



## FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES



### Sure and Certain of the Unseen

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

This month's favorite Bible verse is: **Hebrews 11:1**

***"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."***

It is amazing that with only a few clicks on a computer, we can dramatically alter photos. Such capabilities have led us to be a bit more wary. We find ourselves saying, "Unless I see it with my own eyes, how can I believe that it hasn't been touched up? I'll believe it when I see it."

Often this cynical attitude can touch our spiritual life. How can I believe that God loves me and knows what is going on in my life considering all troubles and disappointments I have to deal with?

The Bible tells us, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." How can we be sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see?

Think of a father and child playing the game where the father stands behind the child and tells him to fall backwards. The child, unable to see his father, still trusts that he is there and is certain that his father won't let him hit the ground. The child leans back and falls, fully convinced that his father will keep his word and catch him, because his father has always proved trustworthy.

This is the kind of trust we can have in our heavenly Father.

Though we did not see the creation or the crucifixion, though we were not present to witness Jesus rising from the Easter tomb, though we have not heard his actual voice forgiving our sins and promising his return, we believe.

How can we be so sure and certain? Because God's Word is true and trustworthy. Our forgiveness is certain because Jesus did die and rise from the dead. God's love for us today and every day is sure. Every promise our Father has made about our eternal future, he will keep.

Faith is sure and certain of unseen things because it takes God at his word.

## WELS NEWS September, 2020

### WELS Center For Mission And Ministry Deals With COVID-19

Congregations throughout the synod have been making many adjustments to their worship and ministry ever since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Even though many of us expected things to have returned to normal by now, that is not the case. Government mandates and advisories continue to have a varying impact on WELS congregations and schools. But, true to their mission, they continue to proclaim the saving gospel, and God's people continue to worship in spite of the obstacles.

Similar challenges have affected the work of the synod. In synodical and district activities, as well at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry (CMM), our synod's headquarters in Waukesha, changes have had to be made.

Throughout the synod, all large gatherings, including district conventions, were cancelled this summer. In-person meetings were replaced with virtual online meetings whenever possible. The workers at the CMM were initially given the option of working at home if the nature of their work permitted it. When the lockdown was declared, all employees were required to work remotely. When the lockdown ended, employees returned to the office in two phases, first with 50 percent returning and then two weeks later with all back to in-person work.

Now things have changed again. Here in Wisconsin, the governor recently issued a statewide mask mandate. Workers at the CMM are complying with this mandate, wearing masks in all public areas. We continue the policy of no meetings or gatherings in the building; individual visitors are allowed in the CMM only by personal appointment.

The policies governing meetings and other activities at the CMM are under constant review, with the next re-evaluation scheduled for Aug. 12. At that time, we will be determining whether meetings scheduled for this fall at the CMM can take place. We pray for a time when things can return completely to normal—for our synod and for our entire country. In the meantime, we continue to place our trust in God's protecting and gracious care.

Serving with you in Christ,

WELS President Mark Schroeder

## **New School Year Brings Difficult Decisions**

WELS schools around the country were faced with the difficult job this summer of determining what school is going to look like in the fall, after the 2019–20 school year ended with online classes because of shutdowns due to the pandemic.

With 436 WELS schools serving over 42,000 students in 33 states—some with minimal numbers of COVID-19 cases and some considered “hot spots”—plans will differ across the country. But one thing is sure: “Sept. 1, 2020, is going to look different than Sept. 1, 2019, in every single one of our schools,” says Mr. James Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS).

While each plan will look different—with schools talking about in-person vs. virtual learning (or a combination of the two), face coverings, size of classes, social distancing, extracurriculars, disinfecting stations, and additional cleaning—Rademan says that the mindset he has seen from WELS schools as they determine how to proceed is remarkably similar: “Each one of the schools is really concerned about the safety of their students and their staff while trying to balance what is going to be best overall for the development of the children.”

Most WELS schools—including Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School (KML), Jackson, Wis. and Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA), Phoenix, Ariz.—are planning to start the year meeting face-to-face at school. “Christian education is way more than just teaching in the classrooms,” says Mr. Jamie Luehring, principal at Kettle Moraine. “It’s the interactions the teachers have with the students, the mentorships, the friendships, the support. You cannot do that as well virtually no matter how hard you try.”

That decision to start with in-person classes was not made in a vacuum. For both schools, it meant sending out a survey to parents and meeting with teachers during the summer to get opinions on the best options moving forward. “We believe parents need to be in the driver’s seat,” says Luehring. “We want to work with them to come up with the best solutions for their kids.”

But the collaboration went even further. Mr. Kurt Rosenbaum, principal at ALA, said that when their school’s task force began meeting in June, they looked closely at recommendations for reopening sent out by the Arizona Department of Education. He is in constant contact with the local health department to keep up with the latest health regulations. Representatives from all 26 WELS area Lutheran high schools and the two synod prep

schools also met virtually multiple times this summer to offer ideas, support, encouragement, and prayers for one another as they determined the best plans for their schools.

For both ALA and KML, the majority of the parents supported in-person classes, “but we knew that there would be some families who would want to start slowly,” says Rosenbaum. To support those students and families, both schools are offering online classes as well. “We’re trying to be all things for all people,” says Luehring. “We understand everyone is in a different situation and we don’t want to lose those kids for the sake of the gospel.” Online classes will also offer an option for international students who may not be able to get back to campuses for the start of the school year.

“There are so many people with differing opinions; there needs to be a loving response to one another,” says Luehring. “As a loving Christian family, we are going to try to work through this together.”

In the end, “flexibility” may be the key word. “Most schools are developing two or three plans and are recognizing the need to be able to pivot based on the circumstances,” says Rademan. The Commission on Lutheran Schools is offering support, encouragement, and direction to WELS schools, while not prescribing any one direction. “We are encouraging them to follow CDC and local health department guidelines and to work with the resources in their community and the schools that are in close proximity to them,” says Rademan.

Some schools in “hot spot” locations—such as southern California—may have no choice but to start virtually. “You can plan and plan and plan, but you don’t know what will happen three days before school starts,” says Rademan. “It’s a time to use the gifts the Lord has given us and trust in the Lord. The path is going to be the path he’s seeking for us to take at this time.”

Available resources from CLS can be found at [cls.welsrc.net/](https://cls.welsrc.net/)