



Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church

March 2025

A Member of the WELS

They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought him a blind man and begged him to touch him. He took hold of the blind man's hand and led him out of the village. When he had spit on his eyes, he placed his hands on him and asked him, "Do you see anything?" Then Jesus placed his hands on his eyes again. The man opened his eyes and his sight was restored. He could see everything clearly. (Mark 8:22, 23, 25)

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Down through the years this hymn has been special to Christians. It states a wonderful, comforting truth. No matter what may happen to us in life, we have a friend. That friend is our Savior, Jesus. There may be crosses to bear, heartaches to face, and loneliness to endure, but Jesus is always there.

The man in our reading had some friends. They brought him to Jesus. Some think that the man did not want to come to Jesus. He thought that he was unimportant. Jesus couldn't care for a poor, blind man. But his friends brought him to Jesus anyway. We can do the same in prayer. We can bring our loved ones, our friends, our fellow Christians, those who do not know Christ to Jesus in prayer. Jesus cares.

He showed it. He had time for the man. He took him by the hand. What a comforting picture for us! Jesus always has time. He will never say to us, "Come back another day. I'm too busy. I have bigger and better things to do than to care about your problems." "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear." He cared about the needs of the blind man. He cares about our needs...the needs of our body and especially our soul. We never have to worry whether our problems are too small, too insignificant for Jesus. Jesus is always there. Always willing to listen. Always willing to help.

In our reading, Jesus took the man outside the village, away from the crowd. This may have been because the

people were miracle crazy. They did not care about the message of Jesus. They wanted him to do something supernatural. They wanted to be able to ooh and ah at something. Jesus was not about to do that. He took the man away from the crowd. There he healed him.

We need to remember this. Today many Christians are concerned about experiences—healing, speaking in tongues, emotional highs. For many the Word takes a back seat. Receiving physical sight is thought to be more important than receiving spiritual sight. They were miracle crazy. We might be tempted to think as they do.

It is then that we need to be taken aside. We need the reminder of what our good friend, Jesus, has done for us. We were blind. We were wandering in sin and darkness on the road to hell. But Jesus saved us. He suffered and died for our sins. He has sent the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. We have been given spiritual sight. We were blind, but now we see. Praise God for that spiritual sight and the hope of heaven. Praise God that Jesus cares about you. He listens to your prayers. He answers them in the best possible way. He had touched your life. You are a child of God through faith in Jesus. What a blessing!

Point to Ponder: Think about how Jesus has been a friend to you...spiritually...physically. In what ways has he healed you? Thank him for his goodness!

I found this devotion in my files as I was cleaning and organizing my office. What an opportunity we have this month to be enlightened and strengthened spiritually. As we begin the annual walk with our Savior to his cross and empty tomb, may we treasure the great love our Lord has shown us. He won us forgiveness and eternal life. May we always ponder that great love and reflect it in our dealings with others. God bless you this Lenten season. See you Wednesdays at 7pm in addition to Sunday morning.

From the classroom to Christ

Christian schools have been part of WELS Native American mission work for over a century. Over the decades our schools have strived to train and build up children in God's Word while also teaching them how to flourish in God's world. Our churches have also benefited greatly from the schools, with many of our current church members and church leaders having received schooling at a "mission school."

However, the church and school connection does not happen automatically, nor can it be assumed. In previous generations, most of the students in our reservation schools came from Lutheran families. This is not necessarily the case today. State vouchers have allowed the schools to expand their student bodies, but this means that many of our students do not come from Lutheran backgrounds. Our teachers continue to boldly proclaim the Word on a daily basis, but the important question arises: "How can we connect more families to our churches?" Answering this question takes much prayer, persistence, and patient endurance on the part of church members and called workers, but sometimes things come together in an amazing way.

Debbie Dietrich is the kindergarten teacher at Peridot-Our Savior's Lutheran School. She is very direct and encouraging with parents and students alike when it comes to spiritual matters. Earlier in the school year, Debbie taught a unit on the blessings of Baptism. Through this unit and follow-up discussions with students and parents, she found out that three of her students desired Baptism. Debbie reached out to the church staff, who met with the parents. These parents then brought even more children to be baptized. On Feb. 9, six young people were welcomed into God's family at Grace Lutheran in San Carlos, Ariz. The kindergarten students sang the baptism anthem, "God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It." The church was packed, and God was certainly glorified that day.

This recent "Baptism Sunday" is just one example of how churches and schools can work together to "make disciples of all nations." We know that the work is not done and that we will need to continue to be prayerful, persistent, and patient. However, it was a blessing to be able to celebrate with our church and school (not to mention the angels) as six more children were welcomed into God's family!

Written by Missionary Erik Landwehr, world missionary on the Native American Mission team.

Be an influencer!

Dear Christian Friend,

Be an "influencer."

It's become an important and sought-after job, thanks to the power of social media and the popularity of online purchasing.

An influencer is a "product pusher" companies use to promote their brands and boost sales. Agencies have popped up to assist with assembling appropriate people who will influence ("guide" is the word they use) customers in their decision-making process.

Ask your pastor, teacher, or staff minister who or what influenced them in their decision to serve in the public ministry. Ultimately it is the gospel—the great news that our sins are forgiven and death is defeated through Jesus—that motivates and moves a person into ministry. Prayer is vital too. But let's not overlook the importance of people.

It may be a family member with a gentle word of encouragement or a congregational leader telling you they see potential. "Your voice is meant for the pulpit!" "You work well with kids; you should be a teacher!"

Maybe it is a kind comment from a teacher following a class presentation or an opportunity a pastor provides to be a "shadow" for a day. Don't forget or underestimate the impact of a care package or birthday card from the home congregation or financial support and generous donations from individuals and congregations. This is the team of influencers that the Holy Spirit can use to guide a person in their decision to train to become a called worker. And the need is great.

Because of the power of the sinful nature and the popularity of sin, the world needs proclaimers of God's forgiveness, peace, and hope. Jesus looks and sees people who are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Gospel workers are in great demand!

The same is true for influencers. The important job of encouraging, whether gently nudging or more powerfully persuading someone toward public ministry, is critical in our world today. Can you do that work? Do you know a person who has a heart for the Lord and his people? Could you be an influencer for the public ministry? I believe the answer to all three questions is "yes!"

Would you also be an influencer today with a gift toward student financial assistance? I pray that your answer to that question is also "yes!" After all, what better "product" could we boost, or "brand" could we

promote, than the message of God's love and his gift of salvation in Jesus our Savior?

Thank you for your influence for God's kingdom!
Rev. Duane Rodewald
Chairman, WELS Board for Ministerial Education

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we pray that you would raise up the next generation of leaders in our church body through the power of your good news in Word and sacraments—and through our encouragement. Help family members, church members, pastors, and teachers to urge young men and women who have a love for you and others to consider gospel ministry. May care packages and financial support from individuals and congregations build up ministerial education students as they go about their studies. You know, Lord, how badly so many people need to hear about your salvation. Provide your church with devoted workers—and their encouragers—so that your name may be proclaimed in all the earth. Amen.

Military retreat in Japan

WELS Military Chaplain Rev. Paul Horn and his daughter Calliope (a senior at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.) traveled to Okinawa, Japan, in January to host a WELS Ministry to the Military retreat for WELS military members stationed in the Pacific. Four branches of the military—Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Army—were represented and included members from Guam, Japan, and South Korea. The weekend was packed with events such as Bible study and Sunday school on the beach, worship that included a teen confirmation, and fellowship activities. WELS Ministry to the Military, a part of WELS Special Ministries, provides live online worship and Bible study every weekend for those stationed in the Pacific, and future retreats are being planned. Refer WELS members in the military at wels.net/military.

175th anniversary resources available

It is interesting how often the Bible speaks of “generations.” For example, the church sings in Psalm 145, “One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4). Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20,21). The idea of God's saving work and his rule over all things extending from generation to generation and the encouragement to proclaim his works to the next generation are found throughout the Scriptures.

Perhaps this is why churches usually celebrate anniversaries in quarter-century increments. Twenty-five years approximates a generation. During this calendar year of 2025, WELS is celebrating its 175th anniversary. This is the first synod anniversary of the new millennium. It is an opportunity for a new generation (and older generations) to review with gratitude the blessings the Lord has showered upon our church body since its founding in 1850.

To help congregations focus on the anniversary by educating members on the synod's history, two resources are now available. Monthly bulletin inserts highlighting key events in synod history are being produced. The first two months are available as PDFs in full-color, black-and-white, or text only on the [WELS Historical Institute website](http://WELSHistoricalInstitute.org). Please consider using these in your congregation.

In addition, an interactive timeline has been put together and is also on the website. The timeline contains short descriptions and photos with links to videos and articles that allow people to dig deeper into various topics. This timeline might especially be useful for teaching a class to confirmation students or adults on the history of WELS.

Special anniversary events are also being planned. Two coming up this spring involve the choirs of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College. The joint concerts will include sets sung by each choir and then a third set sung by the combined choirs. These joint concerts take place on March 20 at 7 p.m. (Central) at St. John's on the Hillside, Milwaukee, Wis., and on March 29 at 7 p.m. (Central) at the Martin Luther College Chapel of the Christ, New Ulm, Minn. The New Ulm concert will be livestreamed.

More information on anniversary events and additional resources are posted at welshistoricalinstitute.org/175th.

It is my prayer that this anniversary will spark interest and appreciation for the blessings God has showered on WELS for 175 years. By his grace, he has raised up leaders among us who have been concerned about defending the pure gospel, preparing workers who serve the church, and proclaiming the good news of Jesus' saving work throughout America and the world. By his grace, the message of Christ has come to us and gone out through us.

By Prof. Joel Otto, chairman of the 175th anniversary committee and dean of students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.

The above items recently appeared on our synod's webpage: www.wels.net.

What's going on at St. Michael's

- Outreach visits are being scheduled this month on Saturday afternoons, weather permitting. We especially are looking to invite our community to Easter. Contact Pastor Westenberg if interested.
- New Bible study location: The Bible study held the third Friday each month at 7am at Perkins in Winona, is now being held the third Friday each month at 8am at The Landing in Fountain City. If that fits your schedule, please join us.
- The Peter Plan continues at St. Michael's in a prayerful effort to bring back inactive members to faithful attendance at worship and Bible study. Continue to circle your name each time you attend so we can have an accurate record of attendance and reach those members who need encouragement.
- We're looking for a person(s) to offer custodial care at church since our current person will be leaving the area soon. If interested, contact Jonathan Mayer (402-470-7138) or Pastor (715-650-0332).
- The Lenten season begins this month with Wed. meals at 5:30pm and worship at 7pm. Pastors Westenberg and Wilde will rotate in leading our worship with the theme: Reflections on Repentance.
- In an effort to improve communication, a brief church council report is now offered at the end of worship on the 4th Sunday of the month.

Calendar Highlights

- Weds. Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26: 5:30pm meal; 7pm worship
- Ladies Aid mtg. Sat. Mar. 8, 9am
- Long Range Planning mtg., Mon., Mar. 10, 7pm
- Worship Planning, Mon. Mar. 17, 7pm
- Outreach Committee mtg., Tue., Mar. 18, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Tue. Mar. 18, 7pm
- Bible study at The Landing, Fri. Mar. 21, 8am
- Candelabra Cleaning, Fri. Mar. 21, 9:30am
- SS Teachers mtg., Mon. Mar. 24, 7pm

Your Council Members

Jonathan Mayer	President/Education
Ryan Ligman	Secretary
Mark Horstman	Outreach
Jim Baures	Treasurer/Stewardship
Jess Veraguth	Properties
Mike Baures	Financial Secretary/Elders

Those Who Help

Ushers for March

Mike Baures	Charles Heller
Mark Horstman	Ben Kafer
Travis Grossel	Jeremy Duerr
Brian Putz	

Altar Guild for March

Judy Putz	Tera Parnow
Tamie Klinger	Hannah Parnow
Susan Suhr	Hope Parnow

Money Counters for March

Roger Bechly	Kevin Buswell
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Ushers for April

Ryan Ligman	Eric Moe
Jonathan Mayer	Roger Bechly
Steven Doebbert	Delmar Plank
Brad Veraguth	

Altar Guild for April

Alyssa Horstman	Lindsey Thewis
Janessa Horstman	Linda Monson
Sheila Becher	

Money Counters for April

Elroy Conradt	Mike Baures
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Host Family Needed—A female foreign exchange from France wants to attend Luther High School for the 2025-2026 school year. Luther High School is looking for a host family for this student. If you want to learn more about this opportunity, please contact Principal Phil Punzel at punzphil@luther.k12.wi.us.

The **Big Knight** is an annual fundraiser supporting Luther High School. This event is a dinner auction with 100% of the proceeds benefiting the students of Luther High. All who attend get to experience a PACKED silent auction followed by an elegant dinner and an INCREDIBLE live auction. Join us on Saturday, April 26, 2025, for the annual Big Knight dinner auction at Celebrations on the River in French Island, WI. This event not only raises funds for tuition assistance, but is a night of exceptional auction items, great food, and fellowship with others who love Luther High School. Doors will open at 5:30 pm with registration and silent auction. Join us in supporting the students at Luther High School.

In the Savior's Steps Lenten Devotions—WELS Women's Ministry is offering weekly devotions for the 2025 season of Lent. We're used to traveling with Jesus during Holy Week from the upper room to the cross to the empty tomb. But these aren't the only places Jesus visited during his earthly ministry. This Lent, join WELS Women's Ministry as we follow in our Savior's steps through a series of weekly devotions. (*Pastor will forward you the devotions when he receives them.*)

LWMS Spring Rally - Save the Date! Plan now to attend the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society Spring Rally on Sat., April 26th from 9-Noon at Trinity Lutheran of Wilson, MN. Learn how to "Build Bridges" in sharing the Gospel message with others. A children's program will be available as well.