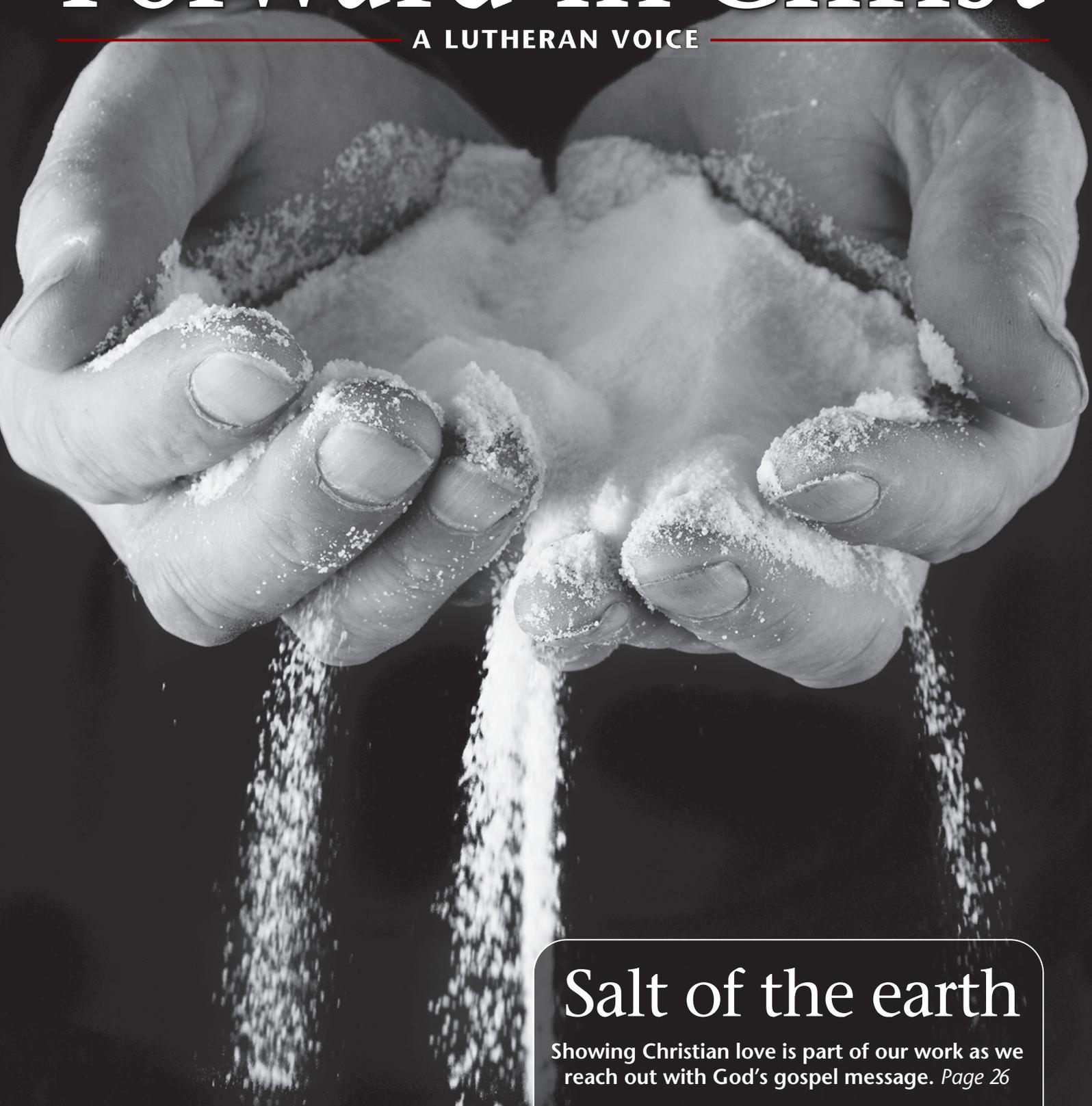


# Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE

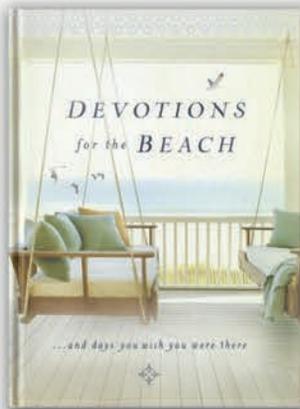


## Salt of the earth

Showing Christian love is part of our work as we reach out with God's gospel message. *Page 26*

# You can take it with you!

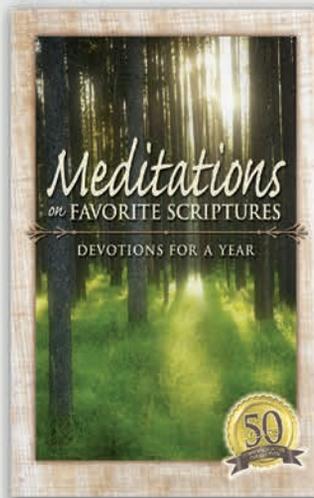
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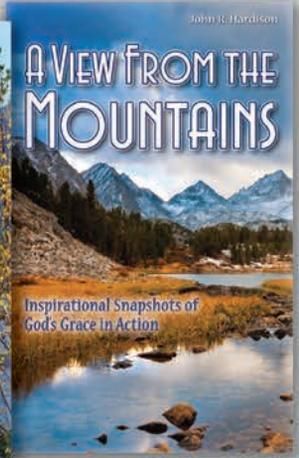
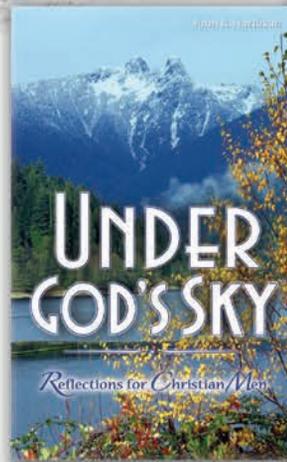
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*May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. — 1 KINGS 8:57*

## WHAT'S INSIDE

Each month in *Forward in Christ*, we work to strengthen your faith by helping you grow in your understanding of God's Word. We also share stories of how you, our readers, let your lights shine in your communities as you pray for the opportunity to tell others about the reason for the hope that you have.

A new series starting this month marries these two concepts. In "Salt of the earth" (p. 26), we will be digging into Romans 12, which examines how to put Christian love into action. You are God's salt in this world, and we encourage you to find ways to incorporate that saltiness into the activities and conversations of your daily life.

As you read this issue, you'll see examples of Christian love in action, including

- a man—actually, an entire organization—who helps build churches and homes in loving thankfulness for what the Savior has done (p. 14 and 22),
- a congregation doing acts of service in the community while looking for opportunities to share its members' true motivation (p. 21),
- a teenager offering hope and love to her fellow classmates (p. 24), and
- congregations preaching God's Word and offering personal support to South Sudanese refugees (p. 28).

Julie Wietzke



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**INSPIRATION**

Once again, an article in *Forward in Christ* magazine provided inspiration for a poem. The article was “Be still and know that I am God” by Marilyn Sievert [Apr.].

In November, we received word that my mother had terminal cancer. Needless to say, there was a period of emotional turmoil. Prayers and Scripture verses came to mind and finally, peace with the knowledge that all was in God’s hands. This allowed me to be supportive of both my mother and father during the three weeks leading up to her eventual call to heaven.

I would like to share the poem Ms. Sievert’s article inspired with the readers of FIC:

**When I’m Still**

When I am still,  
Left with nothing else to do,  
The Lord comforts me,  
His hand upon my head.  
Inner peace restored,  
Energy renewed,  
I breathe a sigh of relief,  
Head bowed in humble thanks.

As Christians, we all have to remember everything that comes our way is easier to handle when we put our trust in God.

*Lawrence Palubecki  
Stanley, Wisconsin*

**SPELL OUT WELS**

We enjoy reading our Lutheran magazine and follow others’ suggestions to leave copies of the magazines in public places. One shortcoming for that use is that nowhere is the source of the magazine identified as other than “WELS.” What does that mean to a newcomer?

I suggest that at least one place on the table of contents or address list the acronym be fully spelled out.

*Kathy Vlach  
Seattle, Washington*

**ALLELUIA!**

Once again, I am awed by the Lord’s work through our missions! That an article by Greg Bey regarding gospel work in Indonesia [Apr.] can be openly published without putting himself and our fellow Lutherans in Indonesia at risk confounds logic. This is the largest Muslim country in the world, yet seminaries, ours included, are allowed to operate openly under government oversight. I praise the Lord for his faithful *orang asing* servants, through whom he has now raised up an army of local men dedicated to sharing the Light of the world to their own people living in darkness. What’s Indonesian for “Alleluia!”?

*Karla Jaeger  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

**NUMEROUS RETIREMENTS**

I recently mailed a piece about delayed retirement that I assume you received by US mail. What possessed me was all the retirements I counted in the FIC magazines. Is there some way your magazine could promote the idea—if the synod does not already have a committee—to encourage the teachers and pastors of near retirement. If you know of someone that has delayed a retirement, maybe his story would be good for your magazine.

I believe if this would have been a popular choice for several over the last 20 years, our shortage would be dramatically reduced. Just think what we could say 20 years from now.

Forgive me for my opinion.

*Richard Anders  
Omaha, Nebraska*

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



# Through my Bible in 3 years

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2017

1. Acts 7:44–8:4	11. Ac. 12:1-24	21. Ex. 14:1–15:21
2. Ac. 8:5-25	12. Exodus 1 & 2	22. Ex. 15:22–16:36
3. Ac. 8:26-40	13. Ex. 3:1–4:17	23. Ex. 17
4. Ac. 9:1-19a	14. Ex. 4:18–6:9	24. Ex. 18
5. Ac. 9:19b-31	15. Ex. 6:10–7:25	25. Ex. 19 & 20
6. Ac. 9:32-42	16. Ex. 8	26. Acts 12:25–13:12
7. Ac. 9:43–10:33	17. Ex. 9	27. Ac. 13:13-43
8. Ac. 10:34-48	18. Ex. 10 & 11	28. Ac. 13:44-52
9. Ac. 11:1-18	19. Ex. 12:1-36	29. Ac. 14:1-12
10. Ac. 11:19-30	20. Ex. 12:37–13:22	30. Ac. 14:13-28

# The mystery and master of faith

**“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” John 14:25,26**

Peter M. Prange

To broken hearts like ours, faith is a real mystery. We don't naturally understand faith's inner workings. We foolishly assume that faith is invigorated by easy roads and pleasant paths. How easy it is to have faith when everything goes our way! Surely that's what God wants for his faithful people in this world, right?

But Jesus is the master of faith. He gets how it works. He creates faith, just as he has created everything else, in a powerful yet unsuspecting way—in a way only he can.

## TRUSTING THE MASTER OF FAITH

Just consider John chapter 14 and the words Jesus spoke on the evening before he died. He told his disciples that he would be leaving them. They didn't expect that. Until the moment of Jesus' arrest, his disciples were convinced he had come to establish a grand earthly kingdom. They were destined—or so they thought—to reign in this world alongside the Messiah. This was their faith, and it was simple to have. Jesus had spoken, and they believed. But Jesus would be leaving them, a point he made repeatedly so they wouldn't miss it.

Still, they did. His words seemed strange to them. All was well, but soon he would be withdrawing. He would go unseen. Then faith would depend on his words without his physical presence. “All this I have spoken while still with you,” Jesus said, but soon his disciples wouldn't see him anymore. Things would change. Jesus would not be present with them as he had been for the past three years.

Martin Luther noted that while God's people hear and accept God's Word



gladly, “it does not always touch the heart right away and is not always believed right away. . . . One can go for a long time without feeling at all improved or comforted and strengthened by it, especially if there is not yet any anxiety and danger” (*Luther's Works* [LW], Vol. 77, p. 355).

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When trials come, so does his Spirit, who teaches us all things.

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## UNVEILING THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

So what does Jesus do to deepen faith? He leaves us, even to the point that we may feel altogether abandoned. He launches storms in our direction. He inserts thorns in the flesh and permits messengers of Satan to torment us (2 Corinthians 12:7). In those challenges, Jesus drives us to his words.

When trials come, so does his Spirit, who teaches us all things and brings to

mind the promises Jesus has made to us. It is as if he says, “I must be taken away from you, so that this comfort may work in you and the Holy Spirit may teach it to you. When you have lost Me and are left alone in danger, need, and anxiety, only then will you realize that you need comfort, and then you will sigh for it. Then the Holy Spirit will find you to be truly teachable students and will help and remind you to grasp and note what I have said” (LW, Vol. 77, p. 354).

Though the lessons of faith our Master teaches are not always pleasant, how necessary they are and what fruit they bear (Hebrews 12:11). So don't scamper too quickly from weaknesses and insults, hardships and difficulties. Delight in them. For through them the Master unveils the mystery of faith.

---

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



Mark Schwede

---

Our help  
comes from  
only one place:  
from a gracious  
God who saw  
us in our  
great need.

---

## The right kind of help

Ever since the 1930s when Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* sold millions of copies, self-proclaimed experts have offered answers and solutions to just about any personal challenge or shortcoming. In the United States alone, the self-help industry that offers books, videos, seminars, and personal life coaching has grown into a \$12 billion-per-year industry.

These "experts" promise that lives will be changed for the better if you only follow a few simple guidelines. Struggling with finances? The book *Master the Game: 7 Simple Steps to Financial Freedom* promises to make money problems a thing of the past. Unlucky in love? *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts* promises to help you. Having trouble keeping your house neat and clean? *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* is sure to solve the problem. And don't forget about all of the experts who, for a small sum, will be glad to tell you how your congregation can thrive and grow and how your church can reach those hard-to-figure-out millennials.

I have no doubt that these experts have at times offered common sense advice that people have found helpful. But I think it's safe to say that just as many people who came looking for help ultimately went away disheartened, frustrated, and struggling.

If there's one thing that we Christians know from personal experience it's that we too are desperately in need of help. But our need is much more serious and dire than needing advice on how to improve our personalities or leadership skills or financial condition. Our need is for someone to help us in our dilemma of being absolutely lost in our own sinful condition, with no hope of self-improvement or self-saving. Martin Luther described us all when he said, "We are all beggars." On our

own, we have no inborn goodness, nothing that we can claim as deserving love or reward from a holy and righteous God. We, ultimately, have no hope.

We need help—and we know where to find it. How blessed we are to be able to say with the writer of Psalm 121: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth" (vv. 1,2).

In those words, we confess and proclaim that we sinners know that our help comes from only one place: from a gracious God who saw us in our great need. That help came from a God who had every right to turn his back on rebellious sons and daughters, but instead turned his face toward us in mercy and love. That help came not in the form of an army of reinforcements coming down from the mountains, but in a suffering servant who ascended another hill to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins. That is the help we need, and that is the help that we have.

We still have challenges with life here and now. But we have his promise to help and sustain us: "The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" (Psalm 121:7,8).

Need help? You know where to find it.

# Light for our path

**When I give weekly offerings of ten percent, should I be giving ten percent of my gross earned income or ten percent of my net earned income (after taxes)? I truly am not sure.**

James F. Pope

Your question affords the opportunity to review the instructions God once gave his people in Old Testament times and to see what guidance God gives his children today in how they can honor him with their wealth (Proverbs 3:9).

## DIVINE DIRECTION

Through the ceremonial laws, God regulated the everyday lives of Old Testament Israel with great detail. Among other things, the ceremonial laws addressed the people's behavior when it came to worship, diet, and hygiene. Laws concerning the tithe, or giving ten percent of income, belonged to the ceremonial laws.

Today, people like you and me can easily have a partial understanding of the Old Testament tithe. That is because the Old Testament speaks of more than one tithe. Perhaps the tithe that we recognize most was the one covering crops and cattle (Leviticus 27:30-32). This tithe supported God's representatives in the church (Numbers 18:21). But there was more divine direction for his Old Testament people. There was a tithe for the benefit of God's representatives in the government (1 Samuel 8:15). There also appeared to be a triennial tithe for the aid of the needy (Deuteronomy 14:28,29).

With these tithes in mind, Bible scholars and commentators speak of God directing his Old Testament followers to give back to him, in various ways, in the area of 23 percent of their income. This information puts your question of giving back ten percent of your income to God in a different perspective.

## FAITH-FILLED FREEDOM

What is, of course, very different for you and me is that God's directives for tithing are no longer in effect. The tearing of the temple curtain in Jerusalem on Good Friday (Matthew 27:51) served as a powerful

visual aid that Jesus abolished all the ceremonial laws—including the commands to give tithes. Christians like you and me are exempt from the ceremonial laws. If people today demand that we follow those laws, such as insisting that we tithe, we need to assert our freedom (Colossians 2:16,17).

What we can certainly do is use the tithe as a pattern for our giving; I personally find that helpful. But remember, there were multiple tithes for God's Old Testament people.

So, the choice is entirely yours if you wish to give back to God ten percent of your gross or net income. The "should" of your question can safely be eliminated.

## PROPORTIONATE PRAISE

With the abolishment of the commands to give tithes, God has not left his New Testament followers without any guidance regarding their giving. He provides general direction through his apostle: "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Those words encourage us to plan our offerings with a proportionate view toward our income. Essentially, our guidance for giving is to offer a percentage of our income. We have freedom to choose the percentage.

Recognition that our money belongs to God (Psalm 24:1; Haggai 2:8) and gratitude for our salvation (Romans 12:1) provide good reasons for proportionate giving that is generous and cheerful (2 Corinthians 9:7). God bless such management of his blessings!

*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.

Psalm 119:105

# ABIDING

## truth

**All believers are equal before God, although they have different roles.**

Michael A. Woldt

“Pastor, will you pray for me?”

As a pastor, I’m happy to pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ. However, I bristle when I hear someone add, “You have an extra-special connection with Jesus. He’ll listen if you ask.”

Whenever someone expresses the thought that a pastor’s prayers are handled like “priority mail” before God’s throne while the prayers of “ordinary” believers wind up in the “presorted standard” pile . . . I feel compelled to respond. “I’ll gladly pray for you,” I say, “but please understand that your prayers are just as important as mine. You and I have the same connection to Jesus. We are both God’s royal priests.”

### **THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS**

Let’s ask the good Lutheran question: “What does this mean?” Perhaps the term *priest* conjures up images of bloody Old Testament sacrifices or a cleric in full garb, carefully chanting the Mass. Peter paints a different picture: “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:5,9).

We become God’s priests when the Holy Spirit brings us to faith through the gospel. “To [Christ] who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father” (Revelation 1:5,6). As royal priests, we enjoy forgiveness of sins and access to the Father at all times (Ephesians 2:18). Everything we do as Christians, whether

at home or through our congregation, is an exercise of our priesthood. We proclaim the praises of God when we share the gospel with others and when we offer our “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).

### **SATAN’S WAR AGAINST THE TRUTH**

Five hundred years ago, God used Luther to restore the biblical teaching that all believers are priests of God. Since then, Satan has been waging war against that same truth. Satan understands that Jesus loses an army of witnesses when the priesthood of believers fails to declare his praises.

Four hundred years after the Reformation, Professor August Pieper addressed the Nebraska district convention and offered this observation:

Here is a truth that needs to be emphasized in our day, that individual Christians are to exercise their priesthood (as long as they do not violate good order in the church).

Unfortunately, one doesn’t see much of this among us Lutherans. Congregations call someone to be their pastor, others to teach their children, still others to serve as officers of their congregation. But what about the rest of the members? They’re informed of their financial responsibilities and reminded that they’re expected to attend worship services, to receive the Lord’s Supper regularly, and to live a godly life. But the real priestly activity to which Luther referred is usually left up to the called workers. Most often individual Christians as such do not share in preaching and teaching God’s Word, in baptizing and using the Keys, in the priestly work of praying and offering sacrifice, in striving to preserve sound doctrine, and in showing concern for the lives their fellow Christians are leading. It’s almost as though the congregation has hitched its

pastor to the congregational wagon, after which the members climb aboard and allow themselves to be pulled along by the pastor. That surely was not Christ's plan for his church. [Translated from German by the late Professor John Jeske.]

### GOD'S DESIGN FOR GOSPEL MINISTRY

So, what is Christ's plan for his church? God's plan is that some Christians are called to serve their fellow priests through the office of the public ministry. "Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11,12). However, our Lord did not establish the office of public ministry to replace, diminish, or interfere with the priesthood of all believers. God's design calls for all believers to function side by side with the office of the public ministry in the one gospel ministry of his church.

Public ministers are called by God through his people. They represent their fellow priests as they lead worship services, administer the sacraments, preach, teach, and visit the sick. Using Word and sacrament, public ministers empower and equip their brothers and sisters in Christ to flourish in their roles as royal priests.

What does a well-functioning priesthood of believers look like? It looks like a repentant sinner pleading for God's mercy while lying on a pillow damp with tears. It looks like a father reading a gospel-centered devotion to his family after supper. It looks like a mother teaching her toddler to sing "Jesus Loves Me." It looks like a woman coming out of church and informing her pastor, "I'm praying that Jesus continues to bless your preaching and teaching of his Word." It looks like a factory worker striking up a conversation with a struggling coworker who needs to hear about the Savior's unconditional love. It looks like people joined together in our synod to support mission outreach, nurturing ministries, and ministerial education. It looks like every act of kindness and love flowing from a baptized child of God.

The Lutheran Reformation fostered a renewed appreciation for the priesthood of all believers. It exposed Satan's lie that only professional clergy possess the right to use God's Word, forgive sins, and approach God in prayer. Every Christian has unlimited access to God. Every Christian enjoys the privilege of declaring God's praise! Let's all be the priests we are!

---

*Michael Woldt is pastor at David's Star, Jackson, Wisconsin.*

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

# LUTHER

*still speaks*

A basic truth God restored through Luther was the "priesthood of all believers." Expounding on 1 Peter 2:9, Luther wrote, "It is certainly clear and plain enough that he (St. Peter) speaks to the whole congregation, to all Christians, when he says: You are the chosen generation and the holy people. . . . Some may be selected from the congregation, who then are its officers and ministers, and are appointed to preach in the congregation and administer the Sacraments. But we are all priests before God, if we are Christians. For since we are built on this Stone, who is our High Priest before God, we also have all that he has" (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 3, #3651).

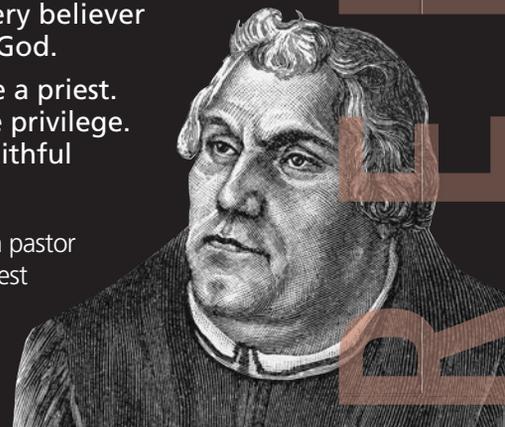
Every believer is a priest into whose hands the Lord of the church has entrusted "all that Christ has." Every Christian has the privilege and the duty of telling penitent sinners that the doors of heaven are open.

For the sake of order, the Lord has also given us the office of the ministry. Believers call other believers to be their representatives in their kingdom work. Publicly such called servants preach and teach, not as replacements for believers or as their superiors, but as partners in the greatest work on earth.

There aren't two classes as the Roman church taught in Luther's day and still teaches today. That teaching proclaims that the clergy is the superior class that claims authority from ordination. The laity is the lower class whose duty is, as someone put it, "confession, contrition, and contribution." Luther blew the cover off this false teaching. On the clear basis of Holy Scripture, he preached that every believer is a priest before God.

I'm a priest. You're a priest.  
Thank God for the privilege.  
Pray God we be faithful  
priests.

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



# HOW MUCH *do you know?*

Take our short quiz about Reformation history and test your knowledge.

**1** Luther was born and died in the same city. Which city?

- a) Smalkald      c) Eisleben
- b) Magdeburg    d) Wittenberg

**2** Which of these statements is true about Pope Julius II?

- a) He dedicated the cornerstone for the rebuilding of St. Peter's in Rome on April 18, 1506.
- b) He was called the "Warrior Pope."
- c) He and the popes after him raised money by selling indulgences to rebuild St. Peter's.
- d) All of the above.

**3** Luther left the Wartburg with a rough draft of the New Testament in German. Who helped him with it when he returned to Wittenberg?

- a) Frederick the Wise
- b) Philip Melancthon
- c) Johann Eck
- d) Paul Gerhardt

**4** Where in Luther's writings can you find this quote: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (LW, Vol. 31, p. 344)?

- a) The Ninety-five Theses
- b) *The Freedom of a Christian*
- c) *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*
- d) *To the Christian Nobility*

**5** While Melancthon and the others were in Augsburg in 1530, Luther remained behind in the safety of which castle?

- a) Coburg              c) Wartburg
- b) Torgau              d) Neuschwanstein

**6** While at the Wartburg, Luther translated the New Testament into German. Which of these statements is correct?

- a) He translated from the Vulgate, Jerome's Latin Bible.
- b) He used Tyndale's English Bible.
- c) He translated from the Greek Testament Erasmus published in 1516.
- d) He had no books at the castle but translated from memory.

**7** Where in Luther's writing can you find this quote: "The temporal authority is under obligation to protect the innocent and prevent injustice, as Paul teaches in Romans 13" (LW, Vol. 44, p. 157)?

- a) The Ninety-five Theses
- b) *Treatise on Good Works*
- c) *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*
- d) *To the Christian Nobility*

**8** Luther was married to Katherine von Bora. Which of these statements is true?

- a) Katherine was a former nun.
- b) They were married on June 13, 1525.
- c) Two daughters died before they reached adulthood.
- d) All of the above.

**9** Where in Luther's writing can you find this quote: "A Christian . . . does everything gladly and willingly. . . He simply serves God with no thought of reward, content that his service pleases God" (LW, Vol. 44, p. 27)?

- a) The Ninety-five Theses
- b) *Treatise on Good Works*
- c) *The Freedom of a Christian*
- d) *To the Christian Nobility*

**10** Luther's Small Catechism and Large Catechism were published in which year?

- a) 1517                      c) 1535
- b) 1529                      d) 1546

**11** Melancthon wrote the first Lutheran doctrine textbook. What was its title?

- a) *Evangelical Lutheran Doctrine*
- b) *Christian Doctrine*
- c) *Loci Communes* or *Common Places*
- d) *Bible Truths*

**12** Lutherans became the first Protestants when . . .

- a) Lutheran princes protested an imperial order to return to Roman Catholic practices and doctrine.
- b) Luther, at Worms, said he would not retract his teachings.
- c) The Lutherans read their confession at the Diet of Augsburg.
- d) They were not the first; John Calvin was the first Protestant.

**13** Henry VIII, King of England . . .

- a) Defended the Roman Catholic sacraments and opposed Luther.
- b) Was married to Catherine, a relative of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.
- c) Left the Roman Catholic Church and became head of the English church.
- d) All of the above.

**14** Where in Luther's writing can you find this quote: "But whatever is without warrant of the Scriptures is most hazardous and should by no means be urged upon anyone, much less established as a common and public mode of life" (LW, Vol. 36, p. 76)?

- a) The Ninety-five Theses
- b) *Treatise on Good Works*
- c) *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*
- d) *To the Christian Nobility*

## ANSWERS

1) c; 2) d; 3) b; 4) b; 5) a; 6) c; 7) d; 8) d; 9) b; 10) b; 11) c; 12) a; 13) d; 14) c.

# LUTHER'S *writings*

In 1520, four of Luther's works (all mentioned in this quiz) sent shock waves throughout the church of his day.

The first was the *Treatise on Good Works*. Luther directed Christians to look to the Ten Commandments for direction on what to do that would please God. Only what God commands is good when done out of faith in Christ. It is better for a Christian to serve others than to go on pilgrimages or follow self-imposed good works.

In the second, *To the Christian Nobility*, Luther challenged the princes to reform the church. He maintained that all Christians are equal before God and have the duty and right to oppose corruption and error. Luther removed the special distinction between clergy and laity; only ministry made them different.

The third, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, shook the ground under the Roman Catholic concept of a sacrament. Luther identified only two sacraments instead of seven. Baptism and Holy Communion are the only sacraments that have New Testament authority and were part of the early church's practices. He defined a sacrament as a rite instituted by Christ that has visible elements connected with the promise of forgiveness in Christ.

*The Freedom of a Christian* is the fourth. Luther suggested that the Christian is free from all false ideas about good works. God grants forgiveness by grace. Therefore, Christians freely love God and their neighbors, not to earn something from God but willingly to do what pleases him.

What does it mean for you to be a Lutheran today? Go to [wels.net/lutheran-heritage](http://wels.net/lutheran-heritage) and give us your insights and comments. We want to share some of the comments in October.

## A man lives on overtime after God uses a brush with death to make his life-saving message known.

Amanda M. Klemm

Randy Baker says that he's living on overtime. He's been saying this for 30 years.

He confesses, "God uses extreme circumstances for extreme people, so he used a two-by-four to get my attention and then once he had my attention, he had me."

### GOING HIS OWN WAY

Baker grew up in California. When he was eight, his parents divorced. While he went to church a few times with his grandparents, his parents didn't put a priority on a church life. The divorce was amicable, to the point that both sides got together for holidays and special events. But, Baker says, this was almost more confusing to a child because it seemed like his parents separated for no obvious reasons.

This family instability affected his own views of what family should be and what commitment means. "I got into things that were definitively not Christian," says Baker. "It went on for a while until I met my wife, and then we ended up living together and not

getting married because both of us came from dysfunctional families."

He continues, "We didn't see any functionality in the families that were supposedly Christian-based to begin with, so we were kind of trying it our own way."

It was when they started to talk about having a family that Baker and his wife, Gail, got married. They were married in 1977, and their first son was born in 1980. This was when Gail, who was raised WELS but wasn't attending church as an adult, felt the pull to go back.

"It was shortly after our oldest son was born that Gail started to feel the heart-strings tugging her back to church. So she started going without me and inviting me," says Baker. He went occasionally, but often made other plans and found reasons not to go. Their second son was born in 1983, and all the while Gail made sure the children were baptized and going to church.

In general, the Bakers represented the all-American family—two small children with two stable parents who loved each other and a father who supported the household working in the construction business.

### CHANGING HIS ATTITUDE

But God had other plans for Randy and needed to get his attention. In 1985, he came face to face with God's two-by-four.

He was diagnosed with melanoma. It was stage five and had metastasized.

The only treatment available at the time was dangerous, and Baker didn't have insurance because he was self-employed. He was given a 20 percent chance that he would live two years. He underwent surgery to remove the melanoma from his back, but the doctors said it would certainly return after three months.

"Now God had my attention," says Baker. With a cancer diagnosis, he says, "The rug gets torn up from underneath you by the world. I was facing my demise. We had two children at the time, and Gail was being faced with being a widow in her 30s."

Facing death, Baker started going to church. He began attending Bible class, reading God's Word, and praying. In 1986, he was baptized and confirmed at Shepherd of the Hills, La Mesa, Calif., where he and his wife are still members.

"[Those were] dark days, and it took a while to get out of that from a worldly standpoint. But from the standpoint of going to Bible class and becoming confirmed and learning more about the Christian faith and how it should work, it changed my attitude quickly," remembers Baker. "But I was still faced with not surviving. During that two-year period that I was supposed to be perishing, our daughter was born, so obviously God had something different in mind."

# Confessions OF FAITH



Baker started spending more time thinking about God's Word and praying for guidance and healing. He wanted to see his kids grow up. It was after his confirmation that he felt he could face his illness and impending death. But, he says, there's never really a sensation of "all clear" as a cancer survivor; every little ache or pain or weird malady makes you wonder if it's back. The difference now is that he feels he can face it.

He says, "As time goes on, you're able to see the next day, the next week, and finally starting to be able to look further down the road. It was certainly meditating on God's Word and getting introduced to the truth that changed my attitude, and I am able to look forward and get a smile back."

After the surgery, he was expecting the cancer to return. By all medical accounts, it should have come back. But it didn't.

"Basically, it went away, and they don't know why it went away," says Baker. "I think it was God because nobody knows." And it hasn't come back in 30 years. "From a medical standpoint, it's a miracle, plain and simple."

Now, he has three children, a new faith in God, and no signs of cancer.

Baker says, "I had a new attitude and a whole new outlook on life. I was going to church regularly, going to Bible classes. The day I got confirmed,

I was added to the church council and board of trustees."

### **WORKING ON OVERTIME**

It was at this time that he started tapping into his construction experience to work on building the church . . . literally. It started with pouring a foundation for a school. Then he worked on or helped build several WELS churches in his area of southern California. From there, he went with a crew to Antigua in 1995 to help with relief work there. The projects kept coming, and his hand was always raised.

When Christian Aid and Relief started relief work in New Orleans in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina, Baker was one of the first to go and last to leave. He spent the better part of three years overseeing construction work on behalf of WELS organizations.

"When I had the opportunity, it was an easy move to make," he says. "It was work, and not always for pay, but it was an easy decision for me to give thanks back. This whole time, I'm in overtime. Every day is overtime, every month is overtime, every year is overtime. When I got asked to be involved with these projects, I couldn't say no."

He's even brought his children to help with some of the projects, modeling



Randy Baker

and teaching service to the Lord. One of his sons even met his spouse volunteering with his dad.

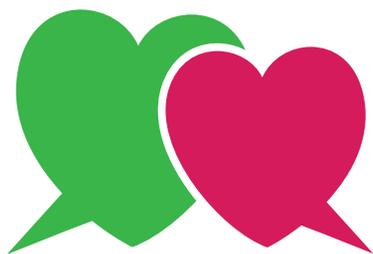
Baker says he comes into contact with a lot of people who say they want to do similar volunteer work someday. His advice is always, "Don't wait. Make plans now, because we don't know where we're going to be tomorrow or in ten years."

Baker is quick to say that none of this is actually about him. "It's about God's people sharing the light that's presented through our actions."

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*Amanda Klemp is a member at Gethsemane, Davenport, Iowa.*

Read about a Builders For Christ project Baker currently is helping with on p. 22.



**heart to heart**  
parent conversations

It's not easy to watch our children face disappointment. We want to swoop in and make it all better. Although I think that swooping can have its place, it's not always possible—or wise. Our three authors (and their sidekicks) this month offer some alternatives.

Are you new to Heart to heart? Check out our archive of articles and webcasts at [forwardinchrist.net](http://forwardinchrist.net). A fan of Heart to heart? Share this resource with the parents you know! E-mail your favorite articles or share them on Facebook.

*Nicole Balza*

**Join the conversation!**

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

HOW CAN WE HELP OUR CHILDREN COPE WITH DISAPPOINTMENT?

**One of the great** challenges we face as parents is watching our children suffer or struggle. It is easy to want to make everything comfortable for them. Disappointment is a part of this life on earth. We have expectations. When reality doesn't match our expectations, we are disappointed.

**I think the very first thing that we must do is let our children be disappointed.** We live in a culture that believes everything should feel good. Disappointment is a bad feeling. Often as parents, seeing our children uncomfortable makes us uncomfortable. We say things like, "You shouldn't feel that way" or "Look at the bright side." The problem is that they don't learn to live with or in the disappointment. We tell them to change their disappointment.

Jesus provided a beautiful example of living with disap-

**Disappointed might** be too weak a word. When my daughter was diagnosed with Crohn's disease at age nine, we were devastated.

Although a simple medication put her in remission and we celebrated—*God answers prayer!*—the disease flared, and we nosedived again. Thus began the cycle: FLARE, med, side effects, med for the side effects, remission, remission, FLARE . . . new med, new side effects, new med for the new side effects . . . all playing against a backdrop of endlessly beeping machines and carpeted waiting rooms.

As I reflect on these difficulties now, it's easy to imagine that a well-meaning parent might unintentionally say things that twist God's beautiful promises.

We might declare brusquely, "Well, God makes everything work out for good." Although true, those words uttered too quickly, too thoughtlessly, can be dismissive, even cruel. They can feel like a mindless pat on a dog's head.

The same with, "Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3,4). That's certainly true, but the wisdom is lost on a child

**I asked my writer's** club to weigh in on this article. The club only has three members: my two nine-year-old granddaughters and me. We meet once a month over hot chocolate or coffee. I buy.

"Would you like to write an article with me?" I asked. "The article is about helping third-graders deal with disappointment. I'll see that you are included in the byline." The whole club cheered in approval.

We started by drawing pictures of disappointment. What appeared on our worksheets were drawings of Earth fractured into two pieces, a sobbing heart, and a skull and crossbones.

Then we made up some synonyms. The club introduced me to *sorpair* (sorrow+despair), *desanguish* (despair and anguish), and *dishappy*.

We talked about things that cause feelings of disappointment. The list started with frivolous items (e.g., when Mc-

pointment when he wept for Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). He was very disappointed. He felt the disappointment and cried. His Father didn't come to him and say, "It's okay, Jesus. I'll make it better. Don't feel that way." His Father, our heavenly Father, let him cry.

**So how do I teach my children to deal with disappointment? The first thing I do is model what it is like to deal with disappointment.** If I am disappointed because something didn't go my way or someone hurt me, I tell my children how I am feeling. I don't want to hide it from them. I want them to see that I get hurt. I want them to see that I pray in the midst of it. I ask them to pray for their momma as I struggle.

**As challenging as it is, don't try to fix their disappointment.** Talk through it. We talk about the expectations and

who can't see past her pain, who keeps hearing the echo of classmates snickering because her face is puffy with prednisone. The wisdom can be lost on a parent too. Many a night I pounded on God's chest: *Please. She's just a child. Enough with the character-building.*

**I asked my daughter if I'd said anything helpful to her in those early days and, lacking any confidence whatsoever, threw in, "Please say yes."**

She remembered praying together: "Let this medication work" and "Take away this stomachache before the softball game."

She remembered me telling her that when others were unkind, it said more about them than about her. Usually some pain inside them caused them to project pain onto others.

She remembered hearing that God loved her and had a plan for her, but since we couldn't read God's mind, we couldn't know for sure what it was. So she could simply focus on whatever he'd placed immediately in front of her. She could divide her life into those things she could act on and those beyond her control that she needed to surrender to him.

That's what she remembers. What I remember is feeling utterly

helpless much of the time. But we can't protect our children from disappointment. We can't walk their journeys for them. We can only accompany them in our shared vulnerability, be strong when we have to, rage and cry when we need to, and apply God's promises like cool cloths on a fevered soul.

**My daughter's 25 now and in a prolonged remission.** She sits in waiting rooms mostly by herself. She's made the journey her own, and she's also grown into the promises. She knows her strength is in Word, water, wine. She knows God answers prayer, but sometimes—*often*—the answer is no. She knows that peace is in surrender, not control. And I'm biased, but I think she's also developed perseverance. And character. And hope.

And if she ever wonders, "Why would God allow this? Where is he in all this?" she knows the answer to that too. He's right there in the thick of it. Jesus, her friend and brother—the one who wept at Lazarus' funeral, the one whose heart went out to the widow of Nain—sees her and sits next to her, arm around her shoulders, his sighs matching hers.

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

Donald's ice cream machine doesn't work). But it soon turned to real disappointments (when I ask God to help me to stop worrying, but he doesn't; when I make a promise and can't keep it; when I work hard and realize that I did something wrong or did it for nothing; when someone is mean to me).

"So what's the best way to handle disappointment?" I asked. Their answers were insightful. Take some quiet time, they advised. "Curl up on your bed and eat ice cream or doughnuts. I go to my room and think. Watching videos can be good."

Then the advice shifted to involving others. "Finding someone to give you hugs and kisses works." I was glad to hear, "Don't give up; try again." Best of all, I rejoiced that my granddaughters counseled, "Read the Bible. Pray to God. Sing hymns."

I had been mulling a motto in the days before the club met. Often when disappointment strikes kids it's because they encounter one of life's many unfairnesses. "When you are disappointed," I asked, "how helpful is this saying, 'Life is unfair but God is there?'"

the reality of the situation. Were our expectations too high? Did someone not meet our expectations? Is this an opportunity to show forgiveness?

Even if our expectations are unrealistic, the feeling of disappointment is very real. Teach children to put words to their feelings. Let them hear you say you are disappointed. Have them say out loud that they are disappointed.

**Finally, let them grieve.** Let them be sad or hurt. Invite our God into the hurt and sadness. Let the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do the true healing.

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



helpless much of the time. But we can't protect our children from disappointment. We can't walk their journeys for them. We can only accompany them in our shared vulnerability, be strong when we have to, rage and cry when we need to, and apply God's promises like cool cloths on a fevered soul.

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



One club member answered, "It doesn't exactly help me, especially when I'm worried." Bless her for her honesty. But she also penned on her worksheet, "1 Thessalonians 5:18" ("Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"). Bless her once more.

The other club member wrote a poem, "When life hands you some sadness, And you know you're falling fast, Remember that on judgment day, God will take us home at last."

How can we help our children or grandchildren deal with disappointment? Invite them to talk about it. They may end up encouraging you through your own disappointments.

*James Aderman and his wife, Sharon, raised three daughters and are now enjoying their eight grandchildren, two of whom (Ellie Lambrecht and Cadence Learman) provided input for this article.*



# teentalk

## Hope in Christ

Anxiety and stress can cause us to lose focus on God's love and power.

Grace Finstrom

Many teens today struggle with anxiety. Anxiety can range from a crippling fear of doing anything wrong in a social setting to post-traumatic stress. Sometimes those with anxiety need professional help. Sometimes they simply need the help of a friend and reminders of God's love and promises.

**I suffered from mental anxiety,** finding myself inconsequential and telling myself I didn't matter. I had a mental fear of putting myself out of my comfort zone and doing something considered "wrong." I also felt great stress and anxiety, especially as due dates approached.

Like many teens, I didn't say anything to anyone. I didn't know how my parents, teachers, or friends would react to my "problem." I pretended to be happy and didn't make a fuss when people put pressure on me in social situations, which was one of the worst things I could do because it only made things worse.

One day, in my junior year, I broke down and told my best friend. Instead

of making fun of me for my insecurities, she comforted me, hugged me, and told me to pray about it. She quoted a passage from 1 Peter, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (5:7). I've been a Christian since I was really young, but I had never considered giving God control over my fears or asking him to help me work through my anxiety.

**I think I'm not the only one who has fears and anxieties.** These problems—although we can't be rid of them entirely—can become minor. God is all-powerful. He knows what we think and what we fear and will help us get through any issue that arises in our lives. "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Psalm 56:3). All we need to do is trust God, in his power and glory, to do whatever is best for us at that point in our lives.

God knows us all: our good points, our flaws, and our breaking points. We are his workmanship, his finest creation, and he loves us, flaws and all. We should not fear because we have been redeemed. We have a Sav-

ior who gave his life on the cross for our sins and failings so that we can stand perfect and righteous before our Holy God. There is no longer a reason to fear anything.

Anxiety is one of the devil's most effective weapons. It causes us to doubt ourselves, our faith in God, and God's power. It breeds within our hearts and eats away from the inside until we no longer feel human and whole, but worthless and broken.

But do not despair. We have hope in Christ and an everlasting happiness in the kingdom of heaven that is to come after this earthly world has passed away. Now we might have to feel anxiety and stress, but God assures us of his love. He promises he will always be there for us in our times of trouble and grief and will give us opportunities to let our faith and his power shine. There is no need to fear this world, for God is with us. Forever.

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*Grace Finstrom, a senior at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Washington, is a member at Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Washington.*

## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

Baumann, Norris H., to retirement  
 Dietz, Michael W., to retirement  
 Goldbeck, Beck H., to retirement  
 Jaeger, Joel W., to retirement  
 Kobleske, Roger W., to retirement  
 Lindke, Allen L., to retirement  
 Mehlberg, Ronald W., to retirement  
 Metzger, Paul W., to retirement  
 Schulz, Joel A., to Delray Beach Mission,  
 Delray Beach, Fla.  
 Seelow, James P., to retirement

### Teachers

Alderman, Katherine P., to St. Matthew's,  
 Stoddard, Wis.  
 Bauer, Gayle S., to retirement  
 Behm, Karen J., to retirement  
 Bertolus, Paul B., to retirement  
 Beyersdorf, Nancy L., to retirement  
 Bond, Marilyn M., to retirement  
 Borchard, Nancy D., to retirement  
 Campbell, Alicia L., to Little Town of  
 Bethlehem Preschool, Carmel, Ind.  
 Carolfi, James E., to retirement  
 Christianson, Cynthia J., to retirement  
 Diels, Joyce A., to retirement  
 Eternick, Wanda M., to retirement  
 Farquhar, Lauren, to St. Croix Lutheran  
 Grades 6-12, West Saint Paul, Minn.  
 Festerling, Miriam A., to retirement  
 Festerling, Roger L., to retirement  
 Frederick, LaVonne K., to retirement  
 Free, Mary A., to retirement  
 Ganey, John M., to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.  
 Gieseke, Sharon J., to retirement  
 Glende, Philip A., to retirement  
 Grunwald, James R., to retirement  
 Gurgel, Nathan J., to Manitowoc Lutheran  
 High School, Manitowoc, Wis.  
 Heidtke, Earl R., to retirement  
 Herbison, Rodney R., to retirement  
 Huebner, Ruth H., to retirement  
 Humann, Beth M., to retirement  
 Inniger, Jeffrey A., to retirement  
 Korth, Samuel D., to St. Paul's, Saginaw,  
 Mich.  
 Krause, Carol M., to retirement  
 Kruschel, Christine S., to retirement  
 Kuznicki, Ellen M., to retirement  
 McFarland, Gail F., to retirement  
 Mielke, Alexander J., to Rocky Mountain  
 Lutheran High School, Commerce City,  
 Colo.  
 Moldenhauer, Kermit G., to retirement  
 Poor, Margaret L., to retirement  
 Pufahl, Laura M., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.  
 Rupnow, Kenneth C., to retirement  
 Schultz, Carol L., to retirement  
 Smith, Joanna J., to Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.  
 Tellier, Kristine J., to retirement  
 Tetzlaff, Joanne R., to retirement  
 Treuden, Terry S., to retirement  
 Tyson, Laura, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.  
 Watson, Ian P., to Resurrection, Rochester,  
 Minn.  
 Watson, Kristin K., to Resurrection,  
 Rochester, Minn.

Wheeler, Ellen K., to Good Shepherd's,  
 West Allis, Wis.  
 Yerks, Troy D., to Salem, Milwaukee, Wis.  
 Zander, Lois M., to retirement  
 Zarling, Colette B., to retirement  
 Zuberbier, David A., to Wisconsin Lutheran  
 School-Middle School, Racine, Wis.

### Staff ministers

Fink, Randel R., to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.  
 Leibner, Carl F., to retirement  
 Miller, Marilyn J., to retirement

### Assignment

Holzhueter, Galen C., to Martin Luther  
 College, New Ulm, Minn.

## ANNIVERSARIES

Brookings, S.D.—Our Savior (50). June  
 11. Worship, 10 A.M.; catered meal and  
 program to follow. RSVP requested by  
 June 1. oslcsec@hotmail.com.  
 Sturgis, Mich.—St. John's (150). June 11.  
 Worship, 9:30 A.M.; dinner to follow. RSVP  
 requested for meal. 269-651-5308;  
 stjohssturgism@gmail.com.  
 Chaseburg, Wis.—St. Peter's Hamburg  
 (150). June 18. Worship, 1:30 P.M.; refresh-  
 ments to follow. RSVP requested. 608-  
 689-2341; genoachristy@yahoo.com.  
 Spruce, Wis.—St. Mark (125). June 19.  
 Worship, 10:30 A.M.; cookout to follow.  
 rjland40@plbb.us; 920-829-6222.  
 Mankato, Minn.—St. Mark (75). June  
 25. Worship, 10 A.M. and 2 P.M.; meal,  
 noon. Risen Savior school tours avail-  
 able. Reservations requested for noon  
 meal. Michele, 507-720-4187. Website,  
 stmarksmankato.com.  
 Mequon, Wis.—Trinity (150). June 25.  
 Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP  
 requested. 262-644-9889 or 262-242-  
 2858.  
 Waterloo, Wis.—St. John (150). July 23.  
 Confirmation celebration, 9 A.M. office@  
 stjohwaterloo.org.

## COMING EVENTS

WELS support staff conference—June 5.  
 Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jack-  
 son, Wis. Website, kmlhs.org/ssconference.  
 Final service—June 11. Zum Kripplein  
 Christi, Iron Ridge, Wis. 11 A.M., celebration  
 service; picnic to follow. RSVP requested.  
 Daniel Babinec, d.babinec@yahoo.com.  
 The National Conference on Worship  
 Music and the Arts—June 13–16. Car-  
 thage College, Kenosha, Wis. Website,  
 wels.net/worshipconference.  
 International student conference—June  
 15–16. St. Paul, Minn. For K-12 schools  
 serving international students. Website,  
 stcroixusa.org/internationalconference.  
 54th annual Lutheran Women's Mission-  
 ary Society convention—June 22–25.  
 Hyatt Regency Orlando Hotel, Orlando,  
 Fla. Theme: "Around the world with mis-  
 sions" (Mark 16:15). Website, lwms.org.  
 Ice cream social—July 16. 10:30 A.M. to 1  
 P.M., St. Mark's Lutheran School, Water-

town, Wis. Hosted by Alpha Life Resource  
 Center. Website, alphalifecenter.org.

Return to Wittenberg conference—July  
 18–21. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Mil-  
 waukee, Wis. Theme: "Liberated." Website,  
 wels.net/event/return-to-wittenberg-  
 2017-conference/.

64th biennial WELS convention—July  
 31–Aug. 3. Luther Preparatory School,  
 Watertown Wis. Website, wels.net/  
 2017synodconvention.

Bus tour—Aug. 4. Daylong tour of his-  
 toric WELS churches. Tour begins and  
 ends at David's Star, Jackson, Wis. Host,  
 WELS Historical Institute. Register by  
 July 1. Website, welsrc.net/event/wels-  
 historical-institute-bus-tour/; Lois,  
 lois.artlip@icloud.com or 414-525-5564.

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.

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

## NAMES WANTED

Bella Vista, Arkansas—people living in  
 Northwest Arkansas. Neil Hansen, Beau-  
 tiful Savior Lutheran Church, 479-876-  
 2155; neil.hansen@cox.net. Website,  
 beautifulsaviorwels.org.

Chattanooga, Tenn., or north Georgia—  
 WELS members, people living in the  
 area, retired or visitors. Mary, packer  
 fan67@hotmail.com, 414-690-0569.

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

Lehi, Utah—WELS members, people liv-  
 ing in the area, retired or visitors. New  
 mission, Lehi, Utah. Daniel Heiderich,  
 dheiderich@gmail.com, 801-889-7942.

## JOB OPPORTUNITY

Costa Maya Ministries—accepting appli-  
 cations for a full-time staff person as edu-  
 cation and community programs director.  
 Website, costamayaministries.com.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Teachers—The newly reopened East Fork  
 Lutheran High School on the Apache mis-  
 sion near Whiteriver, Ariz., is looking for  
 retired WELS educators to teach one or two  
 high school level courses to small class  
 sizes for the 2017-2018 school year. In  
 return, it will provide a stipend of \$4,000  
 per course, a fully furnished apartment  
 on campus, and utilities. 928-338-4455,  
 beapache@outlook.com.

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

# Moments with MISSIONARIES

## KAKUMA, KENYA

E. Allen Sorum

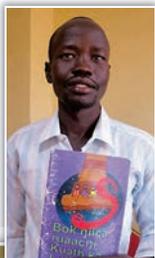


Kakuma is a development on the western edge of Kenya's Great Rift Valley. Temperatures usually range up to 100 degrees by day and 75 degrees by night. It's desert here. The wind blows, but it's not cool or refreshing. Food doesn't grow here. This land should be left to the snakes and scorpions that don't know how miserable this place is.

But Kakuma is a human development, so to speak. The UN Refugee Agency reports that about 200,000 residents are jammed into this camp. About 100,000 of these refugees are South Sudanese Nuer seeking asylum from the Dinka government that seeks to exterminate them in their homeland.

When new residents arrive in the camp, the family receives a piece of thick plastic that is 180 square feet. This will serve as their shelter, assuming the family can find sticks or some other means to support the tarp. The only food or water this family has access to is handed out irregularly by refugee support agencies. There is food on the black market, but there is no way to earn money to buy food. Extreme conditions breed anger and despair. Add uncertainty because the government of Kenya has announced plans to close their refugee camps as a security measure against the rising tide of terrorism.

Does this sound like an ideal spot in which to plant a church? Would it be wise to send a WELS missionary to live just outside this camp to preach the gospel?



Sounds absurd. Yet the gospel is needed in this place of despair—and people want it. Kakuma resident James Dobual is part of a group of South Sudanese refugees organized by WELS pastor and refugee to North America, Peter Bur, to start and to serve congregations in the refugee communities of Kenya and Ethiopia. Peter Bur and his team delivered a translation of Luther's Catechism to the spiritual leaders of these refugee communities and taught it to them in the fall of 2015. In the fall of 2016, Peter Bur (pictured, far left), Terry Schultz (not pictured), and I (middle) returned to Kenya with more training and encouragement.

But James did a better job of encouraging us than we could ever do for him. He and his assistant, Michael Tut, reported that between our visits, they had taken 150 people from the camp in Kakuma all the way through the catechism. On a given Sunday, almost 300 people gather to worship in a place that does not want to support human life. But James is preaching the Word of Life. He is proclaiming a message that refreshes weary souls. His church is thriving.

A cynical voice within wants to challenge these reports. That voice in me was silenced when I saw Michael pull out his copy of the catechism (pictured). He lifted it up to show me its wear. He held it like it was a treasure. He keeps it close because he is memorizing it. That catechism, Michael reported, changed him from a refugee camp resident into a Lutheran evangelist.

After our two-week training in Nairobi, James and Michael went back to Kakuma. They were eager to get back to their people, to their thriving church. May God help them. And may God help us to help them.

*E. Allen Sorum is the director of the Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He, Bur, and Schultz are planning a trip to Kenya in October.*

Learn more about ministry to the South Sudanese in the United States on p. 28.

KENYA

## Serving the Castle Rock community

Each home mission has the same goal—to reach out in a new area with the saving message of Jesus Christ. But while the goal is the same, each mission field brings with it unique opportunities and unique challenges.

Take Castle Rock, Colorado, as an example. When Jared Oldenburg, pastor at Eternal Rock, Castle Rock, arrived in 2010 to start a new mission, he quickly discovered that he couldn't use the same ministry plan he used when starting a mission church in Covington, Washington. "You have to try to find what's unique in your community," he says.

He learned that Castle Rock is an affluent community, located in one of the top 10 wealthiest counties in the U.S. People from multiple different states and backgrounds are constantly moving in and out of the area. Many are families with children, where both parents work. They are active and searching for ways to get involved.

"They're looking for something, no matter how successful they are," says Oldenburg. "There still are problems, and there still is an emptiness. My job is to show people that there still is going to be emptiness until they find value in their Savior, until it gets filled with the one thing that can fill it up."

Due to the transient nature of the area, Oldenburg says the 170-member congregation works to help people feel con-

nected—to Christ and to each other. "It's providing a place where they can have community in church," he says. Because people tend to make friends quickly in Castle Rock, the congregation wants Eternal Rock to be "a place to get to know some other people and to get to know God's Word, a place where they feel supported and feel that there's genuine people who care about them," says Oldenburg.

Finding or building a permanent facility wasn't high on the list at first, so Eternal Rock has been worshipping in a middle school since 2011. "Land is expensive, and buildings are expensive here," says Oldenburg, "so we were waiting and saving money to build the right size at the right time when we do."

Instead, Oldenburg says the congregation keeps to basics—providing Bible studies and worship plus multiple ways to serve and interact in the church and community. New members and repeat visitors get plugged in quickly—even if it's just picking up doughnuts for fellowship time or packing up chairs after worship. "People are pretty quick to move on if they don't click," says Oldenburg. "You have limited time."

The congregation also gets involved in their community. "We worship God with our words and our actions," says Oldenburg. Last December, members provided one thousand lunches to give to the homeless in Castle Rock. They

also look for ways to help the middle school where they worship—including bringing in treats for the teachers, giving them gift cards at Christmas, and even building a shed for school use. "During that time of service, you get a chance to talk and a chance to let your light shine," says Oldenburg.

Letting their light shine is something Oldenburg encourages in all his members. He says 90 percent of the congregation's visitors are from members or prospects inviting their friends and neighbors to church.

Eternal Rock now has a new opportunity to engage in the community. In April, the congregation received a WELS Church Extension Fund loan and grant to buy land and an existing building in the historic downtown. Future plans are to renovate the building into a church. Oldenburg says local business are already asking about using the congregation's facilities and noticing how the church is contributing to the community. "[They say,] 'These are the people who go to this church. They're trying to make downtown better.' . . . But we're trying to make their lives better in a way bigger sense—here's my value in Christ," says Oldenburg.



Learn more about Castle Rock and its outreach opportunities in the June edition of *WELS Connection*. Learn more about Home Mission opportunities at [wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions).



Eternal Rock offers multiple opportunities for service projects to its members, including providing one thousand lunches for the homeless in the community.

## Construction work builds more than homes

Builders For Christ is building more than homes on the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona. It's working with WELS Apache Lutheran churches to build learning opportunities for local residents and a chance for volunteers to show Christian love in action.



Builders for Christ and local Apache volunteers are working together to rebuild homes on the reservation.

Anna Sherod, Kingdom Workers' field manager for the White Mountain and San Carlos Apache Reservations in Arizona, discovered this opportunity when church and community members approached her for help with their homes after they noticed construction projects to improve WELS church properties on the reservation. She started looking at housing statistics and realized that many homes were in extreme disrepair, overcrowded, and unsafe to live in. This led to a connection with the local Tribal Housing Authority, who was fighting an uphill battle to keep up with requests for help. "We talked to them about how we could piggyback on efforts that were already happening and try to add extra manpower to them," she says.

Enter Builders For Christ (BFC), an arm of Kingdom Workers that offers volunteer labor to help build churches and other facilities. BFC volunteers came in for four weeks in 2016 and six

weeks in 2017 to rebuild houses on the reservation. In 2017, 26 BFC volunteers over the course of those six weeks worked on three homes from demolition to dry wall, complete with electrical and plumbing hook-ups—close to move-in ready. Their labor is allowing the Tribal Housing Authority to renovate another three homes this year.

But that's just a start in the difference these volunteers are making. Through community focus groups, Sherod also discovered that there is 75 percent underemployment or unemployment on the reservation. "People needed things to do in the community that were constructive and meaningful," she says. These building projects gave local volunteers an opportunity to work on something productive, keep up their construction skills, and get further job-skill training from experienced BFC craftsmen.

"And whenever you get a BFC team in a location, you're going to have incredible opportunities for fellowship and spiritual strengthening," says Sherod. Besides daily conversations between the workers, lunchtime devotions conducted by local WELS pastors offered hope and comfort from God's Word.

Projects like these don't only help the local communities—they also motivate and encourage the BFC volunteers. Howard and Nancy Wilch, members at Trinity, Jenera, Ohio, volunteered both years. "We were blessed with the opportunity to not only rebuild Apache homes, but more important we were blessed with the opportunity to share our faith with the Apache people," says Howard. "What an awesome experience to share Christ with both our volunteers and the Apaches."

Kingdom Workers spreads the gospel by mobilizing Christians to create locally sustainable ministries addressing spiritual and physical needs in communities around the world. Do you want to volunteer? Learn about available opportunities at [kingdomworkers.com/opportunities](http://kingdomworkers.com/opportunities). Read about another BFC volunteer and his journey of faith on p. 14.

## Reformation 500 updates

### SUCCESS OF A RETURN TO GRACE



Hundreds of WELS congregations and groups have already hosted screenings of the Martin Luther film *A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy* in their local

communities, and hundreds more are planning showings in the upcoming months leading up to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation this October.

Lee Hitter, director of WELS Communications, says he is thrilled to see WELS congregations take advantage of this opportunity to highlight God's grace and the anniversary of the Reformation in their communities. "The reaction from our members that have seen the film is tremendous," he says. "Every Lutheran should make it a priority to see it on the big screen. Celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences."

Congregations can still host local screenings of the film. Find out how at [wels.net/reformation500](http://wels.net/reformation500).

### MOVIE AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR PREORDER

DVDs of *A Return to Grace* are available for preorder through Northwestern Publishing House. They will come out in November.

Other resources based on the movie are available for preorder, including:

- *A Return to Grace* four-week Bible study. This resource will use film segments to help viewers explore the life, times, and importance of Martin Luther. Available early summer.
- *Reformation: Grace, Faith, Scripture* Bible study. This resource includes 12 three-to-four-minute film vignettes

highlighting important truths of the Reformation. The vignettes can be used for a five-minute or a full-length Bible study (both included). They can also be used at the beginning or end of the worship service to celebrate the treasures of our Lutheran heritage. Available early summer.

- *God's Plan for Luther and Me*, a children's film to help children explore what it means to be a Lutheran Christian today as well as a curriculum of classroom activities to go with the film. Available in fall.

Learn more at [nph.net/returntoGrace](http://nph.net/returntoGrace).

## OUTREACH RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The Commission on Evangelism, Board for Home Missions, and Northwestern Publishing House have prepared materials for congregations to host four different outreach Sundays in late 2017 and early 2018. These worship resources will focus on the three *solas*, the “alones” of the Reformation, plus the one on which we are all founded: Christ alone

Nov. 5—Reformation and a focus on Scripture alone

Nov. 26—Christ the King Sunday and a focus on Christ alone

Dec. 17—Third Sunday in Advent and a focus on grace alone

Jan. 7, 2018—Epiphany and a focus on faith alone

Michael Hintz, director of the Commission on Evangelism, says these services are wonderful ways to review the history of the Reformation but also a great opportunity to share its message with unchurched family and friends. “It’s important to learn more about what the Lutheran Reformation is all about,” he says, “but most important is what God is revealing to us about himself in the Bible.”

Materials will include text studies, suggested sermon outlines, children’s message ideas, music suggestions, worship service outlines, and tips for visitor follow-up.

Resources will be available for free in early June at [wels.net/reformation500](http://wels.net/reformation500).

## A lifelong Christian resource

Northwestern Publishing House is releasing a new edition of Luther’s Catechism. While retaining the strengths of the familiar blue catechism in use for many years, this completely rewritten exposition promotes a lifelong study of the catechism for a new generation.

Stephen Geiger, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and one of the contributors to the new catechism, says, “The catechism takes divine teaching found in so many places in Scripture’s 66 books and arranges truth in an orderly way, with key Bible verses leading the reader to God’s answers for catechetical questions. Where helpful, lengthier explanations probe and explain key points of understanding.”

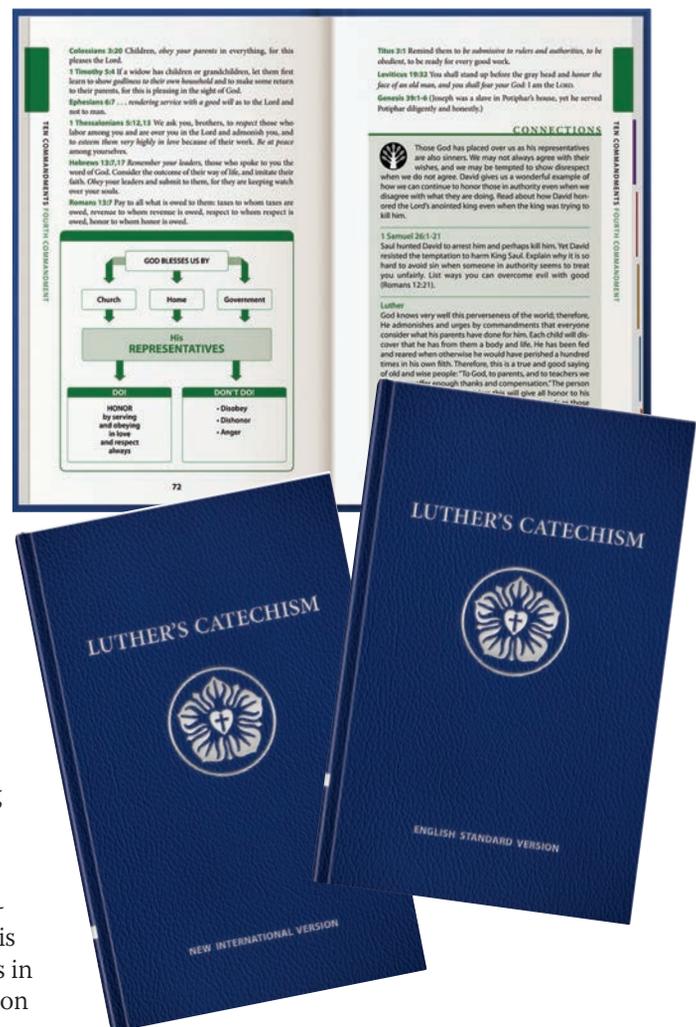
New to this edition of the catechism is a section titled “Connections” at the end of each unit. As Joel Otto, Geiger’s colleague at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and a fellow contributor to the new catechism, notes, “The ‘Connections’ section is meant to be devotional in nature. There is a short paragraph introducing a larger section of Scripture, usually from Bible history. Then, there are a couple of thought questions designed to elicit discussion. A quote from Luther follows and then a few stanzas from a hymn. This is my favorite addition to the new edition. It is my prayer that this can become the basis for home devotion with catechism students and their families or serve people in a lifelong use of the catechism.”

The new catechism also includes color images and diagrams for visual learners. It is available with Bible passages in both English Standard Version

and New International Version (2011) translations. A student workbook titled “Catechism Connections” and a downloadable file with the book’s diagrams are available for those who use the book during confirmation instruction. An e-book version of the catechism itself will be released later this year.

Geiger reminds Christians, “The Small Catechism is for you. It always has been. With this new edition, you can rediscover those treasures that are and, with God’s gracious blessing, always will be the foundation of your faith.”

To learn more and to preorder your copy, visit [nph.net/catechism](http://nph.net/catechism) or call 800-662-6022. Other contributors to the new catechism include Ray Schumacher and John Braun, both editors at Northwestern Publishing House.



## Mirror motivation

Melanie Rittierodt, a senior at Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash., felt motivated to uplift the girls at her school, and it all started with a Pinterest post. Rittierodt saw a post on her newsfeed about a motivational mirror and decided to start one in the girl's bathroom at her school.

"I just wanted to show my love for my Savior," says Rittierodt, a member at Light of Life, Covington, Wash. "And I wanted to show the girls that sometimes the simplest ways to lift someone up are through what you write and what you see."

Rittierodt recruited girls in her class to help write encouraging words on sticky notes to post on the mirror. The notes include anything from Bible passages to inspirational quotes and sayings. Instructions on the mirror tell girls to take a note if they want it and to add new notes as well. Although it started out with just the senior girls writing messages, it has expanded to include notes from other people, including visitors from other schools.

Ted Klug, principal at Evergreen Lutheran High School, said he has seen a positive impact from the motivational mirror all throughout the school.

"In the midst of this storm of life called high school, sometimes the biggest foe to a teenager is the mirror," Klug says.



This motivation mirror at Evergreen Lutheran High School offers encouragement to teenagers at a sometimes difficult time of life.

"But as [teenagers] grow and change, a few things stay the same—God's love for them and his Word."

In the fall, Rittierodt is going to San Diego State University, but she says she hopes students continue to post encouraging notes after she graduates.

And she wants to start a new motivational mirror at her college. "I'm hoping this will help me proclaim my faith more and use the gifts that God gave me," she says.

*Gabriella Moline*

## Obituaries

### William V. McCullough, 1934–2017

William McCullough was born Sept. 16, 1934, in Jacksonville, Ill. He died Feb. 20, 2017, in Springfield, Ill.

He served as pastor at Mt. Zion, Jacksonville, Ill.

He is survived by his wife, Yvonne; two daughters; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and one brother. He is preceded in death by two brothers and one sister.

### Helen E. Schultz, 1930–2017

Helen Schultz (née Berger) was born Aug. 18, 1930, in Bay City, Mich. She died Feb. 17, 2017, in Juneau, Wis.

She served St. John, Caledonia, Minn., and St. John, Juneau, Wis.

She is survived by 3 sons, 2 daughters, 12 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, and 1 sister. She is preceded in

death by her husband, Ferdinand, and three brothers.

### Harold R. Fuhrmann, 1925–2017

Harold Fuhrmann was born April 6, 1925, in Elmwood, Wis. He died Feb. 25, 2017, in Saginaw, Mich.

He served at St. John, Stanton, Neb.; Trinity, Jenera, Ohio; Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.; and St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.

He is survived by two daughters, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. He is preceded in death by his wife, Hertha, and one brother.

### Paul W. Schulz, 1948–2017

Paul Schulz was born Nov. 20, 1948, in Watertown, S.D. He died March 12, 2017, in Fond du Lac, Wis.

A 1971 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he served at

Immanuel, Hadar, Neb., and Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Kirsten; his mother; three daughters; three grandchildren; and one sister. He is preceded in death by his father.

### Elizabeth A. Bahn, 1950–2017

Elizabeth Bahn (née Phelps) was born Oct. 6, 1950, in Beaver Dam, Wis. She died March 30, 2017, in Fallbrook, Calif.

A 1972 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she served at St. John, Montello, Wis.; Pompano, Coral Springs, Fla.; and St. Stephen, Fallbrook, Calif.

She is survived by her husband, Michael; four children; eight grandchildren; one sister; and three brothers. She is preceded in death by her parents and two siblings.

## District news

### SOUTH ATLANTIC

On April 8, members of **Trinity, Castries, Saint Lucia**, hosted a community clean-up day.

### SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

On April 5, the 80,000th student walked through the door of the **Lighthouse Youth Center, Milwaukee, Wis.**

### WESTERN WISCONSIN

On April 29 and 30, 31 handbell choirs joined together to praise God at the 38th annual **WELS National Handbell Festival** in St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

**SEW—St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis.**, celebrated its 75th anniversary on April 23.

**MN—**To kick off its 150th anniversary celebration, **St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.**, worked to clean a neighborhood park. Candy Siewart, project coordinator and a teacher's aide at St. Peter's school, says, "We wanted to share God's love for us by giving back to our wonderful St. Peter community."

**WW—**Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis., recognized four teaching anniversaries this year. Celebrating 25 years in the teaching ministry are **Brad Schaper, Mark Loersch**, and **Connie Bader**. Celebrating 40 years is **Paul Wichmann**.

### NORTHERN WISCONSIN



Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., hosted the WELS 2017 National Band Festival from March 17–19. Students from 19 WELS high schools participated.

### WESTERN WISCONSIN



On April 15, the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis., posted guards outside this tomb. On Easter morning, the stone was rolled away, the tomb was opened, and banners proclaimed, "He is risen! Alleluia!"

The district reporters for this month are: MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NW—Dennis Kleist; SA—Jonathan Kuske; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

## WELS news briefs

### WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

262-242-8181; gurgelr@wls.wels.net

From April 19–21, more than 140 pastors, wives, and presenters gathered in San Antonio, Texas, to be fed in the Word and reminded of God's grace in their lives as they reached a ministry milestone. **Grow in Grace, the institute for pastoral growth at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), sponsors these retreats** for pastors and wives celebrating 3, 10, or 25 years since graduation. In 2018, a fourth retreat will be added for those celebrating 35 years since graduation. Learn more about Grow in Grace at [wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace](http://wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace).

### SPECIAL MINISTRIES

414-256-3241; specialministries@wels.net

On Easter weekend, more than 40 WELS members—both active military and civilians—from across Germany and Switzerland gathered in the walled city of Rothenburg for the **annual Easter retreat**. This was Chaplain Don Stuppy's first retreat since his arrival in January 2017. "The time passes quickly with a balance between worship, Bible study, sightseeing, and fellowship," says Stuppy. "Then attendees leave as they came—with smiles and hugs. They also leave with the bonds of friendship strengthened and their faith nurtured." The next retreat will be held in October. The civilian chaplaincy is part of the work of WELS Military Services Committee. Learn more at [wels.net/military](http://wels.net/military).



### WORLD MISSIONS

414-256-3234; bwm@wels.net

Twenty-three missionary kids (MK)—ranging in age from 16 to 50—along with spouses and children attended a **WELS MK Retreat** in April. Organized by missionary kids, this retreat offered support for adults who grew up in a WELS mission field. "When you come back from a mission field, your sense of identity can be lost," says Anna Sherod, a co-organizer of the retreat who spent much of her childhood in Japan. "We want to provide a way for people to connect and to feel part of a community that understands that unique experience and also unleash people to use their experiences and gifts within God's kingdom now." Attendees created a collaborative art piece, discussed their unique challenges and blessings, networked, and worshiped together. World Missions helped fund this retreat. Learn more at [facebook.com/WELSMKS](https://facebook.com/WELSMKS).



# SALT

— of the —

# EARTH

As disciples of Jesus, we are to love others. The apostle Paul directs us to put our love into action.

Peter L. Unnasch

On Christmas Eve of 1863, at the height of the American Civil War, a Northern commander asked for volunteers to take part in a special mission. The mission was dangerous, but vital. Men raised their hands. Soon those men boarded two ships and quietly steamed south. By Christmas morning, they had reached their objective—a place called Bear Inlet, North Carolina. If successful, this team of volunteers would put a dagger into the Southern war effort. Through good timing and good fortune, the team succeeded. And as a result, that entire region of the South moaned in distress.

The Northern soldiers' objective, however, was not some supply depot or warehouse. Their objective was salt. The Bear Inlet Salt Works produced salt for the Confederacy. Such a loss was disastrous.

When you and I sit in a fast-food restaurant and shake the white shaker on our fries, it's easy to forget that cheap, plentiful salt is a very recent thing. It's easy to forget what a profound necessity salt is. For thousands of years, salt was humanity's refrigerator. It was the only way to preserve food and prevent starvation. Salt was essential for tanning leather. It promoted the healing of wounds. And salt held the priceless magic of mak-

ing the tasteless taste good. For this reason, salt possessed the power to establish the location of major cities, lay out trade routes, even spark wars. Often it served as currency.

And the need for salt remains profound. At last count, there are more than 14,000 known uses for it—including what salt does to keep our bodies alive. You and I cannot survive without it.

With all that in mind, perhaps Jesus is saying more than we realize when he proclaims, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13).

This article is the first of a series that will consider how you and I, by God's grace, are here on this earth to impact people through the message of the gospel. We'll look to the words of Paul from Romans 12:9-21 to help us see how we can be God's salt in our daily lives.

## **"LOVE MUST BE SINCERE."**

Has sincerity vanished? If you were to ask people to say one word to describe our society's attitude for the last 20 years or so, no doubt many would choose the word *cynical*. A pure cynic is distrustful of everything. A pure cynic takes pleasure in mocking someone instead of listening and learning. A pure cynic is al-

ways looking for the next punch line at someone else's expense.

Recently, however, some observers of our culture have suggested that we have begun to enter what they call "post cynicism." This is simply their way of saying that maybe, just maybe, our society is getting tired of assuming that everything is a big joke. After all, if you spend your life only making fun of other people and their ideas, you still have no answers when the day is done.

Perhaps there is a hunger for something more after all. For example, have you heard the true story of Marty Martinson? Marty was an elderly gentleman who worked as a check-out clerk at a Wal-Mart. Whenever Marty was behind a register, the manager couldn't help but notice that a lot of customers chose to get into Marty's line—even when that meant a longer wait, and even when other registers were wide open. What drew them to Marty's line was a deceptively simple thing. Each time Marty got done ringing up your items, he would come around from behind the register, look you in the eye, shake your hand, or give you a hug. In other words, it was an unhurried moment of sincerity. It was an authentic moment of genuine caring. And the people in Marty's line couldn't get enough of it.

The Greek word for *sincere* means "without hypocrisy." Christian love is not about putting on an act. But when the Lord, through Paul, tells us that "love must be sincere," he does it with the understanding that each of us still has a sinful nature, an old sinful self. And our old, sinful selves are very, very good at insincerity.

In fact, it's no secret that the charge of insincerity against the church has been around for a long time—people going through the motions, outward actions devoid of any gratitude for Christ or love for others. And as you and I know, the charge of insincerity can often be right on target in your life and mine. Every time I give in to that sinful impulse to put on an act, I let down all the people who are waiting in Marty Martinson's line. I stand in the way of the gospel. I fail my Lord.

When Jesus entered our time and space, he wore no mask. He put on no act. Rather, in full sincerity of heart, he looked at you and me and said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Then he went to the cross to make it so. It is that life of perfect sincerity on our behalf that empowers you and me to give unhurried, authentic moments of genuine caring to others.

**"HATE WHAT IS EVIL;  
CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD."**

Simple words, aren't they? Simple, clear, concise, short. To see a forgiven soul taking those words to heart, however—that is to see a life that cannot help but impact the lives of others.

Some time ago, it was my great privilege to watch the good news of Jesus season such a soul. Troy had grown up in a difficult and angry household. He dulled the bitterness and filled the void with alcohol. Years passed. Eventually, the alcohol abuse spilled over and began to poison other parts of his life. He wound up in prison. When he completed his sentence, all he knew was that he did not want to go back to what his life had been. Nevertheless, the emptiness persisted.

Enter Jesus. The message of what we possess in our Savior brought quiet tears to his eyes. So overwhelming was the proclamation of God's grace—God's undeserved love on the basis of Jesus as our substitute—that it took time for him to grasp it. From then on, however, Troy spoke openly about where his focus now was. His focus was on keeping his back turned on the dark things of this world and keeping his face where it could bask in the light of Jesus. This single-minded determination began to radiate. It began to touch others. Rescued in Jesus, Troy is now God's salt.

You are too.

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*Peter Unnasch is pastor at Saint Lucas, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

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

*Hate*

WHAT

IS EVIL;

*cling*

TO

WHAT IS

*good.*

ROMANS 12:9



# PROVIDING A CHRIST-CENTERED HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Rachel Hartman and Keith Siverly

## REACHING OUT TO THE SUDANESE

In 2003, “we had just built an addition to our church,” recalls Keith Siverly, pastor at St. Mark, Mankato, Minn. “Two boys rode by. They were both on one bike and I said, ‘I hope you don’t have to travel far.’”

The boys responded by saying, “We want to join your church.”

The two children rode away on their bikes but returned a little while later with a van full of people, including their mother.



Fifteen South Sudanese children attend Risen Savior Lutheran School, the school connected with St. Mark, Mankato, Minn.

The parents were originally from South Sudan and had come to the United States as refugees. After settling in the area, they were interested in a place where they could worship and where their children could receive a Christian education.

The family soon became members of the congregation. During the coming years, other families with a South Sudanese background learned of the church as well. “It’s grown over the years,” remarks Siverly. “We now have 15 South Sudanese students in our grade school out of 93 students, and 38 members of our church are South Sudanese.”

## CONNECTING WITH WELS CHURCHES

Refugees from the Nuer tribe who have fled from South Sudan have settled in other places besides Minnesota. After leaving their country due to civil unrest, these individuals and families have stayed in refugee camps and gone through long processes to come to the United States and Canada.

Pastor Peter Bur is one of these refugees. Bur came to Omaha, Nebraska, and began worshipping at Good Shepherd in 2010. At the time, he was serving as a spiritual leader for South Sudanese immigrants. Bur enrolled in the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI), which is offered through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis. The PSI guides non-traditional students through pre-seminary and seminary training.

Bur graduated in 2015 and now works with a group of about 55 South Sudanese in Omaha. He helps coordinate the pastoral training of other South Sudanese in both North America and refugee camps in Africa. He also has continually sought ways to connect South Sudanese immigrants throughout the United States and Canada with WELS congregations in their area.

One of the men Bur encouraged to find a WELS church had settled in the Calgary, Alberta, area. “In 2013, a Sudanese man came to our church,” says Mike Vogel, pastor at St. Paul, Calgary. “He had the names of three WELS churches scrawled on a piece of paper. He had heard of us through Peter Bur.”

The man brought one family after another to the congregation. “We now have 50 that we serve,” explains Vogel.

## MEETING LANGUAGE NEEDS

Those arriving from South Sudan generally speak the Nuer language, but as families settle in North America, English

enters into their homes and becomes the predominant language for their children.

“The first generation who are here were in refugee camps and then came here,” explains Siverly. “Those who are 18 and under—all the kids we have in the school—were born in the United States. The children often can speak the language of Nuer but can’t read it. The parents can frequently speak English but have trouble reading it.”

The group in Mankato meets once a month for a service in the Nuer language. “We realize on a local level there’s a value in meeting and having a service in your own language,” says Siverly. “They are usually three-hour services, and they are very uplifting for them.”

At Lincoln Heights in Des Moines, Iowa, a group of about 15 adults are confirmed members, and these individuals attend along with their children. “Our goal is to train another Sudanese leader for that group who can speak their language,” notes Matt Pfeifer, pastor at Lincoln Heights. “Right now, we use sermons from Pastor Peter Bur in Omaha. He sends them to the men in the congregation to read in their language.”

### SERVING WITH OPEN ARMS

The Sudanese are appreciative of the opportunities for their children at Risen Savior, the grade school connected with St. Mark in Mankato. “Parents are very much into family and Christian education, and that’s key for us,” says Siverly. “We are known in the community as a place that can help you.”

The ministry reaches to a personal level as well. “There are struggles when you first come to a country,” notes Siverly. “I try to go to basketball games, dentist appointments, and other things they need help with.”

Some children have gone on to attend Minnesota Valley Lutheran, a high school in the area, after graduating from Risen Savior.

At St. Paul in Calgary, the congregation has welcomed the Sudanese families along with other members from differ-



Peter Bur at a recent South Sudanese mission planning conference. Here South Sudanese spiritual leaders and their Anglo partners met with synod leaders to discuss future ministry plans for work in the United States and abroad.

ent cultural backgrounds. “We worship all together,” says Vogel. “We integrate with them and feel like they are part of our church.”

### REACHING NEAR AND FAR

“Seattle has become sort of a gateway for the Sudanese,” points out Joel Hoff, pastor at Divine Peace, Renton, Wash. “Twice a month, they have Nuer services [at Divine Peace] in the afternoon, and the members will join us for worship and commune twice a month. It’s helping our congregation as we enjoy the blessing of world missions at our doorstep.”

South Sudanese members are also looking at ways of serving refugees still in camps in Africa. “Two of our members are involved in Kingdom Worker efforts,” adds Pfeifer. They are scheduled to help carry out health-related workshops and also evangelism opportunities to refugees in Ethiopia. “We do local ministry here, but the first-generation Sudanese are very focused on helping friends and families in refugee camps. Their mind always goes back to Africa.”

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*Rachel Hartman and her husband, Missionary Michael Hartman, serve in Leon, Mexico.*

This is the third article in a series about cross-cultural outreach in the U.S. and Canada. Read more about training South Sudanese refugees in Kenya on p. 20. Learn about mission outreach opportunities at [wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions).

## MEET THE OMOT FAMILY

Teresa Omot is the mother of Cham, who graduated from Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School in 2016. Her son Dunwa currently attends high school there, and her other four children go to Risen Savior Lutheran School in Mankato, Minn.

Teresa recalls her journey from a village in South Sudan to Ethiopia to a refugee camp in Kenya to the US and eventually to Minnesota. Jakoni, Teresa’s husband, emigrated from Ethiopia to America to forge a new life for them. Upon his arrival, he initially found work at a hotel for \$6 an hour. Every month he sent \$100 to Teresa so she could support the family. It took three years of



Teresa and her four children who attend Risen Savior Lutheran School, Mankato, Minn.

bureaucratic red tape before Teresa received permission to join Jakoni in America.

Jakoni had found other work at a meat packing plant in Fargo, but the closure of the plant prompted a move to Mankato. There the family came into contact with St. Mark Lutheran Church. They soon became members and enrolled their children in the congregation’s Christian education programs. To listen to Teresa is to listen to a mother speak of the joy and peace her children experience daily through their Christ-centered education.

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*Keith Siverly is pastor at St. Mark, Mankato, Minnesota.*



# Never alone

Bonnie Wasser

**One life changes suddenly and unexpectedly, but the Lord's promises and his peace remain.**

My husband, Bob, and I boarded the plane together in Florida, leaving our work with troubled teens at Calvary Academy Ministries for a short vacation. We were heading north to visit our children and grandchildren.

An hour and a half later, I walked off the plane alone . . . following the EMTs carrying Bob.

On board the plane, he'd been given constant CPR by four doctors (including a cardiologist), a nurse practitioner, and multiple well-trained airline attendants—to no avail. After the emergency landing with EMTs waiting, they took him to a trauma center minutes away. But Bob's heart never started. The Lord had taken Bob home, and after 52 years together, I was alone.

**The thought of calling all 25 of our kids was daunting.** After the first two, they promised to make sure their brothers and sisters were contacted. Then as I was sitting and praying and gathering my thoughts for the next step, it dawned on me that the Lord had

planned this well. Yes, I was in a strange city, without luggage, without Bob, but two of my Wisconsin sons were already on their way and estimated their arrival time at ten hours. Meanwhile, I knew that our friend and coworker lived less than two hours away. I called; Pastor Schultz and his wife, Diane, would pick me up in two hours. So I waited . . . and pondered the blessings of having Bob by my side for 52 years.

For the next week back in Wisconsin, I was seldom alone as kids, family, friends, and coworkers gathered for the funeral to be held in our former congregation where our son and his family still attended. It was comforting to be surrounded by love, but we all knew we would too soon be heading back to our daily lives. The question "What are your plans?" had to be answered. My kids made it clear that I had many places to go; their homes were all open to me. My time was spent in constant prayer. "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Yet I knew. There was only one way to go.

Back to Florida and my work at Calvary. To those who expressed surprise, I simply answered, “Bob’s work is finished; mine isn’t.” To those who questioned how I was going to do it, I simply answered, “One day at a time, and when it gets too hard, hour by hour, and minute to minute.” With every answer, I prayed for wisdom and his peace.

**The worst came when I headed back to Florida.** On the plane, I prayed for alone time, found a window seat, opened my book, and pretended to read. At the airport, I got my luggage and found the car. With prayer, I drove back to the campus. There were no tears, just a horribly heavy feeling in my heart and my stomach. Forty minutes later, I pulled off the freeway and realized I should pick up perishables because there were no more stores between my exit and the campus, a half hour away. So I pulled into the parking lot, cried, and prayed, “Lord, I can’t do this alone. Please give me your peace so I can get through this and do what you want me to do.”

Wiping my tears, I realized that my heart wasn’t hurting so much and my stomach no longer felt sick and heavy. So I went in, got my perishables, and drove home.

On the campus, I pulled into my carport, took my groceries and luggage inside, and began putting things away. I hoped that no one had seen me arrive, but a knock on our front door said my coworkers had. As I opened the door, Mr. Frank entered, and we simply cried together. Finally we were able to talk. I prayed for the Lord’s peace for both of us . . . and it came. The missing was horrible, but bearable.

**That began my acceptance.** Not of Bob’s death—I had witnessed and accepted that on the plane and in the emergency room. Rather it was my acceptance of the Lord’s peace that I couldn’t begin to explain but that I knew in my weakest times. I had only to ask, and the Lord gave it to me again . . . and again . . . and again.

Initially I waited, expecting the usual stages of grief to come. But instead of feeling anger at Bob or God, I was sur-



Bob and Bonnie Wasser and some of their children and grandchildren at a recent family wedding.

prised that I felt angry with Adam and Eve for blowing it and falling into sin. If they had not given in to temptation, I would still have Bob at my side.

Then I realized that I was dreading going to chapel each day and to church on Sundays because I couldn’t sing. Every hymn brought tears, not because of memories (although those of singing with Bob were there), but rather because I felt the words and meanings in the hymns so deeply and so clearly it was overwhelming. Tears came instead of words.

The tasks of dealing with things like Social Security loomed like mountains and after almost four months of trying to communicate with them—several times on the phone and one face-to-face visit of three hours—I thought we were finally on the same page. But then I received a letter from Social Security addressed to Bob that accused him of fraud for continuing to receive a monthly check. To avoid charges, he had to appear in person in their office with his photo identification. Another two hours on the phone brought to light that the funeral director had reported Bob’s date of death one day off, so my filings never got connected. The worst moment came when the patient young man asked if I was sure which date was correct. After my sobbing ceased, I assured him that since I was at Bob’s side when his heart stopped I was sure of the date. He apologized for asking.

I learned to recognize the times I needed to quit thinking and to break my tasks into simpler and smaller tasks . . . turning to the Lord to get through each.

**Months passed.** When I felt overwhelmed and my heart was unbearably heavy and my stomach felt sick, I realized I was trying to cope with everything on my own instead of depending on the Lord. My prayer, “Lord, please give me your peace!” always brought his peace . . . just as Jesus told us in John 14: “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (vv. 26,27).

I am not afraid. And my prayers now include asking the Lord to give his peace to all who are hurting. His peace is not a worldly gift. It is far better and truly beyond our understanding.

Yes, occasionally I feel lonely . . . but with the Lord’s peace, I never feel alone.

And I know. My work isn’t finished yet.

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*Bonnie Wasser is a member at Living Savior, Valrico, Florida.*

# Chopped liver syndrome

Jeffrey L. Samelson

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When Lutheran teachings and traditions are undervalued, truth is lost and faith is weakened.

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At the company picnic, the time comes for awards and recognitions, and the boss asks for everyone's attention. He begins a small speech, lauding the work done by a 20-something new hire who over the last six months managed to bring in \$5,000 in new revenue. The boss then asks everyone to applaud. All the employees clap except one—a middle-aged loyal worker who brought in over \$200,000 in sales each of the last four years. She says, under her breath, "What am I, chopped liver?"

You might be familiar with the expression. It signals frustration or resentment when others are praised and you are overlooked or your contributions are ignored. And while we might want to think that such feelings have no place in believers' hearts or among Christians, being slighted is all too often real. Might you be experiencing—or contributing to—"Chopped Liver Syndrome"?

Perhaps it has to do with members who have moved away from your congregation, and you lament that your church no longer has their talents in art or music or their friendly way of greeting visitors. Sadly, you don't realize that every time you express those feelings you make the remaining faithful members feel like their skills with crafts or choir or their every-Sunday efforts to welcome guests are unrecognized and unappreciated.

We also might find the syndrome in our synod when the treasures of our Lutheran heritage are undervalued or ignored while the latest and greatest new ideas and practices from evangelicalism are hailed by fellow members of WELS as signs of churches that truly love God and care about reaching the lost. Confessional Lutherans worldwide in this Reformation anniversary year will be frustrated at the attention paid to the observations of those who are Lutherans in name only or whose teachings and practices are as opposed to the gospel and scriptural truth as they were in the 16th century, all while we,

who celebrate as Christians and churches who actually believe and teach what the Bible teaches as Luther did, are dismissed as too small or backward to be of interest. When we see the heterodox and heretical praised for their devotion while the orthodox are ignored, should we say, "What are we, chopped liver?"

It's not a new thing in the church. The apostle Paul, in his letters, ends up having to remind the members of churches he founded, like the one in Corinth, that the honor they were giving to some of the "latest and greatest" teachers that came to them was honor that belonged properly to those faithful to the Word. We even see something like "Chopped Liver Syndrome" in God himself. Through the Old Testament prophets, God points out how his people faithlessly go chasing after other gods, giving them praise, offering them sacrifices, and looking to them for blessings and prosperity—all the while ignoring him, the faithful Lord who guided, loved, and made them his own; brought them out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land; and blessed them abundantly.

"What am I, chopped liver?" might sound a little self-centered. But in the church, we shouldn't consider it self-centered. The gifts and service of every member of Christ's body need to be appreciated, and the whole body suffers if they are not. And when Lutheran teachings and traditions are undervalued, truth is lost and faith is weakened. Do your church a favor. Don't treat its treasures—its people or heritage—as chopped liver.

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



# MONUMENTS

## *Lasting Memories*

**The Tower of Babel was a tribute to humans' own arrogance. Instead of honoring ourselves, we need to work together to make a name for Christ.**

Samuel C. Degner

They intended it to be the original skyscraper—"a tower that reaches to the heavens" (Genesis 11:4). Engineered with the latest technology—bricks and tar instead of stones—it would showcase their skill and ingenuity.

### A MONUMENT TO HUMANKIND

That didn't sit well with the One who had formed man from the same earth they used to form those bricks. Their stated goal was to make a name for themselves, not for God. They were planning a city where they could all stay together instead of spreading out and filling the earth as God had commanded. This structure stretching heavenward was a giant fist in God's face.

Understand how potent pride is. It sets us up against God. It seeks our glory at his expense. It convinces us that we can defy God's commands. Yet when we build and improve and accumulate with the purpose of making a name for ourselves, these things become tributes to our own arrogance.

Want to know where that leads? Travel to the Middle East and look for the tower our ancestors undertook at Shinar. You won't find it. Perhaps a few rows of bricks are there somewhere, buried under centuries of sand. Maybe they were scavenged long ago for another purpose.

What you will find there are people you probably don't understand. Like anywhere else in this world, you'll find human beings whose differences put them in constant conflict with each other—a reminder that here we have no perfect society and no enduring city (Hebrews 13:14).

### A CONTINUAL REMINDER OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

"If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other" (Genesis 11:6,7). The Lord saw humankind's prideful defiance. He came down and put an end to their vain ambitions.

Yet even in this act of judgment, we see God's mercy. United by one language around one sinful purpose, what would have become of humanity? By frustrating their purposes, the Lord granted them an opportunity for repentance. Moreover, he had a gracious plan to fulfill. He had a Savior to send, who wasn't going to be born in Babel. Humans could defy God to their own peril, but they could not thwart his loving blueprint for this world.

Centuries later, with humans still busy exalting themselves, the Lord came down again. Only this time, he came not to judge but to save, not to scatter but to gather.

"And I," Jesus said, "when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). This was the fulfillment of the Lord's plan for all people. Human efforts could never reach heaven, so God's Son came down to us. He humbled himself to die for our pride and disobedience. He rose to guarantee us a place with all his people in the eternal city built by God himself.

Now we have a new purpose. We work together to make a name for him, not for ourselves, to highlight his accomplishments, not our own. We strive to raise up the cross of Christ for all peoples and languages.

A monument to our Savior God.

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

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



*John O'Brien*

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We come together  
to listen to God's  
Word to sharpen  
our faith, correct  
our wayward  
tendencies, and  
steel our  
commitment  
to Jesus.

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## Coming to church

"If I believe in Jesus, why do I have to come to church or even belong to a church? Isn't it enough that I believe?" Those questions are among the questions asked by people who check "None" when asked about their church preference.

The "Nones" have concluded that the organized church is just too difficult for them. Perhaps they have had a bad experience with a pastor or priest. Perhaps they have listened to or sat through too many meetings that go nowhere and may have been filled with too much bitterness, anger, or squabbling. It may, of course, be simpler than that. They just want their freedom.

I suppose that there's another group of people who ask those questions or at least variations of them. We call them delinquents—members who stay away from worship. Pastors and elders in our congregations spend time in prayer and use energy trying to connect with them and encourage them to come to church.

In either case, they don't come to church—at least very often. Perhaps they come for Christmas and Easter—the "C and E" Christians. Some may actually be quite devout—reading their Bibles and even attending a Bible class hosted by a neighbor. But coming to church is another story altogether.

We might imagine the reasons they don't come and the rationalizations they adopt to justify staying away. Services are boring? Too much emphasis on money? Church people are hypocrites? Pastors are unfriendly, pompous, or whatever? So many people and so many excuses!

Why *do* we come to church? Perhaps we have as many answers to that question as others have excuses not to come. Let me suggest a few reasons to come to God's house.

I come to sing God's praises with others. Yes, we are a flawed assembly with all kinds of people from a great spec-

trum of personalities and backgrounds. We may not be friends with everyone at worship, but we are all children of God by faith in Jesus. That draws us together, and our love for Jesus helps us put aside our differences. We sing together—even if some can't sing a note. Our hearts are joined to praise God for his grace in Jesus.

I come for the forgiveness of sins. Martin Luther mentioned something that I think is remarkable. Luther reminds us that when we come to the Lord's Supper, God places the forgiveness there on the table for us. That's true whenever we hear the gospel. God places forgiveness in front of me—in front of us all—as his gift. We accept his gift by faith, and we take it home, wrapped up in our hearts, for comfort and strength. Whatever lies ahead during the week, we have what is important.

I come for instruction. The daily tasks and weekly worries wear down our resolve to remain faithful. We come together to listen to God's Word to sharpen our faith, correct our wayward tendencies, and steel our commitment to Jesus.

I come to share a portion of the income God gives me. The collection plate is a welcome opportunity. We bring our offerings to maintain the building we use for worship, to support the servants we call to teach us and our children, and to spread the message of Jesus through our mission efforts.

I'm also there to smile and encourage others who come. I don't always know the challenges they face every day, but our time together includes prayers for each other—some spoken and others unspoken. Part of coming together is the joy of seeing other disciples of Jesus worship.

## Living a life of repentance

Joel D. Otto

When Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses, he was seeking a debate on the issue of indulgences, especially as they related to the repentance of the Christian. He emphasized this in the first thesis: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance” (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 31, p. 25).

The problem is that the Roman Catholic Church had turned repentance into a work the believer had to do to merit God’s forgiveness. At least once a year, the believer had to confess all his sins to the priest. This act of confessing—aloud—all the sins that could be remembered merited forgiveness. But for the forgiveness to truly take effect, the believer also had to do certain acts of penance, or “satisfactions.” Since most people could not remember all their sins or do all the works of penance, most people had to spend time in purgatory before they could be allowed into heaven. Indulgences were a way to shorten the time in purgatory or remove the burden of some of the “satisfactions.”

Luther was rightly concerned that this was leading people to either uncertainty or complacency. On the one hand, how could they know if they had remembered all their sins? On the other hand, if they had paid for indulgences, they really didn’t need to be repentant. Why bother, if a piece of paper said they were released from purgatory?

Instead, Luther defined *repentance* the way the Bible does. There are two parts. The first is that we confess our sins; we acknowledge that we are guilty and deserve God’s judgment; we are sorry or contrite. The second is that we receive the forgiveness Jesus has won for us; we believe that God forgives our sins for Jesus’ sake; we are comforted (1 John 1:8,9). The Augsburg Confession summarized it this way. “Now properly speaking, true repentance is not-

ing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and yet at the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ. Such faith, in turn, comforts the heart and puts it at peace” (*The Book of Concord*, p. 44).

Being truly Lutheran—and truly Christian—is to live a life of repentance; to daily confess our sins and rejoice in the forgiveness of sins; and to plead for God’s mercy, trusting that he is merciful. That’s how, in the face of our sinful nature and the devil’s attacks, we live in the confidence of God’s grace.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Consider the account of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel chapters 11,12). What lesson does this incident teach us about the importance of being confronted by God’s law?
2. Read Psalm 32:1-5 and Mark 2:1-12. Why is it so important to be regularly comforted by God’s gospel of forgiveness?
3. In Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14), compare the attitudes of the two men. Why is it easy to gravitate to the attitude of the Pharisee? What lesson does Jesus teach about repentance?
4. Read Romans 6:1-4. Describe how repentance takes us back to our baptism.

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



This is the ninth 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 June 5 at [wels.net/forwardinchrist](http://wels.net/forwardinchrist).



**WHAT IT MEANS  
TO BE TRULY  
LUTHERAN**

Last week, at a neighboring congregation's chili supper, my seven-year-old called attention to a verse stenciled on the wall: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6 King James Version). I hadn't noticed it.

He asked, "What about Judas? He departed from the way. How's that passage true?"

I tried explaining, "Most of the proverbs aren't so much promises. They're more descriptions of how things generally work." His curiosity satisfied, he resumed making room on his plate for second helpings of Jell-O®.

Why do we react to that Bible verse looking for ways for it to be untrue, like my son's question? Our minds quickly search for dreadful exceptions: sons or daughters departing from "the way."

There's another reaction. My reaction last week: ignoring it. For all I cared, the stenciled verse could've been 15 feet tall instead of 3. So often, I ignore opportunities to set my children on God's path—the "way" that God says I can expect he'll never let them "depart from." My Savior says I can give my kids the only thing they really need, promising "it will not be taken away from" them (Luke 10:42). I hardly take him seriously.

I need somewhere to hide these sins. That place is behind Jesus' perfect love for children.

One picture that seems to be behind that Hebrew word translated "train up" is to *get a mouth used to something*: breaking in a horse, so its mouth gets used to having a rope or bit in it or getting a child ready for solid food by rubbing the sweet juice of a date on the child's gums.

That's a vivid picture for me. We buckled our six-month-old daughter into the highchair. She was ready for solid food. So while the rest of us ate spaghetti and meatballs, she took a couple bites of a banana. She didn't know what to do then—both bites ended up back on the highchair tray. I'm sure we'll have her try again. If she doesn't care for bananas, the rest of the produce aisle awaits! We want her to like fruits and veggies all her life long.

How does that picture apply to my spiritual opportunities to train up my children?

Some days, when I reject the lie that I'm too busy to pray for my children, I remember the "fruit of the Spirit"—"love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22,23). I pray about each child, about the fruit that particular child seems to be growing least. Sometimes I even have sense to plan a conversation—over McBreakfast or while driving to camp—with a particular child about the fruit I've been praying they'd develop.

Some of my boys are too big to buckle in and spoon-feed. One is taller than I am. But they're still not too old to fit into Proverbs 22:6, a verse which clearly calls dads like me to enormous optimism. The ever-constant Lord, the I AM, in his great love for me and my children, wants me to get my hopes up—when I'm praying for my kids, talking with them, and working with them to increase their taste for the Spirit's fruit. I should joyfully and confidently expect that the I AM will keep that taste in their mouths even when I'm in heaven and they're old and gray. He won't let them "depart from it."

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# Train up a dad

**Feed your children the one thing they need,  
and trust God to keep them faithful.**

Christopher S. Doerr



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