

IMMANUEL

My God's not far off in the heavens

Names can mean so much to us. They are long remembered or soon forgotten, depending on the person they represent. When those names refer to my Savior-God, they are precious indeed. For they are names of wondrous love.

Consider the name given to the Savior months before his birth. "They will call him Immanuel," the angel told his foster father, Joseph (Matthew 1:23), echoing the prophet Isaiah's words some seven hundred years earlier. What a beautiful name for my Savior, Immanuel—"God with us." In it are wrapped two comforting truths, both shining brightly with his wondrous love.

The first is that Jesus is God. Eliminate this truth, and what would that baby in the manger mean to me? He'd be just another baby—cute, no doubt, like so many others. Also what would that figure on the cross 33 years later mean to me? He'd be just another innocent victim nailed there by some miscarriage of justice. No, he must be God or else he can't be my Savior. If he's not God, his blood could hardly purify me or anyone else from all sin. But just think! God—becoming a baby; the Eternal—entering time; the Almighty—needing a mother's care; the Holy One—taking on my sins. And all of this to save me. What wondrous love is this!

The second truth in his name Immanuel? He's "God with us." What a comforting thought! My God's not far off in the heavens, glancing at me from time to time across the miles. He's here with me in my sins, not to cause them or join me in sin but to save me from them. He's with me in my sorrows. He knows what they're like. He suffered many of them himself and knows just how to help me. He is with me in my service to him. Though I often get weary and seem to slide backward more than to stride forward, he's there to keep me trying. And he'll be with me when the time for separation comes. What comfort when facing the valley of the shadows to be able to say, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (Psalm 23:4)!

Immanuel—"God with us," what a name of wondrous love!

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

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

Christmas Decorating is upon us! Please join us Sunday December 4th after second service to decorate the church and put up the Tree!

Thank you!!!
Amanda

READING BETWEEN THE WINES

Reading Between the Wines will meet in Fellowship Hall on Monday, December 19th from 10:00 AM until Noon for our annual Christmas potluck and Christmas Jar offering. All Hope members and guests are invited to join us!

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Hope,

Christmas will be here before we know it. On December 4th, for those who would like to have Christmas cards distributed, we will have a table with baskets for cards. The baskets will be out for at least three weeks so that you'll have time to get your cards ready.

Lorraine G and Kathy B

WOMEN'S RETREAT 2023

If you are interested in attending the Women's Retreat on January 22-23, there are still rooms available. Please call Daune B for more information.

IN THIS ISSUE...

PASTOR’S MESSAGE.....1

CHRISTMAS DECORATING..... 1

READING BETWEEN THE WINES..... 1

CHRISTMAS CARDS 1

WOMEN’S RETREAT 2023..... 1

SUPPORT..... 2

2023 FLOWER CHART 2

CALIF LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL 2

THANK YOU, THANK YOU 3

TOGETHER 3

SUPPORT

Hello everyone,

I would like to start this month's article out by saying a big thank you to everyone who took time and showed up for the work day. I know it has been said before, but many hands make the work light. We were able to complete a few of the larger projects such as tree removal, hedge trimming and resetting the mailbox. We also were able to clean up the campus by weeding, cleaning up leaves and blowing. Not only is this an opportunity to help keep our church looking good, but also to have some great fellowship. Thank you again.

Not too much to report this month, the outdoor cross project has stalled while we wait for the fabricator to give us a price on making the new cross. Once we have that back, we will be able to decide if we are going to proceed or not.

Keep an eye out for a special workday to try to do some road repairs on Hope Way. Hopefully we can get a group together on a Saturday to fill in cracks and potholes. Also there are mowing opportunities

still available in December and going forward. If you feel you can serve this way please contact myself or Ted V.

God Bless,
Tim Alfred

2023 FLOWER CHART

The 2023 Flower Chart is in the narthex by the women’s restroom. Please sign up for the dates that you wish to provide flowers for the altar on Sunday mornings. Flowers can be provided in different ways. You can purchase a bouquet from a florist, you can buy fresh flowers and arrange them yourself, or you can purchase a living plant. If you want help arranging flowers, Judy C and Lorraine G are available to help. Please remember to notify Pastor Waterstradt with the information you want printed in the Sunday worship folder by Wednesday.

CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

A note from California Lutheran High School

In reading the last letter from the High School there were items that were worth telling again especially for those who may not get this letter.

“Recently a father of a senior shared his thoughts that he is convinced that without a move to CLHS his son would not have survived the academics during COVID. With the academic support we can provide, this senior will proudly walk across the stage and receive his diploma while being on the Honor Roll. At a local school, he was on the verge of failing all of his classes during the spring of 2020. Even better news! That boy’s faith in Jesus has grown, where once there was confusion about religious teachings there is now clarity.”

Another student enrolled in our school for his junior and senior year graduated in May. Earning, and accepting, academic scholarships to a college in a different area of California last month emailed the campus pastor seeking information on where the closest WELS church might be found so he could attend.

A longtime friend of the high school has committed to matching the next \$100,000 in gifts given to the school so for those thinking of donations to CLHS this would be a good time to do it.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

The families of Elmer F wish to express their thanks for all the love & support shown during his illness and at his death. We are especially grateful to Pastor Waterstradt, Tina & Gary Smith & all who made the luncheon such a big success. There were many compliments. The family who could not attend the services was particularly thankful to be able to view it on Hope's web site.

I cannot put into words the overwhelming gratitude for all the cards, phone calls and especially the hugs, also for the tribute shown Elmer by your attendance at his services.

God Bless We have much for which to be thankful this Thanksgiving. Elmer is not with us but he is with his Savior and that is where he wanted to be for ever so long.

Mary Ann & Dennis



K9 Warriors Project

(Quote from a friend who investigates projects) "This was a really good project and what I like about it was the statistics that roughly 1500 dogs have been rescued, that 82% of veterans with service dogs report a decrease in suicidal thoughts, that roughly 1/3 of veterans in a VA study no longer met any criteria for PTSD after 18 months with their service dog and 92% of veterans with service dogs reported a reduction in medication.

The families of Elmer F wish to express their thanks for the donations made to this organization.

Mary Ann and Dennis

TOGETHER



News from the WELS

November 2022
Website: www.wels.net

November 1, 2022

FEEDBACK ENCOURAGED ON DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Biblical doctrines and principles do not change. But there are times when those doctrines and principles need to be understood clearly as new situations arise and are addressed by the church. That is certainly true when it comes to what the Bible tells us about the God-given roles of men and women and the nature of their relationship with one another.

Our synod's current doctrinal statement on the roles of men and women is called "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles." After more than a decade of work and discussion, it was adopted by the 1993 synod convention as a correct explanation of biblical truth and as our synod's formal doctrinal statement on the issue.

Since the adoption of "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles," our synod's doctrinal position has not changed; the statement still expresses biblical truth. But new questions and issues have arisen regarding the biblical roles of men and women that did not really exist in 1993. Understandably, those questions were not addressed at the time.

For those reasons, the Conference of Presidents determined that it would be beneficial for our synod to consider an updated restatement of the scriptural principles outlined in the 1993 document. After three years of work and study, a proposed draft of that statement is now ready. The new statement is entitled "**God's beautiful and balanced design for male and female.**" The Conference of Presidents encourages you to study and discuss the statement and invites you to **provide feedback.**

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

UKRAINIAN MUSIC ENSEMBLE PERFORMS IN GERMANY

In October, Baroque Plus, a Ukrainian musical group that includes members of the Ukrainian

Lutheran Church (ULC), traveled to Germany to present concerts at several Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) congregations. These concerts were a thank you for the German church's support to Ukrainian refugees who fled the country to escape the war with Russia. These concerts not only showed the ULC's gratitude for that aid but also offered an opportunity to assimilate the refugees more fully into the German Lutheran churches.

Three sister church bodies—the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Germany, and WELS—worked together to plan the trip. Three ELFK congregations hosted the special worship services that included music from Baroque Plus, other German and Ukrainian hymns, gospel readings, devotions, and prayer.

“The services were edifying and beautiful,” says Rev. Roger Neumann, WELS' liaison to the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. “Translators made it possible that three languages were used during the service: Ukrainian, German, and English. Although, for the Lord's Prayer, all three languages were spoken at the same time, which was quite impressive.”

Fellowship times before, during, and after the services provided opportunities for members from the Ukrainian Church and German church to interact. “There was truly a unique bond of fellowship at each church, which flowed from a sense of empathy, Christian love and concern, and the powerful bond of unity that believers have in Christ. Strangers quickly became friends,” says Neumann. “We pray that those who attended the service, Ukrainian and German visitors who have no church home, will come again to learn more about Jesus and what he has done for them and for all people.”

Hanna Bulu, the leader of Baroque Plus and a member at Resurrection, Kiev, Ukraine, appreciated the opportunity to come to Germany. “After traveling thousands of kilometers from our native home, we met good friends in Germany—and also a long-forgotten feeling of peace and quiet. Such concerts are like bridges between churches, between hearts, between children of God, who are one in Christ.” WELS, the ULC, and the ELFK are all part of the **Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC)**, a group of 34 Lutheran church bodies from around the world committed to the teachings of the Lutheran Church found in the *Book of Concord*. This fellowship of believers offers support in faith and doctrine. “This was a blessing, given to us by our

Lord, that flows from the unity of believers from around the world who form the CELC,” says Neumann. “The people from Ukraine who were there that week, as well as people from the various church bodies that form the CELC, can better understand that they are never alone.”

Read more thoughts about this trip from ELFK President Rev. Michael Herbst at wels.net/familyofbelievers.

November 15, 2022

VISIT TO KENYA AND ETHIOPIA

Along with Rev. Larry Schlomer, WELS World Missions administrator, and Missionary Howard Mohlke, head of the WELS One Africa Team, I was privileged to visit two of our sister synods in Africa in October. The experience is one I will never forget.

The first visit took place in Nairobi, Kenya. There we were greeted at the airport by representatives of the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ—Kenya (LCMC—Kenya). The LCMC—Kenya was received into fellowship with WELS at our synod convention in 2019.

We had the opportunity to worship in the new partially constructed church building (made possible by the generous support of WELS members). We spent the next two days attending the synod convention of the LCMC—Kenya. The faith, zeal, and commitment of the pastors and laypeople attending the convention were truly moving. In the days after the convention, we visited several congregations where members themselves are erecting new church buildings.

Later in the week we traveled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. There we were greeted by Dr. Kebede Yigezu, the president of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia (LCE). The LCE is also a relatively new sister synod of WELS, with fellowship declared at our synod convention in 2017.

One of the priorities of the LCE is Christian education on all levels. In a building in Bishoftu (also made possible by the generous gifts of WELS members), Dr. Kebede operates a school where three levels of theological training take place. We were privileged to attend the graduation of four men who had completed their training in one of the levels and are now ready to begin seminary training.

With his emphasis on Christian education, Dr. Kebede also has permission from the local

government in Dukem to operate a Lutheran elementary school there. It will have an enrollment of 900 by next year. We visited the school at the start of the school day and were impressed by the enthusiasm of the students and the commitment of the teachers.

God is blessing the gospel ministries of these two growing sister synods. Your prayers and offerings have been a special blessing to them.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

SYNOCDICAL COUNCIL HOLDS ITS FALL 2022 MEETING

The Synodical Council (SC) held its fall meeting on Nov. 4-5, 2022. Four new members were welcomed: Mr. Brent Nemmers (South Central District lay representative), Mr. Chris Kestner (Michigan District lay representative), Rev. Phil Hirsch (Conference of Presidents representative), and Rev. Jonathan Schroeder (chairman of the Board for World Missions).

The SC reviewed the 2021-2022 financial results of the synod and its subsidiaries. Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) totaled \$23.1 million, the first time that CMO has exceeded the \$23 million level. That compares to \$22.6 million in the previous year and is an increase of 2.2%. These higher-than-planned CMO receipts, coupled with underspending by areas of ministry, enabled the synod to end the fiscal year in solid financial shape. Synodical subsidiaries (WELS Church Extension Fund, WELS Investment Funds, WELS Foundation, Northwestern Publishing House) all reported strong financial results for the year.

For the first quarter of the current fiscal year, CMO support remains strong (4.3% higher than the previous year). Expenses are in line with the adopted plan.

The SC approved the first draft of the ministry financial plan (budget) for the 2023–2025 biennium. The proposed plan outlines planned synod support of \$32,841,000 in the first year of the biennium and \$33,742,000 in the second year. These are increases of 4.3% and 2.67%, respectively. Compensation for called and hired workers will increase by 2.5% in each year of the biennium. CMO expectations for the next biennium are expected to exceed \$23 million in each year, continuing to remain above historic levels.

The SC will revisit the ministry financial plan (including proposed compensation levels) in February 2023 and will make adjustments if the financial situation changes. Once the plan is adopted in February, it will be forwarded to the synod convention in July 2023 for consideration.

The SC set the new relocation reimbursement rate. Since moving expenses are taxable for all workers, lay workers will be reimbursed at a rate of 19.65% of the moving cost and called workers will be reimbursed at a rate of 27.3% of the moving cost. These rates assure that workers are reimbursed for additional taxes they may incur. All calling bodies are encouraged to follow this policy.

The SC approved a change to the compensation guidelines, encouraging calling bodies to review annually cash housing allowances for called workers who rent. This change was made because of the rapidly rising cost of renting.

The SC received progress reports from the ministerial schools regarding potential construction needs on the campuses. Master campus planning and feasibility studies are taking place at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.; and Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

The SC discussed a proposal that was submitted to the Conference of Presidents for consideration. The proposal is to change the synod convention from a biennial to a triennial convention. As was the case with the Conference of Presidents, the SC discussed both the pros and the cons of such a change. Such a change requires an amendment to the synod constitution (not just the bylaws). This means that if the COP decides to forward this proposal to the synod convention in 2023, it would need to be approved by the 2023 convention and discussed at 2024 district conventions, with final consideration happening at the 2025 convention. The COP will determine what to do with this proposal when it meets in January 2023.

The SC received an update on the work being done to develop the next long-range strategic plan for the synod. It's expected that the final plan will be considered by the 2023 synod convention.

GROWTH AND PARTNERSHIP IN INDONESIA

In July 2022, WELS Friendly Counselor Rev. Gregory Bey made his first visit to Indonesia since

the pandemic began. Bey attended the convention of WELS' sister synod in Indonesia, Gereja Lutheran Indonesia (GLI). GLI currently has about 1,650 members in 29 congregations served by 30 pastors and 5 vicars.

The GLI convention was held on the new seminary campus on the island of Java. Construction of this seminary, called Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Lutheran (STTL), was completed in 2021. Seminary classes are taught by Indonesian pastors with support from Bey. The seminary currently has 27 students, many of whom are graduates of a Lutheran high school that was established in July 2018.

“Walking through the new campus evoked emotions of exhilaration and excitement coupled with thankfulness to God for this beautiful blessing,” says Bey. “But it was interacting with the students, staff, and faculty that brought to mind these words of St. Paul: ‘Entrust the things you heard from me, in the presence of many witnesses, to faithful men who will also be able to teach others’ ” (2 Timothy 2:2 Evangelical Heritage Version).

Bey concludes: “God-willing, STTL will produce a steady stream of qualified national pastors for many years to come.”

GLI continues to grow in number and maturity. In 2015, a plan was set in motion to transition a significant amount of financial support from WELS to GLI. Pastor salaries for men in established congregations will, prayerfully, be fully supported by local members by 2025. In some cases, GLI pastors may need to serve as “tent ministers” who support themselves with secular jobs. WELS would continue to provide funding for seminary professors and possibly the synod chairman. Savings could then be used to support building projects for existing churches as well as exploratory work in new regions. This is a huge step toward self-sufficiency and independence as a stand-alone church body.

WELS' Asia One Team is in the process of calling for a full-time friendly counselor to support and advise the work in Indonesia. Bey has been filling the role on a quarter-time basis since he retired from full-time work in 2019.