



Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church

July 2025

A Member of the WELS

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

July Fourth is a great American holiday. What is your favorite memory of this holiday? Maybe it's a childhood picnic or parade. Maybe it's the fireworks displays that you always took your growing family to see. Or it could be the terrific bicentennial celebration in 1976. (Will it be topped by our 250th celebration in 2026?)

One thing's for sure—July Fourth is worth celebrating. God has given us a wonderful country and marvelous freedoms to enjoy.

Freedom is never free, however. Many of the founders of our country gave their lives and their fortunes in the cause of freedom. Over the years some 600,000 U.S. soldiers have given their lives in times of war to secure our freedoms. You probably knew some of them.

Now think about the spiritual freedom you have and how much it cost.

When we came into the world, all of us were slaves to sin and doomed to death. None of us could escape. We were hopelessly lost in sin. And death was the wage our sin deserved. It's as though we were all prisoners of war with no way to escape, with no hope of returning home.

That's why God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Jesus is the only one who could win freedom for us captives. He took the battlefield alone to fight sin, death, and the devil for us. He suffered the pains of hell on the cross to take away the guilt of our sins. He rose from the dead as our conquering hero to show that he had defeated sin, death, and the devil. How can we be free from sin when we still sin daily? How can we be free from death when we are reminded of our mortality daily with illness and injury personally and the occasional trip past a cemetery? How can we be free from the devil? We often fall victim to temptation as we still live in bodies covered with sinful flesh.

Our Lord offers forgiveness to all as a free gift. Simple trust in Jesus brings us forgiveness of sins and eternal

life. Jesus promises, *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* What a blessing that he has preserved his word, so we can turn to it daily to feed our souls with lifegiving bread and water. We can wake up every day knowing that through Jesus we are forever free from the guilt of our sin and its punishment. Jesus is the first fruits of those who fall asleep in death. Because he lives, we also shall live forever. And Jesus has crushed the serpent's head. He can harm us none. That roaring lion runs like a scared kitty when he sees Jesus ruling our hearts.

The memories of those long-ago July Fourths may dim with time, but through Jesus we have reason to look forward to the brightest of all futures. We'll be with him forever in the glory of eternal life.

Many people in our life still need to learn about the freedom Christ has won them. Are they living each day just looking to get ahead in this life only? What a treasure you and I possess that would bring them true freedom.

Very recently, another holiday occurred. It was Juneteenth Day. It commemorates when the last group of slaves learned that the civil war was over and they were now free. Imagine what life would be like if you never knew the freedom that Christ won you by living for you, dying for you, and living again. Imagine never celebrating our Savior's birth at Christmas. Imagine never knowing "He's risen! He's risen indeed!" at Easter. What if your parents never brought you to church or to Sunday school to learn about your Lord. How tragic! Sadly, many children grow up in our country never learning about our Savior. Encourage your neighbors with kids to join us in the park on Saturday, August 2 for Vacation Bible School. Direct them to St. Michael's website to sign up their child.

We thank our Lord for blessing us to live in this good land. We pray that he keeps our country strong and free. That way many more will hear the truth of the gospel and believe in Jesus. We ask him to forgive our many sins and keep us in his tender care. Finally, we look ahead to the glory of heaven where we will see our Lord face to face and praise his name forever.

European Regional CELC Conference

“The creation of man—Wonderful news for the world.” This was the topic of our European Regional CELC Conference hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) in Nerchau, Germany, on May 22-25, 2025. Nerchau is close to Grimma, the place of the ninth triennial convention of the CELC in 2017. St. John’s Congregation in Nerchau is currently vacant, but a group of volunteers supported the preparation of this regional CELC conference.

Approximately 50 guests from different countries attended the conference. We were especially thankful that Bishop Horpynchuk from the Ukrainian Lutheran Church and Dmytro Maksymenko were among them. The latter serves as the Director of the “Gift of Life” International Charitable Foundation in Ukraine. Our Russian brothers sent a video message, and our brother Iliyan Itsov (Bulgaria) wrote greetings, since he was not able to attend our conference. Dr. Ugis Sildegis (Latvia), who had prepared one of the four papers, could not attend the conference because of problems with his car. As guests from outside of Europe, we welcomed Prof. Tim Schmeling (ELS) as guest presenter, Rev. Larry Schlomer (WELS World Missions administrator), Rev. Jonathan Schroeder (WELS Board for World Missions chairman), and Rev. Tom Heyn (ELS).

We enjoyed a blessed time together with four excellent papers. Two of the papers were prepared by Prof. Tim Schmeling. His first lecture was titled, “Man—Created by God.” His second lecture was our last and titled, “Man—Created in the Image of God.” Our second lecture was prepared by Rev. Nikolla Bishka from Albania, together with Rev. Luke Wolfgramm, the WELS World Missionary and Pastoral Studies Institute adjunct instructor for Europe. “Man—Created as Male and Female” was the topic of their paper. The third lecture was prepared by Dr. Ugis Sildegis. His paper was titled: “Man—Creation with Body and Soul: Today’s Challenges” and was presented by Rev. Holger Weiß, the chairman of CELC European Region.

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder gave a short overview of the WELS worldwide mission work. Rev. Tom Heyn gave some information about the ELS work, especially in Europe, but also worldwide. Larry Schlomer introduced the WELS call for Jennifer Wolfgramm as WELS mobile ministry partner for women in Europe. He explained her tasks and offered her help for all the work among women in the European CELC churches.

The conference ended with a closing worship service including the Lord’s Supper. The liturgy was

conducted in German by myself, and Rev. Holger Weiß preached the sermon on Isaiah 55:6-11 under the topic “Seek the Lord!” After the sermon, Jennifer Wolfgramm was installed by Rev. Larry Schlomer. You can watch the video of the closing service on YouTube.

God willing, the next European Regional CELC conference will be hosted by the LBK Sweden on June 18-20, 2027. But before that, we are looking forward to the next triennial CELC Convention in Zambia on May 29–June 1, 2026.

Written by Rev. Michael Herbst, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) in Germany

Rethinking Northwoods ministry

Our Savior in Phillips, Wis., was approved as an unsubsidized home mission congregation in spring 2025. Unsubsidized, or self-funded, home missions do not receive direct financial support but still have access to the many other benefits offered to all home mission congregations: assistance through their district mission board, mission counselors, access to WELS Church Extension Fund, and synodical support staff and the Board for Home Missions.

We were not unlike dozens of WELS congregations north of a line drawn from Green Bay to Wausau to Eau Claire. We were and continue to be a small Northwoods congregation.

We shared a pastor with another church 90 minutes north of us. He spent at least 40 hours a month on the road—almost as much as he spent in our community. Our building was in disrepair. Architectural engineers estimated it would take \$150,000 to bring it up to code. Our numbers were static—well below what was needed to support a pastor. Our congregational meetings usually ended with different opinions on ministry and solutions to our building issues.

Our leaders were exasperated—tempted to plod along and just survive.

But then something happened. The Lord emboldened a group of laypeople who pushed the issues and took action. Members were encouraged to unite behind solutions, and a sense of urgency regarding our building developed.

Then God opened our eyes. First, it was an idea we had never considered: what about a different building closer to town that would be handicap accessible and provide more space for ministry? Then, he showed us a local Family Dollar store that came on the market—8,000 sq. ft. of “vanilla box.” The price was not much more than the repair costs for our present building, so within a

month we bought it. Next, we received a generous offer for our old building. Phase 1 of renovating the commercial building would eat up nearly \$400,000. Our tiny group of average income retirees and wage earners said, “Yes.”

The more we studied our dual parish arrangement, the more it seemed to hinder ministry to the community. But once again, the Lord opened our eyes to solutions. The congregation called a retired pastor in the congregation to serve part time. Then, we asked three lay leaders to assist the pastor in leading worship. Finally, an outreach team, made up mostly of women, now organizes events to publicize our ministry in Price County.

The Lord blessed our efforts—not with large gains—but with individual souls. An unbaptized 19-year-old named Ethan came to live with his grandparents, and they brought him to worship services. In time, he studied the Creed and Baptism and asked to be baptized. Ethan is currently finishing instructions for confirmation. Another example was Bill’s mother, who invited him to a service. In time, Bill brought his girlfriend, Mari. Both Bill and Mari took instructions and were added to our congregation earlier this year, and in May they were married.

In the last two years, we have had three baptisms, and Sunday Bible class attendance frequently exceeds 50 percent of the Sunday attendees. We thank God for each of these souls.

Written by James Naumann, home missionary at Our Savior in Phillips, Wis.

Celebrating 20 years of gospel impact through Asia Lutheran Seminary

I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2

Twenty years ago, Asia Lutheran Seminary (ALS) officially opened its doors in Hong Kong to train Chinese-speaking pastors and evangelists. Today, thanks to God’s grace and your generous support, ALS is equipping church leaders from across Asia-Oceania and around the world.

From its beginnings as a seminary for Hong Kong and East Asia, ALS has grown into a truly regional seminary with hubs in both Hong Kong and Chiang Mai, Thailand. ALS now supports theological education efforts in more than 18 countries and reaches students across four continents.

Here are just a few ways your support is impacting gospel work through ALS:

- **Training more national leaders:** Many ALS graduates now serve as instructors, professors, and church leaders. Two full-time faculty members—Dr. Angus Cheung and Prof. William Zhu—are national pastors who model ALS’ belief that local Asian leaders will serve as the best teachers.
- **Expanding programs for more students:** ALS’ program structure allows students to earn certificates, diplomas, and degrees that fit their gospel ministry goals and life stage. Programs like the TELL certificate integrate flexible online learning and are offered in both English and Mandarin.
- **Reaching the Chinese-speaking diaspora:** Over the past several years, many Christians have emigrated from Hong Kong. ALS has followed them with gospel training, now serving students in places like New Zealand, Australia, and the U.K.
- **Launching new regional efforts:** ALS’ Regional Theological Education Program (RTEP) supports theological education programs across Asia-Oceania, helping build sustainable, confessional Lutheran training with partner churches.
- **Building a new generation of leaders:** ALS’ online presence, global faculty, and strategic partnerships mean that more people—lay leaders, pastors, and teachers—can grow in the Word and share Christ in their communities.

From the first worship service in 2005 to the 20th anniversary celebration on June 1, ALS has remained committed to one mission: preparing Christians to serve as leaders of confessional Lutheran groups across Asia-Oceania. The celebration in Hong Kong not only marked two decades of blessings but was also a launchpad for what comes next..

Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and financial support. The story of ALS is God’s story—and you’re part of it. Now is still the time.

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

What’s going on at St. Michael’s

- Outreach/In-reach visits are scheduled for three Saturdays this month. Interested in reaching out with VBS & gospel invitations? Contact Pastor W.
- 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. Volunteers are still needed to contact inactive brothers and sisters in Christ. Continue circling your name each time you attend so we can have an accurate record of attendance and can focus on reaching those members in need of encouragement.

- We're looking for a person(s) to offer custodial care at church since our current person has left the area. If interested, contact Jonathan Mayer (402-470-7138) or Pastor (715-650-0332).
- The outdoor service at Merrick Park is being moved to the Fountain City Park on Sunday, August 3 to coordinate with our VBS at the FC Park on Aug. 2.
- Thursday evening worship at St. Michael's is now being held at 6:30pm.
- Pastor Westenberg is serving the vacancy at Christ, Cochrane. Their worship service is at 11am. We pray that Christ will receive a faithful pastor soon.

Calendar Highlights

- Elder/Peter Plan mtg., Wed. July 2, 4pm
- 19-min. Bible study, Weds. July 2 & 16, 6:30pm
- Worship Planning, Sun. July 6, 10:45am
- Long range planning mtg., Mon. July 7, 7pm
- Stewardship mtg. Wed. July 9, 6pm
- VBS Planning, Mon. July 14, 21, 28, 7pm
- Bd. of Elders mtg., Tue., July 15, 4pm
- Outreach Committee mtg., Tue., July 15, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Tue., July 15, 7pm
- Bible study at The Landing, Fri. July 18, 8am
- Young adult (20s-30s) group bonfire/Prairie Island Park, Fri. July 18, 6-9pm
- BLSA Annual mtg at Christ, Cochrane, Sun 7/27, 12pm
- Quarterly voters mtg., Sun. July 27, 6pm

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 July

Jonathan Mayer	Jason Putz
Ryan Ligman	Gabriel Mayer
Michael Kafer	Mark Ellefson
Damian Jilk	

Altar Guild for July

Emily Mayer	Kelly Shaver
LaVonne McCutchen	Beverly Thaldorf
Machelle Plank	

Money Counters for July

Elroy Conradt	Mike Baures
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Ushers for August

Jess Veraguth	Joe Wick
Jim Baures	Bryan Madsen
Derek Herzberg	Josh Isakson
Travis Plank	

Altar Guild for August

Joanne Stiehl	Jenny Putz
Mikayla Stiehl	Rebecca Putz
Christine Churchill	

Money Counters for August

Harry Putz	Gerry Thaldorf
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The Coulee Region OWLS will be holding their regular monthly meeting on Thursday, July 10, 2025 at First Ev. Lutheran Church, 400 West Avenue South, La Crosse at 12:00 Noon for a potluck luncheon. Please bring a dish to pass, your own table service, and coffee will be provided. All church members – men and women age 55 or older – are welcome. Please come for a visit, enjoy the friends you meet, a good lunch, and an excellent program. There will be a free will offering.

Pre-K registration is open at St. Matthew Lutheran School, Winona. Go on the Pre-K website and fill out the Pre-K registration form (under the How to Enroll tab). Registration forms and the \$50 fee can be turned into the office. Please get them in as fast as you can. Pre-K as well as K-8 are included in Buffalo Lutheran School support. To contribute to this support that helps to provide Christian education for our youth, please use the green envelopes with your first-fruit offerings.

Launch of Young Adult Group: The Winona Area WELS Churches are launching a Young Adult (20s and 30s) group. Our goal will be to meet monthly or bimonthly (every other month) for fun and fellowship of like-aged Christian friends (please invite your friends to come along to any and all events).

We are kicking off with a Summer Bonfire Event at Prairie Island Boat Launch Pavillion on July 18th from 6pm-9pm. Brats./Hot Dogs, s'mores, and yard games will be provided. Bring your own lawn chairs, pop, and lawn games of choice if desired. There will be picnic tables and some yard games available, but more is always welcome.

To RSVP please contact Savannah Kubis 507-429-3316 or savannahkubis@gmail.com or see more info on the flyer in the fellowship area or on the bulletin board by the street entry.

Save the date!



The next WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership will be held January 19-21, 2026.