

SERVANT

The Son of Man Did Not Come to Be Served, but to Serve

What does the word servant bring to mind? A police officer dedicated to protect and serve? A parent changing diapers? A restaurant worker bringing my meal? All this and more, I find in that word servant. How about when Jesus calls himself a servant? What comes to mind when I hear him proclaim, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve"? Must it not be his greatest service, "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)? Why could the ruler of the universe find himself stretched out on a cruel cross? Why could the One who hates sin and punishes sin bleed and die in payment for the world's sins? Why could the eternal One, without beginning or end, become a pinpoint of cells in a virgin's womb and a cold corpse in Joseph's tomb? Why did he come to serve in such a way? There is no other answer than his wondrous love.

Nor did his service stop with his ascension. His sitting at God's right hand in heaven does not indicate retirement and a rocking chair. He's still busy working as my servant. At the baptismal font, he sent his Holy Spirit to put the sign of his cross on my heart to show that he had redeemed me. Through his Word, as I read and hear it, he offers me the nourishing food of his forgiveness. At the Communion Table, he gives me his most precious body and blood with the bread and wine to assure me that his forgiveness is real and my sins are gone. Never does he grow tired of serving me in these wonderful ways.

There's more. The ascended King of kings rules over the nations, bending their history to his will and for the welfare of his church. At the right hand of the Father, the ascended Prophet guides and governs his church on earth, giving it pastors and teachers and other called workers, blessing their proclamation of his saving name. In addition, the ascended Priest pleads for me when I sin, reminding his Father that those sins are already paid for. How busy this heavenly Servant must be! Name of wondrous love? That's Jesus, my servant.

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

Beyond the Basics - The Narrow Lutheran Middle

People fall into error when they favor one doctrine over another or try to resolve theological questions according to human reason. In *The Narrow Lutheran Middle*, author Daniel Deutschlander examines a number of Bible teachings that seem contradictory while demonstrating the importance of allowing each teaching of Scripture to stand without forcing a resolution that, in the end, may satisfy our reason, but ultimately compromises the Word of God.

The class we call, "Beyond the Basics" is back! If you'd like to be a part of the ultimate Bible class, plan to join us after the late service beginning Sunday, April 23rd. Each class will begin at 12:15 and finish by 1:30pm. A sign-up sheet is on the podium in the narthex. Though our first "Beyond the Basics" lasted over 2 years, this course will be much shorter. Here's what we'll cover:

- Right and wrong uses of human reason in religion
- Predestination, the providence of God, and human responsibility
- Doubt and presumption, carnal security and despair
- God's will and human will
- The royal priesthood of believers and the public ministry
- The Great Commission and the doctrine of election
- Finding "the middle" in "worship wars"

This is one course you won't want to miss! Professor Deutschlander's book will be required reading (and copies can be ordered for \$21 when you sign up). Bring your favorite writing utensil. Bring your deepest doctrinal questions. Bring a friend. And plan to join us as we ponder these issues on a search for the Narrow Lutheran Middle!

If you have any questions about this course, please don't hesitate to speak with Pastor.

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OUTREACH REPORT

Hello everyone

With Easter just around the corner, it’s a busy time for the Outreach group. We are sending out roughly 8,000 mailers to the surrounding area, with about 800 of these going to new family homes with a personalized message from Pastor.

During Easter, we are planning to have an Easter egg hunt for all the little ones, please invite anyone who you think might be interested. We are also giving each family at BeeKind an Easter bag, which will have a mailer in it in addition to a couple of other things.

BeeKind is having an Open House on March 30-31. Pastor and Ted V. will be representing Hope, distributing snacks and ideally speaking to the families about joining us for services, especially Easter Sunday.

We are also planning our new member welcome barbecue on April 30th. This will be held right after the 2nd service and should be a great time to welcome and have fellowship with our newer members.

Lastly, we are looking to revitalize our Facebook and Instagram pages. Keep an eye out for this exciting outreach tool, and once it is up and running please give a like and follow.

Please support the Outreach team and their efforts with your prayers. Also consider adding to your daily prayers for God to open peoples’ hearts to the Word

and bring them to church where they may find everlasting relief.

God Bless
Tim

LUTHERAN WOMEN’S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

LWMS

This is the last newsletter before the LWMS Spring Rally which will be held the 15th of April at St. Mark’s in Citrus Heights. There is a signup sheet in the social hall. We must give St. Mark’s the number planning to attend by 1 April so please folks “get your name on the list”. This is our only way of knowing the number we need to report.

Continental breakfast will be served at 8:45 with the Rally starting at 10:00

Theme is Ephesians 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us”.

Pastor Kolander’s presentation will be on “100 Missions in 10 years as 2023 is the kick off campaign.

New Home and World Mission projects will be chosen and officers elected for President, Treasurer, Spiritual Growth Woman and Spiritual Growth Pastor.

The February Star of Hope had information on Befriend a Mission. If you save your Stars as I do check it out. There may be something that you can do toward helping one of these missions. PRAYERS are the major need.

Submitted
Mary Ann, Reporter

READING BETWEEN THE WINES

The April selection for Reading Between the Wines is the incredible true-life story of WWII Special Operations Executive Virginia Hall. **A Woman of No Importance** by Sonia Purcell will be discussed on Monday, April 17th in Fellowship Hall between 10:00 AM and Noon.

TOGETHER



News from the WELS

March 2023
Website: www.wels.net

March 7, 2023

2023 SYNOD CONVENTION PLANNING UNDERWAY

Every two years, our synod holds its synod convention. This year the convention will meet at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich., July 31–Aug. 3. The theme of the convention is “Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown.” Planning for the convention has already begun.

Rev. Phil Hirsch, president of the Nebraska District, will deliver the essay that expands on and articulates the convention theme. Rev. James Huebner, first vice president of the synod, will preach for opening worship.

One high point of the convention will be the declaration of fellowship with the Obadiah Lutheran Synod in Uganda. This declaration of fellowship is possible because in-depth doctrinal discussions over the past several years have shown that our two synods are united in biblical doctrine and in our adherence to the Lutheran Confessions. Rev. Musa Makisimu, president of the Obadiah Lutheran Synod, will give a presentation to familiarize delegates with his synod’s history and ministry.

Another high point will be the public affirmation of fellowship between WELS and *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*. This is a newly formed synod in Latin America, comprised of a merger of national churches that have already been in fellowship in WELS. (That’s why fellowship is being “affirmed” rather than “declared.”) In the future, new house churches forming out of *Academia Cristo* efforts also will be joining this synod. Rev. Tonny Quintero, secretary of the governing board of his synod, will address the delegates and give a presentation describing *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*.

This convention will feature elections for the offices of synod president and second vice president. Other elections will be held to determine membership on various synod boards and commissions.

About 400 voting delegates from around the country will attend the convention. Roughly half of the delegates are lay members while the other half are pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. The convention will also be attended by advisory delegates from the Synodical Council, the Conference of Presidents, and various areas of ministry. All voting delegates will be assigned to a floor committee. Each floor committee deals with a specific part of the synod’s mission and ministry and brings reports and resolutions to the convention for action. Memorials, which are calls for action on specific topics, will be assigned to the appropriate floor committee for discussion and recommendations.

All business to be considered by the convention will be published in the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM). The BORAM will be available on the convention website, welsconvention.net, by May 5, and all delegates and WELS congregations will receive hard copies by the end of May.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE GOSPEL

“I would use the illustration of a switchboard operator from the early days of telephone communication to explain the work of a diaspora ministry facilitator,” says Rev. Neil Birkholz, WELS’ Asian ministry consultant and diaspora ministry facilitator for East Asia. “When an inquiry from my designated people group comes to me directly or to someone else in WELS, I become the middleman/operator and connect them to the right person.”

Birkholz further explains, “If someone from Korea is looking to connect their son with a WELS church in the United States, I help connect them with the local WELS church where their son will be living. If a member of my WELS church in California is returning to their home country of Thailand, I help connect them with our WELS World Mission One Team in Thailand so this member can continue to worship with other confessional Lutherans while living in Thailand.”

The role of diaspora ministry facilitator is a new one. As globalization has increased, so have global migration rates, which has opened up new mission opportunities for WELS churches. Diaspora

ministry—or people group ministry—is coordinated by Joint Missions because it involves both World Missions and Home Missions. Each World Missions One Team (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Native American) has at least one diaspora ministry facilitator, which is a role that a pastor takes on in addition to his full-time call. These facilitators have experience serving the people group with which they are working and stay in touch with the World Missions One Team for their area.

“Diaspora ministry certainly makes the world feel a lot smaller,” says Rev. Aaron Bublitz, pastor at Heritage, Gilbert, Ariz., and the diaspora ministry facilitator for Africa. “Our WELS congregations have opportunities to connect to and share the gospel with people who have come here from all over the world. We then have the opportunity to connect to and share the gospel through them in many places in the world. We are helping facilitate the Great Commission we have been given to take the gospel to all nations.”

Learn more at wels.net/jointmissions, including how to contact diaspora ministry facilitators to connect people groups.

REGISTER FOR TASTE OF MISSIONS 2023!

Registration is now open for Taste of Missions, a hybrid event that will be held on Saturday, June 10, 2023! Join us in person at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis., and online, as we give all WELS members a “taste of missions” no matter where you might be around the world. We’re looking forward to a fun day of worship, ethnic food offerings, and family-friendly fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Registration is \$15 per person, with children 13 and under attending for free. Those attending in person will receive food tickets to sample ethnic food and will have the ability to purchase additional food from the food trucks. Or attend virtually for free! Sign up today at tasteofmissions.com/register!

HELPING THE HURTING WITH HOPE: A NEW BIBLE STUDY

WELS Special Ministries is introducing a new Bible study for congregational or small group use. “Helping the Hurting with Hope” was written to help participants appreciate the role of compassion in a Christian’s personal and congregational life, providing gospel motivation for participants to go beyond their comfort zones and act in compassionate ways through the Spirit’s power.

“We hope that the five-lesson study will give congregations an opportunity to discuss the best way to respond to broken people,” says Rev. Jim Behringer, director of WELS Special Ministries. “We hope members will rejoice when the Lord brings them into contact with people who need the Lord and work patiently and persistently to help them and connect them with Jesus.”

Behringer explains that where the Bible class succeeds in cultivating compassion, congregations will be better spiritual refuges for people with broken lives and welcome people looking for a church family where they can walk a new path after release from prison, or in recovery from addiction, or after a public fall into sin.

“WELS Prison Ministry has been successful in reaching the incarcerated with the Word of God, but when people who were in prison are released and look for a church family, some churches are very reluctant to work with returning citizens. Pregnancy counseling centers have experienced that their clients have a hard time finding a church family in a local church because they feel the stigma of disapproval of their past sins,” Behringer says, “When you recognize that someone is a sinner, rejoice to see them at church and encourage them to keep coming. Help them take the baby steps needed to start building a life in Christ.”

The Bible study is available for free online at welscongregationalservices.net/helping-the-hurting-with-hope. Learn more about WELS Special Ministries at wels.net/special-ministries.

March 21, 2023

SEVERE STORMS RAVAGE MALAWI

In Malawi, where the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi has many churches and members, floods caused by Tropical Cyclone Freddy swept away entire villages earlier this month. Many homes have collapsed. Police officers and soldiers have been digging for victims buried under the mud and rocks as the death toll rose sharply. In the three countries affected (Malawi, Mozambique, and Madagascar), more than 500 people have been killed and hundreds are still missing. Those numbers will likely rise as information comes in from places that have been cut off from communication.

More than 300,000 people have been displaced. More than 280,000 children have been affected by the storm.

In addition to the destruction of homes and roads, the storm has inundated farmlands and destroyed crops, just as farmers were about to harvest the only crop of the year. This only increases the food crisis in Malawi, where 3.8 million people were already in need of food assistance before the storm.

Many governmental and private relief efforts are already underway to address the immediate needs. No doubt, there will be need for longer term assistance once the immediate crisis has passed.

As of today, we are waiting to hear how the storm has affected the congregations and members of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi. There is no doubt that our sister church body has been impacted. As we wait for word, WELS Christian Aid and Relief is ready to provide assistance in whatever way it can. If you would like to help in this effort with a financial gift, you can do so by making a gift online.

Please keep our brothers and sisters in Malawi in your prayers.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

NEW ACADEMIA CRISTO CHURCH PLANT IN BOLIVIA

In February, representatives from WELS and partners throughout Latin America gathered in Cochabamba, Bolivia, to welcome a new church plant into fellowship. The new church in Cochabamba is the first one planted through *Academia Cristo* outreach efforts, a milestone for mission work in Latin America.

“The goal of *Academia Cristo* has always been the planting of new churches, not just offering free online Bible studies,” says Rev. Matthew Behmer, Latin America missionary. “It was a blessing to celebrate the gospel changing hearts of those in Cochabamba, and we’re excited to see who else might learn about grace and what Jesus has done for them through other future church plants in Latin America.”

This new church is led by Dr. Eduardo Milanesi, a surgeon and *Academia Cristo* student who began studying in the program in April 2020. In less than a

year he finished the first part of the program, confessed doctrinal agreement, and started gathering a group in his medical office to study God’s Word using study and worship resources provided by *Academia Cristo*. This “*grupos sembrador*,” or church plant group, was also guided by a Latin America missionary. You can read more about the path of *Academia Cristo* in this article from the January 2022 edition of *Forward in Christ* magazine.

The church in Cochabamba declared fellowship with *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*, a new synod that was formed in 2021 through the partnership of WELS sister churches across five countries throughout Latin America. This new synod allows these churches to do mission work together, train pastors together, and support each other with prayers and fellowship. It also provides a place to go for new churches formed out of *Academia Cristo* training efforts, just like the one in Cochabamba. WELS will be affirming fellowship with *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional* at the synod convention this summer.

Currently 51 other church planters and 21 church planter groups are on the same path Eduardo and his church took to fellowship. “This seed-sowing path took years to bear its first fruit, and today we see it happen!” says Rev. Larry Schlomer, WELS World Missions administrator. “God has answered our prayers: More member churches are on the way. Church planting groups gathering in hotels, garages, living rooms, and patios are all following this same path. Each of these sites is a lightning rod for the power of Jesus’ gospel as it is preached to many more. God’s Spirit is at work.”
Learn more about *Academia Cristo* at wels.net/latinamerica.

A SMALL BOOK WITH A BIG IMPACT

Since its inception, WELS Christian Aid and Relief has been delivering hands-on disaster relief and humanitarian aid to communities around the world. During these times of disaster and trauma, WELS missionaries and volunteers aim to provide not only physical relief and assistance, but spiritual nourishment as well. The aim is to help people in their time of need *and* connect them with a church community for ongoing support.

To help get the gospel in the hands of disaster survivors, WELS Christian Aid and Relief developed

a short devotional booklet in 2021 entitled *An Ever-Present Help in Trouble*. Rev. Daniel Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, explains, “I recognized that we really didn’t have a printed resource that pastors and church members in areas that have been hit by a disaster could use as a tool for ministering to those who have been through the trauma of a disaster.”

So Sims and nine of his colleagues wrote a total of 40 devotions and prayers based on gospel promises that are comforting to people who have lived through a crisis or trauma. “When we have a major disaster situation, one of the first things we do is ship boxes of these devotions down to our churches so that the pastor and the people can begin using and distributing them,” says Sims.

The books were thoughtfully designed with designated space in the front where a church body can place an informational sticker. Above that space it reads, “This little book of devotions is a gift to you from God’s people at . . .” Readers are encouraged to contact the listed congregation for anything they might need.

The devotions and prayers within *An Ever-Present Help in Trouble* are brief with simple, straight-forward language. Sims explains that he and the other authors wrote these devotions with two audiences in mind. “One [is an audience] of people who have been through a huge disaster . . . and the other is for people who don’t know much about Jesus.”

These devotion books have already been put to good use in communities facing disasters. For example, after Hurricane Ida hit the Gulf Coast in 2021, a WELS congregation in Louisiana distributed copies of the book along with free meal packets to community members.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief now has partnered with Northwestern Publishing House to make copies available for everyone. Purchase *An Ever-Present Help in Trouble* at Northwestern Publishing House for personal use or evangelism efforts.

Discover how WELS Christian Aid & Relief partnered with local congregations and other volunteers to provide physical aid and spiritual comfort following a devastating hurricane in Florida in this month’s edition of *WELS Connection*.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE MINEFIELD?

By Pastor Dave Scharf

When you reached over to turn off the alarm this morning, did you hesitantly place one bare foot on the floor and then the other, wondering what the devil has in his bag of tricks for you today? The evil one has had all night to plant a minefield of temptation. Did you wonder how it would begin today?

If you are like me, the temptation minefield has been filled with unexpected traps this morning. Have you been fighting them? Or have you been inviting them? The reformer Martin Luther once said, “You cannot prevent the birds from flying in the air over your head, but you can certainly prevent them from building a nest in your hair.” You can’t stop the temptations from coming, but today you can avoid inviting situations that you know will capitalize on your weaknesses.

Jesus said, “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven . . . lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one’” (Matthew 6:9,13). It is daunting to think that we are doing battle with the devil. But as daunting as that knowledge is, know that you are not alone in the fight. You have a Father in heaven who knows your weaknesses and will always provide a way out.

As he leads you through the devil’s minefield today, keep your eyes fixed on the cross of Jesus for the strength to resist the devil and for forgiveness when you succumb to him.

FROM THE PULPIT

An unforgiving heart stands between us and Jesus.
PDW 9-27-20

Salvation is about God’s compassion. It is a gift from God. PDW 10-4-20

True joy is elusive to those who believe they have to earn their way to heaven. PDW 10-4-20

Jesus suffered the wrath of God for our sins. PDW 10-11-20

By loving others, our stress begins to be relieved.
PDW 10-11-20