

THE BETHANY

# BEACON

APRIL 2019

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“Let your light shine before others” (Matthew 5:16)



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*The Christian Church has been blessed with many marvelous hymns in the last 2000 years. Over the next several months, Pastor Prange’s newsletter articles will share insights on some the greatest hymns of Christendom and how they emphasize the great paradoxes of our Christian faith. This month we consider the Easter hymn, Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands.*

## **Great Paradoxes in Christian Hymns: Life and Death**

### **Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands**

*“Death has been swallowed up in victory” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:54b-55).*

It is not uncommon to rejoice when your enemy meets death. For instance, after young David killed the Philistine warrior-giant Goliath, Scripture tells us that women “came out from all the towns of Israel ... with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes” (1 Samuel 18:6). They exulted in the death of Israel’s enemy. The giant’s great power had been neutralized. Fear abolished. As is normally the case, David became the victor by avoiding death.

How strange it is then to celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ won the ultimate victory over our spiritual enemies, not by *avoiding* death but by willingly *embracing* it! No doubt the Devil and his menacing cohorts rejoiced on that first Good Friday as they witnessed Jesus, God’s only Son, offering up his final breath. At last, they thought, we have defeated God and his Anointed One for good! The hellish tambourines and lutes were merrily passed around, and a raucous party ensued.

Just one problem, sinister Satan: Jesus did not remain dead! He rose victoriously from death on the third day to show his power over that measly enemy and to assure us that the forgiveness of sins and eternal life has been won for all people. Jesus’ victory over death becomes our

victory through faith in him, who is our Life. Yes, by the death of Life itself, Death is swept away. What a paradox!

No one delighted in this Scriptural paradox more than Martin Luther (1483-1546). In his hymn "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands," (CW 161) the reformer envisions the cosmic battlefield occupied by Life and Death. At one point "death's strong bands" held our Savior captive, "but now at God's right hand he stands and brings us life from heaven" (stanza 1). Yes, Luther admits, "it was a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended," but "the victory remained with life; the reign of death was ended ... death is swallowed up by death, its sting is lost forever" (stanza 2). And who alone could win such an eternal victory? Only Christ, "the true Paschal Lamb ... whom God so freely gave us." Pull out the tambourines and lutes! "Satan cannot harm us. Hallelujah!" (stanza 3).

Our Christian faith is one of paradoxes: Life wins the victory over Death through death!

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## ♪ GRACE NOTES ♪

### Preparing for Worship at Bethany

**Midweek Lenten Vespers** continue through **Wednesday, April 10** and are focusing on the theme "**Three Words of Truth.**" The pastors from Bethany and other Kenosha WELS congregations are leading us through a series of three word phrases from the Passion history that teach us about the salvation Jesus has won for the world. Services are held at **Kenosha (3:30 p.m.) and Somers (6:30 p.m.)**.

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On **Sunday, April 14**, Bethany will celebrate **Palm Sunday**, when God's people remember and often reenact the scene of Jesus' arrival to the city of Jerusalem on the Sunday before his death and resurrection. This day is also known as **Passion Sunday**, as it was the ancient tradition in the Church to read the entire history of Jesus' suffering and death (his passion) from the Gospel of St. Matthew on the Sunday before Easter. On Tuesday of Holy Week, the Passion according to St. Mark was read. On Wednesday, the Passion of St. Luke would be read. On Good Friday, the Passion of St. John would be read. In the Middle Ages, these readings would be sung dramatically by soloists and choir, with each assigned to sing different parts of the passion narrative. This tradition continued after the Reformation in the Lutheran Church and gave birth to two musical masterpieces by the Lutheran composer, Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach's *St. John Passion* was first performed on April 7, 1724, at the Good Friday Vespers in St. Nicholas Lutheran Church, Leipzig. His *St. Matthew Passion* was likely first performed on Friday, April 11,

1727, at St. Thomas Lutheran Church, Leipzig. The tradition of reading the entire passion history was later transferred to the midweek services during the season of Lent, as is our practice today.



On **Thursday, April 18**, we will commemorate **Maundy Thursday**, which derives its name from the words Jesus spoke to his disciples on this evening: “A new command (the Latin word for command is *mandatum*) I give you: Love one another” (John 13:34). Many Christians call this evening **Holy Thursday**. It was on this evening nearly two thousand years ago that Jesus and his disciples gathered together in a large upper room in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This meal commemorated the deliverance of God’s Old Testament people from the clutches of slavery in Egypt. All the firstborn sons of Egypt died that evening, but all Israel was saved because the blood of the Passover lamb they had sacrificed marked their doors. As New Testament Christians, we celebrate the fact that Christ is our Passover Lamb, as Martin Luther reminds us in his great Easter hymn, “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands.” (If you haven’t already done so, read about this hymn on pages 1-2). Luther points to our Savior on the cross and writes: “Here the true Paschal Lamb we see, whom God so freely gave us; He died on the accursed tree – so strong his love – to save us. See, his blood now marks our door; Faith points to it; death passes o’er, and Satan cannot harm us. Hallelujah!”



On **Friday, April 19**, Bethany will observe **Good Friday**, a tradition that developed in fourth-century Jerusalem. The female Christian pilgrim named Etheria visited Jerusalem after the middle of the fourth century and found a full religious observance of Good Friday. Prior to the fourth century, however, what is now Good Friday was part of the fast that preceded Easter – a single festival that commemorated our redemption won by Jesus and began at sundown on Easter Saturday. By the middle of the third century this fast had been extended to forty hours from the time our Lord was crucified on Friday until his resurrection on Sunday morning. Still, at this time the Saturday fast was the more important than the Friday observation. When Good Friday emerged as a separate day commemorating the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, it at once became the church’s great day of mourning and fasting. Since then there has been agreement that Good Friday is to be a day of mourning unlike any other. The name Good Friday is of English origin and is possibly derived from “God’s Friday” just as “good-bye” is derived from parting words “God be with you.”



On **Saturday, April 20, at 5:30 p.m.** Bethany will hold its annual **Easter Vigil**, one of the most ancient of all Christian celebrations. The service will be held at Kenosha. A vigil is an evening gathering at which you await the arrival of some significant happening. Nothing is more significant than Christ’s resurrection from the dead which foreshadows our own resurrection on the Last Day! The celebration of Jesus’ resurrection traditionally began on Saturday after

sundown due to the Jewish custom of considering the setting of the sun as the beginning of a new day. So to the ancient Christians (many of whom were Jews), Easter began on Saturday evening. In time, many worship traditions were developed around this Saturday evening vigil, including the introduction of the Paschal Candle, which symbolizes the life and light of Christ. This Saturday evening service also included the administration of Holy Baptism for new members who had spent the season of Lent studying the Christian faith and fasting in preparation for their entry into church membership. Bethany's service on this evening includes the lighting of the Paschal Candle and remembrance of our own baptisms, as a reminder of these very ancient customs.

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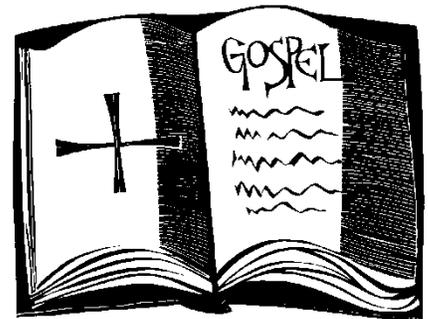
**Easter Sunday** is the quintessential celebration for Christians since our Lord's resurrection from the dead is the key to our assurance of God's forgiveness and eternal life. It's why the Church normally worships on Sunday, a weekly celebration of Jesus' resurrection on that day! As St Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Co 15:17,20). Our celebration of the **Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord** will begin on Easter morning, **April 21**, with a **7 a.m. Sunrise Service at Kenosha. Festival Services** will take place at **9 a.m. (Somers) and 10:30 a.m. (Kenosha)**. Easter breakfasts will be served at Kenosha beginning at 8 a.m. and Somers beginning at 10 a.m.

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## PARISH EDUCATION

*Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

- Pastor Prange will continue his eight-lesson study of Acts 1-12 entitled **How Does the Christian Church Grow?** We can learn much from St. Luke's historical account of the first Christians about how the Church grows with God's blessing, and you might be surprised what you'll learn.
- **Studying the Sunday Scriptures** takes place at Somers every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. Pastor Prange leads this weekly study that helps prepare you for weekend worship. Attendees have commented how much more they now get out of worship because they've studied the gospel and lessons first. Our group has grown in numbers and knowledge. Join us for this informative study.



- The **Wednesday Evening Bible Study** is in recess during Lent. Meetings will resume May 1. Have a prayerful Lent and a joyous Easter. Contact Larry or Deb Dubis at 262-948-3269 or via e-mail ldubis@wi.rr.com for information about the Wednesday Evening Study.
- On **Monday, April 29, at 7:00 P.M.** we will continue our **Somers Evening Seminar Series** with a discussion that will ask and answer the question “**Why Does Bethany Practice Closed Communion?**” on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. It is common for many people—both members and non-members—to misunderstand our congregation’s practice of closed communion, but there are important and loving reasons as to why our Savior instructs us to have the practice that we have. If you’ve ever had questions about our congregation’s practice, this is the place to have your questions addressed and answered. Please join us.
- A group meets with Pastor Pagel for **Breakfast Bible Study** at Perkins in Pleasant Prairie at 8:15 a.m. The group is currently studying the miracles of Jesus. Normally on the last Wednesday of every month, the group will meet on April 3 & 24 and May 29.
- The **Saturday Morning Bible Study** meets every other Saturday at 9 a.m in the home of Gary and Rudee Koepke (3327 86<sup>th</sup> Street, Kenosha). This month they will be meeting on April 6 & 27 and continue their study of the book of Joshua.

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## WINGS CORNER

### *Women in God’s Service*

Happy Spring! Our WINGS/LWMS group has a voted in group of leaders. Serving currently are Diane Bauer, President; Pam Mohr, Vice President; Rachel Dorn, Treasurer; and Lynelle Wagner, Secretary. Kathy Thompson serves as our Recorder, as he receives and shares with us all the information from the national/circuit LWMS.

We were so blessed this past month, starting with the overwhelming generosity of our congregation for the WELS mission in Pakistan, an offering of more than \$1,700! We can’t thank you enough! Then we were able to serve you all at Unity Sunday on March 10 for a fun time of food and fellowship together.

This month brings various times for us to get together. Our next regular meeting will be held **Thursday, April 4 at 6:30 p. m.** taking place at our Somers location. The spring Circuit Rally will be held Saturday, April 6 at Mt. Zion. We currently have 14 ladies signed up to go! If you would still like to attend, please contact Kathy Thompson or Lynelle Wagner.

We also are planning a fun event together after Easter. Final details will be made at our monthly meeting so please join us! The more the merrier! :)

As part of our mission, we would ask that you please keep the following missionaries in your prayers. First, pray for the Pakistan mission and those who risk their lives daily to spread the Word there. Also pray for Pastor Kirk Massey, who serves on the Apache Reservation in Whiteriver, Arizona.

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## CARING AND SHARING

*News from Bethany and Beyond*

### **Subscribe to the Bethany E-News and Notes**

If you'd like to receive a weekly email in your inbox with all the Bethany News & Notes, please send an email to the Bethany office ([blsoffice@bethanykenosha.org](mailto:blsoffice@bethanykenosha.org)) to be included on our e-mailing list. The E-News & Notes will include the full range of news from Bethany Church and School and elsewhere, including Shoreland and WELS info, all at your fingertips.

### **Joint Document to Be Presented to Kenosha Church Councils**

As proposed by Bethany's Long-Range Plan adopted in October 2018, the pastors of the four Kenosha WELS congregations (Bethany, Friedens, Mt. Zion, and St. Luke) have met several times in 2019 to discuss the possibility and desirability of working together more closely than we already do in our efforts to serve the greater Kenosha area with the gospel more effectively and efficiently. At their most recent meeting, the pastors resolved to present a joint vision document to their respective church councils in the next month for initial reaction and feedback. The document lays out the rationale for working together within a united congregational structure with multiple locations in the Kenosha area and the potential benefits of such an arrangement.

### **Upcoming Events at Bethany**

Saturday, April 6 (8:30 a.m.) – **LWMS Rally** at Mt. Zion, Kenosha  
Saturday, April 13 (9-11:30 a.m.) – **Easter for Kids** at Bethany-Kenosha  
Sunday, April 14 (12 p.m.) – **Special Congregational Meeting** at Bethany-Kenosha  
Thursday, May 2 (6:30 p.m.) – **Confirmation Examination** at Bethany-Kenosha  
Friday, May 3 – **Bethany School Grandparents' Day and School Plays**  
Sunday, May 5 (10:30 a.m.) – **Confirmation Sunday** at Bethany-Kenosha  
Tuesday, May 21 – **Bethany Lutheran School Field Day**  
Wednesday, May 22 – **Bethany Lutheran School Awards Day**  
Thursday, May 23 – **Last Day of Bethany Lutheran School**  
Thursday, May 23 (6:30 p.m.) – **Bethany Lutheran School Graduation & Promotion**  
Thursday, May 30 (6:30 p.m.) – **Joint Ascension Day Worship** at Friedens, Kenosha

## **WELS TO RECOGNIZE CHURCH FELLOWSHIP WITH AFRICAN & ASIAN CHURCHES**

One of the highlights of this summer's 65<sup>th</sup> Biennial Synod Convention will be the formal declaration and recognition of fellowship with two confessional Lutheran church bodies. The 2019 synod convention will be held July 29 – Aug. 1, 2019, at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

The Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ – Kenya (LCMC – Kenya) was formed when the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya began to tolerate false teachings. A group of Kenyan pastors broke away and began searching for a confessional Lutheran church body. In 2015, Rev. Mark Onunda of the LCMC – Kenya met at length with the Doctrinal Committee of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa – Zambia Synod (LCCA – Zambia), a former WELS mission and now our sister synod. The LCCA – Zambia synod declared formal fellowship with the LCMC – Kenya last September. The WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations will be recommending to the synod convention that WELS also formally declare fellowship with the LCMC – Kenya.

The Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church in Taiwan began as a WELS mission and is now an independent Lutheran Church body that has always been in fellowship with WELS. Because this church is now independent, the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations is recommending that the synod in convention formally recognize our fellowship with the Christian Lutheran Evangelical Church in Taiwan.

Representatives from each church body will address the convention and make presentations that will familiarize the delegates with these church bodies that will be recognized formally as a part of our fellowship.

## **2019 BREWERS' WELS NIGHT TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE**

Tickets are now on sale for the sixth annual WELS Night at Miller Park. Plan to join thousands of WELS members for the Milwaukee Brewers' game against the San Francisco Giants on Fri., July 12, 2019. Game time is 7:10 p.m.

The Brewers are offering WELS members up to 50 percent off the price of tickets. The pricing is Field Outfield Box, Sections 128-131 for \$21/ticket, Loge Outfield Box, Sections 229-232 for \$17/ticket, or Terrace Reserved, Sections 436-437 for \$9/ticket. All seats are on the third base side. Discounted tickets are now available to purchase online at [brewers.com/wels](http://brewers.com/wels).

Last year more than 2,400 WELS witnessed a dramatic walk-off home run as the Brewers defeated the Rockies in the bottom of the ninth inning. The epic three-run blast topped off a wonderful evening of fun and fellowship for the fifth annual WELS night at Miller Park. "Since several seating sections were filled with members wearing the royal blue WELS Night at Miller Park t-shirts, we have decided to offer the same shirt again this year in youth and adult sizes," says Lee Hitter, WELS Director of Communications.

Shirt orders will be available soon. Visit [wels.net/brewers2019](http://wels.net/brewers2019) to learn more.

# HOLY WEEK AT BETHANY

Palm Sunday, April 13-14  
Saturday at 5:30 p.m. (Kenosha)  
8 & 10:30 a.m. (Kenosha)  
10 a.m. (Somers)

Maundy Thursday, April 18  
3:30 p.m. (Kenosha) & 6:30 p.m. (Somers)  
Holy Communion

Good Friday, April 19  
1 & 4:30 p.m. (Kenosha) & 6:30 p.m. (Somers)  
Holy Communion

Easter Saturday Vigil, April 20  
5:30 p.m. (Kenosha)  
Holy Communion

Easter Sunday, April 21  
7 & 10:30 a.m. (Kenosha) & 9 a.m. (Somers)



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## BETHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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