



"IT IS OUR MISSION, AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD AND COMMAND TO GROW IN HIS WORD, TO GATHER AROUND HIS WORD, AND TO GO WITH HIS WORD."

A painful reminder of

The Dangers of Drought

Water covers most of the surface of the earth. Maybe that's why it seems inconceivable that we wouldn't have enough of it.

Throughout our country this year, we're learning again that that's all too possible. More than 20% of our land is in *extreme* or *exceptional* drought, with some calling this the worst drought since 1956.

When you're in a drought, everything suffers. It's not just the corn and the soybeans that feel the heat. Fewer crops mean higher prices on groceries. The drop in corn production raises the cost of gas. The price of meat goes higher as farmers have a harder time feeding and keeping their cattle. From the stock of fish in drying-up lakes to the stocks of companies that are tied to agriculture, we feel the pressure everywhere. The water that we so easily take for granted means life itself!

That's why God used the picture of drought and famine to illustrate another truth: *"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to*

east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it" (Amos 8:11-12).

During the days of Amos the prophet, God's people had turned their ears away from hearing his Word. God's punishment was startling: He would remove the life-giving waters of his Word! The Word of the Lord that was so common that they could (and did!) often take it for granted was going to be taken away.

Drought and famine gives people throughout our country much to think about—the way we manage our water resources and our farmland, the best way to prepare for the future and our dependence on God. Likewise, the example of a famine of hearing God's Word gives us much to think about as God's people—whether or not we're making use of this precious resource and guarding it for future generations.

Right now, we can easily hear and read God's Word. We can learn and talk all about the salvation that comes through Jesus. Praise God for that! May we so use and guard that Word in a way that preserves it for us, our children, and many generations to come!

Dear Jesus, we ask you to open your hand and provide relief for our nation.



Send rain from heaven to water the earth, making the agriculture and economy of our nation strong.

Send also the life-giving water of your Word throughout our land—and through us. Help us use it faithfully in our homes and churches, and through it give your people true life and growth. Amen.

I believe in + the Holy Christian Church +

In the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, we confess our faith in "the Holy Christian Church." Throughout our newsletters in 2012, we'll examine what this means. What is the Church? What is the difference between "the Church" and "churches"? What does it matter what church you belong to? What's going on among "Lutheran" churches? God's Word will guide our discussion as we talk about these questions.

So what about my sister who isn't Wisconsin Synod?

It's not rare to hear that question part-way through a new member class. We're members of the Wisconsin Synod. That means we've joined together in confessing the truths of God's Word as taught in Scripture. While there are many other churches who join with us in doing so across the world (there are over two dozen church bodies joined with us in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference), there aren't many church bodies in the United States who are faithful to *all* of God's Word (the Evangelical Lutheran Synod is the only other one).

As new members learn and take to heart the *urgent* and *repeated* warnings God gives about changing any of his Word, it's not surprising they ask that question: *So what does this mean for my family members who are members of churches that hold to false teachings?* Here are a few directives to keep in mind.

Rejoice in their faith

There are many Christians who aren't members of the Wisconsin Synod. God says that salvation comes through faith in Jesus. That faith would seem to live in the hearts of even many people who belong to heterodox (false-teaching) Christian churches.

That's nothing new. Throughout the Bible we meet people who confess faith in God but were confused on certain teachings (Acts 19 gives an example of new Christians who did not know about the Holy Spirit; Acts 18 tells us about Aquila and Priscilla explaining the truths about Jesus to Apollos "more adequately"). In our own lives, we may be able to remember times when we held on to some false beliefs simply out of confusion or a lack of instruction.

Do they know Jesus as the Son of God who died to take away their sins and give them salvation by grace alone? Rejoice in that faith! It's a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

Warn them about the dangers

As you take seriously God's promises about the faith he worked in their hearts, also take seriously what God says about false teaching. He tells us to avoid it and to avoid those who teach it (Romans 16:17). He warns us that false doctrine spreads like gangrene (2 Timothy 2:17). He tells us that when we support or encourage people in the spread of false teaching, we're guilty of their sin, too (2 John 10-11). Those passages are also why we don't join in mission work, worship or study with Christians of other denominations.

Take those words to heart, too. If someone you love is a member of a heterodox church body, there's real danger there. God himself says so—often! When we love people, we want to keep them from danger.

How do you do so? Lovingly and patiently. God calls us to *correct* and *rebuke* people—but to do so with "great patience and careful instruction" as well as "all authority" (2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 2:15). Your goal ought never be to show them "what a wonderful Christian you are," but to take them back to the wonderful truths of God's Word.

And expect some challenges. Especially in our culture, we're primed to think that we should just seek out whatever truth we happen to think "works for us" - and to think ill of anyone who claims to know an absolute truth. Don't be offended or surprised when those attacks come. Patiently take people back to *God's Word*, not your word. If they're willing, let them see for themselves what God says.

That means a lot of preparation on your part. It's worth it! That means a lot of prayer, too. God promises to hear it! May God bless your efforts to do so, so that many more people might be delivered from the dangers of false doctrine. And God grant that on the Last Day, we rejoice to see *all* Christians, from many different denominations, rejoicing in the Jesus who forgives all our sins and brings us home to heaven.



January	<i>I believe in the <u>Holy</u> Christian Church</i>
February	<i>I believe in the Holy <u>Christian</u> Church</i>
March	<i>I believe in the Holy Christian <u>Church</u></i>
April	<i>The joy of the Church</i>
May	<i>The mission of the Church</i>
June	<i>Orthodox and Heterodox churches</i>

July	<i>Do denominations really matter?</i>
August	<i>"So what if they're not WELS?"</i>
September	<i>What's going on among the Lutherans?</i>
October	<i>WELS: The confession we share</i>
November	<i>WELS: The challenges we share</i>
December	<i>WELS: The mission we share</i>

Bible Study



God promises us every blessing as we grow in His Word. Consider taking advantage of the following opportunities to study with your fellow believers:

SUNDAY MORNING: CIVIL GOVERNMENT

God's Other Kingdom

Our Sunday morning Bible study focuses on what the Bible says about earthly government. We'll look at the God-given responsibilities of the state, consider church-state relations, and survey the challenges and blessings that have come in this arena of life over the last two thousand years.

THIS FALL...

Watch the newsletter and bulletin for information on Bible studies coming this fall. We're planning on having a number of special studies. A few examples: a two-evening look at the Mormon religion as we compare its teachings to the Bible and talk about ways to have meaningful conversations with people caught in their false beliefs; a three or four week study on "God's Will—How do I know what He wants for me?", and a men's breakfast.

Building project update

Hurry up and wait!

That seems to be the order of the day. The Lord's allowed so many pieces to fall into place over the last year. Here's a brief summary of what he's allowed us to accomplish:

- ✎ Contracting with Massmann Studios and determining some basics about a new building
- ✎ The sale of the parsonage
- ✎ Paying off our congregational mortgage
- ✎ Selling half of our Valley Center land and getting the other half under contract
- ✎ Receiving a \$45,000 grant from the Antioch Foundation
- ✎ Being awarded a grant of 20% of construction costs (as well as a 4% loan) from WELS Church Extension Fund
- ✎ Meeting with two different developers about a likely new location

Our next step is making a final decision on a new piece of land. The congregation's shown a great deal of support for land on Davis Rd, just north of Baxter. The group that owns it is interested in selling to us, and is optimistic about working within our price range. We're anticipating a meeting in mid-August with the City to determine if there are any unanticipated costs associated with developing that property. We'll likely have a price from the owners at the same time, and be able to determine as a congregation if this is the land we want to move forward with.

What does that mean for timing? The folks at Massmann have indicated that they'll be prepared to break ground for us in the spring of 2013. The greatest issues seem to be our congregation making a final decision on land and any questions / issues / delays the City of Bozeman would inject into the process.

Please do keep this project in your prayers. As the Lord has granted great success so far, may he continue to open these last few doors!

News from local WELS churches:



September 28-30, 2012
Fairmont Hot Springs Resort

The women of SMLC are invited to a Women's Retreat at Fairmont Hot Springs. The retreat is organized through Apostles' Lutheran Church in Billings.

The retreat will feature devotions, discussions of the blessings and challenges of our churches' women's ministries, and time to relax. A guest speaker, Ali Manning, will share information about the newly started WELS Women's Ministry organization. Meals and devotions will be provided as well.

To register, contact Apostles' Lutheran Church at 406.656.7141. Participants are asked to pay a \$25 registration fee, as well as cover the costs of their own rooms. The deadline for registering is Friday, August 24th.

For more information, including a daily schedule of events, please see the brochure that's been placed in your mailbox and tacked to the bulletin board, or speak to Pastor Seifert.

Montana Divine Call News

The Holy Spirit through the Church extended Pastor Justin Cloute (Mt. Zion Lutheran, Missoula) a Divine Call to serve God's people at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Norfolk, NE, last week.

The Call would be quite a change of ministry: St Paul's has over 600 members, as well as a grade school and preschool program. Please keep in your prayers Pastor Cloute and his family, as well as the congregations in both Missoula and Norfolk.

Pastor Jonathan Zimpelmann, from Apostles Lutheran in Billings, has just accepted a call to St. John's Lutheran in Hastings, MN. St. John's is a congregation of nearly 600 souls, sharing God's Word since 1871.

Pastor Zimpelmann and his family are familiar to Shining Mountains. We've often keep them in our prayers because of the severe challenges that their son Levi was born with.

Please do keep the Zimpelmanns, Apostles Lutheran, and St. John's Lutheran in your prayers that the Lord will continue to bless his people and his churches.

The issue of *Forward in Christ* (our Synod's monthly magazine) currently in our magazine rack has a well-written article about the terminology, methodology and theology of the Divine Call process that we use within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It's well worth the read to understand how our church body extends Divine Calls—and the promises that our Lord attaches to them about the work of his Holy Spirit.

Serving Us in July *Thank you to those who served in July!*

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
8/5	D Pruitt / M Joecks	Gustafson	P Pruitt	Giese (8/6—8/11)
8/12	J Kohler / T Armbrrecht	<i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Gustafson (8/13—8/18)
8/19	J Thiede / D Thiede	L Baker	Joecks	Hunziker (8/20—8/25)
8/26	J Becker / S McGough	E Baker	<i>open</i>	Joecks (8/27—9/1)

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Psalm 84:10

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C	6	7	8	9	10	11
7:00 Evening Worship		Pastor Seifert on Vacation—for spiritual needs, contact Jim Lauersdorf or Pastor Berger (St. Paul's Livingston)				
12 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship 11:45 Ladies' Fellowship	13	14	15	16	17	18
7:00 Evening Worship		6:00 Church Council Meeting				
Pastor Seifert on vacation						
19 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C	20	21	22	23	24	25
7:00 Evening Worship		Catapalooza booth at MSU				
26 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship	27	28	29	30	31	
7:00 Evening Worship		8:00 am Campus Ministry planning meeting (speak to Pastor if interested in more information)				
Don't forget: Sunday School begins on September 9th! Look for registration forms in your mailbox, and consider inviting a friend!						

Upcoming Messages

August continues our march through the “non-Festival half of the Church Year,” also known as “The half-year of the Church.”

May the following schedule help you as you prepare for worship or look for opportunities to invite a friend!

Worship in August

August 5: *The Christian imitates Christ as we use our gifts to help others*

August 12: *God’s physical blessings are a reminder of his greater spiritual blessings*

August 19: *God calls us to treasure the most important gifts*

August 26: *Christ is the highest wisdom of all*

