



Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church

July 2026

A Member of the WELS

Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine. When you cross through the waters, I will be with you. When you cross the rivers, they will not sweep you away. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned, and the flame will not set you on fire. Because I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. (Isa. 43:1-3)

The words above are comforting, especially for any individual who is caught in a situation that is totally out of their control. In a previous congregation I shared these words with a couple who lost their house in a fire. I have shared this Scripture with individuals heading to the hospital for a surgery that may or may not be successful. I was hoping to share them with my brother when I was in Watertown for convention in early June. My mother told me that he's going through some serious cancer treatment. Unfortunately, my brother wasn't at home when I paid him a visit.

God's Word from Isaiah 43 shows us why we have no reason to be afraid in any situation. Whether we're caught in a raging fire, in flood waters, or in a hospital bed, God's promise holds dear: "I am with you."

Think of some of the people in Scripture to whom God made that promise. Joshua was ready to take over the reigns of leading God's chosen people. Look at whom he was replacing: Moses. Moses was God's chosen leader. When the people were afraid to hear God speak, Moses spent forty days with God on Mt. Sinai. How would Joshua ever be able to fill those shoes? But God came through with words of promise. "*Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified and do not be overwhelmed, because the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*" (Joshua 1:9).

Moses addressed God's people before Joshua took over and before they took over the promised land of Canaan. He wanted them to know why they'd be successful in taking the land. Moses told them, "*Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid and do not be terrified before them, because the Lord your God is going with you. He will not abandon you and he will not forsake you.*" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

We have New Testament examples as well. The writer

to the Hebrews wanted Jewish Christians not to abandon Christ by returning to Judaism. He encouraged them to remain free from materialism and stay content in life. He urged them to do that using God's promise: "*I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you*" (13:5). When our Lord commissioned his followers to gather disciples from every nation with baptism and Jesus' teachings, he left them with this firm promise, "*Surely I am with you always until the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20).

Knowing God is omnipresent, why would we ever be afraid? Could it be that too often we live by sight and not by faith in what God has promised us? What we cannot see with our physical eyes can be seen with the eyes of faith. Since God has promised it, it must be true. So why let fear into my life. If I'm not taking God at his word, that is pure unbelief. And that merits God's wrath and eternal punishment. When we stand before him on Judgment Day, we should only hear, "*Depart from me you who are cursed*" (Matthew 25:41).

As much as we should hear those words, we never will. Instead, our Lord will invite us to stay with him forever: "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom*" (Matthew 25:34).

The reason we will hear those words, is because our Savior endured the curse for us. So we can be with him forever, he was forsaken by his own Father while he was nailed to a cross. Waiting for him on that cross was God's punishment for all sin. He was forsaken by his Father to set us free. Now we are redeemed in his precious blood. Now we are forgiven of every fearful act of unbelief and every failure to take God at his word. Our Savior's return to life on Easter proves that is true. Now we boldly live our life without fear and share with others God's precious promises.

So when troubles do enter life and life seems so out of control, don't be afraid. Turn to the One who is in control. Hold on to his every promise, which includes being with me always and working all things for my eternal good. And while we await his great promise of eternal life to come true, live each and every day to God's glory knowing God has made us his own and he takes care of his own.

A twofold celebration in Germany

On Sunday, June 14, I had the privilege of attending the 150th anniversary of our sister synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany (*Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche* or ELFK). This was not just a celebration of the synod's founding but also a celebration of 150 years of fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. That means it is the longest fellowship relationship that our synod has.

The history of the ELFK is amazing. It was founded at a time when the official state church in Germany had become extremely liberal in its teachings and had wandered far from confessional Lutheranism. There were those in the region of Saxony (the home of Lutheranism) who recognized this unfaithfulness to God's Word. Especially faithful laypeople decided they could no longer be a part of the state church. In 1876, they, along with five pastors, established five new congregations and formed their own new synod called the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church. It was called a free church because they were free and independent of the state church and its false teachings.

From the start, the ELFK received help and support, especially in theological training, from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. ELFK pastors were for the most part trained at the Missouri Synod seminary in St. Louis. Some Missouri Synod pastors also accepted calls to serve congregations of the ELFK.

Since the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods were in fellowship at that time, the fellowship relationship that the ELFK enjoyed with the Missouri Synod from its founding also brought the ELFK into fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. We have remained together since then.

God has done amazing things in the ELFK. From the original five congregations, the ELFK has grown to 17 and has expanded beyond Saxony to several other regions. Today it has 22 pastors, most of whom have been trained at their seminary in Leipzig. It also operates an elementary school in Zwickau with 150 students and a publishing house and bookstore, also in Zwickau.

ELFK has endured many challenges over the years; the most difficult was during the time of Communist control. The churches were under some severe restrictions, especially when it came to communicating with and traveling to the outside world. The end of that rule and the fall of the Berlin Wall was a special blessing.

Today the ELFK continues to hold on to the truth of God's Word. It is committed to planting new missions

in the northern and southern part of Germany and generously supports the work being done by sister synods in other countries.

Keep our German brothers and sisters in your prayers!

Serving with you in Christ,

WELS President Mark Schroeder

Enable women to thrive in their congregations

Dear Friend,

You've seen her before. Perhaps she grew up in your congregation and was confirmed there as a teenager. She sang the hymns, brought dessert to events, and even helped with Sunday school. She was part of it all. And then, slowly, quietly, she wasn't. Life simply filled up. Her attendance became occasional, then rare, and eventually, she slipped quietly out of the rhythm of congregational life. It was not because she stopped believing in Christ, but because somewhere along the way she began to wonder where she belonged in the church. You've likely noticed this too—some women are just not as present as they once were.

At the 2026 WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership, more than 1,600 WELS members gathered in Chicago to discuss this sobering reality. Young women are leaving their churches at historic rates. Most still love their Lord and treasure how Jesus has saved us from sin and death, but they struggle to see where they fit into the life of their local congregation. They feel their talents are not fully utilized. They perceive that their ideas are not heard, perhaps not even welcomed.

The good news? This doesn't have to be the end of her story. WELS Congregational Counseling and WELS Women's Ministry are working together to equip congregations to understand what's happening and to respond with wisdom, humility, love, and joy.

This is what is happening at Living Hope in Commerce City, Colo., where Christine used resources from WELS Women's Ministry to launch a women's Bible study making a real difference in many lives. Or consider Divinne Savior, in Delray Beach, Fla., which used resources from WELS Congregational Counseling to restructure, so that now ministry action teams made up of men and women are serving together under the church council to plan and carry out our Savior's mission.

Your gift makes this type of work possible. Through the consulting services of WELS Congregational Counseling, trained team members come alongside

congregational leaders to honestly assess what's happening and help them build a gospel-centered path forward, one that fully incorporates our sisters in Christ in God-pleasing ways. They use resources from WELS Women's Ministry, including Bible studies, devotions, and worship resources, and *Equip Women to Teach the Word*, a nine-lesson curriculum that walks a woman from uncertainty to confidence in leading other women into Scripture. It gathers women together through conferences and webinars where they can learn, grow, and encourage one another in their Christian callings.

That young woman who used to sit in the third pew? She hasn't given up on her faith. She's waiting for someone to show her she belongs, that her ideas are welcomed, and that her skills are needed. Your gift to WELS Congregational Counseling helps her congregation reach out to her and to be ready when she walks back through the door. Thank you for supporting us in this vital work.

In Christ's service,
Dawn Schulz
Chairwoman, WELS Women's Ministry

International convention meets, offering fellowship, encouragement, and support

From May 29–June 1, eighty-seven confessional Lutherans from around the world—including many from WELS—met in Lusaka, Zambia, for the 2026 Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) convention.

The CELC is a worldwide fellowship of Lutheran church bodies committed to the teachings of the Lutheran Church found in the Book of Concord of 1580. Established in 1993 with 13 churches, the CELC has grown by God's grace to include 35 church bodies today.

Every three years, representatives from CELC member churches around the world gather for theological discussion, fellowship, encouragement, and mutual support in their shared confession of faith. Voting attendees at this year's convention represented 22 of the 35 member churches; with guests, a total of 28 church bodies from five continents were represented.

This was the first time this triennial convention was held in Africa. "Out of the 35 member churches of the CELC, 9 of them are in Africa," says Thomas Nass, who just completed his service as CELC president. "Having the convention in Africa gives recognition to the importance of the church in Africa as a part of worldwide Christianity."

Attendees also were able to experience the unique African culture and landscape, from enjoying Sunday services at local churches in Lusaka to visiting a nearby game park. "Every delegate from non-African churches will go home and talk about the energetic singing of the African choirs that we experienced," says Nass.

As part of its official business, the group elected Nathan Seiltz, director of WELS Multi-Language Productions, as the new CELC president. Three more church bodies also were welcomed into this worldwide fellowship: the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya, *Iglesia Cristo WELS Internacional*, and Obadiah Lutheran Synod of Uganda.

Being part of this fellowship has proven important for all CELC member churches, scattered bastions of Lutheran orthodoxy. "I am deeply grateful for the fellowship we share in the CELC," says Kalyan Gollapalli, president of the Lutheran Mission of Salvation of India. "In a world filled with religious confusion and spiritual compromise, it is a great comfort to stand together with brothers and sisters who believe and confess the same Savior and the same gospel."

This partnership is also important for WELS, as Lutheranism continues to grow outside the US. "It seems that God has put us in this position—that we are coming upon more and more confessional Lutheran brothers around the world," says Nass. "This makes me think that the CELC is more and more important as an organization that can provide a worldwide gathering place for these churches and a place where the unity in faith can be strengthened and where they can help and support one another."

God-willing, the next CELC convention will take place in 2029 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., the same year as the 100th anniversary of the Mequon campus.

Learn more about the CELC at celc.info.

Five new district presidents elected

Five new district presidents were elected during the 12 WELS district conventions held this June. Each WELS district holds a convention once every two years, in the year between synod conventions. These conventions allow delegates to consider local ministry topics and issues that apply to the synod at large and to hold elections for district officers and committee members.

The new district presidents elected by the convention delegates will join the other district presidents reelected to their positions, the synod president, and the two synod vice presidents to form WELS' Conference of Presidents, which maintains the synod's doctrine and

practice and is responsible for funding the synod budget. The new district presidents are Paul Seager, South Central District; Stephen Helwig, Nebraska District; Kevin Westra, Northern Wisconsin District; Jonathan Schroeder, South Atlantic District; and Benjamin Tomczak, Dakota-Montana District.

The districts in which new presidents were elected all knew that they would be electing a new district president because the presidents in those districts did not stand for reelection or, in the case of Donald Patterson of the South Central District, could not stand for reelection because of a new call. The other men who completed their service on the Conference of Presidents are Philip Hirsch, Nebraska District; Joel Zank, Northern Wisconsin District; Charles Westra, South Atlantic District; and Douglas Free, Dakota-Montana District.

“We thank God and these men for their faithful service and pray for God’s continued blessing on their ministry,” says WELS President Mark Schroeder. “We pray for the Spirit’s wisdom and guidance on the five brothers in Christ as they begin serving their districts and their synod in this new role.”

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

What’s going on at St. Michael’s

- The vacancy at Christ in Cochrane continues. On June 14, district President Jensen met with members of Christ. It was suggested that a semi-retired pastor would best serve Christ’s need at this time. We’ll keep you informed of anything further.
- A Joint Mission Festival will be held with members of Christ in Cochrane here at St. Michael’s on Sunday, August 30. Pastor Dan Sims from WELS Christian Aid and Relief will be our guest presenter and preacher. Presentation is at 8:15am; service at 9:30am; and potluck meal at 11am.
- Support is still needed for members affected by the April 17 storm. Your prayers, donations, & comfort are greatly appreciated. Though the free-will offering at church has stopped, you can keep giving by sending your gift to WELS CMM, Attn: Christian Aid and Relief, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha, WI 53188.
- With summer’s warm weather, we make use of it by inviting the unchurched in our area to join us for worship and other activities. Visits are being made on Saturdays in July. Ask Pastor how you can help.
- A fond farewell to Merf & Molly Klebig as they move out of the area. Please sign the card at church where you circle your name for attendance.

Calendar Highlights

- Board of Elders mtg. Wed. July 1, 5pm
- 19-min. Bible study, Wed. July 1 & 15, 6:30pm
- Worship Planning mtg., Fri. July 3, 8am
- Stewardship Committee mtg., Wed. July 8, 6pm
- Outreach mtg., Sun. July 12, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Sun., July 12, 6:30pm
- VBS planning mtgs., Sat. July 18 & 25, 9am
- Quarterly Voters mtg., Sun. July 19, 6pm

Your Council Members

Mark Horstman	President/Education
Kyle Wolfe	Secretary
Ben Kafer	Outreach
Jim Baures	Treasurer/Stewardship
Jess Veraguth	Properties
Mike Baures	Financial Secretary/Elders

Those Who Help

Ushers for July

Ben Kafer	Jason Putz
Kyle Wolfe	Charles Heller
Michael Kafer	Mark Ellefson
Damian Jilk	

Altar Guild for July

LaVonne McCutchen	Patty Mayer
Machelle Plank	Lydia Mayer
Emily Mayer	

Money Counters for July

Elroy Conradt	Michael Baures
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Ushers for August

Jess Veraguth	Bryan Madsen
Jim Baures	Josh Isakson
Travis Plank	Daniel Wantock
Joe Wick	

Altar Guild for August

Joanne Stiehl	Jenny Putz
Mikayla Stiehl	Rebecca Wolfe
Christine Churchill	

Money Counters for August

Gerry Thaldorf	Harry Putz
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The **Coulee Region OWLS** will be holding their monthly meeting on Thu., July 9, at First Ev. Lutheran Church, 400 West Ave., South, La Crosse at 12pm with a potluck luncheon. Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Coffee will be provided. All church members, men and women age 55 or older, are welcome. The program will be Bill Wojahn giving us insights into the American Civil War. Please come for a visit, enjoy the friends you meet, a good lunch & an interesting program. There will be a free will offering.

VBS Registration: Sign up your children today using St. Michael’s website: www.stmichaelscfc.org.