



Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church

August 2026

A Member of the WELS

If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. In fact, whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. After all, what will it benefit a person if he gains the whole, but forfeits his soul? Or what can a person give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24-26)

Jesus values your soul. The Scripture above follows the time when our Lord asked his disciples who people said he was. The disciples listed a number of important figures from Israel's history. Then Jesus asked them, "And what about you, who do you say I am?" That's when Peter offered his beautiful confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The disciples had finally come to learn who Jesus was. Then Jesus wanted them to know what it would cost him for them to keep following him. *From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests and experts in the law, and be killed, and on the third day be raised again* (Mt 16:21). These words show just how valuable our souls are to Jesus. He was willing to suffer much, even give up his life so our souls remain safely in his care for eternity.

Sadly, it was offensive for the disciples to hear Jesus talk about his own suffering and death. Peter even took him aside and scolded him for talking that way. It still offends people today. Back when I was at the seminary, our synod put together a commercial for television that would make people more aware of the Wisconsin Synod. The scene opened with a pair of hands that were bound with ropes. Then those hands we set free because of another set of hands. When that 2nd set of hands opened up, it showed blood flowing down from the palms. It reminds us how Jesus freed us from sin with the blood he shed for us on Calvary. I later asked some of my relatives who are not WELS what they thought about the commercial. I was surprised to hear that they were offended by the graphic scene. That Jesus would die such a horrific death was more than his first followers wanted to hear. But it had to happen that way. For "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). Our Lord values souls that much. It cost him his life.

So what price are we willing to pay to keep our souls with Jesus? Jesus tells us what cost we must pay to follow him to heaven. Deny self; take up cross; and follow him. To remain one of his followers is not cheap. It's not easy. Our Lord tells you that if you value your soul, you will have to disregard your own interests and go after only what pleases the Lord. It no longer matters what you and I want. What God wants is what counts. Following Jesus is not easy. We will have crosses to bear. By a cross we're not talking about the normal pains or illnesses that come from living in a sinful world. These things happen to people whether they believe in Jesus or not. But any dishonor, disgrace, or shame you receive from following Christ—these are the crosses we must bear.

No it isn't easy to follow Jesus. But is it worth it? Jesus told his disciples, "whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." If you want to enjoy life with your Lord forever, you must lose a life that selfishly looks to gain. You must lose a life that is controlled by Satan and is encouraged by life's sinful pleasures. If you want to keep that life, you will lose your life with Christ. A life with Christ assures us of eternal pleasures. And following Jesus with all its crosses is worth it. It can only end in eternal life.

Our Lord asks, "what will it benefit a person if he gains the whole, but forfeits his soul? Or what can a person give in exchange for his soul? The answers are obvious. It would be no good at all to lose your soul. And there is nothing in the whole world that is equal in value to your soul.

So what is the most valuable thing you possess? I hope we can all agree that it's our soul. We never want to take our souls for granted. If something is valuable to you, say your house, your car, an expensive piece of jewelry, you will spend a lot of time and effort maintaining its quality. How about your soul? How much time and effort will you spend to maintain it? Are you doing all you can to insure it for eternity? How's your attendance in worship and Bible study? How's your devotional life in private or as a family? Will you do these things? It depends on how you value your soul.

Celebrating 150 years of fellowship with our German sister synod

Dear Friend,

One hundred fifty years is a long time to remain faithful to the truth that compelled you into existence—and to the relationships that helped sustain you.

We give special thanks to God this year for our Christian brothers and sisters of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) in Germany. For 150 years, God's grace and power helped them weather many trials, remain faithful to his Word, and preserve our blessed fellowship.

When Lutheran laypeople in Saxony saw that their state church practiced open Communion and replaced the pledge to teach the "pure doctrine of Scripture" with the subjective opinion of the pastor, they protested. Creation was taught as a legend, and the Trinity was flatly denied. When the state church ignored them, faithful laypeople felt compelled to form a free church—as opposed to a state church—built on the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

God blessed that painful, necessary step. The ELFK grew to more than 100 pastors and congregations. Then the Wall went up. Congregations in the East were cut off. Decades later, when the Wall came down, everything had changed; most congregations no longer believed and taught what they once had.

Through it all, God's grace preserved them. Today, the ELFK is relatively small—16 congregations, 16 pastors, and 1,200 members. Yet it is amazing to see all that God does through them—a bookstore, a seminary, a school, publications, and media outreach, to name just a few.

Still, our 1,200 brothers and sisters in Christ face challenges. During this anniversary year, the ELFK wants to expand its gospel work, and WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) would like to help.

ELFK's school is bursting at the seams. They need to add on at a cost of \$1 million dollars. While they raised two-thirds themselves, one-third is still needed for construction to begin this summer. Their Leipzig congregation has also outgrown its space. On Sundays, members worship in three rooms across two floors. They need help purchasing property for a suitable church. In addition, the ELFK provides \$1,800 a month in stipends to support their seminary students—and this fund, too, needs support.

One hundred seventy-five years ago, a tiny, fledgling Wisconsin Synod needed help. We needed pastors. And

we needed money to build a school to train our own workers. God graciously provided both—through brothers and sisters in Germany.

Today, we have an opportunity to repay their kindness—and to thank God for the blessing our brothers and sisters in the ELFK have been to us for generations. For 150 years, we have enjoyed their fellowship and been blessed by it. They are gifted, well-trained, and very dedicated coworkers in the kingdom of God as we share the saving gospel of Jesus. This year, especially, we thank God for them. With gratitude in our hearts to God, we have an opportunity to do for them what their spiritual forefathers once did for us.

In Christ,
James Danell
CICR Member

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for 150 years of fellowship between WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Germany and for the shared commitment to stand firmly on your Word. Continue to bless this partnership as brothers and sisters across the world encourage each other, train future pastors, and proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus. Strengthen this church body in Germany and all our sister synods as they serve in places where faithfulness can feel lonely and difficult. Use this global network of believers to bring your Spirit's life-giving power through the means of grace to many more people. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Tornado damages WELS church and school

Around noon on Monday, July 27, a tornado ripped through northeastern Wisconsin, causing severe damage to Bethel, Menasha, a bilingual WELS church with about 500 members. The tornado also damaged the Menasha location of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Preschool, which is located on Bethel's property and is a shared ministry of Bethel and Mount Calvary, Harrison.

Preliminary assessments from the National Weather Service have classified the tornado as an EF-3 with sustained winds of 140 miles per hour. It traveled 12.1 miles, significantly damaging property in Menasha, Appleton, and several other nearby communities. No fatalities have been reported.

Dan Sims, director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, visited the area on Tuesday, July 28, and notes, "Our assessment team met with local pastors and church leaders. We also visited Bethel and the surrounding neighborhood. The devastation we witnessed was heartbreaking. At the same time, it was encouraging to

see people already beginning the long process of cleaning up and rebuilding. Those we spoke with were in remarkably good spirits despite the challenges they face.” WELS Christian Aid and Relief is working to determine how it can best assist after this disaster. For more information on how to support WELS Christian Aid and Relief in these recovery efforts, visit wels.net/relief.

The Unglamorous, Unseen Work

What is being a new mission pastor like? Well, that’s a question that I pondered a lot in the beginning stages of our mission in Brandon, South Dakota. (Hopefully I have a better answer to that now.) In some ways, a new mission pastor does a lot of the stuff that all pastors do—preach, teach, visit, and reach out. But one big difference that became clear very quickly was the necessity to work *on* the church and not just work *in* the church. (These are terms that I learned through our Church Planter Intensive program.)

Here’s the distinction: an established church has a culture, lots of systems, and general practices that have been in place for a long while, but a new mission has none of those things. Culture, systems, and practices need to be developed for this new congregation. This takes some dedicated time and forethought.

Now, maybe you hear those words, and your eyes are already starting to glaze over because this is not the exciting stuff, right? Who doesn’t love to hear the stories of people getting connected to the gospel for the first time? Who doesn’t yearn to hear the stories of someone having their entire life transformed by the gospel? But do you really want to take time to hear about developing a system to make sure new prospects are added into a people management system?

Probably not. But the truth is that a big part of the beginning stages of a mission includes this vital but seemingly less exciting work of formulating ways to build a culture, systems to govern the work, and practices that fit your context.

Think of it like lifting weights in the gym for the first time. You could put in all the effort in the world, but if you have poor form as you are doing the lifts, you are likely to either be injured along the way or not accomplish your stated goals. But if someone takes the time to walk you through proper form and you learn it, all of your energy and effort will go toward making you healthier, growing stronger, and moving closer to your goals.

This is the value of taking time to formulate ways to build a culture, develop systems to govern the work, and think through practices that fit your context. By

working on these aspects, we are developing proper form so that (from an earthly perspective) we can move in a cohesive and worthwhile direction.

What’s the “so what”? Here’s one: Don’t be afraid to slow down and invest in the unglamorous work of building proper form (and give your pastor time and encouragement to do this work). Culture, systems, and practices put in place now can be very beneficial in the long-term ministry and overall health of the congregation.

Here’s another “so what”: Keep praying for the stories of changed lives and new believers, but don’t stop there. Pray for the unseen work that will shape congregations for years to come. That work may never make it onto the front page of publications, but it’s a big part of what keeps the exciting work going.

Written by Craig Wilke, home missionary at [Sure Foundation](http://SureFoundation.org) in Brandon, South Dakota.

Martin Luther College faces licensure challenge

Throughout June 2026, Martin Luther College (MLC) shared information regarding the status of the licensure eligibility for all of its education programs as a result of review by the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). As of June 26, 2026, PELSB temporarily discontinued licensure eligibility for all 16 of MLC’s teacher education programs.

As MLC noted in a statement following this ruling, “The recent PELSB decision to discontinue the license eligibility is not debating the quality of MLC’s graduates. Rather, it relates to how MLC demonstrates, through documented assessment and evidence, that discipline-specific content standards within MLC’s teacher education programs are consistently being met and those programs continuously improved. . . . MLC graduates will continue to graduate as highly qualified Lutheran teachers, fully prepared to serve in WELS schools. They will graduate as ministry-certified and eligible for a call into the teaching ministry.”

MLC leadership has begun to take the steps necessary to resolve this situation and eventually reapply for licensure. To read the full statement from MLC, visit mlc-wels.edu/pelsb-update.

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 as Pastor gets help with guest preaching and with shut

in visits. No calls for their next pastor yet. We'll keep you informed of anything further.

- VBS is being held at the FC park on Sat. Aug. 8 with onsite registration beginning at 8:30am. Volunteers are still needed as well as canopies for shade. Let us know if you can provide yourself and some shade.
- Joint services with Christ in Cochrane will be held this month. On Sun. Aug. 9th a 9:30am outdoor service will be held at the FC park followed by a potluck picnic lunch. On Sun. Aug. 30 Mission Fest will be held at St. Michael's with a presentation at 8:15am, 9:30am worship, 10:40am Ministry Fair, and 11am potluck meal. A free-will offering will be taken to support WELS Christian Aid and Relief.
- Choir practice for Mission Fest will be held on Sundays, Aug. 16 & 23 following our worship.
- Support is still needed for members affected by the April 17 storm. Your prayers, donations, & comfort are greatly appreciated. Send your gift to WELS CMM, Attn: Christian Aid and Relief, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha, WI 53188.
- A committee was recently formed and met to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our organ (installed Dec. 2, 2001). The Committee has chosen Sunday, Nov. 8 for the celebration. Keep an eye open for upcoming details.
- BLSA board meets at Christ in Cochrane on Sun. Aug. 2 at 12pm. BLSA annual mtg. is held at Christ on Sun. Aug. 16 at 12pm.
- 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 most Saturdays in August. Ask Pastor how you can help.

Calendar Highlights

- VBS planning mtg. at FC Park, Sat. Aug. 1, 8am
- Instrument practice at FC Park, Sat. Aug. 1, 9am
- BLSA Bd. mtg. at Cochrane, Sun. Aug. 2, 12pm
- Board of Elders mtg. Wed. Aug. 5, 5pm
- 19-min. Bible study, Wed. Aug. 5 & 19, 6:30pm
- VBS at FC park, Sat. Aug. 8, 9am-1:30pm
- Outdoor worship/FC park, Sun. Aug. 9, 9:30am
- Worship Planning mtg., Sat. Aug. 15, 8am
- BLSA annual mtg./Cochrane, Sun. Aug. 16, 12pm
- Outreach mtg., Sun. Aug. 16, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Sun., Aug. 16, 6:30pm
- Bible Study/The Landing, Fri. Aug. 21, 8am
- Mission Festival, Sun. Aug. 30, 8:15am Presentation 9:30am Worship; 10:40am Ministry Fair; 11am potluck meal
- SS Teachers mtg. Mon. Aug. 31, 7pm

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 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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Ushers for September

Mike Baures	Harry Putz
Mark Horstman	Zach Czaplewski
Paul Churchill	Brayden Stiehl
Brandon Churchill	

Altar Guild for September

Debbie Putz	Ruth Hohmann
Chris Buswell	Susan Suhr

Money Counters for September

Roger Bechly	Kevin Buswell
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The **Coulee Region OWLS** will be holding their monthly meeting on Thursday, August 13, 2026 at First Ev. Lutheran Church, 400 West Avenue South, La Crosse at 12:00 Noon 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. Our program will be a Singalong of Christian Hymns with Mrs. Vicki Riness. Please come for a visit, enjoy the friends you meet, a good lunch and an enjoyable program of singing. There will be a free will offering.

Save the Date—2027 National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts—New Ulm, MN, June 15-18, 2027 (Let us know if you plan to attend so we can budget for it at our October voter's mtg.)

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