



# Sowers & Seeds

Published by the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship & Parish Schools to assist those in early childhood ministry.

## It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

by Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

It won't be long before the words and music of holiday songs will fill malls, stores, homes, and cars all over the country. Perhaps by the time you receive this newsletter, the stores you visit will have gone into full holiday mode. It is the most wonderful time of the year, isn't it? And it's this way for your ECM, too. In the days and weeks to come, you will have many opportunities to help children and parents see why.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, you'll be able to help young, inquisitive, and absorbent minds and hearts gaze into the angel-filled night, peek into the dimly lit stable, smell the cattle and hay, hear the gentle breathing of the Son of God, and sing with all their hearts, "Away in a Manger" and "Go Tell It on the Mountain." You'll be able to teach them, in ways they'll always remember, that Baby Jesus is their Savior from sin.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, you'll be able to refresh older, anxious, and filtering minds and hearts with the calming Good News, that this life's hurry, hassle, and hatred are totally healed by the Son of God who grew to die in their place. You'll be able to remind them – because it's so easy to lose focus – that Jesus, their Savior, brother, and friend, has prepared a heavenly peace for them and their children. You'll help them to sing, "A Great and Mighty Wonder" like they never have before.

It is the most wonderful time of the year! And what a blessing and privilege for you to be able to share why with the children and families you serve. Do it well, from the heart, trusting that the Baby Jesus, the Son of God, is your Savior, too.



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## Those Terrific Toddlers!

by Bob Lepine of [childrensministry.com](http://childrensministry.com)  
a Group Publishing Web site

“Exasperating,” “entertaining,” and “extraordinary” are among the words used to describe toddlers. In fact, toddlerhood is probably the most hair-raising, roller-coaster-like time on earth—until the teenage years!

Teaching a room full of toddlers can bankrupt your energy reserves. Yet the hilarious stories you gain can fill a book. More importantly, though, is the influence you have over a young child. Your investment of time and energy toward toddlers’ understanding of God and their self-worth yields great rewards . . . (Read the rest of the article at [www.childrensministry.com](http://www.childrensministry.com). Type “Those terrific toddlers” into the search box.)

*NOTE: Childrensministry.com is not a WELS or WELS affiliated Web site, but some very good insights and ideas can be found there. Be discerning. When in doubt about something you find, ask your pastor.*



## Can You Help Us?

*Sowers & Seeds* comes to WELS early childhood ministry staff members in one of two ways: either in direct mailing to individual homes, or in bulk to a congregation where the individual copies are then distributed. Currently, 2,274 *Sowers & Seeds* are direct mailed each quarter and 180 are bulk mailed, totalling 2,454 issues. Printing and postage costs are quite high for this, as you can imagine, so we’d like to keep the database as free of duplication as possible. Please help us with this.

### If you are receiving

- a direct mail copy and one passed out via your congregation,
- a direct mail copy, but really no longer care to,
- multiple, direct mail copies,
- more bulk copies than you have ECM staff members or need for distributing to others like Board of Education members, etc.
- or some other scenario leaving you with more copies than you need,

then e-mail your updated information/numbers/wishes to Karen Kulow ([daksk@charter.net](mailto:daksk@charter.net)). She will make the database corrections.

If, however, your congregation needs to receive additional bulk mail copies to distribute or needs to add new ECM staff members to the direct mailing database, then let Karen know that, too. THANKS!

We’d love to have more people reading *Sowers & Seeds*. We also want to make sure we are being good stewards of the precious resources we have. If we don’t hear from you, we’ll leave things the way they currently are in the database. If there are changes, get them to us ASAP, and thanks so much for the help.



### CYD Welcomes New Assistant

The Commission on Youth Discipleship welcomes a new member to the Administrative Assistant position, which was vacant for several months after the resignation of Bob Mateske last July. Jeremy Bakken, a 2004 Wisconsin Lutheran College graduate, joined the CYD team in October, 2006. He graduated Magna Cum Laude with a double major in Mathematics and Music Composition. Prior to joining CYD, Jeremy was store manager at the Wauwatosa location of Beihoff Music, a Wisconsin-based music company. While there, he assisted in multiple areas such as Internet development and Web design, marketing, customer service, and administrative duties. This background has prepared him well to assume the duties and responsibilities that are his as part of the CYD team. You can contact Jeremy at 414-256-3274 or [jeremy.bakken@sab.wels.net](mailto:jeremy.bakken@sab.wels.net). You can learn more about Jeremy at [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship). Click on “About Youth Discipleship.”

# Outreach - Being Rooted and Growing in Christ



*During the 2005-2006 school year the WELS Commission on Parish Schools Early Childhood Task Force sent a survey to Early Childhood Ministries (ECM) around our Synod. The purpose of this survey was to gather ideas on various outreach strategies used in ECM programs. The following article, written by Dana Leyrer, ECM Director at St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, is in response to information collected from the survey.*

By definition the word *root* is explained as “a base or support, an essential part or element; the basic core.” To *be rooted*, therefore, is to become firmly established, settled, or entrenched with this essential part. What, then, do we as disciples need to be rooted in to be successful in our endeavor to carry out Christ’s Great Commission? The answer is simple – be rooted in the Word with eagerness to share the Good News as a natural fruit of faith.

One of our favorite science units is learning about seeds. We have all enjoyed watching our students become excited about their bean seed sprouting in a plastic bag with a damp paper towel. After the initial sprout, the bean plant grows right out of the bag and the roots descend deeper seeking to become that “essential part or element” that will nurture and sustain its growth. Without planting the seed in fertile soil, the seed soon becomes covered in mold, and much to our students chagrin, the once striving plant soon withers and dies.

The same can be said about congregations who fail to make a strong commitment to be rooted in God’s Word. Without this “essential part,” any sprouts of outreach soon become moldy with feelings of disappointment and frustration. When there is no “striving plant,” the outreach endeavors in these congregations eventually wither and die.

Taking root in God’s Word is only the first step in outreach endeavors. Congregations and staff must have an intentional outreach focus in place before any “prosperous plant” can thrive. Outreach plans must be a priority of the congregation, intentional in their focus, and assigned to people for accountability. Pastor Steven Pagels, our outreach pastor, is a fine example of this intentional ministry. One of his goals is to be visible on a routine basis in our preschool program. He makes every effort to know all preschool families. He visits every classroom K3- Kindergarten every month to read a book and get to know the kids. He visits with parents during the morning drop off or afternoon pick up, accompanies the classes on field trips to acquaint himself with non-member families, and in January invites every non-member family to share with him their experience in our preschool. Due to his intentional efforts of building a relationship with these families during the first four months of school, they are comfortable sitting down and talking to him about their future at our school, in our church, and finally in heaven.

St. John’s in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin adapted this theme: “Rooted and Growing – in Christ, in Our Community”. It began as a building campaign that God graciously allowed to flourish in the form of a new educational facility. Because

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Some Have One . . . What's Yours?

by Dr. Sharon Burow, Wisconsin Lutheran College – Milwaukee, WI

Whether a conglomerate on Wall Street or a one-room school in Nebraska, organizations imbed, define, and frame themselves through mission and vision statements. Those hiring often determine employment based on the applicant's buy-in to the company's direction and purpose. As called servants, our mission and vision is clear. Additionally, if we are to live as ambassadors for Christ, if we dispositionally intend to project the words of I Peter 3:15 – *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have* – then it is worth the time to look inward and scrutinize whether our thoughts, words, and actions authenticate and herald the mission of Christ in our daily walk.

Our WELS congregations' church and school mission statements project from the Synodical focus. Often it ends there, only to grace church flyers and school handbooks. Where is the application to my very own classroom? A former principal challenged our faculty to bridge that gap by creating a personal mission statement that we would share with our classroom families at the home visit. That accountability to others often curbed me to have head, heart, and hands in unison and in tune with the ideals set forth in the personal mission statement.

How does one begin? A Bible passage might serve as a personal anchor and litmus test as to how you want to conduct yourself as a servant leader among the families entrusted to you. Articulate on paper as to how that mission can be visible to others and the venue for sharing it. Perhaps, initially you are more comfortable keeping the mission statement as a private commitment and prayer between you and your Lord. For years here at the College, I kept my mission statement tucked under my desk planner. Last year I decided to revise it and staple it to the syllabus of each course that I taught to future educators—it served a commitment to them. What follows is the introduction and my mission statement. May it guide you in the development of your own statement of intent as you also serve our Savior through your calling.

### Mission Statement Introduction

The world continually seeks to create and provide new and alluring ambiances to soothe one from man's inhumanity to man. From literature, music, and art, to food, candles, and lotions, comes a plethora of sensual "gifts" with accolades guaranteed to sweep, exhilarate, and transcend one to a brief reprieve from reality. These momentary facades seem to be

*(Continued on page 5)*

### *("Outreach" . . . continued from page 3)*

of its message, St. John's extended the theme beyond its initial use to become our congregation's "brand". The rationale was simple: as individual Christians we are rooted in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. As those roots dig deep into God's Word, we grow in our faith. Throughout the week members have seven different Bible classes to choose from, including large group, small group, classes just for women, men, or teens. The congregation also offers many organizations that set out to accomplish specific goals within the church and community, all of which begin their time together with Bible study. Members and staff increasingly attach themselves to Christ, the life-giving Vine, and a natural fruit of their lives then is boldly declaring God's grace in Christ to the lost.

Being rooted deeply in God's Word as a body of believers is emphasized in the New Testament. It is here that God's Word frequently pictures the disciples of Christ in a group setting; a sheep in a flock, a soldier in the army, a limb in the body, a stone in a building. Believers worshiped regularly at the Temple each day, met in small groups in

homes for communion and shared meals together. The early church recognized that by meeting together the Body derived strength, knowledge, encouragement, and the desire to fulfill Christ's commission.

In the final act of his life on earth, Christ commissioned his followers as partners to carry out his work. As the Father had sent him, so now he sends us. It is a life-encompassing mission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things that I commanded you..." This Great Commission reflects God's eternal purpose that all people everywhere have the opportunity to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Without question, this final calling from Christ was to be given top priority in our lives and in our ministries. Compelled by Jesus' love, we have a "commission," to accomplish. In order to successfully carry out this task, it is essential that we are rooted deeply in God's Word, so that the Holy Spirit can set our hearts on fire to live up to this high calling left by Christ Jesus.





("Some Have One" . . . continued from page 4)

part of a "quick fix" frequently sought, and that flickers until one is again slapped in the face with the complexities of life.

Why is it that we settle for these pleasurable retreats instead of saturating our lives and the lives of others with an enduring ambience? Perhaps we are caught in a cyclical imbalance?

### Building a Personal and Professional AROMA

My personal mission statement is based on an evolution of self and a gift to others whom I am privileged to have in my life. It is my intention to consistently exude and provide an AROMA that lingers far after our class time together.

**A**ffirmation May you look at me and see strength of character and faithful living and my tenacity to provide, nurture, and validate that within you.

**R**espect May you look at me and see the care and diligence I have toward myself and my tenacity to provide, nurture, and validate that within you.

**O**rder May you look at me and see balance and preparation in my actions, and my tenacity to provide nurture, and validate that within you.

**M**erriment May you look at me and see my joy and spontaneity in simplicity, and my tenacity to provide, nurture, and validate that within you.

**A**ffection May you look at me and see a healthy love of self and ability to forgive and my tenacity to provide, nurture, and validate that within you.

One must "own each of these ingredients to exude an AROMA whose fragrance sensitively and consistently envelops all in a Christian environment for living life to the fullest.

It is my intent to prize, model, and share these ingredients as a servant leader. May I, by example, lead you to be a resilient and sustaining fragrance when encountering the unpleasant malodors of life.

*May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:14*

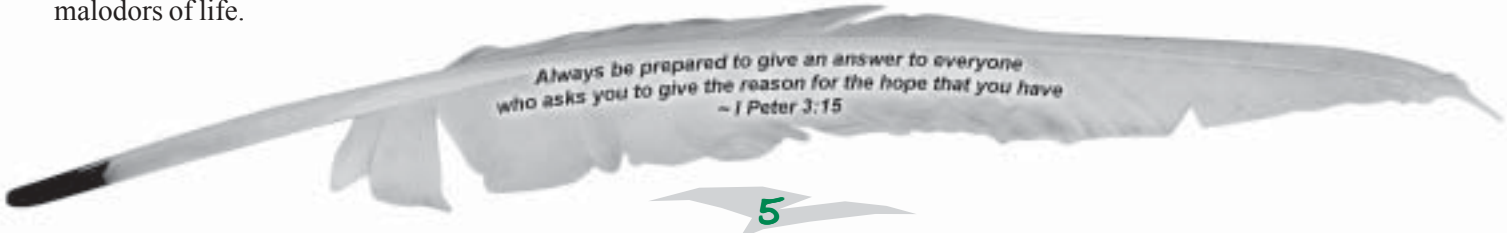
*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2*

In conclusion, I want to say that it is an overwhelming responsibility to prepare future leaders for Christ. It is imperative that through the Holy Spirit we empower our young people [beginning at the earliest ages] and help each to confidently stand firm and tall in the Lord. Developing your own personal mission statement can help you to stay focused on this wonderful calling.

**Here's another example of a WELS worker's personal mission statement:**

*Take it to the next level with confidence, commitment, creativity, conscience, caring, and connection to Christ.*

- **Take it to the next level** – always move in positive, improving, advancing directions
- **with confidence** – developed from past experiences, the nurturing and affirming of others, and solid trust in the absolute promises of God
- **commitment** – keep at it, persevere, run the race in such a way as to get the final prize
- **creativity** – use my own and the creativity of others to figure out new and better ways to get the job done and make lasting improvements
- **conscience** – keep a close eye on what is right, never sacrificing God's truth for man's, listen to the Spirit-guided messages of my "inner voice"
- **caring** – live out the "law of love" in all I do and with everyone I serve
- **connection to Christ** – seek first his kingdom and righteousness, filter all thought and action through his Word, strive with his help to be more Christ-like





## Sowers & Seeds

### God's Good Gifts: Scrapbooking Bible Study for Women

If you want to get moms associated with your early childhood ministry into the Bible and into closer connection with each other, consider starting a women's scrapbooking group using the Group, Inc. scrapbooking resource, *God's Good Gifts*. This resource, and the others in the series (*Christian Living A-Z* and *Fruits of the Spirit*), use Bible readings, questions for discussion, and life applications as a catalyst for growth in faith and friendship. The lessons also include development of scrapbook pages around spiritual and family themes. Mrs. Debbie Rothe, former kindergarten teacher at St. Matthew's Lutheran School in Oconomowoc, WI said of *God's Good Gifts*, "Excellent resource for any group of women. This will foster deep Christian faith and friendships for sure!"

From the Group Web site ([www.grouppublishing.com](http://www.grouppublishing.com)): *The third study resource in Group's best-selling Scripture Scrapbook™ series helps women create compelling scrapbook pages that focus on deep, personal elements of spiritual heritage. These 12 sessions provide a scrapbooking adventure that covers topics true to women's hearts, such as: church, myself, freedom in Christ, home, rest, fun, God's world, my purpose, children, sisterhood, family, and my relationship with God. Includes a devotion with each scrapbook project!* At the Group Web site you can view a sample chapter. Sold at Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) 1-800-662-6022 Order #: 222563 \$21.99 each (discounts on multiple copies) Check out other NPH scrap booking resources at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).

All Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. **Sowers & Seeds** is published four times a year by the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship & Parish Schools. Comments about this **Sowers & Seeds** and ideas for future issues can be directed to Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship.

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