Greetings and salutations from uptown Mankato, the hub of the Western cultural world. I just returned from a ten-day vacation during which time I had the opportunity to read the most recent issue of CHARIS. I just wanted to tell you that I look forward to each issue. Keep up the good work. Tell Mark Braun that his article, “The Wauwatosa Gospel,” should be required reading by every ELS clergyman. Somewhere in the move to Mankato from the ministry in Cottonwood, AZ, I misplaced my back issues of CHARIS, so I wasn’t able to review the article by Eberle. In my opinion, some controversy is good. It makes people clarify issues. Good luck on finding an editorial advisor in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Social scientists, like myself, are a despised breed. I even found out about one particular Bethany scholarship in which the donor states, “No scholarship will be awarded in the social sciences (anthropology, political sciences, sociology, social studies, etc.).” I guess that puts me in my place. Anyway, I just wanted to congratulate you on your great work at WLC and, again, thank you for CHARIS. Greetings to the great Christian folks at WLC.

Dr. William B. Kessel
Bethany Lutheran College

For your consideration, among other reasons, regarding declining numbers in the WELS’ elementary school system, I have summarized and simplified a 1995 Population Trends report by demographer Carl Haub. See:

(www.gcrio.org/CONSEQUENCES/summer95/population.html)

First, at 2.0 children or fewer per mother (Total Fertility Rate is the number of children per mother), a population will decrease. Conversely, a population will replace itself at a TFR of 2.1 or higher. Modernist and urban societies have lowered their TFR to the European model of 1.7. It is speculated that economic security and environmental sensitivity are motivating factors for families in these societies.

Second, the United States (modernist and urban) has a TFR of about 2.0, but there is variance among ethnic groups. White women have a TFR of 1.8; for blacks it is 2.4, for Asians it is 1.9, and for Hispanics it is 3.0. Also, frostbelt states have TFRs below the replacement level, in part because of lower immigration populations than sunbelt states (immigration populations have higher TFRs than non-immigration). The population of the United States is continuously growing in the South and the West and continuously declining in the Northeast and Midwest, in part because of immigration trends.

Compare these trends to demographics in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. If the WELS is a mostly white, frostbelt church body, then it is likely that the WELS’ TFR is close to the national...
level of 1.8–2.0, which is not a sustainable rate. I am neither a mathematician nor a statistician, but it seems as if there are two possibilities to avoid a declining population: change the demographic of the WELS or change the TFR of the WELS’ demographic.

Paul Burmeister
Assistant Professor of Art
Wisconsin Lutheran College

I hope this doesn't sound too presumptuous, but is there some sort of a crisis at CHARIS? I really enjoy the magazine, but I was distracted by the typos in this latest issue (in Kathie’s article, Paul’s article, and in Dialogue). Then I noticed that you will only be distributing CHARIS by subscription. I worry that your readership will become WLC and the Church and Change people. I understand budget constraints and will certainly subscribe, but I loved the fact that you were stirring the pot throughout the whole WELS. I’m just concerned.

Your “Preliminary Findings about Lutheran School Enrollment” struck a familiar chord with me. Not only won’t our parents pay for Christian education, they won’t even drive their children to an LES that is “free” to them. Our enrollment at East Twin Lutheran School in Mishicot comes entirely from the Mishicot school district, which provides busing. Families beyond the district border choose their local public school. Is the solution that we need to do a better job of selling Christian education (as Paul Kelm suggests), or face the reality that we are spending a huge amount of time, effort, and money on a “need” for full-time Lutheran education, which our modern, Christian parents do not recognize? Do we need Lutheran elementary schools to build strong families and faithful Christian children? I’m looking forward to your full report.

Thanks and many blessings.

Rev. Bob Johannes
Mishicot, Wisconsin

Dr. Bauer responds:

No excuses can be given for inadvertent typos. The last issue had its share. Sadly, I lost my trusty student assistant, Stacey Miller, who worked with me on the journal for the two previous years. I also discovered that transcribing conference presentations into readable articles poses a different set of challenges. To overcome these shortcomings, I am happy to announce that Mrs. Ann Jahns, WLC class of 1992, will be providing editorial assistance.

Obiter dicta:

As for Braun’s response, p. 41, re: “The Wauwatosa Gospel,” (CHARIS, Summer 2004), just delving deeply into the Scripture texts and their contexts does not cover all the dimensions of historical-grammatical hermeneutics, which is the Wauwatosa Gospel. One must also understand Scripture in the light of contemporary culture and contemporary thought patterns.

As for Wietzke’s judgment, p. 42, he is not thinking historically. Koehler did not withdraw himself. He was ousted. And in his position and at his age, where was he to go? To an island by himself? Where could he find sympathetic companionship, except with the Protestants, with whose practices, by the way, he did not entirely agree? I know. I visited him several times in his retirement. Also, the Protestants are not properly labeled a “sect,” as Wietzke did. A sect separates itself. They were thrown out, as happened to Luther, and we wouldn’t call Luther a sectarian.
[Dr.] Peter Fraser and I have been discussing, informally, the peculiar allegiance of evangelical Christians to the capitalist ideology despite the latter’s practical opposition to the heart of Christ’s social message. This has led to my own speculations—which are at this moment based upon the most distant and insubstantial of empirical rumblings—as to the origins of this strange friendship.

Actually, this discussion sprang from an offhand remark made by Pete in a Bible class at St. Marcus. He made a casual reference to the dissolution of slavery (i.e., serfdom) in mid-sixteenth- and mid-seventeenth-century England brought about by the redistribution of monastic lands in the wake of the Reformation (an argument made by Hilaire Belloc and other Distributists in the early 20th century). Belloc goes on to posit, however, that this temporary release from bondage led only to a greater social evil with the subsequent rise of preindustrial capitalism and its accompanying “wage slavery”.

This reference to Belloc led to further, brief discussions about the parallel rise of capitalism and Protestantism in western Europe. I suggested to Pete that this—our own Lutheran affinity with a single social, political, and economic ideology—might be an excellent topic for a future edition of CHARIS.

Jerry Knapp WLC ’95

Dr. Bauer responds:

It’s certainly gratifying to see that the life of the mind does not end with graduation from WLC! Mr. Knapp was encouraged to further develop and submit his thoughts.
Dialogue

not some long-lost, hidden thing, that they can find it also among some very good stuff in the aforementioned volumes.

For what it’s worth:

Revi/. Ryan J. Landwehr;
peruser, nonsubscriber;
Lena, Wisconsin

Dr. Bauer responds:

Thank you to Pastor Landwehr for pointing out that Koehler’s essay, “Gesetzlich Wesen Unter Uns,” has been published, along with other fine papers, in the three-volume set, The Wauwatosa Theology, published by Northwestern Publishing House. It was certainly not my intention to ignore this source of the essay, but it should be pointed out that it was not the only source. In fact, I chose to use an earlier translation of the essay and gave appropriate attribution in the introduction of the article.

Earlier references to the NPH publication were made by Dr. Mark Braun in his article, “A Tale of Two Synods” (CHARIS, Summer 2001, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 43) and in a subsequent article, “It’s a Different World— Or Is It?” (CHARIS, Fall 2003, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 32).

The editor regrets that Pastor Landwehr won’t be counted among CHARIS’ subscribers. He will be missing many opportunities to expand his intellectual horizons. I also regret that he showed restraint by deleting his two-paragraph “rant.” Your humble journal editor is always receptive to receiving mail that both challenges and entertains.