

SAINT MARK'S QUARTERLY CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Volume 13, Issue 3

August 3, 2008

SHARE THE WEALTH!

Someone once said, "Having money and wealth is no fun unless you have someone to share it with".

Today, I only want to remind you of a truth that you have no doubt heard before. But I am certain we need to hear it again (as long as we live in this sin-sickened and self-serving world). Here is the truth: **GOD'S PEOPLE ARE WEALTHY BEYOND MEASURE!** Saint Paul wrote these words to the Christians in Corinth,

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

No one had to teach us to complain about what we don't have or about what we think we have coming to us, in the way of fortune. We were born with that kind of self-centered way of thinking. But God in his grace has truly blessed us, nonetheless. In Christ, who rescued us from our own sinful self and the hell we deserve, we have the richness of forgiveness, new life and eternal life. While, for many of us, God has also blessed us with material wealth and possessions, this can never surpass the wealth of knowing we are God's adopted children for time and for eternity. Our own Baptism offers us more riches than we could ever earn or inherit in a lifetime. So with this kind of wealth, we have room to grow in sharing this abundant wealth with others. As important as it is that we share our monetary wealth in the way of our church offerings to God, so also it is important to share our testimony and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with our neighbors and friends.

Now consider the opportunities to grow in this gift of sharing the wealth, which is, sharing the roadmap to heaven. In addition to every worship service and every Bible class, we have scheduled these upcoming events:

- ❖ Sunday, September 14, Church & School Dedication Service. We will have a presentation of our congregation's history at 9 a.m. Then we will worship our Savior God at 10:15 a.m. Our guest preacher will be Pastor Charles Degner of St. Peter, MN. He is also our new District Presidents of the Minnesota District.
- ❖ Saturday, October 11, we will host an Evangelism Workshop. The guest presenter will be Pastor Jeff Limpert of Rochester. Anyone interested in evangelism, especially among our leadership, is welcome to attend. The seminar is entitled "**Connecting to Communities**", and it will run from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Our congregation will provide refreshments, while the ending time will allow for participants to have a late lunch on their own.

THIS SEMINAR WILL HELP OUR CONGREGATION

- * **Define and analyze our community to identify new opportunities for connecting with those who need Jesus.**
 - * **Build a positive identity of your church among the people of our area.**
 - * **Develop closer connections with more people to link them to the ministry of our congregation.**
 - * **Set goals for acts of Christian service by our congregation.**
- ❖ Sunday, October 12, we will celebrate with a Mission Festival. Pastor Limpert will share with us a message of encouragement concerning our church's mission. It will provide the gospel motivation to support our world-wide mission efforts as well as our local outreach opportunities.
 - ❖ Sunday, October 26, we will offer a special friendship Sunday worship service. The intent will be for us to put into action the efforts of bringing unchurched family members, co-workers, or neighbors to worship with us, and to be reassured of the only way of salvation.

God has blessed us with new members, of all ages. May we all see that there is always something we can do for Christ's church and for the people of our community! Jesus loves them just as much as he loves us. How could we ever keep this kind of great news from them? Come on, share the wealth!

MORE CHURCH NEWS AND UPDATES

POSTED: August 3, 2008

CROW RIVER CONFERENCE: Pastoral Installations

- We have two sister congregations receiving full-time pastors, August 3. In Glenwood, MN, Calvary Lutheran Church will be transitioning from a part-time pastor to their first full-time pastor in many years. On August 3, at 4:00, recent Seminary graduate, Brian Koschnitzke, will be installed. Following the service a supper will be served. All are welcome to attend.
- Also on this same day, Petra Lutheran Church of Sauk Rapids will be installing a new pastor. This service will be at 4:30. Their new pastor, Steven Daley, is coming to Sauk Rapids from Riga, MI, where he had served as pastor of our WELS church in that town. Again, all are welcome to attend and to share in this congregation's joy.

THRIVENT UPDATE

Eleven members of Thrivent from Saint Mark's have channeled their offering to support the operation of our Church School. These initial gifts totaled \$6,200, and through the Giving Plus program of Thrivent \$3,375 was added to the total gift. The majority of these matching dollars help to pay the mortgage for the building improvements that are also benefiting our school. If you are a Thrivent Member and wish to find out how you too can further extend your financial support for our Church School please contact Mr. Nathan Bitter, Mrs. Debra Newell or Pastor Kuether.

A CHURCH SPONSORED GOLF OUTING

A sign-up sheet is posted in our church narthex. Men or women of our church are invited to join together as church group outing. Two possible dates for this activity are August 24th or September 7th. The course that will be used will be in the vicinity of Bemidji. If you have questions or comments please contact Tom Carroll.

SPECIAL DETAILS REGARDING THE DEDICATION SERVICE, SEPTEMBER 14th, 2008

Just like the lives that we live, so also the church and facilities that we as congregation own are dedicated to the glory of God. As part of this celebration, we will be having a meal following this special worship service. And after the meal, we would like to enjoy some good Christian recreation. So bring along some casual/recreational clothing and shoes. We hope to have a softball game between those people over the age of 30 and those under the age of 30. (So bring a baseball glove along.) We also plan to have other yard games available for friendly competition. If someone has more ideas and suggestion, especially regarding games for the little children, please call Leonard or Debra Newell at 586-2956.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

SAINT MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

2220 Anne Street NW, Bemidji

www.stmarksbemidji.org

MONDAY – FRIDAY, AUGUST 4th – 8th
From 9:30 to 11:45 a.m.



FOR ANY CHILD:

4 years of age through those entering into 6th grade

CALL TO REGISTER or FOR INFORMATION

444-3939 or 444-6334

(Transportation also available)



CHURCH YOUTH attended a WELS Regional Youth Rally at the Kalahari in the Wisconsin Dells. They left Bemidji on July 16th and came back home on July 19th. They were enriched with various forms of worship and praise, together with nearly 300 other youth. We are grateful for the donations to our church's youth treasury, which make this activity and future participation possible. Pictured above near Black River Falls, WI, on our way back home are:

Christian Kuether, Aaron Schnackenberg,

Cody Holderbecker, Katrina Schnackenberg,

Thank God for his blessings!

" 'Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it' " (Malachi 3:10).

With those words, God encouraged the people of Israel to place their trust in his promises, and he assured them that he would bless them in ways that they could hardly expect or even imagine. At last summer's synod convention, we were encouraged to have that same kind of trust in God's faithfulness. In the 11 months since that time, he has poured out financial blessings on our synod that few of us would have expected.

The preliminary results for our synod's fiscal year, which ended on June 30, show that the synod ended the year with a budgetary surplus of approximately \$2.8 million. Year-end accounting is still being finalized, but our financial staff is confident that these numbers are very close to what the final results will be. The surplus is the result of a number of factors, including a substantial increase in congregational and individual offerings combined with significant underspending by the areas of ministry. The Synodical Council will determine how these funds will be utilized.

In May, the Synodical Council already approved an increase of \$500,000 in the 2008-09 budget for Home Missions to be used for new mission starts. The majority of this \$500,000 was actually a part of the 2007-08 budget that was not spent in 2007-08. The budget originally adopted by the synod convention for the coming year (2008-09) showed a shortfall of \$2.6 million. This shortfall was created when the convention restored \$600,000 to World Missions and \$2 million for the continued operation of Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw. Again, due to a number of factors, the \$2.6 million shortfall has been reduced to approximately \$900,000. Part of the surplus from 2007-08 could be used to cover that \$900,000 shortfall, with the remaining surplus placed, for the time being, into a buffer fund for shortfalls that may occur in the future. Again, the Synodical Council will determine how to handle these unexpected blessings and will present final recommendations to the next synod convention. Two important things need to be noted. First, we can and should be filled with a sense of overwhelming thanks to God. Even in a time of financial uncertainty in our nation, he has moved his people to bring generous thank offerings to support the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. This support is not the result of a convention resolution; it's the result of the gospel of Jesus Christ working in the hearts of God's thankful people.

Second, some have expressed a concern that news of this surplus will lead congregations and members to conclude that the financial crisis has passed and that support will diminish, even as forecasts warn of future shortfalls. I'm convinced that just the opposite will happen. We believe that the promises of a gracious God are what moved people to respond with their offerings in the last year. Those promises have not changed, and we should have no doubt that the gospel will continue to lead us to focus our efforts on the mission opportunities that God will give to us.

Personally, I would like to thank our synodical leaders (the Conference of Presidents and the Synodical Council) for their planning work and the encouragement they offer to the members of the synod. I would like to thank congregational leaders, both called and lay workers, for helping to keep our congregations focused on our shared work as a synod. I would like to thank the members of our congregations for their generous offerings. Together, we join our hearts in thanking God for the gift of his Son, and for all of the other gifts that he continues to shower on us as individuals and as a synod. To him alone be the glory!

Serving in Christ,
Mark Schroeder

Top Stories

Compiled by WELS Communication Services

WELS humanitarian aid trip to Africa

The three members of WELS Humanitarian Aid Committee—which exists to help spread the gospel by providing points of contact with people through humanitarian aid—are traveling to Africa July 24 and will spend two weeks assessing the committee's projects that are currently being carried out in Malawi and Zambia.

Rev. David Valleskey, Humanitarian Aid Committee chairman, says while in Africa the committee wants to see what's working, determine what needs to change, and find new opportunities. "The committee is funded entirely by special gifts from WELS members, so we want them to be used in the best possible way—which really is a major reason for our trip over there," he says. "We really want people's gifts to have an impact."

Valleskey, together with committee members Mr. Kent Raabe and Staff Minister Thomas Hering, will visit several sites where humanitarian aid is being given and meet with leadership of the national churches in Zambia and Malawi to see how humanitarian aid can be best used to assist in fulfilling the mission of the church.

Current projects in these African countries include digging deep wells and assisting in literacy and home health care training. In countries like India, Nepal, and Pakistan, the committee is digging wells, providing sanitary sewers and medical supplies, and running orphanages.

"We are simply showing the love of Christ toward people who may not have as much in the way of worldly goods as the Lord has blessed us in America with," says Valleskey. "If people in these countries ask, 'Why are you doing this?' we can point them to the love of Jesus that led him to go all the way to Calvary for them."

Committee members will be blogging during their two-week trip. Read about their experiences in Africa on the World Mission blog at <http://missions.wels.net>

Record registration for worship conference

This year's National Conference on Music, Worship, and the Arts, to be held July 28-31 in St. Peter, Minn., already has a record number of registered attendees and presenters—almost 1,000 people—and according to Rev. Bryan Gerlach, administrator for WELS Commission on Worship, more registrations are expected to trickle in before and at the conference.

Gerlach says that he expects the conference will end up with about 250 more attendees than the last conference in 2005. He says the increase in numbers is partly due to the location—there was a lot of positive feedback when the conference was moved to St. Peter in 2005. Other factors include the conference dates, which are not competing with another WELS event like the International Youth Rally, and word-of-mouth advertising.

"One of the presenters at past worship conferences recently told a friend, 'If you only go to the worship services, it's worth the drive,' " says Gerlach. "The friend was kind of skeptical and said, 'At \$4.25 a gallon?' And she replied, 'Yes, it's worth the drive because the services are so awesome!' And that's really true."

In addition to the 1,000 people coming from the United States, two people from Sweden and three from Canada will also be attending this year's conference, which features more than 60 workshops, exhibits, corporate worship opportunities, and concerts—including a performance by the conference's largest high school honor choir of more than 130 WELS students nationwide. The new *Christian Worship: Supplement* will also be introduced.

"People can see this on paper and say, 'Wow, they've got a lot of stuff at this conference,' or they can go to the Web site and see resources from the last conference—but it just doesn't compare to being there," says Gerlach. "One person said after the last conference, 'It's like the Grand Canyon: you can see pictures, but that's nothing like standing at the edge and looking down.' "

For more information or to register, visit www.wels.net/jump/worship-conf

Work begins at new mission in Reno

Rev. Steve Hillmer, the new outreach pastor at Shepherd of the Mountains, Reno, Nev., was installed July 13. As outreach pastor, Hillmer is working to start a new mission congregation in Spanish Springs, a growing area just outside of Reno. Shepherd of the Mountains is partnering with WELS Board for Home Missions to fund the mission and is providing lay workers to get it off the ground.

Hillmer and his wife and family arrived in Nevada July 3. "The trip was a blur, three days of driving across the country," says Hillmer, who previously served at Beautiful Savior, Marietta, Ga. "Now we're just trying to unpack and get familiar with the area."

Hillmer is following up on prospects and says he's going to start canvassing in the next couple of months. Hillmer is also working on a Web site and logo for the new mission, which has been named The Springs. He hopes to hold the first service on Palm Sunday.

"Even as we spoke of this bold step by a small congregation in partnership with their fellow Christians through Home Missions, some of the saints were already speaking of where congregations numbers three and four should be, God graciously enabling," says Rev. Harold Hagedorn, administrator of Home Missions. "We give thanks for such outreach mindedness and efforts, and for congregations being willing to be a part of establishing new congregations."

In August, Hillmer will meet with his district mission board representative, Rev. Matt Vogt of Water of Life, Las Vegas, Nev., and Rev. Peter Kruschel, new mission counselor in the Southwest, to discuss plans for the mission and determine how to best utilize members from the existing congregation that live in the target area.

"By God's grace, I hope that we'll be able to get this congregation established and bring people into a more living relationship with their Savior," Hillmer says.

New president for WLC

Daniel W. Johnson has accepted the call to be the next president of Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) in Milwaukee, Wis. Johnson, an administrator of Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA) in Phoenix, Ariz., will be the third full-time president of WLC in its 35-year history, succeeding Dr. Timothy Kriewall, who retired June 30, 2008.

"I am humbled and excited to join Wisconsin Lutheran College in its mission to prepare students for lives of servant leadership," says Johnson. "It is a God-given privilege to ready students with not only academic excellence, but with the values, know-how, and desire to serve and be difference makers in their workplaces, communities, and the world."

"First and foremost, Dan is a dedicated man of God," says Todd Witte, chairman of the college's Board of Regents.

"Throughout his varied leadership roles he has exemplified the type of unique servant leadership that is underlined by the WLC mission."

Johnson has served in multiple levels of education over the past 20 years. He has dedicated his career to improving education across various communities. His leadership of ALA since 1999 is marked by a focus on community, outreach, and meeting needs through creative private and public partnerships. Through such initiatives, ALA achieved record enrollment, financial support, and balanced budgets over his nine years at the helm.

Johnson will defend his doctoral dissertation, "Qualities of Christian Schools that Impact Enrollment," in fall 2008, earning his Ed.D. from Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. He is current president of WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools and holds a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from National-Louis University, Chicago, Ill., and a bachelor's degree from Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

WAYS TO HELP OUT THE DAY SCHOOL

✦ Pray for the school children and workers

✦ Give regular church offerings

✦ Volunteer time - doing a craft project, reading with children, cleaning, field trip driver, etc.

✦ School Special Project Fund

There is a fund within the church budget that is designated School Special Project Fund. This fund is to be used by the Church Council for school related items that do not fall within the normal budget of the school. Purchases in the past that have been made using this fund are the carpet in the fellowship hall, a laminator, three computers, computer software, renovating the playground, tables and chairs for the fellowship hall, and a SMART board. Future uses could be for student desks, playground upgrades, computers.

There are a number of ways that a member can contribute to this fund:

1) A donation that is specifically designated for the School Special Project Fund.
2) Using the matching gift program of Thrivent. The actual gift from you can go to any fund in the church, while the matching gift from Thrivent can go to either the school special project fund or the mortgage payment. If you do not specify either, it will go to the mortgage payment. For more information on this program or to get a form to participate in this program, please see Deb Newell.

3) Clip "Box Tops for Education" symbols off of General Mills products and Betty Crocker products and place them in the correct spot. The school receives 10 cents for each one that it redeems. (Sent in by the Ladies' Guild)



4) If you have a Target credit card, please designate St. Mark Lutheran School as your school choice in the "Take Charge of Education" program. The school receives 1% of any purchase you do with that card in Target stores. The school receives 1/2% of any purchase you do with that card outside of a Target store. Talk to Mr. Bitter if you would like to designate your card for St. Mark.

5) Give your Kemps milk caps that have a sticker on them that says they are worth 5 cents. The school can redeem these caps as part of the "Give 'Em Five" Program that Kemps is sponsoring.

6) Used printer ink cartridges and old cell phones are being collected. The school can turn these in to a recycling company for money.

7) "Our Family" food labels are being collected and can be redeemed by the school at 5 cents a label. (Sent in by the Ladies' Guild)

✦ "We Care" Stickers

"We Care" sticker program is done by Marketplace and helps with special projects by the VBS, Sunday School, and the day school. The money has been used for the purchase of microwaves and Kids' Connection videos, providing VBS with pizza and ice cream, and funding field trips, among other things.

✦ Campbell Soup Labels

These are being collected by the Ladies' Guild. They redeem them for points which can be used to purchase items from the Campbell's catalog. Hockey sticks and basketballs were redeemed recently.