



# A Seed Grows

by Chaplain Steve Stern



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

On a hot summer day when I was thinking how nice it would be to sit in the shade and have a cold glass of lemonade, my dad would say, "We have to get out in the field and pull those cockle burrs and thistles that are growing in the soybean field."

When I asked, "Why do we have to do it today?" my dad said, "We have to pull them up before they go to seed."

So we walked the bean rows, sweating in the heat, pulling up the weeds before they went to seed.

I felt good about getting those pesky weeds pulled out before they went to seed, but I was surprised the following year to see that there was still a pretty good crop of cockle burrs and thistles growing in the fields where we had pulled them up.

I was not pleased to see this and let my dad know that I thought we were done with those weeds and how could they be back again?

"Well," my dad explained, "we got rid of those weeds last year before they went to seed, but unfortunately there were some old seeds in the ground from previous years that we didn't get. They were deep in the soil and the machinery brought them up to the surface where they could sprout and grow. The rain, the sun and the seed itself came together in such a way that what was dormant could now spring to life."

I thought that was bad news for a young boy like myself who didn't enjoy

pulling weeds. The message seemed to be, "Steve, you are not going to get out of the job of pulling weeds for the foreseeable future."

As bad as the news was for me as a boy, I now see that the power and wonder of a seed is also a marvelous thing when that seed is God's love at work in a human heart.

Recently I preached at one of our congregations and I was encouraging the lay people to consider volunteering for one-on-one ministry. In the Bible class, an elderly gentleman raised his hand and proceeded to tell a story about his life.

As a young man, he had to be placed in a sanitarium because he had tuberculosis. He was isolated and cut off from

the world. He was lonely and scared and wondering why this had happened to him.

Pastor Enno Duemling, who was WLIM's first full-time chaplain, stop-

ped to see this man ill with TB. He ministered to him and this man came to know and believe in Jesus. He eventually got well and went on with his life. He joined a WELS congregation and for many years he has been a supporter of WLIM, serving as a delegate, following the ministry, and talking about the ministry's work to others.

As we talked in the Bible class that morning, it now

(Continued on Pg. 2)



# God's Gift That Keeps On Giving

A man reads to children after working an eight hour, third shift day. A forty something mom visits the aging, a retiree sits with the dying, another man, a grandfather many

mercy.

That's what this ministry is all about.

Paul continues, "Be sincere, be devoted, honor each other, respect one another, never lack for



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

times over, cares for children, a young man unemployed and with special needs helps out at a family center.

All volunteers, they work for the others week after week. What makes them do these things for nothing? They will tell you it's not for nothing. Their reasons come from the heart. They are not paid for their work, "But they are richer for it."

WLIM volunteers would agree. Volunteering does stem from the heart and there is a feeling of being richer for it, and yet, there is something much deeper for the child of God.

First of all we have received the greatest gift of all - Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, along with His love, forgiveness, peace and salvation. In addition we have been gifted by God in so many ways, so it's only natural for the child of God to use those gifts in serving God and others.

Paul, in Romans 12, reminds us we have different gifts according to the grace given us. He focuses on the importance of serving, encouraging, teaching, showing

zeal Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Be a blessing to others. Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn."

In 1 Peter 4:10 we read, "each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit. There are different kinds of service. But the same God works all of them in all men." 1 Cor. 12:4-6

Through Jesus let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, confessing His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Heb. 13: 15, 16

If you are already a volunteer, God bless you and press on to the goal set for us. If you've thought about volunteering, seize the moment and contact WLIM right now. Share and rejoice in the gift that keeps on giving.

## A Seed Grows (cont. from Pg. 1)

became apparent that this man wanted to take another step and become involved in doing one-on-one ministry. From receiving ministry to supporting ministry to doing ministry, this man was continuing to grow and move in new directions.

This is what made me think of how a seed grows. I couldn't help but think of how a seed can lay in the ground and nothing may happen for a time and then the right conditions come together and that seed sprouts and grows.

A man lies sick in a bed seeing no hope and another man stops by, listens, offers hope, speaks of Jesus, and prays. Faith sprouts and is nurtured by other pastors. Years go by and this faith sees new ways to express itself and touch others with love and hope and eternal life.

I still don't like cockle burrs and thistles. It is still war when it comes to my attitude toward weeds.

But sowing the good seed! Not knowing where it will fall. Not knowing when it will sprout. Not knowing what direction the growth of the seed will take. That is part of the mystery of the kingdom of God, isn't it?

That is why we sow. That is why we hope. That is why we rejoice when a seed grows.

Chaplain Steve Stern

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# WHY ARE YOU HERE?

## ?



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

I had just walked into one of the patient units at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute. I stopped near one of the tables in the dayroom and began to watch as four of the patients played a game of cards.

In short order, one of the patients, a woman, turned and asked, "What are you looking at?" Quickly, I apologized. I told her that I didn't mean to look over her shoulder and moved away from the table.

It was only a minute or two later when the same woman told me, "Your butt's kinda big!" Some people laughed and I couldn't help but laugh myself.

"It's part of the package," I told her. "I'm kinda big all over." "But," I insisted, "I'm not fat. I'm fluffy!"

By that time almost everyone in the dayroom was laughing, including the woman who had given me her very blunt assessment of one part of my anatomy.

When the card game was over a few minutes later, the woman had another question for me. "Why are you here?" She may have been surprised when I told her I was glad that she had asked that question. I explained that I was a volunteer chaplain at Winnebago Mental Health Institute and that I simply wanted to talk with people about our Savior Jesus.

"Why are you here?" It's a good question for everyone who is involved in any way with our

Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries. It's a good question for each of our congregations and our synod as a whole. It's a good question for each of us who have been brought to faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin. It's a good question, an important question, that we need to ask.

But even more important than the question is our Lord's answer. "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

Maybe your "Jerusalem" is West Allis, Beaver Dam, Eau Claire or Mishicot. Maybe your "Judea" is the inner city of Milwaukee, the Fox Valley or the coulee region of La Crosse.

Maybe your "Samaria" is where you work or go to school. Or, maybe it's the Mexican or Hmong families that are moving into your community.

Maybe your "ends of the earth" is the local nursing home or county jail. Maybe it's your community hospital, a major medical center or a county jail.

It's a good question to ask ourselves, isn't it? "Why am I here?"

May the Savior who died for us help each of us to remember that by the grace of God, I'm here to share the good news of the Gospel!

**"It's a good question to ask ourselves . . . Why am I here?"**

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Chaplain Charles Iles, Sr.





Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

Every correctional institution in our state has general discipline rules and regulations for inmates mandated by the Department of Corrections. Each correctional facility has other regulations that apply to its own conditions and situations.

For example, a maximum security prison will have much stricter discipline rules and regulations than a medium or minimum prison.

Men and women inmates who violate the rules jeopardize the safety of staff and inmates. Minor violations may result in a conduct report; a reprimand; loss of recreational privileges; room, cell or building confinement; or extra work or school duty. Any major violations are punished by TLU (temporary lockup) or in inmate jargon: being sent to "the hole."

Major violators are sent to

the single cell segregation unit where they are segregated from the general population for certain lengths of time. Being sent to "the hole" is not fun and games.

Most of the men and women attending my Bible studies

abide by and obey the rules. One exception in my groups is a woman whom I only have given the nickname: "Maxie," because she is always in and out of "the hole."

Perhaps you, too, know persons who cannot keep their mouths shut or blurt out their thoughts before thinking about what they are saying. Sometimes we excuse that weakness by saying that they lack tact.

That trait gets people into

lots of trouble and the same is true of Maxie. But Maxie also thinks of herself as an authority on everything and anything, which doesn't endear her to others. She can be brutal when criticizing another woman's personal

appearance or ridiculing their wrong answers to the Bible study questions.

But she can't see her own shortcomings and weaknesses. All these weaknesses and flaws get her into many arguments and even fights, which mean she's put back again into segregation.

For years now, when I take roll call and Maxie is absent, I'm not surprised to hear someone say, "She's back in 'the hole' again."

How do you deal with a

## Keep Your Mouth Shut!

**"That's the best advise I've ever had."**

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e Tetzlaff

## Impossible? For God? No!

(Continued from Pg. 3)

even break promises and allegiances to go on the right road.

I asked Kenny if he thought I should see Tim. He said that he thought Tim would appreciate meeting with me.

In his prayer at the end of our visit, Kenny prayed for Tim. While he was leaving, Kenny said, "Tell Tim that I gave you his name, and that I prayed for him."

I met with Tim yet that day. I was excited to meet someone through whom the Holy Spirit had been working, on both himself and through him to others. It is awesome to meet new Christians for whom the light has just begun to come on; those on whom the Holy Spirit has newly begun working.

I told Tim that Kenny had referred him to me. Tim said that Kenny had already told him that I would try to visit him and also that he had been praying for him.

Tim told Kenny he had been praying for him as well. We continued to talk about the new life that Tim wanted and could have. We talked about forgiveness that Saul received from God and that he could have as well, won for him on the cross.

Tim said with watery eyes, "I know that this is weird, I know I shouldn't be happy to be in here, but in here I am really learning about the Lord and I don't know if I would have done that out there."

As I talked about the joy and peace that do not respect boundaries of prison cells and hospital rooms, Tim's eyes and face reflected that he had an understanding of that peace and joy.

He admitted, "Life before on the streets was about money and things, but now, that doesn't even matter. You can't use that money in here, and you can't use it up there either," he said.

Too soon, our visit was interrupted by supper time and Tim prayed for Kenny and his family, took a Bible study book and went back to his room. Before he left, I gave him the WLIM telephone number. He said that he really wanted to find a church when he got out. "I won't be going back to the other things," he said.

As he left, I thought of another person affected in the story about Saul. In the account of Saul on the road to Damascus, we are told about Ananias who was a godly man and was quite nervous about having contact with Saul.

I'm sure Ananias was thinking, could this man, Saul, really have changed? That easily? That quickly?

And then, I remembered God told Ananias to just listen and go on his way to meet Saul! How awesome it must have been for Ananias to see the wonderful acts of faith which Saul,

who had changed his name to Paul, accomplished in his life and ministry.

I don't know that you or I are another Ananias.

But I do know that we may have fears and doubts as well. Don't worry. God will work with us even in our apprehension. And if a "Saul" comes into your life, open yourself to whatever role God may have for you in ministering to him or her. And then, enjoy the blessing of being part of God's work.

I'm not trying to say that Tim is another Paul, but I do know that God has a plan for his life, and that his faith and conviction has already touched another.

Deaconess Sarah Owens

"Tell Tim . . .  
 that I prayed  
 for him."

*"The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done."*

Genesis 8:21

**G**od smells! No the Lord does not have body odor. He has no body or physical nose. But in His own divine way He smells His creation.

At first, all the smells were very good. However, when the curse of sin corrupted the world, some smells became offensive to God and us. Isaiah talks about the Lord smelling stench instead of fragrance and how incense can be detestable to Him.

Truly God has a sense of smell that is different from you and me. When Noah burned the animals with their flesh, fur, and feathers, our noses would have curled at the reek. We don't even like the smell of burning food. Yet at Noah's burnt offerings, the Lord smelled a pleasing aroma.

In addition, when all of those Old Testament burnt offerings were rightly sacrificed, the Lord took great delight in them while to some people the smell of the sacrifices must have stunk. Why the difference and what is the lesson?

Jesus is the difference for believers. Christ kept the will of God perfectly for us. He then suffered and died upon the cross for all of our sins. Our Savior now perfectly filters away the stench of our sins and judgment so that God can smell us as a pleasing aroma.

I am told that when a surgeon opens our body for



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

surgery, the stench is strong. Some people claim that they can smell death. For sure, we know that a sick person in the hospital or nursing home often faces a lot of bad body odors. We don't like such malodor.

Judy was such a patient in the hospital. It took a few visits before she would confide in me, but eventually she shared something that was bothering her. She was embarrassed by all the smells coming from her sick body. She tried all kinds of flowers and odor controls to hide the foulness of her disease, but failed.

### **" She tried . . . to hide the foulness"**

I shared with Judy that in Jesus our life, deeds, and praises are a wonderful fragrance to God and to others. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the

one we are the smell of death, to the other, the fragrance of life.

2Cor. 2:15-16

How comforting it was to Judy to hear that God has a different sense of smell and a cure for what really stinks in our life. God's Word assured her that she was a beautiful fragrance to Him.

Thanks be to our God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 2 Cor. 2:14

The next time you are taken aback by the smell of a person's bad odor, the smells in their sick room or the nursing home, remember that you also stink with sin to God.

But just as for you, Jesus offers them His sweet balm of grace. May God and others smell the aroma of Christ in your faith!

Chaplain Ken Wenzel

I had been seeing one boy in Detention for over six months and he had a tough road to walk. He was facing a charge of homicide.

With these charges, a child could expect to attend court date after court date, experience much frustration and fear, and anticipate being in Detention for a year.

This was the path that Kenny was on. Some had been saying that he seemed to be deteriorating, as he was being waived as an adult and now his adult jury trial would be coming up.

Kenny was a boy, a little difficult to read but most polite and respectful, appreciative of a visit and missed his sisters and mom.

There definitely were weeks where his sadness and apathy had shown through. But this week was a little different. This week, Kenny was asking for a new Bible and whatever Bible materials I had. For some reason, a new turn seemed to have presented itself to



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

been that Kenny reached out to Tim with a gang handshake and Tim let Kenny know that he wasn't into that anymore, and Kenny needed to change too.

Kenny did say that Tim put a Bible in front of

## Impossible? For God? No!

By Deaconess Sarah Owens

Kenny. And just when Kenny seemed to be needing it.

One of the first things that Kenny had said when he came in for his visit was that he had seen a friend from the outside who had been brought into Detention as well. Rather sheepishly, Kenny had said that Tim had been in a gang with him while they were out.

Kenny said that Tim was quite involved with the gang and together, with their gang, they had done many bad things. Yet, Tim's attitude this time seemed to floor Kenny. Now, Tim did not have an angry, vengeful spirit.

I was not there at their reunion, but it may have

**"Tim did not have an angry, vengeful spirit."**

his face and said, "Those people on the outside are not your friends. This is what I'm about now."

I had been seeing Kenny for many months, and I had seen some growth in him, although his quiet nature kept me a little unsure. And of course, I cannot see into hearts. But Tim's testimony spoke a thousand words to Kenny.

Tim had been out there, just like him - a fellow gang member. Tim really understood Kenny, and his past and the "streets" out there. And in Detention, Tim is putting God and His ways before their gang to whom they had promised allegiance.

(Continued on Pg. 5)

In some way, I think this gave Kenny "permission" of sorts to leave the past behind,



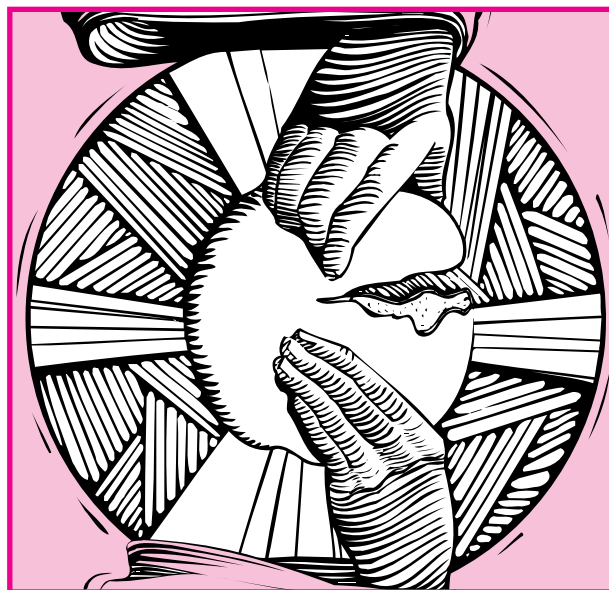
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To Share God's Law And The Saving Gospel of Jesus Christ With People Who Are Institutionalized.



**“Command  
them to...  
be generous  
and willing  
to share.”**

1 TM 6:18



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