

FEBRUARY 2020

forwardinchrist.net

# FORWARD IN CHRIST

A LUTHERAN VOICE

A young boy with dark skin and short, dark hair is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is carrying a large, heavy bundle of firewood on his back, which is secured with a piece of light-colored cloth or rope. The bundle is made of several large, split logs and branches. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a sandy ground and some foliage.

**HEAVEN-SENT  
OPPORTUNITY**

**SHOWING  
CHRISTIAN LOVE**

p. 4

**WHAT'S IN  
YOUR HYMNAL?**

p. 10

**WORSHIPING  
WITH CHILDREN**

p. 16



**FORWARD IN CHRIST**  
forwardinchrist.net

**FEBRUARY 2020**  
VOLUME 107 | NUMBER 2

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

WELS Communication Services  
N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr  
Waukesha WI 53188-1108  
Phone: 414-256-3210 | E-mail: fic@wels.net

Executive Editor | **REV. JOHN A. BRAUN**  
braunj@nph.wels.net

Managing Editor | **JULIE K. WIETZKE**  
julie.wietzke@wels.net

Staff Editor | **NICOLE R. BALZA**  
Staff Writer | **AMANDA M. KLEMP**

Seminary Consultant | **PROF. SAMUEL C. DEGNER**

Designer | **CARIANNE CIRIACKS**

**COPYRIGHT**

©2020 by *Forward in Christ* (FIC), the official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

*Forward in Christ* grants permission for an individual article to be photocopied, provided that copies are distributed free and indicate FIC as the source. Artwork may not be reproduced except in the context of its article. For other copyright questions, contact NPH Permissions at [permissions@nph.wels.net](mailto:permissions@nph.wels.net); 414-615-5706.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

**POSTMASTER**

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

**ON AUDIO OR IN LARGE-PRINT**

Mission for the Visually Impaired  
375 Bridgepoint Dr  
South St. Paul MN 55075  
Phone: 651-291-1536 | E-mail: [welsvisimp@wels.net](mailto:welsvisimp@wels.net)



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

This month, the secular world celebrates love. We know where our love comes from: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

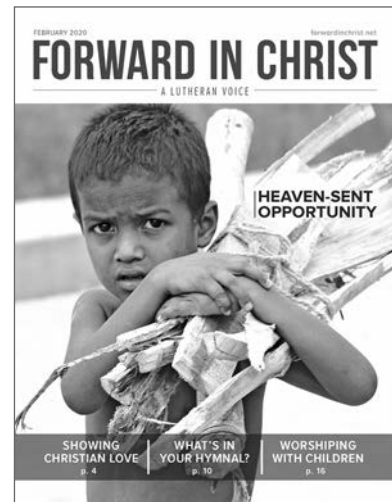
Christ continues to provide opportunities at home and around the world to share his love and mercy for all sinners.

In this issue, you will meet Haris and Asad, two men who learned about Jesus, their Savior from their sins, in a predominantly Muslim country in South Asia (p. 18). These men are not afraid to proclaim the gospel message—even under dangerous circumstances—and are presenting WELS with an opportunity to reach even further into a nation where only 1 in 300 people is a Christian.

You'll also get to know Delaney, who really didn't want anything to do with God as a teenager—that is, until she joined a community band that met in a church basement. There she met WELS members—including her future husband—who let their faith shine (p. 7).

Our new "This is WELS" column shows photos of other WELS members and congregations reflecting the love of Christ through service opportunities in the church and community (pp. 4 & 21).

Find more stories—or share your own—at [forwardinchrist.net](http://forwardinchrist.net).



COVER PHOTO | Courtesy of WELS World Missions

*Julie*

Julie Wietzke

## SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

**Never miss an issue.** Subscribe today so you won't miss an issue of *Forward in Christ*. Or share the magazine by sending a gift copy to your friends and relatives.

**PRINT + DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION** | \$18.00 per year

**CONGREGATIONAL DELIVERED TO CHURCH** (MIN. 12) | \$11.40 per year each

**CONGREGATIONAL DELIVERED TO HOMES** (MIN. 12) | \$13.44 per year each

**SINGLE COPY** | \$3.50 each

**MULTI-YEAR SAVINGS RATES ALSO AVAILABLE**



800-662-6093



[nph.net/forwardinchrist](http://nph.net/forwardinchrist)



[nphperiodicals@nph.wels.net](mailto:nphperiodicals@nph.wels.net)



pp. 7-9



pp. 18-20



p. 24

## CONTENTS

<b>4</b>	<b>This is WELS</b> Photos from WELS members	<b>14</b>	<b>Q&amp;A</b> Is Jesus the only way a person can get to heaven? <i>David G. Scharf</i>	<b>28</b>	<b>Jesus is the Prophet</b> As our Prophet, Jesus proclaims God's message of sin and grace. <i>Kirk E. Lahmann</i>
<b>5</b>	<b>Devotion</b> Repent of deception <i>Daniel J. Habben</i>	<b>15</b>	<b>Bible study</b> Only one path leads to God's presence <i>David G. Scharf</i>	<b>30</b>	<b>A thought</b> Trusting what we cannot see <i>John A. Braun</i>
<b>6</b>	<b>President's message</b> Whose finest hour? <i>Mark G. Schroeder</i>	<b>16</b>	<b>Parent conversations</b> How do we engage our children in worship? <i>Phil Huebner and Kelly Huet</i>	<b>31</b>	<b>Bible study</b> A Bible story just for me <i>Gregory C. Lyon</i>
<b>7</b>	<b>Confessions of faith</b> Music becomes an invitation to learn of Jesus. <i>Gabriella Blauert</i>	<b>18</b>	<b>My Christian life</b> God provides exciting new mission opportunities through a Christian from South Asia.	<b>32</b>	<b>Community</b> Notices and your opinions
<b>10</b>	<b>Much more than hymns</b> The new hymnal will help us plan worship, sing, and grow in our Christian faith. <i>Adam R. Mueller</i>	<b>21</b>	<b>News</b> What's happening in WELS	<b>34</b>	<b>Editorial comment</b> The Father to the fatherless <i>Snowden G. Sims</i>
<b>13</b>	<b>Four ways to keep your faith strong</b> How to stay close to Jesus when college life threatens to pull you away. <i>Hannah White</i>	<b>26</b>	<b>Please explain . . .</b> Are sins of thought as bad as committing the actual sin? <i>Nicolas C. Schmoller</i>	<b>36</b>	<b>Agape love</b> The Bible uses <i>agape</i> , the Greek word for "love," to describe perfect love. <i>Rhoda Wolle</i>

### FEATURED ONLINE

Sign up for *Forward in Christ's* new weekly e-newsletter for articles, photos, and sneak peeks delivered right to your e-mail inbox: [forwardinchrist.net/newsletter](http://forwardinchrist.net/newsletter).





# THIS IS WELS

Christ's love shines through WELS members around the country as they show Christian love in their church and community. Read the stories behind some of these photos on p. 21.

1 | Gift bags for the homeless at St. Matthew, Spokane, Wash.

2 | Thanksgiving collection by Immanuel, Greenville, Wis., for a local food pantry. 3 | A Night to Shine event at St. Croix Lutheran Academy, W. Saint Paul, Minn., for those with special needs 4 | Baby shower at Redemption, Milwaukee, for Hmong members far from home. 5 | Blessings bags for the homeless by Eternal Rock, Castle Rock, Colo. 6 | Blankets for New Beginnings Home for Mothers by Lighthouse Youth

Center, Milwaukee, Wis. 7 | Bethel Bundle: winter wear, meal, and worship at Bethel, Menasha, Wis. 8 | Meals for foster families by Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis. 9 | Prison ministry by Redeemer, Pierre, S.D. 10 | Hurricane clean-up at Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla. 11 | Thanksgiving meals by Illumine, Rock Hills, S.C., for those in need.

SEE MORE AT > [forwardinchrist.net](http://forwardinchrist.net). Have a photo to share? Send it to [ficsubmissions@wels.net](mailto:ficsubmissions@wels.net) or upload it at [forwardinchrist.net/submit](http://forwardinchrist.net/submit).



# Repent of deception

**“When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, ‘I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way,’ they will bring disaster. . . . All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven” (Deuteronomy 29:19,20).**

Daniel J. Habben

I MAY EVEN BE out there right now . . . searching.

Searching for what, you ask?

Octopus.

One of the perks of living in the Caribbean is that I can swim year-round in water that supports hovering sting-rays, languid hawksbill turtles, and yellow-striped French grunts that streak around corners like yellow cabs in Times Square. Octopuses are out there too, but they’re hard to spot because of their ability to blend in with their surroundings. So I’m always on the hunt, eager to find one of these elusive and curious creatures.

## REPENT OF OUR DECEPTION

Like an octopus, we too can be masters of blending in with our surroundings, but that’s not always a good thing! For example, we might be all smiles on Sunday as we compliment our pastor on his great sermon about taking our neighbor’s words and actions in the kindest possible way, but come Monday morning, we eagerly dive into the latest workplace gossip like a kid into a pool.

In Deuteronomy chapter 29, the prophet Moses addressed those who were saying, “Yes, I will do everything the Lord has commanded!” but inwardly they were resolving to do whatever they wanted. If they had thought they could get away with the deception, Moses reminded them that they could not. God would bring judgment on those who persisted in such an attitude.

Ash Wednesday affords us an opportunity to take a good look at ourselves and ask, Have I been nodding a public yes to God’s Word while privately resolving to do my own thing? Have I promised to honor those in authority but then, without a twinge of guilt, complained about what a lousy job they are doing? Have I promised to be a servant to others, even as Jesus served me, but then tripped over my own bad attitude when no one notices my service?

Why are we like this—saying one thing and doing another? Because our sinful nature sticks to us like the suction cups of an octopus. And that’s why the message of Ash Wednesday is so critical: Repent! We are invited to swallow our excuses and acknowledge our sins.

## HOLD ON TO FORGIVENESS

But don’t stop there. Next, grasp what God has done to save us from those sins. He should punish us for our



PHOTO | iStock

**We want to hold on to Jesus’ love and forgiveness as firmly as an octopus will wrap its eight arms around its ocean meal.**

deception and blot our names from the book of life. Instead God dumped our sins on Jesus. Picture a sea captain whose cargo has caught fire. He jettisons the burning cargo into the ocean, where the water douses the flames and saves the ship. In the same way, the blood of Jesus has saved us by extinguishing the burning cargo of our sins.

We don’t want to be a deceiver like an octopus, blending in and pretending to be what we are not. We are sinners, and we want to hold on to Jesus’ love and forgiveness as firmly as an octopus will wrap its eight arms around its ocean meal. Why? Because Jesus’ love and forgiveness not only grant eternal life but also empower us to say yes to God’s will—not just with our lips but also with our hearts and hands.



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

## Whose finest hour?

In June 1940, fear and despair gripped the people of Great Britain as the Nazi German armies rolled across northern Europe, conquering Belgium, the Netherlands, and eventually France. The Germans had surrounded the remaining Allied forces on the coast of France near the city of Dunkirk. An improvised evacuation, using hundreds of military and civilian ships and boats, brought more than 300,000 soldiers safely to England. But the evacuation did not remove the threat of the German armed forces.

Newly appointed prime minister Winston Churchill needed to rally the nation to face the coming dark days. His words are still remembered: "The Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. . . . Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, that . . . for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.' "

The Christian church has from its beginning been faced with powerful enemies seeking to destroy it. First-century Christians faced savage attacks at the hands of unbelieving Jews and from the pagan Romans. In the centuries that followed, false teachers attacked the church by attacking its central doctrines. Even though the attacks against the Christian church came through human enemies, the apostle Paul reminds us of the real nature of the battle: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12).

It seems that the battle being waged against God's church has only intensified in recent years. The culture surrounding us has turned the truth on its head. Morals and values that have stood for thousands of years have been cast aside. Marriage has been redefined. Human life is no longer precious. Those who hold to the truths of Scripture are attacked as closed-minded bigots and haters. The love of many has grown cold. Tragically, even large segments of the visible Christian church have embraced these lies and have simply surrendered to a relentless enemy.

Like Great Britain facing the inevitable attack from across the English Channel, today's church is again facing threats that seek its utter destruction. Is now the time for us to have our finest hour?

Before we answer, we should remember some things. Our strength is not to be found in ourselves but in him. Our confidence lies not on our own resources but in the power and promises of God, who has told us that he will never leave us or forsake us and that the gates of hell itself will not prevail against his church. Our ability to prevail against the onslaughts of an unbelieving world and a hostile culture does not depend on our own wisdom; it comes from the power of the Word of God and his saving gospel to change hearts and lives.

God has given us his promises. He has provided us his unchanging Word and the message of the gospel. He has assured us that his Word will continue to accomplish his saving purpose until the end of time. He has reminded us of his almighty power. Because he has blessed us in these ways, he asks us to be faithful. He enables us to have courage. He calls on us to be witnesses of his truth.

So, in the end, his church will prevail, not because this was our finest hour but because it was his.



Mark G. Schroeder | WELS President



PHOTO | Mel Anne Designs



# CONFESSIONS *of faith*

**Music becomes an invitation  
to learn of Jesus.**

Gabriella Blauert

PHOTO | Lightstock

**OUR PARENTS ARE OFTEN** our first role models. They are the ones we look up to for guidance and moral direction. Delaney Leffel grew up in a divided household. Her mother considered herself a Christian, but her father fully embraced atheism. Delaney considered her father the most intelligent person in her life so it was understandable why she rejected all notions of God and religion when she was young.

"I thought religion was stupid," she says. "My mom started going to a Methodist church when I got older, but I didn't see any value in going with her."

Delaney's parents eventually split because of her father's alcoholism. It was a struggle for the family, coping with the loss of their father in their day-to-day life.

In 2011, Delaney's mother married her high school boyfriend and moved the family to Wisconsin during Delaney's freshman year of high school. It was a big life change that opened new doors and gave new opportunities.

## **FINDING CHRIST THROUGH MUSIC**

As a musician, Delaney wanted to find a way to perform and to meet new people who shared her interest in music. Delaney had grown up thinking church and religion were unimportant, but the door to faith cracked open through her love for music.

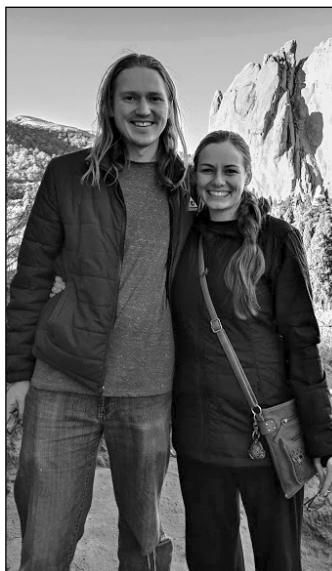
Her path to Christ began in 2012 with an ad in the paper asking for people to join a community band. Delaney, who played the French horn, saw the ad and wanted to join. The Schroeder family, who was organizing the band, was happy to have Delaney play in its group.

The band practiced in the gym of the Schroeder family's church, St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis. At first it was a little strange for Delaney. But eventually, practicing at St. Matthew became the first positive experience that she had in a church. It left her wondering about these people and their beliefs.

## **The first thing Delaney noticed in her Lutheran church experience was the music.**

"I remember thinking initially, *Why are all these smart people falling for this trick?*" she recalls. "*Why do they believe in something that isn't there?*" These questions were natural ones for someone who grew up rejecting God's existence and all religion.

Before long, Delaney became an essential part of this group. Her French horn was a welcome addition. She wasn't ready yet to embrace what so many of her fellow musicians believed, but God slowly would use the music and the people as tools to show her Christ.



Delaney and Trenton Leffel. The Leffels are part of St. Peter's campus ministry, which does service projects like making blankets for the local women's shelter (far left picture).

One more factor added to the transformation. She noticed a boy her age who played the euphonium. The boy, Trenton Leffel, was a member of St. Matthew. They became friends, and he soon invited her to come to church with him. "I was just thrilled," Delaney says. "I was super excited to go to church with him and his grandparents."

The first thing Delaney noticed in her Lutheran church experience was the music. She'd never attended a church before that featured so much music.

The next thing she noticed was how important the Bible was to the congregation. She compared the Bible to a textbook, where members of the church would search for the answers to their questions. The experience was encouraging enough that Delaney began attending two church services at St. Matthew each week. "I think God knew I needed an extra dose of Jesus," she remarks.

Those doses of Jesus were enough to move her to attend Bible information classes with Trenton, who was now her boyfriend. She learned more about what she considered "the trick" and what made it so important to those around her.

Eventually, she played for church and even began singing in the choir. It gave her a sense of purpose and felt like a compliment that people wanted to hear her music. "It made me feel needed," she says.

#### GROWING IN CHRIST THROUGH THE WORD

When it was time to go to college, Delaney looked West. She applied to schools in Colorado, including Colorado

State, where she and Trenton eventually both enrolled to study neurology.

After moving to Colorado, Delaney continued to take Bible information classes at St. Peter, Fort Collins, with Pastor Tim Spaude. She had a desire to learn everything about

## FACTS & FIGURES ABOUT CAMPUS *ministry*

- WELS Campus Ministry is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.
- The only full-time campus ministry is Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. This is where WELS campus ministry got started.
- More than 7,000 colleges, universities, and tech schools in the U.S. and Canada have a WELS Campus Ministry contact.
- More than 3,100 current students are in the campus ministry student management system (database).
- About 30 campus ministries receive funding from the Campus Ministry Committee for their programs.

LEARN MORE AT ➤ [wels.net/cm100](https://wels.net/cm100).



Christ's character but found a simpler answer than she anticipated.

"Pastor Spaude told me that you don't need to know everything," she recalls. "The Bible tells us what is most important, and everything beyond that we can ask God when we get to heaven."

These words spoke to Delaney's heart, showing her that God's purpose is not to make people all-knowing but instead is to get people to heaven.

St. Peter's staff minister, Dan Kleist, says he loves Delaney's fervor for the Word. "Delaney isn't afraid to ask clarifying questions," he explains. "She's ready to dig into any topic and see what we can discover."

Delaney's college career was filled with important milestones that went beyond the typical tests and quizzes. To begin with, she and Trenton got married their sophomore year of college. Delaney was also baptized and became a member at St. Peter. She and Trenton even helped start a WELS Campus Ministry program through their church to reach out to area college students.

The ministry began with five students the first year and has since grown. The group meets weekly for a Bible study and completes a monthly service project together in the community. "It's been a huge support system for me and the other college students," Delaney says. "When you go away to college, it can be hard to stay connected to Christ because you're making all your own decisions now."

Kleist initiated this campus ministry after noticing several students who were attending church faithfully. After identifying a few students, he asked if they wanted to meet outside of church to connect. Delaney and Trenton were two of the first members, and he's glad they've helped foster the group since its inception.

"They're the kind of members where they'll always be there," he remarks. "They've got an infectious spirit of warmth that lights up the group."

Today, Delaney and Trenton still live in Colorado and still play their instruments together at church, enjoying the special way that they serve the Lord together.

"Music is playing in my head all day long," Delaney says, "and now that I'm playing in church and to the glory of God, music plays in my head about Jesus, which is really a gift."



*Gabriella Blauert is a member at Shepherd of Peace, Powell, Ohio.*

## Support for STUDENTS

St. Peter, Fort Collins, Colo., started a campus ministry to reach out to area college students. Assistance is available from WELS Campus Ministry for other congregations that are interested in starting a ministry on a college campus. Find a toolkit to get you started at [wels.net/cm100](http://wels.net/cm100).

Don't have a college in your area? You can still support your congregation's college students while they're away:

- Keep in touch with them during the school year by mailing care packages and birthday cards.
- Text or e-mail them encouraging Bible messages.
- Talk to them about their college experiences when they're back at church during weekends or holidays. Invite them to speak to a teen group or other church group about how they keep their faith strong while they're away.
- Create a bulletin board with the names and pictures of students attending college to remind congregation members to pray for these young adults who are away from home.



# Much more than *hymns*

The new hymnal will help us plan worship, sing, and grow in our Christian faith.

Adam R. Mueller

The phrase “just the tip of the iceberg” existed long before 1912, but the sinking of the *Titanic* popularized it. The expression “more than meets the eye” was in our vocabulary before magnifying glasses or electron microscopes. Both of those ideas apply to the new hymnal—there’s more to it than what you see on the surface.

By the end of next year, all the planning, discussion, and hard work will result in a new hymnal. What’s inside? Of course, there are hymns, but there’s so much more! Our new book of worship is far more elaborate. Here’s a look at some of the exciting things that will come out of the WELS Hymnal Project’s hours and hours of planning:

## OUR WORSHIP

### LITURGY

The main service will bear a resemblance to the Trinity—three in one. Inside the new hymnal will be one service—a single liturgical text—which will help facilitate familiarity. But that single text will be presented in three different musical settings to suit the tastes of different audiences and instrumentation. Those who have worshiped in churches across the country or served in senior ministry will immediately recognize the value of this approach. The overall flow of the service will be similar to what you’ve used before to unite Christians of every generation. It will make it easier for everyone to participate.

Perhaps you have heard stories from



grandparents or great-grandparents who remember going to church when men sat on one side and women the other! Some worship practices that we now take for granted were not always that way. Change does happen, even in worship. In the new hymnal, the changes are gentle modifications. For example, we’ll now stand for the Gospel Acclamation (previously called the Verse of the Day) and sit for the Prayer of the Church. The creed will always be after the sermon, and just before Communion we’ll speak a prayer of thanksgiving. Maybe someday you’ll tell your grandchildren, “I remember when we stood for the entire Prayer of the Church!”

### PSALMS

The book of Psalms has long stood as the de facto hymnal of the Bible. People have been singing the psalms

for millennia with good reason. The deep theology, the rich poetic expression of sin and grace, the prophecies of Christ, the depth and breadth of personal emotions—all lend themselves to setting these poems and prayers to song.

Beginning with our 1993 red hymnal, we have grown familiar with chanted and responsorial psalm singing. That style of music allows worship leaders to incorporate a great deal of variety into worship by involving choirs, cantors, children, and an array of different groups. That style of psalm singing will still be available, but so will many other styles. Some psalm settings will sing just like hymns. More elaborate settings will initially be suitable for choirs but over time will become congregational favorites. The stylistic and instrumental variety is something to anticipate eagerly!

## MORE THAN *a hymnal*

Did you know that we're publishing a stand-alone psalter? The new psalter will include all 150 psalms and will feature at least two (and in some cases up to six or seven) different musical settings of a psalm in various styles. These approximately 450 psalm settings will provide an excellent way for congregations to incorporate musical variety into worship. Choirs will find many settings both beautiful and accessible. The psalter is a natural candidate to join the hymnal in the local music rack.

The psalter is just one of at least 16 different products we're developing to support the worship and praise of God. Others include three accompaniment volumes, four manuals to support the work of altar guilds and musicians, and five professional books for pastors. Several digital tools round out the family of products. We pray these resources will support a heartier "hallelujah!" from the hearts of his people.



### PEOPLE'S HYMNAL

Much thought went into making our hymnal user-friendly. Our current book has one set of page numbers for services, prayers, and psalms, but then restarts the numbering system for hymns. That occasionally trips up worshipers who wonder whether they are turning to a page in the front part or hymn part of the book. Look forward to just one set of page numbers in the new hymnal. You'll always know what page to be on!

Choirs and cantors can be wonderful enhancements to worship, but the main choir of worship is still the congregation. We designed the new hymnal specifically to enhance congregational singing. It will be a singers' book. Unlike some of the organ settings that favored unison singing, most hymns will work for singing in harmony. Some hymns will be printed with the melody line only so that parishioners can more easily join in praise.

Finally, this hymnal will be visually appealing. Careful attention has been given to fonts, layout, and design. It will be printed in two colors to help with navigation and to differentiate between psalms and hymns. Specially commissioned artwork that communicates the gospel will enhance the hymnal's artistry. It will be beautiful to look at!

### OUR GROWTH IN FAITH

#### LECTIONARY

Has your pastor ever made a comment so insightful in his sermon that you wondered if he had bugged your house? How does he know what part of the Bible to talk about each week? How does he know what sins to identify or where to apply grace?



Sermons are not designed to be orations of a pastor's pet peeves. The pulpit is not a place for ax-grinding

about last week's counseling session or advocating political change. Sermons unfold a Bible text to the heart of the listener, and those texts are part of an interconnected and wonderfully harmonized, thematic pattern of lessons that trace the life of Christ from birth to death to resurrection to ascension.

That pattern of lessons, more commonly called the lectionary, has been reworked so that all three readings support a common theme. We will still continue to grow in our faith as we hear the gospel again and again. That never changes, but the texts from God's Word will have a slightly different and refreshing pattern.

### OUR PLANNING

#### SERVICE BUILDER

Doing worship well takes careful planning and effective communication. It's common for pastors and secretaries to spend many hours a week selecting music, planning worship variety, and producing service folders that encourage participation. That does not include the hours that musicians invest to beautify worship. Making even a slight adjustment can mean changing printed and digital resources.



Modern technology provides planning and collaboration tools that will transform the way we plan and communicate worship. Part of our hymnal release next year will include a subscription-based online tool called *Service Builder*, a centralized worship database. Tasks like producing service folders, which used to take hours, will now take minutes, freeing up valuable time. The software will even report usage of copyrighted hymnal content to licensing agencies.

#### MUSICIANS' RESOURCES

Have you ever watched an organist go to work, propping her hymnal



Icons in this spread will be used in the new hymnal and will be available for use in the congregational setting.

open with copies of the Encyclopedia Britannica on either side so it would not flap shut in the middle of stanza 2? The hymnal may be a singers' book, but resources will help make it a musicians' book as well. Both the hymnal and the psalter (see sidebar on p. 11) will have their own accompaniment volumes. Plus, they'll be oversized and spiral bound so that they'll never flap shut in the middle of the second stanza!

What if a musician is looking for an older setting of a hymn or wonders how to add other instrumentation

to worship? An online, digitally available musicians' resource will contain all kinds of alternate settings, liturgical variations, and arrangements for guitar, brass, and other instrumentation so that we can offer God our very best.

Nearly 500 years ago, the first Lutheran hymnal was published with just eight hymns. In a little more than a year, we'll publish our latest hymnal with more than 600 hymns. That's just the tip of the iceberg! Inside your new hymnal will be a titanic amount of useful worship re-

sources that will enhance praise of God both in your church and in your home. I don't know about you, but I can't wait!



*Adam Mueller, director of the Hymnal Introduction Program, is pastor at Redeemer, Tucson, Arizona.*

LEARN MORE AT [christianworship.com](http://christianworship.com).

This new website will provide a more in-depth preview of our upcoming hymnal. You will also find a downloadable purchase planning worksheet as well as a list of frequently asked questions. Congregations will be receiving copies of a hymnal preview booklet this month that will share more about what's coming in the new hymnal. The new hymnal will be featured on this month's edition of *WELS Connection*.

**Nearly 500 years ago, the first Lutheran hymnal was published with just eight hymns. In a little more than a year, we'll publish our latest hymnal with more than 600 hymns.**

 WELS Connections

## NOT JUST FOR CHURCH ANYMORE

Built into your new hymnal is a wealth of resources that will support personal devotions wherever you may be. A daily devotion guide, sets of daily readings, Luther's Small Catechism, and a variety of personal prayers make the hymnal a perfect choice for home use. The psalter and a separate volume dedicated to devotions will serve those looking for greater depth.

Schools will also find multiple uses for the new hymnal and other resources as well. Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school children

will love learning new hymns and psalms. The new hymnology curriculum, *Hymns for Life*, has been closely coordinated with the WELS Hymnal Project to ensure a smooth transition to the new hymnal in our schools. Children who are just learning to play piano

or guitar, as well as more accomplished musicians in high school band, will discover a place in worship for their praise. And if you played an instrument when you were younger, dust it off! Support resources will enable you to put your musical gifts to godly use.

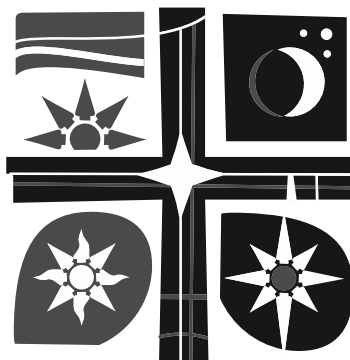






PHOTO | Lightstock


# 4 How to keep your faith LONG

When you move to college, it's a good question for every Christian and for every college student adapting to a new world away from home. If you come from a Christian family and went to a Lutheran elementary school and a Lutheran high school, college may seem like a break from it all. We begin to think that our relationship with God is fine. Then suddenly we discover that studying, friends, and work are crowding him out of our everyday life.


Our relationship with God is something that we can strengthen every day. Here are some things you can do:

**1**  **HAVE A DAILY DEVOTION.** I know this sounds simple, but I think as we get busier with class and work, Jesus can get pushed to the sidelines. This is why I find it helpful to make a daily devotion schedule—to budget time in your day for reflection and digging into God's Word. I start my day with my devotion. It is a good way to begin my morning and also keeps me from pushing it off until right before I go to bed when I might forget. If you are a night owl, reading or watching a devotion before you go to bed can be a great way to end your day.

**2**  **START A PRAYER BOOK.** I find this helpful in connecting my outside world to my Christian faith. I think as we get into the habit of taking care of everything ourselves in college, we forget that God is always on our side. We should be praying to him about the troubles and joys that he lets into our lives. A prayer book is also about thanking God for his blessings. I find it helpful to carry a little notebook to write down things throughout the day to pray about later.

**3**  **FIND A CHURCH.** If your home church is near your college or university, I encourage you to try and get back every Sunday. Yup, every Sunday! You don't realize until you stop going how much of a support system your home church can be. Those people really do care about how you are doing. If you are living far away from home, don't be afraid to go to a new church in your area. The "Find a Church" tab on the WELS website is extremely helpful in


finding a church. If you're afraid to go by yourself, invite your roommates to go with you. You all can be a little awkward together. In the end, you are creating a support system that is important to your faith long-term.

**4**  **JOIN A CAMPUS MINISTRY.** Being involved in a campus ministry is one of the best ways to strengthen your faith. You are surrounded by people your own age who are going through similar issues. They are great at keeping you close to Jesus. Going to a campus ministry lets you help others stay close too. It is another way that you can put God into your life on a day other than Sunday. Campus ministries provide an opportunity to take a deeper look into Bible texts that you may not always get to talk about. They are a great place to connect with people who are like you. While strengthening your faith, you'll make great friendships as well.



Hannah White, a senior at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, is a member at Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

**BONUS:** Here's one more way to get your daily dose of God's Word: Read *Forward in Christ* magazine and *Meditations Daily Devotional*. College students can get free subscriptions to both publications by signing up with WELS Campus Ministry.

**LEARN MORE AT**  [wels.net/cm100](https://wels.net/cm100). There you can also find Bible studies, podcasts, video series, and other resources to help you stay connected to Christ.





# Q&A WITH DAVID SCHARF

**My neighbor does not believe in God, but he is the nicest person I have ever met. I have heard that some denominations say that Jesus is not the only way a person can get to heaven. Could this be true?**

## **MORE THAN ONE WAY?**

When it comes to truth, as with mathematics, there is only one way to be right but many ways to be wrong. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the only way to heaven. But that statement is not popular in today's society. More and more people, including some Christians, have fallen for the thinking that there are many ways into God's presence.

## **UNDERSTAND WHO GOD IS**

We need to understand that God is holy. When Isaiah the prophet saw God on his throne, do you know what his reaction was? It was not one of praise and awe. It was one of terror. He said, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For . . . my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

As New Testament Christians, that fear may seem foreign to us. Perhaps it is because we picture Jesus with the little lamb in his arms. And that beautiful picture is absolutely true! What a comfort! God is love.

But God is also holy. He told Moses, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). Do we think intimacy with God is an inalienable right rather than an indescribable gift? We are not holy and perfect. We need to realize that there is nothing amazing about grace unless there is something fearful about holiness.

## **THE NEED FOR A MEDIATOR**

All people, including the nicest people we know, need a mediator in order to approach a holy God. If we wish to approach God, we need a perfect human life, not just our best attempts. We need a Savior.

So God provided one. Jesus came into this world and showed us who God is. Jesus showed us that

God is holy by taking all the sins that separate us from God and paying for them on the cross. Jesus showed us that God is love because he won forgiveness and eternal life for us.

In the temple, a thick curtain separated the people from the place that symbolized God's presence. The message was clear: Sinful people cannot stand in the presence of a holy God! When Jesus died, that temple curtain ripped in two from top to bottom. Why? Because our sins are gone.

Jesus is the way into God's presence. In fact, Jesus calls himself "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

## **ONLY ONE WAY**

Do you know what separates Christianity from every other world religion? Every other religion teaches that we must do good things in order to appease God.

Christianity teaches that we do good things because God is appeased. On the one hand, Christianity is exclusive in how we get to God. On the other hand, it is entirely inclusive in who can come to God. It even includes you, me, and your neighbor who does not believe in God.

So what do you want to do? Love your neighbor, be a friend to him, and listen to what he has to say. Then invite him to hear about Jesus, the only way to heaven. It is a wonderful blessing when God blesses us with good neighbors for this life. It is an even greater blessing to have neighbors for all eternity in heaven!

ASK A QUESTION AT ► [forwardinchrist.net/submit](http://forwardinchrist.net/submit).

# Only one path leads to God's presence

David G. Scharf

**IMAGINE YOU ARE** stepping out onto the streets, and you ask this question to a cross-section of people: "How would you describe God and who he is to you?" What are five things people might say?

---



---



---



---

I am guessing many of the things listed cannot be describing the same God because some of the items are contradictory.

## WHO WE ARE BEFORE GOD

You see it time and time again in the Bible. When sinful people come face-to-face with a holy God, there is fear. It is intimidating to be in the presence of greatness.

Here is a crude example. I like to play golf. When I play golf with my brothers, I feel like a great golfer compared to them. But put me in a foursome with Brooks Koepka, Rory McIlroy, and Matt Kuchar, and suddenly, I realize just how bad at golf I am!

In the same way, when I am around sinful human beings, I can feel like I am a pretty good person. Then put me in front of a holy God, and I realize just how sinful I am!

St. Augustine said, "He who understands the holiness of God despairs in trying to appease him." Yet many feel they are good enough to "get into heaven."

## Read Exodus 33:20 and Romans 3:23; 6:23.

What misunderstandings do people have who believe that God will accept them because they are good people?

---



---



---



---

## JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

### Read Leviticus 16:2.

No one could come into the Most Holy Place—except for the high priest on the Day of Atonement—or he would die. Grab a piece of paper and draw the Holy Place, Most Holy Place, the ark of the covenant, and as many other elements of those spaces that you can. Feel free to search the internet or a study Bible for reference!

### Read Hebrews 7:26; 10:11-14; and 1 Peter 3:18.

When Jesus died, "at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51). Explain the significance of what happened on Good Friday based on these readings.

---



---



---



---

### Read Acts 4:12 and John 14:6.

Based on those passages and the rest of this study, respond to those who say the following:

"Christianity is too exclusive. No one can claim to have the truth exclusively."

"There are many paths into God's presence."

---



---



---



---

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

# PARENT CONVERSATIONS

Let's be honest. Worshiping with children does not always feel . . . worshipful. I believe that most parents desperately want to engage their children in worship—but we just don't know how. Enter the suggestions offered by Phil Huebner and Kelly Huet in this month's column. They're worthy of tearing out and posting on the fridge, sharing on your Facebook page, or both! We need to start a new culture of what it means to worship with children, and I believe this month's authors have ideas that can help us get there. Keep reading.

— Nicole Balza

## HOW DO WE ENGAGE OUR CHILDREN IN WORSHIP?

**We've all been there.** Arms flailing, Cheerios flying, children wailing, while we—the parents—are inwardly dying. It's tough to raise our children in the church! How do we keep them from making one of those epic scenes that interrupts the worship of others and thoroughly embarrasses us? Or, to put it more succinctly, how do we teach our children to participate and engage in worship?

The first point is to understand that this challenge does not start with the children but with the parents who have been called to raise those children. Then, it's to understand that parenting should be in partnership with the church, which will assist "in whatever manner possible" to help raise children in the faith (as we promise during the Order of Baptism).

So what do you do? **Before you get to the pew, the preparation for worship starts at home—and not just on Sunday morning.** Throughout the week, can you have family devotions on the Scripture readings for the coming Sunday and preview the message that

will be heard in church? Little eyes and ears may perk up when they hear something familiar! Similarly, try singing the Hymn of the Day for the coming Sunday or a pertinent song for the season. For example, could you sing "Savior of the Nations, Come" regularly during Advent? They'll be glad to join in to a song they know well!

Or how about those songs of the liturgy that unite the church throughout history and throughout the world? Could bedtime lullabies include the "Gloria in Excelsis," "Sanctus," and "Agnus Dei"?

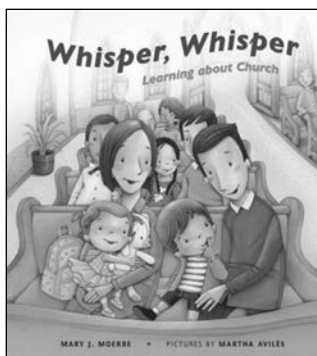
Oh, and speaking of bedtime, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed are easily learnable for children. These statements of faith will help strengthen and teach the faith as well as prepare your children to participate in worship. Or what about using the Psalm of the Day for the coming Sunday as an evening prayer throughout the week?

Could you preview something about worship as you're in the car on the way to church? Maybe it's about the time of year we are in (Advent, Christmas, Lent, etc.). Maybe it's about the colors we will see in church for a season. Maybe you could share with your children why you're excited to take Communion on any given Sunday. Give them things to think about and look for in worship.

**During the service, help your children learn the way children learn**

### TRY THIS!

**Looking for a way to help your toddler understand the rituals and routines of church? Read *Whisper! Whisper! Learning about Church* by Mary J. Moerbe. Available from Northwestern Publishing House, 800-662-6022, [nph.net](http://nph.net).**



**best—modeling their parents and using all their senses.** So while you do the “things” of worship, teach them to do the same—to sit and stand, to fold hands and bow the head, to hold a hymnal and follow along, to find something in the Bible, to sing with a joyful heart, to look at the beauty of the sanctuary, and to listen with eagerness to the Word being proclaimed.

**Finally, after the service, be sure to do a follow-up of some kind.** Perhaps on the way home—or maybe during lunch or later in the day during a devotion—it would be appropriate to debrief and review. Help your children to process what they did in worship earlier in the day.

It won't always be easy, but what a joy to be the ones to “train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6, English Standard Version).



*Phil Huebner completed a doctoral thesis on what to do with children in church. He and his wife, Becky, have two children.*

.....

**What if we engaged our youth,** empowered them, and trained them as leaders for our church and our community? What if worship wasn't something to endure but a vital part of the week, eagerly anticipated as a place to participate, be encouraged, and find joy in purpose? What if a church's teens participated in mission trips, led science camp sessions, served on a middle school or high school music team, set up Communion, operated the church's A/V, served as ushers and greeters, set out coffee and donuts for fellowship, served as children's Sunday ministry leaders, helped prepare worship folders, and participated in the congregation's weekly teen ministry? These are some of the ways our church intentionally engages the students in

our congregation. **We've found that keeping them connected through serving and leading is a core component.** In this way, worship is something they participate in and help make possible, not something they are forced to do. If a teen doesn't show for A/V, no one will be there to run the slides, so their service is critical.

## **As you and your family focus on and prioritize worship, you'll begin finding ways to serve together and to allow your teens to see their value within the congregation.**

Four years ago, using the above list as a guide, as part of their confirmation we started asking confirmands where they wanted to serve. The first few years were rough, but this year's confirmation class has a 95 percent participation rate.

The silver bullet isn't complicated. It's a culture of worship, being in the Word, and serving together for Jesus. It does take intentional effort by parents and their children, but it is awesome when children see the value of their commitment.

**How can you engage your children? It starts with your expectations as a family.** Is worship non-negotiable? Or is it something you endure? That time must be so important to your family that nothing is allowed to violate it—not out of fear of God's punishment or of your pastor thinking less of you but because you revel in that time with God each week.

Sadly, we sometimes become apathetic, discouraged, or jaded with our local church. We lose the sense of awe and wonder, and attending church becomes duty. Slowly we begin griping about church politics, sermon style, and length—and our kids hear it. They wonder why we

go if we are just going to complain. Combine that with sports leagues and vacations that take us away from worship, and we should not be shocked when they walk away.

A spirit of participation, encouragement, engagement, and joy for worship can be restored! It starts with confessing that we are part of the prob-

lem and asking God for forgiveness and strength to redirect our family toward him. Pause for a moment and read Psalm 103; marvel at God's wonder and grace.

Finally, after worship, talk about the message on the ride home. What part resonated with you? What questions does it raise for you? How can you apply it throughout the week?

**As you and your family focus on and prioritize worship, you'll begin finding ways to serve together and to allow your teens to see their value within the congregation.** Encourage your children to bring a friend along, and before you know it, with prayer and God's help you too will have a church of youth participating and leading.



*Kelly Huet serves as pastor for service and outreach at St. Andrew, Middleton, Wisconsin. He and his wife, Katie, have three young children.*

**LEARN MORE AT** ➤ [forwardinchrist.net](http://forwardinchrist.net) and see the teens from St. Andrew in action.



God provides exciting new mission opportunities through a Christian from South Asia.

MYC|

life

“PUT THE BEST MINDS in World Missions in a room. Tell them to come up with a plan for outreach to this Muslim nation. And they could not come up with a plan as good as the one we have.” So said a longtime worker in WELS World Missions. “The plan we have,” he added, “fell into our laps.”

Fifteen years later, this mission to Pakistan has distributed nearly a million pieces of Christian literature, opened 59 churches, started a Bible Institute, operates 24 Sunday schools for 1,000 children, and produces a weekly 30-minute satellite broadcast to much of the Muslim world.

Surprisingly, God is giving us another “heaven-sent” opportunity for outreach in a second predominantly Muslim country in South Asia. And it began in America!

#### THE HEAVEN-SENT OPPORTUNITY

Haris\*, a Christian young man from this Asian country, came into contact with the pastor of a WELS congregation in a large Midwest city. Haris has

a p  
an  
alr  
and one worship group of Muslim-background believers. This man and his wife went through an instruction course and became members of this congregation and WELS.

ago and became a strong evangelist, founding and overseeing two Bible schools for the training of evangelists in this Muslim country. After his death, his Muslim relatives came to

### God is doing the impossible and opening doors for gospel outreach, even in the world of Islam.

Haris expressed the desire to share the gospel with more Muslims, both in his new city in America and in his homeland. With his pastor's help, he enrolled in our synod's Pastoral Studies Institute. He loves his classes with area WELS pastors who graciously take the time to instruct him. He is amazed by the depth of the scriptural teaching he is receiving. “I have never experienced anything like this. It is wonderful, and I want to learn more,” says Haris.

Close to this time, Haris' father passed away. His father was from a prestigious

the hospital to demand the body for burial, even though Haris' father had converted to Christianity more than 40 years earlier. Haris prevented this so that his father could have a Christian burial.

According to their culture, Haris now oversees the two Bible schools his father started. He has asked WELS to provide solid scriptural training for the teachers and the students. He says, “We are planting many churches, but the graduates of our schools do not know the Scriptures well. We have



quantity but not quality. They do not know how to be pastors. The WELS men I meet know how to be pastors.”

### A PLAN FOR OUTREACH

Since then, WELS representatives have made three visits to this country in the last 12 months and are hoping to provide training for the teachers and the students in the Bible schools. The schools have a long list of graduates who are eager for more training as well. Most of the students do not belong to any denomination. The two Bible schools also have vocational training so that the men learn a skill to supplement their income while they serve as leaders in their churches.

But that is only the first part of our plan to reach out with the gospel in this country. The second part is to use these graduates to plant new churches

in the northern part of the country, where there are practically no Christian churches. In this Muslim country, only 1 in 300 people is a Christian.

We also want to reach out to Muslims who live inside a large camp for refugees. (See the accompanying article for more information.)

Finally, we want to provide a ministry center for outreach to Muslims in America. Since this young man has his father's passion and gifts for reaching out to Muslims, we want to partner with him. Our hope is to purchase a home in a thoroughly Muslim neighborhood in this Midwest city and use it as a friendship center to befriend Muslims and, in time, to introduce them to their best friend, Jesus. We hope under God that this and the International Friendship Center in Wisconsin will

## OH, FOR A faith...

*In 2016, over one million Muslim refugees fled from Myanmar. Over 700,000 of these refugees were settled in camps in this South Asian country. A WELS representative visited one of those camps. He shares the story of a Christian leader we'll call "Asad" below:*

Oh, for a faith that will  
not shrink  
Though pressed by  
many a foe,  
That will not tremble  
on the brink  
Of poverty or woe.  
(Christian Worship 405:1)

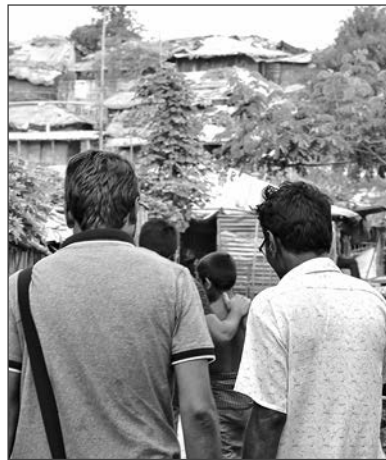
Asad was happier than he had ever been in his life.

A visitor to the camp had brought a DVD—*The Jesus Film*. Asad watched it with amazement. He had never seen such love as he saw in Jesus, who was willing to die for his sins. He had never experienced such joy as he now had knowing that he was a child of God. He had to share this joy with everyone he could. Within the next months, his family, his brother's family, and several others believed.

Then the troubles started. As the families gathered at his brother's

*Continued on p. 20.*





become models for outreach to Muslims and South Asians in America for other WELS congregations.

Already God's blessings for these plans are abundant:

- We have ready-made relationships in this South Asian country through Haris. It would take decades for a WELS missionary to build the relationships we have now, according to Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions.
- The church in this country is already registered with the government. For many years it has been impossible to register a church there.
- We have official permission to provide help to the refugees. It is exceedingly difficult to receive this approval.

God is giving us another "heaven-sent" opportunity. He says, "See, I have placed before you an open door" (Revelation 3:8). God is doing the impossible and opening doors for gospel outreach, even in the world of Islam.

*The author's name is withheld to protect him and his work of sharing God's truths.*

\*Name has been changed.

*"Oh, for a faith," continued from p. 19.*

house for worship and prayer, neighbors started to throw bricks over the corrugated metal wall, hoping to hit those gathered. Amazingly, the bricks all missed. One night they attached burning rags to the bricks, and the house burned to the ground. Miraculously, no one was injured.

Asad and his family kept sharing the joy they had—the message of Jesus—and soon more than one hundred families believed.

Then one day a mob gathered at Asad's own makeshift house. "You are no longer welcome in this camp," they told him as they tore down his walls and barred him from returning.

And yet, Asad was happier than he had ever been in his life.

Two weeks passed and Asad traveled to visit his brother's house, a half-constructed shell that had been rebuilt from the fire. No sooner had Asad greeted the family when he was called out to the road—an elderly neighbor wanted to meet with him. It was a trap. The thin metal wall couldn't block the sounds. Women screaming, men yelling, now women crying. Then the sound of a heavy thud—Asad's body being thrown against the wall as bamboo sticks struck his body. They took his phone and smashed it, sending their clear message: Stop gathering Christians together.

Still, Asad is happier than he has ever been in his life. "If Jesus died on the cross for me," he reasons, "what is some suffering in my life?"

The next day, he gathered with a small group of local believers. They sang a quiet song, shared messages of God's promises, and prayed together. Asad's only thought: How can we show our people God's love? How can we teach more people the message of Jesus?

Lord, give us such a faith as this,  
And then, whate'er may come,  
We'll taste e'en now the hallowed bliss  
Of an eternal home.

*(Christian Worship 405:6)*

Plans are in the works to train and support Asad and other Christians so that they are able to reach more refugees in this camp with the saving message of Jesus.

*The author's name is withheld to protect him and his work of sharing God's truths.*

## Stories of Christian love

This month's "This is WELS" features photos from congregations about how their members show Christian love. Here are a few stories behind the photos:

### 3. St. Croix Lutheran Academy, West St. Paul, Minn.,

welcomed about 220 guests with special needs, ages 14 and older, to its annual Night to Shine event, where they received a night of dancing and VIP treatment (including a red carpet). About 65 percent of the student body was involved in some way. "Night to Shine is a priceless opportunity for St. Croix to celebrate God's precious gift of life, to show the love of Jesus to those in our community, and to unite as volunteers—both students and adults—behind the common cause of showing love to all of God's people," says Lorna Kapanke, co-chair of the event.



4. Johnathan Khang, a member of **Redemption, Milwaukee, Wis.**, was visiting his family in Vietnam and met Sung, his friend's younger sister. Sung and Johnathan were married in Vietnam and then came to the United States. For Sung, it was bittersweet to leave her family to start a new life in the United States—a country whose language she didn't know. Redemption hosted a baby shower for the parents-to-be as an expression of Christian love and support. The members wanted to treat Johnathan and Sung like family—especially Sung, whose own family is not able to be here during her pregnancy or for the birth of the baby.

7. Several sister WELS churches joined **Bethel, Menasha, Wis.**, in donating hats, coats, blankets, and snowpants for the annual Bethel Bundle. "At the heart of the Bethel Bundle is Christian love for our neighbors' souls and bodies—especially those who recently arrived from warmer climates," says Phil Hunter, pastor at Bethel. Immigrants, refugees, and Spanish-speaking families were invited to come and take anything they could use. Nearly 70 souls then attended Bethel's Spanish worship service and enjoyed a Thanksgiving-style feast cooked by the members. Through this event, Bethel was able to speak God's Word and reflect his grace to families from Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Mexico.

8. Members of the Teens for Christ service organization at **Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wis.**, met after



school to make freezer meals to support area foster families. "As these families serve their community by caring for children in need, Teens for Christ wish to serve them by lightening their load at mealtime," says Ruth Hirschfeld, Teens for Christ faculty advisor.

9. John Schwartz, pastor at **Redeemer, Pierre, S.D.**, spends time serving at a local women's prison. There he works with the warden to provide free WELS Prison Ministry materials to the inmates. These devotional booklets are popular. "An inmate who works at the library said that sometimes they have to fill the 'Free Rack' more than twice a day with WELS Prison Ministry books!" writes Schwartz. When asked what the books mean to them, the inmates replied that they know they are loved; they know they are not alone; and they are able to grow in their spiritual life. These women reflected their newfound faith by raising funds to donate to WELS Prison Ministry. "These women may not be able to wash Jesus' feet with their tears and their hair, but they are showing him much love by studying his Word and showing love to others by spreading his Word," says Schwartz.

11. **Illumine, Rock Hills, S.C.**, teamed together with Feed the Hungry, a local non-profit, to provide a full Thanksgiving meal for the hungry. Hosted at Illumine, the event brought together volunteers from Illumine and the community at large, who donated and prepared more than five thousand dinners. About 250 turkeys and 1,100 pounds of turkey breast were smoked over a two-day period. "At Illumine,



we talk about the Christian cycle of worship, education, and service," says Nathan Loersch, pastor at Illumine. "This is a simple way we could support an effort already going on and give our members—and the greater community—an opportunity to come together to serve and to tangibly show love in a physical way."

SEE MORE AT [forwardinchrist.net](https://forwardinchrist.net). Have a photo or story to share? Send it to [ficsubmissions@wels.net](mailto:ficsubmissions@wels.net) or upload it at [forwardinchrist.net/submit](https://forwardinchrist.net/submit). Go back to "This is WELS" on p. 4 to see the referenced photos.

## Proposed changes to improve retirement benefits

*The WELS Retirement Strategy Committee, a special committee appointed by the Synodical Council several years ago, has announced proposed changes to the WELS retirement program. It is proposed that the WELS Pension Plan be frozen and replaced with a defined contribution plan, wherein all eligible workers would receive contributions to their accounts in the WELS Shepherd Plan.*

*After an extensive and prayerful study of many options, these changes are recommended because the defined contribution plan will better support our workers and our overall ministry efforts than the Pension Plan as well as stabilize costs over time for sponsoring organizations. Here's more:*

### **How will the retirement program work if the proposed changes take effect?**

The sponsoring organization for each worker in eligible service will send a quarterly retirement payment to the WELS Benefit Plans Office, similar to how Pension Plan payments are currently remitted. A contribution will be deposited into the defined contribution plan account—the WELS Shepherd Plan—of each eligible worker on a quarterly basis. The contributions to a worker's defined contribution plan account will vest immediately at the time the contributions are deposited to the account.

### **What will happen to earned pension benefits?**

Workers will not lose any earned benefits. After a worker's WELS service ends, the Pension Plan will pay the benefit earned for service performed through Dec. 31, 2020. If a worker dies before he or she begins receiving his or her Pension Plan benefit, the surviving spouse will be able to receive surviving spouse benefits from the Pension Plan.

### **How much will be contributed to each worker's defined contribution plan account?**

Beginning Jan. 1, 2021, all workers will receive a "base" contribution of \$500 per quarter of eligible full-time service.

Workers who are age 44 or older on Jan. 1, 2021, will receive an "additional" contribution per quarter of eligible full-time service besides the base contribution. This is because contributions made to the defined contribution plan account of a worker who is closer to retirement do not have as much time to earn investment returns before the worker retires. Learn more about this at [welsbpo.net](http://welsbpo.net).

### **How will contributions to the defined contribution plan accounts be invested?**

A worker can choose his or her own fund(s) and/or portfolio from the options available in the defined contribution plan based on the worker's personal goals. The account of a worker who does not make an investment election will be invested in the default investment option, which will be the target retirement date fund that most closely aligns

with the worker's projected retirement date based on the worker's age.

### **Can workers or their sponsoring organization make additional contributions to the defined contribution plan?**

Yes, workers can save and invest their own money, and organizations can make additional contributions on behalf of their workers.

### **How much will a sponsoring organization be billed per worker and how will those funds be used?**

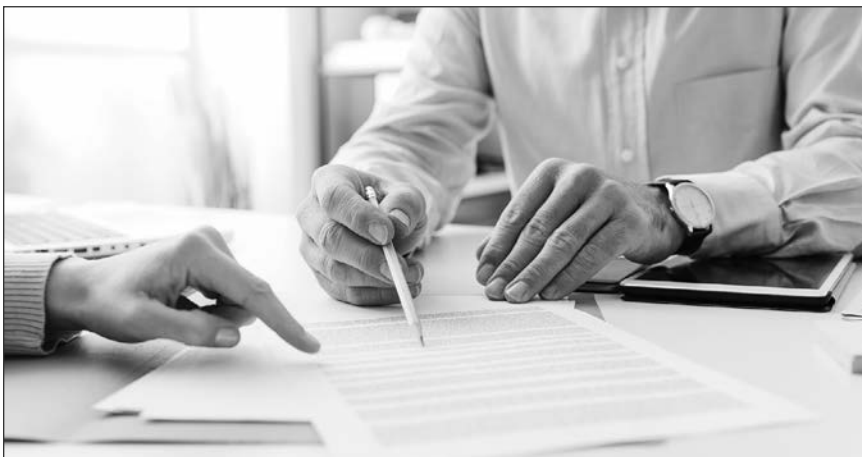
The quarterly "total retirement payment" charged in 2021 will be the same as the quarterly Pension Plan contribution rates in 2020. The amount needed to fund the contributions to workers' defined contribution plan accounts will be submitted to the defined contribution plan. The remainder will be used to pay the frozen Pension Plan benefit obligations and the administrative expenses of both plans.

### **What are the next steps with regards to these proposed changes?**

The proposed changes will be a significant topic on the agenda at each district convention in June 2020. A standard resolution will be provided for each district to review, discuss, and vote on during the convention. The plan is for a representative familiar with the proposed changes to attend each district convention. If each district approves the resolution with broad consensus, the proposed changes will likely be implemented on Jan. 1, 2021.

**LEARN MORE AT** [welsbpo.net](http://welsbpo.net). There you will find a detailed FAQ as well as a video explaining the changes and the benefits.

PHOTO | iStock



## Meet the editorial staff

*Ever ask yourself, “Who are these people who write for Forward in Christ?” Through this series, you can find out.*

This month, *Forward in Christ* welcomes Snowden (Gene) Sims to the staff as the newest editorialist. Sims is excited to share his unique perspective with *Forward in Christ*'s readers: “I’m honored to have the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with a larger audience.”

He says he also looks forward to discovering his own unique writing style throughout the process. For Sims, this is a chance to draw from his own experiences and make each article relatable for people. “My goal is for someone to read my editorials and know they’re not the only one who has gone through this experience before,” he remarks. “I want to make my writing real and personable.”

As for Sims’ own experiences—he was born in Lima, Ohio, and moved with his mother and older brother to Milwaukee when he was six. When he was a student at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, two teachers encouraged him to consider becoming a pastor. He eventually went on to graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., in 1989.

From professor and dean to tutor and pastor, Sims has held a number of different roles in the synod. Today, he serves as one of the pastors at St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio. He also was elected to serve as the district president of the Michigan District in 2018.

Sims enjoys reading other editorials and diving into the Bible studies in *Forward in Christ*. He also scans through the District



Snowden Sims, the Michigan District president, is one of *Forward in Christ*'s newest contributing editors.

News and anniversaries to “see on display the blessings our synod has been given.” He says that we can celebrate with our fellow brothers and sisters during these exciting periods of growth and transition.

As to why people should pick up their own copy of *Forward in Christ*? Sims says people should read *Forward in Christ* because it’s based on Scripture, informative, and educational.

“The challenges we face in life should always lead us back to the Scriptures,” he says. “*Forward in Christ* meets people where they are and pulls them back to Christ.”

Gabriella Blauert

**READ MORE** from Pastor Snowden Sims in his first editorial on p. 34.

## Easter outreach program available

Victorious! It’s a message that the world needs to hear today.

“Many people in our country feel defeated by life. Many are being defeated by disease. All will eventually be defeated by death,” says Eric Roecker, director of the Commission on Evangelism.

That’s why the theme “Victorious” is so fitting for a new outreach program to invite unchurched souls to worship at WELS congregations this Easter. “Easter

changes all of that. Because Jesus was victorious over death when he rose from the grave, those who follow him are already victorious, knowing that their sin has been forgiven,” continues Roecker. “What’s more, even though they may die one day, Jesus promises to raise them from the grave and give them eternal life. His victory is our victory.”

WELS Congregational Services is providing resources for this program called Easter 20, or E20. “Outreach programs like E20 provide ready-made materials for congregations to use so that they don’t need to create their own. This saves time and money,” says Roecker. “Additionally, having a theme ties everything together—from postcards to door hangers to invites to social media ads.” Provided worship plans, service folder designs,

and sermon thoughts then help tie that theme into an Easter festival service.

According to Roecker, studies show that Easter services are one of three worship services that unchurched people are most likely to attend. That’s why it’s so important for congregations—and individual members—to extend the invitation to worship. “People are especially likely to attend if invited by an acquaintance,” he says.

Most of the E20 materials are offered as free online downloads, with minimal costs for ordering postcards, business cards, and door hangers. Helpful “how-tos” provide direction for implementing this outreach program successfully.

**LEARN MORE AT** [welscongregationalservices.net/e20](https://welscongregationalservices.net/e20).





## District news

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

**MN—St. John, St. Clair, Minn.,** celebrated its 150th anniversary on Nov. 3, 2019.

**SEW—St. Matthew, Port Washington, Wis.,** celebrated its 40th anniversary on Nov. 3, 2019.

On Nov. 10, 2019, **Beautiful Savior, Fort Wayne, Ind.,** celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ-CA—Michael Schroeder; D-M—Andrew Hussman; MN—James Panning; SC—Andrew Retberg; SEW—Scott Oelhafen.



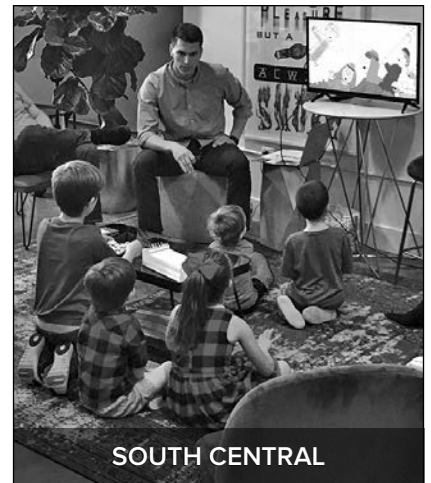
ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA

Gloria Dei, Belmont, Calif., reports that it completed a “refresh” of its sanctuary in November 2019.



DAKOTA-MONTANA

Student volunteers from Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D., held a Christmas party for its New Friends group in the school gymnasium on Dec. 15, 2019. This gathering welcomed friends from the special needs community in Watertown and surrounding areas. The party included fellowship activities such as karaoke (pictured) as well as opportunities to share the gospel.



SOUTH CENTRAL

The core group of WELS’ newest home mission congregation, Hope, Houston, Texas, has been meeting for Bible studies in a community room/co-working space that a local realty office lets them use for free. Andrew Nemmers (pictured teaching the children) was assigned to serve as the home missionary at Hope upon his graduation from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., in May 2019.



SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

St. John’s on the Hillside in Milwaukee, Wis., celebrated its 171st anniversary on Dec. 5, 2019. The congregation has a rich history that includes helping start other WELS congregations in the area. Its current church building (pictured) was dedicated in 1890.

## MLC graduates

Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., held its mid-year graduation on Dec. 19, 2019. Three students graduated with their bachelor of science degree, and nine students graduated with their bachelor of science in education degree. One student received his staff ministry certification, and one received his bachelor of arts degree.



**Benjamin P. Baganz**  
Fond du Lac, Wis.



**Michaela R. Bessler**  
Bremerton, Wash.



**Anastasia L. Bornschlegl**  
Rochester, Minn.



**Elise A. Bush**  
Pacific Grove, Calif.



**Allison K. Hofland**  
Elgin, Minn.



**Stephanie M. Kempenich**  
Slinger, Wis.



**Jacob C. Klug**  
Juneau, Wis.



**Nathanael P. Lindloff**  
Lansing, Mich.



**James N. Penrod**  
San Antonio, Texas



**Benjamin J. Ristow**  
New Ulm, Minn.



**Emma K. Schibbelhut**  
Onalaska, Wis.



**Emma R. Schneck**  
Monroe, Mich.



**Jessica L. Stibb**  
Beaver Dam, Wis.



**Aaron R. Swanson**  
Rochester, Minn.

- Bachelor of Science in Education
- Bachelor of Science
- Bachelor of Arts
- Staff ministry certification

## ASSIGNMENTS

Braun, Abigail K., to Mt. Calvary Lutheran Academy, Flagstaff, Ariz. (December 2017 graduate)

Quinn, Sarah J., to East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz. (May 2019 graduate)

Schneck, Emma R., to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.

Swanson, Aaron R., to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.

## WELS news briefs

### WORLD MISSIONS

[missionspromotions@wels.net](mailto:missionspromotions@wels.net);

414-256-3237



The Russian Lutheran Church celebrated 25 years of God's blessings on Nov. 3, 2019. Members gathered together in Akademgorodok for a joint worship service celebrating the anniversary and the Lutheran Reformation. They also confirmed two new members (pictured). The Russian Lutheran Church has 4 national pastors, 3 deaconesses, and 1 missionary serving 270 baptized members in 5 organized congregations and 1 preaching station.

READ MORE AT [wels.net/25-years-of-autumn-blessings](https://wels.net/25-years-of-autumn-blessings) about the Russian Lutheran Church.

Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria celebrated its 50th anniversary in December 2019. Members planned various activities to celebrate, including live radio broadcasts, special prayer services, carnival floats/parades by the youth groups, visits to orphanages and hospitals, youth rallies, and choir and Bible trivia competitions. Pictured is Sylvester Idiok, president of Christ the King Lutheran Church, cutting the anniversary cake. Christ the King Lutheran Church has 9 national pastors, 1 evangelist, 30 preaching elders, and 10 seminary students serving almost 2,500 members in 34 congregations. It joins All Saints Lutheran Church of Nigeria as our two sister synods in Nigeria.





PHOTO | Lightstock

# PLEASE EXPLAIN

ARE SINS OF THOUGHT AS BAD AS COMMITTING THE ACTUAL SIN? | Nicolas C. Schmoller

**WE KNOW HOW LAWS** work in our world. Different crimes necessitate different punishments. Can you imagine if a government said that you would have to pay the same \$250 fine if you parked on the street during a snow emergency, if you sped through a school zone, if you robbed a bank, or if you killed someone? It's all the same penalty. People would think the government cares just as much about plowing the streets as stealing or murder. Different crimes must have different repercussions.

So it stands to reason that God should work the same way. Yet Jesus said, "Anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment," and, "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:22,28). John also wrote, "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). That sounds too severe. The government should rightly say that some actions are worse than others. God, on the other hand, demands one thing: perfection.

## **GOD DEMANDS A PERFECTION WE CAN'T ACHIEVE**

To our human minds, that just doesn't seem right—or fair. Sin and judgment should be for the ungodly or the criminal, but not for us. So we don't count the sin within, and we make excuses for our sin and guilt. We avoid confronting the reality that we are not as perfect as God demands. Our sinful nature always wants to justify itself. So when we think that we are doing what God asks—we don't murder or commit adultery or steal—we think that we are good enough. We are righteous people, and we look with disdain at those who are more guilty than we are.

But Jesus says, "I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). The Pharisees were godly and upright, but we must surpass their standard of behavior.

When Jesus says that our thoughts reveal the sinful condition of our

hearts, he challenges us to see that we are not as perfect or righteous as we often think we are. It's our sinful hearts that harbor and try to hide the unrighteousness within. Sometimes we like to think that when we try hard or have the best intentions, it is good enough. But it isn't enough to please a holy God. It isn't enough to surpass the Pharisees and enter heaven.

That is Jesus' point. It's hopeless on our own. While it may seem to our sinful nature that we can outweigh the bad with the good, things are not what they may seem. Isaiah reminds us all, "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). All sins, no matter how great or small they seem to us, make us unworthy to enter heaven.

## **LOOK TO THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION**

You would think that if anyone could rely on their own efforts to be in God's good graces, it would be those three men with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13). Peter, James, and John had given up everything. They

even left their families to follow Jesus. Yet when they were faced with the glory of Jesus and the bright cloud enveloped them, they fell to the ground terrified. When they were confronted with the glory of God, they knew they were sinners. They knew they could not stand. The adulterer and the murderer certainly would have fallen terrified. But so too would those only with anger or lust in their hearts. Before a holy God no one can stand.

But there was Jesus. In the midst of the cloud with the voice from heaven, there was Jesus, standing on top of the mountain. Jesus could stand, because he was perfectly righteous. Jesus could stand! Jesus is human like all of us, yet he obeyed perfectly in our place. He was holy for us who daily sin and harbor sinful thoughts and desires within. It is his righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. And he shares it with us. Thank God that things are not like they seem to our sinful and rational

minds, because if they were, we would be lost. But in Jesus, we are found.

### **WE ARE FOUND RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD**

On a different mountain, in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will

judge the world, those who have his righteousness will stand. Only they have the righteousness that surpasses the righteousness of the Pharisees.

Here is proof. When Jesus stood in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah stood at his side. How could they enjoy being in the presence of their perfect Savior?

## **When Jesus comes in all his glory with his holy angels to judge the world, those who have his righteousness will stand.**

be filled" (Matthew 5:6). His harsh words about the sinful thoughts within us are intended to create a hunger and thirst for righteousness—not for our own righteousness but for his. His perfect righteousness covers all our sins. It's as the hymn says, "Jesus, your blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress" (*Christian Worship* 376:1). When Jesus comes in all his glory with his holy angels to

They couldn't stand there on their own. Moses was a murderer (Exodus 2:12). Elijah was a sinful human even if he was a prophet. He threw up his hands in near despair and blamed God when he thought he was the only one left who was still zealous for the Lord (1 Kings 19:10). Yet there they were. They believed in the promises of God that were fulfilled by the Savior at their side—standing in the light.

So now to answer the question, "Are sins of thought really as bad as committing the actual sin?" Yes. Jesus is clear. Praise God for that truth, because otherwise our sinful natures might convince us that we can do enough to enter heaven. The lesson of Jesus is that even our thoughts condemn us. We hunger for a righteousness we cannot achieve. That righteousness comes only from Jesus, through his perfect thoughts, his perfect actions, and his innocent death and glorious resurrection. Through faith, that righteousness is yours.

And that is what saves you!

## **THE WORST OF SINNERS**

The apostle Paul reminds us of the surpassing righteousness of Jesus. Paul calls himself "a blasphemer, and a persecutor and violent man" (1 Timothy 1:13)—the worst of sinners. Yet he wrote about the righteousness that comes from Jesus: "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known. . . . This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:21-24).



*Nicolas Schmoller, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.*



# Jesus is THE PROPHET

PHOTO | Lightstock

**Jesus was anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. As our Prophet, he proclaims God's message of sin and grace.**

Kirk E. Lahmann

When you think of a prophet, who comes to mind? A fire-and-brimstone preacher with a long beard and a wooden staff? An aged seer predicting future doom and gloom?

## THE PROPHETS OF OLD

In the Bible, a prophet of the Lord is a preacher, a messenger, a herald, a mouthpiece for God, called upon by God to speak a message from God on God's behalf. A prophet does not proclaim his own message; he declares what the Lord directs him to say. He proclaims God's Word.

Sometimes prophets spoke God's Word; other times they wrote it. Sometimes God sent them visions; other times he gave them miraculous power. Sometimes prophets could see the future; other times they rebuked sins of the past. Sometimes prophets were respected; other times they were rejected.

Much of the Old Testament records the messages of the prophets. Books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and others record these prophets' God-given messages. Their prophesying spanned centuries before Jesus.

The first—and greatest—prophet of the Old Testament was Moses. The Lord spoke to Moses “face to face” (Numbers 12:8; Deuteronomy 34:10). Moses was like no other prophet before the coming of Jesus. God gave him the law on Mt. Sinai. When Moses spoke to the Israelites and recorded God's law, he was acting as a messenger for God.

God's message through Moses promised that a Prophet would come who would surpasses all other prophets. Moses wrote, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.” About this Prophet the Lord said, “I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him” (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). Moses was a type—a picture or prefigure-

ment—of the greater Prophet who was to come. In fact, every prophet who spoke on God's behalf in the Old Testament foreshadowed the great Prophet the Lord promised to send.

## THE GREAT PROPHET

Generations of Israelites waited for this great Prophet to appear. Some thought John the Baptist could be this Prophet (John 1:21). Others who witnessed Jesus feed the thousands exclaimed, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14; see also John 7:40).

And they were right! Jesus is the great Prophet. He is the direct fulfillment of the promise God gave through Moses.

Both Peter (Acts 3:22) and Stephen (Acts 7:37) attest that this is true. Jesus is the long-awaited proclaimer of God's Word. But there is something different. Jesus does not have to serve as a middleman between God and the people, as every other prophet did. Jesus is God! “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Therefore, Jesus speaks not on behalf of God but as God himself!



Jesus was anointed to serve as our perfect Prophet as well as our perfect Priest and perfect King. Anointing in the Old Testament meant having olive oil poured on your head to set you apart for a special job. Jesus was anointed not with oil but “with the Holy Spirit and power” (Acts 10:38) to proclaim God’s Word.

And that’s what he did—proclaimed God’s Word. When Jesus visited the synagogue in Nazareth, he opened the scroll to Isaiah chapter 61 and read, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18). Not everyone accepted his words, but these words were the message of God to sinful and mortal humans.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus did proclaim good news. The gospels record Jesus’ words and works, his preaching and miracles, his words of comfort, his healing touch, his proclamation of the gospel to hurting souls.

One of the most remembered sermons of Jesus is the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapter 5). It is a wonderful example of how Jesus fulfills his role as the Prophet. He preaches the Word of God to a large, attentive crowd—and to us!—and applies God’s Word to the lives of his listeners. He does so by preaching law and gospel. He begins, “Blessed are the poor. . . . Blessed are those who mourn. . . . Blessed are the meek. . . . Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. . . .” That’s comforting gospel!

But law soon follows. Read through Matthew chapters 5–7 again. You will hear portions of the sermon read in your worship in February. Jesus condemns unjust anger and grudges, lust and lovelessness, hypocritical worship and faithless worrying. The Sermon on the Mount ends with the exhortation to put our Prophet’s words into practice and build our spiritual house on the rock, lest it crash into the sand (cf. Matthew 7:24–27).

Jesus has said so much more—words we need to hear again and again.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life” (John 10:27,28). He has laid down his life for the sheep, so we might live.

### CONTINUED PROPHECY

And Jesus has not stopped speaking God’s Word to us, even though he has ascended into heaven. Today our Prophet also speaks through Christians who share his Word with one another. When a group of Christians calls someone to proclaim God’s Word among them and for them, then Jesus speaks through that called worker—that’s public ministry. But whenever we Christians proclaim God’s Word to one another, Jesus also is speaking as our Prophet through us. Yes, Jesus speaks through us! “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me” (Luke 10:16).

Over the years God has communicated his Word through many different prophets. “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1,2). But only one prophet is the Prophet, the perfect Prophet who proclaims God’s Word as God himself. That Prophet is God’s Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father’s voice resounds, echoing the exhortation of Moses. The Father said, “This is my Son, whom I love. . . . Listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5). Be sure to do that. Listen to Jesus! Hear and treasure his words. He is speaking to you. He is your Prophet, the great Prophet.

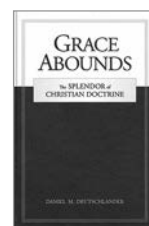


Kirk Lahmann is pastor at St. John, Burlington, Wisconsin.

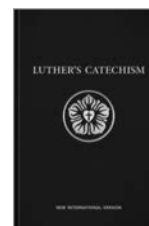
## FOR FURTHER —study

“As Jesus is the Prophet . . . he preaches in order to bestow his salvation upon sinners, turning their hearts from sin to God, from death to life” (*Biblical Christology: A Study in Lutheran Dogmatics*, J. Schaller, p. 139).

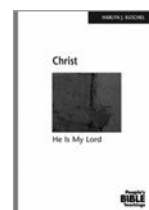
Learn more about Jesus as our Prophet:



**Grace Abounds:**  
*The Splendor of Christian Doctrine*,  
D. Deutschlander,  
pp. 319-323



**Luther's Catechism,**  
*Anniversary Edition*,  
pp. 155-162



**Christ: He Is My Lord**,  
Harlyn Kuschel,  
pp. 119-126



**God So Loved the World: A Study of Christian Doctrine**,  
L. Lange,  
pp. 291-292

These books are available from Northwestern Publishing House, [nph.net](http://nph.net), 800-662-6022.

PHOTO | Mel Anne Designs



## Trusting what we cannot see

Seeing the little baby in the manger at Christmas fills us all with joy and wonder. It is a universal experience because we have all looked with joy and wonder at the children and grandchildren we have welcomed into our families. The birth of Jesus is not difficult to believe—a baby. What could be more precious?

Why then is there so much controversy attached to Jesus? Why do so many turn their attention away from Jesus after Christmas?

I've wondered about that. One answer, I think, comes in the readings we have all heard in our churches since Christmas. We are all strengthened and nourished by them. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts through those readings, which confirm what we know about Jesus and prepare us for Lent, when we will once again journey to the cross and the empty tomb.

**These readings prepare us to see the crucifixion with faith in what it means—our redemption and salvation.**

The problem for those who do not believe is that what the readings say is not a part of a universal experience like the birth of a child. Yes, the little babe grew up, and we all know what that means. We all learned to walk, talk, and read in the process of our development. So did everyone else. So did Jesus. That is not hard to accept.

But then Jesus turned water into wine. We haven't ever seen that happen. How could it be possible? After Christmas we hear another story that defies our personal experiences. When Jesus was baptized, there was a voice from heaven and a dove appeared out of nowhere and descended on him. No such event has ever been recorded in history,

except in the gospels. Finally, we hear that Jesus went up a mountain and talked with two dead characters from the Bible's pages—Moses and Elijah.

Those who do not believe the Bible conclude that such events could not have happened. They have no experience of their own to verify the events and no scientific proof that the events could have ever even occurred. They conclude that these events may be only legends or exaggerations at best. That's what makes them react so negatively to Jesus.

The problem was the same for those who actually saw these events. In spite of what they saw, some thought Jesus had the power of the devil—Beelzebul. Others considered him a threat and plotted his death. Still others followed him and learned that he wasn't a fraud and had power that did not come from the devil. They walked and talked with him, but he did what was beyond their experiences. They grew to love him and recognize that he was God in the flesh.

That mattered to them, and it matters to us too. They watched him humble himself to die on the cross. His death was more than a simple execution. We have all witnessed death. That's not unusual, but the death of Jesus is more. It finishes the payment for our sins because he is God and man—our substitute. His empty tomb is astounding. Yes, it is unusual and beyond human experience, but it is so important to us.

These readings prepare us to see the crucifixion with faith in what it means—our redemption and salvation. They also prepare us to see the empty tomb in faith. It's an event that the most powerful and advanced probes cannot understand, but we do by faith. Jesus is victorious over death, and we are too.

  
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

## WHEN JESUS FEELS, BUT HE DOESN'T CHANGE THE SITUATION—TRAUMA

On April 19, 1995, at 9:02 A.M., the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City was bombed, claiming 168 victims—including 19 children. Next to the site, a statue stands at St. Joseph Old Cathedral, the oldest parish in Oklahoma City, which also had damage. It's a statue of Jesus with his head buried in his hands, turning away from the site of the bombing. The statue is a depiction of the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

Many devotionals on the bombing and on other tragedies have been written on this verse. The idea is generally that we have a Savior who sympathizes with us. A comforting thought indeed! But Jesus was able to change the situation and raise Lazarus to life! If you have experienced trauma, this account might leave you thinking, "When Jesus is sad, he has the power to fix it for himself, but I can't do that. I remain with my experiences. Nothing changes."

### THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

But let's revisit this account. Read John 11 and imagine that you are one of the people in verse 19. As you read, consider these questions in light of some of the experiences in your own life:

- How would you comfort Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother?

- What is your reaction to the words that Jesus says in John 11:25,26? What expectations do you have of him?
- After seeing Jesus weeping, are you more like the people in verse 36 or verse 37?
- What is your reaction to this miracle and what that meant for Mary and Martha?
- What characteristics of Jesus stand out to you as you observe his emotions and the miracle?

### HOW WE FACE TRAGEDY

Did the story sound a little different when you were one of the observers? What a profound struggle for us! When Jesus was sad, he could just make it go away. Can you? Has Jesus done that for you? Was Jesus just curing his own hurt? Why did he change the situation in the midst of his sadness and the sadness of his friends? What are you meant to learn from this?

The time will come when we all will face tragedy. Maybe you're going through it right now. As you recall this story, perhaps you will remember Jesus' heart for his people, how he refused to accept death as an inevitability, his confidence even while standing at the grave, or his power over death. Can you think of other thoughts to remember?

Perhaps you will remember another time that Jesus was tempted to fix his own situation—when the mockers were crying out to him on the cross, "If you are the Son of God, save yourself!" But he didn't. Instead, with you on his heart, he died for you.

As you meditate on your own experiences in light of this account, complete the sentence below with a defining characteristic of Jesus. Consider a characteristic that you need in the face of your tragedies that will help you remember what Jesus was and is for you.

### COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE:

This account shows me that Jesus was \_\_\_\_\_ FOR ME.

May this be your reminder that Jesus is your complete Savior . . . the Savior that you need today. May Christ bring you comfort in his life 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 second article in a six-part series on applying biblical narratives to our lives.

LEARN MORE AT [forwardinchrist.net](http://forwardinchrist.net), including additional food for thought and potential answers.

# COMMUNITY

CONNECT | GROW | SERVE

## THINGS TO NOTE

### CHANGES IN MINISTRY

#### Pastors

Biga, Spencer, to Faith, Dexter, Mich.

Enderle, Jason, to Cross of Glory, Washington, Mich.

Grunewald, Matthew, to Good Shepherd, Fond du Lac, Wis.

Horn, Alan, to St. John, Frontenac/Immanuel, Lake City/St. John, Mazeppa, Minn.

Hussman, Andrew, to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Neumann, David, to retirement

Reich, Daniel, to St. John, Mazeppa/Trinity, Lake City, Minn.

Schmidt, Daniel, to retirement

Sialer, Ismael, to retirement

Sprunger, Matthew, to Immanuel, Kewaunee, Wis.

Tessmer, Paul, to Zion, Chesaning, Mich.

Vogel, Michael, to Lord of Life, Thornton, Colo.

Wahl, Roger, to retirement

#### Teachers

Bender, Kyle, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

DeRuiter, Melissa, to St. John, Lannon, Wis.

Kirchoff, Dana, to Divine Savior Ministries, Doral, Fla.

Krause, Nicole, to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.

List, Samantha, to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.

Marohn, Corey, to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.

Mattek, Karen, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Matthies, Kristin, to Immanuel, Greenville, Wis.

Miller, Dennis, to retirement

Opperman, Karla, to St. Peter, Clovis, Calif.

Otto, James, to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.

Proctor, Michelle, to Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan.

Roth, Joshua, to Faith, Tacoma, Wash.

Scharf, Charis, to Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.

Wentker, Katie, to Trinity, Minocqua, Wis.

### ANNIVERSARIES

**Houghton, Mich.**—Lutheran Collegians MTU at Peace Ev. Lutheran Church (50). Feb. 9. Worship, 10:15 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested by Jan. 26. 906-482-1602; pastor@peacehoughton.org; Irnitz@mtu.edu. Website, lutherancollegians.org.

**North Fort Myers, Fla.**—Bethany (50). March 22. Worship, 4 P.M.; catered meal follows. RSVP, revagumm@hotmail.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.

### COMING EVENTS

**Women's retreat**—Feb. 22. St. Lucas, Kewaskum, Wis. Theme, "New beginnings." Website, stlucaswels.org (under the Bible study section).

**Lutheran Recovery Ministries recovery retreat**—Feb. 20–23. Our Lady of Guadalupe Monastery, Phoenix, Ariz. Theme, "Three days of hope." Website, lutheranrecoveryministries.com.

**Martin Luther College choir tour**—Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, mlc-wels.edu.

- Feb. 27, 7 P.M., Rock of Ages, Madison, Tenn.
- Feb. 28, 7 P.M., Lamb of God, Madison, Ala.
- Feb. 29, 7 P.M., Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga.
- Mar. 1, 10:30 A.M., Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, Ga.; 6:30 P.M., Abiding Peace, Simpsonville, S.C.
- Mar. 2, 7 P.M., Risen Savior, Pooler, Ga.
- Mar. 3, 7 P.M., King of Kings, Maitland, Fla.
- Mar. 4, 7 P.M., Divine Savior, West Palm Beach, Fla.
- Mar. 5, 10:30 A.M., Divine Savior Academy, Doral, Fla.

## CALLED TO *eternal glory*

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

READ MORE AT ► [forwardinchrist.net/obituaries](http://forwardinchrist.net/obituaries).

### TEACHERS AND STAFF MINISTERS

**HELLWIG, STUART C.** | April 2, 1946—Nov. 6, 2019

**KUETHER (NÉE BIERWAGEN), BERTHA A.** | Jan. 29, 1935—Nov. 22, 2019

**WAEGE, LANCE D.** | May 27, 1970—Nov. 27, 2019

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

— Matthew 5:4

# THROUGH MY *Bible* IN 3 YEARS

1. Luke 1:1-25	11. Lk. 4:31-44	21. Lk. 8:22-39
2. Lk. 1:26-38	12. Lk. 5:1-11	22. Lk. 8:40-56
3. Lk. 1:39-56	13. Lk. 5:12-26	23. Lk. 9:1-17
4. Lk. 1:57-80	14. Lk. 5:27-6:11	24. Lk. 9:18-36
5. Lk. 2:1-20	15. Lk. 6:12-36	25. Lk. 9:37-56
6. Lk. 2:21-40	16. Lk. 6:37-49	26. Genesis 1, 2
7. Lk. 2:41-52	17. Lk. 7:1-17	27. Gen. 3
8. Lk. 3:1-22	18. Lk. 7:18-35	28. Gen. 4
9. Lk. 3:23-4:13	19. Lk. 7:36-8:3	29. Gen. 5
10. Lk. 4:14-30	20. Lk. 8:4-21	

FEBRUARY 2020

READ MORE AT [wels.net/bible3](https://wels.net/bible3)

- Mar. 6, 7 P.M., Crown of Life, Ft. Myers, Fla.
- Mar. 7, 7 P.M., St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.
- Mar. 8, 9:30 A.M., Open Bible, Oxford, Fla.
- Mar. 22, 3 P.M., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

**Pathways to Christ retreat**—Mar. 13–15. Oshkosh, Wis. Theme, “A friend loves at all times.” Website, [pathwaystochrist.org](http://pathwaystochrist.org). 920-233-1069.

**Seventh annual Ironmen of God conference**—Mar. 21. St. Paul’s, Ixonia, Wis. Website, [ironmenofgodwi.org](http://ironmenofgodwi.org).

**WELS women writers conference**—April 24–25. Trinity, Waukesha, Wis. To encourage and equip women who have been gifted to serve the Lord through writing. Hosted by WELS Women’s Ministry and Northwestern Publishing House. Website, [wm.welsrc.net/wels-women-writers-conference](http://wm.welsrc.net/wels-women-writers-conference).

**WELS 2020 International Youth Rally**—June 23–26. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn. Theme, “2020 Vision.” Website, [wels.net/youthrally](http://wels.net/youthrally).

**Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society 57th annual convention**—June 25–28. The Classic Center, Athens, Ga. Theme, “Vision for Missions.” Website, [lwms.org](http://lwms.org).

**Taste of Missions 2020**—July 11. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Hosted by WELS Missions. Website, [wels.net/tasteofmissions2020](http://wels.net/tasteofmissions2020).

**Tour**—Study tour to Jordan and Israel. Jan. 2–15, 2021. Hosts: Wisconsin Lutheran

Seminary, Mequon, Wis.; Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Asia Lutheran Seminary. Website, [wls.wels.net/2021-tour-to-israel-and-jordan](http://wls.wels.net/2021-tour-to-israel-and-jordan).

## NAMES WANTED

**Military/inmates/individuals with special needs**—Special Ministries supplies devotions, resources, and other spiritual help and teaching tools to members of the Armed Forces, inmates, and individuals with special needs. Complete an online referral form at [wels.net/refer](http://wels.net/refer). Special Ministries, 414-256-3241; [csn@wels.net](mailto:csn@wels.net).

## SERVICE TIMES

**Gulf Shores, Ala.**—Risen Savior, Navarre, Fla., will hold church services with Holy Communion for Gulf Shores area WELS/ELS snowbirds at 4 P.M., Feb. 2 and 16 at St. Jude By the Sea Lutheran Church, 312 E 16 Ave, Gulf Shores. Bible class will follow worship. Evan Dobberfuhr, 715-573-0808; [tpcevan@gmail.com](mailto:tpcevan@gmail.com).

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

**SEE MORE AT** [welsrc.net/bulletinboard](https://welsrc.net/bulletinboard). Needed and available items as well as volunteer and job opportunities are updated regularly on the online WELS bulletin board.

## SERIES SUGGESTION

My husband recently returned home from a year-long deployment, and our little family (us and our two little girls) spent a week at an Amish farm in Lancaster County, Penn.

While we were there, we had the opportunity to read through several Amish and Mennonite magazines. I was so encouraged by the advice and topics discussed for the stay-at-home mother, a topic rarely discussed in my years of reading *Forward in Christ*.

I am writing this letter because I would like to see a “Christian home” series of articles within your publication. This would not only benefit fellow homemakers within the synod but also encourage a new generation of fathers as spiritual leaders.

*Meredith Moseley  
Tomah, Wisconsin*

*Thanks for your suggestion!—ed.*

## NEW FORMAT OF FIC

I like the format of the new style of FIC, but I have one concern. I do not feel that the print is dark enough. It’s almost as if the print meshes with the whiteness of the page. I find that, to me, it is harder to concentrate as I read. My eyes do not adjust well to it. Other than that, I have no concerns.

*Dave Dahlke  
Port Orchard, Washington*

*Thanks for your comment. We want to hear from our readers. We carefully considered the opinions of our readers from the recent survey. Our goal was to make Forward in Christ better. After much discussion the changes included different paper and fonts. This is a work in progress, and we will continue to look for ways to improve so the new content is legible for all our readers. Thanks for your patience and your continued interest in Forward in Christ.—ed.*

Send your letters to *Forward in Christ*, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; [ficsubmissions@wels.net](mailto:ficsubmissions@wels.net). Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Writers’ views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

# The Father to the fatherless

Snowden G. Sims

Being fatherless is a reality in our world today. Serving in a midwestern urban setting, I encounter single mothers with children who may not see their fathers on a regular basis—if ever. Having grown up in Milwaukee's inner city, I played with neighborhood children who were fatherless as the result of their mother's one-night stand, their parents' divorce, or the death of their father. Growing up without a father in the home was a reality many of us had to face—myself included. As a child, that was just the way it was.

Many fatherless children learn to deal with it. But is there something better than just dealing with it? Some children struggle with it their whole life. The “fatherless” live not only in urban settings but also in the suburbs. Families in rural areas are not immune either. The bottom line is that the fatherless condition is no respecter of persons, purses, or locations.

## Role-model fathers are needed in our world today. Can you be a father to the fatherless?

One tough reality that is brought to light is that mothers also need to be fathers to their children, serving in household roles that a father would normally handle. They need to protect, discipline, and teach their children life skills. This doesn't mean that mothers are ill-equipped to carry out these roles. It just means that there are added responsibilities and strains placed on them.

And some things that young men and young ladies need come from a father. Where are young men to gain insight and instruction when it comes to the proper role and vocation of a father? Where do they learn how to love, honor, and respect the woman they will one day call their wife? Where can they find the role model of a godly man, a godly father, and a godly husband? This can be a difficult task.

Positive relationships can be just as difficult for young ladies to experience or learn, including how a husband is to treat his wife. Where is the positive role model if the only men in their homes are their mothers' boyfriends who are here today and gone tomorrow? Where can they see examples of God's design for parental relationships? Where can they see what a father is to be like?

It can be difficult, but it is not impossible to find those examples. Christian men, husbands, and fathers in our congregations can serve as mentors and role models. Their children may have grown up and moved away, but the opportunity to fill that role with a fatherless child remains.

The apostle Paul was able to demonstrate a father's love for the Corinthians in a few different ways. He demonstrated the close connections we have as believers in Christ when he wrote, “Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel” (1 Corinthians 4:15).

Brothers in Christ, men of God, role-model fathers are needed in our world today. Can you be a father to the fatherless? Our God is the ultimate Father to the fatherless, as it says in Psalms: “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling” (68:5). But he has gifted you to also serve as a father to the fatherless through the gospel, just like Paul. Make the most of those opportunities by taking a personal interest in a fatherless child in your church family.



Contributing editor Snowden Sims, president of the Michigan District, is pastor at St. Paul's, Columbus, Ohio.

**READ MORE** ▶ about Sims, one of our new contributing editors, on p. 23.



# ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

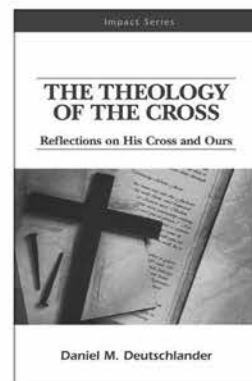
Continue your journey into this new year with these treasured titles from NPH's most popular author, Prof. Daniel M. Deutschlander. As you dig more deeply into his gospel-centered and faith-building explanations of God's Holy Word, you will gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for God's unending love for you.



## THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

In Mark 8:34, Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Prof. Deutschlander discusses this cross-bearing in *The Theology of the Cross*, a powerful title that explores the joy and the pain that followers of Christ experience throughout their earthly lives. Through Deutschlander's exploration, you will see that this joy and pain are more closely related than you might expect. Softcover, 292 pages.

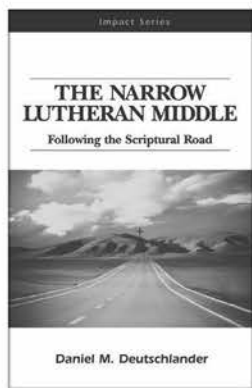
**LU150746, \$20.99**



## THE NARROW LUTHERAN MIDDLE

Some stray from the scriptural road by pulling parts of the Bible from their full context. Others wander when they ignore certain teachings altogether. In *The Narrow Lutheran Middle*, Prof. Deutschlander shows you that God's Word does not need the flawed "course-correction" of humanity; it is already centered and balanced on God's absolute truth. Explore the perfect blessing of Scripture as you dive into topics of reason, human will, evangelism, and more in this perceptive book. Softcover, 235 pages.

**LU150774, \$19.99**



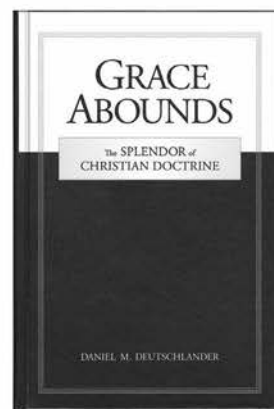
Also available as an e-book from [amazon.com/kindle](http://amazon.com/kindle) or [barnesandnoble.com/nook](http://barnesandnoble.com/nook)!



## GRACE ABOUND: THE SPLENDOR OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

As you listen to the Sunday sermon with your congregation, say the Lord's Prayer together with your family, and read God's Word carefully with your Bible study group, remember where all Scripture points: to our Savior Jesus. *Grace Abounds* examines Christian doctrine to show how every teaching leads to the truth of God's love. Further, you will discover how you can apply these essential principles in your life. Hardcover, 601 pages.

**LU1500785, \$41.99**



Published by Northwestern Publishing House

For more books and gifts in the new year, visit **[www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net)** or call **800-662-6022**.

Prices are subject to change without notice. All orders are subject to shipping, handling, and sales tax where applicable.



**NORTHWESTERN  
PUBLISHING HOUSE**

**[www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net)**

**NPH  
EXTRA  
PROGRAM**

**f** Find us on  
**Facebook**



# AGAPE love

PHOTO | Lightstock

**The Bible uses *agape*, the Greek word for love, to describe perfect love.**

Rhoda Wolle

**FIRST CORINTHIANS DEFINES** agape love like this: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (13:4-7).

This is agape love—a perfect, unselfish, unconditional love—the type of love God has for us. There is nothing we can do to make him love us more, and there is nothing we can do to make him love us less. Think how Jesus loved us enough to suffer and die in our place. He sacrificed so much for us.

**Not only is the agape love of Jesus our treasure; it is also our motivation and pattern.** As we love others, our love, like his, does not depend on anything the other person says or does.

Imagine: Your love for your spouse has nothing to do with what he or she does or says. Your love for your children is not based on what they do or how they act. Your love for your parents holds no record of wrongs, but instead protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.

Agape love means you support and encourage your friends, even though

it seems you often give more than you receive. You love even if they forget your birthday or if they always vent their frustrations without asking about yours. Agape love does not depend on what they do; it is a reflection of the love of Jesus for us.

## Agape love . . . is a reflection of the love of Jesus for us.

Agape love means you love your spouse even if the garbage isn't taken out, the dishes aren't done, or there are no flowers. You love even when both of you say unkind or insensitive things to each other. Your love is not dependent on what is done or left undone. *Unconditional* means there are no conditions that prevent your love.

That is the love God has for us.

To love this way is a tall order, and I fall short every day. I never will be perfect, but each day I turn back to Jesus and find forgiveness and a fresh supply of strength to do better. His mercies are new every morning, and each day we begin again.

**There is an exercise that has been a wonderful blessing to me through-**

**out my life.** I reread Paul's definition of love from 1 Corinthians, and every time it says “love” or “it,” first I insert the name of Jesus, and then I go back and insert my name.

Try it. Jesus' name first, then your name.

\_\_\_\_\_ is patient, \_\_\_\_\_ is kind. \_\_\_\_\_ does not envy, \_\_\_\_\_ does not boast, \_\_\_\_\_ is not proud. \_\_\_\_\_ does not dishonor others, \_\_\_\_\_ is not self-seeking, \_\_\_\_\_ is not easily angered, \_\_\_\_\_ keeps no record of wrongs. \_\_\_\_\_ does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. \_\_\_\_\_ always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

There is a lot of pressure when we insert our name in the blank. But a wise friend recently reminded me that it's not us; we have a God who is love and fulfills it in every way. You have that love, and you can share that love!



Rhoda Wolle is a member at St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

This article is adapted and reprinted with permission from [holymhenhouse.com](http://holymhenhouse.com).