

# Jesus Loves *Me* This I Know

BY CHRISTINE S. WEERTS

For a makeup compact told me so.

I was rearranging a long-neglected dresser drawer when a small brown object rolled into sight. Years earlier, it must have slid behind a box in the drawer, and jostling the drawer freed it from its hiding place. It was a small, brown, tortoise shell, “pressed powder compact” that fit easily in the palm of my hand, and it bore a barely discernible “CG” logo on the outside for CoverGirl®, a popular and accessible drugstore makeup.

The powder was long gone, but the compact kept its value because it contained a special message from my mother-in-law, Margaret Dicke Weerts, a long-time Lutheran kindergarten teacher, who has since died in the faith. Many years before, she gave me this precious compact when I began teaching Sunday School to little children in rural Mississippi.

My mother-in-law was born in Ijuhy, Brazil, in 1921. Her father was a Lutheran missionary. As the oldest of six children, she often taught her younger siblings both school and Sunday School lessons in German, Portuguese, and English. After returning to the U.S. when she was 11, Margaret continued her Lutheran education — in English only — eventually earning her teaching certificate at Concordia Teacher’s College in Seward, Nebraska. This is where she met her husband, Edward Weerts, who was also studying to become a Lutheran teacher.



Ed and Margaret Weerts on their 60th Wedding Anniversary in 2004.



Rev. Ed Dicke, front row with sons Harold and Edward. Margaret, Elinor, and Dorothy are in the back row. Brother Martin was born after they returned to the States.

After the powder was gone, Margaret, who had learned the lessons of frugality by necessity, cleaned it and knew immediately how she would use it to teach children about Jesus and His love for them.



Frugal and resourceful, Margaret was a creative Bible story teller, taking ordinary objects to share the Good News of Jesus' love — popsicle stick nativities, toilet paper praise streamers, or clothespin critters for Noah's Ark. She had the conventional flannelgraph Bible Story collection, creating many characters herself, as well as hand-made flashcards for Bible memory verses. She told the story of Holy Week with objects hidden in Easter eggs: a tiny homemade die, nails, a tiny sponge, and more — long before "Resurrection eggs" were sold.

When CoverGirl® launched in 1961, I can imagine my mother-in-law, who had just returned to the classroom as her youngest (of four) entered kindergarten that year, was glad to see "clean makeup" in the local drugstore. Still a bit of an extravagance on a Lutheran teacher's salary, the makeup was originally made using Noxzema's medicated ingredients of camphor, menthol, and eucalyptus. It was not just makeup, it was "medicated skin cream" for a fair-skinned young woman who grew up in the tropics.

Margaret was not a vain person by any means, but I believe the mirrored compact had been handy for slipping on a pale swipe of lipstick before a parent-teacher conference or maybe even patting a shiny nose before an LWML meeting.

More clearly, I can see her quietly opening the compact to dab powder on her tear-stained cheeks as the congregation sang, "I Know that My Redeemer Lives," that centuries-old hymn that recalls the confession of Job, *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth* (Job 19:25).

Since June of 1952, the hymn held special meaning for her when it was sung at Trinity Lutheran Church in Long Prairie, Minnesota, when four members of her family were buried: her parents, a brother, and a sister. They had been driving through dark rural Minnesota after her brother's high school graduation when they crossed a railroad track. They never saw the train; all were killed instantly.

As the oldest child, Margaret was responsible for planning the funeral, finding a home for her grandmother who had been living with her parents, and emptying the parsonage — all from 350 miles away in Fort Dodge, Iowa, where her husband was teaching. She took in her sister's two-year-old son, the same age as her youngest, and pushed forward, as there was no time to grieve. Her only living sister was half a world

away — a missionary with her husband in Papua New Guinea — too far for mutual comforting.

Eight years later, back in the classroom, Margaret kept busy with her four children, her kindergarten students, lesson plans, school, church, LWML meetings, praying, sewing, and gardening. Yet a tear would slip out now and then when a memory flooded her heart and fresh pain pierced her soul. The convenient CoverGirl® compact helped her keep her composure.

After the powder was gone, Margaret, who had learned the lessons of frugality by necessity, cleaned it and knew immediately how she would use it to teach children about Jesus and His love for them.

On the outside of the compact she placed a sticker with the face of Jesus. She cut a small heart out of red construction paper and glued it inside, where the powder once was.

As five-year-old Sarah held the small compact in her hands — thrilled to be touching such a grownup item — she recited, “Jesus,” at the sticker on the outside, then, opening the compact and seeing the heart, said, “loves,” then, looking in the mirror, she surprisingly exclaimed, “Sarah!”

*Jesus Loves Sarah. Jesus Loves Henry. Jesus loves us all, as the Bible tells us! As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (John 15:9,13).*

The simple, tortoise shell, powder compact brought the joy of Jesus to little ones, and was a reminder to Margaret, as she grieved, of the One Who loved her and would never leave her; Who lives and gives us eternal life.

After finding this long-lost treasure, I put it in my purse. I want to have it on hand to share with the children in my neighborhood and in my church. Jesus loves Jermaine. Jesus Loves Jalaysia. I also need to be reminded daily that Jesus loves Christine.

*The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing (Zephaniah 3:17). Q*

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Ed and Margaret and children in 1966.



Margaret coloring Easter eggs with fourth grade girls in a Saturday Bible Class in Mendenhall, Mississippi, 1996.