

# The Star of Hope

NOVEMBER 2009

## WHAT IS THE REFORMATION?

On October 31, we celebrate the anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. The Reformation was a time of profound change in the Christian Church during the 16th century. On October 31, 1517, a Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther nailed a piece of paper on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. On that piece of paper, were 95 Theses, or statements, to object what was going on in the church of his day.

In Martin Luther's Day, the church was charging money for pieces of paper called indulgences. When you paid money for these indulgences, supposedly God would forgive your sins. People were taught that they could earn their way into heaven. But Martin Luther came to realize that we could not buy or earn our own way to heaven. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven is a gift that God gives.

Martin Luther said, "Forgiveness of sins is not something which we can earn for ourselves by our own good deeds. Rather, it is a free gift which God gives to us as a result of all that Jesus did for us as our Savior. Salvation, therefore, is completely and only by faith in Jesus."

God used Martin Luther to "reform" the church by bringing people back to the understanding of the basic truths of the Bible. The most important truth was that our salvation is a gift from God earned by what Jesus did for us – living a perfect life for us and dying on the cross to pay for our sins. We receive this gift by faith in Jesus. Those who followed this Bible truth became known as "Lutherans."

But the Reformation brought to light many other truths that changed the world. It empowered the "barbarian" Germans who received little credit from the intellectuals in more "civilized" settlements. It also ended the flow of money from the paupers in Germany to the coffers in Rome. Some economists even say that the Reformation changed the economic patterns of the world. Before Luther, the noblest professions were church work or royalty. Monks, nuns, priests and princes had a better shot at heaven, according to the wisdom of the time. When God led Luther to unearth the idea that God approved of all professions practiced to his glory, silversmiths,

musicians, lawyers, farmers, and merchants were freed to follow their hearts' desires for satisfaction and fulfillment.

The Reformation had an effect in people's hearts and lives. It replaced fear with comfort.

The Reformation is really about faithful church members trying to recover the teachings of the historic Christian church built on the Bible alone. The triumph of God through overwhelming odds to get the Gospel to your heart is comforting and encouraging. We become bolder because we know that God will never let his Gospel become a lost cause. The good news of Jesus' forgiveness will always remain God's victory song.

When you feel the world of today is losing the purity of God's Word, as if all Christians might disappear, remember the triumph God achieved in the Reformation. We Christians, true to the Word, are carrying on this valiant effort with the help and strength of God. That is the real effect of the Reformation.

-Pastor Kehren

### **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA WELS REFORMATION FESTIVAL 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

*A meal will follow in the Parish Center after the  
service. Donations accepted to help defray the  
cost of the meal. Please bring a dessert to  
share if you are coming to the meal.*

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**CHILI COOKOFF**

Mark your calendars for Sunday, November 15, 2009 after second service. Please sign up to enter your favorite Chili Recipe as soon as possible.

Signups are also needed for Judges to taste the delicious creations.

Every other family attending should bring a dessert to share.

**ADVENT SOUP SUPPERS**

We will be having a meal at 5:00pm for the congregation prior to the Wednesday evening Advent Services on 12-2, 12-9, and 12-16. Please call Jan D. if you are interested in providing a meal (soup or something else).

**CARD RACK ANNOUNCEMENT**

Recently 15 new cards, including Thank You cards were added to the rack in the Fellowship Hall. Your generous donations help to pay for the postage and cards sent to members and, when appropriate, to their families.

**VISION DOCUMENT PRAYER REQUESTS  
NOVEMBER**

*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.*

- 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.
- God Bless the planning of Christmas for Kids and members willingly participate
- Reformation and Thanksgiving services are well attended
- God continued blessings as we move into the second year of our Vision Document

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

- Eggplant Festival reached unchurched families
- Families that helped and participated in the Harvest Festival
- School ministry held another Parents Night Out
- for His help and guidance as we complete the first year of our Vision Document

### **GENTLE THOUGHTS FOR TODAY**

There's always a lot to be thankful for if you take time to look for it. For example I am sitting here thinking how nice it is that wrinkles don't hurt.

### **NOVEMBER PARENTS NIGHT OUT: MOVIE NIGHT**

Come join us for movie night on Friday, November 13th from 5:30pm - 9pm! We will be watching "Fireproof" while your kids are safe and entertained in the Fellowship Hall. Bring an appetizer to share and come enjoy a great movie and Christian Fellowship. Kids: \$10 first child and \$5 for each additional. Pizza will be served for the kids.

Invite your friends - please sign up in the narthex or with Mr. Leifer in the office.

### **SCHOOL OF OUTREACH SUMMARY**

The School of Outreach hosted by Hope last month was a success. All of the attendee churches came away with both short and long term plans.

The ones identified by Hope's leaders that attended were:

#### **Long-Range Plans**

- Explore the possibility of multi-site ministries in the Auburn - Rocklin - Lincoln areas
- Explore the feasibility of an early childhood ministry - preschool with senior volunteers.

#### **Short Range Plans**

- Develop teen ministry outreach (Friday Night activity)
- Evangelistic website for events - pictures, etc. – visitor friendly
- Explore different times for VBS to reach more in community
- Create a School Connection similar to WELS Connection
- Offer the School Spring play on another night and invite the community
- Hold a Ministry Fair on the courtyard
- Have friendship Sunday and encourage members to invite their unchurched friends and relatives.

### **GENTLE THOUGHTS FOR TODAY**

Long ago when men cursed and beat the ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft. Today, it's called golf.

### **HOPE SCHOOL NEWS**

#### **Day Before Thanksgiving Parade**

As in past years, we are planning to again participate in the Loomis Day Before Thanksgiving Parade. This year we will feature a float decorated by students of Hope Lutheran School. All students in K-8 are involved whether it is painting, assembling, or preparing the packets to be handed out. A special thank you goes out to Nancy Leman for her design and oversight of this great project. We hope you all have a blessed Thanksgiving!

#### **District Teachers Conference**

Three faculty members will be attending the AZ/CA District Teachers Conference held November 5-6 at Emmanuel, Tempe, AZ. Our doctrinal presentation will be given by Pastor Michael Hintz and will focus on sharing the Gospel message with enthusiasm. Our educational presentation will be given by Mr. Daniel Johnson and will focus on initiatives and qualities of Christian schools that have above average enrollment.

### **Children's Christmas Service**

This year's children's Christmas service will be the morning of December 20<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 and 10:30 AM. "The Christmas Gift" is a 5-part service that focuses on the different ways that God gifted the world when he sent his Son. The students will be practicing hard until then and look forward to proclaiming the birth of our Savior to you!

### **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: 11/13, 12/11, 1/8, 2/12, 3/12, 4/9, 5/7, and 6/11. If you want to enjoy nurturing these children in their faith and fun, please contact Mr. Leifer or School Ministry Leader, Jimmy Boyce.

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**

**November:** Come and join us for a potluck lunch at 11:30am on November 17<sup>th</sup> in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring a dish to share.

**December:** Our December event will be held at the home of Ted and Myra on Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. They will provide a meal of salad, Mediterranean chicken, vegetable and dessert for \$10. Money and RSVP due to Myra December 8<sup>th</sup> so she knows how many will be attending.

Bring your singing voice because we will be singing Christmas carols. We will not have a gift exchange this year. If you struggle with an overwhelming urge to buy a gift, please consider bringing a children's gift for the Community Outreach project for the Placer County Child Abuse Prevention Center. See article on Kid's First in the Star.

## **CHURCH SIGNS**

There are some questions that can't be answered by Google

## **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 6<sup>th</sup>.

## **CHRISTMAS FOR KIDS**

**Christmas for kids** - Mark your calendar on December 5th, from 9AM to 1:30 PM. Help in all areas will be needed to make this outreach program a success. If you are unable to help by your physical presence we are also looking for donations of homemade cookies and/or monetary donations towards the lunch that will be served. Monetary

donations should be placed in an envelope marked Christmas for Kids, and placed in the offering plate on any Sunday. If you plan on attending and would like to help you will also need to see the video on child abuse.

### 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.

November: Thanksgiving Dinner-canned yams \ cranberry sauce \ stuffing mix

### ADVENT BY CANDLELIGHT



**Ladies & Girls you are invited to attend**

### Advent by Candlelight

*An evening of Bible readings & songs focusing on God's message brought by the angels to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds.*

**Friday, November 20, 2009  
7pm**

**Hope Fellowship Hall**

**Please bring you favorite Christmas Dessert & Invite a guest**

**Women and Girl's Advent by Candlelight** We had a great response last year and many requests to present "Advent by Candlelight" again. This year, the

program will be held on November 20th at 7:00 pm in the Fellowship hall. The presentation consists of Bible readings and songs focusing on God's message, brought by the angels, to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds. Please bring a dessert to share and you are encouraged to invite guests. You may use the guest invitations (blue) located on the counter in the Narthex. There are signup sheets on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall and on the counter at the entrance to church to indicate how many are in your party and whether you will be able to bring your favorite Christmas dessert. Coffee, tea, and hot cider will be provided. We look forward to you and your guests joining us as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Our family would like to thank all of our fellow Hope members for the love and support they gave to us during the time of my father's hospitalization and death this last summer. The many cards, notes, and kind words from all of you were one way the Lord provided us with just what we needed, just as He has promised to do. Memorial gifts have been given to Apostles Lutheran School in San Jose.

Mike R



Thanks to My Extended Family:

My heartfelt thanks to members of Hope for your prayers, calls, and cards before Bonnie went to be with Jesus. Likewise, since she passed away you have been so caring to me. I give special thanks to all who attended her Memorial service and to the ladies who arranged the lovely luncheon afterwards. All of it was a real blessing and it seems like my words are not enough to show how grateful I am to be a member with all of you at Hope and in God's Kingdom.  
Karen K

### OUTREACH MINISTRY TEAM

The Outreach Ministry Team is providing "Courtyard Snacks" for the month of November. We are asking the members of the congregation to help in the months ahead. When visitors attend, it is easier to

get them to stay and visit with us when we have refreshments. The refreshments will be set up on the courtyard in good weather and in the Fellowship Hall if the weather is uncooperative.

Please look for, yet another sign up sheet on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall.

### DID I READ THAT SIGN RIGHT?

Outside a secondhand shop:  
We exchange anything - bicycles, washing machines, etc.

Why not bring your wife along and get a wonderful bargain?

### TOGETHER



#### News from the WELS

October 2009  
Website: [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net)

October 5, 2009

### FALL MEETINGS ADDRESS IMPORTANT ISSUES

From the office of President Mark Schroeder

Most of the various boards and leadership groups in the synod meet during the fall, and this year is no exception. Since the synod convention in July made some important decisions, those groups have already been busy discussing the steps that they will need to take to implement those decisions and to make plans for the coming year.

The **Committee on Interchurch Relations (CICR)** met last week to discuss issues relating to our sister church bodies throughout the world. They heard of both the challenges facing these small confessional Lutheran church bodies in fellowship with WELS as well as the blessings that God is giving to them as they carry out their important work. The CICR also met with the doctrinal committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern.

The **Boards for World and Home Missions** both met within the last two weeks. Both boards are

working diligently to make adjustments after the recent budget reductions and to make plans once again to begin expanding our work of planting new missions in the United States and overseas. The opportunities for mission work have not diminished, and the dedicated members of these boards are praying that God will make the resources available to continue to proclaim the gospel in more locations.

The governing boards of our **ministerial education schools** have all held their fall meetings; the Board for Ministerial Education will also meet in the coming weeks. The schools continue to carry out their single purpose of preparing and training workers to serve as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers in the synod. At a time when most Christian denominations are having difficulty in recruiting and training church workers, our ministerial education system continues to provide our synod with an adequate number of well-trained future workers.

A number of meetings have taken place with representatives of the entities that comprised **Parish Services**. The synod convention made significant changes to this area of ministry by eliminating the Board for Parish Services and placing the various commissions (Evangelism, Parish Schools, Parish Assistance, Youth Discipleship, Adult Discipleship, Worship, and Special Ministries) under the oversight of the **Conference of Presidents**. The Conference of Presidents will determine the structure and staffing of the ministries of Parish Services at its meeting in mid-October.

The **Synodical Council** will meet in early November. It will direct its attention to a number of convention resolutions and plan ways in which those resolutions will be carried out. One important resolution directed the Synodical Council to develop a long-range, comprehensive plan for the synod that will guide our activities and efforts during the next 5-10 years. This planning will begin in earnest at the November meeting.

Nearly every other board or committee of the synod will be meeting during these fall months. Meetings may not sound all that exciting in themselves. But each of the meetings this fall will discuss and make decisions about the ways in which the synod's work of preserving and proclaiming the gospel is carried out. Please ask God to bless those who serve on these boards and committees, and ask him to guide them in the work that they do.

Serving in Christ,  
Mark Schroeder

### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...**

#### **Synod staffing update**

The governing board of Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., at its meeting Sept. 24-26, regretfully eliminated the positions of three full-time professors as a result of continuing budget cuts. Because of available transitional funding, the one pastor-trained faculty member and two teacher-trained members will remain in their positions until the end of the current academic year. These latest reductions complete the budget cutting process that began last spring with significant staff reductions and furloughs.

Synodwide, four of six pastor-trained men whose synod-funded positions have been eliminated are currently holding full- or part-time calls. Five teachers and two staff ministers remain without calls. All but 3 seminary graduates and 11 MLC graduates have been assigned.

Meantime, WELS Committee on Relief has provided support for called workers and staff members whose positions were eliminated at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Mich. The committee provided funding for professional career counseling services for nine workers currently searching for new employment.

Rev. John Seifert, president of the Michigan District, says the displaced workers were encouraged to hear that their experiences in ministry have value in and are transferable to the secular market. Still, they face a difficult struggle finding meaningful employment in the Saginaw area where the unemployment rate hovers between 22 and 25 percent.

Seifert expresses thanks for the support from Committee on Relief for the effort. "The counseling would not have been possible without it," he says.

#### **Coordinating WELS humanitarian aid efforts**

For the first time, representatives from five WELS entities that deliver humanitarian aid in some fashion came together to discuss how they can work cooperatively to accomplish even more for God's kingdom. The meeting, held in Milwaukee Oct. 1, was funded by a Thrivent Financial grant and included representatives from WELS Board for Home Missions, Central Africa Medical Mission, Committee

on Relief, Humanitarian Aid Committee, and WELS Kingdom Workers.

Each group explained its current organizational structure and individual goals for the future. Then all the groups identified joint priority issues and attainable objectives for the future that relate to WELS humanitarian aid in general. Steps to be taken include creating a new committee, with representatives from each group, to develop an overarching humanitarian assistance philosophy and to tackle other future joint efforts. The groups also resolved to make this meeting an annual event so that they can remain informed about the humanitarian aid work that the other WELS committees are carrying out.

Rev. Dan Koelpin, administrator of WELS Board for World Missions, is enthusiastic about the work that was begun at this meeting. He says that humanitarian work is important for the future of WELS World Missions. "Humanitarian assistance is a great handmaid to the work that World Missions does," Koelpin says. "We don't want it to detract from our primary work of gospel outreach, but often it creates goodwill that enables us to spread the gospel."

October 19, 2009

#### **NEW CONGREGATION AND MINISTRY SUPPORT GROUP**

From the office of President Mark Schroeder

In its meeting last week, the Conference of Presidents (COP) took action to reconfigure the former Parish Services units into a new Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG). The move comes after representatives of the various units of Parish Services and the COP developed a proposal that was in keeping with the intent of a 2009 synod convention resolution.

The convention spent considerable time discussing the role of the synod in helping to strengthen congregations and their members as they carry out their ministries. The convention recognized that the units of Parish Services provide valuable help to congregations, and it wanted to ensure that those resources are more widely accessible and utilized. Since the district presidents are called to supervise doctrine and practice in congregations, the convention eliminated the Board for Parish Services and the position of BPS administrator and placed the

units of Parish Services under the responsibility of the Conference of Presidents (COP). The intent of this decision was to create a closer and more direct cooperative relationship between the district presidents and the resources available to them and the congregations in their districts.

The new CMSG offers some new and more targeted approaches to helping congregations. It will operate as an arm of the district presidents primarily to provide resources and training to called workers and congregational leaders. Familiar programs of direct ministry to laypeople such as youth rallies and various retreats, publications, and Web sites will continue to be offered and coordinated as possible. The CMSG will be responsible to the COP through the synod president. It will work closely with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Martin Luther College to deliver continuing education to called workers. It will develop networks of district pastors and teachers who will work with the CMSG to deliver assistance to congregations. With its various areas of expertise, it will provide a unified team approach to identifying the needs of congregations and their leaders.

### **CMSG composition**

The units of the former Parish Services, along with their grassroots commissions, remain in place, with the following changes:

- The administrators for all of the entities are now called "directors."
- Adult and Youth Discipleship retain separate commissions but are served, at least temporarily, by a single director.
- The Commission for Parish Schools will now be called the "Commission for Lutheran Schools" to reflect its broader work of serving Lutheran high schools and early childhood education programs. The unit will be headed by a director and an associate director, with the possibility of adding a second associate director in the future to provide assistance to struggling schools and to congregations seeking to begin or improve early childhood programs.
- Since the COP has replaced the Board for Parish Services as the calling body and because of some changed responsibilities, the COP issued the following calls: Rev. Mike

Hintz (Evangelism), Rev. Bryan Gerlach (Worship), Rev. Carl Ziemer (Special Ministries), Rev. Dave Kehl (Adult and Youth Discipleship), Greg Schmill (interim director of Lutheran Schools), and Jeff Inniger (associate director of Lutheran Schools).

- Each unit will be responsible for its own program and budgeting, but all units will also work in close cooperation with each other in areas where cooperation is beneficial.
- A new "Congregation and Ministry Support Council," comprised of CMSG directors, COP members, and representatives from WLS and MLC, will coordinate the work within the CMSG and the work of the CMSG with the COP and the synodical schools.
- One of the directors of the CMSG will serve as a coordinator of the CMSG units. This position will be filled by COP appointment on an annually rotating basis. Rev. Bryan Gerlach has been asked to serve in this capacity.
- In the interest of gaining better and more consistent distribution of CMSG resources, the COP will consider in the coming months whether the commissions should be comprised of the district coordinators of each unit.

### **Parish Assistance program discontinued**

The Parish Assistance program will no longer exist in its current form. The COP eliminated the positions of Rev. Paul Kelm (effective Dec. 31, 2009) and Rev. Elton Stroh (effective June 30, 2010). The Forward with Lutheran Schools program (which had been a part of Parish Assistance) was placed under the responsibility of the Commission for Lutheran Schools. Should Greg Schmill accept the call as the interim director of Lutheran Schools, he will oversee a continuation of the Forward with Lutheran Schools program as time allows.

Parish Assistance is currently working with a number of congregations. In order to avoid a sudden discontinuation of services, congregations may choose to engage directly Kelm or the part-time consultants now serving them. These direct arrangements would be made between congregations and consultants and would not be a part of a synodical program. Stroh will work with

other congregations now being served by Parish Assistance to determine how they will best be served.

The COP recognized that some form of consultative services to support congregations and their ministries should continue. It envisioned an entity with its own commission and director (as a part of the CMSG) that would provide short-term assessment of congregational needs and advice as to how those needs could best be met. The COP directed the synod president to appoint a committee to outline the scope and function of this new entity and to bring recommendations to the COP by its April 2010 meeting.

### **The importance of congregational health**

These efforts to reconfigure the ministries of Parish Services underline the importance of congregational health. We have also recognized the valuable role that the ministries of the new Congregation and Ministry Support Group can play in helping congregations and called workers to address the challenges facing them. Please join us in the prayer that God will bless this new entity and that it will receive the full support and encouragement of our entire synod.

Serving in Christ,  
Mark Schroeder

### **Also in this Issue...**

#### **New MLS president called**

On Oct. 15, the governing board at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), Saginaw, Mich., called Rev. Kenneth Brokmeier, pastor at Our Savior, Brookings, S.D., as the school's new president, after Rev. Michael Jensen returned the call Oct. 11.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to see how God in his grace and mercy would extend to a clay vessel [like me] a chance to think about another place to serve our awesome Savior," says Brokmeier.

Brokmeier has previously served as recruitment director at Luther Prep, Watertown, Wis., and Martin Luther Preparatory School, Prairie Du Chien, Wis. He also served at St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis., and Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis. He currently is chairman of the governing board of Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

"I have spent 11 years serving at our schools, and some guys will never have that opportunity in their ministry. So I have seen that side of it. At the same time, I have a great love of serving in parish ministry," says Brokmeier. "I think we want people at our worker training schools who have a great love for the teaching and preaching ministry to encourage young people to prepare as candidates."

The position of Michigan Lutheran Seminary president became vacant in April when former MLS president Rev. Paul Prange accepted the call to be administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education.

#### **Church damaged by fire**

On Wed., Oct. 14, a fire damaged St. John, Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada. No one was in the building when the fire started. However, this was the second church in Wetaskiwin to catch fire within 24 hours, so area police are labeling the fire "suspicious" and investigating the cause of the blaze.

The fire appears to have started in St. John's cry-room. That room is completely destroyed. The heat of the fire then melted the light fixtures within the sanctuary, causing more fires to begin. These secondary fires damaged the church organ and lectern. Three support beams in the entryway of the church are charred and as a result the building may be destroyed rather than repaired.

Rev. Daniel Habben, who serves part time at St. John, says, "Even though we are unsure what the future of the building may be, members are committed to continuing to gather together."

The congregation met for a Sunday worship service at a local senior citizens' center on Oct. 18. Habben encouraged members to share their reactions to the fire and then led members in singing their favorite hymns and in a short devotion.

#### **Jail ministry volunteers encouraged**

About 45 active jail ministry volunteers, chaplains, and mentors of ex-offenders gathered together this past weekend to exchange ideas, enhance their skills, and encourage one another at the 2009 WELS Jail Ministry Conference in St. Charles, Ill.

The conference—sponsored by WELS Special Ministries and Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries—offered keynote presentations, small

group sessions, and much time for networking so attendees could discuss the joys, challenges, troubles, and frustrations of jail ministry as well as share ideas of what does and doesn't work.

"This was a great opportunity for us to compare notes," says Gary Loss, lay member from Gethsemane, Davenport, Iowa. "I was surprised at the diversity of approaches to prison and jail ministry."

An ex-offender was there to give his viewpoints. "That just brings a whole new dimension," says Rev. Carl Ziemer, administrator of WELS Special Ministries. Ziemer says volunteers can see the results of the ministry and hear some of the challenges that inmates face. "They can hear from the inmate the appreciation that he has for the people who take time to come and bring God's Word and be a Christian friend."

Grants from WELS Kingdom Workers, the Siebert Foundation, and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans helped fund the conference. "This was a great way to bring the coals together to keep them burning," says Ziemer.

### **Missionary to Mexico tours United States**

Rev. Mike Hartman, missionary to Mexico, concluded a nine-day speaking tour in Minnesota and Wisconsin on Sunday, Oct. 18. This tour was the first time a WELS world missionary has left a field for the sole purpose of giving mission presentations. Hartman spent his time at WELS congregations and schools sharing the blessings and opportunities in WELS World Missions, with a special emphasis on his mission work in Mexico.

WELS Missions Promotions organized the tour to coincide with the time of year when WELS organizations often focus on supporting mission work. David Savatski, coordinator of Missions Promotions, noticed that a number of WELS organizations in the Midwest had chosen to support mission work in Mexico this fall. He then worked with Hartman to schedule in-person visits so that WELS members could get a firsthand view of the mission work that they are supporting. Hartman's time in the United States included five preaching engagements, 23 presentations, and one Bible class. More than 2,000 WELS members heard him speak.

In his mission presentations, Hartman explained that WELS missionaries work in Mexico to help the Lutheran church body in Mexico, *Iglesia Evangélica Confesional Luterana* (Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church), grow and mature. "The goal is to develop a synod that can stand on its own two spiritual feet," said Hartman. "To make that happen, missionaries train men who want to become pastors in the Mexican Lutheran Church. They also work on evangelism to reach more souls and help the church grow."

Hartman has served in Mexico since 1999. His current call is as field coordinator to Mexico, which involves teaching at the Mexican Lutheran Seminary, overseeing the mission congregation *Cristo Rey* (Christ the King), counseling Mexican pastors, and supervising the mission team.

To schedule a mission presentation for your church or school, e-mail [david.savatski@wels.net](mailto:david.savatski@wels.net) or call 414-256-3293.

### **BME meets, discusses convention resolutions**

In response to 2009 synod convention resolutions, the Board for Ministerial Education began exploring two important issues - student financial assistance and Mandarin language study at its meeting Oct. 7-8.

Two study committees, made up of representatives from all four ministerial education schools, will be studying the issues and bringing recommendations. The financial study committee will examine student costs at each school, study how financial assistance is distributed, and determine a consistent financial philosophy for the entire system. The Mandarin study committee will look into how to add Mandarin language study to the curriculums at the high schools, college, and seminary.

"In our circles, by the grace of God, we have the gift of the unconditional gospel in remarkable clarity," says Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education. "We want to pass that gift on to the next generation with excellent stewardship of our present resources. These committees are being formed with the goal of doing exactly that, always asking themselves, 'What is best for the church?'"

To help congregations better understand the value of the ministerial education system and how this ministry impacts every WELS member, materials for a Ministerial Education Sunday were mailed to all

congregations last week for use in a service in November. Materials include a video; a resource disk containing Sunday worship materials, text study, and bulletin inserts; three color posters; and ideas for hosting the service.

### **WELS in the news**

An Oct. 6 article in the Fond du Lac Reporter reported that Marine Josh Wege, a 2008 graduate of Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wis., was injured in a roadside bombing in Afghanistan. He is recovering in a hospital in Germany.

### **LORD PROP US UP...**

Recently I was thinking of the old deacon who always prayed, 'Lord, prop us up on our leanin' side.' After hearing him pray that prayer many times, someone asked him why he prayed that prayer so fervently.

He answered, 'Well sir, you see, it's like this... I got an old barn out back. It's been there a long time; it's withstood a lot of weather; it's gone through a lot of storms, and it's stood for many years. It's still standing. But one day I noticed it was leaning o one side a bit. So I went and got some pine poles and propped it up on its leaning side so it wouldn't fall.

Then I got to thinking about that and how much I was like that old barn. I've been around a long time. I've withstood a lot of life's storms. I've withstood a lot of bad weather in life, I've withstood a lot of hard times, and I'm still standing too. But I find myself leaning to one side from time to time, so I like to ask the Lord to prop us up on our leaning side, 'cause I figure a lot of us get to leaning at times.

Sometimes we get to leaning toward anger, leaning toward bitterness, leaning toward hatred, leaning toward cussing, leaning toward a lot of things that we shouldn't. So we need to pray, 'Lord, prop us up on our leaning side, so we will stand straight and tall again, to glorify the Lord.

### **DID I READ THAT SIGN RIGHT?**

Notice in a farmer's field:

The farmer allows walkers to cross the field for free,  
but the bull charges.