

SAINT MARK'S CHURCH NEWSLETTER

(The fourth quarter – 2004) October 31, 2004

THANK GOD, THERE IS A DOCTRINE OF ELECTION!

It's a horserace. It's mud slinging. It's party loyalties. It's an election. And in just three days it will all be over (that is until the next election). Elections may not foster happy thoughts. An election for one person may mean uncertainty, while for another there may be the certainty that their candidate is right and all the others are far wrong in comparison. Dear friends in Christ, God's doctrine of election supercedes all such triviality. Please understand our right to vote is a privilege, which many have died for in order to secure this blessing for us to use. (So if you are of voting age and a US citizen please vote.) But really, Jesus' rule and his power is bigger than any earthly rule or position of authority. That is why his teaching of the election is worth recalling.

Saint Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, "God chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Ephesians 1:4,5).

FIRST of all, God's election has nothing to do with government elections. Our vote doesn't count. We are ineligible and incapable of making such a decision or casting such a vote. It has everything to do with God's choice, his decision. In truth, only his vote counts. And because of that wonderful fact, we in faith can say, "I am saved. God voted for me"!

SECONDLY, any campaigning on our part is useless. In fact, if we are compelled to draw attention to ourselves we only present reasons for God to never elect us. There is nothing of merit in us that could demand such attention from a just and holy God. Indeed, we are vying for God's vote, but not on the basis of our past record of service. We seek and receive God's vote on the basis of Jesus' substitute service in our behalf. If we will do any spiritual campaigning, it must be in the way of telling others about what great things God has done for me.

THIRDLY, we never need to sit in anxiety or wonder as to who the winner is. Christ has made each one of us winners and even announced it at our coming to faith. In Holy Baptism, God's vote is cast. His vote is broadcast. His vote is made no secret. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brother. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Romans 8:29,30). Just a few verses from this same section, God calls us winners by saying, "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us"!

Martin Luther embraced this great gospel truth of scripture. He then wrote about it and enables us to sing about it. In his great hymn, "Dear Christians One An All Rejoice" he wrote:

**But God beheld my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And, mindful of His mercies great,
He planned my soul's salvation.
A Father's heart He turned to me,
Sought my redemption fervently;
He gave His dearest Treasure.
(Christian Worship, 377 v. 4)**

CALENDAR EVENTS (Oct. 31 – Nov. 7)

Oct. 31(Sun) . . . 9:00 AM, Sunday School & Bible Class
10:15 AM, Morning Worship
This is our Reformation Celebration.
Worship will include special choir accompaniment.
11:30 a.m., POTLUCK MEAL

Nov. 1(Mon) . . . 7:30 PM, Evening Worship

Nov. 2(Tue) . . . 7:00 PM, Choir Rehearsal

Nov. 3(Wed) . . . 4:00 PM, Catechism Instruction class

Nov. 4(Thur) . . . 7:00 PM, Church Council meeting

Nov. 6(Sat) . . . 10:00 AM, Jesus' Cares Bible Class

Nov. 7(Sun) . . . 9:00 AM, Sunday school & Bible Class
10:15 AM, Worship with Holy Communion
11:30 AM, Sunday School teachers' meeting
7:30 PM, Campus Ministry – True North
Meeting at church with Bible Study &
Break for open bowling at 9:00 PM

ST MARK'S MISSION STATEMENT

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.

RESULTS FROM THE PAST VOTERS' MEETING:

- The main issue that was unique on this Quarterly agenda was the recommendation of our Building Committee. With specific reasons and guidelines, this committee proposed a plan of future expansion to address our space needs. This recommendation passed unanimously. If you need to refresh your mind on this entire plan it is now posted on our church bulletin board.
- **WANTED:** Enthusiastic, knowledgeable people to serve on the Building Financing Committee. The goals of this committee are to develop and implement fund raising strategies, explore investment and loan options, and manage monies donated to the Building Fund. Please see John Quint or Pastor Kuether if you would like to volunteer to serve the Lord as a member of this committee.

KIDS' GROUP EVENTS:

- November 21, Roller Skating
- December 19, Horse-drawn Sleigh Rides
- January 21, Indoor swimming at the water park near Thief River Falls

THANKSGIVING DAY WORSHIP WILL BE ON NOVEMBER 25th, at 9:00 a.m. The sermon for that festival morn will be based upon the Psalm of the Day, Psalm 100. “For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP BEGINS DECEMBER 1st. These Wednesday evening worship services will be focusing upon the Songs of Advent, as shared with us the Gospel of Luke. On December 8th, the Ladies Guild will host an evening meal prior to worship. (Note, these services will be held on December 1st, 8th, and 15th .

CHRISTMAS EVE CHILDRENS' SERVICE WILL ON DECEMBER 24th, at 7:00 p.m. All Sunday School Children are urged to participate and enjoy the opportunity to do the work of those shepherds on that first Christmas. “When they had seen him (the baby Jesus), they spread the word concerning him” (Luke 2:17). Donna Schroeder will lead the practices and direct their Christmas Service. The title for this year will be “The Cross In The Christmas Tree”. Practices will be held on three Saturday Mornings. They are: December 4th, 11th, and 18th. Each practice will run from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

“THE CHRISTMAS FOR KIDS” will happen on Saturday, December 18th, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Children from 4 year old preschool through the 6th grade will be given lunch and a review of Christmas' true meaning along with craft activities and games. During that time, parents will have the chance to do some Christmas shopping. Spread the word among your neighborhood families. This is a wonderful outreach to the un-churched families in our area. Volunteers from St. Mark's will also be most welcomed. Donations for providing this meal to the children would also be greatly appreciated. Please speak to Pastor Kuether, Donna Schroeder or Belinda Baumann, if you would like to help out.

WELS news release

October 20, 2004

This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:14

This news release is being sent to all called workers and to all who have signed up for news at WELS.net. (Please pass this news on to your congregations.)

North American outreach update

The response to the "Proclaim Peace through Jesus" outreach emphasis in North America has been encouraging. Materials, including a 15-minute video, accompanying brochures, posters, and a Congregation Leaders' Toolbox of resources, have been sent to approximately 200 locations. District leaders will use these materials during visits that will be made to all 1,200 congregations to encourage, equip, and involve every WELS member in personal outreach and every WELS church in community outreach.

While training of visitors is still going on in many circuits, more than 80 actual visits to congregations have been made. The Pacific Northwest District made a bold start by completing visits with 85-90 percent of its congregations. The Minnesota and Nebraska Districts have also been active in setting up visits and will complete them this fall. The intent is that visits would be complete by Dec. 15.

Early reports are that people have been receptive to these visits. Pastor Harland Goetzinger, one of the district directors for outreach to North America, greeted a young couple after one of his congregation visits in the North Atlantic District. He could see the excitement on their faces.

"Seeing that presentation today," the young man said, "and remembering what my Savior did for me has energized me to want to go straight from church out to the mall and tell others about Jesus!"

"It's like they had a cataract removed from their eyes and they saw afresh what Jesus had done for them," reflected Goetzinger. "It's really cool!"

As more visits are scheduled and completed in every district, may God continue to bless our work in spreading the gospel to the people around us.

We want to hear your stories. Tell us about your congregation's plans for outreach or how you personally are sharing the gospel to those in your neighborhood. Go to www.wels.net/nao for more information about the North American outreach emphasis. You will also find resources to help you share your faith and forms so you can tell us how you've seen the Holy Spirit work through your gospel witness.

WELS.net adds tour

Have you visited your synod's Web site lately? Now is a good time to look in and find a treasure-store of information and inspiration. A tour has been added to help guide you into and through the 75,000 pages. Go to www.wels.net, jumpword "tour."

Winterim opened to pastors

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary announced that it will open its Winterim courses to pastors as well as its students this January. Winterim is a two-week period between Christmas break and the beginning of the second semester, when the seminary offers classes that don't fit into the regular curriculum. Winterim will run from Jan. 3 to Jan. 14, 2005. Contact the seminary at 262-242-8100 for more information.

WELS Marriage Retreat 2005

The Commission on Adult Discipleship is testing out a great "get-away" weekend retreat in Florida on Jan. 20-23, 2005, as a meeting place for couples throughout our synod. Those who appreciate such a warm, inviting setting can now incorporate it into a spiritual growth time.

Since this is the first time Adult Discipleship has used this type of location on a synodwide scale, it needs to get a better grasp of how many rooms to hold. Please highlight this opportunity to your members and get back to the commission with as firm a number of participants as you can by Nov. 1. Contact Adult Discipleship at 1-800-567-8669; pegr@sab.wels.net.

There is also a similar retreat (except in colder weather) in Green Lake, Wis., on Feb. 11-13, 2005. This one is filling up quickly, but there is still time to register.

For more information, go to www.welsmarriageretreat.org.