Who Knows What the Future Holds
by Pastor Baur

Who knows what this next year will bring? In one sense it will be more of the same. The newscasts will have different names and different locations, but it will tell of the same conflicts, similar accidents, countless murders, ongoing injustice and the like. The future will be filled with the sameness of the past. Even in our own lives we can expect more of the same. There will be meals to cook, colds to overcome, sports to watch, families to raise. Our personal lives will also be filled with the sameness of the past. In many ways it will be life as usual.

Yet there is a wariness as we begin this New Year. It is not based on what we do know, but on what we don’t know. Life has already taught us to expect the unexpected. It is what we don’t know that sprinkles our daily existence with an element of fear as we wonder what our futures hold. Maybe this is the year that death takes a loved one from our reach. Maybe this is the year of lost jobs and losing financial security. Maybe it is the year where we give up our independence to live on our own or take care of ourselves. Maybe this is the year that our greatest fears become reality. Who knows what our future holds?

Does anyone of us really want to know? Besides how would we handle the information? Would we nervously and cautiously approach every circumstance in life? Would we think through every scenario in an attempt to avoid it?

There is a common saying that states, “We don’t know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future.” That means that the Lord does not toss our future into the changing winds of life, just to see where we land. He holds us in his hand. Sometimes his hands lead us around the tragedies and heartaches of the reality of life. Other times he leads us straight though it all with our hand securely in his. That means that life does not become a matter of knowing all the why’s to everything, but a matter of trusting. Even when we don’t know what the future holds.

We don’t know what the future holds, but the Lord does and isn’t that all we really need to know? A blessed New Year is what your future holds.
Pastor Douglas Has Received A Call To Serve Another Church

What does this mean?

Pastor Douglas has received a call to serve as an Associate Pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Tucson, AZ. His focus would be on outreach and family ministry duties. Redeemer is a congregation of 420 souls. They are experiencing a large number of first time visitors as well as new families in their preschool and school that they want to follow up on.

Does Pastor Douglas have to take the call to Redeemer in Tucson, AZ?

No. Pastor Douglas must weigh his gifts against the needs of Redeemer and the needs of St. Paul’s and prayerfully decide where they could be used best to serve God’s kingdom. Over the next few weeks, Pastor will be doing that by speaking with the members and the Associate Pastor at Redeemer. Members of St. Paul’s are strongly encouraged to speak with Pastor Douglas about their thoughts on where he can best use his gifts to serve God’s kingdom.

What goes into the decision?

- As much as is humanly possible the personal likes and dislikes, the material advantages and disadvantages are to be kept out of consideration. (i.e. closeness to family, salary, housing, etc.)
- The congregation must devoutly aid the pastor in weighing the two Calls, (their own and the new Call) and prayerfully advise the pastor on where his gifts may be best used.
- The final decision will be made by the pastor himself.

Pastor Douglas will look forward to hearing from any of you with your thoughts about where he can best serve God’s kingdom with his gifts. He hopes to have a decision by the end of December. Feel free to call or stop in!
These are written that you may believe

In his gospel, the apostle John refers to himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved." John was one of the inner circle of disciples, together with Peter and James. As he recorded the ministry of Jesus, the apostle added many insights not recorded by the other gospels. In January, the Bible Book Group will take an in-depth look at this simple and clear statement of God's grace in Christ. The group meets on Wednesdays from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the Resource Center. For more information, please contact Jerry Blum at 715-423-6514.

Breaking the Cycle with Grace

What better way to start a new year than with a new Interactive Faith online Bible study series.

Beginning Wed., Jan. 7, 2015, Rev. David Scharf, Immanuel, Greenville, Wis., will lead a six-week study called "Breaking the Cycle with Grace (a study of the book of Judges)."

Scharf says of the topic, “It has been said that nearly every doctrine of the Bible can be found in the biblical narratives contained in the book of Judges. That fact alone merits a deeper look! And yet, how often have we read, let alone studied this action-packed book of God’s grace? In our lives, we go through cycles of ups and downs—we think God is pleased one moment and that he is not the next. Come and break the cycle of uncertainty with grace as we study a book full of God’s love and patience!"

The study will be streamed live online twice every Wednesday night between Jan. 7 and Feb. 11 at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. (central).

Thousands of WELS members have participated in the Interactive Faith Bible studies, which are held twice a year and led by a WELS pastor or professor. Many congregations gather as a group for the study; other WELS members connect as couples or individuals. The studies are designed to have 10 to 15 minutes of lecture by the instructor, followed by 5 to 10 minutes for congregations to discuss a question or two or do further study. Participants can interact with the instructor via the chat box.

To learn more or join the study, go to www.wels.net/interactivefaith.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

The results have been coming in for part 2 of our hymn survey. There is still time for you to turn in your survey if you haven’t already. Included with this newsletter is part 3 of the survey, which includes hymns 279-406. This section has some great hymns. Be sure to let us know which ones you like to sing! Remember you can mark as many or as few as you like. Your input will be used in the future to plan our worship services.

Top Hymns from Part 2 of the Hymn Survey

I Know that My Redeemer Lives
Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty
How Great Thou Art
A Might Fortress Is Our God
Let All Things Now Living

Sunday Morning Bible Study
9:15 a.m.
in the Dining Room
St. Paul’s School News

Preschool News – by Mrs. Hannah Mueller

We are almost to Christmas! This month we’ve been very busy working on arranging several things one after another in a series or pattern and describing their relationships by concentrating on big, bigger, biggest and creating patterns in various ways. You can check out our work in the hallway outside the Preschool room. We’ve also been busy working on some special gifts for our moms and dads. The 4K classes have been working very hard on their parts for the Children’s Christmas Service. They have been doing an excellent job!

After Christmas we say farewell to Ms. Angie. Ms. Angie will be leaving us to concentrate on her home business but she will still come by to help us out once in a while. We wish God’s richest blessings to Ms. Angie and we’re so grateful for the time we got to spend with her.

May God richly bless you and your family during this Christmas season!

Kindergarten News – by Mrs. Trisha Engelbrecht

I love working here especially during this time of year! I previously worked for a public preschool and was surrounded by Santa, elves, reindeer, Frosty, "Jingle Bells"... while prohibited of talking about Jesus or singing "Away in a Manger". It is exciting to reveal the wonders of how our Savior came to earth to save us. In fact, when polled today about what event they were looking most forward to, over half of the class answered (unprompted), "Jesus' birthday". They are excited that they get the part in our program from Luke 2 that will tell you Jesus is born and are prone to singing "Little Children Can You Tell" in the lunch room, or while cleaning up after recess, or at snack time...you get the idea. We love devotion time when we hang a new ornament on our tree that teaches us about our Lord and have been using our artistic sides to make Christmas cards for others. They truly have the child like faith and excitement that makes this season so wonderful.

1st-2nd Grade News – by Miss Lexie Smith

Merry Christmas from the first and second grade room. The excitement keeps building higher and higher the closer it gets to Christmas. They’re excited for the Christmas party and for their own Christmas celebrations with their families. We even have some kids in our room who do just want their two front teeth for Christmas. The tooth tally chart in our classroom is up to 18 lost teeth so far this year. In the midst of all the holiday excitement, we have had a wonderful opportunity to focus on the reason we have Christmas. The kids have been hard at work learning their parts for the Christmas service. All this week we get the opportunity to join with the rest of the school to practice putting the whole service together. Our class is so excited to be able to perform our service on Dec. 20. Because of Jesus, we truly have a reason to celebrate Christmas.

Even with all the Christmas excitement, we have still been hard at work in our classroom. Time has been flying by. The first graders are already in their 3rd out of 5 reading books and our second graders are almost done with their 1st out of 2 books. After Christmas, we will be switching from Social Studies to Science. In Christ Light, we have been hearing about a lot of Jesus’ miracles in his ministry such as the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Jesus Calms the Storm, and Jesus Walking on Water. It’s a wonderful reminder reading these lessons that we have an almighty God who loves us and takes care of us. God bless you over the Christmas season!
3rd - 4th Grade News – by Mr. Jon Engelbrecht

It has been an exciting start to the Second Quarter in the 3rd and 4th grade classroom. The third grade class has started working on multiplication math facts. We have multiplied our knowledge by x1, x7, and x10. The fourth grade class is tackling their first chapter book in reading class, Charlotte’s Web. It has been “Terrific” going through such a classic in children’s literature, and learning about Wilbur, who is sure “Some Pig”. You should see the children’s “Radiant” faces as they read chapter after chapter. Wisconsin History has been exciting, as we have explored the Northwest Territory and the formation of Wisconsin as a state. Right now, we are expanding our view of the early life of Wisconsin people as they started the lumber industry and the importance of different waterways like the Wisconsin River for moving lumber from the woods to the mill. As a class, we would like to wish all the members of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and School a “Merry Christmas” as we continue to prepare for the celebration of our Savior’s birth.

5th-6th Grade News – by Mr. John Quint

Our science project continues this month in 5th and 6th grade. We have been observing the life cycle of the grain beetle. The larvae that we have been caring for in our individual habitats are now in the process of developing into the pupa stage. By the time we return from Christmas break we should have newly hatched beetles to care for. We plan on putting the beetles in a large, permanent habitat so that they can lay their eggs and start the cycle over again. If anyone reading this has a fairly clean 10 gallon aquarium they no longer use, we would appreciate the donation to our classroom for this and future science projects. This week, our classroom was the first to receive a new laptop computer to go with our Smart Board. This new hardware will better handle the memory needs of the Smart Board as well as provide faster processing time for video presentations and the overall running of the Smart software. We thank the donors for their most generous gift! This year, instead of exchanging small Christmas gifts, we pooled our money and purchased gifts for a nine-year old boy whose information and wishes we received from the congregation’s Giving Tree program. During next week's Christmas party, we will be exchanging “white elephant” gifts as part of the festivities. On behalf of my 5th and 6th graders, I wish you a most blessed Christmas celebration. May the joy that Christ brought on that first Christmas be yours now and in the years to come.

7th-8th Grade News – by Mr. Randy Pahl

Well friends, we went from Novem-burr to De-sun-ber in just a matter of a few short days!!! The unexpected warmth certainly buoyed our spirits and made travel to the many extra-curricular events just that much easier. With the “wrapping” up of our volleyball season, we are now full-swing into the basketball portion of our sports program. At the YMCA, we have both boys and girls participating in games every Thursday evening. Our “Lutheran League” has also tipped-off with our first games being played at St. Peter’s in Schofield and our coed team having hosted Our Savior’s of Wausau. Our heart-felt thanks go out to Mr. Bob Hafermann, Mr. Fred Camacho and Mrs. Amy Kaehn for coaching this year. Be sure to look forward to more action in 2015, as we will be hosting three Friday evening games in January and February. December finds a very busy time in our classroom. Beside the normal day-to-day classes and activities, we also have been preparing for our Children’s Christmas Service. Each student will be taking part in the service as a narrator. They have been working extremely hard to make certain that the message of our Savior’s birth comes through loud and clear. At the top of our article, we spoke of De-sun-ber, but we could have just as easily spoken of De-SON-ber. Yes, friends, thanks be to God almighty that he gave up His one and only SON that we might be saved! May this joy warm and keep your hearts focused on Him as we prepare not only for His first coming, but for when He returns again to take us to Himself in heaven. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!
Supporting new teachers so they thrive

NTI sounds like a dramatic TV crime show, but for 105 first- and second-year teachers in ten WELS districts, the New Teacher Induction program is a life saver.

"New teachers, even the brightest, meet unexpected challenges in their early years of teaching. For a long time, education has left new teachers to sink or swim. NTI is aimed at supporting new teachers so they thrive," says Jon Schaefer, director of the NTI program.

Begun in 2009 as a pilot program, NTI was a joint effort of the Commission for Lutheran Schools and Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., to provide mentoring and support to new teachers; the program is now under the direction of Schaefer at MLC.

Schaefer is quick to highlight NTI’s benefits: "Teacher induction improves classroom management," he says. "NTI can enhance teacher retention and provide principals with the support of a trained instructional mentor. Mentors also take new ideas and practices back to their own classrooms."

More than 50 2014 MLC graduates are working with a trained mentor, including Abigail Kurth, who teaches grades 2-3 at New Hope Lutheran Academy, West Melbourne, Fla. "Being a first-year teacher is very busy. I have made so many changes to my classroom—everything from physical layout to management strategies to instructional procedures," she says. "My mentor has been a big help as I make these changes."

Jon Kulhanek, another member of MLC’s class of 2014, was assigned to grades 5-6 at Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla. "Getting a call to Florida was the last thing I expected," he says. "My mentor helped by not only discussing classroom and teaching suggestions, but also how to survive in a completely new setting. It is such a blessing to have an experienced colleague in the ministry who is a phone call away."

At the start, Kulhanek had mixed feelings about being involved in the NTI program. "To me, it seemed like it was an extension of student teaching evaluations. However, I am so thankful this program exists. My mentor and I see each other as equals working in God’s ministry. I don’t feel like I’m getting graded or being watched, but instead I have a peer with years of experience who is willing to give me advice and encouragement to aid me in the first years of my ministry."

Jeff Loberger, principal at Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla., serves as both Kurth’s and Kulhanek’s mentor. He communicates with them on a weekly basis and observes classroom instruction quarterly.

Loberger became a mentor two years ago because he has “a passion for teachers and the work they do.” As he builds a trust relationship with his mentees and helps them set goals, he says the program also benefits him as he discovers “innovative ideas” for the new teachers and sometimes from the new teachers. "It brings about a servant-heart attitude that helps me to realize that the kingdom we serve is larger than just the one congregation in which we have been called," he says.

Principals are also happy with the program. Kurth’s principal, Benjamin Priebe, says, "I view Abby's mentor as an additional member of our staff. His words of encouragement, his willingness to assist, and his love for the ministry here in the South Atlantic District have a positive influence on our first-year teacher."

Priebe continues, "The NTI program has a trickle-down effect for all involved in ministry of a Lutheran elementary school. The students benefit from having a first-year teacher who has direct access to a teacher who has experienced some of the challenges that are associated with being a first-year teacher. Our ministry at large will greatly benefit not only in the here and now, but for many school years to come."

Schaefer says a future goal for the program is to "foster a collaborative culture and teacher leadership. Teaching is a life-long process that begins from the first day a teacher walks into class at MLC through induction and beyond. Being mentored during the first two years of ministry allows new teachers to value feedback and the opportunity to learn alongside experienced colleagues who share a sense of responsibility and accountability for the learning of all students. These are blessings that could benefit all teachers."

NTI continues to need experienced teachers—either retired or still teaching—to serve as mentors. For more information, contact Professor Jon Schaefer at schaeffjm@mlc-wels.edu.

Ann Ponath

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Divine Word Reaches Out to UWSP Students

Divine Word, Plover, Wis., serves the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus ministry. Every Thursday, 20 to 25 students meet to study God's Word and to share in a meal prepared by volunteers from the congregation.

But the congregation has decided to take its campus ministry efforts further. With financial support from the WELS Campus Ministry Committee, Divine Word plans to call a second pastor to serve not only the campus, but eventually the Stevens Point community. The goal is that a second pastor will be able to offer more fellowship opportunities and spiritual guidance as well build stronger relationships with the students.

Campus ministry has been an important ministry to Divine Word, as it offers nearby college students a church home and the opportunity to continue building their relationship with God, explains Mr. Scott Dimler, congregation president. He says, “In order to have any successful program that we do at Divine Word, the congregation has to be not only supportive with volunteering their time and talents, but also it is an important part of our ministry, so we do have budget money set aside each year to support it.”

Rev. Ken Brokmeier, chairman of the WELS Campus Ministry Committee, says, “If a congregation is interested, the Campus Ministry Committee is happy to try to partner with local congregations to get something going.” Brokmeier says the Campus Ministry Committee has funds available to help congregations get a campus ministry off the ground and is able to provide guidance on operating a campus ministry program and how the congregation can get involved.

Casey Urbanek, a student at UW-Stevens Point, says, “Being able to meet with other students who share a faith with me and being able to study God's Word with them is truly a blessing. Campus ministry provides an opportunity for me to step away from all the stress and challenges of college life and focus on my relationship with God while growing in faith with other students.”

To sign up with Campus Ministry and get Forward in Christ magazine and Meditations mailed to you for free, visit www.wels.net/campus-ministry.

FIC Adds Parenting Column

In the January issue, Forward in Christ (FIC) magazine is debuting a new column devoted to parenting topics. Titled Heart to heart: Parent conversations, the new column is designed to have the feel of a conversation between parents. Each month one topic will be discussed by a diverse group of parents.

To help Christian parents build each other up and support each other, the readers will have the opportunity to join the conversation online. Visit www.wels.net/forwardinchrist and look for the link to the Heart to heart site. Read uncut versions of the articles, learn more about the authors, and share your thoughts and reactions.

One of the families featured in the first discussion is Thad & Ann Jahns. Thad served as a staff minister at St. Paul’s from 2001-2005. Check out how they and other families keep technology in check so that it’s a blessing for families.
You Can’t Outgive God! by Norm Paul

(What Does This Mean?)

It means “A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” (Proverbs 11:25)

It means “Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.” (Luke 6:38)

It means “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” (II Corinthians 9:6)

It means “Seek his kingdom, and these things (life’s necessities) will be given you as well.” (Luke 12:31)

It means “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10)

It means “You will be rich in every way, so that you can be generous on every occasion.” (II Corinthians 9:11)

It means “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

Because “God loves a cheerful giver.” (II Corinthians 9:11)

With one year to go, we are blessed with about $300,000 in Cheerful Giver gifts, and $700,000 to go. Pray for God’s continual blessing toward the goal.

Men of His Word Conference

The 2015 Men of His Word Conference will be held on Saturday, Jan. 31 at the Best Western Premier Waterfront Convention Center in Oshkosh, WI. The keynote speaker, Pastor Mark Jeske, will address the theme “A Shelter in the Storm.” Breakout sessions will cover family, leadership, and issues like suicide and homosexuality. For more information, visit www.menofhisword.org. Early registration is open through January 17. Registration must close after 600, so register as soon as possible.

Ironmen of God Men’s Conference

Ironmen of God will be held Saturday, March 21 at St. Paul’s School in Ixonia, WI. Christian men today face many challenges. What does the Bible say about our roles as husbands, fathers, sons, grandfathers, brothers and leaders in our churches, communities and families? That's what the Ironmen of God Men's Conference is all about. Be strengthened and encouraged in your faith! Pastor Wayne Shevey, the campus pastor at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee will be the devotional leader. Pastor Jason Ewart from Hope in Jesus in Oconomowoc will be the morning speaker. After lunch, there is a dual presentation from Pastor Clark Schultz from Lakeside Lutheran High School in Lake Mills and Pastor Jim Buske, Jr. from Lighthouse Youth Center in Milwaukee. For more information, visit www.ironmenofgodwi.org.
Special Gifts and Memorials

Given through Dec. 14, 2014

Current
- In memory of Shirley Lau given by Donna Stensberg, Burt & Lucille Stensberg, and Mitzi Casey
- In memory of Joe Feaster on his Dec. 18 birthday given by Randy & Pat Deboer

Mortgage
- In memory of Shirley Lau given by Ron & Georgene Provost

Cheerful Givers
- In memory of Shirley Lau given by Sue Bobrowski
- In memory of Lee Winn given by Kathy Jackson

Debt Reduction
- In memory of Shirley Lau given by Robert Nelson, and Richard Lau

Registration deadlines are approaching for winter retreats.


In the Mailbox

Dear St. Paul’s Lutheran Church,
Thank you so much for allowing us to use your church for our Oct. 11 wedding. We have a large family and group of friends so we filled a majority of the church. You have a very beautiful facility and your church will always be special to us as we got married there. Jan, your wedding coordinator, was also very helpful in making our day perfect!

Thank you!
Brad & Miranda London

Happy December St. Paul family,
We always enjoy worshipping with you; feels like another home! We appreciate your welcoming us and the blessings we always receive from your sharing of the Word. God bless you all this Christmas season and always.

Darla, Sam & Rob

We appreciated what you did for Len. May every kindness you share with the world find its way back to you.
Happy Holidays and Happy New Year.
Carol Henderson
Important Dates to Remember

New Year's Eve Service  
Dec. 31 at 6:30 p.m.

Pancake Brunch  
Jan. 4 at 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Installation of Leaders  
Jan. 11 at Worship

Quarterly Voters’ Meeting  
Jan. 26 at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Service  
Dec. 24 at 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Day Service  
Dec. 25 at 9:30 a.m.