
THE MESSENGER

September 2020

The newsletter of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church



Find Christian Community on Campus

Connect with fellow believers during your college journey. For 100 years, WELS Campus Ministry, a ministry of WELS Home Missions, has provided the resources college students need to find spiritual encouragement and community as they navigate the challenges of young adulthood. The WELS Campus Ministry Committee financially supports about 30 campus ministries and assists hundreds of other congregations. If you are in college, sign up for WELS Campus Ministry at wels.net/campus-ministry.

In this Messenger:

- 1) Campus Ministry
- 2) Pastor's Devotion
- 3) Calendar
- 4) COVID-19 Updates
- 4) Growing Together in Christ
- 4) *Meditations*
- 4) Men's Bible Study
- 4) Birthdays
- 4) Camp Phillip Retreats
 - Family
 - Women
 - Teen
- 5-6) Article:
Transforming Youth Ministry



715-536-3313
www.christmerrill.com
www.facebook.com/christmerrill
1204 N. Sales Street | Merrill, WI 54452



Does God Help Those Who Help Themselves?

One of my friends from my pastoral class visited the parents of one of his confirmation children. The mother was very faithful to God; the father was not at all. The father said to my friend, "Pastor, I know about the Bible except two verses: One, hell hath no fury like a woman's scorn; and two, God helps those how help themselves." My friend had to tell this father that neither of these two statements came from the Bible.

I am not going to talk about the first statement, but I will talk about the second one. For whatever reason people begin to think that certain statements come from the Bible. Statements such as: "This too shall pass," "Forgive and forget," and "What would Jesus do?" Nowhere in the Bible will you find statements written in this way; the same applies to the statement, "God helps those who help themselves." But although these statements are not written as such in the Bible, does that mean that these statements are wrong or unbiblical? My plan, Lord-willing, is to focus on these statements that people can use and to clarify what can be wrong about these statements but also how they can be properly understood. This month we focus on the phrase "God helps those who help themselves."

What is wrong about this statement? Two things I will point out. One, **God helps those who don't help themselves.** Jesus once said, "[God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Those who don't believe in God, those who oppose him, those who persecute his Church, and even those who don't help themselves but live their lives selfishly, God helps them and provides for them.

Second, **the statement that God helps those who help themselves can give the impression that God will only help us if we do something or that God rewards us for doing something and therefore we will have no problems. That is not true.** Jesus told us that if we follow him, we will have hardships. Scripture tells us that we deserve nothing from God. Therefore, the statement that God helps those who help themselves can be misleading.

So, **how could this phrase be properly understood?** Once again, I will point out two things. One, **God wants us to help ourselves.** God doesn't want us sitting around doing nothing if we are able to do things. Scripture does say, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." It is wrong for us to simply think that God will do everything for us and therefore we should do nothing. God, from the very beginning of creation, has told us to work and help ourselves if we are able.

Second, although God doesn't help us simply because we help ourselves, **God does promise that he will help us.** So often we hear of those whom God called in Scripture who were told that God would help them and protect them. But as we serve God, sometimes it can feel like we are failures. But Scripture tells us, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." The Lord will help us as we serve him. Our work is never in vain. **He promises to bless what we do.**

Much more could be said about this statement that God helps those who help themselves, but hopefully these words clarify the statement for you. Help yourselves, help others, and serve God, not because you desire any blessing from him but because he is blessing you.

- Pastor Neal Behm



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 6:30 Worship (Holy Communion)	4 8:15 pm Fall Family Camp @ Camp Phillip	5 Fall Family Camp @ Camp Phillip
6 9:00 Worship (Holy Communion) Fall Family Camp @ Camp Phillip	7	8 6:30 Council Meeting	9	10	11	12 9:00 Men's Bible Study
13 9:00 Worship	14	15	16 6:30 Worship Aids Meeting	17	18	19
20 9:00 Worship (Holy Communion)	21 6:00 Council Budget Meeting	22	23	24	25	26
27 9:00 Worship	28	29	30			



EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS THIS FALL: A special education flyer will be published in September with information about the Sunday and Wednesday Adult Bible Studies, Sunday School, Teen Bible Study, and Catechism.

COVID-19 RELATED UPDATES:

Visit www.christmerrill.com/covid19 for the most up-to-date information.

GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A

new year of congregational Bible study intended for individual, family, or small groups is starting. To keep receiving these or to join, please sign-up on the narthex sign-up bulletin board, at ChristMerrill.com/email or call 715-921-5132 **by September 27.**

2021 MEDITATIONS sign-up:

Meditations is an inspiring, personal devotional booklet offering daily Scripture-based, soul-searching studies of God's Word. Each meditation is clearly written and easy to understand, with a special Scripture reading, devotion, and prayer for each day. *Meditations* provides scriptural guidance and encouragement for daily living. If you would like to get a copy of this periodical, please sign-up on the narthex bulletin board or call 715-921-5132 **by September 27.**

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY: The Men's Bible Study continues **online or at church Saturday, September 12 at 9:00 am.** In advance of the study, it is recommended to read the book of *Zechariah*.

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 address below.

<https://meet.google.com/bhu-zaqy-igr>

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Jaycie Stockowitz | 14 Danielle Boehm |
| 6 Billie Jo Revie | 18 Losha Heisinger |
| 7 Rachel Kleinschmidt | 23 Ann Duerr |
| 10 Don Pagels | 29 Tom Stockowitz |
| 11 Andy Schmidt | |

If you prefer your name to be printed in a different way than above in the future, put a note in the Messenger mailbox.

CAMP PHILLIP RETREATS:

FALL FAMILY CAMP: Friday, September 4 (8:15 pm) – Sunday, September 6 (8:30 pm). This camp provides the right ingredients to make a family vacation great: faith-building Bible studies, unforgettable games and activities and a relaxing outdoor atmosphere. Stay in cabins or camp in our campground. Description: www.campphillip.com/familycamp or 920-787-3202. Christ Lutheran is a corporation congregational member which offers our church's members a reduced rate.

WOMEN'S RETREAT: Friday, October 9 (7 pm) – Sunday, October 11 (noon). Adult women of any age can "get away" on this special weekend planned just for them. Saturday afternoon options include high ropes course, low ropes course, woodworking, cake decorating, basket-making or antique shopping in Wautoma. The retreat includes relevant Bible studies, praise time, and campfires. For more information visit campphillip.com/womensretreat or call 920-787-3202. Christ Lutheran is a corporation congregational member which offers our church's members a reduced rate.

TEEN RETREAT: Friday, October 23 (7 pm) – Sunday, October 25 (noon). A great experience for teens who register on their own or come as part of a group. There will be crazy games, praise and worship campfires, teen-focused Bible studies and great food, and a fantastic experience for the teens. Get more information at <https://www.campphillip.com/teenretreats> or 920-787-3202. You can get a reduced rate as Christ Lutheran is a corporation congregational member.

Please submit items for next month's Messenger by the 20th of this month to 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 share the importance of equipping teens to serve in their local congregations and giving them opportunities to live their faith.



Bill Monday, associate pastor at St. Peter, Freedom, Wis., has been seeing a trend throughout his ministry: After youth members return from college, they aren't getting involved in their congregation. "In high school, teens have youth group—but they have never really connected to the adult life of church," he says. "Then when they come back after college, they aren't comfortable connecting with the other adults, whether it's through Bible study or serving on a committee. That's foreign to them; they haven't had that experience."

Monday says this is because the youth and adult experiences are very separate in many congregations. He likens it to the "kids' table" at holiday celebrations. "You go to Grandma's house for the holiday dinner and you see the beautiful table with the cloth napkins, the china, and the turkey. But that's not for the kids. The kids sit at a card table in the corner with plastic silverware and folding chairs."

Preparing them for service

He continues, "So how do we take those two different tables and learn to eat the feast of God's grace together, as soon as possible?"

One solution for bridging that gap and assimilating young adults into the adult life of the congregation is a "confirmation curriculum" that Monday recently developed. "It's a seven-year plan to introduce youth to the adult leaders of the church," he says. "Throughout those years, they begin to get to know the adult members and connect with working committees, so they can start using their gifts as soon as they're confirmed."

Equipping them to live their faith

Another way to equip youth and keep them engaged in the church is to help them learn by doing. "It's all about giving kids opportunities to live their faith and challenging them to have conversations," says Jon Enter, pastor at Hope, West Palm Beach, Fla., and youth coordinator for the South Atlantic District. "We want to get them in the 'simulator of life'—we want to put them in a safe environment and give them unique experiences to express their faith."

Enter says he uses three different kinds of experiences for his youth group: themed lock-ins, Christian camps, and mission trips. "For themed lock-ins, we take a tough spiritual topic or social issue and turn it into a faith experience," he says. Whether it's taking teens to watch the filming of the local news then having a Bible study or having teens volunteer at a local food pantry and then discussing how Jesus ministered to those less fortunate, "the Bible study hits home a lot more when they've had that shared experience together," says Enter.

Christian camps also provide opportunities for teens to grow in their faith. "The youth are away from their parents, and they feel very grown up," says Enter. "This leads to amazing opportunities for faith talks that they'd never get in their regular environments. I've really seen a magnificent difference in kids who have gone to camps."

And finally, there are the mission trips. “Their primary focus is serving others,” says Enter. “You do so much for other people, but you get exponentially more in return.”

Take Marisa Capobianco, Hayley Binder, and Tricia Mahnke, for example. All have participated in mission trips through Kingdom Workers. Although they are from different congregations and participated in different mission trips in different parts of the United States, they all agree: Their experiences were life-changing.

Capobianco, a member at Mount Zion, Kenosha, Wis., has participated in two different mission trips: one in New Orleans, La., and the other in Peoria, Ariz. “Serving others in the capacity of mission trips is very different than I thought it would be,” she says. “I was excited about serving people before each of the trips, but every time I came home, it always struck me that the people that I met on the trips served and taught me more than I could ever give them. Serving others is a wonderful opportunity that we have, not only to help with people’s physical needs but also to be God’s instruments in leading them toward Jesus—and that is the most powerful gift of all.”

Binder, a member at Divine Peace, Garland, Tex., has also served on two trips: helping with vacation Bible school in New Orleans, La., and a camp in Sault Sainte Marie, Mich. “Serving others in this way was such a blessing to me!” she says. “They were easily some of the best experiences I have ever had. Answering all the questions that the kids had about Jesus and seeing their faces when I answered made me smile! It was also eye-opening because we got to hear all these great stories from the different members about the amazing things that God is doing in their lives, and how they’re using these blessings to serve the Lord. It really made me want to dedicate all my time and talents to God.”

Mahnke, a member at St. John, Appleton, Wis., says mission trips are a great way not only to serve but also to gain a new perspective and outlook on life. “I helped with a soccer vacation Bible school in Arlington, Texas,” she says. “Before I arrived, I anticipated setting up equipment, leading soccer drills, taking down equipment, reading Bible stories, and offering assistance anywhere I could. What I didn’t expect was the deep strengthening of my own confidence in Christ. I’m prepared to share my faith with whomever God puts in my path.”

Enter says whether a congregation decides to organize a mission trip across the state or canvass in their local community, the most important thing is to just get teens serving. “We want to get kids in ‘life experience’ mode,” he says. “It’s like any new job you’ve ever started. When someone tells you how to do something, you really don’t know how to do it yet. But when you actually start doing it yourself, that’s when you get good at it. You can put kids in the classroom setting and tell them what faith is, but these experiences help them live it. And when you serve others, you realize that we are all different but at the core we are all the same, and we all need Jesus.”

This is the third article in a four-part series on the importance of youth ministry. Next month’s article will focus on partnering with parents and marriage-building ministries.

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

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