

The Star of Hope

OCTOBER 2009

Spiritual Welfare

FROM THE PASTOR

(Isaiah 55:1-2) 1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

In these hard economic times, more and more people are in need of assistance. With the unemployment rate hovering near ten percent, and the "under-employment" rate even higher, some Americans are wondering where their next meal will come from.

They're feeling desperate and though they may not like it, they find themselves turning to government programs for help, programs commonly known as "welfare."

Did you know that God has a welfare program? As our Creator, God looks after everything and everyone he has made, providing all we need for life here on earth. He uses the paychecks we earn and/or the government programs we benefit from to feed and clothe us. Everything we have comes from God. But when I speak of God's welfare program, I mainly have in mind what he does for our spiritual life.

Pride sometimes keeps people from getting the assistance they need. They'd rather go hungry than take help from someone else. When it comes to God's welfare program, we can't afford nor do we have any reason to be proud. By nature we are all desperate sinners. We have nothing with which to buy God's love or forgiveness. The sin that stains us from birth makes it so that we could never hope to have a place in God's heaven. From the moment we were conceived we were poor, miserable and hell-bound, destined to live out our days on earth in spiritual poverty.

But God changed all that. Jesus, the Prince of Peace took the place of us spiritual paupers and earned us the riches of God's grace. With the time he spent on earth he bought each one of us enough righteousness to be as holy as God himself and with the horrors he suffered in hell, he paid for all the sin charged to our name.

So where do we sign up for God's welfare? We don't! There are no forms to complete and no criteria to meet. In the same love that sent Jesus, God just hands it all out to everyone through his gospel in Word and Sacrament. That's what he's telling us in these verses from Isaiah. God's love and forgiveness are paid for by Christ so we "buy" them for nothing. They come to us free of charge as often as we "tune in" to the Word of Christ.

Have you been working hard but feel like you're getting nowhere? Does your conscience thirst for some peace? Are you hungry for a more fulfilling relationship with God? He has so much to give you. Make some time to meet with him in his Word. Take some time to listen to what he has to say. Choose a time in your day to read the Scriptures. Attend a Bible class at church.

Make weekly worship a top priority in your life. You won't be sorry. Your soul will delight in the richest of fare. That's a promise – from God himself!

Pastor Kehren

AREA REFORMATION SERVICE

Sunday, November 1 at 4 PM at St. Mark's Lutheran, Citrus Heights, CA

Guest preacher -- Pastor Steve Hillmer, The Springs Lutheran Church, Spanish Springs, NV.

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**THE THIRD MESSAGE AND MISSION
OF THE CHURCH**

The church is to help people live a new, resurrected life in Christ, through the filling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This is called **SPIRITUAL FORMATION**. Spiritual formation happens through teaching, Bible study, the spiritual disciplines and mentoring.

The death of Jesus would have no significance in history without the resurrection. The disciples would not have given their lives for a dead Messiah. This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17-19, "IF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED, YOUR FAITH IS FUTILE; YOU ARE STILL IN YOUR SINS ... IF ONLY FOR THIS LIFE WE HAVE HOPE IN CHRIST, WE ARE TO BE PITIED MORE THAN ALL OTHERS." The resurrection was God's exclamation that a new world was beginning - one that promised life rather than death, hope rather than despair, re-creation rather than decay. The church is to live out that promise of

new life, becoming a source of joy, energy and hope to this world.

Spiritual formation is the resurrected life of Jesus at work inside a Christian, which transforms his or her life. Spiritual formation takes place in many different venues of a church. It occurs through large group, Spirit-inspired teaching and preaching that helps Christians understand how God wants to form their hearts. Small groups can be an equally powerful setting, allowing people to dialogue with each other as they process Scripture and apply it to their lives. The spiritual disciplines use historic Christian practices such as Scripture reading, prayer and fasting to create habits that slow us down, invite the presence of God and form us into the image of Christ. Spiritual direction is the process of being spiritually formed under the gentle, prayerful questions and insights offered by a trained mentor.

Spiritual transformation happens through a process of deconstruction followed by reconstruction. We need to dismantle the false and destructive worldviews that we learned from our culture, family of

origin, personal experience, selfishness and sin nature. We need to construct new worldviews and stories based on our new identity as members of the kingdom of God. The reason so many Christians are unchanged by the gospel is that they have not worked through this two-step process in their lives. This is the great void of "CULTURAL" Christianity, in which the message is only absorbed skin-deep and never reaches the deep places of a person's being.

The parables functioned the way all (GOOD) stories function, by inviting hearers into the world of the story. They were designed to break open worldviews and to create new ones, encouraging listeners to identify themselves in terms of the narrative. To see the point of the parable was to make a judgment on oneself. The parables were therefore, like the apocalyptic genre to which in some senses they belong, subversive stories, told to articulate and bring to birth a new way of being the people of God.

The words and actions of Jesus have the power to deconstruct our natural earthly worldview - first we identify with the narrative, then we come under the judgment of its words and actions. Simultaneously, Jesus' words and actions teach us a new way of living, in which the new values and actions of God's kingdom are incorporated and lived out in our lives. While ALL PARTS OF SCRIPTURE ARE "GOD-BREATHED," the words and actions of Jesus have a special ability to deconstruct and reconstruct the human heart. That the words and actions of the Son of God are this powerful should not be unexpected.

HOPE FOOD CLOSET

All food donations are given to Betty N's Hope Food Closet. Please help by purchasing the designated items for the month.

Leave your purchases on the counter on the East side of the kitchen. Thank you for your outreach to the community.

October: Baby food \ baby cereal \ formula

VISION DOCUMENT PRAYER REQUESTS OCTOBER

We are now proceeding with the implementation phase of Parish Assistance. Please join in praying for the leaders and congregation as God leads us in accomplishing the works of service before us.

Pray that...

Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.

- That God may move hearts of our members to step forward and fill our vacant ministry leader positions (Adult Nurture, Outreach, and Worship).
- God move men's hearts to be nominated to serve as officers or ministry leaders in the next year
- God's Blessings on our advertising efforts this school year.
- May God Bless our request for another year of free Kindergarten.
- Eggplant Festival October 3 is effective in reaching unchurched families
- Unchurched families hear and participate in the Harvest Festival October 9
- Open Forum October 11 is well attended and informative.

Give Glory and thanks to God...

John 17:4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

- Coordinators faithfully pursuing goals
- Successful fellowship events
- Participants enriched by the School of Outreach

HOPE SCHOOL NEWS

Hope Lutheran School Harvest Festival

Friday, October 9, from 5:30-8:00 PM will be the annual Harvest Festival, German Food and Book Fair held at Hope Lutheran. This fun event offers carnival style games, a bounce house, a Scholastic book fair, costume contest, and authentic German cuisine.

You're all invited to come enjoy, so drop on by! For questions please call Hope Lutheran School at (916)652-0459 Come join the fun!

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Thanks to your generous donations at the ice cream social and Thrivent matching funds, we now have over \$2,300 to use for new school computers. Praise God from whom all blessings flow! This will allow us to buy 6 new laptops and a wireless router to enable internet access in the fellowship hall. Thank you for helping prepare the students for the jobs of tomorrow by giving them the technology today!

Monthly Parents Night Out

In an effort to keep in better contact with some of our prospects as well as provide a service to the families of the community, we will be hosting our Parents Night Out monthly, usually the second Friday each month from 5:30-9:00. The upcoming dates are 10/16, 11/13, 12/11, 1/8, 2/12, 3/12, 4/9, 5/7, and 6/11. In order for this to be possible we need a larger pool of volunteers. To have fun nurturing these children in their faith and fun, please contact Mr. Leifer.

Each parents night out is a fun night with Bible lesson, crafts, dinner, games, and a movie for kids up through age 12. It is a real bargain at only \$10 for the first child and \$5 for each additional with dinner included. If you know families that could benefit from this service, please have them call the school office at (916)652-0459.

Wish List

Projector Mounts for Ceiling (\$150)
Document Cameras (\$400)
SMART Board Interactive Whiteboard (\$1200)
SMART Board Cart (\$400)
Newer Computers for Classrooms (\$400-500)
New Desks (\$75-200)
Digital Camera for School (\$100)

YOUNG AT HEART

The Young at Heart group will be embarking on an Apple Hill adventure again this year for their October outing. On October 20th at 11:30am we will meet at Bavarian Hills for lunch, followed by a tour of the Madrona Winery.

On November 17th we will once again meet in the Fellowship Hall for a general potluck.



News From the India Orphanage

**WELS BWM:
TLC Committee**

Sept

ember 2, 2009

Dear Friends,

The rains have finally arrived in our corner of India. They were very late and the farmers were in danger of losing their crops. Some damage has been done to crops already planted but the rain will save others and allow more fields to be planted. I travel through farming land when I visit the homes and it was very sad to see so much productive land lying fallow. We pray that the rain will continue so that the fallow fields can be planted and harvested.

I recently completed my first visit of the year to the 10 homes we are now supporting. I am happy to report that many, many children have returned and are happy to be back. The new children are adjusting well and beginning to learn the Word of God. We have had very few start-up problems.

I thought I might review the way we use the funds which are donated to this project in this update.

The funds donated to the India orphanage project are sent to the WELS World Mission office. There the donations are deposited into the India Orphanage Fund. We requisition the money we spend for the care of the children from that fund.

Now, what do we do with the money? First of all, it is important to tell you that no administrative costs are taken from the Orphanage Fund. These costs are covered by a grant from Kingdom Workers. The costs include my travel expenses, postage, mailings, expenses for the twice yearly workshop and a small stipend.

Direct care for the 300 children in our homes includes food, clothing, school fees and supplies. The children receive a new school uniform at the start of every school year and new clothing at Christmas. Their diet is a nutritious Indian diet. They have chicken or fish once a week, an egg once a week as well as fruit. They receive milk in the form of buttermilk daily. The staple of their diet is rice. Flavored rice or cereal such as cream of wheat prepared with onions and chilies is served at breakfast. Vegetable curries or lentils with boiled rice are given at noon and in the evening.

We pay a cook (\$21 per month plus meals and lodging) at every home and a warden if she is not a member of the pastor's family. We do not pay salaries to family members. We rent the buildings where the children live. Rents range from \$17 per month to \$95 per month depending on the location of the home. We also pay for large medical bills as they occur. We have had children hospitalized with infections, broken limbs or requiring surgery. It is not a yearly occurrence but it does happen. We have provided medication for HIV+ children.

The supervising pastors and their families volunteer to supervise a home and teach the children in that home. This work is done in addition to their congregational and seminary responsibilities. They teach the children faithfully, see that they are well fed, meet with their teachers in the place of parents and guardians, and take pride in their accomplishments as if they were parents. Once a guardian told Elder Lazarus that her grandchild looked much better at the home than in her village. She commented that he was always clean and his hair was combed. Another parent dropped the child on the entrance day and never returned to visit. Elder Lazarus and his wife became the father and mother to a child who was basically abandoned for the year. Elder Lazarus also relates a story of a child who was not only visited by his guardian and relatives but by the congregation and members of the village as well. These are extreme cases but they illustrate the heavy responsibility we place on the shoulders of the supervising pastors and their wives.

On behalf of the children, their caregivers, the supervising pastors and their families we thank you for your prayers and support. Because of you, 300 children attend school regularly, receive good food

and most importantly are taught the word of God every day and worship in a Lutheran congregation.

Brochures which provide information on this project are available. Please contact us at mkrueger51_1999@yahoo.com if you would like some to share. Thank you.

In Christ,

Susan

KID'S FIRST

CHRISTMAS PROJECT

We will once again be collecting presents for the children served by the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Placer County renamed KID'S FIRST. Look for the festive, holiday wrapped box in the Fellowship Hall and add your new, unwrapped gift(s) and sign the Christmas Project list, indicating if you are a Thrivent Member and how many hours you spent shopping for or making presents. We have been approved for a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for \$1300.00 this year to also support this effort.

Suggested items for children ages newborn to 15 are clothing, toys, jackets, diapers, or blankets. All gifts need to be brought to the Fellowship Hall by Sunday, December 6th.

PIONEER NEWS

Pioneers is for boys and girls ages K to 12.

At our first meeting of the year (Sept. 13) we had a fishing and casting clinic. Everyone did well and learned how to properly cast a fishing pole.

Our next meeting is Oct. 11 at 1430 hours (2:30 PM) Mr. Brown will be instructing the Pioneers on camp cooking. We will then eat what we have made over the fire.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Bar B Q Ice Cream Social:

A big thank you to everyone who helped with the event.

Especially A.C.T.S. They did a super job of coming up with fun games for all ages. And also to everyone who attended. Your participation made the day a great success.

The bottom line is your generous donations along with Thrivent's \$510 will provide the School with the much needed computers.

L W M S

LUTHERAN WOMENS MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Every women of every WELS Congregation is a member of this organization and through the LWMS much good work is done in Home and World Missions. The following is just a "thumb nail sketch" of the workings of the organization.

Twice a year each Circuit has two Rallies, one in the Spring and one in the Fall and they all get together once a year for a Convention, which this last year was held in Denver.

At the Convention there are Mission Presentations, Bible Studies and Workshops covering many missions and related subjects.

The Mission Projects of Summer Student Assistants (Home) and Partners in Apache Learning (World) each received a monetary donation of \$37,119.87. Convention Worship service offerings of \$37,376.95 was shared by WELS-Canada Evangelist and Pastoral Studies Institute Training and Cameroon.

New Mission Projects from the following will be chosen in 2010:

Home Missions

Information Outreach

Hmong Evangelist Training

World Missions

Multi-Language Publications Projects

Nepal Projects

The 2010 Convention will be held in the Millennium Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri 24-27 June. Missouri Valley and Mid-America Circuits will be the hosts.

THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM it is said. Perhaps more of the ladies from Hope can plan to attend in 2010.

REDWOOD CIRCUIT FALL RALLY

Hope is a member of the Redwood Circuit with our Fall Rally to be held in Modesto on the 17th of October.

Pastor Guy Marquardt, who spent 15 years as a Missionary in Brazil, will be the guest speaker. He served the Mission in many capacities - come to hear the quaint as well as the heartwarming experiences of he and his wife Linda.

This fall the Mission Projects will be chosen, choices for Home Mission is Musical Assistance or Vicars in Mission Settings. World choices are Central African Medical Mission (CAMM) or Brazil Projects.

The Mission Projects that are chosen will be those that receive our Mission Offerings that are collected in the months that have five (5) Sundays.

BEFRIEND A MISSION

Previously this was called "Befriend a Missionary" but due to the fact that Missionaries moved around it lost some of the continuity so was changed to "Befriend a Mission".

Hope is going to **HIGHLIGHT** one of the Missions each quarter. There is a nice tri-fold display at the front of the church each Sunday showing pictures of the mission in Red Deer, Alberta Canada with Pastor Geoff Cortright.

He has written a long letter that is pinned at the bottom of the tri-fold and is easily removed for reading.

The needs of this little mission are great. One of the big items is a sound system for the church. They have no one to play the piano or organ so have had to rely on MIDI which he said is essentially computer run music which has crashed and has been costly to replace some of the required items to just KEEP IT GOING. They are now using borrowed speakers and a borrowed amp.

One of the items that the Redwood Circuit Board chose for a possible Home Mission project was Musical Assistance which would fit so nicely with the need of this Mission.

Please take a few minutes to look at this Mission Display.

LWMS PRAYER CALENDAR

Prayer Calendars are again available. This year's theme is "Show Me Your Ways, O Lord" and will focus on missionary wives. Missionary birthdays are listed monthly and all are asked to include special prayers for them on these days.

These calendars cover so much information. The price is \$13.00 which includes the shipping.

NOTE: From the information included on the calendar folder:

Please note that some of our missionaries live in dangerous areas of the world. When sending a card to another country, do not include any religious references on the envelope. This includes using *Rev., Pastor, Missionary, or Friendly Counselor* when addressing the missionary. It is asked that these religious references not be used when sending e-mails as well. Please note that Web sites should not contain names of missionaries.

PRAY FOR THE LWMS AND FOR THE MISSION PROJECTS THAT ARE SUPPORTED BY THEM AND FOR THE "BEFRIEND A MISSION" CONGREGATIONS.

Update on the Red Deer Mission:

In this past year (2008-09) God has been good to us at Mighty Fortress in Red Deer. It was the first year we had our new pastor, Rev. Geoff Cortright and his wife Alicia. We worked very hard on planning for the future and developing ministry plans that will lead us to developing a core outreach ministry. We tried some events to meet our community: a neighbourhood block party which led to us helping get a neighbourhood watch started in the townhomes that surround our church. We held a "Christmas for Kids", an "Easter for Kids", and a "Penny Carnival" that brought in a number of unchurched families and gained a few prospects for us. Pastor Cortright spent much of his first year developing a new Bible information class that reaches people in our community. He currently has seven unchurched people in it. We started our first church website: www.nightfortress.ca; designed a logo, and are working to get brochures for doing outreach in the community. We participated in a School of Worship and in spite of a lack of gifted musicians put together a little choral ensemble at Christmas. God has been good in giving us some great opportunities to share his Word with people who don't know him or have pushed him out of their lives.

One other door God has opened for us is to be involved with starting mission work in Vancouver, British Columbia. Though it's twelve hours away by car, or a drive to Calgary and a flight over the mountains, Pastor Cortright has been leading work to start a WEL S-Canada mission in Vancouver. He has been out twice and will start going on a monthly basis beginning in fall. We are blessed to have a chance to help the people out there with some administrative particulars and offer prayers and support as we send our pastor once a month to serve them.

This coming year we look forward to God's grace all the more. During the recent budget cuts, our congregation was spared losing financial support, for which we give thanksgiving to God. (Prior to the Synod Convention we were the very last congregation to receive any funding!) We hope to make use of the time and subsidy God is giving us through our fellow Christians. We're going to again carry out our community outreach events that we did last year. We're also hoping to get some Kingdom Workers to come next summer to help us do research on whether we might be able to start some sort of early childhood ministry--since there is a need for that here and we have the potential space to carry it out.

We thank you for your prayers and kind support--it means so much to have fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who share a love for our Saviour and want to see the people of this country also have an opportunity to hear God's saving message of peace.

From a message received 9-24 from Pastor Cortright:

Our congregation is putting together a number of grant requests to get some WELS Kingdom Workers here next summer to help us research the possibility of starting an early childhood ministry of some type (daycare/pre-school/playschool, etc.) given our great location on one of the busiest streets in the city.

My wife and I were rejected for our permanent residency application (the Canadian equivalent of a green card) and spent the last month frantically working to get a new application in. We discovered the Canadian minister of immigration changed the law in November of 2008 and retroactively applied it to include the time when we applied--with new rules which we cause our rejection. (This is also the reason I've been behind on correspondence with you

and others.) We ask for prayers that God will allow this second attempt to work, because if it does not we may face deportation a year from now. We are not worried about deportation, but we are dealing with issues that keep me from doing gospel work and filling out forms and running errands instead.

We have seven adults reaching the end of our God & Me adult information class. It would be great for all of them to get confirmed and join as members, so again prayers for that would be appreciated.

In Christ, Pastor Cortright

TOGETHER



News from the WELS

September 2009
Website: www.wels.net

September 8, 2009

[NEW YEAR AT MLC, ACCREDITATION RENEWED](#)

From the office of President Mark Schroeder

A new academic year has begun at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., our synod's school of ministry. Opening enrollment is 712 compared to 723 at the beginning of last school year.

The most significant development over the summer is that the school has been accredited for the maximum term of ten years. The accreditation follows an extensive three-year self study conducted by MLC staff and faculty, culminating with a visit by the accreditation team from the Higher Learning Commission, one of six regional accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Accreditation is important for MLC for a number of reasons. Only students who attend accredited colleges and universities are eligible for federal and state educational grants and loans. Last year 70 percent of MLC students received some form of government financial aid. Graduation from an accredited institution has also become an expectation for admission into graduate schools. In many states, graduation from an accredited institution is a prerequisite for obtaining state licensure.

The commission's visiting team identified a number of strengths at MLC. It recognized "an outstanding level

of commitment among students, faculty, administration, and staff—certainly this is a mission focused institution." They also noted that the college has "consistently sought and responded to identified needs for academic programs in order to serve its constituencies." Other strengths noted were facility enhancements, financial support for faculty continuing education, the use of assessment for improvement of the college, and a positive relationship with the community of New Ulm.

The team also identified a number of concerns that the college will strive to address in the coming years. Included among those concerns were teaching loads that are higher than at most institutions and the fluctuation in the financial support provided by the synod in recent years.

As Martin Luther College carries out its role of training future church workers, we can be thankful for the blessings that God provides to his church through this school, and we can also continue to ask God to bless the efforts of the MLC faculty, students, and staff.

Serving in Christ,
Mark Schroeder

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...

[A new look at stewardship](#)

Stewardship resources for congregations are being rolled out over the next two weeks under the new synod theme "Christ's Love, Our Calling" introduced at the synod convention in July.

This new look at stewardship goes beyond the traditional look at each member's time, talents, and treasures. In this comprehensive, four-year approach designed by Adult Discipleship, the main focus of stewardship is nurturing your relationships with God, with family, with the body of Christ, and with neighbors.

Rev. Dave Kehl, administrator of Adult Discipleship, says that the goal of this new emphasis is "that the people of God will have a greater grasp of Christ's love and, as a result, make every effort to live out their calling as God's children."

The emphasis during year one will be to refocus our time to nurture those relationships. Adult Discipleship is developing a series of sermon helps, worship resources, Bible studies, and more to be used as

congregations best see fit. They can be customized for use in series or throughout the year. Week one's resources are now [available online](#). Resources for subsequent weeks should be available over the next week and a half.

[Indonesian church expands](#)

In an example of how local mission efforts can continue or even expand with fewer budget dollars, Gereja Lutheran Indonesia (GLI), a group of congregations in Indonesia subsidized by WELS, opened three new mission outposts in August. The expansion comes after the church volunteered to give up 25 percent of the subsidy it receives from WELS.

Rev. Pieter Reid, a U.S.-based counselor to GLI, says that while the church and its members have appreciated all that WELS has done for them, they don't want to be a burden to WELS. They offered to cut back on administration, travel, and wages but did not want to cut back on outreach.

"This shows the thankfulness of the people for the past gifts and commitment of WELS, but it also shows that they have taken ownership of their own church and want to do the best they can to get the gospel out not only in their own country but around the world," says Rev. Daniel Koelpin, administrator of World Missions.

With the three newly opened mission outposts, GLI now has 27 missions and 1,300 members, served by 20 evangelists and 7 national pastors. Reid, who lives in Sun Prairie, Wis., travels there four or five times a year to mentor and encourage the young church body as well as give his expertise on church-planting strategies.

Reid says that two-thirds of GLI members are in worship and Sunday school and half of the adults are in Bible class every week. "When you have people that are in the Word, they also have the desire to share. They want to make and keep that their main objective even with reduced funding," he says.

[Feedback to Pres. Schroeder's statement](#)

Feedback to a [WELS news release](#) quoting Pres. Mark Schroeder's reaction to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) decision to allow homosexuals in "lifelong, monogamous" relationships to serve as pastors continues to flow in.

On Aug. 21, the day the ELCA church-wide assembly approved the resolution, Communication Services posted Pres. Schroeder's response expressing WELS opposition based on clear biblical principles on the synod's Web site. A news release was also sent to [Religion News Service](#) for worldwide distribution.

So far, the reaction has been almost universally positive, with statements of support coming from both WELS and non-WELS members. "I appreciate your statement and share your disappointment," writes one woman from Michigan. "Thank you for posting the statement with a clear Biblical viewpoint."

"As a member of an ELCA church, I applaud you standing up for the Word of God and having the backbone to speak up and put your 8/21 letter on your Web site," writes another woman from Minnesota.

While it is impossible to gauge precisely how widely published Schroeder's comments were, the news release was printed virtually verbatim on more than a dozen blogs. Schroeder's comments were quoted in an MSNBC.com article (link no longer available) on the reaction to the ELCA decision from both WELS and the Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod. Below is a sampling of posts.

Christian Today: [Lutheran bodies reaffirm Bible's stance on homosexuality](#)

Everyday Christian: [Wisconsin's Lutheran chief regrets ELCA decision on gay clergy](#)

Virtue Online: [Lutheran schism feared after votes on gays](#)

September 21, 2009

[RESUMING OUR WALK](#)

From the office of President Mark Schroeder

You've probably heard more than once that the word "synod" means "walking together." It means walking together in what we believe (our common faith based on God's inerrant Word as summarized in our Lutheran Confessions) and walking together in what we do (carrying out our God-given mission to take the gospel to all the world). This summer's convention beautifully emphasized the many ways in which both of these aspects of walking together are vital and important in all we do as a synod.

In a number of different ways, the convention emphasized the importance of walking together in what we believe. The devotions, essays, and reports all focused on how the means of grace—the gospel in Word and sacrament—are the focus and foundation of all we do. God's Word shapes our beliefs. It is proclaimed faithfully in pulpits and classrooms and in mission fields. The gospel of Jesus Christ strengthens our faith, unites us as members of God's family, and gives life to the church as the body of Christ. The convention passed resolutions encouraging a synod-wide study of these precious truths—truths that sound so basic but that should never be taken for granted. The convention also approved the establishment of a program for continuing education for called workers—not primarily as a means for them to learn new strategies or to develop practical skills, but rather as an encouragement for all called workers to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ through continued study of his Word.

The convention also had much to say about our walking together in what we do. You are aware that some elements of our mission and ministry needed to be curtailed and reduced due to the shortage of funds. At the same time that we made these difficult reductions, we were reminded of the many opportunities that God is placing before us. Those opportunities to share the gospel with more and more people exist in our congregations, in our communities, across the country, and around the world. The difficulties we have faced in our synod's budget should not distract us from the simple facts that the fields are still ripe for the harvest and that God has given us the special privilege of taking his saving message to people who are still lost in their sin.

As we walk together in his Word and in our mission, we have the opportunity in the weeks ahead to recommit ourselves as a synod to faithfulness in both of these areas. When it comes to walking together in his Word, thank God for the pure gospel that is proclaimed every week in your worship. Encourage your pastors and teachers to continue to proclaim that Word faithfully and to defend it zealously. Use your Bibles at home and attend Bible classes at your church. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16).

When it comes to walking together in our mission, we also have the opportunity to recommit ourselves to expanding our efforts to reach out with the gospel once again. It's been very encouraging that Congregation Mission Offerings, which had fallen in the first four months of the year, have rebounded during the last four months. This is particularly amazing because the summer months are typically times when congregations struggle to meet their budgets and to keep up with their mission commitments. We pray that this encouraging trend will continue in the months ahead, since fall is a time when most congregations have mission festivals and Walking Together Sundays. As congregations continue to faithfully grow in their support for the work of the synod, we pray that the painful reductions in mission programs and staffing are a thing of the past. We pray that we will once again be blessed with the resources to plant new mission congregations, to expand our efforts in world mission fields, and to provide greater assistance to young people who are preparing for ministry in our schools.

People who walk generally look ahead. As we walk together as a synod, let's look ahead with joy and confidence to the mission that God has given us and with a common trust that he will bless us as we carry out that mission.

Serving in Christ,
Mark Schroeder

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...

[Walking Together Reminder](#)

Congregations that have not yet participated in this year's annual "Walking Together" celebration are encouraged to do so. Begun in 2005, the Walking Together service celebrates all we accomplish, through God's grace, as WELS.

This year, the focus is on 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7 and the unique role laypeople play in service to God's church. The highlight is a special video presentation profiling a couple from Abiding Peace near Greenville, S.C., and how the Holy Spirit led them to our WELS fellowship and to serve in a variety of ways.

"We found the Walking Together video to be very inspiring—it's great to see the stewardship perspective from these new Christians' point of view," says Mr. Adam Nass, chairman of the stewardship

taskforce at Trinity, Waukesha, Wis. "In fact, we enjoyed the video and its message so much we are using it as a primary discussion piece for our congregation's stewardship presentations this fall."

The Ministry of Christian Giving has developed a variety of resources to help congregations conduct a "Walking Together" Sunday, including the DVD presentation, a Bible study, sermon, worship suggestions, and resources for collecting a special offering. All were mailed to congregations in February, but are [available for download](#) through the synod's new private Intranet, Connect; a username and password are required. If you don't have a Connect account, [sign up](#) today.