

JESUS

His name brings us thoughts of heaven

“What are we going to name him?” asked my wife when our second son was born. In those days before ultrasound, we had been hoping for a girl and had girl names picked out. But, surprise!—Jim was a boy! How different with Mary’s baby. She knew her firstborn was going to be a boy and even knew what his name should be. The angel had told her nine months earlier, “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus” (Luke 1:31).

Did that name fit? It wasn’t chosen by his human parents but by a loving God in heaven. Jesus came from heaven and so his name was given from heaven. He also came to do the work that only heaven could do, save sinners. And he’s going to take people to heaven to be with him eternally. His name Jesus brings us thoughts of heaven. Moreover, it’s shining brightly with God’s wondrous love.

Does any Christian today not know what his personal name Jesus means? Blind Bartimaeus knew. Sitting that day by the roadside outside Jericho, he begged, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47). The penitent thief hanging next to Jesus on Calvary also knew. He prayed, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). By God’s grace, we know too. Jesus means “helper.” Jesus means “Savior.”

Best of all, Jesus is my Savior. Do my daily sins give me alarm? There’s my Jesus with his promise of full and free forgiveness for every one of them. Does my conscience nag me with some sin of the past? There’s my Jesus with his assurance that he has not only paid for it but has erased it from his memory. Do I wonder about the day I must step before the judgment seat of a righteous God? There’s my Jesus with his robe of righteousness to dress me for heaven. Talk about the help I need—nothing can beat what my Jesus offers!

Jesus is what he’s called. Sometimes in mockery, when people shake their fists at him. Sometimes thoughtlessly, when people say “Oh, Jesus!” about almost anything. But so thankfully by you and me. That’s my Jesus, my Savior. What a name of wondrous love!

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

READING BETWEEN THE WINES

Reading Between the Wines will start the new year with the mystery **Ordinary Grace** by William Krueger. This book “covers it all” with themes that include grief, sibling relationships, faith, respect, mystery, community, loss of innocence, forgiveness and the Grace of God. Our meeting and book discussion will take place on Monday, January 16th inside Fellowship Hall from 10:00 AM until Noon. As always, we invite Hope members and guests to join us!

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L W M S

God's Rainbow By Susanne H

Recently I heard about a new Sirius radio channel Somewhere Over the Radio, celebrating LGBTQIA singers and songwriters. With an instrumental version of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" playing softly in the background, I thought of how much I have enjoyed that song over the years. Lately, however, rainbows have taken on a completely different theme and meaning! I was more than disappointed. I was sickened.

During the biblical days of Noah, the sin-filled world was much like it is now, filled with indescribably depraved activity. However, Noah "found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8) and was commanded to build an ark. Because of people's wickedness, God was going to destroy the earth and every living thing in it with a flood. Only Noah, his family, and the animals God chose would be safe in the ark. Afterwards, God made an eternal covenant with Noah and every living thing that came out of the ark. He promised that he would never again destroy the entire world with a flood. He then placed a rainbow in the sky as a covenant sign, a visible reminder of his grace. (Genesis 6-9)

Humanity hasn't changed all that much. The main point of the biblical account is God's grace in spite of humanity's wickedness. God hated humanity's wickedness but blessed humanity by sending His Son Jesus to redeem the world. God's rainbow covenant promise hasn't changed. God still hates

wickedness. God showers us with his grace. His rainbow is alive and well! Share the good news. (Reprint from LWMS 2022 Fall Newsletter)

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Dear Friends in Christ,

There are a number of things they don't teach at the Seminary which are learned once you enter the ministry. Of all those lessons, the most joyous is that a connection develops between the pastor and the people he serves. A pastor comes to a congregation expecting to minister to the saints and before long he realizes that the people he's blessed to serve aren't just members of the congregation, they're family. When a pastor and his own family feels like a part of the family of believers, well, that has got to be one of the greatest blessings the public ministry affords.

Hope Lutheran is a most special place. Thank you for being a part of it. Thank you for allowing my family and I to be a part of it. Thank you for the amazing gifts you shared with us this Christmas. They are deeply appreciated. But beyond that, thank you for making the ministry here such a pleasure. It is pure joy to serve you with the Word of God and to be able to call this wonderful place our home.

Your grateful servant,
Pastor Waterstradt



Dear Members of Hope,

Thank you for your continued support to my tuition. All your gifts and prayers have really encouraged me throughout my studies at MLC. Again, thank you so much for your very gracious gift.

Titus Doletzky

TOGETHER



News from the WELS

December 2022
Website: www.wels.net

December 6, 2022

EMBRACE THE CROSS—ANTICIPATE THE CROWN

The 67th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., July 31—August 3. This will be the first “normal” convention after the pandemic necessitated a scaled-back, partially virtual convention in 2021.

The theme of the convention will be “Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown.” The focus of this year’s convention theme will be twofold. As a synod, we embrace the cross of our Savior Jesus in a number of ways. We embrace the cross as we look to what Jesus did on the cross to win forgiveness and salvation for us. We embrace the cross as we offer our thanks and praise for the sacrifice he made. We embrace the cross as we proclaim to a sinful world what the Savior’s death on that cross means for them and for all people.

We embrace the cross in another way. As believers, we recognize that Jesus asked us to be willing to live under the cross in a sin-damaged world. Believers will experience hardships and trials. The church itself will be under constant attack by Satan and his followers. The church will face difficulties, challenges, and, from our human point of view, setbacks and obstacles. But as a synod and as individuals, we are reminded that we can bear those crosses willingly, even joyfully, knowing our God will never leave us or forsake us and his Word will always accomplish his gracious purpose in our lives and in our mission.

As we embrace the cross, we also anticipate the crown. God’s church, comprising all of God’s believers, looks ahead to when all of God’s promises will be completely fulfilled. We look ahead with confidence and trust to the time when God’s church will be transformed from the church militant to the church triumphant. We eagerly anticipate when the King of Kings, wearing his crown of victory, will take us to his side and crown us with the gift of eternal life.

So, this convention will focus on the here and now, on the meaning of the cross for our lives and on recognizing the work of the church will be one of continued struggle and spiritual warfare. But it will also focus on the time when our victorious and living Savior returns to make his final victory our final victory as well.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

Reminder: The deadline for submitting memorials to be printed in the Book of Reports and Memorials is Jan. 15, 2023. Memorials submitted after Jan. 15 and approved for convention consideration will be posted on the convention website, welsconvention.net, if they are received by June 15, 2023. Further directions can be found at welsconvention.net. Send memorials to the President’s Office, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; carla.martin@wels.net

TEENS GATHER AT AREA WELS YOUTH NIGHTS

This past fall, almost 30 congregations hosted WELS Youth Nights, offering area-congregation teens and youth leaders opportunities to grow in God’s Word and build relationships with one another.

Introduced at the 2022 International Youth Rally, WELS Youth Night is a series of three youth-focused events to bring teens and youth leaders from area churches together in between large rallies. WELS Discipleship provides all the resources to help congregations plan and run the events, which include games, food, music, prayer, a keynote address, and small group discussion.

King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif., invited youth from 16 congregations in southern California to its WELS Youth Night in October. More than 50 6th-through 12th-graders from 8 different congregations attended.

“I had this dream of pulling [area youth groups] together out here just because when we get together it’s so special. But I was intimidated by all the work to make it happen,” says Mr. Josh Robertson, a teacher at King of Kings and the congregation’s youth and family elder. “At the youth rally, as I sat in on the WELS Youth Night presentation, I was floored by God and his

goodness because literally my entire dream was already being planned by the synod.”

Robertson says he’s passionate about youth ministry because of all the societal pressure put on teenagers today. “I want to be able to share the gospel with them and help them be in a personal relationship with their Savior,” he says. “I think this event does that really well. They get to experience God’s love and Christ’s mercy and grace through growing with one another through games and play and fun but more importantly through worshiping their Lord, discussing important topics that need to be discussed, and praying together.”

Mr. Mike Leahy, the youth group leader at St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis., also sees the importance of events like these. He coordinated St. Paul’s October WELS Youth Night, which gathered about 50 teens from 10 area congregations. “It’s good to expose them to other teens in the area . . . so they can see that there are more people their age who have the same passion for their Savior,” he says.

Mary Athorp, a senior at Howards Grove High School and a member at St. Paul, appreciated the event. “I knew it would be an incredible way to experience the community faith can create with other people,” she says. “I experienced this on a larger scale at the WELS International Youth Rally, so I was looking forward to the same idea but with a closer-knit group. I also wanted to learn how different people my age express their faith in God.”

Both Robertson and Leahy are helping plan a second WELS Youth Night in their areas this winter. Leahy prays that other congregations will take advantage of the easy-to-follow program: “Here’s a great event that can not only serve your church’s teens but other teens as well. It just takes that one person to start it.”

December 20, 2022

THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL

We’re approaching the end of 2022. Undoubtedly, that leads us to look back at the year and to remember God’s numerous blessings. Those blessings were showered on us even through the many trials and difficulties we faced in a year of economic uncertainty, a terrible war in Europe, and political chaos. Through it all, God has continued to bless us with the comfort and guidance of his Word, the assurance of his unceasing grace, and the promises that he will never leave us or forsake us.

But before the end of the year, we are approaching another important time—the season in which we pause to thank God for the greatest blessing of all. In just a few days, we will return to the manger in Bethlehem, where God demonstrated—in the most concrete way—the depth of his love for us. There, the One called Immanuel became man—to be with us and to be one of us. There, the One called Christ, was born to carry out the saving work that the Father sent him to do. There, in the manger, we see Jesus, the One who came in humility to save us from our sins.

As you gather with loved ones to celebrate this greatest gift of all, bring the thanks, the joy, and the peace that the Savior has given to us. From all of us at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, have a most blessed Christmas!

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT CHRIST

By Pastor Mike Novotny
December 25, 2022

My family of four has the tradition of eating lunch every Sunday with my parents and my mother-in-law, a meal that we call FamFest. It’s our way of prioritizing time together in the midst of our busy lives. However, I all too often inhale my lunch, shovel dessert into my mouth, and jump up to clean the dishes before running out the door to prepare for our afternoon church service. Often, my mom tells me not to worry about the cleanup, a request that I ignore so I don’t leave her with extra work. One memorable day, however, she said, “Michael, I would rather have FamFest be about time with . . . my family.”

Duh. That should have been obvious, right? After all, it’s right there in the name!

I tell you that story because the same thing can happen at Christmas. In the midst of wish lists, mall traffic, tree decoration, cookie baking, card writing, party attending, ugly sweater wearing, interstate traveling, and Elf on the Shelf hiding, we can rush through the season with barely enough time to catch our breath. I wonder, in those moments, if our

Father wouldn't say something like my mother—
"Child, I would rather have Christmas be about time
with . . . Christ."

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born
to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11).
Please say no to a few good things this season so
you have time to say yes to the best thing—
pondering the peace that comes through the
Messiah, our Lord.

TimeofGrace.org

FROM THE PULPIT

With every temptation we face, Jesus is asking us
"Who do you say I am?" PDW 9-6-20

God is not tame. Just when you think you have him
figured out, you don't because he will surprise you.
PDW 9-13-20

REMINDERS OF GOD'S LOVE

By Pastor Clark Schultz
December 20, 2022

When the end is near, some begin to reflect on life.
This journey back in time can take one to the sweet
mountaintops of days gone by, or it can be a valley of
missed opportunities and regrets. When Paul wrote
to Timothy what would be his last letter, Paul was in
prison and his head was literally about to be on the
chopping block. Paul needed encouragement, so
what did he do? He encouraged another. "For this
reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God"
(2 Timothy 1:6).

Paul didn't feel sorry for himself, blame God, or
complain. He made lemonade out of the lemons of
life he endured. Paul knew why he was in jail, he
knew who Jesus was, and he knew where his
strength came from—it wasn't from within; it wasn't
from the outer world; it was entirely the "gift of God,"
which means the gospel. It's the same gospel that
made Paul not reflect on his past as Saul (enemy of
Christ) but on Paul the redeemed child of God. This
is the same gospel message young Timothy was
brought up in by his mother and grandmother. The

very same gospel that comforts you, reminds you
that we are no longer prisoners to sin but dearly
loved and forgiven children of God. When I have
one of my valley days, I need to hear this message
and remind myself of it. Like Paul, I remind you to
take the time to remind someone else today of their
Savior's love.

TimeofGrace.org

FROM THE PULPIT

Don't treat God's grace like a welcome mat where
you wipe the dust and grime off your feet. PDW 9-
13-20

Who would have ever dreamed that God would
suffer and die for us? PDW 9-13-20

Hatred kills the hater – physically, emotionally and
spiritually. PDW 9-27-20

It's not only foolish to ignore God's word, it is also
sinful. PDW 7-26-20