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# THE MESSENGER

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August 2020

The newsletter of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

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## FAMILY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

We are currently planning Family VBS to be held at Christ on three consecutive Wednesday evenings in August. Our theme this year will be "Dive In!"

**Everyone ages 0 - 100+ are invited to attend either in-person or virtually.**



To register, call (715)536-4180 or visit [www.ChristMerrill.com/FamilyVBS](http://www.ChristMerrill.com/FamilyVBS)

Each week, our lessons will focus around a different sea creature; the dates and topics are listed below.

- Wednesday, Aug. 12th - "Black Dragonfish": God promises a Savior from sin
- Wednesday, Aug. 19th - "Porcupine Fish": Jesus says no to the devil
- Wednesday, Aug. 26th - "Dolphin": Jonathan serves God by helping David

### In this Messenger:

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- 4) *Forward in Christ* on Facebook
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- 5-6) Article:  
Transforming Youth Ministry



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## **“Pray Continually.”**

Prayer is perhaps the easiest and the most powerful thing we can do as Christians. It's easy because we are having a heart-to-heart conversation with God. It's powerful because we are talking to God who can do all things. Yet, despite of all of this, during my years in ministry and simply talking with people, I have had people say the following, “I don't know what to pray for. I don't want to bother God with my prayers because he has more important things to do. I don't know how to say the right words for prayer.” Maybe you have heard others say these things or maybe you have found yourself saying this. So let's examine these statements about prayer.

“I don't know what to pray for.” In our minds we can have this idea that there are certain things that are proper to pray for and other things that are not. It is wrong to pray for things that are sinful, but besides that, God doesn't limit what we can pray for. **We can pray for any and every single thing as long as we leave it to God to answer his prayer according to his will.** Even Jesus did that. He prayed for God to remove his cup of suffering from him, but he submitted himself to his Father's will. Therefore, don't be afraid of what you can pray for since you can pray for anything.

“I don't to bother God with my prayers because he has more important things to do.” We may have this idea because that's how it works with everyone else in the world. People can be busy with other things and they can't bother to help us with all our problems. But that doesn't apply to our God. **God is present everywhere, God never gets tired, and God is never bothered by us for we are his children.** When we were children, got hurt, and cried to our parents for help, our parents dropped everything to take care of us. That's what God will do for us. He even promises to do that even if we don't pray to him. But **he wants us to pray to him and communicate what we are going through.**

“I don't know how to say the right words for prayer.” It is proper for us to remember that as we approach God, he is the King of kings who deserves respect and honor. But God never tells us that there are right or wrong words for prayer. God never tells us that the prayers of those who use better words are better prayers than those who do not. God just wants us to talk with him. God wants us to cast any burden upon him. And even if you still feel intimidated to pray without using the right words then look to the Lord's Prayer. The reason Jesus gave that prayer is because his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. So, if we don't know what to say then use the prayer that our Savior taught us to pray.

**Prayer is a wonderful gift from our God. He gives us the ability to approach him and talk with him. We can pray for anything from our God. We aren't bothering God with our prayers. We can speak freely with our God. Therefore, let us pray and do it continually.**

- Pastor Neal Behm



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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<b>2</b> 9:00 Worship (Holy Communion)  2:00 Softball	<b>3</b> 5:00 Board of Christian Education Meeting	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 6:30 Worship	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>  <b>Softball            playoffs</b>  9:00 Men's Bible Study
<b>9</b> 9:00 Worship  <b>Softball playoffs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 6:30 Council Meeting	<b>12</b> 5:00 Family Vacation Bible School	<b>13</b> 6:30 Worship (Holy Communion)	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> 9:00 Worship (Holy Communion)	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 5:00 Family Vacation Bible School	<b>20</b> 6:30 Worship	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> 9:00 Worship	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 5:00 Family Vacation Bible School	<b>27</b> 6:30 Worship	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> 9:00 Worship	<b>31</b> 5:00 Board of Christian Education Meeting					

**COVID-19 RELATED UPDATES:** Visit [www.christmerrill.com/covid19](http://www.christmerrill.com/covid19) for the most up-to-date information.

**WORSHIP AIDS MEETING** will be held **Tuesday, July 28 at 6:30 pm.** Everyone is invited to attend.

**YOUTH EDUCATION MEETING** will be held **Friday, July 31 at 6:00 pm.**

**MEN'S BIBLE STUDY:** The Men's Bible Study continues **online or at church Saturday, August 8 at 9:00 am.** In advance of the study, it is recommended to read the book of *Haggai*.

There are two different ways to participate in the live study:

- 1) Join the study in person in the church fellowship hall (basement)
- 2) Join using Google Meet link or address below.

**Join with Google Meet** at

[meet.google.com/rea-rzbf-dyp](https://meet.google.com/rea-rzbf-dyp)

Click here for the [study guide](#).

**P-16 TAP APPLICATIONS DUE:** The P-16 Tuition Assistance Program applications for assisting students attending WELS preschool, elementary, secondary, and college level schools are **due on September 1** for the fall semester. Applications are available in the narthex to the right of the education bulletin board. Please place it in the Board of Christian Education mailbox when completed.

**FOLLOW *Forward in Christ*:** Get more from *Forward in Christ*, the synod's official magazine, by following it on Facebook at [facebook.com/ForwardinChristMagazine](https://facebook.com/ForwardinChristMagazine). Join the community and join the conversation.

**WELS TOGETHER E-NEWSLETTER:** Stay in the loop! Subscribe to the WELS Together e-newsletter to stay connected with the people of your synod and the ministry they serve. Also, don't miss the twice-monthly videos, expanding on important and exciting synod news. Go to [wels.net/together](http://wels.net/together) to read more and subscribe today.

**HAVE YOU VISITED [WELS.NET](http://WELS.NET) LATELY?** Your Sunday offerings help support the work of WELS, but do you know how? Go to [wels.net](http://wels.net) to discover stories about the many WELS world and home mission fields; explore which ministries can support you and your congregation; enjoy daily devotions and Bible readings; and subscribe to stay up to date on the latest news from your synod. All of this and more is available on [wels.net](http://wels.net). Visit us online today and save us as a Favorite or a Bookmark!

## AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

6 Gavin Schmidt	23 Kathie Baumann
8 Jonathon Dehnel	26 Jane Dehnel
10 Charlotte Boehm	26 Sonia Thoun
11 Alice Christian	27 Cindy Hackbart
11 Ellen Cerney	28 Brad Byer
13 Colleen Schult	29 Dan Kohnhorst
15 Miley Golomb	30 Bridget Schmidt
20 Donna Dehnel	31 Ethan Rasmussen
23 Nicole Kasten	31 Danielle Kropp

*Would you prefer your name to be printed in a different way than above in the future? Put a note in the Messenger mailbox.*

Please submit items for next month's Messenger by the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month to [Messenger@ChristMerrill.com](mailto:Messenger@ChristMerrill.com) or place them in the Messenger slot located in the top row of church mailboxes in the narthex.

# Transforming Youth Ministry

**WELS youth workers are exploring new and unique ways to get youth members engaged and equip them to share their faith.**



What do viral YouTube videos, playing Capture the Flag, and finger painting have in common? These are just some of the different things WELS youth workers are incorporating into their ministries to help youth connect with their peers and with God's Word.

## Forming a bond

"You can't expect a group of teens to share their experiences or ask deep questions when they don't know people around them," says Sara Aker, member at Bloomington Living Hope, Bloomington, Minn., and presenter for the new School of Youth and Family. "When teens feel safe and comfortable, they are more likely to talk and share."

That's why Aker, who is also a teacher, uses games, ice breakers, and team-building activities when she assists with youth group meetings. "They are great for building trust within your group, and it gives them an opportunity to know each other," she says. According to Aker, there are also a lot of teachable moments. "Sometimes a topic comes up that you weren't expecting, but you can't pass that up," she says. "You have to ask, 'What can we learn from this?'"

Aker says the activities don't need to be big and grandiose—it could be something as easy as having teen use finger paints to illustrate the lesson. The point is just to get the teens moving. It's even better if the youth leaders get involved. "I'll jump in and play games with the youth," she says. "When adults participate and act silly, the teens will be more likely to put themselves out there."

Justin Heise, a student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., says games were a memorable part of his years attending youth group at St. Mark, Green Bay, Wis. "Some of my best memories were from playing Capture the Flag behind the church," says Heise. "The games we played taught us to trust each other, and as a result we had a very strong youth group. We wanted to hang out with each other, we wanted to have fun, and we wanted to learn about the Bible."

Heise later became a junior staff director at Camp Phillip, Wautoma, Wis., where he routinely used games as a teaching tool. "We'd make up games that helped illustrate the devotion or the Bible study," he says. "Putting abstract concepts into action helped make them more concrete."

Heise plans to incorporate games into his ministry. "They are good for more than just ice breakers," he says. "When you put four or five people on a team and give them a challenge, they are going to bond. That bond builds up the church and encourages trust between the believers."

## Youth-driven Bible studies

After teens have connected with each other, it's time to connect them to God's Word. Jon Enter, pastor at Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla., and youth coordinator for the South Atlantic District, says when it's time for devotion or a Bible study, it can be a struggle to get teens engaged in the conversation. That's why he uses a youth-driven format. "We're getting the kids in a comfortable environment where they can simply talk about their faith and about real-life scenarios that they're going to encounter as Christians in the modern world," he says.

Instead of worksheets filled with questions, Enter uses YouTube videos and open-ended questions to get youth talking. "It's not me teaching them in a formal environment," he says. "It's them driving the conversations. I am on the side, helping steer the discussion into Bible passages that teach the truth we are discovering." If tangents come up and the teens get excited about a particular topic Enter will make that the focus of an upcoming Bible study. "The goal is to get them talking and have them talk from the heart," he says.

Jade Wiltsie, one of the youth members at Hope, says she loves that about the youth group. "The way Pastor does it, we can all just hang out and talk. There's not a specific set thing we have to do," she says. "We just show up and talk about the message and we play a few games and things like that." She says one of her friends is very shy, "but when we're in youth group he really opens up. Youth group does that for us—it lets us be ourselves in a Christian atmosphere."

The Bible studies at Hope include teen-focused topics like bullying, college preparation, or helicopter parenting. Wiltsie said one of the recent Bible studies on body image made an impact on her. "Pastor wanted us to share if we'd change anything about ourselves," she says. "I am very short, and I get made fun of sometimes about it. So I spoke up about it; then a few other kids did too. It's amazing. I feel like I can open up and talk to them."

During the course of the discussion, the teens are encouraged to answer one another's questions so they can get experience talking to other teens about different issues. "I just feel more confident about my faith and how to explain it, so I can talk about it with other people who aren't the same denomination as me," says Wiltsie.

Jessica Thierfelder, another member at Hope, agrees. "Youth group helped my faith grow stronger and [helped me] not be scared to show it and tell other people," she says. She attributes that, in part, to the strong bond she formed with the other members. "The thing I appreciate most about youth group is having friends that believe in the same thing as me," she says. "I grew up in West Palm Beach, and there are no WELS schools close by. All of our youth go to public school, so it is hard to have friends that believe in the same thing as you. But youth group is where we do have those friends; that's a great feeling."

Enter says he hopes that as youth members connect and share their experiences with each other, they will feel more confident witnessing to others. "Many youth members have learned Bible passages, but they might not know how to share them or use them," he says. "I want to equip youth members, so when we tell them, 'Live your faith! Go tell about the love of Jesus! Pour it out into the world!', they'll know how to do it."

Author: Alicia A. Neumann      *Alicia Neumann is a member at Christ, Zumbrota, Minnesota.*

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