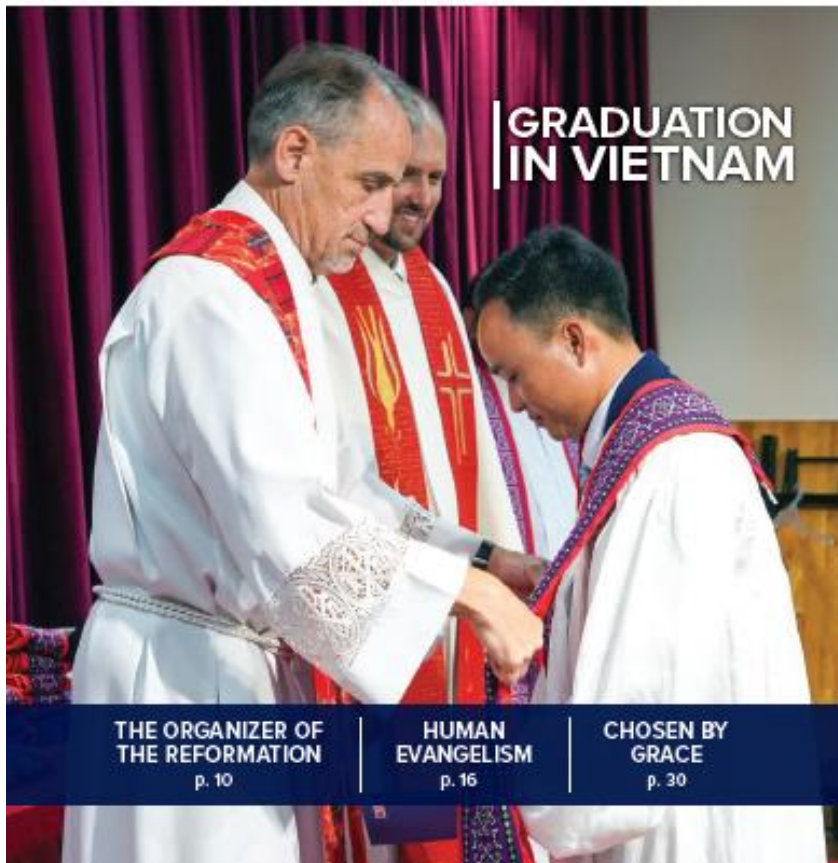


OCTOBER 2023

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# FORWARD IN CHRIST

A LUTHERAN VOICE



GRADUATION  
IN VIETNAM

THE ORGANIZER OF  
THE REFORMATION  
p. 10

HUMAN  
EVANGELISM  
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CHOSEN BY  
GRACE  
p. 30

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Executive Editor, *Forward in Christ*, January, 2023 –  
Pastoral Assistant, St. Mark Lutheran Church; Leesburg, Fla.  
November 2022 - May 2023; November 2023 – May 2024

# You and Your Synod

WELS consists of \_\_\_\_\_ congregations.

- A. 869
- B. 984
- C. 1,243
- D. 1,475

The baptized membership of WELS is \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. 290,000
- B. 335,000
- C. 410,000
- D. 506,000

# You and Your Synod

Of the twelve districts in WELS, which district has the most baptized members?

Nebraska	13,333
Michigan	31,072
Northern Wisconsin	66,071
Southeastern Wisconsin	48,016

# You and Your Synod

Of the twelve districts in WELS, which district has the most congregations?

Nebraska 94

Northern Wisconsin 153

Southeastern Wisconsin 139

Western Wisconsin 164

# You and Your Synod

How many early childhood ministries in WELS?	362
Lutheran elementary schools?	284
area Lutheran high schools?	29

# You and Your Synod

In the history of WELS (1850 – 2023), how many Synod presidents have there been?

2

9

12

16



# *Forward in Christ*

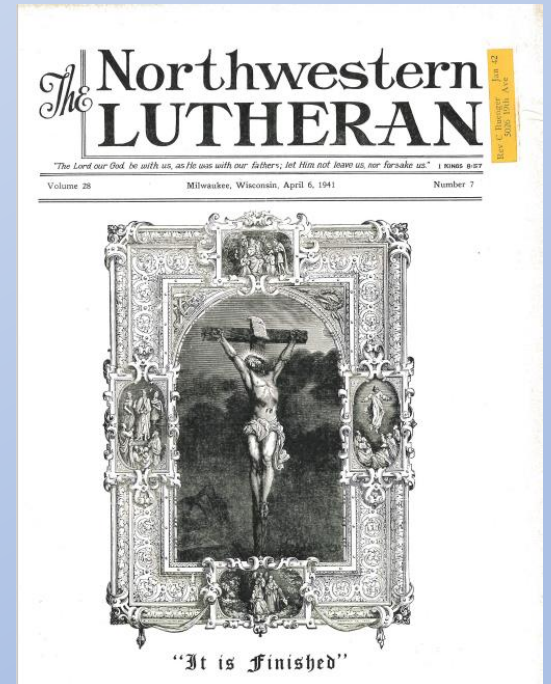
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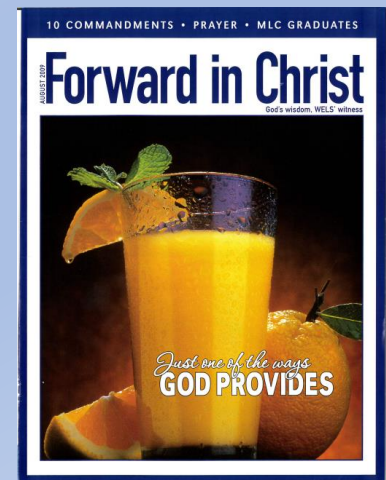
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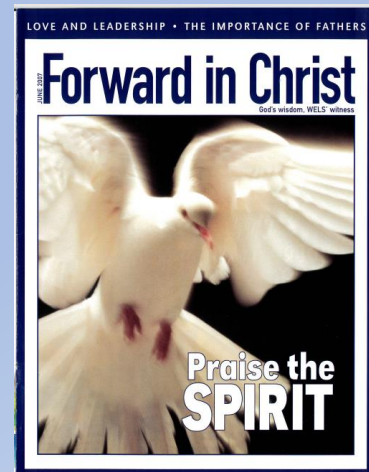
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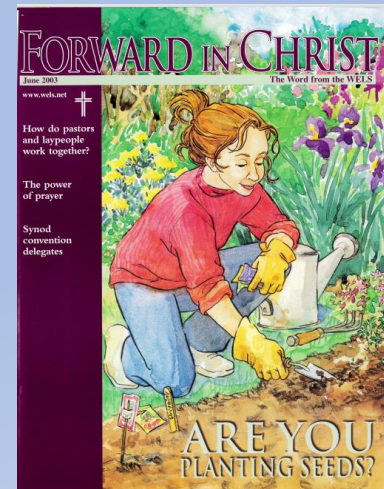
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# Snapshot of contents



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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

"I am Jesus' little lamb" is the theme of this month's "My Christian Life" story, which features a Navajo shepherdess from Farmington, N.M. Just as she cared and tended sheep, so also God provided for her throughout the years, including calling her to faith in Jesus (p. 19).

God's care and provision for his flock can be seen throughout this issue:

- Jesus used grief to draw Steve Yetter, a new member at Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif., deeper into the Word to discover Christ's love for him (p. 7).
- The grace of God can clearly be seen in the graduation of 55 Hmong pastors from the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam, shepherds who will bring the life-saving gospel to church members and beyond (p. 24).
- Our "Please explain" (p. 30) reminds us of the love of our Shepherd, who in eternity chose us as his sheep by grace alone.
- Don't forget about God's love for his little lambs, children who aren't afraid to let their light shine (back page).

Letting your light shine is also the topic of two personal witnessing articles, each providing ideas for sharing Christ's love to a world that desperately needs it (pp. 16-19; 32).

*Julie*  
Julie Wietzke



PHOTO | Brian Urbanak / GodWind Productions

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**ON THE COVER** ➤ Joel Nitz, Hmong Asian missionary, presents a stole to one of the 55 Hmong graduates from the theological training program in Vietnam this past July. The wife of one of the graduates plus ten other women handmade all the stoles. They spent two months on the project. See more photos of the graduation on p. 24.



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## THIS IS WELS

1 | Installation and ordination of Caleb King (pictured with his wife, Samantha, at Atonement, Plano, Texas) as a home missionary for Divine Savior, North Collin County, Texas 2 | A Jesus Cares Ministries event at Redeemer, Victoria, Texas 3 | Installation of two new teachers at California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, Calif. 4 | Installation of Buok Chuol (middle, pictured with his parents Peter Bur and Martha Gach as well as Pastor John Koelpin and Beckie Koelpin) as vicar at Calvary, Dallas, Texas 5 | Third graders at Risen Savior Christian Academy, Pooler, Ga., showing off their new Bibles 6 | Members from Bethlehem, Carmel, Ind., packing more than four thousand meals to feed the hungry.

SHARE > your congregational or ministry photos. Send them to [ficsubmissions@wels.net](mailto:ficsubmissions@wels.net) or upload them at [forwardinchrist.net/submit](http://forwardinchrist.net/submit).



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## Known for a higher hope

"Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

Jeffrey D. Enderte

AT A TIME when we have limitless entertainment options at our fingertips, we have fewer and fewer shared experiences. When the series finale of *M\*A\*S\*H* aired in 1983, over 100 million viewers tuned in, topping even the ratings for the Super Bowl. Today if you ask people for a TV show recommendation, you might not even be able to access it because of all the subscription packages available.

### STORIES THAT DEFINE THE WORLD'S REALITY

We don't all have the same tastes in—or even the same access to—the same music, movies, and shows. We do, however, share some basic needs with all people. These needs can leave people feeling hopeless.

If we can be thoughtful, humble, and curious, we might be able to find openings to share the hope that defines us. Stories have the power to draw us in. Great stories can grip our attention and pull unsuspecting audiences into their gravitational pull. Carefully crafted stories can do more than merely entertain us. They can reveal how people view the world, exposing issues in their hearts.

Over the past 100 years the most influential thinkers have defined our human existence as a search for meaning in a meaningless world. Critically acclaimed artists in recent generations depict hopelessness. There is struggle, but there's no certainty of any purpose behind it.

Now compare the stories pushed on us by intellectuals with the stories that captivate us. The highest grossing movies in the last two decades are from the *Avatar*, *Avengers*, and *Star Wars* franchises. Good has to stand up against evil. There has to be a bigger purpose behind the struggle. Stories we find compelling expose the inconsistencies between what people say they believe and what they want to believe. People might surrender to the assumption that this life is all there is, but we all know there is more. There has to be.

### THE STORY THAT OFFERS HOPE

Author J. R. R. Tolkien once described the way the best fiction contains elements of the universal truth. There has been a fall from perfection. There is conflict between good and evil. Ultimately good will triumph over evil and provide a happy ending. It traces back to the gospels. Tolkien wrote: "The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation" (*On Fairy-Stories*, p. 34).



**If we are known as God's people in a distinctive community, we can offer our world a distinctive hope.**

The coming of Jesus was a tragedy, but a good one. His resurrection provides meaning to suffering.

God's people have hope that our lives are more than our choices because God has given us meaning and purpose. We gather in communities of hope that pull us away from simply feeding our personal preferences. And we have hope to share with a world that desperately needs it. Jesus provides the story that is too good because it is true. Jesus triumphed over personal evil and universal wickedness. His victory is ours individually and available for the entire world. "Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

Even the greatest tragedies and the most captivating stories give us a chance to be known by our higher hope. If we are known as God's people in a distinctive community, we can offer our world a distinctive hope.



Contributing editor Jeffrey Enderte is pastor at St. John, St. Clair, Minnesota.



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## Another humbling experience

The year was 2007. I had just completed my 18th year as president of one of our synod's ministerial preparatory schools. I had the privilege of being part of the training of hundreds of young people who would serve as pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and dedicated laypeople in our synod.

That all changed in 2007. I was attending the synod convention at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Synod President Karl Gurgel had announced several months earlier that he had decided not to serve another term. The first item of business at the convention was to elect a new synod president.

The election process is somewhat complicated. After prayers for God's guidance, each delegate is asked to nominate one person for the position. The five individuals who receive the most nominations are placed onto the ballot. Delegates vote for one person until someone receives the majority of the votes. If no one receives a majority, the person receiving the least votes is removed from the ballot, and the voting is repeated.

At that convention, no one received a majority on the first ballot. Or the second. Or the third. On the fourth ballot, two names remained, one of them mine. Much to my surprise and even shock, I was elected and called to serve as synod president.

What a humbling moment that was. What a huge responsibility it would be. I wondered whether I would be able to serve in such a role. Any call from the Lord is one that leads the person called to reflect carefully on both one's gifts and one's weaknesses. But in that careful self-examination is the assurance that the work of the ministry does not depend on the person, but on the blessings and strength of a gracious God. Trusting his promises, I accepted that call.

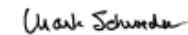
Now, after 16 years as your synod president, God's people in WELS have again called me to serve in this office. More accurately, God, working through his church, has called another weak, flawed, and sinful clay jar to serve in ministry. I am humbled and thankful as much as I was the first time.

The years as your synod president have been a great blessing to me. You, God's saints, have expressed your support and love. You have been patient with me when I have made mistakes. I have no doubt that you will continue to do that. And with God's help, I will strive to be faithful to the calling God has given me and the work you have entrusted to me.

I have also been blessed to see your joyful commitment to our God-given mission. You have supported the work with your prayers, your generous offerings, and your willingness to serve. Our synod is not perfect, but God continues to do amazing things to build his church in spite of our weaknesses and failings.

Paul's prayer for the Philippians is my prayer: "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:3-6).

Thank you for this undeserved privilege. I ask God to help me be faithful in my service to him and to you. I ask for your continued prayers as we continue to walk together in this amazing work that God has given us to do.



Mark G. Schroeder | WELS President



PHOTO: I. Mel Anne Design



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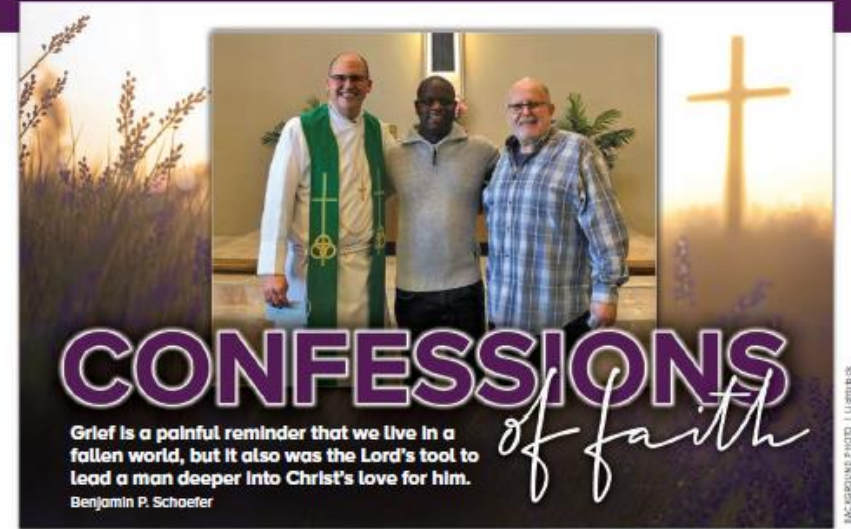
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**SPRING IS THE** season of the year when new life is blossoming. The cold of winter fades away, spring rains water the earth, and flowers burst forth. It's also when Easter celebrations fill our churches and hearts, as we remember that our Redeemer lives. New life in Christ is ours through the power of the Spirit who works through the means of grace. The gospel creates and sustains us with the abundant life that only Christ can give.

For Steve Yetter, however, April showers also came with a stream of grief that has again and again battered his life. The Lord used those painful experiences to remind him of his need for his Savior and to bring him to the doors of Mount Calvary, Redding, Calif.

#### **GRIEF FOLLOWS HIM HOME**

Steve was raised in an average American Christian home in Schenectady, N.Y. Baptized in a Dutch Reformed church, he remembers worshiping with his parents and brothers when he was growing up in the 1950s and '60s. He and his brothers went to Sunday school and heard a lot about "being good, or else!" After high school, Steve enlisted in the US Navy, scoring well enough on tests to serve his country as an electronics technician. He decided to sign up to go to Vietnam.

Officially, Steve was assigned as an advisor to the South Vietnamese Navy, helping them use and repair the electronic equipment and radios provided by the United

States. In practice he became part of the "brown water navy," patrolling the internal waterways of war-torn South Vietnam. "I didn't see God in Vietnam—all I saw was a lot of dying for no good reason," says Steve. His Christian faith had all but evaporated.

When Steve's years of service were up, he got off the boat in San Francisco and stayed on the West Coast. He bought a motorcycle, decided to be a musician, and traveled extensively while working odd jobs and playing clubs, bars, and wherever a guitar player was needed. Despite his outward freedom, Steve was trapped. Every spring the grief and turmoil of war stirred in his mind. Spring was the time when the North Vietnamese Army launched what became known as the "Easter Offensive," and Steve still lives with that trauma of war.

After a few years, he settled down in Santa Cruz, Calif., and met a woman named Roberta. She had three kids, and before Steve knew it, they were married, and he was papa to two boys and a spunky 13-year-old daughter. Soon God blessed their marriage with another son. Steve worked hard to provide for his new family, sometimes working two jobs and playing guitar on the weekends.

But the grief clung to him and appeared in powerful ways every spring. Steve later learned it was post-traumatic

BACK-GROUND PHOTO: ILLUSTRATION

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QUESTION & ANSWER |

# Q & A WITH DAVID SCHARF



## The Reformation cry is grace alone, but don't some Bible passages seem to say that Jesus will look at our good works instead?

When Jesus comes again on the Last Day, everyone's body and soul will be joined together again for judgment.

### SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Jesus describes judgment day: "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:28,29).

Taken out of the context of the rest of Scripture, it almost seems like we are judged on the basis of our deeds instead of faith. But Scripture is clear that we are saved by grace, through faith, and apart from works. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). We are saved by grace through God's gift of faith.

But can we see faith? In one sense, no. Faith is a matter of the heart known only to God. However, in another sense, yes. Faith can be seen in what we do. We are saved by faith alone, not works. But faith is never alone. There will always be evidence of that faith in what we do (cf. James 2:18,26).

### FRUITS ARE A DISPLAY OF FAITH

Jesus will say to believers on the Last Day: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink" (Matthew 25:34,35).

Since faith cannot be seen in the heart, Jesus will point to how faith showed itself in actions. Notice what is missing in Jesus' listing. There is no mention of sin! Why

not? Because all the imperfections in those actions have been washed away! All that remains is the good done out of love for Jesus.

There is sin in every one of my good works because I am sinful. Without God, I never have a perfectly pure motive. When my child wakes up at 3 A.M., is my first thought, Praise the Lord, a chance to serve my Savior? No! Unfortunately, my first thought is, Seriously? You're awake already? I just want to sleep! But I will still help my child, even if one of my motives is not 100 percent God-pleasing. But on the Last Day Jesus will display that work as evidence of faith, because he goes on to say "Whatever you did for one of the least of these . . . you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

Further evidence that we are saved by grace alone comes in Matthew 25:41-45. Jesus says that unbelievers did not do works of love for him. Certainly, unbelievers feed their children and care for them when sick, but because they reject Jesus' forgiveness, only sin remains in all of their works. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Finally, Jesus doesn't say, "For you gave millions of dollars to the poor, started a charity, changed the world." No, he points to giving food and drink and helping the sick. The satirist P. J. O'Rourke said, "Everybody wants to save the earth; nobody wants to help Mom do the dishes." The dishes, not great works of philanthropy, are the types of works Jesus lists.

Our Christian lives, motivated by our "grace alone" salvation, do not go unnoticed by our Savior!

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

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# PARENT CONVERSATIONS

Parenting can feel overwhelming as we navigate through the trenches, and the number of “experts” who volunteer to help us has exploded with the advent of social media and the worldwide web. Yet articles like these from Sarah Reik and Rob Guenther are a reminder that in some ways, the basics of parenting can be remarkably simple. Neither Reik nor Guenther claim to be an expert on parenting, but they’re in the trenches with us and have some valuable thoughts to share about their experiences.

—Nicole Balza

## WHAT ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A STRONG PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIP?

WHEN I initially set out to answer this question, my head was spinning. Thousands of books have been written on the topic of parenting. I believe we all would agree that our main goals as parents are to love our children unconditionally and to teach them about the unconditional love of God. For direction on where to go after that, I decided (with some trepidation as to what I might hear) to turn to the experts—my four children.

### LOVING COMMUNICATION

My children had quite a few thoughts about the importance of communication in developing and fostering a strong parent/child relationship. Carson (16) said he likes knowing that if he shares what’s on his mind, we will listen and do our best to understand from his point of view. McKenna (14) said it’s important for her to feel safe and comfortable talking to us, knowing that she won’t get a lecture but we’ll discuss things calmly and respectfully. Braden (13) said he knows some parents who get angry and put their kids down, but he’s glad that the way we talk to him is “kind and encouraging.”

**“EVERYONE SHOULD BE QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK AND SLOW TO BECOME ANGRY” (JAMES 1:19).**

### LOVING CONNECTION

The book *The 5 Love Languages of Children* lists five primary ways we can connect with our children to show them love. This is something we are intentional about in our family. Sharing words of affirmation is one

way to connect and clearly appreciated by my children as discussed above. Another way is through giving gifts—Braden loves when I run errands and randomly come home with a pair of shorts I think he’ll like. We make an effort to connect with all the children through physical touch (hugs, kisses, high-fives, cuddling on the couch), as this is a vital love language, especially when children are young. When asked what she thinks helps build a strong parent-child relationship, Julia (11) named the last two love languages: “I like that you support me and help me with what I do (acts of service), and I like when we have fun days together (quality time).”

My husband is a master at showing love through quality time. Just in the last two days he went golfing with Carson, helped McKenna practice shooting her bow, talked football with Braden, and spent time with Julia at her cross country run. He makes an effort to connect with them around their interests, and we’ve observed how it has led to strong bonds over the years.

**“OVER ALL THESE VIRTUES PUT ON LOVE, WHICH BINDS THEM ALL TOGETHER IN PERFECT UNITY” (COLOSSIANS 3:14).**

### LOVING CORRECTION

McKenna shared that she likes that we’re not over-protective and we don’t have many rules. She sees that we give her and the other children freedom and independence, and she appreciates that. My husband and I have made it our goal to be trainers and guides as we come alongside our children to both model and teach what it looks like to lead God-pleasing lives. This does



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# COMMUNITY

CONNECT | GROW | SERVE

## CHANGES IN MINISTRY

### Pastors

Bartsch, Mark, to Immanuel, Johnson Creek, Wis.

Bossett, Caleb, to Our Redeemer, Madison, Wis.

Birner, Philip, to retirement

Horn, Isaiah, to Trinity, Kiel, Wis.

Horn, Paul, to national civilian chaplain

Johnson, Randall, to Salem, Owosso, Mich.

Kolander, Ryan, to Riverview, Appleton, Wis.

Marggraf, Paul, to Mt. Olive, Delano, Minn.

Naurmann, James, to Our Savior, Phillips, Wis.

Nguyen, Tao, to Peace in Jesus Vietnamese, Boise, Idaho

Voss, David, to retirement

Wendland, Paul, to St. John, Saint Paul, Minn.

Zierner, Paul, to retirement

**Teachers**

Curtis, Nathan, to St. Paul, Columbus, Ohio

Draper, Eileen, to retirement

Gresock, Rachel, to Prince of Peace, Taylorsville, Utah

Horn, Rebecca, to Reformation, San Diego, Calif.

Jenswold, Madeline, to Loving Arms Child Care Center, Wichita, Kan.

Krueger, Jadee, to Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis.

Lambrecht, Sarah, to St. Paul, Onataska, Wis.

Niehausen, Amy, to Little Lamb Academy of Medford, Medford, Wis.

Perushek, Benjamin, to Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis.

Raith, Nicholas, to St. John, Milwaukee, Wis.

Reinhardt, Douglas, to Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wis.

Rothe, Alexandra, to Divine Savior Academy—Santa Rita Ranch, Liberty Hill, Texas

Schaper, Brad, to retirement

Schroeder, Rachel, to Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla.

Seeger, Rebecca, to Illinois Lutheran Elementary School, Crete, Ill.

Sievert, Scott, to retirement

Wade Jr., James, to East Fork, Whiteriver, Ariz.

### Staff ministers

Benzing, Thomas, to Mt. Calvary, Redding, Calif.

Graumann, Nathan, to St. Paul's, Fort Atkinson, Wis.

Waldt, Jon, to Divine Savior Lutheran Academy, Delray Beach, Fla.

## ANNIVERSARIES

Helenville, Wis.—St. Peter (175), Oct. 8.

Worship, 4 p.m.; catered meal to follow. Website, [stpeterslutheran-helenville.org](http://stpeterslutheran-helenville.org).

Watertown, Wis.—St. Luke (175), Oct. 15.

Worship, 8 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.; catered meal and program to follow 10:15 service. RSVP by Oct. 1 to [bouldese@ps.wels.net](mailto:bouldese@ps.wels.net).

Gillette, Wyo.—Christ Our Redeemer (40), Oct. 22.

Worship, 9 a.m.; anniversary meal, 12 p.m. RSVP, Marco Schlomer, [suemarco183@gmail.com](mailto:suemarco183@gmail.com); 307-689-7752.

Oklahoma City, Okla.—Holy Cross (50), Nov. 5.

Worship, 4 p.m.; meal to follow. Livestream available on Facebook@[HolyCrossOkc](https://www.facebook.com/HolyCrossOkc).

## CALLED TO eternal glory

A reporting of deaths of called workers as noted in the call report. Visit [forwardinchrist.net/obituaries](http://forwardinchrist.net/obituaries).

### PASTORS

WATERSTRADT, RONALD L.  
Feb. 3, 1941—Aug. 18, 2023

### TEACHERS

WERNICKE, DIANE E.  
June 6, 1944—July 29, 2023

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

—Matthew 5:4

## EVENTS

MLC Ladies Auxiliary Day—Oct. 7. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, [mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary](http://mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary).

Lutheran Convention for Seniors—Oct. 11–13. Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Stevens Point, Wis. Website, [wels.net/events](http://wels.net/events).

Christian Life Resources national convention—Oct. 14. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Theme: "For such a time as this." 9:30 a.m.–3 p.m. Website, [christianliferesources.com/resources/events/national-convention](http://christianliferesources.com/resources/events/national-convention).

WELS Historical Institute presentation and annual meeting—Oct. 15. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Presentation: "The History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary." 3–5 p.m.; annual meeting to follow presentation. Website, [welshistoricalinstitute.org/events](http://welshistoricalinstitute.org/events).

Women's retreat—Nov. 11. David's Star, Jackson, Wis. Theme: "God's peace—no place for anxiety." Rachel, 262-677-2412, ext. 302. Website, [davidstar.org](http://davidstar.org).

**NAMES WANTED**

Musicians—The planning committee for the 2024 National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, scheduled for July 30–Aug. 2, 2024, at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis., is looking for names of advanced ability instrumentalists who have not previously played at a worship conference. Submit names at [wels.net/worshipconference](http://wels.net/worshipconference).

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

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3231 or e-mail [rcs@wels.net](mailto:rcs@wels.net). Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.

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**ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA**

Grace, Glendale, Ariz., celebrated the 40th anniversary in the pastoral ministry of David Clark on Aug. 27.

Mount Calvary, Redding Calif., held its second annual Art in the Park on the last Saturday of June, July, and August. During this outreach event, members set up a canopy at a local park and invited the community to make crafts.

**MICHIGAN**

Memorial, Williamston, Mich., celebrated its 75th anniversary on June 4. The congregation was organized May 16, 1948, as a WELS mission.

**NORTHERN WISCONSIN**

St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis., celebrated three ministry anniversaries in June—Dawn Johnson, 35 years in the teaching ministry; Aaron Mueller, 20 years in the pastoral ministry; and Luther Curia, 20 years in the teaching ministry.



NORTHERN WISCONSIN

First German, Manitowoc, Wis., is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its sanctuary in 2023. The building is one of the oldest in Manitowoc and a cornerstone in the downtown area.



NORTH ATLANTIC

A regional WELS youth rally was held in Slippery Rock, Penn., from July 10-12. WELS members from six states focused on the theme "God, Others, Me" based on Philippians 2:3-5.



SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

St. Matthew's, Niles, Ill., hosted its first major outreach event in at least 15 years this summer. Its evening Bible camp was styled after vacation Bible school. It equipped St. Matthew's members to teach Bible stories to children and identified unchurched families in its neighborhood. Sixty-one children attended.



WESTERN WISCONSIN

More than 1,000 people gathered for the dedication of the new sanctuary at St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc, Wis., on Aug. 27. The new space includes a large gathering area and a small chapel as well as six classrooms and a band room for the church's school.



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## MY CHRISTIAN *Life*

The Good Shepherd guides and blesses  
a Navajo shepherdess in New Mexico.  
Sarah Habben

**“YAÁT’ÉÉH.** I am called Marian Newman. I am Bitterwater clan, born for Sleeping Rock. My maternal grandfather is Salt. My paternal grandfather’s clan is Towering House.”

### I AM JESUS’ LITTLE LAMB

For the Navajo people, introducing yourself means more than just sharing your name. It’s about sharing where and how you belong—your kinship or K’è. In this matrilineal society, you do so by sharing your four clans, beginning with your mother’s.

Perhaps this traditional greeting was among the first words Marian heard. She was born in 1933, in Naschitti, N.M., at the base of the Chuska Mountains. It was lambing season, and her pregnant mother had taken the lambs out before it got hot. “Pain came, and I came,” says Marian. “Mother caught me with her skirt. Aunt came and cut the cord.” Marian’s given name is Has-tso’-haz’baa’, which translates to “sudden birth of a lady warrior.” The government assigned her the name Marian Henry—and a birthday of May 14, based on the season she was born.

Marian has known her whole life how she fits in, but for her, belonging isn’t only about her clans. It’s about her kinship with Jesus.

### EVER GLAD AT HEART I AM

Marian’s mother raised sheep, weaving rugs to sell to the trading post. The herd provided their family with meat, milk, and wool, and Marian grew up hearing her mother say, “As long as you have sheep, you’ll never go hungry.”

Marian was the fifth child. “My four older brothers used to tease me, ‘Hurry up! Spin some wool for your mother. Don’t just sit there—spin and card the wool!’” Marian laughs as she concludes, “But I had no patience for that.” So her brothers weaved while Marian herded the family sheep on the mountain, keeping an eye out for timber rattlers and bears. “Mama told me, ‘You’d better not lay on the ground and sleep. A lizard might go in your mouth.’ So I would put my two feet in one stirrup and fall asleep draped across my horse.”

One of Marian’s earliest memories is the seasonal migration up the Chuska Mountains. Winter camp was at 5,000 feet, where it was dry and rocky with few trees. As the weather warmed and the grass dried, Naschittians would drive their flocks to the meadows of the second level. Spring and fall were spent a little higher, under piñons and juniper. In the height of summer, Marian remembers heading to the top camp, over 8,000 feet, under a forest of ponderosa, fir, and spruce. Such

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What does it mean that “many are invited, but few are chosen”? | Nathanael J. Brenner

**ABOUT TWO-THIRDS.** That is what I tell a couple as they are planning their wedding. About two-thirds of the people they invite will actually come.

That is how we usually say it, right? When we invite people to a wedding, party or other event, they RSVP either yes or no. Either they come, or they don't.

The way Jesus ends the parable of the wedding banquet raises some questions. “Many are invited, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). Why not say, “Many are invited, but few come”? Why use the word *chosen*? Jesus' final statement answers the question the parable addresses: Why will some people be in heaven, and why will others not be there?

#### A GOSPEL INVITATION

Similar to when we send out invitations to our weddings, God genuinely wants those he invites to come and share the joy. God wants all people to be saved and to be at the eternal wedding feast (Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Timothy 2:3,4). God's invitation comes to people through the gospel in Word and sacrament (Romans 10:17).

In Jesus' parable, the king invited many to the wedding feast for his son. But the ones he invited first rejected the invitation. “They paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them” (Matthew 22:5,6). The king then sent his servants out to the streets to invite any- and everybody. “[The servants]

gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests” (v. 10).

Jesus was teaching this parable to a crowd of Jews, which also included the chief priests and Pharisees. The Jewish nation received the gospel invitation first, but many refused to come. So God would send his gospel invitation to all the world—to the Gentiles. “Many are invited” (both Jews and Gentiles). The gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16 Evangelical Heritage Version).

#### A GRACIOUS CHOOSING

Many are invited, but why are the few chosen? This isn't picking teams in elementary school where God looks to choose the most athletic kid. This isn't a fancy gala where God is choosing the wealthiest donors. Since we are by nature sinful (Psalm 51:5) and objects of God's wrath (Ephesians 2:3), nothing about who we are or what we do moved God to choose us.

God chose us in Christ by grace alone. It is all by his undeserved love in Christ. “He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time” (2 Timothy 1:9). “He chose us *in him* before the creation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4, emphasis added).



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## A new open door

Jonathan I. Enter

Culture shifted. Absolute truth died. There's a new standard that's defended as undeniable, as the only right way to live: Your truth is your truth; someone else's truth is his or her truth. It's called relativism; it's really the devil's playground.

The greatest offense today is telling others their truth is wrong and yours is right. That's overwhelming and intimidating to most Christians because we know believing that Jesus is the only way to heaven and that the Bible is the only absolute truth is naturally offensive to people. It's scary to open your mouth and boldly proclaim with Paul, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This eternal truth is denounced as archaic, verbally abusive, and downright wrong.

So how do you confidently live and express your faith in this environment?

Actually, this environment is one of the greatest open doors to the gospel! Be like Paul. When he was in Athens, the people there believed in many false gods. But rather than complaining about their culture, Paul used it. He found a statue with the inscription "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23) and connected the people to the gospel of Christ.

Let's use today's culture in reference to Christ. In relativism, no one can tell you your personal truth is wrong. So . . . tell your truth, the truth of how God's love gives you peace, how the power of God did the impossible for you. Tell others about Jesus by sharing how Jesus' mercy gives you confidence to face each day. They'll often listen if you say it like this: "For me, I have found strength to endure by trusting in Christ. That's why I have such hope." From their perspective, you simply shared your truth. You didn't force your opinion on them as the only right way, and you didn't pressure them to believe it. You can't make them believe anyway. That's the Spirit's job. Your job is to plant the seed of the gospel.

In a culture that seems so hostile to the truth of God's Word, go back to what you know is absolute truth. Go back to Jesus.

Use 1 Peter 3:15 as your unwavering guide. "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord." Without hesitation but also without antagonization, proclaim Christ in your words and actions. "Always be prepared to give an answer." When you live for Christ, you will stick out. Listen for times to subtly yet specifically share the

**In relativism, no one can tell you your personal truth is wrong. So . . . tell your truth, the truth of how God's love gives you peace.**

truth "to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." You have the triune God, a God of purpose and order. Talk in the first person about how Christ impacted your past (giving you the peace of forgiveness), how the Father calms your present (knowing he powerfully and personally protects and provides for you), and how the Spirit guides your future (leading you in paths of righteousness and faithfulness). That's a peace and confidence that everyone needs. So, tell them. Proclaim this perspective-altering, eternity-changing truth. "But do this with gentleness and respect."

Share your story, which is God's story. Tell others how you've seen God's power and presence in your life. And after you share that truth, pray the Spirit will work in their hearts to see the truth that Jesus' grace covers them too!



Jonathan Enter, an instructor and pastor at St. Croix Lutheran Academy, West St. Paul, Minnesota, is a member at Crown of Life, West St. Paul.





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PHOTO: J. Neil Arneson for WELS

## Pastor and wife appreciation month

Praise Martin Luther? No, praise the Lord! Praise the Lord for what he accomplished through reformers like Martin Luther.

In our praise to the Lord, it is common and appropriate to focus attention on Luther during the month of October. After all, Luther's nailing of the Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on Oct. 31, 1517, marked the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation.

Tim Grundmeier's article about Johannes Bugenhagen (p. 10), Martin Luther's pastor and confessor, illustrates praise to the Lord for another person who served him faithfully. As you read, Bugenhagen officiated at Luther's wedding to Katherina (Katie) von Bora. In addition, after Luther's death, Bugenhagen provided care for Katie and her children.

Katie is yet one more individual who provides reason for praise to the Lord. Talk about drama in life! She was a runaway nun, and her husband's life was in danger throughout their almost 21-year marriage because Rome had declared him an outlaw. She never really knew if her husband would return home safely from a trip. And when he did return home at the end of any day, she never knew how many unexpected friends and acquaintances he might be bringing with him for supper.

But through it all, Katie displayed Christian faith and godly attributes. Her resolve kept the household intact during her husband's many absences. Her bold personality shook the reformer out of his frequent doldrums. She was a faithful pastor's wife and a blessing from the Lord.

There is no connection to the Reformation of which I am aware, but for some time October has been designated as Pastor Appreciation Month. It's a special time to praise the Lord for faithful ministers of the Word. With Katie Luther in mind, may I suggest an additional designation for October? How about Pastor and Wife Appreciation Month?

There are good reasons for that addition. The role of a pastor's wife is challenging. Privacy can be a concern, as her family always seems to be on display—especially at church. The bar is set high for the behavior of her children. Isolation can set in, as close friendships within the congregation may not always be possible. At home, the hours of her husband's workweek often can create extra responsibilities for her. And when her husband does come home, he may not be very engaged in conversation, as he just experienced confidential counseling matters he is not able to share with her. They only exchange concerned looks in their eyes.

The wife of a pastor may find herself and her family relocating again and again across the country or throughout the world. Certainly, she and her husband prayerfully discussed the calls he received and so the moves came as no surprise, but moving away from everything and everyone familiar can be unsettling.

Through it all, though, the wife of a pastor supports her husband. She encourages him when people are not happy with his ministry. She reminds him that what's all-important is faithfulness and not results. She silently cheers him on from her place in the pew.

"I would not want to exchange my Kate for France nor for Venice to boot . . . because God has given her to me and me to her . . . because she keeps faith and honor in our marriage relation" (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 2, p. 888). That's how Martin Luther viewed his wife. She was a cherished part of his life and ministry. A pastor's wife today has the same significance.

So let's praise the Lord for faithful reformers like Martin Luther and Johannes Bugenhagen. Let's praise the Lord for faithful pastors. Let's praise the Lord for the faithful wives of pastors.

*James Pope*  
James Pope | FIC Editor



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**A country song reminds us about the active, strong faith of children.** | Amanda L. Berg

Years ago, there was a country song called "Let Them Be Little" by Billy Dean and Richie McDonald. It was a tender song all about the sweetness and briefness of childhood with a refrain that chimed, "Let 'em cry, let 'em giggle, let them sleep in the middle."

**Somehow this song became ingrained in me when my girls were small,** especially the "let them sleep in the middle" part. This was especially true with our youngest, Sophia. She was a frequent visitor to our room at night. A sound, a scary dream, just about anything sent her little feet racing through the hall and across the family room of our Minnesota parsonage straight through the door of our bedroom. She usually tried—and failed—to catapult herself up into our bed, but then she'd walk around to my or Mike's side, and we'd help her climb right in. There were nights when this got old, but I tried to remind myself, *They're only that way for a little while, so let her be little, Amanda, let her sleep in the middle.*

Jesus has a tender love for children too. We see that when he welcomed

the youngest of children into his open arms. He announced, "Let the little children come to me" (Matthew 19:14). Jesus preached how a childlike faith, by the work of his Spirit, is active, strong, and true, and serves as a model for adults. We may look on this part of Scripture with fondness or view it as a sweet Bible lesson for children, but it is deeper than that. It is the salvation story. Jesus came for children. He died for children. He rose for children. He came, died, and rose for us all!

**Another verse of that song goes on to say,** "I live for those kisses, prayers and your wishes. Now that you're teaching me things only a child can see." In my years of teaching the littles, I have had the joy and privilege of seeing that childlike faith demonstrated to the fullest. No one speaks with more conviction. No one professes God's love with less doubt or shame. No one lets praises ring to the rafters like small children. And they want to know about Jesus. They want to chat about their Lord and Savior. They burst with joy proclaiming the fact that he loves us all, died to pay the price for our sins, and rose so that we too will rise to be in heaven someday.

Teaching little ones about Jesus truly is my favorite part of the day. It may not always go perfectly; there may be wiggles and giggles, but they are just little. They are his precious little lambs, washed in his blood and the waters of Holy Baptism and given the robe of righteousness earned by his life and sacrifice for them.

And so, let us . . . let them . . . be little. Let us share the love of Jesus with our children daily. Let us include them in worship, Word, blessing, and praise. Let us never underestimate what they can handle and understand. Let us not hinder the work of the Spirit in our children's hearts and minds. "Give them hope, give them praise, give them love, every day. Let 'em cry, let 'em giggle, let them sleep in the middle. Oh, just let them be little."



Amanda Berg is a teacher at St. Philip, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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Evangelism can start with a simple, human question that leads to opportunities to share the hope you have in Jesus.

E. Allen Sorum

**HUMAN EVANGELISM.** The point is not evangelizing humans but how to evangelize humans in a human way. If you pay attention to how Jesus connected with people in the gospels, you will see incredible examples of human evangelism.

Jesus was on his last trip to Jerusalem. The hour of his suffering and death on the cross had come. But just outside Jerusalem, in Jericho

actually, he watched Zacchaeus scurry up a tree because he wanted to see Jesus. Zacchaeus had likely heard about Jesus and his kind ways. He was interested in seeing Jesus but probably could not imagine that the famous rabbi would be interested in him. Jesus' compassion for Zacchaeus moved him to change course from Jerusalem's cross to Zacchaeus' tree. Jesus went to him

and said, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5).

Or consider Jesus' human approach toward witnessing in John 4:4: "Now he had to go through Samaria." John shows his readers how Jesus would not let centuries of hatred and intolerance against a whole nation keep him from sharing his gracious water of life with the people.



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This leader in the 16th-century Lutheran Reformation has much to teach us today.

Timothy D. Grundmeier

THE CELEBRATIONS that began on Oct. 31, 2017, seem to be fading. That date marked five centuries since Martin Luther launched the Reformation with the posting of his Ninety-five Theses. Since then, various publications have noted other milestones associated with the beginning of the Lutheran church.

But before we put the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in the rearview mirror, I would like to propose another occasion to remember. It was during this month in 1523 that Johannes Bugenhagen was installed as pastor of the City Church of Wittenberg.

#### A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Most Lutherans today probably know little or nothing about Bugenhagen's life and work. Yet during the time of the Reformation, he was widely considered to be, along with Luther and Philip Melancthon, one of the three most important leaders of the Lutheran movement.

Born in 1485, Johannes Bugenhagen grew up in Pomerania, located on the present-day border between Germany and Poland. Little is known about his childhood and early life. After receiving a university education, he served for 15 years as the rector of a local Latin school (the modern equivalent of a grade school principal). During this time, he was also ordained as a priest and assisted in the education of monks. Bugenhagen's life was changed in the fall of 1520 after he encountered Luther's writings and became convinced of their truthfulness. A few months later,

at the age of 35, he gave up his career as a teacher and enrolled at the University of Wittenberg.

After Bugenhagen's arrival, Luther and other reformers quickly recognized his intellectual and spiritual gifts. Though his intention was to focus on his studies, he was fast-tracked to various leadership positions, including guest lecturing at the university. Less than three years after his arrival in Wittenberg, he was elected pastor of St. Mary's Church, popularly known as the City Church.

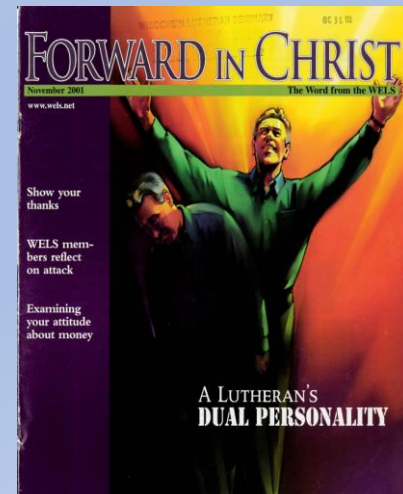
Over the next several decades, Bugenhagen would serve as Luther's pastor and become one of his dearest colleagues. He performed the marriage ceremony between Luther and Katherina von Bora and preached at the great reformer's funeral. In his pastoral role, Bugenhagen provided spiritual counsel to Luther by hearing his confession of sins, proclaiming Christ's forgiveness, and offering spiritual guidance. He and his wife, Walpurga, also enjoyed a close personal friendship with the Luthers. After Martin and Katie had their first son, Bugenhagen served as the child's baptismal sponsor.

In addition to being Luther's confessor and friend, Bugenhagen also served the cause of the church more broadly. He assisted in the translation of the Bible into German, produced several of his own biblical commentaries, and gave numerous lectures in a variety of educational settings. Bugenhagen also possessed great administrative gifts. He helped spread the Lu-

# Content Aligned with Mission

*Forward in Christ* is designed to

- Help readers grow in their Christian faith
- Encourage readers to live as Christians in a secular world
- Provide ways for readers to gain a deeper personal perspective on Christian life and challenges
- Inform readers what is going on within WELS
- Nurture the sense that the reader is part of something bigger than his or her local church
- Broaden the information, insights, and perspectives the readers receive in their local congregations

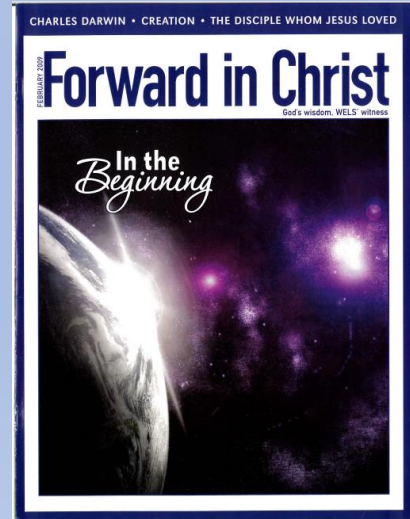


# Current and Future Emphases

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Free in Christ (2024)

WELS' 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (2025)



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- Distribute a monthly parenting newsletter based on FIC's "Parent conversations" to church and school families.
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- Download digital display graphics to remind your members to pick up their copy each month.
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**CROWN**  
SYNOD CONVENTION 2023

In September, both *WELS Connection* and *Forward in Christ* are providing news and updates from the 67th Biennial Synod Convention, which was held July 31–Aug. 3 in Saginaw, Mich. Don't miss hearing from delegates about their experiences as they helped determine WELS' ministry direction for the future. Also read a portion of WELS President Mark Schroeder's report to the convention, which highlights the convention theme "Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown" (p. 6).



## EXPLORE SEPTEMBER 2023 ARTICLES



Why is church discipline a loving action? This month's "Please explain" (p. 30) tackles this question, while "My Christian life" (p. 20) highlights the role of excommunication in one woman's life.



Not seeing eye to eye with your child's teacher? Two teachers share tips on how to handle disagreements in "Parent conversations" (p. 16).



Have the world's problems made you tired? James Huebner reminds us of God's triple gift, which motivates us to keep serving (p. 12).

## HELP THEM STAY CONNECTED!

Did you know that you can subscribe to have a print copy of *Forward in Christ* sent to each home in your congregation? Help your members stay connected with their Savior and with WELS members around the world—right in their own homes.

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# Companion Website

forwardinchrist.net




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SEPTEMBER ISSUE NEWS COMMUNITY PODCASTS VIDEOS ARCHIVE


f i r e q

## FORWARD IN CHRIST


A LUTHERAN VOICE




The love of a Lamb  
By Aaron Boehm




Our cross and crown  
By Mark Schroeder



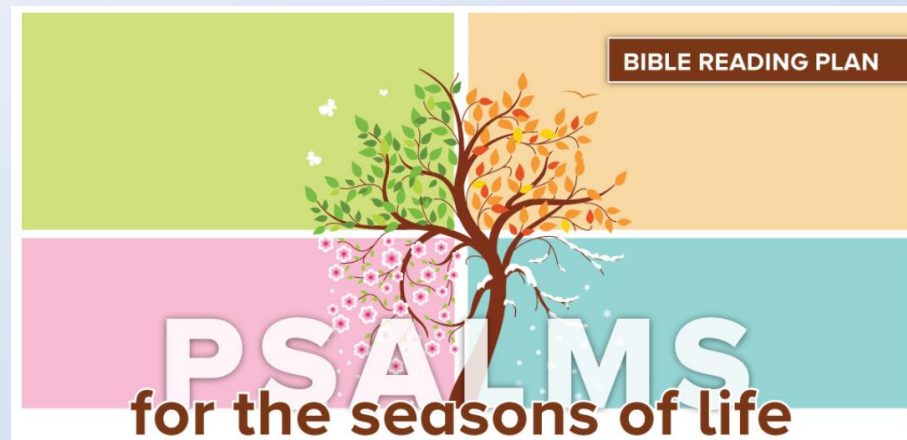
Confessions of faith: Anna Linden  
By Ann Jahns



My Christian life: One woman's gratitude for being excommunicated  
By Alicia A. Neumann



The perfect wedding to come  
By FIC



## Psalms for the seasons of life: June

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### June 4–10

**Psalm 129:** “Psalm 129 contrasts with Psalm 128, which speaks of the blessing of the godly. The ungodly, who oppress the godly, will experience no blessing. . . . Whoever they may be, in whatever time of history they may exist, the oppressors of God’s people will be uprooted. In Psalm 128 the righteous are compared to fruitful trees and productive vines, but the ungodly are uprooted weeds, which shrivel up and have no value” (PBP 2, pages 229,230).

**Psalm 130:** (A Penitential Psalm) “ ‘Lord, hear my voice.’ . . . This is the expression of the soul when it feels that no creature will give heed to its distress, yes, that even God and all creatures seem to be striving against it. . . . Those who wait for the Lord, however, ask for mercy; but they leave it to God’s gracious will when, how, where, and by what means He helps them. . . . [The believer’s] soul always has its face directed straight toward God and confidently awaits his coming and his help, no matter how it may be delayed. . . . To know God aright is to recognize that with him there is nothing but kindness and mercy” (LW Vol. 14, pages 190,192-194).



## August 27-September 2: Commandments 8-10 & conclusion

### Defend and protect the reputation of others: The Eighth Commandment

85. When God forbids false testimony, he reminds us that anything that hurts a person's good name is sin. *How does the Eighth Commandment serve as a mirror, showing us that we also sin against God when we fail to respect our neighbor's good name?*

**Leviticus 19:16** Do not go about *spreading slander* among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.

**Proverbs 19:5** *A false witness* will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will not go free.

**Colossians 3:9** Do not *lie* to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.

We sin by lying to or about someone. This includes everything from lying in our daily conversations to lying as a witness in court (perjury).



# Your Ideas and Suggestions for Content

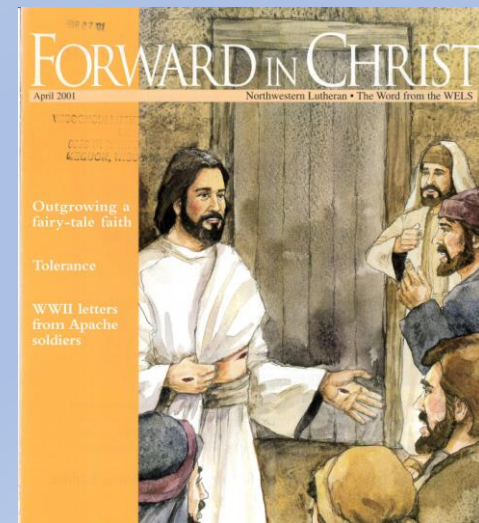
On your own/in a group – brainstorm ideas and suggestions.

What content would you find helpful?

Stand alone articles/Series of articles?

Five to ten minutes

Share ideas and suggestions.



# Your Questions and Comments about *Forward in Christ*

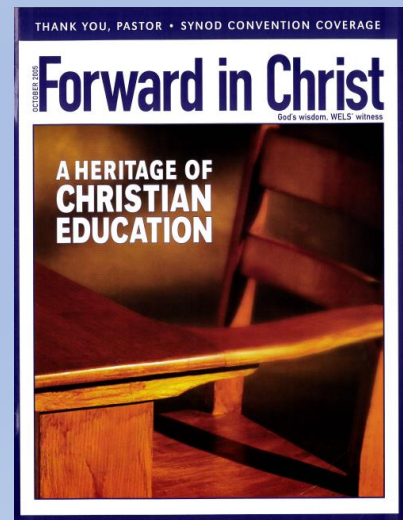
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forwardinchrist.net

A screenshot of the website forwardinchrist.net. At the top right, there are icons for Facebook and Instagram. The main heading reads "On Social Media". Below this is a search bar with the word "SEARCH" and a magnifying glass icon. The bottom section features three social media posts. The first is a video thumbnail for "FORWARD IN CHRIST A LEGACY WEEK" with the sub-heading "A TRUE FAMILY" and a speaker at a podium. The second is a photo of two men on a stage, one holding a tablet. The third is a Q&amp;A post titled "AUGUST QUESTIONS" with the question "How should I help my child struggling with same-sex attraction?" and a photo of David Scharf. The FIC logo and the text "Read more at forwardinchrist.net" are visible in the bottom right corner of the posts.