



## PRAIRIE WHISPERS

Volume 5 Issue 7

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The Monthly Newsletter of Zion  
Evangelical Lutheran Church,  
Winthrop, MN (WELS)

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## BIG "GOOD" WORDS OF THE BIBLE

By Pastor Paul Meitner

THERE ARE MANY WORDS IN THE BIBLE THAT OFTEN WE USE INTERCHANGEABLY WITHOUT REALIZING IT. HOWEVER, THIS CAN LEAD US TO LOSE THE GREAT AND RICH TAPESTRY OF GOD'S MESSAGE OF SALVATION TO US. WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THE WORDS THAT ARE USED ARE NOT USED RANDOMLY OR HAPHAZARDLY, BUT TO CONVEY A VERY SPECIAL MESSAGE ABOUT A CERTAIN ASPECT OF GOD'S GRACIOUS GOODNESS TO US. THIS IS NOT ONLY OF EXCEEDING COMFORT TO US, BUT AS WE PREACH THE GOSPEL, IT MAKES US MUCH BETTER PREPARED TO SHARE A MORE SPECIFIC MESSAGE OF SALVATION TO COMFORT THE HEART.

### Grace

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*

Grace is arguably the most important and most used word in the Scripture regarding our salvation. But, what is meant by grace or "charis" (in the original Greek) and "Chesed" (in the original Hebrew)? The idea is simply this: "that which delights". Therefore "to be gracious" is "to show one's delight." The simplest picture of that is the picture of gift-giving. I delight in my children, therefore, I show my delight by giving gifts to them, both daily gifts (food, clothing, house, home, etc.) but also special gifts (Birthday, Christmas, etc.)

But, the major difference between grace, as we show it to others and as it is shown by God, is in the idea of merit. For instance, there must be something in the object of our grace that causes us to be gracious. For instance, when I ask my daughter why I love her, she will say, "Because I am good, because I am nice, because I picked up my room." Notice how the cause of grace and delight is in them, and because of that, I show them my delight.

But, what this passage from Ephesians shows us is that "grace," in the case of God, is not motivated by anything, is us. This passage rules out once and for all the idea that God loves us for any reason in us. God's grace is undeserved. But it is even more than that. God's delight is the opposite of what we deserve. All that we deserve is wrath and punishment because of our disobedience and unbelief. But, God instead shows love, mercy, kindness and peace.

## Church Potluck Picnic

The annual Church Picnic will be in a new location this year.

The **10 am** Worship Service (please note the change of time) will be outside at God's Treasures Learning Center on Sunday, June 22 with the Potluck Dinner to follow. If weather does not cooperate, all events will be indoors at God's Treasures.

Please bring a dish to pass, your own plates and utensils, and a lawn chair.

Hot dogs and beverages will be provided.

## Large Print Hymnals

A generous donor gave four large print hymnals to Zion Church. They are available on the Ushers Table. If you need assistance with them, please ask an usher.

If possible, we ask that you return them to the Usher Table. However, if that is not possible, please leave them in the pew.

## Thrivent Cards needed

With summer events such as parades and the Sibley County Fair, we are in need of several \$250 Thrivent Grant cards. See or talk to Pastor Meitner for the details at 612-418-7130.

You see, the grace of God originates in God's own heart. The greatest characteristic of God is that he is his own cause for saving us. This is played out in our salvation. Every part of our salvation originates and is carried out by God himself, apart from any of our works, as Paul makes clear in this passage. Even the act of accepting God's grace (believing in Christ Jesus for salvation), is a gift of God, given to us through the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, what is unique comfort that this word "grace" gives to a Christian? It is the eternal reminder that salvation and our certainty of salvation, do not come from looking in our heart, or looking at the works of our hands. Our certainty of salvation comes from looking out and up at the blessed cross of Calvary and the words, "It is finished." God from beginning to end delights in us, and he has revealed this love to us in Christ alone through in his Word. Grace is a reminder to always turn to the Word of God, to the cross of Calvary, to the waters of baptism, and not to our own heart to see, "I have been saved. I am a child of God." In the words of the great hymn,

*By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless;  
My soul, believe and doubt it not.  
Why stagger at this word of promise?  
Hath Scripture ever falsehood taught?  
Nay; then this word must true remain;  
By grace thou, too, shalt heav'n obtain.  
(TLH 373:1)*

**Amen.**

## Prairie Lutheran School



*"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:4-6*

PLS finished school last month with many activities in May. The younger site had a field trip to Mankato, with some of the school

## Vacation Bible School 6/17-19

"Competing like a Champion" will be the theme of this year's Vacation Bible School planned for Tuesday, June 17 to Thursday, June 19 from 6-8 pm each evening for PreK to age 12.

There are sign ups for donations of snacks on the table in the Narthex, along with a registration sign up for enrolling your child.

## Congregational Partner Grant from MLC

A student from Zion has received a \$1,000 Zion Trust Fund Scholarship to attend Martin Luther College (MLC).

MLC has a Congregational Partner Grant that could turn the scholarship into \$3,200, if our congregation could raise \$600 more dollars for the student. And, WE DID IT!

Through a couple of generous donors, our goal was met. The Zion Trust Fund grant of \$1,000, plus our congregation's additional \$600 will be matched.

The congregations' \$1,600 will be used for the first semester, and the MLC grant will be applied to the second semester.

going to the Mankato Children's Museum, while the 3rd and 4th graders went to Minneopa State Park. The 3rd and 4th Graders helped plant trees at the cemetery in Gibbon. The whole school participated in a Pod Day, which was a school track day. The 7th and 8th graders taught different track events. The 5th and 6th graders were group leaders who brought the K-4 graders to the designated track events. Likewise, the entire school attended Fort Day at Fort Ridgely where much fun was had by all. The older site's end of the year trip included visiting Canterbury Downs -Stable tour, Mill City Museum, the Guthrie Theater, and the Three Rivers Outdoor Education School, where they did archery, geocaching and sackline.

Our students performed very well at the Redwood track meet (May 2) and the Sleepy Eye track meet (May 9). They brought home 62 ribbons from Redwood and 67 from Sleepy Eye. That is about double what we earned last year.

In the Kindergarten room, they had seven caterpillars go into their chrysalis, and we are waiting to see how many butterflies would fly off. Mrs. Doehling also visited and taught the students about flowers, and let each student take one flower and one pumpkin home.

The children also thoroughly enjoyed the NWEA. What is the NWEA you ask? Well, the children get to prove their knowledge in this standardized test by Northwest Evaluation Association. Let me tell you this is one of the most anticipated weeks during the whole school year. On a serious note, Mr. Seehafer said, "Students showed good growth from last fall."

On Wednesday, May 21, we were blessed to have 12 students graduate from PLS. Seven of the students have been together since Kindergarten, with five joining us along the way. We ask God to guide them with wisdom, patience, and courage as they face new challenges and opportunities. Surround them with Your love and fill their hearts with peace and confidence. May they shine brightly as they continue on their journey. Amen.

What a blessed school year we had. I want to thank all the congregations, families, and friends for making PLS what it is today and will be tomorrow.

Macord Johnson,  
Principal

## New “Meditations” available

The new *Meditations* are available on the Ushers Table at Zion. These daily devotional booklets are dated June 1-August 30, 2025.

Please bring back your old ones, as they are used by Prison Ministries. Put them on the white plastic drawer set in the Narthex.

## 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual LWMS National Convention

The 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Lutheran Womens Missionary Society Convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 26-29, 2025 registration is accepted through [62nd.lwms.org](http://62nd.lwms.org). This year's theme is "Sowing the Seed of Faith," based on 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.

MN Valley LWMS has a bus trip planned. Email to get on the list: [president.mnvalleylwms@gmail.com](mailto:president.mnvalleylwms@gmail.com)

Watch for information on the Fall Rally in October of the Minnesota Valley LWMS.

Zion's LWMS rep is Janet Lind.

## Building on the Rock Plea

May, 2025

Dear Friends of Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School:

We have received such blessings through our new classrooms, the Activities Commons, the Storm Fieldhouse, and the newly renovated Fine Arts Center. Because of your incredible generosity, our students now thrive in spaces that inspire learning, creativity, and excellence.

Thanks to the new Fine Arts Center, our students could rehearse and produce "Newsies" in a first-rate space. Thanks to the Activities Commons and Storm Fieldhouse, our athletes can hold practices for multiple sports at the same time. Thanks to the new classrooms, we have facilities suited for Project Lead the Way and more. Thank you for being a part of something truly special!

When we began this project, we were blessed to receive a loan from the WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF). The current interest rate of 4.32% is fixed until June 30, 2028. The time has come for us to start making monthly mortgage payments. The more that we can pay upfront before the monthly payments start, the better our situation will be.

To help make this a reality, any new gifts we receive between now and **June 10** will be applied as a special payment to the BOTR loan. This will reduce the size of future loan payments, and will also reduce the total amount of interest we will pay over the life of the loan. For every \$100,000 we raise, we will save \$6,800 annually in cash payments.

**Would you please pray that God blesses our efforts to pay down the debt? Can you give a special gift this spring and support the payment of our Building on the Rock project?** You can contribute easily by visiting our website, [mvl.org](http://mvl.org), or by mailing a check to 45638-561st Ave New Ulm, MN 56073. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our work, please don't hesitate to reach out.

May God bless our work.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Timothy M. Plath  
MVLHS Principal



## June Special Envelopes for sign project

At the Annual Voters Meeting in January, all the Special Envelopes for 2025 were voted upon. The March and June Special Envelopes were designated as Zion 125<sup>th</sup> to complete the sign project.

The new sign is completely paid for, but our message sign to the west is badly in need of repair on its west side. That side has been the victim to sun damage, fading, and the fiberglass has become very rough. Cost of repair is being looked into.

All monies given in June for Special Envelopes will go towards the needed repairs.

## New Websites

Check out Zion's new and updated website at [www.zionwinthrop.com](http://www.zionwinthrop.com)

Links are available to Zion's monthly calendar, current Prairie Whisper's newsletter, Christian Education, church leadership information and online giving.

You can also check out the new/updated website for God's Treasures Childcare Learning Center at [www.godstreasures.us](http://www.godstreasures.us) to find information on our classrooms, our teachers and our board of directors.

## God's Treasures Updates

### Director's Report - May 8, 2025

The month of April included two Easter evangelism opportunities for our God's Treasures families. Our annual Ever Easter event was held at Zion on the Saturday prior to Palm Sunday, and our preschoolers sang at the opening of worship the last Sunday in April. Their songs included *In Christ Alone* and the *Doxology* with a recitation of John 3:16. The majority of the students and their families were present to join us in worship.

The Commission on Lutheran Schools in conjunction with WELS Lutheran Schools visited God's Treasures on April 30 as well as other early childhood ministries (ECM) and Lutheran Elementary Schools in southern Minnesota. The Minnesota District was their focus this spring, so it came at a good time for us to develop stronger partnerships with the resources that WELS offers. Professor Jen Mehlberg from MLC and LaShawn Smith, Director of Jesus Loves Me Learning Center in Mankato and Minnesota District ECM Coordinator received an opportunity to tour our facility and talk with teachers and staff. The goals of the visit were:

- Build positive relationships with teachers and leaders of our schools.
- Grow in our understanding of the unique characteristics of our schools.
- Grow in our understanding of the opportunities and challenges of our schools.
- Identify and understand the critical issues with which our schools are working.
- Use knowledge gained to guide CLS priorities and plans.

On Friday, May 2 six preschoolers attended "Goldilocks" at the MLC Children's Theater. The students rode to MLC on the bus with Prairie Lutheran School and had a picnic lunch in the park. For some of the students, this was their first experience riding on school bus.

Work continues on staffing heading into the summer months and as Taylor Natalie nears the end of her one-year call. We are looking forward to having Charlotte Hoffmann and Emma Niebuhr provide us with some much-needed help, beginning in June. An Assignment Committee request and call packet has been submitted to our District President for a PreK 3 teacher. We will find out as late as Call Day on May 17 if a graduate is assigned to us. While we wait, please pray that we are able to staff our center with qualified teachers regardless of the outcome on Call Day.

Several DEED grant projects from our 1<sup>st</sup> reimbursement request are scheduled to start soon with a couple already completed:

## OWLS Meeting

The local Minnesota Valley Chapter 13 of OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors) will meet on Monday, June 9 at 3 pm at Sweet Haven Tonics, 116 North Minnesota Street, New Ulm to enjoy a "Spritzer and Art Tour" with Bethany Professor Jason Jaspersen.

He will share his vision of Christian art (cost covered by a Thrivent grant).

If you have not signed up and plan to attend, contact Myron Fluegge at [flueggemtj@hotmail.com](mailto:flueggemtj@hotmail.com) or phone 507-359-2424, by Wednesday noon, June 4, 2025, for a count.

Hope you can make it!

## Lutheran Pioneers events

Don't forget to mark your calendars for our local Pioneers activities coming up this summer:

**June 18** - 2 pm - Visiting the hummingbird park and historical museum in Henderson.

**July 4** - Pie social fundraiser at the Gibbon Park.

Pioneers summer camps are coming up fast too! Here is the info we have:

**June 19** - Backyard and Beyond, Pioneers Day Camp. 9:45 am to 2:30 pm, St. Peter Lutheran Church, 427 W Mulberry St., St. Peter, MN, for girls & boys entering Kindergarten through 3rd Grade. The cost for the

playground fencing SW corner; gutters on SE corner roof (divert water from the playground area); sound-absorbing panels in classrooms, commons, and dining room; outdoor permanent signage (installed 4/23); and Bye-Bye Buggy (purchased). In our 2<sup>nd</sup> reimbursement request, we included playground equipment for toddlers and preschoolers/school agers, contractual work and equipment for our prep kitchen, and supplies and equipment for classrooms and dining room. Over 40% of our \$240,000 grant award is earmarked for staffing our new preschool room. The objective of the grant, which qualified us for the award, is to create new childcare slots. In our application we said that we'd create 14 slots before the end of 2025.

Our goal is to open the second preschool room on June 2 when we enter our summer programming months. The current pre-school class will be split almost in half to create a PreK3 and PreK4 class.

### Enrollment:

42 total enrolled

34 PT/FT enrolled

### Looking ahead:

Refine staffing plan for summer months and decide preschool classroom split.

Proceed with DEED grant projects.

Intend to move forward with Parent Aware enrollment for July 1 cohort benefits are to become eligible for grants, early learning scholarships, and teacher/director coaching.

*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.*

*And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:25-27*

Adam Schmidt, Director

## April Council Minutes

### Zion Ev. Lutheran Church Council Meeting - April 24, 2025

Pastor opened with devotion and meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

#### Secretary's Minutes

- March 20, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

#### Additions to Agenda

day is \$10.00 per child.

For more info and to sign up, go to -  
<https://tinyurl.com/2025PioneersDayCamp>



### **July 27-August 2** - Lutheran Girl Pioneers National Camp

Registration is opening soon! Go to  
[www.lgp.org](http://www.lgp.org) and click on "Summer  
camp" to learn more. More details  
are also available at their Facebook  
page -  
<https://www.facebook.com/lgpcamp>



## New mailing

The newsletter is being sent in a pdf  
format, as some had trouble with the  
Word Document used before.

We pray you are getting use to this  
new way of getting your newsletter.  
At any time you wish to change your  
status from pickup up at church to  
get it emailed, or vise-versa, contact  
our office by stopping in, signing the  
sign up sheet, emailing  
[zionwinthrop@gmail.com](mailto:zionwinthrop@gmail.com), or text  
Louise at 507-828-2756.

- None

### Pastor's Report

- Holy Week services were well attended this year.
- There were six students confirmed on Palm Sunday.
- A 4-H scholarship banquet in memory of Keith Schmidt will be held at church on May 17.
- Naomi Johnson will be installed on May 18, as a teacher at God's Treasures Childcare Learning Center.
- Pastor will be a delegate at Synod Convention 2025.
- Pastor will be taking vacation the week of July 7, and taking July 13 off.

### Treasurer's Report

- Checkbook balance of \$18,379.67.
- Report approved subject to audit.
- Council reviewed proposal by Barbara Starley of Good Steward Church Academy with regard to QuickBooks (church accounting software).
  - QuickBooks is switching to online software. support only, with separate module for payroll.
  - The data from our current desktop version needs to be migrated into the online version \$350 one time fee.
  - Tech support is \$499 per year.
  - Pricing with payroll would be \$1,651.50 first year and \$1,301.50 additional years.
- Motion made and passed to accept Barbara Starley's proposal for QuickBooks Online.

### Trust Fund

- No Hirtha Witt money has been requested yet.

Insurance premiums for the church are being examined and compared.

### Elder's Report

- Hymnsoft
  - Purchase will be delayed until after the organist's meeting to gather input.
- Website
  - Mary N. will update website to keep it current each month. Naomi and Leah will move website to Naomi's hosting platform.
  - Motion made and approved to pay Mary Niebuhr \$25/hr to update website each month.

### Board of Education Report

- PLS
  - Worked on proposed calendar for next year.
  - Continued updating handbook.
  - Bussing, some state funding, and school lunches may be cut if current legislation passes.
- God's Treasures
  - Director's Report was read, see newsletter for report.

# June Events

Worship times through Labor Day are 8 am Bible Class, 9 am Service, unless otherwise listed.

- June 1-3 pm Cancer Group at St. John's, New Ulm
- June 3-Delegate's Conference at St. John's, New Ulm
- June 3-10:30 am God's Treasures (GT) Chapel
- June 1-3 pm Cancer Group at St. John's, New Ulm
- June 3-5:30-7 pm Food, Fellowship & Fire Bible Class
- June 6-1 pm Bible Information Class (BIC)
- June 9--3pm OWLS at Sweet Haven Tonic, New Ulm
- June 10-10:30 am GT Chapel
- June 10-5:30-7 pm Food, Fellowship & Fire Bible Class
- June 13-1 pm BIC
- June 15-Father's Day
- June 16-6:30 pm MVL Board
- June 17-10:30 am GT Chapel
- June 17-19 from 6-8 pm Vacation Bible Class (VBS)
- June 17-NO Food, Fellowship & Fire due to VBS
- June 18-10:30 am The Lodge with Communion
- June 19-Juneteenth
- June 19-6:30 pm GT Meeting
- June 20-Summer begins
- June 20-Noon Deadline for June Calendar/Newsletter
- June 20-1 pm BIC
- June 21-10 am Bayside Manor
- **June 22-10 am Service at God's Treasures with Church Potluck Picnic to follow**
- June 24-10:30 am GT Chapel
- June 24-5:30-7 pm Food, Fellowship & Fire Bible Class
- June 25-Treasure Haus, volunteers needed
- June 26-6 pm Elders Mtg

- MVL
  - Working on long term planning.
  - Getting more pastors from the association involved.
  - Building project is nearly done.
  - Acoustics problem in main part due to construction material error, negotiating to get it fixed.
  - Musical will be in new arts center.

## Board of Trustees Report

- Too wet to trim trees.
- Planning to pressure wash some areas outside of church to clean up brick and cement.
- AC office install May 12.
- Fixed parsonage garage door seal.
- No bid yet from McGuire Paving.
- Lawn mowing sign-up sheet for people to take turns mowing.
- Janicke Lawn care will spray and fertilize grass.
- Marlin made ramps for moving screen to and from front of church.
- Parsonage garage has a cracked brick.

## Old Business

- Sign was installed April 16, and will be dedicated on May 4.
- Easter and Christmas insert scenes are in the garage.

## New Business

Next Elders meeting 6:00 Thursday, May 15.

Next Council meeting 7:00 Thursday, May 15.

Respectfully,  
Lindsey Johnson

# April Profit and Loss

As of April 30, 2025 Profit and Loss

## Ordinary Income/Expense

### Income

#### GENERAL FUND INCOME

Envelopes	\$21,851.00
Loose Offerings	1,129.72
Misc. Income	25.00
Online Contributions	531.20
NOW Account Interest	1.62
Thrivent Choice	<u>259.00</u>

Total Income/Gross Profit \$23,797.54

### Expense

#### GENERAL FUND EXPENSES

#### BUILDING UPKEEP



- June 26-7 pm Zion Council Mtg
- June 27-1 pm BIC
- June 29-11 am Penn Church Service

Please note that the Administrative Assistant Hours will be from 1-5 pm on Mondays, Thursdays & Fridays until mid-August.

Church Electricity	371.34
Church Heat	966.75
Church Insurance	1,372.50
Church Maint. & Repair	635.00
Umbrella Insurance	<u>50.00</u>
Total BUILDING UPKEEP	3,395.59
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	
Confirmation	102.24
MVLHS	1,250.00
Prairie Lutheran	<u>8,614.46</u>
Total Christian Education	9,966.70
FACILITIES EXPENSE	
Copier, Cmptr Purc/Maint.	880.86
Office Supplies	164.15
Postage & Fees	235.97
Telephone	78.76
Waste Disposal	<u>64.00</u>
Total FACILITIES EXPENSE	1,423.74
FOR OUR WORSHIP	
Bulletins	194.46
Communion Supplies	87.21
Guest Organist	358.75
Music (Piano Tuning)	351.00
Offering Envelopes & Fees	<u>36.12</u>
Total FOR OUR WORSHIP	1,027.54
MISSIONS	
Missions-CMO	1,416.67
THOSE WHO SERVE US	
Pastor Expenses	
Housing	1,538.46
Housing Equity	87.68
Pastor's Health Ins	2,852.00
Pastor Pension	2,264.00
Salary w/SECA Reim.	<u>2,817.28</u>
Total Pastor Expenses	9,559.42
Janitorial Wages	198.00
Organist Payment	360.00
Secretary Wages	1,060.50
Payroll Expenses	
Soc Sec/ Medi Match Tax Expense	96.27
Payroll Expenses-Direct Dep Chrg	25.00
Workmen's Comp Insurance	<u>-463.07</u>
Total THOSE WHO SERVE US	10,836.12
Total GENERAL FUND EXPENSES	<u>28,066.36</u>
Net Loss	<u>-4,268.82</u>
Trust Fund Transfer (Quarterly)	<u>7,836.69</u>
Net Income	3,567.87

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