

# Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE

For you -  
It is by grace  
you have been  
saved, through faith.

From,  
Your friend in Christ

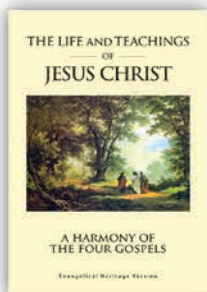
## Acts of love

God's amazing grace, his undeserved love for us,  
inspires us to show love for others. Page 10




# Gather Around YOUR SAVIOR

As you, your family, and your friends return from your summer activities to your homes, schools, and workplaces this fall, remember your Savior in all that you do. These NPH books and gifts will help you when you gather and grow together through the ageless message of his love.




## **NEW!** The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ

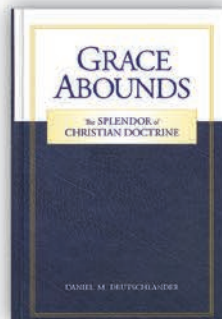
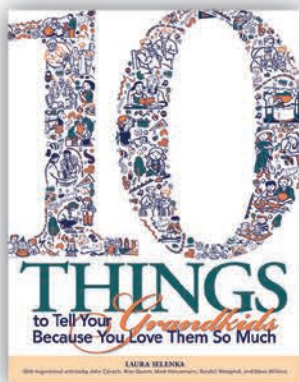
The four gospels form a beautiful and complete account of your Savior. *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ* helps you better understand this account by weaving the books together into a single narrative. No words have been added or

changed to construct this harmony of the gospels. Only God's Word is recorded here, revealing the extraordinary life and teachings of Jesus Christ to you and all believers as it alone can. EHV. Softcover, 238 pages. **LU0105002, \$17.99** 

## **NEW!** 10 Things to Tell Your Grandkids: Because You Love Them So Much


by Laura Selenka

How do grandparents talk to their grandchildren about prayer, marriage, salvation, and other topics of faith? *10 Things to Tell Your Grandkids* features inspirational articles and stories about seniors sharing Christian wisdom and truth with younger generations. Through the anecdotes of dozens of different grandparents, you will discover how much impact a little spiritual encouragement can have on a growing soul. Learn how to share the good news of Christ's love with your grandchildren in *10 Things to Tell Your Grandkids*. Softcover, 46 pages. 8.5 x 11 inches. **LU1201796, \$8.99** 



## **Grace Abounds** The Splendor of Christian Doctrine

by Daniel M. Deutschlander

As you listen to this Sunday's sermon with your congregation, say the Lord's Prayer together with your family, and read God's Word carefully with your Bible study group, remember where all Scripture points: to our Savior Jesus. *Grace Abounds* looks closely at Christian doctrine to show how every teaching leads to the truth of God's love. Further, you will discover how you can apply these essential principles in your life. *Grace Abounds* is an engaging book for all believers, from pastors to teachers to churchgoers. Hardcover, 601 pages. **LU1500785, \$41.99** 

## **A Return to Grace** Luther's Life and Legacy

Martin Luther's amazing story is brought to life like never before in *A Return to Grace*. You, your family, and your friends will witness the dramatic moments that shaped Luther as a reformer and the Reformation as a movement. This inspirational retelling will help you come to understand—just as Luther did—that the only place for believers to turn for truth is God's Holy Word. DVD, 105 minutes. **LU3303025, \$14.50**



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# Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

ROMANS 8:35-39

**God is always with you, although sometimes situations in life can keep you or those you love far away from home or church.**

Loved ones in the military, in college, in prison, or with developmental disabilities can stay connected with God and his Word through special devotions, Bible studies, and other spiritual helps provided by WELS in its ministry-by-mail programs. Fill out an online referral form for yourself, a family member, or a friend so you all can stay close to Jesus no matter what happens in life.

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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

Martin Luther, through the Reformation, helped bring the Christian church back to the central teaching of the gospel: It is by grace you have been saved. That is a message that we should be celebrating year-round. It is also a message that motivates us to live lives of service to our Savior and to other people.

- Our cover article reminds us of this: Whether it's through pies or a friendly smile, we can show others the love of Jesus (p. 10).
- The gospel message is what motivates us to let our light shine so that others can see what our Savior has done for us—and for them. Don't miss the last article about our treasure, the gospel (p. 26).
- The gospel also compels us to speak. We need to get the message of salvation out to the world. The story of the Samaritan woman at the well reminds us that, no matter what our circumstances, we all can proclaim about the One who saved us (p. 12).
- Finally, meet a man who wants to step up in raising his Christian family after he discovers God's love and forgiveness (p. 14).

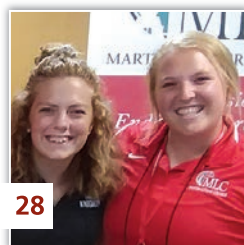
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## CONFIRMATION VERSE

What a wonderful reminder of why I too wanted Romans 8:38,39 as my confirmation verse that Sarah Proeber gave in her article about God and the word *no* ["No!" Aug.]. Even though it might be too long for a confirmation verse, it so succinctly and powerfully summarizes exactly how much God means *no* when he answers the question, "[Will anything] separate us from the love of Christ?" As Ms. Proeber walked us through, if you come up with any situation that could tear us away, God says, "No, not that either. Look at what I have done for you; you are more than conquerors in my love."

*Natasha Jokinen  
Louisville, Kentucky*

## "AHA" MOMENT

I have never written before but just had to let you know I loved the article on the minor prophet Micah ["Majoring on the minors," July]. It's funny how you can "know" something for a long time, but then one day someone discusses it from a different angle and suddenly it takes on a whole new meaning.

Of course, I have known that Jesus was born in a manger, in a humble stable, and was meek and lowly since I was five years old.



But it never really hit home that [Jesus] "gets it." He REALLY knows what it's like to be a normal person. He understands our daily struggles and knows the price of gas and bread. Although he is God, at one with the Father, the Lord of the universe who made this incredible, complex, beautiful world that knocks me over with awe almost every day, he also was a true human being, our brother as Hebrews tells us. Professor Tom's few sentences really helped me "get it."

I just want to thank him for a wonderful "aha!" moment.

*Sandy Adamson  
Tucson, Arizona*

## TEMPTATION

I am compelled to respond to James F. Pope's article ["Light for our path," May].

When we consider our understanding of the Lord's Supper, we do not puzzle over the meaning of Jesus' words, "This is my body, this is my blood." It says what it means. Is it really necessary to question the words of Jesus, "Lead us not into temptation"?

James tells us that God does not tempt anyone. But Scripture also tells us that God may permit the devil to tempt us (Job 1:11,12)—perhaps to test our faith and hopefully strengthen it. Jesus' temptation in the wilderness may be another example. Luther's explanation seems to pertain more to "but deliver us from evil."

As is affirmed in the article, we are all regularly tempted by sinful lusts and desires. But if God tests us, we are truly tested.

Is it not fitting to pray that we be spared such a testing?

*Gilbert Holtz  
Fishers, New York*

# Through my Bible in 3 years

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

OCTOBER 2018

- |                      |                   |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. 1 Ki. 9:1–10:13   | 12. 1 Ki. 22      | 23. Jn. 6:1–21    |
| 2. 1 Ki. 10:14–11:43 | 13. John 1:1–18   | 24. Jn. 6:22–40   |
| 3. 1 Ki. 12:1–32     | 14. Jn. 1:19–34   | 25. Jn. 6:41–71   |
| 4. 1 Ki. 12:33–13:34 | 15. Jn. 1:35–51   | 26. Jn. 7:1–24    |
| 5. 1 Ki. 14          | 16. Jn. 2:1–22    | 27. Jn. 7:25–52   |
| 6. 1 Ki. 15:1–16:7   | 17. Jn. 2:23–3:21 | 28. Jn. 7:53–8:29 |
| 7. 1 Ki. 16:8–34     | 18. Jn. 3:22–36   | 29. Jn. 8:30–59   |
| 8. 1 Ki. 17 & 18     | 19. Jn. 4:1–26    | 30. Jn. 9         |
| 9. 1 Ki. 19          | 20. Jn. 4:27–54   | 31. Jn. 10:1–21   |
| 10. 1 Ki. 20         | 21. Jn. 5:1–29    |                   |
| 11. 1 Ki. 21         | 22. Jn. 5:30–47   |                   |

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# Contend for the faith

**I . . . urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. Jude 3**

Daniel J. Habben

For Lutherans, October means Reformation. We are reminded that salvation is free—a gift through faith in Jesus. We are motivated to stand guard so that no one takes this truth from us. We are also urged to fend off a false teaching that Jude summarized like this: “They . . . pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality” (Jude 4).

## **FORGIVENESS: NOT AN INVITATION TO SIN**

Unfortunately, that false teaching is as likely to come from within our own hearts as from any outside source. We might gleefully belt out Reformation hymns about God's free grace and favor but then feel free to gaze at the latest racy video clip making the rounds. We might rejoice that we are clothed in Christ's righteousness through Baptism but shrug at how our wardrobe choices make it difficult for others to stay pure in thought. We might cherish Jesus' gentle words of encouragement and forgiveness but excuse our own nitpicking and criticism of others. When we realize these sins, we might rush to assure ourselves that we are forgiven but make no move to change. How easy it is to pervert God's grace!

An invitation to someone's house is not permission to leave our dirty socks on their living room floor. Likewise, when Jesus invites us to taste his forgiveness and experience the freedom that comes from lifted guilt, this is not an invitation to shrug our burden-free shoulders at our sin! We can't embrace Jesus' forgiveness and cozy up to sin any more than a man would be allowed to embrace his wife while holding his ex-girlfriend's hand.

“But temptation is all around us. We can't avoid falling into sin!” Yes, but that's not an excuse to sin. And that's



why Jude implores us to contend for the faith. Contending means struggling. It's what you do when you deny an urge to spit back at someone who has just belittled you.

## Contending for the faith is a lifelong effort.

### **GOD IS WITH US IN THE STRUGGLE**

Contending for the faith is a lifelong effort. Every minute of every day you'll need to make conscious adjustments to your attitude, the same way you make constant adjustments to your car's steering wheel. If you don't, you'll end up in the ditch.

Thankfully, contending for the faith is not a solo task. Jude wrote: “To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance” (Jude 1,2). God's abundant love moved him to send Jesus to

die for our sins. It also works to keep us in the faith for Jesus.

You're like a war medal a proud father has received for his son's act of valor. The medal is sent to the father for safekeeping while the son continues to fight on the front lines. Do you suppose the father will throw that medal in the junk drawer with greasy bolts and rusty nails? Of course not! He will guard and keep the medal in a safe place until his son comes home to claim it.

That's exactly what your Father is doing right now as you ponder his Word. He is keeping you safe for his Son until Jesus comes to claim you at the end of time.

Yes—God's mercy, peace, and love are yours in abundance. It's a truth we celebrate at Reformation. It's also a truth that empowers us to daily contend for the faith as we strive to live holy lives for Jesus.

*Contributing editor Daniel Habben is pastor at St. John, Saint John, Antigua.*



*Mark Schwab*

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Legalized abortion  
has been with  
us for decades.  
We dare never  
allow ourselves  
to become numb  
to the number  
of lives lost.

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## A tragic inconsistency

People around the world were transfixed by the drama taking place in Thailand. A boys' soccer team and their coach were trapped in a cave after monsoon rains filled the cave and cut off their route of escape. The rescue effort and the attention it received were a testimony to how much people value human lives.

A storm was brewing in the hills around Branson, Missouri, the vacation destination of thousands of people each year. The captain of a tour boat decided to head out onto the lake despite the dark clouds and lightning in the vicinity. Sadly, the winds and waves caused the boat to capsize, its fixed windows trapping people inside the sinking vessel. Seventeen people lost their lives, but what received the most attention was the fact that nine members of one family, most of them children, were among the victims. There was genuine grief over the loss of life, a grief more deeply felt because of the loss of young children.

Another school shooting is the focus of breaking news reports and round-the-clock coverage for days. The loss of young life shocks a nation, because all agree that human life is precious.

The desire to save and preserve human life is seen every day in the field of medicine, as new drugs, medical devices and technology, and treatment procedures are developed. Due to advances in medical research and the dedicated efforts of scientists and medical personnel, lives are saved.

Why do we care so much about the dramatic rescue in a cave on the other side of the world? Why do we grieve so sincerely when nine family members lose their lives in a boat accident or students are gunned down in their classrooms? Why do even unbelievers marvel with gratitude when even one life is preserved and extended by medical treatment? It's because our society

still claims to recognize the value of human life.

But then comes the tragic inconsistency. Many of the same people who held their breath for the rescue of the boys in the cave are people who have carried signs in demonstrations advocating a woman's "right to choose." Many who mourned the loss of children in a boating accident or in school shootings do not shed a single tear for the millions of children whose lives have been ended before they drew their first breath. In the same building where life-saving surgery is performed, "procedures" are taking place that abort unborn children. Even many Christian churches that claim to be advocates for the poor and the defenseless in our society have absolutely no problem defending a person's right to end the life of the most defenseless of all.

Sad to say, legalized abortion has been with us for decades. We dare never allow ourselves to become numb to the number of lives lost and to reduce them to little more than statistics. Nor should we be content as Christians to do nothing. Rather, we need to pray for God's help in preventing our attitudes and beliefs from being shaped by a society that sees some lives as more valuable than others. It goes without saying that we will want to do all we can to protect life by exercising our rights and responsibilities as citizens. But, most of all, we will recognize that people's tragic inconsistency can be cured only as they are transformed by the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ. It's that message that God has entrusted to us to proclaim in our congregations and to share individually with our friends and neighbors.



# Light for our path

**Recently my church changed the words of the Lord's Prayer from *trespass* to *sin*. Why was this change made? I believe that only God or a called servant can forgive sin.**

James F. Pope

Christians have long prayed the Lord's Prayer. Changes to the wording can lead us to think more about the content of what we are praying. Your question does just that.

## COMMITTING SINS AND TRESPASSES

On the two occasions when the Bible records the Lord speaking the prayer that is named after him, Jesus used different words to describe the violation of God's holy will. That variety is not surprising, as the Bible employs different terms as well, such as "sin," "debt," "transgression," and "trespass."

In the Lord's Prayer we find in Matthew's gospel, Jesus used the word *debt* (Matthew 6:12). In the Lord's Prayer we find in Luke's gospel, Jesus used the words *sin* and *debt* (see the footnote for Luke 11:4). There is a Greek word for *trespass*, but that word does not occur in either account.

So how did we come to speak, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"? We can thank the Anglican Church for that. For hundreds of years, the version of the Lord's Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer focused attention on forgiving "trespasses." When the time came for German Lutherans in our country to begin utilizing English liturgical materials, they adopted the version of the Lord's Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer. Tradition has led many Lutherans in the United States to continue using that version.

Whether we use *sin* or *trespass*, we are acknowledging that we have acted contrary to God's holy will and seek his forgiveness. If your congregation recently began using the "contemporary Lord's Prayer," which substitutes *sin* for *trespasses*, it is not doing anything wrong.

## FORGIVING SINS AND TRESPASSES

When you and I pray the Lord's Prayer, we state that we are on the receiving end and the giving end of the forgiveness of sins. We ask God to forgive our sins or trespasses as we forgive those who sin or trespass against us. Declaring the message of forgiveness is not limited to pastors. In the Lord's Prayer, we speak of "forgiving those who sin against us." Elsewhere in the Bible, that is what God tells us to do: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). Forgiveness of sins is our precious gift from God. Forgiving the sins of others is our responsibility from God.

In the verses after Matthew's account of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus emphasized the importance of forgiving others: "If you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14,15). Forgiving other people when they sin against us is not optional; it is necessary.

For years, Christians have prayed the Lord's Prayer. From church sanctuaries to kitchens, from hospital rooms to war zones, from deathbeds to wedding services, Christians have rendered the original Greek language of the Lord's Prayer into their own language. Our Father hears and answers them all.

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

James Pope also answers questions online at [wels.net/questions](http://wels.net/questions). Submit your questions there or to [fic@wels.net](mailto:fic@wels.net).

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

Psalms 119:105





# FROM FAITH comes love

**We are saved by God's grace through faith and are his handiwork to do good works.** James A. Mattek

Members of the church hadn't seen her in weeks. Had something happened? Mary was elderly and would have been embarrassed by everyone's concern. She also would have blushed if anyone dared to mention her reputation in their small town. People talked about Mary . . . always in glowing terms. "She's always smiling and positive." "Mary cares so much about others." "She's so faithful"—to mention a few. Now, it seemed to everyone that something wasn't right. Mary wouldn't answer the door or pick up the phone. What was going on?

Mary would, however, read her mail. One letter in particular caught her attention. It was from her church. It contained a one-sentence request: Dear Mary, could you bake a pie for me? Your pastor.

**Unless you knew Mary, that request would sound strange.** You see, in that town, Mary had a nickname. When

someone referred to "the pie lady," they were always talking about Mary . . . again, in glowing terms. Mary baked great pies—and a lot of them.

And she gave them all away. If a young couple brought a new baby home from the hospital, they could expect "the pie lady" to show up at their front door with a smile, a freshly baked pie, and a note. When there was a death, the family could expect to see Mary with a pie and a note. If she got wind that someone's child was about to be deployed overseas, Mary would bake a pie and prepare the note. The pie filling varied, but the message in the note did not. It remained the same, pie after pie. When asked why she did it, she would say: "I just want to. Somehow it seems to complete me."

But now, it all stopped.

**A week after mailing the request to Mary, the pastor's doorbell rang.**

It was Mary, smiling. She was holding a pie and a note. She came in. The pastor carried the pie to the kitchen and returned with the note. They sat down.

Three months earlier, the pastor had officiated at her husband's funeral. Harold and Mary had been wed for nearly 65 years. That day the large church was standing room only. Many in attendance were nonmembers. Many knew Mary's husband. All knew Mary. Many had once been on the receiving end of her Christian kindness.

"Let me guess," the pastor began as he opened the note, "my bet is that it's Ephesians 2:8,9." He knew he would be right—that was the unchanging message that always arrived with every pie. With a smile he read from her note: "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."



These words are cherished by every Bible-believing Lutheran. It's part of the unchanging note from our Savior-God. Because of the life and death of Jesus, we are saved . . . period. It's all about God's amazing grace, his undeserved love for us. And God's Spirit birthed and burned this heavenly love in our hearts "unasked, unforced, unearned" (*Christian Worship* 54:4). These truths are celebrated in this Reformation season.

**Of course, there's more to being a Lutheran Christian.** Mary and her pastor talked about the scriptural gem in her note, about Harold's custom-made heavenly home, about Mary's loss and Harold's gain. They also talked about Mary's purpose and ministry. The pastor leaned in and said tenderly: "Mary, our Lord will take you when it's time. I know you as a Christian woman who lets her light of faith shine. Just keep doing that." There were tears—tears of thanks and renewed purpose. She thanked her pastor for requesting a pie. And Mary fired up her oven and resumed her ministry.

Lutherans are certain of grace and heaven. The familiar passage Mary lovingly confessed from Ephesians goes on to remind us, "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (v. 10). God saved us to show love for others. Do you specialize in pie baking? Maybe not. But each of us knows someone who is lonely, friendless, hurting, or scared. How about a phone call, e-mail, handwritten letter, or visit? How about a smile?

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). You may discover that what you do for others simply completes you.

---

*James Mattek, director of ministry at WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions, is a member at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.*

# Some thoughts FROM MARTIN LUTHER

*Saved by works or by grace? Luther taught what the Bible taught: "By grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:8). Works don't earn heaven. But what about following the Ten Commandments and doing good works? Luther again taught what the Bible taught: Christians do good works not to earn their way to heaven but to show love for God and for their neighbors.*

*Here are some quotes from Luther's Freedom of a Christian and Treatise on Good Works to help us understand the relationship between grace and works.*

*"Our faith in Christ does not free us from works but from false opinions concerning works, that is, from the foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works" (Luther's Works [LW], Vol. 31, pp. 372,373).*

*"Behold, from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss" (LW, Vol. 31, p. 367).*

*"The works themselves do not justify [a person] before God, but [the Christian] does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God and considers nothing except the approval of God, whom he would most scrupulously obey in all things" (LW, Vol. 31, p. 359).*

*"A [Christian] living in this faith has no need of a teacher of good works, but he does whatever the occasion calls for. . . . Thus a Christian . . . who lives in this confidence toward God knows all things, can do all things, ventures everything that needs to be done, and does everything gladly and willingly, not that he may gather merits and good works, but because it is a pleasure for him to please God in doing these things. He simply serves God with no thought of reward, content that his service pleases God" (LW, Vol. 44, pp. 26,27).*

*"Therefore [a Christian] should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and the advantage of his neighbor. . . . Here faith is truly active through love, that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith" (LW, Vol. 31, p. 365).*





## The Samaritan woman shares the gospel with others.

Donn G. Dobberstein

She had long, flaming-red hair matching the lipstick she wore—dead giveaways of her Irish roots. She stuck out from the normal crowd: tall, equal to my height due to the extra-high heels on her feet. Every Sunday, she dressed to the hilt. Combined with a warm, extrovert personality bred from a southern Appalachian upbringing in the foothills of Tennessee, conversation with her was never lacking or boring. She spoke as if every word ought to be in capital letters and every sentence punctuated with an exclamation mark! Unafraid to say what was on her mind, she would tell you exactly as she saw things. “You don’t lie to people,” she was taught when she was growing up.

When she heard something in the sermon she liked from the church pew, her cultural instinct kicked in: “Mm mm! Oh! Amen!” she would say out loud. What a stark contrast to midwestern sensibilities. I was strangely fascinated by someone doing the exact opposite of what most of us were told to do growing up: “Be quiet in church.”

Roxanne couldn’t be quiet, but she wasn’t doing it for show. Nor was it contrived. She heard the gospel, and it affected her. She just had to say something!

She caught on to people looking at her. She came out of church and whispered to me, “Pastor, I don’t think people here have seen the likes of me before. . . . You probably want less now, don’tcha?”

### CHANGED BY JESUS

Have you ever known someone with a reputation for being a bit over the top? I don’t know the personality of the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4,

but from the little we know of her scandalous life, it caused people to rubber-neck and stare as if slowly driving by the scene of a stalled vehicle on the side of the road. She already paid dearly for it with ruined relationships and a tarnished reputation. She quietly melted into seclusion.

Then she met someone beautiful at the well. He pulled her out of societal obscurity and onto the enduring pages of Scripture, where we meet her to this day. He tantalized her with living water to quench her thirsting soul and revealed her sin-scarred, mis-lived life. As the two of them talked, the conversation changed from casual to spiritual and from water to Word.

Something else changed: “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’” (John 4:28,29).

Jesus changed her! Can you see the changes?

She arrived with an empty water pot and an equally empty heart. She left without her water pot (John 4:28) but with a heart so filled that it became a vessel overflowing with a message that could quench more thirsty souls!

She arrived during an off-hour, probably to avoid cold stares and judgmental looks of her townspeople. Yet returning to town, the townspeople were the very ones she eagerly sought out! Why? Jesus changed her priorities. Hope replaced hopelessness. A desire to love supplanted any grudge she might have harbored. People became her priority. She was given something precious. She now wanted to give it to them.

She arrived with a life she wanted to hide. She left with her past life as the perfect lead for sharing God's grace: "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did."

She arrived hesitant to speak to Jesus. She returned emboldened, passionate, and with purpose. "Come, see," she simply told others.

### COMPELLED TO SPEAK

When you see something beautiful, you want others to see it too! Jesus was the beautiful hero of her story. "Come, see!" she declared. These simple, yet powerful words piqued the curiosity of more people.

They came. They saw. The Samaritan woman's excited, passionate testimony (4:39) led them back to the well to find the one whom she had found. They returned and said to her, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world" (4:42)

That's evangelism.

It's simply sharing the One who has changed your life. The Savior's love compels us to speak and to share the gospel with others with the boldness,

passion, and purpose of the Samaritan woman. It didn't matter what she had done or how others had treated her in the past. All she knew was a man who showed her genuine love and caring. Jesus was the hero of her story. His love softened her heart so completely that she had to share the One who changed her.

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## The gospel of salvation through the crucified and risen Christ is incredibly personal. But it never was meant to remain private.

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It's fascinating to note the people God uses to share. The Samaritan townspeople had a socially-outcast woman invite them. Red-haired Roxanne was invited by a quiet, reserved believer on the day of his adult confirmation. The kingdom came into his heart, so he shared it with her. Roxanne loved it. She invited two of her friends to join her.

Roxanne said, "Pastor, I don't think people have seen the likes of me." But Jesus has seen the likes of the Samaritan woman, and he's seen the likes of Roxanne and all of us! That's why he wants all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth!

### RETURN. REPENT. REJOICE.

Why is it so easy for us to lose our passion for sharing the good news of Jesus? With that loss of passion, why are we tempted to share the gospel less and less? And what can we do about it?

**Return** to the well with Jesus. Keep drinking the same living water the

Samaritan woman found there: Jesus and his love.

**Repent** daily of the mistakes and flaws in your life. How desperate is your need for him!

**Rejoice** to hear again and again of the peace of forgiveness found in the One who knows everything about you. He's changed you! "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The one *changed* by Jesus becomes the one who *shares* Jesus. The gospel of salvation through the crucified and risen Christ is incredibly personal. But it never was meant to remain private. It is to be shared publicly. The beauty of sharing your faith with someone is that it doesn't have to be complicated or difficult. There is no one conversation or formula for sharing Jesus. You don't have to be an extrovert. Just find a way—your way.

Rekindle and refresh your faith like the Samaritan woman. Have your own visit with Jesus. The Samaritan woman can inspire you to say, "Come, see." Can you find the courage to say such simple words to someone?

If a Samaritan social outcast could invite an entire town of people to come and meet Jesus for themselves, think of those who can meet Jesus through you!

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*Donn Dobberstein, director of discipleship for WELS, is a member at Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin.*

This is the last article in a four-part series on evangelism lessons from the account of the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4.



## A man sees his children's baptisms and wants to be baptized too.

Debbie K. Dietrich, as told to her by Brandon Stevens

Mom and Dad didn't really have a specific church. We weren't into traditional religion either. We just lived life. I maybe went in a church with an auntie, but never a Lutheran church, and I certainly wasn't a Christian.

I grew up the oldest of five kids in the Seven Mile District of San Carlos on the Apache Reservation. I graduated as co-valedictorian, granting me a four-year scholarship to Arizona State University. You'd think that would be a great part of life, and at the time, it was. But then that's pretty much when life fell apart. I lost my scholarship due to too much drinking. I dropped out of school and had no direction in life. With nowhere to turn, I went home to live with Mom and Dad again. I knew this wasn't the life I wanted to live. I wanted a better life, but I didn't know how to get there.

### CHILDREN AND BAPTISMS

My sister Ornida introduced me to her friend Cortney. WOW! Cortney wasn't just pretty, sweet, and kind. She also didn't drink, she went to church, and she actually believed what the church taught. That was amazing to me. We got together, and before you

knew it, Brandon Jr. was born. Cortney wanted to get our baby baptized. That's when I first stepped into a Lutheran church, Peridot Lutheran. It was pretty cool to see the baptism. I had heard about Baptism and that people should be baptized. I wondered if I should be baptized . . . but life got busy. I thought we'd probably have more children, so that meant more baptisms.

We started going to church more because the pastor said you really should not just baptize a baby and let it go at that. He said we should keep coming to hear more about God. That made sense, so we tried to go as often as we could. Soon baby #2 came along, and again Cortney wanted that baby baptized. Then baby #3, and another baptism. Baby #4: baptized; baby #5: baptized, and finally #6, Devon, was born. When baby #6 came along, I thought, *That's it. I really think I should be baptized too.* I asked Cortney about it because she sure liked baptizing our babies, and she agreed!

Pastor said he thought we should both take a class to learn more about what the Bible said—and about Baptism too. By then I really did want to learn more. Cortney wanted me to know more too. She said she felt like I was always left out. The first two kids were in school and Sunday school now. They were learning Bible stories, but I didn't know these stories and didn't really have faith or trust like Cortney and the kids.

There was a lot of information I never ever knew in those classes. I sort of wish I knew all this stuff when I was growing up and I was going through good and, especially, bad times. I started brushing up on learning a bunch of Bible verses. They meant so much to me. Most surprising to me was that undeserved love from God. That just got to me. He sent Jesus to die for me to forgive all the bad stuff I had done. WOW! Now I felt like I belonged here in this church. I was forgiven.

I knew what was coming up soon. We'd want to get Devon baptized, and now I too really wanted to get baptized. Pastor thought I should be too. So on July 5, 2015, both my baby son Devon and I were baptized in front of the entire church! It was a pretty big deal for my wife's side of the family. Her mom even took us all out to eat at a restaurant and paid for all the food for all of us because she was so happy!

### CONFIRMATION

Cortney and I kept taking classes. Even though Cortney had gone through eighth grade at the Peridot mission school, there wasn't proof she'd gotten confirmed, so she was going to get confirmed with me. On Aug. 9, 2015, both she and I stood in front of the entire church and said that we did agree with what the Bible teaches. What I remember most is the whole entire church answering that they accepted me. I was a part of this Christian family



Confessions  
OF FAITH



Brandon and Cortney Stevens and their nine children.

and church. I was so happy to be included, accepted, forgiven, and part of a church that I knew believed what the Bible taught.

I'm especially glad because my children are able to attend the same Our Savior's mission school in Peridot where Cortney went. The scholarship makes it possible for us to send our children. The kids get to grow in faith daily. And the teachers? They are all strong in believing what the Bible teaches too. I love that.

### GROWING IN FAITH

I also want to grow in faith. It's been three years, and I constantly want to know more and to grow in faith and in daily living the way God desires of me. One time a buddy of mine

showed me this Lutheran magazine. It had a story about other fathers raising Christian families, taking their kids to church, and so on. I was impressed and thought, *That's what I want to do too!*

I think one of the coolest things I've learned from Jesus is about power and being strong. It's not being a bully or having power over someone at all; it's about trusting God and resisting doing wrong in a humble, quiet way, knowing and trusting that God will lead me in the right way at work, at home, and as a father. He'll make it all work out. That's real "strength" that you only see in Christians.

My wife, Cortney, has this to say, "It's a neat thing, because with baby #9, I

was so tired sometimes. Brandon would get the kids ready and take them to church himself! It's just faith. Brandon has faith and is living it. Pastor had always told me that life is easier and better if you both can share the Christian faith. Well, he was right about that. Life is way better now. I feel like Brandon and I are on the same page in all of life's issues because we have this shared Christian faith.

"My Grandma, Dolly Dude, pushed her kids to learn about Jesus. My mom pushed us all to get a Lutheran education and know how much God loves us. And now, it's not just me and my daughters. It's my Christian husband keeping us all learning the love of Jesus and passing that on to our sons and daughters. I'm really happy."

I have changed a lot, and I thank God for my wife, Cortney, and for bringing me to church through the baptisms of our children. I'm really happy I'm baptized too.

Now getting two-week-old Brielle, #9, baptized is the next thing we're going to do.

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*Debbie Dietrich is the Native American mission communication coordinator. Brandon Stevens is a member at Peridot, Peridot, Arizona.*

The Native American mission field is celebrating its 125th anniversary with a special celebration weekend this month. Go to [nativechristians.org](http://nativechristians.org) to learn more.





**heart to heart**  
parent conversations

**I have a strong-willed daughter. (No jokes about apples and how far they fall from the tree.) My prayer is that she'll grow into a strong woman of faith. I want her to have a close relationship with her Savior, a solid foundation for a life of service. How can I help her get there?**

**I'm thankful for the strong women of faith who wrote this month's articles. They have given me much to ponder and pray about. May the same be true for you.**

*Nicole Balza*

**Join the  
conversation!**

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

HOW CAN WE HELP OUR DAUGHTERS DEVELOP INTO STRONG WOMEN OF FAITH?

**My oldest daughter** recently took her driving test for the state of Arizona. She passed the written test without breaking a sweat, but it took nearly a year of behind-the-wheel practice for her to get comfortable driving in Phoenix traffic. In that time, she observed my driving with new interest, noting my safe driving methods or vociferously pointing out my lack thereof. It seems that she picked up more from watching me than from hours of online study. More is caught than taught. What do you want your daughters to “catch” from you regarding faith?

**Let them catch you studying the Word.** From a young age, I remember waking up and finding my mom in her cozy robe on the loveseat. She would have a cup of coffee in her hand, a sweet smile on her face, and an open Bible on her lap. No matter what happened the night before, she would hug me and tell me she loved me. With those simple, consistent acts, my mom modeled that God's mercies are new every morning and his Word is worthy of pursuit.

**I think we** do a pretty good job raising strong, godly women. When I look at the young women my kids bring home and the young women where I work, I'm impressed.

First, by their fearless faith. These young women aren't afraid to say the name of Jesus in the grocery store. They form small-group Bible studies. They share their faith in faraway cities and countries. They study theology in college. They tattoo Scripture on their wrists or ankles. And they look forward to singing “Jesus Loves Me” with their children someday—if God so blesses.

I'm also impressed by their stewardship. From early on, they're serious about developing the talents God gave them. They organize community volunteer efforts, say no to the party the night before the ACT, and box out like a boss on the basketball court. They go get their PhDs so they're even better equipped to serve. They know some women want to be CEOs and some want to stay home with eight babies, and it's all good. Their only desire is to spend and be spent for their Lord.

**When my father** caught wind of my plan to “witness” to our neighbors, he sat me down for a discussion. He was happy to hear that I wanted to share my faith, but he wanted me to examine my methods. As earnest as only an eight-year-old pastor's daughter can be, I had launched into a listing of errors in Catholic dogma. My father gently but sternly informed me that this was not witnessing; rather, it was arguing. He in no way wished to squash my desire to share the Word, but he wanted to direct my thoughts and words toward a more loving sharing of my faith. How wise of God to put this headstrong girl into a faith-filled, Bible-based, evangelism-minded family.

My own strong-willed daughters are strong women of faith and starting to raise daughters of their own. Looking back, I have come face-to-face with an undeniable conclusion. I did little. God did much.

God gifted me with a Christian husband who entered the ministry as our children were starting school. Not all WELS churches have schools, but at each church we served, we had

Now that we live 2,000 miles apart, my mom and I stay connected through YouVersion. I no longer wake up to her hugs but to notifications that she's commented on the Bible plan we're doing together. She lets me see her wrestling with God and submitting to his Word as the final authority. I've continued this practice with my own girls. When they comment on the plans we do together, I am amazed by their spiritual insight, their humor, and the emojis my youngest has picked out to go with the day's reading.

**Let them catch you talking with God.** Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray continually." However we define "continually," it's probably more than before we eat and go to bed. Try this: For one day, take every praise, question, or worry and say it out loud. From gratitude for finding a lost backpack to how we should spend our free time to what we saw in the news that disturbed us—let's model that we don't know all the answers, but we know the One who does.

**Let them catch you dancing in your role as a woman.**

I'm impressed by their character too. They know mercy trumps mascara every time, and real beauty isn't found in having "Princess" printed on their behinds but in proudly wearing the crown of Christ. They've resisted bullies and survived #MeToo experiences. Their eyes pan each new room, looking for people who need a kind word, a cup of coffee, or an ear for a story others aren't willing to hear. They're humble. They're gentle. They're dedicated.

The real question is not, "How can we raise strong, godly women?" We're doing it. The real question is, "What do we do with them next?"

Do we let them use the gifts they've so faithfully developed? Do we allow them to share their God-given wisdom? Do we let them take their various places in the body of Christ?

Or are we a little afraid of them? Does the word *strong* make us nervous when it comes to the female half of God's church? Do we inadvertently send the (erroneous) message that in the body of Christ, God wants each woman to be a hand—someone who works hard and then hides herself in a pocket?

one. Even in our first small parish on the East Coast, our children attended a one-room WELS school. The amazing woman of faith who taught our children there has continued to be an example to our children and now our grandchildren.

**Our daughters have had some incredible role models in each church we attended.** They noticed some; we noticed others. We talked about them. They were living textbooks.

**If you don't have a Lutheran elementary school, take advantage of what your congregation does have to offer.** Supplement religious education with age-appropriate materials available through Northwestern Publishing House. Take time to emphasize the many women of faith in the Bible. Point out the Marys, Marthas, and Hannahs in your own congregation.

**Give your daughter the tools to lovingly defend her faith.** Have conversations about controversial and uncomfortable topics and apply God's Word to them. Help your daughter stand strong in the face of today's moral ambiguity. Sometimes God's Word is very clear on a topic. On others it may be a matter of opinion, taste, or even tradition.

American society paints a bleak picture of womanhood: cheap, self-promoting, flesh-serving, male-bashing, and harsh. God has a better way. When our girls catch us respecting our husbands, biting our tongues rather than speaking a dishonoring word, and joyfully sacrificing our "rights" in order to serve others, something clicks in their spirits. This is how their Father designed them to be. Freed from the tyranny of serving themselves, they can dance before the King as his dearly loved daughters.

As I finish writing this article, two of my little girls are snuggled beside me on the couch. They're catching me in my pajamas as I take the time to pass on to others what God is teaching me. I am not a perfect role model. Too often I am inconsistent and unintentional. But that's when they catch me going back to God's grace.

*Liz Schroeder and her husband, John, live in Phoenix, Arizona, with their five kids.*



A while ago I hired a student writer who's smart, hard-working, and creative. As we talked, she had an interesting habit. At the end of each sentence, she raised her voice, as if to ask a question. I encouraged her not to do that. I told her God gave her that intelligence and that voice. I told her God didn't give us a spirit of timidity but of love and power and self-discipline. I told her the world and the church don't want her shushed. They want to hear what she has to say.

Help prove me right. Listen to your daughters. Encourage them. Acknowledge them as the Priscillas, Phoebes, and Eunices of our day. Remind them of their Savior's love. Then stand back and watch how he blesses the service of these young women.

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



Try to discern which is which and pick your battles accordingly. When you raise strong women of faith, they may very well have strong opinions. Exercise caution when you find yourself on the other side of the fence in matters of adiaphora, that is, things not directed by Scripture.

**The most important thing I can recommend is prayer.**

I have had many conversations with God about the trials peculiar to girls and women in our society. My prayer is that we encourage the women around us in faith so that they might lift each other up. I have seen this trait carried on with my daughters as they make applications of their faith in their daily lives. They are strong supporters of other women and their walks with God. We women need to do this for each other and our daughters.

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







# teentalk

## Jesus is in our hearts

Jesus gives us strength and hope when we face difficulties.

Emily Ciha

What do you think about when you hear the word *worry*? We as sinful human beings can be worried about so many things—food, clothing, shelter, sickness, wars, natural disasters, and death.

Ultimately, when people hear the word *death*, their minds focus on sadness, but we as Christians know that we don't have to be sad when we speak about death because of what Jesus has done for us.

**In the short time of knowing my grandpa, he taught me many important lessons about life.** He was a Lutheran teacher in Arizona for most of his life. In the summer of 2007, he was diagnosed with a heart condition that required a heart transplant. When my cousin found out that our grandpa was going to get a new heart, she asked, "Is Jesus going to be in Grandpa's new heart?"

Before he went into surgery, Grandpa said he was in a win-win situation. If he died, he would be in heaven with Jesus. If he lived, he could continue to tell others about Jesus. The Lord brought him through the transplant.

Then in the summer of 2013, my grandma and grandpa planned a family

reunion in South Dakota. About a month before we went on our trip, my grandpa was diagnosed with cancer. It was important to him that we continue with our plans. We saw Mt. Rushmore, played games in our cabins when it rained, and took a lot of pictures together. Most important, we had devotions and prayed together.

Saying good-bye was the hardest part of the trip because we didn't know what the future held for everyone, especially my grandpa. We didn't know if this was the last time we would see my grandpa or if he would live another five months and we would see him at Christmas. But as a Christian family, we knew that God would be with each and every one of us and that he would protect us and provide for our needs. We knew that if God decided to take my grandpa's life, God would bring Grandpa to his eternal home in heaven.

**On Oct. 12, 2013, God in his wisdom took my grandpa home to heaven.**

Although there is sadness, we know that we can have joy in our hearts because my grandpa isn't suffering anymore. He is in heaven with Jesus, where there is no suffering, mourning, or pain.

Even though my grandpa had a lot of hardships in his life, he knew Jesus was always in his heart. He did not get through the hardships on his own. God was with him every step of the way, guiding him and protecting him.

We have the hope of eternal life in heaven with Jesus forever, not because of what we do but because of what he has done for us.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84). That is my confirmation passage, and it brings me comfort and joy to know that I can look to Jesus my Savior for help when I need it.

Even though we have troubles and worry about things in our life, Christians have the joy of knowing that Jesus is in our hearts.

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*Emily Ciha, a junior at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, is a member at St. John, Manitowoc.*



## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

## Pastors

**Adrian, Frederick**, to retirement  
**Biebert, Samuel**, to Christ, Cambridge, Minn.  
**Burgess, Daniel**, to Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev.  
**Deters, Terry**, to retirement  
**Gumm, Jeremiah**, to King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.  
**Heitsch, Jeffrey**, to Our Savior's, Port Orange, Fla.  
**Koschnitzke, Gary**, to retirement  
**Neumann, David**, to Good Hope, El-lensburg, Wash.  
**Moll, Daniel**, to Abiding Faith, Fort Worth, Texas  
**Riedel, Roger**, to Grace, Oronoco, Minn.  
**Schmoller, Nicolas**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Zarling, Joshua**, to Good Shepherd's, West Allis, Wis.

## Teachers

**Arndt, Christopher**, to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Augustine, Sarah**, to Bethany, Manitowoc, Wis.  
**Babinec, Erica**, to Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis.  
**Baumann, Stacie**, to Good Shepherd, Downers Grove, Ill.  
**Bengel, Adrienne**, to St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.  
**Brown, Mary Jo**, to retirement  
**Buske, Hannah**, to St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.  
**Cordes, Joel**, to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.  
**Crass, Sarah**, to Christ Our Savior Academy, Columbia, Tenn.  
**Drake, Deborah**, to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.  
**Eisner, Cait**, to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.  
**Engelbrecht, Trisha**, to St. John, Caledonia, Wis.  
**Erdmann, Renee**, to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.  
**Fletcher, Lisa**, to St. John's, Sparta, Wis.  
**Gnewuch, Faith**, to Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis.  
**Green, Kelli**, to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Hacker, Jennifer**, to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.  
**Hanel, Chelsey**, to Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School, Commerce City, Colo.  
**Hemling, Timothy**, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.  
**Jensen, Ashley**, to West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.  
**Jenswold, Madeline**, to Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Kasten, Kenneth**, to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.  
**Kellermann, Jennifer**, to Good Shepherd, Midland, Mich.  
**Kolz, Carrie**, to retirement  
**Krebs, Erin**, to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.

**Krienke, Anita**, to Mt. Olive, Mankato, Minn.  
**Krueger, Terry**, to retirement  
**Kuske, Jennifer**, to St. Luke, Oakfield, Wis.  
**Linton, Melissa**, to Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wis.  
**Lundsten, Ben**, to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minn.  
**MacKenzie, Jean**, to retirement  
**Markgraf, Peter**, to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Martin, Katherine**, to Crown of Life Christian Academy, Fort Atkinson, Wis.  
**Minzlaff, Monica**, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.  
**Monday, Lori**, to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.  
**Montonati, Linda**, to retirement  
**Naumann, June**, to retirement  
**Nerby, Scott**, to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.  
**Nielsen, Shawn**, to Green Valley Preschool and Kindergarten, Henderson, Nev.  
**Parker, Ann**, to St. Paul, Saint James, Minn.  
**Peil, Jill**, to Prince of Peace, Taylorsville, Utah  
**Phelps, Molly**, to Grace, Kenai, Alaska  
**Price, Debra**, to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.  
**Riedel, Elizabeth**, to Resurrection, Rochester, Minn.  
**Rogotzke, Rebecca**, to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minn.  
**Rude, Larry**, to retirement  
**Rundgren, Kathryn**, to St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.  
**Saugstad, Kaitlyn**, to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Scharf, Bethany**, to Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.  
**Schleef, Ronald**, to Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wis.  
**Sievert, Hannah**, to Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School, Commerce City, Colo.  
**Spiegelberg, Talia**, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.  
**Stillings, Jessica**, to Trinity, Marinette, Wis.  
**Sweet, Valerie**, to retirement  
**Trimmer, Jennifer**, to St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis.  
**VanCalster, Ashley**, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Wassermann, Eileen**, to Mt. Olive, Delano, Minn.  
**Weihrach, Carl**, to St. Paul, Livonia, Mich.  
**Weinrich, Amanda**, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.  
**Wendt, Marcia**, to Trinity, Brillion, Wis.

## Staff ministers

**Hochmuth, David**, to Prison Ministry, Waukesha, Wis.  
**Probst, Mark**, to retirement

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Andover, Minn.**—Hope (25). Oct. 7. Worship, 10 A.M. and 4 P.M.; meal follows afternoon service. 763-421-8434; dprussow@gmail.com.

**Lake Mills, Wis.**—St. Paul (125). Reunion weekend, Oct. 12–14. Oct. 12. Worship, 6:30 P.M. Oct. 13. Worship, 8 and 10:30 A.M.; Oct. 14. Worship, 6:30 P.M. A light reception will follow each service. 920-648-2235.  
**Beaverton, Mich.**—Good Shepherd (40). Oct. 14. Worship, 4 P.M.; fish fry dinner and program to follow. RSVP requested. d.babinec@yahoo.com.  
**Jackson, Wis.**—David's Star (175). Oct. 14. Worship, 10:15 A.M. at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.; meal to follow at David's Star. 262-677-2412. Website, davidstar.org.  
**Ottawa, Canada**—Divine Word (40). Oct. 20. Banquet, 1–4 P.M.; tickets, \$15. Oct. 21. Special worship service. Website, divinewordottawa.ca.  
**Apacheland, Ariz.**—Native American mission work (125). Oct. 26–28. Debbie Dietrich, NativeChristians1@gmail.com. Website, nativechristians.org.

## COMING EVENTS

**Lutheran Girl Pioneer international convention**—Oct. 6. St. Paul's, Franklin, Wis. Karen Martinez, karen.martinez@wels.net. Website, welsrc.net/event/lutheran-girl-pioneer-international-convention/.  
**Friends of the Seminary Day**—Oct. 6. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Website, wls.wels.net/friends/auxiliary.  
**MLC Ladies' Auxiliary annual meeting**—Oct. 6. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary.  
**Women's Ministry retreat**—Oct. 6. Peace, Loves Park, Ill. Theme, "Grace." Website, peacelp.com/womens-retreat.  
**Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention**—Oct. 10–12. Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake, Wis. For all seniors, age 55 and older. Website, wels.net/events.  
**Celebration of Life event**—Oct. 20. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Host, Christian Life Resources. Theme: "Transformed." Website, clrevents.com.  
**WELS Historical Institute annual meeting**—Oct. 21. WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis. 414-443-8930. Website, welsrc.net/event/wels-historical-institute-annual-meeting.  
**Lutheran Recovery Ministries recovery retreat**—Oct. 26–28. Our Lady of Guadalupe Monastery, Phoenix, Ariz. Website, wels.net/events.  
**WELS National Multi-Site conference**—Nov. 12–14. Ingleside Hotel and Conference Center, Pewaukee, Wis. Website, wels.net/multi-site-2018.

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.

## Where are they now?

In *Forward in Christ*, we report the news but aren't always able to follow up. "Where are they now?" is our way of giving you the rest of the story.

In May 2017, we reported that WELS Home Missions approved funding for four new mission congregations at its March 2017 meeting.

**HERE'S A RECAP:** After reviewing proposals submitted from its district mission boards, Home Missions supported opening new missions in Huntersville, N.C.; Candelas, Colo.; Hendersonville, N.C.; and Chattanooga, Tenn.

### SO WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

#### HUNTERSVILLE, N.C.

In summer 2016, the pastor at Grace, Charlotte, N.C., realized that many of his members were driving from Huntersville to south Charlotte every Sunday for worship. He began offering worship services in a hotel conference room and asked WELS Home Missions to consider planting a church there.

Doug Van Sice arrived in July 2017. "Getting assigned to plant a church in a city you've never lived in with people you don't know is daunting," says Van Sice. "So, I began planting this church by focusing on three main tasks: 1) Get to know the people who would become the launch team; 2) Figure out the city of Huntersville; 3) Plan."

In order to devote time and energy to those tasks, public worship was suspended. Van Sice then met with as many city officials as he could, and the launch team took a short survey to their neighbors to gather information



Huntersville Lutheran Church uses a church-in-a-box for its worship at a local elementary school. Members set up all the elements of the worship service, which are housed in this trailer.

about the community and its needs. It also used a survey to choose its name—Huntersville Lutheran Church.

The congregation held its first official public worship service on Sept. 9 in a local elementary school.

#### CANDELAS, COLO.

Members of Shepherd of the Valley, Westminster, Colo., saw an opportunity to spread God's Word to those in Candelas, a growing western suburb of Denver. The congregation asked Home Missions to support a second pastor to reach out to this new area. Although Home Missions did grant funding for this position in March 2017, the call was not filled until this summer.

Jeremy Belter arrived at Shepherd of the Valley in August. He has met with each member of the core group and begun working to get the second location of this congregation launched.

As Matt Frey, the chairman of the district mission board, notes, "This newest mission in our conference has been set up by the good work of Pastor Phil Kieselhorst and the members of Shepherd of the Valley in Westminster, and it looks to be a promising place to share what our Lord has done for the world."

#### HENDERSONVILLE, N.C.

Almost two years ago, Living Savior, Asheville, N.C., began holding a Saturday night worship service in Hendersonville, N.C. In January 2018, Paul Zell began serving alongside Caleb Kurbis as pastor at Living Savior. Zell has primary responsibility for the Hendersonville campus while Kurbis oversees the Asheville campus.

"Yet we really are and intend to remain one congregation at two locations," notes Zell.

On Sept. 16, Living Savior, Hendersonville, will make the switch from Saturday evening to Sunday morning services.

Zell and other members canvas Hendersonville neighborhoods three nights per week and recently sent 20,000 postcards to area households.

"We want to get our name, some Scripture, and a brief summary of who the Savior is in front of as many people as possible," explains Zell.

#### CHATTANOOGA, TENN.

A group of WELS Christians living in the Chattanooga area saw the need for a Lutheran church on the city's growing east side. With no other WELS church within 100 miles, the group asked Home Missions to send a missionary for a new congregation. Eric Melso, a 2017 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., was assigned to be that missionary.



The core group at Living Hope initially worshiped in the parsonage—or the "tiny church" as one young child called it.

Melso arrived in July 2017 and spent the first six months of his time planning and strategizing with the core group. He also took time to get to know the Chattanooga community.

During its launch meetings, the core group chose the name "Living Hope" and developed a mission, vision, and logo for the new church.

Since Easter 2018, Living Hope has been holding worship monthly at a local cinema. "God has greatly blessed our preview services and allowed us to reach many with the gospel," says Melso. "We have averaged 38 in attendance since starting our services, having begun with only a dozen in our core group."

Living Hope held its grand opening service on Sept. 9.

Learn more about the grand opening services in next month's issue.



# for the Generations to come

## PROVIDING WOMEN OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT AND SERVE

It all started with a women's Bible study.

After a few years of meeting weekly to grow in their faith and knowledge of their Savior, the women at Cross of Life, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, wanted to do more. "It was a natural progression for me personally," says Marguerite Rouleau, Cross of Life member. "You just can't spend that much time with women and not grow to love them. [Being involved in women's ministry] was just another chance to be around these women and to be encouraged by them as well as to get things done for the church."

Cross of Life's four-member women's ministry group coordinates two large events a year, plus a weekly Bible study and multiple fellowship gatherings. All of these opportunities strengthen the connections between the women and with their Lord.

Cross of Life is not only looking to strengthen the faith of its own members; it also wants to reach out into its community. Perhaps that's why the women's ministry's biggest offering is its annual Advent by Candlelight event. While the women's ministry coordinates the event, it's "all hands on deck" for this 115-member congregation to make it happen. "Probably every woman that goes to our church gets involved in some way. We get a lot of support and help from the men too!" says Rouleau.

This past year, Cross of Life posted an open invitation to the event on its Facebook page. More than one hundred people attended—many of them nonmembers. "I just can't believe how blessed we are," says Rouleau.

The blessings of an active women's ministry are also something that Matt Brown can see for his 600-member congregation, Abiding Word, Houston, Texas. SHINE (Serving Him IN Everything) has women involved in everything from spiritual growth to outreach to fellowship activities. "We have SHINE members come to our Bible information class and meet our new members and talk to them about different ways to serve," says Brown. "What a key role they play to involve people in ministry in our congregation."

Brown says the congregation now is restructuring so it can better connect SHINE with the overall ministry in the congregation, especially where there is overlap. "I think it's key when a congregation can—in a coordinated, intentional way—have men and women working together in the different roles that God has given to us."

He continues, "There are so many ways that you can use women in the congregation. It's just an important conversation for congregations to have."

Donn Dobberstein, WELS director of discipleship, agrees. "Women are so compelled by the gospel and the love of their Savior and they want to be of greater service to their Lord within their congregation. What does that look like? I would like to encourage that conversation to be had in every congregation."

WELS Women's Ministry Committee, part of the Commission on Discipleship, assists congregations in nurturing, encouraging, and equipping women to use their gifts to glorify God. Resources ranging from Bible studies to planning documents to ministry ideas can be found at [wels.net/women](http://wels.net/women).



More than one hundred people attended Cross of Life's annual Advent by Candlelight program last December.

## OPPORTUNITY

One way a congregation can minister to women—both members and nonmembers—is through an Advent by Candlelight program. Through narration, readings, prayer, and music, women can spend time remembering what Christmas is really all about—Jesus. "One of the goals of the C18 program is to help WELS members become more comfortable with invitational evangelism," says Jon Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services. "Our hope is women will invite their unchurched friends to Advent by Candlelight and then invite those friends to come back for Christmas Eve." A new Advent by Candlelight program that focuses on lessons learned from Lydia connects with the new WELS outreach movie, *To the Ends of the Earth*. Find it at [welscongregationalservices.net/download/tteote-special](http://welscongregationalservices.net/download/tteote-special). WELS Women's Ministry also provides planning documents and other Advent by Candlelight programs to get a congregation started. Learn more at [wels.net/women](http://wels.net/women).

## New WELS high school opens

On Aug. 8, a new WELS high school began its first school year. Kingdom Prep Lutheran High School is serving young men from Milwaukee County, most of whom qualify for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, a government school voucher system.

“There is a huge mission field right here in Milwaukee,” says Kevin Festerling, the school’s founder and principal. “Hundreds of students graduating from WELS grade schools in the area could not pursue Christian secondary education due to the scarcity of voucher seats available in the existing area Lutheran high schools. I felt like we as a church were turning our back on the Great Commission by turning students away who wanted a Christian education.”

Festerling recognized that building a Lutheran high school to serve this new group of students’ needs wouldn’t be easy. The school has deliberately focused on providing young men with a kingdom-first mindset. The statistics are grim for boys who are raised in urban areas in the United States, and Milwaukee’s statistics are even worse than most. According to Festerling, many young men in today’s families are navigating the most critical years of their lives without active fathers. To help reverse that trend and build Christian leaders, Kingdom Prep’s vision is for “young men to develop their God-given gifts to lead in the home, serve in the church, engage in meaningful work, and transform community.”

Daily small-group Bible studies focus on what it means for a man to seek God’s heart with his whole life. Assigned projects help the young men solve real community problems with godly solutions. School decisions are placed in the hands of student leaders. Each facet of the school is focused on helping it accomplish its mission of “building a brotherhood in Christ for lives of purpose.”



Some of the 60 students who compose the founding class of Kingdom Prep Lutheran High School, Wauwatosa, Wis.

Paul Steinberg, executive director of Chaplains in Schools and one of Kingdom Prep’s spiritual advisors, is helping the school’s leadership maintain its focus on its mission to disciple the next generation of Christian male leaders. He says, “My work will be to spiritually assess each of the freshmen and connect them with a strong Christian mentor. Kingdom Prep students and their mentors will aim to meet weekly for spiritual check-ins, prayer, and Bible study.”

In 2018–19, Kingdom Prep is serving 60 freshmen boys. Each school year, a grade will be added, along with space for 60 more boys. Each Kingdom Prep student is invited to commit to the school’s mission, carrying out the school’s vision through brotherhood in Christ and hard work.

“We are there to walk alongside the brothers as they grow,” says Festerling, “celebrating the way each takes responsibility for his own growth.”

Jim Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, notes, “The Christian love and commitment of the called teachers and staff, led by founding principal Kevin Festerling, is clear. The teachers are sharing with the students the power of the Holy Spirit and the opportunity they have to learn the skills to be leaders in their homes and community.”

For more information on Kingdom Prep Lutheran High School, visit [kplhs.org](http://kplhs.org).



Students at Kingdom Prep Lutheran High School earn the right to wear the school uniform. In August, students wore white T-shirts as they worked their way through Leadership Term. Here Kevin Festerling, the school’s founder and principal, helps one student as he tries on his new uniform.



# WELS World Missions updates

## EAST ASIA

As the Lord blesses the outreach efforts in East Asia and Hong Kong, two new missionaries have been called to serve. **Michael Smith** (pictured) was commissioned to serve at Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong in May. Smith previously served as dean of students and New Testament professor at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minn., the Evangelical Lutheran Synod's seminary. Joining four WELS professors and one national instructor, Smith will teach New Testament courses at Asia Lutheran Seminary.



## ONE AFRICA TEAM

**Stefan Felgenhauer** was recently hired to serve as the new director of Africa missions operations. This new layman's role will take over business operations for the One Africa Team to allow the missionaries to focus more on gospel outreach. Felgenhauer previously lived and served in Malawi as business manager for the Malawi mission field and as field manager for Kingdom Workers. Stefan, his wife, Kathy, and their three children have moved back to Africa, with Lusaka, Zambia, serving as the base of operations. The Felgenhauers are pictured with Kathy's brother, Wayne Uhlhorn (far right), at Stefan's commissioning.



The current political situation in **Cameroon, Africa**, has created great difficulties for WELS' Christian brothers and sisters of the Lutheran Church of Cameroon (LCC). The conflict and violence between the English-speaking and French-speaking regions of the country have not ceased, and for that reason WELS missionary to Cameroon, Dan Kroll and his wife, Karen, have been temporarily relocated to Lilongwe, Malawi, while the situation on the ground is being assessed. "We pray that God continue to strengthen members of the LCC and for resolution to the conflict, so our world missionary can return to serve alongside our brothers and sisters in the faith," says Larry Schlomer, administrator for WELS World Missions.

## APACHE

The Apache mission is celebrating **125 years of God's blessings** in 2018 as the first world mission of WELS. Anniversary celebrations on the reservations are planned for Oct. 26–28. Visit [nativechristians.org](http://nativechristians.org) to find out all the details.

In May, **Timothy Leistikow** (pictured at his commissioning in July) was assigned out of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to serve Grace, San Carlos, Ariz., and Peridot, Peridot, Ariz.

He joins four other world missionaries and two national pastors serving the White Mountain Apache Reservation and the San Carlos Apache Reservation through eight churches, one preaching station, and two Lutheran elementary schools.



## PAKISTAN

This past August, a **ten-day Bible institute/seminary class** was held for 11 men and some of their wives in Pakistan via the Internet. WELS' friendly counselor to Pakistan and his contact, both based in the U.S., taught the class from 10 P.M. to 6 A.M. each day so it could be held during the daytime hours in Pakistan. The goal is for the men to visit four to five different house churches every week and teach what they learned. There are 56 house churches total. The women will teach the children in Sunday school. The next class is planned for January 2019. Read more about this experience in a Missions blog, [wels.net/sun-at-midnight](http://wels.net/sun-at-midnight).



Learn more about WELS Missions at [wels.net/missions](http://wels.net/missions).

## WELS Prison Ministry turns 25

This year, WELS Prison Ministry celebrates its 25th anniversary. This ministry provides Christian materials and education to jail and prison inmates. Since its start, WELS Prison Ministry has served more than 80,000 people in 1,300 different facilities by mail and in person.

Helmed by the volunteer efforts of the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) and WELS Special Ministries, this area of institutional ministry formally began in 1993. Its work originally targeted incarcerated WELS members, but it began to reach non-WELS inmates over time as well. By 1999, the program had expanded so rapidly that a full-time administrator was called. The ministry is currently headquartered in New Ulm, Minn., and much of its work is still completed by volunteers.



David Hochmuth began his work as Prison Ministry administrator for WELS in August. He brings 11 years of experience as a staff minister and personal experience in prison outreach to the position.

In August 2018, WELS welcomed the newest Prison Ministry administrator, David Hochmuth. A former civil engineer, Hochmuth served as a staff minister of spiritual growth at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wis., for 11 years before accepting the call.

"It is such a fruitful field for evangelism," Hochmuth says. "Many people in prison understand that they face problems and that they are in need of help. The Spirit moves them to be honest about their situation. It is a great avenue for learning about the truth of Jesus."

Hochmuth quotes Matthew 25:36 when explaining his motivation and interest in leading this ministry: "I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Prison Ministry has evolved significantly over the past 25 years.

"It has developed into more than sending Bible study booklets to inmates," explains Leon Brands, former WELS Prison Ministry Committee chairman. "There's been increased interest and concentrated efforts to involve more WELS members in face-to-face ministry."

Hochmuth adds that technological improvements have also allowed ministries to share God's Word via digital Bible studies and other courses.

Brands is optimistic about the future of Prison Ministry. "The prayer of the Prison Ministry Committee is that the new administrator, Dave Hochmuth—with the help of others—is able to expand and develop better training for individuals who want to go into facilities, and also develop some aftercare and mentoring programs for both released inmates and their families."

In the future, Hochmuth says he also hopes to provide the staff of jails and prisons with the spiritual support they need, among other new services. Yet he recognizes that Prison Ministry faces a daunting task and must establish clear priorities in order to serve effectively and efficiently.

"There are over two million people behind bars in our country. As a relatively small church body, our resources may seem inadequate," says Hochmuth. "But two fish and five loaves seemed inadequate for the task too."

To learn more about WELS Prison Ministry, visit [wels.net/prison-ministry](http://wels.net/prison-ministry) or contact David Hochmuth at [dave.hochmuth@wels.net](mailto:dave.hochmuth@wels.net). Subscribe to the Special Ministries e-mail newsletter *His Hands* for the latest updates about Prison Ministry and other special ministries.

## Obituaries

### Yvonne E. Janosek, 1941–2018

Yvonne Janosek (née Smith) was born Sept. 29, 1941, in Warren, Mich. She died April 12, 2018, in Glendale, Ariz.

A 1962 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.

She is survived by six daughters and seven grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her husband, John; one sister; and one brother.

### Ronald G. Unke, 1931–2018

Ronald Unke was born Dec. 19, 1931, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died April 28, 2018, in Milwaukee, Wis.

He taught at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.

He is survived by two sisters. He is preceded in death by his wife, Carol.

### Norma Duesterhoeft, 1925–2018

Norma Duesterhoeft was born Oct. 12, 1925, in Cedar Mills Township, Minn. She died May 7, 2018, in New Ulm, Minn.

She taught at St. John's, Sleepy Eye, Minn.; St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.; and St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.

She is preceded in death by one sister and two brothers.

### Robert C. Adrian, 1943–2018

Robert Adrian was born Feb. 12, 1943, in Port Huron, Mich. He died May 7, 2018, in Milwaukee, Wis.

A 1966 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wis.; St. John, Baraboo, Wis.; Emanuel, Tawas City, Mich.; and St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.

He is survived by his wife, Karen; three daughters, one son; three grandchildren, one sister; and two brothers.

### Mary E. Cuff, 1937–2018

Mary Cuff (née Hill) was born Oct. 1, 1937, in Grand Island, Neb. She died May 10, 2018, in Stoughton, Wis.

She taught at St. John-St. James, Reedsville, Wis.; Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.; Eastside, Madison, Wis.; and Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, David; three sons; two daughters; one step-daughter, eight grandchildren; and one sister. She is preceded in death by her first husband, Victor Bittorf.



## District news

### ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA

**Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas, Nev.**, a ministry of WELS Home Missions, dedicated its new education and worship facility on Aug. 19. WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., helped finance the building project.

### WESTERN WISCONSIN

**First Steps Child Care Center, Oconomowoc, Wis.**, celebrated its grand opening on Aug. 6. First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew, Oconomowoc.

On Aug. 22, the chamber of commerce of Fort Atkinson, Wis., held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for **Crown of Life Christian Academy**, a ministry of

Bethany, Fort Atkinson. The school opened its doors with 123 enrolled students from 2K through 8th grade.

### NORTHERN WISCONSIN

On Aug. 19, **St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis.**, celebrated its grand re-opening. This is part of the multi-site ministry of St. Mark, De Pere.

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

**D-M—St. Paul, Henry, S.D.**, celebrated the combined 100-plus years of service to the congregation by its organists, **Barbara Hartley** and **Myrna Brenden**.

**WW—St. John, Cornell, Wis.**, celebrated its 100th anniversary on Aug. 4.

On Aug. 12, **St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.**, celebrated the 40th anniversary in the pastoral ministry of **Walter Davidson**.

On Aug. 25, **St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.**, celebrated its 150th anniversary.

**PNW—On Aug. 5, Faith, Anchorage, Alaska**, celebrated its 50th anniversary.

**SA—Abiding Savior, Covington, Ga.**, celebrated its 15th anniversary on Aug. 12.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ-CA—Michael Schroeder; D-M—Andrew Hussman; NW—Dennis Kleist; PNW—David Birsching; SA—Newlin Schafer; WW—Brett Brauer.

## Connecting for a purpose

It's all about making connections.

Living Word, a home mission in Waukesha, Wis., is always working to connect with its community. As the congregation is developing plans for the construction of Living Word's first church building next spring, members decided to include a coffee shop to offer a non-threatening place to interact with community walk-ins and members' friends and acquaintances.

But, according to Sherene Nicolai, part of the congregation's Coffee Shop Task Force, the group is struggling to know exactly how to carry out those plans.

"We have a group of dedicated people on our committee, but no one has worked as a barista," she says. "I thought it would be great if we found anyone with knowledge of the best layout, pricing, appliances, the accounting for a business like this, serving, making drinks—any help really. I was looking for a subject matter expert."

Enter Lutheran Volunteer Connect (LVC), an online site that directly connects ministries with volunteers. A service provided by Kingdom Workers, the site offers churches, schools, and organizations of the Confessional

Evangelical Lutheran Conference\* (CELC) a way to post ministry opportunities that need volunteer help. CELC volunteers who have signed up with LVC can respond to requests and provide needed manpower or expertise to get the job done.



According to Neil Hankwitz, LVC administrator, ministry opportunities can range from running a soccer camp to serving as an English teacher to helping with door-to-door canvassing—the possibilities are as endless as the imagination. The perks also abound. Congregations can get a fresh infusion of manpower and/or expertise in specific skillsets that members may not have. Volunteers can provide necessary help to others in their fellowship, get fresh ideas for their own con-

gregations, and be strengthened in their faith.

"The whole purpose of LVC is to share the gospel—to get God's Word out into our communities," says Hankwitz.

Living Word posted its opportunity to LVC and after two months was contacted by a Milwaukee WELS member who had experience as a barista. "To have someone who can help us hit the ground running when we get in our new building is a big deal," says Nicolai. "He came to one meeting and offered some advice on the layout, the appliances we would want, and product offerings. . . . He's offered to advise us in the future even if just being able to answer questions by phone or e-mail."

"What a great way to get us to work together as a synod," says John Borgwardt, pastor at Living Word. "It gets WELS members to fill a need and develops fellowships between our congregations."

Now through Oct. 15, congregations can post volunteer opportunities on Lutheran Volunteer Connect for free with the code: LVCFIC. To volunteer or post an opportunity, visit [lutheranvolunteerconnect.com](http://lutheranvolunteerconnect.com).

\*A forum for confessional Lutherans around the world. Thirty-two church bodies are members, including WELS.

# Our treasure: THE GOSPEL

THIS TREASURE MOVES US TO LIVE AS JESUS' DISCIPLES

**The gospel motivates us to become a light for others.**

Douglas C. Tomhave

Trapped. Nine days in absolute darkness. Twelve boys and their soccer coach sat with little hope in a deep cave in remote Thailand. They were lost. It looked like the floodwaters would rise even more. No one could escape. Time was running out. All they could do was wait and hope that someone would respond or that help was on the way.

When a British diver emerged from the water into their darkness, he shined a small flashlight on the group. He asked if they were all okay. He said that help would be on the way. The light, to those living in the darkness, was blinding. But that light gave hope. That light meant rescue and life.

## OUR RESCUE

It's a story that easily reminds us of our gospel rescue. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2). This prophecy made so many years ago by God was fulfilled. Jesus was the light that dawned. He rose up out of the waters of death and shined the light of his life onto a dying world. This rescue cost him his life. But his perfect life was exactly what he came to give. He actually lived as a sacrifice that God would accept. He conquered death to give life and hope to a dying people.



Jesus said about himself, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). Everyone who follows the light of Jesus will walk in darkness no more. They have been rescued and given the light that leads to life.

This is your rescue too. Jesus’ light rescued you from certain death as his light shined on you through the waters of your baptism. Jesus says to you by faith, “Follow me; I know the way to light and life.” As a follower of Jesus, his light has shined on you and in you and changed everything. Not only has it changed where you are going, but it also has changed who you are until you get there.

### WE BECOME LIGHT

In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, he described the change in us with these words: “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Jesus has completed his work here on earth. When Jesus ascended, his work of rescuing us was done. Jesus turned over the task of proclaiming the gospel of his complete victory to those who remained here on earth. Notice what Jesus says to his followers: “YOU are the light of the world.” When Jesus shines his light on you, you become a light to others. You have been chosen to be his light shining on a dying world.

I recently presided over the funeral of a pastor who served for a time as a missionary in Asia. As his widow and family made their way to the front of church, you couldn’t help but notice the man who came to sit right up front with the children. He was Asian, clearly not part of the missionary’s natural

family. Yet with a smile he called himself the “favorite son.”

His contact with Christianity did not come from any formal missionary outreach or activity. His contact with the gospel came through the missionary’s Christian children who attended an international school. Through normal childhood activities, a friendship began. He was invited over to play and soon observed something different about this family. Over the years and experiences with the family, he saw the light of the gospel. He was included in their life, and eventually he became a Christian.

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## Your life is Jesus’ sermon to the world.

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His conversion was not received well at his home. His father was a Muslim, and his mother was a Buddhist. When he became a Christian, his father threatened him and disowned him. He was kicked out of his home for a time. He stayed with the missionaries and others until he was received back home. Even though the parents never converted, the young man’s father confessed about the missionaries, “You Christians know how to be better parents to your children.”

Decades later, this Christian man flew across the country to be at the funeral with the family that shined the light of the gospel into his life. He saw their light—the light of Jesus—reflected in their lives.

### YOU ARE LIGHT

Do you see yourself in this story? Jesus used the normal activities of children to shine his light into the darkness of a young man’s life. Jesus used normal family life to reflect his light to others that brought praise to his Father in heaven.

Of course, Jesus accomplishes his work through missionaries, pastors, and teachers. That work needs our support, our time, and our prayers. But Jesus also accomplishes his work through the daily activities of his followers. You are in someone’s story.

Jesus says, “You **ARE** the light of the world.” We need reminders to be who we are. You are the light of the world when you live your life as a Christian, whether you are a child playing in Little League or a parent on the bleachers, whether you are a senior in high school or a senior citizen in a nursing home, whether you are single in your 20s or a widower in your 80s, whether you have a house full of kids or are an empty nester, whether you are a recent convert or a lifelong Christian, whether you are an extrovert or an introvert. It may be in a conversation that stands up for the truth or a gentle deed that puts that truth into action. Your life is Jesus’ sermon to the world, letting “your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Stay close to Jesus. Be in his Word. Jesus will fill you with the light he expects to shine through you. Sometimes the results will be observable. Other times it may remain hidden. But all Jesus requires of you in life is to be a light in this world of darkness. Who knows what rescue Jesus is going to accomplish through you! Jesus may allow you to see what he is accomplishing even now through you. And when he returns, you will see it all clearly and you will hear his voice announce to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Come and share you master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:23).

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*Doug Tomhave is pastor at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.*

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





# A step TOWARD FUTURE MINISTRY

Jesus says the harvest is plentiful  
but the workers are few.

John A. Braun

Some congregations grow weary of calling a new pastor. Today congregations call multiple times over months and, in some cases, even years. Schools scramble to find teachers to fill classrooms even after new graduates are assigned. Most of us have some personal experience or knowledge of the shortage of pastors and teachers.

Ross Stelljes has been recruiting young men and women for the public ministry for 11 years. He was an admission counselor for Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., until he accepted a call to serve as professor of theology at MLC earlier this summer. Before he stepped into the classroom, I asked him to share his thoughts about recruiting future pastors and teachers.

## INSIGHTS FROM A RECRUITER

You won't get an argument from him about the need for more pastors and teachers. He says, "What Jesus said still applies today: 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.' Besides that, right now in WELS we certainly

have a shortage of both pastors and teachers, and this at a time when our Lord seems to be opening all kinds of new and amazing doors for our church body to share Christ with the world."

Stelljes shared his recruiting responsibility with three other full-time counselors. They answer questions about academic majors, financial aid, transferring to other schools if ministry is not what a student wants, dorm life, and sports. He says, "One thing that I think is on a lot of people's minds but only a few blurt out is, 'What if I feel so sinful or unworthy?'" We need to confess that no called worker is worthy except by the grace and forgiveness of Christ.

In all those questions, he notes, "The great majority come [to MLC] because, at least to some extent, the Holy Spirit has created in their hearts a love for their Savior and his Word and a desire to serve." Over the years he has observed that many who start at MLC are "by no means convinced that this is for sure

where they belong. But at least they're willing to give it a try. And it's exciting to see where that leads many of our students!" Stelljes notes, "Our retention rate is around 90 percent, which is quite strong compared to other colleges and universities."

What changes those students to stay and pursue ministry? Says Stelljes, "Their attitudes are changed. Daily chapel opportunities, the religion classes, having all classes taught from a Christ-centered worldview, learning in this environment . . . is like a 'ministry slow cooker.' The Holy Spirit uses all these things to grab hold of students' hearts and change them. The ministry bug bites them, and they grow in their ministry mindset. More and more they treasure what Christ has done for them, that he came not to be served but to serve, and more and more they want to follow his loving lead."

Why do they take that first step to come? After 11 years of talking with students, Stelljes observes, "There are



all kinds of motivating factors, some more sanctified than others. Some come because they recognize how the Lord has influenced them through their called workers and they want to influence others in the same way. I often hear statements like this: 'I want to help people just as my pastor helped me.' 'My fifth grade teacher made learning exciting; I want to be like her.' 'My principal inspired me to want to be a leader like that.' A lot of them come because they were encouraged to think about it by the people in their lives whom they respect: parents, grandparents, members of their congregation, pastors, or teachers. Some come because they have no idea what vocation to pursue, but they can at least start in a solid, Christian environment. Some come because they want to keep playing football or another sport. Some come in hopes of finding a spouse who shares the same faith. I'm sure I haven't exhausted the list!"

He continues, "A difficult part for me is helping some students see that their perceived barriers are just that: *perceived*. For instance, public speaking is probably the most common barrier I hear young men bring up when I ask them what they think about becoming a pastor. And I can relate, because that was definitely fear number one on my long list when I was their age. But I

tell them I'm like the poster child example of someone who, through training and experience, has grown to actually like public speaking. Still, I often find it difficult to convince some that this is a perceived barrier that they too can likely overcome."

Stelljes says some of the most interesting interviews are with students who have suffered serious tragedy, hardship, or loss. "They usually seemed a little more mature in their faith and appreciative of what a solid rock they have in Christ and his Word. And every one of them strongly agreed when I asked them if, in hindsight, they could see how even through those hardships God had brought them blessings."

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## "Remember that you are all recruiters for public ministry."

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And the most rewarding? "Some of the most rewarding ones were the students who came in to inform me that they had decided on MLC and ministerial training even though they had been offered huge scholarships to go elsewhere. For instance, one young man turned down a scholarship with

full tuition and housing to pursue pastoral studies at MLC. What a powerful statement he made to his fellow classmates and to all of us: that it's not all about money; it's about how you feel you can best serve."

### WHAT CAN FIC READERS DO?

Stelljes reminds us all, "Jesus said, 'Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field' (Matthew 9:38). So, pray for more workers. Also remember that you are all recruiters for public ministry. Never underestimate the impact you can have by simply pulling a young person aside who you think has the gifts and telling him that and encouraging him to give public ministry some thought. Also, remember that our young people see the respect you show toward the office of the public ministry, which leaves an impression on them."

Recruiting the next generation to be pastors and teachers is important. Says Stelljes, "Our Savior's words still ring true today: 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few' (Matthew 9:37). Jesus told us to pray that he send out more workers (v. 38). And he normally uses people like you and me as agents in carrying out this recruiting work."

Jesus spoke those words when he saw the crowds "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (v. 36). What do we see? Congregations and schools in need of more pastors and teachers to preach, to teach, to lead, to comfort, and to encourage. We see young men and women who have the talent to do the work. Encourage them. One way may be to share this article with that young man or woman you think could be tomorrow's pastor or teacher.

"Remember that you are all recruiters for public ministry."

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

This is the final article in a two-part series on encouraging young men and women to consider the public ministry.



MLC admission counselors travel around the country to talk to prospective students. This past summer they also were at the WELS International Youth Rally in Bowling Green, Ohio.



# Hang on!

## GOD HAS A PLAN

**In spite of all our precautions and care, cancer unexpectedly intrudes. But we are always in God's hands.** Gerry Diersen

*Cancer* is a word no one wants to hear. I was faithful in doing self-exams and making my yearly appointments. Then I discovered a lump above my right breast just a few months after a mammogram. I made a doctor's appointment to check out the lump. In my heart, I was hoping it would be just another benign spot, not cancer. Yet the unknown feeling and question needed an answer.

### CONCERNS AND CONFESSIONS

When I told my doctor about finding a lump, he was concerned. Looking at him during his initial examination and seeing his facial expression, I realized, "This doesn't look good."

His words confirmed my fears: "I am sorry, but you have breast cancer." The news was heartbreaking. I heard the "C" word and did not want it to be me who was hearing it. It was like a black curtain going over my eyes. My life as I knew it was over.

While sitting on the examination table with thoughts of my life changing, I commented to my doctor, "But God has a plan." He turned around and said, "Yes, he does." I had never talked to my doctor about God before. But on this day, my faith simply burst into a confession. I had turned to Christ in faith for strength.

I repeated that confession later with my team of cancer doctors. I wanted them to know that it was because I trusted



Christ that I was not afraid. With God by my side, I was confident to face the future. I also found that the Lord's Prayer gave me comfort, especially the words, "Thy will be done." I was in my heavenly Father's loving arms.

My journey turned out to be a two-year path of treatments, surgeries, a mastectomy, and an implant. In just five weeks the medical procedures changed me and gave me a different body. I prayed all the time. It was the only way I found comfort. Often I wondered where I would be without my faith.

## CHEMOTHERAPY

In one of the first meetings with my oncologist, I soon realized how effective the chemo would be over the next 52 weeks. I asked about a dental appointment I had scheduled. The oncologist advised me to get dental cleaning done before the start of chemo because he did not want any bacteria going into my stomach while on chemo. This dental appointment proved to be a preventive session. My dentist gave me a prescription for toothpaste and mouthwash to guard my teeth from having undue work and problems after my chemo treatments.

Before starting my cancer treatments, I contacted the American Cancer Society for helpful cosmetic suggestions. The American Cancer Society provided educational meetings to teach me how to care for skin during chemo treatment and going forward after cancer.

As a first step, they inserted a port to administer the drugs. When I went for my first treatment, I was amazed at how many people were getting chemo along with me. Every chair was filled. At times extra chairs were brought in to meet the needs for those getting chemo that day. I soon got to know the patients sitting around me. We had the same schedules. The conversation was always the same: type of cancer, kind of chemo, and the schedule of treatments. God used me to tell other cancer patients that there is a loving God who gives strength and comfort.

I learned that the drug I was receiving would cause me to lose my hair by

the second treatment. I had my head shaved, because it was the only way I could control the first effects of cancer. Along with the loss of hair, I soon lost my eyebrows. I still can remember when I lost all my facial hairs and had one eyelash left. Then it was gone too.

A friend who had gone through breast cancer before me was my support person. She had 52 scarves that she used during her cancer. She loaned them to me. I had every color of scarf imaginable as a covering for my bald head, and I wore them in different styles. Now my hair does not grow as fast as it did before cancer. Fewer haircuts are a blessing!

The chemo drugs take control of one's body. Every Monday was a three-and-a-half-hour injection followed by a week of pain relievers, tiredness, nausea, lack of appetite, and couch time. By the time Friday came around, I was feeling a bit better, but only to think that on Monday it would start over again.

## CHANGES

While getting chemo, cancer patients notice changes in their senses. Some vision loss means a person cannot see as well. Before cancer I wore reading glasses. Now I wear glasses all the time. My sense of smell became very sensitive and is that way today. Certain odors really affect me.

"Chemo brain" was also a concern. Chemo brain is a common term used by cancer survivors to describe thinking and memory problems that occur after cancer treatment. Someone once said to me, "With all the time you have now, I suppose you are reading more." Far from the truth! I would try to read one sentence, and I could not remember what I had just read. What a shock that was. It did get better after many months of being cancer free.

Because I was in a weakened condition, my oncologist suggested I should be very careful during chemo to avoid any infections or diseases. I wore a mask and stayed at home from August to December, only leaving the house to get chemo.



Gerry Diersen

I was fortunate that neuropathy did not happen in all extremities. I did have neuropathy in both hands (my thumb, index finger, and middle finger). It bothers me to read a paper or a paperback book. Just touching the paper is a sensation to my nerves. My lips and tongue were also affected. It feels like a local anesthetic wearing off after a visit to the dentist. It's more evident when I am tired. Fortunately, I do not have neuropathy in my feet, like many other cancer survivors.

After the chemo was complete, I still had one more step on my journey. Based on lab results and tests, radiation followed chemo. The radiation treatment started three weeks after chemo ended and was five days a week for six weeks. One bit of advice my radiologist gave me was to put a leaf of cabbage on my breast after radiation. The leaf of cabbage pulls the heat from the breast, and when the leaf withers it should be replaced.

## COMFORT

Cancer brought me to my knees in all the aspects of my treatments. I found comfort in knowing God was always right beside me. By God's grace, I have been cancer free for over seven years. Every night before I close my eyes, I thank God for another day of grace.

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*Gerry Diersen is a member at St. Peter, Appleton, Wisconsin.*

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“We’ve always  
done it that way”  
is never a good  
argument to  
keep doing  
something.

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# Tradition

Andrew C. Schroer

I recently read that the standard U.S. railroad track is 4 feet, 8.5 inches wide. That’s a rather odd measurement, don’t you think? Why build railroad tracks that width?

The answer is simple. Immigrants from England designed our railroads, and that’s the width they used in England.

But why did they use that width in England? It turns out that the people who built the railroads in England were also the ones who earlier had built the tramways. That’s the width they used.

Why did the tramway builders use that width? Because the people who built the tramways were also the ones who built the wagons, and that is the width they used.

Why did the wagon builders use that width? Because that was the width of the wagon ruts already worn into the roadways of England.

And why were the wagon ruts that width? The ruts in the roads were first made by Roman chariots when Rome ruled England more than 1,500 years ago. The distance between wheels on an ancient Roman chariot was exactly 4 feet, 8.5 inches.

So why are our railroad tracks 4 feet, 8.5 inches wide? Blame it on the Romans.

Why do you do what you do at your church? Sometimes it is because God clearly says in his Word that is the way it should be done. When God reveals his will, we comply. Period.

But like the width of our railroad tracks, we often don’t even know why we do what we do in our churches. We’ve just always done it that way. It’s tradition.

Don’t get me wrong. Tradition can be a good thing. Often it is based on centuries of wisdom and experience. Traditions have stood the test of time for a reason. They should not be changed lightly.

Yet we often treat traditions as divine directives. We cling to them. We cherish

them. We get angry when anyone suggests we change them.

Change can be scary.

Sometimes, though, change is necessary. “We’ve always done it that way” is never a good argument to keep doing something. The way we’ve always done things may not be the best or wisest way.

As time passes, the opportunities, gifts, and challenges God gives each church change. The way your church operates today may have been the best way to serve God 50 years ago, but it may not be today.

Churches often get stuck in ruts exactly 4 feet, 8.5 inches wide when they don’t take the time to periodically ask: Why are we doing what we are doing? Should we adjust what we are doing to serve God and others better and more efficiently?

The answers to those questions aren’t always easy. Wisdom and love dictate that we don’t fall into the ditch on either side of the road. On one side of the road, we despise tradition and change things simply for the sake of change. We should not quickly cast aside the wisdom of time-tested traditions and the feelings of those who cherish them. But on the other side, the ditch is just as dangerous—blindly clinging to traditions and refusing to evaluate honestly what we are doing and to consider new ideas.

It is healthy for Christians to evaluate the ministry of their churches periodically so they can serve God and others to the best of their ability and to his glory. Every Christian congregation needs voices that lovingly and humbly ask, “Why are we doing what we are doing?”

Could you be that voice in your church?

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



# MAJORING ON THE MINORS

Thomas D. Kock

## ZEPHANIAH: "I FEEL LIKE I'VE HEARD THAT BEFORE"

"I feel like I've heard that before." Ever said that?

### A REPEATED MESSAGE OF WRATH

Listen to these verses from Zephaniah. Do you feel like you've heard this before?

"I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD" (1:2).

"At that time I will . . . punish those who are complacent" (1:12).

"I will bring such distress on all people . . . because they have sinned against the LORD" (1:17).

"Woe to the city of oppressors, rebellious and defiled! She obeys no one, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD, she does not draw near to her God" (3:1,2).

Maybe we're not familiar with those exact words, but the concept is clear: It's the fearsome reminder that our God is holy and he hates sin. It's the fearsome reminder that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) and that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Thank God we have heard this before! Sinful human beings need to hear that we deserve God's anger, that we deserve to be sent to hell. I need to hear it so that I despair of saving myself and look outside of myself to God. The listeners at Zephaniah's time were no different; they needed to hear it too.

### A REPEATED MESSAGE OF FORGIVENESS

Thankfully, God goes on. He also says, "The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm" (3:15).

And again, "The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing" (3:17).

Yes, you've heard the message of those verses too. The New Testament fleshes it out fully. Jesus came to this earth; he lived a perfect life in your place; he died a perfect death in your place, paying for your sins and for the sins of the whole world. He rose from the dead, defeating your number one enemy, death. You've heard that before.

And thank God you have! Sinful human beings need to hear that God's anger has been appeased and that sin has been paid for. That message works faith in our hearts, comforts us, and encourages us. I need to hear that! The listeners at Zephaniah's time were no different; they needed to hear it too.

Often, we sinful human beings crave something new and different. But the "old treasures" (cf. Matthew 13:52) are treasures! As we read the Bible, God reminds us of the same truths over and over again. Yes, God hates sin; yes, unbelievers will be sent to hell. Ouch! But yes, God has won forgiveness for you, and yes, God has opened heaven to you and will take you there someday.

Yes, you've heard those things before. Thank God you have! Pray that you hear them over and over again.

*Contributing editor Thomas Kock, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Atonement, Milwaukee.*

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

HOSEA

JOEL

JONAH

AMOS

OBADIAH

MICAH

NAHUM

HABAKKUK

**ZEPHANIAH**

Lineage: Great-great-grandson of Hezekiah.

Date of writing: c. 639-610 B.C. (during reign of Josiah).

Unique fact: The "day of the LORD" theme runs throughout.

Key verse: 3:17 "The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves."

HAGGAI

ZECHARIAH

MALACHI




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Each of us should  
respect life,  
authority, marriage  
and sex, and the  
property and the  
good name of others.  
These are God's  
directions for  
loving others.

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## A better way

Sensitivity and consideration for another's point of view have taken a back seat. They are rendered powerless by strong emotion, shouting, and personal attacks. Expressing an opinion on social media sometimes invites vicious personal attacks or even threats of violence. It's guerilla warfare in most relationships that often waits for the "gotcha" moment and then pounces with malicious bitterness.

Even a mention of Jesus' words, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39), holds little force. One might see a slight nod of agreement, but the volume of conflicting voices does not diminish. And besides, so it is said, such ancient wisdom is just that—ancient—and it flows from an old-fashioned and outmoded Christian morality.

Those who object to such morality demonize, marginalize, and even violently oppose other viewpoints. I suppose we shouldn't be surprised. These things happened to Jesus while he was here on earth. Demonized? "It is only by . . . the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons" (Matthew 12:24). Marginalized? How many times did the leaders of the Jews challenge his words? And finally they plotted to kill him. They concluded, "It is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50).

The attitudes of conflict and anger stretch beyond conversation. Domestic violence and sexual abuse persist in spite of all the voices condemning both. A man shoots another over a parking place. Another throws flares out a car window, starting a fire that destroys homes and lives. Still another shoots a police officer because he doesn't want to return to prison after breaking his parole. Drive-by shootings kill children and adults not involved in the conflict. Mothers abandon their children for sex, drugs, or gambling.

God has a clear indictment: the Ten Commandments. In order to live together in a community with others, each of us should respect life, authority, marriage and sex, and the property and the good name of others. These are God's directions for loving others.

There's more to it, of course. Jesus also gave us the First Commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). For us, the second command to love others simply flows out of our faith in a God who has purchased and won us through the perfect suffering and death of his Son. But for some, personal opinion and agendas trump those principles. Their priority is what is right for them and not what is right for us all together under the care of our heavenly Father.

We live in a society that has marginalized and demonized our message—not only the message of God's grace in Christ but also the message that flows from that grace: love for others. We have all experienced the temptation to join the shrill voices on one side or the other. At times we have found it easier—at least according to our sinful nature—to yield to anger and frustration in order to retaliate or make our point.

Jesus asks us to enthrone two principles in our hearts: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). I don't think that either commandment has grown old-fashioned or obsolete.

Because we understand them, we listen when he directs, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19). It may be difficult to follow his directions, "In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3,4). But consider Jesus before the high priest or Pilate. He showed us how.





# COME Lord Jesus BE OUR GUEST

Joel S. Heckendorf

## NOURISHED BY MEALS WITH THE MESSIAH

### GETTING ENOUGH TO EAT (JOHN 6:1-15)

Ding-dong. The unexpected guests are at the front door. It was going to be a light supper, but all of a sudden, the chef of the house has to become creative. Ever happen to you? I think we all know culinary experts who have learned the fine art of “peel another potato, we’ve got company.”

The feeding of the five thousand continues to rank among the most popular miracles. We marvel at the details. Five loaves, two fish, and twelve baskets of leftovers. But there is a detail we often miss. Jesus asks Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” (John 6:5). Jesus knew there wasn’t \$25,000 sitting in the disciples’ “grocery fund,” so his question was legitimate. But it’s why he asked the question that teaches us something about our Savior. “He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do” (John 6:6). In other words, Jesus had a plan.

How often don’t we wonder, worry, or whine about our physical needs? Whatever your wonder, worry, or whine is about, chew on these words: “[Jesus] already had in mind what he was going to do.” Jesus, the all-powerful Son of

God, has a plan on how he is going to provide for you. Oh, maybe he’s not going to feed your family for a year on two fish and five loaves of bread. God’s plan of providing doesn’t always include such miracles. Nonetheless, he still does have a plan. And when you think about it, God’s normal way of providing for our physical needs still is miraculous.

For example, did you ever consider what it takes for you to enjoy a piece of toast with your morning breakfast? It takes much more than a farmer, a grocery store, and you. A farmer needs to plant the seed. He needs to buy the seed from a seed company. How does the seed company get the seed to the farmer? By truck? Who manufactured the truck? How did the farmer order the seed? By phone? Or did he order online? What does it take for that to happen?

Or what about on the other end. You bought the loaf from the store. How did you get to the store? How did you pay for the bread? Did you use a credit card? Who made the credit card swiping machine? And on and on and on. Literally thousands of people and materials were involved. Pretty amazing when you think about it. It’s pretty miraculous the way the Lord provides for us.

The point? God has a plan. He has a plan to care for your physical needs. So, when you pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest,” he’s not surprised by the invitation. He planned to be there all along. And he’ll even bring butter for your toast.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Why didn’t Jesus simply tell the people to go home?
2. List as many ways you can remember that God provided for the physical needs of people in the Bible.
3. Pray about how God has addressed one of your wonders, worries, or whines about your lack of physical needs in the past.

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



This is the 11th 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 Oct. 5 at [wels.net/forwardinchrist](http://wels.net/forwardinchrist).



# WHICH NAIL TO FOCUS ON?

**Reformation highlights two different sets of nails: those on the door of the Castle Church and those in the hands of a crucified criminal.** Jay Selle

The pounding of a nail five hundred years ago echoed the sound of change and reform. While completely unaware of the outcome of this simple gesture, Martin Luther and his fastening of the Ninety-five Theses to the Wittenberg Castle Church door would forever change the world.

As Lutherans, we champion the monk as a revolutionary who brought Christianity back to the truth. Luther brought Christianity back to the gospel. Through his pounding of a nail, Luther brought Christianity's focus back on the pounding of the nails. But while Martin Luther holds great significance for us this October, let us not forget the message Luther worked so hard to proclaim clearly.

## THE NAILS AT CALVARY

Well before Luther used his hammer, a Roman hammer was used to pierce flesh. The flesh was not of a common criminal but of an innocent man sent to death by the betrayal of a friend and the rejection of his people. The man had done nothing to deserve this torturous death, but the hand that pounded the nails in that man did.

Do you know who pounded the nails into Jesus? It was you. It was me. Every sin we committed was a swing of the mallet, solidifying the Savior's place on that cross.

Luther understood his part in this and tortured himself in attempts to appease God. Luther suffered, with his guilty conscience of sin bearing down on his soul. However, while studying Scripture and looking for answers to his problem of sin, Luther came across Romans 1:17, "In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

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The pounding of  
nails was a gift that  
changed the world.

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Understanding this verse was the link to solving Luther's suffering. Our right standing with God is created not by our actions but by Christ's work. The hands that helped crucify Christ can do nothing to aid in salvation. Only the redeeming work of Christ can satisfy God's holy demands. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

## THE NAILS AT THE CASTLE CHURCH

The pounding of nails was a gift that changed the world. This gift was all by God's grace to atone for the sins of the world. The gift is free and it is complete; nothing else needs to be done. At the time Martin Luther wrote the Ninety-five Theses, the church was teaching salvation by works and money through indulgences. Through the Holy Spirit, Martin Luther was able to rediscover the truth of Jesus' saving work. Martin Luther rightfully refocused the church on the cornerstone of Christ.

In October, we celebrate the return to grace set in motion by a lowly monk's pounding of a nail. Let's not lose focus of another point though. Martin Luther did not want the attention on himself, but instead on the inerrant Word that points to Christ crucified. Instead of championing Luther, let us champion Christ. Let us set our minds and hearts on the nails pounded into Christ's hands and feet as he willingly suffered the pangs of hell for us. Let us focus on the marks of the nails that reveal our risen Lord and the completion of our salvation.

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*Jay Selle is a member at First, Racine, Wisconsin.*