

FORWARD IN CHRIST

A LUTHERAN VOICE

EVERLASTING FRIENDSHIPS

EASTER IS LIFE
p. 10

LIFE OF A FUTURE PASTOR
p. 25

GRIEVE, WITH HOPE
p. 31



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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

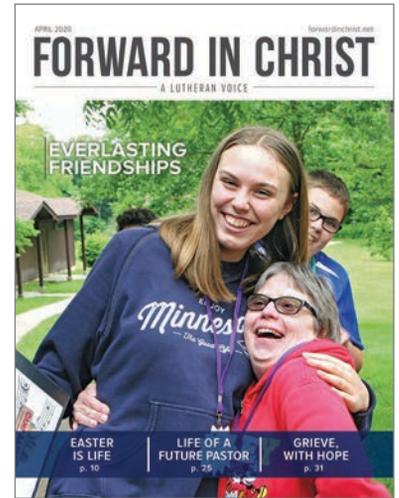
Life can be hard . . . and busy . . . and maybe uninspiring. Some days it may be difficult to find a purpose to it all.

That's when we need the reminder of Easter—to remind us for whom and for what we are living. Joshua Stahmann brings that life-giving message into focus as he details the victory our Savior won for us and what that means to our lives today (p. 10). That focus continues with Jonathan Quinn's article on how Jesus' resurrection changes things for us now and for eternity (p. 28).

While our attention may be on Easter, two articles this month also remind us of the importance of the path Jesus took leading to Easter (p. 34 and back page). Don't miss that journey to the cross and to the tomb.

With the resurrection message affixed in our brains, we are ready to live for Jesus—whether that's serving in a Christian camp (p. 18), studying for the ministry (p. 25), or using our life story to point others to God in difficult situations (p. 7). God will be with us—in this life and the next.

Julie Wietzke



COVER PHOTO | Courtesy of Andrea Schlei

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FEATURED ONLINE

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THIS IS WELS

Each year, third-year students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary spend a year in full-time training as a vicar in a WELS congregation. There they get real-life experiences in preaching and teaching.

- 1 | Isaac Hayes at Hope, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- 2 | Erich Neumann at Victory of the Lamb, Katy, Texas
- 3 | Mark Zondag (left) at Beautiful Savior, College Station, Texas
- 4 | Yaffet Gabayehu at Sure Foundation, Woodside, N.Y.
- 5 | Daniel Schmidt at Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga.
- 6 | Matthew Steinfeldt at St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio

- 7 | Luke Thomford at Beautiful Savior, Grove City, Ohio
- 8 | Timothy Walsh at Grace, Falls Church, Va.
- 9 | Caleb Rothfuss at Our Savior, Brookings, S.D.
- 10 | Jonathan Lehmann at Abiding Grace, Covington, Ga.
- 11 | Zachary Semmann at Christ, Zumbrota, Minn.
- 12 | Benjamin Balge at Beautiful Savior, Carlsbad, Calif.

SEE MORE AT forwardinchrist.net. Have a photo to share? Send it to ficsubmissions@wels.net or upload it at forwardinchrist.net/submit.



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Death dies on this mountain

“On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation’ ” (Isaiah 25:7-9).

Daniel J. Habben

WHERE DO YOU PLAN on retiring? I dream of living in the mountains. I love how the peaks and valleys are a canvas on which the sun practices its coloring and shading, never tiring of its artistic mission.

God seems to have a special liking for peaks too. Many important biblical events have taken place on mountains like Sinai, Carmel, and Calvary.

But there’s a peak that stands higher than these. The mountain in our reading from Isaiah is not one you can find or measure with Google Maps. Isaiah calls it Mount Zion (24:23). That was a place in Jerusalem, but it is much more than that. It symbolized the place where God would reign “with great glory” (Isaiah 24:23).

There God will destroy the sheet that covers all nations. This sheet is more distressing than the hood a kidnapper slips over the head of his victim to obscure her vision. This sheet is the veil of death, the final curtain. And it hangs over every person, rendering us sightless, breathless, helpless. How will God remove this veil?

DESTROYING THE SHROUD

The answer to that question is found in the events of Holy Week, where we witness God’s power and his deep passion for us.

To destroy the shroud of nations, God’s Son first had to wrap death around himself. Like a brave soldier who gives his life by diving onto a grenade to absorb its impact, Jesus gave his life in order to be a shield for all sinners. A soldier might save the lives of a few by jumping on a hand grenade, but Jesus threw himself on what destroys all people—death itself. Only one man, the God-man Jesus, could absorb the blast of God’s anger to keep the rest of us safe. And Jesus did not shrink from the task. He satisfied God’s righteous, raging anger over sin by letting that anger consume him. That’s the truth of Good Friday.

Then, three days later on Easter, Jesus tore a hole through the shroud of death when he rose again! Yes, death still greedily wraps itself around those we love, swallowing them whole like a terrible snake. But the



PHOTO | iStock

On judgment day, death’s wretched heart will beat its last.

hole that Jesus ripped in death is a gaping wound that will not heal. Death is dying.

REJOICING IN LIFE EVERLASTING

It’s no wonder Isaiah says that on Mount Zion the Lord will also wipe our tears away. No more cancer diagnoses. No more late-night notices about fatal car crashes. No more senseless shootings. We can hardly imagine such a time. But take heart. It’s coming. On judgment day, death’s wretched heart will beat its last.

So, while your heart is still beating, continue to put your faith in Jesus. Keep rejoicing in the events of Holy Week. Then one day you will join Isaiah and all the other saints on Mount Zion in this declaration: “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.”



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

What kind of leaders?

Six billion, 450 million. That's not the world's population. That's how many results you get if you Google the word *leadership*.

What exactly does it take to be a good leader? People often will answer that question by listing the characteristics that leaders possess or describing things that leaders do to influence people and events.

Christian leadership, *Lutheran* leadership, is fundamentally different. A biblical definition of Christian leadership looks outside of the leader. More than anything else, Christian leaders are people who are led—led to the cross; led by the Word; led, no matter what the circumstances, to trust in the grace and promises of God.



PHOTO | Mel Anne Designs

Normally, we might expect leaders to have all the answers—to have it all figured out.

The apostle Paul, perhaps the greatest Christian leader, knew better. Here he was, called by Jesus himself to be an apostle to the Gentiles, ready to proclaim the saving gospel. But there was that thorn that was given him—a nagging problem that seemed a barrier to his work.

That wasn't all. Look at his first missionary journey. In Antioch of Pisidia, people received his preaching with great enthusiasm. People were coming to faith in Jesus in great numbers. They begged for more. But then opponents forced Paul to leave the city.

On his second missionary journey, in Galatia, Paul eagerly made his plans to go further with the gospel. But God's plans were different from Paul's. The Holy Spirit prevented them, and the mission team had to change plans. Paul must have been perplexed and confused.

But perplexed as this Christian leader often was, he wrote, "We are . . . perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:8). Why didn't he despair? Because every time he was confused or perplexed, he remembered the answer that God gave him when he asked for his thorn to be taken away: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul, the Christian leader, learned to be led—to be led to trust in the grace and promises of God. Because of that, Paul could say, "I delight in weaknesses" (v. 10). He wasn't delighted that he had weaknesses. Rather, he was delighted because God's grace used those weaknesses to remind him where strength really was—not in his own wisdom or skill, but in the power and promises of the Savior God. And when Paul looked to God for strength, he would then see God doing his work, making his kingdom grow in ways that Paul had never imagined or planned.

That's important to remember when we experience thorns in our work as a synod, in our congregation, or in our personal lives. Our best efforts sometimes fall woefully short, and our best-laid plans fail. When we become perplexed and confused, we may ask, "Why?" We may pray fervently for those thorns to be removed. But like Paul, we need never despair. We see and hear God answering our prayers by saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Pray for Christian leaders—and pray to be leaders—who are led. Led to the cross. Led by God's Word. Led to trust the promises of God.

Mark G. Schroeder | WELS President

In January, eight hundred WELS pastors, teachers, and laypeople attended the first WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. Learn more at lutheranleadership.com.



CONFESSIONS *of faith*

The seed of the Word fell on rocky ground but over time sprouted and grew. | Amanda M. Klemp

PHOTO | Lightstock

In 2005, an agricultural expert grew a date palm tree from seed that was 2,000 years old. That seed was scattered and buried, dormant for a millennium, until it was found and nurtured into a productive plant. (smithsonianmag.com)

For Sherry Deaton, it didn't take a millennium for the seed of the Word to take root in her heart, but it was hidden in the dark for quite a while. However, when it was finally planted, it blossomed abundantly.

"Sherry is the perfect example of God's amazing grace and his promise that he will never leave us the way he found us," says Dan Schmidt, pastor at Faith, Tyler, Texas. "If you were to ever meet Sherry in person, you'd have no idea that she has such a colored past. She has a sweet East Texan accent, a huge smile, and a Holy Spirit glow that is infectious. And she's open enough to tell anyone her jaw-dropping stories of unbelief and rebellion so that she can quickly introduce them to their Savior, Jesus Christ."

THE ROCKY SOIL

Sherry's childhood was spent on a farm in Grandview, Texas. She lived with her mom and stepfather, who were both verbally and physically abusive. They didn't go to church, and she didn't have friends because she could not have anyone over. When Sherry was about 13 years old, her parents divorced, and she moved out with her mom. Her mom ended up with the wrong people and was drinking

and doing drugs. Sherry was scared. She was desperate to be safe, but neither parent was an option. There was no other place to go.

At 14, she dropped out of school and started living on the streets. She made friends who helped her find food and places to sleep, but that life came with all sorts of dangers and problems. It wasn't until she was about 17 that a friend's family took her in. She struggled with the rules and structure, but she was safe.

|"It was the worst mistake of my life . . ."

When she 19, Sherry got pregnant for the first time. She got pregnant again a year later with a new boyfriend, and then again shortly after her second was born. Life was difficult for Sherry, now in her early twenties with three kids. Yet despite all the obstacles and everything she endured, Sherry had a job she liked. She paid the bills, cared for her kids, and was even able to buy a home. She was creating the stability she had never enjoyed.

Then she met Stacy, the man she would eventually marry. While she was getting on her feet, he would go off to clubs and party. In fact, when he proposed, Sherry said no and had no qualms about telling him exactly why. So he promised to change. Over time he demonstrated those changes, and they eventually got married.



Sherry Deaton with her family (left) and with her mom and grandchild (right).

But after they were married, he started reverting back to his old ways—and now he was bringing it home. “It” was meth.

“It was the worst mistake of my life,” says Sherry, speaking about the first time she caved and tried her husband’s meth. At first, it was a weekend thing, but over time it became daily. As drugs became more prevalent in their lives, anything good started to erode. Stacy became abusive. “I was my mom all over again,” Sherry says.

As she and Stacy continued to spiral downward, it was getting harder for Sherry to hide the bruises. Once she even tried to leave, but, when she went back to the home with her kids to get a few things, Stacy was waiting with a sledgehammer. She was able to fight back and get out. The kids saw it all. The next day, her boss encouraged her to talk to a detective. Stacy was arrested and spent a little time in jail. But when he was released, they decided to try to make it work. Sherry admits she was probably as addicted to him as she was to the drugs—it was all toxic. She again drifted into the downward spiral of addiction and eventually lost her job.

Sherry was now jobless, high almost constantly, and worried mostly about where the next hit would come from. “I was in so much pain, so much torment—mentally, physically, emotionally,” she says.

THE SEED IS PLANTED

Then a missionary came knocking on her door. Sherry doesn’t know who he was, but he offered to pray with her. She says he was kind and compassionate and helped her out. It was the first time she really started to think about God and what had been happening in her life. Over the course of a few months two more missionaries made visits, even giving her a picture book of Bible stories. Sherry admits that each time a missionary visited she was high.

No one knows if those visits and the visit from Child Protective Services (CPS) are related, but CPS came to her home, found drugs, and removed her three children, ages 5, 6, and 8. She and her husband were both arrested. She spent the next two years lying to CPS and failing drug tests. She eventually had to sign away rights to her kids. Losing her children sent her further down the slope of addiction. She got arrested again and sentenced to a month in jail.

While in jail, Sherry was not only off drugs for the first time in a long time but someone gave her a Bible. She says she had a hard time making sense of it but was drawn to the Psalms and would read them.

When she was released from jail, her first stop was her dealer’s house—but not for drugs. It was simply for a

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SUPPORT CHILDREN

Due in large part to the raging opioid epidemic across the nation, nearly 450,000 children are in foster care in the United States. The need for strong, Christian foster families is great. However, Kingdom Workers realizes that not every family can foster, so they’ve developed the Foster Support program, which provides assistance to foster families by connecting volunteers to families in need who live in their area.

LEARN MORE AT kingdomworkers.com/volunteer/service-opportunities/help-a-foster-family.

ride. Though it seems way too serendipitous, her dealer was on her way to a Bible study and took Sherry. Afterward Sherry came home and says she could start to feel God working in her.

Nothing was instantaneous. She did drugs again, but somehow it was different. She wanted out of this lifestyle. She was praying and talking to God. She knew she needed real help—God’s help. “The love I was always searching for but never found, I had it now,” she says.

Taking the first steps to make things right, she turned herself in for a previous charge and spent more time in jail. This time she was doing Bible studies with other inmates. She came out sober, cut off communication with her husband, and hasn’t done drugs since.

THE SEED BEGINS TO GROW

Sherry moved away and divorced Stacy, who wasn’t interested in hearing about God and didn’t see a problem with his life. She got back on her feet and joined a Baptist church. She got involved in the church, was learning God’s Word, and became close with its members. “They showed me what it looked like to have Christ in the home. It was beautiful,” she says. She eventually left the Baptist church and got involved with a non-denominational church for several years, but she says she was not finding what she needed. During this time, she was reunited with all three of her kids.

After another move, she ended up living near Faith in Tyler. Remembering a flyer she had received, she called Pastor Schmidt. They met, and he taught her about God’s love.

“I was hooked from there on, and then my kids started to come,” says Sherry. She had finally found God’s Word “where I could grow. I felt so accepted; it felt like family. It was so awesome. My kids felt that too.”

Now she feels like a totally different person. She works at a pregnancy counseling center, armed with the lessons learned from her own life and with the truth of God’s love and grace. She can tell the women she works with that there is hope and that God loves them.

She says, “One thing is for sure—I’ve been through a lot of things. I’ve been broken down; I’ve been in a pit. But God surely called me out. He transformed not just my heart and mind. He transformed my life, my kids’ lives, their families’ lives. He transformed my family. That was all God.”



Amanda Klemp is a member at St. Peter, Savanna, Illinois.

Women’s MINISTRY IN TYLER

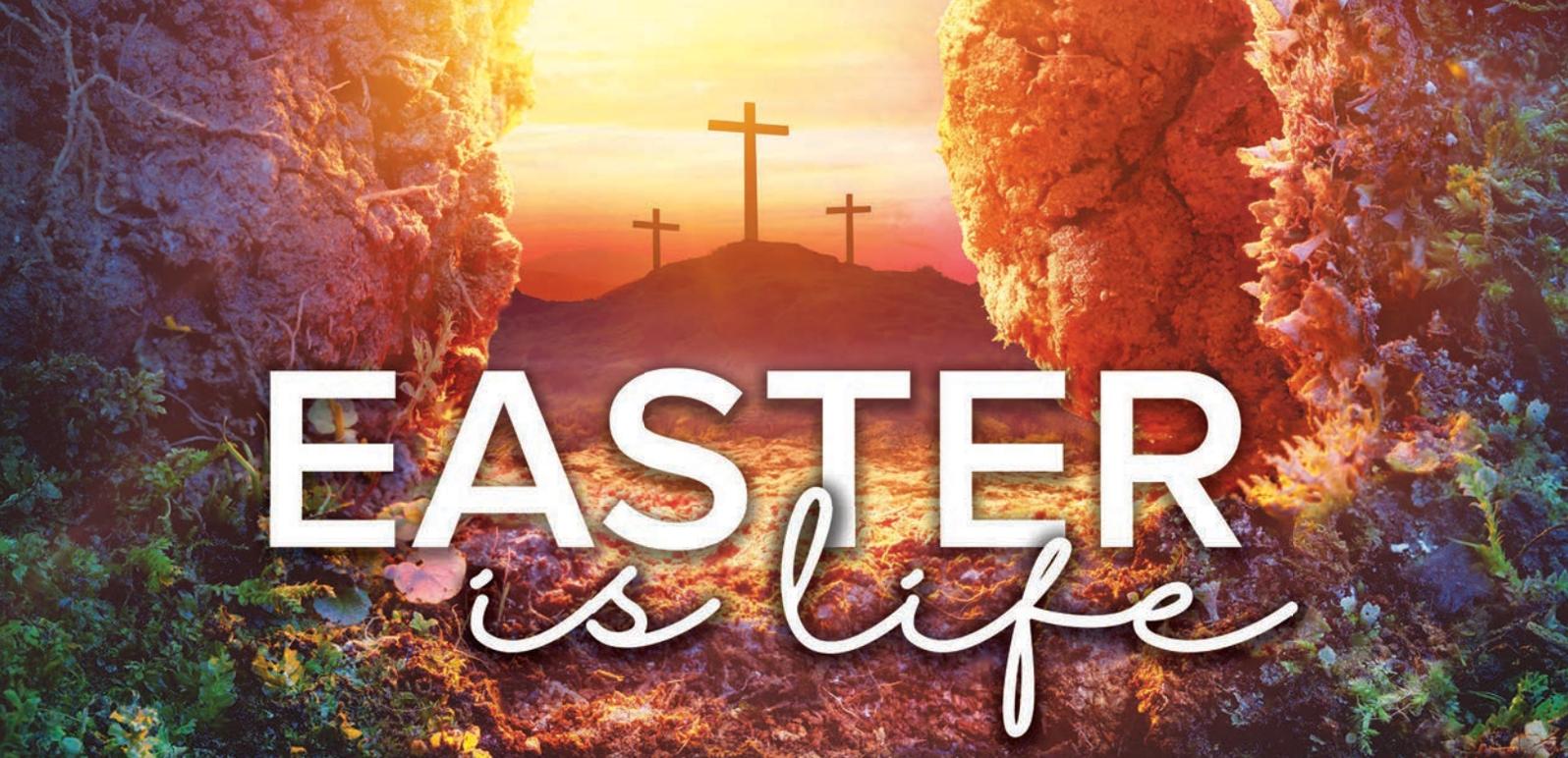
Since Sherry has become a member at Faith, she has been commissioned as Faith Lutheran Church’s deaconess over women’s ministry. Through this ministry, Sherry helps women in crisis situations, including unplanned pregnancies and domestic violence. Kingdom Workers is helping support this program.

“I wouldn’t be who I am today without God’s unfailing love, and I want everyone I meet to experience the joy and forgiveness that only he can provide,” says Sherry. “When the women hear my story, God inevitably opens a door for me to share the life-changing power of Jesus Christ. My main goal is to lead these families into a growing relationship with Jesus through regular Bible studies and connecting them to the agencies and organizations that can help them with their needs. I invite them to meet with my pastor and visit the congregation so they can have lasting and meaningful relationships with the body of Christ.”

LEARN MORE AT kingdomworkers.com/donate/our-programs/womens-ministry.



Sherry Deaton (front row, right) and some of the women she works with.



EASTER *is life*

Easter brings us victory over death and gives us new life.

Joshua E. Stahmann

The young man across the table from me was in tears. There was no doubting the depth and sincerity of his pain. “I’m tired,” he said. “I’m tired of the struggle. I’m tired of the temptations. I’m tired of the devil’s attacks. Sometimes, I wish I was dead.”

His anguished words hit home. Memories of my own guilt came flooding back into my mind. I could not help but think of the times when I was similarly disgusted with my own weaknesses and my own failures. He and I both know we are supposed to be dead to sin and alive for Christ. He and I both know the weariness that comes from repeatedly falling short.

In a moment like that, it’s easy to be at a loss for words. What do you say to someone who is so spiritually beat up that he wishes it would all end? If I could find the words, they were not going to be all that useful anyway. Instead, in that moment, both of us needed to hear something more solid and more powerful: the Word of God about how Christ’s resurrection defeats sin and gives us life.

EASTER IS LIFE TO ALL WHO DESERVE DEATH

This man was feeling something that every sinner knows: God’s expectations are nothing short of perfection, and we sinners don’t even come close to that. Our conscience is sensitive to every mistake. This man confessed his sins numerous times before—to me privately and alongside his fellow Christians in public worship. He didn’t hesitate to acknowledge his sinfulness, and he frequently poured out his soul to God in prayer over that tragic fact. He could have been the poster child for the broken and contrite heart of Psalm 51.

His problem was that in the midst of that guilt, he kept returning to his own actions and to God’s law. Every time he did that, all he could see was more guilt, more disobedience, and more deserved punishment. But God’s law was never designed to bring comfort. Instead it simply was to expose sin. This man needed the gospel in all of its Easter glory.

For people who are beaten and broken by their own guilt, there is only one thing that can provide hope. We need to stand at the foot of the cross of Christ on Good Friday and see Jesus, the Lamb of God, who

willingly takes on all of our guilt and makes it his own. We see atonement and redemption, as Jesus is punished for our sins and redeems us with his own blood. Christ declared from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). His saving work is completed for all eternity.

Then we turn our attention to another place. We travel with the women and the disciples to the empty tomb. We hear the angel announce that Christ did not remain in the grave, but he has defeated death. We listen to the assurance of God’s promises that, just as Christ conquered death, so we also will rise again to eternal life. The empty tomb is the sign and seal of heaven to sinners who on their own have no such hope. The words of Jesus ring in our ears as we celebrate his victory: “The one who believes in me will live, even though they die” (John 11:25). Here, at the empty tomb, we hear God’s gracious pardon: Easter is life to all who deserve death.

EASTER IS LIFE FOR ALL WHO DENOUNCE DEATH

The contrite young man across the table needed the message of Easter. In Christ, God gave him life instead of death. The change in status is a



PHOTO | iStock

priceless treasure: God justified him in faith and brought him over from death to life. But there is more. Easter is also about a change in attitude, as God teaches us to denounce sin and empowers us to live for him.

During our occasional conversations, the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 7:15-20 frequently came up: The good things that I desire to do, I don't do. And the evil actions I don't want to commit? Those are the things I keep on doing! How reassuring it is to know that the great apostle struggled with the same things that we were discussing. How comforting was Paul's answer to this anguish over the continual battle with his sinful nature: Jesus Christ still rescues us, and we can rely on that comfort each day!

In fact, that comfort is what empowers us to keep fighting. We're not fighting to save ourselves or to prove how we've become better people. We're fighting the struggle against sin and temptation because we know we're not dead anymore. Through faith in Jesus, we've been made alive. In our baptism, God buried our sinful natures alongside our sins in Christ. In addition, just as God raised Christ from death, he

raises us to a new spiritual life of faith. That new life depends on him for strength, and we seek to please him by living as if we are completely dead to sin. The very fact that our attitudes have been changed from embracing sin to denouncing it is clear evidence that God has already begun shaping this new attitude of faith and spiritual life in our hearts.

The empty tomb is the sign and seal of heaven to sinners who on their own have no such hope.

Yes, this daily life for Christ has its challenges. We still lament how every time we knock the sinful nature down, it's already jumping back up to begin the fight again. We still experience days that feel more like we're moving backward instead of forward. But that very struggle drives us back to the truths confirmed at the empty tomb: Our sins are forgiven, our Savior has claimed us as his own, and he continues to assure us that heaven is ours. The life we

live now, we live to God, for the sake of his Son who died for us and was raised to life again. In this way, Easter is life for all believers. We have the power to turn away from sin and death and live as his disciples.

As for the young man who felt more dead than alive? He is slowly coming to realize more clearly just how much he needs the comfort of his living Savior. The thought of his living Savior, ascended and seated on his throne in heaven, eager to pardon and quick to forgive, gives this man a steady source of strength and comfort during good days and bad. He knows that his daily life of faith is a work in progress and always will be. There are still tearful moments and conversations prompted by his aching conscience. But there is also increased hope, as God helps him hold on to the cross of Christ and the empty tomb. Why? Because Jesus is still alive. Because Jesus still forgives. And because Jesus keeps holding the truth of his resurrection before our eyes: Easter is life, now and eternally.



Joshua Stahmann is pastor at Salem, Scottsdale, Arizona.

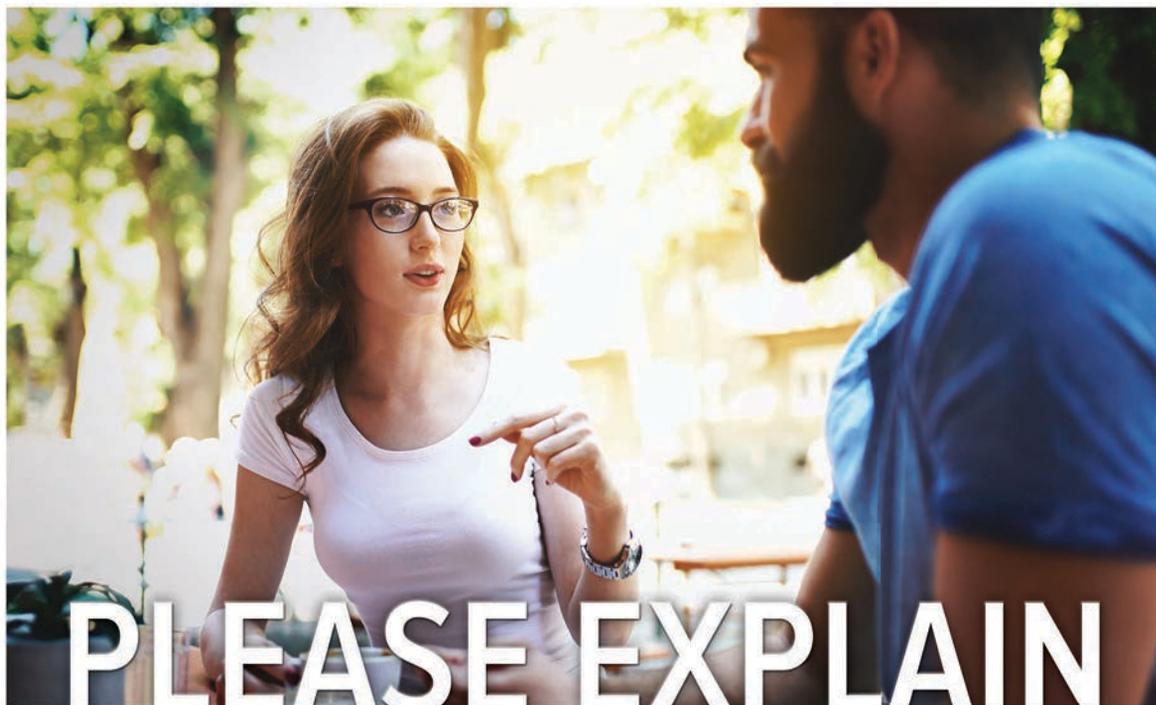


PHOTO | iStock

WHY CAN'T MY SISTER HAVE COMMUNION WITH US? | Gary A. Pufahl

HOW DO I ANSWER that question “Why can’t my sister have communion with us?” without knowing either the person who is asking or the person being asked about? As Christians, we care about both people and want what is best for them. But first we have to know your sister’s situation and whether she understands the Lord’s Supper, the grace of God, and the teachings of the Bible.

ACHIEVING FELLOWSHIP

Here are some things to consider:

God’s goal: Fellowship. Ever since God created this world and its people, he has only one goal in mind: He wants us to be in perfect fellowship with him. He wants us to enjoy his presence. But in order to have fellowship with a holy and perfect God, we can only approach God on his terms and in his way.

Mankind’s problem: Sin. The sad reality is that, due to our sinful nature, human beings don’t like God’s terms. Instead of submitting to what

God says, our sinful nature wants to be superior to what God says—to do things our own way. I have a sinful nature that abhors God’s will and his Word. So do you, and so does your sister.

God’s solution: Repentance. But what a heart God has! He is love. He wants what is best for us. He goes into action to do what is best for us. God the Holy Spirit works repentance in our hearts and minds. He brings us to a genuine sorrow over our rebellion and defiance. He gives us a new heart and a new mind that see what he did to make us new.

Fellowship achieved. What do we see? We see a man who is God stooping down to wash his disciples’ feet (John 13:14). We see a Lord who came to be a servant (Matthew 20:28). We see the Holy One who became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus stood between God and sinful humanity. He chose to be made guilty of the sins of all. He became the atoning sacrifice for me, for you, and for your sister. He achieved what we could not achieve.

Jesus has made us right with God: sin removed; righteousness given. We have fellowship with God through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

God’s gift: His Supper. The very night before he went to the cross to achieve that for us, Jesus gave his disciples—and us—something to treasure until he returns in glory on the Last Day. He gave us a gift that we as the church are to celebrate until he brings us to the banquet feast of heaven.

There he is, speaking so very clearly. He was just hours from dying and wanted his disciples to know in no uncertain terms. Holding the bread, he said, “Take and eat, this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took the cup and said, “Take and drink, this is my blood of the new covenant, poured for you for the forgiveness of sins” (cf. Matthew 26:26-28).

He gives us forgiveness. Fellowship is achieved. As I approach this table, I carry a load of sin: a bag full of my pride, defiance, greed, and idolatrous

ways. It weighs me down. But at the table of my Lord Jesus, I receive something completely different. My Lord bends down to earth in the bread and wine and Word. He looks me in my eyes of faith and says, "This is for you. You are forgiven." I walk away from that table, and the burden is gone. Jesus has taken that weighty bag and has given me joy of heart. I have peace with God. Fellowship is achieved through Jesus.

EXPRESSING FELLOWSHIP

But God never intended that fellowship would just be a personal blessing between him and me. He intended that an individual would express faith jointly with others. We come together to worship. God has always intended individuals to express their faith jointly in the community of other believers.

The Lord's Supper is just such a public expression. The apostle Paul

teaches that as we join in the Lord's Supper, we publicly and jointly proclaim the Lord's death until he returns (1 Corinthians 11:26). In a very real way, I am joining together with other people to confess my Lord when I take Holy Communion. We are united. We are one. A fellowship or unity is expressed.

What is unity except that we believe and confess the same truths! Not my truths, not your truths, but *Christ's* truths—all of them. Let's start with the truth of the Lord's Supper. Do I believe that I am a sinner in need of Jesus alone (Luke 18:13)? Do I recognize that Jesus gives me his very body and blood miraculously connected to the bread and wine (1 Corinthians 10:16)? Do I believe that Jesus fully and freely lifts the burdens of sin and guilt off of my account and supplants them on his account (2 Corinthians 5:21)? Do I believe that I have the privilege of

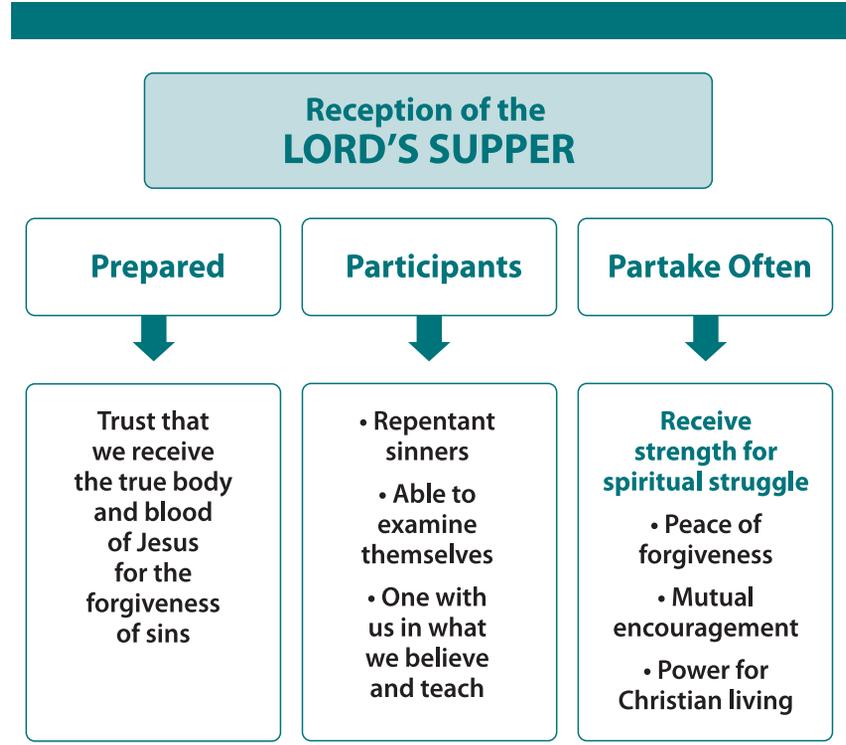
proclaiming the Lord's death with these fellow Christians in the Lord's Supper until Jesus returns on the Last Day (1 Corinthians 11:26)?

But true unity is tied to all we believe. Do we believe and confess *all* the truths of Scripture? Together we submit to God's Word. Together we place ourselves beneath God's will. Together we let the Word of God teach us and mold us. The Lord's Supper is our avenue through which we express fellowship with God and with each other.

SHOWING LOVE

I care deeply about your sister. I desire only what is best for her. Without knowing exactly where she is at as an individual Christian, it's difficult to answer why she can't take communion with us, or even why she shouldn't. Certainly, I would never want to put her in a situation that would bring her harm. If someone does not believe what Jesus teaches about the Lord's Supper, that person would take it to her harm, not her healing (1 Corinthians 11:29). Since the Lord's Supper is an expression of fellowship and unity (1 Corinthians 10:17), I also wouldn't want to put your sister in a situation where she gives public profession of unity with us if she doesn't believe and confess the same as we do.

But the goals are still the same: fellowship and unity. I would love to have and express fellowship with your sister. We all would. I would pray that together we would have the opportunity to sit at the feet of Jesus and let him do what only he can do: create fellowship with God and each other through his teaching.



From *Luther's Catechism* © 2017 Northwestern Publishing House.

All Christians should examine themselves before receiving the Lord's Supper. Resources are available to prepare yourself for Holy Communion in *Christian Worship* (p. 156) and *Luther's Catechism* (2017) (pp. 371-373).



Gary Pufahl is pastor at Christ, Big Bend, Wisconsin.



Q&A WITH DAVID SCHARF

I have been going through a string of bad luck lately. It seems like everything I do ends up in failure. I have a friend who shared the encouragement: “Just keep trying. After all, God helps those who help themselves.” That is not very encouraging! Is this what the Bible teaches?

WHERE DOES THIS STATEMENT COME FROM?

Does the statement “God helps those who help themselves” appear in the Bible? No, but you will find a version of it in the Koran: “Indeed, Allah will not change the conditions of a population until they change what is in themselves” (Ar-Ra’d 13:11).

This statement about God actually has its roots in pagan religion. Five hundred years before Christ, Aesop wrote, “The gods help them that help themselves.” Our current wording comes from the deist, Ben Franklin, who said it in *Poor Richard’s Almanac*.

IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE?

Satan often couches his lies in half-truths. There is an element of truth to this statement. In general, life goes better if you have a positive attitude and you do the right things. No one wants to be around an Eeyore who mopes around all day saying, “Woe is me,” or someone who is always making the wrong decisions. If you do the right things, generally things will go well for you. Martin Luther says in his conclusion to the commandments, “[God] promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in him and gladly do what he commands.”

But hard times will come even if you keep God’s commands. Think of how crippling that thought is. A Christian mother sacrifices time and again for her family, but she gets cancer. A teenager stands up to the bully on behalf of a classmate and is ridiculed. A business collapses despite all the best effort. We perhaps have to say, “That’s

not fair. They don’t deserve that. Shouldn’t God have helped them?” We conclude that either God is not being fair or those people must have had it coming. But neither conclusion is true.

WHO DOES GOD HELP?

The truth is that God does help. We do not deserve anything from God because of our sin. And yet, listen to what Scripture says, “While we were still sinners (not while we were doing the right things, not while we were helping ourselves), Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). That is called grace: God’s something-for-nothing-when-we-don’t-deserve-anything. It is his undeserved love.

So why do we obey God’s will for our lives? Not to help ourselves. That we could never do. Instead, the Bible says, “The grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:11-14).

You are God’s very own special treasure, not because you have helped yourself, but because he chose to love you and help you by using all things in your life to bring you home to him. Because of that, we are eager to do what is good. We can trust his plans for our lives.

ASK A QUESTION AT forwardinchrist.net/submit.

God helps those who cannot help themselves

David G. Scharf

RECENTLY IN A STADIUM packed with people, these words were preached: “If you continue to say something, eventually it will become a reality. Whether you realize it or not you are prophesying your future, prophesying your success Our attitude should be, ‘I’m getting younger. God is renewing my youth like the eagles. I’m getting stronger, healthier, better looking. . . .’ Don’t go around cursing your future. Start blessing your life. Prophecy good things. Your life will move in the direction of your words.”

It is a common message: A God without wrath sent the Christ without a cross to a world without sin. How do you think that message was received? Was the speaker booed off the stage? No, the people hung on his every word. Why? Because who wouldn’t want to believe that? It’s what itching ears itch for. But is it true? Does God help those who help themselves?

WHERE DOES MY HELP COME FROM?

By nature, we are dead (Ephesians 2:1). Dead people cannot do anything to help themselves. But my sinful nature leads me to believe that I can do something to be right with God.

Give specific examples of how you see this truth in other religions, denominations, and even in your own heart.

GOD MUST DO THE “HELPING”

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Paul compares our conversion to God’s work at creation. In what way is God’s activity in creation like conversion?

Read Luke 18:9-14

In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, the Pharisee thanked God that he was not like other sinners. Far from being repentant, he bragged about his own accomplishments. We think, *How arrogant!* And yet, when we look to our own actions or when we look down on others who struggle with a sin, we act like the Pharisee. Remember who went home justified: the repentant tax collector. God must do the helping!

Read Romans 4:4,5; 5:8.

What advice would you give to someone who says, “If I can just kick this habit (or sin), I’ll feel closer to God.”

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Acts 14:22 says, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” Even if we are living faithfully, God does not always “help” from a worldly perspective. Give an example of someone for whom this was true. Think about the apostles, patriarchs, and even your own life.

Compare the difference between the outlook on life of those who believe “God helps those who help themselves” and those who understand “God helps us because of his grace.”

Contributing editor David Scharf, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm.

PARENT CONVERSATIONS

Warning: The two articles this month are a completely accurate portrayal of life with children. Tantrums happen. Parents lose it. If we're being honest, most of us will admit that we have been there. This is us.

How do we stop that cycle though? How can we maintain our cool when emotions are running high? Read these articles by Meg Clemons-Smith and Jenni Schubring and you'll have some new parenting tools to help manage the next meltdown.

— Nicole Balza

HOW CAN I STAY CALM WHEN MY CHILD IS OUT OF CONTROL?

MY SCREAMS and my toddler's screams were interrupted by my husband as he walked through the front door. "You need a time-out," he said in his calm, deep voice.

"Yeah, she does," I quickly responded in an exasperated tone.

"No, Mommy, I was talking to you," my husband responded.

I was furious! I shot him an evil glare and stormed out of the room. I slammed my bedroom door, sat on my bed, and started to cry.

FEELING HELPLESS

As I sobbed, I wondered, *How did it get to this point? When did I become the mom who communicates with yelling and screaming?* I had spent the last ten years working as a behavioral therapist. That was my job. That was my educational background. I could encounter any of my teen or adult clients in crisis and be their calming force. Why couldn't I manage my two-year-old?

I overheard my husband and my daughter in the other room singing a song from a popular children's show. One of the lyrics was "Take a deep breath and count to four. 1-2-3-4."

**I remind myself of
Philippians 4:13,
"I can do all this
through him who
gives me strength."**

In that moment, I stopped and closed my eyes. I took a deep breath and counted to four. When I got to four, I said a quick prayer, "God, forgive me and help me, please!" I walked out of the room to my daughter who was still upset. When she saw that I had calmed down, her whole demeanor changed. She too became calm.

REMEMBERING THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE

All of a sudden, all my training and education came back to me. Here

was my daughter having a real emotional outburst, and by losing my temper, I had just added to her chaos. Instead, I needed to be sharing and contributing my calmness to help ease her anxiety and anger. She needed guidance and correction, but it wasn't going to be effective if I met her big emotions with even bigger emotions. She simply needed me to help her regulate and mirror appropriate actions and reactions. Together we needed the love and understanding of Jesus.

Three years later, I have another daughter, and I spend my weekdays with her and two other toddlers. Every so often I find myself at my breaking point. Screaming into a pillow seems like the only logical option. In these moments, I close my eyes, take a deep breath, count to four, and say a prayer. I remind myself of Philippians 4:13, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." I remind myself that God knows my weaknesses and

still loves me. He will give me the strength to get three screaming children out of the grocery store. He will give me the patience to let a two-year-old buckle her own car seat by herself, even if it takes 20 minutes. He will give me the courage to say no, even when it's difficult.

We as parents don't need to be anxious. We are not doing this alone. We can talk to God about our needs and ask for his help . . . and he will hear us.



Meg Clemons-Smith and her husband, Paul Smith, are raising two young daughters in Los Angeles, California. After receiving her MA in psychology and human behavior, she decided to take a break from behavioral therapy to be a full-time mom.

.....

I WAS SHOPPING AT Walmart, seven-months pregnant, in winter in Wisconsin, with my two- and three-year-old in tow. My two-year-old was giving me all the signs that I had kept him out too long, but I didn't listen.

He lost it.

I tried to escape before it got too much for me to handle. I made it to the entryway where the carts were—and where all the snowy slush was. He started to flail, right in the middle of the slushy mess of the entrance. Pregnant and holding the hand of my three-year-old, all I could do was watch him melt down, screaming and crying, as people quickly walked around him. When he was done, I reached for his hand, and we walked back to our car.

It looks different when they get older. Words lash out, and doors slam.

It is so easy as parents to react with the same kind of behavior. So how do we keep from losing control ourselves? Here are some simple (but not always easy) disciplines we can incorporate:

1. **Pray: Be proactive. Start your day in prayer.** Pray for your children. Pray for your relationship with them. Pray that you see your children through God's eyes. Prayer helps me with my mindset when it comes to most things—especially my children.
2. **Pause: When your child loses control, practice the power of pause.** Don't react. Sometimes

you may have to leave the room. Sometimes you may have to sit and wait. But pause before you move forward.

3. **Seek understanding: Our children usually have a reason to act out.** I have found it easier to respond with compassion when I remember that most of the time it has nothing to do with me and more to do with something else. Maybe something went wrong at school, maybe they had a challenge with a friend, maybe they are simply tired. Setting my pride aside to get at the heart of the matter takes time. Waiting until they have settled down and having those hard conversations are so valuable. By doing so, you create safe space for connecting with your child.

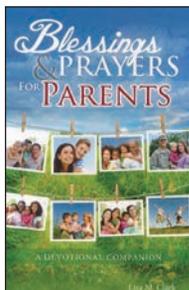
I know that my default is to remove PAUSE and add ENGAGE. But most of the time engaging in the middle of your child losing control only fuels the fire. Focus on the fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22,23). We are led by the Spirit; this is a perfect time to tap into that power and show love.

These may sound like simple practices, but they're not easy. But here's a fun realization: Pray, pause, and seek understanding are good tools in almost every circumstance. If we live these practices, we also model them to our children. How great is that?

Prayer helps me with my mindset when it comes to most things—especially my children.

Blessings and prayers for parents

Looking for some biblical encouragement and guidance from God's Word? *Blessings and Prayers for Parents* points readers to our heavenly Father as the only perfect parent and speaks to a parent's need to hear God's specific words of forgiveness and grace. Available from Northwestern Publishing House, nph.net, 800-662-6022.



Jenni Schubring and her husband, Tad, currently have 6 children in their clan ranging in age from 11 to 19 as well as their crazy dog. Jenni is a licensed life coach.



Going to Camp BASIC is a family affair for volunteers and campers. | Laura Schaefer

MY CHRISTIAN *life*

PICTURE, IF YOU WILL:

- Wheelchairs being pushed on grassy paths by hardy counselors so their campers can experience “hiking;”
- a Bible story interrupted when someone spots a rainbow and everyone flies to the window to watch;
- a camper in a wheelchair helped to the top of the waterslide—the highlight of her week.

For the past 40 years, Camp BASIC (Brothers and Sisters in Christ) has been bringing a love for Jesus and a love for nature to mentally challenged campers. Its mission is to provide an opportunity for Christian worship and fellowship to people with developmental or intellectual disabilities. In the process, it also provides a meaningful experience for volunteers as they help God’s children in need, develop and improve leadership skills, and form everlasting friendships with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Len Punke, a member at Peace, Hartford, Wis., has been a Camp BASIC volunteer since he first saw a presentation about it at a teacher’s conference in 1980. “I was a counselor for 25 to 30 years, served as

Friendships are formed—some for just a week, many for years on end, and even a few for a lifetime

camp secretary in the late 1980s, and have helped in the kitchen since 2016,” he says. “Lately I’ve been Grandpa Len to any and all children whose parents are helping with camp.”

Len is not the only one in the family involved with Camp BASIC. In 1990, Len brought his second-grade son Aaron to camp for the first time,

and, after volunteering in various roles, Aaron, a member at Living Hope, Commerce City, Colo., is now a board member and a director. Len’s brother Lowell started coming as a camper in 1995 and has been coming back for 25 years!

While many families have served together at Camp BASIC over the years, when they talk about their camp family, they mean more than blood relations. They mean the family of campers and volunteers that make Camp BASIC thrive. Volunteers make the camp successful, serving as craft, kitchen, and music helpers, as well as counselors, nurses, board members, and directors.

LIFE AT CAMP BASIC

During two weeks in June, Camp BASIC brings campers to a modern, indoor camp facility at Wyalusing State Park near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. What does a day at camp look like? A typical morning includes Bible story time, music, arts and crafts, and exercise at the campground. After lunch

GROWING UP AT CAMP BASIC

Ella Schlei's parents, Andrea and Dave, met at Camp BASIC in 2001 when they were both invited by friends to be counselors. "The last day of camp is clean-up day, and my dad cleaned the bathroom that my mom was assigned to clean," 16-year-old Ella explains: "She later sent him a thank-you note, and they continued to keep in touch with each other. They got married the next summer and even held a fake wedding ceremony at camp the next year!"

Now Andrea and Dave, members at Zion, Sanborn, Minn., serve as camp directors for one of the weeks of camp, and Ella volunteers.

"I have been to Camp BASIC so many times, it feels like home," Ella reflects. "We have a lot of pictures to prove that even at a young age, it was my favorite place to be. Every year as I grow up, I gain more responsibilities. I started out helping with crafts, music, skits, and the dishes. But now that I am confirmed, I finally get to be a counselor and have the full experience." This summer will be Ella's third year counseling, and she is also involved with planning for and helping with camp all year round.

"Ella has been coming to camp with us since she was a baby," Andrea shares. "I feel that Camp BASIC has influenced her in ways that she doesn't even realize. She does not see the disabilities in our campers. She sees the person and all they have in common—they are friends. She does not really realize that this is special!"

and a rest time, the campers and staff leave on a bus trip to Prairie du Chien known as the "highway sing-along." The campers spend time swimming at an indoor pool, bowling, fishing, going for boat rides, or shopping at Walmart. The shopping is a favorite outing of many campers, with each one getting \$10 in spending money. Evening activities include movies, karaoke, sailboat races, scavenger hunts, and even wedding and baby showers for volunteers. The busy days always close with singing and a devotion at the campfire.

As a camper, Lowell lists playing sports, having s'mores at the campfire, swimming, singing, and taking his craft projects home to show them off as some of his favorite pastimes. He enjoys going to camp because the people trust and respect him. "My counselors are always nice and listen to me," Lowell says, "and they let me know when I can go back for seconds!"

Lowell is one of many campers who return year after year. Some have been coming for nearly all 40 years!

Each week about 35 campers—from teenagers to those in their mid-70s—attend the camp. Campers are paired, usually one-on-one, with a counselor for the week. Most counselors start as high school students, and many continue to volunteer for years after their first time. They not only lead campers through days filled with activities but also lead them to a deeper understanding of what Christ has done for them.

But often it's the campers' unconditional love and hugs that encourage the counselors. "They give us more than they get," Len reflects.

Aaron recalls an example from when he was a counselor in high school: "I had a camper who was nonverbal, and during the week he made a wooden cross necklace," Aaron shares. "When we went to Walmart, he held it out and pointed to it, showing every person we passed. So I had to tell everyone we encountered that Jesus loves them and died on the cross for their sins." As a director of camp now, Aaron enjoys watching as the young counselors grow during the week and



Counselors and campers at Camp BASIC, including Ella Schlei (cover and far right) and Lowell (center).



Camp BASIC is one of dozens of WELS camps that offer children and adults of all ages an opportunity to explore God's creation, grow in their faith, and participate in Christian fellowship. The 2020 camp season is open. Check out the available camping opportunities at wels.net/events.



from year to year. "As I tell the counselors every year," he says, "camp can run without me, but it cannot run without them."

Their reward is not financial, but the experience of serving their Savior and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ is priceless. "Every year there are hugs and smiles galore from campers, counselors, and

camp. Over the years Camp BASIC has had many campers go through simplified catechism classes and get confirmed after attending camp.

HEAVEN'S VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE

The last evening program of each week is a talent show. Aaron explains, "We encourage the campers to do something they enjoy, and

every year and dances with a counselor."

Len recalls a special act when a camper who spoke with a stutter read the poem "Heaven's Very Special Child" flawlessly. What a great reminder that, because of the redeeming work of Jesus, all of God's children will live forever in heaven, flawless in body and mind.

"At camp, every camper is encouraged to learn and participate at their own level and is given personal attention to reach the height of their ability," Len reflects, "but when we see them in heaven they won't be mentally challenged!"

What a great reminder that, because of the redeeming work of Jesus, all of God's children will live forever in heaven, flawless in body and mind.

parents. Friendships are formed—some for just a week, many for years on end, and even a few for a lifetime," reflects Len.

While many campers belong to WELS or other Christian denominations and attend Bible study programs back home, a few campers only hear about Jesus the week of

many plan ahead and bring costumes." Some choose to sing, and one camper plays his trumpet every year. "We had one camper in a wheelchair show off his talent of being pushed into a tower of boxes, and another balances a spoon on her nose," Aaron recalls. "Another brings a special dress



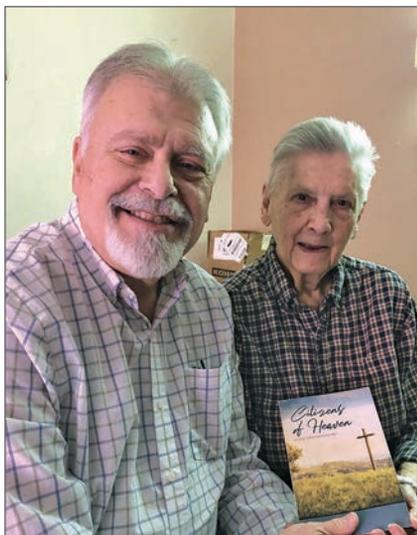
Laura Schaefer is a member at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin.

LEARN MORE AT campbasic.com, including what the program entails, how to register a camper, and how to volunteer.

The blessing of elder care ministry

Sam Kleinschmidt, a member at Crown of Life, a multi-site congregation in California, perhaps didn't know what to expect when he agreed to serve as power of attorney for an elderly member. But that decision started a chain of events—and a new ministry for the entire congregation. "It's amazing the opportunities that God puts at our doorstep. All we have to do is walk through," says Kleinschmidt.

After agreeing to help his fellow member, Kleinschmidt discovered an on-line class from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., about geriatric ministry and thought it would be good for him to learn more.



Sam Kleinschmidt and Caroline, members at Crown of Life, Yucaipa, Calif. Sam agreed to serve as Caroline's power of attorney when she needed help, which resulted in a new elder care ministry at Crown of Life.

As part of the class, he volunteered at a local care facility where he visited eight men once a week. "In one's mind it seems extremely difficult, but in reality, it's amazingly simple," says Kleinschmidt. "You're just being a friend."

Serving at the facility and shadowing his pastors as they visited Crown of Life's shut-ins got Kleinschmidt fired up to reach out even more—and to get others to help. He began working with his pastor, Steve Koelpin, to

start an elder care ministry at Crown of Life's four campuses.

In March, Crown of Life sponsored a training session for interested members. Kleinschmidt taught them what he learned about ministering to the elderly, with the goal of setting up a schedule so that every shut-in gets visited on a weekly basis by someone from Crown of Life.

"From a workload perspective, it's awesome to empower people like Sam and enable them to be part of this unique and special ministry, because [pastors] are going to need that help," says Koelpin, pastor at Crown of Life's Yucaipa site. "But I also think it means a lot to [our shut-ins] to have other laypeople visit and share the Word of God with them. There's an added element of enjoyment and a feeling of being appreciated and mattering when it's not just the pastor visiting."

Neither Koelpin nor Kleinschmidt want to stop there. Their next step is to ask members to volunteer at care facilities located near each of the congregation's four campuses. "I want people to be comfortable and experiment for themselves with going to a facility and volunteering like I did," says Kleinschmidt. "People [in the care facilities] really need the friendship and God's Word so desperately."

Koelpin prays these connections could lead into a relationship with the care centers and open up opportunities to hold Bible classes for residents in the future.

Says Kleinschmidt, "It's pretty eye-opening and pretty wonderful to see the blessings that we can get from this."

LEARN MORE AT mlc-wels.edu about the course Kleinschmidt took. He was able to take the "Geriatric and Care Facility Ministry" course for free because of a grant from Martin Luther Elder Care Ministries. This organization will pay for any WELS member who wants to take the course, which is part of the Chaplain Certification program. It will be offered this fall through Martin Luther College. Interested members can sign up now at mlcem.org or this summer through Martin Luther College.

Join us this summer.



June
23-26

**WELS International
Youth Rally**
Knoxville, Tenn.

June
25-28

**Lutheran Women's
Missionary Society
convention**
Athens, Ga.



July
11

**Taste of
Missions**
Mequon, Wis.



July
24

**WELS Night
at the Brewers**
Milwaukee, Wis.



Learn more and register
at wels.net/events

Encouraging and supporting future called workers

By definition, an auxiliary is a group that provides supplementary help or support. Since 1960 and 1973, the Martin Luther College (MLC) Ladies' Auxiliary and the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) Auxiliary have provided generous support for students preparing for public ministry.

According to Rachel Tacke, president of the MLC Auxiliary, the group gives "financial help for projects at MLC that are not funded" and makes "others aware of MLC and the students who are studying to be our future pastors, teachers, staff ministers and lay leaders." But Tacke also sees the auxiliary "as a group of women (and men) who find ways to encourage and care for these students in this time away from home—kind of like a hug from home."

Currently, the MLC Auxiliary's standing projects provide funding for scholarships, travel assistance for students' off-campus classroom experiences, Daylight outreach opportunities, and new dorm window treatments. This year's special projects included He-

brew dictionaries, a stage crew intercom system, *Smartboards*, Spanish immersion program grants, a honeybee science project, and fitness center equipment.

Similarly, the WLS Auxiliary "provides project and prayer support for the mission of Wisconsin Lutheran Semi-



Every year the MLC Auxiliary hosts a Bingo night for the students. More than 300 attended this year's event, which included prizes of gift cards, quilts, fleece blankets, crocheted/knitted gifts, and baked goods donated by WELS members.

nary," according to coordinator Lori Guse. In the past ten years, ADA-drinking fountains with bottle filling stations, upholstered chairs for the main entrance, stoles, chapel communion ware, grounds maintenance equipment, and many other projects were funded through this group.

"Our students are so grateful for the support—not only the projects but also the loving prayer support—that comes from this special group of WELS members," says Guse. "Being a part of the auxiliary is a great way to connect personally with WLS."

And Tacke reminds us: "Anything we can do to support our future church workers will benefit all of us. Their growth will carry on as they touch the lives of others in their service for Christ Jesus!"

Ann M. Ponath

LEARN MORE AT mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary about MLC Ladies' Auxiliary. Learn more about WLS Auxiliary at wls.wels.net/friends/auxiliary. Both organizations hold annual events in October.

Website helps introduce hymnal

To help introduce WELS members to the hymnal and additional resources coming out in late 2021, the WELS Hymnal Project and Northwestern Publishing House have developed a new website, christianworship.com. Named after the title of the new hymnal, the *Christian Worship* site highlights features of the upcoming worship book as well as the suite of products that will accompany it.

According to Adam Mueller, director of the WELS Hymnal Introduction Program, the website follows the outline of *Christian Worship Preview*, a booklet received by all congregations in February. This booklet shares more information about the contents of the new hymnal, including sections on Scripture, the service, Psalms, hymns, technology, and artwork.

The site also delves into the roles of a WELS member in a congregation—whether worshiper, planner, leader, and musician—and emphasizes what the new *Christian Worship* family of products offers to each person.

An exciting tool for worship planning is featured on the website. *Christian Worship: Service Builder* provides worship planners a quick, easy way to plan a service and



produce the worship folders. Online video previews offer an opportunity to see the service builder in action.

To help congregations plan for the upcoming release, christianworship.com includes budgeting tools for the new suite of products, a list of tentative pricing for the hymnal and its accompanying resources, and some tips for funding. "Now is the time for congregations to start thinking about the new hymnal and its value for the church as they are creating their budgets for the next few years," says Mueller.

LEARN MORE AT christianworship.com. There you can also sign up for updates on the release of the hymnal.

JUNE 23-26
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

| WELS NEWS

All about the 2020 WELS International Youth Rally

The 2020 WELS International Youth Rally is taking place June 23-26 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Learn more about this synodwide event from Donn Dobberstein, who serves as the director of WELS Discipleship, which oversees the rally.

WHO CAN ATTEND THE RALLY?

The rally is designed for those who have been confirmed and completed eighth grade before the rally through those who graduated high school in 2020. We also want a congregation's youth leaders to attend and designed some breakout sessions for them.

WHY SHOULD TEENS ATTEND THE WELS INTERNATIONAL YOUTH RALLY?

It really, truly is a fun event. It is also spiritually uplifting. You'll get to experience worship with more than two thousand of your peers. You'll also grow in your faith in practical ways as the sessions help equip you to live as a Lutheran teen, to grow in your identity in Christ, and to spiritually share your faith with others.

WHY SHOULD CONGREGATIONS COORDINATE A GROUP TO ATTEND?

This rally supplements what is going on at the local level. It shows youth what we can do when we all come together as a larger group. Your congregation's youth will be blessed by their time at the rally and will return to your congregation encouraged and equipped to serve at the local level.

WHAT IS NOTEWORTHY ABOUT THIS RALLY?

The theme of this rally is "Vision 2020." We are looking ahead into the future of these youth and giving them certainty of what they can expect. Christ's perfect love for them will never change. As God's children, we live with a clear purpose to reflect that love.

WHY DOES WELS SUPPORT A YOUTH RALLY?

The rally helps youth see how the body of Christ functions best when we all serve together—teens included.

HOW DO YOUTH REGISTER FOR THE RALLY?

Check in with a pastor or youth group leader at your church to see if a group is going from your congregation. If your congregation is organizing a group to attend the rally, ask to receive a link to the online group registration portal. There you can enter your information, choose workshops, and pay for the rally. Pay in full by April 30 to receive the early bird rate of \$375. Registrations received May 1-29 will cost \$395. If no one else from your congregation is attending the rally, you can contact other area congregations to see if you can join their group.

For questions, contact youthrally2020@wels.net.

**20
VISION
20**

**WELS INTERNATIONAL
YOUTH RALLY**



WELS.NET/YOUTHRALLY



WELSYOUTHRALLY



WELSYOUTHRALLY



WELSYOUTHRALLY

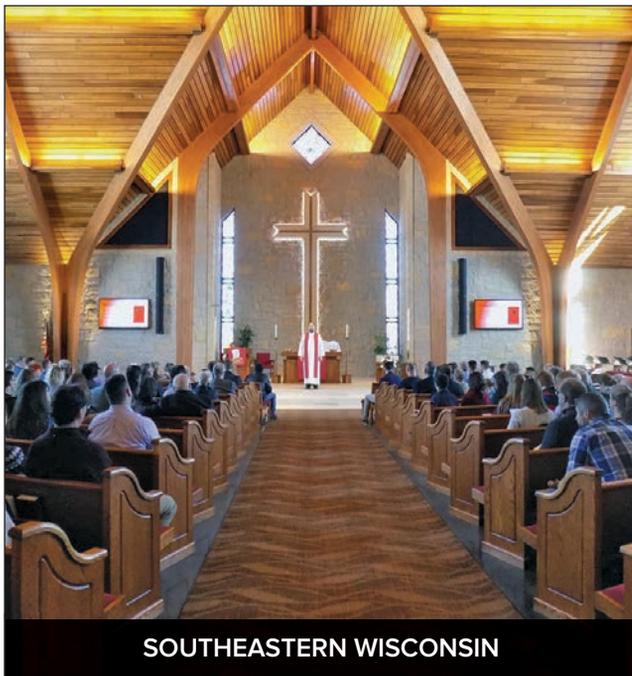
District news

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

WW—St. John, Barre Mills, Wis., celebrated its 150th anniversary on March 1. The congregation first worshiped together on March 2, 1870, in a farmhouse that is still standing down the road from its current church.

SEW—St. John, Wauwatosa, Wis., celebrated the 25th anniversary of the teaching ministries of **Dave and Dana Leyrer** on March 15.

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



SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

Crown of Life, Hubertus, Wis., celebrated its 50th anniversary on Feb. 2.



WESTERN WISCONSIN

On Feb. 2, St. Mark, Eau Claire, Wis., began a Jesus Cares program. St. Mark welcomed 12 individuals with special needs for its inaugural event, which included an opening devotion, Bible lesson, and other activities.



SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

On Feb. 20, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., celebrated the 25th anniversary of the ministries of Stephen Geiger (top) and Joel Otto (pictured with their families).



NORTHERN WISCONSIN

The third grade class at Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis., assembled and presented baskets to the five parents in the class who work as first responders/law enforcement officers. The baskets were filled with snacks and thank-you letters. Pictured are one of the third graders, Eva Beck, and her father, Sergeant Clint Beck (standing behind Eva), during the presentation to the Wisconsin State Patrol Northeast Region.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FUTURE PASTOR

Life is busy for your future pastors as they study for the ministry at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. | Micah Koelpin



5:30 A.M.

I REACH OVER to turn off the alarm on my phone. It's 5:30 A.M. I won't say that I am awake yet, but I head downstairs. After grabbing some coffee, I sit down to read my devotion. It's a Tuesday morning.

I'm in my final year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, studying to be a pastor. I was asked to write about a typical day at the seminary, so I'm writing about this Tuesday. The reason I got up so early is because classes at the seminary start at 7:30 A.M. I like to read my devotion, exercise, and make sure my schoolwork is done before leaving

the house. My wife, Hillery, and my son, Zeke, wake up closer to 7.

Being a married student brings its own unique experiences. I live off campus, so I leave early enough to get to class on time. The students who aren't married live in the dormitories, right next to the classroom building. Once I get to the seminary, I meet up with my friends in the dormitory. I use their room to store my lunch and any books I don't need. Most of the time I'm there in plenty of time, but sometimes I cut it close.

Class is ready to begin. Once we find our spots, we get out our laptops. Every student needs one along with a program that makes Bible study more organized and efficient. Today I also needed a book that I had read the night before, so my desk space quickly

fills up. The seminary desks are more like tables that two students share, so I borrow some room from my deskmate, Nick. Classes at the seminary are 50 minutes long. Today my first class is systematic theology (see sidebar on next page).



7:30 A.M.



9:20 A.M.

After the first two classes, the whole campus gathers in the chapel for worship. This is a very special time. Not only do we all get together in the same spot, but we also get to worship our God.

It's a unique service because it is usually led by the students. Today, my friend Josh gave the devotion. The seminary livestreams all the chapel services. Watch them at wls.wels.net.



MY TYPICAL DAY AT THE SEMINARY

5:30 A.M.

Breakfast, devotion, and exercise

7:30 A.M.

Classes start

9:20 A.M.

Chapel (tune in to the live-stream at wls.wels.net)

10:00 A.M.

Flex hour for chorus practice, studying, and other meetings

10:50 A.M.

More classes

12:30 P.M.

Lunch and fellowship

1:00 P.M.

Work as a senior assistant at a local church

6:00 P.M.

Dinner, family time, extra-curriculars, and homework



10:00 A.M.

Next is a “flex hour.” This just means that there is no scheduled class. But for me, today is a chorus practice. The Seminary Chorus practices three times a week for our concerts. This year we are traveling to the West Coast to sing at our churches there. During this flex hour, some seminarians will study or meet with professors. Others practice an instrument with a group. The student government also meets during this time. I will lead that meeting tomorrow. After the flex hour, it’s time for my final two classes.

The school day is now over, and like a flash mob, the entire student body files into the cafeteria. I can eat at home, but this time in the cafeteria is important because I get to know all the other students, my future colleagues in the ministry. We break down any barriers through food, humor, and entertainment.

You might be thinking to yourself, *They only have four classes?* Yes, the day may seem short, but that’s because the seminary keeps the afternoon open so that students can work to support themselves; to pay for their schooling; and, like me, to support their families. Because the seminary does not receive federal money, tuition can be expensive. Generous donations from numerous people throughout WELS help subsidize tuition. This makes it possible for students to afford school. This has been a great blessing to me.



12:30 P.M.

WHAT STUDENTS STUDY

01

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: the study of the Bible in its original languages, Hebrew and Greek. Classes have titles like exegesis and isagogics, which just describe how students translate: either very slowly and thoroughly (exegesis) or very quickly to get an overview (isagogics).

02

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY: the study of the history of the church from Pentecost to the present time.

03

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: the study of the doctrines found in the Bible (dogmatics). Think of it as a very intense catechism class.

04

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: the study of the practical aspects of being a pastor, like preaching (homiletics), teaching, and counseling.

A CHANGE OF PACE

In between the first and second semester, students participate in Winterim. This two-week session gives students an opportunity to study in areas of personal interest not normally part of the curriculum.

Micah Koelpin, for example, worked on a directed research project to create a Bible information class that could be used online. Two groups of students headed to Texas, where they conducted street evangelism, interviewing, and data gathering, as well as worked on a strategic planning process that shows different ways to begin or enhance a congregation's outreach. At Living Hope, Midlothian, Texas, part of the students' work was to assemble and distribute almost 3,000 reusable

totes for a local food drive and then collect the donations several days later (pictured). Other students traveled to Colombia for Spanish immersion.

"Winterim provides a nice change of pace for both students and faculty," says Earle Treptow, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. "Students who go on a mission trip—and almost every student will during their time at the seminary—gain invaluable experience in engaging the community. Those who participate come back with an increased commitment to preparing themselves for service as pastors."



1:00 P.M.

After lunch, I go home to see my family before I go to work. My wife, Hillery, is a nanny and gets to stay at home with our son. I am a senior assistant at a church near the seminary. Today, I visit shut-in

members and give them the Lord's Supper and then make evangelism calls. I should make it home in time for dinner with my family.

29

STUDENTS SERVING OFF CAMPUS

28
VICARS
(see p. 4)

1
EMERGENCY
TEACHER

After dinner, I start on my homework. I spend an average of three or four hours on homework each night.

However, tonight my study time is cut short because Hillery and I both have something to do. Most extracurriculars at the seminary take place at night to accommodate work schedules. I am the captain of an intramural volleyball team, so I head back to campus to play. Hillery leads a group for seminary wives who meet to get to know and encourage each other.

Once we get home again, Hillery and I sit and talk about our future. I will be receiving my first call into the full-time gospel ministry in May. This is something that we have waited a long time for, so we both are excited and filled with questions: Where are we going? What kind of church will we be at? Who will we get to meet? The Assignment Committee decides my first call. It is a little nerve-racking to think that we are going to move our little family soon and we have no idea where we will be going. But we are comforted knowing that God is guiding our lives and that he will put me where I will best use my training and my gifts to serve his kingdom.

We don't have to worry because it is in God's loving hands. We end our conversation by giving all our worries and requests to God in prayer.

It might have been just a Tuesday, but I did have a lot to do. I hope it gives you a taste of what it is like at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, which is your seminary. Even if you have never been here, I am sure your life has been affected by someone who has.



6:00 P.M.



Micah Koelpin, a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Trinity, West Mequon, Wisconsin.

WELS Connections

LEARN MORE AT wls.wels.net about Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The seminary is also featured in this month's edition of *WELS Connection*.

DO YOU WANT YOUR SAVIOR to fix your marriage? Do you need him to give you better job security? How about following Christ to make life with your kids go smoothly?

If you want such a Savior, your faith is useless. Why? Your spouse is going to die. Your children are going to die. One day your job and finances won't matter at all, because you are going to die too. Maybe that's morbid, but if you only want Jesus to help you with the things of this life, you want far too little. No matter how noble your goal, your faith is useless.

Because, death.

We often focus on many things—some relatively important, some pretty frivolous—but death looms and reminds us to “number our days” (Psalm 90:12). It stings when someone close to us dies. Part of that sting is the reminder that you too are going to die. The cause may vary—cancer, a heart attack, or a tragic accident. Maybe you will avoid all that and die of natural causes in old age.

That is how you might die, but that is not why you will die. Death is not natural! It was not a part of the plan for people from the beginning. The only reason you will die is sin. That is what God clearly says throughout the Bible: “The one who sins is the one who will die” (Ezekiel 18:4). “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Because of sin, you really will die. Your soul and body will be unnaturally divided. Your life as you know it now will come to an end. So none of the things of this life really matter.

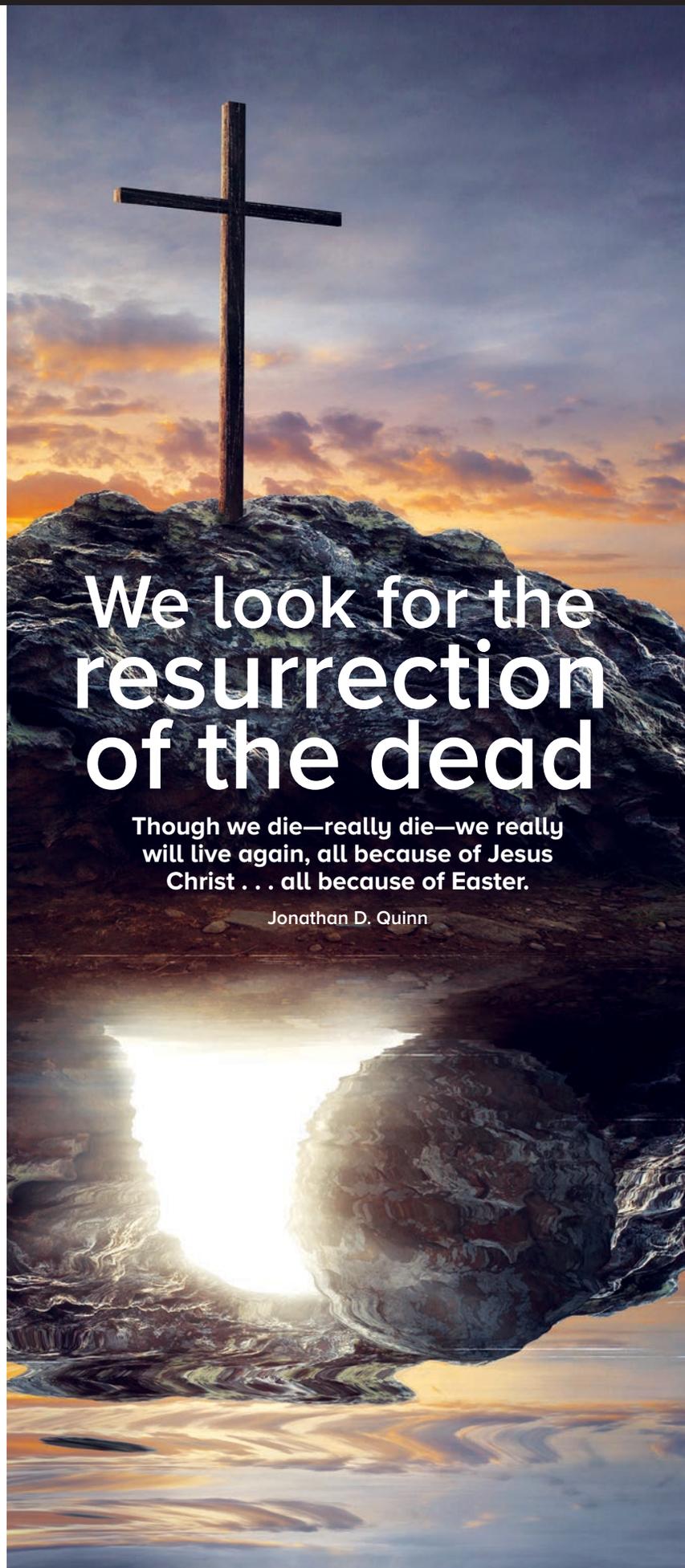
Unless, Easter.

EASTER CHANGES THINGS FOR ETERNITY

The apostle Paul tells us that Easter is “of first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Why is that? Because Jesus died too. Jesus Christ really died. He died in a horrible way.

But he suffered much more than physical death by crucifixion. He suffered separation from God, his Father, on the cross. The perfect, eternal unity of the Holy Trinity was unnaturally divided as Father forsook Son. When it was finished, Jesus died.

And he really was dead. He wasn't sleeping and woke up. He wasn't near death and recovered. He was dead. Those who handled his dead body all confirmed it. Jesus got the wages of sin.



We look for the resurrection of the dead

Though we die—really die—we really will live again, all because of Jesus Christ . . . all because of Easter.

Jonathan D. Quinn

But here's the thing. Jesus had no sin of his own. He didn't earn those wages. So why did he die? It was your sin that caused his death. My sins are the reason he died.

But then there's Easter. Jesus rose from the dead. After really being dead, Jesus really was alive again. He spoke to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. He brought peace to the disciples locked up in fear on Easter evening and again a week later for the benefit of Thomas. He walked and talked with two disciples on the way to Emmaus. All of these eyewitness appearances of the physically resurrected Jesus Christ are for our benefit also. "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Jesus' resurrection from the dead means that he really is who he says he is—true God in the flesh, the Christ, our Savior. Jesus' resurrection from the dead means that our sins are forgiven. We really are not guilty in God's eyes. "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Jesus' resurrection means we too will rise from the dead. Though we die—really die—we really will live again, all because of Jesus Christ . . . all because of Easter.

THE RESURRECTION CHANGES YOUR LIFE NOW

Since we will rise from the dead, we live differently right now. We live like those who have already been raised with Christ from death to life. What does that look like? Every lesson from God's Word appointed for this month is filled with resurrection treasures. Whenever we hear the Easter good news, with the Emmaus disciples our hearts burn within us (Luke 24:32), with

Mary we cry out, "Rabboni!" (John 20:16), with Thomas we proclaim, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Jesus' resurrection gives us peace and a purpose (John 20:19-23). Since Jesus' resurrection means that the grave will not be our final home but instead we will dwell in the joyful pleasure of God's eternal presence (Psalm 16), we live our life now with hearts and minds set on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1-4). The things of this life—work, relationships, family, or finances—are not where we find our security because we have

a living hope in an unfading inheritance that enables us to rejoice despite any earthly trial (1 Peter 1:3-9). We live our lives here with reverent fear as foreigners in a strange land. We walk with faith and hope in a God who bought us with a precious ransom price—the blood of Christ.

How is your marriage changed when you realize your spouse is the object of Jesus' saving love and is meant to live forever? How will your family life be different when you recognize that your children are redeemed by Christ and will one day rise from the dead? Those relationships will be marked by the love, patience, and forgiveness of your living Lord, which was given to you to share with them. How is your approach to work, career, and finances changed when you know that you will rise from the dead to live forever with Christ? No paycheck or promotion can give you security like that! Your daily life is an opportunity to serve a living Savior and a dying world.

In the Nicene Creed we confess, "We look for the resurrection of the dead." The resurrection from the dead is the essence of Easter. It is the essence of the Christian faith. Without the resurrection, our Christian faith is useless, futile, pitiable. Nothing in your life matters because you are going to die. Unless, Easter. Then absolutely everything matters in a whole new way.

You are going to die once, but you are going to live forever. That changes everything about your life. Live like it now.



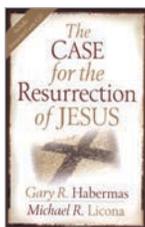
Jonathan Quinn is pastor at Beautiful Savior, Moncks Corner, South Carolina.

FOR FURTHER study

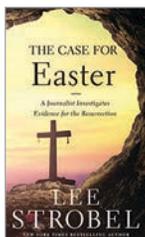
"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Take time this month to read all of 1 Corinthians 15, the great resurrection chapter of the Bible.

Also check out these books, which provide an apologetic defense of the resurrection.



The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus, Gary R. Habermas, Michael R. Licona



The Case For Easter, Lee Strobel

Books can be ordered at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



Outing death

“Don’t forget, you’re going to die,” the message on the screen read. It was from an app that sends five e-mails each day with the sober reminder that death is inevitable. The app is called WeCroak.

It’s a little flippant perhaps, but some appreciate the reminders. As one commented, “With so many stimuli coming at you, it’s nice to have something in your pocket that slows you down, lets you look at the big picture” (Reuters, January 10, 2018). Others suggest that the notices about death are liberating because they are reminders that there is nothing more than the days of one’s life. More than 100,000 people use the app, and most of them are under the age of 44.

When death circles nearby, we can turn to the app we do have—the Scriptures and God’s rich promises there. We will live.

Yet we live in a world that has a deep desire to ignore death. But death can be ignored only for so long. We are reminded again and again that death comes to the young, successful, and famous. Consider the recent death of Kobe Bryant. Of course, we still ignore death and don’t read the obituaries unless someone we know has died.

The cofounder of WeCroak traces its origin to a Buddhist idea called “death awareness,” which is to help people embrace uncertainty and feel the spiritual urgency required to change your life for the better (Reuters, January 22, 2020). Obviously the idea is not Christian. It seeks to change behavior by asking people to face the reality of death.

Facing the end of life has its benefits. We prepare for retirement because we know that we are getting older. In other words, we are not going to live forever here. We ask lawyers to make wills so that what

God has given us can be distributed according to our wishes when we die. We may even plan our own funerals.

But let’s make this Christian. What if instead of an app that reminds us five times a day that we will die, a different app reminds us that we have eternal life in Christ. That app could send us pertinent Bible passages. We have a Bible full of them:

- Job’s confession: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God” (Job 19:25,26).
- And the words of Jesus—oh, there are so many: “Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day” (John 6:40).
- Or his words to Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die” (John 11:25).

You have a favorite, I’m sure.

Those promises motivate us not with the harsh contemplation of our own deaths, but with the joyful and positive news that Jesus has outed death for us. He’s revealed the truth of his victory over death. That might be an app for all people of all times. It’s an Easter app that motivates us to live our lives in hope and peace—living each day to the fullest.

I don’t think there is an app like that, but we have regular reminders—like Easter Sunday—that we will live because of Christ’s empty tomb. Every Sunday is a celebration of his victory. When death circles nearby, we can turn to the app we do have—the Scriptures and God’s rich promises there. We will live. Death has no sting, and the grave no victory.

John A. Braun | FIC Editor

USING BIBLE STORIES TO EXAMINE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD THAT WE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT, CHARACTERISTICS THAT APPLY TO WHAT WE'RE FACING RIGHT NOW.

A BIBLE STORY

just for me

Gregory C. Lyon



PHOTO | Lightstock

GRIEVE . . . BUT WITH HOPE

From time to time, we face realities that we simply can't do anything about. God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. She didn't have a choice. What could Mary do? Read Luke 1:26-38. Consider how Mary faced what she couldn't do anything about.

Now turn to John 19:25-27. How did Mary have to submit her will once again? Do you think the words of Gabriel years before would have prepared her for this day? Why or why not? How might they have prepared her for this day?

Can you see her now standing at the foot of the cross with two other Marys, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene? Your heart breaks for her. None of this seems fair. An innocent man dying for what? And yet there Mary stood, feeling the prophetic words of Simeon, "A sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:35).

Place yourself there watching Jesus' mother approach the cross. Can you see her tears and her grief? Is there anything that you could say to relieve her grief? You might consider those questions knowing the full story of Jesus, but do you think that all the realities of who Jesus was and what he came to do would eliminate

her grief as she helplessly watched her son suffer and die? I don't think so. Mary was in the difficult position of seeing firsthand the business of her Father in heaven—the business that Jesus was all about. And it stung.

We all have experienced loss in one form or another. In my humble opinion, one of the most difficult things about experiencing loss is that we can't do anything about it. We simply submit our will to our Father in heaven and trust him. And while we do so in faith, we still grieve. What that grief looks like depends on the person who's grieving. We dare not put expectations on ourselves or others for what that grieving should look like or when we should be over it, as if we can turn the grief light switch off and on as we please.

Instead we grieve. And that's okay. We grieve a broken world that is filled with sin and death. We grieve over a life lost, a life we held so dear.

If you are grieving, don't be afraid to share what you're feeling with someone. Don't be afraid of how you are feeling. Tell a trusted friend who will offer you a calming, listening ear and the hope of the gospel through faith in Jesus Christ. You are not alone! We stand together in the hope of the resurrection.

But we do not grieve like the rest who have no hope. We grieve in the blessed assurance of the resurrection that is ours through Christ Jesus.

Even after Mary discovered her son was alive, I can't imagine that she would ever forget what that grief of Friday felt like. But now that grief all made sense. Jesus' mission was not death; it was life! So, as we experience loss, we grieve, but we do so with faith's hindsight.

As you think about Mary at the foot of the cross, consider a characteristic that Jesus displayed FOR YOU and complete this sentence:

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE:

This account shows me that Jesus was _____ FOR ME.

While you may grieve, know that you can grieve in faith with the blessed hope of heaven because Jesus is a complete Savior for you.



Contributing editor Gregory Lyon, campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a member at Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

This is the fourth article in a six-part series on applying biblical narratives to our lives.

LEARN MORE AT forwardinchrist.net, including additional food for thought and potential answers.

COMMUNITY

CONNECT | GROW | SERVE

THINGS TO NOTE

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Hartwig, John, to European chaplain, Germany

Langebartels, Matthew, to Trinity, Coleman, Wis.

Mohlke, Howard, to One Africa Team

Redfield, Timothy, to St. Luke, Watertown, Wis.

Schwark, Bruce, to Christ, Denmark, Wis.

Teachers

Arndt, Rachel, to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

Baures, Gregory, to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.

Bengel, Adrienne, to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.

Bengel, Brett, to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.

Cooper, Karen, to St. Stephen, Beaver Dam, Wis.

Gumm, Anneliese, to St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis.

Gumm, Joseph, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Karbula, Julie, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Liepert, Stephanie, to Mt. Calvary, Waukesha, Wis.

Mulske, Rosanna, to St. Paul's, Menomonie, Wis.

Owen III, Richard, to Trinity, Waco, Neb.

Schleusener, Lynelle, to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.

Schneck, Deanna, to Zion, Monroe, Mich.

Seim, Kyle, to St. John, Caledonia, Minn.

Sievert, James, to Commission on Lutheran Schools, Waukesha, Wis. (part time)

Wendland, David, to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Abita Springs, La.—Trinity (115). April 5.

Worship, 10 A.M.; free community meal follows. freesepts@gmail.com.

San Jose, Calif.—Apostles Lutheran School (50). April 25–26. April 25. Evening gala to include catered dinner, dance, raffle, and fellowship. April 26. Worship, 8:45 A.M. RSVP, schooladm@apostlessj.org.

Winona, Minn.—St. Matthew's (100). June 6–7. June 6. Commemoration of the adoption of the constitution and cornerstone laying of the church and school, 6 P.M. June 7. Worship, 9 A.M., community outreach celebration and outdoor picnic follows. 507-454-5440.

Kenosha, Wis.—Mt. Zion (75). Sept. 20. Worship, 8 and 10:45 A.M.; luncheon to follow. RSVP requested by Aug. 15 to Char VanSant, cvsant@wi.rr.com; place in subject line 75th anniversary celebration. 262-652-3054; office@mtzionwi.org; Website, mtzionwi.org.

COMING EVENTS

Lakeshore Lutheran Chorale spring concerts—

- April 4, 6 P.M., St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis.
- April 5, 3 P.M., St. John, Two Rivers, Wis.

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

- April 9, 6:30 P.M., Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho
- April 10, 7 P.M., Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.
- April 11, 7 P.M., Grace, Portland, Ore.
- April 12, 10 A.M., Immanuel, Salem, Ore.; 7:30 P.M., Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.
- April 13, 7 P.M., St. Mark, Citrus Heights, Calif.
- April 14, 7 P.M., Our Redeemer, Santa Barbara, Calif.

CALLED TO *eternal glory*

A reporting of deaths of called workers as noted in the call report.

READ MORE AT forwardinchrist.net/obituaries.

PASTORS

KRUEGER, ROBERT H.
Mar. 18, 1934—Jan. 5, 2020

THIERFELDER, VICTOR W.
Dec. 16, 1929—Jan. 11, 2020

COX, RAYMOND G.
July 11, 1932—Feb. 12, 2020

TEACHERS/STAFF MINISTERS

KANIESS, GERHARD J.
May 12, 1929—Jan. 15, 2020

**BORGWARDT (NÉE NAUMANN),
MYRNA R.**
Aug. 1, 1938—Jan. 18, 2020

OTTO, PHILIP A.
July 9, 1948—Jan. 26, 2020

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY WILL BE COMFORTED.

— Matthew 5:4

- April 15, 7 P.M., Gethsemane, Los Angeles, Calif.
- April 16, 7 P.M., Beautiful Savior, Carlsbad, Calif.
- April 17, 6:30 P.M., Risen Savior, Chula Vista, Calif.
- April 18, 7:30 P.M., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.
- April 19, 10:30 A.M., St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.

WELS Coulee Women's Retreat—April 17–19. Cranberry Country Lodge, Tomah, Wis. Web-site, facebook.com/groups/WCWR2020. welscwr@gmail.com.

WELS National Handbell Festival—April 18–19. April 19. Concert, 1:30 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Website, welsbells.com.

WELS Women Writers Conference—April 24–25. Trinity, Waukesha, Wis. Hosted by WELS Women's Ministry and Northwestern Publishing House. Registration deadline, April 5. Website, wm.welsrc.net/wels-women-writers-conference.

THROUGH MY *Bible* IN 3 YEARS

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Luke 17:1-19 | 11. Gen. 31:1–32:2 | 21. Gen. 42 |
| 2. Lk. 17:20-37 | 12. Gen. 32:3-32 | 22. Gen. 43 |
| 3. Lk. 18:1-17 | 13. Gen. 33 | 23. Gen. 44 |
| 4. Lk. 18:18-34 | 14. Gen. 34 | 24. Gen. 45 |
| 5. Lk. 18:35–19:10 | 15. Gen. 35 | 25. Gen. 46:1–47:12 |
| 6. Lk. 19:11-28 | 16. Gen. 36 | 26. Gen. 47:13–48:22 |
| 7. Genesis 27:1-45 | 17. Gen. 37 | 27. Gen. 49 |
| 8. Gen. 27:46–28:22 | 18. Gen. 38, 39 | 28. Gen. 50 |
| 9. Gen. 29:1-30 | 19. Gen. 40:1–41:13 | 29. Luke 19:29-46 |
| 10. Gen. 29:31–30:43 | 20. Gen. 41:14-57 | 30. Lk. 19:47–20:47 |

APRIL 2020

READ MORE AT wels.net/bible3

Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee spring concert—May 3. 2 and 4:30 P.M. St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis. Website, lutheranchorale.org.

Conference for serving individuals with special needs in WELS churches and schools—April 25. Grace, Glendale, Ariz. RSVP, Brenda, 520-233-0554; bkwagen@gmail.com.

Commencement events—All services streamed live. Website, wels.net/events.

- Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. May 15. Concerts, 4 and 7:30 P.M. May 16. Graduation service, 10 A.M.; call day and assignment of graduates, 2:30 P.M.
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. May 21. Call day and assignment of graduates and vicars, 10 A.M.; concert, 7 P.M. May 22. Graduation service, 10 A.M.
- Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.—May 22. Concert, 7 P.M. May 23. Graduation service, 10 A.M.
- Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.—May 22. Concert, 7 P.M. May 23. Graduation service, 10:30 A.M.

District conventions—all district conventions meet in June. Website, wels.net/events.

WELS Historical Institute events—Website, wels.net/about-wels/history/wels-history.

- June 13. Annual West Granville cemetery tour. West Granville Cemetery, Milwaukee, Wis. Presenter, Jim Moeller.
- June 27. Presentation of “Great hymns of faith from after the Reformation to the present.” Salem Landmark Church Museum, Milwaukee, Wis. Presenter, Carl Nolte.

Apologetics summer courses—Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis. Website, blackearthapologetics.com.

- June 15–19. Practical Apologetics: Defending the Christian Faith. Dr. Kerry Kuehn and Dr. Michael Berg.
- June 22–26. Into the Postmodern Wilderness. Rev. Luke Thompson.

WELS 2020 International Youth Rally—June 23–26. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn. Theme, “Vision 2020.” Early-bird registration rate until April 30. Website, wels.net/youthrally.

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society annual convention—June 25–28. The Classic Center, Athens, Ga. Theme, “Vision for Missions.” Website, lwms.org.

Taste of Missions 2020—July 11. Hosted by WELS Missions. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Website, wels.net/tasteofmissions2020.

WELS Night at Miller Park—July 24. Brewers vs. Pirates. Miller Park, Milwaukee, Wis. Website, wels.net/events.

CORRECTION

Joel Spaude, not Tim Spaude, is pastor at St. Peter, Ft. Collins, Colo., as mentioned in February's “Confessions of faith” story. We apologize for the error.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210 or e-mail ficsubmissions@wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

SEE MORE AT welsrc.net/bulletinboard.

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Holy Week is coming!

Andrew C. Schroer

My favorite Christmas movie of all time is the movie *Elf*. In the movie, Will Ferrell plays a man who was raised as an elf at the North Pole. At one point, Will Ferrell's character is standing in the toy department at Gimbels Department Store when the manager suddenly announces that Santa will be there the next day to meet the children.

"Santa!" Will Ferrell shouts, jumping up and down like a four-year-old. "Santa is coming!"

That is how I feel when Holy Week is coming.

Every year, Christians around the world celebrate Holy Week, following the last days and hours of Jesus' life. It begins with Palm Sunday when we lay our palms in Jesus' path as he enters Jerusalem as our Savior King. Then on Maundy Thursday, we follow Jesus to the upper room where he celebrated the Passover with his disciples for the last time and gave the Lord's Supper for the first time.

Holy Week turns our thoughts away from the distractions of this world to the most basic and important truths of our faith.

On the Friday we call Good, we sit in somber silence as we see our Savior die in the darkness, suffering our pain and punishment in our place. We then return on Sunday ready to celebrate his miraculous resurrection with lilies and alleluias.

Every day of Holy Week is unique. Every service is special. The music, the symbolism, and the truths proclaimed lead us on a roller coaster of emotions and self-examination.

I love Holy Week. I can't wait for Holy Week to get here every year. I feel like Will Ferrell felt when Santa Claus was coming.

But most people aren't like me. I mean, sure, Holy Week is nice. It's important, but they don't

get excited about it. They don't spend weeks getting ready like they do for Christmas. Sure, people get excited about Easter, but the rest of the week seems somewhat like a drag.

I compare it to weddings and funerals. Christmas is like a wedding. Holy Week is like a funeral. Christmas is a celebration. Holy Week is somber. Christmas is about birth. Jesus died at the end of Holy Week.

This Sunday, ask your pastor which he would rather conduct—a wedding or a funeral. I am guessing he will say a funeral. Why? Because though weddings are nice, everybody gets distracted with all the preparations and decorations. God and his promises get lost somewhere in the shuffle of cakes, flowers, and bridesmaids. In many ways, the same is true for Christmas. The true message of Christmas often gets lost in the hustle and bustle.

Funerals, however, are different. At funerals, people are hurting. They yearn for the comfort God offers in his promises. Death has a way of laser-focusing our hearts and minds on what is really important. Holy Week does that. Holy Week turns our thoughts away from the distractions of this world to the most basic and important truths of our faith.

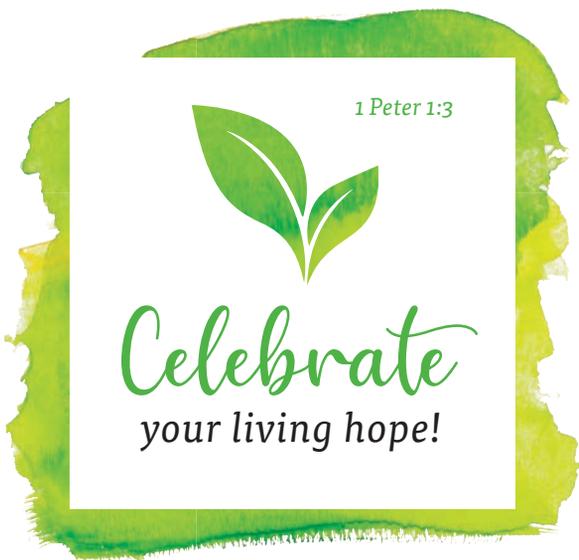
Holy Week helps us remember what is really important. It helps us appreciate what our awesome God did for us in his amazing grace. Holy Week is what the Christian faith is all about.

So celebrate Holy Week. Make the most of every worship service available to you. Each service is unique. Each service is special. Take the time to quietly remember what Jesus in his great love did for you.

Isn't it exciting? Holy Week is coming!



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



Confirmation, weddings, Mother's Day and other spring festivities give us countless opportunities to thank our risen Savior for new life and the promise of our own joyous resurrection. Celebrate renewed hope with books and gifts for these joyful, special days from Northwestern Publishing House.



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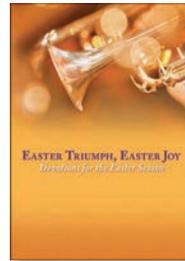
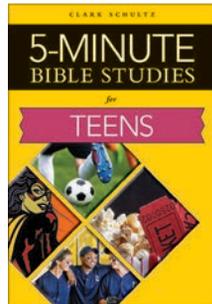
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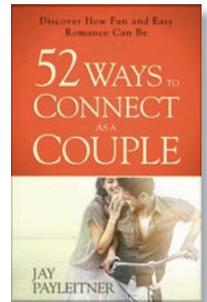
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THE PATH TO EASTER

WE NEED EASTER, BUT WE NEED MAUNDY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY TOO. | SHELLY HAHM

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I didn't like Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. It was uncomfortable to hear how the innocent Son of God suffered, especially knowing it was because of my sins.

I wanted a different end to the story. Like a television courtroom drama, there should have been a defense lawyer who would refute the phony charges and poke holes in the accusations. Perhaps he would have put Jesus on the stand and have him perform a miracle for Herod. That would have shut the mouths of the mockers. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday shouldn't have happened. Jesus was innocent!

But then I got older, and I listened in awe as the holy Son of God allowed those events to unfold and he journeyed to the cross for me and every sinner. I sang solemn hymns with tears in my eyes. I still wished it did not have to happen this way, but I was so grateful it happened and overwhelmed by the price Jesus had to pay.

Then came the March my youngest daughter was born. We laughed at her good timing. She was born on the Wednesday of Holy Week; my doctor could attend choir practice that evening, and we didn't have to worry about missing Easter Sunday. I was in the hospital Thursday and Friday that year. I didn't make it to the evening services.

But on Sunday morning, I was up bright and early and, together with my husband, brought our older children and new baby to church to celebrate the Festival of Easter.

Without the arrest in the garden, without the false testimonies and sham trials, without the beatings, without the suffering on the cross, there would be no Easter.

"He's risen," the pastor began.

"He's risen indeed. Alleluia," the congregation replied.

It was bright and sunny, the whole altar was covered with lilies, but somehow it failed to impress. I was not thrilled by the news of Christ's rising. *Risen, risen from what?* my sleep-deprived brain seemed to ask.

That's when I realized the value in remembering the path Christ took to get to Easter. The writer of Hebrews says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (9:22). Without the arrest in the garden, without the false testimonies and sham trials, without the beatings, without the suffering on the cross, there would be no Easter.

Jesus himself explained this to the Emmaus disciples as they walked together that first Easter evening. "Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:26,27).

Christ came to fulfill what the prophets foretold in order that you and I can call heaven our home. Jesus had to keep the whole law and fulfill every prophecy, and not just the pretty parts about being born in Bethlehem or his triumphant ride into Jerusalem. He did the hard parts too—hard parts like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

That's what Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are about: fulfilling those prophecies and paying the price for the sins of the whole world. Easter? Easter just confirms that his saving work was completed. Paul says in Romans 4:25, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

The truth is we need Easter, but we need Maundy Thursday and Good Friday too. We can't have one without the others. Thank God it is so!



Shelly Hahm is a member at Prince of Peace, Fairport, New York.