



*St. Matthew's
Evangelical Lutheran
Church & School*

(Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod)
709 Milton Ave., Janesville, WI53545
Church & School Phone: 752-1304
James Janke, Pastor 563-4383
Dale Beutin, Congregational Asst. 774-5177
Joel Sonntag, Principal 414-460-8305
www.stmatthewsjanesville.org

*Worship for Palm Sunday
April 13, 2025*

Hymn: All Glory, Laud, and Honor CW 412

**1 All glory, laud, and honor To you, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring.
You are the King of Israel And David's royal Son,
Now in the Lord's name coming, Our King and blessed one.**

**2 All glory, laud, and honor To you, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring.
The company of angels Is praising you on high,
And we with all creation In chorus make reply.**

**3 All glory, laud, and honor To you, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring.
The people of the Hebrews With palms before you went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems Before you we present.**

**4 All glory, laud, and honor To you, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring.
To you before your passion They sang their hymns of praise;
To you, now high exalted, Our melody we raise.**

Invocation

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

The Confession of Sins

P: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment.

C: Therefore, let us approach God with true hearts and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

P: Most holy and merciful Father, we confess that we are sinful from birth,

C: and that we have sinned against you in our thoughts, words, and actions.

P: We have done what is evil and failed to do what is good.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness; the pride, the apathy and selfishness in our lives.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: Our negligence in worship and prayer, and our failure to confess with our lives the faith that is in us,

C: we confess and plead with you, for Jesus' sake to forgive us.

P: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to die for us and for his sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe on his name he gives power to become the sons of God and has promised them his Holy Spirit. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

C: Grant this, Lord, unto us all. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

P: We praise you, O God, for the great acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ. As he was acclaimed by those who scattered their garments and palm branches in his path, so may we always welcome him as our King and follow him with perfect confidence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Hymn: (by Sunday School 10:30) No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet

Old Testament: Isaiah 50:4-10

⁴The Lord God gave me a tongue like the learned, an instructed tongue,

so I know how to sustain the weary with a word.

He wakes me up morning by morning.

He wakes up my ears so that I listen like the learned.

⁵The Lord God opened my ear,

and I myself was not rebellious.

I did not turn back.

⁶**I submitted my back to those who beat me,**
and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard.

I did not hide my face from disgrace and from spit.

⁷The Lord God will help me, so I will not be disgraced.

Therefore I have made my face hard like flint.

I know that I will not be put to shame.

⁸The one who will acquit me is near!

Who can accuse me?

Let us take our stand.

Who can pass judgment on me?

Let him approach me.

⁹Look, the Lord God will help me.

Who then can declare me guilty?

Look, all of them will wear out like a garment.

A moth will consume them.

¹⁰Who among you worships the Lord

and listens to the voice of his servant?

Anyone who walks in darkness

and who has no bright light—

let him trust in the name of the Lord,

and let him lean on his God.

P: This is the word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day

**All: ♪ All glory, laud, and honor To you, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring.
As you received their praises, Accept the prayers we bring,
O Source of ev'ry blessing, Our good and gracious King.**

Gospel: Luke 19:28-40

²⁸After Jesus had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹As he came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ahead, ³⁰saying, "Go to the village ahead of you. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you will say this: 'The Lord needs it.'"

³²Those who were sent ahead went and found things just as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

³⁴They said, "The Lord needs it."

³⁵Then they brought the colt to Jesus. They threw their robes on the colt and set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he went along, people spread their robes on the road. ³⁷As he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began to praise God joyfully, with a loud voice, for all the miracles they had seen, ³⁸saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

³⁹Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

⁴⁰He replied, "I tell you, if these people would be silent, the stones would cry out."

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise be to you, O Christ.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand

of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Hymn: Ride On, Ride On in Majesty CW 411

1 Ride on, ride on in majesty!

Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry.

O Savior meek, pursue your road,
with palms and scattered garments strowed.

2 Ride on, ride on in majesty!

In lowly pomp ride on to die.

O Christ, your triumphs now begin
o'er captive death and conquered sin.

3 Ride on, ride on in majesty!

The angel armies of the sky

look down with sad and wond'ring eyes
to see th' approaching sacrifice.

4 Ride on, ride on in majesty!

Your last and fiercest strife is nigh.

The Father on his sapphire throne
awaits his own anointed Son.

Sermon: Hebrews 12:1-6

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us get rid of every burden and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with patient endurance the race that is laid out for us. ²Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is the author of our faith and the one who brings it to its goal. In view of the joy set before him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God's throne. ³Carefully consider

him who endured such hostility against himself from sinful people, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart.

⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood in your fight against sin. ⁵Have you also forgotten the encouragement that addresses you as sons?

My son, do not regard the Lord's discipline lightly,
and do not become weary of his correction.

⁶For the Lord disciplines the one whom he loves,
and he corrects every son he accepts.

Persevere In Your Palm Sunday Praises

I. Follow the cloud

II. Focus on Christ

III. Figure in a cross

Response to God's Word Ride On, Ride On in Majesty CW 411

♪ **Ride on, ride on in majesty!**

In lowly pomp ride on to die.

Bow your meek head to mortal pain,

then take, O Christ, your pow'r and reign.

Offering

Prayer of the Church

P: Heavenly Father, almighty and all-merciful God, we thank you for bringing us to this Palm Sunday celebration and for permitting us to enter another Holy Week, the most holy place of our church year. Today we see your Son, your eternally begotten and dearly loved Son, enter Jerusalem to begin his great suffering as he offers once for all the perfect sacrifice to take away our sins. How great is your love for lost sinners like us, accept our humble thanks and praise!

C: "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

P: Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, Lord of lords, Son of God and David's Son, on this day you entered the city of Jerusalem in deep humility to cover our sinful pride and to die in shame for our sins. Yet hidden in your humility we see your glory as God, and we know that by your precious blood offered on the cross you have redeemed us for God. Lord Jesus, we thank you for continuing to come to your people as you came on the first Palm Sunday. Still you come in deep

humility—in the Word of preaching and absolution, in the water of Baptism, and in the bread and wine of Holy Communion—but hidden in these humble means of grace is great glory. In the Gospel is the power of God to save; by Baptism you cleanse the Church you bought with your blood; and in the Supper you seal the salvation of your people with your body and blood.

C: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

P: Holy Spirit, Counselor and Comforter sent by our Savior, Breath of life from heaven, work in our hearts and open our eyes on this Palm Sunday. Let us see how our Savior still comes to us in humility that hides his glory, but with the glory and majesty of God hidden in his humility. Open our ears to hear his Word and our hearts to welcome him as our King that we may share in his salvation. Lead us to lift the gates of our hearts that he alone may rule there, and that we may serve him gladly all our days. Help us imitate our Savior’s humility by showing patience to others and by considering others better than ourselves. And then as Jesus was lifted up in glory raise us at last to live in his glory forever.

C: “Hosanna in the highest!”

P: O Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, accept our praise this Palm Sunday, and hear us as we also pray:

C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Sacrament

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: It is good and right so to do.

P: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who still comes to us as he once came to Jerusalem to bring his people all the blessings of salvation. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and joy their glorious song:

Holy, Holy, Holy *CW 167*
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of heavenly hosts:
heav'n and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he, blessed is he,
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

Words of Institution

P: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

O Christ, Lamb of God *CW 169*
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. Amen.

Distribution

1st Distribution Hymn: Jesus Comes Today with Healing CW 668

1 Jesus comes today with healing,
knocking at my door, appealing,
 off'ring pardon, grace, and peace.
He himself makes preparation,
and I hear his invitation:
 "Come and taste the blessed feast."

2 Christ himself, the priest presiding,
yet in bread and wine abiding
 in this holy sacrament,
gives the bread of life, once broken,
and the cup, the precious token
 of his sacred covenant.

3 Under bread and wine, though lowly,
I receive the Savior holy,
 blood and body, giv'n for me,
very Lamb of God from heaven,
who to bitter death was given,
 hung upon the cursed tree.

4 God descends with heav'nly power,
gives himself to me this hour
 in this ordinary sign.
On my tongue his pledge receiving,
I accept his grace, believing
 that I taste his love divine.

5 Let me praise God's boundless favor,
whose own feast of love I savor,
 bidden by his gracious call.
Wedding garments he provides me,
with a robe of white he hides me,
 fits me for the royal hall.

6 Now have I found consolation, comfort in my tribulation,
balm to heal the troubled soul. God, my shield from ev'ry terror,
cleanses me from sin and error, makes my wounded spirit whole.

2nd Distribution Hymn: O Bride of Christ, Rejoice CW 303

1 O bride of Christ, rejoice! Exultant raise your voice

To hail the day of glory Foretold in sacred story.

Hosanna! Now adore him; With praises bow before him!

2 He wears no kingly crown, Yet as a King is known;

Though not arrayed in splendor, He shall make death surrender.

Hosanna! Now adore him; With praises bow before him!

3 The weak and timid find How meek he is and kind;

He graciously will hear you And be forever near you.

Hosanna! Now adore him; With praises bow before him!

4 E'en babes with one accord With you shall praise the Lord

And ev'ry gentile nation Respond with exultation:

Hosanna! Now adore him; With praises bow before him!

Thanksgiving

P: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

C: And his mercy endures forever.

P: Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,

C: we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

P: O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving kindness

you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that

through him you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament.

We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and

minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after

day, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you

and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Benediction

P: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: (by Sunday School at 8:00) No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet

Closing Hymn (10:30 a.m.): O Bride of Christ, Rejoice CW 303
5 Then go your Lord to meet; Strew palm leaves at his feet;
Your garments spread before him, And honor and adore him.
Hosanna! Sing the story Of Christ, the King of glory!

* * * * *

Communion Registration *Communicant members of St. Matthew's are reminded to register for Holy Communion on the "Care Card" found in the pews. If you are visiting St. Matthew's today, we request that you please speak with the Pastor before communing. Questions and answers which will assist you in preparing for partaking of the Lord's Supper are found beginning on page 295 in the hymnal.*

Members, Visitors & Guests— Welcome to St. Matthew's!

Let persevere in our Palm Sunday praises by following the cloud, by focusing on Christ, and by figuring in a cross.

If you are visiting our service, please sign a "care card" in the church pew or our guest book and come back to visit again soon.

Attendance Last Sunday— 370 (128, 66, 176) Bible Classes – 54

Offering Last Week—\$9,982.63 Sunday School – 21

(Meeting our 2025 Ministry Plan requires weekly offerings of \$15,342.00.)

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.

From the house of the LORD, we bless you"

Psalm 118:26.

Announcements

- The flowers on the altar** have been given by Dale and Lynn Beutin in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary. God's blessings and congratulations! *May the Lord bless you from Zion, so that you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, all the days of your life and you see your children's children. Psalm 128:5,6*
- Bentonville Free Will Offering** The free will offering for Cornerstone Lutheran Church, our Mission Journeys home mission church partner in Bentonville, Arkansas, will continue through Sunday, April 13th. Offerings will be used to supplement

the approximately \$8,500 needed for worship space and equipment rental in preparation for the churches first worship service outside of member homes. Your offerings can be placed in the box located in the Narthex and are very much appreciated.

3. **Call for Miss Meredith Moeller** We would like to inform the congregation that Miss Meredith Moeller has received a Call to Divine Savior Academy in Missouri City, TX to teach 5th grade. Please keep Miss Moeller in your prayers as she deliberates where she can best serve her Savior.
4. **Voter's Meeting** A voter's meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, April 27 immediately following our 10:30 worship service. The purpose of the meeting is to bring everyone up to date on our financial situation here at home and consider our obligations outside of our congregation.
5. **Sunday Morning Bible Class** – Sunday morning Bible class will meet today in between services in the fellowship hall. We will continue study of the Lord's Prayer. Please join us!
6. **Sunday School** Sunday School will begin at 9:15 a.m. We will meet in the library for opening devotion. The children may be picked up in their classrooms at 10:15 am.
7. **The Women's Bible Study** The Women's Bible Class will meet Wednesday, April 16 at 9:30 a.m. We will continue to work on two lessons in Psalms as well as working on our Prepared to Answer project. All women are welcome!
8. **Sr. Choir Practice** We will have Senior Choir practice on **Tuesday, April 15th** and not on Wednesday, April 16th.
9. **April Communion Services** We have a number of special services coming up in the month of April. For that reason, we have modified our schedule for celebrating the Lord's supper. We will celebrate the Lord's supper on April 13 which is Palm Sunday and then again on April 17 which is Maundy Thursday. Those will be our two opportunities to receive Holy communion in April.
10. **Mission Journeys** If you enjoyed the mission festival and would like the opportunity to work with Pastor Chartrand and Cornerstone Lutheran Church again, the Mission Journeys Committee encourages you to join us on our next trip to Arkansas

this Memorial Day weekend! The journey will depart Friday, May 23rd, and return Tuesday, May 27th and will include opportunities for outreach, event preparation and execution, canvassing, fellowship and more. Reach out to Deb Lehmann, Nicole Caminata, or Liz Sanchez for more information or to sign up.

11. **Easter Breakfast:** Preparations are under way for Easter Breakfast to be held between services on Easter Sunday, April 20th. A sign-up for food donations can be found on the lower bulletin board. If you have any questions, please contact a committee member: Karen DeLong-Eichman (608) 208-8094, Rosella Reichardt (608) 530-5427, or Sally Wellnitz (608) 752-2037.
12. **40th Anniversary Celebration** You are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the 40th anniversary in the preaching ministry of Reverend James Janke. The celebration will be held on **Sunday, May 4, 2025** with a church service at 10:00 a.m. and a catered meal to follow. **(Please note, there will be no service on Thursday, May 1.)** We ask that you please RSVP no later than April 14 to Lori Sage at lsage@stmatthewsjanesville.org, or by phone at 608-752-1304. A card and best wishes box will be set out in the Narthex on Sunday, April 27 and Sunday, May 4. Please plan on attending! *St. Matthew's Fellowship/Outreach Committee*
13. **2025-2026 Preschool Enrollment** We will be accepting preschool enrollment forms for the coming school year. Our program for 3 year olds will meet on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 8:00–11:15 a.m. Children must be 3 years of age by September 1st. Our 4 year olds will meet on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings from 8:00-11:15 a.m. Children registering for this class must be 4 years old by September 1st. We are also offering wrap-around care for students after preschool is over. This new program started five years ago. We would like you to get the applications in by **May 23** so a spot can be reserved for you. Shortly after that we will begin advertising to the public that there are spots available for next year. If you have any questions about our preschool or would like an enrollment form, please contact Mr. Joel Sonntag or Mrs. Cathy Sonntag.

Assisting with Worship

Organist:

Tom May

Ushers:

8:00 a.m. – Gerald Wellnitz, Evan Burnside, Alex Schmitt

10:30 a.m. – Steve Sage, David Johnson

Maundy Thursday, 6:30 p.m. – Doug McIlvain, Dane McIlvain,
Jeff Burandt, Nathan Wagner

Good Friday, 1:00 p.m. – Mark Schulz, Mike Lenser, Kevin Paasch

Good Friday, 6:30 p.m. – Tim Stirmel, Connor Stirmel

Next Week Ushers:

8:00 a.m. – Rich Hatfield, Mike Borchardt, Ryan Borchardt, Kyle Stade

10:30 a.m. – Fred Shadoski, Russ Scott, Tim Graffin

CODS:

Sunday, April 13, 8:00 a.m. – Phil Fry

Sunday, April 13, 10:30 a.m. – George Ehlers

Maundy Thursday, April 17, 6:30 p.m. – Brian Hartwig

Good Friday, April 18, 1:00 p.m. – Briton Peterson

Good Friday, April 18, 6:30 p.m. – Tim Stirmel

Next Week CODS:

Sunday, April 20, 8:00 a.m. – Jim Daley

Sunday, April 20, 10:30 a.m. – Trevor Sanchez

Greeters

Sunday, April 13, 8:00 a.m. – Doug & Alicia McIlvain

Sunday, April 13, 10:30 a.m. – Brandon & Ashley Phillips

Next Week Greeters

Sunday, April 20, 8:00 a.m. – Shari Deegan

Sunday, April 20, 10:30 a.m. – Sue Balog

Church Cleaning:

April 19, 2025 – Mark Butzow & Tara Chapman families

April 26, 2025 – Jeff Christianson & Jim Daley families

This Week at St. Matthew's

Palm Sunday

Worship 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School/Bible Class
9:15 a.m.

Tuesday

Seedlings 8:15 – 9:00 a.m.
Choir 5:45-6:45 p.m.
Fellowship/Outreach 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday

Women's Bible Study 9:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday

Worship with Communion
6:30 p.m.

Good Friday

Good Friday Service 1:00 p.m.
Classes dismissed after
1:00 p.m. service.

Good Friday Service 6:30 p.m.

Saturday

Easter Orchestra Practice
2:00-4:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday

Worship 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.
Easter Breakfast 9:15 a.m.

Continuing Challenges & Clear Blessings

The 2024 WELS statistics have been gathered by WELS Congregational Services. We are thankful to the 95 percent of our congregations that furnished their statistics—an incredibly good level of participation. While some of the statistics indicate continuing challenges in some areas, others provide some very good news and reasons to thank God for some significant blessings. Certainly, our confidence does not rest in statistics. Our confidence and optimism rest in the hands of a gracious God who continues to work through his Word and sacrament. Following are some significant details, both positive and negative, in those statistics:

- **WELS total membership declined** from 330,618 in 2023 to 327,943 at the end of 2024. That is a **loss of 2,675 members** (-0.8 percent), but on the positive side, it is the **smallest annual decline since 2011**.
- Weekly in-person **worship attendance increased** from 124,042 in 2023 to 127,594, a 2.9 percent rise. The percentage of WELS members in worship each week is now close to where it was prior to COVID.
- There were **increases in adult and youth Bible study** attendance. Both rose last year by 1.9 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively. This was the **fourth year of annual increases**.

- **Spiritual gains have been trending upward, and spiritual losses downward.** In 2024, the Spirit blessed WELS congregations with **4,126 adult confirmations**. That is the **most adult confirmations since 2012** and the **second highest total in 50 years**. The 4,126 confirmations is a **significant increase** compared to the average of 3,300 confirmations annually for the last decade. Professions of faith (those coming to WELS from other Lutheran church bodies) remained stable at around 1,700 annually.
- **Spiritual losses** (those who left to join other churches not in fellowship with us or who walked away from church completely—sometimes called “backdoor losses”) are **decreasing**. In 2024, WELS had 2,315 net spiritual losses, the **lowest total of net spiritual losses since WELS began keeping such records**. Over the decade prior, the average annual net spiritual loss was approximately 5,300.
- In 2024, 2,985 children were born to WELS members, while 3,345 WELS members went home to heaven. That is **five straight years when total births were at or fewer than 3,000**. In the decade prior, the average annual number of births was 5,700. While the **number of deaths has been fairly consistent**, 2024 marks the **fifth straight year that WELS had more deaths than births**.
- In 2024, WELS had **3,445 youth confirmations**, the **lowest in WELS history** (a 20-year trend that reflects the declining birth rate).

Given the demographics of our synod (an aging church population and fewer births), it seems likely that our synod will continue to decline in total membership in the next decade. But if the Lord continues to bless some of the positive trends (increased worship attendance, more spiritual gains, and fewer spiritual losses), it is possible that the losses will flatten out and possibly even be replaced by membership gains. All of this, of course, is in the Lord’s hands. We plant and water, but ultimately, he is the one who makes his church grow.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder

