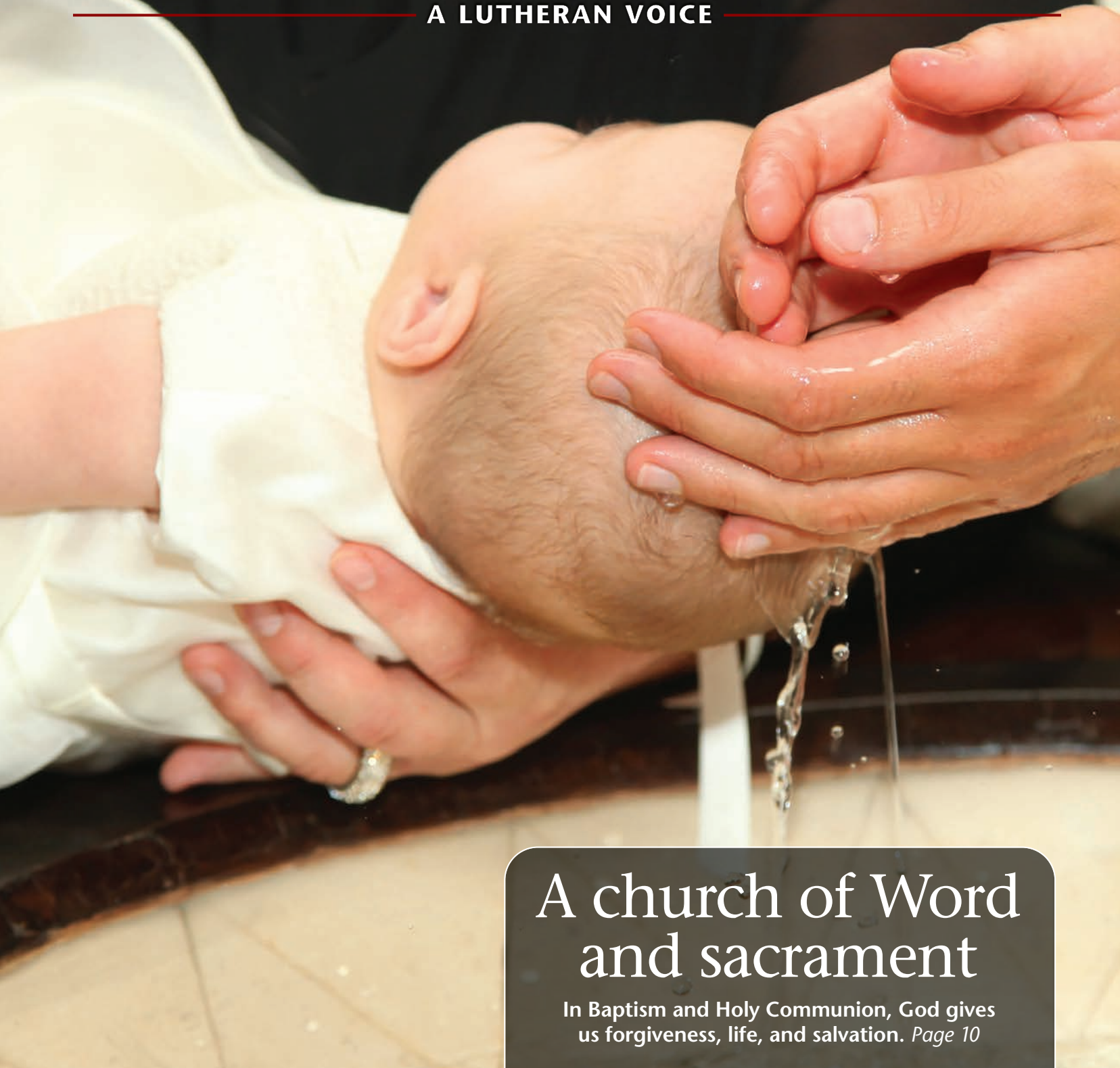


Forward in Christ

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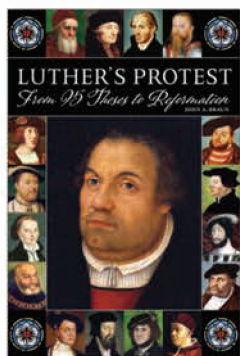


A church of Word and sacrament

In Baptism and Holy Communion, God gives
us forgiveness, life, and salvation. *Page 10*

Celebrating OUR HERITAGE

This fall we're celebrating the 500th anniversary of the dawn of the Lutheran Reformation, when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. Celebrate this historic event, learn more about Luther and the Reformation movement, and give thanks for God's guiding hand in the church.



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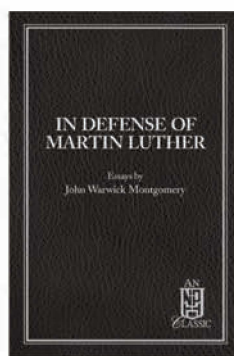
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FEATURES

10 | **Abiding truth**
In Baptism and Holy Communion, God gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation.
David J. Valleskey

12 | **God's love: Our song forever**
Emotional pull or gospel content? How should we balance the two when choosing hymns?
Aaron L. Christie

14 | **Confessions of faith**
A man discovers grace through faith, Martin Luther, and the promise of heaven.
James White

16 | **Heart to heart: Parent conversations**
My child lied to me. Now what?

28 | **Sharing the power of God's grace with the Hmong**
Julie K. Wietzke and Joel B. Schroeder

30 | **Salt of the earth**
As Jesus renews us through his grace and mercy, we can be zealous in sharing that hope with others.
Jeffrey D. Enderle

36 | **Like a bird on a roof**
Open spaces make us feel small, but God has not left us alone and lonely.
Jonathan D. Werre



WELS CHRISTIAN AID AND RELIEF

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The mission of WELS Christian Aid and Relief is to reflect Christ's love and compassion to souls suffering from disasters and hardships. Christian Aid and Relief works with congregations and mission fields to

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- offer humanitarian aid in countries around the world, and
- assist families with catastrophic personal and medical difficulties.



View the August edition of *WELS Connection* to learn more about the work of WELS Christian Aid and Relief or visit wels.net/relief.

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May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. – 1 KINGS 8:57

WHAT'S INSIDE

This month I was able to interview several Hmong pastors about the work they are doing to spread the gospel to the Hmong in the United States and abroad. This isn't the first time I have interviewed some of these men, but every time I do I am amazed at their faith and their zeal to reach out—even in difficult circumstances. Read more about their ministries on pp. 20 and 28 and, as Hmong pastor Bounkeo Lor said in his interview, pray for "guidance and courage from the Holy Spirit" as they go about their work.

Viewing the pictures of the Martin Luther College graduates (pp. 22-26) brings a similar feeling of amazement. God certainly has blessed our synod with faithful young people who are willing to dedicate themselves full time to the spread of the gospel in our churches and schools. Pray that God continue to be with them and bless their work wherever they find themselves in the future.

At the same time, pray for opportunities in your own life to share Jesus' love and his Word with those around you. Then be prepared when God opens doors, whether it's sharing your convictions with new friends (p. 18) or providing real hope to people going through hardships (p. 30).

Julie Wietzke



7



20



21



28

IN EVERY ISSUE

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 6 | Feedback
Readers share their opinions | 20 | News
What's happening in WELS |
| 7 | Devotion
Great things for me! | 32 | Editorial comment
Proud to be Lutheran? |
| 8 | From the president's desk
Big plans, bigger promises | 33 | Bible study
Monuments: Lasting memories |
| 9 | Light for our path
The death penalty | 34 | A thought
Hallowed be your name |
| 18 | Teen ministry
A bubble? | 35 | Interactive Bible study
What it means to be truly Lutheran: Vocation |
| 19 | Bulletin board
Announcements from around the synod | | |

TEEN TALK HITS HOME

Re: "Teen talk" [Apr.]. It isn't often that I, being a 70-something, spend time rereading over and over the items in the "Teen talk" section, but Mr. Trep-tow hit the X ring (as we would say in the military) in his commentary on the passing of his mother. Having recently lost my wife of 44+ years under similar circumstances, I can give a ringing second to his thoughts and feelings in a most difficult situation.

*Allan Lindner
Vallejo, California*

ARE THEY REALLY RETIRED?

Although I've seen all the retirements in FIC as did Richard Anders of Omaha, Nebraska [Feedback, June], I wanted to ask if a WELS pastor ever really retires?

I have been in the military over 34 years (active duty Marines/Air National Guard) and worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons nearly 28 years, so I have been all over the world and seen examples of so-called retired pastors continuing to serve as pastors elsewhere. When I was in Terre Haute, Ind., a nucleus of WELS members met at a YWCA, and we had Pastor Huebner (retired) faithfully serving us for at least seven years. I am presently an active member at St. John's Lutheran Church in Montello, Wis., and our pastor serves two churches. Pastor olfe Westendorf (retired) accepted our call to serve us for at least five years, and I know he worked a lot more than the 40 hours a week we had called him for. He is now retired for the third time and still serves a congregation in Dalton, Wis., at age 84. Pastor Dolan (retired) now assists us faithfully since his retirement. My uncle, Pastor Martin Stuebs Sr. (retired), Lake Mills, Wis., served another congregation for at least two years after his retirement and still serves other congregations as needed.

I have been to many other congregations where a retired pastor was serving—from a few Sundays to filling a vacancy until a new called pastor arrives at the congregation. Those cases are too numerous to count. I thank the Lord, as do so many other WELS

members. I am sure that they continue to serve him faithfully.

So you see, even though there are many retirements—are they really retired?

*Mark E. Emond Sr.
Indianapolis, Indiana*

COMING TO CHURCH

I read Pastor Braun's "Coming to church" [June] with great interest. He made excellent points about why believers go to church. The question is, why does our synod deny these opportunities to some of our members—namely, those who are incarcerated in Wisconsin prisons? Though some facilities have WELS pastors who do offer services, these are few and far between. . . .

While it's true that other Christian services are available (ELCA, Baptist, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, etc.), these are not "safe" places to worship. I have attended some of these services, trying to sit quietly in the back, while hearing the Word. Having to weigh every word and filter these for God's truth is not a very comforting or faith-strengthening experience. I have stopped going to these services for this reason and because, even though I don't actively participate, others attending assume I am in agreement with the message presented.

WELS, through Institutional Ministries, does have a presence in most of the prisons in Wisconsin. More, however, needs to be done. Having regular services at each prison would serve as an outreach to those most in need of God's plan for salvation to harvest souls for his kingdom.

*Anonymous
Wisconsin*

Thanks for your letter. We are very grateful for the work of Institutional Ministries to provide spiritual comfort and strength for those incarcerated in Wisconsin prisons. But they do not have the human and financial resources to provide services at every facility. WELS Prison Ministry provides Bible study materials and contacts WELS pastors near prisons to encourage them to serve prisoners. Please provide WELS with referral contact information at wels.net/refer. We encourage those in prison and their families to contact their home pastor for help, direction, and resources to nourish and sustain faith.—ed.

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

Through my Bible in 3 years

Read or listen online at wels.net/bible3.

AUGUST 2017

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Amos 6 | 12. Ps. 15 & 16 | 23. Ps. 27 |
| 2. Am. 7:1–8:3 | 13. Ps. 17 | 24. Ps. 28 & 29 |
| 3. Am. 8:4–9:15 | 14. Ps. 18:1–30 | 25. 1 Thessalonians 1 |
| 4. Hosea 1 & 2 | 15. Ps. 18:31–50 | 26. 1 Th. 2 |
| 5. Hos. 3 | 16. Ps. 19 | 27. 1 Th. 3 |
| 6. Hos. 4:1–5:14 | 17. Ps. 20 & 21 | 28. 1 Th. 4 |
| 7. Hos. 5:15–8:14 | 18. Ps. 22:1–21 | 29. 1 Th. 5 |
| 8. Hos. 9 & 10 | 19. Ps. 22:22–31 | 30. 2 Thessalonians 1 |
| 9. Hos. 11 & 12 | 20. Ps. 23 & 24 | 31. 2 Th. 2:1–12 |
| 10. Hos. 13 & 14 | 21. Ps. 25 | |
| 11. Psalm 13 & 14 | 22. Ps. 26 | |

Great things for me!

And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.” Luke 1:46-50

Joel C. Seifert

“What are you doing?!”

Do you think Mary was tempted to scream those words toward heaven? Pagan Romans ruled her land, bleeding every shekel in taxes they could get from the people. Her church featured pious leaders in flowing robes, but grace and mercy sat unseen in the back. She had a man that she loved—a godly, upright fiancé. But then came the angel and the message from God that she—a young, unmarried woman—would have a baby. What was God doing?

So Mary lifted her eyes towards heaven, took a breath, and poured out her heart. But she didn’t say, “What are you doing?!” She said, “My Spirit rejoices in God my Savior. . . . The Mighty One has done great things for me.”

HONEST FAITH SEES THE GREATER REALITY

Faith isn’t blind to life’s problems. Mary knew the hardships her out-of-wedlock pregnancy would bring. Yet faith is also honest about God’s promises. Two words changed everything for Mary: *My Savior*. There was a greater reality that God allowed Mary to see. Yes, life would get harder. But she would have her Savior, growing within. And miracle of miracles, he wasn’t just stepping into her life; he was allowing her to be part of his story as he brought salvation to generations of countless souls. Great things, indeed!

HONEST HUMILITY LEADS TO FAITHFUL SERVICE

Mary knew she would serve as the mother of God not because of her worthiness or righteousness but because of grace. That blessed her with an “honest



humility.” She knew her chance to serve was just another one of the “great things” the Mighty One had done for her. So she served faithfully. God grant us eyes to see that too.

[Mary is] an example of how God works through those who don’t seem important in the eyes of the world.

Perhaps Mary seems like a wonderful role model for little girls. She’s an example of how God works through those who don’t seem important in the eyes of the world. Maybe she seems like a source of encouragement for faithful Christian women who choose to serve in humble, quiet ways.

But the truth is that Mary isn’t simply a role model for little girls or faithful women. She’s a wonderful example for big, burly men too. She’s an encouragement for those who sit in corner offices and those who stand in pulpits. She’s a role model for all of us when we’re tempted to wonder what God is doing.

Even if we wonder what God is doing in our world, our society, or in our daily lives, he allows us to be a part of his plan. No matter what’s going on around us, we get to care for others in need, to practice justice, to show mercy, to forgive sins, to carry Jesus to the people around us. Maybe our service seems unimportant or lowly, but it makes an incredible difference.

Contributing editor Joel Seifert is pastor at Shining Mountains, Bozeman, Montana.

Note: For at least the last thirteen hundred years, Christian tradition has recognized Aug. 15 as the date of Mary’s death.



Mark Schweden

This long-range
plan represents
a renewed
commitment
to remain faithful
to the Word
of God and to
the mission
our Savior
has given us.

Big plans, bigger promises

The synod convention is taking place this summer (or took place, depending on when you are reading this) July 31–Aug. 3. Much time is spent at the convention looking back at the work that we have done as a synod during the past two years and at the blessings that God has granted to those efforts.

But a synod convention does not just look back. It also looks forward to the opportunities and challenges that we will meet in the coming years. Even though the details of the future are graciously hidden from our view, faithful stewardship demands that we look ahead as best we can to evaluate where we believe those challenges and opportunities are and to plan how best to meet them.

To accomplish that, the synod adopts a long-range plan. The new long-range plan has the same name as this year's convention: "Our Great Heritage." It looks out to the year 2025 (when, God-willing, our synod will celebrate its 175th anniversary) and describes how the synod will, under God, build for the future on the foundation of the heritage that God has preserved for us from the past.

The introduction to the "Our Great Heritage" long-range plan beautifully outlines the basis for the plan itself: "We exist to proclaim the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ. We affirm that only the gospel can create and sustain faith. Thus, spiritual results related to the growth of the Holy Christian Church in every nation, tribe, language, and people are completely in the hands of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the means of grace to accomplish the results that only he can work, and he has entrusted the means of grace to human beings as his messengers. We fear God, preaching and teaching the law. We give him glory, preaching and teaching the gospel. We do that as individuals and as congregations working together in a confessional Lutheran

church body, that is, we carry out our gospel ministry together while standing squarely on all the truths of Scripture as expressed by the Lutheran Confessions. At all times and in all we do our focus is on the cross of Jesus."

With that foundation, we make plans. In World Missions, we look to increase efforts to train national pastors and church leaders to serve their own people and to create mission networks that transcend national boundaries. In Home Missions, we will continue to strive to open at least ten new missions each year, to serve self-supporting immigrant groups in urban areas with pastors and leaders drawn from those groups themselves, and to work more closely with synodical subsidiaries and parasynodical organizations to support mission opportunities. Our ministerial education schools will work to reduce educational debt for future called workers, to increase the number of teachers specifically trained for urban settings, and to find ways to identify and train future principals and early childhood directors. The Congregation and Ministry Support Group will make use of an extensive study to help congregations as they are affected by declining birth rates, demographic changes, and an increasingly post-Christian culture. Around the world, we will actively seek to develop relationships with Lutheran church bodies that are ready to embrace and confess biblical truths.

This long-range plan represents a renewed commitment to remain faithful to the Word of God and to the mission our Savior has given us. With God's promises in hand, we look forward to a future in which God continues to build his church and to bless the spread of his saving gospel.

Light for our path

Should a Christian support the death penalty?

James F. Pope

Public opinion polls indicate that, although the numbers are declining, the majority of Americans still support the death penalty. “What about Christians?” you ask. “What are they to think of the government taking the life of a human being?” God’s Word addresses that subject and sheds light on the question.

PROTECTION OF LIFE

The protection of human life in the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17) is part of God’s moral law. No one should take the life of another person or their own life. That’s God’s will for all people of all time. Life on this earth is important and worthy of God’s protection because this is the only time of grace people have. The prophet Isaiah urged: “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6). When death takes place, so does eternal judgment (Hebrews 9:27). So God desires to protect life because it is a time to learn that Jesus Christ is the Savior from sin.

THE ENDING OF LIFE

At the same time, God states that he has the authority to end life. “See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life” (Deuteronomy 32:39). God can bring life to an end directly, or he can do it through his representatives in government. God has given those authorities “the sword” (Romans 13:4) to punish lawbreakers. That means governments can implement capital punishment for those who take the lives of others. In short, God allows governments the right to exercise the death penalty, but he does not command them to utilize it. If governments do wield “the sword,” they are illustrating what God declared to Noah after the flood: “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6).

VIEWS OF DEATH

So, what are Christians to think of the 31 states in our country where the death penalty is legal? Might Christians be uncomfortable with the death penalty? Might Christians wish that states imprison murderers rather than execute them? Certainly. Christians can have personal preferences and comfort zones when it comes to the freedom God gives governments to punish wrongdoers. There is every reason, though, for Christians to support the death penalty simply because God, in Scripture, allows it.

If Christians have objections to capital punishment, they can voice those concerns to their elected representatives, just as they are able to do with their thoughts on any other legislative matter. But if Christians have preferences that differ from the laws of their state, God still demands that they give respect and honor (Romans 13:7) to his representatives in government.

What Christians can agree on is the importance of the capital punishment that took place outside Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago. Two criminals were executed—not for murder but for robbery. Between them was the Son of God. An earthly government had sentenced them all to death. If the robbers were guilty, justice—severe justice—was being served. On the other hand, Jesus was completely innocent of wrongdoing. Instead, divine justice was being served. God transferred the punishment all people deserved because of their sins and placed it on his Son. That death brought life (John 12:24)! For that we praise God.

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

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

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

Psalm 119:105

ABIDING

truth

In Baptism and Holy Communion, God gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation.

David J. Valleskey

Throughout his ministry Martin Luther had to fight a battle on two fronts. On one he fought to reform the church, cleansing it of the gospel-obscuring errors and traditions. While he was doing that, on the second front he opposed those who introduced new errors.

Luther did not hesitate to take on both adversaries. Perhaps nowhere do we see more clearly the double battle Luther was fighting than in his work of restoring to the church a right understanding of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

THE FIRST FRONT

Luther reduced the number of sacraments from the seven taught by the Roman Catholic Church to two, since only two—Baptism and Holy Communion—were truly means of grace.

He accepted as scriptural the church's practice of the baptism of infants. But Luther strongly objected to the teaching that Baptism wasn't enough. He wrote, "We must . . . beware of those who have reduced the power of baptism to such small and slender dimensions that, while they say grace is indeed in-poured by it, they maintain that afterwards it is poured out again through sin, and that then one must reach heaven by another way, as if baptism had now become entirely useless. . . . Baptism never becomes useless, unless you despair and refuse to return to its salvation" (*Luther's Works [LW]*, Vol. 36, p. 69).

Luther accepted the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion. But that is where his agreement with the Roman Catholic Church ended. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the*

Church (1520), Luther speaks of three "captivities." The first was the tradition of withholding the cup from the laity. On the basis of the accounts in the gospels and 1 Corinthians, Luther concludes, "Christ gave the whole sacrament to all his disciples" (LW 36:20). He didn't need to say more.

The second "captivity" was transubstantiation, the teaching that the priest changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus; the bread and wine are no longer present. Again, simply on the basis of

Martin Luther refused to let either tradition or reason obscure the clear teachings of Scripture.

Scripture, Luther turns away from the tradition and maintains that Jesus' body and blood are truly present and the bread and wine also remain in a sacramental union with the body and blood.

"The third captivity of this sacrament is by far the most wicked abuse of all, . . ." Luther writes, "that the mass [Holy Communion] is a good work and a sacrifice" (LW 36:35). Holy Communion had become an unbloody sacrifice offered to God. Luther objected: "In the mass we give nothing to Christ, but only receive from him" (LW 35:93). Christ offered the one and only sacrifice for sin—himself.

THE SECOND FRONT

On the other side were a number of contemporary reformers who went beyond the Scriptures on the sacraments. Some maintained that immersion is the only proper mode of Baptism. Others rejected infant baptism and insisted on re-baptism. Many denied

that the body and blood of Jesus are truly present in the sacrament.

Luther may have spent as much, or more, time and pen and ink on combating the errors of these men as he did in battling with the Roman Church of his day. A major bone of contention was the little word *is*: “This *is* my body. This *is* my blood.” In a meeting at Marburg with Ulrich Zwingli and others who denied the real presence, Luther wrote in chalk on his table, “This is my body.” At the end of the meeting, when accused that he had not proved the real presence from the Scriptures, Luther removed the cloth with which he had covered these words and said, “Here is our Scripture passage. . . . We have no need of another passage” (LW 38:67).

The meeting ended with Luther’s sad comment, “Our spirit is different from yours; . . . for it cannot be the same spirit when in one place the words of Christ are simply believed and in another place the same faith is censured, resisted, [and] regarded as false” (LW 38:70,71).

The most serious error of these reformers was their rejection of the sacraments as the means of grace. Zwingli wrote, “In baptism we receive,” not the forgiveness of sins, but merely “a token that we are to fashion our lives according to the rule of Christ” (LW 37:16, fn 7). And again: “It is clear that the eating of the Eucharist does not take away sins” (LW 37:102, fn 167). This was precisely the opposite of Luther’s scriptural contention that “the best and greatest part of all sacraments . . . is the words and promise of God, without which the sacraments are dead and are nothing at all” (LW 35:91).

When I ask a question in confirmation class along the lines of, “How does the Holy Spirit work in our hearts?” the answer usually is, “Through the Word.” Invariably, one of my students adds, “Through Word *and* sacrament,” a reminder that the sacraments also are a means through which God channels into our hearts the gifts of forgiveness, new life, and salvation.

The Lutheran church is a church of Word *and* sacrament. Martin Luther refused to let either tradition or reason obscure the clear teachings of Scripture. Through him our Lord graciously restored to his church the fullness of the treasure of the sacraments.

David Valleskey, a retired pastor, is currently serving at Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, California.

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this is the eighth article in a 12-part series on our Lutheran heritage.

LUTHER

still speaks

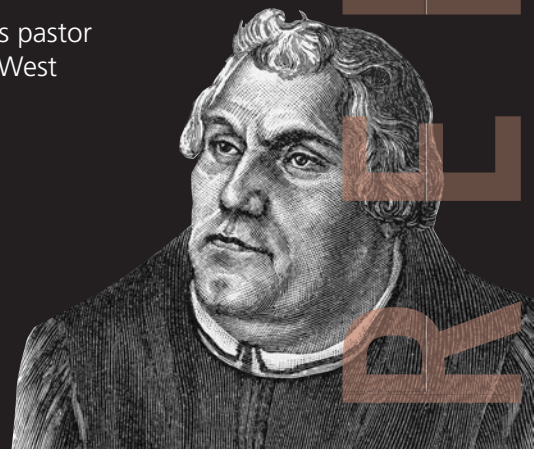
Luther had much to say about the proper use and the rich benefits of the sacraments. In a sermon on John 4:2 he said, “If you omit the Word, Baptism is simply water and the Lord’s Supper is bread; for the Word is the kernel of the Sacrament. The holiness of St. Peter makes no Sacrament, nor do the materials. Only the Word does, as, for instance: I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When the Word comes to the element, it becomes a Sacrament, and then Baptism is a ‘washing of regeneration’ (Titus 3:5). Otherwise if the Word is not there, bread remains mere bread and water is water. But when the Word is added—which says: This bread is my body and the cup is my blood; again: This do in remembrance of me—then it is a Sacrament” (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 3, #3946).

Baptism is not just a handful of water nor is the Lord’s Supper just a sliver of bread and a sip of wine. The sacraments are not something we do for God, but something great he does for us. And their power comes not from who performs them, but from God’s gospel promise connected with them.

Through his Word in the sacraments, God applies the gospel to the individual. In my baptism he comes to me, cracks open my heart of unbelief, and wraps me in the robe of Christ’s righteousness. At the Communion table he comes again to me, the individual sinner, and assures me that he gave his body and blood for my sins and that I can go in peace.

With his sacraments, God shows how much he loves me.

Richard Lauersdorf is pastor at Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wisconsin.





God's love: Our song forever

Emotional pull or gospel content? How should we balance the two when choosing hymns? Aaron L. Christie

It was my first year in the ministry, and I had the job of directing the choir. The music the church used was almost always tucked safely between the covers of the “new” hymnal. In an early effort to broaden our musical bandwidth, I picked “Soon and Very Soon” for Christ the King Sunday. I did my best to improvise a gospel-style accompaniment on the piano. As we practiced, a few members began to sway back and forth to the beat. I sat at the piano thinking, *This is going pretty well! I can't wait to do “Go Tell It on the Mountain” on Christmas!*

One comment came after the service: “Pastor, I almost felt like clapping!” That started me thinking: Why didn't they feel like clapping for “A Mighty Fortress” a month earlier? One dear member suggested, “If we do more music like that, things will really get moving around here!” But was a Baptist-beat the musical cure for an ailing church that had just dismissed her pastor because of doctrinal differences?

Welcome to the difficult and unforgiving world of musical styles and personal preferences!

LUTHER'S PATH

What music to choose? There are times when worship planners—and even hymnal committees—would like to wish the entire topic away. The WELS Hymnal Committee has received some feedback on the *texts* of our hymns and liturgies—what to use and what to lose. And everyone, it seems, has a comment or two when it comes to their musical preferences.

Why is that? Because music has the ability to touch human emotions. Luther recognized music's emotional pull: “For if you want to revive the sad, startle the jovial, encourage the despairing, humble the conceited, pacify the raving, mollify the hate-filled—and who is able to enumerate all the lords of the human heart, I mean the emotions of the heart and the urges which incite a man to all virtues and vices?—what can you find that is more efficacious than music?” (*What Luther Says*, #3103). Other reformers such as Calvin and Zwingli were suspicious of music's power to touch emotions. Calvin severely curtailed the use of music in worship. Zwingli went so far as to ban it from the service.

Luther took a different path. Because music is part of God's creation, he recognized and embraced music's ability to touch human emotions. Yet in public worship, he did not make “emotional pull” a musical prerequisite. The hymns he penned were not designed first to enable emotional expression. That purpose would be assigned to music centuries later in the tent revivals on the American frontier. Instead, Luther's hymns were designed to put the gospel of Christ on the lips of Christ's people. In other words, Luther's hymns were never written to promote toe-tapping, but to enable truth telling. For Luther, content was key. And Christ is the key to Luther's content.

CHRIST IS KEY

This careful balance between music's ability to touch emotions and music's

ability to carry Christ to the Christian can already be spotted in the title of the first Lutheran hymnal almost five hundred years ago: “Several Christian Songs, Hymns of Praise and Psalms, in Accordance with the Pure Word of God, from Holy Scripture, Produced by Various Highly Learned Individuals, for Singing in the Church, as in Part Is Already the Practice in Wittenberg.”

These first Lutheran hymns were so Christ-centered in their content, so pure in their doctrine, so biblical in their approach, and so polished in their poetry, that four of these original eight hymns are still with us today. “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” (*Christian Worship* [CW] 377) sings the heart and core of the gospel. “Salvation Unto Us Has Come” (CW 390) pulses with the careful distinction between law and gospel. Even if someone had never opened a Bible, they could still come face-to-face with Jesus and their justification through these hymns. This was no accident. Luther writes:

“For such songs are a sort of Bible for the uncultivated, and even for the learned. See how the pious are set on fire through these songs!”

Does this mean that every hymn needs to be a “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice”? Does every hymn need to sing about the sacraments in order to be in a Lutheran hymnal? The quick answer is no. Some hymns are, by design, more of an emotional response to the gospel rather than a teacher of the gospel. God’s grace really is amazing (CW 379) and our Savior really is beautiful (CW 369). Some hymns are, intentionally, a commentary on God’s creation or the believer’s sanctification. We are fearfully and wonderfully made (CW 234) with hearts that yearn for the Spirit’s presence and gifts (CW 181).

But we also need to be careful. God’s grace is much more than amazing. Specifically, God’s grace is rooted in the redemption that is ours in Christ (CW 117). Our Savior is beautiful, but his beauty is seen fully in the Word

and sacraments (CW 311). We are a part of God’s creation, but even more wonderfully, in Christ, we are a new creation (CW 471). Christ is the “center of gravity” in our current hymnal. Christ will remain the center of gravity in our new hymnal.

Aaron Christie, the chairman of the Hymnody Committee, is pastor at Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

This is the second article in a nine-part series on hymns and their use in our churches.

The WELS Hymnal Project wants your feedback as it works on finalizing which of the more than 700 hymns from *Christian Worship* and *Christian Worship: Supplement* will be included in the new hymnal. Every month the WELS Hymnal Project will post a selection of hymns online, indicating which hymns are slated to be kept and which are slated to be cut. You can view the monthly list and, if you want, choose up to 10 hymns from the cut list that you would like to see kept in the new hymnal. To review this month’s list of hymns and take part in the process, visit welshymnal.com.

RESPECTFULLY *making room*

Because textual content is key, the first thing the Hymnody Committee did was sit down and agree upon a set of core principles that would guide our picking and panning. Here they are:

Hymns considered for inclusion in the successor volume of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* should . . .

- 1) Be centered in Christ.
- 2) Be in harmony with the scriptural faith as confessed in the Lutheran Book of Concord.
- 3) Be rooted in the church year with its emphases on the life of Christ and the Christian’s life in Christ.
- 4) Be drawn from classic Lutheran sources and deliberately inclusive of the church’s broader song (including so-called international or global music).
- 5) Be superlative examples of their genre in regard to both textual content and musical craft.

- 6) Be accessible and meaningful for God’s people at worship in both public and private settings.
- 7) Be useful for those who preach and teach the faith.
- 8) Be parts of a body (corpus) of hymns that will find wide acceptance by the vast majority of our fellowship.

Your Hymnody Committee is doing its best to follow the careful path that Luther blazed. We recognize and appreciate the emotional pull of music. But even more, we hope to deliver a hymnbook packed with hymns that preach, teach, and proclaim Christ crucified to a generation yet unborn. The Lord requires nothing less. God’s people deserve nothing less.

In short: Some of our new hymns will be toe tappers, but the entire hymnal will be a truth teller!

A man discovers grace through faith, Martin Luther, and the promise of heaven.

James White

The neighborhood I grew up in was an old, working-class, ethnic settlement on a busy street. As a young child, I entertained myself in the backyard, playing everything from frontier army scout to excavation contractor with toy trucks and earth movers. Playmates were scarce, and I was left mostly to my own devices and imagination. I had no siblings.

Sometimes I could hear the bell ringing vociferously from the Wesleyan church down the street. Something about the sound of it enchanted me. My parents and I did not attend church, but I looked forward to hearing the distinct peal as I reloaded my musket on quiet Sunday mornings, ready for imaginary threats.

The closest church to my house was St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic church.

It was only about six city blocks away, easily navigable for an experienced army man and frontiersman. I convinced my parents to let me walk there for Sunday services. The Mass was celebrated in Latin, and it was the most beautiful thing I ever heard. I had no idea what

the priest was saying, but the lyrical cadence of the chants was mesmerizing.

The ancient church was appointed with large statues of the saints, one of the virgin Mary, and a huge crucifix above the altar. The Lord hung on it in perpetual agony. There were Stations of the Cross, incense, and even something they called holy water.

The next move in my “walk,” a term I learned watching TV preachers when the weather was too bad to walk to church (or more likely, I overslept), was to successfully lobby my parents to let me switch from public school to St. Vincent de Paul in the fifth grade. It was grand. At one point, I’d even considered the priesthood. Repetition and recitation of directives and church laws were etched in my mind, and I developed an unshakable faith. I don’t recall studying much Scripture, though.

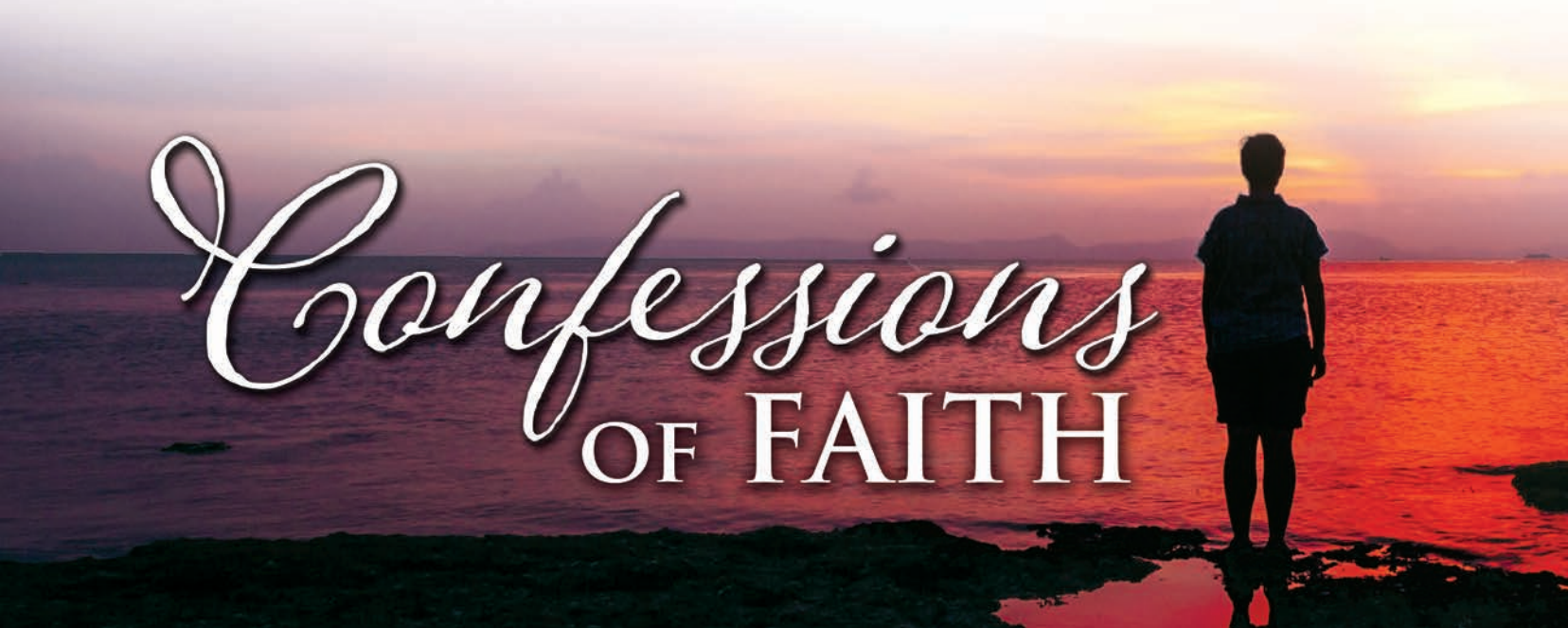
Once, in early spring, I came home from school starving, as most teenaged boys are apt to do. I spotted a hunk of Italian salami in the refrigerator, a delicacy recently discovered at a friend’s house. It made a glorious sandwich and I began to devour it. Suddenly my blood ran cold, and my soul went dark. It was a Friday in Lent, and I had a mouthful of salami. When I opened my eyes again, things thankfully seemed as they were. No fiery cherubs came to remove me to a warmer environment.

Soon after, I met a girl who worked at the local pizza parlor.

She was a nice girl from a good family. There was only one hitch to the budding relationship. She and her family attended a Protestant church, a place I learned never to set foot in if I didn’t want celestial forces to immediately carry me off to the pit. Predictably, I was eventually invited to Sunday service with them at St. Andrew’s Lutheran. They never knew what courage it took for me to accept the invitation.

The church interior looked like any other, but with far fewer adornments, and instead of a crucifix above the altar, there hung an empty cross. *Great*, I mused, *even Jesus doesn’t want to come here*. I followed the family to a pew, sat, and waited for the earthquake. Perhaps the roof would cave in. To my immense relief, nothing happened, but I had no idea what the sermon was about.

I heard the minister preach something about grace through faith and then speak of the Reformation and Martin Luther. I was under the impression that Martin Luther was some sort of religious criminal and the Reformation was an illegal uprising of heretics against the holy church. Who but a troublemaker would have the audacity to nail a list of complaints to his church right on the front door? But a tiny notion was forming as my mind



Confessions OF FAITH

wandered back to when I first heard that Sunday bell. Could there possibly be truth here in the Lutheran church?

It could be a reasonable possibility that instead of angry angels ever at the ready to cast me into judgment, the Holy Spirit was quietly guiding me to a new path bereft of peril and fear. Secretly, I figured I wasn't going to be saved come judgment day anyway; too many sins needed penance. I just kept mentally hearing the words of that Lutheran minister over and over—grace through faith, grace through faith—verify everything in Scripture. This beauty-in-simplicity was something definitely worth pondering.

I began to ask questions. I began to understand and like the answers. The teachings and admonishments of Martin Luther struck a chord within me as nothing before ever could. This opened up a new world for me, and before I knew it, I was enrolled in adult catechism class. I found out what God's grace really was, and was so thankful that not only were prescribed penances unnecessary, but they were fruitless. My question became: Just who was Martin Luther exactly? I intended to find out.

I eventually became a teamster driving long distances. At one point I became the owner of a smartphone with

downloadable MP3 capability, and the selection of audiobooks was endless. I wondered whether there were any audiobooks by and about Martin Luther. To my surprise, there were plenty. I downloaded many and listened. Some were published directly by Luther himself. Slowly I got to know Martin Luther, the man.

Luther had grown on me to the point that I could easily regard him as Uncle Marty. I learned every aspect of his life from start to finish, but what stood out the most was that he seemed to be a regular guy. He had no qualms about having a beer or a couple glasses of wine with the boys, always in strict moderation. In *Here I Stand*, he displayed an appreciable sense of humor about married life and the compromises and sacrifices required. He married a woman, Katie, an apostate nun, and together they had six children—three boys and three girls. He enjoyed gardening, wine making, and a form of lawn bowling. And, as with most men, his wife's insistence on constantly changing the bedsheets became an irritant.

The more I got to know him, the more I truly enjoyed his company. He was



James White

the kind of man with whom you could strike up a conversation in the market square about practically anything—and not be nervous. He taught students at supper seminars in his home about faith. Little did he know, but 500 years after the Reformation, he was still helping people—me. He escorted this old team-

ster to find his way to grace in a way no one else could.

Now it's years later. I still have the original girlfriend—she's now my wife—and together we brought up four children in the faith. From time to time I encounter old classmates from the elementary school, and there's no animosity. Someone may invariably ask about how and why I made the decision to leave the former faith. I just politely but firmly respond, "Here I stand."

James White is a member at Grace, Tecumseh, Michigan.



Dealing with lying makes my stomach twist into knots. I guess that's because so much of it is a guessing game. Did my child really lie to me? Did she do it on purpose? Why did he do it? Does she feel remorse? Did I do something to prompt the lie? My mind swirls with the unknown.

This month, three parents share their perspectives on lying. I love the motivation and the heart behind their thoughts. Even if my stomach still twists up when I suspect that one of my children has lied to me, I'll be a better parent if I can keep the right motivation in how I react.

Nicole Balza

Join the conversation!

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

MY CHILD LIED TO ME. NOW WHAT?

At different times during the past five years, in addition to our biological children, we have had five other young people live in our home. Because they had different backgrounds than our biological children, honesty was not a core value for all of them. So lies were a common occurrence. As we cared for these young people, I realized that God entrusts me with the goal to make honesty and integrity a core value in the lives of the people in my home. It is a heart issue.

With our biological children, honesty was modeled for them since the time they were babies. Lying has been

One Sunday morning after church, I stopped for gas. Inside the convenience store, I bumped into a student I knew from the college where I teach.

"What are you up to this morning?" I asked, making casual conversation.

"A bunch of us are headed to Chicago for a concert," he said. We talked about the band they were seeing, musicians who weren't afraid to call themselves Christians.

As I left the store, I noticed the others in the student's car. Several were enrolled in my theology class that semester. On Friday they had told me they'd be missing Monday's class. I hadn't asked why. They hadn't told me why. They hadn't exactly lied to me; they just held back the truth. They didn't want to admit that their overnight obligation Sunday to Monday was an out-of-state music show. They were afraid of the dreaded "unexcused absence."

When my students returned to class, I hassled them a bit, in a friendly way: "What have I done to make you think

"It must've gotten dinged in the parking lot."

That's his story, and he's sticking to it. But eventually the truth emerges: Your son took the car to the unchaperoned party, indulged in some underage drinking, and backed into a hydrant.

I think lying, like so many sins, is born of fear. When we lie, we're afraid of being found out, aren't we? As imperfect. Sinful. Human.

For kids, being found out has consequences. Maybe discipline—time-outs, loss of privileges. Maybe public embarrassment. Maybe our disappointment, which, like a temporary abandonment, can be terrifying.

But that doesn't mean we dismiss our children's lies: "Aw, they're just afraid of letting us down. Let it slide." Nope. Deceit demands a firm dose of the law. That's because malicious lying—as opposed to polite white lies or flights of fancy—is so dangerous. Like its father, Satan, lying is insidious. It poisons everything.

addressed, along with all the consequences that go along with it. With the other children, lying may have been a way of survival, a way of getting what they thought they needed. Sometimes lying was rewarded when it resulted in earthly positive results. Sometimes they lied and it was so normal to them that they didn't see anything wrong with it.

So now what? What I've learned is that we need to call out the lie (oftentimes without backing them into a corner). Then we meet their sorrow over sin with forgiveness. When we offer forgiveness, we extend the power to turn from the wrong path to what is God-pleasing. We do our best to model honesty and admit to them when we fail and need God's forgiveness.

Heart issues are so hard. It is much easier to address the behavior without getting to the heart issue. But our God is the change agent. We are his hands and feet. It is difficult to surrender our children and the children God has put in our care to our heavenly Father. But he changes their hearts through the gospel we share.

Jenni Schubring and her husband, Tad, have five children ranging in age from 8 to 16. They are also licensed foster parents.



you need to hide things from me—that you can't be open and honest with me?" As a college teacher—especially in a theology classroom—my biggest goal is fostering a closeness among us in Christ, so that we can share our hearts with one another fearlessly. An atmosphere of love in Christ invites such fearlessness. As described by "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23): "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

As parents, our primary goal in our homes is fostering a closeness in Christ so that we always can share our hearts with one another fearlessly. A parent's goal is not just policing behavior. When one of our children lies to us, we do well to ask ourselves, "Why is the child lying?" There could be many reasons, but one is that the child is afraid of what we'll say or do if we learn the truth. If our actions when we do learn the truth confirm the child's worst fears, we may not be preventing future lies but ensuring that the child will be less open, less honest in the future.

Please understand, I'm not suggesting we overlook a child's lies or accept deceptive dishonesty. Discipline often is necessary—maybe even very stern discipline. But we want to be prudent. We measure our responses to our children's behavior, weighing what's best in how we respond, how we seek to shape their future thinking and activity.

It's not just about how we react to what happened today or yesterday. More than anything, it's about building up faith and hope and love in the hearts of our children. It's about finding forgiveness in Christ, who is truth, who atoned for all that is false and wrong in us. It's from faith in Christ, anchored deep in the heart, that truth flows and lies are overcome. So we aim to build up our children and one another in Christ, not just to penalize the lies that have occurred.

David Sellnow teaches at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. He and his wife, Ellen, have four children ages 21 to 28.



Lying poisons relationships. When our kids lie, they need to know: "You've betrayed our trust. Everything you tell us now is suspect. We'll have to check up on you. We'll need to see your phone. Everywhere you turn, we'll be hovering. We'll have to, because your word is no longer good."

Lying poisons the liar too. It seeps into the cells and the psyche and becomes a way of life. Lying children become lying adults. Inveterate liars unconsciously assume everyone lies, hindering them from ever fully trusting another. And sometimes whole families become liars, especially when hiding a family secret: a schizophrenic mother, an alcoholic father. Even if the intent is to protect the family's privacy, children develop a doctrine of duplicity, always concocting some new tale to keep up the beautiful, brittle family facade.

If our kids lie regularly, we may want to ask ourselves some hard questions: What are they afraid of? Have we set such high standards they feel they're not allowed to fail? Is our discipline overly harsh? Or are we liars too? Like Adam and Eve in the garden, are we so ashamed of our faults and mis-

takes that we're always hiding, always blaming others, never 'fessing up?

Maybe the most important question is this: Do our children know the truth about the God who lives in our home and hearts? Our Savior is kind. He understands human weakness and fear. He knows why we're tempted to lie, and he invites honest confession because no sin is too monstrous, no shame too deep, to be forgiven.

That's good news.

Jesus' love and compassion drive out fear. His love lifts the shades and lets the sunshine in. His love—and our reflection of it—makes our home a safe place, where we can air our failures, forgive, and be forgiven. Then it's absolutely okay to be found out—because we're loved and accepted despite our failures.

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





teentalk

A bubble?

Lutheran education prepares students to face the real world.

Anna Menges

“You live in a bubble!”

As a student at a Lutheran high school, I heard this often. Whether it came from peers who went to public school or from the wonderful wisdom of social media, it was a thought that seemed deceptively true. The bubble they were talking about was one that inhibited us from experiencing the “real world.”

At first thought this may seem like a legitimate flaw of private education. But I learned from recent experience that instead of an inhibiting bubble, a Lutheran education is a place where we learn how to use our faith properly. Instead of preventing us from experiencing the real world, it shows us what God wants the real world to be like.

The eye-opening experience I had occurred while attending Badger Girls State, a convention for seven hundred high school girls entering their senior year. Its purpose is to teach the younger generation about state government in order to encourage future leaders. At this convention, I realized that I was in a minority group when it came to my political opinions, especially those based on my Christian values.

I distinctly remember a discussion with a friend I had met at the convention on the topic of homosexuality. She believed that homosexuality was a person’s right. She even told me about one of her homosexual friends who was one of the nicest people she knew. I then told her my opinion, which was that homosexuality is wrong. She could not believe what she was hearing. I was a 17-year-old female who should have had the same liberal views as her. We then went on to discuss abortion. As two people with opposite views, these were some difficult discussions.

While talking to her I began to realize that the underlying reason for our differences was my belief in the Bible—and her lack of belief. I ultimately had to explain that my reason for disagreeing with homosexuality was because God says it’s a sin in the Bible. I had to reason with her that killing a baby in the womb isn’t about the rights of the woman, but about killing a masterpiece of God and not giving that baby a chance to live and come to faith. I have tried to keep in touch with her in hopes that she will come to faith.

Reflecting back on this experience, I realize that because of my education at Lutheran schools, the Holy Spirit has given me the knowledge and confidence to speak my opinion.

A Lutheran school not only instilled in me the knowledge, it also gave me a like-minded support system of friends and teachers that I knew I could go to for any questions or concerns I had. Because I heard the Word of God every day at my Lutheran high school, the Holy Spirit worked a strong and unwavering faith in my heart.

As sinful human beings, we will never be perfect. There is no less sin at a Lutheran school. The difference is that at a Lutheran school, we have the opportunity to surround ourselves with those who embrace God’s Word just as we do. We learn how to live according to God’s plan. A Lutheran education is an opportunity to prepare us to deal with situations that come our way as a result of the world straying from God’s teaching.

Anna Menges, a 2017 graduate from Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, is a member at Bethany, Manitowoc.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Anderson, Mark, to retirement
Baumann, Jon, to Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland, Mich.
Brandt, David, to St. John's, Juneau, Wis.
DeGier, Andrew, to Trinity, Merrill, Wis.
Ernest, David, to St. Paul's, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Glaeske, Aaron, to new mission, Victoria, Texas
Habben, Daniel, to Saint John, St. John's, Antigua
Korthals, James, to retirement
Lewis, Harmon, to Messiah, Alpharetta, Ga.
Lor, Bounkeo, to Hmong Asia ministry coordinator
Mattek, John, to retirement
Quandt, Roger, to St. John, Colfax, Wis.
Rau, David, to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
Rieke, Colin, to Palos, Palos Heights, Ill.
Schauland, Karl, to New Life, Rockford, Ill.
Suhr, Jeffrey, to retirement
Zahn, Larry, to retirement

Teachers

Aanonsen, Aaron, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.
Anderson, Susanne, to St. Paul, Moline, Ill.
Berg, Amanda, to St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wis.
Berg, Karen, to retirement
Bickelhaupt, Melissa, to Apostles Lutheran Preschool, Billings, Mont.
Byers, Allison, to St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.
Czerwan, Chad, to St. Martin's, Watertown, S.D.
Draper, Eileen, to retirement
Engelbrecht, Gloria, to retirement
Enstad, Megan, to Parkland, Tacoma, Wash.
Felgenhauer, Kathryn, to St. Mark Little Lions Preschool, Salina, Kan.
Fetcenko, Danielle, to St. Paul, Onalaska, Wis.
Giddings, Melanie, to Fox Valley Lutheran Schools Inc., Appleton, Wis.
Hackbarth, Hannah, to St. John, Waterloo, Wis.
Hafner, Joanna, to Living Hope Lutheran Preschool, Redmond, Wash.
Hahn, Andrea, to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.
Hahn, Jason, to West Lutheran High School, Plymouth, Minn.
Kallies, Nathaniel, to St. Croix Lutheran Grades 6-12, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Kanter, Rachel, to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Keese, Erin, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Kuepers, Becky, to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.

Laich, Marie, to Eastside, Madison, Wis.
Leibl, Heidi, to Good Shepherd, Omaha, Neb.
Leonard, David, to Friedens, Kenosha, Wis.
Linton, Matthew, to Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.
Loberger, Kelly, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Marquardt, April, to St. Croix Lutheran Grades 6-12, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Marquardt, Michael, to St. Croix Lutheran Grades 6-12, West Saint Paul, Minn.
Marquez, Stephnie, to Arizona Lutheran Academy, Phoenix, Ariz.
Mierau, Greta, to St. John, Caledonia, Minn.
Opperman, Karla, to Concordia Preschool, Eau Claire, Wis.
Plagenz, Lauren, to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee, Wis.
Potratz, Gail, to retirement
Radloff, Ryan, to First, La Crosse, Wis.
Sauer, Tina, to retirement
Scheuerlein, Eric, to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Schleis, John, to Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, Wis.
Schlicht, Samuel, to Atonement, Milwaukee, Wis.
Schubkegel, Timothy, to Good Shepherd, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Schulz, Amanda, to Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wis.
Scriver, Bryan, to Lord of Life, Friendswood, Texas
Sievert, Scott, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Doral, Fla.
Steinmetz, Ashley, to Shepherd of the Valley, Menasha, Wis.
Vanderhoof, Emily, to Martin Luther, Neenah, Wis.
Volbrecht, Taryn, to St. Paul, Muskego, Wis.
Wilson, Kip, to Eastside, Madison, Wis.
Zima, Jeremy, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wis.

Staff ministers

Schaewe, Peter, to St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis.
Steenbock, Brandon, to St. Mark, De Pere, Wis.
Wagner, Scott, to Christian giving counselor, Ministry of Christian Giving

ANNIVERSARIES

Rapid City, S.D.—St. Paul (75). Aug. 12. Picnic celebration, 11:30 A.M. Aug. 13. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; catered meal, noon; worship, 4 P.M.; meal, 5:30 P.M. RSVP requested. dkarau@goldenwest.net.
New Berlin, Wis.—Star of Bethlehem (40-LS/50-LC). Aug. 19. Carnival celebration for school, 2-5 P.M. Aug. 20. Worship, 8 & 10 A.M.; luncheon, 11:30 A.M. RSVP requested. secretary@starofbethlehem.org.

La Crescent, Minn.—First (75). Aug. 27. Worship, 9 A.M.; catered outdoor meal to follow. Website, keepchristfirst.com.
Waterloo, Wis.—St. John (150). Sept. 17. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; dinner to follow. RSVP requested. office@stjohnwaterloo.org.
Denmark, Wis.—Christ (100). Sept. 24. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. 920-863-2090.
Appleton, Wis.—St. Paul (150). Sept. 30. Kick-off meal celebration. RSVP requested. 920-733-6701, office@stpaulappletonwi.com. Oct. 1. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; refreshments/displays in between services.
Eau Claire, Wis.—St. Mark (50). Oct. 1. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; meal and program, 12:30 P.M. Website, stmark-wels.org.
Portage, Mich.—St. James (50). Oct. 14. Lutheran Music Festival celebration event, Chenery Auditorium, Kalamazoo, Mich. Website, lutheranmusicfestival.com.

COMING EVENTS

Christian Educators for Special Education summer conference—Aug. 8. Country Springs Conference Center, Waukesha, Wis. Website, cesewels.org.
WELS night at Miller Park—Aug. 10. Miller Park, Milwaukee, Wis. Brewers vs. Twins. Order tickets by Aug. 3 at brewers.com/wels.
WELS North Atlantic District Labor Day retreat—Sept. 2-4. Camp Danbee, Peru, Mass. Website, welslabordayretreat.org.
Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention—Oct. 9-12. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Website, wels.net/events.
MLC Ladies' Auxiliary annual meeting—Oct. 14. 8 A.M., Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Various opportunities—Thai Village, a faith-based non-profit, empowers people in Thailand by providing vocational skills training and income generation and by working with WELS churches in Thailand to conduct outreach. Short-term volunteer or long-term paid positions include:

- Product designer and developer (Thailand-based).
- Marketing, promotions, and communications assistant (Thailand-based).
- Sales rep (USA-based).

info@thavillage.org. Website, thavillage.org.
Musicians—Guitarist or keyboardist to lead worship at The Vine Church, a mission church in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. One-year commitment. Relocating to the area is required. 208-449-2080; Pastor@TheVineIdaho.org.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

Reaching out at home and abroad

Part of the Joint Mission Council's work is bridging the gap between Home and World Mission work and coordinating multicultural ministries that impact work in North America and countries around the world. "As the world continues to shrink, the labels that the synod gave to Home and World Missions are becoming more and more obtuse, because missions are missions," says Sean Young, chairman of the Joint Mission Council.

Two new mission calls connected to the Joint Mission Council demonstrate the continued collaboration between Home and World Mission work.



Bounkeo Lor (right) and Jon Bare, international recruitment director for the Pastoral Studies Institute, visiting a remote village in Southeast Asia.

HMONG OUTREACH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In April, Bounkeo Lor accepted the call from the Global Hmong Committee to serve as Hmong Asia ministry coordinator. In this new role, Lor will be coordinating ministry opportunities to train future leaders and pastors in Hmong churches in Southeast Asia.

This work isn't new to Lor. For the past eight years he has been traveling to Asia to teach leaders in a 70,000-member church body, in addition to serving as pastor at Grace Hmong, Kansas City, Kan. "Before we started working with them, they were under the work-righteous beliefs of a Reformed style church. When they were told about God's grace and how we are justified by faith, they were excited to hear this—and still are," says Lor. "So we need to give them a thorough training in justification and other scriptural truths to help them stand firm in the Word of God."

These leaders have shared what they learned with their members, and according to Lor, the church body has grown by at least 2,500 people in the last two years.

Now Lor will have more time to devote to helping train these leaders in Southeast Asia as well as to focus on

translating and developing training materials in Hmong. He will be working closely with the Pastoral Studies Institute training team for the training and curriculum development. He also wants to produce materials—items like catechism classes and evangelism resources—that can be used by local pastors in their congregations.

Lor asks for prayers to "bless the work and training" and for "the bringing of many people in Asia to know Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit."

The Global Hmong Committee, started in 2015 by the Joint Mission Council, oversees Hmong ministry around the world, including weighing outreach opportunities and determining where funds should be spent. Learn more about Hmong outreach in the United States on p. 28.

SOUTH ASIAN OUTREACH IN UNITED STATES

The graduation of South Asian "Pastor Paul" from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute this May presents further opportunities to reach out to South Asian immigrants in the United States. The Joint Mission Council has called Pastor Paul as the WELS outreach to South Asia ministry coordinator. He will start by helping a greater Milwaukee-area congregation reach out to South Asian immigrants in the neighborhood.

According to this congregation's pastor, Pastor Paul and his wife first will work to form relationships with the South Asians. As these relationships form, more connections can be made with the congregation's ministries and the gospel message. "Congregations are a very vital part of this ministry," says Pastor Paul. "Mostly the work of reaching out to these South Asians will be possible by making them friends and then involving them in projects like teaching English as a second language, sewing centers, and other such activities. This is to build a long-term contact with them and eventually bring them to the Word of God. For this a lot of volunteers are needed."

Pastor Paul says understanding the cultural differences between the East and the West is important in this work. "For that reason an ethnic missionary (as they know their people very well) can be an important part to engage them and then make them part and parcel to the WELS congregation."

One of these differences is the Eastern view of family and women. "The South Asian community outreach does not function without the pastor's wife. This ministry is family oriented, and visiting in the family's home is only successful while both husband and wife are involved," says Pastor Paul.

Once a ministry is established at this Milwaukee-area congregation, future plans include helping other congregations in Milwaukee and throughout the United States replicate this ministry plan.

District news

WESTERN WISCONSIN

On June 4, **St. John, Ridgeville (rural Tomah), Wis.**, hosted a Reformation-themed service. Members from other churches in Monroe County participated. Three pastors led the congregation through Luther's Small Catechism. A 26-person choir, accompanied by organ, a brass quartet, and flutes, led the congregation in singing many of Luther's hymns.

Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis., dedicated a new addition on May 14. The 38,000-square-foot addition adds a chapel/auditorium to the campus, as well as classroom space for art and industrial technology. The school serves more than 200 students and is supported by an association of 29 congregations in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., supported this project with a low-interest loan.

This spring students and volunteers from **Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis.**, planted the first community garden in nearby Kronenwetter. They also will assist with the fall harvest, and produce will be offered to the community at no cost.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

MN—On June 4, **St. Paul, Jordan, Minn.**, celebrated its 150th anniversary.

Zion, Russell, Minn., celebrated its 125th anniversary on June 25.

St. John, Goodhue, Minn., celebrated the 50th anniversary in the teaching ministry of **Marilyn Jonas** on July 16.

WW—On June 18, **St. Peter, Hamburg, Wis.**, celebrated its 150th anniversary.

ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA



The Springs, Sparks, Nev., dedicated its new church on June 4. The home mission congregation was established in 2008. WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., supported this building project with a grant and loan.

The district reporters for this month are: AZ-CA—Michael Schroeder; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; WW—Brett Brauer.

WELS news briefs

WELS INVESTMENT FUNDS

877-888-8953; welsfunds@wels.net

WELS Investment Funds has reached the **\$200 million mark** in its net assets, \$158 million from WELS and WELS subsidiaries and \$42 million from congregations and affiliated ministries. WELS Investment Funds, a self-supporting subsidiary of WELS, provides cost-effective, professionally managed investment portfolios exclusively for WELS and WELS-affiliated ministries. WELS Investment Funds offers these investment vehicles so that funds can be pooled and invested to achieve the desires of the organizations and their donors. "It is a tremendous privilege and responsibility to see to it that these funds are managed wisely for the benefit of the Lord's work," says Jim Holm, president of WELS Investment Funds. "We pray that the Lord will continue to bless our efforts." To learn more, visit wels.net/wif.

WORLD MISSIONS

414-256-3234; bwm@wels.net

Larry Schlomer, World Missions administrator, **commissioned one home missionary and three world missionaries** at the Southeastern Wisconsin district



conference at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., in June. Pictured left to right: Nixon Vivar, 2017 Pastoral Studies Institute graduate who will be serving at Christ, Milwaukee; 2017 seminary graduate Nathan Schulte, who will be serving in Latin America; John Roebke, who will be serving in Malawi; and Jeff Heitsch, who will be serving in Cameroon and Nigeria. Learn more about WELS Missions at wels.net/missions.



GRADUATES

One hundred forty-five people graduated from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., on May 13. Ninety-two were in the teacher track, and two were in the staff ministry track. Twenty-nine completed the preseminary program, and four received seminary certification. Eighteen received master's degrees.



Colin E. Bahmer
Santa Clarita, Calif.



Benjamin J. Balge
Milwaukee, Wis.



Julia A. Barthels
Mishicot, Wis.



Jarred D. Beduze
Watertown, Wis.



Matthew J. Behm
Beaver Dam, Wis.



Conifer L. Berg
Appleton, Wis.



Todd W. Brassow
Saginaw, Mich.



Carlene R. Braun
New London, Wis.



Abbie L. Brown
Watertown, S.D.



Phillip G. Bunkowske
Watertown, S.D.



Coral L. Cady
La Crosse, Wis.



Allan L. Caldwell-Boeder
Manitowoc, Wis.



Lucas P. Callies
Mayville, Wis.



Jacob M. Colvin
Watertown, Wis.



Christopher R. Dean
Edna, Texas



Brooke L. DeAnda
Janesville, Wis.



Casey J. De Frain
Phoenix, Ariz.



Michael A. Dey
Bay City, Mich.



Lauren E. Donovan
Waukesha, Wis.



Allison M. Dorn
Crete, Ill.



Jeffrey O. Dorn
Sturtevant, Wis.



Mollie E. Dorn
Redding, Calif.



Aimee L. Duncan
Mechanicville, N.Y.



Shannon E. Eggers
West Bend, Wis.



Roger H. Emmons Jr.
Leesville, La.



Lauren E. Ewings
Lakeville, Minn.



Yaffet Gabayehu
Lewis Center, Ohio



Nicole M. Gawel
Milwaukee, Wis.



William C. Geisz
Wheat Ridge, Colo.



Kali E. Gross
Oconomowoc, Wis.



Matthew J. Grow
Sturtevant, Wis.



Nathan L. Guhl
Jackson, Wis.



Paul T. Habermann
Manitowoc, Wis.



Sarah G. Hackbarth
Lake Mills, Wis.



Isaac P. Hayes
Laveen, Ariz.



Ryan E. Henning
New Ulm, Minn.



William S. Hinz
Pickett, Wis.



Emma I. Hirsch
Manhattan, Kan.



Meryl C. Hirsch
Norfolk, Neb.



Charlotte A. Huebner
Sun Prairie, Wis.



Lindsay A. Hughes
West Bend, Wis.



Linden L. Jahns
Markesan, Wis.



Louisa M. Kahrs
Clatonia, Neb.



Thomas J. Keller
Thiensville, Wis.



Bethany J. Kneser
West Allis, Wis.



Olivia A. Knudsen
Arcadia, Wis.



Jonathan D. Kock
Mequon, Wis.



Abigail R. Koelpin
New Ulm, Minn.



Sarah E. Koelpin
Green Bay, Wis.



Karlie L. Kohlmeier
Manitowoc, Wis.



Lisa M. Koschnitzke
Jackson, Wis.



Kate L. Krieger
New Ulm, Minn.



Lucas G. Krogmann
Iron Ridge, Wis.



Sarah M. Krueger
Round Rock, Texas



Seth R. Krueger
Lake Orion, Mich.



Philip A. Kurbis
Miramar, Fla.



Ashley N. Kuschel
Soldiers Grove, Wis.



Kristoffer K. Kuschel
Mukwonago, Wis.



Allen M. Labitzky
Crystal, Minn.



Matthew P. Lange
Bowling Green, Ohio



Cheyenne N. Lehman
Midland, Mich.



Kenneth A. Lehman
La Crosse, Wis.



Jonathan M. Lehmann
Janesville, Wis.



Jason P. Lindemann
Egg Harbor, Wis.



Miranda J. Loduha
Jackson, Wis.



Martin J. Loescher
Jackson, Wis.



Alyssa K. Maertz
Watertown, S.D.



Carl D. Manske
Appleton, Wis.



Adam D. Marley
Midlothian, Va.



Aaron J. Markgraf
Cincinnati, Ohio



Holly R. Marquardt
Guntur, India



Justin T. Marshall
Dickinson, Texas



Esther E. Martens
Cross Plains, Wis.



Michael G. Martens
New Ulm, Minn.



Madeline B. McMullen
Roland, Iowa



Jonathan P. Medico
Sarasota, Fla.



Kyle R. Melso
Brookfield, Wis.



Kaylee A. Messman
Two Rivers, Wis.



Alana M. Mittelstadt
Lake Elmo, Minn.



Sharon A. Mundt
Appleton, Wis.



Leah J. Nass
Manitowoc, Wis.



Emily R. Neeb
Gilbert, Ariz.



Joseph G. Neuberger
Appleton, Wis.



Erich W. Neumann
Adrian, Mich.



Rachel E. Nitz
Sanford, Mich.



Benjamin M. Olsen
Spooner, Wis.



Dominick C. Olson
Inver Grove Heights,
Minn.



Matthew D. Oppermann
West Bend, Wis.



Monica L. Pappenfuss
Watertown, Wis.



Timothy S. Payne
Newburg, Wis.



Magdalena J. Petermann
Saginaw, Mich.



Sophia M. Petermann
Saginaw, Mich.



Christopher M. Pflughoeft
Germantown, Wis.



Maria A. Prange
Burlington, Wis.



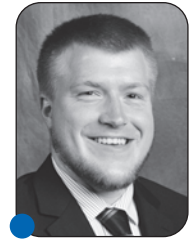
Megan E. Rabbers
Stevensville, Mich.



Gina L. Radue
Waukesha, Wis.



Emily C. Ray
New Ulm, Minn.



Jeffrey B. Rick
La Valle, Wis.



Stephanie N. Rockhoff
Kenosha, Wis.



Luke M. Rosenbaum
Wildomar, Calif.



Luke J. Rothe
New Berlin, Wis.



Caleb M. Rothfuss
Bay City, Mich.



Martin Santos
Seattle, Wash.



Caleb P. Schaewe
Bay City, Mich.



Erick K. Schalo
Bloomington, Minn.



Daniel R. Schmidt Jr.
Ixonia, Wis.



Hannah J. Schmidt
Fond du Lac, Wis.



Darian M. Schnose
Tawas City, Mich.



Calla J. Schoch
La Crosse, Wis.



Mariah K. Schoof
New Ulm, Minn.



Michael J. Schrimpf
Oronoco, Minn.



Philip D. Schroeder
Watertown, Wis.



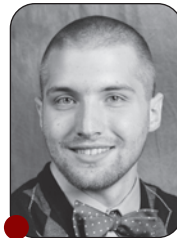
Sarah C. Schulte
La Valle, Wis.



Aaron W. Schwartz
La Crosse, Wis.



Magdalen N. Schwartz
La Crosse, Wis.



Zachary C. Semmann
Grafton, Wis.



Joshua M. Severeid
Federal Way, Wash.



Jacob C. Shepherd
Aurora, Colo.



Joseph D. Shiery
San Marcos, Calif.



Jonah J. Siegel
Wautoma, Wis.



Caitlin M. Smith
Westland, Mich.



Na Bin Song
Seoul, South Korea



Joel R. Sonntag
Milwaukee, Wis.



Anne M. Starr
New Ulm, Minn.



Matthew J. Steinfeldt
Dakota, Minn.



Matthew J. Swanson
Rochester, Minn.



Elizabeth M. Sweigard
Norfolk, Neb.



Matthew P. Tessmer
Winthrop, Minn.



David J. Uhlhorn
Manitowoc, Wis.



Bethany A.
Waldschmidt
Greenfield, Wis.



Micah R. Wendt
Onalaska, Wis.



Katie J. Wentker
Mishicot, Wis.



Megan M. Wenzel
Appleton, Wis.



Hope J. Werre
Sun Prairie, Wis.



Maria K. Wilson
Camp Verde, Ariz.



Jill A. Wolf
Cottage Grove, Wis.



Landon J. Zacharyasz
Appleton, Wis.



Courtney H. Zeamer
Tampa, Fla.



Luke T. Zeamer
De Pere, Wis.



Tyler J. Zeamer
De Pere, Wis.



Amber M. Zibrowski
Mankato, Minn.



Jacob A. Zietlow
Montello, Wis.



Seth J. Zimmermann
Stillwater, Minn.



Seth D. Zoellner
Eden Prairie, Minn.



Mark W. Zondag
Tomsk, Russia

● Bachelor of Arts | ● Seminary Certification Program | ● Bachelor of Science in Education | ● Bachelor of Science | ● Master of Science in Education

Class of 2017
CONGRATULATIONS!

Call assignments

On May 13, the Conference of Presidents assigned 117 new and previous teacher and staff minister candidates. Ten May 2017 graduates deferred assignment, choosing to pursue further education or other areas of service (some electing international service opportunities). Due to marriage plans or living in specific locations, 52 new and previous candidates were available for regional assignments. Twenty-six of those candidates were assigned on May 13 with the remaining candidates available for calls from congregations through their district presidents. Additional calls/assignments will be posted at mlc-wels.edu/events/commencement/.

TEACHERS

Barthels, Julia A., to Divine Savior Academy, Doral, Fla.
Bauman, Bethany A., to Resurrection, Aurora, Ill.
Beduze, Jarred D., to Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis.
Beduze, Tarah J., to Key to Life Christian Childcare & Community Center, Weston, Wis.
Behm, Matthew J., to Trinity, Aberdeen, S.D.
Biebert, Jacob P., to St. Matthew, Spokane, Wash.
Brassow, Todd W., to St. John, Redwood Falls, Minn.
Brown, Abbie L., to St. Paul, Cudahy, Wis.
Bunkowske, Phillip G., to Evergreen Lutheran High School, Tacoma, Wash.
DeAnda, Brooke L., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Donovan, Lauren E., to Divine Peace, Largo, Md.
Dorn, Allison M., to The Shepherd's Little Lambs Preschool, Duluth, Minn.
Duncan, Aimee L., to St. John, St. John's, Antigua
Dutcher, Jason M., to St. John, Lake City, Minn.
Ewings, Lauren E., to Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.
Fischer, Abigail J., to St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D.
Gross, Kali E., to Samuel, Marshall, Minn.
Guhl, Nathan L., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Habermann, Paul T., to Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn.
Hirsch, Emma I., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Hirsch, Meryl C., to Trinity, Kaukauna, Wis.
Huebner, Charlotte A., to Divine Grace, Lake Orion, Mich.
Kahrs, Louisa M., to Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz.
Kent, Julie C., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Knudsen, Olivia A., to Prairie, Gibbon, Minn.
Koelpin, Abigail R., to Trinity (ELS), West Bend, Wis.
Kohlmeier, Karlie L., to The Shepherd's Lambs Child Care Center, New Hope, Minn.
Koschnitzke, Lisa M., to Illinois Lutheran Elementary School, Crete, Ill.
Kristopeit, Emily M., to Mt. Lebanon-Alpha Campus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Krogmann, Lucas G., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Krueger, Sarah M., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.
Lange, Matthew P., to Abiding Word, Houston, Texas
Lindner, Joshua W., to Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.
Loduha, Miranda J., to Hope Lutheran Early Learning Center, Manhattan, Kan.
Maertz, Alyssa K., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.
Manske, Carl D., to Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee, Wis.
Markgraf, Aaron J., to St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.
Marshall, Justin T., to Divine Savior Academy, Doral, Fla.
Martens, Michael G., to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
McMullen, Madeline B., to Grace, Oshkosh, Wis.
Melso, Kyle R., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Messman, Kaylee A., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.

Mittelstadt, Alana M., to St. John, Neillsville, Wis.
Mose, Sarah G., to Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis.
Nass, Leah J., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Nitz, Rachel E., to Sienna Lutheran Academy, Sienna Plantation, Texas
Olsen, Benjamin M., to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.
Petermann, Magdalena J., to Bethany, Kenosha, Wis.
Phillips, Ashley N., to Holy Cross (ELS), Madison, Wis.
Prekop, Keely M., to Loving Shepherd, Milwaukee, Wis.
Quinnett, Monica E., to Calvary, Thiensville, Wis.
Rabbers, Megan E., to Bethany, Saginaw, Mich.
Radue, Gina L., to Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D.
Rick, Jeffrey B., to Illinois Lutheran High School, Crete, Ill.
Rixe, Ethan R., to Christ-St. John's, West Salem, Wis.
Rockhoff, Stephanie N., to St. John, St. John's, Antigua
Roekle, David J., to Good Shepherd, Downers Grove, Ill.
Roemhildt, Daniel T., to St. Peter's, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.
Rosenbaum, Luke M., to Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis.
Rothe, Luke J., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.
Santos, Martin, to Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash.
Schalo, Erick K., to St. Peter, Weyauwega, Wis.
Scharf, Annette E., to Peridot-Our Savior's, Peridot, Ariz.
Schlomer, Hannah E., to Zion, Rhinelander, Wis.
Schmidt, Hannah J., to St. Paul, Beverly Hills, Fla.
Schoof, Mariah K., to Sola Fide Christian, Lawrenceville, Ga.
Schulte, Sarah C., to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.
Schwartz, Aaron W., to Peace, Livonia, Mich.
Schwartz, Magdalen N., to Peace, Livonia, Mich.
Severeid, Joshua M., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Shiery, Joseph D., to St. John, Bay City, Mich.
Smith, Caitlin M., to St. John, Red Wing, Minn.
Sonntag, Joel R., to Good Shepherd Lutheran Academy, Deltona, Fla.
Stein, Megan A., to Christ-St. Peter, West Campus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Waldschmidt, Bethany A., to St. Paul, Algoma, Wis.
Wendt, Micah R., to Immanuel, Salem, Ore.
Wentker, Katie J., to New Hope Lutheran Academy, West Melbourne, Fla.
Wenzel, Megan M., to St. Paul, Tomah, Wis.
Werre, Hope J., to Peace, Hartford, Wis.
Willems, Sara C., to California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif.
Zeamer, Courtney H., to Peridot-Our Savior's, Peridot, Ariz.
Zeamer, Luke T., to Peridot-Our Savior's, Peridot, Ariz.
Zibrowski, Amber M., to St. Lucas, Milwaukee, Wis.
Zoellner, Seth D., to Trinity, Waukesha, Wis.

STAFF MINISTER

Kuschel, Kristoffer K., to St. Paul, New Ulm, Minn.



PASSIONATE ABOUT REACHING THE HMONG

Tong Xing Yang, one of the newest WELS Hmong pastors, is passionate about sharing the gospel with his fellow Hmong—so passionate that he began a rigorous Pastoral Studies Institute program, graduating at the age of 59.

“My wife and I believe that life on earth is too short, and if we do not know Christ, our lives would not have much purpose,” he says. “I have chosen to become a pastor specifically in order to share the power of God’s grace so that others who may not know or serve God will be saved.”

For more than 30 years, WELS has been sharing the gospel with Hmong immigrants in the United States. This includes training many Hmong men to be pastors and helping support them in their ministry. Some of these men serve congregations here in the United States, while others have returned to share the gospel in their home countries of Thailand and its surrounding area. A Global Hmong Ministry Committee was developed in 2015 to coordinate the ministry opportunities. Hmong pastor Bounkeo Lor recently accepted the call to serve as the Hmong Asia ministry coordinator (read more on p. 20).

A look at several U.S. Hmong ministries shows the challenges and blessings of reaching out to the Hmong.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

With family, or clan, connections being strong in the Hmong culture, Yang and his wife remained in Fresno, Calif., after he graduated from the PSI program in 2013 to continue sharing the gospel with their seven children and their families. It was also a good area for evangelism with 75 percent of the Hmong population there not truly understanding God’s grace.

Yang used his many contacts in the Hmong community as opportunities to share God’s message; he also went door-to-door in Hmong neighborhoods. A radio broadcast further widened his outreach. Four years later, Faith Hmong has 93 members and 11 prospects—though the road has not been easy.

“Many Hmong believe that Shamanism is Hmong culture, so when I share God’s message, I am treated as a stranger because I am sharing a religion or culture that is not

‘Hmong,’” he says.

“Oftentimes, I am challenged, left feeling ashamed, because I have been told that I am not Hmong . . . because I believe in the ‘white man’s religion.’ ”

This, however, doesn’t stop Yang. “My goal is to continue to share the gospel with the Hmong community,” he says. “I hope that God will help grow the seeds that I have tried to plant.”

GROWING FAITH

Pheng Moua, pastor at Immanuel Hmong, St. Paul, Minn., shares Yang’s passion for



Tong Xing Yang and his wife, Xee.

reaching the lost. While Moua and his 250-member congregation continue to reach out to the largest Hmong population in the U.S., he is also working to make his congregation more independent and self-supporting.

Moua says he has seen much growth in his members' faith since the congregation started as an exploratory mission in 1999. "A second generation of WELS Hmong Christians have emerged from the older generation that used to worship spirits and ancestors," he says. "The young men and women whom the Lord brought to Immanuel's congregation when they were in grade school are now teaching our WELS doctrines to the members and community."

Currently worshipping at the Anglo congregation, St. John, St. Paul, Minn., Immanuel Hmong would like to secure its own church facility. "If we do not have a place for ourselves, it is hard for us to do outreach to the community, and it is hard for our members to take responsibility and ownership," says Moua. The church has put a building and a fundraising committee in place to work toward that goal.

Moua says Immanuel Hmong hopes to serve as a mother church for future Hmong congregations in the area as well as to partner with WELS congregations to train Hmong men for the ministry. It is also looking to add English worship services to reach the younger Hmong generation.

CLOSE PARTNERSHIPS

Many Hmong ministries partner closely with an Anglo WELS congregation (see sidebar below).

Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn., found itself in this situation when Bounkeo Lor, then pastor at Grace Hmong,

Kansas City, Kan., referred La Xiong to the congregation. Xiong and his extended family went through Bible information class and soon became members at Holy Trinity. Now Xiong is working with Dennis Klatt, pastor at Holy Trinity, and the Pastoral Studies Institute to become a pastor. "I love God and would like to help others understand the love of Jesus from the gospel," he says.

Xiong offers monthly worship in Hmong at Holy Trinity as well as weekly adult Bible study. Besides his studies and his full-time job to support his family, he also is reaching out in his neighborhood and workplace. "I am currently helping a neighbor with landscaping in his yard and have had four conversations with him about Jesus," he says. He also witnesses to his wife's grandmother in Menomonie, Wis. "My goal is to get the family elder and his children connected to our WELS church there."

Because he doesn't speak English fluently, he is thankful for Holy Trinity's partnership in reaching out to the second- and third-generation English-speaking Hmong. His and his extended family's children attend Holy Trinity's English Sunday school, and the entire group attends the English worship services held every week.

His goal once he becomes a pastor? "I would like to go back to Asia to share the gospel in Thailand and Laos. I would like to help them correctly understand the truth about God's free and full forgiveness in Jesus."

Julie Wietzke is managing editor of Forward in Christ.

This is the fourth article in a series about cross-cultural outreach in the U.S. and Canada. Learn more at wels.net/missions.

PARTNERS IN MINISTRY Joel B. Schroeder

Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kan., has benefitted greatly from associating with and serving Grace Hmong, Kansas City, Kan., located 20 minutes from us.

In 2015 we helped Grace Hmong secure a WELS Church Extension Fund loan to purchase and renovate the building they were leasing from a Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod congregation. We guided them through construction, then helped them secure a grant to equip that building. Other grants purchased equipment to carry on weekly Internet radio outreach. We've included Grace Hmong in our annual budget. We've helped fund Pastor Bounkeo Lor's frequent mission/training trips to Southeast Asia. We've prayed for and encouraged Grace Hmong. Our pastors preach once a month to Hmong youth to keep them in the saving faith as they become more Americanized. Our pastors helped teach six men in the Pastoral Studies Institute.



Pastor Joel Schroeder teaching Kong Lor (left) and Hue Thao, two men from Grace Hmong training to be pastors.

Blessings haven't flowed only one way. We've been privileged to see the passion of the Hmong people to hear the gospel and spread it tirelessly. We've rejoiced when Pastor Lor's trips overseas uncovered thousands of people begging for more gospel training. We are learning about another culture firsthand—delicious food, unique holidays, bright festival clothing, strong leadership by elders, and respect for the aged.

Grace Hmong has heightened our joy and burden to take the gospel to all nations. World mission opportunities exist down the block or at the next desk. We thank God for helping us see foreign fields near and far white unto harvest through our fellowship with Grace Hmong.

Joel Schroeder is pastor at Mt. Olive, Overland Park, Kansas.



SALT

of the

EARTH

As Jesus renews us through his grace and mercy, we can be zealous in sharing that hope with others. Jeffrey D. Enderle

My phone buzzed. Checking it revealed a text message from a dear sister in Christ, Lavinia. She texted a prayer request on behalf of her family. Lavinia's sister had died, and Lavinia was on her way to the memorial service. I sent a quick message expressing my condolences and assured her I would keep her family in my prayers. I would pass along the prayer request to the rest of the congregation as well.

Then it hit me. Her text message sounded really familiar. Hadn't she just sent me a similar message not too long ago? I pulled out my phone again and started scrolling through the messages. There was another message a few weeks ago just like this one. Was this the same person? I fired off another quick text asking for clarification.

Unfortunately, it wasn't the same family member. This was another painful death close to home. As we went back and forth, it came out these weren't the only ones. Additional family tragedies had struck. In all, there had been six deaths in her family over the past few weeks. A sister. A sister's husband. One had gone suddenly, unexpectedly. Another had been suffering, in declining health for such a long time. Still another had been the result of mounting health issues. And one had been run over by a car. Intentionally.

This was a lot for Lavinia. I had been praying and sharing prayer requests on behalf of her family. Now I turned my attention to Lavinia herself and prayed that God would allow her to endure all this personal tragedy.

WORN DOWN AND EXPOSED

You've probably experienced enough tragedy of your own to understand some of the side effects. Your tragedies don't have to be as many or as dramatic as Lavinia's. You wrestle with the emotional fallout. You find it hard to concentrate. You are distracted from your normal routine. You can't keep all the doubts and questions from bouncing around in your head. Sometimes it even robs you of sleep, zapping your energy. The whole experience becomes such a burden. Joy gets suffocated out of your life.

In our part of the country, climate conditions can be brutal. The high desert sun can beat down oppressively from above. Winds commonly whip up a frenzy of sand and dust. Without shelter, you can start to feel dried out, cracked, and brittle. You wonder if you're about to get swept away or crumble in the extreme environment.

I couldn't help wondering if that was happening to Lavinia—and not because of the weather. I was wondering if all the tragedy was starting to pile

up on her and about to crush her. It can all be so brutal.

She is such a quiet, gentle soul. But she's a tough lady too. That's because she's always such a rock to the people around her. She's there for her husband and daughters. She's always helping with her grandchildren. Her siblings rely on her for support. Nieces and nephews and cousins rely on her strength. She is always ready to reach out with a kind word, a caring gesture, or her calming presence.

But that kind of care and concern for others can wear you out. It grinds down your enthusiasm when the needs keep piling up. When you keep giving and giving and giving, it uses up your capacity for compassion, leaving your tank empty.

Zeal feels impossible. Enthusiasm appears unattainable. Any kind of energy for other people has already evaporated.

In those cases, the danger is similar to the risks accompanying extreme weather. Exposure is the issue. Exposure to deaths, tragedies, and defeats are issues for our souls. Trying to weather them alone is dangerous. Souls are at risk.

SHELTERED BY GOD'S GRACE

So that became my prayer focus for Lavinia. While I continued to bring her family to the Lord in prayer, I shifted to include prayers for Lavinia's exposure to spiritual extremes as well. If she was exposed to all those tragedies, they could inflict real damage to her soul. Cracks could be created in her confidence in the Lord. Weaknesses in her trust could be exposed. She could end up crumbling under the weight of everything going on all around her.

After the funeral, I decided to give Lavinia a call, just to check how she was holding up. She admitted things were taking their toll on her. But she was thankful she was able to be there to support her family in their time of need.

She was feeling a little worn out. That's also when we realized the Lord was using her at this difficult time. Her

hope in Jesus was so rare amid all the gloom and despair. She didn't have to do anything amazing. She didn't have to change the circumstances for her family. She simply had a chance to share her hope in Christ.

Lavinia took her refuge under the shelter of God's grace. Her Savior had done more than just be present for her in her struggles. Jesus had completely dedicated himself to her spiritual rescue. He never let up for a moment. He never took a break from serving sinners. His life was one huge commitment to living the perfection God demands of every human being. In his most helpless and most agonizing moment, he still was able to cry out: "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). He knew exactly what sinners needed. Jesus never came up short in giving peace and strength to his people.

Refreshment comes from the Lord. Like a cool mist after a punishing desert wind, the Spirit comes to God's children. The Holy Spirit makes Christ's victory your victory. Jesus defeated death and hell, which rob lives of joy and hope. The same power that brings faith to hearts brings confidence to Christian lives. Gospel promises well up in hearts of faith. Blessings bubble up from God's words of peace.

In times of trial and tragedy God's people get to be that cool, refreshing breeze for others. We get to be instruments of God's restoration. We have the chance to share real hope with people going through genuine hardships. Our words and example are real, forged in the fire of our own trials. The good news of what Jesus has done for us is the basis of everything we do for the people in our lives. His power works through us to bring his unconditional love and forgiveness to the people in our lives who are also struggling, perhaps even more than we are. God's mercies restore and refresh us so we might share his love with others.

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

This is the third article in a 12-part series about Christian love in action and how we can be salt in this world.

NEVER BE
lacking
IN ZEAL, BUT
KEEP YOUR
spiritual
FERVOR,
serving
THE LORD.

ROMANS 12:11

We do not
wish to boast
in Luther
or in a body
of doctrine,
but in Christ.

Proud to be Lutheran?

Earle D. Treptow

“Raise your hand, if you’re proud to be Lutheran.” Hoping to avoid embarrassment, you take a quick peek around the room to see what others are doing. Raise your hand and risk being viewed as proud and arrogant or embarrassed. Lower your hand and risk hiding your faith and failing to confess before others.

Before you decide whether to raise your hand or not, reflect on the answer revealed by your daily life. What do your attitudes and actions say about how you view being Lutheran?

I cannot speak for you, so let me mention what I’ve observed in myself. As I read about church bodies that exchange the truth of God’s Word for the “prize” of cultural relevance, I’m proud to be Lutheran. When I argue with a friend whose church views Baptism as nothing more than an act of obedience, I’m proud to be Lutheran. I’m proud to confess God’s truth about Baptism.

I’m proud that I haven’t fallen for the false teachings so many others have because they haven’t faithfully searched the Scriptures. I’m proud that I still hold to what God says in his Word, unlike those who have essentially rewritten it to suit their fancy. All of that is to say that I’m proud to be Lutheran . . . but I shouldn’t be. In the end, my celebration of the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation becomes this: “I’m proud of *me* and *my* orthodoxy.”

Sometimes my attitudes and actions send a different message regarding what I think about being Lutheran. When I tire of hearing that I can do nothing to contribute to having life with God or when I want the preacher to fast forward through the message of forgiveness in Christ and get on to how I should live to please God, I’m not exactly proud to be Lutheran. When I won’t invite people to worship because I feel that close Communion seems

unloving, I show myself embarrassed to be Lutheran. All of that is to say that I’m not proud to be Lutheran . . . but I ought to be.

Whether it’s misplaced pride or inappropriate embarrassment, the problem is the same on both sides. I’m entirely too concerned with self, either in thinking that God must be impressed with my commitment to the truth or in wanting to minimize teachings that I feel stand in the way of the church’s growth.

To be Lutheran is to put aside everything you’ve done for God and to hold instead to Christ’s perfect righteousness in your place. Being Lutheran means clinging to Christ alone for the forgiveness of all your sins and finding your value in God’s unconditional love for you in Christ. It means finding your joy, not in how you’re feeling about the Lord but in his promises. We do not wish to boast in Luther or in a body of doctrine, but in Christ. Boasting in Christ is good, proper, and God-pleasing because the Lord himself works it in us. “Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord’ ” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

So, go ahead and raise your hand!

Contributing editor Earle Treptow, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Christ Alone, Thiensville, Wisconsin.



MONUMENTS

Lasting Memories

As an altar reminded Abraham of a death that didn't happen, so a cross reminds us of how our Savior saved us from eternal death.

Samuel C. Degner

It's not hard to find memorials that mark the place where someone died. White roadside crosses sit at the spot of a highway fatality. A new tower rises over the place where thousands lost their lives on 9/11. A makeshift memorial of candles, flowers, photos, and teddy bears crops up at the site of the latest tragedy.

But have you ever seen a monument to a death that *didn't* happen?

A SACRIFICE GOD DEMANDS

Abraham was a nomad. He was used to walking for days at a time. But the three-day journey he undertook from Beersheba to Moriah must have felt like the longest of his life. It wasn't just the distance; he was on a mission to sacrifice his son, his only son. He had God's promise to bless him—and the whole world—through Isaac; he also had God's command to kill him. How his confidence and confusion must have struggled with every step!

And what about Isaac? What was behind his question, when he noticed that they had all the materials needed for a sacrifice except the sacrifice itself? What was going through his mind when his father tied him up and placed him on top of the altar?

The Bible answers none of these questions. But perhaps it's good to ask them because, whether you realize it or not, you were once in Isaac's place.

You were bound guilty and laid out on the altar of God's justice. You belonged there for all the times you disobeyed

your heavenly Father. His wrath was about to come down on you and end your life eternally.

A SUBSTITUTE GOD PROVIDES

Abraham's reply to Isaac echoes down through the centuries: "God himself will provide the lamb" (Genesis 22:8).

Who do you think was happier to see that ram caught in the thicket of Moriah—father or son? What a relief to know that another would die in Isaac's place! Isaac's hands and feet were untied, and he came down off the altar. He was safe! He would not die at Moriah that day. The stones stacked there were finally stained with blood, but not his. They stood as a monument to one death—and to another that didn't happen.

Two thousand years later, not far from that very place, God once again provided a Lamb. The innocent Son of God was bound and laid onto a cross-shaped altar. The Father in heaven "did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). The perfect Lamb spilled his innocent blood for our disobedience. The sacrifice is over . . . and we get to live. We're safe!

Today, we have reminders of that substitute's sacrifice all around us—in our sanctuaries, on our steeples, around our necks, on our walls, in the sign the pastor makes at the start of the service, on the stones that mark our final resting place. Each cross is a memorial to the Lamb's sacrifice in our place. Each cross is a reminder that, because he died for us, we will not die forever but live with him.

Cherish that cross—a monument to a death that happened and to one that never will.

Contributing editor Samuel Degner is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

This is the fourth article in a nine-part series on Old Testament monuments and what they mean to us today.



Jesus invited
believers to pray
that his Father's
glorious work of
saving us be
honored and
revered among us.

Hallowed be your name

I think the only time I use the word *hallowed* might be when I say the Lord's Prayer. It's not that I don't understand what it means. It's just a word that does not come up in conversation—with one exception. It is an important part of my conversation with my heavenly Father.

So I often use *hallowed* when I pray, "Our Father, hallowed be your name." I ask for God's name to be honored, appreciated, or set apart for special reverence. Of course, we cannot make it any more special or holy than it already is. His name is forever connected to what he has done for us. That God has sent his Son to redeem sinners is a glorious and profound truth. God has given us forgiveness, life, and salvation through Christ. What greater reason to treat his name with respect and honor.

Jesus invited believers to pray that his Father's glorious work of saving us be honored and revered among us. "Hallowed be your name." When we come together, we need to hear the gospel, the news of God's gracious work for us. We know the gospel is the power of God (Romans 1:16). It is vital for our spiritual life and our eternal future. We honor God by proclaiming what he has done.

To proclaim something different from the gospel of Christ dishonors our heavenly Father. It diminishes him. John reminds us that when we say something contrary to God's Word we make God a liar (1 John 5:10). When our works, our thoughts, and our efforts take center stage, we move God to a secondary role as a supporting actor instead of the main attraction. His name is not hallowed.

So we pray that God our heavenly Father would keep our attention on the main thing: Christ. Our regular prayer is necessary because of the temptations we encounter almost every day. In our world, God's name is used for almost everything but proclaiming Christ crucified. Even in churches the message is distorted and altered to create a kind

of Christianity of feeling good without Christ.

With my fellow believers, I ask that the Lord's name be revered, honored, and held in a special place among us as God's children. After all, he has placed his name on us. We are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That name along with the water has washed our sins away and made us children of God. We are clothed with Christ's perfect life so that all blemishes and faults are covered. And we have become his children, destined to inherit all our Father's rich blessings.

What troubles me is when God's children bring dishonor to the Lord Jesus. When I hear that Christians have stumbled into great public sin, my heart sinks. I know sin still lives within us. So when I pray, "Hallowed be your name," I'm asking God to strengthen both me and my fellow believers so that we do not disgrace our heavenly Father by our behavior.

In a positive way, we pray that God would strengthen and direct us all so that we show more kindness, patience, gentleness, love, joy, and peace as we deal with each other. Those qualities are important in his church. They are also important in our dealings with those who do not know Jesus yet. We ask the Lord to help us honor him in every situation of life. When we are insulted, when the world speaks well of us, when we suffer, when we rejoice and are happy, we pray, "Hallowed be your name, heavenly Father."

Vocation: Serving God and others

Joel D. Otto

Monasticism received a lot of attention from Luther and his fellow reformers. They saw that the church promoted this “religious” way of life as the best way to improve a person’s chances to get to heaven. It was an example of salvation by human effort.

The reformers also criticized this life of poverty, chastity, and obedience because monasticism confused what it really meant to serve God and others. People were led to believe that you had to live as some kind of “super Christian” to really serve God. Luther said that Christians serve God in their everyday lives when they serve their families and neighbors. But it is hard to serve your family and neighbor if you are sequestered behind the walls of a monastery.

God gives us opportunities to live our faith (Ephesians 2:10). Luther described these opportunities as a Christian’s “station” in life or a “vocation” or “calling.” We have numerous relationships in our daily living: families, communities, schools, workplaces, the marketplace, friendships, churches, government. Each of these provides opportunities to serve God by serving others and by contributing to the welfare of the larger society.

In fact, God provides what we need to help us carry out our vocations. In Luther’s explanation to the Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer in his Small Catechism, we notice how many different aspects of “daily bread” intersect with our service to God and others. “Daily bread includes everything we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.” God gives us the opportunities and the means to help others.

Luther especially noted the value God places on the simple, everyday ways that Christians live out their various vocations. Yes, we are serving God. We are doing all things to his glory (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17). But God is also acting through us. He is working through us to care for others. Luther wrote, “God’s people please God even in the least and most trifling matters. For he will be working all things through you; he will milk the cow through you and perform the most servile duties through you, and all the greatest and least duties alike will be pleasing to him” (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 6, p. 10).

When we think in those terms, we can see how what seems like an ordinary life is elevated in God’s eyes. We don’t have to be “religious” or “super Christians” to serve God. True Lutherans understand that we serve God when we serve others through our various vocations in life.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Read Colossians 3:12–4:1. How do these verses demonstrate attitudes Christians display in their vocations? How do these verses give specific direction for living out our vocations?
2. How might we fall into “Lutheran monasticism” today?
3. List specific vocations you have in your life. How have they changed over the years? Choose one vocation and think of ways you serve God and others in that calling.



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This is the 11th article in a 14-part series on key doctrinal emphases that Luther brought back to light through the Reformation. Find this article and answers online after Aug. 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TRULY LUTHERAN

Open spaces make us feel small, but God has not left us alone and lonely.

Loneliness is inherent in the experience of the West. The wide-open spaces, the sheering sweep of the mountains, the endless stretches of highways. It's as lonely in its effect as it is beautiful to the eye. Perhaps this is why some people carve their names into trees or write, "Dave was here," on bathroom walls. The loneliness was crowding in on them, threatening them with their own smallness.

But such is our condition. We are born small, needy, dependent. That is why each of us discovers, as soon as we have even the most rudimentary self-awareness, the same thing—loneliness. That need for others, that need for connection. But needing does not guarantee receiving. Thus we do the apprehensive dance, a cautious dance drawing close to others in anxious hope yet afraid we might instead pull back in aching hurt.

This dance has as its cause our willful pulling back from God and his Word. For the loneliness of being disconnected from other humans is an echo of the Great Loneliness, the deadly disconnection from the triune God caused by sin.

So Christ entered our time and space and did his own dance. His life was in perfect rhythm with God's law for our sake. His death was in the extreme rhythm of love in order to pay for our sin. Dying as he was born—not just as man, not just as God, but as both. And then rising again.

He enters, one by one, into our own time and space by Baptism, connecting us by water and Word to his death and resurrection, connecting us to himself by faith.

For loneliness has no place with our triune God, that

perfect unity of relationship, the ultimate reality of being truly connected with another. In our Father's house, *lonely* is a foreign word—an unintelligible word.

This is the house that Jesus went to prepare for us. The one he promises us at our baptism. The one he shares with us in the gospel. The one he connects us to in his Supper, a foretaste of the feasting and celebration in that house, a connection so real you can taste it.

But we are not home yet. Each Christian is caught between time and eternity, "like a bird alone on a roof" (Psalm 102:7). Not yet home in heaven, no longer at home on earth.

So Jesus taught us to ask for good friends and a godly spouse in the Fourth Petition.

The Holy Spirit gathers us into a congregation. The Father makes us, by his grace, more grace-full in our apprehensive dance—learning to forgive, to set boundaries, to be authentic. We teach our children,

"If you want to have friends, you have to be a friend."

And God blesses it all. We are not alone. Thank you, Lord.

But still, times of loneliness come. Maybe when you are traveling through the West or when you are lying awake in the dark or when you find that you have places to fit but no place to fit in. And you again learn the truth the psalmist revealed—that you are a bird on a roof. That the ultimate solution to us as birds on the roof is God's angels, coming to help us fly off the roof. Soaring high. Soaring home. Where a discouraging word like *lonely* is never heard.

Jonathan Werre is pastor at Good Shepherd, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

In our Father's house,
lonely is a foreign word



Like a BIRD ON A ROOF

Jonathan D. Werre