

Sunday, November 2

PUT THE EXCUSES ON THE BACK BURNER AND NOT JESUS!

It has been said that any minister could probably learn to apply some of the commonly spoken excuses for not attending worship to his own personal life. Imagine the minister of a church saying that he would no longer attend local sporting events. He might say:

1. Every time I go, they ask me for money.
2. The people, with whom I've sat with, didn't seem very friendly.
3. The seats were too hard and uncomfortable.
4. The coach never came to call on me.
5. The referee made a decision with which I could not agree.
6. I have even sat with people who were hypocrites – they came only see what others were wearing.
7. Some of the games have even gone into overtime, and I was late getting back home.
8. The pep band played some numbers that I had never heard before and didn't particularly like.
9. The games are often scheduled when I want to do other things.
10. My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
11. I take time on my own to read books about sports. I probably even know more than the coaches do.
12. And I don't want to take my children at all, because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.

Perhaps we might say, "That type of pastor is only joking". Most likely you would be correct. But, indeed, skipping worship in God's house is no joking matter. As "good" Lutherans we should be familiar with the words to the Third Commandment. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it." Our attitude and actions go hand-in-hand. When God is sitting on the throne of our hearts, an opportunity to hear his Word, to sing his praises, to savor his forgiveness and love in Word and Sacrament will not be a tough choice. In fact, it quickly becomes the only choice.

Jesus did and still does forgive us for such laxity, apathy and indifference. Such an assurance is based upon Jesus' own life of worship and praise to his Heavenly Father. One time, when he was back home in Nazareth we are told, "On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom" (Luke 4:16). Worshipping in church was Jesus' regular practice. Imagine if there was someone who could have a good reason not to hear the reading of the Scriptures. That would be Jesus. Think about it, as true God, he is the actual author of the Scriptures. He wrote the Bible. It is his Word. He already knows what it says. Yet, as our perfect and spotless substitute, he never sinned once. He never asks us to do something that he hasn't already done for us. Then on top of that he suffered our punishment for those times we have let him slip down from first place in our lives.

Our respect and reverence for his name will be based upon this unfailing love and mercy for us. St. Paul wrote this fact in his second letter to Timothy. "Here is a trustworthy saying: 'If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself'" (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

The confirmation hymn sung by many of us holds out for us the proper attitude and actions that will accompany our faith in Jesus. Thank Jesus that he hears this prayer's request and will promptly respond and answer our call through his almighty Word.

Let me be yours forever, My faithful God and Lord;
Let me forsake you never Nor wander from your Word.
Lord, do not let me waver But give me steadfastness,
And for such grace and favor Your holy name I'll bless. Amen.

CHURCH NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mission Statement Passed And Approved For Saint Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church

On October 16, our voters adopted the following mission statement. This will serve our church and all its organizations in the same way that the tracks for a locomotive train keep the engine and cars all going in the same direction and down the same path. This Mission Statement is the set of tracks that keeps us always concerned about the business of our Father in Heaven. HIS reason and purpose for our existence needs to be OUR reason and purpose for our existence. HERE IT IS:

Because Jesus directs us, "Go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19), our mission at St. Mark's is to nurture believers with the Word and Sacraments, preparing them for a life of service to the Triune God; and to spread the good news of Jesus and his forgiveness to our community and beyond.

TRUE NORTH CAMPUS MINISTRY (It is a new name but the same campus ministry as before.)

Our next meeting is on Thursday, November 13th at 6:00 PM in the Hobson Memorial Union. Snack foods and pop will be provided. Our study is called "Dare To Be Different". Then on Sunday, November 23, we will gather at the church for a taco supper and fellowship.

OTHER NEWS

- **SIGN UP FOR THE LWMS PRAYER JOURNAL.** The sign-up sheet is on the back table in church. A sample book is on display from last year. This order will be placed sometime soon. The cost per book is \$5.00.
- **SIGN UP TO ORDER CHRISTMAS CARDS.** A member of the staff at Great Plains Lutheran High designed these cards. Sample copies are on display near the sign-up sheet. The suggested donation is \$5.00 for a pack of 10 cards. All proceeds will benefit Great Plains Lutheran High School. The complete order will be submitted soon.
- **On the bulletin board in the fellowship hall is a special display sent to our school children from Sam Schroeder and Andy Peterson. They are currently serving the U.S. military in Bulgaria.**
- **Commemorative coffee mugs are available at the bargain price of \$5.00 per cup. Purchases can be made in the fellowship hall. (While supplies last!)**

THANKSGIVING DAY WORSHIP AND PRAISE!

On November 27, at 9:00 AM, St. Mark's honors this national holiday by saying "thank you" to the only one who should receive and has truly deserved every "thank you" ever said. It is the Lord our Triune God. "Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods" (Psalm 95:2,3).

MID-WEEK ADVENT WORSHIP WILL BE ON WEDNESDAYS: December 3, 10, 17 at 7:00 PM

Since Jesus' Peace is clearly connected to our Savior's birth we will use this as our three-week sermon series: "Peace Through Jesus". 1. Know it. 2. Live it. 3. Share it.

CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR KIDS, December 13

This will be a special opportunity to reach out to our neighborhood children with the true message of Christmas. From 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM, we will share Christ-centered stories, crafts, and activities with the children of our church along with their neighborhood friends. Parents will then have time to Christmas shop without their kids along. Spread the word and consider donating food or money (for the noon lunch), or your time and talents to assist with the promotion and the activities of that day.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING PLANNED FOR DECEMBER 21

After our Sunday morning worship, all (youth, teens and adults) are welcome to stay. We will order out for Pizza and then make our way to the hospital, area nursing homes, assisted-living centers to share the message of Christmas in song.

THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE IS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 at 7:00 PM

This special service gives the children of our congregation the opportunity to communicate their love for the Christ child. It also keeps us grateful for God's greater gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation, which only Jesus could procure. This year's title and theme is "Where Shepherd Lately Knelt". Children from preschool through eighth grade can participate with the guidance of their Sunday school teachers. Our superintendent of Sunday school is Donna Schroeder (751-4107).

KEPT IN OUR PRAYERS

+ The Family of Ella Wagner (age 79)

God took Ella home to himself Sunday, October 19. Her funeral was Thursday, October 23. Her daughter, Brenda Wagner, is a member of St. Mark's.

+ The Family of Robert Lee Sr. (age 87)

God took Robert Lee home to himself Monday, October 20. His funeral was Friday, October 24. His son, Robert Lee Jr., is a member of St. Mark's.

In both funeral services we were reminded of God's unchanging promises of forgiveness, life and salvation in Psalm 46.

LADIES GUILD IS SENDING OUT CARE PACKAGES TO OUR FOUR SERVICE MEN

These young men from our congregation are Tyler Hazelton, Andy Peterson, Alex Peterson, and Sam Schroeder. Ladies Guild is accepting donations for these packages. Tyler, Andy and Sam are currently serving in Bosnia and Alex will be sent over to Iraq sometime in March. He is expected to serve in that country for one year. No doubt, we will want to include them in our constant prayers. The deadline for having these items brought forward is Sunday, November 9, 2003.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS:

These can just be placed in the church kitchen.

Beef jerky	Gum
Trail Mix	Crackers
Red & Black Licorice	Gold Fish Crackers
Dried Fruit	Store-bought Cookies
Granola or Nutra Grain Bars	Tang
Powdered Lemonade	Mints
Raisins	Life Savers
Peanuts	Pringles
Throat Lozenges	Bar Soap
Chapstick	Deodorant
Toilet Paper	Foot Powder
Baby Wipes or similar	Eye Drops
Sunglasses	Notebooks
Envelopes	Magazines

These are the addresses we currently have available for sending greeting cards and letters.

PRIVATE Alex Peterson	SPC Peterson, Andy K
C-84 ECO	HHC 2-136
Building 651 Room 201 B	EAGLE BASE OJF
Fort Richardson, Alaska 99505	APO AEO9789

SGT. Samuel Schroeder
HHC 2-136 INF(M)
EAGLE BASE OJF
APO AE 09789
Email: Samuel.Schroeder@us.army.mil

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

- Teachers using the Christ-Light Curriculum have recently finished a series of Old Testament stories are starting fresh with a New Testament series of stories.
- Children's Christmas service preparation will begin shortly. Saturday morning practices will start on December 6. And they will also happen on December 13 & 20. These Saturday morning times will be from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM.
- Faithful attendance at these practices is very important. We are grateful that Mrs. Nancy Ganske has offered her time to direct this year's children's service. If there are any questions contact Pastor Kuether at 444-6334.

ST. MARK'S WEB SITE IS HERE: www.stmarksbemidji.org

A home page, with contact information along with a message from your pastor, is currently posted. More is forthcoming.

Synodical Council in special session

With WELS facing serious budgetary concerns following the biennial convention this summer, the Synodical Council (SC) wasted no time springing into action with meetings Sept. 13 and 14 in Milwaukee, Wis.

The early budget performance was scrutinized and assumptions challenged. Calling for caution in spending, SC members warned that we have to learn to do more with less. The following observations were recorded:

- WELS congregations are responding beyond earlier expectations. Congregational Mission Offerings are up, and we pray for God's continued blessings.
- An actuary engaged to examine our projected revenue from bequests determined that we might be overly optimistic. Those estimates have been revised downward.
- The total budget is slightly overspent, but much of the deficit is seasonal and reflects a typical cash flow variance.
- The search for a Chief Financial Officer is on target. The office should be filled before the year's end.
- A Financial Oversight Committee of WELS lay leaders knowledgeable in finance has been appointed and will be prepared to function soon.
- Although caution is obviously needed, it is too early in the fiscal year to draw any summary conclusions about the budget performance.

Citing the urgency to get on with ministry action plans to move us ahead, the SC resolved that the Operations Team of WELS* will be the official agent of the SC between meetings as long as the team acts in keeping with the will of the synod in convention and within available funding.

The council also reorganized itself to better carry out its responsibilities. It will have the following committees:

- Ministry-includes strategic planning.
- Finance-combines the issues of budget spending and revenue in one committee.
- Administration-includes human resources, support services, communications, and gift planning.
- Executive-functions as needed at the call of the president.

*WELS Operations Team: President, Vice President for Mission and Ministry, Executive Director of Support Services, Administrator of Home Missions, Administrator of World Missions, Administrator of Ministerial Education, Administrator of Parish Services, Administrator of Financial Support, and Director of Communications.

WELS Web gets new look

On Mon., Sept. 15, the WELS Web site <http://www.wels.net> switched over to a new, more-user-friendly format. The site is organized for the casual visitor. It leads a person into the site by way of topics like "faith," "ministry," and "community"; and it has strong search capabilities. Be sure to check it out and explore its offerings. But, remember, it is still being tested and may have a few bugs yet. We are also continuing to upgrade and improve the site.

ATTENTION!

This news was distributed by e-mail and by surface mail. In the future we will offer regular WELS news updates by e-mail only, thus saving the cost of postage. We will also post the news on the WELS Web site (look under FYI, News, WELS News, News Release). If you received this message by surface mail and wish to receive future posts, be sure to sign up for the service on the WELS site under News Release. Click on "sign up for notification," fill in the required information, and click "submit."