

GETHSEMANE

LUTHERAN Church

News from 4040 N. 108th Street, Omaha, NE 68164
February, 2017



Forgiveness through Jesus

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.
2 Corinthians 5:19

February holds the day that often makes or breaks relationships: Valentine's Day! It's a day of engagement rings, flowers, dinners, and the hope for returned affections. For all the happiness of Valentine's Day, it's also bittersweet. For every happy or newly engaged or blissfully married couple, you can find someone who is sadly alone, someone who longs to be loved, someone going through a devastating break-up. No wonder the game is, "He loves me...He loves me not."

Imagine if the pressure of Valentine's Day was off. Imagine there was no doubt about how that special someone felt about you. Imagine that person did what the Bible says, "Love keeps no record of wrongs."

We have to imagine, because our experience is that human love is conditional. It is usually based on how people look, or what they have, or how they treat us. As a result, we are led to think that God is the same. We think that he loves us if we're lovable. We assume that he loves us if we show our love to him. The truth is that God loves us not because of who we are or what we do. The Bible clearly describes God's amazing love by what he has done for us: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them."

Honestly, we have to admit that there are all kinds of sins on our record before God. Our attempts at love throughout life—failures, breakups, lies, adulteries, divorces—all are an astonishing record of wrong. God ought to oppose us. But in amazing love, God doesn't count our sins against us. That means that he doesn't keep a record of all our actions, thoughts and words that violate his holy will.

God doesn't keep a record of our sins because of Jesus. God took all our sins, the sins of everyone, and charged them to his Son. In our place Jesus willingly and lovingly suffered the punishment of death that we and all people deserved. This is the great love that God has for us...for you! Through Jesus Christ, our relationship with God is restored and by faith in Jesus we will enjoy the blessing of his love forever.

In our relationship with God, it's not "He loves me...He loves me not." In Christ, it is always, "He loves me...He loves me...He loves me."

SPIES!

Galatians 2:1-5



Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

Paul's defense of his apostleship and his defense of the free Gospel - that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone - continues into the second chapter of his letter to the Galatians. The problem in Galatia was that false teachers - called "Judaizers" - were going around telling the people that they had to believe in Jesus AND follow the Old Testament ceremonial laws (which included circumcision) in order to be saved. A similar problem was arising in Jerusalem where some of the supposed Christian Pharisees were trying to add law requirements to God's free Gospel of forgiveness.

Paul's point is that what he had been teaching on his Missionary Journeys was exactly what the apostles back in Jerusalem had been teaching. Their messages were in complete agreement even though they had had little contact over the past fourteen years - and really over the past seventeen years since his conversion. God had been preserving and spreading his Gospel through faithful teachers and preachers and lay Christians. These faithful people of God refused to give-in to the false teachers who were teaching salvation "by faith and works." These faithful people of God refused to make themselves slaves to the law all over again. To defend their freedom in Christ and their freedom from ceremonial law, Titus - a Gentile - refused to be circumcised.

Today Satan would like nothing better than to add works to the Gospel. Our sinful human pride would love to add works to grace. By contributing to our own salvation, something inside us thinks that we can be more certain of our salvation. Just the opposite is true, however. Whenever we add works to God's free grace, we destroy the certainty of salvation that Christ declared when he said from the cross "It is finished!" We thank God that he has given us the faith in Christ to know that we are saved by grace alone. Reading God's Word daily will remind us of that. It will also help us better defend the Gospel of free forgiveness.

PRAYER: Lord, may I give all credit and glory to you for my free salvation in Christ. Amen.

Voters' Meeting
Sunday, February 19th
9:15 a.m.
In the fellowship hall



The Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) met on Wednesday, January 11th. We were missing three members, but six other people were there; and we had a very good meeting.

There was very good discussion about the current items listed on the plan, including our priorities and how we can engage the congregation again on a wider scope to look for needs and a possible expansion of our facility.

It is exciting to think that Gethsemane's debt could be paid off within the next seven years if contributions and payments maintain their current pace. That excitement should energize everyone about working on the Ministry Plan items and how we can work toward any expansion.

Our current plan was initially molded in 2009 with additional items added annually. Some possible items to be added to the LRP include: ways to improve our current facilities, drive for debt payoff, and the reinstatement of a preschool program after facility expansion. These are just a few items that were suggested to the committee.

We would like the congregation to help with these priorities and to schedule a large meeting for members to attend and voice their ideas. In the October voter's meeting, we discussed having that meeting in January. However, with the vacancy that Pastor Helwig is serving with Good Shepherd, we feel that we'd like to delay the large congregational meeting until April, just after Easter Sunday. We hope this will allow the vacancy to be filled and allow both pastors the time to dedicate their time solely to Gethsemane.

We hope this will allow members to have time to brainstorm their own ideas and plan for our April meeting. If anyone has questions, please contact the church office.

Jeff S

SCHOOL NEWS



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We hope to make the doldrums of winter disappear by gearing up for the 2017-18 school year. We will have our Kindergarten Round-Up in FEB, along with a Tuition Assistance supper. As we make our preparations, it's helpful to look back for anything that might be something to build off of or learn from. In terms of our Lutheran school, a look back over the last 10 years is interesting, to say the least.

That look back shows a steady line of growth over a seven year stretch (with all but one year at an astounding 10% enrollment increase). These last two years were down 10% and then down 2%. Now I know you can make numbers do whatever you want them to - like I can make them say that our school saw a 220% increase across eight years (from 49 K-8 students to 108). But I can also make the numbers say that over a period of four school years has seen a decline (albeit a total of 2 students). So I try not to get caught up in the numbers.

For me, looking back at these statistics is a bit puzzling. It's puzzling because I can't tell you what on earth was contributing to such a profound stretch of growth. It would be really nice to know that answer and bottle it up for the future. Granted, I can tell you who in heaven was contributing to that growth. And I know we actually do have that "bottled" up. The connection and consistency of God's Word in our school day and integrated in our curriculum tells me more than any statistics could.

As I mentioned, I try not to get caught up in the numbers. But I'll tell you it is a temptation. It's tempting to throw our numbers up against Good Shepherd or St. Paul's (Norfolk). It's tempting to gauge success in that way. But none of that matters when I change my thinking and gauge success in the students that we have - the students that we are blessed and privileged to have - hearing and responding to the Word of God that they hear. Success that is gauged on the development of Christian character. Then it becomes a case of wanting more numbers so that more children get to

participate in this. More numbers mean more ears to hear about Jesus, to see his works, and believe in his salvation.

I hope you can join me in sharing this message with people that you know that want this for their children. As we look to line up specifics for 2017-18, we have a great message of our school to promote. God will bless those efforts and bring us every little lamb that he has in mind for us. Little lambs by the tens or by the hundreds that are blessings and privileges to serve with our Lutheran school.

Peace in Him,
Mr. Pederson

+++

Please look for information coming from GLS and the School Board regarding enrollment matters for 2017-18. Join us in spreading the news of what our Lutheran school is all about!

SUPPORT OUR SCHOOL AS YOU EAT, DRINK + SHOP!

Get out of the house and burn some energy!

Take your kids to:

- Bounce U
- Dave & Busters
- Defy Gravity
- Maplewood Lanes
- Papio Bowl
- Papio Fun Park
- Pump It Up

IT'S AS EASY AS 1-2-3

- 1** Download the TAGG app
- 2** Visit participating businesses and snap a photo of your receipt within 7 days
- 3** Choose your school. The business will donate 5% at NO extra cost to you!

tagg TOGETHER A GREATER GOOD



FOCE

(Friends of Christian Education)

A big THANK YOU to all who volunteered to help make the GLS Winter Carnival a huge success!

Our next FOCE meeting is coming up on Tuesday, February 7th at 7:00 p.m. in the fellowship hall. We'll be discussing future purchases we'll be making for the school as well as the goings-on for Spirit Week coming up at the end of February! See you there!

Liz K, Secretary

Thank you to all who bring in their Box Tops for Education. In January, we received a check for \$195.70! Please continue to turn in your Box Tops, as well as your Campbell's Soup labels as you can. There are receptacles on the table in the southwest corner of the fellowship hall as well as the table in the school hallway near the vending machines. Campbell's will be discontinuing their program after this year, so get yours in as soon as possible. Every bit helps, and we thank you for your support!

HyVee receipts have been turned in. We are awaiting the check back from them. This program was only from September 1 through December 31. Stay tuned for a possible restart of this program this fall.

OWLS

(Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors)



The January meeting was held at Good Shepherd. Three new members were welcomed to the group. Total membership is up to 33, and we hope this positive direction will continue.

As scheduled the bulk of the meeting was focused on plans for 2017 that included ideas for positive chapter fellowship, ways to serve our congregations, and continue engaging our pastors. In addition Dick provided copies of the proposed national OWLS by-laws, OWLS handbook, and the proposed changes to the chapter by-laws.

Next OWLS function is Sunday February 19th at 2:30 p.m. at Gethsemane where the Chapter will be hosting to our congregation members and friends a presentation by Dr. Mark Christian a converted Muslim that shares his life story and his views on Muslims in the world today.

Down the road:

- March trip to view the sand hills cranes in central Nebraska.
- April Durham or Burlington Station tour
- May Memorial Day celebration at Memorial Park and lunch

Reminder for those not in attendance: chapter dues need to be collected.

Richard V, President



WINGS

(Women IN God's Service)

Many enjoyed our annual Bunco/ugly sweater/white elephant gift exchange on the 9th of January. Keep this event in mind for next year and plan to join us!

The next meeting of WINGS will be held on Thursday, February 2nd in the fellowship hall. Snacks begin at 6:45 p.m. with the meeting following at 7. Hope to see you there!

*Rachel C
Secretary*

LWMS

(Lutheran Women's Missionary Society)

"God Loves the World so that He Gave"

Allow me to share a story from the LWMS website. I thought that it was too good not to share:

Each January, LWMS hosts a dinner for graduating seniors at Martin Luther College to inform them of how LWMS can assist them in their future ministries. Last January, the LWMS President, Karen Fischer, had a special experience meeting one of the seniors. He said to Karen: "I just wanted to come up and thank you personally. Can I thank you with a hug? I am the son of a missionary, and

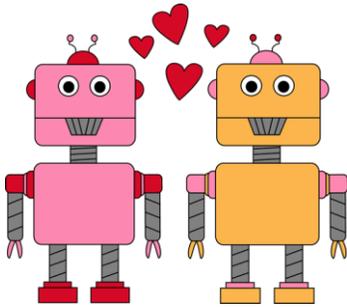
we received a lot of notes and gifts from the LWMS ladies. My siblings and I looked forward to receiving them because it could get very lonely. I never thought I'd have the chance to personally thank LWMS."

We will have an opportunity in the upcoming month to show our support for our new Befriend a Missionary. Look for ways that we, as a congregation, can show our support to them with our offerings and gifts.

Want to take a trip to Florida? Well, this summer is your chance! The 54th Annual LWMS Convention will be held in Orlando, Florida, June 22nd-25th, 2017! And.... guess what?!?! Our NE-IA Circuit has a Send One Sister program, and will give money towards one lady in our circuit who would like to attend her first convention! So...if you are thinking about attending your first convention, let me know! I would love to connect you to the Send One Sister program! Start making your plans now!

February Prayer Requests

- ~Our new Befriend a Missionaries
- ~The work being done in Russia
- ~The pastors on the mission board.



Leslie B
~Reporter

NELHS

(Nebraska Ev. Lutheran High School)

- Sports update:
 - Boys varsity basketball is 11-1 and is the 10th rated team in state according the latest Omaha-World Herald poll.
 - Girls varsity basketball is 7-6.
- Call News
 - Mr. Wells has returned the call issued to him by Fox Valley Lutheran and will continue his work among us.
 - Pastor Haakenson has received a call to teach Spanish at Michigan Lutheran Seminary.
- Upcoming events:
 - **Grandparents Day** will be Friday, February 3. To register or get more information about this day contact Lisa at the NELHS office (402-728-5236 or ldressel@nelhs.org)
 - **Cheer Camp** will be Saturday, February 11, and is for grades K-8. Contact cheer coach Katelynn Dorn (kdorn@nelhs.org) to receive information about Cheer Camp.
 - **Shadow Day**, which was postponed due to the ice storm, will be held on Monday, February 13. Any 7th and 8th grade students who are interested in NELHS or high school students who are considering transferring to NELHS are invited to spend the day on the campus. Mr. Otte can answer any questions you might have. Contact him at motte@nelhs.org and let him know who is coming and when they will be arriving.
 - **"Knight Out"** invitations are being sent out this week. The date for this event is Saturday, March 11. We look forward to seeing many of you attend this night of fellowship and fundraising at the German American Society in Omaha. Contact Twila Fickel (tfickel@nelhs.org) for more information about this night. We will also be seeking businesses and individuals to sponsor this night.
- One new student joined us in January, and we are now blessed with an enrollment of 90.
- The speech team has begun their competitions with over a third of the student body participating. This is a record for participation in speech.

- **“This is Our School” Campaign**

Overview: NELHS continues to be blessed in many ways and is poised to significantly grow during the next several years. A final step to position NELHS for growth is increasing the regular support that NELHS receives to support its people and programs every year. Our congregations have been regularly increasing their commitments, we now need families and individuals to say that Nebraska Lutheran is “Our School” and regularly support their high school.

Goal: Have over 100 families and individuals to make Nebraska Lutheran “Their School” and sign up for monthly donations to support the operating budget.

How: Go to the NELHS website (www.nelhs.org), click on “Support NELHS” and follow the directions to have an amount (\$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100,...) monthly withdrawn from your bank account or credit card.

By many of us making Nebraska Lutheran “Our School,” we can dramatically change the financial health of our school and enable it to continue to grow. As of today, we have 7 donors supporting our school monthly. Please pray about this and consider making Nebraska Lutheran your school by supporting it with a monthly donation.

- **Recruitment:** Our goal is 40 new students for next year. So far 19 have applied (18 freshmen and 1 sophomore). There are many families that continue to show a strong interest in our school but have not yet enrolled. If you know of a family whom we can contact to tell about our ministry, please let Administrator Mark Otte know. He can be reached at motte@nelhs.org or call 402-728-5236. Please pray for this goal.

Mark Otte, Administrator



Deacons

Members of the Board of Deacons include Jon B, Mike C, Bruce D, Allan D, Jeremy J, and Mike M.

At their most recent meeting, new door knobs with better locks were installed on six of the doors in the school wing of the building. This will add a safety measure to our classrooms by way of a means to lock the doors from the inside should it become necessary.

Discussion centered around mowing and clean-up. Mowing schedules will be compiled in the same way as they were last year, with two person teams. If you are interested in taking a spin on the mower and helping to make the grass look trim and nice, please contact the church office.

A congregation-wide clean-up day will take place on Saturday, April 1. This is the day that we clean the cobwebs, give the windows a good washing, deep clean the restrooms and wash light fixtures and vents, amongst other things. Please save the date! Many hands make lighter work. We'll start at 8 a.m.

We appreciate everyone's help in picking up trash, if you come across it. If you see something that needs to be repaired, please let the church office know. Thank you for helping us to keep the property in ship shape!

Discipleship

Teen Outing

On Sunday, February 12th, the teens of Gethsemane will be enjoying a day out at **The Escape Omaha®**, which is a new, simple, and fun live escape game, designed for small groups of up to 7 people. You get 60 minutes to climb a mountain of puzzles and mysteries in a room. The goal is

simple yet challenging: get out in time! Else ... you could be trapped inside forever! During this engaging and challenging game team members truly live and breathe in union for an hour.

After their great escapes, the teens will meet back at church for Bible study.

If you would like to help offset the cost of this event, please contact the church office.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School is Cool



Sunday School starts each week at 9:15 a.m. Please help your child to be on time and attend as often as possible. We carefully prepare lessons each week and look forward to sharing God's word with as many students as possible. Our last two lessons in January were on Samson. Ask your student what they know about Samson.

We can sing more songs if we start on time. We like action songs so we can move around before going to our classrooms. Preschool/Kindergarten loves singing and leading the Lord's Army song and we have been singing Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho this month along with other favorites.

Preschool through 6th grade will meet in the sanctuary from 9:15 to 9:30 for the opening, offering, and songs and then will proceed with their teacher to their classrooms for their lessons. The 7th and 8th grade class starts right away; they meet in Mr. Zimmermann's room. High school students meet in the church basement.

February lessons for Preschool-6th Grade:

5 - Jesus Is Born

12 - Family Bible games

19 - Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

26 - Jesus Appears in Glory

A big thank you to all our teachers, helpers and substitutes who put in time, talents, and resources to have lessons and activities planned for their classes.

See you Sunday!!

*Nickie L
Sunday School Coordinator*



MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT BIBLE STUDY

Join us

Wednesday, February 1, 6 p.m.
at Gethsemane

This event is live streamed at wels.net/interactivefaith. The presenter is Rev. Randy Hunter, who has presented many marriage enrichment retreats. While you may do this study at home, we are offering a chance to take some time with your spouse, without distractions, around God's word. Supper will be provided!

Please contact Pastor Koester or the church office to let us know if you are interested, so we can have enough materials ready for you.

EVANGELISM

Your Evangelism Committee would like to thank everyone who has liked our church and school Facebook pages, shared content when appropriate, followed Gethsemane on LinkedIn, connected with our called workers on LinkedIn, kept up-to-date on events by checking our website regularly and/or invited neighbors and friends to church and school events using our welcome postcards. By doing these simple things, you are basically an extension of our Evangelism team and a herald for our ministry at Gethsemane. What is a herald? The definition of herald is: a) one who conveys news or proclaims; b) one who actively promotes or advocates.



To the many heralds actively showing your support of Gethsemane Lutheran Church and School, we sincerely thank you for your help! Keep up the good work!

Joel K

Stewardship



Dinner and a Dance

There will be a Tuition Assistance Spaghetti Dinner on Friday, February 17th, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Cost will be \$5.00 a person with a \$25.00 max for a family. All proceeds will go to the Gethsemane Tuition Assistance Fund.

Following the tuition assistance dinner will be a dance that all Gethsemane Church and School Members are invited to. "A Night Under the Stars" will be held in the fellowship hall from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. with music provided by Scotty B Productions. There is no cost for the dance.



BOOK CLUB

Thanks goes to Jean R for hosting our January get-together for the discussion of **The Boys In the Boat** by Daniel James Brown. I do believe this is one book we ALL enjoyed!

We only have three months left before the end of our "book club year!!" February will see us meeting at the home of Liz Koester to discuss **The Longest Ride** by Nicholas Sparks. That evening is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28th.

After that, March sees us reading **Comfort & Joy** by Kristin Hannah (March 28th with Dawn B as host) and April will be a discussion of **One By One** by Jojo Moyes (April 25th with Sharon B as host). The April book is an Omaha Public Library Book Club reservation, so I'll have those books to distribute in late March.

We invite anyone who loves to read to join us! Whether you read the month's selection or not is NOT important - just that you'd love an evening out of the house to enjoy some great fellowship and maybe a snack or two!! See you on the 28th!

Becky G

Vacancy Call News

The saints at Good Shepherd met on January 4th and chose to extend a Divine Call to Rev. Jonathan Quinn. Please keep Pastor Quinn and our brothers and sisters in Christ in your prayers. Pastor Helwig will continue to serve as the vacancy pastor for Good Shepherd until the Lord of the Church provides them with a new pastor. We pray that this will be soon.



**LUTHERAN MILITARY
SUPPORT GROUP**
Shoulder to Shoulder in Service

LMSG

2016 Year in Review

Happy New Year from your Lutheran Military Support Group "LMSG"!

2016 will go down as the year that LMSG took on a life of its own. Last January there were 81 congregational members; as I type this, there are now over 300. We all thank our Lord and Savior for His blessings on LMSG.

In May our Memorial Day Ammo Can Offering came in at over 40 thousand. This provided the funding to support the WELS Military Service Committee, the National Chaplains office and various worthwhile veterans support groups. Please see the entire list of LMSG grants for 2016.

Also the Veterans Day Ammo Can Offering continues to arrive with 85 congregations reporting with over 20 thousand have been received.

In 2017, our leadership will be reaching out to our Liaisons and member congregations for more Board level participation throughout our Synod's membership. Currently because of our fast growth there are more District and Synod functions and speaker requests than we have manpower to fulfill.

This will be my last report as President as my term is up, however I will continue to serve as financial secretary to the LMSG Board.

The Lord has seen fit to trust me with many positions of leadership throughout my life - but none more rewarding than President of LMSG. The young men and women who serve our nation in uniform are always in our thoughts and prayers to keep the faith as their parents have taught them. Those of us with a little gray hair, or no hair that have worn the cloth of our nation also need help and encouragement. LMSG stands ready to support as needs are made known to us.

I thank everyone who helped, prayed, served or gave to support our LMSG mission and ministry to our military.

Please let me introduce the incoming President: Col. (US Army, retired) Erhard P. Opsahl, PHD, Professor Emeritus, Luther Preparatory School. Col. Opsahl has been a mighty warrior for God and Country. Please see a more complete bio on the LMSG website.

Semper Fi
In His Service,
John L. Stedman

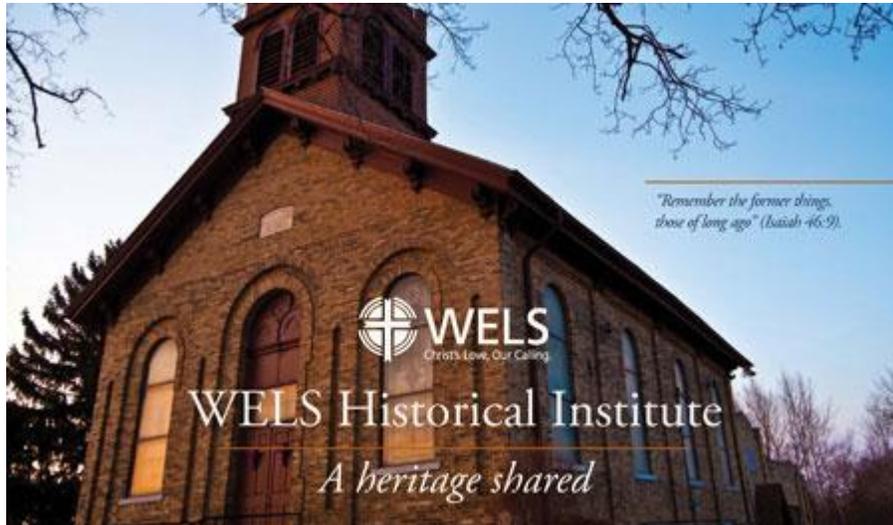
Other LMSG activity includes the following:

- * Last year, the St. Joe Valley Blue Star Mothers used a donation of \$2,000 from the LMSG to send out 5,830 pounds of care packages to soldiers. God has blessed them with a very generous community as well as organizations such as the LMSG that allow them to get a little piece of home to our heroes. They were able to send out many care packages—so many that their total postage expense was \$11,343.69.



- * Last October, the annual Wayne D. Horner Memorial "Homeless Veterans Stand Down" was held in Madison, Wisconsin. More than 100 former military members from the area were offered services from medical, dental, and health providers. They got haircuts. Breakfast and lunch were served. Clothing and hygiene items were given away. Veterans could find out about disability and VA benefit eligibility, housing and social services resources along with employment and training information. The LMSG gave a grant of \$250 for this effort.
- * The LMSG has devotions each week on its web site. Go to www.lutheranmilitary.org to access these devotions.

Tom K is your liaison to the LMSG. Please contact him if you have questions or would like to get involved with this group.



From Federation to Merger: The Birth of the Wisconsin Synod as We Know It Today

by
Professor John Brenner

Wednesday, February 22, 2017 - 7 p.m. Central
Join the presentation - www.livestream.com/welslive

The WELS Historical Institute invites you to join this livestream presentation! The presenter is: Professor John Brenner from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

In 1892 the Wisconsin Synod, Minnesota Synod, and Michigan Synod formed a federation to carry out ministerial education, mission work, and other activities more efficiently. The federation was a logical development. The three synods were in geographical proximity; their early pastors came from the same mission houses and mission societies in Europe; and each had a similar theological development, moving from a weak Lutheranism to a strong confessional Lutheran position. In 1917, these three synods together with the Nebraska Synod merged to form the Wisconsin Synod with the basic synodical structure that we know today.

We will look at the eventful twenty-five years from the establishment of the federation to the final merger with an eye to understanding our synodical roots and learning lessons from a sometimes tumultuous history.

The WELS Historical Institute exists to "preserve and present the story of God's grace to the WELS." Our calling brings to mind the stone monument God directed Joshua to build when the nation

of Israel had crossed the dry riverbed after God had cut off the flow of the Jordan River. Forever after when children asked, "What do these stones mean?" they would hear the account of this special manifestation of God's grace. The members of the WELS Historical Institute work to provide a lasting witness of how God has worked among us with His blessing as we have proclaimed the message of His grace in Christ.

The Institute publishes two issues of the WELS Historical Institute Journal and two Historical Institute newsletters each year. The Institute also operates a museum at Salem Landmark Church in Milwaukee and hosts events and presentations related to the history of the WELS. Funding for the work of the Institute comes from donations.

For more information about the WELS Historical Institute, or to find out how to become a member, please visit www.welshistory.org or e-mail welshistory@gmail.com.