

THE BETHANY

BEACON

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



A Heavy Cross Made Light By Jesus

“For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30)

As sinful people we have a natural aversion to serving others. Even when we serve generously, our motives are still every moment tainted by our sinful flesh. We seek a pat on the back, a “thank you” or some other recognition for our service. And when that service goes unappreciated, we are tempted to yell out, “But don’t you see how I’m serving you?!?” Thankful and freely-given service is easily undercut by a thankless response!

Jesus faced the same temptation. “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (John 1:10,11). Instead, “he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3). Our Savior sighed deeply through his prophet Isaiah: “I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing” (Isaiah 49:4). Jesus knows what it is to have a thankless job.

Yet, ironically, the fact that Jesus had nothing to gain personally from his work of salvation – the fact that we wasn’t “thanked” profusely beforehand – made that work all the more perfect and holy. Jesus certainly wasn’t sacrificing himself for people who deserved it, and he could never expect repayment from us. His was a complete sacrifice, one inspired entirely by love, as St Paul explains: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The Scriptures teach us that we are saved by grace alone; our forgiveness and salvation are simple yet profound gifts, freely given, with absolutely no strings attached.

Only when we begin to appreciate that most important of all Scriptural truths, only then will our heavy cross of serving others willingly and freely begin to become lighter and easier! Only when we begin to truly appreciate how great a debt of sin has been forgiven us, only then will we have the courage and confidence to forgive one another willingly and freely! Only when we

begin to grasp just “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3:18), only then will we be able to put into practice the apostolic encourage to “live a life a love” (Ephesians 5:2)!

What a glorious cross Christ has carried for us! What a glorious cross he gives us!

♪ GRACE NOTES ♪

Preparing for Worship at Bethany

UNITY SUNDAY is **Sunday, March 1**. We will have just one service that weekend, beginning at 10 a.m. at Shoreland Lutheran High School. An opportunity for fellowship will follow the service, however, this year we are not having a meal or potluck. Celebrate the unity that we share as Christians and as members of the Bethany congregation.

MIDWEEK LENTEN VESPERS will take place on Wednesdays throughout the month of March. Services will be held at **Kenosha at 3:30 p.m.** and **Somers at 6:30 p.m.** and will focus on the theme “The Son of God Goes Forth to War.” The Kenosha pastors will once again be involved in a preaching rotation.



THE SUNDAYS IN LENT are not meant to be reflections on the sufferings and death of Jesus. That’s what the midweek services are for, when we read the passion history of our Savior and consider what he suffered for us and our salvation. The Sundays *in* Lent (not *of* Lent) aren’t even counted among the forty days of Lent because all Sundays (even the ones in Lent) are always a celebration of Jesus’ victory over death on Easter Sunday. The Sundays in Lent recount the great victories that our Savior Jesus has won over all of our spiritual enemies: Satan, sin, suffering, hell, and death. So go to the midweek services to ponder Jesus’ suffering, and then come on Sunday morning to be reminded of his ultimate victory for us and our salvation!

PARISH EDUCATION

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Sunday Morning Bible Studies** meet at our **Somers (8:45 a.m.)** and **Kenosha (9:15 a.m.)** locations. Pastor Pagel is teaching a nine-lesson study entitled **Caring for Souls:**

People Matter. Pastor Prange will conclude his five-lesson study on Paul's letter to the Colossians, entitled **The Fullness of God**, and then begin a new study on Christian freedom, entitled **Free in Christ**. Make Bible study with your fellow Christians a routine.

- **Sunday School** meets at the Kenosha campus only, beginning at 9:15 a.m. Due to a lack of available teachers and students at our Somers location, Sunday School has been suspended for the time-being with the hope of being able to provide it regularly in the future. If you have questions or would like to help with teaching Sunday School, please speak to our Family/Youth Nurture chairman, Nick Spittlemeister, or to either pastor.
- **Studying the Sunday Scriptures** takes place at our Somers location every **Tuesday at 9 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.
- **Wednesday Evening Bible Study** is on recess for Lent. Meetings will resume April 22 continuing the study "Seven Visions, Seven Truths," 6:30 p.m. at the Dubis residence, 8686 122nd Street, Pleasant Prairie. Contact Larry or Deb at 262-948-3269 or via email at ldubis@wi.rr.com for additional information.
- **Breakfast Bible Study** On the last Wednesday of every month, a group meets at Perkins in Pleasant Prairie for breakfast and Bible study at 8:15 a.m. We are currently studying the First Missionary Journey of St. Paul. Join us on March 25.
- **Saturday Morning Bible Study** A group meets every other Saturday at 9 a.m in the home of Gary and Rudee Koepke to study the Scriptures. They are currently studying the books of Samuel and will meet on March 7 & 21.
- **Saturday Evening Bible Study** This 20 minute study deals with a range of topics and Bible passages. Please join us.

WINGS CORNER

Women in God's Service

This year's Spring Lakeshore Circuit Rally mission project is called FIRST PUBLIC SERVICE ASSISTANCE. What is this? The WELS Board of Home Missions authorizes the start of new missions. After those missions receive a pastor, planning takes place for the first worship service. Advertising materials and mailings need to be completed and service folders and welcome signs produced. Creative ways to get the word out may have additional costs. New mission congregations want the first service to be well-received. They want to promote a warm invitation to their community. Your gifts will fund these needed preparations and encourage those who will spend countless hours of effort. These special project funds, largely supported

through gifts from the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS), provide money for various types of projects common to mission congregations including first public worship services, tools for outreach, children's ministry, and facility or music equipment.

There will be an opportunity to support this mission with a door offering this month!

Save the Dates... Our **Lakeshore Circuit Rally** will be on **Saturday, March 28** at Immanuel, Waukegan. Registration is at 8:30 a.m. All women are invited. Carpooling will be available. Please RSVP to our WinGS board by **March 5** before or at our **meeting**, which will take place at **6:30 p.m. in Kenosha**. Then on **Sunday, March 15** we would like to invite all women to join us for a **potluck at our Somers location**. We will start after fellowship time, about **11:45 a.m.** Come enjoy food, fellowship and help make blankets for us to send to our Apache mission!

We look forward to seeing you!

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) 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.

COMMITTEES AND COMMUNICATION SESSIONS TO DISCUSS REUNIFYING CONGREGATIONS

In January 2020, all four Kenosha congregations approved the formation of five committees made up of members from each of the congregations to research and discuss different components of a possible reunification. These committees have been tasked with making recommendations to the four congregations on July 1, 2020, concerning the steps necessary to realize such a reunification.

Five communication sessions were scheduled, and two have already taken place in the month of February to address the areas of Word and Sacrament ministry and church culture & congregational connection. These communication sessions are being held to give Kenosha congregational members an opportunity to react to initial ideas, to ask questions, and to provide input toward desired outcomes in each area.

The five committees have begun to do their work in discussing the areas of congregational life assigned to them. Please keep them and their in your prayers as they make ready their recommendations for the congregations to consider in several months. More information is available at www.sites.google.com/view/welskenosha

SOMERS EVENING SEMINARS TO DISCUSS THE DIVINE CALL & THE BREAD OF LIFE

After Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, his people faced a dilemma. Jesus had given them an awesome task—to go and make disciples of all nations—but they were so few in number, only around 120 total people. They were also down one apostle-pastor because of Judas’ treachery and suicide. They needed to select someone to replace him, but Jesus was no longer around to help them do this. Or was he? Come and find out how Jesus continues to prepare and call his people to serve in the public ministry of the gospel, as we discuss the particular case of man named Matthias in a seminar entitled **“Called by God.”** We’ll meet at Bethany-Somers on **Monday, March 2 beginning at 7 p.m.**

Another seminar will take place at the end of the month on **Monday, March 30 at 7 p.m.** At this seminar we will be coming the words and actions of Jesus in John 6, where our Savior calls himself the Bread of Life. The chapter begins with the familiar account of Jesus feeding 5,000 men, plus women and children, with five loaves of bread and two fish. But what the other gospel writers didn’t report about what happened next, John tells us. And how important it is; Jesus is the Bread of Life! But what does he mean by that, and why is this long sermon of Jesus so important for us to consider and understand? Is he talking about the Lord’s Supper he would later institute when he urges us to “eat his flesh and drink his blood,” or is he not? And how did the crowds, even his own disciples, respond to this sermon, or would he not even have any disciples left by the end of day? Discuss the answers to these questions and many more when we join together to study **The Bread of Life.**



FIRST WELS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

WELS Congregational Services hosted the first ever WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership in Chicago, January 21–23. Approximately 800 people, representing about 350 WELS congregations, met to hear five plenary speakers and attend a selection of breakout sessions. Pastor Pagel was among the attendees.

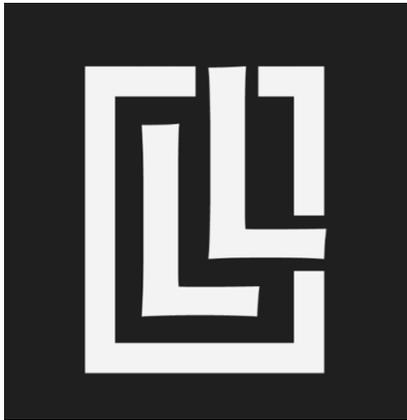
Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services, says, “The focus of the conference was that we want to do all we can with the gospel to serve Christ’s mission. ‘Doing all we can with the gospel’ requires leaders to focus on two things. First, we look at tactics. Is the way we are carrying out gospel ministry smart?”

He continues, “But underneath tactics is congregational culture. The group—the collective—needs to have the right thought habits and attitudes. That was what the plenaries were all about.”

Attendee Mr. Wes Schappert, a lay leader at Resurrection, Maumee, Ohio, says he appreciated the emphasis on personal evangelism. He says, “The point was simple, people sharing Jesus

with others—people free from the curse of sin and Satan, sharing what lives in their heart so that others may know Christ.”

The first day of the conference started with three plenary presentations focusing on how lay leaders and called workers encourage one another for local ministry, finding our voice as a gospel-centered church, and encouraging both men and women to use their gifts to serve God. The evening concluded with an opening worship service with communion, bringing together WELS members from around the country as they embarked on learning and growing together as leaders of the church.



On day two, attendees could attend five breakout sessions, picked from 20 available sessions on a wide variety of topics. Hein said many attendees were interested in workshops that focused on reaching and retaining younger generations as well as personal evangelism. Additional topics ranged from ministry in rural areas to worship to apologetics.

On the second evening, attendees were treated to a preview on the new hymnal, set to be released by Northwestern Publishing House by Advent 2021. The new hymnal will maintain the name Christian Worship and comprise a suite of resources including a comprehensive psalter, musical arrangements for various instrumentation, and an easy-to-use service folder builder. Worship services and devotions at the conference included liturgical and hymn arrangements from the upcoming new hymnal. Learn about the new hymnal at christianworship.com.

The final day of the conference concluded with two more plenary speakers. Rev. Dave Rosenau, St. Mark, Leesburg, Fla., spoke about the importance of reaching people one-by-one using God’s Word, and Rev. Adam Mueller, Redeemer, Tucson, Ariz., presented on the need to commit to Christ’s mission.

Attendee Mr. Scott Krause, a member at St. Luke, Watertown, Wis., says, “I found the conference to be a great boost to my faith in the good Lord and what he has done for me. It was totally Christ-centered. My main takeaway was that I need to focus on a daily basis to love and reach out to my friends, family, and neighbors with the good news of the gospel.”

Following the success and overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, the conference planning committee is exploring options for a second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, likely sometime in 2022. Watch for information in upcoming editions of the WELS Together e-newsletter, wels.net, and Forward in Christ.

Registrations exceeded expectations for the first WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. If you didn’t make it to Chicago for the conference, all five plenary presentations and many of the breakout sessions will be available to view online over the next few months at lutheranleadership.com.

A MISSION POST: A FLIGHT WITH JESUS

A few weeks ago during family worship we read and discussed Matthew 2 and the flight to Egypt. As we began, one of the kids remembered that Annibale Carracci had painted *The Flight to Egypt* in 1604. She ran and located a print among our piles of books which were being sorted and packed for our imminent relocation to Thailand. Like a lot of art from this period, it looks very European (that's all the artists knew), but still evokes so much thought and emotion by pulling you into the scene.

As we looked at the painting and read the account from Matthew, our children pointed out the range of feelings at having to leave so suddenly. Joseph looks grumpy in the picture. Maybe he's thinking, "I can't believe we have to move. . . again!" Mary looks sad, but she also seems concerned for her husband as she looks back at him. And Jesus, he just looks like a content baby as he clings to mom—but maybe there is a hint of distress as well. Our 8-year-old wondered if the expression on Mary's face in the painting was disappointment at all the things they had to leave behind. After all, they left in such a hurry. Our youngest pointed out, "Babies are too little to be sad about moving." But then he added that Jesus could be sad if he had to leave his Transformers behind. The older kids were more aware of the reason they had to leave. . . a bad leader didn't like Jesus, and he didn't want anyone to take away his power.

But the Lord provided a way to keep the holy family (and the Magi) safe. All the kids pointed out that even though there were a lot of difficult, surprising, and stressful things happening, everything was okay because God was with them. No one missed the divine irony that God was literally with them as Mary carried him in her arms (or in an ancient baby stroller as one child imagined). God was literally and physically with them, but at the same time watching over them from on high.

No one missed the similarities between the flight to Egypt and our flight out of one Asian country to Thailand (even if one flight was much more intense than the other). One big difference, however, is that although God is still with us, this time Jesus is the one carrying us in his arms. Of course, we still hold Christ in our own way—in worship, adoration, thanks, and praise. But how much greater is the peace in our journey knowing who holds who with an everlasting love.

Even though we don't always know the way in which our Shepherd leads us, what a comfort it is to know that our guide and protector is Christ Jesus. And while we groan with the burdens of major transition, what a comfort too that when we pour out our feelings and concerns to Jesus, he can look back at us with understanding eyes and say, "I know what you mean. I've been there too. My Father got me through it though. And he and I will get you through this."

As missionaries take flights (literally) to new countries, or perhaps wait a little longer in some in-between-land, or stay put in Herod's land for a while longer—the Prince of Peace will be with us. Whatever transition, trial, or trauma you face, Jesus will still be Immanuel, God with us, no matter what.

Written by a WELS missionary in East Asia

PASTOR PAGEL RECEIVES DIVINE CALL

Pastor Pagel has received a Call to serve as a missionary for Truth In Love Ministries (TILM), an organization that reaches out to Mormons (LDS) with the love of Jesus. TILM is based in Nampa, Idaho. Pastor Pagel requests your prayers and welcomes your input as he deliberates this new Call alongside the one he holds here at Bethany.

WELS ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE ONLINE

“Your gifts, God’s blessings: An annual report to our members” is now available online.

“I encourage every WELS member to read the annual report to learn the length, breadth, and depth of the impactful gospel ministries that Jesus graciously allows us to conduct in his name and to his glory through our prayers and offerings,” says Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving.

Read the 2020 report to learn more about

- Samuel Lor, a second-generation Hmong student who is in his first year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary;
- Qiang Wang, a recent graduate of the Pastoral Studies Institute, who is serving as a missionary to the Chinese in a suburb outside of Vancouver;
- Pastor Chaplai, a Hmong pastor in Vietnam, who notes, “I want to say thank you to WELS because you have given me peace;” and
- Kyle Opperman, who drifted away from the WELS church of his youth but returned two years ago and now is so grateful to be “home.”

The report includes photos of Christian brothers and sisters around the world, stories of faith, updates on WELS’ ministry, and a summary of WELS’ financial picture.

“As you review the ministries we support together,” says WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder, “keep our synod and its work in your prayers, and thank God that he has given you an opportunity to be a part of the soul-saving mission he has placed before us.”

To view the report online, visit wels.net/annualreport.

BETHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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