



Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church

November 2023

A Member of the WELS

They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth...They were longing for a better land—a heavenly one. For that reason, God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he prepared a city for them (Hebrews 11:13,16).

The verses above follow what the inspired writer to the Hebrews wrote about Abraham. God told Abraham to leave his family and homeland and go to a place that he was going to inherit. He left without knowing where he was going. He sent no messengers ahead to check out the land. He simply packed up and left. And what move him? It was faith. He trusted God's direction.

While living in Canaan, he did so without owning any of it, except a burial plot that he purchased when Sarah died. He lived in tents as a stranger and pilgrim on earth. So did his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. They were looking ahead to the city of the living God; to the heavenly Jerusalem, whose architect and builder is God.

We should live similarly in this world. It doesn't mean that we sell all our possessions and invest in decent camping equipment. It means that while we live here, we keep our hearts heaven bound. Our Savior promised us a home in heaven when he gathered with disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. And he provided the way to get there. Through his suffering and death the next day and his resurrection on the third day, he has opened the path for everyone.

But it's not an easy path to follow. Anyone living along the big river is familiar with some of the winding roads that twist around the bluffs. A wrong turn could be disaster. Jesus told us the road to eternal life is narrow and difficult. One would think that since Jesus did the hard part, the rest would be easy. One difficulty Jesus said in following him was to deny ourselves. That's not easy because our sinful self is selfish. It refuses to be denied. As children we wanted the spotlight on us. As adults we're not any better. Our thoughts seem to always turn inward asking how this or that affects me. A lifetime of self-denial may seem impossible.

So one must focus on Christ to deny oneself. Look how he denied himself to serve others in their greatest needs.

Think of the crowds that came with whatever evil inflicted them. Jesus gladly took time out of his busy schedule to help. His heart went out to them all. He even had you and me in mind when he made the ultimate sacrifice, giving his life on the cross. We were that important to him that he willingly took our place in suffering God's punishment for all our sins.

As Paul told the Philippian Christians, your attitude should be the same as Christ's (Philippians 2:5). Let Christ lead you in denying yourself and putting others first. He'll also help you carry the crosses you must bear. Any hardship that comes your way for faithfully following your Savior, he will give you strength and patience to bear. And your cross will keep you gazing at Christ and his cross where your salvation was won.

This month our focus in worship is on the end of time when Christ returns to take us from this world of sorrow. What a day it will be when he returns to raise all the dead and equip us with immortal bodies. It's difficult to imagine a life without sin and its effects. No more pain or disease and no more death and tears. Only joy and eternal pleasure far greater than anything we've experienced in this life. That's what Christ's return brings.

In addition, we'll celebrate mission fest with a guest presenter/preacher who spent many years sharing the gospel in Japan. On Sunday, November 12, Professor Brad Wordell, a college and seminary classmate of your pastor, will share the work of God's church a half a world away. Join us for his presentation at 8:15am in the church basement and the special worship at 9:30am. A ministry fair and a potluck meal will follow.

On Wednesday, November 22, we'll join our nation in offering thanks at our 7pm Thanksgiving worship. A quick look back over the past year should foster much thanksgiving. Beside the physical blessings that have enriched our lives, our Savior has abundantly fed our souls with his word and sacrament.

God has remained true on all he has promised. When we were faithless, he remained faithful. May he keep us faithful in following him and in keeping our hearts and minds heavenward.

Taking the gospel to the people

How much time do you spend on the internet every day? Do you know? Is it more than you read your Bible? More than you pray? More than you exercise?

If you're like me, then the answer to all of these questions is yes. This isn't meant to be a guilt trip though, but rather to draw our eyes to an opportunity! Yes. God has given us an opportunity in the internet. We could become discouraged by the fact (as I do sometimes) that the internet is stealing our attention from the most important things in life and we should all just set down our phones and computers and enjoy each other's company. But. . . that's not the world we live in. We live in a modern age in which technology has improved our lives immensely. And now, as always, we will go to where the people are whether that's by a river, in a village, on the "other side of town," or on the internet.

In some parts of the world, like North America, COVID hasn't been a big deal for a while, but in other parts of the world, mask mandates and PCR tests hung on for a long time. We in Asia felt the full brunt of that. COVID is basically over here now too, but it's just been in the last six months or so that all restrictions have been lifted. That means that for the past three-plus years pretty much everyone has been doing almost everything on the internet: buying clothes, groceries, watching movies, finding partners, etc.

What does this have to do with the gospel?! Well, #theinternet. That's how people do everything so that's where the gospel must go as well. And we must go there and be present there with all our might, in the best way we possibly can.

And so, that's what we're doing. Asia Lutheran Seminary (ALS) and Multi-Language Productions (MLP) have partnered up to reach all in Asia with God's grace.

MLP has produced an online training platform called [TELL Network](#). TELL Mandarin is a translated version of the TELL Network high-quality self-study courses called TELL which includes videos and quizzes. TELL Mandarin helps people read and understand God's Word on their own and then teaches them how to lead others to do the same. MLP has translated and contextualized TELL for a Mandarin speaking audience, so that Mandarin speakers in East Asia and all over the world can learn of God's love for me. After completing TELL Mandarin, ALS guides these students through its degree programs so that, in the end, they can become church leaders and shepherds for God's people.

TELL Mandarin has enrolled thousands of students in Asia and the number of those who enroll is growing every day. We thank God for all those precious souls he brings to us through these digital means. We are blessed to be able to have such a far reach with such an incredible tool as TELL Mandarin to educate and bless people all throughout Asia!

Written by Tony Barthels, world missionary for the Asia One Team & recruiter for Asia Lutheran Seminary.

Your gifts are making a difference in Africa

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-6)

The WELS One Africa Team currently works with established church bodies in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia. Your gifts are making a difference for these sister churches as we partner with them in outreach and assist in their theological education programs. Below are just a few specific ways that God is using your support to bring his gospel message to more people throughout Africa:

- WELS is supporting the building of an additional elementary school campus that the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia will operate in Gambella, Ethiopia. The current campuses in Dukem serve over 750 students.
- Missionary John Roebke and his wife, Nancy, assisted with a marriage workshop for pastors and their wives from the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ – Kenya (LCMC–Kenya) alongside LCMC-Kenya President Mark Anariko Onunda. One attendee shared, "It has refreshed our family and taught us new things that will strengthen our staying together and our work in the Lord's vineyard too. It was a good encouragement."
- Missionary Daniel Witte continues to visit various sister churches throughout Africa to provide theological education for pastors, and partner with the LCMC-Kenya to lead workshops for Kenyan lay and called leaders.
- Pastors from Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia come together in various locations throughout Africa to study different courses as they work towards a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. A course on marriage was taught in Zambia in June, and another course on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was held recently in Malawi.

Thank you for your support! We pray that God continues to work through WELS' sister churches and the One Africa Team to change lives in Africa—like those of Eruc Kebeno from Soweto, Kenya, and Eunita Odongo, a deaconess in the LCMC-Kenya.

Pray for our African brothers and sisters in the faith as they continue to spread the message of Christ's ultimate sacrifice and love for sinners like you and me. Follow the One Africa Team on Facebook and subscribe to their blogs at oneafricateam.com for updates and stories of the Holy Spirit at work. Ask God to bless the work of the One Africa Team as they help spread the gospel throughout Africa.

Addressing the teacher shortage

Dear Friend,

The numbers are staggering, and they continue to climb. The teacher vacancies across our church body are intensifying: 50 in 2020, 90 in 2021, 140 in 2022, **158 in 2023**. What happened? And where will our congregations and schools find additional qualified teachers—teachers with a servant's heart like Christ's—to educate our children?

One reason for increasing vacancies is increasing enrollment. Out of a global pandemic and societal changes across our country, God has opened the doors of our WELS schools to more and more families seeking a different educational path for their children.

What a blessing that more families and children will know the love of Jesus! But at the same time, what a challenge to fill more classrooms with qualified teachers!

We're excited to tell you that Martin Luther College, *your* WELS college of ministry, has a new program that, God-willing, can become part of the answer!

Competency-Based Education (CBE) is the visionary solution to develop *second-career teachers*. We regularly hear from church leaders about members who want to make a career transition to teaching. CBE is designed for people at different ages and stages of life. It recognizes their life experiences and job-embedded skills, and allows them to earn their education degrees online while staying in their own communities. These are adults who have a heart for the teaching ministry but cannot uproot their families and move to our campus in New Ulm, Minn. These potential teachers cannot come to MLC, so *MLC will come to them!*

We have great news! Because of the many prayers and generous financial support from God's people over the past year, we have already begun to develop this

program. Two new professors are in place and moving at a rapid pace, so that we can enroll our first students in CBE next year.

How can you help us move forward toward enrolling students? First, please keep praying about this opportunity. Second, please encourage potential second-career students you know to consider this program. Finally, please consider a donation at <https://community.wels.net/pages/z-general-donation-form---2023.11-me> We seek just \$80,000 more to continue redesigning the online education curriculum and to purchase the necessary educational technology to enroll students starting in 2024.

If you are so moved by the Spirit, can you help us with a gift now so that adult students can begin their career transition to classroom teaching as soon as 2024?

Of course, we'll continue to train traditional-aged students *on campus*, where they are surrounded by professors, mentors, and friends who share and encourage them in their faith. But CBE provides an opportunity to prepare *second-career teachers* who can also fill WELS classrooms—perhaps in your own congregation!

In him,
Rich Gurgel
President, Martin Luther College

P.S. Your gift continues the momentum and allows students to enroll in second-career teacher training as early as next year!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we praise you for redeeming us, making us part of your church, and giving us the privilege of sharing the good news of your salvation from sin. Thank you for the growth in enrollment in our Lutheran schools. We pray that you would help us find more teachers to serve the additional students. May Martin Luther College's Competency-Based Education program be a blessing to future teachers and students and help increase the number of people who are nurtured in your Word. Amen.

The above items recently appeared on our synod's webpage: 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

- Our monthly Bible study/breakfast at Perkins, held the third Friday each month at 7am, is now being offered to brothers & sisters in other area WELS congregations. Wednesday 19-minute Bible study continues the first & third Wed. at 7pm.
- 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. If you missed the special service/study on October 22, be sure to grab a copy of the sermon and a challenge card on the small table entering the chancel.
- Mission Festival will be held this month on Sun., Nov. 12. Seminary professor Brad Wordell is our guest presenter/preacher. Having served several years as a missionary in Japan, Wordell will give a presentation in the church basement at 8:15am that Sunday, as well as preach for our 9:30am worship service. A ministry fair will be on display in the fellowship area and a potluck meal will be served in the church basement at 10:45am.
- Youth group meetings began last month on Sunday, October 8 at 6pm in the church basement. We watched & discussed a video study on personal evangelism, highlighted the international youth rally held next summer in Fort Collins, CO. Mention was made of possible fund-raising activities so more young people can attend the rally. We ended the night with pumpkin carving. The next meeting is Sunday, December 10 at 6pm.
- Your elders are reaching out to inactive members encouraging them to keep listening to our Good Shepherd. We pray these efforts will bring our straying brothers and sisters back to the fold. Keep your brothers and sisters in your prayers as well as your elders and pastor. The elders are also looking at the synod's Peter Plan as a better way to track member's attendance and encourage faithfulness.

November Calendar Highlights

- Bible Study: Wed. Nov. 1 & 15, 7pm
- Daylight Savings Time ends Nov. 5 (*fall back 1 hr.*)
- LHS delegates mtg., Wed. Nov. 8, 7:30pm
- Ladies Aid mtg., Sat. Nov. 11, 9am
- Mission Festival, Sun. Nov. 12
- Men's Fellowship, Sun. Nov. 12, 6pm
- Perkins Bible Study, Fri. Nov. 17, 7am

- Board of Elders mtg., Tue., Nov. 21, 4pm
- Outreach Committee mtg., Tue., Nov. 21, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Tue., Nov. 21, 7pm
- Thanksgiving worship, Wed., Nov. 22, 7pm
- SS Teachers mtg., Tue. Nov. 28, 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 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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Ushers for December

Eric Horstman	Allen Glodowski
Mike Baures	Jim Wick
Paul Isakson	Asher Duerr

Altar Guild for December

Marie Grossell	Jean Burmeister
Yvonne Tamke	Cally Ligman

Money Counters for December

Roger Bechly	Kevin Buswell
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Coulee Region OWLS— The Coulee Region OWLS will be holding their regular monthly meeting on Thu., Nov. 9 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.