

WHERE THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS ARE

We were traveling in Europe some years ago. Our rental car from Germany used only lead-free fuel. At that time only a few filling stations in France offered it. Imagine our delight when we found a station that had lead-free fuel and we could fill up our empty tank. How we looked for that “lead-free” sign!

While we’re traveling the road of life, what should we look for in a church? How can we find believers who are members of God’s church? Do we look at the size of the visible grouping? at its structure, its programs, its friendly clergy, its active members? What about the one that has the best ads or is in the news regularly? Of course, none of this is wrong in and of itself. But such outward signs are not an indication that believers are present.

If we want to find the church, we need to look for the gospel. Why? God tells us clearly, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). So where the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus is proclaimed, we will find faith. And where there is faith, there is God’s church, believers in Christ.

How can we say this so confidently? Because we know what the gospel is. “It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). With our limited human sight, we cannot point out in whose heart the gospel is working faith. That only God can see. But we do know where the gospel is, there the Holy Spirit is at work. The Lord himself assures us, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: **It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish** what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

What’s the “lead-free pump” that fills the heart with faith? It’s the gospel in Word and sacraments. If we are looking for the church, we can look for the place where the good news of God’s free gift of salvation in Christ is proclaimed. There we will find believers, the church. And where the gospel is present in

visible form, in things we can see and touch—in the water of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper—the Spirit is at work, creating and strengthening faith in human hearts.

Those lead-free pumps in France told us where to find fuel for our car. The Word of God and the sacraments are the marks of the church that tell us where we can find members of God’s church.

Taken from the devotional series, *For Living Saints*, published by Northwestern Publishing House

VBS – A DAY WITH JESUS

There will be an informational/prep meeting for this year’s VBS on Monday, May 9. We will discuss the day’s schedule, plan crafts, view the required insurance video, and answer any questions. We can always use more volunteers, please consider helping out. VBS – A Day with Jesus is scheduled for Friday, June 10 at 7pm. See you at the meeting!

READING BETWEEN THE WINES

The final selection for this season’s Reading Between the Wines is the Agatha Christie classic **Murder at the Vicarage**, which was the first of Miss Marple’s many adventures. We will meet to discuss the book on **Monday, May 16th** in Fellowship Hall from 10:00 AM until Noon. All members and guests of Hope are welcome to join us.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

A very heartfelt thank you is directed to Ted V and his merry band of volunteers that pulled off a wonderful Easter breakfast. Everything was very tasty as the sounds of fellowship reverberating in the Fellowship Hall were a joyful, welcome noise.

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SUPPORT

Hi Everyone,

I would like to start out this month's support article by thanking everyone who came out to the work day. We had a good turnout, and were able to spruce up the campus before Holy Week. We were able to complete many projects such as weed and hedge trimming, sprinkler repair, weeding the planter boxes, getting a start on painting the school building, tree trimming, replacing the door handle to the men's bathroom, washing windows, and picking up trash along Hope Way. Many thanks to everyone who volunteered their time and talents.

I would like to provide an update for a couple of the larger projects that have been discussed at the council meetings. First, keep an eye out soon for the front doors to the church to be removed so they can be repaired. The council has decided to have them sandblasted and powder coated, and the hope is that this will create a long lasting finish that won't wear down. During this time the front of the church will be boarded up, so we will have to use the side entrances to enter and leave church. The ushers will help facilitate this and be available for any questions. Secondly, a decision has been made on what to do with the large cross that is above the entrance to the church. After getting quotes for a new cross from Fiberglass Specialties Incorporated, Stewart Signs, and Pacific Neon Company, we have decided to take down the existing cross, refinish it and repaint it ourselves. We all felt that the designs the companies

came up with were underwhelming for the cost they were asking. Thirdly, the window in the front of the church that got hit by a rock from the lawnmower has been repaired, and in addition to that the stained glass that was damaged behind it is being repaired by Rainbow Glass. It should be finished around the end of April.

A quick note of concern, be careful of the trip hazard coming out of the fellowship hall leading up to the courtyard, there is a crack that is raised in the concrete. Unfortunately our go to concrete company, Freedom Concrete, is about twelve weeks out on jobs, but Trevor did say he would add us to his schedule.

As always we are looking for lawn care people to volunteer. Riding mowing takes about 1-1/2 to 2 hours to complete, and push mowing takes about 30 minutes. Also, for anyone who has been trying to use the string trimmer in the new shed, it has been repaired and works normally now. Thank you to everyone who devotes time to help keep our campus looking good.

God Bless
Tim A

LWMS

Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society

The Redwood Circuit Rally was held at Anderson last Saturday. Three ladies from Hope attended.

LWMS has several things coming up in May. On the 15th of May ballots will be distributed at church which will ask that each woman vote for the National LWMS officers for the next year and also the Mission projects. The bio for each lady running for office is included on the ballot. The mission projects are included in this article so you may have more time to review them and select your choice of 1 Home Mission and 1 World Mission. Please try to give each of these some thought and be able to mark your ballot on the 15th. A box for returning the ballots will be available in the church entry on that day as well as on the 22nd. Results must be postmarked no later than the 25th. **When your ballots are received you are asked to vote for one person or project in each field.**

May is a five (5) Sunday month which means that there will be a basket in the entry for your mission (mite box) offerings. This will also be announced in the bulletin.

MISSION OFFERINGS PROJECTS

Home Mission Projects

HM 2020-05: Musical Assistance

Home mission congregations are not always blessed with a pipe organ or even a piano. They often use portable equipment such as electronic keyboards, computer generated music or CD players with sound amplification. The costs for computer, software and sound equipment are a challenge when establishing mission congregations. Your gifts will enrich their worship service as they acquire these electronic tools to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord.”

HM2020-13: WELS Campus Ministry Support

Students on college campuses are often faced with many new choices, not all God pleasing. During their college years, students are often living away from home for the first time – it is critical for them to have guidance from God’s Word that is both meaningful and practical for daily living. The Campus Ministry Committee (CMC) assists congregations in ministering to college students and other young adults with the means of grace so they may grow in their faith, be trained for service and reach out to the lost. One of the main ways the CMC assists congregations is in maintaining a synod-wide database of college students to help campus pastors reach and serve students while they are at college. The CMC also provides materials for campus pastors and congregations, funding for new ministry initiatives and ongoing ministries, counsel to ministries requesting assistance, and opportunities for campus pastors to grow spiritually and to network ideas through regular staff conferences. Your gifts to the CMC will help assist congregations to reach out and serve these young people on college campuses with the Word of God.

World Mission Projects

WM-2020-28: Latin America Special Projects

There are many other project requests across Latin America that enhance our gospel ministry efforts. Your gifts will help to fund projects such as Church-Planting or Sister Synod Support. Once someone takes all the online courses offered through Academia Cristo and is identified as a promising leader and church planter, Latin America missionaries will make on-the-ground training visits

and offer seminars to continue mentoring him and supporting him in his outreach to his communities. This is church planting support. The Latin America Missions team has already made these kinds of visits in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, and many more places. Sister Synod Support is World Missions working to share the gospel message throughout Latin America, for many years. The Lord has blessed that effort, and strong independent sister synods now exist in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, Peru and Puerto Rico. Much of our work in Latin America has turned to the outreach efforts through Academia Cristo, as national pastors have taken over what had been the work of missionaries in their church. However, we continue to partner with our sister synods in outreach and sometimes support them financially.

WM-2020-29 Native American Special Project

WELS Native American Missions are currently located on the Fort Apache and San Carlos Apache Reservations in eastern Arizona. Apache Christians are asking to be equipped to share Christ’s love with more people on their own reservations and even into other tribes. Apache Lutheran teachers have connections with different Native American tribes and are ready to reach out with the saving message of the gospel to the more than 500 reservations scattered across North America. Your gifts will support the following projects and others as needed: exploratory visits and online outreach to other Native American tribes; materials for outreach, Sunday schools, youth ministry, small group Bible studies and support groups, grief counseling, addiction recovery ministries and more; property repairs and renovations at the churches, schools, parsonages and teacherages and continuing education for the pastoral and teaching staff, and humanitarian aid projects.

ALSO:

If you are planning to attend the LWMS Convention and have not submitted your registration you should be doing it very soon.

TOGETHER



News from the WELS

April 2022
Website: www.wels.net

April 5, 2022

GOOD OUTCOME FOR A COURT CASE IN FINLAND

Religious freedom and the ability to proclaim the teachings of Scripture without fear of government persecution is something we in the United States have taken for granted. But there are increasing examples from around the world where even seemingly free and democratic countries are attempting to restrict the abilities of Christians to express their faith and their teachings openly.

In Finland, a member of Parliament and former Minister of the Interior, Paivi Rasanen, was charged with “hate speech” for sharing her faith-based views dealing with marriage and sexual ethics in her writings and in media interviews. A Lutheran bishop, Juhana Pohjola, was also charged because he published some of Rasanen’s writings.

When charges were brought, confessional Lutheran churches from around the world signed a letter to the prosecutors in Finland that strongly urged the court to uphold the principle of freedom of religion and free speech and to dismiss the charges against Rasanen and Pohjola. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and our sister churches in Europe signed the letter, along with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its partner churches.

Last week, the Finnish court upheld the right to free speech by dismissing all charges against Paivi Rasanen and Bishop Pohjola.

We are happy that the courts of Finland made this decision. But this entire episode is a reminder that the freedom we enjoy to proclaim the truths of Scripture can never be taken for granted. We pray that God would preserve this freedom for us here in America and give us the courage to “speak about the things that we have seen and heard.”

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

BOARD FOR HOME MISSIONS APPROVES FIVE NEW MISSIONS

On March 31–April 1, the WELS Board for Home Missions met and approved 12 new mission requests—five new home mission starts, five enhancements at existing congregations, and two unsubsidized missions.

New home missions are being supported in:

- **Windsor, Colo.**, where WELS congregations in Ft. Collins, Loveland, and Greeley are supporting this mission start in a rapidly growing area in northern Colorado. Currently 20 WELS families are located in the target area, which has no Lutheran churches.
- **Wichita, Kan.**, where the area population is expected to grow by ten percent over the next ten years on the east side of the city. This will be a second site ministry for Messiah, Wichita.
- **Canton, Ga.**, a fast-growing suburb of metro Atlanta identified by members and leadership from Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga., as a prime location to plant a new mission church.
- **Conroe, Texas**, the northernmost suburb of Houston, which is the fifth-fastest-growing city in the United States. Abiding Word, Houston, Texas, is helping this new mission get off the ground.
- **Lodi, Wis.**, which is a second-site ministry for Zion, Leeds, Wis. Zion has already leased a ministry center in Lodi and the 17-person ministry team hopes to launch worship services this year. This mission is financially supported by Zion, but it will receive support from Home Missions through the district mission board, mission counselors, and special grants.

The Board for Home Missions is also financially supporting ministry enhancements for St. John, St. Paul, Minn.; Cross of Glory, Baton Rouge, La.; Divine Savior, Delray Beach, Fla.; Abiding Savior, Killeen, Texas; and Our Savior, Burlington, Iowa. It is providing unsubsidized support to Mount Calvary, Redding/Anderson, Calif.; and Living Faith, Midlothian, Texas. More details about these ministries can be found at wels.net/newstarts.

Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Home Missions, commends district mission board members and mission counselors for the hard work that went into the 28 new ministry requests that the Board for Home Missions received for consideration

during last week's meetings. As Free notes, "Not all the requests could be funded, but \$610,000 of new ministry was. Thank you, Lord, for those who support gospel outreach through WELS' home mission churches."

WELS currently has 141 home mission congregations in the United States, Canada, and the English-speaking West Indies. To learn more about WELS Home Missions, visit wels.net/homemissions.

April 19, 2022

CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS HOLDS SPRING 2022 MEETING

The Conference of Presidents held its spring meeting on April 4-6. Here are some of the issues that were discussed and decisions that were made at the meeting.

- There are 162 vacancies in pastoral positions, with 141 of those being vacancies in congregations. The graduating class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will number only in the mid-20s, which means that the shortage of pastors will continue. Next year's class numbers in the 40s, which should provide some relief a year from now. Teacher vacancies number in the 300s. After the assignment of teachers at Martin Luther College (MLC) in May, nearly 200 teacher vacancies will remain. The district presidents will be working with congregations to find ways to fill those vacancies before school starts in the fall.
- After Mr. Bill Ziche retired from his position as president of Northwestern Publishing House, Mr. Jeremy Angle was hired by the board to serve as his replacement. Mr. Angle will begin his duties as president in early May.
- The COP expressed its thanks to God and to WELS members for the generous support that has been given for humanitarian work in Ukraine.
- Mark Gabb, chairman of the Board for Home Missions (BHM), and Rev. Keith Free, BHM administrator, provided the COP with an overview of the 100 missions in 10 years initiative.
- The COP called Rev. Philip Spaude to serve in a part-time retirement call as a Christian giving counselor. The COP also issued full-time calls to Rev. Lon Kuether, Rev. Craig Wasser, and Rev. Steven Schmeling as Christian giving counselors.
- The COP was given a presentation by Dr. Victor Vieth, a nationally recognized expert on child abuse (and WELS member). Vieth gave a strong encouragement to the COP to assist WELS congregations to adopt policies that will

serve to help congregations to identify potential victims of child abuse. District presidents will be making resources available to congregations to help them be more informed about the issues and to take steps toward prevention and providing needed spiritual care.

- Rev. Phil Hirsch, president of the Nebraska District, was elected as one of the three COP representatives on the Synodical Council, replacing North Atlantic District President Rev. Don Tollefson, who is retiring in June.
- As requested by the Synodical Council, the COP directed the Commission on Lutheran Schools to begin developing a new K-12 religion curriculum.
- The COP endorsed a proposal by MLC to offer a Competency-Based Education program to encourage people not trained at MLC to consider training for the teaching ministry in WELS.
- An Early Childhood Ministry Task Force has been formed to evaluate the needs of teachers and calling bodies and to recommend strategic curricular approaches to meet those needs.
- The COP asked Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education, to take responsibility for planning and carrying out the Grow in Grace retreats for pastors who have served for 10, 25, and 35 years. This had previously been the responsibility of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.
- The COP plans to distribute a final draft of its document "God's Beautiful and Balanced Design for Male and Female" for discussion in late summer or early fall.

The Conference of Presidents will next meet as the Assignment Committee at Martin Luther College and at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE CONTINUES

Members of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC), WELS' sister church body in Ukraine, along with all the people of Ukraine, have been under attack for nearly two months. Many people have fled their homes seeking safety. ULC members have remained unharmed, though they too are facing the hardships of this war. Despite the danger and hardships, the ULC is finding ways to help its fellow countrymen.

WELS members have demonstrated generous hearts to help fellow Christians in Ukraine. WELS World Missions has been able to send funds so that the ULC can buy food and other supplies not only for its members but also to help the many people fleeing their homes. In addition, WELS Christian Aid and Relief has made three donations to Direct Relief, with another gift planned this week. Direct Relief is an organization equipped to provide immediate medical supplies to places experiencing crises; CAR has worked with this organization in the past.

“ULC members are using the funds in their communities mainly to buy supplies (medical, food, clothing, blankets, etc.). They can get supplies from certain areas and bring them into other areas,” says Rev. Dan Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. “They’re providing these supplies not just to our Lutheran brothers and sisters, but to anybody who has need. While they’re doing it, they’re having all kinds of opportunities to talk to people about their Savior. They said it’s really been quite a thing to see how people have been open to that right now.”

There have been questions and interest in helping Ukrainian refugees who come to the United States. CAR has created a WELS Ukraine Refugee Volunteer Assistance form for WELS members who may be interested in hosting a Ukrainian refugee.

Sims says the form is being made available to be ready if there is opportunity to host refugees. Sims iterates, however, that CAR is not a refugee placement organization but can help volunteers connect to the proper authorities to work through the complicated process.

While the hearts of WELS members are ready and eager to help, Sims gives three reasons why these opportunities are likely to be very limited. “One is that the U.S. is only accepting 100,000 refugees, which is a tiny amount. Two, most Ukrainians who have become refugees and fled to other countries don’t want to get too far away, because they’re hoping they will be able to return soon to their homes. The third thing is that Ukrainians who want to come to the U.S. as refugees likely already have contacts or family members in the U.S.,” he says. But, he says, CAR wants WELS to be ready if the opportunity arises.

“We’ve been blown away by the gifts God’s people have sent; they’ve been so generous” says Sims, “We anticipate the need for assistance is going to be high for years to come.”

NEW CHAPTER FOR RUSSIAN CHURCH

On Tues., March 1, Missionary Luke Wolfgramm and his wife, Jennifer, left their home in Russia, a country in which they have lived and served for the past 25 years. They discovered they needed to leave four days earlier, the day after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Before they left, Wolfgramm was able to meet with church leaders from the Evangelical Lutheran Church Concord, WELS’ sister church body in Russia, as well as preach at several of the congregations. It was a time to offer encouragement and hope, assurances that Jesus’ church would prevail. It was also a time to provide last-minute instructions to church leaders about the practicalities of managing the church’s business affairs.

“God has been planning this out and preparing us,” says Wolfgramm. “The timing came as a surprise to us but not to him. We were planning to get there, just not so quickly.”

The Wolfgramms were planning to leave Russia in 2024. “We were in Russia for 25 winters. God blessed the church over those times,” says Wolfgramm. “But my work is changing. Even before this [evacuation] happened, I wasn’t exclusively a missionary to Russia. I was also working with other churches in Europe.” This means that he partners in ministry with a dozen sister churches in Europe, helping with training seminary students, leading workshops, mentoring, and preaching. “My work is to fellowship with churches—talk together, work together, pray for each other,” he says. The church in Russia will continue to be one of the churches he partners with, just not as a resident missionary.

For the short term, the Wolfgramms are living in Dures, Albania, helping train a seminary student there. They still keep in touch with the three pastors and one seminary student who are leading the 270-member Russian church body. “The first time I was able to talk to all the pastors, I shared my concern for them,” says Wolfgramm. “Pastor Alexei said, ‘We’re in good hands. We’re in God’s hands, and that’s the best place to be.’ They definitely see that this is God at work to speed up the timetable to give them opportunities to share Jesus’ peace in a world that desperately needs it.”

WELS will continue to support the Russian church as it is able to under current sanctions. “Back in the 1990s when the Iron Curtain fell, we were able to

rush in with missionaries and plant a church,” says Rev. Larry Schlomer, World Missions administrator. “The current reality is that another curtain has been set up that divides us from the Russian people. Our prayers go out for the church members there that their connection to their Savior through the means of grace stays strong as God leads us to a new stage of fellowship.”

A DONOR ADVISED FUND: ONE-STOP GIVING

WELS member and attorney Mr. David Nommensen and his wife, Bonnie, knew that setting up a donor advised fund was an ideal and tax-wise way to support ministry at their home congregation, First Lutheran in Elkhorn, Wis.

David likes the fact that their donor advised fund provides predictable, ongoing support to ministry at First, helping fund programs that spread the gospel both inside and outside the church and school. He also likes the tax benefits of the donor advised fund. “It was just part of good stewardship,” says David. “Bonnie and I could look at the taxes that we had saved and do a little soul-searching and perhaps give a little more.”

Donor advised funds are very popular since a donor can give a gift now and recommend the ministries that benefit later. The gift can be divided among the ministries the donor cares about, and a single receipt will be provided for income tax purposes.

In addition to ongoing support for their church and school, the Nommensens know that their family donor advised fund is a wonderful way to involve their kids and grandkids in the joy of giving since they can be included in the decision-making process for the grant recommendations. It’s another way to pass along Christian values to the next generation of believers.

“Our prayer is that the donor advised fund is around a lot longer than Bonnie and I are,” says David. “And it’s a nice opportunity for us to have these conversations with our children about the needs of our favorite church organization. I’m really hoping that someday my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be donating to this fund and having those same conversations.”

Learn more about donor advised funds by contacting your local WELS Christian giving counselor at 800-827-5482 or mcg@wels.net.