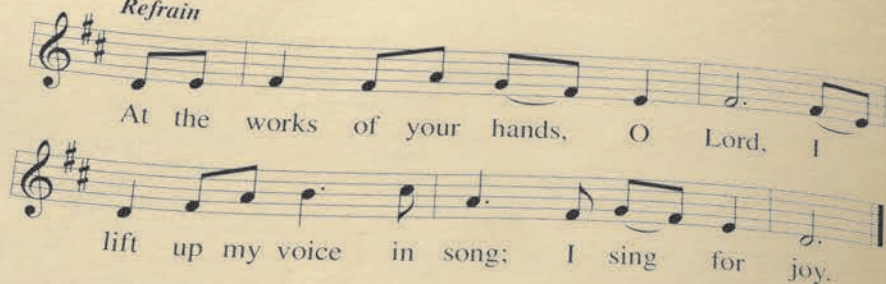


# Forward in Christ

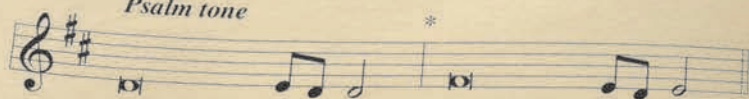
A LUTHERAN VOICE

## Psalm 89

*Refrain*



*Psalm tone*



I will sing of the LORD's great love forever.\*

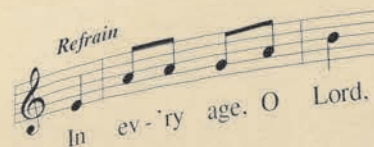
I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

I will declare that your love stands firm forever,  
that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

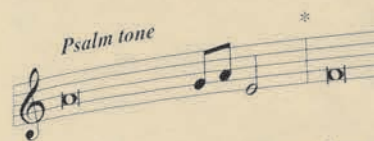
The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,  
your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.

Ps

*Refrain*



*Psalm tone*



Lord, you have been  
throughout all ge

Before the mountain  
or you brought f  
from everlasting

For a thousand year  
has just gon  
a watch i

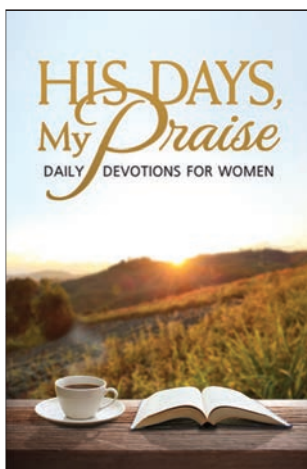
## Hymn treasures

Singing hymns is an important way to build  
up the faith of God's people. Page 10



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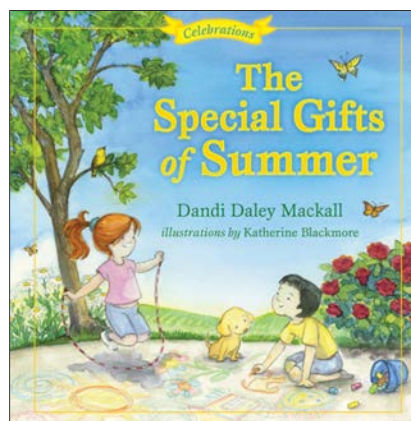


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 Indicates additional online content

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

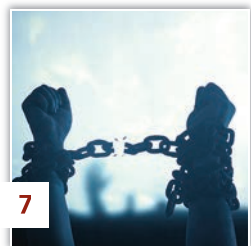
## WHAT'S INSIDE

As we were discussing titles for our new series on hymns, one of the authors of the series mentioned Psalm 89:1, "I will sing of the LORD's great love forever." Besides praising our Lord and Savior, singing Christ-centered hymns is a wonderful way to build up our faith, share God's love, and express our joy in our salvation—from generation to generation. Our new nine-part series is going to look more closely at hymns and how they are used in our congregations. Written by members of the WELS Hymnal Project, the articles also will give us more insight on how hymns for the new hymnal are being selected. Check out the first article on p. 10.

Sharing our joy in our salvation can be done in many ways besides singing hymns. Acts of love and devotion can create opportunities for us to witness. In our "Salt of the Earth" series, you will meet Ann, who for years took care of her suffering mother and then her sick husband (p. 28). Yet during that time she found strength in her Savior and shared that strength with others she met.

As the famous hymn puts it: "Let us ever walk with Jesus, follow his example pure" (*Christian Worship* 452:1).

Julie Wietzke



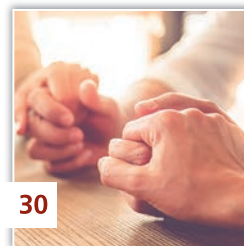
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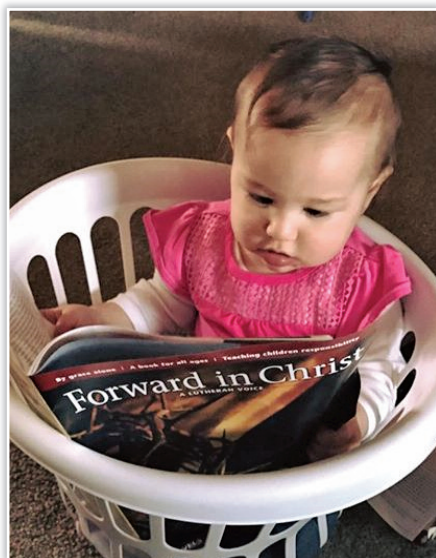
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### Interactive Bible study

What it means to be truly Lutheran: Faith-produced good works



# YOUNG READERS



Pastor Thomas Bauer sent in this photo and writes, “You can never start them too soon. Ava enjoys crawling into the laundry basket at Grandma and Grandpa’s house. This time she took reading material with her!”

## AIRBNB

I wanted to pass on a tidbit about Airbnb mentioned in your article by Earle D. Treptow [“A more beautiful world,” May]. My daughter owns a building in Atlanta, Ga., which she uses in part for Airbnb customers. I have to believe she wants to reach out to others in a general way. I’m happy she reaches out, and I do pray she remains safe in doing so. . . . As you said in the article, Jesus was judged unfairly, so I cannot judge and hope others don’t judge me.

*Carolyn Tutin  
Moorhead, Minnesota*

Send your letters to Feedback, *Forward in Christ*, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; [fic@wels.net](mailto: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*.

## CORRECTION

The person pictured on p. 29 of the June issue is not Peter Bur, as was identified in the caption. It is actually Chuol Buol, a South Sudanese PSI student from St. Mark, Mankato, Minn. We apologize for the error.

# Through my Bible in 3 years



Read or listen online at [wels.net/bible3](http://wels.net/bible3).

2017  
JULY

- |                   |                     |                  |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Acts 15:1-12   | 12. Ac. 20:1-16     | 23. Ac. 26:1-18  |
| 2. Ac. 15:13-34   | 13. Ac. 20:17-38    | 24. Ac. 26:19-32 |
| 3. Ac. 15:35-16:5 | 14. Ac. 21:1-16     | 25. Ac. 27:1-20  |
| 4. Ac. 16:6-15    | 15. Ac. 21:17-36    | 26. Ac. 27:21-44 |
| 5. Ac. 16:16-40   | 16. Ac. 21:37-22:16 | 27. Ac. 28:1-16  |
| 6. Ac. 17:1-15    | 17. Ac. 22:17-29    | 28. Ac. 28:17-31 |
| 7. Ac. 17:16-34   | 18. Ac. 22:30-23:10 | 29. Amos 1 & 2   |
| 8. Ac. 18:1-17    | 19. Ac. 23:11-35    | 30. Am. 3 & 4    |
| 9. Ac. 18:18-28   | 20. Ac. 24:1-21     | 31. Am. 5        |
| 10. Ac. 19:1-20   | 21. Ac. 24:22-25:12 |                  |
| 11. Ac. 19:21-41  | 22. Ac. 25:13-27    |                  |

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# Slaves living in freedom

**Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover up for evil; live as God's slaves. 1 Peter 2:16**

Peter M. Prange

Who wouldn't want to be free? Free from insult? Free from pain? Free from trouble? Free from debt? Free from guilt? Free from death? God created us to live in freedom and to celebrate it. Freedom is good and desirable. When we feel the bondage of burden down to our bones, it makes life miserable. We want freedom.

## LIVING AS SIN'S SLAVES

But instead we naturally live in bondage. We're born that way. Jesus plainly taught that "everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). Psalm 51 reminds us that our bondage originates in the womb. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (v. 5). St. Paul outlined the ultimate consequence of our addiction to sin, explaining that "sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all



to sin and its guilt or the wages of sin—death—because of Jesus. He overcame death by his own death and resurrection. He urges us to take heart and to live in the eternal peace that only he can give. In other words, as St. Peter put it, "live as free people" because through faith in Jesus, that is what we are, now and forever.

## LIVING AS GOD'S SLAVES

But the apostle also advises us against misunderstanding this freedom. Yes, we are to live as free people, but our freedom dare never be used "as a cover-up for evil." In other words, Jesus has not restored our freedom so that we are "free" to return to the bondage of sin. We should not call sin "freedom" so we can do whatever we want. Our Christian freedom is never to be used in a self-serving way, but in a way that willingly and generously serves others. Strange as it sounds, we are set free from sin and death so that we might "live as God's slaves" in service to one another.

Jesus serves as the ultimate model of this divine principle, pointing out that "even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The One who created heaven and earth—the only One who can freely do "whatever pleases him" (Psalm 115:3) with no need for excuse or explanation—uses his perfect freedom in service to sinners like us. He gave his very life to set us free.

At first it might not seem natural for us to celebrate our freedom from sin and death when we discover that we are still slaves, called to serve one another in humility and love. But slavery to the will of God is true freedom. It brings joy and meaning and fulfillment to our lives. So, let's live as free people by living as God's slaves.

*Contributing editor Peter Prange is pastor at Bethany, Kenosha, Wisconsin.*

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We are set free from sin and death so that we might "live as God's slaves" in service to one another.

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sinned" (Romans 5:12). Simply put, we are shackled to sin and death. We cannot break the chains of our bondage.

That's why Jesus came. He came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves in a million lifetimes. Yes, our Savior, God's Son, came to set us free, and "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Jesus canceled sin's debt. We are not chained





*Mark Schweder*

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While our synod may not be increasing in numbers here in the United States, our fellowship around the world continues to grow.

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## The word of the Lord continues to spread

It's a phrase that occurs many times in the book of Acts. In fact, it occurs so often that it could perhaps be the theme of the entire book. "The word of God spread" (Acts 6:7). Beginning in Jerusalem after Pentecost, the religious leaders of the Jews did everything they could—including making threats and arrests—to keep the apostles and other Christians from preaching and teaching about the crucified and risen Savior. But they didn't stop. "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah" (Acts 5:42). As the church grew, the apostles appointed seven men to assist them in providing for the physical and spiritual needs of Christians. "The word of God spread."

The same word of God that grew in spite of opposition and persecution in the time of the apostles is continuing to grow today. Even though we live in a country that seems to be turning away from Christianity, and even though the influence of Christian faith and values seems to be diminishing in our own culture, the very opposite is true in many places around the world. The word of the Lord is growing. The saving gospel is on the march. God's church is being built by the same powerful preaching of the good news of Jesus.

While our synod may not be increasing in numbers here in the United States, our fellowship around the world continues to grow. It's happening in some very unexpected places and in ways that we could not have foreseen. Thousands of people are hearing the gospel and being brought to faith in places like Nepal and Pakistan, where modern-day Herods continue to threaten and oppose Christians. People in Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand—like modern-day Macedonians—are asking us to

come and help them with theological training. Literally millions of people are hearing the gospel online in Latin America through the efforts of our synod's Multi-Language Publications. And hardly a month goes by when our synod is not contacted by a Lutheran group somewhere in the world seeking to establish a relationship.

Later this summer at our synod's convention, we will see tangible evidence that the word of the Lord continues to grow. A high point at that convention will be the establishment of fellowship between our synod and three Lutheran church bodies. The Lutheran Church of Ethiopia broke away from a large liberal Lutheran church body because it wanted to be faithful to the Lutheran Confessions. South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) in Hong Kong originally began as a WELS mission. But when faithful Lutheran pastors were no longer available, its doctrine and practice strayed. Now, with the help and encouragement of our WELS missionaries in Hong Kong and with pastors trained by Asia Lutheran Seminary, SALEM has confessed its full commitment to Lutheran doctrine and practice.

Because we share the same commitment to the truth of God's Word, WELS will declare fellowship with these Lutheran churches at our convention in July. It will be a joyful day for them and for us. And, with God's power and blessing, the word of the Lord will continue to grow and spread.

Learn more about the synod's upcoming convention on pp. 22-24.



# Light for our path

**I am a WELS member and will soon be marrying a man who is studying to become a pastor of another denomination. His church teaches that there is salvation only through faith in Jesus, but beyond that its doctrine can be described as being on “shifting sand.” Is it wrong to convert because I do not fully adhere to the doctrine of my future husband’s denomination?**

James F. Pope

My response to you addresses the confessions of faith we make and how important it is that those confessions be consistent.

## THE CONFESSION OF THE HEART AND MOUTH

Faith is a matter of the heart. Faith certainly involves knowledge and the affirmation that such knowledge is true, but faith is primarily trust in God’s promises. Perhaps you have seen that truth illustrated in a picture in which a heart is tilted, leaning against the cross of Christ. Saving faith is known only by God and the Christian involved. God alone can see what is in a person’s heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

When we confess our Christian faith, as we do when we speak the creeds, we tell God what he already knows, but we also tell others what is in our hearts (Romans 10:10). That confession is important.

We all make another significant confession. It’s not one of words, but actions.

## THE CONFESSION BY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Think back to the day of your confirmation. At that time, you confessed your faith publicly, you answered questions, and you made solemn promises to God. While the questions might vary from one congregation to another, it is likely you were asked if you believed that the teachings you learned in your course of instruction were correct explanations of biblical doctrines.

You were not alone in being asked such a question. Adults who wish to be confirmed are asked a similar question. That question also is presented to people who wish to join our congregations by way of profession or affirmation of faith. That question is appropriate and necessary for people seeking communicant member-

ship. Membership in a congregation sends the signal to others that their faith matches the church’s teachings. Their membership is a tangible way of doing what Jesus said—acknowledging him before others (Matthew 10:32). Others would have every reason to conclude that your faith matched those of the church you joined. If that were not the case, someone could wonder why you are affiliated with that church in the first place.

## A CONSISTENT CONFESSION

It can be misleading and confusing when the confession of faith made by your membership in a church is different from what you believe in your heart. In your case, joining the church of your future husband would naturally lead people to think you believe what that church teaches. While that church correctly points to Jesus Christ as Savior, you indicated that its doctrine beyond that is on “shifting sand.” Your membership in that church would be an endorsement of teachings you do not accept.

Many have faced similar decisions. Those situations are not always easy. Take the matter to the Lord in prayer and begin a discussion with your fiancé about your questions. I do not know how you will make a consistent confession. That is a conversation for you and your fiancé. Both of you will want to determine how best to make a confession that is consistent—before your Lord and before others.

*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](http://wels.net/questions). Submit your questions there or to [fic@wels.net](mailto:fic@wels.net).

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

Psalms 119:105



# God's love: Our song forever

Letting God's forgiving love in Christ be proclaimed, heard, and sung is an important part of choosing hymns for new worship resources. Michael D. Schultz

On a shelf in the new synod archives are 16 cardboard boxes containing all the paper files of the *Christian Worship* (CW) hymnal project. Tucked away in one or two of those boxes are the handwritten correspondences that flooded the project director's office after the publication of the dreaded cut list—the list of hymns from *The Lutheran Hymnal* (TLH) that would not appear in *Christian Worship*. Some of those letters were rather “expressive.” Yet all those letters were effective. About a dozen hymns that had been on death row were given a stay of execution and, in fact, new life in the new hymnal.

Members of the current hymnal project are taking us through that same process once again. Where do we start? We started with nearly four years of multiple-level reviews designed to let the best hymns of CW and *Christian Worship: Supplement* (CWS) rise to the top. Included in these reviews have been a national survey of favorite hymns for adults and students, the collection of hymn usage statistics around the country, and the rating of hymns by two separate committees.

Choosing 450 to 500 CW/CWS hymns to appear in our next hymnal will make room for 150 to 200 hymns that are new to us. We make room for new hymns, mindful of the following:

**FINDING NEW TREASURES.** Some hymns wear out, while others simply don't catch on. Letting go of approxi-

mately 25 to 30 percent of CW/CWS hymns gives us the opportunity to see what new treasures the Lord will provide. And he does provide new treasures. “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” (CW 377) and “Salvation unto Us Has Come” (CW 390) appeared in the first Lutheran hymnal in 1524. The publication of TLH placed on our lips the hymns “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus” and “God's Word Is Our Great Heritage.” In 1993, CW gave us the communion hymn “Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face” (CW 315) and allowed us to sing Psalm 115 in the striking words of “Not unto Us” (CW 392).

Time will tell which hymns from a new hymnal will become the texts and tunes that we treasure. We make room for them because we know that the Holy Spirit keeps giving to the church gifts that spring from the gospel. As he does, it's a bit of a misnomer for us to work toward a “final hymn list;” hymn lists will never remain static.

**CLEAR PROCLAMATIONS.** We understand that not everyone will be ecstatic about the changes in a new hymnal. So we invite feedback on the list we are publishing. As CW was taking shape, Kurt Eggert, CW project director, wrote, “From time to time it may be desirable or even necessary to incorporate changes in our liturgical forms, language or music in order that God's truth be more clearly communicated to the wor-



shippers or that the faith of the believers be more meaningfully expressed.”

### CHRIST'S COMPELLING LOVE.

There is one changeless truth that drives everything about our hymnal project, including the selection of hymns: letting God's forgiving love in Christ be proclaimed, heard, and sung.

We are convinced that pulling together the best hymns of CW and CWS and spending several years searching for the best other hymns

that can be found will result in worship resources that build up the faith of God's people. By God's good grace that happens as singers sing and worshipers hear, “My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more” (CWS 760:2).

---

*Michael Schultz, project director of the WELS Hymnal Project, is a member at Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin.*

This is the first article in a nine-part series on hymns and their use in our churches.

The WELS Hymnal Project wants your feedback as it works on finalizing which of the more than 700 hymns from *Christian Worship* and *Christian Worship: Supplement* will be included in the new hymnal. Every month the WELS Hymnal Project will post a selection of hymns online, indicating which hymns are slated to be kept and which are slated to be cut. You can view the monthly list and, if you want, choose up to 10 hymns from the cut list that you would like to see kept in the new hymnal. To review this month's list of hymns and take part in the process, visit [welshymnal.com](http://welshymnal.com).

## RESPECTFULLY *making room*

“O King and Father, kind and dread,  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
Forgive us, who have learned to bless  
Our enemies, all trespasses;  
Spare us temptation; let us be  
From Satan set forever free” (*Christian Worship* 407:2).

The hymn “O Lord, You Have in Your Pure Grace” is not currently slated to appear in our next hymnal. Lutheran pastor, professor, and poet Martin Franzmann intentionally wrote this shorter version of Luther's Lord's Prayer in the hope that it would be sung more frequently. But the third and fourth lines of Franzmann's second stanza present the singer with a textual challenge: “Forgive us, who have learned to bless our enemies, all trespasses.” The fourth line, when sung by itself comes out as “our enemies, all trespasses,” which is not impossible to follow, but not easy either.

One could certainly not find any fault with the text of the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. Nor has the slight textual difficulty mentioned above landed this hymn on the cut list. But a combination of things has led to the proposal to cut CW 407:

- 1) The tune has been overused (six times in TLH and five times in CW).
- 2) The committee voted 14-1 to cut it.
- 3) It has very low statistical usage (bottom 100 out of 711).

- 4) The hymn did not appear in the last two hymnals of the author's own church body.

- 5) CW is the only recent hymnal in which it appears.

Simply put, this version of a sung Lord's Prayer has not gained sufficient traction to continue in the next book.

The Prayer section of our new hymnal will need some new entries. Should it be approved, this hymn by author Chad Bird may serve well in that section.

“Jesus, advocate on high,  
Sacrificed on Calv'ry's altar,  
Through your priestly blood we cry:  
Hear our prayers, though they may falter;  
Place them on your Father's throne  
As your own.”

These reasons make a good case for its inclusion:

- 1) Its statistical usage in another Lutheran hymnal is high.
- 2) It would bring back a tune familiar from TLH which did not appear in CW (TLH 539).
- 3) It reminds us that when our prayers come to our Father in Jesus' name, it is as though our Father views our prayers as Jesus' own prayer.

# ABIDING

## truth

**Law and gospel. Diagnosis and cure. We need both. The law show us our sin, and the gospel shows us our Savior.**

Joel V. Petermann

*Toleration.* That's been the catchword for the first decades of the 21st century. In social settings it means that we accept other cultures and races without passing judgment on or discriminating against them. It means we don't judge anyone's actions and orientations if they are different from ours. In the education setting it often means we are careful not to tell a student they have made a mistake. Instead of pointing out an error, we are to dwell only on the positive.

Unfortunately, toleration easily becomes indulgence, and it also can cause chaos. A toleration mindset that accepts the idea that nothing is wrong, anything goes, or you just have to accept that others are different from you means that no standards, guidelines, or boundaries for behavior or thought exist. In society, *relativity* becomes the watchword; what may be wrong for you is okay for me. Such thinking leaves us unable to enforce laws, punish wrongdoers, and keep order. In school, students begin to lose the ability to accept constructive criticism and to rise above failures.

Let's face it, none of us like to be told that we have done something wrong. It affects our self-worth. It demotes "ego." It can depress us or make us angry. We often respond to accusations of failure with defensiveness or excuses. We try to find a way to make

ourselves look better, to restore our self-fantasy that we are better than we really are.

So toleration is handy. It speaks the language of our soul. Don't tell me I can't be the way I am. Don't tell me I've made a mistake. Let me live in my bubble of self-glory, and I'm much happier.

At least so I think.

### **LAW SPEAKS HARSH REALITY**

Martin Luther knew that this isn't the way that Scripture speaks. God's Word has two teachings. Even though the Bible calls one of them the "strange work" of God (Isaiah 28:21), it is nevertheless *his* work. It isn't the work of toleration. It is the work of calling a spade a spade. It isn't couched in politically correct verbiage. It doesn't allow for any wiggle room or loopholes. It is called God's law. Proper use

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**God didn't tolerate our sin.  
He paid its price for us.**

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of the law in our lives is to let the ax fall true and swift. The law cuts to the heart of the matter. There is no, "yes, but" allowed. Wrong is wrong. Right is right.

Luther pulled no punches when he categorically stated, "That . . . upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god" (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 538). That's the first commandment. You either worship the Lord your God and he is most important to you, or you are an idolator. If money is



more important to you than God, then money is your idol. There is no middle ground.

The rest of the Ten Commandments are not tolerant of our lives of sin. Say the name of Jesus flippantly and you are sinning. Despise God's Word by not gladly hearing it and you sin. Disrespecting your mom and dad is not mimicking the Simpsons, it is sin. Abortion and hatred are both sins. Revenge is sin. Having an affair online is sin. Feasting your eyes on sexy pictures or movies is sin. Wanting everything in the ad flyers or online sidebars even though you don't have the money is sin. Bad-mouthing your boss in the breakroom is sin. It's not just sin if we act on it; it's sin already in our hearts. That's not toleration. It's truth. There are standards. They're called God's commands, and they are not negotiable.

### GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

But neither is his gospel. That's the other teaching which God's Word speaks to us. Luther knew it better than anyone, because Luther had deep anguish over his sin. He knew that God didn't tolerate his sin. He feared God. He trembled at the intolerance of God's law. It is perfect and unbending. That's why Luther found the gospel so sweet. The gospel is complete and final. The gospel simply states: "Don't be afraid!" Why shouldn't we be afraid of the intolerant law? Because the law finds its end in Christ and his cross. The law is destroyed by the conquering cry, "It is finished!" The law's threats and curses are gagged by the Easter morning declaration: "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said" (Matthew 28:6).

God didn't tolerate our sin. He paid its price for us. He became the damned in our place. There is no more wonderful truth. My worth is not found by convincing myself I am not as bad as I know I am. It is found in knowing that Jesus loves me as I am. He gave me new worth—worth in God's eyes through his precious blood. That's the uncompromising truth God's Word and Luther still speak today.

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*Joel Petermann, president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan, is a member at St. Paul, Saginaw.*

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this is the seventh article in a 12-part series on our Lutheran heritage.

# LUTHER

## *still speaks*

Luther had much to say about the proper use of the law and the gospel. In a sermon on Galatians 3:23,24 he proclaimed, "To be sure, both are God's Word: the Law, or the Ten Commandments, and the Gospel; the latter first given by God in Paradise, the former on Mount Sinai. But everything depends on the proper differentiation of these two messages and on not mixing them together; otherwise one will know and retain the proper understanding of neither the one nor the other." (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 2, #2276)

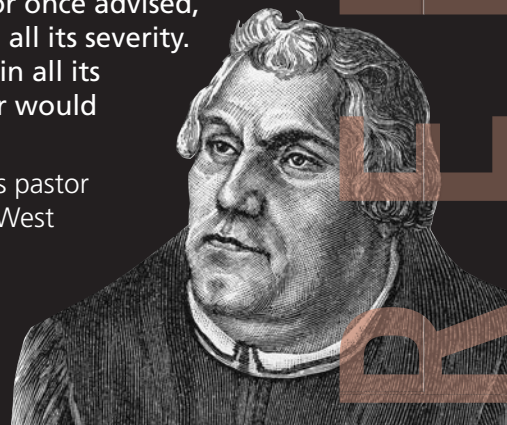
Both law and gospel are God's Word. Both need to be heard and absorbed by the sinner. In his law God tells us what he wants us to do or not to do. He also shows plainly that we have failed and deserve eternal punishment. In his gospel he tells us how his Son has paid our punishment and fulfilled God's demands. We might say the law is God's strong left arm that shoves the sinner away as unworthy. The gospel is his gentle right arm that draws the sinner close and clothes him with Christ's righteousness.

When the law is soft-pedaled, the need for the gospel is diminished. Anemic preaching of the law seduces us to careless contentment about our spiritual condition instead of showing us our desperate need for salvation.

When the gospel is thinned out, it leads to uncertainty about our salvation and leaves us with an unsettling question, "Have I done enough?"

A veteran professor once advised, "Preach the law in all its severity. Preach the gospel in all its sweetness." Luther would agree!

Richard Lauersdorf is pastor at Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wisconsin.



## After a couple rejects religion, two postcards serve as their call to Christ.

Gabriella Moline

Preparing for retirement, Joanne, also known as Joni, and Bob Gruber moved to Madison, Alabama. After settling into their new home, they received a postcard from Lamb of God Lutheran Church inviting them to come to worship. The Grubers agreed that they didn't need to waste their Sundays by going to church, but Joni didn't toss the card. Instead, the card sat on her desk for nearly a year. Finally, when tidying up a bit, Joni threw it away.

But the day after Joni threw it away, a new card appeared in the mail. It seemed to the Grubers like a good time to change directions. Because of that card, Joni and her husband started on a new path of faith.

### NO NEED FOR ORGANIZED RELIGION

Joni was raised in a devout Catholic household, attending Catholic school in Wausau, Wisconsin. In high school, she told her parents that she didn't want to attend Catholic school anymore, because she didn't believe in

the Catholic religion. To Joni, there were fundamental things wrong in the church; the leaders allowed bad things to happen without making corrections. After a little discussion, her parents allowed her to go to the public high school. "If I didn't believe in the Catholic religion, they didn't see the point in spending the money for it," Joni says.

In 1966, Joni married her husband, Bob, at a Lutheran church in Chicago. Although they were married in a church, both already had made the decision not to join a church or attend worship. Joni and Bob agreed that they didn't believe in religion. They thought that religion caused the major wars and turmoil in the world. "Religion seemed to be disappointing to us," Joni says. "Religion, as we knew it, was not as important as they were trying to say that it was." Their lives continued without Catholicism, Lutheranism, or any other faith. Although they still prayed to God and trusted in him, they believed that religion was something human-made and it was used to suit the needs of humans. Their lives seemed to be fine without organized religion.

### NEW CONNECTIONS

It wasn't until after Joni and Bob received the second postcard from

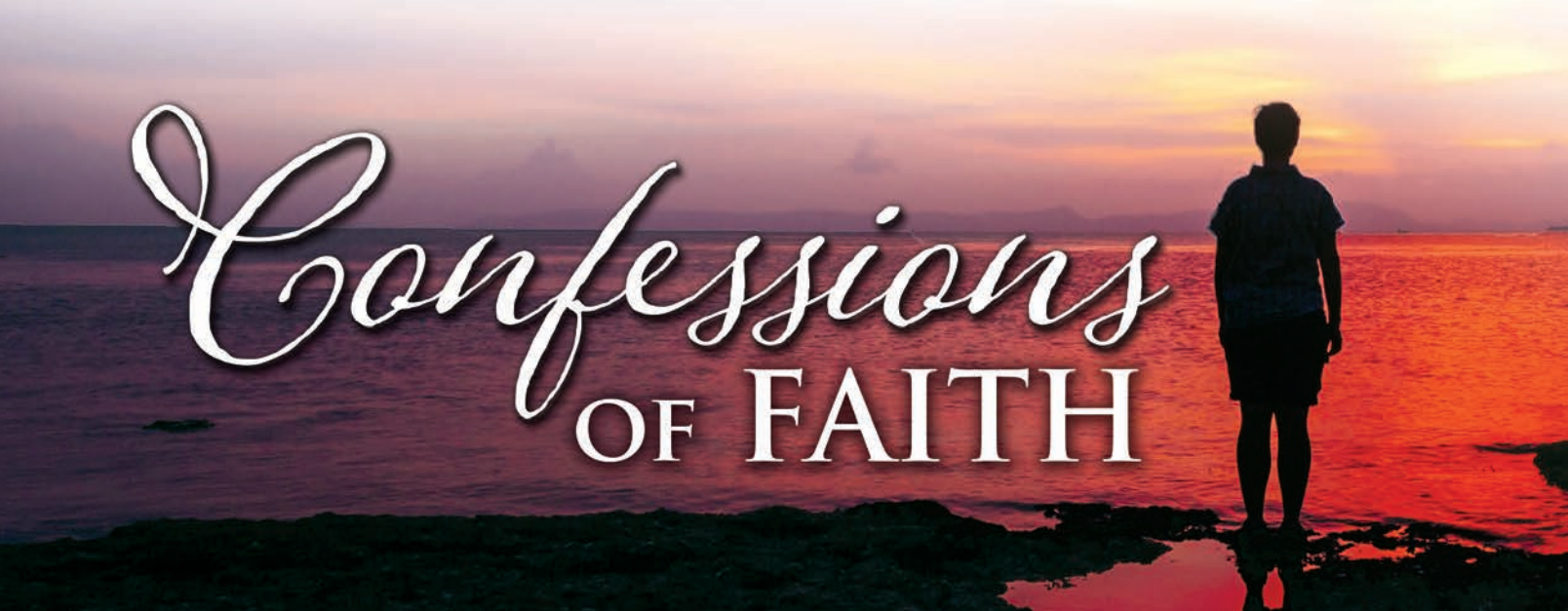
Lamb of God that they changed their minds about religion. They discussed the idea of going to church and decided it wouldn't hurt to attend just one Sunday.

When they arrived at Lamb of God for the first time, their experience was a lot different than they both expected. "There were greeters at the door, and they were very nice," Joni recalls. "Everybody was very interested in talking with us, which was very welcoming."

After that day, Joni and Bob regularly attended services at Lamb of God, and the pastor led the couple through Bible classes. "He answered every question we had, and, of course, we had lots of questions," Joni remembers. It wasn't long, though, before the pastor took a call to the state of Washington.

About the same time, Joni officially retired from her business and decided she needed to fill her time with something new. She thought that being a church secretary would be a perfect fit for her, but with the pastor leaving, she found it unlikely that an opportunity would arise. Still, she prayed to God, asking him to guide her.

Soon another pastor accepted the call to serve Lamb of God. As he began



# Confessions OF FAITH



his new work in Alabama, he asked the church to budget for a part-time administrative assistant. The church agreed to hire a secretary and put an ad in the weekly bulletin. That Sunday, as Joni sat in her pew and read the bulletin, she was stunned to see the ad for the position. It was exactly what she was praying for. She nudged Bob and showed him the ad, and he encouraged her to look into the job. She thought about it for two weeks until she finally put in her resumé for consideration. She got the job. "We were both very happy with my opportunity," Joni says.

### VALUABLE MINISTRY PARTNERS

Joni met the new pastor, John Roebke, on her first day of work, starting a friendship that continues today. She says she enjoyed working with him all the years she was there. He helped train her the first year, including teaching her about computers and how to create bulletins. Roebke says that Joni had a willingness to learn and be trained, asked important questions, and always troubleshooted problems. "She was a very valuable ministry partner," he says. "God certainly got the right person in the right place at the right time."

The job came with some unexpected important benefits. Joni learned new

information about the Bible. One of her favorite parts of the job was finding Bible passages and information to incorporate into the church bulletin. She found ways to integrate the Bible into her daily activities. "I got the best part of the deal because not only did I come to church but I got to see my friends, and I learned more about my religion than I probably would've learned otherwise," Joni says.

Her pastor became much more than just a boss to Joni. He also provided the support of a friend. When Bob was diagnosed with a brain tumor, Roebke became the couple's spiritual shepherd and offered them counsel. Trouble and trial drove them both to the promises of God. From those promises, their faith grew stronger. Roebke remembers, "That is definitely what I saw with Joni. I've really seen her faith mature." When Bob passed away, Roebke answered Joni's call at two in the morning, offering words of encouragement that her husband was with his Savior.

Joni worked at Lamb of God for several years, even after she had a stroke. As her mind was healing, Roebke was there, patiently helping Joni relearn certain tasks. "I give her credit because she didn't quit. She kept it up," he says. She eventually started a card playing group to help with her mem-



Joni Gruber

ory. That also had some unexpected benefits—it grew into a strong fellowship group.

Joni retired from her church work a year ago but still maintains her church relationships and volunteers when she can. She hopes that her story inspires others to keep their hearts open. "Keep yourself open to different things in life because you never know when the best is going to come," Joni says.

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*Gabriella Moline is a member at Zion, Crete, Illinois.*



**heart to heart**  
parent conversations

Heart to heart seeks to be a place where parents can share their experiences and support one another. This month's column tackles the topic of parenting guilt that is so pervasive in our society.

What are the things you regret as a parent? We all have those things, don't we? What pops into your head immediately when this topic comes up? No doubt, some regrets are serious. Others are more lighthearted. They all have one thing in common, though, and our authors this month do a beautiful job reminding us of it. Read on, fellow parents, and bask in your Savior's forgiveness.

*Nicole Balza*

**Join the conversation!**

Visit [wels.net/forwardinchrist](http://wels.net/forwardinchrist) and look for the *Heart to heart* link.

## HOW CAN WE MOVE PAST OUR PARENTING MISTAKES?

**We live in a society** that reviews and re-evaluates just about everything on a regular basis. It feels natural to have that same critical mindset about our parenting. When we reflect on words we have said or things we have done, it's easy to feel that we could have said or done something better. We can have lingering feelings of regret and guilt, which might even be intense.

**The reality of living as a flawed believer in a sinful world means that you're not going to be a perfect parent.** Sometimes you're going to be a bad example for your children. You will do what you shouldn't do, and you will fail to do something you should. You might do the wrong thing for the right reason. And there might even be times when, no matter how hard you try, you'll be stuck between two bad choices—both of which are going to hurt at least one of your children in some way.

Logically, we realize that we don't fail our children all the

**It was a long day** at work. I was exhausted. When I finally returned home, I stopped by the refrigerator for a glass of milk. I opened the door, grabbed the milk container—empty! There was another full gallon right next to it, but who puts an empty milk container back in the refrigerator?

**Aren't there certain things or certain times when seemingly little things just get you frustrated?** That's what happened to me.

I could have tossed the container in the recycling and moved on—but not that day. Nope. It was time to find the one responsible, and I had an immediate suspect. My wife wouldn't do it, and my daughter, Kayla, doesn't drink milk. That left one person—my son, and it wasn't the first time Josh was caught doing this. It was time to confront.

Here's how that conversation went.

Me: "Josh, why would you leave an empty milk container in the fridge?"

Josh: "I didn't!"

Me: "Mom and Kayla wouldn't do it, so you're telling me

**On a hot** July day in 1994, my husband and I walked out of the hospital with our firstborn, bound for home as a new family of three. At the car, we struggled to wrestle our tiny, slumpy newborn into a gigantic car seat. At the ripe old age of 24, my husband and I were practically still children ourselves. What did we know about parenting? Even 23 years later, thinking about our lack of preparedness makes me feel a little panicky and sweaty.

We train for so many things in life. We endlessly practice. We gain valuable on-the-job experience. We earn degrees. But for parenting, one of the most important jobs in the world? No experience necessary. And like all rookies, we make mistakes—loads and loads of them.

Many times since that July day, I have hung my head in shame and cried guilty tears for all the parenting mistakes I have made, for all the times I have yelled or lost my temper or done the polar opposite of what God



time. The vast majority of our kids are fed regularly, are wearing (reasonably clean) clothes, and have a roof over their heads. The basics are covered. But if we're honest, we probably don't have to think too hard to come up with something we've done to our child that brings a feeling of guilt. What can we do to assuage our feelings of guilt and regret?

**First, know without a doubt that your sins have been forgiven.** As children of God, we are blameless in his eyes through Christ. Because of God's grace towards us, we also can apologize to our children for how we have hurt them. It's a powerful parenting lesson for our children when we demonstrate repentance and forgiveness in action.

Despite the forgiveness we have, consequences of our sin may remain. Guilty feelings can linger. When we remember what we did, we may feel that we can't forgive ourselves. But if God can unconditionally forgive us, then we also are free to forgive ourselves. In fact, God wants us to forgive ourselves! He doesn't want us to live with feelings of shame and regret.

someone else came into our house, drank all our milk, and put the empty container back in the fridge?"

Josh: "It wasn't me. Why do you always think I do things like that?"

You can imagine how the rest of that conversation went . . . until Kayla (overhearing parts of the conversation) yelled from the basement, "Don't throw away the empty milk container in the fridge; it's for school. We are building a raft for science class. I have to wash it out yet."

At that moment, I felt like finding that raft and sailing far, far away. Oh, yes, another example of *Great Moments in Parenting* by Dan Nommensen.

You might think I'm being facetious by calling this a great moment in parenting, but it really was. In that short exchange with my son, I could probably count a dozen ways I screwed up and offended Josh and crossed the line for what God expects of a parent. Now remember Romans 5:20: "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more." This truly was a great moment in parenting because I am forgiven by grace through the sacrifice of Jesus.

**Praise God that my sins as a parent are not held against me.** My joyful response to God's grace was to tell Josh I screwed

wants me to do. In contrast, I can't ever recall thinking, "Wow. My kids are *so lucky* to have me as a mom. I really knocked it out of the park today." Oh, paralyzing guilt! How do we get past it?

**Here are a few things we parents can remember:**

- It was in God's good plan to give our children to us. Our family was planned by him.
- Since God created our families, he also loves us with an eternal love. He equips us as parents and promises to strengthen us, bless us, and help us (Isaiah 41:10).
- For those parenting mistakes we've made—and there are many because we are sinful—we need to ask for God's forgiveness. And through his sweet, sweet grace, he does forgive us (Ephesians 1:7). If he died on the cross to forgive all the sins of everyone of all time, why would our shortcomings as parents be the exception?

**But what can we do about our lingering regret, especially if our sin caused lasting consequences for our child?** Romans 8:28 says, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him." God promises to use the broken pieces of our lives to create something beautiful that glorifies him. God will not abandon us, even when nothing we've done has turned out as we'd hoped or expected.

God loves our children more perfectly than we ever can. We are his children, and our children are his children too. Our heavenly Father is the perfect parent who promises to love us, care for us, and work everything that we do (or fail to do) in our lives for the good of all his children.

Relax in that knowledge, fellow parents. God has it all under control.

*Emily Gresens Strey and her husband, Johnold, have four children ranging in age from 2 to 13.*



up and that I was sorry. This moment in parenting had the potential of creating a rift in our relationship, but it ended up presenting itself as an opportunity for greatness as I expressed my need for forgiveness and Josh extended that forgiveness to me.

Parents, do we have moments where we make mistakes that impact our children negatively? Maybe you've had more than a few? I know I have. The temptation is not to see these times as moments of grace but rather allow these experiences to build resentment and anger for both parent and child.

Does our sinful parental pride lead us to fall into the trap of thinking we are always right? If so, we are missing opportunities to see and show God's grace and forgiveness.

But fear not because it's never too late! God's unconditional love and forgiveness never end. In the joy of knowing that by God's grace we are forgiven and part of his family, watch for your great moments in parenting with your children.

*Dan Nommensen and his wife, Kelly, have a teenage daughter and a pre-teen son.*



- Let's also cut ourselves a little slack and remember that good kids sometimes do bad things (Romans 3:23)—even though a) they know better, b) that's not how we raised them, and c) we've done our best to teach them what God's Word says about pretty much everything.

**Especially as our kids get older and make their own choices, we need to let go of our guilt.** Also, remember the times that we've prayed with and for our children, loved them fiercely and unconditionally, taught them about their Savior, and battled to teach them life lessons about being a Christian light in this dark world. Don't forget those times.

Lord, forgive us for the times we've failed as parents. Lord, thank you for the times we haven't!

*Ann Jahns and her husband, Thad, have three sons and a recently emptied nest.*



# Summer on campus

Work continues in campus ministries, even when college students are home for the summer.

James D. Roecker

The summer months in Stevens Point are vastly different from the months when UW–Stevens Point is in session. That makes sense. Ministry to college students does not happen as much without college students around. Some students do stick around Stevens Point for the summer, but most head home. It happens every summer. It can be expected.

**For a campus pastor, the beginning of summer brings a good deal of reflection.** To help evaluate the prior year, I rely on the students. At our last Bible study of the school year, I hand out a sheet with three columns on it. The columns are: “What you liked,” “What you did not like,” and “What could be better.” The student comments come in handy for setting up goals and plans for the upcoming year of campus ministry. The collegians also suggest specific Bible studies throughout the academic year.

I do my best to implement elements of those suggestions into future Bible studies. Rather than decreeing what I think UW–Stevens Point campus ministry should be or should look like, I defer to our group of faithful collegian officers to make it what they want it to be. Although there may be different officers for each school year, they always seem to set an example for others in our group. A passage from 1 Timothy conveys this remarkably. “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (4:12).

This past year Divine Word in Plover started another ministry location and student center in Stevens Point. The congregation called it The Word. A dedicated student space at The Word allowed WELS collegians to invite their friends to do laundry, study, or just hang out away from campus. Invitations extended to friends also led to our Thursday night Bible study group growing from an average of 15 students to an average of nearly 30! Future plans already are being discussed in the event our gracious God sees fit to double this group of students in the coming year.

**This is not to say that challenges and obstacles are non-existent.** The devil still tempts, and our sinful nature does not simply disappear. The father of lies wants nothing more than for collegians—for all of us—to believe that we do not need God and his Word. Too often the devil succeeds and separates collegians from fellowship opportunities with other collegian believers. Our faith connection to Christ brought about by the Holy Spirit’s work in our hearts can

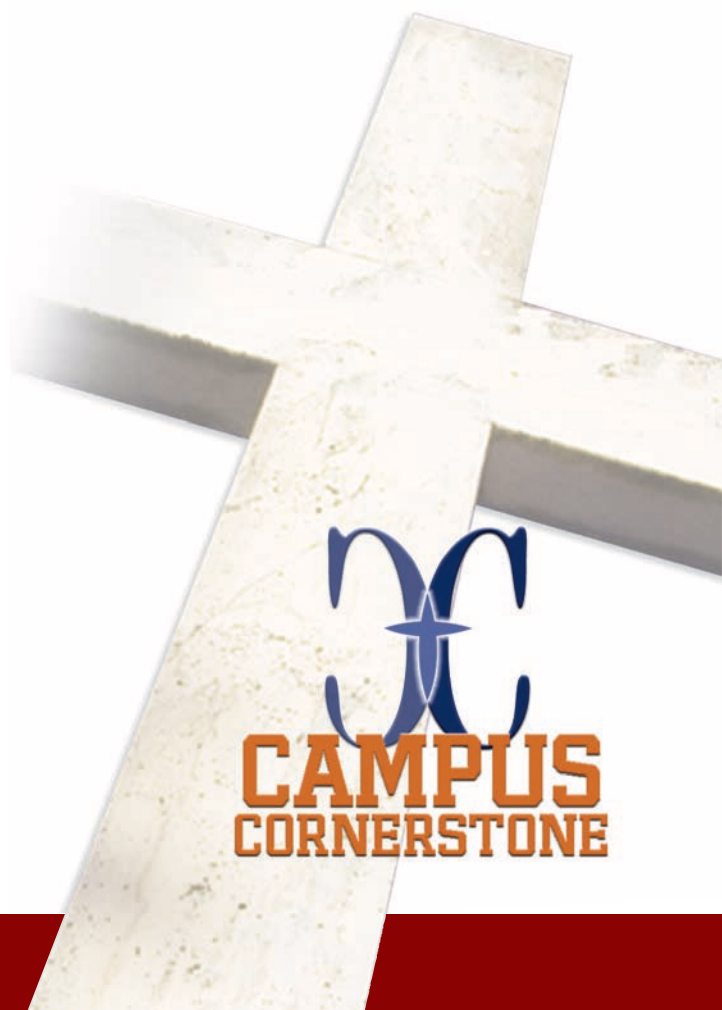
be weakened or even lost over time if that connection is not continually being strengthened through the Word.

Summer months allow me to prepare for the upcoming semester of campus ministry. Bible studies get planned and created. Letters are written to collegians and their parents. All of this is sent to every collegian’s home address we have on file. It is a reminder of the opportunities they have while attending UW–Stevens Point to continually feed on the Word and to continually strengthen their faith connection to Christ.

Students come and go until they graduate or transfer. Faces and names may change, but our God never does. The foundation of our faith, which is found in Christ, binds us together until we are reunited to learn and grow in him.

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





## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

**Baerbock, Ronald**, to Bethel, Arcadia, Wis.  
**Berg, Michael**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Braun, Mark E.**, to retirement  
**Burgess, Emile J.**, to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Ewerdt, Kenneth A.**, to St. Paul, Ixonia, Wis.  
**Found, Charles**, to retirement  
**Goldbeck, Beck H.**, to Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Gurgel, Karl R.**, to St. Matthew, Winona, Minn.  
**Heitsch, Jeffrey**, to Nigeria and Cameroon  
**Jahnke, Gene E.**, to retirement  
**Krentz, Michael C.**, to Faith, West Newton, Penn.  
**Krueger, Robert**, to retirement  
**Papenfuss, Charles W.**, to retirement  
**Schmidt, Andrew**, to Bethany Lutheran College (ELS), Mankato, Minn.  
**Schmidt, Jason L.**, to Shepherd of the Hills, Tucson, Ariz.  
**Schmitz Jr., Reuben W.**, to retirement  
**Schweppe, Paul E.**, to retirement  
**Trapp, Thomas H.**, to retirement

### Teachers

**Agenten, Gloria R.**, to retirement  
**Arndt, Joan**, to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.  
**Bovee, Jennifer**, to St. Paul's, Saginaw, Mich.  
**Buch, Laura A.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Buege, Nicole**, to St. John, Dakota, Minn.  
**Buehner, Jill L.**, to retirement  
**Christensen, Jared D.**, to St. Paul, Saint James, Minn.  
**Collyard, Leonard**, to retirement  
**Cortright, Patrick C.**, to Sienna Lutheran Academy, Missouri City, Texas  
**Currah, Katherine**, to Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev.  
**Dretske, Philip J.**, to Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.  
**Duve, Eric**, to St. Paul, Bangor, Wis.  
**Enter, Diane**, to retirement  
**Everhart, Emily A.**, to Eastside, Madison, Wis.  
**Feld, Rachel M.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Georgson, Kathy L.**, to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.  
**Glodowski, Emily**, to Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla.  
**Glodowski, Theodore**, to First, Elkhorn, Wis.  
**Grunwald, James R.**, to ALHS Online  
**Heldman, Kelly**, to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.  
**Heyn, Molly M.**, to Emmanuel, Tempe, Ariz.

**Hill, Stefanie L.**, to Brooklyn Bridge Preschool, Brooklyn Park, Minn.  
**Hoffmann, Allison M.**, to Bethany Luther Preschool, Saginaw, Mich.  
**Hough, Suzanne M.**, to Ascension, Sarasota, Fla.  
**Hulse, Erin M.**, to St. Croix Lutheran Grades 6-12, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
**Kelm, Paul H.**, to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.  
**Krieger, Julie A.**, to St. Paul, Livonia, Mich.  
**Leyrer, Tamara**, to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Livingston, Angela**, to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Lusky, Rebecca E.**, to retirement  
**Martin, Erika**, to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.  
**Mellgren, Kelly**, to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.  
**Mildebrandt, Kathleen E.**, to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.  
**Mildebrandt, Paul A.**, to St. Paul, Cannon Falls, Minn.  
**Most, Michelle M.**, to St. Martin's, Wauertown, S.D.  
**Nemitz, Sharon**, to retirement  
**Pufahl, Bonnie L.**, to retirement  
**Roecker, Roberta**, to St. Peter's, Fond du Lac, Wis.  
**Ross, Michael**, to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.  
**Roth, Ryan N.**, to Zion, Toledo, Ohio  
**Rouse, Lisa**, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Russow, Kay**, to retirement  
**Schmeling, Ryan**, to Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash.  
**Schopper, Jennifer L.**, to Bethlehem, Menomonee Falls, Wis.  
**Schroeder, Alissa L.**, to St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.  
**Schultz, Nancy**, to retirement  
**Scoggins, Amber**, to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Shambeau, Marc A.**, to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Siverly, Alyssa J.**, to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, Calif.  
**Weinrich, Tyler**, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.  
**Wendland, Ruth L.**, to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.  
**Wieting, Melissa M.**, to Trinity, Minocqua, Wis.  
**Wieting, Michael A.**, to Trinity, Minocqua, Wis.  
**Zimmerman, Suzanne**, to Jesus Loves Me Learning Center, North Mankato, Minn.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Two Rivers, Wis.**—St. John—Two Creeks (150). July 23.

**Waterloo, Wis.**—St. John (150). July 23. Confirmation celebration, 9 A.M. office@stjohnwaterloo.org.

**Rapid City, S.D.**—St. Paul (75). Aug. 12. Picnic celebration, 11:30 A.M. Aug. 13. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; catered meal, noon; worship, 4 P.M.; meal, 5:30 P.M. RSVP requested. Judy, dkarau@goldenwest.net.

**La Crescent, Minn.**—First (75). Aug. 27. Worship, 9 A.M.; catered outdoor meal to follow. Website, www.keepchristfirst.com.

## COMING EVENTS

**Return to Wittenberg conference**—July 18–21. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Theme: "Liberated." Website, returntowittenberg.org.

**WELS family campout**—Aug. 4–6. Silent Valley Club, Banning, Calif. Host, King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif. Steve, s\_r\_bruce@roadrunner.com, 714-728-6895.

**Christian Educators for Special Education summer conference**—Aug. 8. Country Springs Conference Center, Waukesha, Wis. Website, cesewels.org.

**WELS night at Miller Park**—Aug. 10. Miller Park, Milwaukee, Wis. Brewers vs. Twins. Order tickets at reduced rates at brewers.com/wels.

**Retirement service**—Aug. 27. St. James, Milwaukee, Wis. For Pastor Peter Kassulke. Worship, 9 A.M.; dinner to follow. RVSP by July 30. office@saintjames-mke.org.

**WELS North Atlantic District Labor Day retreat**—Sept. 2–4. Camp Danbee, Peru, Mass. Website, welslabordayretreat.org/.

**Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention**—Oct. 9–12. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Website, wels.net/events.

## NAMES WANTED

**Bella Vista, Arkansas**—people living in Northwest Arkansas. Neil Hansen, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, 479-876-2155; neil.hansen@cox.net. Website, beautiful-saviorwels.org.

**Gulf Shores, Foley, Orange Beach, Bon Secour, Fairhope, Ala.**—WELS/ELS members, snowbirds, short-term vacationers, and local residents looking for winter 2018 worship. Evan Dobberfuhl, tpcevan@gmail.com, 715-573-0808.

## JOB OPPORTUNITY

**Costa Maya Ministries**—accepting applications for a full-time staff person as education and community programs director. Website, costamayaministries.com.

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

# Moments with MISSIONARIES

## FALCON, COLORADO

Steven H. Pahl



COLORADO

Before our church's grand opening in October 2016, we held three "preview" services to get used to setting up our equipment and chairs in the school we were renting for worship. It was the week of our last "preview" worship service when God gave us an opportunity to do what I call "granola bar evangelism."

That day, shortly after everyone had gone into the gym for worship, one of my daughters went into the hallway and saw two girls grab some granola bars from our hospitality area and run out the door. My daughter told my wife, Jill, who followed them out. The girls were getting on their bikes, but one had a problem with her bike. Instead of accusing them of stealing, Jill offered to help. She found a granola bar had fallen into the gears of the girl's bike in her attempt to make a "dine and dash" getaway. The object of her sin had literally derailed her! Jill helped her fix her bike and told the girls that they didn't need to run off. They were welcome to come in for church anytime. The girls said, "Okay," and took off on their bikes.



Steven Pahl presenting a children's message during the grand opening service at Foundation, Falcon, Colo. He says that the "granola bar" kids continue to bike, scooter, and walk to the school for worship, and they regularly bring friends.

Eight minutes later, those same girls and three other kids walked into the middle of our service! They sat down, and during the next hymn I went and talked to them. I asked if they wanted to go to FoundationKIDS (our Sunday school), which was about to start during the sermon. They said they didn't know what Sunday school was . . . they had never gone to a church in their lives. They went to FoundationKIDS and stayed for the rest of the service, adding their loud "Amen!" at the end of the Lord's Prayer.

After worship, all five kids (ages 6-13) asked to help with our door hangers that day promoting our grand opening. I told them they had to ask their parents if they could go, expecting their parents would be skeptical and likely say no. In minutes, they were back with their parents' permission! They were awesome helpers, running from house to house and even taking invitations home for their parents and friends.

Those same five kids came back two weeks later for our grand opening (without their parents). Since then, they have consistently come back to worship with us, even asking if they could come to our Bible Basics class for new members! Better still, they regularly bring friends to worship! They wear the T-shirt from our grand opening to school and are always eager to shout, "Hey, Pastor Steve!" when they see me.

That Sunday, with much of our attention and energy focused on preparing for the grand opening, God gave us a great reminder of why we are here and doing what we are doing. He also reminded us that we never know whom he will bring into our lives and how he can use what seem like "chance" encounters—hungry kids coming to play on the school playground during church—to give us opportunities to witness.

*Steven Pahl serves as a home missionary at Foundation, Falcon, Colorado. Foundation had 95 people—50 of them local prospects—at its Easter service this year.*



# WELS news briefs

## WORLD MISSIONS 414-256-3234; bwm@wels.net

On May 5, 150 family, friends, and well-wishers braved a 105-degree day to celebrate the **graduation of 16 men from Christ Evangelical Lutheran Ministries'** (CELM) seminary in Guntur, India. Some graduates and worshipers traveled more than 36 hours (by train, bus, and auto-rickshaw) to attend. Now that the graduates have completed their seven years of study, they will return to their homes to serve congregations that they began before or during their training. This graduation brings the total number of CELM



pastors and seminary graduates to 56. Another 19 students will soon begin their second year of the seminary program. Two friendly counselors serve this field.

## MINISTERIAL EDUCATION 414-256-3236; bme@wels.net

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., hosted its **annual MLC Day** on May 3. MLC Day is an online, social media-driven event for WELS members to show their support for the ministerial training college and its students who are entering the ministry as pastors, teachers, missionaries, or staff ministers. Sixty-five congregations, schools, and individuals submitted prayers, videos, and photos, and more than \$95,000 was given to support the Congregational Partner Grant Program. Check out the videos and photos at [mlcday.com](http://mlcday.com).



Forty-six staff ministers and staff ministry students attended the **WELS Staff Ministry Conference** in April at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Under the theme "Here We Stand," this conference explored various contemporary spiritual issues on the foundation of God and his Word. This conference also worked to establish mentors for new staff ministers. This annual continuing education event for staff ministers provides opportunities for learning, worship, and fellowship. "The conference is so important because it brings us all together to share our experiences, learn from one another, help one another through the struggles of ministry, and rejoice with one another in the good times," says Levi Nagel, a staff minister at St. John's, Milwaukee, Wis. The next Staff Ministry Conference will be held April 26–28, 2018, in Boise, Idaho.

## CAMPUS MINISTRY 414-256-3279; cm@wels.net

Sixty campus ministry pastors, committee members, and lay members met at a **Campus Ministry Conference** in Waukesha, Wis., in May to share ideas for campus work, provide support and encouragement, and discuss new ministries. Topics included mentoring young people, exploring campus ministry activity ideas, and learning how to write Bible studies for college students. Tom Trapp, who has served the campus ministry at the University of Wisconsin–Madison since 1979 and is retiring this year, also shared tips and methods for successful campus ministry work. "It's cool to think outside my own experience and hear what other guys are doing in their campus ministries," says Brian Wrobel, pastor at Zion, Gainesville, Fla., and campus pastor for the University of Florida in Gainesville. To learn more about campus ministry, find a campus pastor, or sign up for free spiritual materials, visit [wels.net/campus-ministry](http://wels.net/campus-ministry).

## Updated tool to find WELS churches

The WELS Locator tool has received a makeover. The trusted online tool that helps WELS members find churches when they travel the country or recommend churches to friends and acquaintances has new and updated functions.

The previous WELS Locator application was rewritten and enveloped into the existing WELS Online Yearbook. Now, with the Locator integrated into the online Yearbook, you can find a church or school by its proximity to the criteria you enter. For example, you can enter an address, city, state, or zip code and find all organizations within a radius of miles that you determine.

Also available within the Locator is a function to filter your search results by special criteria including church, preschool, elementary school, high school, counseling center, and care facility. Other filters—like signed services, hearing loop, personal sound equipment, livestreaming, and languages offered—relate specifically to worship.

Besides having enhanced Locator functionality, the online Yearbook gives you access to called workers' profiles and contact information. You can search by a called worker's name, or you can input a specific city and receive a list of called workers in the area. Clicking on a called worker's name will reveal a profile that shows contact information, year graduated, and what organization he or she works for.

The Yearbook/Locator can be found on the synod's website, [wels.net](http://wels.net), by clicking on "Find a Church/School" (formerly "WELS Locator") at the top of the page. This will take you directly to the Organization tab of the Yearbook app. You also can visit the Yearbook site directly at [yearbook.wels.net](http://yearbook.wels.net), or the Locator portion at [locator.wels.net](http://locator.wels.net). The Yearbook/Locator is also available on the WELS mobile app. Download WELS Mobile at [m.wels.net](http://m.wels.net).





## WELS' 64th biennial convention is being held at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., July 31–Aug. 3, under the theme "Our Great Heritage."

The biennial synod convention provides the opportunity for grassroots input and decision-making when it comes to the work that we do together as a synod. Delegates—including pastors, male teachers, male staff ministers, and laymen—representing congregations across the synod come together to adopt a ministry financial plan (or budget), which describes in detail how we will use the financial resources God provides to carry out his work. The convention helps set the priorities and charts the direction of the synod's areas of ministry in the coming years.

## What's happening at this year's synod convention?

**Worship services:** The convention's opening worship service takes place on Mon., July 31, at 6:30 P.M. CST. The closing worship service will take place on Thurs., Aug. 3, when the convention business concludes.



The closing worship service will take place in the Luther Preparatory School Chapel, which was recently remodeled as part of the school's 150th anniversary.

**Devotions:** Each morning before the convention business begins, a pastor delegate will present a devotion.

**Missionary presentations:** Four world missionaries are attending this year's synod convention. These missionaries will present about the mis-

sion fields that they serve on Tuesday evening from 7-8:30 P.M. CST.

**Area of ministry presentations:** Area of ministry administrators and committee chairmen will share ministry updates and tell delegates about their areas' blessings and opportunities.

**Essay:** John Brenner, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, will present an essay titled *God's Word is Our Great Heritage* on Tuesday afternoon.

**Elections:** Delegates will elect the synod's first vice president and secretary as well as board members for synod commissions, boards, and committees. Interested in the candidates? Visit [wels.net/2017synodconvention](http://wels.net/2017synodconvention) to view ballots and candidate biographies.



The synod's current officers (from left): Robert Pasbrig, secretary; James Huebner, first vice president; Mark Schroeder, president; and Joel Voss, second vice president.

**Declarations of fellowship:** The WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations is recommending that WELS declare fellowship with three foreign church bodies—A **Synod name removed for security concerns**, the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, and the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) in Hong Kong. Representatives from each of these church bodies are attending the convention and will greet delegates



Rev. Dr. Kebede Yigezu (right), the founder and president of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, will be attending the synod convention, where WELS will discuss declaring fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia and two other church bodies.

**Greetings from sister church bodies:** Delegates will get to hear from representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany.

**Floor committee meetings and resolutions:** The work of the convention takes place as delegates meet with their assigned floor committees to consider the reports that pertain to their area of ministry. Floor committees write resolutions on the topics



that they feel should be addressed and present their resolutions to all the delegates. Delegates can then discuss and vote on these convention resolutions, helping set the stage for work that will take place over the next biennium.

**95 Theses for the 21st Century presentation:** The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) commissioned the writing of a new set of 95 Theses for the 21st Century. With input from Lutheran church bodies around the world, these theses are first being presented at the CELC convention in July. Prof. Thomas Nass, who helped coordinate this project, will present a compilation of these 95 Theses at the synod convention.



**Reformation 500 celebration:** With the theme “Our Great Heritage,” convention organizers have focused many aspects of the convention around the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, including a special viewing of the film, *A Return to Grace: Luther’s Life and Legacy*.



To view a full agenda of the convention, visit [wels.net/2017synodconvention](http://wels.net/2017synodconvention). Most of the convention will be streamed live online at [wels.net/2017synodconvention](http://wels.net/2017synodconvention).

## What does the proposed ministry financial plan look like?

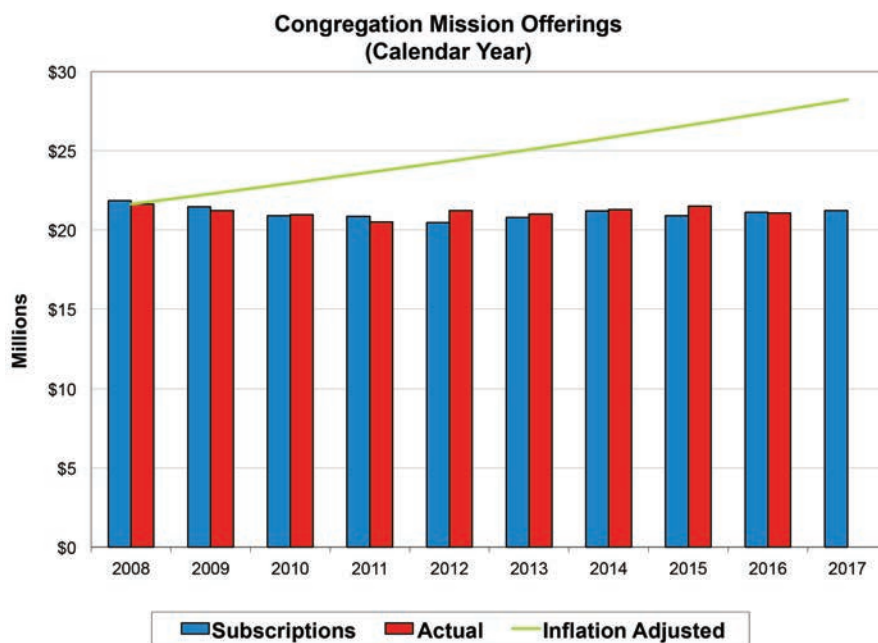
Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) are the backbone of the synod’s ministry financial plan but have been flat for about 10 years (see graph).

As Todd Poppe, chief financial officer of WELS, explains, “The proposed ministry financial plan keeps WELS on solid financial ground, but projected near-flat Congregation Mission Offerings when costs are increasing 3.5 percent could challenge WELS’ ability to maintain ministries beyond the 2017–19 biennium.”

In order to maintain existing ministry with these rising costs and flat revenue, the Synodical Council authorized a greater use of reserves in the ministry financial plan being presented for the upcoming biennium. Of course, as these reserves are drawn down, funding future ministry becomes more difficult unless offerings increase.

“Congregational support has been the bedrock and foundation of our work together,” says Mark Schroeder, president of WELS. “It’s that support that has enabled us to prepare well-trained pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. It has made it possible for us to enter new world mission fields with the gospel. It has resulted in the planting of dozens of new home mission congregations in the past few years alone. As the cost of mission and ministry continues to increase—and as God continues to open new doors for the gospel—we pray that God will continue to move our members to grow in their joyful support of the work that we do together as a synod.”

For more details about the proposed ministry financial plan, read the 2017 *Book of Reports and Memorials*, which can be found at [wels.net/2017synodconvention](http://wels.net/2017synodconvention).





## What are the findings of the Compensation Review Committee?

The 2015 synod in convention approved a resolution calling for a “thorough review” of the WELS Compensation Guidelines by the Compensation Review Committee of the Synodical Council. Since the conclusion of the 2015 convention, the Compensation Review Committee has met regularly to work on preparing a set of revised compensation guidelines for the 2017 convention.

“In the early stages of the project, the committee envisioned a radical reworking of the guidelines currently in place,” explains Prof. Earle Treptow, chairman of the Compensation Review Committee. “The more we wrestled with the issues, however, the more we recognized the excellent work that had been done in putting together the current compensation guidelines. The problem has been that calling bodies haven’t consistently applied the guidelines.”

Once the committee arrived at that realization, the focus shifted away from a complete revision toward a modification of the current guidelines.

As Treptow notes, “Much of the inconsistency in applying the guidelines stemmed from a lack of understanding. So, the Compensation Review Committee committed itself to repackaging the compensation guidelines in such a way that calling bodies would find them easier to apply. Only slight modifications were made to the current guidelines, so the financial impact on the work we do together as a synod should be minimal.”

Dennis Maurer, director of WELS Human Resources, believes that “the greatest result of this two-year project has been the emergence of a simplified tool for calling bodies

to determine a fair and equitable compensation package for their called workers. WELS Technology created a user-friendly, web-based calculator to replace the existing Excel worksheet that Human Resources provided to calling bodies working on called worker compensation. This called worker compensation calculator automates many of the tasks that previously required research and data entry on the user’s part.”

Treptow concludes by saying, “What the Compensation Review Committee desires, above all else, is that calling bodies would approach compensation matters prayerfully, thoughtfully, and carefully. We want calling bodies, through their leaders, to think about the gospel ministry being carried out in their midst. More specifically, we want them to reflect on the responsibilities entrusted to each worker, the time that is being invested in carrying out those responsibilities, and the additional education the worker has pursued. Instead of simply pulling a number from a matrix, the calling body can determine a salary based on knowledge of, and appreciation for, the important work the Lord’s servant is doing in their name.”

The synod convention floor committee assigned to review the Compensation Review Committee’s recommendations will meet, discuss the committee’s recommendations, and then present one or more resolutions to the synod convention for consideration by all the delegates.

To read the entire report of the Compensation Review Committee, visit [wels.net/2017synodconvention](http://wels.net/2017synodconvention) and download the 2017 *Book of Reports and Memorials*. To view a trial version of the called worker compensation calculator, which is currently being field-tested, visit [wels.net/cwcompalc](http://wels.net/cwcompalc).

## How can I learn more about the convention?

### PRE-CONVENTION

Visit [wels.net/2017synodconvention](http://wels.net/2017synodconvention) to see who the nominees are for election; to read the *Book of Reports and Memorials*, which includes reports from all the areas of ministry and will guide delegates in their work at the convention; and to see a list of delegates and the floor committees on which they’re serving.

### CONVENTION

Plenary meetings, missionary presentations, and the opening worship service

will be streamed live at [wels.net](http://wels.net). Other communication vehicles include:

**Video news updates**—At least two updates per day will inform WELS members about the important work and decisions being made at the convention and will feature interviews with key synod leaders and delegates.

**Social media**—WELS’ Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages will be active each day.

**News articles**—As decisions are made, articles will be posted to [wels.net](http://wels.net). Each

evening, an issue of “Together,” WELS’ e-newsletter, will be delivered to subscribers as a wrap-up of the day’s events and a look ahead to the next day.

### POST-CONVENTION

A special issue of “Together” will be sent to subscribers to summarize the actions of the entire convention. Additional convention coverage will be included in the October editions of *Forward in Christ* and *WELS Connection*.

To subscribe to “Together,” visit [wels.net/subscribe](http://wels.net/subscribe).



## District news

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

**D-M—Our Savior, Brookings, S.D.**, celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special service on June 11.

#### MINNESOTA



Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., celebrated the service anniversaries of three professors on April 30. Pictured from left are James Grunwald (40 years), David Bauer (40 years), and Mark Stein (25 years).

#### NORTH ATLANTIC



On May 21, Redemption, Watertown, N.Y., dedicated its new ministry center. Redemption is a WELS home mission served by Aaron Goetzinger (pictured). WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., provided a loan and a grant to help Redemption purchase and renovate its new worship facility.

#### SOUTH ATLANTIC



Peace, Aiken, S.C., a WELS home mission, dedicated its new church on May 21. Pictured (from left) are Charles Westra, president of the South Atlantic District, and Jonathan Bourman, home missionary at Peace. WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., supported Peace's building renovation project with a loan and a grant.

The district reporters for this month are: D-M—David Ruddat; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NA—Philip Gurgel; SA—Jonathan Kuske.

## Obituaries

### Marjorie L. Kiecker, 1935–2017

Marjorie Kiecker (née Morack) was born May 31, 1935, in Township of Horton, Wis. She died Mar. 18, 2017, in Hortonville, Wis.

She taught at St. John, Fairfax, Minn., and Bethlehem, Hortonville, Wis.

She is survived by 4 daughters, 2 sons, 19 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her husband, Roger, and one brother.

### Muriel A. Manthey, 1941–2017

Muriel Manthey was born Apr. 6, 1941, in Rhinelander, Wis. She died Mar. 30, 2017, in Appleton, Wis.

A 1971 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served Grace, Neenah, Wis., and St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

She is survived by three sisters and one brother. She is preceded in death by one sister.

### Lester Albert Ring, 1930–2017

Lester Ring was born Dec. 2, 1930, in New Ulm, Minn. He died Mar. 30, 2017, in New Ulm, Minn.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served St. John, Bay City, Mich.; Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.; and Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

He is survived by one daughter, two sons, six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his wife, June; one son; one grandchild; and one brother.

### James H. Oldfield, 1951–2017

James Oldfield was born Feb. 20, 1951, in New Ulm, Minn. He died Apr. 1, 2017, in Anchorage, Alaska.

A 1977 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Divine Peace, Renton, Wash.; Redeemer, Yakima, Wash.; and Faith, Anchorage, Alaska.

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

### Donald G. Holzhueter, 1932–2017

Donald Holzhueter was born Aug. 18, 1932, in Watertown, Wis. He died Apr. 7, 2017, in South Haven, Mich.

A 1955 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served Salem, Milwaukee, Wis.; Redemption, Milwaukee, Wis.; St. John, Westland, Mich.; and St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.

He is survived by his wife, Suzanne; two sons; and two grandchildren. He is preceded in death by two children, seven brothers, and two sisters.

# WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY GRADUATES

At the graduation service on May 19, 28 graduates received diplomas for successfully completing their seminary studies.



**Craig N. Birsching**  
Tacoma, Wash.



**Ross S. Chartrand**  
Manassas, Va.



**Samuel R. Crass**  
Watertown, Wis.



**Nixon Gregorio  
Vivar Gomez\***  
Cochancay Cañar, Ecuador



**Justin W. Heise**  
Green Bay, Wis.



**Philip M. Janisch**  
Plymouth, Minn.



**Joshua J. Jensen**  
Ixonia, Wis.



**Jacob A. Jenswold**  
Powell, Ohio



**Christopher W. Johns**  
Crete, Ill.



**Christian D. Marquardt**  
Racine, Wis.



**Eric C. Melso**  
Brookfield, Wis.



**Larry C. Neitzel**  
Grafton, Wis.



**Jardan Patrick\***  
Sahiwal, Pakistan



**Geoffrey D. Rue**  
Racine, Wis.



**Peter R. Schlicht**  
Black Creek, Wis.





**Benjamin M. Schone**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Jacob A. Schram**  
Merrill, Wis.



**Andrew J. Schrimpf**  
Goodhue, Minn.



**Nathan G. Schulte**  
La Valle, Wis.



**John M. Schwartz**  
Watertown, Wis.



**Joshua J. Shandor**  
Milwaukee, Wis.



**Justin L. Shrum**  
Clovis, Calif.



**Paul L. Spaude**  
Antigo, Wis.



**Matthew E. Stuebs**  
Appleton, Wis.



**Douglas R. Van Sice**  
Capac, Mich.



**Mark J. Voss**  
Williamston, Mich.



**Austin M. Ziche**  
Belleville, Wis.



**Luther R. Zuberbier**  
Fond du Lac, Wis.

\*A graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary through the training program under the auspices of the Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

## Assignments

At the Call Day service held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., on May 18, 33 men received new assignments (listed below). From the class of 2017, 28 students received assignments. Five candidates from previous years received new calls. Three were reassigned to their present fields of labor; three had their current call made permanent.

**Birsching, Craig N.**, to St. John, Westland, Mich.

**Chartrand, Ross S.**, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

**Crass, Isaac M.**, to associate for the South Atlantic District president, Christ Our Savior, Columbia, Tenn.

**Crass, Samuel R.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

**Groth, Brock D.**, to St. Mark's, Citrus Heights, Calif.

**Heise, Justin W.**, to St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.

**Janisch, Philip M.**, to Trinity, Brillion, Wis.

**Jensen, Joshua J.**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

**Jenswold, Jacob A.**, to Rock of Ages, Kansas City, Mo.

**Johns, Christopher W.**, to St. Matthew, Pound, Wis.

**Marggraf, Daniel P.**, to Faith, Elizabeth/Our Savior, Freeport, Ill.

**Marquardt, Christian D.**, to St. James, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Melso, Eric C.**, to new mission, Chattanooga, Tenn.

**Neitzel, Larry C.**, to St. John, Kendall/St. Matthew, Ontario, Wis.

**Patrick, Jordan**, to Joint Mission Council, Waukesha, Wis.

**Rue, Geoffrey D.**, to St. Paul, Tacoma, Wash.

**Schlicht, Peter R.**, to Eastside, Madison, Wis.

**Schone, Benjamin M.**, to Abiding Word, Houston, Texas

**Schram, Jacob A.**, to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.

**Schrimpf, Andrew J.**, to Cross of Glory, Baton Rouge, La.

**Schulte, Nathan G.**, to Latin American Mission, Latin America

**Schultz, Joshua S.**, to Mountain View, Great Falls, Mont.

**Schwartz, John M.**, to Redeemer, Pierre, S.D.

**Shandor, Joshua J.**, to King of Kings, Little Rock, Ark.

**Shrum, Justin L.**, to St. John, Riga, Mich.

**Spaude, Paul L.**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

**Stuebs, Matthew E.**, to Calvary, Abrams, Wis.

**Van Sice, Douglas R.**, to new mission, Huntersville, N.C.

**Vivar, Nixon G.**, to Christ, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Voss, Aaron M.**, to Living Water, Wind Lake, Wis.

**Voss, Mark J.**, to associate for the North Atlantic District president, Immanuel, Long Valley, N.J.

**Ziche, Austin M.**, to Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.

**Zuberbier, Luther R.**, to Deer Valley, Phoenix, Ariz.



# SALT

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# EARTH

**Acts of love and devotion can create opportunities for us to witness about the one who gives us strength—Jesus.** Steven J. Pagels

Ann wasn't just a member of my congregation. She was a woman I had come to deeply respect and admire. She had grown up in a loving Christian home, but that didn't prevent her from experiencing some significant setbacks in her life. When she was just a child, her mother suffered a stroke and from that day on, Ann became the matriarch of the family. To make a difficult situation even more so, her father died suddenly and unexpectedly when she was in high school.

Instead of complaining about her lot in life, Ann went into the workforce after graduation. She poured herself into everything she did, and in time her hard work was rewarded. Ann eventually became a business executive, and she enjoyed the perks that went along with the job.

## **BEING DEVOTED IN LOVE**

But no matter how successful Ann became, she never forgot where she came from, and she never forgot her family.

When her mother could no longer live on her own, Ann brought her to live with her in her own home. That arrangement lasted for several years until it became necessary to find a place where she could receive around-the-clock care. Even though Ann was forced to relinquish her role as her

mother's caretaker, she remained a devoted daughter and visited the nursing home after work almost every night.

You don't have to be a Christian to do what Ann did. Lots of people, including lots of people who don't believe in Jesus, take care of their aging parents. They will say, "You do it for family." But that's not why Ann did what she did. As much as Ann loved her mother, she loved her Savior even more. And it gave her great comfort to know that Jesus loved her more than anything.

A few years later Ann's mother passed away, and in a perfect world that would have finally given Ann more time for herself and her own life. But we do not live in a perfect world, and it wasn't long before Ann's husband took the place of her mother. His decline was a long and slow process, but even as he grew weaker Ann's resolve grew stronger. She remained devoted to her husband in sickness and in health until the Lord called him home.

Ann never asked me the question, so I will ask it for her. Why? Why is life so full of heartache and headaches? Why didn't God give Ann a break after her mother died? Maybe you ask similar questions. Why would God allow me to suffer or expect me to give up so much to help another person who is suffering? Why does God seem to be



asking me not just to go the extra mile but to run a full-length marathon?

The Lord may not always give us the answers we are looking for, but he does give us promises. He promises he will never leave us or forsake us. He promises he will make every situation in our lives work out for our eternal good. He promises that the challenges we face will stretch us, and, when we turn to his Word, he will strengthen our faith.

In addition to all of God's promises, the obstacles in our lives also present us with opportunities to share our faith. In fact, some of the most difficult situations give us some of the best opportunities to be salt in the world.

### BEING SALT IN THE WORLD

A story like Ann's can lead us down two very different paths. We can be inspired to follow her example, or we can become depressed because we know we will never be able to follow her example. If you are leaning toward the latter, you need to know something about Ann. As much as she loved her family and as much as she was devoted to others, Ann wasn't perfect. There were times when she became frustrated. There were days when she was tempted to give up. Instead of being some kind of superwoman, Ann was a sinful human being who sought refuge in the loving arms of her Savior.

Jesus gives rest to weary souls. Jesus assures sinners burdened by guilt that they are forgiven. Jesus gives us the peace we could never go out and get on our own. And by his perfect life, our Lord also gives us a perfect example to follow. No one was more devoted to others than Jesus. Nobody ever put the needs of others before their own like Jesus. And at no time was that selfless love on greater display than on Good Friday.

The Lord of heaven and earth had been sentenced to death. Even though he was innocent, even though he could have called down angels to rescue him at any moment, Jesus willingly went the way of the cross. And even though he was suffering in ways that we can't

even imagine, he remained focused on the needs of others. He asked his Father to forgive his enemies. He assured a dying criminal that they would be reunited in heaven. He wanted to make sure that his mother would be taken care of after he was gone.

In Jesus' sinless mind, the pain and persecution he endured were never reasons to withdraw from the world. Instead, they created opportunities for him to reach out. It is a radically different and liberating way to look at life. The daily challenges we face are more than problems that need to be solved. Our struggles may lead to conversations, and those conversations may give us opportunities to witness, to be salt in the world.

Think about Ann's struggles, but now look at them the way Jesus did. Imagine all the people Ann encountered every week—her family, friends, coworkers, even the staff at the nursing home. They knew how much was on her plate. They could see how she was holding up. And if anyone ever asked Ann how she was doing, if anyone asked her how she did it, she could tell them. She could tell them about the source of her strength—Jesus.

When you look down at your own plate, when you consider the sacrifices God is asking you to make in your life, when you see the faces of all the people the Lord has called you to love and serve, you can ask the question. In fact, as a follower of Jesus who wants to follow his example, you should ask the question. Why? Why has God brought this situation into my life? What is Jesus telling me? What doors is the Holy Spirit opening for me? How can my acts of love and devotion create opportunities for me to witness, to be salt in the world?

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

This is the second article in a 12-part series about Christian love in action and how we can be salt in this world.

BE  
*devoted*  
TO ONE  
ANOTHER  
*in love.*  
HONOR ONE  
ANOTHER  
*above*  
YOURSELVES.

ROMANS 12:10



# LOVE YOU ALL!

## *Keep praying!*

Life's unexpected troubles give us all opportunities to show Christian love.

John A. Braun

Accidents are accidents because no one expects them to happen. Andy Zeller went out to make a minor repair on a piece of heavy equipment. He extended the bucket so he could get at the repair. But while he was working, the hydraulic line holding the bucket in the air ruptured. The bucket fell, landing on his midsection and left leg.

Still conscious, he somehow was able to crawl over the 700-pound bucket and call for help. How he freed himself was a mystery because it seemed physically impossible. Family members credited God's care and Andy's guardian angel. The ambulance got to the house quickly, but Andy had a broken pelvis and lower left leg.

**He first went to the local hospital in Joplin, Missouri,** but doctors decided that he would need multiple surgeries to rebuild his pelvis and leg so he was airlifted to the university hospital in Columbia, two hours away by air.

The next day Andy underwent surgery to rebuild his broken pelvis. It seemed to be successful, and the doctors anticipated surgery for his leg the next day. But the staff could not wake Andy in post-op. In spite of all the ef-

forts to purge his body of drugs for pain and anesthesia, he did not respond. More tests revealed that fatty tissue had entered his blood stream and traveled through his system.

Usually the body clears that tissue by filtering it through the lungs. In Andy's case, it escaped the filtering of the lungs and accumulated in his brain. His condition was called Fat Embolism Syndrome and affected his breathing, speech, emotion, and memory. He was experiencing multiple mini-strokes. No one could say if the damage would be permanent or only temporary. The doctors worked to keep him stable and allow the body to repair itself. That meant inserting feeding and breathing tubes. Waiting was difficult!

Andy's wife, Tiffani, and other family members were at Andy's side watching, waiting, and praying. Aaron Schumann, the Zeller's pastor at Faith, Pittsburg, Kan., joined the family and had a devotion and brought them the comfort of Holy Communion. He said, "The mini strokes did not affect his hearing. What a blessing this has been from the Lord as we know he can hear us as we share with him the comfort that he is not alone, that his Savior is with him every

waking moment and that through this trial his God will never leave him."

The medical staff decided surgery to repair Andy's leg was the next step. Four days after the accident, surgery was successful, so his physical damage was fixed and on the mend. But the doctors said that his body would require two to four weeks before they would know whether the damage to his brain would improve.

**Slowly they began to see hopeful signs.** When the pastor was there and talked about the kids, they noticed a lot of eye movement. When he reminded Andy that the Lord was with him, they noticed the same increase in eye movement. Tiffani remembers, "I cannot express how hopeful and exciting this was for me and everyone."

Tiffani wrote updates on Andy's progress. That first hopeful sign was shared with everyone. It was one of the first pieces of good news Tiffani had shared. She concluded, "Thank you all for your prayers and support! I look forward to giving another great report tomorrow!! Thank you all!!" Everyone looked for new reports and shared their support. One wrote, "We are thinking and praying for An-



drew's full recovery. Thank you for updating us in this very difficult time." Others wrote:

- "I'm so glad to hear the progress that is happening! I can't help but think of the Psalm pastor read on Sunday during a devotion with Andy. Psalm 121."
- "Our prayers are with you during this difficult time. May God give you tons of peace and comfort! You all will be in our prayers."
- "We are all here for you and Tiffani and your kids and all your loved ones."

The apparently small progress signaled by the eye movement meant a great deal to everyone. And the responses Tiffani got from friends and family were a huge boost for her. She wrote, "Thank you all for your prayers and everything else you all are doing. We are so incredibly blessed to have all of you. The kids are doing well. A little stir crazy [after being] in the hotel for two days and they have been pretty tired so hopefully after another good night's sleep they will feel better and we can get them out somewhere to run off some energy."

The next day Andy noticed Tiffani in the room with him and followed her with his eyes for the first time. It was a small step forward but still very good news. Some of the news was not so good. Andy's breathing tube seemed to have contributed to a problem with pneumonia. But there were good days too. "Andrew is smiling today!!!" Tiffani would report.

Although Andy was beginning to listen, smile, and laugh, he still was not able to remember the accident and got confused and frustrated. But he was happy to see visitors. After almost two weeks in the hospital, he began physical therapy and began sitting in a chair for a few hours. Tiffani wrote, "Thank God for everything he has done for us!" and "Thank you all for your prayers and support on this roller-coaster ride."

Progress continued. Andy celebrated his birthday in the hospital with bal-

loons and banners. "The kids all came in and sang him 'Happy Birthday,'" Tiffani reported. The excitement made him tired but happy.

### **Christians are to love each other.**

That means they help in times of need. Friends and family alike pitched in to help with prayers and support. Tiffani responded, "We have had an outpouring of help both back home with the kids, with food, diapers, and financially. I don't think I can thank everyone enough. The friends and family that have watched my three very young and

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"Thank you all for  
your prayers and  
support on this  
roller-coaster ride."

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active kids and shown them lots of fun and lots of love have kept this experience from being traumatic for them, which is priceless to me. The prayers from those we know well and from those we don't know at all have been the absolute best support we have had. My cup runneth over! What an amazing amount of blessings God has given us. I hope one day we can show you all how much it all has meant to us. Love you all! Keep praying!"

Improvement continued. After almost a month in the hospital, Andy came home. His brain function returned to normal, and he enjoyed time with his kids. "That is definitely one of God's many blessings in this whole ordeal," he said. Rehab was difficult, but all is now well.

Thank God for his blessings and for friends and family.

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*John Braun is executive editor of Forward in Christ.*

Photos: (top) Andy and Tiffani Zeller and their family at Christmas 2016. (Remaining): The Zellers following Andy's accident in 2012.



# Mocking millennials

Andrew C. Schroer

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How should  
we respond to  
this generation  
that sees the  
world so  
differently?  
Love them  
as our  
Savior God  
loves them.

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Man buns and skinny jeans. Shaggy beards and yoga pants. Starbucks and selfies. That's how other generations tend to see millennials.

They live in their parents' basement. They march in protests. They are constantly on their phones. They are dreamers. They can't handle criticism.

That's how many of us from other generations tend to view millennials. So we mock them on Facebook. We make sarcastic remarks about how they were all given trophies in Little League. We share posts about how they are scared to eat at Chick-fil-A and how they don't even know what they are protesting. We call them lazy. We call them crybabies. We call them narcissists.

We wring our hands and worry about a future with them in control.

Like any generalization, some truth can be found in the stereotypes. Millennials are a product of the world in which they were raised—a world where truth is relative and all opinions are given the megaphone of social media. In the end, they are sinners, just like you and me.

Generalizations and stereotypes, however, are never the whole story. Stereotypes can warp how we treat and view millennials. Not all millennials wear skinny jeans and yoga pants. Not all millennials march in protests and live in their parent's basement. Not all millennials are selfie-taking crybabies.

And even if some of them are, mocking them doesn't help. One of the age-old responses toward those we consider weak or thin-skinned is to tear them down. We think we need to toughen them up, so we make fun of them. We mock them. They need to learn not to be so sensitive.

Though that is an age-old response, it is not God's response. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul encourages us to build each other up by "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

Should we confront the weaknesses and sins of the millennial generation? Of course, just as we need to confront other generations' weaknesses and sins. But we should do so in love. We should do so remembering that not all millennials are the same. We should do so with grace and forgiveness flavoring our words and attitudes.

We should do so, understanding that for many millennials, the greatest sin of all is bullying. Millennials tend to view truth as relative. They value tolerance above all else. If you mock them or tear them down, they won't hear what you are saying. They will simply look at you just as another intolerant bully.

As a pastor, I am constantly being bombarded by articles and posts on social media all saying the same thing: Millennials are leaving Christian churches in droves. The reasons for this seeming mass exodus are diverse. Sometimes it is because of their sinful attitudes which flow from a warped worldview. Other times it is because they view Christian churches as intolerant and unloving.

So what should we do? How should we respond to this generation that sees the world so differently? Love them as our Savior God loves them. Speak to them honestly and openly about the dangers of moral relativism. Confront the sins and failings that have permeated this generation's thoughts and attitudes. Let God's love and forgiveness shine in what you say and do.

Be firm. Be real. Be loving.

But more than anything else, please stop mocking millennials. That's definitely not helping.

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





# MONUMENTS

## *Lasting Memories*

**As pilgrims in this world, we need to stand out in our worship of the true God, just as Abram did in the land of Canaan.**

Samuel C. Degner

There must have been no shortage of shrines in Canaan. The land we now call “holy” was filled with unholy sites dedicated to pagan gods.

### AN ALTAR TO THE LORD

But this new altar was different. Its builder was a foreigner named Abram. He came from Ur of the Chaldeans, a people with their own gods. But it wasn't for one of those gods that he stacked these stones. It wasn't for one of Canaan's gods either. In the ancient world, it was common for immigrants to adopt the local religion, not just because they wanted to fit in but also because they believed that each place had its own deity that had to be pleased.

Not this migrant. Abram knew that the God who had called him in Ur was still with him in Canaan. He trusted that his God could and would bless him in this new land, just as God said.

So, at his first recorded stop in Canaan, at the great tree at Shechem, Abram built an altar to the Lord. When he moved on to the hill country between Bethel and Ai, he built another altar and “called on the name of the LORD” (Genesis 12:8). This was a public act of true worship right in the heart of pagan country! These altars were beacons of light in the darkness.

### WORSHIP OF AN OUTSTANDING GOD

What's the land of your pilgrimage? What god do the people there worship? In secular schools, Reason or Science may be the local deities—and their followers surely are persuasive.

In the workforce, many people worship Money—and seem to be rewarded handsomely. Popularity has a devoted following, and people offer great sacrifices to Sports. The rituals in the religion of Pleasure seem quite appealing.

But you, dear pilgrim, were called to be different. That's not easy, but it's good, as Abram would tell you.

He and his family were vastly outnumbered in their new land. Other than the mysterious Melchizedek (Genesis 14), we are told of no other true believers there except those with Abram. Yet Abram trusted the Lord's promise that one day the land would belong to his people. After just a few centuries, Abram's descendants covered that land like sand on the seashore.

Several more centuries passed, but the Lord also kept his ancient promise to bless the world through Abram's family. His Offspring was born and made his pilgrimage in the same land Abram once roamed, the only Holy One in a world full of sinners. In place of our crumbling and misdirected altars, Jesus sacrificed himself on a cross to please God on our behalf.

The same God who kept his promises to Abram and the world has kept the promises he made to you when he called you to faith. He has been with you everywhere you have gone. He has blessed you with more good things than you can count. He has reserved a place for you in the eternal land of his people.

Aren't you glad to stand out in your worship of such an outstanding God? A word of kindness in a negative discussion. A tournament game skipped because it's Sunday morning. Words that bring honor to God. Actions that reveal godly priorities. These are all acts of worship! With them we raise a beacon in a dark world that needs his saving light.

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*Contributing editor Samuel Degner is pastor at Bethel, Menasha, Wisconsin.*

This is the third article in a nine-part series on Old Testament monuments and what they mean to us today.




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Our Father  
loves us and  
wants us  
to bring our  
cares and  
concerns to  
him in  
our prayers.

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# Our Father in heaven

“Our Father in heaven.”

How often have you said those words? How often have you said them without thinking what a marvelous truth Jesus taught us? Each of the petitions of this prayer gives us something important to ponder.

I want to spend a few months thinking through what the Lord’s Prayer means for us as Christians and specifically how we can pray this prayer for our needs as a church. My reason is that first word “our.”

Jesus taught his disciples that this prayer included them all together. They asked him to teach them how to pray. Then with the first words of the prayer, he invited them to consider that they shared a Father in heaven together.

Most often when I pray the Lord’s Prayer, I pray it personally and think, *My Father in heaven*. That’s okay because there is much I need to bring to my Father in prayer.

Yet, I should not forget the words Jesus used. It starts with that word “our.” When we gather in worship, we speak the prayer together. Jesus encouraged me to look down the pew at the people who are saying the prayer with me, as well as at those in the pews in front of me and behind me. *We* address *our* Father together.

I think that little word “our” is significant because it reminds me that I’m not the only one in the Lord’s church. Peter was not alone, nor were any of the other disciples. Even later when they went their separate ways to share the gospel with all nations, they were part of the Lord’s church. The Holy Spirit brought new people to faith in Jesus who together would begin their prayers, “Our Father.” In another way, even when they were separated, there was still the “our Father.” A thousand miles away, Christians were saying the Lord’s Prayer. They were in his church

and part of the “our” of communion and fellowship with each other.

Believers, the church of Christ, often said this little prayer together over the centuries, just as Jesus taught it. Sometimes the words tumble from lips of family, friends, or a pastor gathered together around a bedside. At other times we mumble them together when facing great trials. “*Our* Father.” We are not alone. Certainly, our Lord is with us, but this is a reminder that so are other Christians. Together we pray for each other.

Jesus wants our prayers to be addressed to our Father. Luther reminds us that our relationship with God is the relationship of an ideal, tender Father with his dear children. God’s love has removed what makes us rebellious and infuriating. He sent his perfect Son, Jesus, to be our substitute. Our Father sees us as brothers and sisters of the One whose blood atones for our rebellion. Our Father loves us and wants us to bring our cares and concerns to him in our prayers.

Jesus adds that our Father is “in heaven.” These aren’t just words to fill a sentence or address! No, our Father is powerful and understands our challenges. He does not sit in heaven, oblivious to what happens here and unable to help us. He listens and has the power to help in every need and every situation.

And the world seems to spin out of control. We all sense it happening. We are concerned about the believers we know from our regular worship and the believers we read about worldwide. Jesus encourages us to take those concerns to our Father. What a wonderful opportunity to pray for each other as dear children, brothers and sisters together.



## Faith-produced good works

Joel D. Otto

One of the sharpest criticisms of Lutheran theology revolves around the subject of good works. The argument is directed against the teaching that a person is saved by grace alone through faith alone. Some object, saying, "If salvation by grace is true, then no one will do good works. The incentive to live a godly life is gone."

Luther was sensitive to this criticism. That's why he went out of his way to show that he encouraged Christians to do good works. But he was careful to put good works in their proper place. Good works neither earn grace and forgiveness nor are they somehow combined with faith to win heaven. Rather, good works flow from faith. Good works are what Christians who have been saved by grace through faith naturally do. Good works are done not to earn heaven but to thank God for his gift of heaven in a tangible way.

In his preface to his commentary on Romans, Luther stressed this truth about faith producing good works. "O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. . . . Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown him this grace. Thus, it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 35, pp. 370,371).

To be truly Lutheran is to put good works in their proper place. Yes, we're saved by faith alone in Jesus alone. But faith is never alone. It always produces good works. If there are no good works, faith is non-existent (see James 2:14-26). Faith rests in the promises of God and receives the blessings of God's love. Then faith responds by loving God and living for Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15). Luther stressed this truth in the opening words of explanation to each commandment in his Small Catechism: "We should fear and love God that we . . ."

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Explain this apparently contradictory statement of Luther: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 31, p. 344).
2. Describe how each of the following passages, in a unique way, demonstrates the place of good works in the life of a Christian: Luke 19:1-10; John 15:1-8; Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20,21; Ephesians 2:8-10.
3. Read Matthew 25:31-46. How might someone think Jesus is teaching salvation by works in these verses? How do we know that is not what Jesus is teaching?

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This is the tenth article in a 14-part series on key doctrinal emphases that Luther brought back to light through the Reformation. Find this article and answers online after July 5 at [wels.net/forwardinchrist](http://wels.net/forwardinchrist).



# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TRULY LUTHERAN





# Getting away from it all

Take a deep breath, but be sure that Jesus is with you in your quiet place. Kenneth R. Kratz

“Take a deep breath. You are at the lake.” Those are the words on our doormat. The words are so true for many people. Whether it is the gurgle of a stream, the steady movement of waves, or the glistening sun playing on the varied surface colors, water seems to dissolve the stresses and strains of life. Time by the water can clear our minds, relax our muscles, and renew us again for the rigors of our lives.

No wonder we try to get away from it all. Time away is valuable for us to get revitalized and to deepen family connections. Right now we are in the middle of vacation season, and resorts are bustling, campfires are numerous, highways are busy, and airports are humming with travelers.

**Far from being wrong, time away can be God-pleasing.** After all, even Jesus told his disciples, “Come . . . to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31). Jesus sent the 12 disciples out to proclaim the Word. As they went sharing the gospel message, new tensions must have gripped them as they encountered not only challenges but challengers. Then there also was the excitement of the miraculous powers that Jesus had given them to authenticate the message they spoke. Now,

these same disciples returned to Jesus needing time to share their experiences and process this entire episode in their new lives. But immediately the crowds surrounded them. They didn’t even have a moment to eat. Then Jesus invited them, “Get some rest.”

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Time away is valuable for us to get revitalized and to deepen family connections.

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They needed to “get away from it all” for a while. Can’t we identify with that need? Isn’t that why we look forward to that weekend away or that vacation—even if it’s a stay-at-home vacation? It can be important for the rhythm of a Christian life.

**But please note—a key element was not quoted in Jesus’ words above.** That key thought is what sets apart the Christian “getting away from it all” from the secular world. The complete statement of Jesus was, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

The disciples weren’t getting away without Jesus, but with Jesus. They weren’t escaping to a quiet place for the sake of being in a quiet place. They were going to a quiet place with Jesus.

How do we “get away from it all” with Jesus? Not to minimize the importance of worship, but might there be a myriad of ways we could cultivate that sense on vacation? Are we in the mountains and reminded of the strength and stability of the Lord in all we see? Are we in the desert or at a waterfall and notice a tender plant growing in a harsh or hard environment and we see the beauty and the wonder of God’s creative genius? Do we witness wild rapids or violent waves crashing on the shoreline and then see that same water quietly and gently moving in the breeze, knowing that the same is true of life? Sometimes we are in the rapids and sometimes in the quiet waters, but in all times the Lord is with us. Each setting can provide a teachable moment for parents to pass on great truths to their children.

Anticipating some relaxing time this summer? Great! Be sure that Jesus is with you in your quiet place.

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