

Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE



Because Jesus lives

Hope springs to life in life's darkest hours. *Page 10*

A Time for EVERYTHING

God blesses us with countless exciting milestones each year. Take time to celebrate confirmations, Mother's Day, weddings, and time alone with God with these special books and gifts from Northwestern Publishing House.



New!

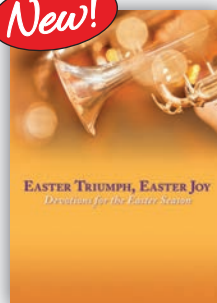
There's a Prayer for That

The Word encourages you to pray in every circumstance. Whether life leads you to bring thanks, praise, or troubles before God, he will listen. *There's a Prayer for That* guides you in this continual conversation with God. This collection contains over 450 prayers for the people and situations in your life, whether you are thinking about your family and friends, your future, or your faith. No matter what tomorrow brings, there's a prayer for that—and there's a loving Father who wants you to talk to him. Softcover, 173 pages.

Includes prayers from **Meditations Daily Devotional®!**

LU0600760, \$10.99

New!



Easter Triumph, Easter Joy

Edited by Curtis A. Jahn

Let the trumpets sound, for your Savior conquered death for you! Through his grace, his victory is your victory. *Easter Triumph, Easter Joy* helps you rejoice in this victory through God's Word. This collection contains 56 insightful devotions for Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. Focusing on the scriptural truths of Easter morning—not just on those of Lent—*Easter Triumph, Easter Joy* helps you to remember the glorious resurrection of Christ. Softcover, 131 pages.

LU0600754, \$12.99

Eternity Cross Necklace

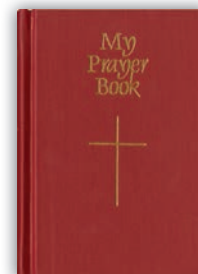
This silver-plated cross necklace is an elegant symbol of God's unending love for his people. With its unique, fashionable, and meaningful design, it makes a perfect present for confirmands on their confirmation day and moms on Mother's Day. So on these days and every day, help your loved one to remember and cherish the eternal goodness of Christ with this special piece. Chain measures 18" long.



LU2002878, \$25.99

My Prayer Book

Encourage confirmands to turn to the Lord with every joy, question, or concern. This book contains over 200 prayers for the church, family, nation, and more. Resources in the back of the book refer readers to Bible chapters and stories relevant to these prayers for further reading. Help the young Christian in your life learn to talk with God frequently, openly, and trustingly with *My Prayer Book*. Hardcover, 235 pages.



LU062169, \$11.99



Add a **heartfelt touch** to their hymnal, prayer book, or Bible! Ask about custom imprinting by phone or select a Personalization Option online.



Let them pick out their ideal Christ-centered gift! **NPH Gift Cards** are suited for every occasion and can be purchased in any dollar amount.

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

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

**NORTHWESTERN
PUBLISHING HOUSE**



**NPH CHRISTIAN
BOOKS & GIFTS STORE**

**NPH
EXTRA
PROGRAM**

f Find us on
Facebook

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

FEATURES

10

Because Jesus lives

God works through believers around the world to share the message of his victory.

Bradley D. Wordell

12

What is truth?

Religious truth cannot be based on human opinions and ideas.

Arthur A. Eggert

14

Confessions of faith

A man discovers God's answers to life's important questions.

Gabriella Moline

16

**Heart to heart:
Parent conversations**

What do I need to consider before I give my child a cell phone?

26

Salt of the earth

When we are hurt, we want to hurt whoever hurt us. God has a different way for his people.

Bruce A. McKenney

28

Reaching Native Christians

WELS' first missionaries to a foreign nation were determined to share the gospel with the Apache people.

*Daniel J. Rautenberg and
Debbie K. Dietrich*

30

God's map

We might not know where we're going, but God does.

Nicole E. Peterson

36

Easter emotion and faith

The angel's message at the tomb brings comfort, joy, and relief.

Daniel M. Solofra



APACHE CHRISTIANS

Celebrating 125 years of God's blessings as the first WELS world mission

Join the Apache anniversary celebration!

From two Lutheran missionaries in 1893 to thousands of Apache Christians today, Native American Missions invites you to join the Apache anniversary celebration.

June 22 in Wisconsin

KI Convention Center, Green Bay, Wis.

6 to 9 p.m.—Meet Apache brothers and sisters, experience their music, and learn about their history

October 26–28 in Arizona

Oct. 26—Self-guided reservation tours

Oct. 27—Anniversary celebration in Peridot, Ariz.

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.—Music, crafts, history, food; 4 p.m.—Worship; 5 p.m.—Dinner

Oct. 28—Celebration worship at all reservation WELS churches

- Host an Apache mission festival in 2018. Request a speaker at wels.net/speaker-request
- Visit NativeChristians.org for more information, or contact info@NativeChristians.org
- Like us on Facebook—[@NativeChristiansWELS](https://www.facebook.com/NativeChristiansWELS)



EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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

MANAGING EDITOR

Julie K. Wietzke
julie.wietzke@wels.net

STAFF WRITER

Nicole R. Balza
nicole.balza@wels.net

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Bill Tackmier

ART DIRECTOR

Karen Knutson

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

COPYRIGHT

©2018 by Forward in Christ. Printed in the USA. Forward in Christ grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a WELS church, school, or organization, provided that copies are distributed free and indicate Forward in Christ as the source. Artwork may not be reproduced except in the context of its article. For other copyright questions, contact Kristine Laufer, 414-615-5706; lauferk@nph.wels.net.

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

POSTMASTER

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


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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Print: USA—\$17.99; Canada—\$18.89; all other countries—air mail \$71.99. Digital: USA—\$15.99; Canada—\$16.79; all other countries—\$15.99. Premium: USA—\$18.99; Canada—\$19.94; all other countries—air mail \$72.99. Postage included, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House. Contact Northwestern Publishing House for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N 113 St, Milwaukee WI 53226-3284; 800-662-6093. Milwaukee area, 414-615-5785. nph.net/periodicals.

ON AUDIO

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

 Indicates additional online content

COVER IMAGE: iSTOCK PHOTO

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

Jesus lives! Alleluia! We rejoice with Christians around the world who call the resurrected Jesus their Savior and Lord. This includes Christians in an Asian nation where less than 1% confess faith in Jesus, a place where Christians are outcasts and often persecuted. It also includes Native Christians on reservations in Arizona, where 125 years ago WELS sent its first world missionaries.

As Brad Wordell reminds us in his article (p. 10), Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter is closely tied to the mission of the church: to spread the gospel to all creation. Wordell shares more about God's amazing power and how God has raised up pastors in an Asian nation despite the extreme challenges they and other Christians face.

We also start a three-part series this month that looks at WELS mission work on the Apache reservations (p. 28). I'm sure many didn't expect a mission to succeed in the wilds of the Arizona Territory in 1893. Yet God prevailed, and today there are more than 3,600 members in nine congregations. And these members aren't content to sit still—they want to take the message of Jesus' resurrection to the more than 500 reservations around the country.

Jesus lives! Alleluia! To whom will you tell that message?

Julie Wietzke



20



24



28



30

IN EVERY ISSUE

6

Feedback

Readers share their opinions

7

Devotion

God's gift of groaning

8

From the president's desk

Grass roots in action

9

Light for our path

Business transactions with non-Christians

18

Teen talk

Facing persecution

19

Bulletin board

Announcements from around the synod

20

News

What's happening in WELS

32

Editorial comment

Fools

33

Bible study

Majoring on the minors: Jonah

34

A thought

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever

35

Interactive Bible study

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest:
Do you have anything here to eat?

WHERE WAS GOD?

Regarding the “Light for our path” question of “Where was God?” [Feb.]. During a church shooting, why are we surprised when Christians are killed? Didn’t Jesus warn us that we would be persecuted for his name’s sake?

Blaming God is the oldest trick in the book—Adam did it first. We avoid the real question—How can human beings do such terrible things?—because the answer implicates us all. No one asks, “Where was God?” when a child bullies another or when someone curses and belittles another or engages in sexual sins, etc. It seems we only want God to act on what offends us and to tolerate sins we are okay with! Perhaps God allows extreme things to happen because sinners only recognize the evil of sin when it is violent and extreme.

Where was God during the shooting? Where he always is—suffering with his children.

*Doris Baglo
Stillwater, Minnesota*

FIGHTING THROUGH CHALLENGES

Several fine stories in the February *Forward in Christ* reminded me of how God moves us to keep going when challenges confront us.

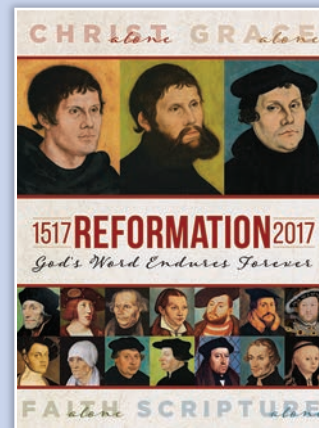
Then there was Erma Hamann’s brief obituary that mentioned the places at which she had taught. Multiple sclerosis cut Erma’s teaching career short, but even when faced with limited mobility, she refused to end her service to the church. She sized up the situation, earned a master’s degree in library science, and went to work in the library at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. Then she gave 16 years of service to Dr. Martin Luther College’s library. At DMLC, she had a motorized scooter but would only use it part of the day to prevent becoming totally dependent on it. She loved to help the faculty find books at other libraries and to be the first to catalog a book, often from Northwestern Publishing House, in OCLC, a worldwide library cooperative.

Her continued faith and dedication were an encouragement to all who met and worked with her.

*Paul R. Boehlke
New Ullm, Minnesota*

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*.

REFORMATION 500 RESOURCES



Thinking back to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017? Several items are still available to remind you of the truths Martin Luther rediscovered:

- **DVDs of the Western Wisconsin District Reformation 500 festival service.** Includes the four sermonettes and music from a 150-member children’s choir, a 225-member high school teen choir, a 300-member adult choir, a 50-member brass ensemble, and handbell choirs. \$10 (proceeds go toward ministerial education scholarships and the creation of an Evangelical Heritage Version reference study Bible). Contact Richard Lehmann, rwlehmann@sbcglobal.net.
- **A Reformation insert** first included in the October 2017 issue of *Forward in Christ*. The insert includes a time line on the development of Lutheranism as well as quotes from FIC readers about what it means to be Lutheran. Free. First come, first served. Contact *Forward in Christ*, fic@wels.net. Also available are the files used to create the insert if churches or schools want to enlarge it to display it.
- **Reformation books and Bible studies** from Northwestern Publishing House. nph.net/reformation500.

Through my Bible in 3 years

Read or listen online at wels.net/bible3.

2018
APRIL 2018

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Numbers 33–35 | 11. Mk. 5:21–6:6a | 21. Dt. 2 |
| 2. Mark 1:1–15 | 12. Mk. 6:6b–30 | 22. Dt. 3 |
| 3. Mk. 1:16–34 | 13. Mk. 6:31–56 | 23. Dt. 4:1–40 |
| 4. Mk. 1:35–2:12 | 14. Mk. 7:1–23 | 24. Dt. 4:41–5:33 |
| 5. Mk. 2:13–3:6 | 15. Mk. 7:24–37 | 25. Dt. 6 |
| 6. Mk. 3:7–19 | 16. Mk. 8:1–26 | 26. Dt. 7 |
| 7. Mk. 3:20–35 | 17. Mk. 8:27–38 | 27. Dt. 8 |
| 8. Mk. 4:1–20 | 18. Mk. 9:1–29 | 28. Dt. 9:1–10:11 |
| 9. Mk. 4:21–34 | 19. Mk. 9:30–50 | 29. Dt. 10:12–11:32 |
| 10. Mk. 4:35–5:20 | 20. Deuteronomy 1 | 30. Dt. 12 & 13 |

God's gift of groaning

We live by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Peter M. Prange

"Don't get too comfortable." I offer that guidance to my children when we've got someplace to go. Don't take off your shoes. Don't even remove your jackets. Be prepared when it's time to head out the door. Simply put, don't get too comfortable.

We like comfortable, though, don't we? It appeals to us. But bodily comfort can be damaging to the human soul. It can so easily serve as a tranquilizer to Christian faith, lulling us to spiritual sleep. Bodily comfort can be dangerous, even deadly.

AVOIDING COMFORT

That's why Jesus responded the way he did to the rich man who thought he had everything he needed stored up for many years. Jesus scolded him: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Luke 12:20). That wretched fool had put his hope in the comfortable things of this world—a deadly decision. It's why our Lutheran forefathers taught their people to pray for the Lord Jesus to *rescue them* from luxury, because luxury can be so poisonous.

Who in their right mind would offer such a prayer? Only someone who lives by faith and not by sight. Someone like St. Paul.

The apostle had learned from experience that Jesus uses groaning to serve our ultimate good. Ironically, groaning is a gift from God. It's as if Jesus has put us up in tents in this world, and "while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened." But our gracious Savior has his reasons. It's no mistake. Indeed, he "fashioned us for this very purpose" (2 Corinthians 5:4,5).

And what is his purpose? He doesn't want us to get too comfortable. Instead, he wants us to be prepared for that remarkable moment when all our dying and groaning is "swallowed up by life"



once and for all. Then we will trade in our quickly expiring earthly existence for "our heavenly dwelling" that is truly imperishable (2 Corinthians 5:4).

Jesus' main life lesson is this: We are called to "live by faith, not by sight," so we shouldn't get too comfortable here. Our Savior has far greater things in store for us, and those divine gifts will last forever. Then the groaning stops, and true, wholesome, and eternal comfort begins in Christ.

Our groaning compels us to live by faith, not by sight.

EMBRACING OUR CROSS

It's the central scriptural truth that a young friar named Martin Luther discovered in the monastery and then proclaimed to his dying day. He called it "our theology," the theology of the cross. In April 1518—five hundred years ago this month—Brother Martin presented

the cross-centered theology he found in Holy Scripture to a group of monks and scholars gathered in the German city of Heidelberg. His words caused a stir, and the reason was simple. They ran so counter to our broken and backward worldly thinking. Young Luther was imploring his listeners to heed the urgings of St. Paul to "live by faith, not by sight."

But we sinners prefer comfortable. The sooner, the better. Even St. Paul had to admit that about himself, because he was a sinner too. But Jesus opens our spiritual eyes to see the divine purpose behind our groaning, behind our suffering, behind our lack of comfort in this world. It's no accident. It's no divine oversight. It has a godly purpose, and that purpose is good.

Our groaning compels us to live by faith, not by sight, and the comfort of that blessed faith is eternal.

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



Mark Schweden

District conventions give delegates the opportunity to express opinions and grassroots input regarding matters that will come before the synod convention.

Grass roots in action

Our synod is organized into 12 geographical districts. In June of even-numbered years, each district holds a convention to consider important matters facing the synod and to conduct other business. Plans are already under way for this year's district conventions.

Delegates to the district conventions include every pastor, every male teacher, and a representative from each congregation in the district. That makes the district conventions an opportunity for truly grassroots participation in the decisions and direction of the synod.

One of the most important responsibilities of the district conventions is to elect people to serve in various important positions. Perhaps the most important of these is the position of district president, who is elected for a two-year term at each district convention.

The district president serves as the pastor of the entire district. In that role he is responsible for overseeing all doctrine and practice in the district. He is tasked with providing spiritual leadership to the called workers and congregations of the district, encouraging faithfulness to the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions. He is also responsible, along with other officers (the two district vice presidents and the district secretary, who are also elected at each district convention), for carrying out discipline when called workers or congregations stray from the truth.

Another important role of the district president is to assist congregations in the calling process. When a vacancy at a church or school occurs, the district president consults with the congregation about the congregation's ministry needs and then, when the congregation is ready to issue a divine call, provides a list of candidates along with pertinent information about those candidates.

The district president also serves as a member of the Conference of Presidents (COP). This group has the responsibility for overseeing the doctrine and practice

of the entire synod, working together to provide support and guidance to congregations and to look out for the needs of called workers.

Each district has a lay representative serving on the Synodical Council (SC). Elected by the district conventions, these representatives give each district both a voice and a set of ears in the important work carried out by the SC—another opportunity for ongoing grassroots participation in the decisions affecting the entire synod. Elections for people to serve on various district committees also take place at the district conventions.

The district conventions provide called workers and lay delegates with the opportunity to hear reports from synodical ministries and offices. Those reports typically look back and review what has been done in the past year, and they also look forward and present plans, opportunities, and challenges for the future. These reports are published in the *Report to the Twelve Districts*, which is sent to every delegate and congregation before the convention and also posted on the synod's website.

District conventions also give delegates the opportunity to express opinions and grassroots input regarding matters that will come before the synod convention in the following year. They can express support or opposition to proposals through the resolutions they pass. They can also provide input of their own choosing by asking the synod convention to address specific topics or needs.

As summer approaches, please keep these gatherings and their delegates in your prayers. Talk to your representatives about what they will be considering and give them your encouragement. They represent you and your congregation—a true exercise in grassroots participation in the work of your synod.

Find the dates and locations of this year's district conventions at wels.net/events.

Light for our path

Recently there was a news story about a Christian baker who was sued because he would not provide a wedding cake for a gay wedding. Didn't he miss out on an opportunity to show Christian love and speak truth while still providing a service? Aren't we supposed to love our neighbor?

James F. Pope

The United States Supreme Court is likely to rule on this case soon. Even without knowing how the outcome of the court's decision might affect Christians, Scripture can provide guidance for your questions.

BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS

Christians do want to "[speak] the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) on all occasions. When it comes to marriage, Christians lovingly share the biblical truth that God designed marriage to be the union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:22-24).

What happens to that confession of truth when Christians engage in business transactions with people who define marriage differently? When Christians operate businesses, they interact with and provide services for many different people.

Christians will want to understand that their transactions with non-Christian churches or individuals are not endorsements of their doctrines or practices. When Christians sell their products to individuals who self-identify with unscriptural practices or ways of living, they are not necessarily approving or sanctioning the actions of their customers. They can simply exercise Christian love by providing the service or product for the customers. Then they may also exercise their love by speaking the truth in love in those situations "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

But Christian love is not blind tolerance. There may come a time when a Christian will refuse to be a partner in what is contrary to the will of God or will bring harm to others. That too can be Christian love. A Christian will consider the role of conscience and will want to refrain from sinning against his or her conscience (Romans 14:23). Christians will wish to choose opportunities to act as disciples of Jesus and to speak the truth in love, but deciding what to do is not always easy.

NONE OF MY BUSINESS

When it comes to your questions, 1 Corinthians 5:12,13 is helpful in providing direction for Christians' interactions with unbelievers: "What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside." Those words come in the context of the apostle Paul's directing the Christians in Corinth to take action with a church member who was impenitent over an incestuous relationship. The apostle instructed the Corinthians to implement what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 18: "If your brother or sister sins . . ." (vv. 15-18). Church discipline involves those within the church. We have no specific instructions from God on addressing personal sins in the lives of those outside the church.

Certainly, those words from 1 Corinthians chapter 5 do not mean that we close our eyes and ears to what is going on in the world. What those words mean is that the church does not have the responsibility or divine mandate to discipline people who are not part of the church.

So, where does this leave us? Yes, we want to love our neighbor, but because there is no manual that spells out in detail how best to live a life of neighborly love, Christians will wrestle with questions like the one you asked. They will seek to arrive at decisions that agree with biblical principles and that do not violate consciences. They will also seek to refrain from judging the motives of fellow Christians who arrive at different decisions.

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

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

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

Psalms 119:105

BECAUSE *Jesus lives*

Jesus has overcome death. He lives!
God works through believers around the world—even in anti-Christian countries—to share the message of his victory.

Bradley D. Wordell



A recent trip to an Asian nation reminded me of God's powerful working in the world. God can make flowers blossom in the desert and myrtle trees grow where once there were only briars. God sends the gospel into the darkest corners of the earth and calls precious souls into his marvelous light. And no matter how fiercely the prince of this world roars, he cannot stop the Lord Jesus from tending his flock like a shepherd and from gathering the lambs in his arms, close to his heart.

Even in countries where the prince of darkness employs anti-Christian government policies and anti-Christian religion to threaten, abuse, and attempt to snuff out the church, yes, even there, believers remain. It is truly amazing. And those believers not only have faith, they have strong faith, rooted deeply in God's Word.

How can this be? It's only because Jesus lives. The kingdom is his, the power is his, and the glory is his, because Jesus lives.

THE KINGDOM IS HIS

Sadly, many non-Christians and, surprisingly, many who call themselves Christian say that it is arrogant and wrong to bring the Bible's teachings to other cultures. The conventional wisdom of our age says, "Every reli-

gion has some truth in it, and every culture is rich and beautiful just the way it is. Don't go changing the world."

We might have agreed with that if Jesus had not risen from the dead and if we didn't know the meaning of his resurrection. God has declared Jesus to be his Son, the Redeemer and Savior of the world. Jesus truly is the Resurrection and the Life. No other religion or culture claims a founder who has risen from the dead. In the one invisible kingdom of God, the risen Christ is king.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the mission of his church have always been closely connected. On that glorious Easter morning, God sent his angel down from heaven. "Come and see," he said and added, "Go quickly and tell" (Matthew 28:6,7). Later the risen Savior himself told his disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (v. 19). Shortly before he was taken up before their very eyes, Jesus said to his disciples, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The message of Easter is for every nation, every person.

Sending the gospel across cultures to other parts of the world requires sacrifice, energy, boldness, and determination. Without the clear command of the risen Savior, the church would not have owned this Great Commission. But now we can't help speaking about this kingdom, because it is the kingdom of Jesus, who is alive forever and ever.

THE POWER IS HIS

In the Asian nation I visited, there are few Christians. While my taxi driver estimated that 15% of his nation's people are Christian, a recent census indicated that less than 1% confess faith in Jesus.

It is difficult to be a Christian in this country. Confessing faith in Christ immediately brings you down to a very low position in society. Like the lepers in Bible times, you are an outcast and considered unclean. Many won't want to associate with you, and they will cleanse themselves from impurity if contact occurs.

In the rural areas of this country, people share equipment and work together to farm the land, to sow, and to harvest. But once you confess faith in Jesus, you are on your own. Your neighbors don't want you to help in their fields, and no one will help you in your fields.

In many remote areas of this country, medical care is not readily available. If someone is gravely sick or badly injured, the people of the community will carry that person many miles to a doctor. But not if you are a Christian—even if you are dying.

In this [anti-Christian] environment God has his believers. They are his treasured possession. Flowers in the desert.

If you confess faith in Christ, it is likely that your family will disown you. You are no longer welcome in your parents' house, your grandparents' house, or the houses of your siblings. Your chances of receiving government aid during times of famine or natural disaster are very low, and it is more likely that you will have run-ins with police and government officials.

Extremists may burn your house or your school or your place of work to the ground. You may be put in prison and beaten if anyone accuses you of trying to convert people to Christianity. The newspaper and the television news might broadcast false accusations against you. The constitution of the country states that it is illegal to baptize anyone—even your own children—under the age of 18. Clearly, the devil hates Baptism, which connects people to Jesus' death and resurrection. He uses anti-Christian government and anti-Christian religion to try to prevent it.

But wonder of all wonders, in this environment God has his believers. They are his treasured possession.

Flowers in the desert. Myrtle trees where once there were only briars.

Again, how can this be? And how can there be pastors among them who know their Bible well and who encourage and equip and serve these believers? This can only be because the risen and ascended Savior provides leaders for his people. All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus. The church remains and grows, because Jesus lives.

THE GLORY IS HIS

It is our privilege to be supporting Christ's people in this Asian country. We support them with our offerings, with humanitarian aid, with friendly Christian counsel, with theological training, and with our prayers.

In our nine-day workshop earlier this year, 12 national pastors gathered to study God's Word and to grow in their ability to feed Christ's sheep and lambs. These pastors may be lowly in the eyes of their society, but they are faithful, humble shepherds under the risen Christ. They serve with very little reward. They certainly don't serve for their own glory but for God's glory and the benefit of his people. They know that the glory belongs to Jesus, because Jesus lives.

This month and in all their weekly worship services, they celebrate the resurrection of their Savior: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" They have their hearts set on a better country, because Jesus lives.

Join me in praying for these pastors and the people they serve:

When all their labor seems in vain,
Revive their sinking hopes again;
And when success crowns what they do,
Oh, keep them humble, Lord, and true
Until before your judgment seat
They lay their trophies at your feet.
(*Christian Worship* 542:3)

Our labors and their labors in the Lord are never in vain. Because Jesus lives.

Bradley Wordell, the world mission seminary professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Christ Alone, Thiensville, Wisconsin.



WHAT IS truth?

Religious truth cannot be based on human opinions and ideas. God must reveal it, for he is not subject to human limitations.

Arthur A. Eggert

While mathematical truth from deductive reasoning and scientific truth from inductive reasoning have value in this world, the most important truth for humanity is religious truth. Moreover, if people are not to grope around blindly in philosophical reasoning hoping to find some sort of firm foundation, then there must be some source of religious truth and some standard by which to judge religious ideas. In other words, religious truth must be

revealed to us because we cannot rise up to God (Romans 10:5-11).

Throughout history people have relied either upon some guru who claims insight of the divine (e.g., the pope or oracle at Delphi) or upon some book of revelation (e.g., the Bible or the Qur'an) that claims to be God's Word. Of all the religious sources, only the Bible presents a God who freely delivers people from their sins and promises eternal salvation. All the rest make salvation dependent on some course of action through which people must earn or contribute to their salvation.

With such a great offer, one would think that biblical Christianity would attract nearly everyone, but just the opposite is the case. The reason is that people inherently want to take

some of their own good deeds to the judgment throne of God when they are summoned to appear before him.

They do not want free salvation because it means they must repudiate not only all their sins but also everything they view as their own meritorious works (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 79, p. 196). They are unwilling to accept the biblical declaration that they are totally depraved and have no works acceptable before the Lord (John 15:5). They seek a "rationalized truth" that is less clear-cut, one that leaves room for negotiation over issues of behavior and piety. Biblical truth becomes distorted when people try to mix "rationalized truth" into it.

SCRIPTURE INTERPRETS ITSELF

As Lutheran Christians, we follow

biblical? mathematical?

Luther's directive to test every teaching to see if it matches what the Scriptures actually say. We know that some parts of Scripture are difficult to understand, so we employ three simple principles:

1. The words of the Bible are to be interpreted in their simplest grammatical sense unless a clear indication in the text tells us that the words are meant in a figurative or symbolic sense.
2. If a passage is unclear, we look for another passage that speaks of the same thing and gives more clarity or detail.
3. If a passage is difficult to understand in spite of parallel passages, we must not invent an interpretation but conclude that the passage is difficult to understand.

Even using these principles does not remove the desire to "rationalize" the words of Scripture. There are many examples of scholars and simple everyday Christians rationalizing God's Word because something doesn't make sense to them. Here's an example that will help illustrate the challenge: The first chapter of Genesis reveals God's creation in six days. That conflicts with what many believe about the origin of the universe. To "fix" the problem, some rationalize that those six days must be symbolic or an ancient myth in order to harmonize God's activity with what they think actually happened. But the Bible contains no clue that the account in Genesis is symbolic or mythological. Biblical Christians simply accept the Genesis account as it is without "rationalizing the truth."

Another example is the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus tells his disciples, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." But that doesn't make logical sense. John Calvin was a brilliant Christian scholar, yet he adopted the nonbiblical idea that, in some cases, God would not expect us to believe what was against reason. He, therefore, sometimes used reason to filter some of the biblical teachings. He ar-

gued that Jesus' human nature could only be present at one place like everyone else's human nature. Consequently, he taught that Jesus is currently at one place in heaven and therefore cannot be really present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. But the words of Jesus say something clear and different, even though it's difficult to comprehend. Like Luther we simply let God's Word stand and conclude the God is wiser and more powerful than we are and that he can do what he says.

For the Christian, the source and standard of all religious truth is the Bible.

SCRIPTURE ALONE

From the earliest days of the Reformation, Martin Luther recognized the inerrancy of the Bible and the importance of understanding it correctly because he knew that there can be no religious truth apart from the Lord's revelation. *Sola Scriptura* (from the Scriptures alone) became one of the pillars of the Reformation. Those who claim Luther did not regard the Bible as inerrant have not read enough of his writings. In more recent times we have used the phrase "narrow Lutheran middle" to indicate that we may teach no more and no less than what is revealed in the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18,19).

Another pervasive error that corrupts the principle of *sola Scriptura* is the teaching that religious truth develops as time passes. In this philosophical view, God gradually becomes wiser in his dealings with humankind; therefore, some of the things in the Bible should no longer be accepted as true. They were the products of the Lord himself

being ignorant of the truth or of his shaping it for the benefit of more primitive peoples. Therefore, some of the things in the Bible must be changed to adapt with contemporary culture and thinking. This ignores the biblical teaching that God is not a creature of time and therefore never changes (Psalm 102; Malachi 3:6).

We end where we started, with the question: "What is truth?" Truth, regardless of its type, is information that conforms to a given standard. For example, the truth about the length of an object is determined by using a ruler as the standard. To decide whether we are willing to accept something as true, we must first know the standard according to which it is to be measured, and then we must do the measuring. In philosophy, the standard of truth is weak, namely, the rationalism of the philosopher's thinking process. In mathematics and formal logic, it is strong, namely, the definitions of the domains of study and of the properties of relevant operators. In science, the standard of truth is the assumption that all observations can be explained in the terms of the natural properties of matter, energy, space, and time through the application of the scientific method.

For the Christian, the source and standard of all religious truth is the Bible, as the Lord revealed it in the original Hebrew and Greek. If we try to use our reason to judge it, then we no longer have God's truth and have fallen back into philosophy. We can lose our eternal salvation if we try to shape our relationship with God with ideas from our sinful hearts, from our clever minds, or from the minds of other humans, rather than relying on what is revealed in his Holy Scriptures.

Dr. Arthur Eggert is a member at Peace, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.

This is the final article in a four-part series on different ways the world finds truth and where we as Christians should look for truth.

philosophical? scientific?

After trying to find answers on his own, a man discovers God's answers to life's important questions.

Gabriella Moline

"Figure it out for yourself."

Don Steinhorst heard those words anytime he asked his parents questions while growing up. And as a child, Steinhorst had a lot of questions, many regarding how he came to earth and what God's purpose in his life was. Those questions are difficult for some parents to answer, and it's not surprising that their answer to his questions was not really an answer.

FINDING HIS OWN ANSWERS

Steinhorst turned to reading the Bible. After reading Genesis and the creation of Adam, Steinhorst concluded that God had created him in the same way as the first man was created. He believed God formed him with clay and breathed the breath of life into him from heaven, with no parents involved.

One day he came across a magazine with a picture of a nursery in a hospital. For him, that was the final piece of the puzzle regarding his birth. Until the age of 13, Steinhorst concluded that God

had placed him in the nursery at birth for his parents to pick up and take home.

Steinhorst had one Lutheran parent and one Catholic parent and was raised in the Catholic faith. He attended catechism class every Friday and learned the church's teachings, but he never opened a Bible.

His parents did not take him to church to learn more. The reason was simple: His little brother often made noise and disrupted the service. In catechism class, Steinhorst learned that if you do not attend church, then you are going to hell, unless you attend confession with the priest.

"To me, going to confession was a nightmare," says Steinhorst. "I figured back then that I was the most sinful human being who ever walked the face of the earth. I assumed every other family went to church on Sunday, except us."

When his family casually discussed church and religion, Steinhorst was perplexed that they were not more concerned about going to hell.

So, like the other mysteries in his young life, he came to his own conclusion. Steinhorst decided that his family must be secretly going to church each Sunday and that it was all a test from God. But by these standards, he

had failed, because he himself missed church each week. He was miserable because he was not part of his family's secret attendance and he did not make the effort to go himself.

The thought of going to hell tormented Steinhorst. The catechism instructor told Steinhorst's class that anyone carrying a mortal sin would not have their prayers heard by God, so Steinhorst stopped praying altogether.

He also cut himself off from people. He did not want anyone to know his secret—that he was going to hell. It weighed on his heart. At school, he did not talk to the other students. He hid and avoided any conversations. The only friends he had were his cousins. "It got to the point where it was literally almost making me sick," Steinhorst says. "Every time I went to religion class, it made me feel more and more guilty all the time."

When he was 20 years old, his whole worldview changed. Steinhorst discovered that his whole belief in God was wrapped up in how he figured things out for himself. But that was all wrong. After making this realization, he immediately became an atheist.

FINDING GOD'S ANSWERS

When Steinhorst was 31, he and his cousins went to see a movie called *The*

Confessions OF FAITH



Late Great Planet Earth. They expected it to be a horror movie, but they found it made a deeper impression on them than they expected.

The 1979 movie, narrated by Orson Welles, is based on the book of Revelation and its descriptions of the end times. Steinhorst had never heard of this book of the Bible before and found himself both fascinated and terrified by the content of the movie.

In those catechism classes at the Catholic church, the priest had said there was no reason for him to have a Bible. Steinhorst had never explored the biblical texts himself; he only read Genesis and absorbed what he heard from his instructors.

After seeing *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Steinhorst decided to buy the book of Revelation at a local bookstore. The cashier told him, though, that he could not just buy one book of the Bible but would have to buy the entire Bible. Steinhorst left the store that day with a Bible. "That was the first Bible I ever owned," Steinhorst says.

Steinhorst began a journey exploring the Christian faith. He started listening to Christian radio programs. He looked up Bible passages that were mentioned in the shows. His faith and life began to grow.

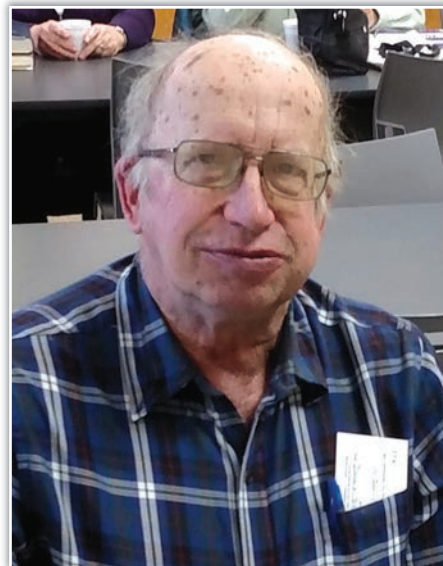
Steinhorst eventually joined a Christian church near his home. He was not completely happy with some of its beliefs, so five years ago he visited St. John, Fox Lake, Wis.

David Nottling, pastor at St. John, says that Steinhorst just showed up in church one day and has been coming ever since. "He would even sometimes let me know if he was going to miss church or could not come one week," says Nottling. "I couldn't get him to take the classes at first, but he kept coming to worship."

After a major surgery, Steinhorst knew he would be out of work for several weeks. He decided that it would be the perfect time to take the courses with Nottling and become a member of the church.

"I can remember in class one time that we were talking about Martin Luther, and Don borrowed my book on him," Nottling says. "Don told me that he experienced what Luther went through, how he was afraid of God."

As a member of St. John, Steinhorst feels a sense of peace and comfort in knowing that Jesus has suffered and died for his sins. He also has developed new relationships and friendships. Last spring, he sponsored a trip to the Creation Museum and the Ark Encounter for a group of children and adults from the congregation. This



Don Steinhorst

was the first time he traveled out of the state of Wisconsin.

"I did a complete 180 compared to where I was before," Steinhorst says. "I'm so happy now."

Now, Steinhorst goes to church and Bible study every week, not for fear of going to hell if he misses but because of his deep love for Christ.

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

Did you know that "Confessions of faith" has been a series in *Forward in Christ* for ten years? Started in April 2008 to share stories of peoples' journeys of faith, this series also helps teach the differences between the teachings of WELS and other religions and gives us all the opportunity to rejoice in the work of the Holy Spirit. What do you appreciate most about this series? Any favorite stories? Share your thoughts with us at fic@wels.net.



heart to heart parent conversations

My oldest is 12. She's in sixth grade, and almost all her classmates have smartphones. So far her dad and I haven't seen a reason for her to have one too. But the pressure is there. Socially, she finds herself at a disadvantage. Her peers are texting one another, playing on the latest apps, taking selfies, and . . . well, I'm not even sure of what else because I'm just not that tech savvy. Hearing from parents who have been through this stage is helpful as my husband and I try to navigate what is best for our family.

Here are two perspectives from parents who are raising teens now. This is a broad topic, so we know there are many other perspectives to consider. Share your family's insights at forwardinchrist.net.

Nicole Balza

Join the
conversation!

Visit wels.net/forwardinchrist
and look for the
Heart to heart link.

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER BEFORE I GIVE MY CHILD A CELL PHONE?

Disclosure alert . . . my husband and I are definitely not the poster parents when it comes to cell phones and kids. In fact, I originally declined writing this article because we have made so many mistakes along the way—it's embarrassing! But if someone had laid it all out when we were having the whole "I *need* a phone" conversation with our first child, who is now 18, I'm pretty sure we would have done things differently.

It's true. The pressure is huge for kids to get a phone. All of their friends have them, and as a parent, you see it as a way to keep them safe. But be cautious—once you enter this realm, *there is no going back*. Be over-prepared in this journey and plan it out. Here are just a few things we have learned along the way with our kids and their phones.

Start with the basics

Back when we were kids, no one had cell phones. Today, if we forget our phone at home, it's like we have lost a limb. That feeling of safety and convenience when your child has a phone is undeniable. But do they really need a smartphone? A basic cell phone really can be sufficient, especially when they are in grade school.

I'll be honest—we fell into the trap of "everyone has a smartphone at this age," thinking it must be the right

Parenting sure has changed! I remember my two-week trip abroad as a high school junior. My parents heard via one very quick and expensive phone call that I'd reached Germany, but the only other communication was a postcard arriving *after* I'd returned to Wisconsin. Now I worry if my high school junior doesn't text me that she made it to her babysitting job ten miles away.

On the plus side, cell phones provide a quick and easy way to check up on our kids, make plans or adjustments to plans, send a picture of the puppy to the one away at college, or ask for someone to *please* pick up more milk. Bible verses on a stressful day or an "I love you!" randomly sent are wonderful ways to use this technology.

Our family policies

Although every family is unique, eighth-grade graduation is the time when our children receive their first cell phone. Once in a while there's a free bonus month, but the kids pay the monthly service fees themselves. And besides reminders about Christian conduct, general encouragements like "No phones at the table," and an expectation that a timely response is necessary if Mom or Dad texts or calls, we don't really monitor their phone use. This seems to have worked, but I wondered what the three kids who currently have phones (ages 22, 20, and 17) and the 13-year-old who doesn't yet think of our family policies.

On waiting until eighth-grade graduation for their first phone, our kids all agreed that it was fine. "For our situation,

thing to do. I wish we could go back and start our children off with a basic cell phone. Sometimes I think parents are just as worried about fitting in as their kids are. Try not to let the crowd decide what is best for you and your family.

Set limits

Phones truly do become a huge part of our kids' lives, so you need to know and own this fact: YOU are the one that needs to be the enforcer of limits. Before you purchase a phone, sit down and think through exactly how much phone/screen time your child should have, and then make that happen. Be intentional. Tons of apps are available that limit screen time. OurPact (ourpact.com) is one that a friend recommended to us. It can block Internet and app usage on your child's phone and set a schedule for activities like school, dinnertime, or bedtime. Also, take the phone out of their room at night—even if they tell you they need it for their morning alarm (yes, we hear that one all the time).

Personally set limits on *your* phone/screen time. Consistently take time to do meaningful things with your kids that don't involve technology. It's amazing how different we are as a family when phones are put away and we are playing games without that constant distraction.

Social media

Snapchat, group rooms, Instagram . . . these are lifelines for our kids. They are ways our kids stay connected with one another but can also be places where they can get seriously torn down. It is crazy what kids will write on social media sites that they would never think about saying in person. Remind your kids that what they write on those sites is there for all to read . . . potentially forever. And if you don't think they are ready to be on these sites, stand your ground—even when their friends claim they have to be on a particular site for their "group project." They'll find a different way to connect.

Okay, so yes, you probably will end up getting your child a smartphone. It's the world we live in. But my biggest piece of advice for you is to have a plan, and, of course, pray that God will guide you in this huge growing-up process for your child. This little piece of technology has the potential to change your child's life in a big way—so make sure you do everything you can to make it positive.

Ann Zuleger and her husband, Matt, have four children—Zachary, 18; Faith, 16; Isaiah, 13; and Ellis, 10.



it was just right because that way we wouldn't get caught up in social media until we were a little more responsible, and we would entertain ourselves in other ways. In some cases it might be better to get it earlier if that particular family member needs to be able to communicate for rides and stuff when they are younger."

On our relaxed phone rules, all four said there aren't any other policies we should have that we don't: "It is good for us because we have built a trust bond so you can rely on us to be smart with them. Some kids do need a feeling of being watched over their shoulder or else they will do really dumb stuff." And, "As a parent, you should be able to trust that you raised your kids to be responsible enough to make good decisions."

As for paying their service fees: "Nothing in life is free, so it's good to learn basic responsibilities like paying for a phone." Another commented, "It makes you think that it is a privilege that you've earned, not just something given to you," but "younger kids should not have to pay for it because their parents are the ones giving it to them as a necessity." (I would also like to add that no one has lost their phone for longer than a few minutes, which seems to be somewhat of a rarity these days and perhaps due to the fact that these kids are paying their own way.)

Some positives and negatives

I also asked, "Did a cell phone change you or your life?" One said, "It did not change me, but it changed my life.

It made it easier to contact friends for homework help or just to socialize." Another mentioned, "[A cell phone] definitely came with negative and positive changes. A lot of the time I overuse my phone when I could be doing something else or talking person to person instead. You're oftentimes so worried about what everyone else is doing that you don't take advantage of what you have in front of you. Social media tends to warp your mind and make you ungrateful, but, on the other hand, it can also be simple entertainment." One also commented on useful apps like GPS and managing his bank account, but said, "It can take too much of your time or [lead to] spending money because of wanting the newer or better thing." One other note from the child who admits to being rather "anti-phone": "I don't have an excuse for not knowing certain things or being 'off the grid.'"

So, friends, there you have it! Not necessarily the definitive guide to parenting in the cell phone age but, at least, what has worked for us. May God bless our families as we use the tools at our disposal to raise our blessings in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Ann Ponath and her husband, David, have four kids ranging in age from 22 to 13. Their oldest son, David, shared his thoughts about cell phones in an article that is available at forwardinchrist.net.





teentalk

Facing persecution

Don't let others stop you from showing your faith.

Taylor Wolfram

Most of us have never faced the threat of death because of our faith, but everyone has faced persecution. As soon as we speak about our faith, we are stereotyped as ignorant, unaccepting, and hypocritical. We learn not to bring up religion. Christianity is seen as an unspeakable topic that causes divisions.

When I was younger, Jesus was new and exciting, something that everyone needed to hear.

So I told everyone. It was a conversation starter. Now when I meet new people, one of the logical questions they ask is where I go to school. After scores of disappointed responses to my answer of a Lutheran high school, I just gave up. I gave them a city, and that seemed to satisfy them. But that seemed to deny Jesus, and I didn't want to do that.

It's so easy to say that you're proud of being a Christian among hundreds of Christians in church on Sunday. It's easy to say that you'll follow Christ into death while in your high school religion class. But once you're out in the world, it's not as easy. God doesn't promise rainbows and sunshine if we become Christians. He warns us that

it will be hard. Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

We may have to endure glares, lose friends, and handle being ridiculed for now, but our suffering is not in vain. Romans 5:3,4 says, "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

And we are not really alone when we confess our faith. The whole world may be lined up against us, but we have God on our side. If God is for us, who can be against us? Plenty of people may stand in our way, may poke fun at us, or may ridicule us, but God will help us persevere. He won't give us more than we can bear, and he will see us through everything and anything we are going through.

So if you're going through a rough patch, don't lose hope.

Pray to the Lord. Read your Bible. You will get through it. This world is temporary, but your salvation is eternal. Hold steadfast, and no one will be able to separate you from Christ. No trouble, hardship, perse-

cution, or temptation will be able to lure you away from what really matters. You could go along with the world and gain tons of friends, but none of that will matter if you lose your eternal salvation.

If others forsake you for your faith, your witness is a bold confession for all to hear. You are living your faith as God wants you to. Don't be afraid of persecution. It's just showing that you are not from this world, you don't agree with it, and you won't consent to the temptations of it. You are looking forward to the world to come.

Don't lose sight of that. "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

Taylor Wolfram, a junior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member of St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.

Lakeside students often submit "Teen talk" articles as part of Pastor Clark Schultz's religion class. Read more about how Schultz offers his students real-life experiences on p. 21.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Iwinski, Daniel, to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
Miller, Scott, to Light of Life, Greenwood, Ind.

Nitz, Aaron, to Good Shepherd, Cheyenne, Wyo.

Reede, Paul, to retirement

Turner, Stuart, to King of Kings, Frankenthum, Mich.

Valleau, Dennis, to retirement

Varnum, Neil, to retirement

Vogt, Matthew, to Western regional mission counselor

West, Aaron, to St. Matthew, Spokane, Wash.

Teachers

Brown, Eric, to Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla.

Brown, Janell, to Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla.

Engelbrecht, Jon, to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.

Falck, Jeffrey, to Illinois Lutheran Elementary School, Crete, Ill.

Fischer, Abigail, to Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio

Giovinazzo, Sydney, to Kingdom Prep Lutheran High School, Wauwatosa, Wis.

Hintz, Nicole, to Christ the King, Breerton, Wash.

Hinz, William, to St. John's, Pardeeville, Wis.

Kjenstad, Jessica, to Illinois Lutheran Elementary School, Crete, Ill.

Mueller, Hannah, to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.

Sell, Jeffry, to Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla.

Sell, Sarah, to Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla.

Stegman, Julie, to St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.

Steinbrenner, Shelly, to Peace, Hartford, Wis.

Stevenson, Scott, to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.

Tiarks, Karin, to Mount Olive, Appleton, Wis.

Trimmer, Aaron, to Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.

Wachal, Michelle, to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.

Walker, Joel, to Grace, Glendale, Ariz.

Walz, Justin, to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.

Zeitler, Anne, to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.

Staff ministers

Babler, Timothy, to St. Mark, De Pere, Wis.

Schroeder, James, to Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla.

ANNIVERSARIES

Vacaville, Calif.—St. John (20). April 1. Worship, 10 A.M. Website, stjohnvacaville.org.

Valentine, Neb.—Zion Lutheran School (75). April 15. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. facebook.com/zionlutheranschoolandpreschool; zionschool@msn.com.

Tacoma, Wash.—Evergreen Lutheran High School (40). June 9, video presentation prior to graduation service. June 23, all school/alumni/association picnic. RSVP for picnic, 253-946-4488; email@elhs.org. Aug. 19, special observation during opening service, 4 P.M. Website, elhs.org.

Apacheland, Ariz.—Native American mission work (125). June 22. KI Convention Center, Green Bay, Wis. 6-9 P.M. Oct. 26-28. Peridot, Ariz. Oct. 26, self-guided reservation tours. Oct. 27, 11 A.M.-4 P.M., crafts, music history; 4 P.M., worship; 5 P.M., dinner. Oct. 28, anniversary worship throughout Apache reservation. Debbie Dietrich, NativeChristians1@gmail.com. Website, nativechristians.org.

COMING EVENTS

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Chorus spring tour—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Website, wls.wels.net

- April 1, 9 A.M., St. Paul, Calgary, Alberta, Canada; 11:30 A.M., Mountain View, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

- April 2, 7 P.M., Living Savior, Missoula, Mont.

- April 3, 7 P.M., Apostles, Billings, Mont.

- April 4, 7 P.M., Abiding Love, Loveland, Colo.

- April 5, 7 P.M., Zion, Denver, Colo.

- April 6, 7 P.M., Good Shepherd, Kearney, Neb.

- April 7, 7:30 P.M., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

- April 8, 10:30 A.M., St. Paul, North Mankato, Minn.

Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale spring concerts—April 14. 3 P.M., Trinity, Liberty, Wis. April 15. 3 P.M., Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.

WELS Handbells regional festival concerts—Theme: "Speak, O Lord." welsbells.com.

- April 14-15. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

- April 21-22. Pine Island High School, Pine Island, Minn. Hosted by Christ, Zumbrota, Minn.

- April 21-22. Emanuel, New London, Wis.

WELS Nurses Association 2018 spring conference—April 20-21. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Theme: "Christ Centered Nursing Care Across the Spectrum of Life." Website, welsnurses.net.

Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee 60th anniversary concert—April 22. 1:30 & 4 P.M.; Grace, Milwaukee, Wis. Website, lutheranchorale.org; 414-861-7092.

National staff ministers conference—April 26-28. Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho. Website, wels.net/events.

Martin Luther College Wind Symphony tour—May 13-18. Website, mlc-wels.edu.

- May 13. Christ, Zumbrota, Minn. 8 & 10:30 A.M.; St. John, Mazeppa, Minn., 8:30 & 10:30 A.M.; Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis., 7:30 P.M.

- May 14. Mt. Calvary Lutheran School, Waukesha, Wis., 11 A.M.; Bethlehem, Germantown, Wis., 7 P.M.

- May 15. St. Paul Lutheran School, Howards Grove, Wis., 11 A.M.; Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis., 7 P.M.

- May 16. Immanuel Lutheran School, Greenville, Wis., 1 P.M.; Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., 7 P.M.

- May 17. St. Stephen Lutheran School, Beaver Dam, Wis., 1 P.M.

- May 18. St. Paul Lutheran School, Tomah, Wis., 1 P.M.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention—June 21-24. KI Convention Center, Green Bay, Wis. Theme: "Speak, O Lord, from the Valley to the World." Website, lwms.org.

WELS International Youth Rally—June 26-29. Bowling State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. Theme: "Never Alone." Register now. Website, wels.net/2018youthrally.

NAMES WANTED

Monroe, Wis.—WELS members or people living in the area. Nathan Strutz, 608-515-4334; pastorstrutz@rlcverona.com.

Norman, Okla.—for the Thorn Bush Autism Support Group for Oklahoma families raising children on the autism spectrum. Efforts are sponsored by Grace, Norman, Okla. John Vieths, 405-795-6545; viethsja@gmail.com. Website, gracelutheranok.com.

Norman, Okla.—WELS members or people living in the area. John Vieths, 405-795-6545; viethsja@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEER/JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Soccer coaches—Help with a soccer vacation Bible school at Our Savior, Arlington, Texas. June 11-15. Transportation costs, room and board, and a stipend for leisure time provided. Four people needed. oursaviorluth@gmail.com.

Thai Village—short-term volunteer, long-term staff, and internship positions available in Chiang Mai, Thailand. All volunteers are incorporated into the work as team members under the supervision of native English-speaking managers. Stipends are available for applicants who commit to serving for one year or more in Chiang Mai. Website, thaivillage.org/staff-positions/.

Norman, Okla.—volunteer organist. John Vieths, 405-795-6545; viethsja@gmail.com. Website, gracelutheranok.com.

Find additional community events and resources at **welsrc.net**. To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

Moments with MISSIONARIES

GRENADA

Ib Meyer



GRENADA

It's called oil down.* It's the national dish of Grenada. The ingredients include dasheen (calallo) leaves, chive and thyme, carrots, Scotch bonnet (or habenero) pepper, dumplings, pig tail and snout, turmeric (locally called saffron), salt fish, breadfruit, coconut milk, and onion. All these ingredients—prepared, layered, and cooked over a long period of time—blend together to create a tasty and nourishing meal.

That is what Grace in Grenada is—a blend of God's children from different social and religious backgrounds, brought together by the gospel, gifted with God-given skills and abilities, working together as one congregation to serve the tasty and life-giving meal of the gospel of Jesus.

Grace is overseen by the South Atlantic District Mission Board, but we aren't your usual home mission. We are the only Lutheran church in the country. We are diverse, unified, and blessed by God.

Our "oil down" (ministry), just like the meal, is layered. It is made up not only of spices (people) but also of "provisions"—the staples and substance of any good meal. Our ministry is blessed to include three layers—church, community outreach, and a primary school.

Two of the people who make up our "oil down" are Elder Terry Louison and church secretary Neisha Roach.

Neisha is married to Patrick, who leads our youth and music ministry, and

they have a two-year-old daughter. Neisha, like many of the members of Grace, was raised in the Pentecostal church. She came to Grace almost 10 years ago and stayed because of the nourishing gospel.

Grenada's society has strong matriarchal undertones. Neisha knows the culture, and she knows her Savior. She is patient and humble, strong and committed. Her quiet demeanor invites confidence and trust. Members will ask her for advice or inform her of a matter, knowing that she will pass it on to the pastor if appropriate. Neisha is enrolled in Martin Luther College's Congregational Assistant Program, and upon completion, we want to call her as our deaconess.

Terry joined Grace about three years ago. He worked in the United States and also studied and worked in Cuba. His spiritual journey, beginning in the Roman Catholic Church, is a windy, twisting long road that reveals God's mercy in action. He is a scholar of history and of God's Word. If you want to know anything about Grenada, Terry is the person to ask. If you want to be spiritually enriched, speak to Terry. You will leave the conversation blessed by the Lord.

Terry is a master tour guide operator. He owns a van, which he uses for his tour guiding. However, as many of our members do not have cars, he transports them to and from church. While driving, he listens to the members and encourages them. He proclaims the gospel not only in words but also in a life that gives glory to God.

Neisha and Terry are just two of the many wonderful, spicy, flavorful souls whose lives the gospel has touched here in Grenada. "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (Psalm 34:8).

Ib Meyer serves as a home missionary at Grace, Saint George, Grenada.

*npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/09/11/493157111/this-hearty-stew-is-a-one-pot-lesson-in-grenadas-history



(Clockwise) Terry Louison; Neisha Roach; and Denise, a Grace member, making oil down.

Q&A with Pastor Clark Schultz

Clark Schultz has taught theology at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis., for the past 13 years. Here he shares his perspective on educating young Christians.

Q: What is your philosophy as you approach the teens in your classes?

A: I have adopted the philosophy that was impressed on me from little on—“jump or get thrown into the deep end.” This started with Pastor Richard Pagels asking me when I was in fifth grade, “What are you doing this Sunday?” My answer was, “Coming to church.” His response was, “Good! You’re going to help with liturgy.” So there I was at 10 or 11 years old, stumbling over words like “beseeching” and all the “thees” and “thous” of the old hymnal.

I spent my vicar year with Pastor John Parlow, who left me to go on a family vacation the first weekend I spent at St. Mark’s in Green Bay. So there I was, doing liturgy and communion at a congregation three times the size I was comfortable with. Talk about sink or swim! But it’s this idea that I throw to my students. God gave you a brain and gifts. Don’t be afraid to use them despite your age. For me, as for most, experience is the best teacher.

Q: What are some examples of the projects that you encourage/require your students to complete.

A: We like the flipped classroom idea. This idea involves students doing projects in groups. One project is to create their own church in a real town. They will research that area to look at demographics and then come up with a plan

to share the gospel in that area. The students will then present their ideas to their classmates in a *Shark Tank* setting where fellow students get to evangelically ask questions of the presenters.

Another project we do is have students compile their own worship service. Again, they get into groups and craft their own worship service, from the theme of the service to selecting hymns, readings, and prayers. They also must come up with their own original bulletin cover that corresponds with their theme.

Other projects involve getting out of their comfort zone and volunteering to go to the Lighthouse Youth Center in Milwaukee, canvas in a town that is not their own, or help out at local church events like Christmas for Kids.

Q: How do your students react to these ministry experiences?

A: At first, they are like a deer in the headlights. There is often some, “What? Why? Huh?” reactions. But after they are done, it is such a joy to see the Holy Spirit work through their efforts and give them the confidence that mission/church work is not so intimidating or hard and can even be fun.

Q: Any final thoughts to share?

A: Teens are not the future of the church; they are the church now. We need to look for creative ways to get them plugged in.



To learn more about Clark Schultz and his students, visit wels.net/together and watch the March 13 edition of the “Together” video update.



Clark Schultz with Lakeside Lutheran High School students who created T-shirts for their class mission church project.

Native Christians look to the future

This year marks the 125th anniversary of WELS’ world mission work on the Apache reservation in Arizona. While the Native American mission is planning to celebrate its history and God’s blessings over the past years (see p. 4), it also is looking forward to how it can share the gospel message in the future.

“Our past is amazing,” says Dan Rautenberg, the Native American mission field coordinator. “We honor that, but at the same time we’re not just looking back at the amazing things people did long ago. Our people have the same potential now, and we have new opportunities.”

He continues, “That’s what Christians do—we receive the gospel, we get on our feet, and we spread the gospel.”

The mission has its eyes on the 500-plus other reservations throughout the United States. Rautenberg says 95 percent of the Native Americans on these reservations aren’t Christian.

While the mission has some contacts on other reservations, it is hoping to broaden its reach through its new website, NativeChristians.org. Developed as part of the anniversary celebration, the website is working to establish an identity that’s wider than just the two current reservations, hence the name Native Christians. The site currently shares 125th anniversary plans and historical articles, but future plans call for making the site an evangelism tool that Native Christians can use to share the gospel with their friends, family, and acquaintances—no matter where they’re located. “We have the unique ability to personalize it as a site from natives for natives,” says Rautenberg.

The goal, according to Rautenberg, is to be looking at two new prospective mission sites in the next three years.

He knows that won’t be easy. “But it was not easy to start a mission 125 years ago either,” he says. “That’s our challenge. To be a church that’s done so much in the past but still has energy to go into the future.”

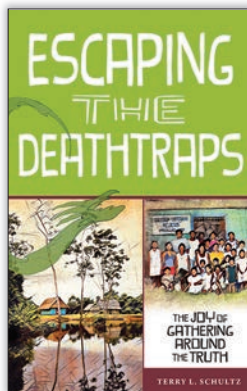
Booknook

A look at books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit nph.net or call 1-800-662-6022.



Deathtraps are those things that hinder faith or prevent sinners from coming to faith. We avoid deathtraps when we are in the Word. *The Joy of Gathering Around the Truth*, the subtitle to *Escaping the Deathtraps*, tells us how to escape deathtraps.

Church fellowship can be a deathtrap when it is misunderstood or misapplied. This book, written by Dr. Terry Schultz, explains church fellowship and answers questions many of us have about fellowship in a series of 21 Bible studies. It is set in a Peruvian village, but it could be anywhere. The studies begin with questions from the congregation. Pastor Pedro uses stories and God's Word to answer the questions. Sometimes the stories are told by the church members. The stories are told orally, with pictures, with music, with drama, and with humor. The stories teach biblical doctrines so that, with a clear understanding of doctrine, church fellowship practices are better understood.



PRICE: \$18.99

Don't expect to read this book in one sitting. Use it instead for group Bible study, book clubs, personal or family devotions. Read a story—a chapter—a week or even a chapter a day and answer the study questions at the end of each chapter. The questions will help with practical applications. You will have a better understanding of what we believe and how we can share God's love with our neighbors.

Teaching methods vary, and this book shows you don't have to sit still in a classroom or lecture hall to study God's Word. You can laugh; you can dance; you can sing; you can cry; you can even use practical jokes. Telling stories to teach biblical truths worked well and brought joy to the members of this Peruvian church—as it will for you.

Mark Schulz, Milton, Wisconsin

Social media expands reach and offers more connections

It started with wanting to offer more women in a congregation the opportunity to study together.

Corissa Nelson, wife of the pastor at Good Shepherd, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, decided to start a midweek women's Bible class using *2000 Demons* by E. Allen Sorum as the base of the study. With short chapters, already included questions, and a riveting topic, the book seemed a perfect fit.

The problem: finding time during the week when most women could meet. Also congregation members are scattered, many living at least half an hour from church.

The solution: social media.

Nelson decided to create a Facebook group, where she would post a question or two a day related to that week's reading. Members of the group could comment and share their thoughts. While a small group still met in per-

son each week, this allowed more people to participate.

But Nelson didn't stop there. "Once I realized that we had bridged those miles, I determined we could invite anyone to be in the study," she says. As part of the WELS Women's Ministry Development Committee, Nelson thought offering this online opportunity for Bible study would be a great way to build community for all WELS women. So WELS Women's Ministry began promoting this Bible study opportunity on its Facebook page.

More than 600 women from around the country joined the group throughout the course of the monthlong Bible study. Nelson said between 300 to 500 of these were active, returning often to the site even if they didn't always post comments.

Nelson says that having this broader group involved helped Good Shepherd,

a smaller, isolated congregation, feel more connected to the synod and other WELS members. "They were able to connect with other mature Christians and learn from them," she says.

Others commented on Facebook that they too had difficulty getting to a Bible study and appreciated this additional opportunity to study God's Word. "Although it's not as perfect as everyone sitting around a table and sharing ideas, it really can encourage more people to have some personal study and connect with other women," says Nelson.

Nelson plans to offer another women's Bible study, which will start April 9. This one, written by her husband Pastor Marques Nelson, will be on getting women involved in evangelism, based on the book of Acts. Go to facebook.com/groups/WMStudyGSLCR to join.

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

New start in South America

This summer two missionaries from the One Latin America (1LA) mission team—Nathan Schulte and Phil Strackbein—will be moving to Ecuador. This will be the first time WELS will have an active mission presence in this South American country. Schulte currently serves in Mexico, and Strackbein serves in Bolivia.

“In the beginning of November all the 1LA missionaries met in Mexico City to discuss a major training program we are developing and the relocation of different missionaries to best accomplish our goals as a team,” says Schulte. “We want to reach as many people as possible and to train people to be leaders in their own multiplying groups. The team had done extensive research on a number of major cities in Latin America. Quito, Ecuador, eventually came to the top of the list.”

One of the main contributing factors to the decision was the large number of Facebook users in Ecuador who follow *Academia Cristo* online—more than 60,000.

Academia Cristo is a WELS Spanish-language website that offers video and audio Bible studies and live online training to reach out to non-Christians as well as to teach Latin American church members how to share their faith.

This location in Ecuador also puts the missionaries closer to other countries in South America where WELS can't permanently locate a missionary for safety or political reasons but where interest in the gospel message has been demonstrated through active use of the *Academia Cristo* website.

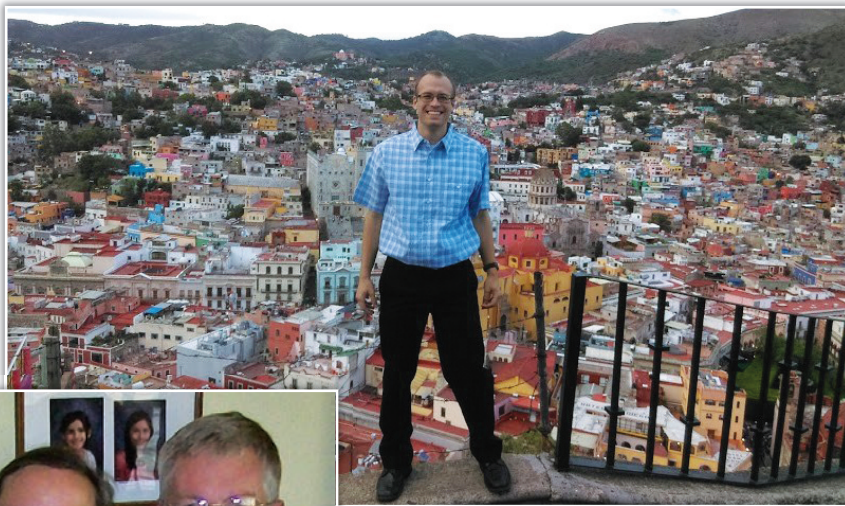
A third reason is, while WELS has never officially had a mission in Ecuador, Martin Luther College Spanish Professor Paul Bases has been taking groups of students there for years to teach English, and, through that work, valuable connections have already been made.

Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions, says the main goal of the missionaries is to “facilitate the planting of small group churches in Quito and beyond.” He says, “The idea is to connect Ecuadorean Christians to the online materials and relationships so that they're able to keep the ministry rolling even after our missionaries might leave.”

Schulte says, “I love the fact that, from the start, we are focused on training Ecuadorians to study God's Word and to share it with others. They know their culture and situations

better than I ever will, and God has already placed them in their own unique contexts with their own connections and opportunities. I'm really looking forward to working to help them to do just that—share God's grace with others.”

The missionaries' first priorities will be finding a location for a Christian training center and doing boots-on-the-ground work—meeting their neighbors and learning more about the community. To help this effort, two congregations—



(Above) Nathan Schulte, a missionary in Mexico, is one of two missionaries relocating to Ecuador to help start new small group churches. (Left) Phil Strackbein, who had been serving in Bolivia, is the other. The Christian Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bolivia does not need a full-time resident missionary anymore but will be visited by members of the 1LA team as it continues to reach out. Phil is pictured with his wife, Kathy.

St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, Wis., and Goodview Trinity, Goodview, Minn.—will be sending volunteers in May and June to host introduction workshops open to the Quito community. These two volunteer groups are the inaugural groups for the new WELS Mission Journeys program, which coordinates opportunities for WELS members who want to volunteer in a mission field.

“Ecuador, like all Latin America, is in desperate need of God's grace. It is grace-starved. Even in many churches and Christian groups, the emphasis is not on Jesus and what he has done for us in our salvation,” says Schulte. “We want to bring people to the source of that grace—the Bible—and to teach them to learn from it and share it with others.”

Learn more about WELS Missions at wels.net/missions. Check out *Academia Cristo* at academiacristo.com. Find out more about WELS Mission Journeys in the upcoming June issue.

WELS news briefs

Synodical Council

414-256-3201; mark.schroeder@wels.net

Upon the request of the Synodical Council, WELS President Mark Schroeder appointed **an ad hoc committee to review the retirement program for WELS workers** and to explore options to improve it. The committee includes representatives from the Synodical Council, the Conference of Presidents, and the Retirement Program Commission, along with advisory members. The committee's objective is not to increase or decrease the amount contributed toward the retirement plan but to ensure that the contributions made on behalf of called workers are directed to the best retirement program for the synod and its called workers. WELS established a pension plan during the 1960s that covers all called workers and is funded by individual calling bodies. Learn more about WELS Benefit Plans at welsbpo.net.

Communication Services

414-256-3210; csc@wels.net

The date for the fifth annual WELS Night at Miller Park

has been set for Aug. 3. Join thousands of WELS members for the Milwaukee Brewers' game against the Colorado Rockies. Game time is 7:10 P.M. WELS members get up to 50 percent off the price of tickets. Seating will be along the third base line and in a block for WELS members. To purchase tickets, visit brewers.com/wels.



Commission on Evangelism

414-256-3288; evangelism@wels.net

Filming is complete for the movie *To the Ends of the Earth*, the final installment in a series of four outreach movies.

Filmed in Ouarzazate, Morocco, from Jan. 29–Feb. 3, the movie highlights four major events from the book of Acts—the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, the conversion of Lydia, the casting out of a demon from the slave girl, and Paul and Silas in prison followed by the baptisms of the jailer and his household. Pictured are scenes from the movie. The filming location, in a setting where many other Bible-era movies have been shot, allowed the production team to make use of already available sets, beautiful scenery, and local talent. The goal is to have the movie available by the end of summer 2018 in time for congregations initially to use the film and accompanying materials as an option for celebrating a synodwide Mission and Ministry Sunday on Oct. 21. Funding sources included CM Cares: the Church Mutual Insurance Company Foundation; WELS Foundation's Shared Blessings donor advised fund; Multi-Language Publications; and gifts from groups, congregations, and individuals.



New training to help protect children

A new training program to help people recognize and respond to child abuse is being released in April by Freedom for the Captives, a WELS organization that works to protect children and empower survivors of abuse.

The program—entitled “Standing up for Children: A Christian Response to Child Abuse and Neglect”—consists of four videos that review dealing with physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse and provide a theological basis for the importance of protecting children. The course also highlights how to create and enforce a child protection policy for a church, school, or organization.

“We want to make it as easy as possible for pastors, teachers, and lay leaders to get some fundamental training on how to keep children as safe as possible,” says

Ben Sadler, chairman of the Freedom for the Captives committee and pastor at Goodview Trinity, Goodview, Minn. He recommends that all pastors, teachers, and lay leaders for children's ministries go through ongoing training like this.

Sadler says that having a child protection policy in place and having ongoing training for those who work with children also encourages survivors. “When going through this training, it raises awareness in the congregation on how we might better help people who've been abused,” he says. “It lets those who are suffering in silence know that [the church] cares about them.”

Sexual abuse is widespread in our communities. The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study (1997) shares that 1 in 4 women

and 1 in 6 men were sexually abused as children. “I think there is still the idea that this is somebody else's church's problem,” says Sadler. “Avoiding the issue won't make it go away. We need to offer hope. . . . And we need to provide the tools to keep our children safe.”

Funding from Antioch Foundation helped make this training program possible. This funding also is allowing committee member Victor Vieth, founder of the Gunderson National Child Protection Training Center and member at St. John, Lewiston, Minn., to present at congregations, schools, and conferences in person. E-mail freedom@wels.net to get access to the free training videos.

To learn more about Freedom for the Captives, a part of WELS Special Ministries, go to freedomforcaptives.com.

District news

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

Christ, Pewaukee, Wis., began worship services at a second site in Erin, Wis., on March 18. Each Sunday evening, Christ now offers family-friendly worship services in the Erin School gym.

On Feb. 24, Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis., hosted the first **WELS Middle School Honors Band Festival**. The band included students from Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.; Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.; Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School.

WESTERN WISCONSIN

Western Wisconsin District teachers assembled for their first unified teachers' conference in more than 30 years on Feb. 15 and 16 at **St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.**, under the theme, "Here we stand—united in God's Word."

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

SEW—On Jan. 28, **St. Paul, Slinger, Wis.**, celebrated its 145th anniversary.

The district reporters for this month are: SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

WESTERN WISCONSIN



On Jan. 28, St. John, Jefferson, Wis., celebrated WELS World Missions by hosting a church mission festival and corresponding school cultural fair. Each school family worked together to create a display from one of the countries where WELS is currently conducting mission work or is in fellowship with a sister church body. The children sang songs in different languages, and each family brought a potluck dish to pass specific to their country. Kinsley (pictured), a first-grader at St. John's, noted, "I learned that missionaries in Mexico sometimes have to communicate through the Internet to share Jesus with other people." For resources to help plan a cultural fair or mission festival, visit missions.welsrc.net.

Obituaries

Arnold J. Koelpin, 1931–2017

Arnold Koelpin was born May 24, 1931, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died Nov. 13, 2017, in New Ulm, Minn.

A 1958 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.; Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; St. James, Cambridge, Wis.; and Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth; 1 daughter; 3 sons; 23 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren; and 1 sister. He is preceded in death by one sister and one brother.

Erling L. Carmichael, 1932–2017

Erling Carmichael was born Feb. 23, 1932, in Fort Atkinson, Wis. He died Nov. 13, 2017, in La Crosse, Wis.

A 1963 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. Matthew, Warrens, Wis.; Emanuel, Fairfax, Minn.; and St. John's, Dakota, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Beverly; 3 daughters; 1 son; 12 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild; 1 brother; and 3 sisters. He is preceded in death by two daughters and one brother.

Doris J. Kurth, 1930–2017

Doris Kurth (née Frey) was born May 17, 1930, in Middlebury, Ind. She died Nov. 16, 2017, in LaGrange, Ind.

She taught at Mt. Calvary, Menasha, Wis.; St. Paul, Franklin, Wis.; St. John, Fremont, Wis.; Wisconsin Lutheran School, Racine, Wis.; and Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Robert; two sons; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild; two brothers; and four sisters. She is preceded in death by one brother and one sister.

Alice R. Muenkel, 1922–2017

Alice Muenkel (née Konetchy) was born Sept. 24, 1922. She died Nov. 26, 2017, in Milwaukee, Wis.

She taught at St. Paul, Bangor, Wis.; St. James, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.

She is survived by two sons, one daughter, six grandchildren, and some great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her husband, Ralph, and one son.

Martin P. Janke, 1929–2017

Martin Janke was born Oct. 12, 1929, in New Ulm, Minn. He died Dec. 10, 2017, in Jackson, Wis.

A 1955 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. John, Saint Paul, Minn.; St. Paul, Roscoe, S.D.; Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.; and David's Star, Jackson, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Marie; 2 sons; 2 daughters; 12 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by two brothers.



SALT

— of the —

EARTH

When we are hurt, we want to hurt whoever hurt us. God has a different way for his people.

Bruce A. McKenney

It was the ultimate example of not repaying evil with evil.

A lifelong faithful Christian was nearing death, dying of cancer at home under the care of hospice. No matter what we read from the Scriptures or what hymns we sang, he just seemed so restless and didn't want to listen. He wouldn't even fold his hands to pray. His wife and I were perplexed at how troubled he seemed.

Finally, when I had a few moments of privacy with him, I asked, "What in all the world is bothering you that makes you so restless?"

Then it came out. Early in their marriage he had committed an act of infidelity and he had never told his wife. And now, as he faced death, his past sin was haunting him as well as the fear of going to hell. I encouraged him to tell his wife and seek her forgiveness.

That moment finally came. Tearfully he confessed to his wife what he had done. He then told her how sorry he was. For him, it was the ultimate act of betrayal, and I didn't know how she was going to react. I could see her clenching her jaws as he spoke. I thought that, surely, she would start yelling at him or cursing the day she had met him. Or maybe she would just keep silent, making him squirm even more in his guilt and fear.

But she didn't do either. Although his

past act hurt her deeply, she stood up, leaned over, and kissed him, saying, "I forgive you, honey, and Jesus forgives you too!"

The tears came flooding from his eyes. You could almost see the weight of that guilt and shame fall off his shoulders.

DO NOT TAKE REVENGE

Although not every wrong committed against us will be as serious as the act of unfaithfulness in marriage, wrongs do hurt, and they can come from friend or foe, from believer and unbeliever alike. When others hurt us, there is a natural tendency to want to get even. The world and our sinful hearts look upon revenge as something sweet. But that is not true, and that is not what our Savior wants from us. We have been called to be salt of the earth and light in the world.

One way we can do this is by not repaying evil with evil, but by repaying it with good. Paul explains it this way: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head'" (Romans 12:17,19,20).

First of all, Paul reminds us that we are to love others because we have been loved by God. And how did God ultimately show his love for us? Rather than taking out his anger, his revenge, on us for all the wrongs we have done against him and others, he took it out on his own Son! We were his enemies, and yet he was willing to send his Son to die and take the punishment for us.

Such amazing love from God gives us the reason and the strength not to repay evil with evil. No better example of this can be given than that of our Savior himself. Think of how he responded to those who were beating and crucifying him! If someone ever had justifiable reason to strike back, it was Jesus, the Son of God. But what did he do? He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). That is how we want to be salt and light too. "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

How much greater our effectiveness as salt when we flavor life with forgiveness and love.

Another reason for avoiding revenge is because it is not our place to mete out justice. It is God's. That is what Paul was getting at when he wrote, "Leave room for God's wrath." When we take matters into our own hands by trying to make others pay for what they have done to us, we carry a burden we don't need to carry and have no right to carry. As God's people, we are to live at peace with others, always keeping in mind that we are all in the hands of the Lord who will take care of all things and bring everything into line with his justice in his own time and in his own way.

REPAY EVIL WITH LOVE

Living at peace with our loved ones is challenging enough. Living at peace with our enemies is even more difficult. So, if we are not to repay evil with

evil, what are we to do? Repay it with kindness. When our enemies hunger, we feed them. If they thirst, we quench it. In so doing, Paul says, we will heap coals of fire on their heads.

There are a number of ways to understand these words. Have you ever been touched by a hot burning coal? It can leave a red burn mark. Maybe Paul's point is that when we repay evil with kindness the person reacts with burning anger: "I meant to hurt you. How dare you try to be nice to me." Such hard-hearted reaction to kindness can be part of God's judgment on our enemies. Such reactions make plain to all, especially to God, who indeed is in the wrong.

Or when we repay evil with kindness, that person's face might blush in shame, possibly leading them to repentance! Isn't that what happens to us when we sin against God for the umpteenth time and yet his forgiveness is always there? We sing about that in a Lenten hymn: "Thus might I hide my blushing face while his dear cross appears, dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt my eyes to tears" (*Christian Worship* 129:4). Isn't that what we want most for those who hurt us, especially our enemies? Jesus said that this is the ultimate goal in doing good: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). How much greater our effectiveness as salt when we flavor life with forgiveness and love, and how much greater our light shines in repaying evil with good!

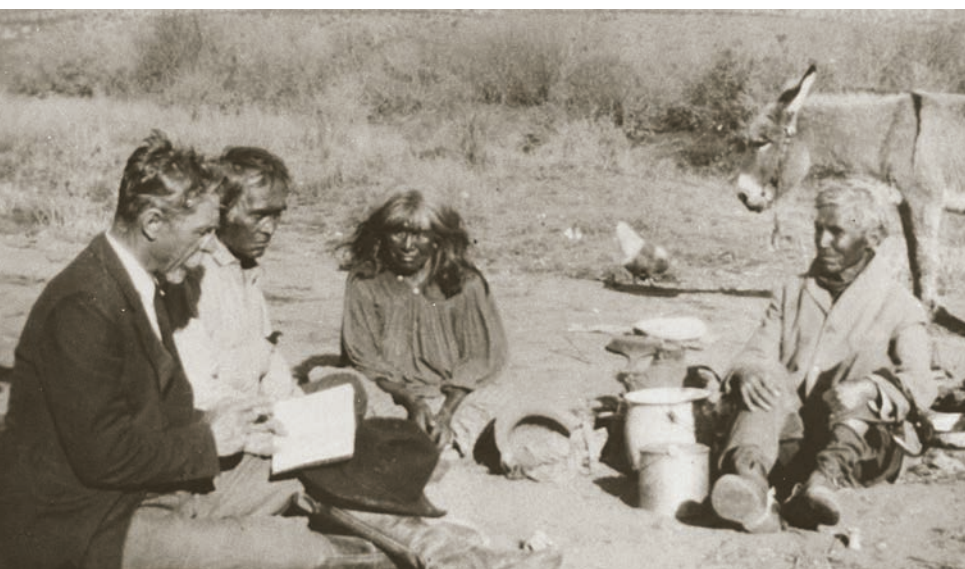
That is what happened that day on my member's deathbed. He had sinned against his wife. He had hurt her deeply. But she didn't strike back. She didn't take revenge. She didn't repay evil with evil. Rather, she forgave. That forgiveness dissolved his heart in thankfulness and melted his eyes to tears. Mine too.

Bruce McKenney is pastor at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

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

DO NOT
repay
ANYONE EVIL
FOR EVIL.
DO NOT TAKE
revenge,
MY DEAR
FRIENDS.

ROMANS 12:17,19



Reaching Native Christians

WELS' first missionaries to a foreign nation stepped off the train in Arizona determined to share the gospel with the Apache people.

Daniel J. Rautenberg and Debbie K. Dietrich

"This is the worst of times to begin an Indian mission." So said a veteran missionary in 1876 as the Iowa Synod was deciding whether or not to begin a gospel outreach effort to American Indians.

It certainly seemed like he was right. Days later General Custer and his men would die at the Battle of Little Bighorn. The next year an effort by the Joint Lutheran Synod to begin an Indian mission failed miserably when the missionary called to begin the work chose instead to focus on German Lutheran immigrants going to California. The Iowa Synod closed down its Indian mission. No other mission societies could be found to be partners in this venture. Time, money, and workers were lacking.

THEN WAS THE BEST TIME

But the desire to do mission work did not die. Undeterred by the obstacles, our forefathers continued to plan and work to begin their mission efforts. And when they found a group of people in Arizona unreached by the good news of the gospel, they decided that it was

indeed the best time to bring the gospel message to the Apache tribes in Arizona Territory.

In October of 1893, John Plocher and George Adascheck stepped off the train in Arizona Territory, in what was then known as "Hell's 40 Acres." It was a harsh new environment. Desert heat without air conditioning. The strange barren landscape stretching in front of them foretold of isolation and loneliness. The only green things in sight seemed to be the missionaries.

As Rev. Alchesay Arthur Guenther, a longtime missionary to the Apache, wrote, "No real town. Just scattered small teepees or wikiups constructed of cedar poles covered with bear grass, tied with cactus rope. A *tus* (pitch covered basket) for carrying water, burden baskets for carrying corn, flour, salt, jerky, coffee, yucca bananas, wild onions, acorns, walnuts, and anything else. A scrawny horse and a couple of patient donkeys. Little ones with matted hair, bare feet and ragged clothing. These were to become his 'congregation.' Did this early white intruder

from the East feel in his pocket for what just might be a return ticket?"

Aside from a theological education, the early missionaries were completely untrained for this new endeavor in this new culture. Their task was to preach the gospel to people who spoke a different language and had all the skepticism, cynicism, and hostility that comes from being defeated and betrayed. But the missionaries were determined to share the message of God's love.

And they found people willing to listen. Try, fail, innovate, adapt, try again. Showing love, patience, and perseverance, our missionaries built a relationship with the Apache people. Over the last 125 years, not everyone who came to share the gospel could stay long. But the graveyards on both reservations pay silent tribute to those who did.

NOW IS THE BEST TIME

One hundred twenty-five years later, not so silent tribute is paid every week by thousands of Native Americans who gather to offer praise to our gracious and merciful God! The powerful gos-



pel has done incredible things on the Apache reservations in Arizona and continues to work in the hearts of fourth- and fifth-generation Christians. Children still fill the schools to learn about Jesus, and adults who were raised in the mission's nursery are now leaders in the nine congregations. With more than 3,600 members, the Native American mission is now raising up Apache men and women to take the gospel to their own people and, God-willing, to many other Native American tribes in the future.

We remember our history, because the attitudes displayed, lessons learned, and examples shown continue to guide and inspire us today! Not many of us will visit sick members after catching skunks and rendering their oil so that we can wrap our members in foul-smelling tar paper and torn flannel shirts for healing like one of our early missionaries did! But we still show love and compassion. We may not have to live in a half cave with an Ocotillo cactus fence door or put together a house ordered from a Montgomery Ward catalog like those early missionaries, but we can improvise and innovate and find ways to do ministry and communicate the gospel. Most of all, we can, with the Holy Spirit's help, always keep that fire to share the gospel burning bright. Despite the obstacles that Satan will put in front of us, our God is stronger

and the Word of Life is powerful and urgently needed by more people.

So from your Native American brothers and sisters: *A shoog'* (White Mountain Apache language), *Ahi'ye e'* (San Carlos Apache language). "Thank you!" to all of the WELS people today and to our ancestors 125 years ago who, undeterred by trials, have taken the gospel across the street, across the country, and across the oceans! We pray with you that we all use every opportunity to share the good news as the first world missionaries did 125 years ago—undeterred and fueled by the Holy Spirit, with new approaches and techniques, to new people, despite economic and political climates. "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

May God bless all our efforts.

Daniel Rautenberg is the Native American mission field coordinator. Debbie Dietrich is the Native American mission communication coordinator.

This is the first article in a three-part series on WELS mission work on the Apache reservations in Arizona.



Read how the Native American mission is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year (p. 21). Learn more about its work in this month's edition of *WELS Connection*.

Photo 1: Dr. Francis Uplegger (pictured far left) served as a WELS missionary to the San Carlos reservation from 1919 to 1964. During his ministry, Uplegger developed a written form of the Apache language and used it to instruct the Apache people in God's Word. His hymnal and writings are still used today.



Photo 2: Chief Cassadore and his wife (c. 1886). Chief Cassadore led WELS' first missionaries down the dirt road from the military fort in Rice to the Peridot area. Here he gave WELS 10 acres to use for Christian education and worship for his people, the San Carlos Apache tribe. This land is still used for these purposes today.

Photo 3: Chief Alchesay of the White Mountain Apache was brought to faith after almost dying during the flu epidemic in 1918. Missionary E. Edgar Guenther and his wife, Minnie, ministered to Chief Alchesay when he was sick. Alchesay then donated land for Guenther to build a church. When the Church of the Open Bible was dedicated in Whiteriver in 1922, Alchesay and 100 of his band were baptized.

Photo 4: The East Fork Nursery provided a home for Apache babies from about 1922 to 1993. It began because of mothers who died at childbirth or who could not care properly for their little ones and because of an old Apache custom of killing one of the babies if twins were born. Funding from WELS ladies' groups made it possible for the nursery to open officially as an orphanage in 1957. The orphanage, which began as a lean-to with tomato boxes for cribs, grew into a building housing 30 to 40 little Apaches. The building now is used for the Apache Christian Training School, which equips Native Christian leaders.



GOD'S MAP

We might not know where we're going, but God does.

Nicole E. Peterson

"Sweetheart, the map is not wrong."

"Tim. It is. We followed exactly the roads indicated on this map and here we are."

"Nic, clearly we didn't."

Tim and I, barely thirty years old and just days into our new marriage, were standing at the top of the Waimea Canyon at a dead-end road squarely in the middle of Nowhere, Kauai, Hawaii. We were nowhere near the visitor center and trailhead that were supposed to be right there.

"That's why I'm saying the map is wrong. We turned at the third tiny road to the left, then again to the right at the second smaller road, and here we are. Obviously, they did not draw every tiny trail and road on the map and that is why we are here. It wasn't me."

"Okay, Sugar, I understand."

"Don't do that! I know you're just humoring me! The map is wrong. Do you see how the map is wrong?"

"I do, Nic. I really do." Never mind the smirk on Tim's face.

That was February of 2002. And although I admit I have an awful sense of direction, I did have my road in life mapped out. My road was the one where I go to college, meet a nice boy, get married, work a bit, have four adorable babies, live in the northeast suburbs my whole life, and raise these kids with my husband until they're off on their own.

FEELING OFF-COURSE

But clearly my map was wrong. Just 14 short years after our wedding, after we played soccer in the rain with our kids and their pals, Tim left the field in his truck with our littlest son. Our two middle children and I followed in a vehicle behind. His last words to me were, "Follow me. I don't know where I'm going." Minutes later my children and I hugged and cried as our 45-year-old vibrant, faithful, genuine, kind, joyful, funny, strong, ambitious husband and daddy passed away on the grass in front of us from a sudden massive heart attack.

That road definitely was not on *my* map. My road was to be the smooth one that Tim and I had agreed on—the one

on which we'd grow old together. The one where Tim, body worn but mind sharp, would boss me around as I, strong in body but absent-minded, would push him in a wheelchair and threaten to send him down a hill when he got too sassy. It was a joyful, safe, familiar road.

Never did I imagine that the pleasant road we were on would turn so abruptly, so frighteningly, so dark and lonely, for me to travel alone as a heartbroken, too-young widow. Never did I expect to plunge into valleys so deep that only God's outstretched hand would enable me to climb out—not for me but for the sake of my kids who needed me. Nor did I anticipate it could be followed by such beauty that I never would have seen before the dark parts of the journey forced me to travel closer to the light of Jesus.

With Jesus, I can be brave enough to look at the road just within my view, not straining to anticipate the curves or speeding up or slowing down. But I can't see too far ahead. My journey, with only Jesus as my guide, would reveal blessings of faith, courage, strength, and perspective I never knew possible. But none of this was on my map.

DISCOVERING A NEW ROAD

New Year's Eve 2017 also wasn't on my map. An amazing man invited me and my little passengers on a completely new road that we would travel together. That night, in front of hundreds of Carnival cruise ship passengers, Greg got down on one knee and proposed to me. And I joyfully and emotionally said that I would gladly travel this road with him, wherever it may take us.

As I plan to marry this good man God so unexpectedly put in my path, I know now more than ever that God lights our path and reveals the way forward if we just trust in him and the perfection of his map for us. "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105).

I would be lying if I said I wasn't a little scared as I try to map out this new journey. I'm scared for my ability to help my kids understand, accept, or even love this path. I'm scared that others will misinterpret or even judge how quickly this change in course came about. I'm scared of what life change this brings and how we'll stand up under it as we've already been through so much. I'm scared of how much I love Greg and how vulnerable it feels to feel this way again, even as I continue to nurse a broken heart that will always love Tim.

TRUSTING IN GOD'S PATH

But then I remember that drawing the map is not my responsibility. My map belongs to God. If I continue to lean on him, my fear calms, and trust and optimism replace it. Trust that God brought Greg and me together and blessed us with this unexpected and beautiful love. Trust that together we can navigate this ruggedly beautiful road because our hearts first belong to God and then to one another and our children. Trust that no matter how challenging the terrain gets or how uncertain that next turn seems, God will light the way and fill us with all that we need. Optimism that we'll blend our Brady bunch together and create a faith-filled, loving, fun family life that will bless not only us but also others we meet along the way. Optimism that although my children and I loved where God originally put us on the map and it's easy to want to stay put to avoid bumps along that way, we'll instead look ahead to all the goodness that awaits us. Optimism that we'll continue to be humbled and overwhelmed by God's

God lights our path and reveals the way forward if we just trust in him and the perfection of his map for us.

goodness, faithfulness, kindness, creativity, and brilliance as we remember he's led us through so many miles already. We're clinging tightly to his hand as we're "comin' in hot" around this new curve, and we realize there really is no place for fear when we are focused on God and his path for us.

So as we continue our journey, I thank God for the sweet gift of the miles I traveled with Tim at my side. I thank him for the unexpected gift of Greg on this new leg of our journey. And most of all I thank him that I trust his map isn't wrong, that by guiding me through the rockiest parts he's blessed me with confidence to follow.

After all, contrary to what I may like to think, I don't always know where I'm going. What I do know, without a doubt, is that it's bound to be a beautiful and exciting ride.

Nicole Peterson is a member at Bethlehem, Lakeville, Minnesota.



Listen to a radio interview conducted with Nicole one year after her husband's death. Find the link at wels.net/forwardinchrist.

(Top to bottom): Tim and Nicole at their wedding in 2002. Tim and Nicole and their family about a year before Tim died. Nicole and her children almost a year after Tim died. Greg (far left), his son Parker (second from left), and some of Nicole's family. Nicole and Greg. Greg proposing to Nicole on Dec. 31, 2017.



Even though
the world
considers us
foolish, we
have true
wisdom.

Fools

Andrew C. Schroer

It all began with an edict by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. The Julian calendar used by most of the Western world had some problems. Among other things, seasons and solstices did not always line up because the calendar did not accurately calculate leap years.

The new calendar, called the Gregorian calendar, established a more accurate number of leap years as well as other innovations. Pope Gregory's calendar also established January 1 as the official beginning of the year.

Though January 1 had traditionally been the first day of the year on the Julian calendar, by the Middle Ages many Western European countries celebrated the new year on different days. In some countries, New Year's was celebrated at the end of March and the beginning of April.

When Pope Gregory published his new calendar, there was no Facebook and no CNN. There wasn't even radio. News about the changes spread slowly. Many continued decades, and even centuries, later to celebrate New Year's on their traditional dates.

Those who continued to celebrate the New Year at the end of March and the beginning of April, either due to ignorance or just plain obstinance, were soon mocked by their fellow countrymen. They were called fools, and practical jokes were played on them.

According to some historians, thus began the celebration of April Fools' Day.

Much has been made in the media about the fact that Easter this year falls on April Fools' Day. It's ironic. As Christians we often play the role of the fool for believing the Easter message.

For those who don't believe in Jesus, what we believe seems ridiculous. We believe that because God was born as a man, nailed to a piece of wood, died, and came back to life, we are now free from any guilt or punishment for every bad thing we do. We believe we will live

forever with him one day in a perfect place of happiness called heaven somewhere beyond our existence here on earth.

Many of the greatest scientists and scholars of our age mock us and call us dumb for believing the Bible. Even the apostle Paul was laughed off by the educated elite of his day (Acts 17:32). As Christians we are fools. To be more accurate, though, we are sophomores. You see, the word *sophomore* literally means "a wise fool."

But even though the world considers us foolish, we have true wisdom. To the world, what we believe as Christians is weak and foolish. The apostle Paul reminds us of that but concludes, "The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

How can anyone believe in what so many think is for fools? Only through faith can a person see its true wisdom and power.

Through Jesus' humble death and glorious resurrection, we have become heirs of heaven. We are now sons and daughters of the King of all creation. Through faith, we have true understanding, but we can't prove any of it. The world cannot see it. It seems foolish to them.

But instead of getting upset when the world calls us fools, instead of getting embarrassed, instead of feeling like you have to defend or prove what you believe, embrace the foolishness of the cross. Accept the fact that the world does not and will never understand. Jesus told us it would be that way. Some will mock us. Some will point and call us fools.

Don't worry about it. Don't be ashamed. Don't back down. One day God will reveal who the true fools really are.

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

MAJORING ON THE MINORS

Thomas D. Kock

JONAH: HOPE IN HOPELESS SITUATIONS

"This is hopeless! There's no way out of this, no way to escape! There's nothing good that can come of this!"

Who had the most reason to make statements like the above? Perhaps Adam and Eve right after they'd eaten that forbidden fruit? Oh, how hopeless their situation!

Another group who thought it was hopeless was Jesus' followers as they saw him being put to death and laid in a grave. Think of Mary Magdalene as she talked to the One she thought was the gardener. Hopeless!

JONAH'S "HOPELESS" SITUATION

What about Jonah?

Remember, God had said to Jonah, "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me" (1:2). But Jonah rebelled! He got onto a ship headed away from his task. God caused a mighty storm to come up; Jonah knew he was the reason for it (cf. 1:7-10,12). Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea, which they did. How did he feel as he plunged into the raging sea? Hopeless? I'd guess! After all, it appeared his life was about to end, and it was because he'd blatantly rebelled against God!

Not so much.

"Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (1:17). Chapter 2 of Jonah records a prayer of Jonah and ends by telling us that the fish, at God's command, "vomited Jonah

onto dry land" (2:10). Was Jonah's situation hopeless? Not at all!

JESUS' HOPE-FILLED PROMISE

And had Jesus' followers paid better attention, they would have known that their situation wasn't hopeless either. Jesus had said, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Jonah came out of the fish; Jesus would come out of the grave! And he did!

Because Jesus came out of the grave, you and I will never face a hopeless situation, ever. That's true because, ultimately, we know where our journey is heading—to heaven! We know we'll enter eternal life because Jesus died paying for all sins, even the sin of overt rebellion like Jonah's. Then Jesus rose, proving that his payment for sin was all-sufficient! We who deserved hell are now journeying toward glory! So no matter what we might be facing, no matter how "hopeless" our situation seems, ultimately we will journey through that situation to eternal glory!

Hopeless? Never. Not for you! You know where you're going!

Contributing editor Thomas Kock, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Atone-ment, Milwaukee.

This is the third article in a 12-part series on the minor prophets.

HOSEA
JOEL
JONAH

Background: Jonah, the son of Amittai of Gath Hepher (land of Zebulun, cf. Joshua 19:13), was a prophet at the time of about 700-650 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 14:25).

The book's major truth: "Salvation comes from the LORD" (2:9). God's love is *undeserved*; God's love is for *all*.

Interesting note: The book is full of ironies. For example, unbelievers pray while the prophet sleeps; the most rebellious of the Old Testament prophets is, humanly speaking, the most successful.

Unusual fact: Jonah was swallowed by a fish!

AMOS
OBADIAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI



Our vision of
[God's] kingdom
can come into
focus when we
say his prayer
together in our
worship.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever

Kingdom? So often we think in such narrow terms about the word *kingdom*. We consider it defined by our personal experiences and activities. Even if we consider *kingdom* as Christ's kingdom, we still see its shape and contours by what we know.

That perspective is good and healthy as far as it goes. We praise God for finding us in the span of history, calling us by the gospel, and making us part of a kingdom. We—most often we think and say “I,” using the singular—are chosen, royal, holy people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9). We have all that by grace through faith. We are—I am—called by the gospel, enlightened, and incorporated into his church.

But then that enlightened heart expands our vision. I am not alone; others belong to that kingdom. We are together—his. But that still becomes too narrow. We are here at this time and this place. Even time and place confine Christ's kingdom. His kingdom stretches over all time to include those who have gone before us and those who will come after us. Place is just as limiting. Place might imply cultural, social, racial, and economic similarities, but those are also gone—one kingdom, one head, Jesus and all who believe in him together.

Our vision of his kingdom can come into focus when we say his prayer together in our worship. For two thousand years Christians have prayed to their heavenly Father using the words Jesus taught us. And they haven't all spoken his prayer in English or in churches with pews.

Yours is the kingdom! We simply find ourselves citizens now with so many others over time and geography. His power sustains that church. The gospel

is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). That power made us believers and still sustains us. It is the means by which God keeps us in his kingdom and converts new hearts to marvel at his grace.

But I think we most often think of Christ's almighty power. That's okay, for he rules all things for the benefit of those in his kingdom. He controls the stars and still sees our struggles as well as our joys. He knows the number of hairs on our heads and tells us that not one sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge (Matthew 10:29,30). We depend on his power for daily breath, for strength, for care, and for the ability to use our talents for him and for others. He even invites us to pray that he will use that power for us in our needs. Yours is the power, Lord.

Naturally we conclude, “Yours is the glory!” What else could we possibly say or think? We are not worthy of anything, but God has made us recipients of so much. Our hymn of praise is imperfect. We are still tied to life here with its trials, troubles, and traumas. At times it is not easy to give him glory, but we do, even while we anguish over some pain or problem. But at other times, when the Holy Spirit helps us see clearly all that God has done for us, we praise him without complaint.

We look forward to the time when our praise will be perfect and we will join those in heaven to sing, “Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever” (Revelation 7:12). Here we simply say together, “For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.”



COME Lord Jesus BE OUR GUEST

NOURISHED BY MEALS WITH THE MESSIAH

Joel S. Heckendorf

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING HERE TO EAT? (LUKE 24:36-49)

"Do we have anything to eat?" Being the father of two teenage boys, that's a question I'm accustomed to hearing. So much so I sometimes don't even hear it. But when Jesus asks this seemingly ordinary question, it's anything but mundane.

It was Easter night. The huddled disciples were just hearing the reports for the first time. "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon!" (Luke 24:34). But they weren't quite sure if the report was fake news or not. Was Simon mistaken? Were his eyes playing tricks on him? Were his hopes creating a false reality?

But soon Jesus stood before them. Was that him? Sounded like him. "Peace be with you." Looked like him. "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself!" But was it really him? Was it too good to be true? Then came the question, "Do you have anything here to eat?" (Luke 24:36,39,41).

Why did Jesus ask that question? Was he starving because he hadn't eaten since Thursday? No, it wasn't his glorified body that needed to be fed that night. Jesus did not ask for food because he needed to be fed. He asked for food to feed his friends' faith. Their hearts were emptier than his glorified stomach. He asked for a bite to dispel their doubts.

Imagine how the next moments played out. The designated chef walked over to

the first-century oven and plated a piece of fish. The designated waiter handed it to Jesus, thankful that he didn't drop the plate to the floor. Real-flesh hands of Jesus took it. With great anticipation, the disciples watched those scarred hands bring the fish to his mouth. As the candles cast their dim light on this unexpected guest of honor, they caught a glimpse of the fish grease glistening on Jesus' chin. Like a parent watching a child eat their first spoonful, they intently watched this grown man chew. Munch. Munch. Munch. When he swallowed, it wasn't just the fish that went down, so did their doubts. The next bite confirmed their joy. The bite after that confirmed their amazement. He is alive! Just as he told them. Just as it was written.

But this Easter meal doesn't just tell us something about Jesus' resurrected body. We also learn something about ours. Because Jesus' body was real, we can say, "In my flesh I will see God" (Job 19:26). Because Jesus could dine with the disciples, we can look forward to eating with Jesus in the kingdom of God with glorified bodies (Luke 22:16). Because Jesus' body stood in that room, we can confidently stand and confess, "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting" (Apostles' Creed), a life where we can enjoy paradise in soul and body.

This Easter, you may gather with friends or family for dinner. Before you eat

your Easter ham or peel those Easter eggs, you will pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest." As he joins you for dinner, may the message of a living, 100 percent human, risen Lord dispel your doubts. May the certainty of a victorious, death-defying Savior certify your joy and amazement. May his resurrection lead you to look forward to your resurrection. Let all these gifts to us be blessed!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Why did the disciples think they saw a ghost?
2. How does this section compare to other times that Jesus asked, "Why did you doubt?"
3. How does Jesus still appeal to our various senses to show us himself? What does this say about our Savior?

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



This is the fifth article in a 12-part series that looks at Jesus as a mealtime guest and how he blessed his fellow diners—and us—with his living presence. Find the article and answers online after April 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.

Easter EMOTION AND FAITH

The angel's message at the tomb
brings comfort, joy, and relief.

Daniel M. Solofra



I was once told that it is difficult to effectively counsel someone within 24 hours of a traumatic event. If you have ever made a visit to an emergency room, you know how overwhelming the experience can be. Sometimes people go into shock. Others describe the ordeal as surreal. For this reason it is difficult to process information and to think clearly at that moment.

When dealing with individuals who experience tragic events, we especially try to be sensitive and understanding. Taking into account their fragile condition, we try to comfort and encourage as we help them process their life-changing events.

DEATH IS COMING

It is with this type of consideration of human weakness that I picture the angel engaging the women on Easter morning. The angel had a strong and powerful message, but it was delivered to a fragile and struggling audience.

The first Easter message is one of comfort. "Do not be afraid," the angel said. These words speak volumes. The women did not need to be afraid. They did not need to be afraid of the angel, and, more than that, they did not need to be afraid of the absence of the body of Jesus. Most important, they did not need to be afraid of death.

Because let's face it, death is scary. Death always seems to take us by surprise. The death of Jesus took these women by surprise. They couldn't believe it. For us it's the same thing, whether it's the sudden death of someone too young to die or the anticipated death of an elderly relative.

Have you experienced an encounter with death? A close call for you or someone close to you? Death reminds us that we and those we love are mortal. It reminds us of a

sin problem that causes death. It captures our attention and whispers, "Are you ready to meet your God?"

WE DON'T NEED TO FEAR DEATH

God's first words to the women at the tomb and to us as we face death go against every emotion we feel. He says, "Do not be afraid!" The angel quickly adds, "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay" (Matthew 28:5,6).

For the women at the tomb, it was obvious why this message would bring joy, happiness, and relief. Their friend was no longer dead. Jesus was alive. In a very short period of time, they would see him and talk to him.

But Jesus' life means so much more to these women—and to us. The death Jesus died three days earlier was no ordinary death. Jesus' death was preceded by a perfect life. He came into this world to live the perfect life that God demands of us and to die in our place as a payment for sin. Jesus' resurrection was not only his victory, but ours as well.

For the women, Easter morning started with fear and hurt and heartache. But all of this changed with an invitation to view an empty tomb. "The women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (Matthew 28:8). I am sure the day seemed surreal. But the significance of the angel's message, "He is not here; he has risen!" would continue to shape their hearts and lives.

Jesus' resurrection does not mean that death won't visit your door one day. But it does mean that when it does, with Jesus by your side, you will be ready to face it.

Daniel Solofra is pastor at CrossWalk Lutheran Ministries, Laveen, Arizona.