



# Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church

October 2023

A Member of the WELS

*By faith Joseph, as he neared the end of his life, mentioned the Exodus of the sons of Israel and gave instructions about his bones. (Hebrews 11:22).*

Thirteen of the last fourteen chapters of Genesis cover the life of Joseph. Joseph was the favored son of Jacob. Joseph's older brothers didn't like that. In fact, they hated him so much that they sold him in slavery to Egypt. They covered up their evil by telling their father that a wild animal must have killed and devoured their brother. In Egypt, Joseph showed he was a hero of faith. He served God faithfully while in Egypt and the Lord blessed him by making the prime minister of Egypt, second in command to the Pharaoh himself. A severe drought covered the land, which led Joseph's brothers to reunite with Joseph in Egypt. God also directed his father Jacob and the rest of the family to live in Egypt. The Lord told Jacob, *"Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes"* (Genesis 39:3,4).

As successful as Joseph was in Egypt, one might think that he was content calling Egypt his home. Consider all the wealth and power he had gained there. But before he died, he remembered the words of his father: *"I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers"* (Gn 48:21). And Joseph relayed that message to his family when death drew near him. He said, *"I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"* (Gn 50:24). Joseph's heart was not in Egypt. His heart was with the Lord and the promises he made to his fathers.

When we look at what the Bible tells us about Joseph, we would have to agree that he was a true hero of faith. When Potiphar's wife tried to go to bed with him, Joseph gave a response that all of us should use when sin comes knocking at our door. *"How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"* (Gn 39:9). When Pharaoh asked Joseph to interpret his dream, Joseph didn't take any credit for this gift, nor did he doubt the power of God. He willingly submitted to the Lord,

saying, *"I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires"* (Gn 41:16).

But Joseph was not a hero of faith because he did such wonderful things for the Lord. Like you and me, Joseph fit under Paul's description of every soul—*"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Ro 3:23). Although the Bible does not make any reference to any specific sin that Joseph committed, we can be sure that he was a sinner. The Bible states, *"Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!"* (Job 14:4). Since his father Jacob, who deceived his father Isaac for a blessing, was a sinner. Joseph was a sinner as well in desperate need of a Savior.

But Joseph was a hero of faith because his heart was with the Lord. He put his trust in the promises God made to his fathers. He believed that from the land of Canaan, from his own descendants would come the Savior of the world. And the land of Egypt would play an important role in the life of that Savior. The Lord foretold through the prophet Hosea, *"Out of Egypt I called my son"* (Hosea 11:1). God had to rescue the Christ child from the murderous hand of King Herod. He had Joseph and Mary take the baby Jesus to Egypt and stay there until the death of King Herod. Like the nation of Israel would return to the promised land following a 430 year stay in Egypt, Christ returned to the promised land as well. There he began his saving work serving our God flawlessly. There he completed his saving work by carrying our sins to a cross, by suffering and dying in our place. He put on the finishing touches by rising from the dead on the third day. Our Savior has given each of us victory over sin, death, and the devil. That is what Joseph believed. That is where his heart lay. His heart was with the Lord. And his trust in the Lord made him a hero of faith.

Could the same be said of us? Or do we focus too much on this world's material blessings forgetting about eternal riches that are ours in Christ. Forgive us, Lord, and give us a faith like Joseph's. Though the Lord blessed him immensely while living in Egypt, his heart remained with the Lord speaking of Israel's exodus from Egypt and making sure his lifeless bones made the trip. May we always have our hearts with the Lord.

## Reflections on Zambia

I had the incredible privilege to travel to Malawi and Zambia in July with three other members of the Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM) Stateside Committee, Gary and Beth Evans and Stacy Stolzman, to see the clinics operated by CAMM, meet the staff, and observe clinic operations. Gary is currently the CAMM Field Director and oversees the clinics in Malawi and Zambia. This blog shares some of my reflections on our visit to Lusaka, Zambia and the Mwembezhi Lutheran Mission Rural Health Centre.

Our visit to Zambia began with meeting Alisad Banda, the clinic administrator, whose office is in Lusaka on the same property where the seminary which trains pastors for the Lutheran Church of Central Africa is located. He is currently pursuing his Master's degree in Public Health Administration and is truly a blessing to the clinic operations in Zambia. Alisad has a gentle and faithful spirit that is on fire for Christ and he is dedicated to serving the people that come to Mwembezhi with Christ-centered health care.

Alisad drove our group out to Mwembezhi, which is in a rural area about a two-hour drive from Lusaka, part of it on dirt roads. Before we departed, we loaded up several boxes which were recently received from CAMM supporters across the country. These boxes contained pill bottles, baby blankets, and baby hats, and we were excited to personally help bring those boxes to the clinic staff. About 160 babies are delivered per year at Mwembezhi, and the new mothers really appreciate receiving the baby blankets and hats that have been donated.

We were met at the clinic by Jackson Kalekwa, the Clinical Officer in Charge, who introduced us to many of the staff and gave us a tour of the clinic buildings, including the pharmacy, lab, examination rooms, and the labor, delivery, and recovery rooms. The onsite staff, which is made up of all Zambian nationals, is led by Jackson, who is very knowledgeable and diligent in ensuring the clinic is run smoothly and that things are in good order. The clinic is part of the Zambian government health system, so the government provides many medications and test equipment to keep the pharmacy and lab well stocked. Mwembezhi has a very good reputation to provide their patients with the medications and health care they need.

It was amazing to walk around the property at Mwembezhi and to learn that it is in the same location where the missionaries to Zambia established a church, Martin Luther Church, and began their outreach in the late 1950s, nearly 70 years ago.

The original church is still in use, but the original clinic building has been renovated and new buildings have been added, some very recently. The new mother's shelter is bright and clean and is a much improved, comfortable setting for expectant mothers to come for a stay shortly before they are due to give birth. The new staff house, which is modern and well-equipped, looks like it could be a home here in the States. It is waiting for power to be connected before it will be occupied by Mrs. Banda, the midwife.

All of these enhancements to Mwembezhi were only possible due to many donations from churches, schools, and individual supporters, and are critical to continue providing a high standard of quality care at the clinic, which serves around 25,000 patients annually.

As we were leaving the Mwembezhi clinic, a local woman and member of Martin Luther Church named Gertrude stopped by our vehicle to introduce herself and to say "Thank you, thank you so much for all you are doing for us." Her exuberance, joy in Christ, and her humble thankfulness stands out in my memory. I would like to pass on her words to those of you who have remembered CAMM with your donations and your prayers: Thank you, thank you so much for your support of the Central Africa Medical Mission and the work to address the physical and spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters in Zambia and Malawi!

Written by Vickie Walther, CAMM Development Committee Member.

## How's it going?

"How's it going?" Many have asked me that question lately. That likely doesn't surprise you, because it is such a common, generic greeting employed by many of us. Often, we don't even expect a real answer. The people who have asked me do want a real answer. They ask for a specific purpose. They know I have experienced a big change – the ministry I serve has experienced a big change. They finish the question like this, "How's it going working with another pastor?"

In March of 2023, Divine Savior Church – Sienna submitted a request through our district mission board to the Board for Home Missions for an enhancement grant – financial support to allow our church to call for a second pastor. Under God's careful watch and blessing, the Board for Home Missions granted that request. Our leadership crafted a clear job description for a Pastor of Discipleship, then moved quickly to extend call number one. We knew it was a strong possibility we would need to extend call number two, and three, four, five, maybe more, but God had other plans. Our faithful God worked through that process, Rev. Dan Laitinen was the first pastor we called and he

accepted the call. He moved with his family to Sienna in July 2023, and we celebrated his installation on July 30 with worship and a massive serving of Texas-smoked pulled pork.

That celebration kicked off a massive change, both for me and for our ministry. Honestly, I was nervous. How well would we get along? Would I be a good teammate? What information is the most important to share immediately?

So. . . how's it going? I'm learning how to better communicate, and let go, and many other ways in which I can grow as a pastor. I struggled at first to remember to say, "I'm one of the pastors here." Yet, all of that puts too much emphasis on myself and Pastor Dan, we are under shepherds. I want to put the emphasis on Jesus, the great Shepherd, and his mission to reach more for his flock.

How's that going? Incredibly! As we partner with Divine Savior Academy on our campus, there are so many opportunities for ministry. This year, the school has grown to 350 students in PreK – 11th grade. We anticipate more students next year with the completion of a building project. So much ministry can happen! While I serve 10th graders and teach the Old Testament, Pastor Dan can study the Bible with Kenneth, our security officer, and Keith, our technology specialist, progressing towards membership at Divine Savior Church. While Pastor Dan invites them to his home to encourage and equip Connect Group leaders for our small group ministry, I am the invited guest at the homes of academy parents like Jake and Amanda or Will and Jordan, who take our START class to become members. While I take time to engage and interact specifically with worship visitors and guests, Pastor Dan leads a Sunday morning small group study. While Pastor Dan works with our youth group leaders to plan consistent events to connect teens to Christ, I work with the Outreach team to plan our Soccer Camp and Easter Egg Hunt.

How's it going? Thanks for asking! I have a real answer to give: More kingdom work is happening. More people are equipped to serve in our mission. More souls are connected to Christ!

*Written by Rev. Kevin Boushek, home missionary at Divine Savior Church in Sienna, Texas.*

## ***Using The Foundation to reach the unchurched***

*The Foundation*, a free worship planning resource developed and offered by WELS Congregational Services, is designed to assist congregations with outreach in their communities.

By using the pre-planned worship resources, busy pastors will have more time to spend visiting prospective members and interacting with their communities.

The worship plans have also been carefully constructed to be accessible to first-time guests. The orders of service and hymns, while feeding the faithful, will also bless those new to Lutheran worship.

"Perhaps most importantly, it is hoped *The Foundation* resources will encourage members to invite their unchurched friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join them for worship. The use of themes for worship series might mean a member brings someone who is struggling with a particular issue in their life or who may have expressed interest in a topic that will be discussed in an upcoming series," says Rev. Eric Roecker, administrator for WELS Commission on Evangelism, part of WELS Congregational Services.

To assist with this outreach, a promotional video is produced for each series. The videos are specifically produced with the unchurched in mind, using language, images, music, etc., that unchurched people could understand and relate to. Roecker suggests some ways the videos might be used:

- Show the video for an upcoming series after worship for two to three weeks prior to the start of the series. Not only will it prepare your people, but it might also make them think of someone they could invite to join them.
- In certain settings, the video could be shown as an introduction to the sermon each week. This repetition would help tie the series together in the minds of worshipers.
- Post the videos on all of your congregation's social media pages. You never know who might see it and be intrigued enough to join you.
- Share the videos with your members in the weeks leading up to each series so they can share them with unchurched acquaintances. It's an easy way for them to make the invite.

Also, don't forget to get Christmas outreach materials! Christmas outreach postcards and other materials are available from Echt Printing to help congregations reach their neighbors, inviting them to Christmas worship. The materials feature *The Foundations* Christmas theme for 2023. The deadline to order is Oct. 24. Praise and Proclaim is also offering assistance to congregations with digital evangelism efforts. The deadline to sign up is Oct. 27.

*The above items recently appeared on our synod's webpage: [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net).*

## Save the date!

2024 WELS International Youth Rally, June 25-28, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO.

The next WELS Women's Ministry Conference will be at the Ingleside Hotel in Pewaukee, Wis., July 28-30, 2024.

The WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts will be at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis., July 30 - August 2, 2024.

## What's going on at St. Michael's

- We've started a monthly Bible study/breakfast at Perkins. Our next study is October 20 at 7am. An evening Bible study began in May (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays). If you have free Wed. evenings, join us at 7pm on October 4 & 17.
- The God-lived life is a life lived shrewdly. While stewardship of our finances isn't the only part of stewardship, it is a part. God's Word encourages us to use all of the financial gifts God has given us with an eye on our purpose. Our challenge this quarter focuses on *living shrewdly* with the blessings and treasures that God has given us. Join us for the next Stewardship Sunday on October 22 as we gather for a shortened worship service and 19-minute Bible study.

### October Calendar Highlights

- Bible Study: Wed. Oct. 4 & 18, 7pm
- Outdoor Workday, Sat. Oct. 7, 8am
- Youth Group mtg., Sun. Oct. 8, 6pm
- Fall LWMS Rally in Caledonia, Sat. Oct. 14
- Board of Elders mtg., Tue., Oct. 19, 4pm
- Outreach Committee mtg., Tue., Sep. 19, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Tue., Sep. 19, 7pm
- Perkins Bible study, Fri. Oct. 15, 7am
- Quarterly voters mtg., Sun. Oct. 22, 6pm
- Worship Planning, Mon. Oct. 23, 7pm
- SS Teachers mtg., Mon. Oct. 30, 7pm

### *Your Council Members*

Jonathan Mayer	President/Education
Ryan Ligman	Secretary
Eric Horstman	Outreach
Jim Baures	Treasurer/Stewardship
Roger Bechly	Properties
Mike Baures	Financial Secretary/Elders

### Those Who Help

#### **Ushers for October**

Ryan Ligman	Richard Conrad
Jonathan Mayer	Darrel McCutchen
James Veraguth	David Herzberg

Gerald Suhr

#### **Altar Guild for October**

Trish Baures	Jennifer Baures
Sharon Wick	Sadie Baures

#### **Money Counters for October**

Paul Isakson	Elroy Conrads
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#### **Ushers for November**

Jim Bauers	Jordan Suhr
Roger Bechly	Matthew Baures
Richard Falls	Gerry Thaldorf

#### **Altar Guild for November**

Jan Schaffner	Donna Ernst
Becky Suhr	Renata Wojchik

#### **Money Counters for November**

Harry Putz	Gerry Thaldorf
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**Coulee Region OWLS**— The Coulee Region OWLS will be holding their regular monthly meeting on Thu., Oct. 12 at First Lutheran, 400 West Ave South, La Crosse at 12:00 noon for a potluck luncheon. Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Coffee will be provided. All church members – men & women age 55 or older – are welcome. There will be a free will offering.

**Good Shepherd, Holmen** is having their mission festival on Sun., Oct. 15. Pastor Roger Neumann, WELS Liaison to Ukraine, will be preaching in the 9:00 AM holy communion service. A door collection for Ukraine will be after worship. There will also be a brief reception after the service, refreshments provided. Pastor Neumann will give a presentation in our fellowship hall at 10:30 AM, informing us of the current situation for our sister church in that war-torn nation. All are invited.

Please make the following address changes/additions to our pictorial directory.

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