

Contrition and emotion | Parents and college students

# Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE

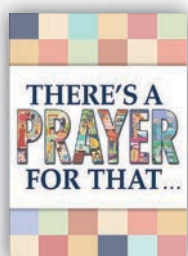
## Doing Lent

The best way to do Lent is to remember what we already have done as sinners and then what Jesus did as our Savior. *Page 10*



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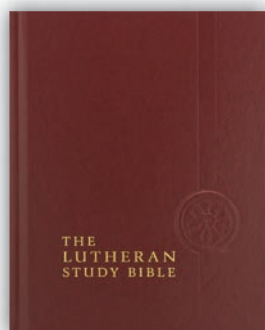
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—Jeff

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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

At my church, a wooden cross stands in front of the congregation on Good Friday. It is a tradition at the end of the worship service for members to come forward and place a nail into the cross, while soft music plays in the background. This visual reminder of our part in this story of what Jesus did for all people is a moving, contemplative ending to the service.

Our cover story this month reminds us of how easy it can be to get caught up in “doing” Lent instead of using the time to remember what we have already done. Read more on p. 10.

Also on our pages this month . . .

- A mom, speaking from experience, offers tips on ways to help a family when a parent is sick (p. 16).
- A mom and a student share their perspectives on the importance of open communication between parents and their children attending college (pp. 18 & 30).
- Two pastors discuss how to talk to our neighbors about Jesus. One presents a simple method to help us with this task (p. 28), while the other highlights how to handle the fear of rejection (p. 12).

Julie Wietzke



07



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## JESUS LOVES ME

I enjoyed Eric Hartzell's article "Jesus loves me" [Nov.]. As a volunteer for Jesus Cares, I go to nursing homes and group homes. We sing "Jesus Loves Me" often. In one group home, one of the residents sang it regularly when I wasn't there.



Another resident held the hand of one of the residents who was dying and sang it to her as she passed.

Those of us who

are older have some great opportunities to witness for Christ in these places.

1. Become a familiar face.
2. Find out who the activities director is and what religious preference there is, if any.
3. If there are few or no real Christian programs, maybe you can start one. It can be formatted much like Sunday school for adults. You need to be flexible with the residents' abilities. Jesus Cares programs will help.
4. Visit with the people who come, and become their friend.

This will be one of the most blessed experiences you will have.

Joan Frihart  
Schofield, Wisconsin

*Jesus Cares Ministries, a program of The Lutheran Home Association, Belle Plaine, Minn., assists congregations in reaching out to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and communities. Learn more at [tlha.org/jesus-cares-ministries](http://tlha.org/jesus-cares-ministries).—ed.*

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

# Through my Bible in 3 years



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

MARCH 2019

- |                     |                     |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Matthew 12:22-50 | 12. Jeremiah 1      | 23. Jer. 17:19-18:23 |
| 2. Mt. 13:1-23      | 13. Jer. 2:1-3:5    | 24. Jer. 19 & 20     |
| 3. Mt. 13:24-52     | 14. Jer. 3:6-4:31   | 25. Jer. 21 & 22     |
| 4. Mt. 13:53-14:12  | 15. Jer. 5 & 6      | 26. Jer. 23          |
| 5. Mt. 14:13-36     | 16. Jer. 7:1-8:3    | 27. Jer. 24 & 25     |
| 6. Mt. 15:1-20      | 17. Jer. 8:4-9:22   | 28. Matthew 19:1-22  |
| 7. Mt. 15:21-39     | 18. Jer. 9:23-10:25 | 29. Mt. 19:23-20:28  |
| 8. Mt. 16:1-20      | 19. Jer. 11 & 12    | 30. Mt. 20:29-21:22  |
| 9. Mt. 16:21-17:13  | 20. Jer. 13         | 31. Mt. 21:23-46     |
| 10. Mt. 17:14-27    | 21. Jer. 14 & 15    |                      |
| 11. Mt. 18:1-35     | 22. Jer. 16:1-17:18 |                      |



living stones  
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1 PETER 2:4-5

*As you come to Him, the Living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

[wels.net/wmconference](http://wels.net/wmconference)

**CORRECTION:** John Chworowsky was born on Sept. 12, not May 12, as was reported in his obituary [Dec.]. He served Prince of Peace, Mason City, Iowa (not Gethsemane, Davenport, Iowa), and also worked as a mission counselor. We apologize for these errors and omission.



# Close enough to love

A Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. Luke 10:33

Joel C. Seifert

“And who is my neighbor?”

A religious expert asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. When Jesus told him to love God and his neighbor, he asked, “And who is my neighbor?” His question showed that he still wanted to do something to be worthy of eternal life. He wasn’t even close.

So Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). A man traveling down the road from Jerusalem falls into the hands of robbers, who strip him of his clothes and beat him, leaving him to die alone. An unlikely foreigner comes along and shows selfless love to a stranger—even when it puts him in harm’s way, even when the most outwardly religious people passed by uncaring. It’s a simple story with a simple point: Love helps whoever is in need. How could this expert love like that?

## LOVE BRINGS US CLOSE TO OTHERS

A subtle detail helps us understand love better.

There’s a progression in Jesus’ story that stands out in the original Greek: The priest *went down the same road*. The Levite *came to the place*. The Samaritan *came to the man*.

There’s a connection between *love* and *proximity*. When love isn’t there, it’s easier to stand at a distance and tell ourselves that there’s no real need for help, that we’re not the right ones to help, or that helping is someone else’s responsibility. The world is full of people whom we can find every reason to keep at arm’s length—the criminal sitting in his cell, the atheist who mocks our faith, the poor and homeless in our community. But love goes right to the person in need.



That strikes right at the expert in the law and at us too. It condemns the times we stood at an arm’s distance from someone in need, offering no help and telling ourselves we don’t need to love them. Such love is not love at all. It needs to know the love God has for us and the power it gives to help others.

## There’s a connection between love and proximity.

## LOVE IS FOUND IN THE GOD WHO DRAWS CLOSE TO US

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. We remember that this world is a present evil age and that we fallen people have hearts turned away from the God who made us. Yet at Lent we see the most unbelievable thing: the holy Son of God here in this world, traveling up the road to Jerusalem so that a band of

wicked men might surround him, strip him of his clothes, and beat him to the point of death.

We don’t mourn the tragedy. Instead we praise God because we know what is happening. In Christ, God has come close to his fallen creatures. Close enough to see our hurt and feel our pain. Close enough to know our failure to love others. Close enough to be mocked and beaten so he could bear our sins and die our death. He came close enough to love us.

At the end of his story, Jesus told the expert in the law, “Go and do likewise.” How? Not by following rules and directions to love others but by knowing the One who loves us. The love of God changes us. We love not to earn eternal life. We already have eternal life by grace and are children of God’s grace. When we see the pain of others, we love “with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:16-18) because we are grateful Jesus loves us.

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



*Mark Schwede*

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Our times  
are always in  
God's hands.

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## Hindsight shows God's blessings

Twenty-five years ago, in the spring of 1994, our synod was facing a time of uncertainty and divided opinions. Eight months earlier at the 1993 synod convention, the synod approved, by a narrow margin, a major change in its educational system for training pastors and teachers. By the next spring, plans were well underway to amalgamate Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, and to combine Northwestern Preparatory School and Martin Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin. In the fall of 1995, the newly combined college for training future pastors, teachers, and staff ministers began operations in New Ulm as Martin Luther College; the combined prep school opened that fall as Luther Preparatory School, joining Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., as the synod's two preparatory schools.

Opinions about the amalgamation proposal had been strongly held on both sides of the issue. Those in favor of the amalgamation believed that operating four ministerial campuses was too expensive when resources for missions and the rest of the synod's work were scarce. They were convinced that a ministerial college serving both men and women on the same campus would provide a better atmosphere for training future called workers. Many had the opinion that three prep schools were more than was necessary to serve as feeder schools for the pastor and teacher tracks.

Those who were opposed to the change (and I was one of them) also presented strong arguments. They were concerned that there would be pressures to change the curriculum of the pastor track and that the smaller pastor track could lose its identity in a larger school. They were convinced that the cost savings would be far less than anticipated. They believed that separating Northwestern College from Northwestern Prep (its largest provider of candidates for the

pastoral ministry) would result in fewer pastoral candidates.

The decision was made with much prayer and with vigorous and sincere debate. But in the months after the decision was made, the entire synod grew to be united in the desire to make the new schools as good as they could possibly be—not for the sake of creating great educational institutions but for the sake of creating new schools that would carry on the work done so well by the previous ones.

Now the perspective of a quarter century enables us to recognize how richly God has blessed those efforts. Despite the concerns and even fears, today Martin Luther College continues to provide well-trained teachers and staff ministers. It continues to provide a solid presemenary education to young men preparing to continue their training as pastors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Studying side by side, future pastors and teachers develop respect for each other's ministry and build personal relationships that continue after they begin serving in their callings. Perhaps more than ever, the college enjoys the love and support of the entire membership of the synod as its single college of ministry.

Luther Preparatory School, as a single purpose school, continues to provide more candidates for the pastoral and teaching ministry than any other school. Its entire focus is to encourage young people to consider prayerfully whether they might someday serve as pastors, teachers, or staff ministers. And God is blessing those efforts.

When large decisions loom and the future seems unclear, Martin Luther College and Luther Preparatory School are reminders that our times are always in God's hands. We thank him for blessing that difficult decision, confident that his blessings will continue and that a future in his hands may be unknown but is never uncertain.



# Light for our path

**Sometimes after I sin I don't feel very remorseful. I am afraid that the lack of emotional guilt within me following sin means I am not contrite. What role does emotion play in contrition?**

James F. Pope

Humans experience a wide range of emotions. Your question is a valid one to consider, especially during this season of Lent, which emphasizes repentance. Phrases from some of our hymns will be helpful in answering your question.

## SORROW OVER SIN

"My sin and guilt are plaguing me; oh, grant me true contrition" (*Christian Worship* [CW] 437:2). Our Lutheran Confessions define contrition as "terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin" (Augsburg Confession, Article XII:4). After his adulterous and murderous episodes with Bathsheba and Uriah, King David did what he could to distance himself from guilt and personal accountability. Eventually, the message of the law from the prophet Nathan broke down the impenitent king. "I have sinned against the LORD," the king confessed (2 Samuel 12:13). While Scripture records the words of David's confession, it does not supply any accompanying outward emotion. We hear only of the king's heartfelt sorrow over sin.

God works similar attitudes in you through the message of his law. During the general Confession of Sins in worship services, he leads you to confess your natural sinful condition and your sins of commission and omission. In daily life, God leads you to acknowledge your wrongdoing and seek his forgiveness. At the time of David's confession, we do not know what emotion he felt. We do know that his confession was sincere.

## SORROW ON DISPLAY?

"With broken heart and contrite sigh, a trembling sinner, Lord, I cry" (CW 303:1). Is that what contrition is all about: people wearing their hearts on their sleeves, giving evidence of inward sorrow by outward displays of emotions? Contrition can be like that, but we want to be careful that we do not prescribe what contri-

tion is to be like. You and I might confess specific sins with varying degrees of emotions. Factors such as the nature of the sin, the frequency of the sin, and the person against whom we have sinned can have a bearing on how emotion-filled our confessions might be.

Keep in mind that, like any other part of our Christian life, our contrition will not be perfect. One man called out to Jesus, "Help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). Faith can always be stronger. Another person could have called out to Jesus, "Help me overcome my impenitence!" Contrition can always be more genuine. And yet, Christian contrition and repentance point in the right direction.

## SORROW REMOVED

"When o'er my sins I sorrow, Lord, I will look to you" (CW 109:1). When the prodigal son was ruminating over his lost condition, his thoughts turned to his father. The son recognized his wrongs and began to rehearse the confession he would offer his father. Putting his plan into action, the son traveled back home and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21).

His father embraced him with a kiss and staged a celebratory feast. The father forgave his wayward child. Likewise, God responds to our confession of sins with the words, "Take heart . . . your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2). That message cheers the contrite in heart and provides them with strength to fight against sin even more.

*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





# LET'S DO *Lent*

## How are you preparing to observe the Lenten season?

Mark H. Schewe

I'm sure you are preparing! The Lenten season begins the first week of this month, with Ash Wednesday on March 6. Pastors, worship planners, musicians, food volunteers, and many others have had plenty of time since the Christmas season to get at planning and preparation. All the questions to answer: Did the midweek bulletin covers come in? Did the piano tuner stop by for his annual visit? Are we using Evening Prayer or Compline for Wednesdays? Is the

junior choir scheduled to sing? On which Wednesday will the youth group be cooking?

### RESET YOUR FOCUS

If you're a veteran called worker or lay leader in your congregation, you might be tempted to jump in and begin grinding out plans and filling in the blanks for a busy season. If so, you need to start over. Even if you're a regular member of a church, your thoughts can't begin with the activities and services that you will do during Lent. Your Lenten walk of faith will be adversely affected if it starts out in mechanical fashion. In fact, it's possible to stand the season of Lent

on its head altogether, finishing the season with relief simply because the extra planning and worship are over for the year.

Lent is not about planning what to do for the season. To illustrate, our church has a subscription to an online church clip art program. This program has tens of thousands of images and Scripture verses that can be easily inserted into bulletins and newsletters. Very handy! But sometimes it can be a bit interesting or humorous what the internet site suggests for appropriate clip art during Lent or any other season.

If you type "Lent" in the search box, a couple options invariably pop up, pos-



ing the question, “What are you giving up?” One of these images even includes 20 suggestions within the clip art of what you can give up. Some suggested sacrificial items are common, ones we hear every year: chocolate, sweets, coffee, TV. But some newer ones have appeared: Facebook, credit cards, shopping, and Twitter. Yes, Twitter.

I know there are plenty of pious Christians who sacrifice something during the 40 days of Lent with a sanctified heart. It can be done properly, of course. But I’m also certain many people in the Christian world hear that the days of Lent are approaching and immediately think, *Oh yeah, what am I going to give up this year?* In other words, “How can I do Lent this year?” If that’s your starting point, you’re off on the wrong foot.

It can be the same for church leaders and called workers. Get ready to do Lent! More choir practices. Suppers to serve. More church services to plan and attend. Instruments to rehearse. More times to clean the sanctuary. More things to communicate. Extra sermons to complete. Communion to set up. Paraments to change from purple to black to white. An Easter vigil service to prepare for Saturday of Holy Week.

We have so much to do as we look forward to Lent. Or do we?

## REMEMBER WHAT YOU HAVE DONE AND WHAT JESUS DID

What do we do for Lent? The proper place to start is to ask, “What *did* we do for Lent?”

I was reminded of that when I served at a congregation in the state of Washington. It was my first Lenten season at the church. Our congregation worshiped in a sanctuary that was newly built. On one side were tall windows that faced a busy street. The Christmas tree had been in those windows during the holidays. It was a perfect spot, visible to worshipers and the community, and it made perfect sense to build a large, rugged cross to place there for Lent. It would be a striking

scene for worshipers and commuters alike, draped in the appropriate color for the season.

One of our church members heard about the idea and offered to bring a tree that had fallen on his property, which could be cut and shaped into a cross. Perfect! After the delivery, we made some basic measurements, and the cutting, notching, tying, and erecting began. It’s what we did for Lent that year.

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## Lent is about what we originally did and continue to do as sinners. And it’s about what Jesus did for us before we saw the light of day.

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But as I notched the wood and hammered the pieces together, it dawned on me: This is not the first cross I’ve made.

It was true that I had never constructed a physical life-sized cross before, but I had most definitely had a hand in making one already. It was a cross that I never saw, but one that I had caused. My sin was nailed to it. It was the original cross of my Savior, who went the way of that cross so that my sin and guilt could be paid for. “‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed’ ” (1 Peter 2:24).

How do we properly “do Lent”? We already did it. We caused it. And this is where a proper Lenten walk begins. Why must Lent come each year, that dark and somber season of the church year with its hymns in minor keys and ashes and blackness? We commemo-

rate how the Son of God had to come in grace and mercy to pay the price that we could never pay. Lent is about what we originally did and continue to do as sinners. And it’s about what Jesus did for us before we saw the light of day.

So, this year, how can we properly “do Lent”? Come. Come and marvel that there is nothing you must do, nothing that you must pay for your forgiveness. Come with a contrite and repentant heart to receive what God has to give. Be amazed at the love of your Savior.

As Lent begins, perhaps the best initial activity we could do would be to meditate on a portion of Scripture or a devotion that reinforces where the true action of Lent lies and that points out how we are undeserving recipients of God’s grace. Read through Isaiah chapter 53, Psalm 22, Psalm 51, or 1 John 4:9,10. Spend a few moments with the hymn “Jesus, I Will Ponder Now” (*Christian Worship* 98) and the many other hymns in the Lenten section of the hymnal that reinforce how we are “receivers” rather than “doers” during Lent. Go into your morning devotion with that intentional angle of emphasis, especially if you are a church leader consumed by how much there is to do during Lent.

Receive. Reflect. Be comforted. Soak in the Passion History as it’s read. Come ready to hear the old, old story that gives us so much peace. Sing about it. Marvel at it. Come early to meditate. Enjoy some food and time with fellow Christians pilgrims. Rejoice that God loved you enough to do it all to win your salvation.

Then, with the right perspective on your Lenten season, you can make a sacrifice to help you concentrate on the cross. After all, maybe you could do without those sweets or chocolate for a while. And that Twitter account.

---

*Mark Schewe is pastor at St. Peter, Clovis, California.*



## Like lambs among wolves

Eric S. Roecker

He clenches his hands, palms soaked with sweat.

The butterflies in his stomach flutter fiercely.

He looks in the mirror one last time to make certain that every hair is in place and that nothing of his lunch is tucked between his teeth.

He wonders if he can do this. He is terrified. It has taken him weeks to work up the courage. What if she says no? What if the girl of his dreams rejects him? What worries him is the thought of being rejected, of being told, in essence, “You’re not good enough.” He’s not sure he can handle it. It might just be better to avoid that possibility all together.

She stares at the bright white envelope on the well-worn kitchen table. She has waited what seems like an eternity for it. Now, here it is, right in front of her, and she is too terrified to open it. She knows that her future lies within. Has she been accepted to the university she has always dreamed of attending? She has spent years taking all the right classes, joining all the right clubs, being involved in

all the right extracurriculars. She has spent countless late nights studying to get good enough grades. Her hands tremble as she struggles to unseal the envelope.

**The fear of rejection is common to us all.** We want to be accepted—so much so that the fear of being rejected sometimes keeps us from asking out that special person or applying to that university. Better to play it safe than risk rejection.

This same fear sometimes keeps Christians from telling others about their Savior. We think, *What if they won’t listen? What if they laugh at me? What if they think I’m ignorant and naïve? What if I invite them to church and they say no?*

If the fear of rejection keeps you from telling others about their Savior, then listen to Jesus in Luke chapter 10. While sending 72 of his disciples to proclaim the coming kingdom of God, he told them: “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves” (v. 3).

That doesn’t sound very encouraging! Why not tell them that there is nothing to worry about? Why not tell them that they will surely be successful?



**Because God cannot lie.** Jesus told them the way it was. He knew very well that they would face opposition. He knew the spiritual forces of darkness would mass against them. He knew that the people to whom they preached would not always welcome the good news the disciples shared.

People won't always welcome the good news when we proclaim it either. And, in a strange way, this truth can comfort us. It conditions our hearts from becoming overly optimistic. It steels us for the inevitable rejections we will encounter.

Jesus tells us, in no uncertain terms, that some people will welcome our message and others will not. In fact, they will be wolves.

So what? How does this, in any way, change our mission? Our Savior sends us with the message of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We proclaim it. We invite others to hear about it at worship or in a Bible study. Some will welcome our invitation. Others will not. So it is. So it has always been.

**This does not mean we are indifferent.**

We are saddened when God's message is rejected. We are thrilled when God's message is received. But, either way, our task remains the same—to proclaim that message.

During my 20 years serving as a parish pastor, I had the opportunity to teach dozens of Bible information classes. It was one of my favorite parts of being a parish pastor.

People new to our church, and in some cases new to Christianity, would gather to learn the basics of the Christian faith. We talked about sin and grace—what Jesus did to save us—and more.

It was always exciting to begin a new series of classes. I was always hopeful that the souls attending would receive God's truth with joy. Often, they did. Occasionally, they did not. I never knew what would happen. But it was not my job to know what would happen. It was my job to share what God's Word says.

**Sharing the gospel is the job—and the privilege—of every follower of Jesus Christ.** We dare not allow our fear of rejection to keep us from accomplishing this task. After all, what is really at the root of this fear? Most often it is self-centeredness. We are thinking too much about what rejection will mean for our reputation or relationships and too little about what failing to share the gospel will mean for the souls of others. We are putting our comfort ahead of our Savior's command. We are putting ourselves ahead of both our neighbor and our God.

Thankfully, our God sent us a Savior. Jesus was willing to be rejected himself in order to save us from our sins—yes, even the self-centeredness that sometimes keeps us from telling others about him. Many of the people who heard Jesus preach rejected what he had to say. But this did not stop him from continuing to preach. He loved them too much.

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Look at the people the Lord has brought into your life. Do they know that, in Jesus, their sins are forgiven and eternal life is theirs? If not, find time to tell them. Or invite them to worship or a Bible information class where they can hear the good news.

Ten minutes ago, I sent a text message to someone I met more than two years ago. She is not a Christian. Over the past couple of years, we have had multiple discussions about God and faith and our eternal fate. Each time we have talked, she has argued against the kind of God I described. So far, there is no indication that she believes in any kind of personal God, much less trusts in Jesus as the one true God and her Savior. But, as I wrote the preceding paragraph and thought about the people

the Lord has brought into my life, this young woman came to mind. So I reached out again to invite her to continue our conversation. I don't know what will happen. I don't know where it will lead. I don't know whether she will ever accept what I am sharing. But I do know that I am not wasting my time. I am doing what my Jesus has told me to do. And I know he is with me as I carry out his command.

Let this be your comfort as well, even if you fear being rejected. You are carrying out his command, and he will be with you as you do.

So . . . what is there to worry about?

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*Eric Roecker, director of the WELS Commission on Evangelism, is a member at Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.*

This is the second article in a three-part series on the account of Jesus sending out his disciples in Luke 10.

## A woman finally discovers the blessings of Baptism.

Alicia A. Neumann

"I just want to go to heaven," says 74-year-old Pat Ensign when asked why she wanted to be baptized. She trusted the words of Jesus and had his forgiveness. Baptism was another important assurance of his promises.

Pat's baptism was not only a blessing to her, giving her new life and forgiveness of sins, but it was also a blessing to her church family.

### A BUSY LIFE

Growing up, Pat knew the importance of going to church. "I lived with my grandparents, eight of us kids," she says. "Every Sunday we walked five miles to church and five miles back home." Later, she got married and started attending a Baptist church.

But then her family grew, and life got very busy. "I quit going to church," she says. "I always believed in God, but I didn't attend church for years because I had too much to do, like taking care of my husband, the kids, and the garden. We also owned a business, and I had to help."

And that was the pattern of her life, until about a year and a half ago when Pat called Spirit of Life, Caledonia, Mich., for help. Although her children are grown up, Pat is still a full-time

caregiver. Her husband has Parkinson's disease, and she also cares for her 15-year-old grandson, Kenny, who lives with her.

"I was looking for help for Kenny, because he is a special-needs child," says Pat. "He goes to a special class in a Caledonia school, but I was looking for more help. And I thought maybe he could get it from a church." One day she drove past Spirit of Life, which was on the same street as her house, and got its phone number. "I didn't even wait until I got home to call," she says. "I had already asked a couple other churches, and they said they couldn't help me because I didn't belong to their church."

But Pat got a very different answer from Allen Kirschbaum, the pastor at Spirit of Life. "Pastor was happy to hear from me and told me to come on in. He didn't even ask if we belong to the church! He just said to bring Kenny."

Kirschbaum started meeting with Kenny each week. "Sometimes we'd play Uno, while I talked to him and counseled him," says Kirschbaum. "One day I showed him the new stained-glass windows in the church. I showed him how Jesus died and came out of the tomb. Then Kenny said, 'He was dead, but then he walked out? How did he do that?' It was a great opportunity to talk about sin and grace." Soon, Pat and Kenny were regularly attending services, and Kenny got baptized.

Pat says she has seen such a change in Kenny. Before they came to church, she says Kenny had started talking about the devil and seemed interested in him. "But now he says, 'I want to go to see Jesus, not the devil.' He talks about Jesus and gets the Bible out and reads it to us and tells us about it," says Pat.

### HELPING PAT

Kirschbaum says it's been amazing to work with Kenny, who now helps usher at church, but he also wanted to help Pat. "She takes care of everyone and carries the world on her shoulders. By God's grace, she is helping a lot of people; that's a testament to her faith in action," says Kirschbaum. "But I said, 'Pat, you carry so many people. Who is going to carry you?'"

After Kenny's baptism, Kirschbaum encouraged Pat to learn more about Jesus and discovered she was not baptized. "I really didn't understand Baptism; I didn't understand what it was about," says Pat.

That's where Pat's friends from church helped. Pat attends "Wise Woman's Coffee Time" with other women from the church. This support group was organized by fellow member Judy Clifton, who says, "I wanted it to be a place women could come and not have anybody judge them—where they could get a prayer or support or whatever they need." Approximately six to ten women meet each month. "I bring



# Confessions OF FAITH



specific topics or questions for us to talk about, and we share stories about things happening in our lives,” says Judy. “Sometimes we go places together. It’s been such a blessing.”

One day, Kirschbaum asked Judy if she’d talk to Pat about Baptism. “I said of course! So, the next time we met for coffee, I waited until everyone else was gone, and I started talking to Pat about Baptism,” says Judy.

It didn’t take much to convince Pat to get baptized. “When Judy started talking to me and telling me that I’d spend eternity in heaven, that’s where I want to go,” says Pat. “But I didn’t want to get baptized in front of a bunch of people. I was 74, and I was embarrassed to tell people I wasn’t baptized. I felt more comfortable in front of a couple of ladies.”

Judy solved the problem. “All of us women love you. How would you feel about doing it with us?” she asked Pat.

Judy arranged the details so they could have a small baptism service for Pat at the next month’s coffee time. There were eight women there with Pat, and they all lined up around the baptismal font while Kirschbaum performed the Rite of Baptism. “When I got baptized, I felt warm inside; I felt like everything was lifted off of my shoulders,” says Pat. “And now I’m going to go to heaven!”

After the service, they all had coffee and cake to celebrate. “We all gave Pat a big

hug and I said, ‘Pat, isn’t this the most wonderful way to celebrate your upcoming 75th birthday?’ ” says Judy. “To me, it’s very emotional. Every so often I still tell her, ‘I’m so happy you got baptized and are a child of God!’ ”

Judy says it’s also uplifting to think about the impact that conversations can have. “You don’t really think you’re doing anything special, just talking to someone, but then something like this happens. Pat has so much on her shoulders, but now she can say, ‘I’m going to heaven!’ It’s just a beautiful thing.”

Kirschbaum said Pat’s baptism was special for him too. “We’ve been blessed with a lot of adult baptisms and adult confirmands here. But to baptize Pat in her 70s was a unique and special expe-

rience, and I tear up thinking about it,” he says. “I’ve never heard anyone say, ‘I wanted to get baptized so I could go to heaven.’ That makes me feel like God did something really amazing here.”

After her instruction and baptism, Pat became a member at Spirit of Life. “She’s become the welcoming crew. Any new ladies that have come here by themselves, I encourage them to talk to Pat, and she makes them feel welcome,” says Kirschbaum. “Now Spirit of Life has a new member of its youth group and a new wise woman who share Jesus everywhere they go. Pat and Kenny are such a blessing to our church.”

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*Alicia Neumann is a member at Christ, Zumbrota, Minnesota.*



(Top) Ladies from the “Wise Woman’s Coffee Time” attend the baptism of Pat Ensign (third from the right). This women’s support group was organized by Spirit of Life member Judy Clifton (second from the right). (Bottom) Kenny, Pat’s grandson, was also baptized at Spirit of Life and now participates in the church’s youth group.



## heart to heart parent conversations

When we find out that someone we care about is sick, we want to help. Often, though, we don't know what to do. Writing from firsthand experience, Heart to heart author Kerry Ognenoff details what helped her and her family when she was sick. I really appreciate the practicality of Ognenoff's insights and the glimpse into what her mind-set was when she was struggling.

Following Ognenoff's article, read the sidebar about how Holy Word, Austin, Texas, put together a Care Team to help serve its members and neighbors. Does your congregation have a group like this? Share how it's been a blessing to you—to receive Christian love and support or to give it. E-mail [fic@wels.net](mailto:fic@wels.net) with your stories.

*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 A FAMILY WITH A SICK PARENT?

**In April 2018**, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. I never expected to hear a cancer diagnosis at 36 years old. I never expected to have to tell my two young children that their mom was seriously ill. I also never expected the amount of help and support we received from our friends, family, and church/school community. Our lives were thrown into a tailspin for six months as I went through chemotherapy, and my husband took over the kid and house duties. We would not have survived without the unbelievable outpouring of love and help we received.

Before I offer advice on supporting a family with a sick parent, I'd like to speak to the person who is ill (or in need of support): Figure out exactly what you need. The following suggestions were most helpful to me and our family, but that was because I carefully evaluated what I needed most and was able to make specific requests when people offered help. When people ask what they can do for you, don't be afraid to say, "This is what we need right now."

That said, when someone you love is going through a tough time, here are some helpful ways to reach out.

### PRAY!

I cannot put into words what an empowering comfort it was to know that I had people praying for me and my family during my diagnosis and treatment. When our life took a surreal turn, we had so many believers on our side, storming his throne on our behalf. It was a *huge* comfort!

Ask what to pray for specifically. Do they have tests or procedures coming up? Troubling side effects? Kids or spouse struggling with the life changes? A particular challenge you can bring to God? And then let them know you're praying.

### BE SPECIFIC IN YOUR OFFERS OF HELP.

General offers of help, like "Let us know if you need anything," were always appreciated, but the specific offers of help were much easier for me to accept. "I'm picking up your kids for a day at the zoo. What time works for you?" or "What day this week can I come and clean your bathroom?" It took all the thinking out of it for me. It's the little things—walking the dog, hanging with the kids, cleaning up the kitchen—that, yes, I could still do while sick, but the help gave me a little bit of a break to focus on other activities instead.



### SIGN UP FOR OR COORDINATE A MEAL TRAIN.

My family was beyond blessed to be well-fed throughout my treatment. My good days were spent trying to conserve energy to be with my kids, so cooking and grocery shopping took a back seat. Talk to the person struggling in your life—has someone already set up a meal train? Would it be helpful to have meals delivered a couple times a week? If a home-cooked meal isn't workable, a gift card to a restaurant or meal service is a wonderful alternative.

### SEND A CARD OR A CARE PACKAGE.

Getting mail is special at any time, in my opinion, but getting cards from friends and family near and far during treatment always lifted my spirits while I was sick. My favorites were the cards with terrible jokes, but I also received many beautiful cards of encouragement. Receiving a little care package was also uplifting. I had several days of resting in bed after each chemo and devoured dozens of books shared with me by friends during that time. Consider sending a small care package with a book, a treat, a special blanket they can snuggle under while they rest, or something special for their kids to play with.

### SPEND TIME VISITING OR LISTENING.

Often when people would ask what I needed, I would immediately answer, "Company!" I am a very busy and social person. To be sidelined from my usual routine for months was incredibly lonely. I loved to have friends drop by for a visit. Be sure to keep it short if it seems like your friend needs to rest. Ask if they need a ride to or company for appointments or procedures. Having friends along at my chemo appointments gave me something to look forward to about the appointment.

Whether you reach out in one or many ways, do something, even if it's just sending a text letting family members know that you're thinking of and praying for them. Being surrounded by brothers and sisters in Christ is one of the beautiful benefits of struggling through hard times. God created us to need one another, so don't be afraid to be the one who needs help or the one who offers it.

*Kerry Ognenoff and her husband, Andy, have a 10-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son who attend school at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. They are members at Grace, Milwaukee.*



## Organizing a Care Team: One congregation's story

Holy Word, Austin, Texas, created its Care Team in 2018 to be the listener and identifier of community needs, to ask who will be the hands and feet of Jesus to meet these needs, and to connect the hurting with the servants.

The Care Team was designed to empower our members to become servants by caring for fellow church family needs brought to the attention of the team via our pastors' insights or personal relationships. As a part of this work, the team also seeks to help identify members of the Holy Word community who are in need of support, guidance, or other services and to connect them with members interested in helping meet the need.

Our initial team duties included arranging helpers to organize and serve at funeral receptions, writing and mailing cards to members, providing meal support for new mothers, visiting shut-in members and bringing them gifts, and organizing frozen meal storage for future needs. In February 2019, we launched a recovery ministry. We have been working to create processes that will sustain these endeavors as volunteers come and go over the years.

Holy Word's Care Team hopes to create more opportunities for our members to serve in ways that showcase their gifts while benefiting others. Helping others lets us show our love to God and our gratitude for his blessings. Research also shows that people get a boost of well-being when they volunteer and support others in service. The Care Team sees this as an opportunity to create a culture within our church family of awareness, encouragement, and servant leadership, and we are excited to watch this effort blossom and grow.

*Amory Stephenson*

# A parent's worries and advice

**A mom discusses the importance of talking to your children about what they may encounter when they go to college.**

Mary Sieh

We recently took our 18-year-old to college orientation day. The first day we learned about fun social events to help get students settled in. Day 2 included “Sex Discussion 101—a fun way to ask all the questions you want.” Two days into their new college life, not knowing anyone yet, students were being encouraged to discuss sex together—and with adults who likely don’t hold the same values as our family does. I was worried, but I found courage and now want to offer some advice.

Parents, it’s no lie when you hear folks say, “If your kids aren’t learning about sex from you, they are learning about it from someone else.” Even when they are learning about it from you, they are still hearing from other sources too. **Take the opportunity to talk to your kids from young ages on up, and not just once.** Include all topics. Don’t assume they “get what you mean.” Be specific. Ask for your teens’ thoughts on certain matters. Give them space to talk without pressuring them to conform to what you may want. Plant the seeds along the way but know you can only leave the growth of those seeds in the Lord’s very trustworthy hands. And take heart! Your children are listening to you and value what you tell them above all others.

Your children will face decisions, such as their roommates asking if their girlfriends or boyfriends can sleep over in the dorm room. Discuss with your teens exit strategies at parties. Discuss how they plan to carry themselves daily in a manner that will act as a defense against any allegations. They are going to need these memories to help them make decisions that support their values and goals in life.

**Ask your teens what those values and goals are in their lives**—academically, spiritually, and relationally. Help them vocalize what it might take to achieve these goals. Where will they find help along the way? Their bodies may look all grown up, but their heads and hearts still need the guidance Dad and Mom can provide. Don’t shy away just because they act like they’ve got this all figured out. They don’t.

**Our best defense for our children is prayer.** Start now, and do it relentlessly. Our Father in heaven is listening! Regularly let your children know you are praying for them to remind them of the blessings you are asking the Lord to give them. We don’t parent out of fear, but rather out of love, hope, anticipation, and trust in the Lord’s Word—that is exciting!

**Then encourage your children in the Lord—for he has done marvelous things.** They need to hear about your faith and the ups and downs you’ve experienced. We don’t merely

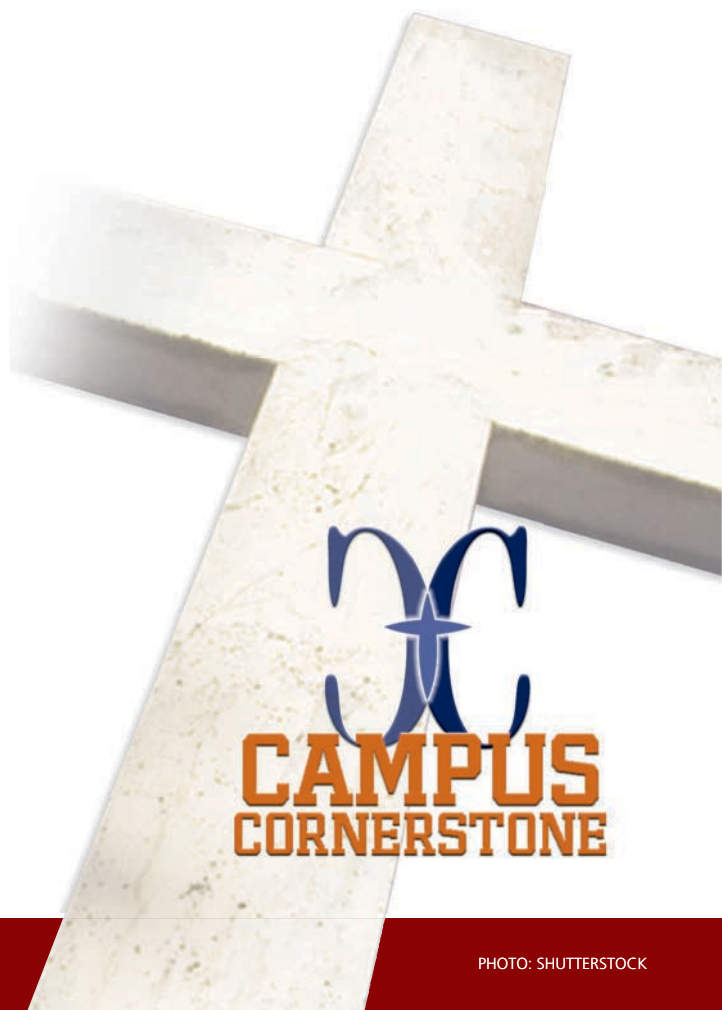
have a God who resides in the words on the pages of a book. We have a Mighty Counselor and Friend who is alive and active! Let your God shine at home with your family. They need to know they have a Savior who loves them and will help them even when the going gets real and tough.

It’s evident that we haven’t always taken to heart the seriousness of 1 Peter 5:8: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” I am so thankful Jesus has paid the price for us. We can rest in his promises, no matter where we may fall short as parents or what may come our kids’ ways as they head off to college.

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*Mary Sieh is a member at Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minnesota.*

Read a college student’s perspective on the importance of open communication between parents and their children in college on p. 30.





## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

**Hackmann, Brian**, to Grace, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Hillmann, Joshua**, to Rock of Ages, Gordon, Neb.

**Horn, Paul**, to Lamb of God, Lafayette, Ind.  
**Kelly, John**, to St. Peter, Saint Peter, Minn.

**Schuppe, Edward**, to retirement  
**Wagenknecht, Daniel**, to Christian giving counselor, South Atlantic and South Central Districts

### Teachers

**Chojnacki, Jennifer**, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Delray Beach, Fla.

**Danell, Joshua**, to Trinity, Marinette, Wis.

**Danell, Kelly**, to Trinity, Marinette, Wis.

**Degner, Ethan**, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Dorn, Katelynn**, to Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.

**Edmundson, Benjamin**, to Shepherd of the Valley, Menasha, Wis.

**Ellenberger, Caley**, to St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.

**Gudex, Melissa**, to Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis.

**Jaeger, Seth**, to Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.

**Johnson, Elizabeth**, to St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis.

**Leifer, Paul**, to St. Paul, Livonia, Mich.

**McKenney, Lisa**, to Faith of a Child Daycare, Oshkosh, Wis.

**Myers, Michelle**, to St. John, Montello, Wis.

**Noffsinger, Candace**, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.

**Rebernick, Gregory**, to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.

**Scharrer, Jody**, to St. John, Hemlock, Mich.

**Smith, Stephanie**, to Resurrection, Aurora, Ill.

**Stangl, Ryan**, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

**Stuebs, Alyssa**, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.

**Von Eschen, Cindy**, to retirement

**Weinrich, Tyler**, to Trinity, Neenah, Wis.

**Wigley, Lisa**, to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.

**Wilson, Ann**, to Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis.

## ANNIVERSARY

**Fort Atkinson, Wis.**—St. Paul school (150). May 19. Festival service and alumni reunion. Worship, 1:30 P.M.; school open house and cornerstone opening follows. All alumni invited. 920-563-2263. Website, [stpaulsfort.org](http://stpaulsfort.org).

## COMING EVENTS

**Martin Luther College choir tour**—Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, [mlc-wels.edu](http://mlc-wels.edu).

- Mar. 1, 1:45 P.M., Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.; 7 P.M. Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis.
- Mar. 2, 7 P.M., St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.
- Mar. 3, 11:30 A.M., Salem, Escanaba, Mich.
- Mar. 4, 10 A.M., Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; 7 P.M., Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
- Mar. 5, 10 A.M., Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich.; 7 P.M., Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio
- Mar. 6, 7 P.M., Bethlehem, Carmel, Ind.
- Mar. 7, 1 P.M., Michigan Lutheran High School, St. Joseph, Mich.; 7 P.M., St. Paul, South Haven, Mich.
- Mar. 8, 10 A.M., Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.; 7 P.M., Faith, Antioch, Ill.
- Mar. 9, 7 P.M., St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis.
- Mar. 10, 9:15, 11 A.M., St. Peter, Milwaukee, Wis.
- Mar. 21, 7:30 P.M., St. John, Caledonia, Minn.
- Mar. 22, 12:45 P.M., Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis.; 7 P.M., St. Peter, Schofield, Wis.
- Mar. 23, 7 P.M., Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
- Mar. 24, 10 A.M., Living Hope, Shakopee, Minn.; 3 P.M., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

### Pathways to Christ women's retreat—

Mar. 8–10. LaSure's Banquet Hall, Oshkosh, Wis. Theme: "I have learned the secret of being content." Website, [pathwaystochrist.org](http://pathwaystochrist.org).

### The Prep Singers spring tour—Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Website, [lps.wels.net](http://lps.wels.net).

- Mar. 14, 7 P.M., Grace, Yorba Linda, Calif.
- Mar. 15, 7 P.M., Reformation, San Diego, Calif.
- Mar. 16, 5 P.M., Christ, Prescott Valley, Ariz.
- Mar. 17, 11 A.M., Cross of Christ, Kingman, Ariz.; 7 P.M., Beautiful Savior, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Mar. 18, 7 P.M., Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Mar. 19, 7 P.M., The Springs, Sparks, Nev.
- Mar. 20, 6:30 P.M., St. Peter, Modesto, Calif.
- Mar. 21, 7 P.M., St. Peter, Clovis, Calif.
- Mar. 22, 7 P.M., Christ the Vine, Temecula, Calif.
- Mar. 23, 7 P.M., St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif.
- Mar. 24, 10 A.M., Gethsemane, Los Angeles, Calif.

### Christian Leadership Experience conference—

Mar. 15–16. La Crosse Center, La Crosse, Wis. Hosted by the Antioch Foundation. Website, [christlead.com](http://christlead.com).

### Christian Woman Today retreat—

Mar. 15–17. Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel, Brookfield, Wis. Website, [christianwomantoday.org](http://christianwomantoday.org).

### Ironmen of God conference—

Mar. 23. St. Paul, Ixonia, Wis. Website, [ironmenofgodwi.org](http://ironmenofgodwi.org).

### National staff ministers conference—

April 25–27. St. Matthew, Niles, Ill. Website, [wels.net/events](http://wels.net/events).

### WELS Nurses Association spring conference—

April 26–27. Eastside, Madison, Wis. [welsnurses@wels.net](mailto:welsnurses@wels.net). Website, [welsnurses.net](http://welsnurses.net).

### WELS EdTechLead Summit 2019—

June 25–27. Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, Wis. Registration open. Website, [welsedtechlead.com](http://welsedtechlead.com).

### Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention—

June 27–30. Des Moines, Iowa. Theme: "Let us ever walk with Jesus in the Heartland." Registration open. Website, [lwms.org](http://lwms.org).

### WELS Women's Ministry conference—

July 18–20. Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis. Theme: "Living stones, positioned to thrive." Registration open. Website, [wels.net/wmconference](http://wels.net/wmconference).

## JOBS AVAILABLE

**Operations director**—for Camp Shiloh, the South Central District Lutheran retreat camp located near Pittsburg, Texas. Full-time, salaried position with on-site housing provided as part of compensation. Website, [campshilohretreat.org](http://campshilohretreat.org). Conal McDanel, 903-855-1800; [director@campshilohretreat.org](mailto:director@campshilohretreat.org); or Tony Cuellar, 214-244-8010; [tonycuellar77@gmail.com](mailto:tonycuellar77@gmail.com).

**Administrative manager**—for Costa Maya/Cruz de Cristo Ministry in Mahahual, Quintana Roo, Mexico. Key areas of work include managing the humanitarian aid ministry, office administration, and more. Full-time, paid position with housing provided. Spanish language fluency required. Website, [costamayaministries.org](http://costamayaministries.org). Martin Valleskey, [pastormvalleskey@gmail.com](mailto:pastormvalleskey@gmail.com).

## NAMES WANTED

**WELS/ELS counselors**—WLCFS-Christian Family Solutions is seeking WELS/ELS in-training or licensed mental health professionals to provide services in nationwide outpatient counseling clinics or via secure video. Send names to [hinfo@wlcfs.org](mailto:hinfo@wlcfs.org) or call 888-685-9522.

Find additional community events and resources at [welsrc.net](http://welsrc.net). To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; [bulletinboard@wels.net](mailto:bulletinboard@wels.net). Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

## Students put their faith into action

Not all college students are planning to lie in the sun or ski the slopes during their Spring Break this year. WELS Mission Journeys is working with campus ministries at several colleges and universities to coordinate short-term mission trips this March.

Teams from Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC), Milwaukee, Wis., and the campus ministries at Michigan Tech, Houghton, Mich., and the University of Wisconsin—Madison are traveling to help missions in Colorado Springs, Colo., and Spokane, Wash.

Shannon Bohme, coordinator for Mission Journeys, highlights the importance of providing these opportunities for college students. “They’re the future leaders [of our church],” he says. “The younger generations want to put their faith into action, so we’re trying to give them the opportunity to go and serve.”

While some WELS high schools and colleges already have mission trip programs, Bohme says many don’t have the resources or contacts to do it on their own. By working with those schools, he can offer more students a way to experience a mission trip. He also plans to work with schools with existing programs to help coordinate needs and opportunities.

Wayne Shevey, WLC campus pastor, says he appreciates the coordination that Mission Journeys provides. “[Mission Journeys] shares with us what their needs are. They do a lot of the legwork and then we connect them with the necessary students.”

He continues, “This gives students a different experience than what they’re used to. Rather than being served as people in congregations, this gives them the opportunity to be of service.”

WLC sent out its first group through Mission Journeys in January, when seven students traveled to Sahuarita, Ariz., during the college’s J-term to help Grace Lutheran Church with community outreach, English as a Second Language classes, and church property clean-up.

Ryan Heiman, pastor at Grace, says the students’ work provided a boost to Grace’s ministry and its members. He also took this as an opportunity to expose the students to many different aspects of ministry work. “This might lead them down a path of being a pastor or a teacher or just get them excited about outreach and mission work wherever they may end up in their vocation.”

While the students were able to help Grace with some practical tasks, they also learned lifelong lessons. “I learned

that it often takes more than one encounter to engage others when it comes to speaking about church or Jesus. . . . Maybe the door in the face one time can lead to listening ears the next time. Who knows what God can work after that!” says Elizabeth O’Connor, a WLC sophomore and member at St. John, Lomira, Wis.

David Wilson, a junior at WLC and member at St. John’s, Pardeeville, Wis., says that he could see some of the ideas and programs he learned about on the trip working in his home congregation as well as in his personal life. “I plan on taking this experience and utilizing what I learned to interact more with those I know who don’t understand the joy we have in Christ.”

Both say that they would go again “in a heartbeat.” “These trips teach you how to engage others and instill a heart of service,” says O’Connor. “For those of you considering a mission trip, I strongly encourage you to go. There is nothing like it! You don’t have to worry that you are too young, too inexperienced, or too nervous. God will use you!”



Learn more about Mission Journeys at [wels.net/missionjourneys](http://wels.net/missionjourneys) and in this month’s edition of *WELS Connection*.



Students from Wisconsin Lutheran College went door to door in Sahuarita, Ariz., to promote Grace’s new church and child learning center, a building scheduled to be completed by next fall. A family has already pre-registered into the childcare as a result.





## First WELS EdTechLead conference to be held

The 2019 WELS Education, Technology, and Leadership Summit (WELS EdTechLead) will be held June 25–27 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

This new event combines the National School Leadership and the WELSTech conferences into one expanded convention. It offers information and fellowship to those interested in exploring ministry tools, techniques, and best practices in the areas of education, technology, and leadership.

Created to be more sensitive to the time and funds of those who may have been interested in attending both conferences, WELS EdTechLead also aims to draw a broader audience than either conference might be able to alone.

“I think the conference really is for almost anybody in ministry,” says Martin Spriggs, chief technology officer at WELS. “It’s an opportunity to help everyone put a bit more brainpower



and a bit more passion into their efforts. It just makes sense to share that knowledge and energy and come up with better ministry plans and strategies together.”

The speakers and sessions offered at WELS EdTechLead are not simply related to one of the three topics of education, technology, and leadership. Many

demonstrate the intersections between the topics. For example, teachers will be able to learn about instructional technology at the conference, and school principals and early childhood directors will have opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

The schedule is organized to allow attendees to experience a variety of workshops from each of the three fields. Half-day and full-day preconference sessions are also available to allow visitors to dive deeply into a specific subject.

“It’s to strengthen the network of support we have with one another in ministry,” says Jim Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools. “You are going to learn some tips and some tools, but, in many ways, this conference is to inspire you to move forward in your ministry.”

Registration for WELS EdTechLead is now open, with early-bird discounts through May 1. Visit [welsedtechlead.com](http://welsedtechlead.com) to learn more and register.

## Women’s ministry conference highlights being “living stones”

“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

The focal point of the 2019 WELS Women’s Ministry Conference, being held at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., July 18–20, is “living stones” and how Christian women are called to be a part of something bigger.

Dawn Schulz, conference coordinator, says the committee chose 1 Peter as the conference’s inspiration because it’s a great encouragement to women. “A ‘living stone’ is a woman who uses her God-given talents and gifts to build up God’s kingdom and to bless those around her, wherever that may be,” Schulz says. “Just like Jesus, we are special to God. We are chosen for a reason.”

A range of speakers will discuss the topic of living stones in keynote ad-



dresses and breakout sessions. One of the main points of the conference is how Christians fit together, like stones on a building. Each stone possesses unique qualities to serve God’s kingdom. To emphasize this point, the speakers have a range of backgrounds, including a lawyer, a pastor, and a ministry coordinator.

“We wanted to provide opportunities for a wide scope of presentations,” Schulz says. “The speakers that were chosen are people who have been speaking and researching God’s Word and will bring light to the fact that God uses every single person in his kingdom.”

The conference also will dive into how Christian women should look

at the individuality of each person to share the gospel more effectively. For example, a young adult ministry professional as well as a panel of college students will emphasize how to reach younger generations today.

At the end of the conference, Schulz hopes women walk away feeling more confident in their purpose as a part of God’s spiritual house. She says, “This conference is going to nurture women in God’s Word, encourage them by bringing them together with other Christian sisters, and equip them with resources.”

*Gabriella Moline*

For more information on the Women’s Ministry Conference and to register, visit [wels.net/wmconference](http://wels.net/wmconference).

## WELS members support Christmas outreach program

Approximately 70 percent of WELS congregations participated in the syndowide Christmas outreach program known as C18. WELS Congregational Services created a myriad of materials for congregations to use to encourage members to reach out to the unchurched and to promote the theme “A Light in the darkness.”

“When we began C18,” says Jon Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services, “we said our goal was ‘to reach’ one million souls prior to and on Christmas Eve. I realize ‘reach’ is a nebulous term. That was intentional. It is impossible for congregations to track how many people a member invites to Christmas Eve. So it is hard to quantify. What I can report is that at least 1.2 million ‘A Light in the darkness’ Christmas Eve postcards were shared.”

Hein also notes that through follow-up surveys, he has discovered ancillary benefits to this Christmas outreach effort. One of those benefits is a renewed focus on evangelism in some congregations.

One survey respondent commented, “I have prayed for years for God to make me bold enough to share the gospel. I have now done this . . . several weeks in a row for C18 and have had very positive results. I plan to continue this method of inviting neighbors to my church year-round for different events.”

Another said, “Our congregation did more evangelism in the past 3 months than we have done in the 20 years I have been a member here.”

In addition to evangelism materials, Congregational Services offered worship resources to congregations. Hein believes these resources helped congregations see the potential for worship

### WELS MEMBERS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS

C18 encouraged members to invite those around them to attend Christmas Eve worship with them. Hear more from those who participated in this outreach program:

“We had our largest Christmas Eve service attendance ever! It was great! So many first-time visitors, family members that never come, and coworkers of members who were so happy they came.”

“A Hindu family worshiped with us due to the efforts of one member who knew them and made an effort to invite them. This was their first time in a Christian house of worship.”

“One woman in the congregation was wishing she’d be able to fill a pew [with worship guests]. She arrived about 30 minutes early and was pretty bummed that she’d be all alone. Then, about 10 minutes before the service, they all piled in as a Christmas surprise to her and did fill a whole pew.”

“C18 gave something for our teens to do. They helped with the Facebook promotion and canvassing. My son seemed excited to do something for his church maybe for the first time ever.”

These statements were taken from follow-up surveys conducted by WELS Congregational Services.

in two ways. “First, they illustrated the potential for liturgical variety. Liturgical worship has been proven for centuries to let the gospel predominate. When done properly, it also demonstrates a rootedness, illustrating that the church deals with ancient threats and universal problems. However, the liturgy also allows for appropriate flexibility, opportunities ‘to bring out . . . new treasures as well as old’ (Matthew 13:52). It seems people appreciated that. Second, C18 illustrated the potential to use worship as a part of your congregational evangelism efforts. Worship folders make it extremely easy for someone who has never been to church in their life to follow along and not get lost.”

This was borne out by one survey respondent who commented, “I have at times been afraid to invite friends to church because I was not sure if they would get how it works. The worship folders take away that fear. It was the first time my church has used them. I hope we use them more often.”

Congregational Services also used this Christmas program as an opportunity to promote family Advent devotions. Thousands of families used the materials developed by WELS Discipleship and WELS Evangelism, based on the popular WELS Daily Devotions.

As one WELS member wrote, “I loved that C18 focused on reaching unbelievers. But I also love that it stressed feeding our children with God’s Word.”

After hearing from WELS members about the blessings that this Christmas program offered, Congregational Services is now planning resources for C19.

To read Jon Hein’s full report about C18, visit [welscongregational-services.net/c18-our-christmas-efforts](http://welscongregational-services.net/c18-our-christmas-efforts).





## 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 2014, we reported that Divine Savior Academy, Doral, Fla., was embarking on another building project—an 88,000-square-foot high school, that would double the size of its campus. It's five-year-goal was to have 1,000 students from PreK-3 to 12th grade getting a quality education and learning about their Savior.

### SO WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Divine Savior Academy—Doral has 980 students and is still growing. Divine Savior Church reaches out to the school families and community in Doral as well as serves more than 400 members with Spanish and English ministries.

But perhaps the biggest change is that its church/school model has spread, with four additional Divine Savior campuses in Florida and Texas.

"As a group, we have always focused on outreach—not only in our community, but kingdom wide," says Carlos Leyrer, president of Divine Savior Ministries.

Leyrer says that for years Divine Savior—Doral had been using a percentage of its budget to give grants to congregations across the country. Several of these congregations asked for more help with long-range planning and program development. "That led to a lot of consulting," says Leyrer, noting that they were happy to share best practices and advice.

But when another South Florida congregation approached Divine Savior—Doral for help on potentially starting a school, Divine Savior offered more than just advice. It merged with the group and with another congregation in South Florida, and they all worked together to start a new church and school in Delray Beach (read the full story on p. 26).

Soon after, two additional sites were added in Texas—one is an existing



Last September, Divine Savior Ministries celebrated the grand opening of its campus in Delray Beach, Florida. This is one of five Divine Savior locations. Three are in South Florida, and two are in Texas.

school in Sienna Plantation and another is a new mission church looking to start a school in Liberty Hill, near Austin.

"We did not look for these new campuses. We had always considered multi-site ministry, but assumed it would be closer to home," says Leyrer. "But these are just God things."

As a multi-site ministry, Divine Savior is both collaborative and independent. This network of churches shares a logo, brand, website, and philosophy of ministry, yet each congregation remains autonomous as it conducts its day-to-day work. Offerings stay at each campus and each congregation has its own budget and council, yet all contribute to a global fund that supports marketing, communication, and other joint efforts across all the sites. The pastors meet regularly to plan sermons series, Bible studies, and worship plans, yet each congregation has its own events and ministry plans that work within its unique community. The academies share in many of the same systems and are governed by the Divine Savior Ministries governing board, yet they all also have local school councils.

Divine Savior Ministries was formed to coordinate and support ministry growth. It provides financial and long-range planning, communication, education, administrative systems, and expertise for all five campus sites. "We are not innovators," says Leyrer. "We're

simply applying best practices and seeking to gain efficiencies wherever possible. We have a life-changing product, a true Christian education, and we simply want to find the best way to share it with others."

Divine Savior Ministries has big goals for its future. It is hoping to break ground on Divine Savior Church and Academy—Santa Rita Ranch this summer, opening this new Austin-area school in the fall of 2020. It is working to increase enrollment at the new academy that just opened this past fall in Delray Beach. Finally, it is looking to open a school on the Doral campus for children with special needs.

John Boggs, pastor at Divine Savior—W. Palm Beach, Fla., says this ministry model could not exist without the support of the synod as a whole. More than 70 MLC-trained teachers work at Divine Savior Academies, and several of the congregations are home mission churches. WELS CEF provided grants and loans for both the Santa Rita Ranch and the Delray campuses. "We are thankful for the support of the synod and our joining together in the same exact work that our brothers and sisters around the world are doing," says Boggs. "Yes, it looks different, but God is blessing all of us as we move forward to his glory."

Learn more about Divine Savior Ministries at [divinesaviorministries.org](http://divinesaviorministries.org).

# WELS news briefs

## WORLD MISSIONS

414-256-3237; [missionspromotions@wels.net](mailto:missionspromotions@wels.net)

Nathan Seiltz, director of WELS Multi-Language Publications, and Terry Schultz, a consultant for Multi-Language Publications, **traveled to Hanoi, Vietnam, in January to evaluate the types of training materials needed for the**



Hmong Fellowship Church and to teach courses on legalism and the book of Galatians. They were joined by Bounkeo Lor, WELS' Hmong Asia ministry coordinator. Pictured are the students who attended the two-week training courses as well as a few of their family members. For more information about the amazing opportunity WELS has to bring the gospel to the more than 100,000 members of the Hmong Fellowship Church, visit [wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach](http://wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach).



In December, John Holtz (left) and John Hartmann (right), missionaries in Africa, along with Pastor Bright Pembeleka (middle) from the Lutheran Church of Central Africa—Malawi, **traveled to Uganda to meet with and provide training to a fledgling church body.** The church body's leader, Pastor Makisimu Musa, e-mailed WELS and the LCCA requesting assistance. Over the course of 14 days, this group traveled to eight congregations, met six pastors and five evangelists, taught three days of lessons, and attended two days of meetings. Read more about their trip at [wels.net/new-hope-in-uganda](http://wels.net/new-hope-in-uganda).



## WELS TECHNOLOGY

414-256-3250; [martin.spriggs@wels.net](mailto:martin.spriggs@wels.net)

**The audio version of WELS Daily Devotions can now be added to Amazon Alexa's "Flash briefing" function.**

Each day WELS provides a short devotion based on a Bible passage. These devotions are written by WELS pastors around the world and can be accessed via text or audio. If you have an Echo, Echo Dot, Echo Show, etc., you can set up a "flash briefing" that plays through a list of available items of your choosing. You can now add WELS Daily Devotions to that lineup. In your Amazon Alexa app on your smartphone (or <https://alexa.amazon.com> on your computer), go to "Settings," then "Flash briefing," then "Add content," and finally search for "WELS Daily Devotion." Once you have it set up, you can just ask Alexa to "play my flash briefing."

## BOARD FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

414-256-3236; [paul.prange@wels.net](mailto:paul.prange@wels.net)

Following the theme "Fearlessly proclaim the gospel," 30 presenters shared their expertise and personal stories, encouraging students to communicate Christ in their personal lives and their public ministries at **Martin Luther College's 14th annual Evangelism Day** on Jan. 16. Pictured is Matt Rothe, home missionary at The Way, Fredericksburg, Va., presenting on the topic of "church planting" and how a mission mindset can be applied in any field. For the second year, Martin Luther College also offered four evening presentations to the public.



Students appreciated the perspectives of those who are actively serving. "It was a great reminder of why we're here," notes Zach Kopplin.

"I came out with this zeal for evangelism," says Aislinn Eddy. "It's not just about global missions. It's about evangelism right where you're at too."

New this year is E-Day Action Day, a follow-up to Evangelism Day on April 10. Students will take their learning to the streets as Dave Malnes, a WELS staff minister and the founder of Praise and Proclaim Ministries, leads students and other New Ulm WELS members in an outreach effort. Participants will receive two hours of training before they knock on doors and will then participate in a debriefing session afterward.



## Obituaries

### Robert L. Ring, 1945–2018

Robert Ring was born Nov. 21, 1945, in Faribault, Minn. He died Oct. 10, 2018, in Minneapolis, Minn.

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

He is survived by two daughters; four grandchildren; his second wife, Connie; one brother; and two sisters. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Jae; his parents; one brother; and one sister.

### Frederick M. Archer, 1938–2018

Frederick Archer was born Oct. 13, 1938, in Rowan County, N.C. He died Oct. 17, 2018, in Salisbury, N.C.

He served at Good Shepherd, China Grove, N.C., and Our Savior, Roanoke, Va.

He is survived by his wife, Alice; two daughters; two sons; seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

### MyKayla J. Jensen, 1988–2018

MyKayla Jensen was born July 16, 1988, in Appleton, Wis. She died Oct. 20, 2018, in Redwood Falls, Minn.

A 2011 graduate of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.; First, La Crosse, Wis.; and St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.

She is survived by her parents, three grandparents, one brother, and one sister. She is preceded in death by her grandmother.

### Elaine H. Falk, 1926–2018

Elaine Falk (née Bogenschneider) was born Apr. 20, 1926, in Lomira, Wis. She died Nov. 1, 2018, in Fremont, Wis.

A 1965 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., she taught at Zion, South Milwaukee, Wis.; Gloria Dei-Bethesda, Milwaukee, Wis.; St. John, Fremont, Wis.; and St. Matthew, Appleton, Wis.

She is survived by 3 sons, 1 daughter, 15 grandchildren, and 25 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, LaSalle, and one brother.

## District news

### NORTHERN WISCONSIN

On Jan. 6, **St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.**, dedicated its new church building. The congregation cherished its historic downtown church building but needed to build a new church that was handicap-accessible and could better serve the community's current needs.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ-CA—Michael Schroeder; NW—Dennis Kleist; WW—Brett Brauer.

### ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA



In January, the boys basketball program at Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz., lived out their core values of thankfulness and servanthood by preparing food bags for impoverished countries.

### WESTERN WISCONSIN



At St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis., the Christmas Eve tradition is to have sons of the congregation who are studying to be pastors read the Scripture lessons during candlelight worship. Pictured are both Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary students along with St. Matthew's pastors at the 2018 service.

### NORTHERN WISCONSIN



In the early 1980s, members of First German, Manitowoc, Wis., began reaching out to the Hmong in their community. Today, Trinity Hmong, Manitowoc, is an independent home mission congregation of 154 souls that shares a worship facility and fellowship ties with First German. On Jan. 6, the congregations hosted a joint Hmong Outreach in Vietnam Sunday to celebrate the amazing opportunity God has opened to WELS to reach the more than 100,000 members of the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam. First German and Trinity Hmong's members enjoyed a Hmong-American potluck; Hmong artifacts on display; a presentation by Larry Schlomer, administrator for WELS Board for World Missions; and a worship service with the liturgy recited in Hmong and English. Pictured (from left) are Mark Johnston, vacancy pastor at First German; Larry Schlomer; and Daniel Lor, pastor at Trinity Hmong, who all participated in the service.



# MERGING

*for mission*

**Three congregations become a multi-site as they work to spread the gospel in South Florida.** Julie K. Wietzke

It started with three congregations—all with their own unique situation—having the same goal: to spread the gospel further in South Florida.

Pompano, Pompano Beach, Florida, was struggling to get new members, its church was in disrepair, and its location left much to be desired. Yet it wasn't ready to close, to give up on sharing the gospel message.

Hope, W. Palm Beach, Florida, was pulling in members from all over South Florida and dreamed of daughtering a congregation to extend the gospel's reach, but it didn't have quite enough resources to take the leap.

Divine Savior, Doral, Florida, had just finished adding on to its campus and was blessed financially with an enrollment of more than nine hundred students from PreK-3 to 12th grade. They

thought they might eventually start another site in the Miami area.

As the only three congregations left in South Florida, they all came to the same conclusion. "We realized we could do more ministry together than we could by ourselves," says John Boggs, pastor in W. Palm Beach.

This led to the formation of a new multi-site ministry under the name of Divine Savior and a new church and school in Delray Beach, Florida. "Satan is trying everything he can to make ministry work as difficult as possible in south Florida, but God is bigger than Satan," says Boggs. "Us joining together is giving us more of an opportunity not only to survive in this ministry down here but to thrive in it and to exponentially grow the ministry of grace God has entrusted to us."

## **FACING STRUGGLES**

Started in the 1960s, Ocean Drive Lutheran Church in Pompano Beach worked hard to reach out into its community, even starting an early childhood ministry in the late 1970s. But the school closed in 1993, and membership numbers began declining.

With a name change in the 2000s and a goal to become "Your neighborhood church," Pompano continued to try to make inroads into its community. But with a location offset from the main thoroughway and in a neighborhood filled with transient residents, outreach was difficult. "No matter what we tried, it was just not yielding the results we were hoping for in terms of bringing in new souls," says Patrick Lockwitz, a member at Pompano.



With membership declining and a church in need of repairs, the congregation began facing financial problems. With the help of a WELS mission counselor, it began conducting demographic studies and collecting data to determine what it should do next. In 2014, it was looking at three options: rent the building out to another ministry, have its pastor become part time, or sell its building and relocate. “It was the reality. Nothing was bringing in people. Work was wearing [members] down. The facility was falling apart. It was a cycle happening over and over again. Something had to change—it was going to take something drastic,” says Lockwitz.

## FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

In its studies, Pompano learned that some nearby areas in South Florida were in need of good education options. The congregation began talking to Divine Savior in Doral, located an hour south, about the process of opening a school—buying land, constructing a building, financing. “We said, ‘You have already done this in Doral. Can you help us navigate this in Coral Springs?’” says Lockwitz, referring to a nearby city.

At the same time, Pompano’s pastor decided to take a call, and Divine Savior’s pastors took on the vacancy. “When you’re at the end of the map, you just hang tighter together,” says Carlos Leyrer, president of Divine Savior Ministries. “If we didn’t do something, we knew how the story ended. We needed a new ministry plan.”

That “something” was the start of Divine Savior and Pompano working together—an event that would eventually lead the Pompano congregation to join Divine Savior Ministries. Pompano put its church on the market and started meeting in a hotel room in Coral Springs, a more stable, family-oriented neighborhood primed for Christian education.

Land search for a permanent location began, and when the search turned up options in nearby Palm Beach County, Hope, W. Palm Beach, also joined the discussion, because it had already been looking to start a church in that area.



Divine Savior–Delray Beach dedicated its new church and school building in September 2018. The core group of this new mission church began officially meeting in July 2017, worshipping together and laying the vision and groundwork for this new mission in Delray Beach.

The three congregations settled on a great location in Delray Beach, Florida, about 20 miles south of W. Palm Beach. With grants and loans from WELS Church Extension Fund, land was purchased, and building began. Pompano members closed their church and along with several families from W. Palm Beach became the core group of this new mission. The South Atlantic District Mission Board called Joel Schulz to plant this new church. On Oct. 29, 2017, the three congregations celebrated an official merger under the name of Divine Savior.

Boggs says this was a group effort with each congregation having a role: Pompano provided starting cash from the sale of its old church property; Doral brought in the systems and financial backing; and Hope added a growing, stable, experienced ministry to help the mission church. “We had three different sites, offering three different things,” says Boggs. “None of us was going to be able to do this by ourselves but together we were able to start a congregation in an area of South Florida that desperately needed the gospel to be proclaimed.”

## MOVING FORWARD

A little less than a year after the merger, Divine Savior–Delray Beach dedicated its new school building. Although zoning issues and construction delays pushed back its original timeline for the opening of its academy, the congregation is excited to settle into its new home and move forward with its mission. For former Pompano members it had been almost three years of meeting

in hotel rooms in Coral Springs and hotels and a movie theater in Delray. “It might take me a couple of years to get used to this being our permanent home,” says Lockwitz.

Pompano’s cross, altar, and baptismal font adorn the front of the worship space. “It means a lot for them to have that,” says Schulz, who spent months after he arrived visiting all the former Pompano members.

But the new congregation isn’t focusing on the past. “We’re always forging forward,” says Lockwitz. He says being part of a multi-site ministry provides the support—both financially and spiritually—to get the work done. “It’s not like we’re living in our own Delray Beach campus. It’s a regional thing. . . . Now we’re able to do the mission planning as we think it needs to be done. We have enough resources and expertise across all the different facets of ministry. It feels like the burden has been lifted off our backs.”

With 75 people in worship on Sunday, an excited outreach team, an academy poised for growth, and collaboration with other Divine Savior Ministries sites, the congregation at Delray Beach is ready to put Divine Savior’s mission statement into action: “Changing lives with Jesus as we worship, connect, and serve.”

*Julie Wietzke is the managing editor of Forward in Christ.*

This is the final article in a three-part series about church closings, mergers, and multi-sites. Learn more about Divine Savior and its unique ministry on p. 23.



# AMBASSADORS

## HELP THEM SEE JESUS



### KISS them.

Kenneth L. Brokmeier

We are ambassadors for Christ. Our mission? Preach the good news (cf. Mark 16:15). Previous articles in this series directed us to be ready by studying the Word. We know about praying boldly, confidently, and even dangerously for God to open doors. We recognize that listening carefully is a must. And it can be helpful to ask some clarifying questions so that we can properly crystallize the issue. So . . . now what?

Kiss them! Well, not literally kiss them but use the KISS approach! KISS, an acronym employed by many, commonly is explained as Keep It Simple, Stupid (or Silly or Sugar). Using the KISS method can help one think through and complete a difficult task.

Witnessing or standing up to someone assaulting our faith can be daunting, especially the first few times we try it. To help, let's explore the KISS motto—with a minor adaptation.

#### KEEP

*Keep* can sometimes mean "to stay, continue, or persevere." If someone is attacking your faith, remember to keep going. Stay the course. Don't be so quick to give up, as tempting as that may be. As Christ's ambassadors, keep plugging away, even when

facing verbal hostility. After all, God promises that he is your helper, and others really can't harm you (cf. Hebrews 13:6).

*Keep* also means "storing or retaining." No two evangelism experiences are alike. After you have had an evangelism opportunity, make the time to evaluate and reflect on that encounter. Store it away, including what you might do differently. Reflecting on and evaluating that experience can often prepare you for similar circumstances in the future.

Likewise, stash and store Bible verses in your memory bank so you can have them on the tip of your tongue. Granted, this calls for an investment of time and effort, but you don't need to memorize the whole Bible. Arm yourself with a handful of carefully chosen verses from Scripture. Keep them at your disposal. Build the list from your experiences. The time you invest in knowing a few passages and where they are located in the Bible can reap great dividends as you become engaged with those who have questions and are seeking answers. A great starting point would be to learn some of the basic passages from God's Great Exchange, a simple way to tell others about Jesus. (If you are not familiar with God's Great Exchange, ask your pastor or check out a simple brochure at [nph.net](http://nph.net).)

#### IT

Keep It . . . note "it" is singular. There are times and places to discuss a wide variety of religious topics, but when dealing with an individual who is asking you questions, try to stick to only one topic at a time. Limiting the number of topics can help you and the other person to focus on what is most important.

Keeping it to one subject can be especially beneficial if you are lacking in personal witness experiences. Focusing on many different issues at once can prove to be overwhelming. Besides, leaving some "loose ends" can also open the door to having future conversations with this same person. Certainly acknowledge and keep track of other themes or issues the other person wants to chat about. Then study them and get together in the future to talk more.

"It" will also compel us to remember that finally there is only one main topic we must discuss—Jesus. When we center our dialogue on Jesus, sooner or later many other subtopics will naturally flow from that discussion.

Jesus underscores that point for us when he rather bluntly asks, "But what about you? . . . Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15). What a person knows and confesses about Jesus reveals the







## WHAT'S YOUR STORY

How have you shared Jesus? Every encounter is different, and we want to hear from you. To whom in your life did you reach out? What barriers did you have to overcome? Did you employ the KISS method? E-mail responses to [fic@wels.net](mailto:fic@wels.net) with the subject line: "How I shared Jesus." Include your name, congregation, and contact information. Questions? Call 414- 256-3231.

faith within. We want to keep "it," that is, Jesus, as the main point.

### SIMPLE

Keep It Simple. Here's an example: Do you know what denticity is? If you studied chemistry, you might. Denticity is "the number of donor groups in a single ligand that bind to a central atom in a coordination complex." Funny thing, I read that definition and I still don't know what denticity is!

Now imagine what it could be like for people who really don't know about Jesus and, perhaps, know even less about the Bible. When their ears hear terms like *justification*, *sanctification*, *incarnation*, *salvation*, or *redemption*, what goes through their minds? Even words like *mercy*, *grace*, *sin*, *law*, or *gospel* may immediately conjure up meaning and pictures for us. After all, we spent two years in confirmation class thoroughly learning them. But remember that the person you talk to doesn't have that background and may even have the wrong definitions for terms familiar to you.

Make no mistake. I'm not against learning terms. I ask students in my confirmation class to learn them. They are important. But for someone who didn't grow up knowing and learning the "lingo," those words probably sound like *denticity* does to me.

The solution? Don't use those technical terms. Instead be ready to describe them. Remember a good place to start is with your catechism. Take it off the shelf and review those terms so you can describe them without using theological jargon.

### SINCERE

Keep It Simple (and) Sincere. Here is a quote worth learning for friendship evangelism: "People don't care what you know until they know that you care." If people sense that you are a fake or a fraud, it may be impossible to maintain an audience with them to tell them about Jesus. After all, if others sense you are insincere, why should they want to believe anything you might say about the Bible or Jesus?

Practice sincerity even when talking to antagonists. Show them you have a genuine interest in their eternal well-being. Such sincerity may leave them with something to think about.

Sincerity implies truthfulness and honesty. When having a religious discussion, it is okay to say that you don't know the answer to a question. Of course, if an answer is to be found, go and find it in God's Word, but sincerely saying "I'm not sure" may help people to see that you too are still growing in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18). And remem-

ber, when you say you will try to find the answer, it gives you a chance to talk with them again.

### AN EXAMPLE

Does the KISS method work? Four years ago, Sally from East Asia attended my church. Sally knew English but was not familiar with the Bible or biblical terms. I had to employ the KISS method as we met for five months almost daily for usually 60 to 75 minutes. Since her return to her country, we have studied the Bible for the past three and a half years about ten times monthly via the internet. Two years ago, her spouse joined our study.

Does the KISS method work? I think it does. After all, God certainly keeps his main message about Jesus simple for us. And there is no doubt about his sincerity to save us.


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This is the fifth article in a 12-part series on sharing your faith.







**University study encourages students to explore and discover. Parents need to be a part of that process too.**

Hannah White

My third year of college has given me a perspective on university study and parents. I am currently living at home and commuting every day to school. That means I am able to see my parents on a regular basis. I've seen and lived in both worlds, though, because I lived on campus during my first year of college.

I know that most college students don't live at home. That's why I think it is so important for students to talk with their parents. I have always had a very close relationship with my parents, and it only got better when I went to college. Feeling like I could talk to them about my "silly college problems" was and still is something for which I am very grateful.

#### **LIVING SITUATION**

In my first year of college, I shared a dorm room with a few girls from my Lutheran high school. The worries of having boys over in our room was never a problem—at first. I mean, I am outspoken; I would

# DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE



just tell my roommates not to do that if I was uncomfortable, right? Well, our suite had two rooms: I shared one room with my friends and two strangers lived in the other. Our suitemates were different; they were Christians but did not hold the same values that I did.

One of my suitemates had her boyfriend sleep over in her room multiple times while we were out. In my mind, I excused it and thought, *This is okay, right? I mean we weren't in the room. It's not bothering us. Why should I even bring this up to her?* And honestly, I never did. I didn't want to deal with the awkwardness of telling her that what she was doing was sin. I didn't want her to get upset with me. One day I walked in with one of my roommates. We quickly walked into our room, pretending not to notice our suitemate and her boyfriend making out. My suitemate whispered to me later that if I had come in a few minutes later, they would have been having sex.

It was an awkward situation. I'm glad I had talked about these issues with my parents before I went off to college. I wish more parents would have such conversations. I know those talks are awkward, but it's truly important to be prepared. I'm grateful for the conversation, as uncomfortable as it was for me and my parents. I heard from them that we are not like the world. I didn't want to be.

After living with roommates for two years, I moved back home. It was mostly for financial reasons, but it's nice to be with my parents and siblings. I like surrounding myself with people who care about me.

## CAMPUS MINISTRY

In my freshman year, I started looking into the campus ministry. I went a few times and decided that it just wasn't for me. I had gone to a Lutheran high school and to church every Sunday. I wondered why this was something that should be important to me. My parents asked me if I was going; I lied and said yes. I would stay at the dorms on a weekend or two and would not go to church. When they asked, I

would tell them that I had. I thought, *What is missing one church service going to do?* I think many college students think this way when they first get to college. As new students, we can believe that we don't need that dose of God's Word because we've been exposed to it for most of our lives.

But eventually I wondered, *If it really isn't that big of a deal to not go to the campus ministry and to miss church, then why am I lying about it?* So I started going home every weekend and attending church, and I realized the impact it really had on me. My Savior was missing from my life because I was pushing him out.

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## Having good communication with your parents creates a healthy mind-set for you to be able to be yourself.

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I started hanging out at the campus ministry house. Now it's one of my favorite places during my week. At first, I didn't think it was a place for me, but the people are great and the pastors are too. I didn't like the Bible studies that much at first, but the pastor's survey asked what topics we wanted. That helped make Bible study something I enjoyed. I'd encourage students to get involved and make the ministry what you want it to be.

## OPEN COMMUNICATION

My parents and I have always had a very open line of communication, but I know that might not be the same for everyone. Some parents don't know how to bring up topics without sounding like they're scolding or prying. Some college students want to talk to their parents but are either embarrassed or choose not to bother. My view is, very bluntly, talk to each other. I mean, really talk to each other. Have an open, mushy, heart-

felt conversation about what you as a parent want for your child's life. Just be open and honest, and it may surprise you how much that talk will do. Tell your son or daughter how you feel. They will tell you how they feel too.

Parents and students should really have those awkward talks with each other about what to expect in college, especially at a public university. We have an entire Sex Week for the students at my university and never once is the option of not having sex brought up. It's very important for the freshman students who primarily attend these events to talk about values and beliefs with their parents, to be reminded that it's okay to have a different view than others who don't share the same beliefs or principles. That's something we can easily forget.

College students go into college being told that this is the place to discover who you are. But then you discover that you are being told who you are. One of my suitemates told me that waiting to have sex until marriage was ignorant. I have been told by some of my peers that my religious views are just those of my parents and I should discover who I really am.

Having good communication with your parents creates a healthy mind-set for you to be able to be yourself. You have already discovered part of who you are by listening to your parents for 18 years. They have told you that you are a Christian, loved by Jesus and loved by them. From that base you can explore so much more. The world doesn't like God's Word and the things that it has to say, but remember what you have learned. Be salt and light on the earth.

God calls us to spread his Word, and with encouragement from support systems like our parents, it makes doing that not as daunting as it first seems.

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*Hannah White, a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, is a member at Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

Read a parent's viewpoint on this topic on p. 18.

# Frogs in heated recliners

Glenn L. Schwanke

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Little by little,  
my conscience  
has been dulled  
to entertainment  
that would have  
shocked me  
back in 1972. . . .  
Has the same  
happened  
to you?

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I wake with a start, and it takes a few moments for me to realize it was only a dream.

The dream?

I'm sitting at the supper table with my family. I look over in the living room, and there's my dad, Loyal, sitting in one of our recliners! (That's no small feat, since my father passed away suddenly in 1972.)

Eagerly, I jump up from the kitchen table and rush over to my dad to give him a hug. Then I sit down in the other recliner as I pour out my life story. "I have so much to tell you, Dad! I went to Northwestern College, then to seminary. While at Sem, I met a very special young lady. We got married. After Sem, I was assigned to serve a congregation in Fort Wayne. There our daughter was born . . . yes, Dad, you're a grandpa! Since 1996, we've lived here in Houghton."

While I'm catching up with my dad, I notice he's getting distracted. He keeps glancing at our television. So I shift the conversation. "Dad, you won't believe the technology we have today! Those anchor-weight CRT TVs are a thing of the past! Now we have flat-screen TVs, light as a feather. And cable! No more rabbit-ear antennas wrapped with aluminum foil."

But it's not the technology that has grabbed my dad's attention. As a dark cloud settles over his face, he asks, "What's that show on TV?"

"That? That's a rerun of *Friends*, an old sitcom from almost 20 years ago."

"And you allow that kind of program to be viewed in your home?" Dad responds sternly.

"Well, Dad, it's mostly just background noise during supper. And it's just *Friends*—that's pretty tame by modern standards."

"But they were just talking about sex and no marriage, as if it was okay! Joking about it! You let your daughter watch that? You watch that? I thought I trained you to know better."

"But Dad . . ."

That's when I wake up and realize I've become a frog in a heated recliner. How so? Well, there's an old tale that says if you put a live frog in a kettle of hot water, it will jump out. But if you put the same frog in a kettle of cooler water and heat it slowly, the frog won't notice the danger, and it will be cooked to death.

In my dream, my dad came back from the dead after 47 years, so what he saw on the television shocked him. After all, he was used to watching *Gunsmoke*. And Marshal Dillon didn't curse. Nor did he joke about going to bed with Kitty.

I've been immersed in our country's culture through all those same years. So little by little, my conscience has been dulled to entertainment that would have shocked me back in 1972. Entertainment that should still shock me (Ephesians 5:12).

Has the same happened to you?

Then how comforting it is to have a Savior who cried out from his cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). He said that for the soldiers gambling at his feet, the religious leaders circling like the vultures, and the gawking crowds. He also said it for all of us frogs in our heated recliners—Christians with dulled consciences who may spend too much time watching garbage entertainment and too little time pondering the truth that Jesus bore the full heat of God's hellish punishment for all our sins.

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





# A GOSPEL-FILLED LIFE

## Prayer in Jesus' name

Jeffrey D. Enderle

Slumps affect all the greats. Last year's baseball batting title winner might go through the first week of spring training without a hit. A sure-bet first-round NBA draft pick might go cold from behind the three-point line just as his team enters the conference tournament.

### PRAYER SLUMPS

Christians can grow weary and tired in their devotional lives too. For some Christians, growing weary is just getting forgetful. They become so busy with daily trials and joys that their Christian faith weakens and they no longer have the strength to turn to God in prayer. Prayer feels more and more like an overbearing obligation than a gift from God.

For other Christians, frustrations in their prayer life often come because of unrealistic, even unbiblical, expectations. Sometimes they pray and pray. They beg urgently and plead repeatedly. Then they wait, but they still don't get the answer they are after. So they try harder. They convince themselves that if only they were following a better system, they would be more successful. But what is success in prayer? How do we define it?

Is success in prayer defined by getting the results we are after? If we measure prayer by what we get from God, we

reduce our heavenly Father to a coach. As if we followed the advice of a coach we would be able to sink every free throw. As if taking to heart the hints and habits of a hitting coach would enable us to hit one out of the park every time at bat.

### SUCCESSFUL PRAYER

When Jesus teaches us how to pray (Matthew 6:5-13; Luke 11:1-13), he encourages us to approach "our Father." He urges us to be like little children as they come and ask their loving parents for whatever is on their minds. It's a natural part of their relationship.

Jesus created that relationship with our Father in heaven. Through Jesus, we know our Father loves us. Through his cross, he removed our sins so we can approach God as little children. He wants us to come to him with what troubles us and with what brings us joy and pleasure—as children do.

Prayer is not an obligation we owe to God. Instead he has given us the privilege to pray, the gift of coming to our loving Father as his dear children. Prayer is simply a part of our relationship with God through the saving grace of Jesus. Prayer flows from the recognition that through faith in Jesus we are children of God.

Our slumps in prayer life come to us at times when we forget that our Father loves us and wants what is best for us

at all times. Sometimes we take him for granted as we are distracted by all of life's daily schedules and experiences. At other times we are frustrated that our Father does not answer our prayers quickly or exactly as we want. So we give up. Our prayers seem unsuccessful and of little value.

Our parents did not give us everything we asked for when we were children. Instead they thought more about what we needed than what we wanted. Their goal was to see us grow and mature until we were ready for some of the things we wanted. Our heavenly Father thinks the same way, only he sees our future and our lives much better. With perfect love, he promises to give us what is best for us.

The way out of our prayer slumps is to remember our Father loves us, listens to us, and can even turn our difficulties into good (Romans 8:28). And then simply to pray.

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*Contributing editor Jeffrey Enderle is pastor at Christ the Rock, Farmington, New Mexico.*

This is the second article in a ten-part series on ways to enrich your personal devotional life.



*John O'Brien*

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Only the cross  
brings us  
forgiveness  
and strength  
to live as God's  
children.

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## A Lutheran Lent

On Ash Wednesday in some churches—some Lutheran churches too—ashes are placed on foreheads as a sign of repentance. For many, Lent is giving up some indulgence—like candy, greasy food, or even red meat—for 40 days. Conversations often start with the question, “What are you giving up for Lent?” Sadly the emphasis too often becomes a distortion of Lent.

Lent is a valuable time for God's people to focus on Christ and his suffering and death. That's the essential element of Lent. Lent sharpens our focus on what God has given to us through the cross of Christ.

For Lutherans that starts when the law of God brings into stark view what has caused his bloody death: our sins. We bow our heads as the publican in the temple did and pray, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

But Lent does not leave us in anguish and hopeless fear. The gospel raises our eyes to the cross where we see that Jesus has paid fully for our sins. Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Like the publican, we go home with the comfort that we are justified—loved and forgiven by God because of Jesus. We offer God our praise and are filled with a renewed desire to serve him as dear children.

But sin does not disappear from our lives. Like children, we find the law accuses us daily for careless failures as well as for unloving and defiant disobedience. We discover that once we hear the gospel, we struggle to be obedient children. Sin still lives within us. Like Paul we know, “I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Romans 7:19). We are forgiven children but still disobedient—saints and sinners at the same time. So we return to the gospel—the Savior's cross—for forgiveness and strength to renew our efforts to be the children God has made us.

We cannot earn God's love and acceptance. Peter stumbled miserably, and so did all the other disciples as they fled into the night. But Jesus embraced them in forgiveness. That forgiveness made them ready to serve. Reminders of his forgiveness sustained them in the years ahead as they, like us, struggled to live as disciples and children of God. Each Lenten season, we come to the cross, humbled by our sins but then rejoicing that God has done what we could not do even after we know Jesus. Only the cross brings us forgiveness and strength to live as God's children.

Here's where the distortion of Lent comes into view. “What are you giving up for Lent?” If you give something up for Lent so that you can think more often and more clearly about what Christ has done, there is no distortion. But if you think that giving up something for Lent makes you worthy of forgiveness and God's approval, your picture is blurred. Your vision shifts from the cross and God's undeserved gift.

Lent is a human practice; it's not an ordinance from God. When we think that we can offer God anything for the gift of the cross, it is like trying to buy gold with play money. No matter how much we have, it will never be enough. Lent helps us focus not on what we can do for God but on the gold of forgiveness, life, and salvation that God freely gives to all sinners.

That's a Lutheran emphasis. When we understand this, we come back to the cross for comfort and strength—not just at Lent but regularly in our worship throughout the church year.



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT: REVELATION 6 AND 7

Timothy J. Westendorf

Jesus, who was slain to purchase us for God, stood at the center of the throne. He was worthy to open the sealed scroll (cf. Revelation chapter 5). Chapter 6 dramatically leads us into the heart of John's second vision as the Lamb begins to open the scroll, one seal at a time.

### THE SEALS ARE OPENED

From the serene and sublime throne room, John, and we through him, is allowed to see what God sees. While God reigns and rules, what should we expect in this world? As the scene unfolds before the apostle, perhaps John is reminded of a question that the disciples asked Jesus while he yet visibly walked with them in the world: "What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

The answer Jesus gave them parallels what John sees in dramatic picture here. Four seals are opened, and four colored horses with riders are sent out. The meaning of the first horse, the white one, is debated. Is it representative of Christ and his gospel going out victoriously to conquer, an echo of Jesus' promise that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached until the end (Matthew 24:14)? Or does it represent the false and deceptive "messiahs" (24:5) who come claiming to be him, wolves in sheep's clothing? We can't say for sure, but since false teaching is the subject matter

of the entire next vision, we might safely lean toward that first option: Jesus and the gospel going forth.

The other horses remind us that wars, famines, pestilence, plagues, natural disasters, and death will be part of this world's plight until its end. Those who hold faithfully to the Word will not be strangers to persecution. And then the end will come, a frightening day for those who refuse and resist Jesus and his redeeming work.

### THE SEALED AND SAVED

But that end won't come until God's gospel work in this world is done. With symbolic numbers and a reference to the Old Testament nation of Israel (Revelation chapter 7), we are reminded of this truth. Twelve is the number of the church, and ten cubed (10x10x10) represents completeness. John hears a numbering, representative of the countless sea of people from every nation, tribe, people, and language brought by the gospel from the darkness of sin and unbelief to the light of forgiveness and faith in Christ.

Immediately after that numbering, he looks and sees a great multitude. But they are no longer residing in this world. These are those who have already come out of the great and ongoing tribulation of this world and now experience the

victory of heaven. This is the church triumphant! This is the land of rest that we look for and long for during our pilgrimage in this world. This is the blessed reality we await as those who are sealed in Christ through Baptism, robed in his righteousness through faith, possessors of eternal life even now, and citizens of his heavenly kingdom.

### REFLECT ON REVELATION CHAPTERS 6 AND 7

1. What comfort can you draw from the seals as you compare them to real life in this world?
2. How might the vision of the redeemed in heaven give you comfort when you are in a rough spot?

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This is the third article in a 12-part series on the book of Revelation. Find the article and answers online after March 5 at [wels.net/forwardinchrist](http://wels.net/forwardinchrist).





# SILENT NO LONGER

**Nicodemus remained silent before Jesus died, but then, along with Joseph of Arimathea, he broke his silence.** Stephen G. Helwig

Have you ever been there? In a hospital room? Next to a hospice bed? Have you ever been there when someone died? What about the death and burial of Jesus? Nicodemus remembered. . . .

**Mary, his mother, was there.** She had been there when Jesus—her son—died. A few other devoted and caring women were there. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was there. The centurion was there. They all had their own reactions. Gasps. Sighs. Beating their breasts. Shaking their heads. Holding each other. Consoling each other.

Have you ever been there when they had to take the body from the room or when they had to close the casket for the final time? No one wants to do that. No one wants to be the person who is assigned that task. But Joseph of Arimathea and I knew it was time. In fact, time was short, and there was much to do. We had to act quickly. We needed to get into the city and ask Pilate for permission to take the body.

We had to wait as the soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals and as they pierced the side of Jesus' body.

We waited as Pilate summoned the centurion to make sure that Jesus was dead. Then we headed back to Calvary with our spices and the linen.

We had to figure out a practical yet respectful way to carefully remove his body from the cross. Imagine for a moment what that must have been like for me as I held my Lord's dead body in my arms. We washed his body before we wrapped it in the linens with all those spices. Then we carried it to a nearby garden and placed it inside the tomb that had been cut out of the rock. Finally we had to roll a stone in front of that tomb to seal it off—all in a matter of hours.

**It was so sad, so disappointing, so frustrating . . .** for me . . . because it took the death of Jesus for me to become bold enough to express my faith in him. For too long I was afraid to be known as one of Jesus' followers. Why? For what? My reputation? My office? It was Jesus who had told me nearly three years earlier that unless a man is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. But I didn't understand.

I was one of Israel's teachers, and I did not understand. But then Jesus told me this: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" (John 3:14,15).

On Good Friday I saw Jesus lifted up. I would be silent no longer. I would confess my faith in him by giving him a respectful and dignified burial.

**Do not be silent;** do not wait to confess your faith in him. Jesus died. Jesus was buried. I witnessed that firsthand. But I can also tell you that Jesus rose from the dead. Tell that to yourself. Tell that to others. Jesus is alive. Our debt has been paid. Our sin is washed away. Our guilt is covered.

Tell yourself—tell others—what Jesus told me: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

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