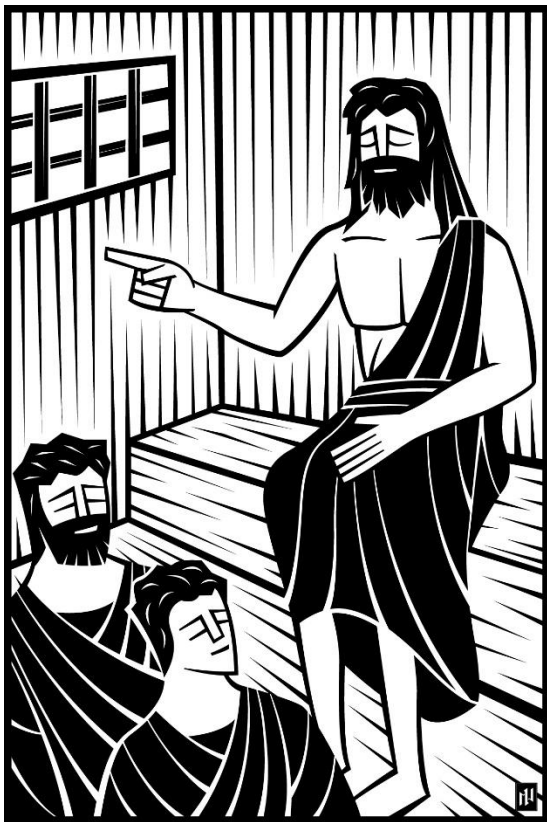


St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church & School

711 & 805 W 5th St., Neillsville, WI 54456

Member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



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Advent 3 ☪☪☪

December 11, 2022

“Welcome Visitors and Members!”

(Visitors, you may find helpful information on the back cover.)

Focus: Rejoice! The Light of Christ leads us to patiently hope.

Ringling of the Bell

Service Introduction

6 All glory to the Son,
who comes to set us free,
with Father, Spirit, ever one
through all eternity.

Text: tr. John Chandler, 1806–1876, alt.; Charles Coffin, 1676–1749
Tune: Aaron Williams, 1731–1776
Text and tune: Public domain

M: The grace of our Lord (+) Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

CONFESSION OF SINS

M: God invites us to come into his presence and worship him with humble and penitent hearts. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sinfulness and ask him to forgive us.

C: **Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son (+) and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Song by Choir: “Prepare the Way, O Zion”

M: Let us pray.
Hear our prayers, Lord Jesus Christ, and come with the good news of your mighty deliverance. Drive the darkness from our hearts and fill us with your light; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

First Lesson: Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the desert will be glad.

The wasteland of the Arabah will rejoice and blossom like a crocus.

²It will bloom lavishly,

and there will be great joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to it.

It will be excellent like Carmel and Sharon.

They will see the glory of the LORD,

the majesty of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands,

and make the shaky knees steady.

⁴Tell those who have a fearful heart:

Be strong.

Do not be afraid.

Look! Your God will come with vengeance.

With God's own retribution, he will come and save you.

⁵Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,

and the ears of the deaf will be unplugged.

⁶The crippled will leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy.

Waters will flow in the wilderness,

and streams in the wasteland.

⁷The burning sand will become a pool,

and in the thirsty ground there will be springs of water.

There will be grass, reeds, and rushes where the haunts of jackals once lay.

⁸A highway will be there,

a road that will be called the holy way.

The impure will not walk there.

It will be reserved for those who walk in that holy way.

Wicked fools will not wander onto it.

⁹No lion will be there,

nor will any ferocious animal go up on it.

They will not be found there,

but only the redeemed will walk there.

¹⁰Then those ransomed by the LORD will return.

They will enter Zion with a joyful shout,

and everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Happiness and joy will overtake them,

and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Psalm 146

Refrain



I will praise your name for - ev-er, my King and my God.

Psalm tone



Praise the LORD, O my soul.*

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Do not put your trust in princes,*
in mortal men, who cannot save.

Blessed is he whose hope is in the LORD his God,*
the maker of heaven and earth. **Refrain**

The LORD gives food to the hungry,*
the LORD sets prisoners free.

The LORD gives sight to the blind,*
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

The LORD watches over the outcast*
and sustains the fatherless and the widow.

The LORD remains faithful forever.*
He upholds the cause of the oppressed.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son*
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,*
is now, and will be forever. Amen. Refrain

Refrain Tune: Lynn Trapp. © 1989 MorningStar Music Publishers. All rights reserved.
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Second Lesson: James 5:7-11

⁷Therefore, brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the valuable harvest from the ground, patiently waiting for it, until it receives the early and late rain. ⁸You be patient too. Strengthen your hearts because the coming of the Lord is near.

⁹Do not complain about one another, brothers, so that you will not be judged. Look! The Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰Brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering with patient endurance. ¹¹See, we consider those who endured to be blessed. You have heard of the patient endurance of Job and have seen what the Lord did in the end, because the Lord is especially compassionate and merciful.

Song by Choir: "Who Is This Child?"

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 11:2-11

²While John was in prison, he heard about the things Christ was doing. He sent two of his disciples ³to ask him, "Are you the Coming One or should we wait for someone else?"

⁴Jesus answered them, "Go, report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the gospel is preached to the poor.

⁶Blessed is the one who does not take offense at me."

⁷As these two were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the crowds about John.

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the

wind? ⁸What did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? No,

those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹So what did you go

out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you! And he is much more than a

prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written, 'Look, I am sending

my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

¹¹Amen I tell you: Among those born of women there has not appeared

anyone greater than John the Baptist. Yet whoever is least in the

kingdom of heaven is greater than he.



NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.**

Through him all things were made.

**For us and for our salvation, he came down from
heaven,**

**was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and became fully human.**

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered death and was buried.

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the
Scriptures.**

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the
dead,**

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

**who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped
and glorified,**

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

305 Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates

CW 21



1 Lift up your heads, you might - y gates! Be - hold, the King of
 2 The King is born in pov - er - ty, his char - iot is hu -
 3 How blest the land, the cit - y blest, where Christ the rul - er
 4 Fling wide the gates; pre - pare your heart to be a tem - ple
 5 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to you; here,



glo - ry waits. The King of kings is draw - ing near; the
 mil - i - ty, his king - ly crown is ho - li - ness, his
 is con - fessed! O peace - ful hearts and hap - py homes to
 set a - part from earth - ly use for heav'n's em - ploy, a -
 Lord, a - bide! O en - ter with your sav - ing grace; show



Sav - ior of the world is here. Life and sal - va - tion
 scep - ter, pit - y in dis - tress. The end of all our
 whom this King in tri - umph comes! The cloud - less sun of
 dorned with prayer and love and joy. So shall your Sov - 'reign
 me your kind and friend - ly face. Your Ho - ly Spir - it



he will bring; there - fore re - joice and glad - ly sing. To
 woe he brings; there - fore the earth is glad and sings. To
 joy is he who comes to set his peo - ple free. To
 en - ter in and new and no - bler life be - gin. To
 guide us on un - til our glo - rious goal is won. E -



God the Fa - ther raise your joy - ful songs of praise.
 Christ the Sav - ior raise your grate - ful hymns of praise.
 God the Spir - it raise your hap - py shouts of praise.
 God a - lone be praise for word and deed and grace!
 ter - nal praise and fame we of - fer to your name.

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.; Georg Weissel, 1590–1635

Tune: Geist-reiches Gesang-Buch, Halle, 1704, ed. Johann A. Freylinghausen, alt.

Text and tune: Public domain

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 11:2-11

PRAISE THE LORD! JESUS DOES NOT DISAPPOINT.

- I. He lived up to salvation promises.**
- II. The One who is least became the greatest.**

OFFERING



The members of St. John's have joined together to do the Lord's work in this community and around the world. Guests need not feel obligated to participate in this offering which supports our ministry, but please use this QR code to fill out a short form giving us a digital record of your attendance. Visitors may also fill out our visitor registration book in the entryway by the drinking fountain.

Handbell Song During Offering: "Savior of the Nations, Come"

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT

M: The Lord be with you.



C: And al - so with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.



C: We lift them up to the Lord.

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



C: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

M: Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In love he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

Through his holy prophets, he promised a King to bring light to those living in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and thanks and honor and glory for ever and ever:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Sanctus



C: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly is the Lord of hosts.



The whole earth is full of your glo - ry.



You are my God, and I will ex - alt you.



I will give you thanks, for you have be - come my sal -



va - tion. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly is the Lord of hosts.



The whole earth is full of your glo - ry.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.



C: A - men.

O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD

C: O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us your peace. A - men.

The musical score is written on five staves, each beginning with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C'. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: 'C: O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us your peace. A - men.'

DISTRIBUTION: *St. John’s practices “member communion.” We ask, therefore, that only those who are members of St. John’s or another WELS/ELS congregation partake of the sacrament.*

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS (pgs. 14-15)

Gathered 'Round Your Table



1. Gath - ered 'round your ta - ble We re - joice and grieve,
 2. Prince of glo - ry, grac - ing Heav'n ere time be - gan,
 3. Laid in man - ger yon - der, Giv - en for our sake—
 4. Beth-l'em's in - car - na - tion, Cal - v'ry's bit - ter cross,



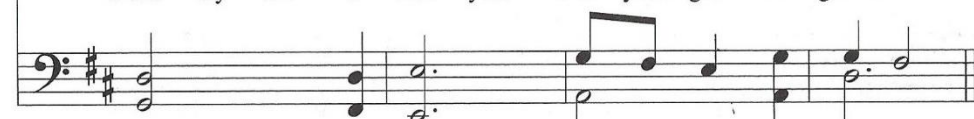
View - ing Beth - l'em's sta - ble On that ho - ly eve;
 Now for us em - brac - ing Death as Son of man,
 With pro - found - est won - der We your bod - y take;
 Worked for us sal - va - tion By your pain and loss.



Joy to see you ly - ing In your man - ger bed,
 By your birth so low - ly, By your love so true,
 Hushed in ad - o - ra - tion We ap - proach the cup,
 Now we kneel be - fore you In this ho - ly place;



Weep to see you dy - ing In our sin - ful stead.
 By your cross most ho - ly, Lord, we wor - ship you!
 Blood of our sal - va - tion Free - ly of - fered up.
 Hum - bly we a - dore you For your gift of grace.



320 As Angels Joyed with One Accord CW 21



1 As an - gels joyed with one ac - cord up - on the
 2 He came, not clothed in maj - es - ty nor pow'r that
 3 This done, he soared to God's right hand, yet or - phaned
 4 In ev - 'ry age— let praise a - bound— he comes; we



ad - vent of our Lord, so let us glad - ly
 suits his de - i - ty. In low - ly state he
 not his cho - sen band, for he, not bound in
 hear his voice re - sound. His glo - rious gos - pel



praise the name of him who from the Fa - ther came.
 walked till he in dy - ing set us cap - tives free.
 grace and pow'r, at - tends his own each day and hour.
 does not cease to bring us com - fort, joy, and peace.

- 5 He comes in water to the child
 and cleanses it, from birth defiled.
 This washing seals his pard'ning grace
 and shows the Father's kindly face.
- 6 He comes to us in bread and wine
 to give himself and gifts divine.
 O praise him for this sacrament,
 redeeming love's great testament!
- 7 Lift up your heads! All grief and pain
 shall vanish when he comes again.
 Where we shall see him face to face,
 there joy alone shall have a place.

Text: Werner H. Franzmann, 1905–1996, abr., alt.

Tune: Latin, 15th cent., adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1571–1621

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Tune: Public domain

THANKSGIVING

THANK THE LORD



C: Thank the Lord and sing his praise. Tell ev'-ry-one what he has done.



Let all who seek the Lord re-joice and proud-ly bear his name.



He re-news his prom-is - es and leads his peo-ple forth in joy with



shouts of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

M: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

C: his mercy endures forever.

M: Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,

C: We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

M: Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.
The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and (+) give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

Closing Song by Choir: “Glory to God The Angels Sing”

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This Week at St. John's: Dec 11, 2022

SERVING US TODAY

Greeters: Donna Anding & Rosie Murphy

Ushers: Team 2- Verlyn Shaw's team

Altar Guild: Charlene Siebert

Donating Bulletins: Gloria Hamm

Donating Website in December: Mel & Sharon Nemitz

SERVING US NEXT SUNDAY

Greeters: Joel & Darlene Zschernitz

Ushers: Team 3- Dick Urban's team

Altar Guild: Pat Strangfeld

~OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW & SERVE~

Sunday Dec 11:

Communion Service/Choir-Bell Concert 9:00 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:15 a.m.

Monday Dec 12:

Shut-In Visits 9:00 a.m.

Shut-In Visit 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday Dec 13:

Shut-In Visits 1:15 p.m.

Wednesday Dec 14:

Chapel 8:20 a.m.

Thursday Dec 15:

Adult Instruction Class 5:30 p.m.

Friday Dec 16

Staff & School Board Christmas Party 5:00 p.m.

Sunday Dec 18:

K-8 Christmas Program 9:00 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:15 a.m.



Holiday Service Schedule:

Sunday, December 18:

The children of our Lutheran Elementary School (Grades K-8) will be presenting their Christmas service in place of our regular worship service at 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, December 20:

The 3K/4K students will be presenting their Christmas program at 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 24:

We will be having a special Christmas Eve song service at 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 25:

We will celebrate the birth of Christ during our worship service at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 1:

We will celebrate the new year during our worship service at 9:00 a.m.

Please invite those you know to join us for these special services.



St. John's Lutheran Church & School

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Email: stjohns1886@gmail.com

Website: www.stjohnsneillsville.com

Facebook (church): www.facebook.com/stjohnsneillsville/

Facebook (school): www.facebook.com/stjohnshornets/

Tim Biebert, Pastor: 715-743-3015; 1fisheromen@gmail.com

--Church Office: 715-743-2944

Mike Allard, Principal: 715-937-7534; allardmj1@gmail.com

--School Office: 715-743-2501

John Hagedorn, Chairman: 715-743-4653;

hagedornjohnw2@gmail.com

Worship Schedule: Sundays at 9:00am

"Welcome Visitors & Members!"

To those who are visiting us for the first time, we extend our sincere welcome; to our friends who know us we renew our welcome; to those who seek a church home we invite you to be part of our family and enjoy fellowship with our Savior.

To assist you in worship, personal listening devices are available for anyone to use. Please talk to the ushers for assistance.

Visitors, if you would like to know more about our church or school, please introduce yourself to our pastor. He would be delighted to speak with you and serve you in whatever way he can. Please sign our guest register which you will find in the entryway by the drinking fountain.

We love seeing young children in church as we want families to worship together. We also love to hear children making a "joyful noise to the Lord." If you need some privacy for feeding an infant or changing a diaper, please make use of our parents' room off the north side of the entryway where you can still listen to the service.

CHURCH NEWS

Communion: We will celebrate the Lord's Supper today using the regular style of distribution (at the rail).

Advent: Today is the third Sunday in Advent. Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation. The Church looks for the coming of her Savior in this threefold advent: his coming in the flesh; his return in judgment; his daily coming in Word and Sacrament. The Church encompasses all these facets of the season in the single word that defines Advent worship: "Come!" That single word is our invitation, our anticipation, our sure and certain hope. Come, Lord Jesus!

The Advent wreath that has been placed in the front of the church has some special significance. The wreath is made up of evergreens, symbolizing the everlasting life found in Christ. Bending the branch to form a circle further symbolizes life without end in Christ.

The candles on the wreath remind us that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the Light of the world, and they each have a special emphasis. The candles stand for hope, peace, joy (that explains the pink color), and love. The center candle is the Christ Candle. We will light the center candle on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The Altar Cloths are blue during Advent. Blue is the color of hope and anticipation, as we look forward to Jesus' coming.

Bible Class: We didn't quite finish our "One by One" study last Sunday, so we will be finishing that today (in the church basement).

Next Sunday-Bible Class attendees have expressed an interest in watching the "One by One" video in its entirety, so we have decided to do that on the 18th during Bible Class time. The entire video is just over one hour. If anyone has missed a session or two or if anyone who doesn't normally come to Bible Class would be interested in watching the video, please join us next Sunday. (That will also be in the church basement.)

We will start our new Bible study on January 8th.

10 Lies About God: On January 8th we will be starting a new Bible Study called "10 Lies About God."

"God just wants me to be happy." "God helps those who help themselves." How many times have you heard these sayings in secular culture or from a professing Christian? Despite their catchy, positive appeal, these sayings and others like them have dangerous implications for Christian theology.

In "10 Lies About God," Professor David Scharf explains how these inaccurate beliefs distort your relationship with God and offers loving, Bible-based corrections that participants can use in response. The study includes ten lessons to help participants respond to false teachings about God and defend what the Bible teaches.

We hope many of you can join us for this Bible study.

Sunday School: Sunday School will be held as normal after the worship service today.

Heritage Tree: In connection with our Christmas decorating, the Altar Guild would like to explain, especially to newer members, what the Heritage tree is. Our Heritage tree is set up on the north side of the church entryway. Families have furnished us an ornament with their names displayed on it to be hung on the tree, and we store them and reuse them.

We would like to see an ornament from every family on the tree. If you have never furnished one, please consider doing so. You can simply place your ornament on the tree. If you have any questions, please ask any of our Altar Guild members.

Bulletins/Website: Would you like to donate bulletins on a particular Sunday in 2023, or would you like to donate our website for one month? The new sign-up sheets for 2023 are available on the table in the entryway. Cost to donate bulletins is \$10.00 per Sunday, and cost to donate the website for one month is \$23.00. (Please note that the website cost went up by \$2 from previous years.)

If interested, please sign up on the sheet for the date you would like. Payment can be made any time throughout the year. Simply place the money in a marked envelope and put it in the offering basket.

12/18-Christmas Service: All students in grades K-8 will be presenting their children's Christmas service on Sunday, December 18th at 9:00 a.m. That will take the place of our regular worship service next Sunday.

12/20-ELC Christmas Service: We will be having a special Christmas service for our 3K/4K students. The children will be presenting this service on Tuesday, December 20, at 6:00 p.m. All are invited to attend.

SCRIP: Are you looking for Christmas gifts for that "hard-to-buy-for" person? Perhaps a gift card would be a good choice. We are offering SCRIP gift cards for the holiday season. Through our SCRIP program, gift cards from many different companies, from gas stations to grocery stores to retailers, are available. We buy the cards at a discount and sell them to you at face value. By making use of SCRIP you can purchase gifts for family and friends and help your church at the same time. **More stores have been added, including Fleet Farm.**

SCRIP order forms are available in the church entryway. Orders and payment are due **by December 15**. You can turn in your order form and payment to Darlene Zschernitz or the school office.

FIC: The December issue of "Forward In Christ" is available in the entryway.

2023 Calendars for Sale: Living Stones Youth Group is selling beautiful 2023 calendars with inspirational Scripture verses and plenty of room for writing birthdays, appointments, etc. in the date squares. Get one for \$8 for two for only \$15. Get yours today before they're gone! Make checks payable to Living Stones.

Closed Captioning: We discovered recently that our worship services, which we post online using Vimeo, are now being automatically closed captioned. We checked out several of our recent services, and the captioning seems to be very accurate. (There are no captions while the congregation is singing.) If you are watching our service online, all you have to do is click on the "CC" button on the bottom right edge of the video and the captions will scroll across the bottom.

We have begun putting a link to the bulletin on the video page (just scroll down to where you see the sermon text) so that you can have the bulletin handy to follow along with the hymns and liturgical singing.

Please spread the word to anyone you know who may find this helpful.

Member Suggestion: *Recently one of our members had a suggestion he felt would be good for us to ponder in our hearts. While we're busy getting Christmas gifts for our loved ones this holiday season, why not consider giving a monetary gift over and above your regular offerings to the One (**your Brother!**) whose birth we will be celebrating, our Lord Jesus, without whom there would be no Christmas celebration. Something to keep in mind!*

Parking Assistance: *Especially at this time of the year when the parking lot can get icy (but really at any time), if you need help parking your car before church, please don't hesitate to pull up under the canopy and talk to one of the ushers or greeters. They will find someone who will be happy to park your car for you. The same thing applies after church. If you'd like someone to go get your car and pull it up under the canopy, please don't hesitate to ask.*

Offering Envelopes: *You've probably noticed that the 2023 offering envelopes are available in the entryway. Please pick yours up, and if you could help us by delivering someone else's, that would be great! You can begin using the new envelopes on January 1st.*

Holiday Offerings: *Offerings given in your Christmas Eve envelopes will go toward Home. Offerings given in your Christmas Day and New Year's Day envelopes will go toward Missions.*

Special Thanks: *We would like to take this opportunity to thank **Jenny Pagenkopf**, who has been getting the Lord's Supper set up for communion Sundays for a number of years. She is stepping down from doing that. We thank her for her years of faithful service. We also thank **Lynda Hilliard**, who has volunteered to take over the job. Thanks for your willing service, ladies!!*

More Special Thanks: We thank the children and adults of our Pioneer group, who decorated cookies and made cards and put together boxes for our shut-in members.

Picture Directories: The new picture directories are available in the church entryway. Please feel free to pick one up. We printed 150, but will be happy to print more if we run out.

In Focus: Several copies of the Fall 2022 edition of "In Focus" from Martin Luther College are available in the entryway. Please feel free to take one.

WELS Investments: Copies of the 2022 annual reports from both WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds are available on the table in the entryway.

Northland News: Did you know that Christmas Eve has surpassed Easter as the worship service that unchurched individuals are most likely to attend? A recent survey found that 80% of unchurched adults would seriously consider accepting an invitation, extended by a friend, to attend a Christmas Eve service.

Help those who are unchurched learn about "The Greatest Gift." A live outdoor nativity will be held Dec. 17, 5-8:30 p.m., at Northland Lutheran High School, 2107 Tower Road, Kronenwetter. This is a free outreach event with no registration required. It involves a 20-minute walk through the woods stopping at stations to hear the true Christmas story from actors and carolers. If you wish to have a reserved time for you and your guest(s), please visit nlhs.org to link to the reservation page.

WELS Weekly Prayer: Home mission in Lodi, Wis. – Heavenly Father, we ask you to bless Zion Lutheran Church in Leeds, Wis., as they reach out with your gospel in Lodi, Wis., with the help of WELS Home Missions. Thank you for providing Zion with a ministry center in Lodi. Please open doors of opportunity for your witnesses to testify to the truth, and grant success to your servants as they proclaim Jesus Christ to lost souls. Amen.

Worship the Lord with Gladness:

Last Sunday: 112

Worship with Our Care of God's Wealth:

Thankoffering Given last week:

\$6,060.25 (Home); \$732.00 (Missions)

Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown

The 67th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., July 31—August 3. This will be the first “normal” convention after the pandemic necessitated a scaled-back, partially virtual convention in 2021.

The theme of the convention will be “Embrace the Cross—Anticipate the Crown.” The focus of this year’s convention theme will be twofold. As a synod, we embrace the cross of our Savior Jesus in a number of ways. We embrace the cross as we look to what Jesus did on the cross to win forgiveness and salvation for us. We embrace the cross as we offer our thanks and praise for the sacrifice he made. We embrace the cross as we proclaim to a sinful world what the Savior’s death on that cross means for them and for all people.

We embrace the cross in another way. As believers, we recognize that Jesus asked us to be willing to live under the cross in a sin-damaged world. Believers will experience hardships and trials. The church itself will be under constant attack by Satan and his followers. The church will face difficulties, challenges, and, from our human point of view, setbacks and obstacles. But as a synod and as individuals, we are reminded that we can bear those crosses willingly, even joyfully, knowing our God will never leave us or forsake us and his Word will always accomplish his gracious purpose in our lives and in our mission.

As we embrace the cross, we also anticipate the crown. God’s church, comprising all of God’s believers, looks ahead to when all of God’s promises will be completely fulfilled. We look ahead with confidence and trust to the time when God’s church will be transformed from the church militant to the church triumphant. We eagerly anticipate when the King of Kings, wearing his crown of victory, will take us to his side and crown us with the gift of eternal life.

So, this convention will focus on the here and now, on the meaning of the cross for our lives and on recognizing the work of the church will be one of continued struggle and spiritual warfare. But it will also focus on the time when our victorious and living Savior returns to make his final victory our final victory as well.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

Reminder: The deadline for submitting memorials to be printed in the Book of Reports and Memorials is Jan. 15, 2023. Memorials submitted after Jan. 15 and approved for convention consideration will be posted on the convention website, **welsconvention.net**, if they are received by June 15, 2023. Further directions can be found at welsconvention.net. Send memorials to the President’s Office, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; carla.martin@wels.net.

Teens gather at area WELS Youth Nights

This past fall, almost 30 congregations hosted WELS Youth Nights, offering area-congregation teens and youth leaders opportunities to grow in God's Word and build relationships with one another.

Introduced at the 2022 International Youth Rally, WELS Youth Night is a series of three youth-focused events to bring teens and youth leaders from area churches together in between large rallies. WELS Discipleship provides all the resources to help congregations plan and run the events, which include games, food, music, prayer, a keynote address, and small group discussion.

King of Kings, Garden Grove, Calif., invited youth from 16 congregations in southern California to its WELS Youth Night in October. More than 50 6th- through 12th-graders from 8 different congregations attended.

"I had this dream of pulling [area youth groups] together out here just because when we get together it's so special. But I was intimidated by all the work to make it happen," says Mr. Josh Robertson, a teacher at King of Kings and the congregation's youth and family elder. "At the youth rally, as I sat in on the WELS Youth Night presentation, I was floored by God and his goodness because literally my entire dream was already being planned by the synod."

Robertson says he's passionate about youth ministry because of all the societal pressure put on teenagers

today. "I want to be able to share the gospel with them and help them be in a personal relationship with their Savior," he says. "I think this event does that really well. They get to experience God's love and Christ's mercy and grace through growing with one another through games and play and fun but more importantly through worshiping their Lord, discussing important topics that need to be discussed, and praying together."

Mr. Mike Leahy, the youth group leader at St. Paul, Howards Grove, Wis., also sees the importance of events like these. He coordinated St. Paul's October WELS Youth Night, which gathered about 50 teens from 10 area congregations. "It's good to expose them to other teens in the area . . . so they can see that there are more people their age who have the same passion for their Savior," he says.

Mary Athorp, a senior at Howards Grove High School and a member at St. Paul, appreciated the event. "I knew it would be an incredible way to experience the community faith can create with other people," she says. "I experienced this on a larger scale at the WELS International Youth Rally, so I was looking forward to the same idea but with a closer-knit group. I also wanted to learn how different people my age express their faith in God."

Learn more about WELS Youth Night at welscongregationalservices.net/wels-youth-night. The Youth Night #2 kit will be available later this week. Subscribe to the Youth Leader Resources newsletter to notified when the resource is released. 



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.

