



WISCONSIN  
LUTHERAN  
INSTITUTIONAL  
MINISTRIES

# COMPASSION

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## IN THIS ISSUE

2

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE  
YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU?

3

I LOVE JESUS

4

SPECIAL GIFTS AND  
MEMORIALS

CERTIFICATION CLASSES

SPIRITUAL MEDICINE FROM  
OUR LORD

6

A CHARITABLE GIVING  
SUGGESTION

BLESSINGS MULTIPLY

7

GIFTS COME IN MANY  
FORMS

8

THRIVENT GIVINGPLUS  
MATCHING GRANTS

## CONNECTIONS TO HEAVEN

by Chaplain Phil Merten

Mrs. M was sitting patiently by her husband's hospital bed, and she was praying for even more patience. The recovery from Mr. M's surgery was coming along at an agonizingly slow pace, and the trauma to his body was doing strange things to his brain chemistry. This meant that his wife had to cope with his questions about when they were going to buy this hospital and his horrifying racist comments about the hospital staff.

### SMALL TALK CAN BE TELLING

She was glad to see me come in. She needed to have someone other than her husband to talk with, and she was a long way from home. There was no problem getting a conversation going with Mrs. M. Within a few minutes she was telling me about her hometown in northern Wisconsin and about her 55 years of marriage and about raising their kids. Then she made a sort of passing remark in describing her family, about how her youngest boy, Paul, would have been forty this year.

I decided not to let that go. I asked her, "How did your boy Paul die, if I'm not being too nose-y?"

### SHARED CONNECTIONS

I think Mrs. M was relieved to be able to talk about it. She related how a brain aneurism killed him during a basketball game with his brothers when he was 13. You could tell it hurt her to talk about it, twenty-seven years after the fact, but it was something she needed and wanted to do. And it wasn't all pain, either. She told me,

*continued on pg 5*



## YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU?

As representatives of WLIM speak at local congregations and ladies' organizations, we continue to be amazed by the number of people who think WLIM is funded through mission offerings sent to our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). WLIM is an independent parachurch organization, like WELS Kingdom Workers, the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society and Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service.

WLIM is not funded by the synod's budget. WLIM has been working as a partner with the WELS for 105 years, but does not receive financial support from the synod. Our 2007 budget of \$724,408 is raised through WLIM's appeals directly to individuals, church organizations, congregations, and foundations.

WLIM thanks all of our donors for their continued prayers and financial support which allow our important gospel ministry to continue to those "behind the walls." How marvelous are the blessings of our God, and many of those blessings come through you!

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WISCONSIN LUTHERAN  
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www.wlim.net • email: wlim@wlim.net  
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## LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE



*WLIM Volunteers (and others!): Do you at times become discouraged as you share God's Word? Does the lack of interest on the part of some overshadow the excitement and growing faith in others? Find encouragement in the following article from Lay Ministry Coordinator, Franklin Gauger!*

Consider all the blessings we receive when living the Christian life. Your unchurched friends and neighbors may view your life as dull, boring, uneventful and just not very exciting. In reality you are living the abundant life filled with blessings. Consider what we have as followers of the Lamb:

- We know the joy of being forgiven in Christ our Savior and Redeemer.
- By grace we are saved through faith in Jesus.
- We understand God's plan of salvation and grasp the meaning of scripture.
- We worship the Lord with joy and meaningful purpose.
- We possess a saving faith to share with others.
- We have fellowship with fellow believers in Christ through Word and Sacrament.
- We continue to grow in wisdom and knowledge in the one true God.
- We are in Christ, we live in Him and He lives in us.
- We rely on the Holy Spirit to intercede for us when we are at a loss to pray.
- We are children of God, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.
- We have an abiding Father's relationship with the living Lord.
- Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- We can minister to others with spiritual gifts provided by God.
- We mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice.
- We can talk to God in prayer.
- "We are hard pressed, but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)
- We have the assurance that Jesus will be with us always.
- We live in anticipation of Christ's return and reigning with Him in heaven.
- When we get to heaven there will be no more sin, pain, tears frustrations, regret, guilt, shame, or death.
- Heaven is our home; live every day with the joy of the Lord.

*Lay Ministry Coordinator Franklin Gauger*

*Franklin Gauger recruits, trains, and communicates with lay ministry volunteers and leads Bible classes in area retirement and assisted living centers.*



# I LOVE JESUS

I never know what to expect when I go the mental health treatment center for children...Who will be there? What will their backgrounds be? What will they need? I walk by faith as I open the doors.

For example: This week was a little larger group around five young teens. I had come with a book about the Lost Son and thought if we could remain focused for a little bit of time, we could get through the story. So I read and we talked about what we have in common with the lost son. At times, we want to be independent. We think we can do things without our parents, and we can do things better on our own. One boy in the group admitted that this was his attitude and that attitude brought him into the treatment center.

A few of the girls shared an attitude they had. They wondered if they really needed to hear God stuff. No one they knew wanted to study the Bible. I told them that if they did not want to be in the group, they could leave - I was not forcing them to stay. I also referred to the story, Lost Son, where the father had allowed the son to leave. God gives us the same freedoms. None of the girls left. They stayed with some interest in what might come next.

## **GOD IS GRACE**

We came to the part of the story where the son realizes he can't do it on his own and he needs to go home. He even wanted to go home. But how will the father react? The general consensus of the group was that if the father was like their own parents, the son would either be turned away or be abused. One of the boys in our group showed the physical marks made by his parents. They literally threw him out. The idea of grace (undeserved acceptance and love) was not even a possibility in their minds. So, with a smile on my face and with God-given patience, I reassured a group of confused teens with attitudes that God's love is completely different than what they had previously experienced from others. We prayed for God to help them and their parents.



## **LOVE FOR GOD IN THE SIMPLEST OF TERMS**

I was unsure if the group understood the Bible story, however, one girl's reaction left no doubt. She is small, cognitively-delayed and makes statements about a boyfriend from the cartoon world. I was unsure what was going on in her spiritual world. It surprised me and the entire group when this girl (who had usually spoken what seemed nonsense from a fantasy world) said, clearly, courageously and with much passion, "I love God!" What a lovely simple statement. It was said without a concern about what the others might think. It was an expression of faith!

I hope that what we had talked about in that lesson had helped her and the others to know and believe more clearly the awesome love God had for them. They, with the Holy Spirit as their power-source, could produce beautiful things for God in return.

## **LOVE AND PEACE IN OUR LORD**

May God work His message of love and peace in you, even as he did in the children at the Mental Health Complex that afternoon. We have a God who knows our attitudes and is ready to help!

*Deaconess Sarah Owens*

*Deaconess Owens works with children and teens in the Milwaukee County Children's Court Center, in the Behavioral Health Treatment Center and various other institutions throughout the state.*



## SPECIAL GIFTS AND MEMORIALS

<i>IN MEMORY OF</i>	<i>GIVEN BY</i>
Elwood Lutze	Rev & Mrs Eugene Kitzerow
Son Robert Kitzerow	Rev & Mrs Eugene Kitzerow
Min Meyers	Mr & Mrs Eugene Schultz
Willie Starkey	St John's Lutheran School Faculty, Jefferson, WI
Rola Wiedmann	Mrs Mildred Schultz
Arno Zeitler	Mr & Mrs Harvey Zeitler
Irene Glaze	Mr & Mrs John A Cleven
Marie Doering	St Paul Ev Lutheran Church Ladies Aid, North Freedom, WI
Alice Rozek	Lorraine Beck
Jeanne Kunz	Mr Kenneth Kunz
Dorothy M. Buege	Lewis & Lois White
Cecil Hinneberg	Florence Hinneberg
Gary Noah	Mrs Shirley Noah
Mr & Mrs Roy Wendt	Mary Johanknecht
Eugene H. Juergens	Gail Wendt
William Starkey	Rev Mark O. Bartsch
Charlotte Schnackenberg	Mr Thomas Luecke
John Sutherland	Mr Thomas Luecke
Mary Ann Cloute	Rev Mark O. Bartsch

<i>IN HONOR OF</i>	<i>GIVEN BY</i>
Rev Steve Stern's Retirement	Mr & Mrs Don Borgwardt
Jane Krueger's Birthday	Mr & Mrs Jerome Harders

## CERTIFICATION CLASSES

The WELS Special Ministries office has received a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for the development of certification courses for both laymen and pastors. More institutions are demanding not only credentials but also specialized training. These new courses will lead to WELS certification for individuals working in ministry with the military, the hospitalized and with inmates in jails and prisons. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College will be assisting in this project, as will WLIM (for the jail and prison certification). It is a major project and we ask for your prayers for its success!

# SPIRITUAL MEDICINE FROM OUR LORD

Jackie is a four year old girl with an extremely rare disease. Only seven other people in the world are known to have survived this disease. Her mother, Connie, has been spending most of her time caring for Jackie at home or comforting her in the hospital. Connie has accepted this burden, but it has come at a great price. Her husband has abandoned her and her daughter. She has lost her job, her savings, her home, and many friends. She belongs to a Lutheran church but has not been able to attend.



## SIN IS NOT A RARE DISEASE

Connie welcomes my visits. We have talked about many things including spiritual things. One day, we began talking about how God sends spiritual medicine. We agreed that we all are spiritually sick with sin. Sin is worse than a fatal disease. Sin has sickened our lives with diseases, disobedience, doubts, disrespect, difficulties, disasters, and death. It is not a rare disease. It is common to all. So what is God's spiritual medicine? How does it come to us? Connie knows that God loves her in the Savior Jesus but she did not know how God brings his healing medicine to her.

I pointed to the intravenous (IV) bag of medicine and the IV tubing for her daughter. The IV bag contained the medicine. The IV tubing was the way the medicine was delivered to her daughter. If one disconnects the tubing, the medicine is still there, but it does not flow to Jackie. When the tubing is properly connected, the medicine flows to the patient.

## GOD'S OWN BAG OF SPIRITUAL MEDICINE

Next I pictured God holding his bag of spiritual medicine. It is a bag full of undeserved and saving love won for us by the words, life, and death of

Jesus. Jesus has purchased for us the ultimate saving medicine. Jesus' medicine offers forgiveness, peace, strength, and life with God. If there ever was a miraculous medicine, it is Jesus, the Savior of sinners. His medicine works now and into eternity.

### **HEALING THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD**

But how does this miracle-medicine get to us? I suppose that if God sent it through pizza and soda, many people would have a strong healing faith. But the Lord chooses to send his miraculous medicine through the tube of his Word. Like the IV tube which delivers earthly medicine, the Word brings the Holy Spirit to create spiritual life, to fight spiritual infections, to rehabilitate faith, and to fully cure us in eternal life.



Connie now understood how baptism had brought God's saving medicine to her daughter. For herself, she saw the importance of reading God's Word even though she could not get to church. We set up a Bible reading program for God to rehabilitate and nourish her faith.

Several months later Connie was back in the hospital with her daughter. Connie told me how God's medicine, coming through the Word, had helped her. In fact, she told me that her friends were impressed when she pointed to her

daughter's home IV and used it as a lesson about the way God brings spiritual medicine to us.

Become a spiritual pharmacist. Share the Lord's prescription for receiving His spiritual medicine, namely, His Word!

*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.*

### **CONNECTIONS – CONTINUED FROM PG 1**

“I feel a real connection with heaven, having a son who's already there.”

I told her I could relate to that, because my grandson is also in heaven and that helps me feel connected to heaven. For me, too, talking about a loved one's death was painful but also a relief because of the special connection to heaven. The conversation opened the door to talk more about being confident about God's love now as well as in eternity because of God's grace in Jesus.

There are times when I'd just as soon stick to pleasant topics of conversation, but the truth is that in some ways people's truest hearts can only be found in the painful places of their lives. And that's where Jesus meets with people. The Bible calls Jesus, “a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3) who invites suffering people to, “call upon me in the day of trouble” (Psalm 50:15).

*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.*



## A CHARITABLE GIVING SUGGESTION

US Savings bonds: They are an interesting possibility for estate charitable giving.

Many of us have accumulated US Savings Bonds. Usually, interest earned by the bond is not declared on an annual basis but becomes due when the savings bond is redeemed. Although state taxes are not owned on interest earned by savings bonds when redeemed during the owner's life time, the taxes on bonds remaining in an estate can be substantial. Not only may there be sizable state and federal estate taxes, but there could also be tax on the interest earned by the bond since the time of purchase when the bond is redeemed by the beneficiary. Only a small portion of the total redemptive value of a bond may pass to the beneficiary.

Do you wish to support the Lord's work at WLIM from your estate? Consider an estate gift using US Savings Bonds. The tax savings could be considerable. To accomplish this type of gift in your estate, a bond cannot have a surviving joint owner or a death beneficiary. The bonds could be left through your will or revocable living trust with a specific directive to donate the bonds (be specific about which bonds) to "Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries."

Questions? Call the WLIM office. WLIM continues to be greatly blessed by estate gifts and thanks the Almighty God for WLIM supporters who also include WLIM in their estate planning.

Pastor Bob Pasbrig,  
WLIM Director of Ministry Advancement

## BLESSINGS MULTIPLY

WLIM and the Prison Ministry Committee (PMC) of the WELS, have been awarded a generous WELS Kingdom Workers grant. The grant is funding an initiative to replicate the successes WLIM has been experiencing in ministry



work at county jails in Wisconsin. With the use of lay volunteers, hundreds in Wisconsin county jails are hearing the gospel message of Jesus Christ and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, are coming to faith.

Could this also happen in county jails throughout the United States? Yes, it could, and the WELS Kingdom Worker's grant will provide the needed funding to make it happen! Three part-time "trainers" recently met for four days in Milwaukee. Training was provided to the trainers and an organized approach was developed to expand county jail ministry throughout the United States. The trainers adopted the name, "JMTT," Jail Ministry Training Team. The men are now making arrangements to speak to various WELS pastor's conferences throughout the nation. They are seeking opportunities to address interested lay people in WELS congregations who may have an interest in doing volunteer ministry in a local county jail.

A DVD has already been produced to introduce the initiative and training sessions will be put "on line" so that the trainers do not have to be personally present for each training session.

We pray for the rich blessings of the Holy Spirit on this initiative. We anticipate that the Kingdom Worker's grant could be renewed for two more years. Watch for reports on the number of new lay-led county jail ministries initiated in various parts of our county as the result of the work of our new JMTT. The trainers are Duane Anderson, Jefferson WI, Mark Santelman from the New Ulm, MN area and Rev. Roger Zehms of Austin, Texas.

Pastor Bob Pasbrig,  
WLIM Director of Ministry Advancement

# GIFTS COME IN MANY FORMS

A caregiver is often overlooked when taking care of a seriously ill loved one. This was brought to my attention in a hospital waiting area.

I briefly visited with Sam and his wife, Cheryl. The nurse called Sam's name for his scheduled radiation appointment. When he left I asked Cheryl how she was doing. She said that I was the first one that showed any interest in her or how she was feeling. She said that frankly, she was doing terrible!

## **PROVIDING CARE IS OFTEN AN OVERLOOKED GIFT**

Cheryl lamented the fact that everyone seemed to be concerned about her husband but she and her role in his care was totally ignored. She explained that often people come to see Sam but she felt obligated to provide snacks. She serves coffee or tea. She needs to clean up afterwards. She needs to take him to his appointments. She needs to get his medicine and see to it that he takes the medicine on schedule. She prepares his meals. She feels that she is on duty 24-7. To Cheryl, it seems that there were only a few hours a week left to care for herself or to relax.

She went on to explain that just the previous night a crisis occurred. Many little irritations had built up through the day and she was feeling explosive anger. Cheryl related that she had three bowls in her hands as she was about to prepare dinner. Sam tapped her on the shoulder with another request. She lost it. She smashed all three bowls on the counter and then began to cry. "Yesterday was a terrible day for me," she exclaimed.

## **OVERCOMING ADVERSITY WITH AID FROM OUR LORD**

I told Cheryl that Jesus understood all her frustration and anger. Jesus could not only help her overcome her anger but also to find the ability to deal with all that was going on in her life. Cheryl replied that she felt better just to have someone listen to her troubles and someone who seemed to care for not only Sam's feelings but also hers. We prayed for God's help for both her and her ill husband.

I saw Cheryl and Sam a few days later. They both were all smiles. Cheryl told me that she had shared with Sam her frustrations and what led up to her smashing the three bowls. On the way home the day before they stopped at a thrift store and found three bowls almost identical to the ones she had broken. Cheryl saw this as a sign of Jesus' love and forgiveness. She told me that she thinks of His love every time she looks at those new bowls.

I thank the Lord that Cheryl was able to unleash her anger and verbalize her love for the Savior who first loved her. I also think of the many, many caregivers who also may also be feeling great frustration. If you are a caregiver facing difficulties and frustrations, talk to someone about your feelings. You need spiritual care as well as those who are dealing with serious illness. Share your anger; talk with your Savior in prayer. Do not let anger build up until it explodes. (Why waste three perfectly good bowls ?)

## **CAREGIVERS SUFFER ALONG WITH THE ILL**

There is no doubt in my mind - caregivers also suffer. Caregivers need to listen, to hear words of encouragement from God's Word, to have their faith in the Savior's love reaffirmed and, no doubt, also time for some relaxation.

Remember the caregivers!



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.





WISCONSIN LUTHERAN INSTITUTIONAL MINISTRIES, INC.  
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## OUR MISSION

*“ To share God's law and the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ with all individuals who are or have been institutionalized, and their families. ”*

## THRIVENT GIVINGPLUS MATCHING GRANTS

WLIM continues to receive, on a weekly basis, a number of GivingPlus forms from our donors. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, through the GivingPlus effort, matches \$.50 of each \$1.00 given each year by a Thrivent member who completes and returns the Thrivent GivingPlus form with a gift. In 2006, GivingPlus matching funds added \$18,578 to the gifts given by 157 donors who completed the needed form. A sincere thank you to the donors and to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans!

GivingPlus matching funds received in January and February, 2007 already total \$3,383.50.

Contact the WLIM office if you need a GivingPlus form.  
The WLIM hotline is 888-214-6490.

