

SAINT MARK'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

(The second quarter)

April 30, 2006

LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR WELS MISSION STATEMENT!

**OUR VISION: Emphasize every believer's need
For regular public worship.**

GOD'S WORD... STUDY IT!

Written by Pastor John Gawrisch,
More than four years ago

The House on the Rock

The #1 sight-seeing attraction in Wisconsin every year is an architectural marvel known as The House on the Rock. Located on Highway 23 between Spring Green and Dodgeville, The House on the Rock was designed and built by Alex Jordan.

It all began in the 1940's when Alex was looking for a quiet country retreat where he could focus on his artwork. He found just what he was looking for high on top of Deershelter Rock. Using this majestic 60-foot chimney of stone as the foundation and walls, he built a home. The end result is an amazing structure that is affectionately called The House on the Rock.

Build on his Word

This idea is not really unique. Jesus encouraged you to build your house on the solid foundation of his Word a long time ago in his Sermon on the Mount. There he declared, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them in to practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." (Matthew 7:24-25).

Wise People

It is a wise person, Jesus says, who builds his house on the rock. It is a wise person who regularly takes his place in the pew each week to hear God's sustaining Word and who puts that precious Word into practice in his life each day. It is a wise person who makes use of his time of grace and his good days to prepare for life's storms whenever they occur. And they most certainly will!

The sands of this life

Unfortunately, many people are building their homes and staking their futures on the eroding sands of this life. Such sands include the job, academic or athletic ability, material goods, finances, today's good health and economy, etc. And when the storms of life suddenly strike with deadening force and unexpected velocity, it becomes crystal clear what Jesus was warning about. "The rain came down, the streams rose, and winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Matthew 7:27)

When the storms hit

When you fail to hear the Word regularly in church, you are accident waiting to happen. When you fail to receive the valuable support from God's sure promises and the needed strength from the Lord's Supper, you are living very dangerously on the edge. When you sever your ties with your congregation, you are not equipped to offer anyone support or to receive it from others when those storms hit. When you fail to construct your home on the solid foundation of God's Word through regular public worship, you are foolishly building your life on eroding sand.

Many of you know from personal experience just how devastating the storms of life can be. Those storms

are neither kind, nor partial, nor forgiving. I've also seen those storms beat against the best of you. And oh, how it hurt when you lost your job, when the hoped-for promotion was given to someone else, when the cancer came back, or when the dear friend was suddenly called away. **OVER==>**

Jesus and his Word are there

Fortunately, you have your Savior and his sure Word to hold you up in the midst of such storms. You have Jesus' promise that whenever those storms of life occur the home of the one who has built his house on the rock will not fall. Listen again to our Savior's promise. "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." (Matthew 7:25)

The importance of regular public worship

Your Savior loved each one of you enough to live, die and rise again to rescue you from the worst storm of all – the explosive anger of a just and holy God (because of yours sins) on the day of judgment. Now your loving Savior promises to be with you through every storm of life and to equip you for them through regular public worship. And he will keep his Word until he graciously takes you to that place where there are no more storms. Nothing but blue skies – his heaven forever.

May each one of you experience the joy and derive the comfort of having just such a home that is built solidly upon the rock!

CHURCH AND SCHOOL NEWS AND UPDATES

QUARTERLY VOTERS' MEETING IS SET for MAY

This meeting could not be held in the month of April. This is now rescheduled for Thursday, May 11th at 7:00 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE ON YOUR CALENDARS!! MONDAY EVENING WORSHIP WILL CONTINUE, WITH SERVICES AT 7:30 PM. (HOWEVER, THE MONDAY EVENING SERVICE ON MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 29th, WILL BE CANCELED.)

FRIDAY, MAY 5th, "RESTORED" IN CONCERT

This Christian Band will perform concerts at St. Mark's in the FELLOWSHIP HALL. This will be at two different times, 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. There is NO admission. However free-will donations will be accepted. CDs of their music will be available for sale. The lead singer is a member of a WELS church in the Milwaukee area. If anyone is willing to offer a night's sleep for him or any of his band members, please speak to Pastor Kuether. This lead singer is Mike Westendorf. His personal website can be accessed at www.mikewestendorf.com

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

The final day of Sunday School and Bible Class for this school year period is planned for Sunday, May 21st. The teachers are planning to hold a joint closing activity with the teens and adults that show up for the Sunday Bible class. They plan to have a hymn sing a-long and also have the children lead us in singing some of the songs from their songbook. We will show the kids' connection that focused on the Hmong. Time for cookies and bars will also be enjoyed.

LADIES GUILD NEWS

The Ladies Guild has been busy!

- 1 Working on making bandages for the African Medical Mission.
- 2 Making Easter candy booklets with a Bible verse for nursing homes in our area.
- 3 The Sunday school children have also made Easter cards for our Befriend A Mission/Missionary, Stephen Ness Regina, Canada.
- 4 The Ladies Guild also sent the Ladies Guild in Regina, Canada, a monetary gift of \$25.00 for their mission work.
- 5 We received a "Thank You" note from Mission To The Children for the \$50.00 that the Ladies Guild sent to them.
- 6 A wedding shower will be scheduled for Shelley Holderbecker, who is getting married July 22nd.
- 7 Baby showers will be scheduled for Natalie and Sam Schroeder and also for Amanda and Josh Quint.

MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY and DISCUSSION REGARDING TOPICS OF INTEREST!

These Monday evening session will begin at 6:30 p.m. They will need to conclude and wrap up by 7:20 p.m. Monday worship will begin at 7:30 (excluding Memorial Day, May 29). Please consider yourself most welcome. It will be a relaxed class, as we sit around tables in the Fellowship Hall and talk about what God's Word has to say about any questions of doctrine or practice we may have. Initially, on May 1st, we will chew on some of the words of REVELATION and the topic of END TIMES. Bring a friend. Bring your questions. And above all bring your Bible. (For the near future these classes will be held on the first four Mondays of May. Future classes will be planned for the summer months.)

THE WELS

April 2006 Information Release

www.wels.net

CHURCHES COMMIT MORE OFFERINGS TO SYNOD FOR 2006

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving has released the latest forecast for 2006 Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO). Based on more than 1,000 congregations submitting their subscriptions to synod, a 2.6% rise in giving is projected for the 2006 calendar year. More than 150 congregations still have not submitted CMO subscriptions. In the absence of these subscriptions, actual receipts from 2005 were used to help estimate funds for 2006. "We are grateful for the 2.6% increase," said Pastor Dave Liggett, WELS Director of Christian Giving. "However, with inflationary costs running close to 5%, there is a gap between revenue and expenses. If this gap isn't closed, it will result in a yearly operating deficit of approximately \$1 million over and above the growing support needs of our ministerial education schools. A gap of that magnitude cannot be absorbed without significantly impacting the work that we do together as a synod, specifically the training and sending out of gospel workers."

Liggett encourages congregations to incorporate the 10/10 concept in their giving. Congregations are asked to give 10% of their annual receipts to the synod or raise their subscription to the synod by 10% over 2005 gifts.

REAL TREASURE VISITS REACH NEXT LEVEL

WELS' "Real Treasure Visits," involving a Bible study for one on one discussion about Christian stewardship, are continuing. President Karl Gurgel started things off when he met with WELS' 12 district presidents and their wives in January. The district presidents for the most part have met with pastors and their wives from each of the WELS circuits. The next step is for these pastors in the circuits to meet with their fellow pastors before the study moves to the congregational level. Resources are available for implementation of the one-on-one studies at the church level. Visit www.wels.net/jumpword/realtreasure. The Web site includes helpful items such as a planning timetable beginning 10 weeks ahead of member visits, suggestions for recruiting members to serve as the "visitors" and possible agendas for visitor training sessions.

WELS to celebrate Walking Together

During the month of May, WELS members are encouraged to participate in the synod's annual "Walking Together" campaign. This year's focus will be on how Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., and our WELS school system prepares future called workers for our congregations, schools, and other WELS organizations.

Formed from an amalgamation of Dr. Martin Luther College (founded in 1884) and Northwestern College (founded in 1865), Martin Luther College opened its doors to the next generation of church workers in 1995. MLC's educational ministry graduates serve WELS early childhood ministries, Lutheran elementary schools, high schools and also as staff ministers. Pastoral ministry graduates go on to four more years of theological training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

Regardless of the path chosen, all MLC graduates have several common attributes:

- They believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- They believe that all the books of the Bible are the clear teachings of God.
- The Lord has led them to commit their lives to full-time service in his church.

As a synod, WELS is using the Walking Together campaign as an opportunity for WELS members to say thank you not only to our current called workers but also for a ministerial education system that remains loyal to God's Word.

The thank offering that is being gathered as part of the Walking Together campaign will be used for two important purposes. The first \$800,000 will be put toward the synod's operating fund, to continue to spread the gospel at home and abroad through all means possible, including our MLC graduates. Gifts over \$800,000 will be given to Martin Luther College to continue its commitment to preparing the next generation of WELS pastors, teachers, and staff ministers.

NOTE: SAINT MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH WILL GIVE FULL RECOGNITION AND AWARENESS TO THIS THEME IN OUR WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, MAY 7th.



Proclaim!

EQUIPPING GOD'S MESSENGERS TO TELL MORE PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS

PASSAGE TO PONDER – Mark 5:18-20

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Friendship Witnessing

Interpersonal Style of Evangelism

As Christians we have a concern for friends and family in an eternal sense. In our love for them we want to share the salvation of Jesus. Our relationships with people offer opportunities and advantages for sharing the gospel.

- 1 **Friends naturally share good news with each other.** The demoniac that Jesus healed was eager to tell everyone he knew about Jesus. So we, who are saved from eternal death by our Savior, are very glad to share the good news of Jesus with our family and friends.
- 2 **Friends trust and respect one another.** People with whom we have a close relationship are likely to listen to what we have to say about our faith.
- 3 **Friendships provide extended opportunities for sharing the gospel.** We don't have to say everything all at once or force the issue. We can build on previous witnessing in a natural way.
- 4 **Friendships offer opportune moments for sharing God's Word.** When people we know are going through a time of need, we can use the situation to talk to them about our greatest need—being right with God—and point to Jesus who meets that need.
- 5 **Christians demonstrate Christian confidence to their friends.** Our non-Christian friends may wonder how we cope. We communicate that Jesus is our true help and hope.

Bringing up questions about religious background or experience will lead to opportunities for sharing what we believe. We can explore matters of life that

have significant impact on the people we know, such as job changes, marriage or family issues, health concerns, etc. As we relate to some of these matters, we can share the promises and direction of God's Word.

Starting a conversation that leads from everyday life to eternal life requires the skill of listening. Communication is a two-way process. We listen and we speak. Listening to people express their feelings and fears, their problems and opinions opens up opportunities for us to talk with them about Jesus.

Take note of statements that you can use to bridge the conversation to a spiritual discussion. Then ask, "May I share with you what I think... what I believe about that?" Talk about Jesus and the salvation he accomplished by his life, death, and resurrection. Talk about your faith, your hope of eternal life, and how that comforts and strengthens you day by day. Explain that your worship of God and service to him is a glad response to his great love.

The familiar words of the Apostles' Creed serve very well to present the main truths of the Christian faith. You can explain that God is the all-powerful Creator and Preserver of everything (First Article). God's eternal Son, Jesus Christ, in great love came to rescue us from eternal death which we deserve as sinners (Second Article). God the Holy Spirit has given me the sure hope of heaven and helps me in my daily struggles until I get there (Third Article).

If you get tongue-tied when you share your faith and fear that you have blown an opportunity, think through the situation and explore ways of explaining things in a clearer way. Then, when you are together again with your friend, you might say, "I've been thinking a lot about our conversation that we had before, and I have been studying God's Word. This is what I found..."

Patiently share the good news of Jesus with friends using different approaches at different times. As opportunities present themselves in your relationships with people, share your faith persistently in a natural way. The apostle Peter instructs us, "Do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Trust the Lord's promise, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Our living Savior will never fail us. He will use our witness, however simple or inadequate it may seem, and make it serve the purpose that he intends. Trusting his promises, we can confidently share Jesus with friends!

NEWS FROM YOUR WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Jeremy Koehler Serving Us in Iraq

Jeremy Koehler will graduate from the seminary this May under some unusual circumstances. Before studying for the ministry, Jeremy served in the army on full-time active duty for three years after high school, and it was, in fact, his experiences in the military that led him to want to become a pastor. After being discharged, he joined the Army National Guard and began studying for the ministry at Martin Luther

College.

Jeremy was scheduled to complete his service in the Guard in July. He expected to graduate with his class and receive a call into pastoral ministry along with the rest of his classmates. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, however. In February his unit was placed on alert, putting his discharge date on hold. Then in March his unit was called up for active duty in Iraq. Jeremy was able to stay in school until mid-April and finish all his assignments early in order to complete his pastoral studies. After Easter, he will leave for a two-month training session in Mississippi. In June he's off for at least a year's duty in Iraq where his unit will be guarding military and civilian convoys.

Jeremy's wife, Koreen, will receive his diploma at the seminary graduation service on Friday, May 26th. His call will be deferred until he returns from serving our country in Iraq. While this was not something Jeremy or his family imagined he'd be doing when he came back from his vicar year, this was clearly something God had envisioned from all eternity. With his combined pastoral and military training, Jeremy will be in a unique position to serve as a Christian example to his fellow soldiers. No doubt God will provide appropriate ways for him to witness his faith in word as well as deed.

Jeremy and Koreen have been married since 1998. They have three children: Jayden, age 5; Jenna, age 2 1/2; and Julianna, age 1. While Jeremy is in Iraq, Koreen and the children will reside in the Neenah, WI, area where many of their family members live.

Something like this really brings home to us here the need to keep all our service members and their families in our prayers. Ask the Lord to keep them in his tender care and bring them safely through this and every trial. We especially invite you to hold our brother Jeremy up to the throne of grace. Ask God to help him give a strong witness to our Savior, the only name under heaven that can rescue any one of us from sin and death. Ask him to hold his protecting hand over Jeremy and to give him and his wife strength and courage in this time of separation. Ask him to bless and keep Jayden, Jenna, and Julianna safe as their father serves all of us in Iraq.