

October 30, 2005

A SAVING FAITH – based on something more than “feelings”

Johnny Mathis made the song “Feelings” popular as a romantic song. He sings about his feeling of love for a girl as being “Nothing more than feelings”. Yes, that is pretty sappy and shallow. There’s not much there, when you’re trying to describe love in such terms. Aren’t you glad God’s love for you is of a much greater value and substance. Recall these words in John’s first epistle, “*God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins*” (1 John 4:8-10). God’s love for you is something more than feelings. Our God initiated and demonstrated the depths of his love by coming into a world of rebellious unworthy sinners. What amazing love! That is why we call it grace. All our feelings within our gut and mind are truly fleeting; they are deceptive and deceiving. So God made sure that we never had to rely upon feelings to know that we are loved and saved by God.

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.

Within the next month, our current church year will end. That is the non-festival half of the church year. Then on November 27th we will begin a new church year on the first Sunday of Advent. This is the festival half of the church year. At that time, we will begin to ponder God’s miraculous entrance into history; that is into our time and place. Do not let the glitz and tinsel of the Christmas season that is soon to follow, cloud and crowd out the real message God, which he wants you to grasp. God loves you . . .

- Not because you’ve given it your best to please him.
- Not because someone has said, “There is a little good in everyone”.
- Not because your family name is so readily associated with church-going people.
- Not because you’ve made a decision for Christ. (The truth is God made the decision to include you in his Kingdom of Grace. Faith is the gift of God – Ephesians 2:8.)

He loved you even before you came into existence. He loves you because he SAYS SO and has SHOWN IT TO BE SO! What a joy it is to learn and know all that Christ did perfectly and successfully in our place. (For we have failed miserably and done nothing perfectly.) So cherish the upcoming change in our church year. Then realize that the saving faith given and entrusted to you is potent and powerful, sure and certain, because it is based upon something more than feelings. It is based squarely upon the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHURCH NEWS AND UPDATES:

- **SPECIAL FREEWILL OFFERING FOR THE SAINT MARK'S BUILDING FUND** will accompany our Reformation Potluck Meal. This is today, October 30th. The congregation's Thrivent Group has also assured us that a minimum of \$550 will be matched by Funds given through Thrivent.
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- **ADDRESSES AND CONTACTS NEEDED!** Dear parents, if your child is attending a college or university, or stationed in the military, please share that information with Pastor Kuether. He is able to pass that news onto our nearest WELS pastoral contact or to be on a WELS List for receiving a mailing of devotional materials.
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- **CHOIR PRACTICES WILL HAPPEN ON WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, BEGINNING WITH NOVEMBER 2nd.** While our current choir members are already aware of this change, perhaps others within the congregation may find this new night to be more favorable. Our choir director is always ready to welcome new voices. If you have an interest or any questions please call our director, Kiki Schnackenberg, at 755-1244.
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- **YOUTH GROUP GETTING REVAMPED AND ORGANIZED!** The Church Council and the voters' of Saint Mark's have adopted new guidelines for enhancing our ministry to the high school youth of our congregation. Under the appointed oversight of the Board of Christian Education, Lou Tasa and Jan Jason have agreed to serve as the **YOUTH LEADERS**. Yet, as with so many other areas of ministry, it will take parental and youth involvement. Please contact Lou or Jan if you or any member of St. Mark's wishes to offer assistance in anyway. The youth, on a weekly basis, will have the opportunity to voice their interests and suggestion within the Sunday morning teen Bible Study class. (There is a plan to make one of these Bible Study classes, each month, into a youth group meeting.)

DID YOU KNOW THAT SUNDAY AND MONDAY WILL NOT BE OUR ONLY OPPORTUNITIES TO WORSHIP OUR SAVIOR GOD?

- ❖ **SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES IN NOVEMBER and DECEMBER**
 - Thanksgiving Day, November 24, at 9:00 a.m.
 - Advent Wed. #1, November 30, at 7:00 p.m.
 - Advent Wed. #2, December 7, at 7:00 p.m.
 - Advent Wed. #3, December 14, at 7:00 p.m.
 - **SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS SERVICE, December 18, 7:00 p.m.**
With the theme: "Now Sing We, Now Rejoice!"
 - Christmas Eve, December 24, at 7:00 p.m.
 - New Year's Eve, December 31, at 7:00 p.m. (w. Holy Communion)

Pastor Stafford and Pastor Kuether plan to switch pulpits on the Sunday preceding Thanksgiving (November 20th). Their thanksgiving messages will be used on that Sunday. They will also plan to switch for the second mid-week Advent service (December 7th). During the Wednesday evening worship services, they will be using the following Advent sermon series, entitled:

"God's Family Tree"

- 1: "The Tree Planted" (Genesis 3:1-21)
- 2: "The Tree Promised" (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6)
- 3: "The Tree Pruned" (2 Samuel 7:1-17; Isaiah 11:1-10)

A fourth Advent Wednesday service could take place. Normally the weeks of Advent don't allow for it. Please speak to your pastor or head elder if you will want them to add such an opportunity for worship on December 21st.

JESUS CARES MINISTRY – HERE AT SAINT MARK’S

You already know that the developmentally disabled people of our community need Jesus just as much as you and me. And the gospel makes it increasingly clear that we have no greater hold on salvation than these disabled citizens among us. Indeed, not one person is more deserving of God’s mercy than any other person. With that in mind, God has again humbled us in our small efforts to reach these people with the message of salvation. He has truly showered numerous blessings down upon our ministry to meet their spiritual needs with the Word of God.

Here are some quick facts.

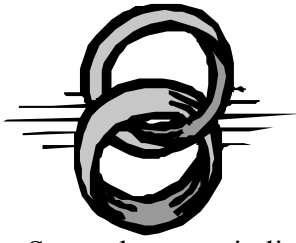
- + We continue to meet on the first and third Saturdays of each month through May.
- + We are averaging over ten students per class.
- + After meeting once in September and twice in October, the attendance has steadily increased at each meeting.
- + Students and accompanying staff have requested and received bibles for personal use.
- + While we have had to limit our invitations to this bible class due to the limited size of our fellowship hall, the students continue to spread the word and invite others.
- + Singing hymns and spiritual songs along with the use of rhythm instruments is a favorite way for the students to express their joy of the gospel
- + Finally, we are especially grateful to the volunteers of St. Mark’s who have sacrificed their Saturday mornings to help spread the saving Word of God.



SCHOOL NEWS

Georgina Peterson has been hired to help Mr. Bitter out for the remainder of this school year. She is actually occupying the same desk that she had when she was on staff at St. Mark’s from 1984 to 1986. She enjoys being back in the classroom with the kids, and Mr. Bitter tremendously appreciates her help. She works primarily with the 1st graders each and every afternoon. Welcome back, Georgina!





Minnesota District WELS National Marriage Retreat & Get Away Weekend!

Strengthen, revitalize, and celebrate your marriage on a weekend get away while enjoying first class accommodations at the Radisson in Plymouth, MN during the weekend of January 27-29, 2006. Experienced and gifted presenter, Rev. Randy Hunter, will lead couples to a deeper understanding of Christ's love and how it applies to building a stronger and more fulfilling marriage relationship. Use this as an opportunity for a second honeymoon or Christmas gift to your spouse. Give it as a gift to children or grandchildren. Surprise your spouse with an anniversary gift. The cost, \$340 per couple, covers two nights stay in the luxurious Radisson Hotel and includes beverage breaks, Saturday breakfast & lunch, as well as Sunday brunch. Saturday "date night" will provide an opportunity for you and your spouse to choose from a number of romantic and fun activities available at numerous Twin Cities west metro restaurants, theaters, parks (cross country skiing) and more. The weekend will conclude with a special Sunday morning worship service at the hotel. For more information about the Radisson in Plymouth log onto www.radisson.com/minneapolismn_plymouth. To register for the Minnesota District marriage retreat call Pastor Dennis Klatt at 763-533-3693. Shortly after November 1st you may also register at www.welsmarriageretreat.org, where you will find details about the marriage retreat format and schedule.

St. Mark's Ladies' Guild News

The most important function of the Ladies Guild is to provide Bible study at each meeting. The Ladies Guild devotions at this time are on the Ministry of the Keys in Luther's Catechism.

This year our officers are President: Donna Schroeder, Vice President: Kris Kuether Treasurer: Marjorie Gildersleeve and Secretary: Lucille Granger.

The Ladies Guild would also like to make everyone aware of the food shelf items. For the month of October it is Pasta and the month of November is canned vegetables.

For our meeting in November the Ladies Guild will be making bandages for the African Medical Mission. African Medical Missions are in need of more bandages and have contacted the Ladies Guild to make them. Old white sheets and sewing machines are the only items needed to make them. Please come to the next meeting on November 10th and help our African Missions.

Every December, we hold a Christmas party on the night of our meeting. This year our meeting is on December 8th. We have a brief business meeting, and then the rest of the evening is for fun and fellowship, Christmas carol singing, white elephant gift and this year we will be doing a Christmas ornament exchange. Everyone is most welcome to all of our meetings, we especially like to share a few moments with you at this busy time of year to renew our spirits a bit.

Every woman who is a communicant member of this congregation is a member of the Ladies' Guild and of LWMS. We realize that some of you are not able to make the meeting every month. Please feel free to come whenever you are able. We pray that you will have the opportunity to join us, and that you will be refreshed spiritually through our fellowship.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lucille Granger (Secretary)



Building Financing Committee Report October 20, 2005

- The building Financing Committee (BFC) [Jerry Goldschmidt, Doug Kranich, Ken Grob, Jean Mathweg, John Quint, Pastor Kuether] continues to encourage the congregation to support the Building Project.
- Commitment forms are still welcome from those who have not yet submitted one.
- A prayer will be offered in all of our worship services in the future, asking the Lord's blessing upon our program.
- The BFC is in the process of contacting other congregations to solicit information regarding their strategies for building program fund raising.
- Options for long term financing of the project are being explored.
- There will be a joint meeting of the BFC and the Building Committee in November to establish a timeline for the Building Project.
- We have received roughly \$75,000 in commitments through 2006, \$50,000 of which should be on hand by the end of 2005.
- The BFC would like to address a member concern regarding unwillingness to support the project because of rumors that the project could be downsized due to shortage of funds. The BFC is confident that sufficient funds will be available and would like to reassure the congregation that there are currently no plans to reduce the scope of the project.

Building Committee Report

- The Building Committee (BC) [Paul Bellig, Mark Bitzer, Amanda Quint, Joshua Quint, Kiki Schnackenberg] has recently been reactivated and is busy working on plans for the upcoming project.
- The congregation's response to the preliminary building plan has been discussed and changes will be made to reflect concerns and suggestions made over the past year.
- The BC plans to establish subcommittees in the near future to address a variety of issues relating to the Building Project, including model construction, landscaping/exterior lighting/signage, room furnishings, floor/wall coverings, special window design, altar furnishings, kitchen design, parsonage exterior rehab, and volunteer coordination.
- The City of Bemidji has scheduled the sewer/water extension project to start June/July 2006.
- The BC shares the confidence of the BFC that the entire project proposed last year will be completed, without downsizing, in the near future.

On Sunday, October 30th, St. Luke's in Grand Rapids, MN, dedicated their new sanctuary. This day also fit into their October theme of the "five solas" of the Reformation. So on October 30th the theme of their worship was "*soli deo gloria*" (to the glory of God alone).

In view of Saint Luke's joyous celebration of dedicating their new church building to the glory of God, Pastor Kuether sent a congratulatory letter as an expression of our shared thankfulness.

October 22, 2005

Dear brothers and sisters within Christ's mission field at Grand Rapids, Minnesota,

Jesus called the temple in his day "My Father's house" (Luke 2:49) and also "A house of Prayer" (Matthew 21:13).

Such recognition is reserved by God for that place

- where his people express their oneness in faith,
- where they call upon the Name of the Lord,
- where God's Name is revealed in the Word and Sacraments,
- and where God's people receive spiritual nourishment and rest.

You are truly a blessed people of God. May such a rich blessing not only be a source of joy and gladness but also a cause and reason to share God's goodness with your community and beyond.

As grown children, who have moved away from home, often look with longing anticipation to visit their parents and the home they grew up in (or as grandchildren are thrilled to hear that this is the day we get to go to Grandma and Grandpa's house), so may you long for every opportunity to visit your Father's House. It is A House of Prayer. And St. Luke's church is God's gift to you. Indeed, it is a gift not to just admire. But it is God's gift for you to use! God bless you in this high privilege afforded to you and your community.

In Jesus' name and to his glory,

Pastor Lon Kuether
Saint Mark's, Bemidji



NEWS FROM THE WELS

Minnesota District
Commission for Communication on Financial
Support

OCTOBER 2005 Information Release www.wels.net

PRINTED FOR YOUR INFORMATION ON THE NEXT PAGE →

WELS.NET RSS TECHNOLOGY PROVIDES UPDATED CONTENT FOR CHURCH WEB SITES

WELS' Web site, www.wels.net, is keeping pace with the quickly changing world of Web technology with its use of RSS—Really Simply Syndication. RSS allows blogs, Q&A and anything sent over WELS' news service to automatically feed into other Web sites. This can provide major advantages for churches as well as individuals.

For example, at most churches the Web site is handled by a volunteer. Once the Web page is up and running, the biggest difficulty is keeping the site's content up to date. RSS can help solve this problem. The church's Webmaster simply needs to add an RSS feed of, let's say, WELS.net "Daily Devotions" or "Daily Prayers" and the church Web site will be automatically updated with this content on an hourly basis.

Individuals can also have their favorite WELS.net content fed into a Web account or right onto their computer. A free "reader" Web account must first be set up over the Internet. The reader site will walk you through the set-up. Then you can choose to add WELS RSS feeds. Once this is accomplished, you'll be able to log into your account to receive always-up-to-date WELS content (not to mention updates from various other Web sites you pick).

For everything you need to know to get started, visit www.wels.net and search by one of the following jumpwords:

RSS	Information about RSS technology
RSSchurches	List of churches using WELS.net RSS feeds on their Web sites
RSSppt	RSS explanation in PowerPoint
RSSWebfeed	Instructions for adding RSS feeds to your Web site

PARENTS: A WELS WEB SITE FOR YOU

The Parents Crosslink Web site, www.parentscrosslink.net, was launched in September to complement an eight-page print quarterly, in the purpose of strengthening and encouraging parents for the challenges of raising children in a world that adheres to secular values. Together, the magazine and Web site address real parenting issues with practical insights and scriptural applications.

The Web site expands on the newsletter content and also provides a much larger array of resources, information, links and interactive ways for parents to connect with each other via discussion boards, live chats and Q&A.

"The Parents Crosslink endeavor (Web site and print) represent a two-plus year effort on the part of several ministry partners: WELS Youth Discipleship, Adult Discipleship, Parish Schools, Web Services and Northwestern Publishing," said Dr. Joel Nelson, Administrator for Youth Discipleship. "God-willing it will be an endeavor that truly helps parents and families to establish stronger 'links' to Jesus, each other and WELS. So far, we have gotten very good feedback about Parents Crosslink and pray that congregation leaders get on board and promote both parts to their members."