’re right.

Confessions OF FAITH



We should have a spiritual home, a church home.' I had issues with God, but there was this underlying feeling—I think it was the Holy Spirit working in me, nudging me. I knew it was time."

FINDING A CHURCH HOME

The Skenes were living in a small town in Michigan. They weren't sure where to start their search for a church, since neither of them wanted to join the denomination the other was raised in. Then Skene's cousin, who lived in the same town, called Skene up one day and invited the family to visit his church.

"I was hesitant to go, but the pastor's sermon that day hit me like a ton of bricks. It made the hair on the back of my neck stand up," says Skene. "It was like God finally had enough of my complaining and said, 'Who do you think you are? Stop feeling sorry for yourself and understand that I am your God.' I sat up in that pew and listened like I hadn't ever listened before."

Skene says he felt like the answers he was looking for were right there. "This stereotypical light had gone off," he says. "I knew this is where I belonged." He and his wife joined, and Skene says it was enlightening for both of them. "Tracy learned about her religious upbringing, and it helped me

finally deal with the frustration of what I thought was so bad."

Because of his new relationship with God, Skene says now it's easier to deal with challenges that come his way—whether they are related to work, relationships, or dealing with illness. And that's the message he shared when he was asked to present at a WELS men's rally last fall in Bay City, Mich. "I was able to use my football experiences to communicate how things won't always work out the way you think they are going to and you're not always going to win. And that's okay." God is in control and loves us more than we deserve. He works to bring us to our senses so that we can grasp the depth of his love for us and the treasures we have because of Jesus.

Skene says that knowledge and understanding would have been helpful for him as a young man. "There are regrets along the way, but we can't go back and change," he says. "For what-



(Above) The Skenes (from l to r): Nathan, Tracy, Nora, Madelin, and Doug.



(Right) Skene, #74, playing for the New England Patriots

ever reason, my path led me to have this religious reawakening in Tawas City. And now I have this home, and friends, and family—I have a great deal of gratitude for all of it, including the hard parts."

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



heart to heart
parent conversations

As Christian parents, we can't bury our heads in the sand about what is going on in the world around us. We can't expect that our children don't notice either. We need to be ready to discuss difficult topics, and homosexuality is one of them. The great part is that, as Christian parents, we have God's Word to reflect upon and share with our children. Our two authors this month share their perspectives on how they believe that God's Word and Jesus' sacrifice are essential parts of this conversation.

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 DO WE EXPLAIN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS TO OUR CHILDREN?

Just last week we sat together at a Starbucks, the unlikely of friends. He a horse trainer from L.A. Me a pastor of a church in Aiken, S.C. We sat there amiably chatting about life in Aiken, etc., etc.

I sat there and prayed, "Lord, show me a way to talk to him about you." And, suddenly, my friend announced, "I'm gay." Opportunity provided.

I won't recount his story to you, but I will tell you that I ached for him as he related it. All these years, you know what thought really killed him inside? He said, "You're clean before God. I never can be. This is who I am. I will wake up tomorrow just this way. There will always be this fundamental separation between God and me."

I know. I know. I'm supposed to talk about what we might say to our children about same-sex relationships. But, honestly, in a way I just did. This man had once been a child. In fact, this man had once been a child in a very pious Christian household. And his only present conception of God was one perfectly antithetical to the gospel. We believe in a God who broke down the wall of separation between us and him with his Son, Jesus Christ. We believe in a Jesus who came the whole way to us—no, he didn't just come the whole way, he chased us down because we were self-consumed and self-willed in ways so destructive that even now we're still coming to understand how bad it was. And as I sat with my new friend, I got glimpses of him, the boy who'd never glimpsed a God

Even difficult topics can be broached with Scripture as our guide, and the issue of same-sex relationships is no exception. Christian parents are often caught unprepared to give an answer to an inquiring child. But God's Word has a definitive approach.

If your inclination is to start with Scripture's unequivocal stance against same-sex coupling, stop and remember Christ's example. First, we are told repeatedly that God wishes for all to be saved. We are commanded many times to love our neighbor. If your viewpoint toward the weaknesses of others is one of self-righteous condemnation, stop and adjust your attitude. If you have been tolerant of other sinful lifestyles yet find this one intolerable, stop and realize your own bias. If you gossip about people—especially in front of impressionable children—stop and train your tongue to speak well of others.

Christ led with an attitude of love and compassion, and we can aspire to do no less. John 8:3-11 is an example of the way Jesus handled a real-life situation. Jesus was preaching in the temple courts when a group of Pharisees brought a woman in front of the group. There was no doubt as to her sin of adultery since she had been caught in the act. These men of God wanted Jesus to pronounce

that good—a boy who'd never understood that Jesus isn't just theological theory. He's flesh-and-blood Savior for very real inner darkness.

As I stared into that history, I sat in my present and thought of my daughter. I asked myself, "What truth can I deliver to her now that the Spirit can leverage on her heart? I want her to know that good God. When and how do I do that?"

After all, it is in my fatherly job description to answer those questions. In some ways, I suppose I already have. I enjoy her personal flair, but I call her on it when it morphs suddenly into sass. I love to play ball with her, but when she becomes selfish and possessive? She's going to know about it. And then I always lavish her with Jesus when she "gets" it. Did I say lavish? And why? Her personal darkness is no theory. Neither is her Savior. And if she knows those divine truths, she will be able to deal effectively with any proposed alternatives that surface in her life.

And I tell her The Stories. It's my favorite part of parenting her. I LOVE to tell her The Stories. I don't just do the Christmas story. I do them all. Light. Darkness. Sin. Grace. I do the ones that include violence and even death. (It was really something to see Samson through her eyes last week! And how else do you do Good Friday?) I do them all.

I can guarantee you that by the time she grasps by experience the darkness of this world, she'll already have known that truth from the Scriptures. That "modern" family at the mall won't surprise her because her daddy told her that story

about Lot. That rumor about her fifth-grade classmate won't confound her because she'll already have learned from the Scriptures how to think about it—all right there sitting on her daddy's lap. All in a context of gentleness, love, and the Spirit of God himself.

And then? Well, I plan to live in that moment. Because I just want to be her dad. Not a template. Not a cookie cutter. I just want to be her dad. When her young mind sees sin firsthand, I don't want to bust out my preplanned speech. I want to hear what her tender, young conscience is causing her to think. When she confronts big questions about sexuality, I don't want to get out some canned approach. I want to minister to whatever issues of sin and grace bubble to her surface so I can properly wrap her up in a hug of truth.

What will that look like? I don't know. I do know where I'm headed though. I want her so confident in the gospel that at a Starbucks in 2046 she'll sit with someone just as her daddy once did and say, "I too have evil desires that wage war on my soul. They'll be there tomorrow too. But I know the gospel, and I want you to know it too. God gave me Jesus as my substitute, and he's poured his Spirit into me as my new impulse. And can I just tell you this? Jesus is real for you too."

Jonathan Bourman is a pastor at Peace, Aiken, S.C. He and his wife, Melanie, have a three-year-old daughter.



punishment on her in this very public forum. When pushed for an answer, Jesus reminded these sanctimonious Pharisees of their own sin. He then waited until he and the woman were alone. He didn't condemn her to death as had been suggested. He told her to go and leave her life of sin. What relief she must have felt when she realized her life had been spared! And how much more receptive she must have been when a simple directive was given by her Savior. No invectives, no finger pointing, just truth.

Discussions with children arising from organic events are usually more effective than contrived lectures. Today's social climate provides plenty of openings on this issue. Age-appropriate answers to honest questions don't need to be lengthy. We take our cue from God's commands and lovingly apply them.

When Jesus met Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and recognized his many sins, Jesus could have had Zacchaeus dragged from his perch in the tree. As a tax collector, Zacchaeus would not have received much empathy from the crowd. Instead, Jesus did something that gave the crowd fodder for gossip. Jesus told Zacchaeus he wanted to go to his house. In so doing, he honored Zacchaeus with his presence and took him to a private place to talk about his erring ways. No public ridicule,

no cheap shots, rather, a one-on-one talk in Zacchaeus' own home. Facing the Savior's love, Zacchaeus changed.

We remind our children of God's love and of his desire for all people to be saved. We recognize this sinful inclination as a cross to bear. We acknowledge the forgiveness for all sins—including our own—and praise God for his goodness.

We give life to our words by our loving interactions with all people. Being motivated by the gospel opens doors that could otherwise be closed by the sting of the law. Friendship without compromising our beliefs gives truth to our love for all of God's people. Our brothers and sisters who struggle with these wrongful desires often have an aching need to worship. We must own our uneasiness with those who are different and pray for guidance and a heart for souls.

Children learn far more from our actions than our words. Walk in love. Stand firm in the Word. Give thanks for a forgiving Savior.

Mary Clemons lives in Tucson, Ariz., with her husband, Sam. They have three grown children and five grandchildren.



Application is everything

Sometimes it's easier to hold a grudge than to forgive, but we are to forgive others as Christ forgave us.

James D. Roecker

Has there ever been a time in your life when someone has wronged you? Have false rumors been spread about you to give you a bad name? Those rumors might have torn down your reputation. Maybe you can think of a few people who have broken your trust. Forgiveness may not be given out easily. Really, it is easier to withhold forgiveness for a while so others feel terrible about what they did to you.

In fact, holding a grudge often seems to be the only option. One of life's guilty pleasures is fantasizing about what telling off that person looks like. Rehearsal time is set aside to run through all the grievances you have in your arsenal. Resentment can rage until you lash out with an angry text or e-mail. You may even make decisions based on how someone has wronged you.

At times, the "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" exchanges are just words you say, not something you truly feel. Then a relationship you have with someone disintegrates quickly and ends poorly. This sort of thing can happen at the workplace, within families, and on college campuses.

College courses do not ignore the topic of forgiveness, but the religious and spiritual component is often lacking. Emma, a UW-Stevens Point student, shared an experience she had in her Positive Psychology class. An entire section of the course was dedicated to the topic of forgiveness. One assignment was to write a forgiveness letter to someone. Students did not have to give the person the letter. They wrote it and handed it in.

Emma said this about her letter: "I chose to write it to my first roommate from the residence halls. We did not have the same morals or respect for others. It ended poorly when I changed roommates after a semester with her. I often would see her around campus, and we both avoided eye contact and never talked even before I switched rooms. So I wrote the letter, and, after the letter was written, I said a prayer. I knew that I had already been forgiven by God for the way I handled the situation, but it helped me get it out of my head. I stopped feeling weird every time I ran into her."

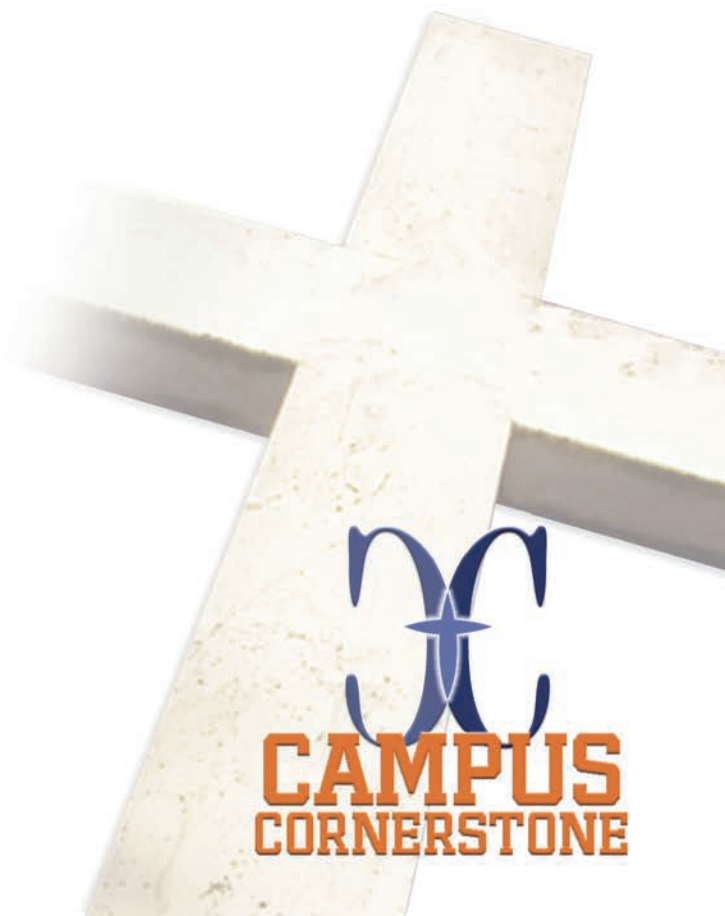
Sinful people sin. All of us fall short of God's standard of perfection. Sin strains all the relationships we have, including our relationship with our heavenly Father. We can even secretly enjoy being overcome by evil. We might not want to ever forget the way people have treated us or especially the deep hurt they caused. At times, we may not be able to forgive ourselves.

However, when we confess our sins, the cross is personal. God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness are given to us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). His faithfulness brings us forgiveness.

Forgiven people forgive. Jesus lived a perfect life, died for all people, and rose from the dead. He lives so that we will someday live with him eternally. We need to take time to reflect on the forgiveness Jesus has given us and then to let our lights shine as we live Christlike lives and forgive others.

James Roecker, pastor at Divine Word, Plover, Wisconsin, does campus ministry work at UW-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

This is the second article in a six-part series on life apps that the Bible has given Christians.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Bare, Jonathan M., to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
Gawel, Adam S., to St. Andrew, Chicago, Ill.
Hagen, Kurt W., to St. John, Goodhue, Minn.
Hirsch, Paul A., to St. Paul's, Norfolk/Beautiful Savior, O'Neill, Neb.
Manian, Adam S., to St. John, Vesta/Peace, Echo, Minn.
Pankow, James W., to Grace, Spring Hill, Fla.
Russow, David P. (ELS), to Hope, Andover, Minn.
Schwark, Bruce E., to Rockwood, Manitowoc, Wis.
Wessel, Mark W., to Christ, North Saint Paul/Christ, Hugo, Minn.
Zahn, Jason A., to Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla.

Teachers

Avila, Christopher C., to St. John, Red Wing, Minn.
Bartsch, Christopher D., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Blumer, Bonnie J., to Risen Savior Academy, Orlando, Fla.
Brown, Geron J., to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.
Cain, Amy M., to Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis.
DeNoyer, Jennifer L., to Bethany Lutheran Preschool, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Douglas, Daniel L., to Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.
Evans, Matthew J., to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.
Ewald, Sarah L., to Crown of Life Christian Academy, Fort Myers, Fla.
Ewerdt, Philip N., to New Hope Lutheran Academy, West Melbourne, Fla.
Gibson, Joshua D., to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Gibson, Nicole L., to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Heiderich, Deborah S., to The Genesis Academy, Houston, Texas
Hilgendorf, Edye, to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Hoffman, Erica E., to Christ the King, Bremerton, Wash.
Hubert, Dan, to Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.
Iles, Peter A., to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Johnson, Maria A., to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
Johnson, Rachel K., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Killinger, Jessica, to Prairie, Gibbon, Minn.
Klemann, Jessica, to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Kock, Carissa B., to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kuske, Jennifer D., to St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis.

Luebke, Christopher J., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Milbrath, Meredith L., to Risen Savior, Mankato, Minn.
Morgan, Tyler J., to Sienna Lutheran Academy, Missouri City, Texas
Pappenfuss, Paul E., to Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz.
Pasillas, Stephanie A., to Salem, Milwaukee, Wis.
Peitsmeyer, Stephanie L., to St. Mark, Lincoln, Neb.
Schallert, Terry S., to retirement
Schlieve, Miriam J., to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.
Schneck, Deanna C., to Peace, Livonia, Mich.
Schroer, Kim, to St. Paul, Saginaw, Mich.
Scriver, Bailey A., to Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center, Downers Grove, Ill.
Stellick, Karin R., to St. John, Montello, Wis.
Trimmer, Jennifer L., to St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio
Staff minister
Benzing, Thomas A., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.

ANNIVERSARIES

Lewiston, Minn.—St. John (150). July 3. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow. 507-523-2280. Website, lewistonlutherans.org.
Grass Lake, Mich.—St. Jacob (175). July 17. Worship, 10:15 A.M.; picnic to follow. 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/.
Delavan, Wis.—Christus (125). Aug. 7. Worship, 9 A.M. and 2 P.M.; pig roast at 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/.
Mosinee, Wis.—Grace (100). Sept. 18. Worship, 11 A.M.; meal to follow. 715-457-4727; gracelutheranmosinee@gmail.com.

COMING EVENTS

Women's Ministry conference—July 21–23. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Theme: "Mentors." Website, wels.net/wmconference.
Return to Wittenberg conference—July 26–29. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Theme: "What Does This Mean?" Website, www.returntowittenberg.org.
WELS Night at Miller Park—July 29. Miller Park, Milwaukee, Wis. Brewers vs.

Pirates. Order tickets at reduced rates at www.brewers.com/wels. Order deadline, July 22. Website, wels.net/events.

WELS retired called worker reunion—Aug. 4. Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis. RSVP requested by July 25. 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.

Annual 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. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary/.

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

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

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

NAMES WANTED

Hot Springs Village, Arkansas—people living in the area, retired or visitors. Living Water, Hot Springs Village, Ark. Website, www.livingwater@hsv.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.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Director of mission advancement—Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. Full-time position. Development, sales, or public relations experience preferred. Website, www.lutherhigh.org.

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



Kristina (Wessel) Troge won the 2007 Thalassa Prize for her entry from the Dominican Republic, "Considering Clay."



A Malawian choir greeted Rachel (Kionka) Schroeder when she served there in 2007–08. "One in Christ," her entry reflecting on the event, won the 2008 Thalassa Prize.



Amber (Schlomer) Poth's entry from Southeast Asia, "Don't Be Afraid," won the 2011 Thalassa Prize.

You'll never be the same

When Rachel (Kionka) Schroeder arrived in Malawi after her graduation from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., in 2007, she knew she'd crossed a threshold, not only into a new country, but into a new way of seeing the world.

A year later, she wrote: "The joy hits before you even get out of the truck. The choir sways out of the small brick church, clapping and dancing. Then they begin to sing. It is a sound you've never heard before; the harmonies are more brilliant, more penetrating. Stepping down onto the dirt, you realize you will never be the same again."

Schroeder's written reflection and accompanying photo earned her MLC's Thalassa Prize in 2008.

Thalassa is a Greek word meaning "the sea." The Thalassa contest gives MLC students and graduates who've served overseas an opportunity to share their experiences through a photo and a 300-word reflection. Winners are awarded \$1,000, half of which they designate to a mission of their choice. Funded by two different donors through the years, the prize is now funded by the MLC International Services Office.

The year 2016 marks ten years of Thalassa. Johannah Crass won the 2016 prize with her entry from Antigua, "White Robes." Her submission joined more than one hundred over the years—from Peruvian villages and teeming cities in Asia, from a snowy Siberian college town and the sun-soaked Caribbean, from a Brazilian *fazenda* and the Zambian bush. Each photo and reflection is rich in particulars but tells the same story—of human needs and the Savior who meets them.

In honor of this anniversary year, the ten Thalassa winners have reflected on their ministries overseas, noting what they did afterward, what they learned, and how they were changed.

Rachel Schroeder has taught at two Lutheran high schools; chaperoned a mission trip to Ukraine; and spent another year overseas, this time in Mexico with her husband, Howard. She recalls that the Malawians taught her more than she ever taught them: to be happy even in the toughest of circumstances, to focus on Christ, and to consider service to the Lord a great privilege.

The 2007 winner, Kristina Troge, notes that she still uses the Spanish skills she honed in the Dominican Republic at Divine Savior Lutheran Academy in Miami, Fla. Similarly, the 2011 winner, Amber Poth, lives in St. Louis, where she uses her Mandarin skills with the large Chinese population.

The 2012 winner, Paul Kelm, served in Japan from 1987 to 1989 and the Czech Republic from 1994 to 2006. Now teaching at Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis., he says: "Sharing God's Word in Milwaukee, though a world apart from the work we did in the Czech Republic, is still exciting and humbling. I am thrilled that the Lord continues to use me and my family to do his work of sharing his love and forgiveness."

Laurie Gauger-Hested

See all the winning entries plus additional photos in the ten-year anniversary booklet at mlc-wels.edu/go/thalassa-10.

Preserving WELS history

Construction is underway on a new WELS archives and visitor center in the lower level of the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), Waukesha, Wis. For the first time, historical WELS documents, books, and artifacts will be stored in a purpose-built space designed to preserve and organize the synod's history. The visitor center will feature artifacts and information about WELS history. The projected completion date is this fall.

To set up, organize, and manage the archives in its new home, WELS has hired a full-time archivist, Susan Willems, who currently manages archives processing at the University of Denver. A 2006 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis., Willems received her Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Denver in 2013.

"To be the first [full-time] archivist for the synod is a huge honor," she

says. "It's going to be a challenge, but it's going to be a lot of fun to learn about our synod's history."

The archives currently reside at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Mequon, Wis., but the collection has outgrown the space and the facility does not have the proper climate controls for preservation. Willems' first job will be to sort and move archive materials from WLS. Then she will organize and maintain the archives at the CMM. She says that one of her initial goals is "raising awareness about the archives in the synod and reaching out to the different districts and individual churches to make sure that they know that the archives exist and what type of material we would like them to save that we would be collecting."

John Hartwig, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary who currently works with the archives, says, "We thank God for this long-awaited progress in providing a suitable space and



Susan Willems is the first full-time archivist for the synod. She is pictured with her husband, David, and daughter, Sophia.

staffing for our archives, and we ask for his blessings as we move forward."

WELS news briefs

CAMPUS MINISTRY

414-256-3279; cm@wels.net

WELS Campus Ministry is already gearing up for next fall, when thousands of WELS college students will head back to school. "This is an extremely important time in their spiritual lives," says Charles Vannieuwenhoven, chairman of WELS Campus Ministry Committee and pastor at Northdale, Tampa, Fla. "Working through WELS Campus Ministry, this can be a time during which young men and women mature in God's Word to become leaders in Jesus' ministry." But Campus Ministry needs your help in order to better serve WELS college students. The committee needs student names and addresses. By **registering with Campus Ministry**, students can receive *Forward in Christ* magazine and *Meditations* as well as other materials for free. The informa-

tion also will be shared with a neighboring campus ministry pastor, who can offer more personal spiritual support. Register online at wels.net/campus-ministry.

MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

877-MLC-1995; info@mlc-wels.edu

On May 4, Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., held



MLC Day in which WELS members around the world were encouraged to pray, share, and give to support the mission and training of the next generation of called workers to share the gospel with the world. MLC posted videos, pictures, and information on a special site, mlcday.com, as well as on its Facebook page to share more about MLC and its mission. Schools and churches also sent in videos and pictures, like the one shown here from St. John's Lutheran School in Jefferson, Wis., in support of the college and its students. More than 80 donors gave more than \$33,000 to fund 33 student scholarships. More than one thousand visitors from 47 states and 24 countries visited the special website. Learn more about MLC at www.mlc-wels.edu.

Picture this

From her first camera that she received at her confirmation (one that used 110 film) to her latest cell phone (which she says she picked out based on the camera), Naomi Green has been hooked on photography. “For as long as I can remember, it has been a passion for me,” she says. “Wherever I go, it is just something my mind does. I always think, *How would I frame that? What would be the best lighting for that?* It’s just part of who I am.”

So when a friend on Facebook told her about a photo challenge sponsored by WELSTech, a weekly podcast that explore the use of technology to further the spread of the gospel, there wasn’t a question in her mind about whether or not she should participate. “I had to take part in it,” she says.

The contest, which started in August 2015, asks photographers to take photos based on a monthly theme. All photos submitted are then included in an online public domain album for use by our churches and schools.

Sallie Draper, co-host of WELSTech, says the idea came about after a series on the WELSTech podcast about the importance of images in communication. “It was really well received, and that was the genesis of the photo challenge—let’s build up an image library for churches and schools to use,” she says. Many of the themes are built around the church year, providing images for congregations to use throughout the year in their visual communications.

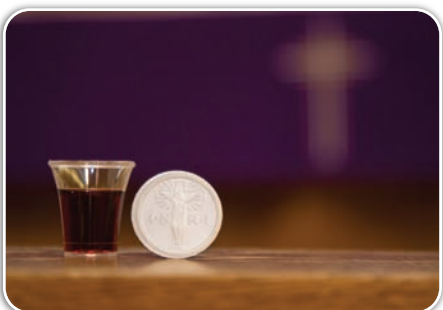
Green has participated every month, sometimes submitting slice-of-life snapshots and sometimes setting up specific still-life images. “It is fun as a photographer to have something to motivate you,” says Green, a member at St. Peter, Monticello, Minn. “And what a cool thing for me to be able to take something I love to do and have it help other people.”

While photography is just a hobby for her, Green also volunteers her time and talents to her local church and WELS high school, taking photos for their websites and promotional pieces.

The photo challenge is now giving her—and other photographers—an opportunity to further hone their skills and share their talents with a broader audience.

“When I think about this photography challenge, it’s a practical applications of 1 Corinthians 10:31, ‘So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.’ I see this as a way of giving glory to God and helping him with whatever I do,” says Green. “It’s something that I love to do, and it can be used for God’s kingdom—and it’s fun!”

The challenge theme for the month of July is summer, evangelism, and Isaiah 52:7. Find out more at wels.net/photochallenge. To view—or use—the more than 650 photos taken by over 30 photographers, go to bit.ly/wtchallengealbum.



A few of the photos Naomi Green submitted to the monthly photo challenge sponsored by WELSTech. These photos are part of an online public domain album.

Reaching inmates with the Word

The mission of WELS Prison Ministry, part of the Commission on Special Ministries, is to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to people who are serving time in jails and prison. The main work of the ministry is mail correspondence. Prison Ministry has produced 35 Bible study booklets and corresponding tests that are sent to inmates who seek to study God’s Word. More than 80,000 inmates have received at least one of the Bible studies.

“We have over three hundred volunteers throughout the country who are either test correctors or pen pals or make the mailings happen here in New Ulm,” says Brad Price, director of WELS Prison Ministry, based in New Ulm, Minn.

While the mail ministry is thriving, Price hopes to expand Prison Ministry efforts to include more face-to-face Bible studies in jails and prisons.

Price says, “We do really well with our correspondence courses. The next challenge is getting more people involved with the face-to-face ministry—laypeople, men and women, who are interested in going into jails and doing Bible studies there and sharing that way.” Volunteers, particularly women to minister to women in prison or jail, are needed.

Vi Schuppe, a retired WELS teacher, is one of these volunteers. She’s part of a group who rotates leading weekly Saturday morning Bible studies at the Shakopee, Minn., women’s correctional facility. Since its inception, the study regularly sees about a dozen attendees, though attendance has reached up to 30. Schuppe uses the Prison Ministry level one and level two booklets for the study.

“These women, we see it every time, are so burdened by guilt, and it’s such a joy to bring them the peace of the gospel,” says Schuppe, who has volunteered in this way since 2010.

“You go in with fear and human thoughts of *They’re going to ask*



Brad Price (left) and a volunteer working on correspondence to prisoners at the Prison Ministry headquarters in New Ulm, Minn.

a question that we can't answer, but we're over that because we can say, 'That's a good question; we'll ask our pastor,' says Schuppe. "All the human fears about how they're going to react are just swept away. We get more back because we're a Christian family studying God's Word together, and we all learn. God has blessed us so much."

Price says that training is available for those who are interested in doing jail ministry or conducting face-to-face Bible studies. "If people aren't interested in that or don't have access to the jail, but they're interested in being a mentor, we have mentoring program training as well," he explains.

For situations where face-to-face Bible study isn't possible, Special Ministries can still provide those impacted by incarceration—as well as members of the military or others living overseas and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities—with gospel-oriented materials and encouragement. Referral forms to sign up for materials or contact catered to these specific circumstances are available at wels.net/refer.

To learn about all the work of WELS Special Ministries, visit wels.net/special-ministries.

Where are they now?

In Forward in Christ, we report the news but aren't always able to follow up. "Where are they now?" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

In January 2013, we gave you a glimpse into the ministry of Crown of Life, a congregation in southern California whose goal was to be one church with multiple services in multiple locations so that it could have the intimacy of a small church with the impact of a large church.

HERE'S A RECAP:

Crown of Life was established in Corona, Calif., as a home mission in 1998. By November 2012 the 396-member congregation was holding four weekly services in three different locations and was served by two pastors. It saw potential for outreach in several other locations.

SO WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Rick Johnson, pastor at Crown of Life, explains that in 2014 a sister congregation in Yucaipa, Calif., about 10 miles from Crown of Life's Beaumont location, decided to dissolve as a church because its numbers had dropped and the congregation was aging.

"When they closed," says Johnson, "they offered us their building and property, and we began what we now call 'saving sacred spaces.' We gratefully accepted their generous offer, renovated and updated the building, and moved our Beaumont group to Yucaipa. We currently average 70s in worship in Yucaipa with lots of young families and children attending."

The Board for Home Missions believes that the practice of "saving sacred spaces" can be a valuable tool for outreach if the situation is right.

As Johnson explains, "In southern California and probably in many other places, WELS has struggling small congregations with land and buildings that are in danger of closing and the property being sold. In some areas, if we lose these sacred spaces, we may never be here again or it may cost us dearly to

reestablish ourselves. For the sake of the souls around these sacred spaces, Crown of Life has included 'saving sacred spaces' as part of our multi-site mission."

In May 2015, Crown of Life began working with St. Paul, Riverside, on a second "saving sacred spaces" project. The plan is for St. Paul's, a small 45-year-old congregation with a church, to join with Crown of Life to better reach out with the gospel to those in the Riverside area. The group from Crown of Life that has been worshipping at a rented Riverside storefront plans to move to St. Paul's church in the fall, and two services are planned to be held there each Sunday.

Mike Johnson, a member at Crown of Life, says, "I think what makes Crown of Life special is the vision and mission set by the pastors. I have been here from the beginning and have seen Crown of Life grow from one service to the five we currently have. We could have been satisfied with one campus but have been seekers of the lost and continue to move forward in the Great Commission."

With its stated mission to "get the gospel to as many people as possible," members of Crown of Life are thankful for how God has blessed their congregation but are not ready to slow down their aggressive outreach plan. In 2015, the congregation supported a vision of "6 by 20," indicating its goal of establishing three more worship and outreach locations during the next five years.



Steve Koelpin, pastor at Crown of Life, gives a devotion for children during the Easter service at the Yucaipa location.

From Liberia to Las Vegas and back again

Isaac David has not had an easy life. In fact, at one point, he was so disappointed in God, he stopped going to church. Now, however, he is looking for every opportunity he can to share the message of salvation—whether to legal immigrants in his home city of Las Vegas or to the people of his homeland in Liberia. “I know God has been faithful and he has been carrying me through,” he says. “What I am today is not by my strength but because God has a plan for my life.

David was born and raised as a Christian in Liberia. But with the eruption of a civil war in 1989, his life changed dramatically. In 1990, at the age of 10, he witnessed his parents being murdered. He escaped and traveled to Nigeria by boat—along with 30,000 other refugees. There he grew up as an orphan in a refugee camp, often with little food or medication. “I slept on the ground for eight years,” he says.

He was mad at God. “Church was not my priority because I was going to church in Liberia and now I lost my parents—both of them in the war,” he says. “So I felt that God had let me down.”

In time he returned to church and even agreed to study to be a church leader. He went to high school and college to study to be a teacher. In 2003, he immigrated to America and was among the first Liberian refugees to settle in Las Vegas, Nev.

After settling in, he became concerned about the faith of his people—and that of other immigrants flooding into the area. He says that the immigrants were not going to church, probably due to cultural and language differences. He decided to open a church—the Chapel of Improvement Christian Fellowship—to reach these immigrants. “My goal was to reach African refugees that come to Las Vegas with the gospel of Christ and to remind them of the promises that were made before coming to America,” he says.

He began studying at a Lutheran seminary but found it was too liberal for



Attendees of the first convention of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Liberia. Isaac David is in the first row, second from the right.

him. After an Internet search for conservative Christian church bodies, he discovered WELS. Now David is studying to be a pastor through the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Part of David's ministry is providing material items to new refugees to help them get started in America. Along with the pots and pans, the soap and detergent, is information about the church and an invitation to worship. He is also working with Water of Life, Las Vegas, to set up a first friends program, in which volunteers establish relationships with the refugees. “They minister the Word of God to them but also help them out in American society,” says David.

The congregation recently has started a second site that is closer to where the refugees are settling down. More than one hundred people from 13 different nationalities are being served.

David, however, doesn't just want to help refugees to America. He also wants to share the gospel in Liberia. When he traveled there in 2014 to see family members, he started five churches and began training more than 30 leaders.

In March 2016, David returned to register these congregations with the government as the Confessional Lutheran Church of Liberia. John Vogt, one of David's PSI professors, and Matt Vogt, pastor at Water of Life, met him there

in April to attend the first convention of the new church as well as to teach courses to the leaders. John Vogt writes, “The convention's worship services—unlike anything we experience in the U.S.—were filled with a joy, enthusiasm and volume. The reports indicated that worship attendance and congregational membership are about 1,800, and 25 men are serving as pastors. On Saturday we taught a day-long course on law and gospel—57 people attended the full course and received a certificate of attendance.” He reports that 65 students—pastors plus other leaders and teachers—then attended two weeks more of full-day classes for ministerial training.

“The Lord is providing WELS with a world mission field right at our door,” says Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions. “New immigrants arrive looking for a place to belong. When our members reach out with the gospel, the Holy Spirit goes to work. These new, God-planned connections are helping our synod reach with the message of Jesus' love far beyond where we could ever go on our own.”



Both the WELS Joint Mission Council and WELS Christian Aid and Relief are providing funding for David's work in Las Vegas. Learn more about Christian Aid and Relief in the July *WELS Connection*.

District news

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

On May 22, **Grace, Portland, Ore.**, dedicated its new organ and renovated balcony. The digital organ includes pipes from the congregation's original organ that came from Germany in the early 1900s.

SOUTH CENTRAL

Abiding Savior, Weslaco, Tex., set up a sensory room in its fellowship hall for families of children with special needs. It looks much like an indoor play land with large mats and climbing equipment, a hammock swing, stepping stones, and a mini trampoline. It also has centers such as a small kitchen, art supplies, games, and a reading corner. Bible story lessons and corresponding crafts are available for families to take home. The congregation hopes to start a midweek Jesus Cares program for those with special needs.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

NW—Rockwood, Manitowoc, Wis., celebrated its 150th anniversary on May 22.

MN—On May 26, Christ, North St. Paul, Minn., celebrated 25 years in the teaching ministries of **Christopher Olson** and **Ann Ponath**.

SEW—The following pastors are celebrating their 30th year in the pastoral ministry—**William Carter**, St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis.; **Jack Kelly**, Our Savior, Zion, Ill.; **Gary Koschnitzke**, St. John, Lannon, Wis.; **Daniel Marshall**, St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.; and **Joel Pless**, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

The district reporters for this month are: MN—Jeffrey Bovee; PNW—David Birsching; NW—Dennis Kleist; SA—Jonathan Kuske; SC—Andrew Retberg; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



Peace, Hartford, Wis., dedicated its renovated sanctuary on April 14.

MINNESOTA



On April 24, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., celebrated the service of (from left) Jeff Wiechman, 25 years in the teaching ministry; Paul Tess, 40 years in the teaching ministry; and Keith Wessel, 25 years in the pastoral ministry.

SOUTH ATLANTIC



On May 1, Beautiful Savior, Moncks Corner, S.C., dedicated its new church building. Beautiful Savior is a multi-site congregation that includes a location in Summerville, S.C. The Moncks Corner location held its first worship service in January 2013. WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., helped the congregation fund this project.

SOUTH ATLANTIC



Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's chorus performed at Our Savior's, Port Orange, Fla., on March 29 and was joined by a choir from the congregation's Small Steps Academy, which provides childcare and a preschool to the community. The two groups had fun interacting with each other before and after the performance. A member even made robes and stoles for the preschoolers.

Obituaries

Arlyn W. Boll, 1935–2016

Arlyn Boll was born Nov. 27, 1935, in Winona, Minn. He died March 19, 2016, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1958 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at St. Paul, Arlington, Minn.; St. Paul, Stevensville, Mich.; St. Croix, West Saint Paul, Minn.; Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.; Northwestern Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.; St. John, Watertown, Wis.; Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.; Peace, Hartford, Wis.; and St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Verna; three sons; five grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and one sister. He is preceded in death by his first wife, Karen.

Linda J. Hengst, 1952–2016

Linda Hengst (née Dew) was born May 9, 1952, in Valentine, Neb. She died March 21, 2016, in Rowlett, Texas.

A 1974 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Zion, Valentine, Neb.; Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Lord of Life, Friendswood, Texas; and Calvary, Dallas, Texas.

She is survived by her husband, Gary; one son; her father; one brother; and three sisters. She is preceded in death by her mother.

Joanne L. Rosenbaum, 1935–2016

Joanne Rosenbaum (née Westendorf) was born April 27, 1935, in Thiensville, Wis. She died March 26, 2016, in Saginaw, Mich.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Trinity, Jenera, Ohio; St. John's, Bay City, Mich.; and Peace, Saginaw, Mich.

She is survived by 4 sons, 17 grandchildren, 1 great-grandchild, 1 brother, and 3 sisters. She is preceded in death by her husband, Werner.

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY GRADUATES

At the graduation service on May 20, 32 graduates received diplomas for successfully completing their seminary studies.



Garrett F. Alford
Appleton, Wis.



Andrew C. Buschkopf
Milwaukee, Wis.



Isaac P. Cherney
Mequon, Wis.



William H. Dunn
Southlake, Texas



Andrew C. Franz
Emmaus, Penn.



Jason D. Free
Rapid City, S.D.



Lloyd D. Harter
La Crosse, Wis.



Cody A. Hauch
Saint Clair, Minn.



Paul H. Kolander
Appleton, Wis.



Ryan D. Kolander
Brookfield, Wis.



Bryant D. Laude
Salina, Kan.



Gunnar R. Ledermann
Plymouth, Calif.



Jason W. Liebenow
Washington
Township, Mich.



Joseph M. Lindloff
Saginaw, Mich.



Marques J. Nelson
Winona, Minn.



Timothy L. Patoka
Stafford, Va.



John M. Paustian
West Bend, Wis.



Justin A. Pomije
New Prague, Minn.



Matthew D. Rothe
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Caleb J. Schmiede
Madison, Wis.



Caleb K. Schultz
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada



Aaron M. Schulz
West Bend, Wis.



Gregory M. Sitzman
Hubertus, Wis.



Daniel J. Slaughter
Mesa, Ariz.



Andrew D. Stuebs
Platteville, Wis.



Mark D. W. Swanson
Vancouver, Wash.



Darin R. Warnecke
Watertown, Wis.



Peter J. Wells
Dresser, Wis.



Kurtis J. Wetzel
Kewaskum, Wis.



Nathan A. Wordell
Kenosha, Wis.



Benjamin D. Zietlow
Montello, Wis.

Assignments

At the Call Day service held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., on May 19, 34 men received new assignments (listed below). From the class of 2016, 31 students received assignments. Three candidates from previous years received new calls. Five were reassigned to their present fields of labor; two had their current calls made permanent.

Alford, Garrett F., to Christ, Eden Prairie, Minn.

Buschkopf, Andrew C., to Mountain of the Lord, Wausau, Wis.

Chartrand, Evan S., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Cherney, Isaac P., to Redeemer, Yakima, Wash.

Dunn, William H., to San Pedro, Milwaukee, Wis.

Franzo, Andrew C., to Redeemer, Weston, Wis.

Free, Jason D., to assistant to the Southeastern Wisconsin District president

Harter, Lloyd D., to Faith, Antioch, Ill.

Hauch, Cody A., to Trinity, Wabeno/Risen Savior, Mountain, Wis.

NAME REMOVED for security concerns.

Kolander, Paul H., to Green Valley, Henderson, Nev.

Kolander, Ryan D., to Palabra de Vida, Detroit, Mich.

Laude, Bryant D., to Zion, Mobridge/St. Jacobi, Glenham, S.D.

Ledermann, Gunnar R., to Divine Peace, Rockwall, Texas

Liebenow, Jason W., to St. John, Florence, Wis./St.

Paul, Tipler, Wis./St. Mark, Iron River, Mich.

Lindloff, Joseph M., to Hope, Irmo, S.C.

Moldenhauer, Nathan D., to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Nelson, Marques J., to Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Patoka, Timothy L., to Grace, Tucson, Ariz.

Paustian, John M., to Zion, Morgan, Minn.

Pomije, Justin A., to Our Savior, Gaylord/Hope, Indian River, Mich.

Rothe, Matthew D., to new mission, Fredericksburg, Va.

Scharf, Matthew W., to assistant to the Nebraska District president

Schmiede, Caleb J., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Schultz, Caleb K., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Schulz, Aaron M., to St. Paul, Menomonie, Wis.

Sitzman, Gregory M., to Emanuel Redeemer, Yale, Mich.

Slaughter, Daniel J., to Zion, Monroe, Mich.

Stuebs, Andrew D., to assistant to the South Atlantic District president

Swanson, Mark D. W., to St. Peter, Helenville, Wis.

Warnecke, Darin R., to St. John, Sturgis, Mich.

Wells, Peter J., to assistant to the Western Wisconsin District president

Wordell, Nathan A., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Zietlow, Benjamin D., to East Fork/Canyon Day, Whiteriver, Ariz.

WORLD MISSION QUIZ

How well do you know your facts about WELS World Missions? Take our quiz and find out while learning more about our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

1 How many world mission fields are there?

- a) 21
- b) 30
- c) 23
- d) 16

2 What is the oldest world mission field?

- a) Malawi
- b) Mexico
- c) Japan
- d) Apacheland

3 What is the largest world mission field?

- a) Hong Kong
- b) Malawi
- c) Zambia
- d) Nigeria

4 What is the smallest world mission field?

- a) Albania
- b) Haiti
- c) Taiwan
- d) Bolivia

5 How many people does WELS World Missions serve in Lutheran churches worldwide?

- a) About 75,000
- b) More than 50,000
- c) 30,000
- d) More than 100,000

6 How many congregations/ preaching stations are in our world mission fields?

- a) More than 500
- b) More than 600
- c) More than 700
- d) More than 800

7 How many national workers serve congregations in world mission fields?

- a) 150
- b) Nearly 400
- c) 80
- d) 275

8 How many missionaries, teachers, and layworkers does WELS World Missions support in world mission fields?

- a) More than 110
- b) More than 60
- c) More than 150
- d) More than 80

9 How many world mission fields are more than 50 years old?

- a) 3
- b) 4
- c) 5
- d) 6

Extra credit if you can name them.

10 Which island nations are not part of WELS Board for World Missions work?

- a) Antigua
- b) Indonesia
- c) St. Lucia
- d) Cuba
- e) All of the above
- f) A and C

11 In what countries is WELS World Missions exploring future outreach opportunities?

- a) North Vietnam
- b) Ethiopia
- c) Romania
- d) All of the above
- e) None of the above

12 WELS Multi-Language Publications (MLP) coordinates the development of confessional Lutheran mater-

ials for outreach worldwide. In how many languages are its materials available?

- a) 30
- b) 41
- c) 47
- d) 56

13 How many items has MLP printed for distribution worldwide?

- a) 1 million
- b) 1.8 million
- c) 2.4 million
- d) 2.9 million

14 Which world mission fields rely heavily on literature distribution for outreach?

- a) Nepal
- b) Pakistan
- c) India
- d) All of the above
- e) A and B

15 How many sister churches does WELS have around the world through the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC)?

- a) 19
- b) 27
- c) 29
- d) 32

Learn more about WELS mission work at wels.net/missions.



ANSWERS

1) c; 2) d. The mission started in 1893; 3) b, with 41,404 members; 4) d, with 18 members; 5) a; 6) c. There are 454 congregations and 252 preaching stations for a total of 706; 7) b; 8) a, with 41 missionaries, 9 teachers, and more than 60 lay workers; 9) c. Japan, Malawi, Zambia, Apacheland, and Nigeria; 10) f; 11) d; 12) c; 13) d; 14) e; 15) c.

One woman is brought to the brink of hopelessness, where she finds forgiveness and joy again through her Savior.

Amanda M. Klemp

When DiAnn Krigbaum talks about her life story, she doesn't play the victim. She doesn't make excuses. She connects the dots. She can see how she went from viewing herself through the lens of condemnation to viewing herself through the lens of God's grace. She uses her experiences to speak that language, the language of pain and of regret, to others who are going through their own trauma or have made their own mistakes. She points them to the answer she found.

GROWING UP

Krigbaum grew up in south-central Wisconsin. She was the youngest of five, with four older brothers. Her mom was Lutheran, and her dad was confirmed when she was a child. "My father was a truck driver and my mom worked in a factory, so pretty much my brothers took care of me and we fended for ourselves," she says.

Her father was often away from home, but when he was at home, he didn't always treat his family well. "My mom tried to hold it all together. I saw struggles between my parents and some of the treatment of my family members," Krigbaum recalls.

As she was entering middle school, the family moved. She began attending a WELS grade school. Then she went on to attend Luther Preparatory School. "I didn't really know healthy family relationships or dynamics. I didn't understand that. I was used to chaos. I cherished the Prep family

I had. I love, love, loved my experience there. It felt like my family," says Krigbaum.

As a teenager, she decided to be a police officer. She says, "The role in my life was to be the helper, the responsible one who took care of my parents and their squabbles, and mentoring and negotiating and refereeing. So, I think it seemed like a really good fit for me."

But the transition from high school to career wasn't smooth. "I floundered between high school graduation and trying to find my way. I didn't have the confidence and I didn't know where to start," she says. "I didn't know any police officers. And I struggled with the party life for a number of years."

She attended church through those years but didn't feel a close connection to her Lord. "Because I didn't understand healthy relationships, I didn't know what having a personal relationship with the Lord looked like and felt like," she says. "I knew it was something I was supposed to do, but it wasn't always out of love for God."

ENDURING DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIPS

At 24, Krigbaum married her first husband. "It was a huge mistake. I threw up my whole wedding day," she says. In less than two years, she left her first husband and started attending a different WELS church, looking for a fresh start. But she soon left that church. Then she met the man who would become her second husband and a few months later was pregnant with twins.

"About eight or nine weeks in, they did an ultrasound and found out I was having twins. In my mind, that was God telling me I should marry this man," Krigbaum recalls. "I made a decision on a Wednesday to get married to him and said to him, 'Okay, stop nagging me. Let's do it Saturday before I change my mind.' And in three days, we were

Turning to God for a new life story

married by the justice of the peace.”

She continues, “After we got married, there were a couple more hostile outbursts that devastated me and broke my heart because I didn’t understand. I thought he loved me. When I tried to talk to him about our problems, he just got angry with me and would leave. And that is how our marriage continued for 19 years,” she says.

While pregnant, Krigbaum applied to and was accepted to the police academy. When her twin sons were three months old, she began her career as a police officer. “During this time, as a police officer, my career was very successful,” she says. “My marriage was very painful, so I put more energy into my job because it seemed like I got more benefit from work than from my marriage.”

In addition to a successful career, Krigbaum’s family also grew. She adopted a daughter through the foster system when her sons were 12.

Throughout the years, she would occasionally see a therapist but didn’t want to talk about her marriage. “If I validated the painful marriage, then I would have to deal with it, so I kept pushing that subject away,” she says. Besides, despite all the problems, there was still a big part of her that wanted her marriage to work.

The marriage didn’t get any better. Krigbaum starting breaking down badly enough that she was missing work and was even hospitalized with migraines and dehydration. Her marriage hit a brick wall. “I could not look at him; I couldn’t move. I became numb,” she says. They tried seeing a marriage counselor, but as a couple they never addressed the problems. He accused her of being too needy. She cried at almost anything and suffered daily headaches. One therapist diagnosed her with post-traumatic stress disorder. She moved out.

She admits she wasn’t connected to God. She wasn’t experiencing the Christian joy she heard others talk about. All she knew was anger, sadness, and hopelessness. She didn’t feel sure of God’s forgiveness. Reaching her absolute lowest point, she began to turn to God and his Word.



DiAnn Krigbaum and Phil Henselin, who served as her pastor and chaplain.



Krigbaum and her family.



Krigbaum and her family on her retirement from the police department.

“I recognized that I had been doing things my way and that my way was not working,” says Krigbaum. “And slowly, through his Word, it’s like my eyes became open. Before that, I was hearing, but I wasn’t understanding.”

FINDING LASTING PEACE

Krigbaum’s pastor at the time became a certified chaplain and started meeting with her. “God sent a chaplain to me,” she says. “Instead of condemning me, he started giving me the gospel.”

She helped her pastor navigate the world of the police force and, with his encouragement, started taking chaplaincy courses herself. She even served her former police department for a while.

Now she volunteers and mentors young women who are experiencing crisis pregnancies. She can share her own story. She has also started a couple of support groups for police officers and for families struggling with mental health problems.

“My message that I try to give families who are hurting and going through turmoil and trauma—because it’s becoming so prevalent—is that this is not the ending of God’s story for you. It’s a transformation to God’s beginning of a new story, a new life

for you,” she says. “I want so much for people to understand how important it is to confess, repent, understand the ugliness of your life, and say it to God without fear of judgment.”

She concludes, “I am so thankful for the blessings he has given me, because I recognize now that the things I chose or that I thought I wanted were not lasting. It took me years to recognize that God is the giver of all good things.

“I am so thankful for God’s unlimited mercy and grace.”

Amanda Klemp, WELS editorial projects manager, is a member at Living Word, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

Our God reigns

Andrew C. Schroer

No matter who
is running
our country—
no matter what
is happening at
home or abroad—
our God reigns.

The field has been narrowed down. After a dizzying primary season, full of surreal debates, crazy comments, and canned soundbites, the Republican and Democratic parties will finally nominate their candidates at their party conventions.

Many Christians are anxiously wringing their hands, wondering who the next president will be. Some are filled with frustration about who is left standing after the debates. Others are excited. Still others are filled with dread. I'm here to tell you: Don't worry about it.

Don't get me wrong. As a Christian, you should be concerned about the upcoming election. God has called you to be a light to the world. He has called you to speak the truth in love. As Christians, we should participate in the political process. We should let our voices be heard. We should vote our consciences.

We should be concerned about who becomes the next president. It should sadden us when government officials don't live up to their high callings. Injustices should anger us and lead us to act.

We don't need to worry, however. Again and again, our God tells us in his Word not to worry about the future. He lovingly whispers, "Do not be afraid." Why? Because no matter who is running our country—no matter what is happening at home or abroad—our God reigns.

God is in control. If you have a chance today, read Psalm chapter 2 in your Bible. See how God reacts when leaders and governments contend against his will. He laughs. They can't win. In the end, Jesus wins, and because he wins, we too will win.

Kingdoms will rise and fall. Presidents will come and go, but our God reigns. He will control all of time and history for the good of his children. If he did not spare his only Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also make everything else work for our good (cf. Romans 8:32)?

Now, that doesn't mean it will be easy. Look at history. Tyrants can quickly steal our freedoms. They have come in other places and other times. The power and prosperity we enjoy can disappear in less than one generation. That has happened even in our own national history. Our nation's future as a world power is by no means guaranteed.

In the end, though, we need not fear. God's Word still will be preached. No ruler or government throughout history has been able to silence it. They have tried more than once, but God provided for and protected his children. No matter what happens here, we are citizens of God's heavenly kingdom because of Jesus.

Yet, many Christians in our country worry. They fret and fuss about our government. Some think that if we can just get the right candidate or right party in power, all our problems will disappear. They fear that if the wrong people get elected, we are doomed. The government, however, cannot solve our problems. Only God can. He has demonstrated his love for us by giving us his one and only Son.

So this November, as the candidates vie for your vote, let your light shine. Participate in the process. Let your voice be heard.

In the end, though, even if your candidate is not elected—no matter who becomes the next president of the United States—don't worry.

Our God reigns.

Contributing editor Andrew Schroer is pastor at Redeemer, Edna, Texas.

The RIPPLE EFFECT

LOIS & EUNICE



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

Daniel N. Balge

As the power of Pentecost rippled across Rome's empire, not everyone who came to know Jesus as Savior was new to the faith. Some of those learning about Jesus for the first time already had faith in the true God. The Holy Spirit had already created their faith in God's forgiveness through God's promises in the Old Testament. They weren't strictly converts, but they did learn the news that Jesus had come and was the Messiah promised by the prophets.

A SON'S STRONG FAITH

Such longtime and now better informed believers included a Jewish woman named Lois; her daughter, Eunice; and Eunice's son, Timothy. The apostle Paul met them in Lystra in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), probably on his first missionary journey and certainly on his second. That first visit (Acts 14:6-20) had been tumultuous. Because Paul healed a crippled man there, he and his coworker Barnabas were mistaken

for Greek gods. Soon hostile Jews from earlier stops on the first journey reached Lystra and incited locals to stone Paul. So thorough was the assault that these Lystrans pronounced Paul dead and dumped his body outside the town. But after a group of believers gathered around Paul, he revived and returned to Lystra. The next day he and Barnabas moved on to Derbe.

Timothy may have been in that circle of Lystran believers. Paul's second letter to Timothy hints at that (3:11). What is certain is that when Paul returned to Lystra (Acts 16:1-5) on his second journey, this time with Silas, Timothy was described as a "disciple." He was so well regarded by local Christians and so impressive to Paul and Silas that Paul took him along on this journey and the next as a coworker.

Indeed, Timothy was at Paul's side in good times and bad. He sometimes served also as an extension of Paul's ministry, going ahead of him to Macedonia or taking up work where Paul could not be (Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus, and likely Philippi). Whether with him or not, Timothy was always close to Paul's heart. Paul loved him like a son (1 Timothy 1:18; Philippians 2:22) and longed to see him again as

Paul was finishing his race in a cold jail cell (2 Timothy 4:7,9).

A MOTHER'S EXAMPLE

And what had made Timothy such an asset to Paul and to the gospel? Paul knew: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5). Because Timothy's father was a Greek, apparently not a believer, it had fallen to Lois and Eunice to train this child in the way he should go. Because of their efforts, blessed by the Holy Spirit, Timothy had "from infancy . . . known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

No one in ministry has ever had the mentor and model that Timothy had in Paul. But even that unparalleled example only built on what Timothy heard first from his mother's lips as he sat on his grandma's lap.

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

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



God doesn't owe
us anything, but he
graciously gives us
everything in Jesus.

Dust and ashes

The cities nestled comfortably in the valley. The green meadows stretched out almost as far as one could see. A short time before, he and his nephew had looked at the same valley where the Jordan turned everything so beautiful. Lot chose the rich pastures in the Jordan valley. Abraham went the opposite direction to avoid quarrels over grazing rights.

Then the Lord chose to visit Abraham and confirm his wonderful promise. Abraham's descendants would fill the land that now provided a meager pasture for his flocks. Sarah would have a child in her old age. This son would confirm the promise that from those descendants a Savior would come—a great Son in the future who would redeem the world from its folly and sin and death.

Abraham could see the place Lot had chosen from where he was. Yes, the green meadows still stretched out beautifully along the river. But what God saw was not the beauty of the valley. He saw cities filled with sin and wickedness. He told Abraham that the outcry of their sins was grievous and that judgment was coming (Genesis 18:20,21).

God doesn't often share information about his timetable. But he does warn us of the trouble that will come and has come in this perverse world. Like Lot, we become comfortable with sin and wickedness. We live side by side with it. We learn to adapt so we avoid evil as much as we can. We accommodate.

Will disaster come unexpectedly in some limited way and wipe away our green valley of prosperity, comfort, and beauty? The next day Abraham saw dense smoke rising from the land. The beautiful valley was changed.

But what lessons can we learn? First, God doesn't share the reasons for the sudden destruction that comes from time to time. But we do know that even

these things will somehow serve his believers. Perhaps they are reminders of what is essentially important for us—family, health, and Savior—all from a God who loves us more than we deserve. Perhaps they are calls to repentance or reminders of the final destruction of this world.

Second, I hear the words of Abraham when God told him what was about to come. Abraham prayed for the people, "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23). It was a bold prayer from a man who confessed he was "nothing but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). He knew that he was no better than those in the valley cities, but he also knew that his nephew Lot and his family were among them.

His boldness in prayer came from the promise God had made: A Savior was coming. That assured Abraham of God's boundless love. So he prayed to God for those he knew and loved, as well as for those he did not know.

Where are we? Are we at some vantage point where we can see a society that has abandoned morality, common sense, decency, honesty, and dignity? Do we wonder if judgment is only a night's sleep away and we will awake to destruction and chaos?

Like Abraham, we are "nothing but dust and ashes." God doesn't owe us anything, but he graciously gives us everything in Jesus—a Savior born in the land where Abraham tended his flocks. So we pray both for those we know and love and for those we do not know—even our enemies.

Then we let God be God. He decides what's best. We are only dust and ashes, but we know how deeply God loves us, whether we live in the green valley or we're digging out of the rubble.

GREAT STORIES OF THE BIBLE

JOSEPH

Joel S. Heckendorf

“What God ordains is always good.” Try saying that to a preschool mother who just found out that her husband has stage-four cancer. “What God ordains is always good.” Try saying that to a congregation president whose pastor resigned because his lifestyle is no longer above reproach. “What God ordains is always good.” Try saying that to a dad whose teenage daughter died in a rollover accident. Then duck, because you never know what they might throw at you.

As Christians, we know that bad things happen because of sin. But when bad things happen to us, our voices quickly harmonize with the skeptics, “How can a good God let bad things happen?”

Welcome to Joseph’s world (Genesis chapters 37–50). Early on, life was good. Yes, his mother died when he was a young boy, but Joseph still had big dreams. He had a loving father and 11 brothers who helped put food on the table. He dressed well, sporting an expensive robe you’d expect to see modeled on a red carpet. But what once was a promising life, as impressive as the coat that he donned while skipping his way to the fields, soon turned shabby. Hated. Framed. Forgotten. At one point, all could have served as the title of his autobiography. But thankfully, those titles were merely chapter headings. None of them were the final chapter.

The final chapter of the Bible’s first book (Genesis 50) shares one of the great biblical lessons when it comes to dealing with difficult times. The lesson is simple: Wait. Why doesn’t God show his power over this disease? Wait. Why did God allow a congregation to endure that struggle? Wait. Why did he call that person out of this world? Wait. In other words, don’t be too quick to close the book on your autobiography. Leave room for a final chapter. In the end, you’ll see God’s providence. In the end, you’ll see that “God intended it for good” (Genesis 50:20).

We may not always appreciate or understand how God exercises his authoritative hand. But when we look at his leading hand, the conclusion is clear: God is good, no matter the present circumstances. God is so good that he sent his Son to this world to live and die for us so that he could lead us to eternal life. If he is leading us *to* life, you can bet he will lead us *through* life. With that perspective, we no longer view things of this world as “good things” or “bad things.” They’re “God” things—things that God is using to bring us through this life to himself in heaven.

Therefore, we can say with confidence, “What God ordains is always good.”

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. What were once difficult times in your life that you now see how God intended them for your good?
4. Read all of Genesis chapters 37–50. Trace how God used each difficulty in Joseph’s life for a blessing.

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



This is the eighth 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 July 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.



PEACE for the land of the free

**We praise God for America's religious freedom
and continue to pray for peace in our land.**

Glenn L. Schwanke

The sky is blue, with a few wispy clouds here and there. There's just enough of a breeze to keep the bugs at bay. The sun is warm on my cheeks, so I close my eyes, tip my head up for a moment, and do nothing but daydream.

But there's no time to dawdle. I need to finish packing the car, so I double-check my list. Folding chairs: check. Snack bag filled with dried fruit and pretzels: check. Soft-side cooler with juice boxes and a few sodas: check. Mosquito repellent in case the wind dies down: check. SPF 50 sunscreen: check. A sun visor or baseball cap for everyone in the family: check. A deck of cards to pass the time if we're early: check.

At last it's time to pack the whole family into the car. Eagerly, we drive to "Small Town" America. It's the Fourth of July. And there's going to be a parade.

Along the parade route, the crowds are already growing. We spot some of our friends and set our chairs next to theirs. After hugs and handshakes, we settle in. Before you know it, someone shouts, "The parade is starting!"

We jump to our feet, straining to look down the street. First comes the sheriff's car, then a city police car, lights and sirens flashing. Then comes the color guard—all smartly dressed in

their uniforms. Then the flag of the United States of America!

Off comes my cap. Over my heart goes my right hand. The high school marching band begins to play our national anthem, and I lend my tenor voice to the untrained chorus along the parade route.

My eyes grow misty as the sound of the anthem fades into the distance. I am flooded with thanks over this great nation in which we are privileged to live.

**I am flooded with
thanks over this great
nation in which we are
privileged to live.**

Many of us have ancestors who came to this country in search of freedom—not just the freedom to work hard and earn a living but also the freedom to worship, following their convictions as based on Scripture. In the United States of America, they found such freedom.

We still enjoy that freedom! Ours is a nation where we can open a Bible at the dinner table and have a family devotion—free from the worry that

our neighbors will turn us in to the authorities. Pastors can fulfill their calling—free from concerns that they will be jailed for telling someone about Jesus. Our congregations can gather for Bible study and worship—free from the threat of having the state police raid our churches and take us in for questioning.

But America's values are rapidly changing, and we Christians fear our religious freedoms are slowly being eroded. We worry about the future and our children. More and more we feel like "strangers and pilgrims" (Hebrews 11:13 NKJV) in a foreign land.

But this Fourth of July, instead of worrying, I encourage us to unite our voices in a prayer for our nation. As we do that, it seems fitting to borrow the prayer Jeremiah once urged on those who were exiled in Babylon: "Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace" (Jeremiah 29:7 NKJV).

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