Good News-Letter

St. Michael's Ev. Lutheran Church November 2026 A Member of the WELS

This month we end our church year with thanksgiving. On November 8 we will show our thanksgiving for our church organ that has served us well the past 25 years. On November 25 we'll gather for our final worship service of Thanksgiving, praising our gracious God for all his physical and spiritual blessings.

On the last Sunday of the month, we'll begin a new church year. Next year our Gospel readings will mainly come from the Gospel of St. Mark. Here's some background material I recently found on Mark.

So then, what can we say of St. Mark? He is not a famous world missionary. He is not an eternally quoted theologian. He is always a student, ever a helper. In his book he tells us nothing about himself… He just wants us to see and come to know Jesus. And is that not a comforting thought for us all by itself? Most of us are not all that important either. We live out our lives and then pass into the dust of history like St. Mark. Ah, but what use God made of him for our benefit in giving us this beautiful record of our Lord's words and works for us and for our salvation. And isn't that what we would like to have ultimately as our legacy, whether we are remembered or not? Is not our greatest honor this, that like St. Mark we hear the Words of Jesus, treasure it and him in a shrine of our forgiven hearts? Then we even get to pass him and his Word on to those around us, to our family and friends, the next generation! That finally is what St. Mark wanted. We need ask for nothing more.

Mark's gospel divides neatly into two chief parts. The first half, chapters 1:1—8:26, concentrates on the deeds of Jesus by which he showed himself to be the Son of God, the promised Savior. While never neglecting Jesus' teaching, the emphasis is on the proofs he gave of his right to teach by his works that proved that he is indeed God's own Son. The second half of the gospel, chapters 8:27—16:20, concentrates more on Jesus' teaching, while never fully leaving behind miracles that proved that he is God in the flesh stood behind his every word taught. Mark bids each of us, one by one, to follow after Jesus in his deeds and in his teaching; both his words and his deeds draw us into the heart of God. Especially when we come to the Passion History, each of us, all alone, stripped of all merit and worthiness, must be confronted by Jesus. Each must look into the heart of the God made flesh who allowed himself to be stripped of all dignity and who instead let himself be covered with every humiliation. Each must see him there on the cross, with all the Father's wrath against our sin poured out and over the Son. May each one of us bow low with deepest grief over the suffering his own sin caused. Then may each rise with unbounded joy at the same time over what Jesus' suffering has accomplished. With the shadow of the cross ever in view and with the open tomb before our eyes, may each cry out in faith worked by the Word: *Surely this One is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, MY Savior* (Mark 15:40)! And then may we heed the command of the angel to the women on Easter Sunday; the angel told the disciples to go and find Jesus *where he promised to be* (Mark 16:7)! That remains our great joy, to find Jesus and be found by him where he has promised to be—in his Word, in his sacraments, and in the church, where such are preached and taught and dispensed in their truth and purity.

It is useful to remember that Mark's gospel was addressed initially to gentile readers, especially, we suppose, to Christians in Rome. Their very presence in the power center of the world in their day would have made Mark's emphasis on Jesus' powerful word and powerful works especially thought provoking. Are the words of the emperor and the Roman senate powerful? They are nothing compared to the Word of God that overcomes unbelief and creates saving faith. Is the might of the invincible Roman army greater than any power ever seen? It is nothing compared to the power of the King from heaven made flesh, who rose from the dead and who gives resurrection of body and soul to those who believe in him.

The gospel starts with the proclamation of the kingdom of God by St. John the Baptist. It continues throughout with the preaching of repentance and the creation of the kingdom of God through the gospel of forgiveness. What Jesus said, what Jesus did, always has that as its motivation and goal. By it all he wants the kingdom of God, his gracious rule in our hearts and lives, to come to us by faith in his forgiving grace and word and work.

(*Your Kingdom Come, Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, Daniel M. Deutschlander, Preface)

Women serve in world missions

In the same way that women actively served in the work of the early Christian church, WELS is using women's gifts to share the gospel with other women in situations where it may be culturally inappropriate for men to do so. Larry Schlomer, administrator for WELS World Missions, explains how this is happening today.

In our mission work in the Dominican Republic, I was often amazed at what my wife learned during a visit. I would be outside talking with the men while the women prepared a meal inside, with lively conversation and a lovely sense of sisterhood. That was territory where men weren't "allowed." My wife came away knowing more about the families, their challenges, and the spiritual life of the home than I had learned outside. I could not have ministered nearly as effectively without the insight she gained in conversations I simply could not have had. I wrote more about why those opportunities matter in a recent *Straight talk: Women in world missions* article in Forward in Christ magazine.

Today, WELS World Missions has three women serving in full-time missionary roles across three regions of the world. While their day-to-day work can be as varied as the three different continents where they live and work, they share a common focus: building relationships with women, encouraging them in God's Word, and equipping them to share that Word with others.

Here's a glimpse at what that work looks like.

Jennifer Wolfgramm – Europe

Jennifer Wolfgramm, women's ministry coordinator for the Europe Team, continues connecting women with God's Word across borders. She leads an online inter-European Bible study and recently completed Bible Information Classes with her first student, who is preparing for confirmation. She also is preparing Bible studies and devotions for a women's retreat in Finland. Jennifer recently shared more about the online Bible study, which brings together women from different countries for time in God's Word and Christian fellowship.

Elise Gross – Latin America

Elise Gross, director of women's ministry for *Academia Cristo*, is coaching women involved in church-planting efforts in Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Argentina. She is guiding three women through the confession of faith process, studying together to make sure they share the same biblical beliefs, and she recently taught an *Academia Cristo* course attended by more than 60 women. One example of this ministry in action is Elise's connection with Nahir, an *Academia Cristo* student, who became the first confessional WELS Lutheran in Uruguay and now shares God's Word with others.

These women aren't carrying out a separate mission. They are part of the mission Christ has given his church, using the gifts and opportunities God has given them to share his Word and strengthen fellow believers. We pray that the Lord continues to open doors for this work so that more people may know Christ and share his Word with others.

Rev. Larry Schlomer
Administrator, WELS World Missions

We thank the Lord of the Church for providing women missionaries who have hearts for advancing the gospel, and we ask his richest blessings on their missions and the women they are reaching.

Serving together with you in Christ,

WELS President Mark Schroeder

Organization of WELS Lutherans Seniors dissolves corporation

"Closing down [an] organization isn't failure; it is just a symptom of the laws of organizations. Organizations have a life span."

Retired Pastor Mark Jeske passed along that observation in his sermon at the opening worship service of the 2026 Convention of the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) held in Brookfield, Wis., October 13-15, 2026.

This year's convention had a familiar-looking schedule of keynote speakers and breakout presentations, but the business meeting agenda listed an unprecedented item: a board recommendation to dissolve the corporation. Of the delegates present, 89 percent subsequently voted in favor of the recommendation.

Mike Thom, OWLS executive director, explains what led to the recommendation and the endorsing vote: "The numbers tell the story. Back in 2004, we had around 1,700 members, and now we're down to a little more than 550." The number of local OWLS chapters similarly has decreased from 80 to 25. Having fewer members in the organization has made it increasingly difficult to fill leadership positions on the national board.

But while the OWLS corporation is being dissolved, local OWLS chapters can continue to function. That is an important legacy for Gerald Steffen, OWLS president. He notes, "If we accomplished nothing else than to get senior groups started in congregations, it was worth it."

Linda Liesener, a member at David's Star, Jackson, Wis., is president of her regional OWLS chapter. She views the future of OWLS this way: "Senior members want a place to continue meeting to share their faith through friendship—sometimes with a speaker, potlucks, tours, or playing games and cards. The dissolution of the national organization is not the end of friendships or ministry support; it is an opportunity to evaluate and expand our local efforts."'

That's the prayer of Joel Gaertner, director of WELS Special Ministries. "OWLS has given many [people] opportunities to serve and enjoy fellowship over the years," he says. "We pray that this continues with senior groups on a local level across the country."

The OWLS' Bylaws mandated that, in the event of the organization's dissolution, all proceeds would be given to WELS Special Ministries, the area of ministry that oversaw the organization. It is anticipated that such proceeds will be approximately $122,000. OWLS formally requested—and received assurance—that WELS Special Ministries, in turn, will send proceeds to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., for the general scholarship fund.

OWLS is updating its website to reflect these changes and will soon include a listing of local OWLS groups.

Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum discusses theological issues

The biennial meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum, which consists of leaders of WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), took place October 19-20, 2026, at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis.

A synod of about 120 congregations, the ELS is headquartered in Mankato, Minn., and has been in fellowship with WELS for 150 years. While leaders of the two synods routinely discuss matters of doctrine and church organization, they meet formally for two days every two years to discuss issues facing both synods. Included in those meetings are representatives from administration, missions, higher education, schools, communications, and stewardship. The group discusses theological issues, usually hearing presentations through prepared essays. Representatives also participate in individual meetings with their counterparts to discuss mutual opportunities and challenges.

Charlie Vannieuwenhoven, administrator of the WELS Board for Ministerial Education, attended the meeting for the first time this year. "It was good to meet with the representatives from Bethany Lutheran College [Mankato, Minn.] and talk about the challenges that especially small private colleges are facing," he says. "Talking together through and about these issues is what helps to strengthen the unity that we enjoy."

The next meeting will take place in October 2028 and will be hosted by the ELS in Mankato, Minn.

"We thank God for this fellowship, which he has made possible, and we pray that these meetings will continue to be opportunities for our church bodies to strengthen our fellowship ties through ongoing discussion of God's Word and the mission he has given us," says WELS President Mark Schroeder.

"Rubbing elbows" to connect community to Christ

Every congregation has to figure out ways to reach their community in order to connect people to God's Word. At King of Kings, a mission restart in Willoughby, Ohio, one of our main strategies has been to go off campus to "rub elbows" with people outside our church. There are many more opportunities to serve than most people realize, even right in their own backyard! We regularly send crews to help out at local events. We've done things like park the display cars for a car show downtown; help with the Willoughby ArtsFest, by far the largest event in our county; label and hand out free water bottles to thirsty attendees at Last Stop Willoughby, a full day festival that includes an outdoor market and all kinds of activities; and take a Saturday to help with a Miracle League Baseball game for people with special needs. Our goal is to demonstrate that we want to be part of our community and that we're here to serve. To that end, we've also held successful events on our campus. Our recent Family Fall Fest brought around 200 people to us. During Advent, we hold our Christmas Cookie Connection, where we provide all the items needed to decorate Christmas cookies.

This past spring, we hosted a series of free low impact exercise classes for seniors. It became a regular group of mostly non-members who got to know each other a bit and are hoping we host another series in the future. In our disconnected world, people are looking to make safe, comfortable connections.

Going out to where people are living their lives is essential and will always be our main strategy. We only have two WELS churches in the Cleveland Metro area with a population of over 2 million people. That also means that sometimes, just being present and available, makes a difference.

A story that illustrates that point is about an 18 year-old young man named Ashton. He moved in down the street and wanted to get connected to God's Word. He came to King of Kings all by himself one Sunday

morning, kept coming, and has since become a member. Since that first visit, he has brought his mother, father, brother, sister, niece, grandfather, and grandmother at different times. He invited a good friend to attend with him, and that resulted in an adult baptism. Ashton appreciates how welcoming we are, and, most importantly, the message of Christ's forgiveness that is front and center in everything we do.

Ashton's story reminds us why we're here to do what we do. We would love to have a congregation of 150 souls, build a new building to serve more people, and provide many more opportunities to gather around God's Word and sacrament. God-willing, those things will happen, but along the way, it's still about reaching people one by one with the good news of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Written by Jeff Duquaine, home missionary at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Willoughby, Ohio

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 preaching and with shut in visits. No calls for their next pastor yet. We'll keep you informed of anything further.
- 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.
- We're celebrating the 25th Anniversary of our church organ with a special service on November 8. An organ recital by guest organist Greg Baures will be held at 9am before our 9:30am worship service. At 11:15am a catered meal will follow in the church basement. Please sign up for the meal where you circle your name for worship. We hope all of you can join us in the celebration.
- New doors are replacing the bluff side entrance and outside door to the sacristy room. We're also in need of a new chancel piano. A piano fund has been created allowing you to contribute for a new piano. Please leave your gift in the offering plate in an envelope marked "Piano Fund."
- An open forum will be held on Sunday, Nov. 29 following our worship service to discuss our future use of our synod's newest hymnal. This discussion will aid our voters in a special meeting following worship on December 13. This open forum and special voters mtg. was decided at the Quarterly voters mtg. on Oct. 25. If it is decided to keep using the hymnal's Service Builder, we'll save on costs.

Calendar Highlights

- Area Reformation Service/Lewiston, Nov. 1, 2pm
- Bd. of Elders mtg., Wed. Nov. 4, 5pm
- 19-min. Bible study, Wed. Nov. 4 & 18, 6:30pm
- Worship Planning mtg., Sat. Nov. 7, 8am
- Organ Anniversary Celebration, Sun. Nov. 8, 9am recital; 9:30am worship; 11:15am catered meal
- Pastors Circuit mtg./MN City, Tue. Nov. 10, 9:30am
- Luther delegates mtg., Wed. Nov. 11, 7:30pm
- Ladies Aid mtg. Sat. Nov. 14, 9am
- Outreach Committee mtg., Sun. Nov. 15, 5:30pm
- Church Council mtg., Sun., Nov. 15, 6:30pm
- SS Teachers mtg. Tue. Nov. 24, 7pm
- Thanksgiving Worship, Wed. Nov. 25, 6:30pm
- Children's Christmas practice, Sat. Nov. 28, 9am
- Open Forum, Sun. Nov. 29, 10:30am

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 November

Jim Baures	Hudson Baures
Jess Veraguth	Gerry Thaldorf
Jordan Suhr	Elliot Kozlowski
Matthew Baures	

Altar Guild for November

Becky Suhr	Kyler Ernst
Donna Ernst	Renata Wojchik

Money Counters for November

Harry Putz	Gerry Thaldorf

Ushers for December

Mark Horstman	Allen Glowdowski
Mike Baures	Jim Wick
Paul Isakson	Dennis Wolfe

Altar Guild for October

Jean Burmeister	Yvonne Tamke
Clarissa Gross	Cally Ligman

Money Counters for October

Roger Bechly	Kevin Buswell

Save the Date—2027 National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts—New Ulm, MN, June 15-18, 2027.