



DIVINE SAVIOR
Lutheran Church
102 Northridge Dr. Shawano, WI 54166

MESSENGER

January 2021

Special Dates in January

Choir Practice

Weds. @ 6:30 p.m.

Endow. Comm. Mtg.

11th @ 4:30 p.m.

Co-or. Council Mtg.

12th @ 6:30 p.m.

Voters Mtg.

24th @ 10:15 a.m.

Food Pantry

1/7 & 1/28

1:00– 3:00 p.m.

Pray & Play

Tuesdays

3–4:30 p.m.

Worship service times.

Sun. 9:00 & 10:30 am

Mon. 6:30 p.m.

Our God is...Infinite

“You are!”

“No, you are!”

“Yeah? Well, you are times a gazillion!”

Katie knew that gazillion was going to be tough to beat, but thinking hard she finally proclaimed: “Oh yeah? Well, you are ... to infinity!”

His jaw dropped because Joey knew his sister had him beat. How could he compete with *infinity*?

Simply put, infinity means stretching on and on, without any end. When something is infinite it has no boundaries. It is unlimited and immeasurably great.

The Bible helps us understand the concept as it describes God. ““Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?” declares the LORD. ‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:24).

There is only One who is everywhere, who always has been, who always will be, who had no beginning, and who will have no end. That is God.

God wants us to feel good about him being infinite.

As we begin a new year, it can be great to know that God is always with us. Wherever the year takes us, God will be there too.

The comfort of God’s unending presence is ours through faith in his Son, Jesus. As the Apostle Paul says: “In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).

God knows everything we think, everything we do, and most importantly, he knows everything we need. In fact, God already took care of our greatest need. He sent his infinite Son to be our Savior! Trust him.

Joey and Katie challenged each other with the concept of infinity. Come and visit us to learn more about the only one who can truly change your life so you have comfort that will last...to infinity!

PARISH NEWS

Congregational Changes last month:

Added:

Transferred:

Released:

Called Home to Jesus:

Current Congregational Stats: communicants: 156 souls: 169



“I’m ‘Scused!”

Today, we’re going to talk about forgiveness. I’ve been thinking about it every time my two-year-old burps or toots. Odd thought? Well, every time she says, “Excuse me,” and we start to tell her, “You’re excused,” she jumps right in with, “I’m ‘scused!” She’s that sure that we are going to excuse her that she just knows and can blurt out, “I’m ‘scused!” without any doubt.

That’s what forgiveness is like, when God forgives us. We talk about it all the time, how God forgave us through Jesus. We recount it so matter-of-factly that it seems there’s no doubt. But we aren’t really as confident as a two-year-old in this belief. When we ask God, “Forgive me,” we’re never so ready to accept that forgiveness as fact and blurt out, “I’m ‘given!” We say that it’s true. We hope that it’s true. But do we always trust that it’s true? I would say no.

Maybe that’s why God tells us so frequently, and why he gave us the command to forgive. We need the constant the constant reassurance. But not only that. We need the constant forgiveness, given again and again, every time that we sin. We see this played out at nearly every worship service when we recite the *Confession and Absolution* portion of our liturgy. After we confess our sins, the pastor absolves you of your sins, telling you they are forgiven, that God forgave them. Therefore, you are forgiven.

When you believe that Jesus earned forgiveness your sins, that he has set you free from condemnation, and you repent of your sins and ask God to forgive you, then you can trust entirely that God has forgiven your sins. Jesus told his disciples, **“Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”** (Mark 11:24)

Jesus was talking about praying for things out of faith. If your prayer is out of faith, then God hears that prayer and grants it in the way that is according to his will. When you ask for forgiveness, God grants it because Jesus has already earned it for you. Yes, we continue to sin. And God continues to forgive us. We can be absolutely certain of this, not just hope that it is true. When we ask God to forgive us when we repent of our sins, we can know and boldly say, “I’m forgiven,” with the same confidence as a little girl blurting out, “I’m ‘scused!”

We pray: Jesus, thank you for living perfectly, fulfilling the law of your Father, so that you could be the sacrifice needed to forgive our sins. Help us to live our lives in thanksgiving for all that you have done and continue to do for us each day. Amen

In Christ,
Pastor Wolf B. Parsons

News Bits and Pieces

New Church Office Hours

Beginning the week of January 10, a Church Secretary will be in the office from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays only. While some days the secretary may arrive at work before 9:00 and remain later than 11:00, the normal office hours will be the two-hour period between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. two days each week.

Recent experience has shown that the normal work load for the church office secretary can fit into four hours per week. Scheduling Tuesdays and Thursdays for the secretary's office time synchronizes well with the weekly work routine for preparing worship bulletins, processing data, and getting out monthly newsletters along with other reports and correspondence.

The Advent Wreath

Having just completed Advent, the first season in the Church Year, we have become familiar once again with the Advent Wreath. But are we aware of the symbolism contained in it?

There are different traditions, or customs, involving the wreath, but one published last year by Martin Luther College, the WELS ministerial college, is enlightening and is reprinted here.

"The word *advent* means 'coming.' Christians celebrate the season of Advent as a time of preparation and reflection in anticipation of Christ's coming to earth at Christmas.

"The Advent wreath itself, a circle, represents the unending love of God. Evergreens adorning the wreath symbolize the hope of eternal life. The four candles set in the wreath represent the four Sundays until Christmas Day. Some traditions add a fifth candle, the Christ candle.

"The lighting of the candles each week in Advent marks the growing anticipation for the birth of Christ, the Light of the World.

"1. **The Prophecy Candle:** Also called the Hope Candle, this violet or blue candle symbolizes the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's coming.

"2. **The Bethlehem Candle:** Also called the Peace Candle, this violet or blue candle symbolizes the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem.

"3. **The Shepherds' Candle:** Also called the Joy Candle, this rose-colored candle symbolizes the

coming of the Savior into the hearts and lives of believers, like the shepherds and like us.

"4. **The Angels' Candle:** Also called the Good News Candle, this violet or blue candle symbolizes the final glorious coming of the Savior with all his angels on the Last Day.

"5. **The Christ Candle:** This white candle symbolizes the day of Jesus' birth, the coming we've been waiting for, the advent of Jesus, the Light of the world." (From *Advent Devotions: Christ Is the World's Light*, a devotion booklet published and distributed by Martin Luther College in 2019, page 3.)

Eleven-Month Financial Picture

By the end of November, contributions to cover expenses from the Unified Budget, which some might call our "general operating fund," exceeded expenditures by \$13,115. Eleven-month Unified contributions totaled \$167,519 compared with expenses of \$154,404. Still, a major factor to recognize is that contributions were \$11,289 less than 11/12 of the budget. In other words, viewed from one direction the 11 month financial picture is bright, but from another direction it is clouded.

So, after 11 months, how does 2020 compare with 2019?

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Difference</u>
2019	168,540	158,686	9,854
2020	167,519	154,404	13,115

Also, during October an interesting and unusual accounting event occurred. \$2,397.58 was added back into the checkbook ledger. Why?

When reconciling our computerized checkbook ledger with bank statements for several months, it was observed that five checks or electronic funds payments had never cleared the bank. Three of these dated back to February and July of 2017, and two others were from March and April of 2019.

The CPA from our financial accounting service became involved, and when he determined that these were all "stale dated" transactions that could no longer be negotiated, he simply added the money back into the checkbook as if it had never been removed in the first place--not new money, just a one-time accounting adjustment that resembles a deposit.

(DRF)

Selections from WELS TOGETHER

Update from Vietnam

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lord is always with his church. Christians in the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam are continuing to reach out to lost souls. In 2020, the Holy Spirit brought more than 12,000 Hmong people throughout Vietnam to faith in Jesus. The Hmong Fellowship Church has grown from 126,000 to 138,000 members.

Rev. Zang, one of the Hmong leaders, said, "Most of the pastors in the Hmong Fellowship Church have heard many scary things through television and radio about the impact of COVID-19, but they see it as less dangerous when compared to the lost souls who have no chance to hear the gospel before they die."

Rev. Fong and his evangelism team reached out to many villages in his area. The Lord blessed their efforts, and they were able to establish nine new mission congregations.

The Lord also has provided a way for WELS to continue training the Hmong Fellowship Church leaders. In November, the Vietnam mission team responded to the request of the Hmong Fellowship Church and offered Zoom training to 57 students. WELS provided phones and internet connectivity when needed to allow these students to participate in online training classes. Rev. Joel Nitz taught the gospel of Mark, and Rev. Bounkeo Lor taught law and gospel. Instruction via Zoom is something new for the Hmong Fellowship Church, but the students were very excited. Some students even asked permission for their wives and parents to join the training as well.

While the Hmong Fellowship Church has been tremendously blessed, there are also some big challenges ahead. More than 1,360 leaders are waiting for someone to train them in the Word of God. They are also waiting to build more churches for new believers to worship their Lord. Lor explains that the Hmong Fellowship Church leaders are very skilled at doing evangelism in their communities. With proper training and materials, these men will continue to share God's Word.

The theological education center building project in Vietnam is still active but has been delayed due to COVID-19. Once Lor is able to visit Vietnam, he will arrange a Zoom or face-to-face meeting, if possible,

between WELS and Vietnamese representatives. The government also wants to make this project happen as quickly as possible.

Lor shares that brothers and sisters in Vietnam send their greetings and say, "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!" to all WELS members. They appreciate your help and support, especially to train their leaders in the Word of God. They also ask for your continued support and prayers.

(Selected from *WELS TOGETHER*, Dec. 15, 2020 edition.)

Good News Regarding WELS Health Insurance and Pension

Last August the WELS VEBA Commission offered a one-month premium holiday for the WELS VEBA Group Health Care Plan. No premiums were charged to calling bodies for WELS VEBA for that month.

The WELS VEBA Commission has also announced that there will be no increase in the 2021 premium rates for WELS VEBA. The commission is pleased to provide this rate stability to help support WELS ministry efforts.

In addition to steady health care rates, the WELS Benefits Plans Office has implemented a Pension Plan contribution holiday during the October 2020 quarter. No contributions were charged to calling bodies for pension benefits this quarter. This is a savings of \$1,132 per full-time called worker and a total of about \$5 million in savings across all of WELS.

Finally, there will be no increase in the 2021 contribution rates for the WELS Pension Plan. Maintaining the 2020 contribution rates will adequately fund projected Plan benefits and expenses in 2021.

Both the WELS VEBA Commission and the WELS Retirement Program Commission are pleased to take these steps to help support WELS ministry efforts. The savings resulting from the premium holidays and the "no increase" rates should result in significant savings for calling bodies.

For calling bodies experiencing financial hardship, these decisions will be a welcome blessing. (Selected from *WELS TOGETHER*, Dec. 1, 2020 edition. Edited to fit available space.)

(Note: Divine Savior participates in both VEBA programs for our pastor. DRF)