

From your pastor...

Here's a hymn I wrote that we might use on Ascension Day in our worship service. I know Ascension is a long way off since we haven't quite entered the Lenten season yet. But we do rejoice in Jesus and all that He did for us and all that He has planned for us who right now "walk by faith and not by sight."

We walk by faith and not by sight
Led by our God of grace and might.
We cannot see the God we trust,
But know He conquered sin and lust.
For us Christ lived a perfect life.
For us he died in pain and strife.

We walk by faith and not by sight
Led by the Word of life and light.
God's Word remains forever sure,
An anchor for our faith secure.
For us Christ rose from His dread grave.
For us He lives, our souls to save.

We walk by faith and not by sight
Led by our Lord to heaven bright.
Soon we will see the God we trust
Be free from death and hate and lust.
For us our Lord ascended high
For us He reigns and draws us nigh.

The Lord bless your heavenward walk!
- Pastor Bare

Church Council News:
Our financial report – as of January 2019

	Month	Year to Date
Budget Requirements	\$49,817.10	\$49,817.10
Offerings	\$34,526.88	\$34,526.88
Tuition/FEF/ Reg	\$ 3,400.46	\$ 3,400.46
Other	\$ 1.32	\$ 1.32
Total Receipts	\$37,928.66	\$49,817.10
Actual Expenses	\$46,531.25	\$46,531.25
Difference	-\$8,602.59	-\$3,826.17

Owed to Internal Line of Credit: \$42,500

The Technology Committee is looking at the option of rear projection for the screens at the front of church.

The Nominating Committee will meet after the Ash Wednesday service.

- Respectfully submitted,
 Steve Kobe

WELS APP: Our Synod has developed an APP and makes it available as a free download. We encourage you to download the WELS app – and use it! It has a church locator for your travels, daily devotions, Bible reading series, and much more!

Salem School News:

My Coke Rewards

Do you or family members/friends drink Coca-Cola? How about PowerAde? Save those bottle caps and codes from the insides of multi-packs for Salem! They're worth CASH for our school. (5 cents per cap, 15 cents for a 12-pack code, and 30 cents for a 24-pack code).

Feelin' Good Mileage Club

Just like last year, **you must sign your child up for your child to participate.**

We will have as many days of mileage walks as we can get helpers. Please think about setting aside some time to help the kids get healthy. We generally do this after our lunch hour. About 12 noon until 1pm is the time commitment. We love to have grandparents and church members help as well! We will send home a sign-up as spring approaches.

March is Reading Month

March Reading Month at Salem runs from March 4th to April 1st. We are in search of some guest readers. If you, or someone you know, is interested in coming into the school and reading in one of the Preschool through 8th grade classrooms, we'd love to hear from you. All you really need is about a 15 minute block of time and a favorite book. If you are interested, please contact the school office at 725-2234.

WELS Together:

Church dedication in Puerto Rico

On Sept. 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria swept over the island of Puerto Rico causing great devastation and destruction.

WELS members responded generously with gifts to WELS Christian Aid and Relief. But the devastation caused by the storm made communication with fellow Christians in Puerto Rico difficult. It was hard to know what needed to be done to help and how that help could be delivered.

Early last summer WELS Christian Aid and Relief sent retired missionary Rev. Larry Schlomer Sr. to the island. He was asked to stay for up to a year to help the church leaders determine what needed to be done and then to help organize relief and rebuilding efforts.

God has graciously taken care of the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico and restored their church in Humacao. On Feb. 10, 2019, this church celebrated the completion of the rebuilt church with a dedication service. Many of the national pastors were in attendance along with Rev. Larry Schlomer Sr., WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder, and Rev. Tim Satorius.

VIETNAM – HMONG OUTREACH

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace. Colossians 1:6

God’s grace has opened doors to an unprecedented mission opportunity in communist Vietnam.

It all started when Zang Lou, a leader within the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC) in Vietnam, viewed an online sermon by WELS Pastor Bounkeo Lor in 2011. The clear proclamation of law and gospel and the message of pure grace through Jesus Christ was something he had never heard before . . . and he wanted to learn more. That same year, Zang Lou invited Lor to come to Vietnam to train the HFC in the truth of the gospel. Lor made his first training visit in 2012. Since that time, Lor has made over 24 different trips to Hanoi, Vietnam. To assist in his training, members of the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) began to accompany him on some of these trips starting in 2016.

With every visit Lor has made to conduct training in Hanoi, approximately 60 church leaders have attended to learn more about the truths of the Bible. These same 60 leaders have been taking the message back to their rural congregations, preaching the message of salvation by faith, not by works – something the members had never heard before. The HFC was a church body of 55,000 members when

Zang Lou first reached out to WELS. In the years WELS has provided training, the HFC has grown from 55,000 to over 100,000 members and formed many new churches. HFC leaders have seen the growth and the joy that Lutheran teaching has brought to their congregations and have expressed a desire to become a confessional Lutheran church body.

The Opportunity

The message of free grace received from Jesus Christ has replaced their old law-based preaching: Grace has brought peace to the Hmong Fellowship Church, and church leadership has stabilized as a result. The communist government in Vietnam has noticed this positive change.

The Vietnamese government has invited WELS to build a theological training facility in the capital city of Hanoi.

This is an incredible, unprecedented opportunity for our synod. WELS is currently the only protestant church with official government permission to work with the Hmong in Vietnam. The Lord is opening a door to reach the more than two million Hmong people who live in Vietnam and the surrounding countries. However, this door can close at any time. Our WELS World Missions team is working quickly to ensure WELS is taking full advantage of the time the lord has provided.

“Grace—Hmong outreach in Vietnam” Special Offering

WELS is collecting a special offering through June 2019, with the goal of raising \$2 million to purchase land, construct the campus, and cover the initial two years of operational costs.

\$654,000	Special offerings collected to date
\$2,000,000	Special offering goal

Salem church special offering received \$345.

Salem school has designated the Hmong Outreach as their 2nd quarter mission offering recipient.

CMO totals for 2018 and CMO subscriptions for 2019

Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) received in 2018 totaled \$21,111,878. We are grateful for this generous support our synod's mission and ministry. The total, however, was \$246,000 (1.2%) below the offerings received in 2017 and \$148,000 (0.7%) less than what congregations had indicated in their CMO subscriptions for the year. More than a decade of flat, and now even decreasing, CMO has made it increasingly challenging to maintain our current level of ministry, not to mention to seize some of the many gospel opportunities that God is graciously placing before us.

Adding to that challenge is the fact that subscriptions for 2019 are \$20,913,700, nearly 1% less than 2018 receipts. Since our planning forecasted that subscriptions would be met in 2018 and that subscriptions for 2019 would increase by 0.5%, the task to maintain and expand ministry has become even more difficult. The results for 2018 and subscriptions for 2019 are \$350,000 less than the forecast and compound to reductions from what was used for planning the next biennium of \$454,000 and \$456,000 for Fiscal Year 20 and Fiscal Year 21, respectively.

One bit of good news is that offerings for January 2019 were 6.4% higher than the January offerings in 2018.

At its meeting later this week, the Synodical Council will be looking to adopt a Ministry Financial Plan that recognizes these financial realities. All areas of ministry have been asked to look for ways to economize and to plan for less spending than what had been anticipated. Once a plan for the next two years is adopted by the Synodical Council, it will be forwarded to the synod convention this summer for approval.

As the economy improves, we pray that God will enable congregations to meet—and even exceed—their CMO subscriptions in 2019.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder

LENT SHOWS US OUR SAVIOR

Lent is all about Jesus. Lent shows God's grace and mercy in action as he sent his only-begotten Son for us. On Calvary we see Jesus pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our guilt. There he shed his innocent blood to give us peace. He suffered what we deserved so we have eternal life—the gift of God's grace. There he was wounded so we'd be healed. There Christ paid for the sins of the whole world.

It is right for Christians to focus on these truths, especially during Lent. It is the message of the Scriptures. Roughly 29 percent of Matthew's gospel, 38 percent of Mark's, 23 percent of Luke's, and 43 percent of John's focus on Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. The Old Testament doesn't neglect these truths either. The sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed to the death of the Lamb of God. Those sacrifices and the promises God gave his people picture not only the suffering of Jesus but also his love and willingness to pay for their sins and the sins of all people.

This is God's clear Word during Lent. God erases all doubt about whether we have a place with him, whether he cares at all for us, and whether our lives have any meaning. His Word is true. God does not lie.

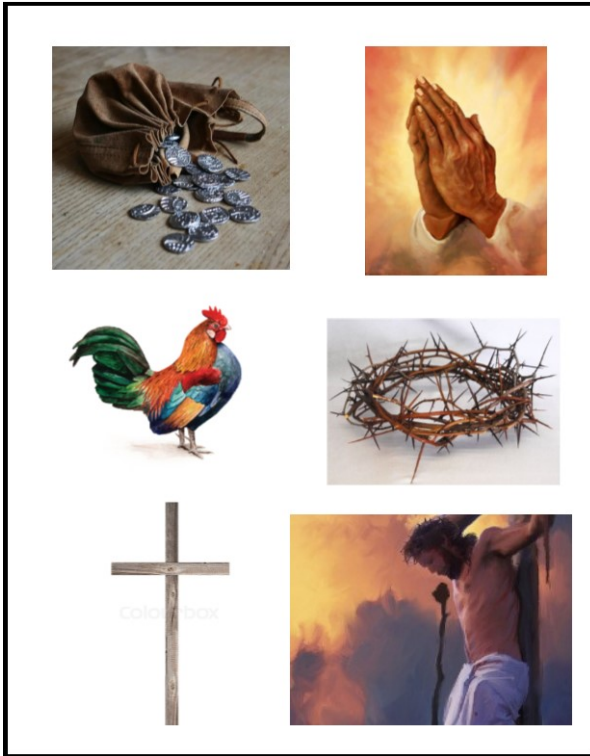
Through his faithful and powerful Word, your faithful and powerful God connects you to Christ by faith. By this faith in Christ, you are healed and made whole; by faith in Christ, you are forgiven and justified; by faith in Christ, you belong to God, not just for time but also for eternity. In Christ—and only in Christ—we exchange doubt, hopelessness, and condemnation for complete forgiveness and the sure hope of heaven.

Indeed, this is Lent.

Ross Else (pastor at Emmaus, Phoenix, Arizona.)

3/31/2015 article in Forward in Christ

Our 2019 Lenten Services
“Symbols of Our Savior’s Suffering”



March 6 – Pastor James Bare

The Cross

March 13 – Pastor Mark Franck

The Crown of Thorns

March 20 – Pastor Randy Johnson

The Pouch of Coins

March 27 – Pastor Paul Wilde

The Rooster

April 3 – Pastor David Voss

The Praying Hands

April 10 – Pastor James Bare

The Sponge

Services are at 12 noon and 7PM each Wednesday.