

Forward in Christ

A LUTHERAN VOICE



Giving back to God

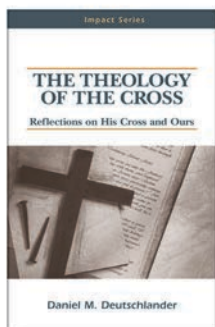
Offering our firstfruits recognizes and reflects the giving nature of our God. *Page 10*

OVERFLOWING

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— Psalm 23:5

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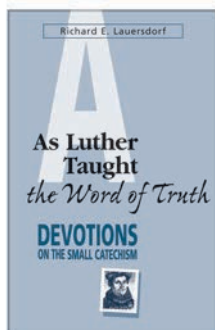


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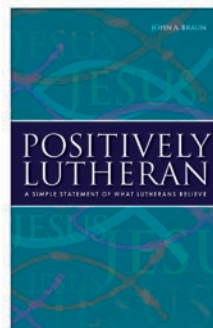
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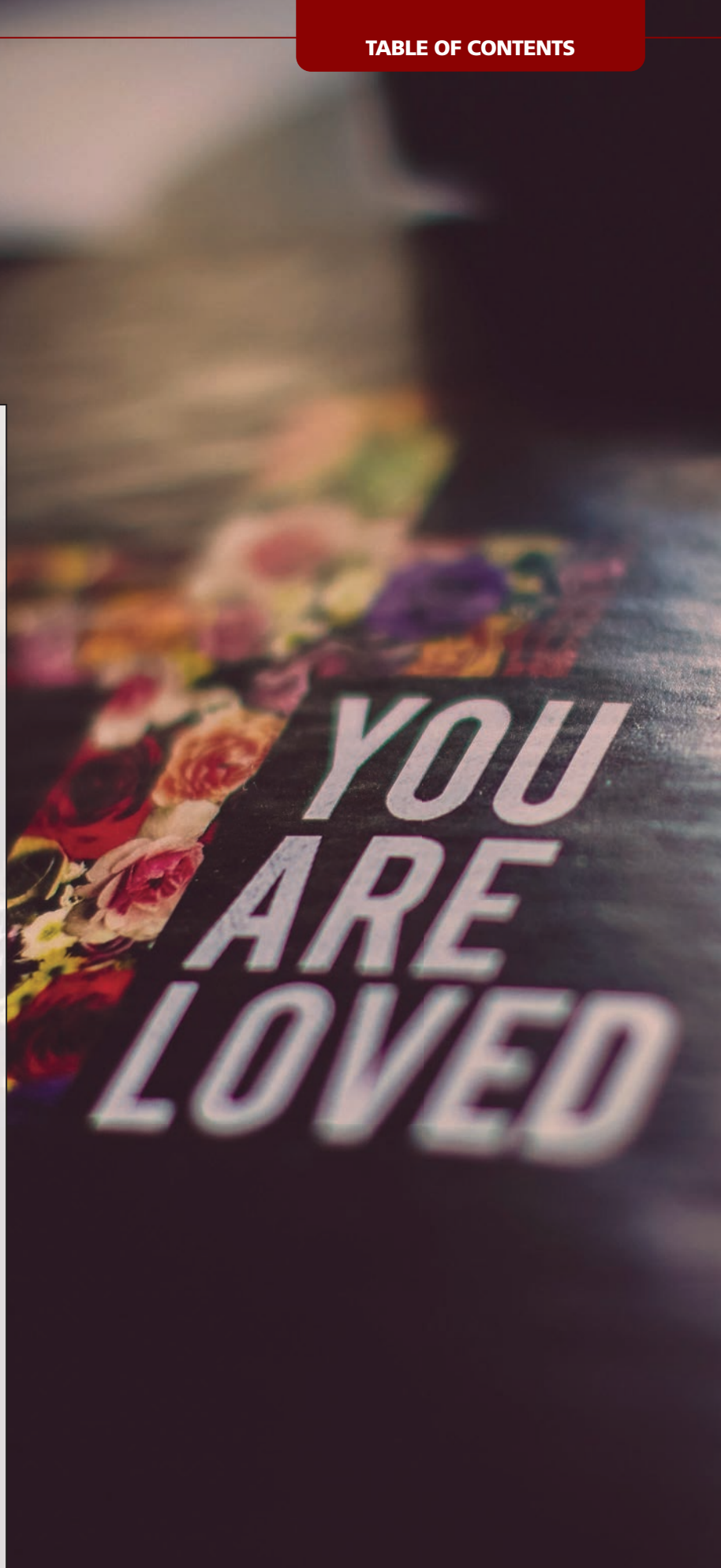
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EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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

MANAGING EDITOR

Julie K. Wietzke
julie.wietzke@wels.net

STAFF WRITERS

Nicole R. Balza
Dayton Hamann

SEMINARY CONSULTANT

Prof. Samuel Degner

DESIGNER

Carianne Ciriacks

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POSTMASTER

Send address changes to Forward in Christ, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, N16W23379 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188-1108.


Forward in Christ (ISSN 1541-8936) is published monthly through Northwestern Publishing House, N16W23379 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188-1108. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Print: USA—\$17.99; Canada—\$18.89; all other countries—air mail \$71.99. Digital: USA—\$15.99; Canada—\$16.79; all other countries—\$15.99. Premium: USA—\$18.99; Canada—\$19.94; all other countries—air mail \$72.99. Postage included, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House. Contact Northwestern Publishing House for multi-year, blanket, and bundle rates. Northwestern Publishing House, N16W23379 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188-1108; 800-662-6093. Milwaukee area, 414-615-5785. nph.net/periodicals.

ON AUDIO

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

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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

“Christ’s love compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14) . . .

- . . . to “not become weary in doing good” (Galatians 6:9,10). Our devotion writer reminds us that Jesus never quit his job as our Savior. Neither should we give up in serving him (p. 7).
- . . . to give our firstfruit offerings to the Lord. A new stewardship series starts this month by reminding us that God gave his best—his Son—to us; our giving should reflect God’s attitude (p. 10).
- . . . to be faithful to God and gentle in our attitudes as we deal with those who create conflict and divisions (p. 12).
- . . . to share the good news that we know with others, whether it’s over the phone, on a plane, in the newspaper, at an assisted living facility, at the university, or in a country far, far away. This issue is filled with stories of your brothers and sisters in Christ letting their faith shine so that others can discover God’s grace and Jesus’ love.

Julie Wietzke



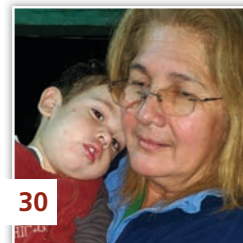
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UPLIFTING COVERS

The covers on *Forward in Christ* are always interesting; however, two in particular were very uplifting for me. The Apache child with the seeds [June 2018] and Hannah Paustian with her students [July 2019]. Both spoke volumes about the work of our synod and, in Hannah's case, the training and joy in ministry. I see that Divine Savior sent in Hannah's photo and hope that more will do that. Continue to use the cover well with follow-up stories as you did. Blessings on your work.

*Paul Boehlke
New Ulm, Minnesota*

Send your letters to Feedback, *Forward in Christ*, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; fic@wels.net. Letters between 100 and 200 words are preferred. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. 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.

SEPTEMBER 2019

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. James 1:19-27 | 11. 1 Chron. 15:1-16:6 | 21. Psalm 107:1-32 |
| 2. Jas. 2:1-13 | 12. 1 Chron. 16:7-43 | 22. Ps. 107:33-43 |
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| 4. Jas. 3 | 14. 1 Chron. 18-20 | 24. Ps. 109 |
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| 6. Jas. 5 | 16. 1 Chron. 22:2-19 | 26. Ps. 111, 112 |
| 7. 1 Chronicles 1-9 | 17. 1 Chron. 23, 24 | 27. Ps. 113, 114 |
| 8. 1 Chron. 10, 11 | 18. 1 Chron. 25-27 | 28. Ps. 115 |
| 9. 1 Chron. 12 | 19. 1 Chron. 28 | 29. Ps. 116 |
| 10. 1 Chron. 13, 14 | 20. 1 Chron. 29 | 30. Ps. 117, 118 |

How I SHARED JESUS



It was the first leg of a trip to Israel, appropriately enough. In the aisle seat: the husband. In the window seat: the wife. In the middle seat: me. We chatted about our hometowns, destinations, and occupations.

As a pastor, my rehearsed response to "What do you do?" is "I tell people how to get to heaven for free." Their casual knowledge of Christianity was characterized by the typical but fatal misunderstanding: Being a good person, or at least trying hard, gets you to heaven. I asked if I could share my belief, and they readily agreed.

My favorite gospel witness is the Great Exchange. It helps to make it visual with a simple diagram of a cross and a stick figure to illustrate how God placed our sins on Jesus and credits us with Jesus' sinlessness. Alas, none of us had even a scrap of paper. Flight attendant to the rescue! Drinks were being served, along with—ta-da!—a paper napkin, which would have to make do.

As one head leaned in from either side, I used all my artistic skills to draw a stick figure and cross while explaining the damning results of sin and the delightful results of grace.

My testimony was followed by a few moments of silent contemplation, broken by the husband's bold request: "Do you mind if I take that napkin with me?"

Not at all, sir. I think the airline can spare one more.

David Rosenbaum, Merritt Island, Florida

Read more stories of how you shared Jesus on pp. 28-29.

Be imitators of Jesus in doing good

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:9,10

Peter M. Prange

Do you think Jesus was ever tempted to quit his job as our Savior? Do you imagine he ever became fed up with our weaknesses? Was it possible for him to ever become “weary in doing good”?

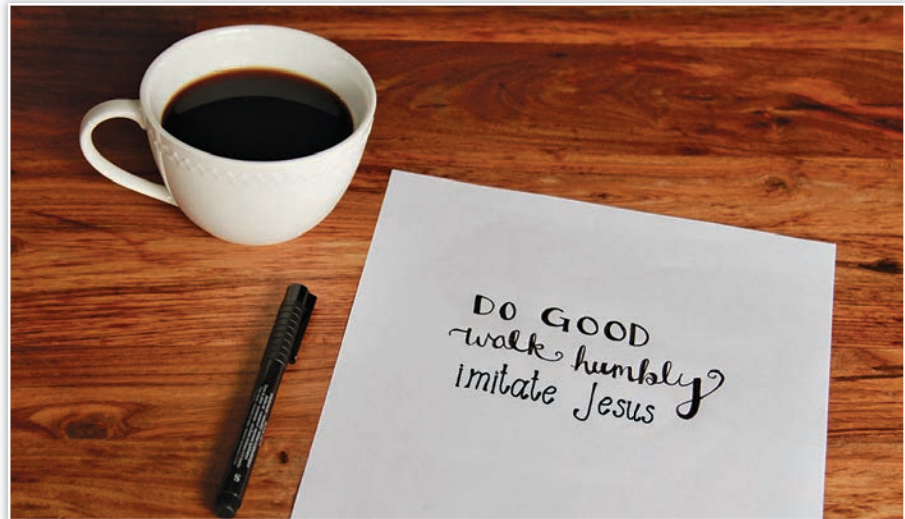
JESUS DIDN'T GIVE UP

Sometimes in the gospel accounts you can detect a tinge of frustration in Jesus' words, even when—no, *especially* when!—he's speaking with his closest disciples. When those disciples once attempted unsuccessfully to cast out a demon, our Savior exclaimed, “You unbelieving and perverse generation . . . how long shall I stay with you and put up with you?” (Luke 9:41). On the night Judas betrayed him, Peter denied him, and the rest abandoned him, Jesus questioned his snoring supporters, “Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?” (Matthew 26:40).

Already through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, our Lord Jesus had vocalized how wearisome the object of his saving work would become. There he lamented, “I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all” (Isaiah 49:4). Do you think Jesus was ever tempted to quit his job as our Savior? Certainly so!

Despite that frustration, however, Jesus never gave up. He never submitted his letter of resignation. He never stopped loving us, forgiving us, saving us, and carrying our burdens. Though tempted to do so, Jesus never became weary in doing good.

What stopped him from becoming weary? First and foremost, his love for all people is so unfailing and so flawless. But he also knows that there is great, eternal reward in doing good to others, even if that reward isn't immediately obvious. Jesus understands



that, as his words through the prophet indicate: “Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God” (Isaiah 49:4).

WE SHOULD NOT BECOME WEARY

Like Jesus, we're often tempted to become weary in doing good. Unlike Jesus, we succumb to that temptation all too often and all too easily.

Our Savior has called us to serve as his hands and feet.

But consider what would happen if Jesus ever quit his job as our Savior and threw in the towel. We'd be finished immediately. Life would consist of nothing but death. Without Jesus working for our good, every blessing would instantly vanish. Thankfully, Jesus hasn't and won't become weary in doing good to us, and that's a promise (Hebrews 13:5).

As his dear children, then, neither should we become weary in doing “good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” True, our service to others might not have the same impact as Jesus' work, but our Savior has called us to serve as his hands and feet, his mouth and eyes in the world. We are Jesus' co-workers. Through us, he comforts others (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). Through us, he cares for others (2 Corinthians 9:10-15). Through us, he saves others through the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:22). Through us, he does good to others. What a thought! What a privilege! What a joy!

So be imitators of Jesus: Don't become weary in doing good, “for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” The fruits are eternal, both for us and for those we are called to serve.

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



Mark Schwede

We have no clue
what God has in
store for our synod.
At the same time,
we know exactly
what he has in
store for us.

No contradiction at all

Apparent contradictions—with the emphasis on the word *apparent*—happen when two true statements appear to contradict each other, but in the end, there is no contradiction at all. Here are some examples: God is three persons, yet one God. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. God is perfectly righteous and must punish sin; God is completely gracious, a God who forgives the sinner fully and completely. All these statements that appear to be contradictions are not contradictions at all. They only *seem* to be contradictions because of the limits of our human ability to comprehend the nature of an incomprehensible God.

There are other apparent contradictions. In May, I had the opportunity to speak with the graduating class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary just before they were assigned to their first calls. I drew their attention to an apparent contradiction that each of them was experiencing: “In a matter of hours, you will learn where you will serve. Right now, you have absolutely no clue what God has in store for you. At the same time, you know exactly what God has in store for you. You don’t know where you will be serving, but you know that God will use you as his witnesses. He will give you the privilege to preach the gospel and to teach God’s people. And as you serve him, you know that God will bless your efforts.” In one sense, those graduates had no clue what God had in store for them. At the same time, they could know exactly what God would do for them and with them.

We are living in a time when we need to remember that the same two truths often apply to the work that our synod does. We have no clue what God has in store for our synod. At the same time, we know exactly what he has in store for us.

For example, God has opened a door to WELS in, of all places, Vietnam. We have been permitted by the Vietnamese government to provide theological

education to the leaders of a 100,000-member church body that wants to become fully Lutheran. In one sense, we have absolutely no clue what exactly will happen with our efforts. At the same time, however, we know exactly what God has in store for us. As always, we know that his Word will not return to him empty. God will accomplish his purpose.

What about the future of our synod? We have no idea what God has in store for us. Will the attacks on God’s truth increase in intensity? Will our synod experience numerical growth or a loss of membership? Will a shortage of called workers become more acute, or will the number of those willing to serve in public ministry increase? Will decreasing financial support require us to scale back our mission and ministry, or will God provide the resources for us to expand?

In one very real way, the answer to those questions is, “We have no clue what God has in store for us.” But in another way, we can say, “We know *exactly* what God has in store for us.” We know that God will never leave us or forsake us. We know that as we spread the seed of the gospel, God will bless that planting in the way and in the time that he sees fit.

In other words, an apparent contradiction is no contradiction at all. We face the future not knowing exactly what it holds but with trust and confidence in God’s unbreakable promises.

Light for our path

I am dealing with a terminal illness and am tired of the suffering and pain this is causing me and my family. I am scared to die, but is it a sin to want to die so I can go home and be with Jesus?

James F. Pope

It is definitely not a sin to desire to leave this world at God's time and be with Jesus. That, finally, is the goal of our faith. It would be good to review what Scripture says about Christians and death.

LONGING FOR HEAVEN

The apostle Paul longed to be with God in heaven. When Paul was first imprisoned in Rome, he wrote to the Christians in the city of Philippi. He confessed that he was conflicted over the thought of continuing his life on earth or joining his Lord in heaven. "To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body" (Philippians 1:21-24). Paul also spoke to the Corinthians of "longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling" (2 Corinthians 5:2). The apostle Paul found joys in his earthly life as a child of God, but he knew there was something much, much better awaiting him, and he looked forward to that.

Job, in the Old Testament, did as well. When he thought of his new life with God, he exclaimed, "How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:27). If you agree with Job, it is because you also agree with the writer to the Hebrews, who compared this life to the next in concrete terms: "Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

While you and I look forward to the perfect life that is to come, we recognize that our life is in God's hands (Psalm 31:15), so we do nothing that would hasten our death.

LOOKING AT DEATH

Death is inevitable for us all unless the Lord returns visibly to this world on the

Last Day before we die. The thought of death can be unsettling even for Christians. Death is an unnatural intruder into God's perfect world; death was never a part of God's design for life. Death is "the wages of sin" (Romans 6:23). The unnatural origin of death, along with not knowing what it is like to take a final breath, can generate fear.

What we want to remember is that Jesus has taken away every reason for fearing death. Jesus, after all, lived and died as our perfect substitute and then rose triumphantly from the dead. Those people in the Bible who were raised to life eventually experienced death as the end of their earthly life. Jesus rose from the dead as "the firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 15:23). He was the first person to die and rise from the dead, never to die again. And as the firstfruits, that means there will be others like him. Christians who die will be raised to life on the Last Day and will never experience death again.

So take heart in the works and words of Jesus. They give us sure confidence for the future.

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

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

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

Psalm 119:105



GOD'S GIFTS, OUR *giving*

First things first

Aaron L. Christie

Americans have an issue with discerning theory from reality. We have hundreds of friends on Facebook, but they are friends in theory. In reality, we do not know many of them. We have gym memberships to help us get in shape. Unfortunately, we don't get in shape in theory but by making real choices on diet and dedicating ourselves to exercise.

If we struggle with theory and reality as Americans, we struggle far more as sinners. Do we love the Lord in theory? or in reality?

The First Commandment is the first for a reason. The Lord unapologetically asks to be first on our life's list. We are to fear, love, and trust in him above ALL things. We all know that. We are quick to say that the Lord is the Lord of our lives. God comes first!

SHOWING THE REALITY OF OUR PRIORITIES

But does he?

Is God really, truly the Creator of everything that exists? Has God blessed us with eyes, ears, mind, members, strength, and abilities? Does everything we possess really come from him? We talk about questions like these as if they were theoretical. In reality, all of the answers to these questions are either yes or no.

In order to help make loving and trusting God into something real, tangible, and personal, the Lord commanded his Old Testament believers to offer him their *firstfruits*: "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops" (Proverbs 3:9). Whether the offering was one of grapes or grain, the first and the best of the harvest went to the Lord.

In other words, it is an easy thing to say that the Lord is "Lord of the harvest." It is an entirely different thing to recognize him as such with the tangible, very first portion of the harvest. It is one thing to say that the Lord will "take care of us." It is an entirely different thing to offer him the first por-

tion of the harvest—even before you have fed your family or stored away seed for the next planting. The Lord's commands regarding giving firstfruits helped the Israelites put the Lord first—not just on paper but in practice. It helped them live by faith in God's providence. God did not intend for them to give just with words but also with faith-stretching deeds.

Humanly speaking, firstfruits offerings don't make a bit of sense. Investment professionals tell us that if we "pay ourselves first" and invest it carefully over time, our money will grow. Human logic tells us that if we make the Lord's work our firstfruits priority, then that means we have less for every other area of life, including important things like mortgages and medications. It's true: Humanly speaking, giving firstfruits doesn't make a bit of sense.

Our offerings either recognize God's position of first place in our lives or they don't.

It's also true that giving firstfruits goes against every inclination of our sinful nature. The default setting of our sinful nature is to keep stuff, stockpile stuff, even hoard stuff in a never-ending quest to look out for number one. We call it the good life. God calls it greed. We call it being sensible. God calls it sin.

God takes many positions in our lives, but second place dare never be one of them. There is no theory here: Our offerings either recognize God's position of first place in our lives or they don't.

REFLECTING GOD'S ATTITUDE

There are consequences to putting God first in theory but not in practice. Take a moment to read the major stewardship message contained in the book of the minor prophet Haggai. Look how the Lord—not in theory but in reality—turns people's eloquent excuses for withholding their offerings

upside down: "You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it. You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little" (1:6,9). In other words, the people had less because they gave little. God himself was seeing to that with one drought, one holey purse at a time! Think about it. The God who once fed five thousand hungry stomachs using only a boy's picnic lunch is the very same God who can ensure that a stockpile of stuff won't be able to make ends meet.

But even more wonderful, giving firstfruits recognizes and reflects the giving nature of our God. He himself practiced giving firstfruits. He didn't place our salvation toward the bottom of the list of things that needed to be done. He didn't give us a bite of daily bread to keep us from starving until he sent us to the hell that our misplaced priorities deserved. What did he do? The giving heart of the Father gave us his first and best: his firstborn, his only begotten Son. First things first! And with his Son, he graciously gives us all things! "God so loved the world *that he gave . . .*" (John 3:16).

The point? Offering our firstfruits in Christian freedom is more about an attitude of gratitude than agriculture. It is more about God being our priority than it is about our personal property. It is about being who we really are in Christ: the firstfruits of all creation (James 1:18); blessed with the firstfruits of the Spirit (Romans 8:23); and rejoicing in Christ, the firstfruits of all who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).

In offering our firstfruits, we are simply reflecting the giving nature of God, who gave us his first, his best, his only begotten Son!

Aaron Christie is pastor at Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

This is the first article in a three-part series on giving. This series follows the outline of the congregational stewardship program, 10 for 10.

A DIFFERENT way to give

"When you read the Bible, it tells all over the place about giving your firstfruits," says Becky Wagner, a member at The Vine, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. "I'm just so thankful for everything I have and have been given to take care of in this life, and I want to use my time, talents, AND treasures to give back."

Wagner uses Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to give her offerings to The Vine. This commonly used payment method allows Wagner to set funds to be transferred directly from her bank account to her church on a recurring basis.

"It's nice to know that it is taken care of because it is automatic. It's done; it's set," says Wagner. "It's not anything to question—did I do it? Did I forget? You don't have to worry about it because you know you're doing what you want to do."

Kevin Schultz, pastor of The Vine, says almost half of his members use EFT for their regular giving. He says it's a convenient way for his members—and for him—to give that also offers accountability. "I tell my members not to think of it as paying a bill once a month or once a week. Look at it as an opportunity to give without the devil getting his hand in there," he says. "We're making a commitment to God, and we want to fulfill that commitment without having those temptations to go back on our promise."

The Vine also offers the traditional envelope system as well as one-time online giving through a giving app for those who don't carry cash or a checkbook. "It's not that one way is better than another," Schultz says. "It's just offering multiple ways to give in a culture that requires multiple ways."

TO CONSIDER: Have you thought about giving your firstfruits offerings via EFT? If so, why? If not, why not?



Walk by the Spirit

**Dissensions and factions
create roadblocks along
the Christian way.**

John A. Braun

Paul's acts of the flesh include some hazards we must avoid on our journey. He lists them as dissensions, factions, and envy. But he does not leave us paralyzed, unable to move toward our heavenly goal. He also cites two important fruits of the Spirit to help us make progress: faithfulness and gentleness.

ACTS OF THE FLESH: DISSENSIONS, FACTIONS, AND ENVY

Paul's world was different from our own. It's hard to imagine that Paul faced protests for civil rights, abortion, or other political causes. Roman law and power settled almost all such issues. Most found little tolerance for social or political protests. Yet Paul was in the midst of a vehement protest with Demetrius and the silversmiths. That disagreement turned into a riot in Ephesus (Acts chapter 19)—an example of dissension, faction, and envy caused by the message of the gospel.

It was ugly and dangerous. "Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there [in the theater]" (Acts 19:32). Finally, the city clerk quieted the crowd and told the people to take their grievances to the courts, warning them of the danger of causing a riot. The crowd melted away.

In our own age, protests and divisions are part of our everyday newscasts. Differences escalate into heated confrontations. Like the riot in Ephesus, some shout one thing and some another. Perhaps such displays of factions and dissension are part of our system of government. We vote and contend for our positions in a way people in Paul's world did not. Roman soldiers did not stand by in riot gear awaiting flying stones.

Whatever Roman soldiers did or did not do doesn't matter much today. What does matter is that dissensions, factions, and envy have not disappeared. The sinful nature within asserts itself and creates conflict. Paul's list is not just a list of ancient characteristics we no longer have. His acts of the flesh persist in our age because the sinful nature persists. Envy persists. Factions persist.

FACCTIONS

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, **dissensions, factions and envy**; drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Paul adds envy to the list, I think, to help us understand. Envy distorts every thought to help others. It is subtle at times; at other times, it is blatantly obvious. Sometimes we allow envy to blockade our ability to listen and love. As a result, we become harsh and hostile, ready for a fight or argument. It's so much a part of our world that we are carried along without thinking. We fall for the temptation to be disagreeable, assert our own rights or thinking, and oppose others.

It is bad enough that the conflicts arise in our country and society, our marriages and families, and our neighborhoods and our government at all levels. Sadly, they also arise within the church—among God's people. Paul was no stranger to the conflicts. To the Galatians he warned, “If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (5:15).

Yes, these negative attitudes reside in Christians as well. Paul saw divisions rise up in the churches he founded. He warned against “false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ,” reminding the Corinthians that even Satan masqueraded as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:12-14). He also told the Romans to avoid those who taught false doctrines (Romans 16:17).

Paul's view of the future of the Christian church emerges from his words to Timothy, “The time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITHFULNESS AND GENTLENESS

Throughout history, the church has

often had to contend with those who have not put up with sound doctrine and have claimed to be right. Sadly, they claimed to be righter than right. That sentence doesn't make any sense grammatically or theologically, but it raises the question of who is right and who isn't. There can't be two rights or a righter than right. How do we navigate differences and factions? Paul suggests two fruits of the Spirit: faithfulness and gentleness.

Faithfulness first. The antidote to all the false teachers and heretical factions was—and still is—faithfulness to the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has created a desire within us to treasure the Scriptures that tell us of Jesus and of all of God's promises. So we remain faithful to the Scriptures. They are our authority for truth, our Supreme Court, to decide what is right and what is not. Faithfulness to that truth will move us to compare anyone's teaching with the Scriptures and to evaluate it on the basis of that standard. John suggests, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Then, with firmness in the truth, Paul advises gentleness. Peter advises the same attitude when he says that we are to share with gentleness and respect the hope we treasure (1 Peter 3:15). No one wants divisions, and we must deal with love and kindness with those who think differently. When they will not listen to the truth, then we have no alternative but to avoid those ideas and the groups that proclaim them.

But not all disagreements are about doctrine. Sometimes Christians have arguments and quarrels about whether or not to have carpeting in the church and what color it should be. Some ques-

tion which preacher is better—even Paul mentioned this disagreement (1 Corinthians 1:10-17); others anguish over how the budget was set and whether we should spend money on the school or on the front steps of the church. Every church has these differences or others like them.

Faithfulness and gentleness are valuable in all these discussions. We remain faithful to God's Word and also faithful to Jesus' command to love one another. Then we can be gentle in our disagreements, not belligerent or harsh.

Dissensions and factions dog every step of our journey, and our sinful flesh is often tempted to feed them. They become group activities. One person solicits support from others who are like-minded. Then another person gathers others who disagree. The result can be belligerent, bitter, and divisive.

We should not let differences get out of hand. Even everyday disagreements may become roadblocks to the Christian concept of loving one another and may block the work of the congregation and the larger church. They will turn the character of a congregation sour. Perhaps they also will turn some away from the path we follow together. Let us walk by the Spirit and “not gratify the desires of the flesh. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (Galatians 5:16,25,26). Remain faithful to the Scriptures and gentle in our dealings with one another.

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

This is the fifth article in a six-part series on acts of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

FAITHFULNESS

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness, gentleness** and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:22-24).

The Holy Spirit worked saving faith in a Korean family who claimed, “We are not Christians.”

Mark A. Eckert

Youngil (Alan) Kang and his wife, Sukjeong (Ann) Kim, were a typical South Korean couple. They were consumed by their professions—so much so that they had limited family time, which is quite common in Korea. Alan was a government official, working for the Ministry of Science and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies). For over 15 years, he has created and implemented policies that foster the development of science and technology and also technology commercialization in Korea. Ann was a plant quarantine officer dealing with diseases caused by insects in imported plants.

Ann had grown tired of her job. She worked and lived in an apartment during the week and only got to see her husband and sons on weekends.

A JOURNEY TO MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

About three years ago, they—together with their two sons, Gyumin (Tony) and Gyoungmin (Fred)—began quite a journey. Ann quit her job so she could have more time with her family. Then Alan learned that he would be sent to Michigan State University (MSU) in Lansing, Michigan, for two years. In the first year, he'd study in the Visiting

International Professional Program. Then he'd put what he learned into practice at Spartan Innovations, which provides the educational and financial support necessary to turn MSU research technologies into successful businesses.

This journey to the United States brought many new challenges, including learning English. Fortunately, Alan has a dedicated and organized wife who knew that her family members needed to make the most of their time in the United States. Her priority was to make sure that her family spoke and understood English better after their two-year stint in America. While still in Korea, she searched the internet for ways to improve the family's English. She learned about the Friendship House, a place in East Lansing where she and her family could take English classes.

When they arrived in Michigan, the Kang family went to the International Welcome Party at the Friendship House. HaeHee Park, a member of the WELS Campus Ministry in Lansing, met Alan and Ann and invited them to come to the campus ministry. She told them it would be great for them to learn some English and to learn about God. It also would be good for them just to hang around with some Americans, to have fun, and to learn “American.”

FIRST STEPS IN WORSHIP

A couple weeks later, they came to our Saturday evening worship service. We have Saturday evening services because

that works best for our campus ministry. Some of our volunteers attend their own congregations on Sunday, but they also love to worship and enjoy fellowship with the WELS students. After our worship service, we have a great time together and eat some of the best international—and sometimes even American—food.

That Saturday in September, Ann was planning how often her sons could meet with Doug Tabor, who teaches many of our English classes. Students usually end up meeting with Doug every day except for Sunday and Monday. Doug says he doesn't really teach them English. He just spends a lot of time talking and doing things (playing Cribbage, basketball, camping) with them so they get more comfortable with English. After two years, Doug says their English is definitely better and their ping pong skills are really great!

Later that September, the Kangs came again for worship. After that they faithfully attended our worship services, Doug's English classes, and whatever else we offered them. If they missed, it was usually because they were traveling or experiencing other pieces of American culture.

Soon Alan asked me to record our services so he and his wife could listen to the services again during the week to understand the English and the sermon message better. We began posting our recordings online for the Kangs and for other internationals who have returned



Confessions OF FAITH

to their home countries and want to listen to our services.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS

Just before Christmas, HaeHee Park convinced Alan and Ann that they should come to my Bible Information Class (BIC). I had talked to them about coming, but it always works better when one Korean invites another. We started a marathon class.

Prior to coming to our campus ministry, the Kangs had no real religious background. Ann had gone to a church for about three years while in elementary school. Tony and Fred had gone to church with friends for a couple years. But they didn't really know about Jesus. I remember Ann often saying to me, "We are not Christians."

As the weeks and months rolled by, the Kangs faithfully kept coming to our services and the BIC sessions. I noted how attentive they were in worship. I know that sometimes they were struggling a bit to understand the English and the message, but I also know that the Holy Spirit was working. Fred and Tony were always the key targets for my youth devotions.

I'm not sure when Ann last said, "I'm not a Christian." She said it so often. But in the last year when she spoke those words, I would say to her that if she wasn't a Christian, I didn't know what a Christian was. I'd ask her and Alan if Jesus was the Savior who lived and died for the sins of the world, and



The Kang family with Pastor Mark Eckert (left).

they would say, "Yes, he did." I repeatedly told them that I believed they really were believers.

I often talked to them about Baptism and encouraged them to be baptized. Finally, they said they wanted to be baptized. I spent more time talking about Baptism with the entire family, and then they all were baptized. What a journey we had traveled together!

Since then we've completed our information classes. I told them that it would be great if we confirmed them as well, but what was more important is that they knew more about Jesus their Savior. When we asked them what they would miss most about Michigan when they return to Korea this year, they said they'd miss our campus ministry and their Christian friends because here they learned about Jesus.

After the Kangs return to Korea, we'll stay in contact with them through KakaoTalk (a text/phone app). We'll also e-mail them our sermons and bulletins. They said they'd continue to go online to find our service recordings. Maybe we'll get the chance to visit them in Korea. Maybe they'll come back to the United States for a visit. Whatever happens, we can rejoice because the Holy Spirit worked on the hearts of the Kangs and made them who said, "We are not Christians," into believing children of God and heirs of heaven.

Mark Eckert is pastor at Calvary, Eaton Rapids, Michigan, and campus pastor in Lansing, Michigan.

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNIVERSARY

WELS Campus Ministry is celebrating its 100th anniversary this school year. A ministry of WELS Home Missions, WELS Campus Ministry provides resources, support, and encouragement to approximately 30 ministries on college campuses (ones like the campus ministry in East Lansing) and many congregations near college campuses in the United States and Canada. Learn more at wels.net/campus-ministry. Read about another campus ministry on p. 32 and watch for more articles from our WELS campus ministries in upcoming issues.



heart to heart
parent conversations

"Forming character in children combines parental instruction and modeling," notes Kenneth Kremer in his book Embracing Godly Character. "When parents lead a moral life, God gives them many opportunities to be godly examples for their children. But the models we provide will never be perfect, because all parents are sinners. Our children need to be able to see us finding peace from our guilt and receiving God's assurance that we are forgiven."

This month's article gives us a real-life example of Kremer's words. Read on and see if you relate to Nicole Smith's story as much as I do. Have your own parenting story to share? Send it to me at fic@wels.net.

Nicole Balza

**Join the
conversation!**

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

ARE WE MODELING KINDNESS FOR OUR CHILDREN?

"Use kind words, gentle hands, and find someone who needs a friend today," I said to my son as I dropped him off at the gym day care.

"I will, Mommy. I will be kind today. I will share," he replied as he bounced away gleefully.

Kindness with our children

It is so important to me that my kids are kind; in fact, sometimes I think I place a little too much emphasis on it. In a world that so desperately needs more kindness, I want to make sure I'm raising boys who love God and love others unconditionally.

For as much as I give verbal reminders, true kindness is shown by modeling the behavior—seeing kindness in action. So when my son reminded me, "You need to be kind, Mommy!" as I was asking him to do something, it made me stop in my tracks.

How often am I really modeling kindness for my sons?

"Don't do that."

"Hurry up!"

"Get your shoes on, NOW!"

Commands that are often heard throughout our day blare like sirens in my brain when I lay down at night. Am I nurturing my boys and showing them kindness?

While modeling kind words, gentleness, and love is extremely important in raising empathetic and God-fearing boys, so is admission of sin and forgiveness.

Kindness with our spouses

Recently my husband and I—just the two of us—went out on our first date in more than eight months. We have an eight-month-old baby at home, so I'll let you do the math. To be honest, it felt like a chore to get that date planned. It seems the longer you don't give a relationship proper nurturing, the harder it is to get back to that baseline foundation. Once we were out, we had a blast, but it's the getting out that is hard right now.

At one point during our date, I found myself apologizing for not expressing gratitude enough. The truth is that my husband works really, really hard so that I can stay home with our boys. We both work hard to make our home what it is, but stress can take its toll on each of us.

Jesus quoted words from Genesis, “A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5).

When is the last time we felt we were a united front or on the same exact page? When is the last time we were truly “one”? I wondered.

Like most couples with young kids, we are sleep deprived and overscheduled. Many evenings and weekends are jam-packed with obligations, home improvement projects, grocery shopping, cleaning, bathing our children, and keeping them alive. I admitted honestly to him, “You know, I wonder what our marriage would be like if I spent as much time working on being a better wife as I do trying to be a better parent.”

Just like my kids feel they can be sassy and defiant to me, I often feel I can be sarcastic and harsh with my husband. That’s never easy to admit, but the more and more I think about the example I want to set for my children, I recognize that I need to start with me.

Power in our weakness

This admission may seem like I’m airing out a vulnerable weakness, and if that’s how you see it, you’d be correct. The truth is there are many days I wonder if God picked the right woman for the job. Raising kids in a sinful world is no joke!

In her book *You Are Free*, Rebekah Lyons says, “God demonstrates his power through our frailty. In fact, this is the only thing we can boast in: *His power is made perfect and on full display in our never-enough-ness*. When we are weak, we are actually made strong in Christ Jesus” (see 2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

God nurtures us in the most perfect way. First, when I’m falling short, full admission of my weakness and asking God for forgiveness helps me seek forgiveness from my husband, my kids, or anyone else I’ve wronged. His forgiveness sets me back on the path he created for me.

While modeling kind words, gentleness, and love is extremely important in raising empathetic and God-fearing boys, so is admission of sin and forgiveness. Recognizing that I’m not a perfect wife and mother doesn’t make me want to give up but rather helps me recognize that I need God more than ever and makes me want to try harder next time. A heart full of thankfulness for Jesus’ love on the cross motivates me to display that love in all my relationships.

It’s not always easy to admit weakness (sometimes the list feels so long that I don’t know where to even begin), but I’ve regularly been asking God to show me areas of my life that I need to work on, areas that could use a little nurturing. My son pointing out that I wasn’t using kind words could have made me angry, but it didn’t. I believe

CHARACTER FORMATION CAN BE MESSY

“Though the plan for character formation, along with the tools to make it happen, come from God, the process doesn’t always go smoothly. Sometimes it isn’t even linear. Character usually forms in a herky-jerky rhythm, with awkward starts and unexpected fits of regression. It can be clumsy, uncomfortable, challenging, frustrating, disappointing, depressing, costly, and messy. This is because human relationships can be messy. Nonetheless, character never forms in a vacuum. Our relationships, rooted in our relationship with our loving Lord Jesus, are the critical mass that God uses to get the job of character formation done. Our homes are His preferred culture for getting a good head start.” Excerpt from the book *Embracing Godly Character: The Christian Community’s Response to a Godless Culture* by Kenneth Kremer, pp. 42,43. Available through Northwestern Publishing House at nph.net or by calling 800-662-6022. \$14.99.

God was using that sweet boy to kindly point out that Mommy needs to remember, “The mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45).

Lyons also writes and reminds us to take action: “God delights in us. He doesn’t want us to live in bondage. . . . He comes and says, ‘Let’s nail this thing. Let’s not dance around it, perform around it, or seek validation to make it feel better. Let’s just go after it.’”

Strength from God

So now, instead of just repeating my mantra when I drop my son off to play with other children, we speak it every morning, together, as a reminder for us both: “Today we will try our hardest to use kind words, gentle hands, and to be a good friend. With God’s help, we can do it!”

God’s calling for me to nurture and love my husband and these boys doesn’t mean that every day will be easy, but he has fully equipped me with Christ’s example and his promise that we are in this together.

Nicole Smith and her husband are raising two young boys in Sussex, Wisconsin. This article is reprinted with permission from holychenhouse.com, a blog for “imperfect women spurred on by God’s perfect grace.”



Lavished love for loneliness

The absence of familiar things often means feeling alone, but God's love in Jesus remains sure and certain.

Jonathan P. Bilitz

Would it surprise you to learn that the fastest-growing problem faced by college students (especially first-year students) is loneliness? Medical services report that more and more students present symptoms of depression and anxiety because they feel alone. Survey statistics from universities convey that as many as 70 percent of college students say they have gone through bouts of loneliness.

Loneliness in college is certainly not new, but the rate of increase among students has led some to label the issue the "Loneliness Epidemic." Why? Certainly many factors contribute to its rise. Modern technology has allowed people to be in touch with one another like no other time in history. Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook can connect hundreds or even thousands! Snapchat streaks promote a daily communication with others. But how many of those relationships go deeper than a surface friendship?

College students have left behind many of the friends made in high school. A new beginning means new relationships need to be cultivated. The pressure of academic success might isolate the student as studying becomes the top priority.

Whatever triggers loneliness, God's people know that the "father of lies" would like nothing more than to convince us that we are all alone. He wants us to think that no one loves us or cares about us. He wants us to focus so much on our troubles that we forget about the One to whom we belong. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1). We are never alone; our Lord promises he is always with us.

So when lonely times hit, you have the greatest relief: Jesus, who already defeated Satan. King David experienced bouts of loneliness. He expressed his anguish in Psalm 25:16: "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted." Though he felt alone, David knew where to turn. He knew his hope was in the Lord. Connect with your Lord through his Word when lonely times visit you. He has lavished his love on you and calls you his child.

Consider these ideas when you're lonely:

- Don't panic! What you are experiencing is common. Remember that it takes time for something new to feel comfortable.
- Try getting out of your dorm or apartment to meet people. Connect with others through activities and clubs.

- Find opportunities to connect with those students who share the same beliefs as you. Search out the campus ministry at your college or university.

Campus ministry can provide the blessing of connecting you with Christians who are experiencing the same things. Together you will find strength for your faith in the Word of God. You will be encouraged to cast your worries on the One who cares for you. Campus ministry may provide the outlet you need to alleviate loneliness. In his grace, God has provided one hundred years of campus ministry through our church body. (Watch for more information about this anniversary in upcoming issues of *Forward in Christ!*) Countless students have connected with one another around the promises of God. Campus ministry can provide that for you.

Most of all, remember that God says you are his child. When pangs of loneliness hit, cherish your status. Reflect on the love he has lavished on you. Trust that he will never leave you or forsake you. Because God is faithful, you will never be alone.

Jonathan Bilitz is pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wisconsin.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Bater, Michael, to retirement
Bauer, Steven, to Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn.
Bigelow, Philip, to St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Daylo Jr., Hernandez, to Michigan Lutheran High School, Saint Joseph, Mich.
Degner, Abram, to Latin America
Ericson, Nathan, to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
Hillmer, Steven, to St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Johnston, Daniel, to Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School, Commerce City, Colo.
Johnston, Mark, to retirement
Koelpin, David, to new mission, Folsom, Calif.
Matthies II, Timothy, to Asia Lutheran Seminary
Rue, Geoffrey, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.
Schwab, Rodney, to retirement
Sievert, Phillip, to Grace, Yorba Linda, Calif.
Soukup, Timothy, to Abiding Savior, Killeen, Texas
Stahlecker, Gregory, to retirement
Starr, Richard, to retirement
Vanderhoof, Collin, to Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Williams, Robert, to English, Viroqua, Wis.
Witte, Daniel, to Zambia, Africa

Teachers

Adickes, Anne, to Illinois Lutheran Jr. High, Crete, Ill.
Avery, Jean, to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.
Barabas, Nicole, to Grace, Saint Joseph, Mich.
Bauer, Tessa, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Bayer, Michele, to Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz.
Biebert, Brea, to Kingdom Prep, Wauwatosa, Wis.
Botero, Santiago, to St. Paul's First, North Hollywood, Calif.
Boxill, Linda, to retirement
Bredendick, Daniel, to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Bredendick, Kristi, to Holy Cross, Madison, Wis.
Brown, Katherine, to St. Paul, Norfolk, Neb.
Buonincontro, Mandy, to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Burgess, Sarah, to Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev.
Busby, Vicki, to retirement
Eckert, Elizabeth, to Immanuel, Medford, Wis.
Ertl, Sheryl, to retirement
Falk, Michael, to First, Elkhorn, Wis.
Gauger, Jonah, to St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wis.
Groth, Kristin, to Grace, Glendale, Ariz.

Guelker, Brigetta, to Southridge, Kennewick, Wash.
Guenterberg, Kati, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.
Gumm, Lisa, to King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.
Hafenstein, Daniel, to Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Heller, Jeanine, to retirement
Hohenstein, Angela, to Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.
Hunt, Emily, to Little Lambs Preschool, Fort Collins, Colo.
Janikowski, Janise, to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
Kasten, Daniel, to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
Kolander, Anna, to retirement
Kuehl, Tammy, to Holy Cross, Madison, Wis.
Kurth, Abigail, to Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Manian, Renee, to Samuel, Marshall, Minn.
Manning, Alicia, to Crown of Life, Fort Myers, Fla.
Mantz, Lauren, to Lamb of God, West Allis, Wis.
McGowan, Kathaleen, to Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
Moll, Elizabeth, to St. Paul, Algoma, Wis.
Pinski, Richard, to retirement
Proeber, Kenneth, to Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
Renstrom, Ashley, to Westside Christian School, Middleton, Wis.
Schmidt, Elizabeth, to St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis.
Schwartz, Todd, to Grace Lutheran Academy, Lowell, Ariz.
Shilling, Laura, to Crown of Life, Fort Myers, Fla.
Stelzer, Heather, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Strong, Steven, to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Szmanda, Kathleen, to First, Elkhorn, Wis.
Tesch, Barbara, to retirement
Timm, Lyle, to Shoreland Lutheran High School, Somers, Wis.
Van Kampen, Amanda, to Mt. Calvary Lutheran Academy, Flagstaff, Ariz.
Wendorf, Jamie, to Lamb of God, West Allis, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Houghton, Mich.—Lutheran Collegians MTU at Peace Ev. Lutheran Church (50). Sept. 1. Worship, 9:15 A.M.; cookout and volleyball to follow. Oct. 27. Worship, 10:15 A.M.; cookout to follow. RSVP requested by Oct. 13. 906-482-1602; pastor@peacehoughton.org; lrnritz@mtu.edu. Website, lutherancollegians.org.
Baxter, Minn.—Christ (50). Sept. 8. Worship, 9 A.M.; program and meal to follow. 218-829-4105; office@christbaxter.com.

Newburg, Wis.—St. John's (160). Sept. 8. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; historical presentation, 9:15 A.M.; church picnic, 12-3 P.M. RSVP requested by Sept. 5. office@stjohnsnewburg.com.
Owosso, Mich.—Salem (150). Sept. 8. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; meal to follow. Website, salemowosso.org.
Ann Arbor, Mich.—St. John's (150). Sept. 15. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; meal, noon; worship, 2:30 P.M. 734-761-1740; stjohsnorthfield2015@gmail.com.
West Allis, Wis.—Jordan (125). Sept. 22. Worship, 10:30 A.M.; luncheon to follow. RSVP requested. 414-453-2030; jordanluth@att.net.
Centuria, Wis.—St. John's (125). Sept. 29. Worship, 10:45 A.M.; program and dinner to follow. RSVP requested. 715-483-3401; redeemerstjohns@outlook.com.
Houston, Texas—Abiding Word (50). Sept. 29. Worship, 4 P.M.; meal and fellowship to follow. RSVP requested by Sept. 8. 281-444-5894; sandy.leopard@awlcs.org. Website, abidingwordtx.org.

COMING EVENTS

Annual golf outing—Sept. 6. Christian Life Resources. Ironwood Golf Course, Sussex, Wis. Website, christianliferesources.com/golf-outing.
Annual wine and dine event—Sept. 12. New Beginnings. Davian's, Menomonee Falls, Wis. Website, donorbox.org/wine-dine2019.
Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention—Oct. 6–9. Eagle Ridge Resort, Galena, Ill. For all seniors, ages 55 and older. Website, wels.net/events.

NAMES WANTED

Madison, S.D.—names and contact information of WELS members and other prospects in the Madison, S.D., area as well as contact information for WELS students attending Dakota State University. Ken Brokmeier, 605-692-6989; osavior@brookings.net.
Prescott, Ariz.—names and addresses of college students attending school in the Prescott area. rothet@cableone.net; 928-445-2807.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Christian counselor—Living Hope Christian Counseling, LLC, located at St. Mark, De Pere, Wis., is seeking Christian counselors who are licensed by the State of Wisconsin. Send resumes to Kiley Martin, 2066 Lawrence Dr, De Pere WI 54115.

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

A summer of faith, fellowship, and fun

This summer, WELS members have been blessed with countless opportunities to connect with others in fellowship and faith. Enjoy these photos and takeaways from some of the synod's biggest summertime events!

WELS EDTECHLEAD SUMMIT—JUNE 25-27

About the event:

The WELS Education, Technology, and Leadership Summit (Ed-TechLead) brought more than 400 teachers, pastors, and other synod leaders together at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells, Wis., to explore ministry tools, techniques, and best practices.

A unique moment: John McHugh, director of Corporate Communications, Leadership, Development, and Training at Kwik Trip, Inc., La Crosse, Wis., was the EdTechLead keynote speaker on June 26. He encouraged attendees to promote and participate in a mission-driven culture at their organization.



An attendee's thought:

"I think at times you can work within your little bubble, just teaching a certain subject or working at a certain school. Here you can meet others in related fields. By learning from their experiences, you can im-

plement what they're doing. You can share your own stories as well."—Dan Albrecht, teacher at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.

Learn more at welsedtechlead.com.

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY CONVENTION—JUNE 27-30

About the event: The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) welcomed nearly 950 attendees from 821 WELS congregations to Des Moines, Iowa, to praise God and show their support for WELS mission work.

A unique moment: Pastor Titus Tse and members of the Southeast Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) (pictured right) traveled from Hong Kong to join Rob Siirila of Asia Lutheran Seminary onstage for a special keynote presentation.



A first-time attendee's thought: "It was so exciting to see all of the amazing things happening at home and around the world. The fellowship and support are so encouraging. I can't wait to go back to my home congregation to share what our synod is doing around the world and hopefully encourage even more outreach into our community."—Betty Schwede, member at First German, Manitowoc, Wis.

Learn more at lwms.org.

WELS NIGHT AT MILLER PARK—JULY 12

About the event: More than 2,400 WELS members enjoyed a beautiful summer evening of baseball and fellowship at the sixth annual WELS Night at Miller Park. Despite the Brewers' loss to the San Francisco Giants, WELS members were able to have plenty of fun taking part in the festivities. WELS First Vice President Jim Huebner (pictured with Brewers' bullpen catcher Robinson Diaz) threw out the ceremonial first pitch, while eight-year-old Addison Bauer, from Good News, Mt. Horeb, Wis., was chosen as a junior announcer.

A unique moment: Recent Wisconsin Lutheran High School graduate



Fernanda Rocha led more than 41,000 people at the game in singing the national anthem.

A leader's thought: "The hundreds of WELS members wearing their bright blue WELS shirts really stood out in the near-capacity crowd, and it was great to greet them as I passed them in the concourse. Many of them suggested dates for me to consider when I schedule next year's seventh annual WELS Night event."
—Lee Hitter, WELS communications director

Find videos and photos at wels.net/wels-night-a-hit/.

TASTE OF MISSIONS—JULY 13

About the event: WELS Missions hosted more than 400 people at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., for the first Taste of Missions event. Attendees enjoyed connecting with missionaries, sampling international foods, and participating in a special worship service.



A unique moment: Three new world missionaries—Dan Witte, Abram Degner, and Bounkeo Lor (pictured left to right)—were commissioned during the worship service.

A leader's thought: "God's people walked away feeling ignited for the mission work that's taking place both in the

United States and around the world! I felt that the atmosphere was electric from the start and just kept building."
—Sean Young, director of WELS Missions Operations

Learn more at wels.net/missions.



WOMEN'S MINISTRY CONFERENCE—JULY 18-20

About the event: More than 300 women from 17 different states gathered at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., for the Women's Ministry Conference. The event's theme—"Living Stones: Positioned to Thrive"—explores God's design and purpose for Christian women. A dozen breakout sessions and four keynote addresses discussed topics such as teamwork, evangelism, and family.

A unique moment: Jenna Keller, Kayla Priebe, and Delaney Leffel hosted a panel to discuss witnessing for Christ and to encourage Christian leadership on secular college campuses. As recent college graduates or as current students, they shared unique anecdotes and insights about their challenges and successes.

An attendee's thought: "I loved everything about the



conference. It was an emotional experience for me and gave me insight into my personal gifts. I never realized I had any before this."—Anonymous

Learn more at wels.net/womens-ministry.

New Bible translation available

A new translation of the Bible—the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV)—is now available from Northwestern Publishing House (NPH).

More than one hundred people—pastors, professors, teachers, and laypeople—have been working on the translation since 2013, all under the direction of the Wartburg Project, an independent Lutheran Bible translation effort by WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) pastors and professors. About 30 WELS and ELS pastors and professors were involved in translating and the technical review, and 100 people served as proofreaders and popular reviewers. “By the time it was done, at least ten people had read every book,” says John Brug, general editor and Old Testament editor. All are volunteers, except Brug, who worked full time.

A committee appointed by the Conference of Presidents has reviewed the EHV. In its report in the 2019 *Book of Reports and Memorials*, it writes,

The EHV presents us with another tool for communicating God’s Word. . . . There is room for improvement in its English style and overall consistency. In some places its translators have produced fresh renderings that surpass the clarity and fluency of other translations. . . . Several of our reviewers expressed the hope that the EHV will continue to go through an editing process in anticipation of future editions. . . . At the same time, we find the translation accurate and faithful, and can recommend it for use in our church. (p. 8)

Brug says that the Wartburg Project welcomes suggestions to improve the translation. He anticipates reviewing changes for revisions after three to five years.

Read the full review at synodadmin.welsrc.net/cop-resources.

The EHV aims to provide a balanced translation that is good for all uses in the church, according to Brug. This means it preserves traditional familiar biblical idioms while also looks for better ways to say things that may be confusing in other translations. Being balanced also means that “sometimes you have to be a little more literal in your translation, and sometimes you have to be a little more free,” says Brug. “We tried to look at each passage in its own case and not have one rulebook that covered everything.”

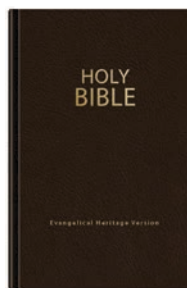
While only WELS members and those in fellowship with WELS worked on the translation, Brug is quick to note that this is not a “WELS Bible” and it is not just for Lutherans. The Bible is called “Evangelical” because of how it centers on the gospel, but “no one should be able to say there is a Lutheran slant in the translation,” Brug says.

The Wartburg Project is working on content for an EHV study Bible that will provide Lutheran commentary on the passages. It hopes to have an electronic version available by year-end.

The new edition of Luther’s catechism from NPH using the EHV translation is available now. It also is available in the English Standard Version and the New International Version 2011 translations. This is an example of NPH’s use of the eclectic approach: offering multiple translation choices when possible for a single resource.

Brug says he has been blessed to have been able to take part in a project of this scope. “The greatest thing is the spirit with which the participants worked,” he says. “To work together with my brothers and sisters in Christ on God’s Word—the whole Bible—intensely for five years is a great blessing, and we hope it will also be a blessing to those who use what we developed.”

Learn more at wartburgproject.org. Order the translation at nph.net.



Being a welcoming congregation

As part of its Welcome Home initiative, WELS Congregational Services has released a series of videos to address some of the most common reasons Christians stop attending church and how to show love and minister to these members. Nate Bourman, pastor at Mount Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis., was featured in the videos discussing how to be a welcoming congregation.

Forward in Christ: What is your definition of a welcoming church?

Bourman: A church where no one stands or sits alone; everyone feels comfortable and safe. A place where everyone knows what is going on and feels that they can navigate the facilities or get information about our congregation. A place where parents, adults, and children feel safe to hear God’s Word and can easily participate and are welcome to participate.

FIG: What are some common reasons you’ve heard from members who felt unwelcome at church?

B: I think the primary reason people don’t feel welcome is that no one talks to them. People will walk into a church and no one greets them; they don’t know what’s going on and are left to feel like they don’t belong there or are clearly the outsider. Members are often so busy in their “holy huddles” that the guest, visitor, and sometimes even other members are left on the



Nate Bourman and Jeff Matteson from Mount Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis., discuss how to be a welcoming church in a new series of videos available through WELS Congregational Services.

outside looking in. It's possible to be a stranger in your own house.

FIC: How can members participate in being a welcoming church?

B: Care and concern for the members of the church is not just the pastor's job. It is not just the elders' job. It is the job of each and every member. Love calls us to participate. None of us sit on the sidelines when it comes to welcoming God's people home. . . . All are coming to church with sin and weakness and brokenness and frustration. Be part of the throng rejoicing to gather for worship with each other.

FIC: How can congregations maintain the "welcome home" practices and culture beyond the synodwide *Welcome Home Sunday*?

B: 1) Make it a yearly effort at your church. At Mount Lebanon we are going to go "small" this year and make this a regular part of our congregational outreach each year. 2) Consistent follow-up and outreach to inactive members is vital for their souls. We are working with our elders and a shepherding team to keep reaching out to our members. 3) Regularly talking about hospitality in sermons, Bible studies, and newsletters. We like to think we're friendly, but if we asked strangers to honestly evaluate us, what would they say?

FIC: What do you hope viewers take away from the videos?

B: Love your fellow members. Deeply. Bend over backwards. Be nice. Do whatever you can to give the gospel the opportunity to be heard. Get into their shoes and try to understand how they feel. Sympathize with their needs, their hurts, and their struggle. Love them!

All congregations are encouraged to participate in *Welcome Home Sunday* in October. The mission is to "pack the church" with every member. The four videos and accompanying Bible studies as well as all other *Welcome Home* materials are available at welscongregational-services.net/welcome-home.

Learning about God's timing

In April 2018, WELS Board for Home Missions approved funding for a new mission in Joplin, Mo. In May 2019, Jordan Bence was assigned to serve as the home missionary in Joplin, Mo. What did the core group in Joplin do as it waited for its first pastor?

"Well, the first thing we had to learn was patience," says Wendy Wright, a member of the core group. "This was God's timing, not ours! We learned a lot about the divine call process, as we extended ten calls during this year."

Wright adds, "The waiting would have been much harder had we not started a weekly Bible study last July, led by Pastor Aaron Schumann, who serves at Faith, Pittsburg, Kan."

The Bible study began as a way for the core group to enjoy fellowship and biblical encouragement together. "But then, several of the group invited guests . . . and they came . . . and they stayed!" says Wright. "We were excited to have three guest families join us, and two have continued regular attendance."

"My role was every pastor's dream—I showed up and taught them and their friends God's Word every Wednesday evening for one year," says Schumann. "The core group took care of all of the details, filled out all of the necessary paperwork, put together the proposal to synod, and invited their friends and their coworkers to the Wednesday night Bible study. Their motivation to serve their Lord and tell others about Jesus is what has driven this mission."

So what was it like to find out that a pastor was assigned to them from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's graduating class of 2019?

"On Call Day the whole core group

was waiting anxiously to find out who would be assigned to our home mission," says Wright. "We were all watching on our laptops or phones at work and at home. When we saw that at the top of the list Jordan Bence was assigned to our mission, we were ecstatic!"

And Bence's reaction? "I guess it was just pure shock," he says. "You try to prepare yourself for that moment, but you really can't. When President Schroeder read my name and assignment, I was just overwhelmed. Overwhelmed with the fact that God had chosen me for such a task. Overwhelmed with the opportunity that God placed before me to love these people by continually building them up in his unconditional love. It's truly a humbling moment of God's grace. It was something I had been dreaming of since kindergarten."

Bence continues, "The training program of our synod has given me many experiences to not only build my own faith but also prepare me to serve the Joplin, Mo., (JOMO) mission."

Finally, Bence says, "When it comes to the JOMO mission, I guess a summarizing statement for this group might be—ambitious to serve. These people are filled with the spirit and are ready to go out and proclaim the good news!"

To learn more about the JOMO mission and other home mission congregations, visit wels.net/missions.



The core group in Joplin, Mo., gathered together at the installation of their first pastor, Jordan Bence (with wife, Laura), on July 28.

Academia Cristo brings new opportunities to share the gospel

Academia Cristo began in 2015 with a primary goal to help people start churches in Latin America that faithfully preach and teach God's Word. "We provide resources, and train and connect people to a network of mentors as they work to share their faith and start churches," says Mike Hartman, coordinator of *Academia Cristo* and the Latin America missions team.

Academia Cristo, academiacrismo.com, offers self-study Bible studies, music, and training courses for leaders. More than eight thousand people have signed up for Bible courses through *Academia Cristo*. Its Facebook page, where it shares daily Scripture-based messages and regular live devotions, has more than one million followers. "We want to be known as an entity that has a Christ-centered, biblical message," Hartman says.

This online presence has led to mission opportunities throughout Latin Amer-

ica. In these places, church leaders have connected with *Academia Cristo* to access the available resources. During the last years, "we saw a lot of people in Paraguay signing up for courses," Hartman says.

To make face-to-face connections, missionaries traveled to Paraguay to meet with *Academia Cristo* students who were interested in using the resources to share the gospel with others. Later in 2019, two WELS missionaries, Abram Degner and Joel Sutton, will be moving to the city of Asunción, Paraguay, to continue meeting with these individuals. There they will study with them and show leaders how to share the resources with others.

The missionaries will be located near individuals such as Carlos Fernandez in northern Argentina. Fernandez started studying with *Academia Cristo* more than two years ago. Previously, he had

served as a pastor and missionary for a different church body. He left the church 10 years ago for doctrinal reasons. "I realized I was just preaching and teaching rules that people had come up with, rather than teaching people about Christ," Fernandez says.

As he studied the Bible and read it on his own, he realized salvation is through faith by grace. Fernandez, who lives in the Chaco province of northern Argentina, wanted to start a church that was faithful to Scripture. In his search for truthful resources, he came across *Academia Cristo*. During the last two years, missionaries have visited him three times, and now Fernandez is in doctrinal agreement with WELS.

Now a missionary mentors Fernandez, who then trains other men in the Chaco province who want to start Bible-based churches.

For years, WELS members in the United States have reached out to missionaries in Latin America in an attempt to share the gospel with loved ones in other countries. *Academia Cristo* is able to help these members connect with family and friends in Spanish-speaking areas and share the gospel with them. For instance, several years ago, members of a WELS church in Sarasota, Florida, began working with contacts they had in Paraguay (read more on p. 30). Through *Academia Cristo*, they can coordinate with WELS missionaries to share the gospel with people in these areas.

Another WELS church in Arizona has contacts in Cuba. Together with missionaries, members are using *Academia Cristo* to learn how to share the gospel and start churches in Cuba. Missionaries mentor these members and their connections to help them set up a ministry plan and reach more.

"People are interested in these areas and searching for the gospel," Hartman says. "They are looking for someone who will teach them about the Bible and Christ."

Rachel Hartman



Missionary Mike Hartman and his family spent seven weeks in South America this summer working with *Academia Cristo* contacts, including people like Carlos Fernandez in northern Argentina (pictured above with the Hartman family). Carlos is already teaching *Academia Cristo* courses to the families of three men in three different northern Argentinian towns. Hartman met with Pablo in Asunción, Paraguay, as well (pictured right). Pablo took online courses through *Academia Cristo*. When he started sharing what he learned with his neighbors, the Latin America missions team set up a face-to-face visit with him. This summer was the second such visit. During his stay, Hartman also made preparations for two missionaries to relocate to Paraguay later this year.



WELS news briefs

WELS EVANGELISM

414-256-3287; evangelism@wels.net

Materials for a **new synodwide Christmas outreach campaign called C19** are now available. The theme of this year's program is "God so loved the world." "Many people look at



the pain and suffering in our world and conclude that either there is no God or that if there is a God, he doesn't love the world," says Eric Roecker, director of WELS Evangelism. "Jesus' birth in Bethlehem

proves that God does indeed love the world, a world that includes every single soul." Materials will again include worship resources for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day as well as outreach postcards (pictured) and other promotional materials. C19 follows the success of last Christmas' outreach campaign, a program in which 70 percent of WELS congregations participated and invited more than 1.2 million people to Christmas Eve worship. Find materials at welscongregationalservices.net/c19.

WELS BENEFIT PLANS

414-256-3299; bpo@wels.net

WELS Benefit Plans will offer a **full open enrollment into the WELS VEBA Group Health Care Plan** from Nov. 1 through Dec. 2, 2019. This means any eligible workers at WELS and Evangelical Lutheran Synod sponsoring organizations, including organizations that do not currently participate in WELS VEBA, can enroll for WELS VEBA medical benefits effective Jan. 1, 2020. Workers who are currently enrolled will also be able to add or remove eligible family members and/or change to a different deductible option during this open enrollment. A full open enrollment is not guaranteed to be offered every year. "If an organization or worker has wanted to return to the VEBA plan or to participate in the VEBA plan for the first time, this will likely be the best opportunity for the foreseeable future," says Joshua Peterman, director of WELS Benefit Plans. Eligible workers will receive a packet of enrollment materials in late October. Currently, more than 80 percent of WELS calling bodies participate in the WELS VEBA plan. Learn more about WELS Benefit Plans and how to participate at welsbpo.net.

Obituaries

Thomas H. Trapp, 1949–2019

Thomas Trapp was born Oct. 9, 1949, in New Ulm, Minn. He died March 12, 2019, in Madison, Wis.

A 1975 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served St. Paul, Tipler, Wis.; St. Mark's, Iron River, Mich.; Peace, Houghton, Mich.; and Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Carol; three sons; five grandchildren; one brother; and one sister.

Edward Krause, 1941–2019

Edward Krause was born Sept. 23, 1941, in New London, Wis. He died March 13, 2019, in New London, Wis.

A 1963 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at Bethel, Menasha, Wis., and Emanuel, New London, Wis. He also served as a staff minister at Emanuel, New London.

He is survived by his wife, Sandy; one son; two grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. He was preceded in death by one brother and one sister.

Sandra L. Corlett, 1951–2019

Sandra Corlett (née Grandt) was born Oct. 25, 1951, in Elgin, Ill. She died March 30, 2019.

She taught at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.; Eastside, Madison, Wis.; and Crown of Life Christian Academy, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Alan; four daughters; one son; and three grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents.

Armin J. Panning, 1931–2019

Armin Panning was born May 13, 1931, in New Ulm, Minn. He died April 7, 2019, in Johnson Creek, Wis.

A 1957 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.; Salem, Escanaba, Mich.; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. He also served as a friendly counselor to the Bulgarian Lutheran Church.

He is survived by four sons, four grandchildren, one brother, and two sisters. He was preceded in death by his wife, Virginia.

Janet L. Stirmel, 1928–2019

Janet Stirmel (née Flink) was born Oct. 1, 1928. She died March 31, 2019.

She taught at Immanuel, Gibbon, Minn.; Fairview, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Jordan, West Allis, Wis.

She is survived by 4 sons, 2 daughters, 16 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, Myron; one brother; and one sister.

Myron R. Kell, 1930–2019

Myron Kell was born Aug. 19, 1930, in Lake Mills, Wis. He died April 9, 2019, in Watertown, Wis.

A 1955 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served Grace, Durand, Mich.; Hope, Swartz Creek, Mich.; Apostles, Toledo, Ohio; Redeemer, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Faith, Dexter, Mich.; and St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Faith; 3 daughters; 1 son; 12 grandchildren; and 6 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by one brother and one sister.



AMBASSADORS

LET THEM SEE JESUS



Knowing when to say when

Jonathan P. Bilitz

One day about two years ago, the phone in my office rang. When I answered, I wasn't prepared for the conversation that would span the next hour. The caller identified himself as Jacob. He wanted to talk about Hebrew words in the Old Testament and how I (and the Lutheran church) defined and explained those words.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION

I felt woefully inadequate to answer his questions. But I was intrigued, so I listened and scrambled to find every Hebrew resource I had on my bookshelf! Though I wasn't sure I could give every answer he might be looking for, I am thankful for my college and seminary training. The Hebrew I learned in preparation to be a pastor allowed me at least to engage in this conversation.

I remember saying a quick prayer as Jacob launched into his first question. My prayer was simple: "Lord, whatever happens in this conversation, give me the words to say so that Jesus and his love for all people shine through." No matter how able or unable I was to answer the questions, I knew God was at work through his Word.

Jacob's first question involved the Hebrew word for *virgin* in Isaiah 7:14, "The Lord himself will give you a sign: The *virgin* will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Jacob asked me, "How do you translate the Hebrew word for *virgin*?" I explained that I thought "virgin" was a proper translation. He asked, "But doesn't the word *almah* (Hebrew) simply mean 'young woman'? How can we know for sure it is referring to a *virgin*?"

His question was a good one. The word doesn't necessarily mean "virgin." But the New Testament gives us all the evidence we need to translate the word as virgin. Matthew clearly tells us the birth of Jesus fulfilled the prophecy given in Isaiah 7. He wrote, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')" (Matthew 1:22,23). As the gospel writer speaks about Mary and Joseph, he uses these phrases: "before they came together" (v. 18) and "he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son" (v. 25). Those words clearly indicate that Mary was a virgin.

Jacob respectfully listened to my answer and did not object to my reasoning. What he said next, however, made me realize why this conversation was a

challenge. Jacob remarked, "I guess that is a good explanation if you believe the New Testament." *If you believe?* I was speaking with someone who perhaps did not consider the Bible in the same way I did. Suddenly I knew that Jacob and I lived in different spiritual worlds.

As we spoke about some other Hebrew words and I frantically paged through resources to maintain the conversation, he expressed an appreciation that we were able to engage in this way. He mentioned that he had called other places and had not been successful in getting anyone to talk to him.

Jacob then confessed, "I am the rabbi in the synagogue in town. I enjoy hearing what Christians have to say about the Old Testament and have a personal mission to correct some misconceptions." His admission didn't completely surprise me. His Hebrew knowledge certainly surpassed my own. Several times I said to him, "I will have to do a deeper study on that word." He never seemed put off by my disclosure. His comment from earlier about the New Testament now made perfect sense.

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE JESUS' LOVE

What could I say? How could I witness to him? I kept asking myself the question, "Where can I direct him so that he can see Jesus as the Savior?" The





WHAT'S YOUR STORY

How have you shared Jesus? Every encounter is different, and we want to hear from you. E-mail responses to fic@wels.net with the subject line: "How I shared Jesus." Include your name, congregation, and contact information. Questions? Call 414-256-3231.

words of Isaiah 53:5,6 came to mind: "He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." I asked him for his interpretation of the passage. In my mind, this passage clearly referred to a Messiah who would suffer as a substitute for sinners.

Even when you don't have the answer, speaking about Jesus and his love for all people is always good.

For the first time, Jacob surprised me. He said, "Those verses don't refer to a single Messiah but the nation of Israel collectively. The nation of Israel has suffered and continues to suffer for the Lord." He continued by offering proof. He said that the people alive when Jesus came weren't looking for someone to suffer for them and even Jesus' own disciples objected when Jesus repeatedly predicted his death. He went

on to claim that the Jewish people in Jesus' time did not read this prophecy as a Messiah suffering in their place.

I tried to explain that one of those disciples, Peter, later demonstrated a different understanding, an understanding that was more complete: "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.' For 'you were like sheep going astray,' but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:24,25). Clearly, Peter was referencing Isaiah 53 and connecting it to Jesus.

Jacob didn't back down. He was cordial, but he could sense that he wasn't changing my mind. I was reading him the same way. At this point, I said, "Jacob, I appreciate this conversation. I have learned from you. But I am afraid that we approach the Bible in two different ways. My understanding of the Old Testament is completely influenced by the events of the New Testament. I view the Bible as a seamless account of God's love for us through Jesus. If we cannot agree about that, we will struggle to agree about much else." He thanked me for my time and hung up.

I pray that the testimony about Jesus will change Jacob's heart. Isaiah planted the seed. God can make it grow. In that

conversation, no common ground could be reached. I had to know when to say when.

CLING TO JESUS THROUGHOUT

As you testify about Jesus, recognize that not everyone has the same capacity for a conversation about every aspect of the Bible. If you don't know something, you don't know something. Knowledge doesn't make you a child of God; Jesus does. If you don't have an answer to every objection that can be raised, that's normal. Cling to Jesus and the salvation that belongs to you through him.

Even when you don't have the answer, speaking about Jesus and his love for all people is always good. That "love for all people" includes someone who might disagree with you or for whom you don't have an answer. Most ambassadors for Jesus come to the end of their knowledge and ability. What a blessing to say, "I don't know about that, but I do know Jesus loves you, me, and everyone!"

Jonathan Bilitz is pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wisconsin.

This is the 11th article in a 12-part series on sharing your faith.





AMBASSADORS

HOW I SHARED JESUS

We asked, and you shared! Here are more stories from you, our readers, on how you let your faith shine in your daily lives.



OPPORTUNITIES AT AN ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY

I volunteer at the local assisted living facility. It is a way that we lay-people can share the good news of Jesus. Our

witness plants the seed of faith in some. For others, it encourages them in their faith.

I have two memorable events concerning sharing the message of Jesus at the assisted living facility.

In the first event, I was engaged in conversation with several elderly men. Somehow the topic of discussion shifted to circumcision. The discussion centered around reasons for circumcision. There were the typical comments of "ouch." One man said he was circumcised at age six.

How can a conversation about circumcision be turned into a gospel message? I asked myself.

My contribution was telling them the good news that we no longer have to follow the Old Testament law of circumcision because Jesus took our place and died on the cross to fulfill the law and pay for our sins. I found it to be a unique opportunity for sharing the gospel message.

In the second, I was helping push the wheelchair-bound residents to their lunch room after our chapel service.

One lady complimented me on the service while I pushed her chair. I thanked her and then asked if she got anything out of the message. Her reply? "Yes! Lots of questions!"

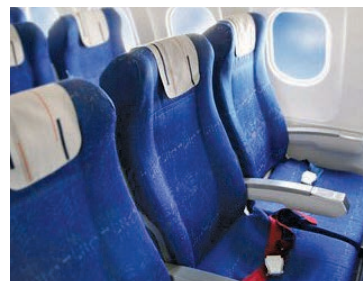
"What kind of questions?" I pressed.

She replied, "Too many to ask here." Then there was a long pause. "How can I be good enough? How do I know if I've done enough good things?" she suddenly asked.

That was my "jailer of Philippi" moment! I knelt by her chair and told her, "You don't have to. The beauty of it is that Jesus has done it all. He paid for all your sins when he died on that cross for you."

Ministry at assisted living facilities is awesome.

*Jim Baur
Christ, Baxter, Minnesota*

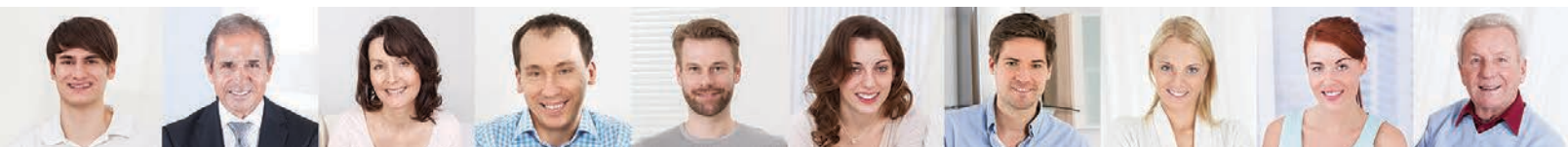


OUTREACH AT 35,000 FEET

It was a simple question that normally would have had a simple answer. But the young man next to me on the plane did not anticipate my response.

I was quietly reading my Kindle when he asked. It is likely he thought I would say I was reading John Grisham or Danielle Steele. Instead, I told him I was reading a book about the culture war against Christianity. He seemed surprised. But that answer led to a conversation that lasted for the duration of the flight.

He was a well-mannered young man in his late 20s or early 30s. I am in my 60s, so I was surprised he engaged me in conversation. Yet, it was clear the conversation was led by someone other than us! He said he was raised in the church and had good parents, but he had not been to church in years. We talked about marriage and its importance, and he agreed that a Christian marriage was important and that he would only marry once. I shared that my own marriage was 45 years old, but my relationship with Christ was lifelong. I told him how important church was to my life and how engaging with God's Word kept my faith strong. We discussed how today's social upheavals have





changed the culture, and I told him these changes resulted in moving “boundary stones” and could destroy our country but not God’s Word.

The young man was polite and receptive. He did not offer much in the way of argument, and he seemed to be thinking about what he was hearing. As the flight came to an end, he told me he did not feel close to God. I said, “There is a verse in the Bible that says, ‘Come near to God and he will come near to you’” (James 4:8). I asked him to keep that verse in mind, and he said he would.

I have no idea if this nice young man ever thought of our conversation again. I do know that whenever he comes to my mind, I pray for him. I pray for a nice, Christian young woman to enter his life. And I pray that he comes near to his God.

*Mary Snyder
Living Hope, Chattanooga, Tennessee*



WITNESSING THROUGH THE WRITTEN WORD

I had the blessing of sharing Jesus with many children for 22 years. I retired from teaching in 2003.

That year a unique opportunity for me to share Jesus with adults began. Our daily newspaper has a “Public Forum” column for readers to share their thoughts. One day a writer accused Martin Luther of removing the Apocrypha books from the Bible, thereby removing evidence of the existence of purgatory.

I felt compelled to reply with Bible passages about the completeness of Jesus’ salvation. That started a correspondence in the paper on a variety of religious topics that was to last until 2007.

In my research on the Apocrypha, I learned that St. Jerome was the first to state that seven books in the Old Testament were useful for history but “not of the same quality” for doctrine as the other Old Testament books. He suggested that these books be grouped together and placed at the end of the Old Testament. I wrote that Martin Luther was the first to follow St. Jerome’s suggestion. Luther did

include the apocryphal books in his German translation of the Bible, but it was the Puritans who requested that the apocryphal books be removed.

The necessity of purgatory continued to be discussed at least once a month. One day the writer shared this thought: “Whenever I pass a cemetery, I pray for the souls there, that they may be received into heaven.”

I replied that it was kind of him to think of others’ salvation, but it was not necessary to pray for those who have already died believing in Jesus as their Savior. I had already shared Jesus’ words about passing from death to life. This time I used 1 John 1:7: “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” I ended with this question: “If Jesus’ death purified us from all sins, what is the need for purgatory?”

That 1 John verse ended the discussion of purgatory.

Later I discovered one special result of sharing Jesus through the newspaper. A few years ago, I was visiting an elderly friend in a nursing home. The last time I saw him, he said, “I have read all your letters, and they comfort me. I want to ask you a question. Do you have to belong to a certain church to be saved?”

“No,” I replied, “if you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins, when you die, you will be with him in heaven.”

With tears in his eyes, the gentleman grasped my hand and smiled, thanking me for coming to see him.

A few weeks later, my husband and I attended his funeral in his hometown church. I found myself startled to hear these words after the homily: “He was a fine Christian man, but when he died, he still had icky things clinging to him, like we all do. You can help him be found worthy in God’s sight by praying for him and offering the sacrifice of the mass.”

Later my husband and I shared our thankfulness that our friend knew the truth: “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

*Trudy Madetzke
Zion, Russell, Minnesota*

What’s your story? How have you shared Jesus? E-mail responses to fic@wels.net with the subject line: “How I shared Jesus.” Include your name, congregation, and contact information. Questions? Call 414-256-3231.





RETURNING

by the power of God

A native Paraguayan finds motivation from the gospel to revisit her country and share the message of Christ with residents there.

Rachel Hartman

Earlier in her life, Juliana Kennell left Paraguay with the desire never to return. Now, years later, time and again she has gone back to the country. The change of heart, she says, can only be accredited to God and his powerful Word. After finding a Lutheran church in the United States, Juliana realized she could find ways to help others in South America learn more about Christ.

EARLY YEARS IN PARAGUAY

Juliana was born and raised in Asunción, the capital and largest city in Paraguay. She lived with her mother, who raised her and sent her to a Catholic school. “It was an all-girls school run by a nun,” Juliana says.

When she was older, Juliana got married and had a child. Her mother moved to New York, but Juliana re-

mained in Paraguay with her family. Her life quickly took a troubling turn when her child passed away at the age of six. “I was very hurt and felt very bad,” she says. “It took me years to move on.” She found her life empty.

During this sad time, Juliana’s mother developed a heart condition and grew ill. “She invited me to go see her in New York,” Juliana says. Accepting the invitation, Juliana recognized the chance to move on from her past. “I closed the door on Paraguay,” she says. “When I left, I said I would never come back.”

A NEW LIFE IN FLORIDA

Juliana stayed with her mother in New York for some time. Eventually, when she was once again single, she moved south to Florida and began to rebuild her life. One evening she went fishing at a beach park. During the outing, she met LaVon. The two exchanged phone numbers, and two years later they got married. A little later, the couple had a child they named Abby. Life in Florida was a new beginning.

After LaVon and Juliana got married, LaVon wanted to see the place Juliana

had come from. Even though Juliana had vowed never to return, she decided to take a trip to show him what life had been like. When their daughter Abby was just nine months old, they made their first visit back. “My stepdad has a ranch, and LaVon loved it there,” she says. The couple appreciated the way their daughter was welcomed and appreciated in the setting in Paraguay.

They returned to Florida and soon began thinking about Abby’s education. She was just a toddler, but based on their assessment and comments from others, they felt it might be helpful to have their daughter in an environment where she would feel challenged.

One evening the family went out to dinner. While there, they struck up a conversation with another diner who intrigued their daughter. During the chat, they learned the person was the preschool director at a nearby WELS school.

Based on the initial encounter, LaVon and Juliana decided to check out the preschool. The place offered a program for children prior to preschool, and they opted to enroll Abby. “We started

with the school and really liked it,” Juliana says.

Soon their toddler was exposed to chapel and the Bible. The couple watched as their daughter developed in a Christian environment. It was a place that Abby visibly enjoyed.

At the time, the family was attending a different evangelical church. While they went regularly, they didn’t find clear teachings regarding the law and gospel. They also came across few resources when looking for further instruction for their daughter.

The situation led them to turn to Ascension Lutheran Church, Sarasota, Fla.—the church connected to the preschool Abby was attending. “I wanted her raised in the truth,” Juliana says. The preschool director invited them to try a Bible class. They soon discovered that the church offered a Bible study for adults and a Sunday school for children.

GROWING IN THE WORD

Juliana appreciated the chance for her daughter to learn more about the Bible and soon found herself absorbed in the Word too. “I knew very little with my Catholic background. I never understood the Bible,” she says. From her past church experiences in Paraguay, she remembered not being able to ask questions to gain a deeper knowledge.

In the Lutheran church, the Bible was explained, and Juliana learned of the free and full forgiveness offered to her from Jesus. She was eager to study, learn more, and become a member. “I fell in love with the church,” she says. She was drawn to the opportunities to talk about God’s Word and apply it to her daily life.

Living in Florida, she was far from her other family members, yet she found a sense of belonging in the congregation. “That is the amazing part of Ascension. It’s a small church and feels like family,” she says.

REACHING OUT BACK HOME

LaVon and Juliana kept making trips to Paraguay and discovered they could

help those living there. The elementary school, for instance, had a green board that was nearly the same color as the chalk they used. This made it difficult to read what was written on the board. The couple came up with an idea to take slate-colored paint for the board when they next visited.

During following visits, Juliana brought clothes and supplies for family members, friends, and community members. “We started helping people,” she says. On one occasion, the family noticed that children were drawing water from an open well every day for school. They helped oversee a project to put in a cistern and change the well structure, making it an operation that used gravity to draw water. This created a safer source of water for the children who used the well every day.

Back in Florida, the family continued to attend Ascension and grow in the Word. “I like the Bible classes,” Juliana says. “The more I learn, the more I know and can share with others.” Over time, LaVon and Juliana realized they could do more to help those in Paraguay: they could help with the spiritual need they had observed. “The priest comes just once a year,” Juliana says.

“The Spirit led us to the opportunity to bring the gospel to the village.”

Juliana felt God had put her in a position where he could use her to share the message of Christ. “I can explain things in my own language, and I have the experience from the time I spent there before,” she says. She could relate to the people and bring the gospel to a place that was hungry for it.

Now Juliana has made numerous trips to Paraguay. Her congregation got involved, and the pastor and other members organized a mission board called Solo Cristo. They also reached out to WELS World Missions and are working with missionaries to spread the gospel further in Paraguay.

Juliana recognizes that her mission efforts stem from the Word being present in her life. “It’s not what I did; it’s what he did,” she says. “He put us together to work for him.”

Rachel Hartman is a member at Divine Savior, Doral, Florida.

Go to ascensionwels.org to read more about how Ascension is involved in outreach in Paraguay. Read more about WELS mission work in Paraguay and the surrounding area on p. 24.



Juliana Kennell and her husband, LaVon, in Paraguay. They return often to Paraguay to help the people there and to share the gospel message.

The Lord, our shield

Glenn L. Schwanke

Thank God we
still have campus
ministries to serve
students living
through these
turbulent times!

August 15–17, 1969. Woodstock. Over a half million people flocked to Max Yasgur's 600-acre dairy farm in upstate New York. There they rocked to Joan Baez; the Grateful Dead; Janis Joplin; Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young; and many more. Jimi Hendrix's electrifying guitar work wrapped up the event.

But Woodstock is remembered more for the shocking scenes captured in a 1971 Academy Award-winning documentary: sex, drugs, and rock and roll. The three-day event became little more than a warped respite from the violent protests that were sweeping our nation—protests demanding an end to the war in Vietnam and unfair treatment of blacks, as well as demanding full equality for women.

Many of the most violent protests were on college campuses. On May 15, 1969, at the University of California, Berkeley, police and 2,700 National Guard troops used tear gas and shotguns in an effort to control the rioters. Then came May 4, 1970. Kent State. Four students were killed and another nine were injured while protesting the bombing of Cambodia by US forces.

Our nation was ripping apart. Yet, in the midst of this chaos, something incredible took place at Michigan Technological University (MTU).

At the beginning of the 1969 fall semester, a Michigan Tech freshman, Martin Jones of Woodruff, Wisconsin, reached out to Dr. J. Michael Skaates, a faculty member at Tech. Jones did not want to organize a protest but rather get a group started for Bible study and worship. Jones knew that Dr. Skaates was a member of the National Church in Calumet and that Skaates had connections with the Wisconsin Synod.

Jones and Skaates received permission to check the religious preference cards on file in the Dean of Students' Office. They identified 12 students as Wisconsin Synod members. They invited those students to meet on Oct. 14, 1969. Seven students came and arranged to meet regularly for Bible study. They organized as a chapter of "Lutheran Collegians," the

national WELS Student organization. Several months later, the Dean of Students granted a charter to the group, recognizing them as a student organization.

In the fledgling years of this campus ministry, communion services were held once a month in a Seventh-day Adventist building in Houghton. On other Sundays, students took a taxi to Calumet for worship. Later, communion services were conducted in the Baptist Student Center. By 1973, weekly worship services were held at the Christian Science Building. Then on Dec 3, 1978, the first worship service was held at the University Chapel, the campus ministry's new home thanks to the WELS General Board for Home Missions.

So much has changed since then! Yet, just like 1969, 2019 is rocked by protests in our nation. Today's protests are over migrant issues, border protection, gender identity, or anger over "white privilege." Our college campuses remain tinderboxes where issues explode, finding students in the cross fire.

Thank God we still have campus ministries to serve students living through these turbulent times! Here in Houghton, we're celebrating our 50th anniversary with the theme, "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage." We'll have special services on Sept. 1, Oct. 27, and Feb. 9, 2020. We'd love to have you join us!

Whether you join us or not, please keep praying for WELS Campus Ministry, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Perhaps your prayer can mirror mine: "Father, steel Christians on campus with a faith that joyfully shouts David's confession. 'This God—his way is blameless. The speech of the LORD is pure. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him' " (Psalm 18:30 Evangelical Heritage Version).

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

Read more about how campus ministries can provide comfort and connections on p. 18.



A GOSPEL-FILLED LIFE

Cross-centered life and thought

Jeffrey D. Enderle

Her first restaurant job was nothing like cooking at home. Personal safety videos. Rigorous sanitation rules. Strict food-handling standards. Weeks into the job, she had no chance of forgetting them. Multiple signs made safety an ever-present issue. Other cooks didn't tolerate shortcuts. Managers kept constant vigilance.

Likewise, Christians benefit from keeping the basics of the faith in focus at all times. That means the cross is an essential part of our lives of faith. The cross of Christ and what it means for us is not something we can move beyond and leave behind. Martin Luther adopted a motto to encapsulate his Reformation rediscoveries: "The cross alone is our theology" (*Crux sola est nostra theologia*).

SEEING LIFE THROUGH THE CROSS

As Christians, we see everything in our lives through the prism of Jesus' cross. From a purely human perspective, the cross of Christ is a crashing defeat for his ministry. Yet far from a failure, the cross of Jesus meant he accomplished the rescue of humanity just as he set out to do. His cross en-

ables us to see everything in life through the perspective of what we have from Jesus.

Why is the cross such a crucial and constant element to our faith? Just think back to your default reactions when you experience painful suffering or injustices. Do your prayers accuse God of being unfair? You might never actually say it in these exact words, but when you are faithfully studying God's Word and spending time in prayer, do you expect favorable treatment from God?

When Paul says the cross is "the power of God" for believers (1 Corinthians 1:18), he wants us to know the practical, ongoing value of the cross for our daily lives. Christ crucified is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24) for us when we experience struggles that induce doubt and uncertainty in our faith. The cross is the key to trusting in God when things in life seem incomprehensible. Luther commends the believer who "comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross" ("The Heidelberg Disputation," Thesis #20).

The cross means Jesus fulfilled every condition laid down for the salvation of every sinner. The cross of Christ means we get to enjoy God's unconditional love because of what Jesus did for us. The cross helps us see that our ultimate

problem in life isn't self-improvement but ingrained and pervasive sin in our hearts. The cross gives us a constant reminder to find meaning in life from the sacrifice Jesus made and the victory he secured for us.

LIVING LIFE BY THE CROSS

As we study Scripture, we gain a deeper understanding of who God is. As we meditate on his gospel promises, we are drawn into a great appreciation of his gifts. As our hearts are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, our prayers are shaped by the cross of Christ. Every aspect of our lives flows out of God's riches to us in Jesus.

The message of the cross is something we need to preach to ourselves. The cross of Jesus is the dual destroyer of both our pride and despair. Infinite riches are ours through the grace of God poured out on the cross. The finished work of Jesus provides certainty in the middle of our confusion and a solid foundation for faith in a chaotic world. The cross is something we never outgrow.

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

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



I believe in a
specific God who
has stepped into
history for all
humanity.

Faith in Jesus

I believe. I say those words regularly with others as we confess what we believe. I believe in a specific God who has stepped into history for all humanity.

When hearing that I believe, some suggest that I am hostile to investigation, critical thinking, and rational thought. I can understand why some would make that assertion about people of faith. All too often “faith” is so vague that it loses its object and becomes just faith in faith—a kind of dream without substance.

For that kind of faith, there is no proof; it’s just a feeling no one can verify. To make matters worse, thousands of faiths like that exist and new ones arise every day. But I believe in some important historical facts about Jesus and what he came to do. These facts can be verified just like other facts of history.

The first question is whether or not there was a Jesus in history. In a court of law, witnesses testify to what they have seen. In the case for Jesus, the eyewitnesses say there was someone called Jesus. John’s gospel begins with the note, “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). Luke begins, “I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning” (1:3), which included talking with “eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (v. 2). Matthew and Mark confirm the testimony. Mark probably was Peter’s secretary, and Peter himself wrote in his second letter, “We did not follow cleverly devised stories . . . but we were eyewitnesses” (1:16). The testimony is remarkably accurate.

An opposing attorney would attempt to challenge their testimony with a host of arguments. He might suggest that the documents containing their eyewitness accounts were written long after the events took place. We’ve all heard that, but it did not happen. The words of the eyewitnesses have been verified

as genuine historical documents written shortly after the events they relate. The challenges to their truthfulness have all proved to be without merit.

The attorney might suggest that the original handwritten documents of these witnesses do not exist, and therefore, they might have been doctored by others afterward. But over five thousand copies of their handwritten documents do exist, some of them coming almost a century after the events. That’s not a problem for ancient texts. Scholars of Latin and Greek writers like Caesar, Herodotus, and Aristotle do not have the originals of these writers either. The copies they study are relatively few and in some cases occur one thousand years after those writers died.

Then we also investigate what these eyewitnesses claim about Jesus. Why is he so important even today? Is he a teacher? a philosopher? a charismatic leader? something else? Jesus claims to have come from his heavenly Father to tell us what comes directly from heaven: “I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence” (John 8:38). Amazing! Even astounding! Jesus makes that claim often. C. S. Lewis said what has so often been repeated: Either Jesus is a lunatic with a god complex or he is who he claims to be: God himself entering human history.

And why did he step into history? After Jesus came into the house of Zacchaeus, he said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

My few words here are not enough to explore all the arguments for the Christian faith and the counterarguments against it. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, I can confess that I believe. I believe, that is, I trust what the eyewitnesses tell me about Jesus.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT: REVELATION 20

Timothy J. Westendorf

Chapter 20 introduces the seventh and final vision. Many Christians have been taught to expect a coming millennial (thousand-year) reign of Jesus on earth based, in large part, on the words of this chapter.

On the one hand, we will be sympathetic to and patient with those who are troubled and confused by this section of God's Word as they seek his truth. On the other hand, we'll want to read these words carefully and compare them to the rest of the Bible. From that study, we conclude that the so-called millennium is not taught anywhere in Scripture.

THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN

Chapter 20 begins with the dramatization of a historical truth and the ongoing reality that results from it: Jesus, the angel from heaven, has defeated Satan, the dragon, by his life, death, and resurrection. That good news of Jesus' victory, the gospel, keeps the devil chained up from fully and freely deceiving people and nations with his wicked lies. The dragon will be bound for "a thousand years," a complete number (10 cubed) representing a definite and determined time from Jesus' ascension until shortly before his return in glory.

During that same time, we're told that a group of people, those who have taken part in the "first resurrection," reign with

Jesus. Who are those people? When we remember the Bible teaching that all human beings are born dead in sin, we understand the "first resurrection" to be the new birth given by the Holy Spirit through faith. These are all believers in Jesus! While they take part in the first death, a physical one, they all have eternal life in Christ and need not fear the "second death" (eternal separation from God). Along with all people, they will participate in the second resurrection, a bodily one at Christ's return. Meanwhile, saints in heaven and on earth live and reign with their living and ruling Savior.

SATAN'S SHORT SEASON AND FINAL DEMISE

At the end of this period, Satan will be loosed from his chain and allowed to deceive widely and freely. This vision tells us that it will be a "short time" (v. 3). We are reminded of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:21-25, where he speaks of a time of severe testing but promises that he will mercifully cut that time short for the sake of his people. Previous visions in Revelation also point to this time when gospel witness will be nearly or completely silenced. But that short season will come to an end. That end means final judgment for the old evil foe.

That end also means Jesus' return to judge the living and the dead. Those who

stand before the judge without the righteousness of Christ by faith are justly sentenced based on their own faulty record. Those who are found in Christ, who are written in the book of life, are judged on his perfect performance and guilt-removing sacrifice. They have life and peace with God through Christ and need not fear his judgment now or ever.

Jesus himself, the victor over sin and Satan, is our life and hope, our comfort in every conflict.

REFLECT ON REVELATION CHAPTER 20

1. Read Ephesians 1:1-10. What reasons given here to praise the Lord are similar to those in Revelation 20?
2. How do the words of Jesus in John 5:24-30 teach the same lessons as Revelation 20?

Contributing editor Timothy Westendorf is pastor at Abiding Word, Highlands Ranch, Colorado.



This is the tenth article in a 12-part series on the book of Revelation. Find the article and answers online after Sept. 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.



Archaeology can teach us things, but it needs to be kept in perspective.

Thomas D. Kock

“Did you find anything?!” That’s almost always the first question you’ll hear when you come back from an archaeological dig.

WHAT WE FOUND

I helped lead a group of 20 people—pastors, teachers, students, and laypeople—on an archaeological dig to Israel this summer. We dug at Khirbet ‘Auja el-Foqa, a few miles north of Jericho.

And, yes, we did find some interesting things! First, we found two rather substantial pottery destruction layers. Generally a destruction layer occurs when a wall collapses. The pottery is crushed, and sometimes, there it stays. One on-site archaeologist commented that some archaeologists will spend their entire career without finding a pottery destruction as substantial as what we found. It’s valuable because it may allow others to put the pottery back together, which can help to date the site more accurately. We also found an ancient oven called a “taboon” and a round projectile that is perhaps the sort of stone David would have used in fighting Goliath.

WHAT INSIGHTS WE GAINED

Maybe you have another question. Is it appropriate for us to look to archaeology for insights into the ancient world? Of course! Seeing that projectile—a round stone almost the size of a baseball—helps us to understand the biblical text more clearly. Seeing the pottery, city walls, and ovens helps us to understand daily life in the ancient world a bit better. Finding ancient monuments or coins with the names of biblical characters can perhaps be used to suggest to the skeptic, “You see, it’s reasonable to say that the Bible is reporting about real people, real events.”

But there are limitations. The reality is that often we’re guessing. Oh, the guesses are usually quite educated, but they’re guesses nonetheless. Maybe someone might say, “That pottery is really simple; therefore, it’s really old.” But maybe it was a beginning pottery-maker’s first try at making pottery, and so it’s simple, but not so old.

That point was brought out quite clearly with one of our finds. We found *something* made out of stone. At first we thought it was the handle to a stone vessel, but the size seemed to make that unlikely. The missing vessel, if proportionate, would have been so big and heavy it would be unusable. The next thought was that it was some sort of

weight, perhaps used to measure grain or some other commodity. Another suggestion was that it might have been used as a weight to hold a lid on a jar or something like that. The on-site archaeologists said they’d never seen anything quite like it. That’s neat!

But digging through the rubble was also a powerful reminder of the limitations of archaeology. Yes, it can teach us some things, but it needs to be kept in perspective. It can never—and dare never—take the place of “thus saith the Lord.” There are way too many “perhappes.”

So we’ll ask God for wisdom to explore archaeology to its fullest that we might gain more insights into details that had previously escaped us. But we also ask God for wisdom to help us keep it in proper perspective. Archaeology is a handmaid to the sacred text, where the best, most important insights are always to be found.

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

Note: This archaeological dig is run by Dr. Ralph Hawkins of Averett University, along with Dr. David Ben-Shlomo of Ariel University. It’s part of the Jordan Valley Excavation Project, jvcp.org. The next dig trip is tentatively planned for summer 2021.