



## PRAIRIE WHISPERS

Volume 6 Issue 3

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

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## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

By Pastor Paul Meitner

### Judas vs Peter

*In fact, godly sorrow produces repentance, which leads to salvation, leaving no regret. On the other hand, worldly sorrow produces death. – II Corinthians 7:10*

Judas and Peter, at first glance, seem to be as far apart as the heavens are from above the earth or the east is from the west. Yet, one can't deny that Judas did believe in Jesus. Judas even did miracles, as did the rest of the disciples during the ministry of Jesus. Indeed, Judas held on to saving faith right up until the moment he took the bread out of Jesus hand at the last supper and "Satan entered him." One of the greatest tragedies of Judas is that Judas' sin was not so great that Christ could not and did not pay for it on the cross.

Nor can one deny that Peter was once told by Christ, "Get behind me Satan, you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of man." This same Peter, who walked on water, also sank in the water when he put his eyes on the waves and not Jesus, and was chastised for having, "little faith." And this same Peter, after being warned by Jesus of his pending denial, ran headlong into temptation and denied Christ three times and wept bitterly.

How close Peter came to being a second Judas! How close Judas came to being a second Peter! The difference between these two men is the focus of our meditation verse this month: *In fact, godly sorrow produces repentance, which leads to salvation, leaving no regret. On the other hand, worldly sorrow produces death.* The ultimate difference between Peter and Judas was repentance. And that is a difference as wide as the Grand Canyon.

There can be no doubt that Judas felt bad about the condemnation of Jesus. But what he really felt bad about was the consequences of what his sin has wrought not the sin itself. Indeed, I remember the performative tears of Jim and Tammy Faye Baker when they were arrested for larceny, or Jimmy Swaggert when he committed adultery. They had no compunction about their sin when they did it, but now that they saw what the sin had done, their conscience awakened. The thirty pieces of silver so attractive now burned in Judas' hand. So

# Ladies Guild information

Thank you to the cleaning crew who did extra work to make our church, chapel and kitchen sparkle and smell good! Your work is greatly appreciated.

The Ladies Guild will be serving a soup supper on Wednesday, March 4. Please sign up to bring various items. A free-will offering will be collected with money being used to purchase new altar flowers.

Would you like to put flowers on the altar in 2026? If so, they would be appreciated. Please talk to the people in charge for that month. Their names are on the flower chart, which is located on the wall across from the offices. The monthly information can also be found on the back of the monthly calendar.

Women and men are cordially invited to Zion for a special Mother's Day Program on Saturday, May 2, 2026 at 1 pm. Our speaker will be Becca Backhaus of Austin, Texas. She will present "An adoption love story about God getting us through the peaks and valleys of our lives even when things look tough." A story about her experience was in the *Forward in Christ* issue of May 2024. Dessert and fellowship will follow the presentation. Invitations have been sent to area congregations. A free-will offering will be collected to help with Becca's plane fare. A sign-up sheet is available to help us prepare. God's blessings to you!

Ladies: the Committee assignment sheets are on the table in the Narthex for you to pick up.

desperate he was to take the pain of a guilty conscience away he ended his own life.

This is worldly sorrow. It is sorrow for being caught and seeing the consequences of the action. It is the sorrow of Nazis at Nuremburg. They winced at the evil the regime had caused but could not bring themselves to say I'm sorry. They regretted only where the path they had chosen had taken them, not that actions they had taken.

But Peter did repent. And this is the key difference. Peter recognized that his sin of denial was a sin against God. Here is where true repentance begins. It is the hammer blow of the Spirit through the Law. Peter we are told went outside and wept bitterly for his denial. What did he weep? I imagine his prayer went like this, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!" For godly repentance makes no excuse. It stands before a Holy God and says, "I deserve hell right along with Judas for what I have done. But Lord, have mercy on me, not for my sake, but because in you is forgiveness."

Luther described what Peter felt as being "in cloaca," that is, "in the dumps, in the latrine, in the manure pile." A fitting description if there ever was one who takes seriously the sin we commit against God. But that is not where Peter stayed. No Peter becomes the leader of the church, a missionary, and yes, a martyr in Rome for Christ. And why was this the path Peter took? Because when Peter was in the dumps, he sought the saving grace offered to him by Christ, who had jumped into the pits with him, rather than diving deeper in the muck like Judas.

There is a reason Martin Luther described the effect of saving faith on himself as "being born again and entering into paradise itself through open gates." It is when we find Christ, and the forgiveness that he offers us, that we find everything for which our soul could hope. We find Christ has indeed paid the penalty for all the sins, that God has accepted that payment, and now God the Holy Spirit offers to us the pardon that Christ won for us.

Repentance is an attitude of the heart. The basic word "Repent" means, "To think again, to reconsider, to have a change of mind." Judas, with his worldly sorrow, refused to change his mind about Jesus and his word. Peter, with his godly repentance, did change his mind and hastily took his solace in the nothing but the Word of God. And that is what makes all the difference in the world. Luther, in the first of his 95 Theses, says, "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said "Repent," willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance. Indeed! Let this be our prayer this Lenten season! Let me daily die to my sin, that I might rise with Christ in faith through the Gospel preached.

## Lent has begun

This year's theme is "Lord, Teach Us To Pray!" There will be a revolving pulpit involving Pastor Meitner, Pastor Steve Bauer of Immanuel, Gibbon, and Pastor Jesse DeDeyne of St. John, Fairfax and Emanuel, Wellington.

Soup Suppers will precede each Wednesday Lenten service beginning at 5:30 pm:

**March 4**-Ladies Guild. Pastor Steve Bauer of Gibbon preaches.

**March 11**-God's Treasures. Pastor Meitner preaches.

**March 18**-Choir/Handbells. Pastor Jesse DeDeyne of Fairfax preaches.

**March 25**-Fellowship Committee. Pastor Bauer preaches.

Choir will practice after each Lenten Service in the church balcony. New members are welcome to join.

## Handbell Festival

Our Zion Handbell Choir, under the direction of Mark Jaeger, is vigorously practicing in anticipation of being part of the WELS 2026 National Handbell Festival to be held at Martin Luther College, New Ulm. The festival will be April 11 and 12.

Watch for more information on this awe-inspiring event.

## Lutheran 1-liner

The Lutheran word for party is "potluck."

Amen.

## Sunday School & OLS update

As of February 22, 2026, \$723.98 has been raised in support of the Obadiah Lutheran Synod (OLS) in Uganda! The children will continue to donate until the end of the Sunday School season in May. The Sunday School plans to send a care package to our sister synod telling them about the Gospel work we are doing in this country.

## MVL Open House

Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School is holding an Open House for new and prospective students on Tuesday, March 10.

Tours will begin at 6:15 pm. A presentation for parents will be at 7:15 pm, while a Q & A student panel will take place.

Come and get all your MVL questions answered and enjoy some amazing fellowship!

## Prairie Lutheran School



Hello PLS friends!

Here's a few updates on what's been happening in Gibbon & Fairfax!

At the upper site, the basketball players held a B team tournament. The girls team took 2nd place and the boys team took 3rd place. Congratulations to both teams! This ends the season for the B teams. The girls record was 3-4. The boys record was 4-6.

The 5th - 8th graders have been busy working on their Bob Ross painting unit under the direction of the talented painter Mr. Johnson.

All of our students participated in Spirit Week! Tuesday was dress up like your dream job. Wednesday was Hawaiian day, yet, we had a snowstorm and ended our day early. Thursday was the 100th day & also injury day. On Friday, we ended the week with PLS School Spirit wearing red, white & blue. If you'd like to check our school Facebook page, there are lots of great pictures to enjoy! The A team ended the week by participating in the MLC basketball tournament.

## LWMS updates

Our Spring Rally will be hosted by Emmanuel Lutheran Church of Owatonna, on April 11. The speaker will be Rev. John Holtz on Native Christians. It will begin with a morning coffee fellowship registration at 8:30 am, with a 9 am start to the meeting. To carpool to this event, contact Jan Lind at 320-583-6018.

The LWMS International Convention theme is "Cast Out Your Nets" and held in Madison, Wisconsin on June 25-28, 2026. Congregations are welcome to use available funds to help with the cost of the convention by applying to the "Send One Sister" program. To register, beginning on March 1, go to [lwms.org](http://lwms.org). Information is available from our reporter, Jan Lind.

## Lutheran Pioneers

March your calendars for the Lutheran Girl Pioneers Swim & Gym event scheduled for Sunday, April 12 from 1-4 pm at the Lake Crystal Area Recreation Center. Cost is \$4 per participant with no registration required. This also includes the gym space, also! Bring a snack to share for the 4 pm devotion in the upstairs gathering room. For more information, go to the Facebook page Lutheran Girl Pioneers District-19.

Registration is now open for the Girls Camp 2026 on June 11-12-13 at Flandrau State Park, New Ulm. It has a Stay Sweet theme based on

Kindergarten and preschool held their annual Round up on February 24. If you missed out, please don't hesitate to contact the teachers!

During the first week of March, we look forward to celebrating Lutheran Schools week! We will kick the week off with Bike Night in Fairfax on March 1 from 4-6 pm. Then on Wed., March 4 and Thurs., March 5, we will be inviting family members to observe their students' classrooms and enjoy lunch with them. If you'd like to come enjoy lunch with one of the students you know, contact them! We also look forward to the Science Museum coming to our Fairfax gym on Fri., March 6. The students in K-2 will listen to a presentation about Sound, while 3rd-6th grade will listen to a presentation about engineering. The 7th-8th graders are going to participate in a special art project led by MVL. The basketball students will close out our busy week with a game vs. their parents Fri. night, March 6.

We give thanks for the opportunity to celebrate our Lutheran School and we thank God for the blessings He's bestowed upon us this year. Before we know it, the year will be over but until then, we give thanks for the chance to share God's Word with our students, especially during this Lenten Season.

In Kindergarten, the students will get to hear a song by Michael Schroeder, called "The Nails". Michael was a member of the congregation I belonged to as a child. His song is such a wonderful reminder of Jesus' love for us as we learn about his journey to the cross. Check him out on YouTube! God's Blessings!

Mrs. Katherine Wenner, Kindergarten Teacher  
Prairie Lutheran School 507-834-6134  
1322 1st Avenue  
Gibbon, MN 55335

## "The Orphan Train" at OWLS Meeting in New Ulm

The local MN Valley Chapter 13 OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors) will meet at St. John's Lutheran Church, New Ulm on Monday, March 9. Please register by noon on March 4 with Myron Fluegge at [flueggemtj@hotmail.com](mailto:flueggemtj@hotmail.com) or call 507-359-2424.

Fellowship begins at 11:30 am with a Subway meal at noon, cost covered by Thrivent Action Team moneys. Following a devotion, Sid and Jan DeLeo will present "The Orphan Train." Hope you can make it!

Galatians 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.* Registration can be done going to the website: [www.facebook.com/events/1590087661708732/](https://www.facebook.com/events/1590087661708732/) or going to: <https://forms.gle/rQmFgJpRnznV9L4g6>

The year's schedule includes:

March 25: Lenten Supper at Immanuel

April: TBA Sheep shearing demonstration

June 18: 2 pm Hummingbird Park, Historical Museum, Henderson

June 18: Sunbeam Day Camp, St. Peter Lutheran Church

July: TBA Patriotic Pie Social, Gibbon City Park

July 26-Aug. 1: Girls' National Camp, Crivitz, WI

## eGiving: An easy way to give

The church has an account with Vanco that allows for secured online and text giving for your offerings. Your e-gifts will link to your Zion envelop number and will be included on your Zion offering summary report.

There are three methods of giving.

1. Go online to [zionwinthrop.com](http://zionwinthrop.com) and look under Give and follow the links.
2. Text the dollar amount of your offering to 844-999-0914.
3. Through the Vanco Mobile app on your cell phone.

You have the option to set up reoccurring offerings to help meet your personal giving goal.

## God's Treasures Report

January into February brought a spike in illnesses leading to several absences for students and staff. We had up to three full-time staff out at one time, which ultimately lead to closing the infant room for two days. This allowed us to divert staff to a room with a higher enrollment and minimize the overall impact to families.

In between the illnesses, Mrs. Johnson organized a Glow Party for all the kids to enjoy. She used black lights, shades to darken her room, and anything to would reflect black light such as neon playdough, highlighters on paper to fingernails, and all the neon and white clothing guests wore to the party.

We're attempting to bring more God's Treasures updates from the classroom, in words and pictures, to Zion through a monthly bulletin insert. Our first edition went out in January.

Parent Aware made two visits within the past month. One visit was for observations of teacher and staff interaction with children and provided feedback to the teacher using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CLASS will be used to evaluate one of our preschool classrooms in the spring as part of our final rating. The purpose of the second visit was to help our newest teacher catch up on content she missed late fall.

The next three months will be pivotal for God's Treasures to continue operating five classrooms (ministering to families with infants through 5<sup>th</sup> graders). It would be ideal to add two assistant teachers for flexibility and to compliment the teachers and aides we'll have during the last half of the year. My recommendation would be to extend a call for a preschool teacher to cast the widest net possible while continuing the search for assistant teachers. God has a plan for us in this instance, too, just as he did in the last 15 years of God's Treasures existence. Prayers are appreciated on our behalf as he reveals is plans to us.

### **Enrollment:**

47 total enrolled (includes drop-ins)  
35 PT/FT enrolled  
8 prospects

### **Looking ahead:**

Parent Aware focus for the next 6 months  
Anticipate additional visits by the State as part of its focus on fraud prevention

Blessings in Christ,  
Adam Schmidt, God's Treasures Director

## Volunteer your time & talents

A church does not run without dedicated volunteers. There are opportunities to offer your gifts:

- Counting the weekly offering
- Mowing lawn, assist with raking and trimming
- Be a Greeter
- Assist the Trustees with projects
- Send a card to guests
- Outside message sign help

## March Events

- March 1-11:15 am Handbell practice
- March 1-4-6 pm PLS Bike Night for K-4<sup>th</sup> grade
- March 3-8:30 am Pastor at Prairie Lutheran School (PLS)
- March 3-10 am God's Treasures (GT) Chapel
- March 4-Noon signup for OWLS Meeting
- March 4-5:30 pm Lent Supper by Ladies Guild
- March 4-5:45-6:30 pm Public School (PS) Catechism
- March 4-7 pm Lent service with Pastor Steve Bauer
- March 4-8 pm Choir practice
- March 5- 8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 6-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 8-11:15 am Handbell Choir
- March 9-11:30 am OWLS meeting at St. John's, New Ulm
- March 10-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 10-10 am GT Chapel
- March 10-6:15 pm MVL Open House for new/prospective students

## MLC Knights Youth Football Camp for grades 1-6

Martin Luther College's Head Football Coach Paul Huebner, along with his coaching staff and current players invites 1-6<sup>th</sup> graders to join them for four fun Sundays of football fundamentals in the awesome Betty Kohn Fieldhouse!

All campers will receive a T-shirt and instruction in the fundamentals of football including, but not limited to passing, catching running, punting, and kicking – along with safer blocking and tackling techniques according to the USA Football "Heads Up" curriculum.

Registration deadline is March 16, 2026. Cost is \$75. Register at: [mlc-wel.s.edu/athletic-camps/](http://mlc-wel.s.edu/athletic-camps/)

The schedule is set for Sundays March 22, 29 and April 12 & 19. Grades 1-3 are from 1-2 pm with grades 4-6 from 2:30-3:30 pm.

For questions, contact Coach Huebner at 507-354-8221 ext. 360 or email him at [huebnepd@mlc-wels.edu](mailto:huebnepd@mlc-wels.edu).

## Lutheran Military Support Group-Shoulder to Shoulder in Service

The mission of Lutheran Military Support Group is to provide Christ-centered support to Military Service Members, Veterans, and their Families. Here are a few examples of how they pursue that mission.

Spiritual and mental health are a primary focus as we know the toll that those wounds can have on the Service Member and their Families. One way we provide Christ-centered support in this area is through our Spiritual Retreat for Christian Warriors, a four-day event for Military Members, Veterans, and their Spouses to be renewed by God's grace. This year's retreat theme is *Armor of God: Truth & Righteousness* and will be held this October in Rochester, Minnesota. Topics include anxiety and hypervigilance, lies that we believe as warriors and spouses, identity crisis and purpose, and others. Consider joining us for this encouraging event that promotes growth spiritually and mentally!

- March 11-5:30 pm Lent Supper by GT
- March 11-5:45 – 6:30 pm PS Catechism
- March 11-7 pm Lenten Service
- March 11-8 pm Choir practice
- March 12-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 12-6:30 pm GT meeting
- March 13-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 14- 10 am Bayside Manor Service, Gaylord
- March 15-11:15 am Handbell Choir
- March 16-Deadline to register for MLC Knights Youth Football camp
- March 16-6:30 pm MVL Delegates meeting
- March 17-St. Patrick's Day
- March 17-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 17-10 am GT Chapel
- March 18-10:30 am The Lodge Service with Communion
- March 18-5:30 pm Lenten Supper by Choir/Handbells
- March 18-5:45-6:30 pm PS Catechism
- March 18-7 pm :Lenten Service with Pastor DeDeyne
- March 18-8 pm Adult Choir
- March 19-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 19-Noon Deadline for April Calendars/Newsletter
- March 19- 6 pm Elders meet
- March 19- 7 pm Council meets
- March 20-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 22-11:15 am Handbell Choir
- March 19-Knights Football camp
- March 24-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 24-10 am GT Chapel
- March 25- Treasure Haus Day- Volunteers needed!
- March 25-Lutheran Pioneers serve at Immanuel, Gibbon
- March 25-5:30 pm Lenten Supper by Fellowship Committee
- March 25-5:45-6:30 pm PS Catechism

Two **Workshops for Veterans & 1st Responders** events will be held this year, one in Appleton, Wisconsin and another in Fayetteville, North Carolina. We are also currently working on a **peer group** that will be available online and in-person in select locations.

Our Service Members have wonderful stories to share with others. **Their Stories Told** articles are one way that those stories can encourage a wider audience! Are you interested in sharing your story? Please let us know! We also appreciate hearing from our younger military family members. We are looking for Military Kids to share their story with us for April, **Month of the Military Child**. Contact us at [info@lutheranmilitary.org](mailto:info@lutheranmilitary.org) if your child/young adult is willing to share their experience as a military child.

One area that we are working to improve each year is support for **spouses and families**. Later this year, we will be seeking input from our military families, for ways we can best support them. Please look for more information on the **WELS/ELS Spouse Military Spouse Facebook group**.

This year we look forward to partnering with **WELS Mission Journeys** and WELS Military Services to cohost a military themed Mission Journey. Look for more information about that trip that is scheduled for this coming summer.

More information can be found on our social media accounts or by registering for our monthly newsletter at [www.lutheranmilitary.org](http://www.lutheranmilitary.org).

## January Profit and Loss

As of January 31, 2026 Profit and Loss

### Ordinary Income/Expense

#### Income

##### GENERAL FUND INCOME

Envelopes	\$17,869.00
Loose Offerings	695.00
Misc Rev.-General	126.00
NOW Account Interest	1.29
Online Contributions	<u>424.96</u>
Total Income/Gross Profit	\$19,116.25

#### Expense

##### GENERAL FUND EXPENSES

##### BUILDING UPKEEP

Church Electricity	435.23
Church Heat	1,016.12

- March 25-7 pm Lenten Service with Pastor Bauer
- March 25-8 pm Choir practice
- March 26-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 27-8:30 am Pastor at PLS
- March 29-Palm Sunday
- March 29-11:15 am Handbell practice
- March 29-Knights Football Camp
- March 31-8:30 am Pastor at PLS

## From the cloud

And finally, it was not Steve Jobs, it was not Bill Gates, nor was it Al Gore...it was Moses who was the first person to download a message from the cloud to a tablet!

Church Insurance	1,230.94
Church Maint. & Repair	288.00
Umbrella Insurance	<u>50.00</u>
Total BUILDING UPKEEP	\$3,020.29
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	
Meditations	332.50
MVLHS	1,275.00
Prairie Lutheran	<u>13,288.12</u>
Total Christian Education	\$14,895.62
FACILITIES EXPENSE	
Copier, Cmptr Purc/Maint.	667.64
Janitor Supplies	52.98
Postage & Fees	371.63
Telephone	76.27
Waste Disposal	<u>65.20</u>
Total FACILITIES EXPENSE	\$1,233.72
FOR OUR WORSHIP	
Guest Organist	91.25
Music	228.62
Offering Envelopes & Fees	31.41
WELS Connection	<u>100.00</u>
Total FOR OUR WORSHIP	\$454.28
MISSIONS	
Missions-CMO	\$1,667.00
THOSE WHO SERVE US	
Pastor Expenses	
Housing	2,115.38
Housing Equity	87.68
Pastor's Health Ins	3,094.00
Pastor's Mileage	596.33
Pastor's Pension	1,132.00
Salary w/SECA Reim.	4,741.20
Total Pastor Expenses	\$11,766.59
Janitorial Compensation	147.00
Organist Payment	360.00
Secretary Wages	1,113.00
Payroll Expenses	72.82
Soc Sec/ Medi Match Tax Expense	87.60
Workmen's Comp Insurance	<u>122.80</u>
Total THOSE WHO SERVE US	\$13,669.81
Total GENERAL FUND EXPENSES	\$34,940.72
Net Loss	<b>-15,824.47</b>







