

What our children learn is not just taught ... It is also caught!

How thrilling it is to hear a two-year-old child (or even younger) point to a familiar painting or drawing of Jesus' face and then say enthusiastically "JESUS!" In my family, we've witnessed that joy again, as my wife and daughters frequently watch the young daughter of a local family. That kind of exuberance should not be lost as we ponder Jesus' presence among us in worship and in life.

God's Old Testament people despaired when God's Temple was destroyed by the invading armies of Babylon. In that Temple, they realized and worshipped God's divine presence among them. God lived in their neighborhood. He was their neighbor who frequently let them come over to his house. How devastating it must have been when God's house was destroyed. To add insult to injury, many of those Jewish believers were captured and deported to a far-away land. God in love was teaching them to value his gifts by taking those same gifts from them for a time.



"Jesus . . . took a child, and set him by him. —Luke ix. 47."

How blessed we are to still have the freedom and the privilege to gather with God's people in God's house on a weekly basis! In doing so, we not only give praise to God, we show our praise of God for others to see, especially those precious children. They need to see our faith modeled so that that they will never tire or cease to say "Jesus is my Savior and Friend!"

Just as it was a rich comfort for those Old Testament believers to know that God is not far away, so also for every New Testament believer we are comforted to know that Jesus is with us, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). By our Savior's earthly ministry and his saving work here on earth, Jesus reminds us that God is not far from us. God was in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19 KJV). This fact further solidifies for us the fact that God truly cares for us. God, therefore, could and did take our place in life and in death. Jesus, the God-man, had the full buying power to forgive us for all those times we have wandered from him, for those times we shied away from expressing our love for him, or every time we remained silent when we could have and should have told others about him.

Perhaps you have heard the story of the five-year-old girl who was terrified of being alone. Her mother came to her side and told her: "But God is with you." The child responded: "But I want somebody with skin on!" Jesus is indeed God with skin on. He is both the controller of the universe and also our accompanying friend. This is a truth we dare not outgrow or outlive. Show and share this truth with every child through your living example, through your support of St. Mark's School, through your support of Sunday school and Vacation Bible School, through your testimony of faith with those children in your family circle. From our own personal experience and from our own observation it becomes more and more evident that our children do pick these gospel truths up and hold them close to their hearts. For what they learn is not just taught, but also caught.

Your Shepherd under Christ,
Pastor Lon Kuether

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.

CHURCH NEWS

IN SEPTEMBER, THE MONDAY EVENING WORSHIP WILL BE REPLACED WITH A WEDNESDAY WORSHIP SERVICE:

At our last Semi-annual voters' meeting, it was decided to try Wednesday evening worship at 7 pm. This new practice will begin after Labor Day. So, that will be on September 9, 2009. The Wednesday worship will offer the sermon for the upcoming Sunday, NOT from the previous Sunday.

FUTURE CHOIR REHEARSALS WILL NEED TO BE RESCHEDULED!

All interested, communicant members planning to join our church choir, are asked to offer their preference for a Monday or Tuesday evening time of practice. The Wednesday worship will be a conflict. As already noted, there will be a 7:00 p.m. service on Wednesdays, beginning with September 9th. (During Advent and Lent, the choir practice may likely take place before or after the mid-week Wednesday services.)

VBS FLYERS ARE HERE FOR YOU TO SHARE!

These are in the church tract rack. Please share them with your co-workers, neighbors and family members. We are looking forward to a well attended Vacation Bible School this year.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

We will again host a week-long Vacation Bible School. This will start August 3 and run through August 7. It will be morning sessions running from 9:30 AM to 11:45 AM. The VBS theme this year comes from Northwestern Publishing House, "DIVE IN". Sign up to help. AND you may also register your child as a student.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO ASSIST WITH SPECIAL BENEFIT DINNER FOR REBECCA JEWETT!

On August 2nd, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., our church's Thrivent Group will host a special benefit meal to help out Rebecca Jewett and her family with the numerous costs incurred, do to her cancer surgeries and treatments. Donations of bars and cake will be appreciated and the volunteering of time for set up, serving and clean-up is also welcomed. Please contact Deb Newell or Donna Schroeder if you can help in any or all of these ways.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR OPINION!

We have two samples of fine artistic designs for a future stained glass window. There is no Bible passage to steer our choice one way or another. So the input from the congregation will serve as a useful resource for our voters, who will have to make the final decision. Opinion forms are available near the Suggestion Box. If you haven't already done so, each communicant may turn in his/her suggestion no later than August 2nd.

SPECIAL VOTERS' MEETING ON AUGUST 9th!

This single-issue meeting will gather the voters together to make a decision on which design will be used for the stained glass window. (NOTE: a special congregational meeting will precede this meeting on Sunday, August 2nd at 10:00 a.m.)

VOLUNTEER TO ASSIST WITH OUR CHURCH'S FAIR BOOTH AT THE BELTRAMI COUNTY

FAIR! (The Beltrami County Fair will be July 29- August 2.)

SIGN UP to sit at the church fair booth.

All you need to be able to do is SMILE. ☺

MISSION PARTNER ENVELOPES AVAILABLE!

As you prayerfully consider your gifts for Christ's Kingdom Work, consider giving a gift to support our Mission Partner Project – Outreach to the Hmong in Saint Paul, MN. Envelopes are in our membership mailboxes and in the tract rack.

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER:

From the June church financial report, our church expenses were \$15,047 and our income from offerings was 13,592. This is nearly a \$1,500 shortfall. Please count the rich blessings you have in your work and family, and especially the blessing of Christ's forgiveness; then give your thank offerings as a joyful response for all that God has given. God's gifts to us are already His. He loans them to us for a time. Thank Him with your offerings as an expression of your love for Him and also as an expression of your trust that He will continue to provide.

What a special privilege it is to have been given so that we can give!

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER! (2 Corinthians 9:7)

TOGETHER in God's Word and in our Mission

Circulated on July 20, 2009

Counting our blessings at convention time

From the office of President Mark Schroeder

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is preparing for its churchwide assembly (similar to our synod convention) in August. Compare the business to be considered by the ELCA assembly with the matters that WELS will address. You will see immediately the stark differences in doctrine and priorities between these two church bodies that share the name Lutheran—but little else.

The assembly will be asked to consider a recommendation that the ELCA should advocate for a change in U.S. immigration policies and should call for a suspension of immigration raids until the reforms are in place. The assembly will adopt resolutions dealing with the Israel-Palestine issue and calling for implementation of an effort called, "Peace Not Walls: Stand for Justice in the Holy Land." A "Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies" will ask the assembly to consider a process to change ministry policies to make it possible for Lutherans who are in "publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gendered relationships" to serve as ELCA associates in ministry, deaconesses, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers. It will discuss the renewal of the ELCA's commitment to confront racism and to review factors that limit people of color from "the fullness of leadership in this church." Other topics on the agenda include environmental issues and disaster relief.

As I look at the list, I see topics dealing with social issues, political conflicts, and cultural developments. But I see little on the agenda that reflects the work of a church that calls itself Lutheran.

Contrast those agenda topics with what your representatives will be doing in Saginaw, Mich., next week. Certainly we will address practical matters such as finance and budgets. But all of those discussions will revolve around how we can best use God's resources to carry out our mission of preserving and proclaiming God's truth. We will hear reports of the gospel ministry that has been carried out during the past two years and approve the plans that have been made, under God, to continue that work. We will be talking about the need for well-trained pastors and teachers and the importance of recruitment. We will be talking about ways to improve the spiritual life and health of our congregations and the importance of Christian education for all ages. We will be striving to maintain an aggressive program of missions and outreach in the face of financial challenges. We will do all of this, focusing not on temporal but on spiritual and eternal issues.

Our synod is not perfect. But it is a synod that God has blessed richly. By his grace it remains a synod that is committed to the truth of God's Word in all we believe and do. I encourage all members of our synod to remember our upcoming convention in their prayers. Thank God for those blessings. Ask him to guide us and to keep us focused on the work he has given us to do. And pray for a renewed sense of joy and commitment as we carry out our mission.

Serving in Christ,

Mark Schroeder

Top Stories

Compiled by WELS Communication Services

Synod convention begins on July 27

Final plans are in place for WELS' 60th Biennial Convention, which will be held at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) in Saginaw, Mich., from July 27-31, under the theme "Christ's Love, Our Calling."



The 60th biennial convention will be held July 27-31 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Rev. John H. Boggs, dean of students at MLS and the school's convention coordinator, says: "We are excited to welcome the almost 400 delegates from around the world who will be spending a week in the place we call 'home.' Despite the challenges before our school and synod, it is indeed a blessing to be able to come together in worship, work, and fellowship with one another."

Delegates have many important decisions that they will wrestle with during the five-day convention, including adopting a balanced synod budget for 2009-11. About \$8 million needs to be cut from the current budget due in large part to decreased giving from foundations, individuals, and congregations in the midst of the current financial climate.

Delegates will also weigh in on the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Commission, established by the 2007 synod convention to address current challenges and to offer suggestions for improving the way that WELS carries out its mission.

WELS members can watch the convention live online at www.wels.net/convention. Each night a special convention issue of "Together" will be sent to all subscribers, which will summarize the convention's actions that day. This special issue of "Together" will include a video wrap-up of the day's events, along with articles and photos. A complete summary of the week, along with explanations of how the delegates' decisions will affect WELS' ministry, will be presented in "Together" the week following convention, in time to be included in worship folders for Aug. 9. "Our goal is to provide comprehensive, accurate information in a timely manner," says Joel Hochmuth, WELS director of communications. "We realize how vitally important the decisions made at convention are to members across the synod."

To receive "Together" in your e-mail box, subscribe at <http://together.wels.net/subscribe>.

Year of Jubilee ends with convention

The Year of Jubilee offering, authorized by the 2007 synod convention to eliminate or reduce the synod's \$22.4 million dollar debt, concludes at next week's synod convention in Saginaw, Mich. To date, more than \$3.9 million has been gathered from 722 congregations and more than 2,700 individuals. In all, 56 percent of congregations synodwide have participated.

The Year of Jubilee offering combined with regularly scheduled debt payments have reduced the debt to about \$14.6 million as of the end of June. Under the budget proposal before delegates, the offerings will allow deferral of debt payment and accrual of interest for one year—and allow the debt to be re-amortized over ten years, reducing annual debt payments from \$2.7 million to \$1.6 million. "May all of us go to God's throne and thank him for using the message of Jubilee—'Now is the day of the Lord's favor'—to compel these congregations and donors to assist with reducing WELS indebtedness," says Rev. Dave Liggett, director of the Ministry of Christian Giving.

While the formal Year of Jubilee offering is coming to an end, donors can continue to designate gifts toward debt elimination. To learn more, go to www.wels.net/jump/mcg.

Mexican church in convention welcomes two new congregations

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico, one of WELS' sister synods, welcomed two new congregations into membership at its 18th annual convention, held July 16-19 at *Cristo Resucitado* (Resurrected Christ), Mexico City.

The congregations—*El Buen Pastor* (Good Shepherd), Altar, Sonora, and *Cordero de Dios* (Lamb of God), Sásabe, Sonora—both began through Mission to the Children, a WELS-affiliated humanitarian aid group that has been delivering food and basic



Pres. Jesús Vega (right) shaking hands with Benjamín Valenzuela of *Cordero de Dios*, Sásabe, officially welcoming the congregation into fellowship.

essentials to villages in Sonora for 20 years and currently is served by a WELS missionary. "It is great to see the congregations develop," says Missionary Michael Hartman. "This helps to give some permanence to the working going on in Sonora by Mission to the Children. Whenever foreigners come in as missionaries, it is really just a temporary effect that they will have on a community unless they get national leadership involved."

To get that national leadership, the national church body called two home missionaries to the state of Sonora to work with the new congregations as well as other preaching stations. These men—Alejandro Sánchez and Carlos Rosales—will spend the next few years working with the WELS missionary in Sonora.

The 20 delegates passed the church's annual budget and grew in the Word through a variety of presentations.

"It was a very positive convention," says Hartman. "I was particularly pleased to see the Mexican church taking on more and more of the fiscal responsibility for their pastors."

In January, three missionaries and seven national pastors will be serving 670 baptized members in 10 congregations and 20 missions and preaching stations.

To learn more about the church in Mexico, go to www.wels.net/jump/worldmissions.

Rally teens make a difference

The 2009 WELS International Youth Rally brought together more than 1,000 WELS teens from across the United States and seven foreign countries. The rally, which was held July 8-11 at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, included time for worship, education, fellowship, recreation, and service projects.

The community service projects completed by the teens included painting playground equipment, weeding flowerbeds in parks, and spending time with nursing home residents. KCCI, a television station in Des Moines, Iowa, featured a news story about the 500 teens who trimmed lilac bushes at the Ewing Park Lilac Arboretum.

Rev. Richard Warnecke, a coordinator of these service projects for rally attendees, says, "It is good to see Christians serving their Lord in love outside of the church and church grounds. Service projects teach Christianity as a lifestyle. Christianity is serving God and each other. It is a way of life. The hope is that when the teens return home that they will look for opportunities in their own communities to express their love for God in service."

Dr. Joel Nelson, administrator of WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship, which coordinates WELS' biennial international youth rally, says, "The youth rally is an opportunity to communicate to WELS youth from all over the world that their faith life can be taken to the next level by the power of the Spirit."

To learn more about activities at the youth rally, visit www.livingbold.net/welsspace/youthrally. See the commercials that youth groups created, hear music sung at the rally, watch some of the presentations, and read what attendees have to say about their rally experiences.



Teens From Divine Word, Nepean, Ontario, Canada, at the 2009 International Youth Rally.

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, a SMART board, and a Cricut machine. Future uses could be for student desks, computer software, playground upgrades, and more 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 ½% 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.

AUGUST 2009

Lon Rugther, Pastor - 444-6334
Pastor's Cell Phone: 209-8594
Nathan Bitter, Principle - 759-0398

SUNDAY

MON

TUES

WED

THURS

FRI

SATURDAY

2 JJ <i>Communion service</i> <i>- 9 AM</i> AT 10:00 AM = A CONGR- EGATIONAL MEETING SPECIAL BENEFIT MEAL For REBECCA JEWETT 11 AM – 2 PM Matching funds from Thrivent	3	4	5	6	7	1 Cleaning – Wm & R Roder/ M. & S. Freye / Lee
	Vacation Bible School, August 3rd through the 7th → The morning classes run from 9:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.					8 Cleaning – J. Barckholtz/ Jewett/Jason
	Communion service – 7:30 PM			<i>Council - 7 PM</i>		
9 JB Worship service – 9 AM GUEST PREACHER: Rev. Mark Falck from Saint Luke, Grand Rapids, MN AT 10:00 AM = A SPECIAL VOTERS MEETING	10 Worship service – 7 30 PM	11	12	13 Board of Education – 6 PM	14	15 Cleaning – J. Barckholtz/ Jewett/Jason
	Pastor Kuether and family are vacationing in WI August 8 th through August 17 th →					
16 JanB <i>Communion service</i> <i>- 9 AM</i> GUEST PREACHER: Rev. Gerald Geiger from Great Plains Lutheran H. S., Watertown, S.D.	17 Communion service – 7:30 PM	18	19	20	21	22 Cleaning – Krenz/Matzke/ Orr/Eichstadt
23 NG Worship service – 9 AM	24 Worship service – 7 30 PM	25	26	27	28	29 WORK DAY for anyone and everyone! – 9 AM Cleaning – Krenz/Matzke/ Orr/Eichstadt
30 MG Worship service – 9 AM	31 Worship service – 7 30 PM	Ushers: D. Kranich, J. Gildersleeve, L. Baumann, P. Bellig, P. Granger, C. Konecne, C. Holderbecker Altar Society: Belinda Baumann Mowing: Bengtson / Konecne / Manges Greeters: 2 nd – George & Ginger E., 9 th – Linda E. & Rebecca J., 16 th – Leslie B. & Sherry W., 23 rd – Jim G. & Donna S., 30 th – Loren & Belinda B.				
	NOTE! THERE WILL BE NO WORSHIP ON LABOR DAY & ON SEPT. 9 th , WE WILL HAVE A SERVICE AT 7PM!					

Together in Christ for 100 YEARS!

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church of Montrose, MN,

Will be celebrating its 100th anniversary

On Sunday, August 30th, 2009.

(Pastor Marty Schwartz will preach.)

The morning service will be at 10:00 a.m. Followed by a

dinner from 11:30 to 1:00.

The afternoon service will be at 2:00 p.m.

(Pastor Tom Westendorf will preach.)

Coffee and cake will be served after the service.

If you wish to attend the dinner,

Please RSVP to 763-675-3201.