

Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE

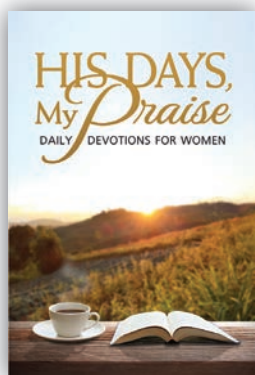


Let your light shine

The world we live in is dark and broken.
It needs believers to be light. *Page 10*

A Time for EVERYTHING

God blesses us with countless exciting milestones each year. Take time to celebrate the mom in your life this Mother's Day with these special books and gifts from Northwestern Publishing House.



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Open to all congregational leaders,
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The multi-site church movement is all about reaching more people with the gospel—and this new strategy has already been blessed with success in WELS congregations. Having one church in several locations allows congregations to reach different communities while enjoying practical benefits such as shared resources, efficient organization, and cost-effective programs. Whether you are already part of a multi-site ministry or just considering new opportunities for outreach, you can learn from speakers about the challenges and blessings of multi-site ministry.

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Ingleside Hotel and Conference Center, Pewaukee, Wis.
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May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. — 1 KINGS 8:57

WHAT'S INSIDE

Remember singing the children's song "This Little Gospel Light of Mine"? I remember teaching it to a class with the actions, especially the part about not hiding it under a bushel! That simple song teaches a big message—we need to let our light shine.

Our issue this month highlights the importance of witnessing, of sharing the amazing gospel message of Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

- Executive Editor John Braun starts off a new series that will explore the gospel's power and how we can use that gospel message in our churches and communities (p. 12).
- Our interactive Bible study shows how Jesus used the Scriptures to make the "hearts burn" of the disciples on the road to Emmaus—a burning that inspired them to go and tell others (p. 35).
- All of us are called to be Jesus' witnesses. Jon Hein shares more about that calling and the importance of us answering that call (p. 10).

Several articles this month also examine God's power and grace even among the increasing violence in our society (pp. 8,26,32). They show how extremely important it is to proclaim the gospel message to the world. It's the only message that can transform sinful hearts and lives.

Julie Wietzke



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PILATE'S MOTIVE?

I'm thinking that perhaps Dr. Eggert was rushing to conclusions in his article [Jan.] about Pilate's motive with his question "What is truth?" since no inflections or emotions come through the printed word. Couldn't he just as well have been expressing frustration with the difficulty of knowing what the truth is if all you have to go by is human opinion? Let's put the best construction on the motives of people in the Bible too!

Ruth Kovaciny
DeForest, Wisconsin

WHAT IS TRUTH?

The March issue of *Forward in Christ* had two articles that together made an important point. The third installment of "What is truth?" by Arthur Eggert addressing scientific truth and "Are you religiously incorrect?" by Mark Schroeder illustrate how human thinking is influenced by assumptions, logic, and social pressure. The dogmatic aspects of intellectual disciplines (and religions, as well) are greatly steered by socially-fueled notions of "correctness."

As a geologist, I was trained in the scientific method in the third type (observational science) categorized in "What is truth?" In geology, 50 years ago dogma mandated that continental drift was heresy. Now, seafloor spreading is dogma—like a lowly German

monk, a grad student can upset the cart. Pressure to hold to established dogma is produced by typical drivers, such as obtaining research grant money or worshiping of the hierarchy. Currently, global warming dogma is forcing out dissenters of this theory—simply by control of funding.

Yet, despite the "itching ears" and "vending tables," God's truth will prevail—and that is the one dogma that really matters anyway.

Steve Waltz
Houston, Texas

SONGS OF THE HEART

I have written before on the subject of our hymns, and the recent article ("God's love: Our song forever" [March]) in *Forward in Christ* did not provide any optimism. It ended with "sing the same one several weeks in a row to give them a chance to learn it." Please, let my singing be primarily worshipful rather than an education.

I make my final appeal from Scripture. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and make melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19 KJV). Songs of the heart we tend to know by heart.

Gilbert Holtz
Fishers, New York

Through my Bible in 3 years

Read or listen online at wels.net/bible3.

2018
MAY 2018

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Deuteronomy 14 & 15 | 12. Dt. 32:1-47 | 23. Mk. 14:1-25 |
| 2. Dt. 16 & 17 | 13. Dt. 32:48-34:12 | 24. Mk. 14:26-52 |
| 3. Dt. 18 & 19 | 14. Mark 10:1-16 | 25. Mk. 14:53-72 |
| 4. Dt. 20 & 21 | 15. Mk. 10:17-31 | 26. Mk. 15:1-21 |
| 5. Dt. 22 & 23 | 16. Mk. 10:32-52 | 27. Mk. 15:22-41 |
| 6. Dt. 24 & 25 | 17. Mk. 11:1-19 | 28. Mk. 15:42-16:8 |
| 7. Dt. 26 | 18. Mk. 11:20-33 | 29. Mk. 16:9-20 |
| 8. Dt. 27:1-28:14 | 19. Mk. 12:1-27 | 30. Judges 1:1-2:5 |
| 9. Dt. 28:15-68 | 20. Mk. 12:28-44 | 31. Jdg. 2:6-3:6 |
| 10. Dt. 29 & 30 | 21. Mk. 13:1-23 | |
| 11. Dt. 31 | 22. Mk. 13:24-37 | |

CORRECTION:

In the "Obituaries" [p. 25, April], Doris Kurth's birthplace was listed as Middlebury, Ind. She actually was born in White Butte, S.D. We apologize for the error.

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*.



Defining religion

PENTECOST: The festival of the church year in which we commemorate the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit 50 days after Easter (Acts 2). In the Old Testament, Pentecost commemorated the harvest and was one of the three great festivals celebrated annually, along with Passover and Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-17; Leviticus 23).

Jesus' victory is a given

"Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Luke 1:43

Joel C. Seifert

I think of the young women and men who've stood before me and made confirmation promises that were boldly spoken and quickly broken. I write this article the day after another school shooting claimed 17 lives, and I fear the despair and anger that Satan is sowing in the world my own children are growing up in. I get afraid.

JESUS' VICTORY IS A GIVEN

So, Elizabeth's words amaze me and bring peace to my heart. The virgin Mary was pregnant with Jesus when she visited her cousin. Mary faced dangers. Certainly, those around her considered her guilty of adultery, a sin punishable by death. The world would be opposed to this child; Herod would order the deaths of dozens of children in hopes of killing her baby. The child she was carrying was one the great dragon would do anything to destroy.

If Elizabeth was afraid for Mary, you couldn't hear it in her words: "But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? . . . Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" (Luke 1:43-45). I suppose it was simple. Elizabeth was too old to have a child, but God promised she would. It was more than dangerous at her age; it was impossible. But there she was, running her hand over her growing belly. That same God also promised that a Savior would come through Israel. Yes, the nation was broken. And, yes, there were dangers for Mary. But God promised. So, it would happen.

The dangers to our children's faith and safety are real. Many churches are confirming another group of eighth graders this month; the seniors receiving diplomas in a few weeks will head to college in the fall. And Jesus makes a promise: No one can snatch his sheep



out of his hand. The world and the devil will attack them with lies; these young Christians can and will wander from their faith at times. But Jesus has paid for every sin they'll fall into. Jesus will bring his people home. His victory is a given.

**Jesus makes a promise:
No one can snatch his
sheep out of his hand.**

JESUS GIVES US TO ONE ANOTHER

So, God keeps giving. On May 31, the Christian church celebrates the Festival of the Visitation. We remember the three-month period during Mary's pregnancy when she stayed with Elizabeth and Zechariah (Luke 1:39-56). One of the chosen readings for that festival is Romans chapter 12. Consider a few encouragements from that passage: "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above your-

selves. . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another" (vv. 10-16). It's a beautiful picture of what those faithful women must have done for each other during those dangerous days.

And it's a reminder of the privilege we have during these dangerous days too. We won't stop the devil from being the devil, and the world won't cease being filled with evil. But we can show Christ's love to one another. We can encourage one another. We can weep and rejoice with one another, not in fear but out of Christian love.

The Festival of the Visitation falls at the same time as many graduations and confirmations. Consider taking time this month to choose a younger Christian or two whom you might seek to befriend, encourage, and pray for in the years to come.

Contributing editor Joel Seifert is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Georgia.



Mark Schwab

It's the message
of Christ that
leads people to
turn from sinful
desires and to
follow him.

Finding the real cure

In February, our nation endured the trauma of yet another mass shooting. By the time you are reading this, it would not be surprising if another similar terrible incident has occurred in a different school or public place.

When these terrible tragedies occur, the questions immediately come. What could have been done to prevent this? What can be done to prevent similar atrocities in the future?

The public debate invariably centers on two solutions. One suggests tighter regulations and laws on the sale and possession of guns. The other argues that the solution to the problem is increased efforts to provide security in schools and other public venues, to better enforce the laws already on the books, and to give more attention to mental health diagnosis and treatment.

But none of these solutions provide an answer. That's because they don't address the real problem. These solutions attempt to treat the symptoms of a deeper problem rather than providing the cure for the disease.

We know what the root cause is. From the time of the world's first murder, when Cain took the life of his brother Abel, the cause of such behavior is the sinful and wicked human heart that neither knows God nor desires to serve him. It's sin in the human heart that separates a person from God and is the fountain from which flow the evil and wicked deeds that plague our fallen world. It is sin that moves a person to devalue and disregard the life of everyone—from the child in the womb to the elderly in a nursing home. It is the sin-darkened heart that contemplates and causes harm to others—from hurtful words to deadly shootings. It is sin that has shown itself throughout history in man's inhumanity to man.

So, the solution to the problem of gun violence and mass shootings is not really to be found in political arguments or governmental actions. If the root

cause of this problem is sin—and it is—then the only solution is to be found in the cure and remedy for sin: the saving and transforming gospel of Christ.

Sad to say, the pure gospel of forgiveness and salvation in Christ is all too often not seen as the solution we so desperately need. Even Christian churches today have set aside the one true remedy and have focused their attention on the symptoms. Like Martha, they have forgotten the one thing that is needed (cf. Luke 10:38-42) and instead have replaced it with misguided efforts to fight for social justice and to root out poverty and oppression. When the church abandons its mission to preach the gospel, sin-darkened hearts are not changed; life continues to be devalued; and love for others is replaced by self-interest, self-promotion, and every kind of evil.

I am thankful to belong to a Christian church that, by the grace of God, is committed to a mission that says, "We preach Christ crucified!" God has graciously preserved his saving truth among us, and in doing that he has given us the only effective remedy against the corruption within each of us. It's the gospel that motivates us to do God's will, not our own. It's the good news that alone changes the heart of the young adult who feels marginalized and alone. It's the message of Christ that leads people to turn from sinful desires and to follow him.

The gospel alone is the cure. By grace, we have that gospel. With God's help, we proclaim it and teach it as faithfully as we can—not to change society, but to watch its power change hearts and lives.

Light for our path

There have been news stories of Pope Francis wanting his church to change the translation of “Lead us not into temptation” in the Lord’s Prayer to something like “Do not let us fall into temptation.” What does our church body think about this?

James F. Pope

There is no need to change the translation of that petition in the Lord’s Prayer. There is a need to understand better what Jesus meant with those words. Your question provides an opportunity for that.

AN ACCURATE TRANSLATION

There is no mistranslation involved in the Sixth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. “Lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13) is an accurate translation of the Greek. The verb can mean “lead,” “bring in,” or “carry in.” As the Address of the prayer indicates, we make that petition of our Father in heaven. The traditional wording of the Lord’s Prayer—asking God not to lead us into temptation—is accurate.

Most Bible translations render the Greek in similar ways. There are a few exceptions, including “And do not cause us to be tempted” (Expanded Bible) and “Keep us from being tempted” (Contemporary English Version). Those translations drift away from a strict literal translation.

A CONSISTENT MEANING

As far as explaining the petition, I certainly cannot improve on Martin Luther’s explanation in his Small Catechism: “God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.”

Luther offered similar thoughts in his Large Catechism: “This, then is leading us not into temptation, to wit, when he gives us power and strength to resist, the temptation, however, not being taken away or removed. For while we live in the flesh and have the devil about us, no one can escape temptation and allurements; and it cannot

be otherwise than that we must endure trials, yea, be engulfed in them; but we pray for this, that we may not fall and be drowned in them.”

Luther’s thoughts point to James 1:13-15: “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

Scripture clearly teaches that God does not tempt anyone to sin. Scripture plainly identifies Satan as “the tempter” (Matthew 4:3). When we use the prayer Jesus taught us, we do what he first told his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Mark 14:38).

A MEANINGFUL PETITION

Because you and I wage daily spiritual warfare against evil, we have reason to speak the words of the Sixth Petition on a regular basis—not in a mechanical way but in a meaningful way. We do that when we recognize our own frailty and seek God’s strength to withstand temptations. We do that when we recognize who is the tempter and who is our Friend.

The wording of the Sixth Petition is like other parts of Scripture in that we need to “let Scripture interpret Scripture.” Often it’s a matter of taking into account all of what Scripture says on a topic.

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

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

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

Psalm 119:105

Jesus told his disciples, “You will be my witnesses,” and then he ascended into heaven. They had a reason for being, as do all disciples of Jesus.

Jonathan R. Hein

In philosophy it is called one’s *raison d’être*, literally “reason for being.” It is the activity that justifies a thing’s existence. To put it another way, if something is not fulfilling its *raison d’être*, it may as well *not* exist.

Consider the piano sitting in the corner of a living room. You must have some justification for it being there. Maybe someone is taking lessons. Perhaps, at Christmas, your family gathers around it to sing favorite hymns. Maybe no one in your home plays piano. You keep it around simply because it reminds you of your grandparents, to whom it used to belong. In that case, the piano’s *raison d’être* is to serve as a memento. The point is, something justifies allowing that piano to take up space. If not, you would have gotten rid of it.

OUR REASON FOR BEING

So, what is the *raison d’être* of your congregation? What is the “reason for being” of our synod? What is the activity that justifies our existence?

Now make it personal. What do you see as your individual purpose for existence? What is the thing that if you *aren’t* doing it, you might as well not be alive?

The answer to those questions is connected to one of the great celebrations of the church—the Festival of the Ascension. When Jesus ascended and sat down on the throne of heaven, it was not like me plopping into my recliner after a long day. Jesus did not ascend to relax. He ascended as he took up the full use of his divine power. Now he directs all things for the good of the church as it carries out its mission.

WE ARE LIGHT: OUR REASON FOR BEING



And what is that exactly? Shortly before Jesus ascended, he told 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). That was their “reason to be.” If they were not going to be witnesses, there was no reason for them to be alive anymore.

Two millennia later, the believer’s *raison d’être* has not changed. It is the most universal of Christian callings. Not every Christian will be called by God to be a spouse or a parent. Not every Christian will be called to serve publicly as a pastor, teacher, staff minister, or missionary. Not every Christian will serve as a Sunday school teacher or on the church council. But all of us are called to be witnesses as opportunities present themselves. We know those opportunities *will* present themselves, for Jesus does not lie. “You *will* be my witnesses.”

OUR UNIQUE QUALIFICATIONS

“But I’m not qualified,” some will object. Nonsense! Jesus did not say, “You will be my theologians.” Witnesses! Jesus is not asking us to do something complicated. You do not need a master of divinity degree to witness. A witness simply shares what he or she has seen and heard. A witness shares *experiential* information.

For example, I understand that the wings of an airplane create lift, but I do not have a good grasp on exactly how that works. However, I have observed planes flying. I have experienced it, as I have flown plenty of times myself. So, while I am not qualified to give a lecture on aeronautics, I am plenty qualified to say, “If you need to travel a long way, flying is the way to go!” It’s *experiential* information.

So maybe you cannot recite all the books of the Bible. Perhaps you can’t explain the meaning of every one of Jesus’ parables. That does not disqualify you from witnessing. You know Jesus died for your sins. You know that he rose again. Since you know those things, you have experienced

peace, certain that hell is not in your future and that the gate to Paradise stands wide open. Witness about that.

You might not be able to give the catechism explanation of what it means to pray “in Jesus’ name.” But you know you can pray. Moreover, you have experienced the comfort of being able to carry your problems to Christ through prayer. Witness to that.

The world we live in is dark. It needs believers to be light.

Do you remember when your child was baptized? You observed God claim that child as his own through water and the Word. You did not understand the nature of faith that the Spirit created in your child. Even one who has his master of divinity degree doesn’t understand that! But you experienced the joy of knowing your child was safely wrapped in spiritual armor. Tell others about that joy!

THE WORLD NEEDS OUR WITNESS

“You will be my witnesses.” Why has Jesus made this every believer’s “reason for being”? Because witnessing is what the world needs most. The world we live in is dark. It needs believers to be light. The world is rotting. It needs believers to be salt. This world is nothing but death. It needs believers to share the One who is life.

The world desperately needs witnesses of the power of the gospel. If you are not witnessing—to your children, your friends, your neighbors—then, frankly, why are you breathing? If your congregation is not witnessing—to the faithful and the straying and the lost in your community—then why does it exist?

Martin Luther said it well:

We have no other reason for living on earth than to be of help to

others. If this were not the case, it would be best for God to kill us and let us die as soon as we are baptized and have begun to believe. But He permits us to live here *in order that we may bring others* to faith, just as He brought us. *Luther’s Works* 30:11, emphasis added.

Luther well knew that Christians can glorify Christ in many ways across multiple vocations. But it would be a gross perversion of the doctrine of vocation to say, “Because I serve God as a faithful teacher, farmer, or physician, I don’t need to be a witness to my next-door neighbor.” That’s using our vocation to justify refusing to share our faith.

Chances are that at times—maybe oftentimes—we have lived as though our “reason for being” has been something other than witnessing. Ascension helps there too. Do you think Jesus would have ascended if your salvation were incomplete? Unthinkable! Jesus ascended only because he knew he had made atonement for every last sin, including the sin of failing to witness—of denying our “reason for being.” When the Father looks at you, he sees people who are bold in proclaiming his truth.

The faith that embraces Christ’s promise of forgiveness then also embraces Christ’s promise of function. “You will be my witnesses.” He ascended and sat down on the throne of God to make it so! He orchestrates our lives so that we might have the privilege of witnessing . . . the joy of playing a role in his saving work. Moreover, he gives us the power to do what he has asked. More on that next month.

Jonathan Hein, director of WELS Congregational Counseling, is a member at Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

This is the first article in a two-part series on the necessity of Christian witnessing.

Learn about WELS’ membership trends on p. 23.

Our treasure: THE GOSPEL

THE GOSPEL PRESERVES THE CHURCH

The gospel is God's power. While opposed by many, it still brings sinners to faith in Jesus.

John A. Braun

Two worlds collided. Jesus was clear about that: "You will be hated by everyone because of me" (Matthew 10:22). His disciples later suffered because their world, built on Jesus, collided with the world that opposed Jesus. In the conflict they had one weapon. It also provided the strength, comfort, and courage to be faithful to Jesus.

That weapon? The gospel.

The apostle Paul reminded Roman Christians that the gospel was "the power of God" (1:16). In the darkest hour the gospel sustained Paul and the other believers. It was a power for them and became a power for those who heard its message. We are believers because of the power of the gospel. Christ crucified, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, was so much foolishness to many, but "to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The collision of these two worlds hasn't come to an end because of some peace treaty. It only flares up hotter at different points in history. A short, honest review of history will confirm those periods of opposition to the gospel. Of course, persecutions of the church, Christians, and the gospel have not come to an end even in our own age. Nevertheless, the gospel always—always—is a power and has preserved the church through those periods of opposition.

JONAS SCHRÖTER: THE FIRST CHAPTER

A real story can illustrate how the gospel is God's power to preserve his church. At the end of World War II, Europe—Germany in particular—was divided into two zones. In the east the government adopted an ideology that clearly opposed the gospel and Christian churches. It wasn't open persecution where churches were boarded up and Christians were sent to firing squads, but two distinct worlds still collided—Christians and those opposed to Christianity.

Jonas Schröter lived with his family in Grimma, Germany, the city where Katherine von Bora, Luther's wife, was a nun before she married Dr. Luther. There in Grimma the gospel brought people to faith. Lutherans still lived there when World War II began.

But when the war ended, things changed. The streets were renamed. Signs for familiar streets came down, and new signs replaced them. Karl Marx Street and Lenin Street were among the new names. Jonas remembers the irony of one street that retained its name: Paul Gerhardt Strasse. Paul Gerhardt was not a communist hero. He was a Lutheran theologian, pastor, and hymn writer born in 1607. His name appeared in the hymnal Jonas used. Eighteen hymns in *Christian Worship* bear his name. Jonas comments, "Even at that time God was king and he ruled." Yes, the Lord had left a witness even in a world that sought to erase his name and his glory.

In school Jonas learned the communist ideology: There is no God! Religion is the opium of the people. The officials believed that their ideas were superior, and they chose to focus on the young, educating them with this guiding principle: "We have a scientific worldview which is superior to all other religions and beliefs."

Jonas went to school where he heard the mantra of the new government. But he was a part of the other world—the Christian one that listened to another voice, the voice of Jesus. At home

his Lutheran family taught him to know Jesus the Savior. Jonas says, "In the home, my parents believed that the Bible is God's Word through which God shows us the way of life."

In school he learned that the problems of the world could be solved by removing ownership of property. At home he says he learned that "the root of all problems of this world is found in the sin of man. We find the only rescue in the blood of Jesus Christ, which washes us clean of all unrighteousness." In school the teachers believed that the church was superfluous and would soon be forgotten. At home they wondered "how long could worship services be held and if Lutherans would soon face open persecution," says Jonas.

The opposition did not become open, but it was clearly directed at erasing the church. Jonas tells his experience: "The school required almost obligatory participation in communist youth organizations and their activities. As confessional Lutherans we did not participate, especially in the *Jugendweihe*—a youth dedication rite that was devised to substitute for confirmation. It included a public confession to the communist and atheist ideology. Whoever stayed away was put on a black list." Students that remained "stubborn" were blocked from higher education and better career choices. Jonas says, "I was denied the opportunity to enroll at the school that was just two blocks away from my parents' house."

JONAS SCHRÖTER: THE NEXT CHAPTER

Another chapter in Jonas' story illustrates Paul's assertion that the gospel is the power of God. In spite of the opposition and challenges, Jonas became a Lutheran pastor. He studied at the seminary in Leipzig and also at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Wisconsin. He still serves as a parish pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Germany.

An important part of this chapter is that he was asked to preach for a Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) service that commemor-

ated the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. That conference was held in Grimma, Jonas' childhood hometown, and the service was held at the school he was denied attending because he remained faithful to Jesus—the Gymnasium St. Augustine. Jonas said, "You can imagine how excited I was when they asked me to preach on *sola gratia* in the very assembly hall and from a stage where earlier I was expected to speak my communist youth vow. The service took place exactly on the campus that was off limits to me when I lived [in Grimma] as a teenager."

He went on to observe, "My knees were shaking and on a very personal level for me it was as if the Lord gave a small glimpse into his kingdom: 'See, I told you, I'm in charge.' " That's a lesson that wasn't lost on Jonas and should not be lost on us either.

The changes in Germany have been dramatic. Jonas observed, "Today we speak no more of those who wanted to build a new world [in Grimma]. They have failed miserably. . . . Yet one thing stands firm. To fight against the living God is a senseless act. . . . What armies does God send out to secure his power? With what weapons does he fight? . . . The incredible message of God's grace in Jesus Christ—that is the weapon with which God builds the kingdom in this world."

This German pastor brings the lesson to our ears and hearts: "What can you do about the opponents who appear before your congregation? What will make your preaching appealing to modern ears? What deep wisdom . . . will build the kingdom of God? Preach the word of reconciliation! Make known the God of grace who in Jesus Christ seeks and saves sinners. Preach the message of grace alone."

The gospel was, is, and always will be the power of God for salvation.

John Braun is the executive editor of Forward in Christ.

This is the first article in a six-part series on the power of the gospel.

After worrying for years that she was carrying sins from her family's past, a woman learns of God's full forgiveness.

Rachel Hartman

Anny Ally spent some of her early years in an orphanage in Rwanda. Today she lives in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, but she has also had another drastic change in her life. After being born into a Muslim family, Ally is now a Christian who clings to the comfort found in Jesus' words. She says, "For some reason, God has given me a different life, and I don't want to take that life for granted. I just want to serve him."

STARTING OUT IN AFRICA

"I grew up in Rwanda, and I lived with my mom and dad," Ally recalls. Both of her parents, as well as her surrounding family members, were Muslim.

In 1994, when Ally was still a young girl, about 800,000 Rwandans were killed in a span of one hundred days. Both of Ally's parents died during the genocide. "I ended up going to the orphanage home," says Ally. The place was called Noel de Nyundo.

Ally stayed at the orphanage until she was ten years old. Then she left with a woman who took her to the neigh-

boring country of Uganda, where she ended up in a refugee camp.

"I grew up considering myself Muslim," she says. She read the Koran and studied Islam since her parents had been Muslim and she felt she should learn about it.

Ally also visited churches while in Uganda. At one, she found people inside praying for others. "The pastor said everyone had a problem, and they could pray for you—if you have a problem, that's going to solve it," she remembers. "I was 14, and the pastor started praying for me. Everyone went down to pray, and he reached for me and pushed my head forward. He told me I had demons."

The incident left Ally wondering why she had demons inside of her. Familiar with a common teaching that children can end up paying for the wrongs of their parents, Ally worried about her family's past. "In Africa they say if parents do something, it comes back through the children," Ally says. "My parents died when I was young, so I didn't know what they had done."

Another church she attended had members who appeared to speak in tongues. It seemed everyone there had something special, except Ally. "I said, 'Okay, maybe God doesn't like me. Everyone has a gift—some had a gift of a spirit, others can talk in tongues—and I have nothing at all.'"

The event left her anxious. "When I was in Africa, I thought that sins were not the same," she says. "There were some that God forgives and some that God cannot forgive." She was taught that seemingly small sins, such as lying, could be forgiven. More serious sins, such as murder, were said to be unforgivable.

That teaching coupled with the idea of children paying for the wrongs of the parents left Ally wondering if there was something in her, or her past, that God couldn't forgive. "I thought, *Has my family done something that is coming back to me?*"

These experiences left her feeling alone and helpless. "I quit going to church," she says. "I was kind of lost."

LIVING IN CANADA

A private sponsorship made it possible for Ally to move to Canada at the age of 17. She settled in Ottawa and had two daughters. But it was hard to go to church. "I tried to go to the mosque to pray, but I would just sit there," she says. "Then I decided I would stay in my house with my kids and thought if God can hear, he'll hear me at my house."

One day, shortly after her second daughter was born, it was really cold outside and Ally felt depressed. To cheer up, she took her girls for a walk. While out, she passed St. Paul's Lu-



Confessions OF FAITH

theran Church, which was across from her house.

Out of curiosity, Ally went inside. The service had ended, but a woman was still there. She told Ally to go downstairs for coffee. “I thought, *Why am I going here? I was just taking a walk*,” says Ally.

She headed downstairs and sat down with her girls. “A lady came next to me and she didn’t move; she just asked my name,” says Ally. “Then she told me, ‘I think you should come to church and see how we are. How about you come next week?’ ”

The lady took Ally’s phone number and called her. “She talked to me like she knew me a long time ago,” recalls Ally. She asked Ally if she was planning to come to church on Sunday, and Ally said yes.

Ally went to worship that week, but she wanted to know about the church before continuing much further. She started studying the Bible with one of the pastors.

What she found was a message of comfort. “When it comes to the Word of God, it assured me that God died for all our sins. We are human and not perfect; we do sin, but that doesn’t mean God is angry with us. He always loves us,” says Ally. “Since Jesus died for me and my sin, I shouldn’t worry. Now I get to serve him.”

A PART OF GOD’S FAMILY

Ally now looks forward to going to church on Sunday, and so do her girls. In addition to hearing God’s Word, Ally treasures the community she’s found there. “Everyone is welcoming—it doesn’t matter who you are, everyone is so nice,” says Ally. “It makes you feel that you are a part of something, like you belong.”

She has grown especially close to the woman who first invited her to church. “She calls me her daughter and has become like a grandmother to my two girls. God put her into our lives.”

And while Ally is thankful to be where she is today, she has not forgotten her past. She takes trips back to Africa and uses the opportunity to help others in need. She always takes something to hand out at a camp or orphanage that is low on supplies.

At the end of 2017, St. Paul helped pay for her to visit a refugee camp in Uganda. She went to a place called Imvepi, which has been receiving refugees from Sudan. “Before it used to be a few children, but people are coming from Sudan so there are a lot of kids,” explains Ally.

While there, she handed out Christian material from WELS Multi-Language Publications, toothbrushes, and soap. She also held a Christmas party. “I was able to feed seven hundred children,”



Anny Ally

she says. “Everyone was so happy and loved the gifts. It made me very happy that I was able to do that. I remember being in the orphanage and wanting someone to give me something.”

Ally also met a girl who had walked three hours to the camp to pick up food and take it back to her home. Says Ally, “I helped her to her house. I visited with her family and told them how I found Jesus.”

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



One of the purposes of this column is to support Christian parents. This month we're focusing on new moms (check back next month for advice aimed at dads)—but the information shared here can boost any parent.

Often advice for new moms adds more stress than it alleviates. The advice from the authors who wrote this month, though, is designed to lighten a parent's load. Share these nuggets with the moms in your life. Then send us your advice at fic@wels.net. To watch a short webcast that shares more of these parenting nuggets, visit forwardinchrist.net/webcasts.

Nicole Balza

Join the conversation!

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

WHAT DO NEW MOMS TRULY NEED TO KNOW?

Thanks to social media, I was able to poll many, many moms on what they wished they knew when they were new moms. I was able to take the pieces of advice and break them down to five basic themes.

1. Stop comparing! All of it! Don't compare how you look. Don't compare what your children have or don't have. Don't compare how your children behave. Don't compare how you're parenting. This goes both ways. Do not shame yourself for not having it all together and please, please do not judge other moms for doing it differently than you. There are so many ways to parent, and most of them are God-honoring.

2. Take care of yourself. Continue to date your husband. Make that relationship a priority. Get sleep. Seek out your friends. Find time for solitude. Find time to do things you love.

3. Find a community. Seek out a community of moms.

Welcome to the adventure, friend! Parenting is hard and messy, and you'll never be so tired in your life as you are with a newborn. But it is so worth it. I'd like to share my biggest takeaways from what I've experienced with my kids so far (ages 6 and 9), in hopes that they give you something to look forward to during your sleepless nights.

You will sleep again.

I remember thinking after my daughter was born that I would be tired for the rest of my life. While my days of sleeping past 9 A.M. on Saturday are long gone, most nights pass peacefully. So power through that fatigue; it does get better.

There's no such thing as a weak-willed toddler.

Have you ever tried to stuff an octopus into a pillowcase? Me neither. But I have a great idea of what it might be like

The years are short, but the days were long.

Even as a little girl, I knew I wanted to be a mommy. When that day finally came, I was over the moon. We brought our precious baby boy home, and he started to cry and cry and cry. An overbearing relative told me that the baby could feel my nervousness. We had just moved, and since this was 1978, there was no Internet and long distance calls to friends and family were expensive. I felt so alone and bewildered that this experience was not the Hallmark moment I had envisioned. The days were long. How foolish of me not to quickly turn to the living, breathing help available at my new church. Eventually I sought the counsel of wonderful Christian mothers who had dealt with colic and ear infections.

But I quickly fell headfirst into the quagmire of parental self-doubt when I met my very first "Supermom." Her house was always tidy, her children immaculate. They sang hymns in four-part harmony at bedtime. And so I agonized over inviting other moms into our modest and quite often messy home. This was brought home to me rather forcibly after an attempted burglary on our house. The burglars had gotten

Help each other. Ask for help. Receive it when offered. Cheer each other on and be encouraging. Share with each other. Cry together. If you have a community of moms but they don't do these things, find another community. My friends have been instrumental in my survival of parenting.

4. You are fully equipped. You know the Scriptures, and they “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). You know the depth of God’s love for you and your children. You understand forgiveness, and you can turn to the Scriptures for guidance. The Scriptures make you “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (3:17). And you are doing good work.

5. Grace. God’s love lives in you, and you can reflect that love in your day-to-day life. Live in God’s grace. Help your children live in that same grace. Encourage other moms to

find comfort and energy in that grace. Remember that our God pursues our children and he loves them even more than we do. He loves you too. Passionately. There is nothing you can do to make him love you more and there is nothing you can do to make him love you less. Just because you don’t feel that way doesn’t make it any less true. Hold on to truth.

As I look at this list, the themes go beyond parenting. They speak to everyday life wherever you are in your Christian journey. Psalm 119:140 says, “Your promises have been thoroughly tested; and your servant loves them.” Trust in his promises. They never fail.

Jenni Schubring and her husband, Tad, have five children ranging in age from 8 to 16. They are also licensed foster parents.



after having to buckle angry toddlers into their car seats mid-meltdown. It’s hard when you’ve gone from having babies who are dependent on you for everything to little humans with opinions of their own. Patience and more patience will get you through.

This too shall pass.

It’s all a series of stages. Tantrums, sleepless nights, leaving church without actually hearing a word of the sermon due to a squirmy, active kiddo—none of these are forever. If you are stuck in the “random nudist in awkward places” stage of toddlerhood and just *cannot* keep pants on your child—don’t sweat it! All parents have been through this, and it does end eventually. (Probably.)

You and your kiddos were paired by God, and you are exactly the person they need.

God chose us to snuggle, feed, burp, console, teach, and love these specific little humans. He knew they needed us and we needed them. I hold on to this when stages are particularly difficult. (Hello, impending teenage-hood!) I am, without a doubt, the right person for this job. Even if I don’t always feel like it. Even if sometimes I want to run screaming into the woods and embrace life as a hermit. I am meant to be their mom, and they are meant to be my kids. Trust in this when you find yourself questioning your parenting abilities. God knew what he was doing when he put you together. He loves you and your kiddos.

Kerry Ognenoff and her husband, Andy, have two young children—nine-year-old Anna and six-year-old Henry.



into our basement but had not gained access to the first floor. A police officer who joined the investigation as it was ending looked around that unburgled first floor with a horrified expression and said, “Look what they did to your house!” My own mother gently reminded me that nobody does everything. Something usually gives. And the days were very long.

God granted me a wonderful friend who truly loved all children and welcomed them into her totally child-centric home. You can imagine the wonderful jumble of planned activities and the spaces for unplanned creative play. She was totally engaged with the children who entered. My children never wanted to leave her house. And so I felt guilty that I didn’t let my children paint in the living room or drop playdough on the carpet. Guilt vied with yearning as I snuck furtive looks at the clock to see if it was bedtime for kiddies. I was sure that her days were as long as mine, but she was enjoying hers more.

My husband and I thought it was important that we invite children and adults who were not invited elsewhere to our home. As I was explaining this yet again before an Easter dinner, one of my children asked rather wistfully, “Are we ever gonna have just our family for holidays?” I felt I had

somehow fallen short in the mommy role. The days were long, and some dinners were extremely long.

And suddenly they are grown, with children of their own. We watch in humble gratefulness as we see our children as loving and already wise Christian parents who continually seek to improve. We admire their willingness to learn from others and marvel at how many seek their counsel. We applaud their prioritization of Christian values in the face of popular parenting myths. We support their efforts to spread the Word to the uninformed or excluded through their love for the marginalized and disenfranchised. We meet the diverse friends they have gathered as family and embrace them as our own. We praise the Lord for his people and his Word in this yet unfinished parenting journey.

The days were long, but the years are short.

Mary Clemons lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Sam. They have three grown children and seven grandchildren.



Life's arrow

The seemingly endless stress and hardship that we feel now is a tiny speck of time compared to the eternity that we will spend with Jesus.

Katelyn Raddatz

To us, time seems like such a definite thing. Sixty seconds from now, I expect my clock to show that one minute has passed. Sixty minutes from now, I will be one hour closer to my alarm waking me tomorrow morning.

Because time seems so definite to us, we often complain. We complain when we're so busy that we feel we have no time to relax. We turn to God and beg for a break. When he answers, we feel content. But then contentedness fades, and we complain again. We complain of boredom, because we don't have enough to keep us occupied. Then the cycle repeats itself.

Our lives are like roller coasters. They have their ups and downs, their sharp turns and dramatic changes in speed. But unlike a roller coaster's path, which we can see in advance, we lead our lives blind, not knowing what lies ahead. We may try to map out our lives in advance, planning how we think things should go, but more often than not our path turns right when we think a left turn would be best. Our roller coaster speeds up when we want it to slow down and slows down when we so desperately want it to fast forward. We struggle because we cannot accurately pinpoint when our lives are going to be hectic and stressful.

To us, tragedies and sadness seem like they are such a gigantic part of our lives, but, in reality, they are not. I'm reminded of something a teacher showed our class in grade school. He used the geometric description of a ray (a line with a start point but no end point) to explain what God promises us: an eternal place in heaven. Our life begins at one point, and we die at one point. Throughout that time, we go through ups and downs. We experience things that make our lives come to a complete halt. But when life gets tough and time seems to stand still, we find comfort in God's promise. The seemingly endless stress and hardship that we feel now is really a tiny speck of time in the big scheme of things. It is just one tiny dot on a line that goes on forever. It is nothing compared to the eternity that we will spend with Jesus. Eternity never ends; it is like the arrow on the ray that keeps going and never stops.

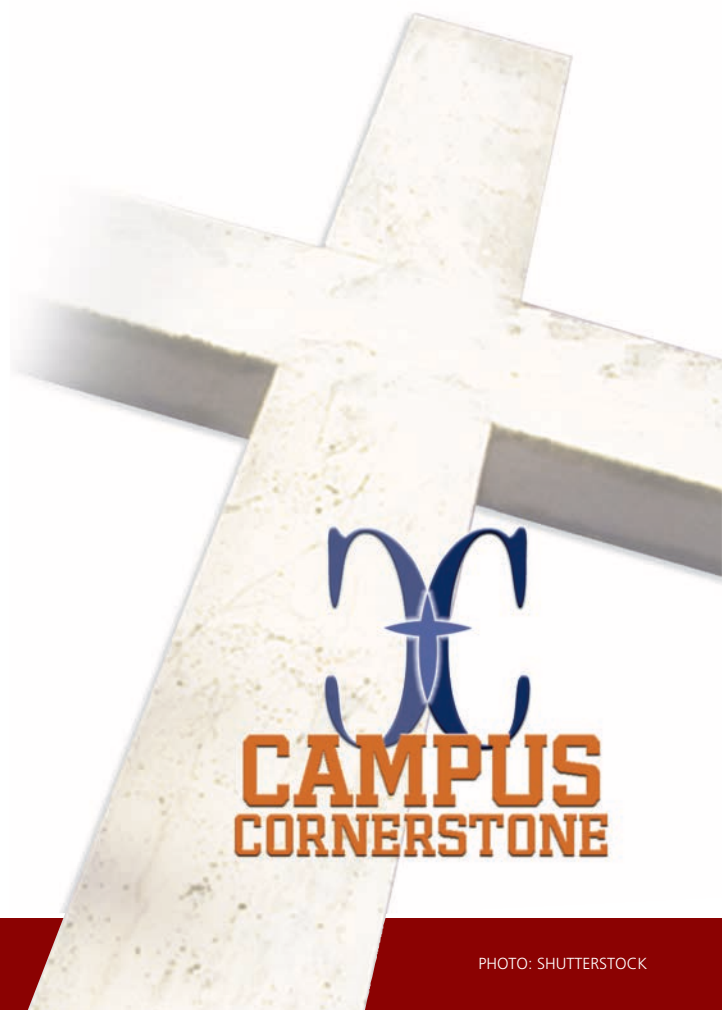
God's promise extends to our lives on this earth too.

When we reach a fork in the road and we don't know which way to turn, God directs us. Each of us can say, "[The LORD] guides me along the right paths for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3). God leads us in the right direction. When we stumble off those paths, he guides us

right back to them. And when we walk through the darkest valleys of life's journey, we need fear no evil because the Lord is with us and comforts us (cf. Psalm 23:4).

Next time you are feeling the weight of time bringing you down, remember the promise that Jesus spoke: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-3).

Katelyn Raddatz, a sophomore at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, Sparta, Wisconsin.



**CAMPUS
CORNERSTONE**

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Bentz, Martin, to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.
Bode, Adam, to St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis.
Butler, Heath, to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Hanneman, Jacob, to Shepherd of the Plains, Fort Morgan, Colo.
Janisch, Bruce, to retirement
Lindke, Andrew, to St. Mark, Normal, Ill.
Reede, Paul, to St. Peter, West Bend/St. Paul, West Bend, Wis.
Schneider, Michael, to Zion, Crete, Ill.
Warskow, David, to Beautiful Savior, Spooner, Wis.
Weber, Jeffrey, to Redeemer, Big Rapids, Mich.

Teachers

Balge, Rebecca, to Christ-St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
Brennan, Jared, to Grace, Oshkosh, Wis.
Cvikel, Zachary, to Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.
Drewitz, Jaime, to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Fuhrmann, D.H., to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Grivno, Dorothy, to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
Jahns, Rebecca, to Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.
Kiecker, Linda, to retirement
Loberger, Scott, to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.
Martin, Gregory, to Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis.
Mensching, Erin, to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
Metzger, Joshua, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Plitzuweit, Elizabeth, to St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Rannow, Jennifer, to Precious Lambs Early Learning Center, Raleigh, N.C.
Roloff, Sarah, to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Schrap, Amy, to David's Star, Jackson, Wis.
Shrum, Stacy, to St. Stephen, Adrian, Mich.
Sievert, Nate, to Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.
St. John, Catherine, to Martin Luther College Early Childhood Learning Center, New Ulm, Minn.
Stokke, Elizabeth, to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Stoltz, David, to Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
Thiesfeldt, Mark, to Risen Savior Christian Academy, Pooler, Ga.
Waage, June, to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.
Waage, Lance, to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.

Staff minister

Malnes, David, to Praise and Proclaim Ministries, Meridian, Id.

ANNIVERSARIES

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.
Rib Falls, Wis.—St. John's (140). St. John's building (100). June 17. Worship, 3 P.M.; dinner to follow. RSVP requested. 715-443-2119; treich77@yahoo.com.
Apacheland, Ariz.—Native American mission work (125). June 22. KI Convention Center, Green Bay, Wis. 6-9 P.M. Oct. 26-28. Peridot, Ariz. Debbie Dietrich, NativeChristians1@gmail.com. Website, nativechristians.org.
Sauk Rapids, Minn.—Petra (50). June 24. Festival service, 10 A.M.; dinner and concert to follow. Website, petralutheran.com.
Kaukauna, Wis.—St. John (150). Aug. 12. Website, stjohnekaukauna.com.

COMING EVENTS

Combat veteran spiritual retreat—May 4-6. Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis. For WELS/ELS veterans since 1991, primarily focused for those with combat induced post-traumatic stress. Sponsored by the Lutheran Military Support Group. Website, lutheranmilitary.org.
Commencement events—Website, wels.net/events.
 • Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.—May 11. Concert, 4 and 7:30 P.M. May 12. Graduation service, 10 A.M.; call day and assignment of graduates, 2 P.M.
 • Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.—May 24. Call day and assignment of graduates and vicars, 10 A.M.; concert, 7 P.M. May 25. Graduation service, 10 A.M.
 • Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.—May 18. Concert, 7 P.M. May 19. Graduation service, 10 A.M.
 • Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.—May 25. Concert, 7 P.M. May 26. Graduation service, 10:30 A.M.
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.

WELS camps—held around the country throughout the year. Dates and locations available at wels.net/events.

District conventions—held throughout June. Dates and locations available at wels.net/events.

WELS executive & support staff conference—June 8. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Website, kmlhs.org/essconf.

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

Lehi, Utah—WELS members, people living in the area, retired or visitors. Good News Lutheran, a new mission in Lehi, Utah. pastor@goodnewslehi.com; 801-889-7942.

Southeast Wisconsin—names of men for membership in the WELSMEN of Southeast Wisconsin. Expand knowledge of WELS programs, increase fellowship, and network with men with similar values. Website, welsmen.com.

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

Fort Atkinson, Wis.—contact information of alumni, former students, teachers, pastors, and staff of St. Paul School, Fort Atkinson, Wis. For upcoming 150th anniversary of Christian education. Complete the form at goo.gl/forms/CovbHREDXstnkZAK2 or call 920-563-5349.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Norman, Okla.—looking for a 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.

Same mission, new methods

One hundred twenty-five years ago WELS sent its first world missionary to the Apache reservation in Arizona to “go and make disciples of all nations.”

Following that first mission initiative, WELS World Missions has sought to reach many corners of the globe. Recently new opportunities have arisen to support confessional Lutheran church bodies and other groups of Christians who have reached out to WELS for help. Now WELS Missions has a presence in 50 countries, with 14 prospective new fields and 44 missionaries.

Larry Schlomer, administrator for World Missions, says, “After 125 years of work in Apacheland and 60-plus years in other countries, our mission partners have achieved a great level of maturity. That allows us to approach our mission work as partners, not as owners, and this is what makes just about any partner church a ‘world mission.’”

One way WELS Missions is teaming up with sister churches and new mission partners is through helping train fellow confessional Lutherans around the world through the Pastoral Studies Institute, a ministry of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. More efficient transportation and communication vehicles help make this work possible.

“One of the biggest changes is how we’re immediately training the people groups and locals to be their own proclaimers of the gospel,” says Sean Young, director of Joint Missions Operations. “It eliminates anywhere between three and seven years of a WELS missionary landing in a foreign field getting to know the people, getting to know the culture, and finding the best way to approach them with sharing the gospel. To train someone at that level to share the gospel is far more cost-effective and far more expedient than it is for one of our missionaries to get to know the culture and the area and the language.”

How WELS comes to work with these different fields is varied. One common

avenue is immigrant people groups in the United States who learn about what the Bible teaches and want to share it with their family and friends in their home country. Sometimes, these national church leaders find WELS through the Internet. In 2018, the WELS website, wels.net, has had visitors from more than 100 countries.

One recent example of this is the Philippines. A church leader there contacted WELS Missions after discovering what WELS teaches through its website. Schlomer explains, “He never needed our help to do the work but rather craved the Bible fellowship we could offer. The partnership has been noticed by other leaders who are now being trained in two additional church sites. Our role is to offer the training tools and supplemental teachers to aid the church leader in training these new men to be leaders.”

WELS World Missions also offers support through humanitarian aid, which can lead to opportunities to spread the gospel. In Puerto Rico, an opportunity to help came following

Hurricane Maria. While WELS has historical mission roots in Puerto Rico, the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (ELCC) has been operating independently for years. But after the hurricane hit, WELS, through World Missions and Christian Aid and Relief, is providing a missionary to assist with relief planning support as well as to help train the next generation of young men as public ministers. While the missionary’s stay in Puerto Rico is meant to be temporary, the training work will continue online, supplemented by short visits for seminars.

“There may still be times and places where missionaries are on the ground preaching, teaching, baptizing, and serving the Lord’s Supper,” says Schlomer. “However, when we have a national leader in place, we have always been eager to allow that national to step into those roles and our missionaries serve much more as teachers and mentors.”



Learn more about WELS Missions at wels.net/missions.



Top: WELS leadership met with the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church of Puerto Rico to discuss how the two church bodies can work together to provide aid after Hurricane Maria as well as how WELS can help provide worker training for this small church body.



Bottom: WELS leaders visited the Philippines in February to meet with Alvien De Guzman, pastor at Law and Gospel Lutheran Church, to put together a plan for a pastoral training program supported by WELS Pastoral Studies Institute.

Booknook

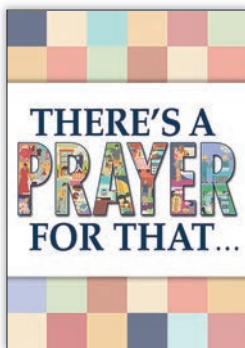
A look at books published by Northwestern Publishing House. For more information, visit nph.net or call 1-800-662-6022.



When faced with life situations of all kinds, would you like to be a more effective prayer warrior but find it hard to think of how to pray? Or would you like to align your thoughts and prayer life more with the special holidays?

There's a Prayer for That is filled with every kind of prayer anyone could imagine. Not only will you find prayers for help, but you will also find prayers of praise and thanksgiving as well as prayers for each kind of family member and prayers to use during grieving and when facing personal trials.

Have you ever thought of praying for people who clean up in public places or those who keep the power grids going? How about special prayers for schools, called workers, athletes, and those in the service of our country? The variety of prayers will broaden every believer's scope of prayer.



PRICE: \$10.99

While the Table of Contents appears to be rather random, each short prayer is numbered and organized in an appropriate category. The first reading of each prayer will touch your heart and leave you with a resolve to pray more, for more, and with more fervor.

Do you want to pray for situations in the workplace? Or for special occasions in your family, beyond birthdays and confirmations? How about prayers for spiritual gifts or personal goals? The format for this book is small enough to fit in a pocket or a purse.

No matter what issues a person could face, this book has a prayer for that. Written from the hearts of more than two dozen pastors, this volume would make a wonderful gift and companion for any Christian.

Marilyn Sievert, West Bend, Wisconsin

Christian children's books available in braille

Learning to read is a milestone in every child's life. But can you imagine teaching a child who can't see the words?

"Her hands are her eyes," says Timothy Redfield, pastor at Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minnesota. He is talking about his six-year-old daughter Libby who was born blind due to an optic nerve condition.

Redfield and his wife are teaching Libby how to read braille. Even though she is still learning how to read, "once she got the idea that reading time means bumps on the page, she likes to feel the page and know the braille is there," says Redfield.

While the Redfields are able to get free children's books in braille from the state and county, they also wanted Libby to be able to read about her Savior. They began working with the Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI), a ministry of WELS Special Ministries that provides Christian literature to those who are blind or have a visual impairment. They sent several of their favorite Christian story books to the MVI. Volunteers then produced and positioned clear braille stickers into the books so Libby could read along.

"As a parent, I can read all the words on the page while Libby feels the braille," says Redfield. Redfield says he guides Libby's hands over the words in braille while he reads them so that she can learn how to read it on her own.

The Mission for the Visually Impaired also provides weekly Christ-Light Sunday school lessons in braille so that Libby can follow along while her teacher reads the story.

Manned by volunteers and headquartered in South St. Paul, Minn., the Mission for the Visually Impaired produces devotional and other materials in braille, large print, and on cassette tape, which are distributed free to WELS and non-WELS visually impaired people. It currently is working on a project to have downloadable Christian audio resources available online.

"Our goal is to spread his Word—in any way we can!" says Bill Bremel, MVI director.

Learn more about the Mission for the Visually Impaired and the resources it provides at wels.net/visually-impaired. Read more about the Redfield family on p. 30.



The Mission for the Visually Impaired provided braille stickers so Libby can follow along when her parents read.

Awake and Alive supports young adults

Musician and ministry leader Mike Westendorf describes a young adult's life like a Rubik's cube. Before individuals go off to college or start their professional lives, all the colors of the cube are lined up in order. But as they enter adulthood, learn more in their studies, and develop deeper critical thinking, the colors start to get jumbled. Difficult questions are asked, and sometimes the answers are unclear.

During this point, notes Westendorf, it's crucial that young adults have a community where they can grow and discuss key questions, especially regarding religion. This is where Awake and Alive comes into play.

"Awake and Alive has three primary goals," Westendorf says. "One is to help people know the gift of grace, the second is to own the gift of grace, and the last is to make the gift known."

Westendorf has worked with 18- to 25-year-olds for the past eight years through WELS campus ministries in Milwaukee, and he saw the need to encourage them in their faith. He started Awake and Alive five years ago and has held one-day events in the past.

This past January, Awake and Alive held its first two-day conference at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. More than 100 people attended, growing closer in their relationship with Christ and each other.

Elicia Engel, a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, was introduced to Awake and Alive during the winter conference. She notes, "Awake and Alive is a really great way to hear some important messages and to be surrounded in fellowship with other young adult believers." Engel said one of the greatest moments was listening to Pastor Wayne Shevey talk about the need for God's grace.

Twenty-four-year-old Sammy Unnasch was one of the people who urged Engel to attend the conference. Unnasch turned away from God in college but eventually found his way back to the

gospel with a new passion for young adult ministry.

"I became invested in Awake and Alive because my generation has been asleep spiritually," he says. "It breaks my heart to see them pursuing things or people or experiences that never satisfy them the way Jesus' love and grace do."

The Awake and Alive winter conference was made possible through donations from the Antioch Foundation, WELS Campus Ministry, and other organizations. The WELS Campus Ministry grant, which offers up to \$2,000, is available for any WELS campus ministry group that wants to hold a retreat.



During the Awake and Alive conference held in January, Sammy Unnasch (left) helps Mike Westendorf (right) make the point that when our lives don't make sense, it's best to turn our confusion over to the One who knows how we are put together.

Charlie Vannieuwenhoven, chairman of the WELS Campus Ministry Committee, says that Awake and Alive is the first group to take advantage of this grant but he hopes more groups will apply in the future.

"Any time you can get more college students together around God's Word, the more they will be strengthened," Vannieuwenhoven says.

Gabriella Moline

The next Awake and Alive conference will be held June 10 at St. Paul's, Muskego, Wis. It also will be livestreamed. For more information, visit awakealive.com.

Obituaries

Louise S. Wilde 1933–2017

Louise Wilde (née Reichert) was born Sept. 2, 1933, in Prescott, Wis. She died May 2, 2017, in New London, Wis.

A 1956 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. John's, Fairfax, Minn.; Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.; and St. Peter, Freedom, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Hilbert; two sons; one daughter; two brothers; and three sisters. She is preceded in death by one son and one brother.

Note: When Louise died, her husband, Hilbert, was still alive. He since has passed away (see next).

Hilbert A. Wilde 1934–2018

Hilbert Wilde was born July 31, 1934, in Silo, Minn. He died Feb. 11, 2018, in New London, Wis.

A 1956 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at St. Peter, Freedom, Wis., and Emanuel, New London, Wis.

He is survived by two sons, one daughter, and two brothers. He is preceded in death by his wife, Louise, and one son.

Daniel E. Southard 1941–2017

Daniel Southard was born Oct. 18, 1941, in New London, Wis. He died Nov. 11, 2017.

A 1963 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at Gethsemane, Omaha, Neb., and Trinity, Marinette, Wis.

Robert M. Oswald 1931–2017

Robert Oswald was born June 8, 1931, in Weyauwega, Wis. He died Dec. 14, 2017.

A 1957 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis.; Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.; Christ, Hiles, Wis.; St. Paul, Crandon, Wis.; and St. John, Peshtigo, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Janet; one daughter; two grandchildren; and one sister. He is preceded in death by one brother.

Sharlene D. Petri 1951–2018

Sharlene Petri (née Lawrence) was born Jan. 21, 1951, in Ventura, Calif. She died Jan. 4, 2018, in Two Rivers, Wis.

She taught at St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.; First German, Manitowoc, Wis.; East Twin, Mishicot, Wis.; Trinity, Kiel, Wis.; and Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Dennis; her mother; one daughter; one stepson; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; one brother; and one sister. She is preceded in death by her father, two half-sisters, one half-brother, and three grandchildren.

Dayton A. Fritz 1924–2018

Dayton Fritz was born July 11, 1924, in Lewiston, Minn. He died Jan. 6, 2018, in Chino Hills, Calif.

He served Holy Cross, Daggett, Mich.; Hope, Indian River, Mich.; Christ the King, La Habra, Calif.; and Trinity, Ridgecrest, Calif.

He is survived by five daughters, two sons, five grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and two brothers. He is preceded in death by his wife, Ellie; three brothers; and two sisters.

Study highlights trends and opportunities

At the 2017 synod convention, Jonathan Hein, director of WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling, published the findings of a two-year study that looked at the demographics and trends of WELS' membership. The study demonstrated that Christian churches in America are experiencing some significant declines and that WELS is not immune. WELS has approximately 56,000 fewer members than it did 25 years ago.

Hein cites a number of reasons for the statistical decline. In the last decade, at the same time WELS has seen a steep decline in the number of infant baptisms, it has seen an increase in the percent of members who are dying annually. WELS also has averaged about 8,000 "backdoor losses" annually for over two decades. Backdoor losses are when WELS members join another Christian church or simply quit church.

Adding to the challenge, Hein notes that adult confirmations are trending down. The study demonstrated that WELS had 15% fewer adult confirmations in 2016 than in 2012. Synodwide, annually, WELS will have only one adult confirmation for every 83 communicant members.

Part of the study forecasted WELS' membership in the future if current trends would continue (see graph). "If the current rates of decline would hold steady, in 20 years, WELS would lose about 29% of its current member-

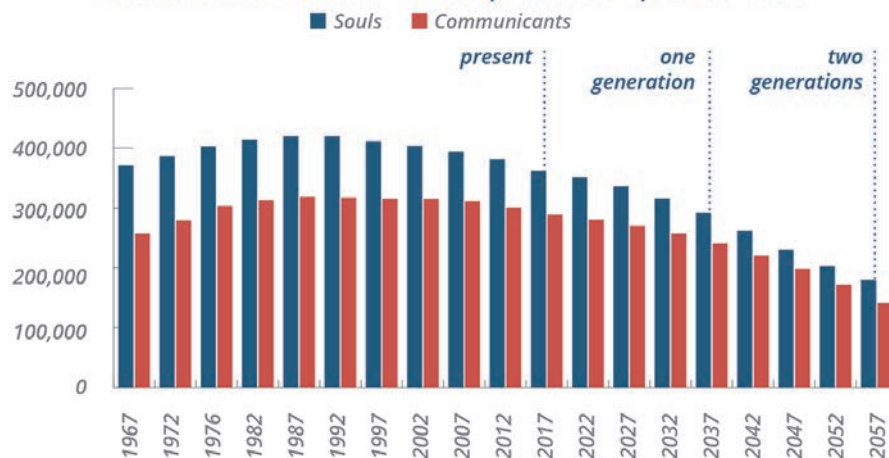
ship—over 100,000 souls," says Hein. "That would translate to approximately 300 fewer congregations in just one generation."

The study also contained what Hein called "prayerful projections," a forecast of what could happen if WELS congregations were able to increase their gospel efforts *and*, more important, the Holy Spirit were to bless those efforts. One hypothetical scenario had WELS congregations cutting backdoor losses by one-third through increased elder work and greater efforts at retaining young members who go off to college. This scenario also had WELS members increasing their personal evangelism efforts, so that the ratio of communicant members to adult confirmations went from 83 to 1, to 45 to 1. In this scenario, WELS would gain 33,000 new souls for Christ in the next 20 years.

"Our only job is to proclaim the gospel as zealously as we can," says Hein. "The Holy Spirit then produces the results when and where he sees fit. . . . [These projections are] simply a snapshot of what is feasible if we were able, walking together, to increase our ministry efforts, and if the Holy Spirit saw fit to bless those efforts."

Read Hein's full report at wels.net/cc. Learn about a new synodwide outreach campaign in next month's issue. See how you can make a difference through personal evangelism (p. 10).

WELS MEMBERSHIP—PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE



New president for Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Mark Luetzow, pastor at Bethel, Bay City, Mich., has accepted the call to serve as the next president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich., one of two high schools in the WELS ministerial education system. He will be taking over for Joel Petermann, who after six years of serving as MLS president, took a call to Zion, Torrance, Calif.

“Pastor Luetzow combines the heart of a parish pastor with a keen understanding of the work of a preparatory school,” says Paul Prange, administrator for Ministerial Education.

When Luetzow as a young boy decided he wanted to pursue the ministry, his

parents supported that path by sending him to Northwestern Preparatory School (now Luther Preparatory School) in Watertown, Wis. Luetzow has had a heart for the mission of the WELS ministerial education schools after his high school experience. “I’ve always had a deep love for our prep school system, and, in some respects, I feel like this is a neat way to give back to something that has given so much to us and the WELS members who have supported us,” he says.

He continues, “Michigan Lutheran Seminary has such a rich history, and it’s very much loved by its alumni and the district as a whole. I’m hoping that

that love for the prep school will continue to grow—and not just in Michigan but in the entire United States so that we can have a bigger reach.”

Luetzow has served as a parish pastor since 2003. He says he loves being a pastor, so it will only be natural for him to encourage to do what he loves. “One of the things I’m looking forward to at MLS is being an encouraging voice for young men and women to consider full-time ministry for the Lord.”

Luetzow will transition into the role of MLS president after this school year.

Learn more about MLS at mlsem.org.

One church—two locations

In 2014, Divine Peace, Garland, Texas, began discussing the idea of starting a second congregation in the neighboring community of Rockwall. This area northeast of Dallas is booming, and many families were traveling from the Rockwall area to Garland to attend Divine Peace. Rather than start a separate daughter congregation, Divine Peace decided to become a multi-site.

John Hering, pastor of Divine Peace, notes, “Initially there was some hesitation from members wondering how it would be possible to start a new location and survive. But, after clearly explaining that we would not be two churches but one church at two locations, the tensions eased and folks supported the effort.”

In 2016, after Divine Peace conducted community surveys and a demographic study of the area and demonstrated that a strong core of its members would support ministry at a second site in Rockwall, the WELS Board for Home Missions voted to support the effort. In May 2016, Gunnar Ledermann, a new graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, was assigned to serve as the second pastor at Divine Peace, with the main responsibility of establishing the Rockwall location.

Soon, those in Rockwall were worshipping at a wedding chapel just off of the town square. In January 2018, Divine Peace bought the wedding chapel and its property, thanks to support from WELS Church Extension Fund.

“Now that Divine Peace has a second permanent location for ministry, a new door has opened for reaching our community,” says Ledermann.

Mark Drezdson and his wife, Michelle, joined Divine Peace in 2012. Mark currently serves as Divine Peace’s president. He says, “‘One church—two locations’ brings challenges and blessings alike. One of the biggest challenges was splitting our resources and talents between two locations. We have been blessed with many talented and gifted members to cover things. . . . It takes time to coordinate everything between the two locations, but it has also brought members closer together. But most important, having two locations gives us the chance to achieve the Divine Peace mission—to bring the true Word of God to our community—in two communities.”



After Divine Peace, Rockwall, Texas, purchased its permanent facility, the congregation held a series of grand opening events to welcome the community. The final event was an outdoor Easter service (pictured). Five new families attended the service.

Hering agrees. “Multi-site gives you the joy of sharing the gospel with more people in more places while remaining one church.”

“Stay tuned,” concludes Drezdson. “With the way growth continues in the Northeast Dallas Metroplex, we might be ‘one church—three locations’ in the not too distant future!”



To learn more about multi-site congregations, consider attending the WELS National Multi-Site Conference (p. 4). WELS Home Missions supports congregations establishing ministries through both multi-site and mother/daughter efforts. To see how a congregation is reaching out by daughtering congregations, watch the May *WELS Connection*.

District news

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

The **East Regional WELS Band Festival** was held at Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill., from March 9–11.

NORTHERN WISCONSIN

Oshkosh-area congregations coordinated a WELS Night to enjoy a game of the Wisconsin Herd, a minor league team of the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks, on March 23.

On March 25, **St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis.**, experienced an underground explosion just before their Bible class was finishing up. The explosion, related to underground utility lines, was relatively minor but was large enough to be felt inside the church. No one was injured.

On April 15, **First, La Crosse, Wis.**, hosted a concert of praise and thanksgiving to celebrate the refurbishment and rededication of its organ.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

On March 16–18, Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash., hosted the **West Regional WELS Band Festival**.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

AZ-CA—On April 1, **St. John, Va-**

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



Student nurses from Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis., visited Christ-St. Peter in Milwaukee on March 6 for a show-and-explore experience with its third through eighth graders.

caville, Calif., celebrated its 20th anniversary.

WW—The Lutheran Pioneers honored **Tom Palubecki** for his 54 years of service in March.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ-CA—Michael Schroeder; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NW—Dennis Kleist; PNW—David Birsching; SEW—Scott Oelhafen; WW—Brett Brauer.

MINNESOTA



The college choir of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., gave a concert at Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Iowa, during its spring tour. While there, the choir volunteered at a humanitarian aid organization and helped package food for the poor in Haiti.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST



On March 11, Saviour of the Nations, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, installed its new vicar, Qiang Wang, who is studying in the Pastoral Studies Institute. The institute exists to guide and assist non-traditional students through their training so they can become WELS pastors. Wang is pictured here with his wife.

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., hosted 26 young men and 7 chaperones from area Lutheran high schools and public schools for its Focus on Ministry event in March. Students joined in classes, received a tour, and learned more about the possibility of becoming a pastor. Paul Wendland (pictured), president of the seminary, reassured them, "Don't think that God's eternal plan for the universe depends on your decision. There are lots of ways to serve Jesus. It's fine if you decide to serve and worship him another way. . . . Simply by being here, you encourage the hearts of everyone here—no matter what decision you make. Thank you for being willing to check us out to see if this is right for you."



SALT

of the

EARTH

So much death! Why? Evil oppresses us and seeks to squeeze the last drop of hope from us. But we will not be overcome! Glenn L. Schwanke

“So much death. What can men do against such reckless hate?”

So spoke Théoden, the once mighty king of Rohan. He had stood mute. He was little more than a husk of a man who held his right arm tightly against his side to stem the flow of blood caused by a spear that nearly killed him. Then came those words that fell from his lips like a whimper.

And the look on his face? It was the haunting image of a man beaten down by life, his eyes betraying a sadness that welled up from the very depths of his soul.

Why? The impossible had happened. Rohan’s army, though aided by the Elven elite, had all but been annihilated. The impregnable fortress at Helm’s Deep had been overrun by the hellish hoards called the Uruk-hai—nightmarish creatures of immense strength who were “bred from the heats and slimes of the earth” in the pits beneath Isengard, home of the evil wizard, Saruman. One last massive oaken door was all that protected the few surviving defenders. But as the Uruk-hai smashed their battering ram into the door with infernal might, the oak groaned, splintered, and shattered. And Théoden’s courage and hope vanished.

JUST A MOVIE OF FANTASY?

At least that’s how I remember the

scene from Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002). The movie was based on J. R. R. Tolkien’s famous work *The Lord of the Rings*, which was published in three volumes from 1954 to 1955. So, of course, the movie is little more than fantasy.

Well, maybe not.

Tolkien once shared this insight about his epic novel: “*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious . . . work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like ‘religion,’ to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism” (Letter 142).

OVERCOME BY EVIL

Why am I taking you down this memory lane of movie trivia? Because Théoden’s words came flooding back into my consciousness this past week. “So much death. What can men do against such reckless hate?” I recalled the words the minute I heard about the Valentine’s Day school shooting. Seventeen people were gunned down, both high school students and staff, at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, Florida. The alleged shooter: a troubled 19-year old who had earlier been expelled from the school.

The shooting has prompted the usual response in our nation. Calls for more gun control. Passionate pleas for more help for those who are mentally unstable. Demands for better security at our schools. A tighter monitoring of threatening posts on social media combined with some type of proactive action on the part of law enforcement. Outrage. Disbelief. Helplessness. Hopelessness. And a numbness that nibbles away at our collective heart and mind as we wonder, “Why so much death . . . such reckless hate?”

Marjory Stoneman Douglas (17 killed, Feb. 14, 2018); the Route 91 Harvest music festival at the Las Vegas strip (58 killed, Oct. 1, 2017); Sandy Hook Elementary (27 killed, Dec. 14, 2012); Virginia Tech (32 killed, April 16, 2007).

Our country struggles to find answers to such reckless hate but can’t because we live in a nation that has accepted the notion that people are basically good. But I pray you and I know better. These atrocities and so many more are the inevitable, nightmarish products of a human race that was plunged into sin by our first parents in Eden.

Why “so much death”? The apostle Paul explained, “So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Sins happen because we are a race of sinners. And, sadly, we’re experts at it.

Why “such reckless hate”? Our sinful natures have helped. There is a hellish army headed by Satan that relentlessly seeks to batter us Christians down. As Paul warns us, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). After a while, even the strongest Christian may sigh with a whimper, “Too much, Lord, it’s no use! I give up.”

Do you want to know why I thought of Théoden when I heard about the Valentine’s Day shooting? Because I looked in the mirror and saw him. Inside I heard him. “So much death. What can men do against such reckless hate?” Broken. Empty. Overcome by evil.

Or maybe not.

OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD

If you remember *The Two Towers*, then you know the battle was not lost at Helm’s Deep, but rather won. Just as the enemy was about to burst through the door, Gimli the dwarf whispers, “The sun is rising.” As a ray of light breaks through the window, the reenergized survivors ride out into battle, guided by the promise given by Gandalf, the white wizard: “Look to my coming at first light on the fifth day. At dawn, look to the east.”

That’s “the story and the symbolism.” Here is the fact: Our riding out into the wearying, daily fight of faith will not somehow turn the tide of this war with evil. Jesus won this war long ago, all by himself, when he said from his cross, “It is finished!” (John 19:30).

Here is the fact: You and I look to the dawn of the third day that we know as Easter. There we see a rolled away stone, an empty tomb, and angelic messengers who announce, “Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has been raised!” (Luke 24:5,6).

Not death, not hate, not a world filled with devils, not even hell itself can conquer us! Rather, “Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Jesus’ victory gives us the strength to be salt for yet another day. Not bitter, but bold. Not hopeless, but confident that “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

And in this way, dear friends, we will overcome evil with good. Victorious salt amid so much death!

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

This is the 11th article in a 12-part series about Christian love in action and how we can be salt in the world.

All Scripture references are from the Evangelical Heritage Version.

DO NOT BE

overcome

BY EVIL, BUT

OVERCOME

EVIL WITH

good.

ROMANS 12:21



Reaching Native Christians

Despite challenges, the Word of the Lord continues to grow on the Apache reservation. Joseph M. Dietrich

In 1893 Missionaries Plocher and Adascheck first arrived in what is now called Peridot, Arizona, to begin sharing the good news of Jesus with the Apache people. They had many struggles. Where should they set up camp? How will they communicate? Who will translate? How will they overcome suspicion and mistrust toward the white man? By God's grace, they began to overcome these and other obstacles. The mission took root. From Peridot it spread east to Bylas and north to Whiteriver. Some missionaries became masters in the Apache language. Schools and churches were built. People came to hear the good news of Jesus. Congregations were started. The Word of the Lord grew.

THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY

Now it is 2018—125 years later. How is the Apache mission doing? What are the challenges and blessings of today? The challenges are much different than the ones the first missionaries encountered:

- Our pastors, teachers, and congregational families are not perfect. We admit we are all still learning and growing—sometimes the hard way—by our mistakes. Gary Lupe, one of two Apache pastors on the reservation,

says, “A long time ago the Apache needed the white man missionary to make all the decisions; he did a good job. But now, we have been strong in Christ for years, yet too many Apache people rely upon the missionary to make decisions. Our missionaries are working to let go and let members make decisions, and also our people must be empowered to stand up to run our churches. This is a struggle.”

- Our communities aren't perfect either. Broken homes, substance abuse, and unsupervised children are the new normal for many homes. When caregivers choose alcohol and drugs over electricity and food, children suffer.
- Gangs are active in our communities, and vandalism and theft are regular occurrences that plague the churches, schools, and homes of our members and missionaries.
- Unemployment (75%) and poverty (median family income is less than \$20,000 per household) are multi-generational. Health issues plague our people; the average life expectancy is between 45 to 50 years old.
- Traditional Apache religion is still a powerful force that pulls people off

the path that leads to eternal life. Medicine men actively practice witchcraft and have been successful in convincing many Apache people that this false religion is part of their identity. Christians continue to stumble in their walk of faith and distrust the message of the Bible as well as the messengers who bring it. “The writer to the Hebrews had to always tell people to not follow the old ways,” says Lupe. “I must always tell our Apache people to not go to the medicine man to find out who to blame for your problems or which rock or powder to buy to heal you or take away problems. Like the writer to the Hebrews, I too must always say, ‘Jesus is all we need. Jesus is the only way and the only power.’”

Yes, the Apache mission has challenges, and some of them are so big at times that our missionaries and teachers spend many weekly hours of ministry in unique ways—helping, counseling, transporting, praying with people out on the road and on the phone, talking with tribal security, and repairing buildings. It's a struggle to do the regular daily work one would think pastors and teachers are called to do.



VICTORIES DESPITE CHALLENGES

To keep these challenges in perspective, we turn to the book of Acts, a marvelous book that tells how Jesus' disciples carried the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. It tells of the magnificent march of the gospel through the powerful Roman Empire. It's a happy book, a book of joyous victory. From beginning to end you can read how the Word of the Lord grew through Palestine and beyond.

But the story of Acts is not without its challenges. At every turn, there were struggles and threats to the ministry. Peter and John were put in prison. James was killed. Saul approved of Stephen's death and started a great persecution. The Jewish leaders joined in on the persecution. They stoned Paul for speaking against traditional religion—the gods that the local people had worshiped for years. Arguments broke out between Jews and gentile believers. Paul and Barnabas split up after a dispute. Unbelievers beat Paul and had him thrown into prison. People argued over who was the best pastor.

When you read Acts, you see struggle after struggle, blow after blow, hitting the apostles and believers.

When you spend time on the Apache reservation, you too can see struggle after struggle, blow after blow, hitting our missionaries and believers.

Still, the book of Acts is about the spread of the gospel. It's always about the

Word of the Lord growing and going to the world. It's victorious and joyous. When Paul was detained in Rome, Luke ended Acts with the following statement: "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!" (28:28). Boldly and without hindrance, Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord.

The Word of the Lord grew in Paul's day, and it is growing among the Apache today.

- Six missionary pastors serve more than 3,000 Apache members, with approximately 1,000 worshipping in nine congregations every Sunday.
- Almost 300 students attend our two K-8 schools, and 25 students attend our high school. They are taught by 20 called teachers.
- The Apache Christian Training School program continues to build spiritual maturity and train people for service in God's kingdom.

Six of our called pastors, evangelists, teachers, and ministry leaders are Apaches. "I love being a pastor and having that truth that I'm saved for myself, but mostly [I love] sharing it with my Apache people, working with the missionaries, and looking to share the gospel in many ways," says Lupe, who has begun Wednesday evening street

services at Gethsemane, Cibecue, to reach the community better. Lupe also works with lay evangelist Leonard Fall to record sermons in Apache that are broadcast on the radio.

Another Apache pastor, Kirk Massey, is working to equip his members at Open Bible, Whiteriver, so they can better serve this 1,000-member congregation and its community.

And the Apache people are not content to serve only on the two current reservations in Arizona. They want to reach Native Americans on the 500-plus reservations throughout the United States, to follow the Great Commission as Jesus' disciples did: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

Because despite all our needs and challenges, we are assured that the Word of the Lord will grow, that God's salvation has been sent to the Apache, and that they will listen.

Joseph Dietrich serves the San Carlos Apache Tribe as a missionary at Our Savior's, Blyas, Arizona.

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

Go to nativechristians.org to read more and to get 125th anniversary celebration updates.



By faith, not by sight

We are here to follow the Savior's voice through the darkness of this chaotic world to heaven's gates.

Megan Redfield

From the day we were married, life was "temporary." Uncertain. Three more years until Call Day, and then our lives would start.

Tim was assigned. Maybe now, after three years, when we could settle into a home for more than one year . . . maybe now we would be blessed with a child. And our lives would start.

But after two more years of poking and prodding, heartache and uncomfortable questions, we felt ready to begin the adoption process. We completed the first application, wrote the first check, and just KNEW that "within an average of 18 to 30 months" we would be parents. And our lives would start.

We had been chosen, and she would be ours. We were humbled, grateful, and

scared out of our minds. She had been born blind. We researched her diagnosis feverishly, scheduled specialist appointments, and set up Early Intervention services. We prepared to travel and counted the minutes until May 28. We knew—we just knew this time—that our lives were about to start.

Every spring brings a parade of anniversaries—the day we first held her in our arms, the day she was baptized, and so many more. This year we celebrate six years since the day that mountains of paperwork and years of frustrations gave birth to our sweet Elizabeth, seven months old. We would call her Libby. Finally we understood God's plan completely. Finally all the twists and turns made sense. Right?

Things were idyllic that first year. Well, *idyllic* isn't exactly the right word. We're still talking about diapers and sleep deprivation and first-time parenting jitters. But it felt like a dream, and there were days that I physically felt gratitude washing over me. There

were nights I would continue rocking her long after she was asleep, tears of disbelief drip-dropping onto her tiny footie pajamas. I remembered choosing this very pair as we registered for baby gifts, holding them up and wondering if such a tiny person could possibly exist. And now here she was, filling them out, breathing soundly in my arms as we rock, rock, rocked.

In those moments, it felt like God had gift-wrapped her and dropped her straight into my life, closing a chapter of questions and doubts with a flourish. I had spent so many years waiting for the next thing, a clearer picture, waiting to see God's plan all wrapped up, neat and tidy. We just love a happy ending, don't we?

WANTING TO SEE GOD'S PLAN

Sometimes we wait patiently for God to show us his plans; sometimes we demand it.

What is the plan here, Lord? Why this? Why now? Why this illness? Why this



hardship? Why this heartbreak? Why my family? Why my job? Why my bank account? What are you teaching me? Where are you leading me? How is this ever going to work for my good, as you have promised? Tell me, Lord. Show me your ways. Wrap it up; give me an “aha!” moment. Make it all clear to me. Show me the answers to the riddles of my life, and then I will tell everyone I know what great things you have done for me.

This is it, I thought back then. My life has started. Now I know exactly why we were unable to conceive. Now I know why our adoption took precisely as long as it did. It was all about her. She was meant to be ours. Look at this amazing thing that God has done! Look how he has shown his wisdom and power!

“Look at this beautiful girl of mine,” I still say to myself, pretty much every day. “Look how she learns, how she processes, how she touches hearts. Listen to her sing and play the piano. We daily learn so much from her. God is going to do amazing things through her. I can’t wait to watch the pieces fall into place, to see his plans carried out in her life.”

Am I wrong? Isn’t it possible that I do understand God’s plan? When I look back on how it all played out, it sure seems to make sense. And yes—his wisdom and almighty power—I can pretty confidently declare that these were fully displayed as he laid our family’s pieces into place in ways I could never have imagined. Am I wrong to wait in wonder about Libby’s future? About how her remarkable abilities, wrapped to-

gether with her unique delays and difficulties, will continue to develop and translate into her passions . . . her liveliness . . . her service to her Lord?

Simple answer: No.

Longer answer: Perhaps. My life, my family, my child, my dreams for her future, my questions, my praises for his powerful hand in my story—if these are the anchor of my faith, then, yes, I’m way off base. I’m entirely wrapped up in deciphering clues like my life is some great earthly scavenger hunt for a little box wherein he answers all my burning questions. I want clarity, certainty, and to be comfortable. I want to walk by sight.

TRUSTING WHERE GOD LEADS YOU

I am forgetting that he has shown his plan—the only plan I need to know. This plan of salvation was written before eternity. “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship” (Galatians 4:4,5).

We aren’t here to feel comfortable. This world, since the very day sin entered it, promises none of that. We aren’t here to have our questions answered. We are here to “live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). We are here to follow the Savior’s voice in humble obedience through the darkness of this chaotic world. Let him lead you to the place he has prepared for you. Tune out the distractions and

discomforts. Better yet, praise him for them! These are the things that fix our tired, desperate eyes heavenward.

At times, we appear foolish and naïve. We trust, like Abraham preparing to sacrifice his only son or like Noah building an ocean liner in the desert. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5,6).

There are a lot of dreams for Libby’s future that bring tears to my eyes. I hear it’s a “mom thing.” The older we get, the prouder they make us, the more we cry. At some point I’ll just be crying non-stop and dressing in a water-resistant poncho. But the biggest and brightest dream—the one that can dissolve me in a heartbeat—is when I think of the day she will enter heaven’s gates. Here on earth, she walks with a white cane, cautiously, darkness all around her. On that day when her eyes are finally opened, the very first thing she will ever see is her Savior’s face. And she will run—leap!—into his waiting arms.

That is the answer to every one of my questions for her future. That is the purpose of my life—to teach her, guide her, and lead her to Jesus, in whom everything becomes clear.

Megan Redfield is a member at Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minnesota.

Learn how the Redfields work with the Mission for the Visually Impaired (p. 21).



Optimist or pessimist?

Earle D. Treptow

When we reflect
on senseless
violence,
we often focus
only on the
hard-heartedness
of sinners and
forget about
God's grace
and power.

Do you belong to the “pessimist party” or the “optimist club”? Your answer may depend on the day you’re asked. For instance, if asked whether your favorite team will win a championship, you may be a pessimist, conditioned by years of futility. But two months later, when the team is exceeding expectations, you may be an optimist.

On a more serious level, would you consider yourself an optimist or a pessimist on the possibility of eliminating, or reducing, the mass shootings that plague us? Do you think steps can be taken to preserve life? Or do you feel that attempts to address the situation won’t make any substantial difference? How does your Christian faith influence your view?

Christians have learned, by the Father’s grace and the Spirit’s work, to tune their ears to God’s Word when they’re bothered by horrific events. What Christians hear is God speaking the truth about all people, including us: “Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood” (Genesis 8:21). We can’t be overly surprised by these senseless shootings. Sinners sin. The law that God has written on human hearts curbs sin, but it doesn’t stop all sin from occurring, as we know from our own personal struggles.

Christians also hear what Jesus said about the final days of this world: “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). People will become increasingly self-centered. They will do what their corrupt hearts want to do, with little thought to the impact of their actions on others.

Christians who believe what God says about sinners don’t expect an end of senseless violence in this world. Laws may well be enacted to make it more difficult to get the kinds of weapons used in these shootings. Yet laws do not change hearts. Sinful hearts will remain loveless. Christians see the glass half empty.

But Christians whose ears are tuned to God’s Word also hear promises that fill

their hearts with confidence. The Lord Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father, promises to direct all things for the benefit of his people. The Lord is ruling over everything, even if rampant wickedness makes it appear that the devil has gained the upper hand.

When we reflect on senseless violence, we often focus only on the hard-heartedness of sinners and forget about God’s grace and power. The One who desires all to be saved promises to work through his powerful gospel to call people to repentance and faith.

What’s more, he promises to empower his people to speak the gospel, through which the Holy Spirit miraculously transforms hearts and lives. Believing the Lord’s promise that he can “do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20), we take up the task of speaking God’s Word to the world. We need not feel helpless in the face of rampant violence. Jesus gave us the task to proclaim his heart-changing gospel to everyone, and he gave us his promise that the Spirit will accompany the Word we speak. Christians see the glass half full.

When Christians focus on sinful human beings, they’re pessimistic—sinners will continue to sin. When Christians focus on the grace and power of God, they’re optimistic—the Lord can change hearts. We know and confess the sinner’s natural depravity, which makes every sin possible. But we also know and confess the grace and power of our Savior-God, for whom nothing is impossible, not even transforming hearts and altering lives.

Contributing editor Earle Treptow, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Christ Alone, Mequon.

MAJORING ON THE MINORS

Thomas D. Kock

AMOS: WHAT IF GOD HAD ASKED YOU?

Amos wasn't a staff minister; he wasn't a teacher; he wasn't a pastor. He describes himself as being a rancher of sorts, raising sheep, as well as doing something with figs (cf. 1:1; 7:14). Amos was a layman, a typical Israelite!

But God had different plans for Amos: "The LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'" (7:15).

What if God had asked you? Would you have been ready?

GOD'S MESSENGER—THEN

Amos might have wondered, "Why me?? Why not send one of the prophets?" God didn't do that; he chose to send a layman.

What if God had asked you? Would you have been ready?

And then there's the message! God called Amos to bring a difficult message to the Northern Kingdom! The people had rebelled against God over and over. God's patience was coming to an end. So Amos had to deliver this message: "Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land" (7:17).

Ouch! I'm guessing the people weren't gathering around Amos to say, "What a great sermon! I was really blessed by that!" This was a hard message . . . but a message that needed to be brought to the people because they were becoming more and more hardened in unbelief. It was imperative that Amos—the layman—deliver this message. What if God had asked you? Would you have been ready?

GOD'S MESSENGERS—NOW

During this month we'll celebrate Pentecost—how the Holy Spirit was poured out in a miraculous way, giving power to proclaim the Word. And what had some of those proclaimers done previously? They'd been fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, John), tax collectors (Matthew), and political activists (Simon). In other words, laymen!

And?

And God touched the world through their message! The message of Jesus spread from person to person! And, generally, it seems to have spread through laity! Through people like Amos!

Through people like you.

What if God had asked you? Would you have been ready?

I'm convinced that the answer is yes! You know Jesus; you know his Word.

However, could it hurt to deepen your knowledge? While it's critical for our church body to train our public ministers thoroughly, it's also incredibly important that our laity understands the Word of God deeply!

So, head to Bible study—both for yourself and for the good of others! And in the study of the Word, God will make you ready for whatever opportunities he grants you.

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

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

HOSEA

JOEL

JONAH

AMOS

Background: A shepherd and fig-picker from Tekoa (in the Southern Kingdom). He prophesied in the Northern Kingdom from 765-760 B.C.

The book's major truth: God's patience with the Northern Kingdom is running out. Judgment!

Key verse: "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD" (8:11).

OBADIAH

MICAH

NAHUM

HABAKKUK

ZEPHANIAH

HAGGAI

ZECHARIAH

MALACHI



Amen is
our word of
confident faith
in all the promises
God makes.

Amen

Amen is a word we say so often we don't even realize we say it. At the end of every prayer, it's kind of a spoken period. When we worship, we sing or say it in response to what the worship leader said. If we use it outside of church and our prayers, it's simply saying something like, "Amen to that," when we agree with what someone has just said. It often simply means, "Yes, I certainly agree."

The word, of course, has roots in both the Old and New Testaments. Actually, it's a Hebrew word emphasizing certainty, assurance, and dependability. For example, Psalm 89 ends like this: "Praise be to the LORD forever! Amen and Amen" (v. 52). The psalms have other examples of *amen* used to assert and confirm praise to God (Psalm 41:13; Psalm 72:19).

The apostles Paul, Peter, and John also use the word to emphasize their praise. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (4:20). Peter used the word in the same way, "To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:11). And John's Revelation ends with two uses of *amen*. Both are part of his concluding prayer: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen" (Revelation 22:20,21).

The word also comes from the mouth of Jesus, but it's not translated as "amen." Instead it becomes "verily" (KJV) and "truly" (ESV and NIV). When the gospel writers quote Jesus using the word *amen*, they write, "Jesus said, 'Truly (amen) I say to you.'" The word emphasizes the truth of what Jesus said. Jesus told the thief on the cross, "Truly (amen) I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). When John quotes Jesus, he often doubles the *amen*. For example, Jesus said, "Very truly (amen, amen) I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). John's double use of *amen* doesn't mean

that Jesus' words are "really, really" true and the other sayings of Jesus are only "really" true. Whether there is one *amen*, two *amens*, or none at all, all of Scripture is equally true and sure.

So what does this mean to us in our worship and our spiritual lives? First, I think it means that we are following the example of believers throughout the history of the world. *Amen* was on the lips of God's people in the Old Testament and the New. We are connected with them all by faith in Jesus, and the little word *amen* is one of those connections. What an amazing blessing that is! Then also remember that we say it together with our brothers and sisters here and now. We are also connected to one another whether we say the word in worship or at home with our loved ones. Our *amen* affirms we are all of the same mind. It is a word of faith and trust in God.

And that's the second thing. *Amen* is a word of faith. When we speak it, we are saying that we trust in the God who gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen! Like little children we come to our heavenly Father with our prayers and praise. He scoops us up in his arms and soothes us with his love. Confident in his arms, he invites us to praise and pray. *Amen* is our word of confident faith in all the promises God makes and a word of assurance that the Lord's Prayer—and every other prayer—ascends to our heavenly Father, where it will receive his attention. Amen! Amen!



COME Lord Jesus BE OUR GUEST

NOURISHED BY MEALS WITH THE MESSIAH

Joel S. Heckendorf

WERE NOT OUR HEARTS BURNING WITHIN US? (LUKE 24:13-35)

Already in this series, you've nibbled on some fish with Jesus. You've broken bread and sipped some wine. You've sat in an aroma-filled dining room and a crowded wedding reception hall. I pray you have been spiritually nourished by these meals with the Messiah. But, be warned, you might want to take some heartburn medication before you indulge in the meal set before us today. At least Cleopas got heartburn. What caused it?

Before we get to that, you should know that Cleopas had a preexisting heart condition. At least, that was Jesus' diagnosis after examining him for a couple of hours late one Sunday afternoon. Jesus could see it in his face and in his pace, as Cleopas trudged the seven miles between Jerusalem and Emmaus.

If his outward appearance wasn't a strong enough symptom, Cleopas' words certainly were: "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). Unable to recognize the one speaking to him as the One on whom he pinned his hopes, Cleopas droned on and on about Jesus: "He was a prophet. . . . He was powerful . . . but he was sentenced to death. . . . They crucified him. . . . It's been three days since this happened. . . . Some women said his tomb was empty and that he was alive. . . . Our friends also said the tomb was empty . . . but they

didn't see Jesus" (cf. Luke 24:19-24). Nor did Cleopas. And he didn't see Jesus standing before him. Nor did he see Jesus in the Scriptures.

Yet, Jesus doesn't diagnose him with having eye problems. It was a heart problem. "How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25 NIV84). Has the powerful Jesus ever acted in such a way that your hopes were dashed? Has failing to see Jesus working in your life or in Scripture left you with a mind clouded with doubt and despair? Ever find yourself searching for a spiritual pulse because you have a slow heart? Jesus has just the prescription: It's his Word.

And if you need someone to endorse Dr. Jesus, listen to Cleopas. He invited Jesus in for a meal after their long walk, but it was the seven-course meal of Scripture that Jesus spoon-fed him that led him to say, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

And look what a burning heart fuels: "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem" (Luke 24:33). After Jesus miraculously vanished, basically so did Cleopas and his buddy. They didn't stick around to do the dishes. They didn't even finish their supper. They didn't care that it was dark outside. Without giving it a second thought, they ran back the seven

miles they had just walked. Same road, but what a different journey! No longer were they trying to escape defeat; they were equipped with victory. They were no longer questioning; they were proclaiming. What a different attitude filled their hearts as they realized their Deliver was not dead but alive! How they must have shouted to the huddled disciples, "It's true! Jesus is alive!"

You can do the same. Come, Lord Jesus, let these heart-burning gifts to us be blessed!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Why do we sometimes fail to recognize Jesus?
2. What are some portions of "Moses and all the Prophets" (Luke 24:27) that you have found to be especially heart-burning?
3. What is significant about Jesus' words, "Did not the Messiah *have* to suffer these things?" (Luke 24:26, emphasis added)?

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



This is the sixth 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 May 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.



His address is *heaven*

A school project demonstrates the faith of a child. Holly J. Beckman

Kindergarten is a lot different these days. Kids already can print their names; can count to 50; and know their address, phone number, colors, and shapes. These are things I learned in first and second grade.

After only a few weeks in kindergarten, my grandson had to write a family profile. This seemed quite advanced to me. The kids had to write family names, where their grandparents live, and what they love most about us.

My grandson brought it home to work on it. My daughter helped him spell some words, and when he was all done, he excitedly showed it to her. She then forwarded it to me. I love getting school papers, brightly colored Bible story pictures, and cute art projects that I proudly display on my refrigerator. All grandmas love to show off anything about their grandkids!

My grandson had filled in all the blanks. For my address, he wrote, "Milwaukee, Wisconsin." But his grandpa's address was different. He wrote, "Heaven." My daughter said she never helped or prompted him in any way. He did this totally on his own.

His grandpa, my husband, had gone to heaven nine months before. My grandson had visited him before cancer took him to heaven. Coming to Wisconsin for the funeral was something I doubt any of the kids will forget. It brought them comfort, strength, peace, and closure.

Little ones are such an example. They see things with fresh and exciting eyes. They never doubt what they learn about God. This comes later as we grow up. We adults know all about doubting. But little children thoroughly trust that what God says is rock solid and will never change. God made a promise, and he is good for it.

My grandson is content. He knows he will see Grandpa again. He is satisfied to wait for God's perfect timing. I love that about my grandkids. They spur me on. They inspire me with their strong faith.

Recently, this little boy, in all sincerity, asked if he could FaceTime Grandpa in heaven!

Holly Beckman is a member at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.