



FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES



Christmas—God's Gift to You

This year in our monthly articles we are considering favorite verses from the Bible. This month's favorite Bible verse is:

Galatians 4:4,5

"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

It's the moment for which children wait so excitedly: the time for tearing open Christmas presents. It's thrilling to see their excitement and joy to find out what lies beneath the bow and paper. But often, just as quickly as the excitement erupted, it begins to disappear. When the flying bows and paper settle, feelings of disappointment and ingratitude so often start to surface. The moment everyone so eagerly looked forward to becomes yet another disappointment.

For so many, the Christmas season and celebration ends up like the boxes strewn across the floor—empty. Because, eventually, the decorations are taken down, the parties end, and life goes back to normal.

But this won't be the case when we remember what Christmas is really about. Christmas is the celebration of the gift of God's one and only Son, a gift he gave to the world. It's the gift that I need, that you need, that this whole world needs. You see, this world—including you and me—is wrapped and covered in sin. It is this covering of sin that leaves us empty and disappointed and looking for more gifts and other presents that we hope will fill the void. But they can't.

It is only through the gift of God's Son, and his life and death that removes from you the ugly covering and wrapping of your sins. Jesus did not come to be placed under a Christmas tree, but to hang upon a tree, not as an ornament, but as the one who would die upon it to pay for all of your sins. His perfect, innocent life and death are gifts he offers to you to make you his perfect and holy child and heir of heaven.

Christmas is so much more than presents placed beneath a tree. It's the sure and certain fulfillment of God's most treasured gift to you—your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ.

WELS NEWS

December, 2020

Planning Has Started For The 2021 Synod Convention

Planning has begun for the 66th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which will be held at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., July 26-29, 2021. More than 400 delegates and 50 advisory members will be meeting under the theme "Here We Stand," reflecting the 500th anniversary of the historic and bold confession made by Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521.

A convention allows us to look back on the history of God's blessings to his church, and that's always a good thing to do. But the convention will also look ahead to the opportunities God is giving us to carry out our mission. The convention theme will remind us that in order to carry out our mission faithfully, we need to continue to stand boldly on the unchanging Word of God. Only then will we be able to focus on the opportunities God is giving us now and the challenges we face in an increasingly hostile society. This theme also reminds us of the responsibility we have to pass our rich heritage of faith on to our children and grandchildren so that God's church will continue to be built by the power of his gospel.

During the convention called workers and lay members will hear presentations, discuss issues, and make decisions related to the synod's work, including setting a ministry plan (budget) for the next biennium. Two offices to be filled by election are the synod first vice president and the synod recording secretary, both to be nominated by delegates at the 2021 synod convention. Delegates will also elect others to serve on various boards and commissions. Voting members of WELS are encouraged to nominate qualified individuals to serve on these boards and commissions. A list of positions and descriptions is available online. Nominations must be received by Nov. 30, 2020.

The primary source of the convention's business is the Book of Reports and Memorials (BORAM), which contains various departmental reports as well as formal petitions to the synod convention called "memorials." A memorial is a proposal to be considered by the delegates. Memorials can be submitted by individuals, congregations, district, conferences, and circuits. The deadline for submitting memorials to be printed in BORAM is Jan. 15, 2021. Memorials submitted after Jan. 15 will not be printed but will be posted at the discretion of the synod

presidium on the convention website if they are received by June 1, 2021. More information about submitting memorials can be found online.

Serving with you in Christ,

WELS President Mark Schroeder

Colorado Church Receives Relief From Fires

"At our final outdoor worship services at Carbon Valley Lutheran we could see the smoke coming across the sky, and by the end of worship we had ash and burnt pine needles on our cars," describes Rev. Tim Spiegelberg, pastor at Carbon Valley Lutheran Church, Firestone, Colo., and also vacancy pastor at Peace, Boulder. While Colorado is no stranger to wildfires, 2020 brought some of the biggest and longest lasting in the state's history. As the fires closed in, four families from Peace, Boulder, were told to evacuate. Two of the families needed a place to go, and without hesitation, the council at Peace opened the doors of the church, allowing the members to stay on the church property as needed. Carbon Valley assisted as well, providing gift cards for necessities.

Unsure of how widespread, long, or damaging these fires would be for the community, Spiegelberg turned to Christian Aid and Relief, seeking assistance before the crisis got bigger. Christian Aid and Relief answered the call and provided additional funds to help families if needed. Spiegelberg explains, "It was incredibly easy working with Pastor Dan Sims [director of WELS Christian Aid and Relief]. I was actually surprised at how easy it was and how receptive he was. It was as simple as a phone call describing the situation and [Sims] gave me the assurance that Christian Aid and Relief was there for us." "I think the story here is moving swiftly with compassion before things get out of hand," says Spiegelberg. "It turned out that those families were okay. They were able to go back. God sent snow and stopped the progression of the fire. But we were in place and ready to go. Immediately and without hesitation, the leadership said to use the church." After a record fire season, not just in Colorado but on the West coast as well, Sims said he will be meeting with a group of pastors from the fire-hit regions to brainstorm the best ways for Christian Aid and Relief to assist with these disasters in the future.

To learn more about Christian Aid and Relief, visit wels.net/relief

Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum Gathers

Two dozen leaders from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)

and WELS met Oct.19-20 at the Country Inn and Suites, Mankato, Minn. The forum was to take place on the Bethany Lutheran College campus but was moved due to COVID-19.

"We would have enjoyed the opportunity to gather on the Bethany campus, but due to our COVID-19 protocol requiring social distancing in classrooms, and given that the Bethany student body was already using all of our larger campus spaces, we just didn't have the facility space on campus to host the forum this time," says Dr. Gene Pfeifer, president of Bethany Lutheran College. "Nonetheless, we're pleased our two synods could still gather in Mankato to discuss ways we can work together to advance confessional Lutheranism among our church bodies."

The meeting provided the sister synods an opportunity to share information about what each synod is doing during the pandemic and allowed discussion of several theological topics.

"As ELS and WELS leaders hear what is taking place in the two synods, it is a time to reflect and to rejoice in the blessings the Lord provides," says Rev. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Home Missions. "It is a time to discuss ministry. Above all, it is a time to pray for our ELS brothers and sisters in Christ as well as for our church body that we remain faithful to the teachings of Scripture as we point more people to Jesus Christ as the world's Savior from sin."

During the forum, ELS/WELS leaders updated one another on mutual issues in the synods and then participated in divisional meetings by representatives in the following areas: administration, higher education, doctrine/seminary, stewardship, communications, missions (home and world), and schools.

Following reports from each synod president, three theological essays were presented and discussed during the plenary session, including "Expectations and Challenges Communicating the Gospel Electronically" by ELS Communications Director Rev. Paul Fries. "The past year has shown the importance of communicating the gospel in new ways to our members and to our world," says Fries. "Technology provides many ways for us reach out with God's Word—the message of saving grace through faith in Jesus. As we explore new ways of reaching the world with the gospel, we continue to treasure the fellowship that we share."

The next Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum is scheduled for Oct. 17-18, 2022, at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, Waukesha, Wis.