



WISCONSIN
LUTHERAN
INSTITUTIONAL
MINISTRIES

COMPASSION

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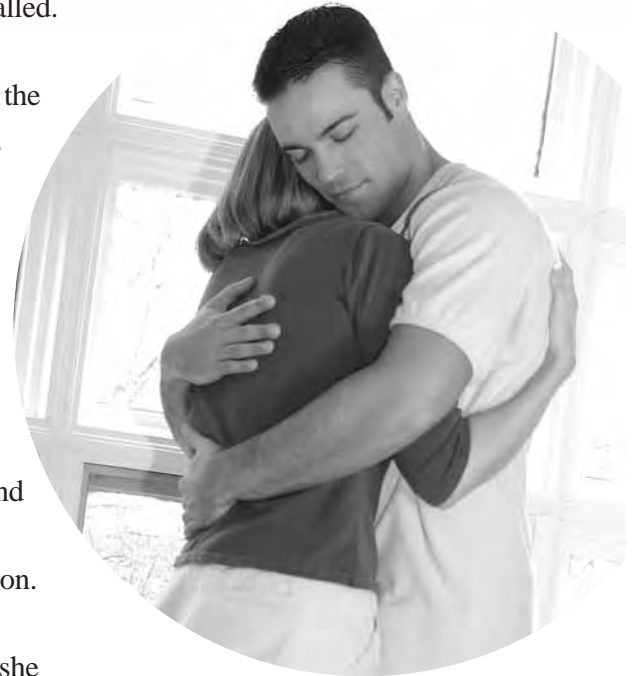
Penny, a chemotherapy patient, was called. She needed to go with a nurse for her cancer treatment. She had to leave in the middle of our visit but first she asked, "Can I give you a hug?" She wanted that hug even with many others present in the room.

What leads a patient to hug a chaplain in a public waiting room? In this case, one doctor informed the patient that she had terminal cancer and that there was nothing to be done. Devastated, she sought a second opinion. The second doctor held out hope and suggested the medical procedure that she was now undergoing.

A TOUGH TIME

But Penny had more to tell. She told me of a drug-addicted husband. While pregnant with her first child, Penny purchased baby things needed for her unborn child. But her husband returned all the items to the store and used the refunded money to buy more drugs. In anger, Penny confronted him. She asked, "The baby, or drugs?" He chose the drugs. Finally, divorce ended the marriage.

Now Penny is living with her 6-year-old daughter in a small apartment. She showed me pictures of her little girl. She is so proud of her. But Penny has serious cancer.



JESUS CAN WIPE AWAY THE TEARS

I spent many hours listening to Penny's troubled life and witnessed many tears. We have had numerous visits at the cancer treatment center. We agreed that earthly life has many troubles and a host of unanswered questions. But I was able to assure her that Jesus loves her and her sins are forgiven. Heaven is her home through faith in Jesus Christ.

Penny and her daughter are now baptized. Penny wants to be together with her daughter in heaven even if they are

CANCER - CONTINUED ON PG 4

FROM THE EDITOR, PASTOR BOB PASBRIG



With this issue of *Compassion*, WLIM wishes the Lord's richest blessings to Chaplain Steve Stern and his wife Jean as

Chaplain Stern retires from WLIM at the end of the year. This issue features two articles written by Chaplain Stern, highlighting his 20 years of service to WLIM's ministry. The first article (p. 3) displays his customary sensitivity, perception, and loving concern. The middle pages contain a special feature, a farewell to all of us from Chaplain Stern. We all will miss his wonderful articles, his devotions, his prayers, his guidance, his encouragement and his trust in the Lord.

We also wish the Lord's blessings on Deaconess Sarah Owens and her husband Karl. The birth of Sarah and Karl's fourth child is expected as this issue is going into the mail. May the Lord grant this new little one a long and happy life on earth and an eternity in heaven through faith in Jesus.

Pastor Bob Pasbrig

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A LETTER FROM JAIL

My name is Michael. I will not go into details on why I am here in jail, but I will just say that I have struggled with drugs and dishonesty.

I am very thankful for Christ and the work that God has done in my life. Without God I would never have been able to face my fears as I do now. I am thankful for my pastor who has shown compassion and patience with me. And it's because of God in his life that he is able to do so. I miss my church and cannot wait to be back.

I am very thankful for the jail ministry. While I am here I can still worship God, learn from His Word, share testimonies and have fellowship with other Christians. As I think this last thought, my mind begins to wonder about these fellow brothers in the jail and where it is they will go once they leave here. I have a church home to go to. But others may not, and that saddens me.

What will they do?

Without the fellowship we are easily lost and go astray. I would not want for anyone to leave here just to be lost. There is a heavy burden in my heart. I wish there was more I could do. For now

I must pray and be patient.

I thank the jail ministry for their time and love for the lost. I pray God will continue to strengthen me, so that I may be able to further His kingdom. God bless you.



SPECIAL GIFTS AND MEMORIALS

IN MEMORY OF

Edgar Kasten	Mrs. Hertha Kasten
Richard Drewek Sr.	Dorothea Drewek
Fred Buettner	Mr. & Mrs. John Wiederhold
Audrey Johnsen	Mr. Richard F. Johnsen
Mr. Florian Ring	Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Lueck
Mr. & Mrs. WM Richter	Mr. & Mrs. Oscar Dirks

IN HONOR OF

Pastor Phil Merten's 25 Years in the Ministry	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Bauer
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IN HONOR OF

20th Anniversary of Terry & Laura Wendorff	Mr. & Mrs. Virgil Schultz
Pastor Daniel Luetke	Mr. & Mrs. Gary Conley
Luis Quisma	Mr. Lloyd Hoeffner
50th Anniversary of Robert & Carol Haferman	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Hanamann
58th Wedding Anniversary	Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Tank
Thanksgiving and Blessings Received	Dr. & Mrs. A Anthony Fiorini

MY SON CALLED

Mike was sitting in a wheelchair in the outpatient cancer clinic. He is only in his mid-fifties but the cancer and the treatments have taken a heavy toll. His body was wasted and shrunken, his face etched with pain. As I approached him, he said to me, "My son called." I am happy to hear Mike's news.

A FATHER REACHING OUT

The previous month Mike had come in for chemotherapy. He told me that the treatments were so hard on him that he was going to quit. He knew his time was running out and he was trying to get his affairs in order. On Mike's mind was an alcoholic and drug-abusing son. Mike hadn't heard from him in months and he didn't know where his son was living. The previous month we talked about this son and I had said to Mike, "Do you remember the story of the prodigal son? Do you remember how the father is looking down the road waiting for the son as the son comes home? Doesn't it make you wonder how many times the father had looked down that road? Do you wonder how often that father thought about his son? Do you think the thoughts of that father reached across the miles and somehow touched the son's heart, helping the son to make the decision to come back home?"

I offered this thought to Mike because I knew he could not even contact his son. I wanted to give him the hope that prayers and thoughts have power. With God's blessing, they can transcend the limits of space and time. God can take the pain and longing of our hearts and bring help to someone who has lost his way. Even when attempts at communication are shut out, God can bring help. I left Mike with this thought, not knowing if it would help him or his son.

GOD CAN HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS LOST THEIR WAY

Now you understand why Mike and I were pleased at our next meeting. Mike told me that he answered the phone one day to hear a voice that said, "Dad? Is that you? Are you still alive?" Mike replied, "Aaron, is that you? Are you still ok?" In those simple words a flood of emotion was released. A ton of fears fell away. A thousand regrets and disappointments faded into the background. Mike

learned that his son was enrolled in a 90-day treatment program. He was really trying to straighten out his life.

Now, Mike wants to try to make a trip to Minneapolis to see Aaron face-to-face before he goes home to heaven. I don't know if Aaron will successfully straighten himself out. I don't know if Mike will be able to make the trip to see his son. I don't know if these two men will ever see each other again on this earth. But I know what Mike needed before he leaves this earth. He has told his son how much he loves him. He has forgiven his son. He has been able to assure his son that although he will die his love for his son will never die, and that his love for his son patterns the Savior's love for each of us.



PEACE COMES TO A FATHER AND SON

Aaron now knows his father still believes in him, is pulling for him and wants him back. His father wants him to trust in his Heavenly Father's love and forgiveness. I rejoice in the peace that has come into the lives of these both of these men here on earth. May the assurance of the Savior's love be in their hearts forever.

A cancer clinic hardly seems like the place to look for joy and peace and good news. But even in the darkest place, the good news of a loving Savior and his forgiveness brings light. Deep pain can even be healed with a phone call. The impossible can become possible when God is directing our thoughts and prayers.

Offer your prayers, even your thanks for the darkest moments in your life. But don't pray out of desperation. Pray with hope and confidence knowing the Lord will answer in the best possible way. Remind yourself that maybe someday you will also be able to tell someone, "My son called."

Chaplain Steve Stern

Chaplain Steven Stern served congregations in Minnesota and Wisconsin before joining WLIM in 1986. His primary focus as an institutional chaplain is cancer and bone marrow transplant patients in Milwaukee area hospitals. He is also involved with county jail and nursing home ministries utilizing lay volunteers.



CANCER – CONTINUED FROM PG 1

not to be together for very long on this earth. Penny now believes that Jesus is with her, and as the Good Shepherd, he will watch over her and her little girl.

I will never forget my first visit with her. I am so thankful that I am a hospital chaplain. There should be many more.

There are so many fearful and troubled patients that need to know our all-powerful Savior, Jesus. Her hug was nice.



Chaplain Kenneth Lenz

Chaplain Kenneth Lenz serves part time as a hospital and jail chaplain for WLIM, serving numerous institutions in the Milwaukee area. Before joining WLIM in 1971 as a full-time chaplain, he served congregations in Montana for 13 years.



PLAN TO ATTEND WLIM'S ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE

Saturday, November 11, 2006

Mt. Olive Ev. Lutheran Church

Appleton, WI

For more information, or to register,

CALL: 888-214-6490

A WORD OF FAREWELL

In May of 1986, I accepted the call from Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries to be a chaplain. It was difficult and emotional to speak my words of farewell to the congregation I had served for 15 years. Now I will retire from WLIM on December 31, 2006, and I again need to speak some words of farewell.

I have many memories of my ministry with WLIM. In 1986, the WLIM staff consisted of Chaplain Ken Lenz and myself. Now, WLIM has several more staff members and has merged with institutional ministries of the Western and Northern Wisconsin districts. Meanwhile, my ministry at Milwaukee County Hospital moved to Froedtert Hospital and has been one of changes and challenges for twenty years.

FOND MEMORIES OF THE PEOPLE I HAVE SERVED

My most precious memories will be of the people I have been privileged to serve within the institutions as well as the many lay people I have met at workshops and worked with in lay ministry training. These memories have touched me in a number of ways, and they have often humbled me. I remember standing with a young widow in the emergency room at 3 a.m. As we stood by, her husband lay lifeless because of a self-inflicted gun shot to the head. I could not take away her grief, but could stand with her as she cried out in pain and expressed anger at her husband for leaving her. I could share a Savior who would never leave her. Later, we were able to talk and I learned that she was pregnant with a child who would never know its father. It humbled me to know that no words could make that pain go away. Only faith in a loving Heavenly Father could allow her to go home that night feeling that she would be ok. I'm glad that I was there with her and know it helped her to talk with a chaplain. I know the Lord could help her to get through that night and to deal with what would follow.

THERE IS A GOD TO HELP IN TROUBLED TIMES

After that night I have stood countless times with families at death beds or in ICU waiting rooms. I have been overwhelmed again and again with the intensity of peoples' feelings and the depths of their pain. I am glad for all these experiences and the humility they have taught me. The people in these traumas aren't looking for the Lone Ranger to come to the rescue. They just want someone who will have some idea of what they are feeling, someone who will listen, someone who will support them, someone who will pray with them, someone who will tell them there is a God who sees. There is a God who loves them. There is a God who will sustain them. There is a God who will lead them on. The cross of Calvary is the pledge of God's love and concern.

HELPING PEOPLE BY LISTENING

I have also experienced joy in this ministry. I have often witnessed dying and death. People say, "Your work must be very depressing." I am always surprised to hear people say that. I want people to understand my joy over the discoveries the dying can make. When I first started working with cancer patients, I wondered if the dying were open to talking about death. Would they be open to talking about their faith? Would they openly search for peace with God and their fellow man? As I grew more comfortable with people, I asked questions like, "If the treatments don't work, have you thought about what might be important to you?" I have found that people are ready to talk about matters of the heart. People are not offended at my asking such personal questions. After we grew to trust each other the patient knew my questions were coming out of Christian love and concern. People understood I was ready to listen. Often there would be a flood of emotion that had been covered up, sometimes for years. Could, would, God forgive? What of the missed opportunities to know and serve God?

SHARING GODS LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Is it too late to mend fences at the end of life, both with loved ones and God? What a joy to share God's love and forgiveness. I could assure people it wasn't too late, that there still was opportunity to know God's forgiveness and reflect his love to their family. The Good Shepherd had been seeking them, and He is ready to lay them on His shoulder and carry them home. When I saw the joy and peace on peoples' faces as they heard God's Word, I felt that I, like Moses, was standing before the burning bush. I was in the presence of the living God and witnessing his work. God was allowing me to watch, and I could tell others that God is very much alive and at work.

Another of my memories is the variety and the diversity of this ministry. I can't really think of a day when I looked at my watch and said, "Just one more hour and I can punch out. This is so boring. If I hear one more story I am going to scream!" Every day has been an adventure. Every day I have met someone who has interesting experiences to share. Every day I find that

we are all human, that we all make mistakes, that we all have problems. We all seek peace. I have served people in very difficult situations whose hearts could open in love to Jesus, family and friends.

THE NEXT CROSSROAD

So why would I want to retire when I still have good health? I have always believed that life has many crossroads, places where you have to go in a new direction. When I began to study for the ministry, I was at a crossroads. When I received calls, I was at a crossroads. Now that I am drawing social security, I am again at a crossroads. As I thought about this time and talked about it and prayed about it, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to continue to do ministry, but also have time for family, for travel, for writing and studying. I want to work with lay volunteers in my home parish. I want to continue to make hospital calls. I am taking the next crossroad in my life.

LET JESUS BE YOUR COMPANION

All of you have come to crossroads in your lives and will face more in the future. Ahead for me lie the crossroads of retirement and the end of life on earth. I hope that you, too, will find that every road has its joys and its sorrows, its challenges and opportunities. Remember that Jesus is our companion who assures us, "You liked what was on that last road? Wait until I show you what is yet to come! There will be rough spots, but I will carry you. Enjoy the road you are on. Try to see every blessing I am bringing. Enjoy the blessings that make your cup run over. But know that this is really nothing. The best is yet to come!"

Thank you for being faithful readers and supporters of WLIM all these years. Please continue to follow and support and pray for this vital ministry, so that those who will follow after me may find the same blessings that I have received. Farewell.

Chaplain Steve Stern



SUPPORTING WLIM MINISTRIES

THRIVENT GIVINGPLUS

We are thankful for this Thrivent program which has provided a substantial additional source of income for WLIM. However, we have received notice from Thrivent that the number of GivingPlus applications have increased nationwide. Budgeted GivingPlus funds may run out before the end of the year. If you are planning to submit a GivingPlus form this year, please do not wait until December lest the matching funds are no longer available. Thanks!

Your memorial or special gifts to the WLIM operating fund or any WLIM special fund (youth ministry, Grace Oasis, nursing home ministry, etc.) are most appreciated.

Dozens of WLIM supporters multiply their gifts to WLIM through the Thrivent "GivingPlus" program. If you are a member of Thrivent (or are willing to become an associate member), call the WLIM office (888-214-6490) and a GivingPlus application form will be mailed to you.

THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

A man who just started coming to my recovery Bible study at Racine Correctional Institution told the group, "People kept inviting me to come to stuff like this group and prayer meetings and worship service. And I kept taking the lazy man's way out: I always said, 'Well, not this time, but pray for me.'" That got a laugh. Everybody knew exactly what he was talking about. "Pray for me" can be a meaningless toss-off, or it can even be a bogus way of appeasing a guilty conscience ("There, I just did a little something for my relationship with God; I told those guys to pray for me.") But when God's people actually do "pray for me," big things can happen. God keeps reminding me of the fact that he does things when people pray.

A COLD WIND ON MY BODY

There's a man who comes to one of the groups I lead – I'll call him Doug. Doug has a cognitive disability and a mental illness, as well as a problem with his eyelids that give him an unsettling half-lidded stare when he talks to you. Doug was giving me that stare several weeks ago when he assured me, "I pray for you, you know." I told him I really appreciated that. His stare continued as he said, "I prayed for you last night." I thanked him again. And then he added, with his flat voice and his half-lidded stare, "And when I was praying for you, I felt a cold wind on my body."

That stopped me. The night before, when I walked out of Racine Correctional Institution, where I'd been conducting a Bible class, I discovered that near-blizzard conditions had sprung up while I'd been inside. And I remember thinking that driving home through this storm could be risky. But I arrived home safe and sound. The next day God let me know that Doug's prayers were part of the reason I got home safely. While Doug was praying and feeling "a cold wind" on his body, I was being guided safely home through snow and a cold wind on the highway.

"TRAVELING MERCIES" A PRAYER IS ANSWERED

I don't know why this kind of thing catches me by surprise. It's not like the "cold wind" incident was the first time I've experienced this kind of thing happening when people were praying for me. Actually, nearly every time I conduct Bible class at Racine Correctional Institution somebody will pray at the end of class for "traveling mercies for Brother Phil." I usually take those prayers for granted. But God doesn't. One night last summer as I left the prison and got back on my motorcycle to ride home, the rain started. No big deal, I thought. I've ridden in rain before. But then it really started pouring. As I turned onto the freeway, the downpour was so strong, I couldn't see the road. I tried following taillights, but often I would lose them. Finally I pulled off the highway at a gas station and sat under the canopy. I caught my breath and wondered what to do next as the rain kept pouring down. Someone hollered, "Hey, are you heading for Milwaukee?" I turned, and there was a guy with an empty motorcycle trailer behind his car. He took me and my bike to the front door of my house.

That's what's known as "traveling mercies." And that's the kind of thing that happens when you pray to a God who loves answering his people's prayers.

Chaplain Phil Merten

Chaplain Philip Merten spends the majority of his time working with people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction and runs "Grace Oasis," WLIM's Friday evening ministry to people recovering from addictions. He is also involved with jail and prison ministries.





ATHEIST? AGNOSTIC? OR A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN?

with his wonderful love.” Dixie replied, “If this Christian God can help, please tell Stan about Him.” Stan added, “I would really like someone to explain God to me.”

I walked into the room of a patient whom I had never met before and about whose case I knew nothing. “Hello! I am the pediatric chaplain making unit rounds today. My name is Chaplain Ken.”

The patient’s mother said, “Hi! I am Dixie, and this is my son, Stan. I do not believe in any personal living God, and that’s the kind of church we attend. I just try to be connected with everything in a spiritual way. Stan also does not believe in any personal God. He is an atheist. No, I take that back. I think my son has now changed to being an agnostic, you know - one who believes that you cannot ever get to know if there really is a God. Yesterday Stan tried to commit suicide by overdosing on drugs. He also has a drinking problem. He is only 16 years old, and I know he needs help.”

THE NEED FOR A PERSONAL GOD

Until now, Stan had been silent. But when his mother tried to describe his faith, Stan broke the silence by loudly exclaiming, “Mother, I am not an atheist. I am not an agnostic. I am a Christian because I know I need a personal living God to help me!”

Surprised, Dixie replied, “I didn’t know that. When did this happen?” Stan explained, “I learned at an AA meeting that I need a personal God to whom I could talk and obtain help. I believe that Christianity teaches a living, personal God.” I asked Stan, “What have you learned about this living personal God?” Stan replied, “I really don’t know anything about Him. I don’t even know who He is and what He does. But I do talk to Him.”

I asked both of them, “Do I have your permission to talk to you about this Christian God? I would like to share with you my living Lord and how he wants to help you

FINDING THE FORGIVENESS, STRENGTH AND DIRECTION

I spent the next hour talking to them about Jesus, his law, and his saving work. Stan came to understand the seriousness of his attempted suicide and his misuse of drugs and alcohol. I shared with Stan a Bible reading plan so that he could grow in faith and in the saving promises of Jesus. He was also referred to a Christian AA group as an additional resource. I’m pleased to report that Stan is considering attendance at a nearby Lutheran church. He now knows the living Lord and the personal Savior in whom he has forgiveness, strength, direction and the promise of eternal life.

“WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS!”

Enjoy the blessings God offers you! He is a real, living Being who listens and works and cares and saves. Talk to him from your heart every day. Grow in your knowledge of his love and strength by reading His Word. Rejoice in Jesus as your personal Savior. Confess that he sacrificed himself on the cross for all of our sins, and is now ruling over all things to bless each of us. Turn, like Stan, to this living Lord for forgiveness, peace and eternal life.

The hymn verse, “What a friend we have in Jesus” is not a wish, but a modern psalm that praises the Lord as a personal, living and saving God. “He is the true God and eternal life.” I John 5:20

Chaplain Kenneth Wenzel

Chaplain Wenzel’s primary ministry is conducted at the University Hospital and the Children’s Hospital, as well as two other Madison, WI area hospitals. A 1973 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Chaplain Wenzel joined WLIM in 1997.





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OUR MISSION

*“To Share God's Law And
The Saving Gospel of
Jesus Christ With People
Who Are Institutionalized.”*

VOLUNTEER AWARD PRESENTED TO GEORGE SCHASER



The annual Lois Mitzner Memorial Award for Volunteer of the Year was presented at the annual WLIM volunteer get

together held on October 11, 2006.

The 2006 award was given to George Schaser, current WLIM board member and treasurer, who has been an integral part of the county jail ministry at the Milwaukee County Jail for the past 13 years. For the past four years, he has traveled throughout Wisconsin making numerous presentations to individuals and congregational groups interested in starting county jail ministries, training lay ministry volunteers and promoting the entire WLIM ministry.

WLIM Executive Director Don Borgwardt, in presenting the award, commented that George has demonstrated in countless ways his faithful service to our Savior Jesus Christ.

“George has been the driving force behind the scenes over the past few years to promote lay ministry involvement in bringing the Gospel to inmates at county jails throughout the State of Wisconsin. He has faithfully served as a lay ministry volunteer at the Milwaukee County Jail for the past 13 years, as a member of the WLIM Board of Directors, and is currently serving as the treasurer for the ministry.”

“His concern has always been that the men and women who are institutionalized have an opportunity

to know their Savior, whether they are in a jail, prison, hospital, nursing home or drug & alcohol treatment center.”

George and his wife, Caroline, live in Greendale and attend Centennial Ev. Lutheran Church. Their three sons and their wives have blessed them with four grandsons and six granddaughters.

The award, in memory of longtime WLIM volunteer, Lois Mitzner, is presented each year to one of the many dedicated and faithful volunteers who serve at the various jails, prisons, nursing homes, hospitals, mental health centers, drug and alcohol treatment centers and juvenile detention centers on behalf of WLIM.