



## FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES



### **Can God take my guilt away?**

This year in our monthly articles we are considering favorite verses from the Bible.

This month's favorite Bible verse is: **2 Corinthians 5:21**  
***"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."***

"I wish I could take it all away," Mom whispered to her suffering five-year-old son. He had the flu for a couple of days now, and Mom's heart was broken. As he lay in his bed suffering from the chills and a fever, there wasn't much Mom could do except give him some children's flu medicine and just be there for him. Mom felt helpless and wished she could take it all away from him. She even wished she could have the flu instead of her son.

When children are sick, the love of Mom and Dad really starts to shine through. In a heartbeat, parents go to extra lengths to make sure their kids are feeling as comfortable as possible. If you're a parent, you've been there. You make sure their pillow is extra fluffy. You bring their favorite juice box. You provide their favorite movie to watch. And any time you hear them call, you quickly respond with, "What can I do for you?" The love of Mom and Dad goes so far that if they could take the sickness away, even become sick instead of their child, they would. But they can't, and it hurts.

Has there ever been a time when you wished you could take it all away? Not just a sickness of a child, but something you did that you really regret? Maybe it was something you did to end a close relationship with a friend. Maybe you said something to a family member that you wish you could take back. Maybe it was something that only you know about, but it haunts you each day.

It's at moments like these that God's love really starts to shine through. He knows your sin, your guilt, your regrets. But he doesn't just wish he could take them away. He did take them away. He forgave them all! He took your sin and guilt away when he put them on his only Son, Jesus. He loves you so much that he had Jesus die for your sin so that you wouldn't have to. God forgave your guilt and now considers you right with him because of what Jesus did for you.

Wish your guilt and regrets could be taken away? They were. In their place, he gives you forgiveness and eternal life. Now that's a love that shines through!

## **WELS NEWS**

**August, 2020**

### **A Welcome Return**

The past three months have been difficult and challenging for congregations throughout the synod. Government mandates required congregations to drastically scale back or even discontinue in-person worship services. Schools were closed, graduation celebrations were canceled, and public confirmations of young people were postponed. In spite of those challenges, our congregations found ways to continue to provide members with opportunities to worship digitally and to continue to hear the proclamation of God's saving Word. And now, in recent weeks, the happy task of reopening carefully has begun. While congregations continue to adjust their schedules and their procedures as precautions, in most places we are back in God's house for worship. On the synod and district level, adjustments also needed to be made in response to COVID-19. District conventions were canceled (with voting for district officers done electronically). The WELS International Youth Rally and the convention of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society could not be held. Graduations at all synodical schools and assignments at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary were held online. All synodical travel was discontinued.

At the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), the first adjustment meant that all meetings were canceled or postponed. When the Wisconsin governor issued his "Safer at Home" mandate, the decision was made to have all but a handful of workers at the CMM work remotely from home.

Now that the restrictions have eased, we have begun steps to resume normal operations. On June 2, 50 percent of the workers returned to work at the CMM. On Wednesday, June 17, all on-site workers will be back in the building. After workers are back, we will begin to accommodate small meetings and individual meetings with synod staff by appointment. We have put in place necessary safeguards to ensure the health and safety of our workers and visitors. For now, however, we are not scheduling large meetings or group tours of the CMM.

We pray that later in the summer all normal activities at the CMM can take place. We are thankful for your patience and understanding as we work through these challenges. Most of all, we thank the Lord that he gave us ways to continue carrying out the work he has given us to do. Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder

### **MLC President Mark Zarling Retiring**

Rev. Mark Zarling, president of Martin Luther College (MLC) from 2007 to 2020, is retiring this summer.

During Zarling's tenure, God has blessed the college in countless ways.

The campus saw the construction of beautiful new facilities funded by God's people: Chapel of the Christ, the Early Childhood Learning Center, a baseball field, and a soccer pitch.

The academic catalog expanded to include majors in early childhood education and special education, many four-year secondary education majors, and minors in urban ministry and Chinese. The graduate program added two new degrees: Master of Science in Educational Administration and Master of Arts in Theological Studies. And continuing education offerings expanded tremendously, including New Teacher Induction, new certifications, and a full catalog of on-campus, online, and on-location professional development options.

Zarling's keen sense of vision led the campus family through two strategic plans, two accreditations, a Master Site Plan, and a Master Staffing Plan. He put the spotlight on lowering student debt, broadening international services, expanding experiential learning, and recruiting new students not merely to fill current vacancies but to prepare for new ministries still in development. He also traveled extensively, serving as a warm and sincere ambassador all over the synod.

Through all these changes, he kept the campus focused on the mission statement: "To train a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of WELS and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord."

Faculty, staff, and synod leaders have called Zarling a man of faith, a pastor-administrator, a humble visionary, a Christlike leader, and MLC's spiritual compass. He spoke God's promises in the hallways, prayed with colleagues in their offices, and uplifted the college family with his "Letters from Home" chapel messages.

"President Zarling has left an impression on Martin Luther College," said WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder. "He has worked tirelessly to ensure that our WELS College of Ministry faithfully carries out its purpose. He has personally guided and shaped hundreds, if not thousands, of students. And through his leadership he has instilled in our synod's members a love for and a confidence in Martin Luther College."

To MLC students past, present, and future, President Emeritus Zarling offers this encouragement: "The apostle tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Live daily with eyes on Jesus—and the only way to keep eyes on him is to stay with the Scriptures that reveal him. Make time daily to prayerfully read the Spirit's inspired words that you may build up your faith. As Jude tells us, 'But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life (20-21).'"

Mark and his wife, Colette, are moving to Manitowoc, Wis., this summer and are planning road trips to the East and West Coasts to see children and grandchildren.

### **New Full-Time Director For Christian Aid And Relief**

This month Rev. Dan Sims began his work as the new full-time director

of WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

"As much as I will miss parish ministry, I'm really excited about this new call," says Sims, who served the last four and a half years as pastor at Immanuel, Manitowoc, Wis. "Christian Aid and Relief is doing a lot of great work, and I'm excited to increase the opportunities and extend the reach."

The mission of Christian Aid and Relief is to reflect Christ's love and compassion to souls suffering from disasters and hardships. The organization works with congregations and mission fields to offer humanitarian aid as well as boots-on-the-ground service to people who need help, all the while sharing the gospel message that inspires the work.

"Our Savior tells us to show compassion to those who have need—whether that need is a humanitarian need or from some disaster," says Sims. "One of the great impacts of carrying out our Savior's plan is that it gains us opportunities to talk to them about their greatest need and the one who fulfills that need—their Savior."

The past several years, a five-man commission—with a chairman who also serves as a full-time pastor—oversaw the work. The Synodical Council decided last fall to call for a full-time director who will continue to work with the commission to develop policies, establish action plans, review humanitarian aid projects, and discuss grants for people facing extreme medical and financial challenges.

"Calling a pastor to serve as director emphasizes the spiritual aspect of our relief ministry," says Rev. Robert Hein, chairman of WELS Christian Aid and Relief. "He is well suited to preach at congregations, prepare materials, and make presentations to pastors and other leaders to promote the biblical basis for our ministry of compassion."

Having a pastor serve full time in this position will allow more time to develop an intensive program—including a printed training manual and video materials—to prepare and train congregations and their leaders in disaster response before a disaster hits. Another goal is to establish and equip disaster relief coordinators in each district to assess and oversee local disaster response.

But Sims wants to do more than just respond to disasters; he wants to create a compassionate spirit in WELS congregations to help those who are suffering in their communities. He says that not only does that follow Christ's command to "do good to all people" (Galatians 6:10), but also "if [the neighborhood residents] can see WELS congregations and people as caring and active in helping with physical needs, then we gain more opportunities to talk with them about their spiritual needs and their Savior." Sims looks to partner more closely with WELS areas of ministry to provide training as well as examples of such ministry opportunities.

Sims, a 1997 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., has served as the Western Wisconsin district secretary as well as secretary for the WELS Hymnal Project.

Discover more at [wels.net/relief](http://wels.net/relief) or by watching this month's edition of [\*WELS Connection\*](#)