

Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE

Find your catechism

Luther's Small Catechism still is important
to us in today's world. *Page 10*

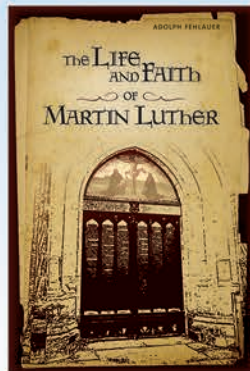
1891–2016



S E R V I N G Y O U F O R 1 2 5 Y E A R S

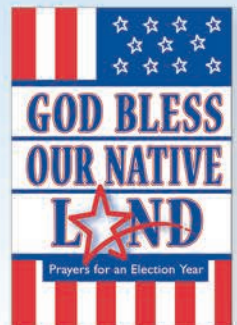
The Life and Faith of Martin Luther

When Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the Wittenberg church door, little did he know that it would spark a great reformation of the church and a return to the pure Word of God. With this primer, you will gain essential insights into Luther's life from cradle to grave as Fehlauer points out the indelible impact Luther had on the Christian faith as we know it. Includes maps and illustrations. Softcover, 131 pages. **LU150376, \$10.99**



God Bless Our Native Land

As the November election draws closer, it's important to remember that God is still in control and works everything out according to his plan. This prayer booklet encourages readers to seek his will and come before the heavenly Father with all their hopes and concerns for the nation in 2016 and beyond. Quantity discounts are available on this inexpensive booklet—share it with your friends and family! Softcover, 32 pages. **LU060734, \$0.50**



Big Picture Interactive Bible Storybook

Kids of all ages will have a blast discovering the big picture of God's Word with this fun, interactive storybook! Featuring more than 140 colorfully illustrated Bible stories, a "Christ Connection" section showing God's plan of salvation, and a free "augmented reality" app, this innovative book brings the Bible to life both visually and audibly. Hardcover, 320 pages, 8.25 x 6.25 inches. **LU1606055, \$16.99**



Popular Prayers Wall Cross

An uplifting decoration for your home or office, this beautifully crafted mahogany cross features the words of various Bible verses in gold. The unique design draws the viewer to "Christ" in the words of Galatians 2:20 at the center of the cross. Prominent themes from other verses include Strength, Trust, Love, Hope, and Peace. 12-inch height. **LU234856, \$31.99**

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

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



**NORTHWESTERN
PUBLISHING HOUSE**



**NPH CHRISTIAN
BOOKS & GIFTS STORE**

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

**NPH
EXTRA
PROGRAM**

f Find us on
Facebook



FEATURES

- 10** | **Open your catechism**
Luther's Small Catechism still is important to us in today's world.
John A. Braun

- 12** | **Transforming youth ministry**
WELS youth workers are exploring new ways to engage youth members and equip them to share their faith.
Alicia A. Neumann

- 14** | **Confessions of faith**
A woman finds safety and comfort in the gospel message.
Julie K. Wietzke

- 16** | **Heart to heart: Parent conversations**
What do we do when our children say they can't, but we know they can?

- 26** | **Mission stories: Ukraine**
Roger L. Neumann

- 28** | **Thanks, Pastor**
Readers share stories showing their appreciation for their pastors.

- 36** | **Celebrating the Reformation**
Cling to the living and life-giving Word of God.
Daniel M. Deutschlander



Telling the **next GENERATION:**

Utilizing our Schools for Outreach

Are you looking for ways to share the gospel through your school?

There is a tremendous opportunity for outreach through our schools and early childhood ministries. This new seminar—*Telling the Next Generation: Utilizing our Schools for Outreach*—provides tools and training for sharing the gospel with the community.

Practical, interactive presentations will teach you how to . . .

- maintain a Christ-centered mission/vision for your school,
- build relationships within the church and school and then with the community, and
- develop an organized program to connect with school families and then connect them with the Word.

Learn more at wels.net/tellingthenextgeneration.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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

MANAGING EDITOR

Julie K. Wietzke
julie.wietzke@wels.net

STAFF WRITER

Nicole R. Balza
nicole.balza@wels.net

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Bill Tackmier

ART DIRECTOR

Karen Knutson

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

COPYRIGHT

©2016 by Forward in Christ. Printed in the USA. Forward in Christ grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a WELS church, school, or organization, provided that copies are distributed free and indicate Forward in Christ as the source. Artwork may not be reproduced except in the context of its article. For other copyright questions, contact Kristine Laufer, 414-615-5706; lauferk@nph.wels.net.

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

POSTMASTER

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


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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

ON AUDIO

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

 Indicates additional online content

COVER PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

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

WHAT'S INSIDE

This month, as we celebrate the 499th anniversary of the Reformation (check out editorialist Andrew Schroer's musings on that on p. 32), we included several articles to remind you of the importance of this event for Lutherans today.

- In a new interactive Bible study, Joel Otto reminds us what it means to be truly Lutheran by looking at our key doctrines. This month, he focuses on *sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone (p. 35).
- Executive editor John Braun starts a new series on the Small Catechism, a book Luther wrote to help pastors teach chief Christian doctrines. Even though it was written almost 500 years ago, Braun relates how its teachings still apply to our lives today (p. 10).
- Daniel Deutschlander tells us how we continue the Reformation by following the King, our God through the ages, in our daily lives (back page).

Besides celebrating the Reformation this month, *Forward in Christ* is celebrating our pastors. We asked you, our readers, to share what you appreciate about your pastors. You responded and shared many heartwarming stories about how they have impacted your lives. Read more on p. 28 as you reflect on—and thank God for—the men who serve you each week with the gospel message.

Julie Wietzke



13



27



28

IN EVERY ISSUE

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 6 | Feedback
Readers share their opinions | 20 | News
What's happening in WELS |
| 7 | Devotion
The Word endures | 32 | Editorial comment
Happy anniversary |
| 8 | From the president's desk
Removing obstacles for outreach | 33 | Bible study
The ripple effect:
Onesimus and Philemon |
| 9 | Light for our path
Martin Luther and Romans | 34 | A thought
A parable for the ages |
| 18 | Teen talk
Are fairy tales real? | 35 | Interactive Bible study
What it means to be truly
Lutheran: Scripture alone |
| 19 | Bulletin board
Announcements from around the synod | | |

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

I appreciate President Schroeder's article, "Obeying God rather than man" [Aug.]. We are truly blessed to have the freedoms we enjoy in this great, but morally declining, country. The greatest freedom we have is to be able to openly worship the true God and proclaim Christ crucified throughout the land. I find it very comforting that, should this greatest of all freedoms be threatened, that we, as a synod, will continue to walk in obedience to God.

Americans have indeed been richly blessed with incredible freedoms for generations. I pray that many more generations will continue to enjoy the same religious freedoms we have. However, if this turns out not to be the case, we will still be the subjects of God's everlasting love. In our ever-changing world, we have the security of knowing that his love that knows no bounds never changes.

*Mike Winter
Belvidere, Illinois*

KEEP CALM AND SHARE ON

Whenever I travel, I take FIC with me as reading material. I leave copies in airports at gate waiting areas. Once onboard, I also leave FIC in the pockets of the airplane seat backs, right next to the "emergency information."

*Judi Hansen
Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

Send your letters to **Feedback**, *Forward in Christ*, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; fic@wels.net. Letters between 100 and 200 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

Through my Bible in 3 years



Read or listen online at wels.net/bible3.

OCTOBER 2016

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Psalm 119:1-24 | 12. Ps. 130 & 131 | 23. 2 Ch. 9 & 10 |
| 2. Ps. 119:25-48 | 13. Ps. 132 | 24. 2 Ch. 11 & 12 |
| 3. Ps. 119:49-80 | 14. Ps. 133 & 134 | 25. 2 Ch. 13 & 14 |
| 4. Ps. 119:81-104 | 15. Ps. 135 | 26. 2 Ch. 15 & 16 |
| 5. Ps. 119:105-128 | 16. Ps. 136 | 27. 2 Ch. 17 & 18 |
| 6. Ps. 119:129-152 | 17. Ps. 137 & 138 | 28. 2 Ch. 19 & 20 |
| 7. Ps. 119:153-176 | 18. 2 Chronicles 1 & 2 | 29. 2 Ch. 21:1-22:9 |
| 8. Ps. 120 & 121 | 19. 2 Ch. 3:1-5:1 | 30. 2 Ch. 22:10-23:21 |
| 9. Ps. 122 & 123 | 20. 2 Ch. 5:2-6:11 | 31. 2 Ch. 24 |
| 10. Ps. 124-126 | 21. 2 Ch. 6:12-42 | |
| 11. Ps. 127-129 | 22. 2 Ch. 7 & 8 | |

EVERY NEIGHBOR EVERY NATION

WELS Missions and You

Did you get your special bonus issue of *Forward in Christ* yet?

Find out more about *every neighbor and every nation* we are reaching with the gospel at wels.net/missions.

- Read articles and blogs.
- Watch videos.
- Download maps.
- Request mission speakers or kits.
- Order enlarged maps for your church, school, or home.

Request extra free copies of the issue for yourself or your congregation.
Contact Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6093 ext. 5613;
nphperiodicals@nph.wels.net; nph.net/fic.

The Word endures

All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever. 1 Peter 1:24,25

Steven J. Pagels

It was time to make a decision, but it wasn't going to be easy. The Bible that I had been using for most of my schooling and my entire ministry was falling apart. Loose pages occasionally fell out. And my name, which had been imprinted on the front cover, had worn away so that only a few letters remained. I needed to decide: do I try to repair my Bible, or do I go out and get a new one?

I went to the library, hoping that someone who specialized in taking care of books would be able to help me. The librarian looked at my Bible and let me know that she couldn't restore it to its original condition, but she did know someone who could. The library sent many of its older volumes to a local book bindery. She assured me that the people who worked there were very good, but they weren't cheap.

A PRECIOUS GIFT

You might be wondering why I would spend the money to fix my old Bible when I could buy a brand-new Bible for half the cost. For one, my Bible had sentimental value. It was a gift from my parents, a gift that I treasured, a gift I had used more than any other gift they ever gave me.

Besides that, it was my personal Bible, and for more than half my life it had been my constant companion. I had highlighted many of my favorite passages. I had scribbled all kinds of notes in the margins. I wasn't sure I was ready to move on.

A PRICELESS GIFT

As I agonized over my decision, the Lord led me to a realization. It didn't

really matter which Bible I held in my hands, whether it was new or old. What mattered was that God had given me the priceless gift of his Word. Unlike everyone and everything else in the world, the Word of God endures.

God's Word remains.
God's promises live on.
They never wear out.
They never grow old.

Peter made a similar observation two thousand years ago. Grass sprouts up, and then it withers. Flowers blossom for a season, and then they die. People live, and then they pass away. But God's Word remains. God's promises live on. They never wear out. They never grow old. And those promises still will be comforting and encouraging God's people long after I am gone.

Do you understand what that means for your life? It means that you have no reason to doubt. It means that you have nothing to fear. When God says that he loves you, he means it. When your Savior declares that your sins are forgiven, he guarantees it. When the Lord promises that he will be with you always, you can be certain that he will never leave your side.

Can you guess what I did with my old Bible? I spent the money to have it rebound, and, Lord willing, I will be



using it for many years to come. But even when I decide that the book has outlived its usefulness and I replace it with a new one, every promise on its pages will remain because we have God's guarantee that his Word endures forever.

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



Mark Schwede

God will bring
sinners into his
family not by our
strength or zeal
or creativity
or planning,
but by his grace,
by his power,
and in his time.

Removing obstacles for outreach

I think it's safe to say that all congregations want to grow. Faithful and Bible-believing Christians are well aware of the Great Commission—Jesus' command and encouragement to his church and to believers to proclaim the gospel to all nations. They simply want more people to come to know their Savior.

And so congregations ask the question, What is the best way to reach the lost? Why don't people come?

Some would point to liturgical worship as an obstacle. But is it really? Liturgical worship need not be an obstacle. The beauty and benefit of liturgical worship lies not in the fact that it is historical but in the fact that it provides a clear path in which sins are confessed, prayers are offered, and God's Word and sacraments are proclaimed and celebrated.

Some would point to the music used in our worship and conclude that the unchurched will not feel at home unless the music and the instruments sound more like the culture in which they live. But numerous surveys have shown that the style of music in a church is one of the least important things that the unchurched consider.

Some would point to the fact that the congregation does not have a well-organized and active evangelism program. But some of the fastest growing congregations in our synod are growing without a formal and defined effort.

Some would even point to the fact that some of the teachings we hold should be softened or tailored or even abandoned because they are out of step with today's culture. Yet many people today are looking for a church that has not surrendered to the whims and currents of an increasingly skeptical world but boldly stands on its beliefs and principles.

I would suggest that if these are the only things we are pointing to, we are missing the two main obstacles that stand in the way of reaching the lost.

The first obstacle is one that hits very close to home. We find it in our own sinful human nature: that part of us which wants to close our ears to God's Word, to forget his promises, and to ignore his call to us to be his witnesses. Removing this obstacle happens only when we return daily to the cross in humble repentance. This obstacle of a sinful and stubborn heart can only be thrown aside by the joy that we have in Christ. And in that joy of learning to know our Savior, we are moved to go to family and friends and neighbors and coworkers and say, as Philip said to Nathanael, "Come and see" (cf. John 1:43-51).

The second obstacle resides in those we want to reach with the gospel. It is the same one that's found in us—a human heart hardened and darkened by sin and unbelief. That obstacle can't be removed by trying to make the church seem more attractive or less offensive. It can only be removed by the same message of law and gospel that has touched our hearts.

Therein lies the mission of the church: proclaiming and sharing law and gospel to sinful people. Therein lies the power of our message: sharing the Word of God with others and watching as the Holy Spirit does the rest. Therein lies the joy of sharing the gospel: knowing that God will bring sinners into his family not by our strength or zeal or creativity or planning, but by his grace, by his power, and in his time.

Light for our path

It was brought to my attention that Martin Luther added the word *alone* to Romans 3:28. Is this a fact?

James F. Pope

Luther did include the word *alone* in his translation of Romans 3:28. It will help to consider the simple content of that verse.

A LOOK AT THE TEXT

A literal translation of the verse in question could be: “For we consider that a person is justified by faith without the works of the law.” There is not a Greek word in the verse that corresponds to *alone* in English. Well-known Bible translations indicate that. “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (English Standard Version). “For we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Holman Christian Standard Bible). “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (King James Version).

So why did Luther put *alone* (or in German, *allein*) after “a person is justified by faith” in his translation? Let’s let Luther himself answer that question.

A REPLY FROM LUTHER

In his *On Translating: An Open Letter*, written in 1530, Luther explained his translation of Romans 3:28:

I knew very well that the word *solum* [Latin = alone, only] is not in the Greek or Latin text. . . . At the same time . . . it belongs there if the translation is to be clear and vigorous. I wanted to speak German, not Latin or Greek, since it was German I had undertaken to speak in the translation. But it is the nature of our German language that in speaking of two things, one of which is affirmed and the other denied, we use the word *solum* (*allein*) along with the word *nicht* [not] or *kein* [no]. For example, we say, ‘The farmer brings *allein* [only] grain and *kein* [no] money.’

. . . This is the German usage, even though it is not the Latin or Greek usage. It is the nature of the German language to add the word *allein* in order that the word *nicht* or *kein* may be clearer or more complete. (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 35, pp. 188,189)

Luther plainly acknowledged that the word *alone* is not in the Greek text, but there was good reason to include that word because of the nuances of the German language.

AN ANSWER FROM SCRIPTURE

Certainly, if we are not saved by our good works or by a combination of faith and good works, then we are saved through faith *alone*. That is the consistent message of Scripture. “We maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Romans 3:28). If we are saved by faith, and the works of the law have no place in our salvation, then we are saved by faith *alone*. “So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified” (Galatians 2:16). If we are justified by faith and not the works of the law, then we are saved by faith *alone*.

Sola fide (Latin for “by faith alone”) is a Christian doctrine that does not hinge on a single verse or even a single word in the Bible but is clearly a truth of Scripture.

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

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

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

Psalm 119:105

Luther's Small Catechism still is important to us in today's world.

John A. Braun

Where is yours? your catechism? Mine is on a shelf, still sporting the tape I used to keep it together so many years ago. I guess you could say my old catechism is a memento of my confirmation. I haven't looked at it in years, although, as you might expect, I have used different editions of the catechism over the years.

For many, the catechism might be little more than a memento still on a shelf or in a box somewhere. It might have been discarded or given to a younger brother or sister. Maybe the last time you thought about the catechism was when your kids were learning what you learned years ago.

Luther's Small Catechism is the most widely known work of Martin Luther. Aside from some of Luther's hymns, it's also the most widely used, and it has been translated into almost as many languages as the Bible.

So why am I asking if you know where your catechism is? Luther suggests, "Many see the catechism as a poor, common teaching, which they can read through once and immediately understand. They can throw the book into a corner and be ashamed to read it again. . . . But for myself I say this . . . I act as a child who is being taught the catechism. . . . I must still read and study [it] daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish."

He went on to encourage us all: "Catechism study is the most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts. It helps to be occupied with God's Word, to speak it, and meditate on it, just as the first Psalm declares people blessed who meditate on God's Law day and night" (Longer Preface to the Large Catechism).

So find your catechism. It's a good place to start as we mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation next year.

THE NEED FOR WRITTEN WORKS

When Luther began preaching in Wittenberg already in 1516, his sermons often addressed the topics of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed. Priests and monks had been using those topics long before Luther began his work in Wittenberg. But the clergy had taught people what they needed to do to gain heaven. At first Luther struggled with this approach, never knowing whether he had done enough.

Luther soon learned that no one, not even he, can do enough to get a pass into heaven. But his study of the Scriptures assured him that Jesus had done enough—not just for him but for all sinners. That brought him comfort and a stronger faith in Jesus.

After that, Luther had a deep passion to help laypeople understand the gospel he learned. Some of his sermons on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer were among the works he published. In 1522 he also wrote a little book called *Personal Prayer Book* to help the "lowly Christian" understand the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer correctly. The little book, along with his other publications, helped spread the ideas of the Reformation.

STEPS TO PRINTING THE CATECHISM

But a series of events caused Luther to take another step. In 1527, five years after first publishing *Personal Prayer Book*, the reformers in Saxony wanted to assess what people knew about their new faith. They visited the parishes in the territory and discovered a "deplorable, miserable condition." Many had "no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine. . . . Many pastors are completely unable and unqualified to teach" and most "cannot even recite the Lord's Prayer or the Creed or the Ten Commandments. They live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs" (Preface of the Small Catechism).

What should be done? Luther continued to preach each year on the three topics and added sermons on Baptism,



Open your
CATECHISM

Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. His colleagues worked on catechisms and instructional material, but finally Luther was convinced that he had to write a brief handbook of Christian doctrine. From the sermons he had preached he drew material for the Large Catechism, which was published in March 1529. In May 1529, he finished *The Small Catechism for Ordinary Pastors and Preachers*. Both books were written to help pastors of congregations teach the chief Christian doctrines to their laypeople. The Small Catechism was an immediate best seller.

Luther had large posters printed of the chief parts of the catechism for congregations to hang on the walls in their churches, schools, and

homes so the people could recite them together. Remember that the catechism Luther wrote was *small* and was the chief parts we memorized and learned in confirmation class. Our catechisms today also contain an "Exposition of Luther's Catechism," a much longer section with explanations and Bible passages.

THE CATECHISM REMAINS IMPORTANT

We still use Luther's little book almost five hundred years after its first printing. Today when congregations call pastors, they require the pastor "to instruct our catechumens in the Word of God, as it is taught in the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther" (Pastor Call Form). Luther's Small Catechism has stood the test of time, and most of us can still recite some portions of it.

Why is it important? Luther described his goal in the foreword of his *Personal Prayer Book*. What he wrote also applies to the Small Catechism: "It is just like a sick person who first has to determine the nature of his sickness, then find out what to do or to leave undone. After that he has to know where to get the medicine which will help him do or leave undone what

is right for a healthy person. Third, he has to desire to search for this medicine and to obtain it or have it brought to him." (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 43, p. 13)

What does that mean to us? We are sick whether we realize it or not. Sin still infects all humans, including us, and makes us sick to death. We have a naturally sinful

tendency to minimize our sins or to go about our daily lives thinking we can make ourselves spiritually healthy. The Ten Commandments force us to confront our failures and faults. They help us remember the nature of our sickness—sin. But they offer no real hope or healing. The only place to find the medicine to heal our hearts and lives is the

gospel. The Creed reminds us what God has done and continues to do for us by grace. That's the gospel and God's powerful balm for sin. Once we find the gospel's healing, we turn to the Lord in prayer—his prayer—seeking his grace for all our needs.

But this is not a single event in our lives. Again and again, yes, daily, we discover the infection of sin is not yet gone. So we review and repeat the process: confess our sin, trust in the forgiveness, and humbly pray for God's mercy and grace. That's why we should review the catechism regularly.

Assignment: Find your catechism.

John Braun, chairman of the Reformation 500 Committee, is the executive editor of Forward in Christ.

This is the first article in a six-part series on Luther's Small Catechism. John Braun is leading an interactive Bible study on this topic each Wednesday, Sept. 21 through Oct. 26, at 6 and 8 P.M. CDT. Learn more at wels.net/interactivefaith.

Catechism study is the most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts.





TRANSFORMING YOUTH MINISTRY

WELS youth workers are exploring new and unique ways to get youth members engaged and equip them to share their faith.

Alicia A. Neumann

What do viral YouTube videos, playing capture the flag, and finger painting have in common? These are just some of the different things WELS youth workers are incorporating into their ministries to help youth connect with their peers and with God's Word.

FORMING A BOND

"You can't expect a group of teens to share their experiences or ask deep questions when they don't know people around them," says Sara Aker, member at Bloomington Living Hope, Bloomington, Minn. "When teens feel safe and comfortable, they are more likely to talk and share."

That's why Aker, who is also a teacher, uses games, icebreakers, and team-building activities when she assists with youth group meetings. "They are great

for building trust within your group, and it gives them an opportunity to know each other," she says. According to Aker, there are also a lot of teachable moments. "Sometimes a topic comes up that you weren't expecting, but you can't pass that up," she says. "You have to ask, 'What can we learn from this?'"

Aker says the activities don't need to be big and grandiose—it could be something as easy as having teens use finger paints to illustrate the lesson. The point is just to get the teens moving. It's even better if the youth leaders get involved. "I'll jump in and play games with the youth," she says. "When adults participate and act silly, the teens will be more likely to put themselves out there."

Justin Heise, a student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., says games were a memorable part of

his years attending the youth group at St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis. "Some of my best memories were from playing capture the flag behind the church," says Heise. "The games we played taught us to trust each other, and as a result we had a very strong youth group. We wanted to hang out with each other, we wanted to have fun, and we wanted to learn about the Bible."

Heise later became a junior staff director at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis., where he routinely used games as a teaching tool. "We'd make up games that helped illustrate the devotion or the Bible study," he says. "Putting abstract concepts into action helped make them more concrete."

Heise plans to incorporate games into his ministry. "They are good for more than just icebreakers," he says. "When

you put four or five people on a team and give them a challenge, they are going to bond. That bond builds up the group and encourages trust between the believers.”

YOUTH-DRIVEN BIBLE STUDIES

After teens have connected with each other, it's time to connect them to God's Word. Jon Enter, pastor at Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla., and youth coordinator for the South Atlantic District, says when it's time for devotion or a Bible study, it can be a struggle to get teens engaged in the conversation. That's why he uses a youth-driven format. “We're getting the kids in a comfortable environment where they can simply talk about their faith and about real-life scenarios that they're going to encounter as Christians in the modern world,” he says.

Instead of worksheets filled with questions, Enter uses YouTube videos and open-ended questions to get youth talking. “It's not me teaching them in a formal environment,” he says. “It's them driving the conversations. I am on the side, helping steer the discussion into Bible passages that teach the truth we are discovering.” If tangents come up and the teens get excited about a particular topic, Enter will make that the focus of an upcoming Bible study. “The goal is to get them talking and have them talk from the heart,” he says.

Jade Wiltsie, one of the youth members at Hope, says she loves that about the youth group. “The way Pastor does it, we can all just hang out and talk. There's not a specific set thing we have to do,” she says. “We just show up and talk about the message, and we play a few games and things like that.” She says one of her friends is very shy, “but when we're in youth group he really opens up. Youth group does that for us—it lets us be ourselves in a Christian atmosphere.”

The Bible studies at Hope include teen-focused topics like bullying, college preparation, or helicopter



Teens doing team-building activities at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis.

parenting. Wiltsie said one of the recent Bible studies on body image made an impact on her. “Pastor wanted us to share if we'd change anything about ourselves,” she says. “I am very short, and I get made fun of sometimes about it. So I spoke up about it; then a few other kids did too. It's amazing. I feel like I can open up and talk to them.”

During the course of the discussion, the teens are encouraged to answer one another's questions so they can get experience talking to other teens about different issues. “I just feel more confident about my faith and how to explain it, so I can talk about it with other people who aren't the same denomination as me,” says Wiltsie.

Jessica Thierfelder, another member at Hope, agrees. “Youth group helped my faith grow stronger and [helped me] not be scared to show it and tell other people,” she says. She attributes that, in part, to the strong bond she formed with the other members. “The thing I appreciate most about youth group is having friends that believe in the same thing as me,” she says. “I grew up in West Palm Beach, and there are no WELS schools close by. All of our youth go to public school, so it is hard

to have friends that believe in the same thing as you. But youth group is where we do have those friends; that's a great feeling.”

Enter says he hopes that as youth members connect and share their experiences with one another, they will feel more confident witnessing to others. “Many youth members have learned Bible passages, but they might not know how to share them or use them,” he says. “I want to equip youth members, so when we tell them, ‘Live your faith! Go tell about the love of Jesus! Pour it out into the world!’ they'll know how to do it.”

Alicia Neumann is a member at Christ, Zumbrota, Minnesota.

This is the second article in a four-part series on the importance of youth ministry. Next month's article will focus on faith experiences.

Enter and Aker are both presenters for the new WELS School of Youth and Family called Transformed: Equipping Youth Leaders. For more information about this eight-part video series or to order, visit www.nph.net and search for “Transformed: Equipping Youth Leaders.” Special pre-sale pricing ends Oct. 31.

A woman finds safety and comfort in the gospel message.

Julie K. Wietzke

The world is a dangerous place—for the body and the soul. Ivette Bernabe from Queens, New York, knows that firsthand.

Bernabe, like all of us, wants to feel safe from the bad things of this world—whether it be drugs, abuse, hunger, or poverty.

Sure Foundation, the WELS congregation in that neighborhood, is working to protect people from the spiritual hazards of the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh.

Sometimes those worlds collide. Now Bernabe truly has met the One who can shield her from all real harm and danger.

“She is in a safe place for her soul,” says Tim Bourman, pastor at Sure Foundation.

Bernabe has been in New York City since she was five years old. Her dad moved her there from Puerto Rico when her parents split up. Her mom soon followed, moving to the United States to get custody of Ivette and her sisters and brothers.

Her mom brought them up as Catholic, but she didn’t have time to take them to church regularly. “She was raising us alone,” says Bernabe. “She was working two or three jobs to raise us.” She says the Jehovah’s Witnesses came to their apartment to hold Bible classes. The family lived in the Bronx until her mom remarried when Bernabe was 13 years old, and they settled on Long Island.

Life went on. Bernabe got married and soon after had a baby girl. Her marriage ended, however, when her husband brought drugs into the home. She decided to visit her brother and sisters who had moved back to Puerto Rico. It was there she met Luna, who taught her how to read tarot cards. “You literally felt a presence. This is a spirit,” says Bernabe. “I was young. It was so interesting. How can some cards tell somebody’s whole life?”

Bernabe says she was raised knowing she shouldn’t be doing this, but she couldn’t stop herself. She continued reading the cards for fun until they “told” her that her then seven-year-old daughter was in danger. It was then that she realized the cards weren’t helping her, and she decided to stop. “We need to pray to God for protection,” she says. “The devil won’t protect you.”

Bernabe spent most of her young working life selling wares on the street and in markets to make money. She did quite well and eventually made enough to buy a four-apartment home in Queens. She tried many religions—Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hare Krishna—to see what they were like, but “it never did nothing for me,” she says. “But I didn’t know this until I went to the Lutheran church.”

Bernabe met Dan Olson, a pastor at Sure Foundation, at a street fair where the congregation set up a booth to meet local residents. She says she was drawn to his beautiful little girls who were with him. They talked and exchanged contact information, but Bernabe wasn’t ready. She had been attending a Jehovah’s Witness church and wasn’t looking for another congregation.

Olson kept her phone number and called her once or twice a year to see how she was doing. Seven years after they first met, the timing was right. “I don’t get rid of people’s contact information because you never know what issues God is putting in their lives when it’s the perfect time for you to call,” says Olson. “She was so thankful I called.”

Bernabe started coming to church—and also asked lots of questions.

Confessions OF FAITH



“Pastor Dan made me understand so many things. I felt so comfortable. How could I not want to stay there?” she says. “It was different [from other religions].”

Olson says Bernabe thought that to get close to God, you had to be a good person. “One of the main things she struggled with was how you can have salvation completely free without having to earn it,” he says. “It’s the typical non-Christian idea of how to get to heaven.” He says Bernabe would ask him to pray for her because she thought that since he was a pastor he was closer to God. “I told her, ‘You can pray too. Your prayers are just as powerful as mine.’”

He said that after years of teaching and patiently answering her questions, she finally understood that she—like all of us—was a sinner but that forgiveness was hers through Jesus’ perfect life, death, and resurrection.

“I wish everyone would know of God like I know,” she says. “It’s such a good feeling.”

It’s a message that Bernabe can’t keep to herself. “She’s very excited about the gospel. She’s one of the best listeners, and she leaves as a different person every week,” says Bourman.



Ivette Bernabe

“In her whole spiritual history she never has been engaged with the gospel the way she is now. She knows it, and she wants her friends and family to know about it.”

Bourman says that’s common in the neighborhood. Many live their entire life in the area and make life-long friends. They want to share what they discover—especially the message of hope the gospel brings.

Bernabe already has brought her close friend to church. Her friend was confirmed, and her friend’s immediate family was baptized. Bourman says they now are talking to her friend’s brothers and sisters. Bernabe also shares the Word with her children and grandchildren. She’s in church every week, and she appreciates the lessons she learns in the sermons and the Bible classes that further help her understand the sermon message.

Bernabe’s life isn’t perfect. She says she still is trying to learn how to forgive. She is going through a messy divorce. She has had health issues (but she says, “Thanks to God, all is good”). Money struggles still happen. But now she knows the One who can keep her safe. “What do I have to worry about?” she says. “God will protect me.”

Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ magazine.





heart to heart
parent conversations

"Mommy do!" insists my two-year-old.

"I can't!" whines my five-year-old.

"I don't know how!" laments my ten-year-old.

No matter the age, all children have their moments of insecurity, self-doubt, and—sometimes—laziness. So how do we tackle those "I can't" moments? Often my first response is, "Of course you can!" Sometimes, though, a more nuanced approach might be better. This month, three Heart to heart authors offer their approaches for how to deal with the "I can't's."

Do you have a parenting question you'd like Heart to heart's authors to consider? Please send it our way! E-mail fic@wels.net.

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.

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN OUR CHILDREN SAY THEY CAN'T, BUT WE KNOW THEY CAN?

It's hot in South Carolina in the summer. Sunny too. How's that for stating the obvious? The solution? Go to the pool. That's where my daughter's "can't" came to life in a way stronger than anything I'd seen in her before. She didn't want to dunk her head, but at the same time, she did. She was at war with herself.

Saying no to something one can do is sometimes about an inner tension for a Christian. We've all felt it. One minute you're making the grand pronouncement, "I can do it all by myself." And the next, just like my daughter did, you stare at what's in front of you and say, "Daddy, I can't." Sometimes it's the unknown you don't want to face. Sometimes it's the fear of failure that grips you. Other times it's the easiness of inertia that captures your heart.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to overcome the "can'ts." But helping our children know how God has

"I cahn't!" I-I-I cah-h-hn't!" That was the lament of my three-year-old grandson as he fit together puzzle pieces. Within minutes the puzzle was complete, and he was on to another puzzle. But the chant continued. "I cahn't!" Cute.

Doubting one's adequacy may be cute at three years old. It loses charm by grade school. So how do we best love our kids when they insist, "I can't," but we parents know they can? I have five guidelines as a conversation starter.

Show grace. Lead with love, not law. Let your self-skeptical kids know they are loved—loved by you and, even better, loved without measure by God. Try, "I'm sorry you don't think you can do this. I want you to know I love you more than anything else. And Jesus loves you much more than that."

Don't only *begin* with an emphasis on God's grace. Throughout your conversation, circle back to your love, a love that

It can happen around age 12.

Your daughter suddenly quits the team, refuses to enter the music contest, or starts getting Bs when she's always been an A student.

It isn't laziness. It isn't fear of failure. It's fear of success.

Near the onset of puberty, your little girl who once outran all the girls and out-mathed all the boys wakes up one day and says, "I can't," when you know—and she knows—she absolutely can. Why?

Because sometimes success brings negative social repercussions, especially for adolescent girls. Insecure boys don't like to be outdone, so they reject her for the girls who make them feel stronger and smarter. Competitive girls resent her achievements, so they kick her down the social ladder.

What's a parent to do?

It might be tempting to sit that girl down and remind her, "To whom much is given, much is required." God demands she use her talents, not bury them.

re-created them in Baptism is important. God didn't baptize us into timid lives or shy choices or despairing attempts at worthwhile living. He certainly did not want us to face life fearing every event. Confidence in our love for our children and especially God's love for them is a factor in moving forward. He baptized us into lives of confidence, love, and self-discipline. And so for me, saying "can't" when you can isn't just a matter of merely pounding on the will or somehow gaining compliance; it's a matter of understanding the gospel itself.

That's why I relished my daughter's "can't" moment. I saw it not as a moment to develop more grit in her but, rather, to set loose the grit she already possessed in her re-created self. And I believed that turning her former "no" into a full-bodied "YES" wasn't really a matter of pushing on her will. I believed it was a matter of putting down her old will that was holding her back and raising up her more powerful, re-created will so she'd turn into the dolphin I knew she could be.

How do you do that in real-time, real-life living? You apply law and gospel. Was she scared of her underwater attempt? I gave her the safety net of a father's gentleness and ever-present love. Was she being lazy or combative? That's not who God re-created her to be, and I don't have time for that. Some variation of "Git 'er done" was occasionally the right medicine for the moment. Was she emotionally tapped out? Then it was time to float with the noodles, take a break, and try again later. My goal throughout? Nurture her re-created self and put down her old one.

How'd that turn out for us this summer? Honestly? I'm happy to report that she has now officially turned into a dolphin. And better yet, she is living her re-created life more powerfully making waves for Jesus. And not just in the pool either.

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



won't diminish because of your child's failures, a love that is driven by God's love for you. Make God's grace tangible with your actions—a hug, a smile, a back rub.

Yes, laying down the law has a place. But refuse to start there.

Seek to understand. Ask, "Why do you think you can't do this?" Your child is believing a lie. Expose the falsehood to the warmth of truth, and the problem evaporates.

There are many reasons we might doubt our abilities, including others' negative opinions, fear of failure, prior failures, and peer pressure.

Share your positive evaluation. Gently offer your own view of the gifts and abilities God has given your child. Suggest evidence for your view. "I know you can do this. Remember how you swam across the pool and surprised us all?"

Talk about grace and giftedness. Go beyond offering your evaluation. Talk about grace's evaluation. Grace insists

your child is unimaginably precious to God. The Son of God coming to be our Savior proves that. But in addition, God's grace means your child is spectacularly gifted as the exact person God wants on this planet today. Consider Ephesians 2:10: "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Offer appropriate assistance. You might say, "What if you and I do this together?" "I'll show you; then you can do the rest." "I'd be willing to get you started on this project."

Different kids in different situations at different times in their lives need to be approached differently, of course. What advice would you add?

James Aderman and his wife, Sharon, raised three daughters and are now enjoying their eight grandchildren.



Let's not. Let's not use the law in this way. Even if such tactics succeed and your daughter starts using her gifts faithfully again, she'll be doing it out of guilt. She may even begin to resent the God whose love, it seems, comes with strings.

Instead, build her up.

1. Tell your daughter you're proud of her when she works hard, whether her efforts are successful or not.
2. Be generous and specific with praise.
3. Stop saying, "You can do anything, honey." She knows it isn't true, and it only makes her wonder whether your other praise is empty too.
4. Make your home a safe place, where your daughter can say, "It felt so cool to win!" It's honest, and having permission to say it at home may eliminate that feeling to seek praise in public, which really will hurt her social standing—and rightly so.
5. When you see jealousy or pettiness in any of your kids, put your foot down. The family is a support network, not a rugby scrum.

6. When you see jealousy or pettiness in your daughter's friends, help her recognize it for what it is and try to understand the pain and insecurity that causes it.
7. Foster humility by helping your daughter recognize that every person is gifted, whether those gifts win plaques at award banquets or not. And some of those gifts—humor, empathy, work ethic—will count far more in adulthood than fine free throw shooting. Your daughter may be gifted, but so is everyone else.

One of Satan's favorite tools is to shut down Christians' talents. He'll tempt our daughters to make themselves smaller than they are, to sabotage themselves, to feel guilty when they faithfully use the gifts God gave.

Let's not let that liar win. Let's help our daughters humbly and faithfully say, "I can do this. For my Savior, I can do this."

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





teentalk

Are fairy tales real?

Happily-ever-after is only true because of the promises of Jesus.

Melanie Rittierodt

“Once upon a time” is the beginning of my favorite story lines in books. This phrase brings hope that there will be a happily-ever-after for the characters of each book.

An important lesson that I have learned in my life is that the fairy tales we see in movies and read about in books are nonexistent. However, God has a happily-ever-after for us. It will have faith, trust, and hope, but *no* pixie dust.

The authors of many fairy tales don't tell you that the lives of the characters are not always what they seem. Disney characters never have it easy. Cinderella was only a scullery maid. She was treated poorly and had no one but mice to talk to. Snow White was poisoned by her stepmother. Simba witnessed his father's death.

God never promised us a movie-star life, where we have the perfect hair and the perfect person to stand by us. God knows that because we have him in our lives, the devil will work even harder to take us away from him.

My mom battled with cancer for six long years, and those years finished

their course with her death last year. From that day on, I have learned to take care of myself and provide for myself and my family. Like Wendy Darling in Peter Pan, I take care of my two younger brothers, who need all the help they can get sometimes. I am not just the big sister in my house. I am the woman of the household. I feel like Cinderella, constantly taking care of my family along with myself; there is always something left undone. The fairy tale of a perfect high school career is only a dream.

In a way that I have yet to understand, God has put this tragic event in my story to help me. And, in some crazy way, the two childhood stories of Peter Pan and Cinderella have stuck with me and have almost become my reality. God works in mysterious ways. He knew that this tragedy would cause a stumbling block for me.

“‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:11). This verse has rung in my ears ever since that day my life turned upside down. One day all I had to worry about was getting to work on time. Now my

life isn't just me anymore. I have my brothers, my dad, and my own future to think about. I had planned my life according to the endings of my favorite fairy tales, but the ending to a story doesn't take place until the plot is finished.

Are fairy tales real? No, at least not the fairy tales that we see on the silver screen. We don't have the simple life of happily-ever-after. The world does not give us our fairy tale; it gives us our story. God is the one who gives us our fairy tale. When our time is over and our story is complete, we will be with God and see Jesus our Savior sitting at the right hand of God. That is where the fairy tale begins. But it won't be a fairy tale. It will be the reality of everlasting life in heaven.

Melanie Rittierodt, a junior at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Washington, is a member of Light of Life, Covington, Washington.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Brassow, William R., to Zion, Osceola, Wis.
Cortright, Charles L., to retirement
Foxen, Benjamin A., to Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz.
Gorsegrner, James A., to retirement
Guse, John R., to retirement
Heiman, Ryan A., to Grace, Sahuarita, Ariz.
Henselin, Philip J., to Institutional Ministries Inc., Wauwatosa, Wis.
Jordan, Robert W., to retirement
Kleist, James R., to retirement
Kronebusch, Kerry F., to retirement
Krueger, Robert H., to retirement
Lange, Lyle W., to retirement
Leyrer, Daniel P., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Limmer, Bill F., to Victory of the Lamb, Franklin, Wis.
Lindloff, Mark A., to Emanuel, Tawas City, Mich.
Oldfield, James H., to retirement
Prange, Peter M., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.
Schlieve, Dale W., to retirement
Schroeder, Carl J., to St. Peter's, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.
Semenske, Douglas M., to retirement
Sprain, Roger J., to retirement
Strey, Johnold J., to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
Tiarks, David A., to retirement
Wenzel, Glenn E., to Crown of Life, Corona, Calif.
Zahn, Richard T., to retirement

Teachers

Aswege, Daniel D., to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Balza, Susan K., to retirement
Bertolus, Elizabeth S., to St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Brutlag, Ronald D., to retirement
Burow, Sharon R., to retirement
Carey, Rebekah E., to retirement
Carlovsky, Steven C., to retirement
Cherney, Laura R., to St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.
Cole, Carol D., to retirement
Collyard, Kathryn M., to retirement
DiGiovanni, Michelle J., to St. John's, Jefferson, Wis.
Dittmar, Mary, to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Dus, Joyce L., to retirement
Gauger, Beth L., to retirement
Glende, Kathleen M., to retirement
Glock, Ronald J., to retirement
Green, Barbara E., to retirement
Grunwald, Carol A., to retirement
Grunwald, Nicole, to Little Lambs Preschool, Saint Paul Park, Minn.
Hackbarth, Ronda K., to retirement
Hesse, Mark A., to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.
Houser, Vicki J., to retirement
Hutchinson, Katie M., to Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.
Kasten, Joann M., to retirement

Kasten, Kenneth C., to retirement
Korth, Jeffrey G., to retirement
LaGrow, Bonita L., to retirement
Mathwig, Michael J., to retirement
Meitner, Merlin A., to retirement
Menefee, Sandra, to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.
Miller, Cheryl L., to retirement
Nelson, Carol L., to retirement
Neujahr, David J., to retirement
Nolte, Beth A., to retirement
Oldre, Sonja J., to St. Matthew, Stoddard, Wis.
Ott, Sharon S., to retirement
Paul, Michele M., to Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School, Commerce City, Colo.
Poetter, Chris C., to Holy Cross, Madison, Wis.
Rosales, Kandi, to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
Schalow, Mary E., to retirement
Schmanke, Roxanne M., to retirement
Schmidt, Kurt N., to retirement
Schwartz, Armin, J., to retirement
Shambeau, Elise M., to retirement
Stahl, Susan E., to retirement
Steinbrenner, Shelly A., to St. Matthew, Iron Ridge, Wis.
Thompson, Donna M., to retirement
Toppe, Carol, to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Vetting, Joni L., to retirement
Wagner, Wayne L., to retirement
Walker, LaRita E., to retirement
Walker, Patrick D., to retirement
Walta, Gerald R., to retirement
Wegner, Joan L., to retirement
Wilke, Diane G., to retirement
Wilke Jr., Russell A., to retirement
Winsky, Judith L., to retirement
Zak, Paula R., to retirement
Ziche, Laura M., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.

ASSIGNMENTS

Pastor

Stuebs, Andrew, to Living Word, Gray, Tenn.

Teacher

Kressin, Nicholas, to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.

ANNIVERSARIES

Frontenac, Minn.—St. John's (150). Oct. 9. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 651-345-2757.
Spooner, Wis.—Beautiful Savior (25). Oct. 9. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; presentation, 11 A.M.; meal to follow, noon. Website, bscls Spooner.com.
Grass Lake, Mich.—St. Jacob (175). Oct. 23. Worship, 10:15 A.M.; Oktoberfest meal to follow. Website, stjacobgrasslake.org.
New London, Wis.—Grace (100). Oct. 23. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 715-752-4285; gracesugarbush@gmail.com.
New Orleans, La.—recovery of Crown of Life following Hurricane Katrina (10).

Oct. 30. Rededication service. Website, crownoflifefenola.com.

Oakfield, Wis.—Saint Luke's (125). Nov. 7. Event celebration, 8-11 A.M. Website, stlukesoakfield.com.

Davenport, Iowa—Gethsemane (50). Nov. 13. Worship, 10:15 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 563-359-0144.

COMING EVENTS

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

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

Organ concert—Oct. 16. Divinity-Divine Charity, Whitefish Bay, Wis. Charles Bonow. Worship and concert, 9:30 A.M.

WELS Day at Ford Field—Oct. 16. 1 P.M. Ford Field, Detroit, Mich. Tickets available. Website, wels.net/events; Lucas Schroeder, 313-262-2164.

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

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

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

"Three Strands" couples retreat—Nov. 5. Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis. Website, threestrandsretreat.org/.

Women's Retreat—Nov. 12. David's Star, Jackson, Wis. Website, davidstar.org.

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

Christian Leadership Experience—Jan. 6-8, 2017. Orlando, Fla. Registration open. Website, christlead.com.

NAMES WANTED

WELS musicians—with advanced training in organ, piano, voice, conducting, composing, or instrumental music. Submit names with a short resume to WELS Commission on Worship, cw@wels.net.

Celebration event and tour information—Planning a special tour or celebration to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017? Communication Services is gathering information about these public events. Send event details to csc@wels.net. Website, wels.net/reformation500.

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

Moments with MISSIONARIES

COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO

Kevin K. Schultz

When I received the call to St. Matthew, Spokane, Wash., to start a multi-site church across the state line in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, I was excited. And so, when I asked how many people would be part of the core group in Coeur d'Alene, the response caught me off guard: "Well . . . basically . . . no one."

No one? I've always thought that new churches got started because a core group of WELS people lived in that area. No one? How do you start a church with no people?

After arriving in Spokane, I talked with some of the leaders. It quickly became clear that with no core group in Coeur d'Alene, we needed to recruit members from St. Matthew. These people would partner with me to plant this multi-site church almost an hour away.

But who would travel one hour to do canvassing, community service projects, outreach events, relationship building, and weekly worship services, when the current church in Spokane is only a few minutes away? I couldn't imagine that anyone would say "yes."

One by one I started contacting people in the Spokane congregation. I asked them if they would be interested in being a part of a launch team for two years to get a new church started in Coeur d'Alene.



I was honest and told them that it would take a lot of work and time out of their already busy schedules. They would need to travel almost one hundred miles round trip multiple times every month. They would be going door-to-door talking with people about Jesus. They would be driving past their current church to worship in a rented facility with perhaps only a few other people. I fully anticipated that no one would agree to do this with me.

But I learned quickly how God works in the hearts of his people. He reminded me not only how the gospel changes hearts but also how the gospel motivates hearts.

Twenty-five people said "yes" to my request. 25! And shortly after that, another 5 people asked if they could be a part of it too. That's a far cry from the "no one" that I had anticipated. God showed me once again that he is in control. His people are eager to be a part of the greatest adventure on earth—telling other people about Jesus.

Many of these people may not remain a part of our mission in Coeur d'Alene once the congregation gets established there. They may return to worship in Spokane. But it's been humbling to see so many of God's people excited about doing evangelism, outreach, community service, and relationship building for the purpose of sharing the gospel. God is using them to build his church.

Start a church with no people? Hardly.

Kevin Schultz serves as a home missionary at The Vine, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, the second church site of St. Matthew, Spokane, Washington.

In 2016, the Board for Home Missions authorized five established congregations, including St. Matthew, to start second site ministries. A National Multi-Site Conference being held Nov 14–16 at Grace, Tucson, Ariz., will further discuss this strategy of a church reaching out to more people by worshipping and carrying out gospel ministry at more than one physical location. Find out more at wels.net/events.



LWMS convention highlights mission work

The Chicago Area Circuit of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) welcomed nearly 1,100 WELS women from around the world to praise God and show their support for WELS mission work. "Christ Alone, Our Cornerstone" was the theme for the 53rd annual LWMS convention, held June 23–26 in St. Charles, Ill.

During the convention, members attended several workshops and learned from home and world mission speakers about what God is doing through WELS missionaries—and through all of his people. "As a mom, I definitely want my kids to learn that missionaries aren't just people that maybe live in a different country," says Katherine Schmoller, a member at Lamb of God, Lafayette, Ind. "We're all called to be missionaries for Christ, and we can do that whether we live in India, or whether we live in Indiana or Wisconsin or anywhere that Christ has called us to share the good news."



Throughout the LWMS convention, women reminded themselves to recharge, reach out, and rejoice by taking LWMstagram photos.

Missionary Terry Schultz, the preacher for opening worship, was amazed at the enthusiasm of the attendees. "To stand up on stage and see over one thousand women have such a passion for missions—it's like no other church service you can imagine," he says. "Their support through their prayers, volunteer work, and gifts allows WELS to bring that Bible-based truth to all ends of the earth."

About \$53,000 was gathered during the convention for mission projects, and more than \$143,000 was received throughout the year from LWMS chapters and its k.i.d.s. care program.

"Such faithful support isn't taken for granted," says Keith Free, administrator of Home Missions. "It is another evidence of the power of the Lord's love moving hearts to support the work we do in WELS through Home and World Missions."

Karen Fischer, LWMS president, sums up the convention: "It was a wonderful, emotion-filled convention that underscored how God takes all of us—little pieces of rubble—to build his church as he sees fit, making more of us together than we could ever make individually and building a diverse church full of saints around the world."

Next year's convention will be held June 22–25, 2017, in Orlando, Fla.

Learn more about LWMS at lwms.org.

Equipping women to mentor

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." This was the theme for the Women's Ministry Conference held in July. About 350 women met at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., to be encouraged and equipped through God's Word.

The conference explored how Christian women serve as mentors to those around them. Marilyn Miller, chairwoman of WELS Women's Ministry, says, "This conference helped Christian women realize how their words and actions reflect Christ wherever they might find themselves. It is our prayer that women will intentionalize their mentoring, letting God use them to shape the character and transform the thinking of everyone with whom they come into contact. God is in the business of changing hearts, and I know he will do just that through some of the women who joined us."

Presenters led Bible study sessions examining how Christ is the ultimate mentor and how to model one's mentoring after his.

Dawn Schulz, a member of WELS Women's Ministry, led a study titled "Jesus—A mentor for me." "As a mentor, my identity, purpose, priorities, words, and actions are all determined by the fact that I am God's child because of Jesus," she says. "Jesus not only shows me how to live in this grace, he teaches me how to mentor it to others by understanding their individual and diverse needs, giving them time to grow, and living transparently in order to set before them a living picture of a life patterned after Jesus."



There were many opportunities for encouragement as women explored the topic of mentoring at the Women's Ministry Conference this past July.

The conference also included time for networking, brainstorming sessions, and opportunities to share mentoring experiences.

Su Hansen, a member at Redeemer, Tomahawk, Wis., summed the conference up with one word: "Encouragement." She says, "It's a very godly way to gather together sisters in Christ and grow together and encourage one another in our various callings."

WELS Women's Ministry, part of the WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship, holds a conference every three years; the next conference will be held in 2019.



Learn more about WELS Women's Ministry at wels.net/women.

Lessons in Ukraine

Teens and adults from Grace, Oska-loosa, Iowa, and Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga., taught—and learned—some valuable lessons this summer when they traveled to Ukraine to help a local congregation with its vacation Bible school.

Three youth and three adults planned and taught Bible stories, crafts, music, and English lessons to around one hundred children at Church of the Holy Cross in Kremenets, one of 18 congregations in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. In exchange, they learned about Ukrainian culture and what it's like sharing the Word in a different country.

Renee DeMarce, a member at Grace and junior at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, especially appreciated learning about the hardships the Ukrainians had to go through for their faith. "My favorite part was hearing the story that was told to us by Deacon Stepan about when he was younger and put in a prison for teaching God's Word when Christianity was new in Ukraine," she says. "They gave him chances to change his ways, and he stayed true to his Christian beliefs. When he went to sleep one night, he was surprised when he woke and noticed that all of his hair had gone white overnight. This was a sign to him that God was with him still and his hair changing overnight led him to stay strong in his faith and continue teaching the Christian faith and being part of it to this day. This story will stick with me my whole life and reassure me in times of trouble that God does not leave us."

Although in many ways this was just like teaching vacation Bible school in the United States, there were some notable differences.

"Every word we said had to go through an interpreter," says Sarah Kvidt, a member at Faith. "This took time! Pentecost was a huge gift from God!"

Although having translators was a necessity for sharing the stories, DeMarce says they weren't necessary to make



The volunteers and the local translators: (Front row left to right) translator Vita Yaskevych, Sarah Kvidt, Renee DeMarce, and Will DeMarce. (Back row left to right) translator Tanya Hetman, Noah Kvidt, translator Yulia Rymar, and Brenda DeMarce.

connections. "The children knew that what we were teaching them was important even before they knew what we were saying."

Tenth-grader Noah Kvidt also saw that Christian love trumps language barriers: "The language barrier was tough, but the love from and for the kids was not hindered," he says. "One boy, Max (age 10), was sitting by me during music. He looked up to me, hugged me, and said in his best possible English, 'Noah, I love you.' I will always cherish that moment forever."

This isn't the first time WELS members have helped with conducting vacation Bible school in Ukraine. Past programs were coordinated through the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Thoughts of Faith. This time, Roger Neumann, World Missions liaison to the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, led a local effort to coordinate volunteers from his congregation in Iowa and from Sharpsburg, Ga. "They hadn't had a VBS for three years, so we decided we needed to revive this," says Neumann. "Our volunteers were great witnesses and well received by the church and townspeople of Kremenets."

Read more about Deacon Stepan and the Ukrainian Lutheran Church on p. 26.

Obituaries

Phyllis A. Westendorf 1950–2016

Phyllis Westendorf was born April 21, 1950, in Flint, Mich. She died July 5, 2016, in North Mankato, Minn.

A 1972 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Zion, Crete, Ill.

She is survived by her brother. She is preceded in death by her parents and one sister.

Alvin R. Kienetz 1930–2016

Alvin Kienetz was born Nov. 5, 1930, in Two Rivers, Wis. He died July 9, 2016, in Redwood Falls, Minn.

A 1957 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. John, Darfur, Minn.; St. Matthew, Butterfield, Minn.; Grace, Neenah, Wis.; and Ascension, Rochester, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Marlene; 3 daughters; 1 son; 15 grandchildren; and 5 great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his sister and brother.

Robert J. Wiegman 1948–2016

Robert Wiegman was born Aug. 30, 1948, in Chicago, Ill. He died Aug. 6, 2016, in Appleton, Wis.

A 1970 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served Zion, Sanborn, Minn.; St. John, Oak Creek, Wis.; St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.; and St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra; two daughters; three sons; six grandchildren; three sisters; and one brother. He is preceded in death by his parents.

Our Savior's love compels us

"Our mission to share the gospel is so important that it demands nothing less than our very best," says Rob Guenther, pastor at Grace, Kenai, Alaska, and chairman of the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force. "We want to always strive for excellence in all that we do and push ourselves to be better not only because eternal souls are at stake but especially because our Savior's love compels us. And because we each have a sinful nature that is very active, we want others to push us and encourage us to stay focused on that task."

Guenther explains that these thoughts drove the work of the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force, which was created at the direction of the 2013 synod in convention. Convention delegates resolved that a special task force should be appointed to develop a continuing education process for pastors and staff ministers "so that progress toward professional growth for pastors and staff ministers can be more formally encouraged and reported." In recent years, special emphasis has been placed on professional growth for teachers, so this task force's work helped formalize growth for other called workers.

As the task force began its work, it quickly recognized that spiritual and professional growth is taking place throughout the synod. "For that we are thankful to God and his grace," says Guenther. "But we're also glad to 1) keep pushing that growth with an online newsletter to encourage it; 2) better track that growth through regular reporting to circuit pastors and district presidents; and 3) help create and locate resources to help with that growth and present a toolbox of resources."

The first issue of this newsletter, titled *The Four Branches*, will be e-mailed to all pastors at the end of September. Each issue will contain one article on each of the four traditional branches of theology—systematic, exegetical, historical, and practical.

As Joel Seifert, editor of *The Four Branches*, explains, "More than

anything, the newsletter is meant to be a starting point for self-guided continuing education. The articles all have links to other online resources for those who want to take their study a little deeper. Even those who just read the short articles should receive a little more insight into some Scripture or dust the cobwebs off some learning they once did long ago."

Much of the task force's work was in conjunction with Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

One such project became known as *Fan God's Gifts into Flame*, an essay and workbook to help a called worker develop a well-designed annual plan for growth. Grow in Grace is also housing an ever-growing list of growth tools that a pastor or staff minister can use to pursue growth. This toolbox of resources includes listings of articles, essays, books, videos, websites, podcasts, courses, workshops, and more. These tools are available at wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace.



CELEBRATION OF MINISTRY RETREATS FOR 2017

Is one of the pastors in your congregation celebrating 3, 10, or 25 years in the ministry in 2017? If so, consider encouraging and supporting him to attend the Celebration of Ministry retreat designed for him. In 2017, these retreats are being held April 19–21 in San Antonio, Texas.

Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, coordinates these retreats for pastors and their wives each year. The retreats include time for Bible study, presentations, worship, and fellowship, all designed to support pastors at these critical times in their ministry.

Richard Gurgel, director of Grow in Grace, says, "Just as it is worthwhile for our synod to invest in the training of a new generation of workers, so also it is wise for congregations to invest in the encouragement of their present workers. These retreats provide a concrete way to do that for pastors."

Registration for the 2017 retreats opens Oct. 21. To learn more, visit wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace/celebration-of-ministry-retreats-2017.

Now that these resources have been created and compiled, the Continuing Education of Called Workers Task Force is praying that called workers and their congregations use these tools.

"My encouragement to congregations is to make continuing education a part of your annual church budget," says Guenther. "It shows your called workers that there is an expectation to grow and improve. . . . Give them time to grow as well. Time spent at conferences, at workshops, and in the study is not time wasted. It's critical to becoming a better servant of our Savior."

Guenther continues, "My encouragement to called workers is to continue to make use of what's right at your fingertips. Read what you're sent. Invest in good books, and make time to read them. It doesn't need to be huge leaps forward, but regular improvement in an area of ministry will pay big dividends in the long run."

Training strong school leaders

"I know I've only been a principal for two months, but it's a neat job that I wouldn't trade for anything," says Bill Fuerstenau, principal at Bethany Lutheran School, Hustisford, Wis.

Fuerstenau originally wasn't planning on being a principal—or even a teacher. But as a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, he still didn't know what he should major in. After attending a recruitment Sunday that shared more about the mission of Martin Luther College (MLC), both he and his now wife decided to go to New Ulm, Minn., to train as called workers.

provide training and mentoring to prepare them for leadership roles.

With many current principals reaching retirement age and the increase in early childhood ministries, the need for these leaders is great. Twenty-five WELS principals and ten early childhood directors were needed in each of the last two school years. While some of these positions were filled temporarily by pastors and interim teachers, 14 men were assigned directly from MLC as principals and 10 women as early childhood directors. "The goal is to have principals and directors who first have been able to

teachers attended several leadership conferences and seminars and were assigned a project during that year. They also were matched up with an experienced principal or early childhood director to mentor them.

"To hear all the things they do to be effective leaders was a really awesome experience," Fuerstenau says about the conferences he attended. "And then bringing it all home and having one-on-one time with my mentor . . . has been really invaluable in preparing me to be a principal."

Fuerstenau received his call to be principal and fifth through eighth grade teacher at Bethany about two-thirds of the way through the program. He's excited about his new administrative responsibilities, which include working on the curriculum, the budget, faculty development and communication, and school accreditation.

He's also happy that his school board recognizes that he needs time for these new duties. "They set up a part-time teacher to teach half days so that I can focus on accreditation," he says. Bethany is going to help him finance his continuing education as well, which includes enrolling in Martin Luther College's master's program.

Even though the program is developing new leaders, Rademan says that principal and early childhood director vacancies will continue in upcoming years. He also says that there are shortages of teachers who speak Spanish and who are prepared to serve in urban areas. "These are three key areas where we really need to pray for additional people who are willing to be trained and serve."



Bill Fuerstenau (center) and the faculty at Bethany, Hustisford, Wis. Bill just completed the Leadership Candidate Training Program.

"I got this feeling that I'd like to be a principal—not in charge of a faculty but working with them and helping other teachers by making their job easier," he says.

After his graduation in 2011, he was assigned as a teacher at St. John, Montello, Wis. One of the school board members saw his potential and recommended him for the Leadership Candidate Training program, a one-year program that helps prepare teachers to be principals or early childhood directors.

The Commission on Lutheran Schools started this program to address the need for additional principals and early childhood directors. The goal is to identify teachers already serving in WELS schools who have leadership gifts and

become strong teachers before asking them to serve in leadership roles," says Jim Rademan, director of Lutheran Schools. "That's what would be best for the growth of those teachers and, most important, for the children entrusted in their care."

While Lutheran Schools does provide training and mentoring for those assigned to leadership roles directly after graduation, it is working to find and train experienced teachers in the field to serve in these roles instead. That's where the Leadership Candidate Training program and graduate coursework come in.

Fuerstenau was one of eight men and seven women who participated in the program during 2015–16. These



Learn about the Principal Training Program, another way Lutheran Schools is training future school leaders, in this month's edition of *WELS Connection*.

District news

SOUTH CENTRAL



Twenty teens and seven adults from Holy Word, Austin; Christ the Rock, Round Rock; and Atonement, Plano, Texas, joined together for a mission trip in July to the White Mountain Apache Reservation in East Fork, Ariz. Despite being without running water for several days, the group happily served and shared the good news of Jesus during a three-day vacation Bible school and two-night family life seminar.

ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA



The two Hmong groups in Fresno and Clovis, Calif., were formally welcomed into the district as incorporated congregations during the Arizona-California District Convention in June. Daniel Thao (left) shepherds Christ's Gospel Lutheran Church in Clovis, and Tong Xing Yang (right) is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Fresno. Both men graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute three years ago.

MICHIGAN

On Sept. 11, **Zion, Toledo, Ohio**, rededicated its facilities following a serious fire in November 2015.

ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA

On July 20, seven local congregations

NORTH ATLANTIC



Our Savior, Roanoke, Va., hosted a weeklong Robotics Camp in July. Students learned how to create their own computer game and command their own robot using Scratch programming language. Each day began with a devotion and Bible story.

NORTHERN WISCONSIN



In July, Grace, Crivitz, Wis., hosted its third annual soccer Bible camp. The Lord blessed this year's camp with 46 kids, double the number from 2015. Kids learned a basic soccer skill each day, which was connected to a Bible story and song.

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



In July, 40 teens (pictured) from St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., helped Illumine, a home mission in Rock Hill, S.C., with its science outreach camp.

(92 people in all) participated in the **first WELS Arizona Diamondbacks Day** at Chase Field in Phoenix.

NEBRASKA

On Aug. 14, **Living Word, Montrose, Colo.**, dedicated the new addition to its church and preschool. Builders for Christ, a ministry of Kingdom Work-

ers, completed the major work of the expansion. WELS Church Extension Fund helped Living Word finance the project.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ-CA—Michael Schroeder; MI—John Eich; NA—Philip Gurgel; NE—Timothy Kemnitz; NW—Dennis Kleist; SC—Andrew Retberg; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.

Worship according to the gospel

Roger L. Neumann

Ukraine has a deep history in Lutheranism, dating back to the Lutheran Reformation in the mid 1500s. After the Counter-Reformation and a union with Moscow in the 17th century, Lutheranism was preserved among the German colonists. Native Ukrainians, however, were forbidden under the fear of death to belong to any church body except the Russian Orthodox church.

From 1925 to 1939, when western Ukraine was a part of Poland, there were 25 Lutheran congregations with a total membership of more than ten thousand. But when Russia invaded western Ukraine in 1939, many Lutheran pastors, deacons, and laypeople were arrested and either murdered or placed into concentration camps. Lutheranism became an illegal religion, buildings were seized, and people were forced to practice their faith in secret.

In the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC) today, almost everyone still has a story or a memory of the time between 1939 and 1991 that burns in their hearts and minds—of family members who were sent to concentration camps, had property taken away, or were killed by the KGB simply because they were Lutheran.

Some of the scars remain. Many today will not give out their addresses or phone numbers for contact information. These people have a fear—“Why do you want to know this?”—that still lives on after the years of oppression. That makes it difficult for the church to follow up on visitors or visit the homes of the children who attend vacation Bible school or Christmas services.

Stepan Ksiondzyk lived through some of those years. He still lives where he lived then—in Kremenets. He wasn't Lutheran at the time. He was a deacon in the Russian Orthodox church

when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. The church was ruled by the Communist overlords, and if church leaders didn't do the bidding of their overlords, they lost their parishes or their parishes were closed.

Stepan asked his bishop if he could conduct private services at his home and also be authorized to perform baptisms, marriages, and funeral services. His bishop approved, and Stepan then led services, often in the middle of the night. Some of those attending were family members of city officials of Kremenets. Some of these people were openly loyal to the Communist party. In time he thought it was possible to reopen their church building. Materials were donated, such as bricks, boards, nails, cement, and plaster, which were usually brought under the cover of darkness. But the local KGB major was determined to stop the project. This major arrested Stepan and demanded he give up the names of those who donated materials. He was severely tortured and let go with the warning that if he kept up his religious activities he would not live more than a month.

During that month, a woman came to Stepan's door in the middle of the night telling him her husband had died and requesting the deacon to bury him. Stepan learned that this man was the KGB major. His wife said that he had repented and confessed the Christian faith, so Stepan buried the one who had threatened and tortured him. The Lord protects his faithful ones!

Stepan tells of his conversion to the Lutheran faith: “When I worked for the bus garage in Kremenets, the congregation of the ULC rented a hall in that building for their services. I stopped by to see how Lutherans worship the Lord, and I immediately noticed the difference between the Russian Orthodox and Lutheran worship. Lutherans worship God according to the gospel.” He added, “You can see this especially at the Lord's Supper with the Words of Institution. I understood that they do according to the Word of God.”

Stepan knew that this was where he wanted to worship. He continued, "I left the Russian Orthodox church and began to attend worship services at the ULC congregation in Kremenets."

He felt very welcome in this congregation. "I was invited to sing in the choir," he says. "With time, they commissioned me to serve as deacon. For 22 years now I have served as a deacon, with the help of the Lord."

I asked Stepan to describe life in present-day Ukraine. He said, "Life in Ukraine is very difficult for all people because of the war in the east. We thank the Lord that in his mercy he does not let war reach all the way here. But I suffer in my soul since they kill there, blood is shed, and people die. We pray to the Lord that he stops this war. Only he can do it and do it in such a way that all the people will marvel what miraculous things the heavenly and holy Lord can do."

When asked about religious life and if he still felt that there was oppression to the church, Stepan commented, "Lately, religious life in

Ukraine has changed. As Ukraine became free, the life of Christians became better. People began to visit churches more often. Christians are not persecuted anymore."

Finally I asked, "What do you want people to know about you now?" He said, "For me, my faith is life with God. Not once did I doubt that the Lord has been and continues to help me in difficult minutes of my life and the life of my family. The Lord has heard my prayers and has been solving all our problems. My family and I are sincerely grateful to the Lord for his wonderful care for us. I will try to serve my Lord with all my strength and love."

Stepan and his wife are retired now and have a small garden where they grow fruit and vegetables.

Stepan is respected by all who know him, as a humble and faithful servant of our Lord. He, along with the many people of the ULC whom I've met, are a warm and welcoming people. I will pass on to you what I hear from them quite often: "Please tell your people in America, come and visit us in Ukraine sometime."

Roger Neumann, the World Missions liaison to the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, is pastor at Grace, Oskaloosa, Iowa.

Stepan (left) participating in a worship service at a recent pastors' conference in Kremenets; Church of the Holy Cross in Kremenets. The church used to be a restaurant and is one of only five church buildings in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church; Resurrection, Kiev, dedicated its new church building this past June. Members have been working toward having their building for almost 20 years; Stepan Ksiondzyk, a deacon at Church of the Holy Cross in Kremenets, Ukraine.

Read about a vacation Bible school in Ukraine on p. 22.

UKRAINIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Baptized national members: 761

Organized congregations: 18

Pastors: 17

Deacons: 5

Preaching stations: 3

Unique fact: The ULC only has five buildings for the entire church body. Most congregations worship in rented facilities or in homes.



Thanks, Pastor!

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. To celebrate, we invited readers to share stories showing their appreciation for their pastors. Here are some of their messages of thanksgiving. Thank you all for sharing these wonderful thoughts.

WISCONSIN

Do you ever think about how many times your pastor served you in your life? brought you closer to God? gave you God's blessings every Sunday in church? These are some of the highlights of my life of 88 years blessed through my pastors.

I thank God I had a Christian mother who had me baptized by our pastor. Then the Depression came. With seven children in our family, we were very poor. We couldn't afford a Christmas tree. So the day before Christmas, after the trees were picked over, my dad was able to get one free. Our church, through our pastor, provided us with a basket full of food—God sent. I will never forget that.

I was confirmed by my pastor who taught me the law and gospel.

When I was 15 years old, I got sick. My mother called the doctor. He said I had the flu because I hurt all over. After three weeks, I asked my sister to help me walk to church so I could take

Communion. My pastor noticed how hard it was for me to walk. No sooner had I got home and the doorbell rang. To my surprise, it was my pastor. He asked me what was wrong with me. I told him the doctor wasn't sure. My pastor said to me, "I am going to pick you up at 9 A.M. tomorrow morning to find out what is wrong with you." So that next day, he took me to a doctor, and they took x-rays from head to toe. My parents never received a bill. The doctors still couldn't find anything. On Tuesday they took me to the hospital for eight weeks. I had polio. Thanks to my pastor, they found out what was wrong and got me the proper treatment.

Later in life, I had a boyfriend. He was not WELS. We became engaged, my pastor gave him instruction, and he joined my church. My pastor married us. God blessed us with three sons. They were all baptized and confirmed by my pastor.

I couldn't count the number of sermons and Bible classes my pastors preached and taught me all these years as well as

giving me Communion, which gave me forgiveness of sins, God's undeserved love, and comfort.

My pastor comforted me when my husband died. I called my faithful pastor at six in the morning. I surely got him out of bed, but I needed him, and he came without hesitation. (He later performed my husband's funeral.)

Our pastors are such a great gift that God has blessed us with.

MICHIGAN

My pastor has been caring for me during a dark time in my life. My pastor has been my pastor for over 12 years. He has provided counseling for my wife and me when I was arrested again for my addiction problem in 2012. He would stop by our home to check in from time to time while I was waiting to be sentenced.

In 2013, I was sentenced and sent to prison. My pastor filed the paperwork for clergy visits and to provide Communion, which requires a warden's approval. He's been visiting me monthly



for the past three years, and I can always rely on him to say, “Mornin,” along with a smile and a handshake, even though we meet in the afternoon. We spend time in God’s Word along with Communion and then talk about our families.

He may not think that what he does is anything special, but a visit in prison means so much. It is very easy to get down on yourself in here, and the fact that he remembers me is something I treasure. I look forward to each and every visit from him.

Thank you for what you do. The Lord has blessed me with you in my life.

MINNESOTA

Pastor Gurgel retired a few years ago from the ministry. He and his wife, Barb, became members of our church when our pastor accepted a call to another congregation. Pastor Gurgel was available and accepted a call to serve as a vacancy pastor until a permanent pastor would accept a call to serve us.

We have been blessed with this call in spite of having two calls returned.

Pastor Gurgel has served WELS in administrative offices over 20 years, 10 as president of WELS. Those who make it to the top in leadership positions may think they have reached a pinnacle, but serving as a pastor for one or more congregations by preaching the gospel of Christ is still most important.

I think I speak for our congregation in thanking Pastor Gurgel for serving our congregation.

MONTANA

Pastor always starts and closes every meeting with a prayer, whether it is a private session, women’s Bible study, or a Sunday school teacher meeting. He preaches the true Word of God. He uses the law to show us our errors and then comforts us with the gospel and how we are saved by what Jesus Christ did for the world.

He takes time to greet every member and visitor with a hardy handshake and a big smile. He truly listens to you, and you feel (as he does) that he really cares about you and your life (even us old ladies!).

He and his family are truly an example of a Christian family and a blessing from God for us.

WISCONSIN

We have two of the best full-time pastors and one part-time pastor, and they are really top-notch servants of the Lord who truthfully proclaim God’s Word on Sundays and in their daily lives.

I love the way they make a person feel when the service is over—their message is heartfelt and sincere, very informative, and something to remember as we leave.

In spite of personal health issues at home, they are always good-natured, uplifting, humble individuals and a joy to be around.

One day the Lord will say, “Well done, good and faithful servants.”

ARIZONA

We have three pastors, two are full-time and one is retired.

One taught me to *always* look at the cross in times of trouble and to go to Jeremiah 29:11: “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

The other has taught me about grace: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The retired pastor has taught me how the Word of God is alive.

These pastors have taught me so much more, and we *should* honor them.

God called them to help us believers to read the Word and to pass on the gospel. Above all, they taught me that God comes first in our lives and to always give him the honor.

WISCONSIN

I will always be thankful to my pastor for the time he came to the hospital when our daughter was dying. I had to call him from the hospital to let him know she was dying soon. He had to leave his Sunday school teaching and came to be there with my daughter and us. Our daughter was a special young adult who felt a closeness to him, and I’m sure she was (as well as were we) especially thankful for his presence and his prayers.

continued on p. 30



WASHINGTON

The Sunday service at church is wonderful. Pastor always uses a unique and special worship setting based on the church calendar, and the hymns are selected to teach the lesson.

The sermon is also well thought-out to present the truths so everyone—even the children—can understand that Jesus loves them and that he is all they need. Pastor is patient and prayerful regarding the needs of the church. He works diligently and has a heart for our unchurched neighbors. He looks for ways to make church an exciting and interesting place to visit and feel welcome. His objective is never to overwhelm, but to teach that the simplicity of Jesus is all you need, and you can speak the truth in love.

WISCONSIN

Sometimes you stop and wonder how you get where you are in life. It's no different for me. I struggled with religion and faith for most of my life.

Being raised in the Word doesn't mean you will stay or believe what you are hearing if you are struggling in your heart for many other reasons. When you stray from a church and people for many years, you begin to develop some of your own beliefs and opinions about a wide range of things.

I never thought I'd meet a pastor and talk to one about stuff that I really

thought. For me, talking with Pastor has become an important thing because not only are my questions getting answered over time, but I'm learning about God little by little. I don't feel like I did as a kid when I was forced to learn something and felt like it was being shoved down my throat to the point that I hated it. Now I can ask why and not feel bad because I want to know. I don't feel wrong about my questions, and I feel like I can ask them.

Pastor is really good at knowing if you are having a hard time with something and if you need a few words of encouragement. No matter what he is doing and no matter what time it is, he understands that life spins out of control for some at random times of day or night, and he might be the lifeline you reach out to because you don't know whom else you can trust.

Pastor never takes credit for what he does. He gives of his time to help others and is always willing to go the extra mile. I believe far too often people who attend church never know the hundreds of extra things their pastors do on a daily basis to show they care about what they do and about the people. Too often, people get bent out of shape over silly things like how long a sermon goes, what kind of songs we are singing, or if we are using the hymnals anymore.

God knows what's in your heart, so all those things will not matter. But it does matter if those who know the Lord are willing to share what they know with others in whatever ways or means they can learn it.

That is only part of why I think pastors are so awesome, and I am grateful for the support I receive.

ILLINOIS

Years ago, our church went through a terrible time. It split up Christians.

Then our new pastor came to us, and it could not have been easy for him. From his first sermon on, he started healing in our congregation. We felt secure and that he taught us from the Bible and put our Lord first in all affairs. He does not waver or compromise any of God's laws and assures us of God's love.

WISCONSIN

I love being a member of a small church with a close-knit church family, a family who helps lift one another up spiritually and is always there to support and encourage one another. This is the type of church I grew up in, and this is why I appreciate my childhood pastor. He was and still is the leader of our church family.

When I was 16 years old, my pastor encouraged me to use my gifts and talents to serve the Lord by teaching



Sunday school, and I did for years. As a lonely college student attending a public university, he guided me towards the WELS campus ministry at that university. I ended up becoming very involved by attending WELS college rallies and making lifelong Christian friends.

During my last year of college, I am ashamed to admit that I rarely attended church because I was working on weekends, trying to meet student teaching and graduation requirements, and dating a boyfriend I thought I could change. When all that ended, I was welcomed back with love as if I had never left.

It has been four years now since new careers led my husband and me to our new home. Every time I go visit my parents in my hometown though, I enjoy attending church services to listen and visit my former church family because I am so grateful for the spiritual guidance and Christian love that was shown to me over the years.

My parents did a wonderful job providing me with a Christian home and raising me in the Christian faith. All parents need help though, and my parents received that from my pastor. Now that my husband and I are parents, I cherish spiritual leaders like faithful pastors even more.

CONNECTICUT

I wrote this poem for my pastor.

Pastors

Pastors are tough; yet tender,
Meek and might, all bundled
together.
They walk by faith and not by sight,
Oftentimes working all day and
into the night.
Courageous and with zeal,
A theological backbone of case-
hardened steel.
Intellect and humility,
Expected to exhibit the utmost
in civility.
A living epistle; on display to all,
We measure their lives compar-
ing them to Paul.
Relational warmth and rigors
of study,
Molded by God as if made of putty.
A sense of humor and a serious-
ness of his calling,
Not afraid to take a risk and always
avoids stalling.
A prayer warrior at heart,
Ready to help when the flock
drifts apart.
Their first love is Christ and then
their people,
Their Garden of Eden; gathering
right there under the steeple.

Excerpt from Lifestyle Worship—Poems, Prayers and Ministry Resources

WISCONSIN

Your pastor is your shepherd. He might not be the Good Shepherd, but he is your shepherd while on earth or in your church.

What does he do? Well, if you think he preaches one hour on Sunday and then has the rest of the week off, you have a lot to learn.

I might say that in the past year we have had over 140 new members and in one Sunday baptized eight children. That is a far cry from one hour on a Sunday.

We thank God for sending our pastor to be our good shepherd and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide him and protect him and his family. Thank you, Pastor, for being our good shepherd. God bless you.

WISCONSIN

My wife was Catholic when we were dating. She went to church with me, and she loved our pastor's sermons. She decided to turn Lutheran. Our pastor has a way of listening to our problems and then tells us how to handle them through the Word of God.

Letters are edited, and personal references were removed.



Happy anniversary

Andrew C. Schroer

Don't forget
to celebrate the
Festival of the
Reformation
this year. It is
just as important
and meaningful
this year as it
will be next year.

This month we celebrate the 499th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. On All Hallows' Eve (Oct. 31) 1517, a German monk named Martin Luther nailed a document to the door of his local parish. The document consisted of 95 theses he wished to publicly debate concerning abuses he saw in the Roman Catholic Church.

The nailing of the Ninety-five Theses changed the world. Most historians include it in their top ten list of history's defining moments. Every non-Roman Catholic Christian church, except for the Eastern Orthodox churches, can trace its roots back to the moment Luther's hammer struck that nail.

Next year, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation will be celebrated, not only in Lutheran churches but by numerous church bodies around the world. A major PBS documentary will be released. The History Channel will highlight Martin Luther. Historians and scholars will wax poetic as they give their unique insights as to who Martin Luther was and what the Reformation means. Many congregations are already making plans to celebrate the historic event and maximize the publicity surrounding it.

This year, though, there will be no PBS documentary. The History Channel will most likely focus its attention on Halloween, as it does every year at this time. Few non-Lutheran churches will notice. Even our celebrations will be much more subdued. Sure, some communities will have joint Reformation services. But even then, all the conversations and excitement will be about what we are going to do next year for the 500th anniversary.

But why? Why is the 500th anniversary so much more important than the 499th? Why is our world so fascinated with round numbers? We celebrate our parents' 50th wedding anniversary with big parties, fabulous trips, and wonderful family reunions. But what about their 47th anniversary or

their 52nd? Why don't we celebrate those with as much fanfare?

Why mark the 100th day in office for the president and not his 123rd? Why celebrate a baseball player's 500th home run and not his 484th? Because we as a society consider round numbers implicitly better and more important. One author calls it "the mathematical tyranny of round numbers."

In the end, they're just numbers.

Now, don't get me wrong. I am all for celebrating the 500th anniversary of the nailing of the Ninety-five Theses. I am excited about the publicity it will bring and the opportunities it will give us to share the good news of the gospel with a world that so desperately needs it. Pastors and local congregations should already be planning their celebrations and looking for ways to take advantage of the opportunities it will provide in their local communities to talk about what it means to be a Lutheran.

But don't forget to celebrate the Festival of the Reformation this year. It is just as important and meaningful this year as it will be next year. In the end, the Festival of the Reformation isn't about Martin Luther, being Lutheran, or being WELS. It's about how God has preserved his gospel throughout history. It's about how he has used flawed human beings like Martin Luther, you, and me to stand up for and speak the truth.

It's about the free gift of heaven and forgiveness Jesus won for us by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

That's something to celebrate every year.

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

The RIPPLE EFFECT ONESIMUS & PHILEMON



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

Daniel N. Balge

The ripple effect of Pentecost meant that the gospel spread not only across land and sea to Jew and Gentile but also up and down within society. Soon the good news of Jesus converted an Ethiopian government official; reached a businesswoman in Philippi; touched a centurion in Caesarea and elite soldiers in Rome; instructed Jewish craftsmen like Apollos (tentmaker) and Simon (tanner); and brought both Zenas, a lawyer, and Dionysius, a member of Athens' court, to faith. Jailers and sailors heard God's truth.

THE SLAVE-MASTER RELATIONSHIP

So did slaves and masters. This is not surprising, since about a third of the people in the Roman Empire of Paul's day were slaves. Enough slaves and masters became followers of Jesus that Paul addressed the slave-master relationship in his letter to the Ephesians (6:5-9).

This was not an endorsement of slavery but an application of Christian living to a reality of the Roman Empire. When Paul had written to the Galatian Christians that under Christ, "there is neither

Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28), he did not do away with slavery. He dealt with the facts as he met them. Within the Christian church there were still slaves and masters, just as there were still men and women and people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Paul's point was that such human distinctions of sex, race, or status mean nothing before God.

Moreover, the circumstances of slavery under Rome could be different from what we commonly think. Roman slavery was not race-based. Slaves were not kidnapped into servitude, though peoples conquered by Rome's legions were sometimes used as slaves. Similarly, some slaves were prisoners of war. Others were convicts. Still others went into slavery to pay off debt, essentially mortgaging their time, skills, and strength. There were both privately and publicly owned slaves. The latter worked for the state. Slaves might do hard labor, practice trades, or be clerks and record keepers. By law, slaves had some rights. They could earn money, acquire property, and buy their freedom, even become citizens. Still, on average their lives were harder and shorter.

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR SLAVES AND MASTERS

Against that backdrop Paul asked a favor of a Christian slaveholder,

Philemon. Paul appealed to Philemon to take back a runaway slave, Onesimus, who had become a believer while on the run. "Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. . . . Welcome him as you would welcome me" (Philemon 8-10,17).

Paul asked a favor, confident of Philemon's love for him. Let's share Paul's confidence. It rested ultimately on Christ's love—a love that Onesimus would reflect as he worked faithfully in Philemon's household, a love that Philemon would reflect in forgiving Onesimus and treating him kindly, a love that—they all knew—caused Jesus to die to set both slave and master free.

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

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



We treasure the
message of Jesus
because it tells us
where we are going.

A parable for the ages

Why should anyone become Christian? We would point to the Savior Jesus as the only real reason. He came to earth from the throne of his heavenly Father to accomplish what no human could accomplish. He assumed our place, suffered, and died, but rose again. He paid the full penalty for all human sin and failure and demonstrated his accomplishment by rising from the dead.

The Holy Spirit convinces doubting, uncertain, and opposing hearts to trust that Jesus has accomplished what the Scriptures tell us. We speak, write, sing, and live as disciples of Jesus here and now. The Holy Spirit uses our witness to change hearts.

There are still so many who have difficulty with the story of Christ. It has been so throughout the ages.

Over one thousand years ago, a king was confronted with the Christian message. His wife was a Christian and urged him to become a Christian, but he still doubted and remained unconvinced. So he convened a meeting of his advisors in the grand hall to ask for advice. Huddled around a warm fire, they talked far into the night. As they talked, a bird entered through one of the windows. They grew quiet as they watched the bird. It flew around the hall and left through another window.

One of the king's advisors proposed a reason to adopt the Christian message. He adapted the flight of the bird into a short parable. We enter this world, he said, but we don't really know where we come from. We enjoy the company of our friends and the warmth of life here, but we all must leave this world again. And we don't really know where we will go once we fly away and return to the unknown darkness. If this Jesus can help us understand what we cannot know about our flight out of life, we should listen to him. (Adapted from the account of the conversion of King Edwin by the Venerable Bede.)

We all wonder about what will happen when we fly away at the end of life. Jesus has always been the answer. He was the answer when Luther was troubled by a bolt of lightning on his way back to the university at Erfurt. Luther worked hard to prepare himself to stand before God at life's end, but he never could do enough. After years of anguish, he found the Bible's answer: God himself gives us all we need. Jesus gives us his perfect life as a beautiful robe to cover all our sins. When our days "quickly pass, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10), God welcomes us because of Jesus. Then he allows us to perch in the branches of the tree of life. His resurrection is our assurance that life after death is ours.

Christianity has always been about Jesus. It has never been about what we do, think, or feel. We treasure the message of Jesus because it tells us where we are going. Those who walked and talked with Jesus have left us the New Testament, and we trust it because it tells us about Jesus.

The Savior himself designated those apostles to leave behind what we needed to know and promised that they would tell us the truth. Anything else is just speculation told by men and women who enjoy the warm fire and the company of friends. They cannot know what lies outside the window when we fly away. That's a message only God knows, and he has made it clear to us in Jesus.

Scripture alone

Joel D. Otto

What was the Lutheran Reformation all about? Was it merely that we Lutherans don't pray to Mary and our clergy can get married? What does it mean to be truly Lutheran? Is it all about having a German or Scandinavian background and enjoying potlucks?

While the Reformation changed the way most people view the church, Luther was not interested in starting something new. He only wanted to bring the church back to its origins. Yes, we certainly may enjoy our potluck suppers, but that's not what it means to be truly Lutheran. What made the Lutheran Reformation different from many other efforts to reform the church and what distinguishes true Lutherans today is doctrine—what we believe, teach, and confess.

It starts with the source of what we believe, teach, and confess. Unlike Roman Catholicism and other churches that rely on the Bible *and* tradition, other writings, or the decisions of church leaders, true Lutherans look to Scripture alone, where God reveals what we are to know, believe, and do.

The introduction to the Formula of Concord, one of the Lutheran Confessions, states:

We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teachings and teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone, as it is written, 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' (Ps. 119[:105]), and Saint Paul: 'If . . . an angel from heaven should proclaim to you something contrary, . . . let that one be accursed!' (Gal. 1[:8]).

Unlike many churches that try to adjust the Bible to human thinking, true Lutherans accept what God reveals in his Word, even if it doesn't make logical or reasonable sense. The Formula of Concord also states: "Although these answers are con-

trary to reason and philosophy in all their arrogance, nonetheless, we know that 'the wisdom of this 'perverted' world is only foolishness in God's sight' [cf. 1 Cor. 3:19] and that only on the basis of God's Word can judgments on articles of faith be made" (Article II:8).

This is comforting for us. In Scripture alone God himself reveals to us what he wants us to believe and proclaim. We are not at the whim of changing interpretations or newly discovered traditions. The Word of God endures forever (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25). It is the truth (John 17:17). God does not, cannot, and would not lie to us (Numbers 23:19). Therefore, we subject our faulty human reason to the Word of God (2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 2:2-8). And we confidently trust that what we believe, teach, and confess is divine and powerful truth (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2 Timothy 3:15,16).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Read 2 Peter 1:21 and 2 Timothy 3:16. Define "verbal inspiration." What are the implications of this doctrine?
2. List at least five scriptural teachings that defy human logic. Why is it comforting that many of the Bible's teachings cannot be completely comprehended by human reason?
3. What are the inherent dangers when tradition or the "living voice of the church" becomes a source of a church's teaching? What examples do you see in various churches today?

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



This is the first article in a 14-part series on key doctrinal emphases that Luther brought back to light through his Reformation. Find this article and answers online after Oct. 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TRULY LUTHERAN



Celebrating the REFORMATION

Resist the temptation to act as though there is no King in your life.
Instead, cling to the living and life-giving Word of God.

Daniel M. Deutschlander

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 17:6).

These words appear more than once in the book of Judges and become a theme for much of the book. Read the book. What happened back then when the people turned away from the God of Israel and his Word?

What happened then is what always happens. The nation sank into ever-greater depravity, and God in his love and mercy sent the consequences of their sin: famine, plague, chaos in the streets, and another war worse than the one before. His goal was always the same: to call them back to his grace and his rule.

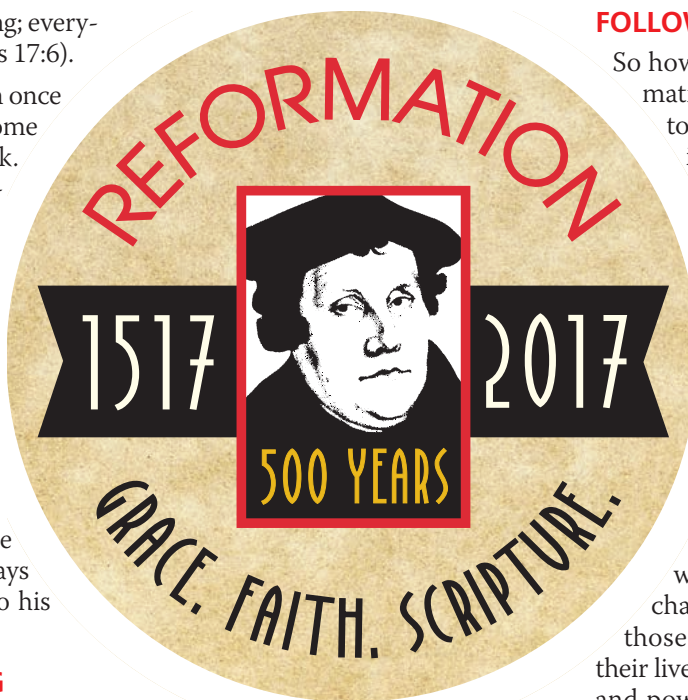
WHEN THERE IS NO KING

We are observing another anniversary of the Reformation. Luther's days too were days when people did as they saw fit. In the church, authorities imposed doctrines and rules that contradicted the chief doctrines of the Bible. "Under the bench," as Luther put it, was the gospel of forgiveness by grace, through faith, on account of the perfect work of Christ for our redemption. Gone was the notion that we strive to live a life in accord with God's Word out of gratitude for salvation given, not in order to earn salvation for ourselves.

And what was the result? In some who imagined that they could earn their salvation, there was self-righteousness. In others, the more realistic ones, there was despair that they were doomed before an always angry God. Both ended up

doing whatever they saw fit. Both wandered further away from the joy of the gospel. Both lost the peace and the love of God won for them and freely offered in the Word and the sacraments.

How everything changes only to stay the same! Today most still want to be free from the authority of the only King ever worth having. Most think themselves free to believe and behave exactly as they please. And so society and culture sink ever deeper into the muck and mire of chaos, lawlessness, violence, self-righteousness, and despair. God lets peoples and nations suffer the consequences when there is no king in the land except the sinful will of the individual.



FOLLOWING THE KING

So how shall we celebrate the Reformation? Let's resist the temptation to act as though there is no King in our lives. Let's cling to the living and life-giving Word of God. Let's immerse ourselves in the joy of God's love, his peace, and his forgiveness for us in Christ. Let's strive to live in grateful obedience to our gracious God. Such are the lives of true children of the Reformation.

We still can be witnesses to the joy of faith in Christ, which is the opposite of the chaos that comes eventually to all those who have no such king in their lives. By our witness to God's love and power, we can still draw few—or many—to share with us in his kingdom of peace and eternal joy.

As Luther sang in his battle hymn:

"Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us,

We tremble not, we fear no ill; they shall not overpower us.

This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will,

He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done.

One little word can fell him"
(*Christian Worship* 200:3).

Daniel Deutschlander, a retired pastor, is a member at St. Mark's, Watertown, Wisconsin.