

THE LAMB

Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Now it rests on her dresser top, almost forgotten, fleece matted down, one ear partially torn off. But for many evenings it had been on her pillow, nestled next to her cheek as her "security" lamb. How different with the Lamb to whom John pointed that day along the Jordan!

For centuries God's people had been waiting for that Lamb. They had plenty of reminders that he was coming. Every day two lambs were offered in their temple and at times even more as special sacrifices. The blood of all those lambs couldn't erase a single one of the people's sins. But it did point to the Lamb who could. Now he had come, and John had the privilege of announcing for all to hear, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

This is not some lamb that I want close to me for a day or two. He's not some security symbol that has no real power. He is God's own eternal Son sent from heaven by wondrous love. God sent him to take on my skin, to take on my sins, to take them to Calvary's cross, there to take them away forever. John was right! I need to look at that Lamb of God. I can't afford not to because of my sins. And when God fastens my eyes of faith on that Lamb, I have all the security I need. By God's grace, I know all about pardon for my sins, peace with my Father, and the promise of his heaven as my eternal home.

I can't help noticing though, how John pointed out that Jesus is more than just my Lamb. He clearly stated that God sent his Lamb, "who takes away the sin of the world." Not just Israel's sins, not just John the Baptist's sins, not just my sins, not just your sins, but the sins of the world were laid on and paid for by this divine Lamb. Do I hear what John's telling me? I

can't just hold that precious Lamb of God close to my heart. He didn't come just to bring me eternal security. I need to be vitally concerned about taking the Lamb of God to others. They need him too, just as much as I do.

What a name, the Lamb, my Savior-God has! It shines brightly with his wondrous love.

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

CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATE

Work is underway to update the church directory. In order to get the latest and best information for you and your family recorded, please take a moment to completely fill in the Member Card you receive at worship on Sunday. This will be used for the update. If you need more room on the card, please use the back side.

If you are **not** in attendance on Sunday, please email the info to: hlcoffice2016@gmail.com
Thanks for your cooperation! Direct any questions to Carol H.

READING BETWEEN THE WINES

The February book selected for Reading Between the Wines is Agatha Christie's first novel, published 100 years ago: **The Mysterious Affair at Styles**. This book introduces us to our favorite Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot who went on to solve mysteries in 32 more Agatha Christie novels. We will meet on Monday, February 20th in Fellowship Hall from 10:00 AM until Noon. As always, we invite Hope members and guests to join us.

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OUTREACH

Hello Everyone,

The outreach group met for our January meeting, and we discussed many different ways to get our name out into the surrounding communities. Our first item of discussion was to decide on the design of our Easter invitations. This year we have agreed to send out a mass mailing to 5000 homes in our area. Also we are sending out personalized letters to the families that have moved to the area, and we are going to do this every three months.

We also discussed rescheduling our new member welcome. We are planning to have this on April 30th after second service, so plan on a fun day of fellowship and good barbecue.

We also talked about plans to host other events, how to get our name out into the community, and plans to reach out to the new townhomes going in across Penryn road.

God Bless,
Tim A

SPECIAL EVENTS CHAIRMAN

I have joyfully served the Lord as decorator of Special Events Chairman for approximately ten years. Thank you for allowing me this privilege. I am now passing the baton to Amanda C, who I am sure will serve you well. Please support her in her efforts.

Your Sister in Christ Jesus,
Lorraine G

L W M S

REDWOOD CIRCUIT LWMS NEWS

The “Befriend a Mission’ assignments have been made for the year. The information is as follows:

World Mission: One Africa Team (OAT)
Daniel Kroll, Plot 4, Area 9,Lilongwe AFRICA
MALAWI

email address dkroll@wels.net

Pastor Kroll has sent all of his information which follows: Home: Risen Savior Ev. Lutheran Church, 1685 Lexington Ave., Mansfield, OH 44907 (Michigan District)

For Your Family:

What are some special prayer needs for your family?

- 1) We have 2, possibly 3 of our adult children (some married with children) making some life changes that require relocating. Pray they find suitable housing and that God blesses these transitions.
- 2) Please pray that all our children and their families can make it to our planned family vacation for December of 2023. Our last vacation together was in June of 2019 so we are praying we can be together again.

Would you be willing to share your wife and/or children’s birthdays?

Pastor Dan Kroll March 16
Karen Kroll July 2

What are some things, such as gift cards or small items, that you/your family would enjoy receiving? Amazon gift cards would be great!

Is there a limited amount that can be given to you personally at one time? No

Do you have prayer requests for your mission?

- 1) The One Africa Team is in a state of flux with some long-term missionaries recently/soon to be leaving the field and new families coming in – please pray for smooth transitions on both sides.
- 2) As we continue to develop practices and processes to fit all our work across Africa, please pray for wisdom where there is a need to make exceptions to those practices.
- 3) As I serve as the OAT liaison to Cameroon, we pray for an end to the ongoing political crisis that has scattered our members and puts all of them into life-threatening risks.
- 4) Also in Cameroon, we are making some changes to policies and procedures of our financial cooperation, we pray for clear communication and continued efforts towards biblical stewardship.
- 5) As I serve as the OAT liaison to two synods in Nigeria (Christ the King and All Saints), please pray that we communicate with one another clearly and regularly for steady increases of strength against the challenges of Pentecostalism unique to that country.
- 6) Also in Nigeria – please pray for a level of security that would allow our OAT members to visit one place (Lagos?) there to minimize border crossings for meetings. Currently a few, very select, representation occasionally meets with us in Cameroon)
- 7) As an Outreach liaison to Liberia, please pray for some very real changes in the ministry there towards traditional Lutheran, Biblical doctrine and the practice that goes with it.

Home Missions: Rev. Bradley Wright, 1549 Bridgewater Way S., Mansfield, OH 44906-3578 work #(920)251-0259 email: pastorbradwright@gmail.com – Wedding anniversary 6/27 Birthday 4/1 Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church-North Liberty. 2900 42nd St. NE. Cedar Rapids, IA 52402 (Minnesota District – Non Member)

Rev. Lucas Callies, 27 Jaro Way, North Liberty, IA 52317-9407 Phone (319) 393-5656, Work: (920)318-2443, email: lucascallies92@gmail.com Wedding anniversary 6/22 Birthday 10/26

CONVENTION: The Annual LWMS Convention will be held on 22-25 June 2023 in La Cross, Wisconsin

hosted by Crow River Circuit in Minnesota & Rock River Circuit in Wisconsin.

The Convention Center is nestled between towering bluffs and the Mississippi River, which is perfectly fitting for the theme: Peace Like a River. The presentation of the flags is always the first and very impressive. Our LWMS has groups meeting all over the world and the flag presentation makes one aware of just where all are located. Missionaries will be speaking and there will be workshops as well as tours of the area. (These must be chosen when the Convention Registration is sent.) The LWMS newsletter with all the information and forms is posted on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. It can be removed and all the applicable information copied. (If you remove it for copying please place it back.)

WOMEN'S RETREAT REPORT

The Annual Redwood Circuit Women's Retreat was held at Mr. Herman on January 20-22. It was a fun time studying God's word, singing praises, playing games, and making crafts. But most of all making new friends and renewing old friendships.

Kristi M (teacher at MLC) presented a 5 part program entitled (Faithfully Living Out Our Helper Calling). The sessions covered studying many of the women in both the old and new testaments with the roles they played. After Sunday morning's Chapel Service, we all left looking forward to next year's retreat.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Dear Friends at Hope Lutheran,

We are grateful for the love and support and kindness given to Ben since he was diagnosed with colon cancer in the summer of 2018. He was a trooper living with cancer and took it one step at a time with his various treatments while working and enjoying his usual routines. He was blessed to be able to travel and to enjoy family gatherings and friendships and to attend church these past years. The time we had was a gift. His faith remained strong even though this later summer he was dealing with a very serious infection that seemed to

take its toll on him back and forth all these past months.

We would like to thank those who helped with the setup of the church hall, the servers, all the delicious food items supplied to guests and church members, the cleanup crew. To Pastor and Tina Smith and the ushers we are grateful for the service planning and for making it comfortable for those out of town who came on this rather blustery day. Ben's grave site service for family members was earlier in the afternoon at Newcastle Cemetery on the hillside.

Ben was touched and humbled. He read and kept his cards and notes from these past years. He would have been so grateful for all that was done for his family and friends here at Hope. Even a simple "how are you, Ben", touched his heart. We thank you all. God bless and keep you in his care.

In Christian love, Sandee B, Lisa B and family and our extended families

TOGETHER



News from the WELS

January 2023
Website: www.wels.net

January 10, 2023

CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS' JANUARY 2023 MEETING

The Conference of Presidents (COP) held its winter meeting Jan. 3-6, 2023, with all members present.

Items addressed include the following:

- The COP has begun planning for the 2023 synod convention. The convention will be held July 31-Aug. 3 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich. The convention theme will be "Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown." The essayist for the convention will be Rev. Phil Hirsch. Rev. James Huebner will preach for the opening service. The convention will discuss and adopt the synod's two-year ministry financial plan (budget), declare and recognize fellowship with the Obadiah Lutheran Synod from Uganda and the Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional from Latin America. Several bylaw changes will be

considered, and reports will be presented by all areas of ministry and synod entities.

- A committee will soon be appointed to plan for the 2025 celebration of the 175th anniversary of the synod's founding in 1850.
- The COP was informed by Christian Family Solutions of the growing need for Christian counselors. Further discussion will take place on how this might be accomplished.
- The COP discussed the best way to move forward with the study and discussion of the restatement of the synod's doctrinal statement on the roles of men and women. Further discussion will take place at the COP's March meeting.
- A special task force has been exploring practical ways for congregations to provide support and encouragement for early childhood teachers and directors. These suggestions will be promoted by district presidents in the months ahead as they have the opportunity.
- The COP discussed the potential impact of new federal executive regulations regarding transgender "affirming" issues on our synod, congregations, and schools. We are thankful that the U.S. Supreme Court has dealt with similar issues by upholding the principles of religious liberty, but we need to be prepared to respond if the government attempts to force us to act against the scriptural principles on which we stand.
- The COP will recommend to the synod convention that the Publication Coordinating Commission be disbanded, since the work it did is now being carried out by other entities.
- A special task force appointed by the COP studied ways to improve the ability of called workers to express how their gifts for ministry might be used. The task force maintained that it is important for the church and her called workers to encourage and instill an attitude of "Here am I; send me!" At the same time, called workers at times may wish to express their concerns about how their talents can best be used in the kingdom. The task force believes that we have existing structures in place (district presidents, circuit pastors, congregational leaders, etc.) for workers to express those concerns in a way that continues both to honor the divinity of the call and acknowledge sanctified human judgment to make best use of the talents and gifts of called workers.

- The COP reviewed the number of vacancies for pastor-trained positions. That number continues to grow, reminding us of the need not only for increased recruitment of young men but also of the need for men serving in other careers to consider the pastoral ministry as a second career.
- The COP called Mr. Sean Young to serve as a Christian giving counselor for the Northern Wisconsin District and Mr. Terry Helton to serve as a Christian giving counselor for the Michigan and North Atlantic Districts.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

LUTHERAN LEADERSHIP FOCUS IN 2023

In 2023, *Forward in Christ* (FIC) will include a special focus on Lutheran leadership. Each issue will contain features, editorials, or news stories that share insights and ideas to help and encourage readers as they strive to be Lutheran leaders in their congregations, homes, and communities.

Attendees of the 2023 WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, being held Jan. 16–18 in Chicago, may recognize some topics and authors.

“Our goal is to build on the information presented at the conference, allowing those who attended an opportunity to continue to grow and offering those who couldn’t make it a chance to access expert knowledge on multiple topics involving Lutheran leadership,” says Rev. James Pope, FIC’s executive editor.

January’s FIC highlights Lutheran Leadership conference presenters’ views on what Lutheran leadership means to them.

Upcoming topics include:

- February: How to strengthen ministry teams.
- March: Congregational health: What matters and what doesn’t.
- April: How to be an effective Christian leader in your vocation.

Look for the Lutheran leadership icon to identify related articles.

Find articles and related materials online at forwardinchrist.net/lutheran-leadership.

CONGREGATION MISSION OFFERINGS SET ANOTHER RECORD

God continues to bless our synod with the generous and faith-filled offerings of his people, even in these difficult economic times. Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving, reports:

By the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, God’s people remitted \$3.36 million of Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) in December. (This is \$1,500 more than CMO given during December 2021.) We thank our Lord for these generous offerings!

For calendar year 2022, CMO totaled \$23.33 million, which is 2.9 percent (\$654,000) more than 2021 CMO and 3.9 percent (\$833,000) higher than projected receipts. This is the third consecutive calendar year in which our congregations have offered a record total of Congregation Mission Offerings and the first year in which CMO surpassed \$23 million. Let us thank the Lord for continuing to bless us through his people’s generous gifts!

Clearly, our Savior’s gracious love for us has prompted this wonderful response from his people for his gospel ministry through our church body. It is fitting and right that we, like King David, acknowledge, “Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. But who [are we], and who are [our] people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand” (1 Chronicles 29:13-14).

We thank Jesus for you and your faithful response to God’s blessings through your Congregation Mission Offerings!

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE EQUIPS MEMBERS TO SERVE

Last week, more than 1,300 WELS members gathered in Chicago for the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. For three days they dedicated themselves to learning about leading in the congregation and community as well as enjoying worship and fellowship. The conference was for all WELS members, both called workers and

laypeople, men and women of all ages, and current leaders and future leaders.

The conference kicked off Mon., Jan. 16, 2023, with an opening devotion led by WELS Michigan District President Rev. Snowden Sims. The afternoon was spent absorbing the first three keynote presentations. The day concluded with a worship service, with 1,300 Christians raising their voices in glory to God and sharing in the Lord's Supper. Music was led by varied instrumentation and members of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Chorus. Rev. James Huebner, WELS first vice president, served as the preacher. A portion of the opening worship service is available to view online.

Kicking off the keynotes were Dr. Joan Prince and Rev. Dr. Kenneth Fisher, with a presentation titled "A Courageous Conversation on Modeling Gospel-Centered Unity." While acknowledging the lack of diversity across WELS, they reminded attendees not to let man-made constructs be a barrier to sharing God's love; we are all citizens of a greater kingdom. As Fisher explained, the unbelieving world will see God's love through the actions of believers. Prince spoke about how there are many ideas for unity in the world, but none of them work without the gospel.

The second keynote had Mr. Kurt Nitz and Rev. Eric Roecker, director of the WELS Commission on Evangelism, present "Culture Is Critical: Shaping a God-Pleasing Congregational Culture." They defined culture as the shared thought-habits that form the way people behave and work together. Good organizational culture, they explained, is the product of intentional and deliberate actions. Because of the important God-given work of Christians, a good culture is critical for congregations.

Rounding out the afternoon was Rev. Jonathan Bauer, speaking on "Our Lutheran Moment: Why Now Is a Good Time for Us to Be Doing What We Do Best." Bauer summarizes his presentation: "The last few years have presented an unending string of challenges to all leaders, including Lutheran ones. They've also done us a huge favor. They've accelerated things that were happening slowly and brought to light things that were happening beneath the surface. They've made it apparent that what our world needs right now are the very things that we do best. We Lutherans are equipped to meet the challenges of our moment in a way that few others are interested in or capable of doing."

Day two of the conference gave attendees the opportunity to attend five breakout sessions on topics more specific to their local ministry needs or personal interests. Forty-seven breakout sessions on varying topics were available to choose from, offering something for every type of leader in the church.

Topics ranged from personal evangelism, outreach, issues facing WELS schools, discipleship, congregational governance, church culture, worship, and more. Some trends emerged based on breakout requests that revealed common challenges in WELS congregations. Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services, says, "Looking at the top 20 [requested breakouts], I'd say how to develop and equip lay leadership was a massive goal. Any breakout about recruiting and equipping leaders had at least 120 people signed up. Another one seems to be the challenge of doing outreach and the challenges presented by the shifting American culture that is hardening against the church. Finally, the culture shifting breakouts did well."

Mr. Kurt Nitz, breakout presenter of "Culture Shifting—How to Make It Happen," led listeners through practical strategies for initializing culture changes in a congregation, such as knowing what the end goal is, the importance of leadership through the culture shift, and evaluating what already exists. Nitz, a WELS member, works with large organizations and corporations on their cultures and was asked to help develop Everyone Outreach, a program that helps congregations build a culture of outreach so that every ministry and every member is thinking about and participating in outreach. He says, "Every congregation has a culture and certain aspects of it can help or hinder your ministry. You should take a moment to look at it, and if it's a barrier, do something about it."

Dr. Glen Hansen, a radiologist and elder at Bethlehem, Germantown, Wis., attended the conference to bring ideas back to his congregation to help members become more comfortable with evangelism. "Our overall goal is not only to equip ourselves but to equip our members too," says Hansen. "They can all be equipped to do the work of the Lord." Of the conference, he says, "There are a lot of like-minded people who care about the work of the Lord, which helps me feel empowered to continue and go do that work."

The breakout “Rethinking Congregational Partnership: Men and Women Working Together in Christ’s Mission” shared some practical considerations as congregations work toward ministry that honors God’s design for men and women and uses the gifts of every member of God’s family. “Rethinking congregational partnership means taking a look at the partnership men and women share. We are better together. We demonstrate this godly partnership to a world experiencing gender confusion and to future leaders in the church when we go through the hard work of putting God’s design for partnership into practice,” says Mrs. Dawn Schulz, a presenter at the breakout.

In the breakout “Leadership Skills Used in Industry and Ministry,” Mr. Chip Woods provided insights from his experience in the corporate world. He explains, “First, leadership skills that have been developed and learned in our vocations can also be applied in leading our ministries. Second, and inversely, servant leadership is not only effective in ministry but also in our vocations. And finally, time is important in industry as well as ministry. The time is now to spread the Word of God.”

Mr. Art Hora serves as the congregational chairman at St. Paul’s, Stevensville, Mich. When he’s not serving his church, he works in the nuclear power industry. “What I’ve learned from the things that I’ve seen here is that a lot of what I’ve done in the nuclear world can be brought back and applied, but in a different form.” Hora says, “There’s a lot to think about and pore over.”

Day three concluded the conference with two additional keynote presentations and a closing devotion, led by Rev. Michael Seifert, president of the WELS North Atlantic District.

For the first keynote on Wednesday, Prof. Luke Thompson presented “Thinking Differently: On How the Next Generation Thinks, and On How to Help Them Think,” where he addressed the types of doubt facing young Christians today. He stressed that in a world where everyone is “connected” digitally, what the younger generation truly needs is real connection and authentic relationships with their Christian family.

The final keynote was four TED-talk-style presentations from Rev. Mark Zarling, Dr. Donald Kudek, Rev. Luis Acosta, and Rev. David Scharf. Each presented his take on what Lutheran leadership is and why it’s important right now.

Attendees left the conference edified in their faith and inspired for their ministry. “I really like how not only did we have the keynote speakers but we got to choose breakout sessions that we think will line up with something we are really interested in or something that will help with our campus ministry,” says Hailey Russ, a student at Carroll University in Waukesha, Wis. “Not only am I getting personal information that will help me grow my faith and is firing me up a little bit, but also I have things that I want to take back to our campus ministry to implement.”

The ideas and inspiration could be overwhelming for WELS congregational leaders as they head home. Hein suggests, “Attendees don’t need to do everything all at once. There was a LOT there. But I’d love if those leaders would debrief about what they learned and pick a top priority or two to try and incorporate into their next annual plan.”

To find out more about the presenters or their presentations, visit lutheranleadership.com. Check back often as all the keynotes and several breakout sessions will be posted online in the coming weeks and months. Also, check out photos of the event online.

MARVEL AT THE GRACE OF GOD

“Your gifts, God’s blessings: An annual report to our members” is now available online. The report includes photos of Christian brothers and sisters around the world, stories of faith, and updates on WELS’ ministry.

“As you read this annual report,” says WELS President Mark Schroeder, “join me in marveling at the grace of God—the grace of God that has brought us into his family and given us an eternal inheritance, and the grace of God that has blessed the work that he privileged us to carry out.”

Marvel at

- Marli, who is studying with *Academia Cristo* and has gathered a group of Christians in her home in Cuernavaca, Mexico;
- Jesse, who knew that something was missing from his life so he contacted Rev. Tim Spiegelberg, pastor at Carbon Valley Lutheran, Firestone, Colo., and went through Bible information classes with him;
- Qiang Wang, a Pastoral Studies Institute graduate who is offering Chinese worship in

Coquitlam and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and

- Blythe, a student at Cross of Christ, Peoria, Ariz., who was baptized at one of the school's outdoor chapel services.

These stories and more are presented in the 2023 edition of "Your gifts, God's blessings." Print versions of the report are being sent to every WELS congregation and individual donor. Additional print versions are available from Northwestern Publishing House for free. Visit nph.net or call 800-662-6022.

To view the report online, visit wels.net/annualreport. There you can also download a PowerPoint presentation of the report with notes that allow anyone to share the highlights of our synod's work. Alternatively, churches can invite a WELS Christian giving counselor to give the presentation. Contact WELS Ministry of Christian Giving at 800-827-5482 for more information.