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The Reporter

January 2021

The Reporter

Volume 19, Issue 01

“What’s Next?”

by Pastor Proeber

It used to be a new year would offer the hope of something different. It would be like a breath of fresh air. But as 2020 slowly waned and became 2021, all of us may have come to the same conclusion—not much is going to change. The biggest disappointment is the stranglehold COVID has on everything. Businesses remain closed. Gatherings are prohibited. Even worship is a casualty of governmental mandates. The most disappointing thing I heard regarding the new year is that things will get worse before they get better. It is not the news anyone wants to hear. As the struggles with increased infections continue, and as many local small businesses remain shuttered, it leads us to wonder, “what’s next?”

What’s next, indeed! It is going to be interesting to see how long this pandemic lingers. It could be anywhere from a couple of months to potentially next year. We all pray for it to be over and for people to be safe. Yet there is a nagging reality from which we cannot escape. We really don’t know. So, what is our course of action? And what if, God forbid, this persists for another year?

Only recently have the psychological effects of school closures, lock downs and stay at home orders been considered. The news isn’t good. Suicides are up. Drug and physical abuse is skyrocketing. People are changing, and not for the better. This is the unseen tragedy, and it makes us wonder, “what’s next?”

As believers in Jesus Christ we have an advantage over many people. Seriously! We are not subject to fear and uncertainty because we know God is in control. We also know everything will work for our blessing. If this weren’t sufficient encouragement, we even live with the promise our Lord will never allow anything to come into our lives that he doesn’t provide the strength or faith to overcome it. This means our most intimidating challenge is remembering what our Lord will do for us.

It gets us back to the exclamation, what’s next! It can be said in frustration, dismay, even hopelessness. It can express a sense of loss and complete failure. How sad, if we fall into this trap. We need to be aware the devil is the origin of this trap. He embraces frustration. He yearns for dismay. He rejoices when hopelessness seizes the heart. We always need to be aware of his destructive and deadly intentions. The last thing we would ever want him to do is get his foot into the door of our lives.

You and I need to ask ourselves a few critical questions, and it may not be comfortable. Are we stronger in our faith today, or has it suffered during the pandemic? Are we excited about more opportunities for new ministry, or are we complaining because things are so difficult? Have we thanked the Lord for every blessing we daily receive, or are we burdened by all the things we have had to forfeit?

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These questions should be a wake up call. They should also lead us to humbly repent. It may be that we have unwittingly adopted an attitude of frustration, dismay and hopelessness. We may have even entertained doubts about the Lord and his loving kindness. If we have reached this state, then we need to recommit ourselves to a renewed and regular study of the Scriptures. This is the only remedy for the ills perpetuated and made worse by the world. The Word opens our eyes to all the good things with which the Lord fills our lives. The Word strengthens our hearts to overcome feelings of loss, disappointment and despair. The Word proclaims God's great, undeserved love for each of us.

This is where we need to focus our undivided attention—on what the Lord has done and continues to do for us every day. Sure it's hard because of the many distractions we face. It will also hurt to see how wrong our assumptions tend to be. But, this is a good thing.

When we focus our attention on the Lord, "what's next," takes on a completely different perspective. Instead of looking at everything as being just one more loss, we see it as an opportunity for an additional blessing. In true excitement and anticipation we can say, "what's next?" The answer is more undeserved blessings from the Lord's treasure store of grace. Each can be received with thanksgiving. Each can be received with joyful confidence. Each can be a reminder he will more than supply our needs.

So, "what's next?" I don't claim to have a crystal ball. Nor do I assume to have any special insight into the future. What I do have is a Bible filled with God's precious promises. Ones that are not foolishly made, nor ever broken. God's promises are made in complete faithfulness and unyielding commitment. God's promises are made certain because they come from the sure foundation of his love for us in Jesus. This is something tangible to which we can hold with all our strength. It means every day we can live our lives to the fullest. Every day we can sing songs of praise to the Lord loud and long. Every day we can live with an unshakable and joy-filled hope.

What our Lord promises to do, leads me to recall a song written by Stephen Bautista—"Brand New Day." Maybe you remember he performed it at Our Redeemer several years back. This song really says it all. It considers the pessimism of daily life, and replaces it with the confidence of living in the Lord's complete and unfailing care—a care that is new every day.

It's 6 a.m. I stumble out of bed a cup of joe to help me clear my head
Then I'm off and soon it'll be back to the daily grind.
But I won't fret no I won't complain despite this rat race I run everyday
Cause Jesus lives, God's in control and it's good to be alive.

Rejoice the sun is a shinin' rejoice my spirit is flyin'
Rejoice cause I have been given a brand new day.

The kids are sick, the house is a mess, the yard has weeds clear up to my chest
The list goes on and sometimes I get a little overwhelmed
But I won't fret no I won't be annoyed; I'll live my life reflecting the joy
That comes from sailing through everyday with my Savior at the helm.

Rejoice the sun is a shinin' rejoice my spirit is flyin'
Rejoice cause I have been given a brand new day

The light of day brings with it a fresh new ray of hope

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And twenty-four new opportunities that I can serve my Lord.

Rejoice the sun is a shinin' rejoice my spirit is flyin'

Rejoice cause I have been given a brand new day.

For you and me it is the one thing about which we can always be sure. Every day we can look forward to "what's next," because it will be another day of blessing from our gracious and loving God. It will also be another day to serve him in love.

Brand New Day from the Album "Abandon"

Words and Music by Stephen Bautista

www.StephenBautistaMusic.com

WELS Investment Fund

by Al Todd

Our Redeemer has an Endowment Fund managed by the WELS Investment Fund (WIF). The Endowment Fund was set up in 2006 with an initial investment of \$51,000. Over the years the Endowment Fund has grown (with some additional periodic contribution of money into the Fund by ORLC members in addition to investment returns) to \$433, 926 as of the end of 2020.

The Endowment Fund started the year 2020 with a balance of \$359,479 and ended the year with a balance of \$433,926.

We believe the WIF managers are doing a good job as fiduciaries of our Endowment Fund and we plan to continue to use the WIF the coming year as well.

If you have any questions or if you would like to contribute to the Endowment Fund please contact me.

Property Mowing & Care

by Jim Brown

Starting with the new year, a mowing calendar has been established, and is available on the table in the back of the church. The purpose of the schedule is two-fold. The first is to afford people a meaningful way to be good stewards of the property the Lord has entrusted to our congregation's care. The second is to have as many men participate in the mowing of the property as possible. The schedule is set up beginning on Sunday so you have almost two weeks to serve. You may cut for an hour or two over several days to make the work less arduous. You may also do it in one sitting—about 5 hours total is needed.

If there is nothing to mow, you could spend a little time during your scheduled week to pull weeds, clean up some beds, or just do a little extra maintenance. This form service is actually open to every member who has a little time on their hands, and would like to enjoy the fresh air.

If you have any questions, please speak to Jim Brown or Pastor Proeber. Most tools and equipment are in the storage building and are easily accessible. Thank you in advance for your service to the Lord and to the congregation.



The Joy of Christmas

While Christmas was different this year, the joy of celebrating our Savior's birth could not be diminished. Whether you attended in person, or watched the stream, the message was the clear—"to you is born a Savior; he is Christ the Lord." It is that message which tells us we have peace with God through the forgiveness of our sins. While we do not know what the future has in store for 2021, we do know one thing is certain. God will give us daily opportunities to rejoice in the love he offered through his Son. This is the joy of Christmas, and it is our joy throughout the year.



January Birthdays



We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

- 3rd - Linda W.
- 5th - Jessica D., Marrison H.
- 11th - David C.
- 14th - Carolyn H.
- 16th - Jim E., Lucas S.
- 21st - Tiera S.
- 24th - Nicole K.

2021 Budget Report

By Al Todd

The congregation's 2021 budget is broken out into nine (9) categories as shown below:

	2020 Actual	2021 Budget	\$ Over/ Under Ac- tual 2020	% Inc / dec
General Fund Income	149,129	143,000	-6,129	-4.1%
Total Advertising/Outreach	1,217	1,700	483	39.7%
Total Church Operations	15,189	15,220	31	0.2%
Total Church Utilities	6,761	7,236	475	7.0%
Total Education Expenses	954	850	-104	-10.9%
Total Fellowship	107	450	343	319.1%
Total Pastor Expenses	99,624	102,261	2,638	2.6%
Synod Missions	13,771	14,300	529	3.8%
Total Worship Expenses	1,350	600	-750	-55.6%
Total Expense	138,974	142,617	3,644	2.6%

In 2020 we saw a year over year decline in the General Fund by \$2,900. We ended 2020 with a balance of \$33,940 which is a 7.9% decline in the General Fund in the past year.

Our Synod is not increasing Pastor's health, dental, and pension benefit costs which is a big saving for us in 2021.


For the year 2021, we are planning for offerings to just cover expenses; hence the 4.1% planned decline in expected offerings. We realize that 2020 was a challenging year (to say the least); however, we expect that sometime around mid-year (and possibly sooner) we will see a return to a more normal worship service and more participation from members in the life of the church.

Please prayerfully consider the financial gifts God has entrusted to your stewardship and then help us meet the approved budget so we can continue to proclaim the gospel to a dying world.

If you have any questions regarding the 2021 budget, please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the ORLC council.

Brothers, sisters, let us gladly give to God our all, our best —
 Service hearty, through, honest, with a living love impressed.
 All our duty, all our striving, all our time to him belong;
 Praise him, then, with true devotion; come before him with a song.

By his mercy, by his bounty, by the gift of Christ, his Son,
 What great goodness he has shown us, what high marvels he has done!
 Let us to him promptly, freely, yield our bodies and our souls.
 Thankful that his love protects us, that his wisdom all controls



 LET THE WORDS OF
MY MOUTH
 —AND THE—
 MEDITATION OF
MY HEART
 BE ACCEPTABLE TO YOU,
O LORD,
MY ROCK,
 —AND—
MY REDEEMER.
 PSALM 19:14, NRSV

Outreach Opportunities

Usually by the January Congregational Meeting a strategy for outreach has been decided. This year is different, again. There is nothing hard and fast which has been planned, because there is still uncertainty about the short term future. God-willing, as the year progresses we will be able to adopt more opportunities to share the good news of our Savior. In addition, we pray the Lord will allow us the opportunity to celebrate in person the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Savior. If you remember last year, most of these services were streamed.

The first, and probably most important, action we want to undertake is to get back to inviting people to worship. With services being streamed, we can let people know what the Sunday morning schedule is, or pass along their email address to receive the link. This is actually quite simple, and there is little potential for confrontation.

In time, and when the weather cooperates, we will begin to offer services outside again. This will be in conjunction with the streaming, so we will have two opportunities to which we can invite people to be part of our Sunday worship. As you recall the outdoor services offered more flexibility and a bit more protection.

What else are we considering? Josh Schueler is evaluating on-line advertising to get people to the website, and to watch the stream. Door hanger pieces are also being considered. These would have a two-fold purpose. One would be to offer an invitation to come and see. The other would offer an encouraging tract with promises from Scripture for these challenging times. If you have additional suggestions, please share them with Josh, or with Pastor.

Notes & News

Handbell Choir

The “ringers” will soon begin practices for Holy Week and Easter. While the number of ringers is down from previous years, the level of commitment is just as high. We thank the Lord for their service to the congregation. If you are interested in ringing in the New Year, there is still time to come and be a part of this group which meets on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm. You may also speak with Debbie Aitkins for more information.

Wednesday Evening Bible Class

We continue with a regular Bible Study opportunity every week. The class meets on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall. Currently we are studying the “End Times.” It is a topic we don’t consider too often, however, it has great implications for now, and for the future. Come and learn more about these distressing, yet hopeful times.

Other Ministry Information

Much remains uncertain for the first part of the year, but God-willing some changes will begin to take place so we can implement more of our regular ministry offerings—Sunday School, Sunday morning Bible Class, mixed voice choir, outreach and fellowship events, and more. Continue to pray for the Lord to work his gracious good will.

Serve the Lord with Gladness

Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck—gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Email to Pastor Proeber (pastor.orldsb@gmail.com)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

Thanks to Alan Todd and Jim Brown for their articles in this month's *Reporter*.

With a new year there is a new invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past eighteen volumes and nineteen years, articles authored by members have made every issue more interesting. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber for advice. Thanks!

Meetings for January

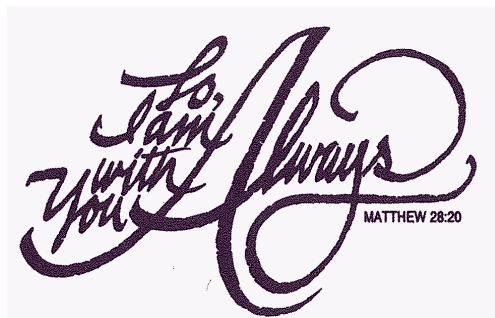
Church Council	Tuesday, January 5 th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday, January 5 th at 8:00 pm
Voters Meeting	Sunday, January 17 th after the Worship Service

If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board. He will be happy to help.

Meetings for February

Church Council	Tuesday, February 9 th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday, February 9 th at 8:00 pm

February Birthdays



We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

1st - Jameson S.
7th - Joel D.
8th - Kathy T.
11th - Janelle Y.
Michael J.
17th - Debbie A.

Please share any corrections—spellings, addresses, or birthdays with Pastor Proeber. We would like to have all our information as correct as possible. Thank You!