



First Things – June, 2022

We're FOR Love

Many people only know our *brand* of Lutheranism for what they've heard we're AGAINST. You've heard statements like, *The WELS is AGAINST abortion, AGAINST sex before marriage, or AGAINST this or that church.*

And, let's be honest, our own words sometimes display a critical and unloving attitude toward others. That's something for which we need forgiveness.

I guess it's inevitable that when we announce and apply what God's Word says, some people will always misunderstand us as only being AGAINST things. But, at the same time, we also need to be a little better at telling people what we're FOR.

We are FOR the Bible. We believe it's inspired by the Holy Spirit and inerrant, without mistakes or errors. We want it to guide what we do and what we teach. We need it to comfort and console us.

We also confess regularly that we are *sinful and unclean*. We say that because the Bible declares it in no uncertain terms. We see that in the world around us and we see it in our own hearts. It reminds us of what we are by nature, how helpless we are.

Most of all, we are FOR the big truth of the Bible, that God's Son Jesus Christ died on the cross to take away the sins of ALL people. More than that, we rejoice in the fact that God wants ALL people to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

We recognize not only from the Bible, but from looking at the world around us, that God gives different gifts and abilities – as well as different challenges and crosses – to different individuals. He does all of this in order to bless us, to lead us to him and make us dependent on him.

Finally, we are FOR eagerly using the gifts that God gives us not just to give him thanks and bring him glory, but also to help others, those who are in need.

In short, we are FOR love – God's love for us in Jesus Christ and our love for the Lord and those around us, even when they don't agree with him and us.

And so we pray: *Lord, help us proclaim your love to the world by displaying it in all we say and do. Amen.*

The Latest From WELS

On Saturday, May 14 the WELS Conference of Presidents (COP) assigned 125 graduates of Martin Luther College (MLC) to their first call teaching in WELS schools throughout the United States. There are still 140 teaching vacancies synod-wide. 48 men also graduated from MLC's pre-seminary program and will continue their studies to be pastors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in the fall – nearly double the average number from the last five years. You may view the 2022 teaching assignments [here](#).

Parents, Save The Date

We're looking at
having a VBS-like
event

Monday, August 1
thru Friday, August 5

And speaking of calls, two members of First Lutheran received and accepted calls to reach in WELS schools:

- **Hannah Bartels** (now Dr. Hannah Bartels) accepted a call to teach sports and exercise science at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- **Sara Rieke** accepted a call to teach music at St. Croix Lutheran Academy in West St. Paul, Minnesota

On Thursday, May 26, the COP assigned 25 graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to their first calls. They will be ordained and installed in the near future. You may view the 2022 pastoral assignments [here](#). Interestingly, four seminary programs we operate in Africa will graduate 29 students this year. Keep up with mission work in Africa by following the [One Africa Team](#).

Each of the WELS' twelve districts will have a district convention this summer. The Minnesota District Convention will take place June 7-9 at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota.

Our brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church are suffering greatly. You can get the latest updates or help them with a gift by clicking [here](#).

Area WELS Update

The pastoral vacancy at **St. John's in Nodine** continues. **Pastor Aaron Nitz** of Cheyenne, Wyoming is currently considering the call. During the summer months, I will be preaching at First at 9:00 and then at Nodine at 10:30 AM.

Zion Lutheran Church of Hokah &
Immanuel Lutheran Church of South Ridge

will be celebrating the

150th Anniversary

of their founding on Sunday, June 26:

- 8:30 AM at Zion in Hokah
- 10:30 AM at Immanuel on South Ridge
- 12:15 meal – RSVP to Jenny at djwalter@acegroup.cc

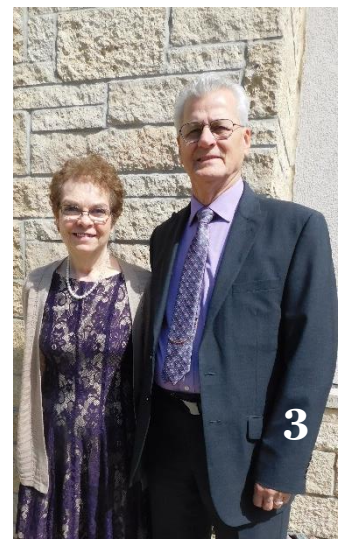
Other vacancies remain:

St. Matthew's in Winona
Rochester Area – three vacancies
Good Shepherd in Holmen.

Please keep these congregations – and the men who serve them – in your prayers.

Pastor Brian Kom declined his recent call and continues to serve Ascension Lutheran in Rochester.

Greet & Get To Know Our New Members



1. **Brianna & Morgan Krueger** transferred to First from Belmont, California and now live in Brownsville
2. **Jerry & Jeanine Stotesbery** came to us from Prince of Peace
3. **Leo & Sandy Chaput** also came to us from Prince of Peace
4. **Terry Beitlich** transferred to us from the Twin Cities (he's camera-shy)
5. **Keith & Jo Heinze** recently came to us from First Lutheran in La Crosse
6. **Kyle & Jana Schroeder** and children **Josiah (JJ)**, **Savannah**, **Sophia**, and **Adalynn** are coming to us from Caledonia
7. Then there are new confirmands: **Cami Esser & Eli Holub**



Board For Lay Ministry Update

1. **Finances** – We received \$84,013 in offerings and other income. We had expenses totaling \$85,440. Therefore our deficit through these months that include Lent and Holy Week was \$1,427. We pray that our members will continue their regular support of their congregation even when they may be away on vacation during the warm weather months.
2. **Altar Area** – last month it was announced that the top step would be removed. Someone suggested an interim idea – using one of the old communion rails as a visual reminder of the awkward step. So, we're seeing how that works.
3. **Roof Fund** – Total gifts to-date are \$20,024, with a \$33,000 goal. Please prayerfully consider how you can help with this project. And thanks for all your support!
4. **Hymnal** – the new blue hymnals have arrived. After the new books are "conditioned," approximately half of the present red hymnal will be removed and replaced with the blue ones.

The Month Of June

Sunday Mornings – Worship at 9:00 AM, **Pastor Steve Olson** will be here on June 12 while I'm at the WELS Taste of Missions in Mequon, Wisconsin

- There will be **NO Sunday Bible Study OR CrossTalk** during the summer months
- **First Women** will be hosting a social after worship on Father's Day, Sunday, June 19.

Mondays – Evening Worship @ 6:30 PM – **NO Monday Bible Study** during the summer

Thursdays – Women of the Word (WOW) will meet on every Thursday in June at 6:30 PM

Saturday – First Women will meet on Saturday, June 11 at 10:00 AM

Board for Lay Ministry – will meet on Monday, June 20, after the evening worship service

ELC Business Team – will meet on Tuesday, June 21 at 6:30 PM

Monday Evening Worship

With all the summer activities that may take you away from home – and Sunday worship – on the weekends, please keep our Monday evening worship service in mind. It's a little more relaxed worship service, but with the same readings and message. And if social distancing is still a concern, this is the service for you – we had 35 this past Monday evening. Just one more thing – this summer, ALL the Monday evening worship services will be held in the church, not outside.

God Bless,

Pastor Mark