

Immanuel's Newsletter

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Pastor Michael P. Sullivan
388-2592; 255-8156 (Cell); pastor.sullivan@me.com

December 2016



Christmas Worship Schedule

**Children's Service (24th)
4:00pm**

**Christmas Eve Service (24th)
6:30pm**

**Christmas Day (25th)
9:00am**

**Monday, December 26th
6:30pm**

**New Year's Eve (31st)
6:30pm w/Holy Communion**

**Sunday, January 1st
9:00am**

**Monday, January 2nd
6:30pm**

*****Please Note the Service Time Changes for Christmas Eve
Worship**

What Child is This?

It is the story of our humanity. It has happened at least 7 billion times in our generation and billions of times more in history past, and yet each time it is a small miracle to those involved.

It is the story of birth. A mother holds her newborn. He is so small and weak. The newborn does not even have full control of his body; his muscles are not fully developed. His parents need to nourish, strengthen, clothe, and protect it.

As the mother looks at her child, she loves him. So many discoveries in the years to come. What will this child be like? Who will this child become? It is the story of our human race – the story of our birth.

Can you remember the birth of your children? Can you recall holding your infant son or daughter in your hands for the first time – so fragile that you were afraid they might break? Can you recall the wonderment you had for your children – pondering who they would become?

Such were the feelings of Mary and Joseph as they held baby Jesus, with one big exception: God revealed to them who this child was. They knew that his birth could truly be called a miracle of all miracles – not merely because Mary was a virgin, but because they knew that Mary's baby was their almighty God and merciful Savior.

Think about how majestic and powerful God's creation is. Think about the hundreds of billions of stars and galaxies that fill our unfillable universe – and how much power went into it all! Think about the knowledge it takes to sustain it.

And now think about the baby in Mary's arms. What a paradox! The Creator of all is himself born. The all-powerful one is not able to control his own body. The Provider of all needs himself to be nursed. The Helper of all is himself helpless. This was the Jesus that Mary held in her arms.

Can you picture both the joy and fear Mary and Joseph must have had? I mean it's scary enough holding your first child in your arms – hoping you don't break it - but Mary and Joseph did not simply hold their child. They held their Savior. They held their God!

Let us change the picture from Mary and Joseph holding baby Jesus, to God the Father lifting up a child and holding it in his arms. Can you picture it: God the Father lifting up a child, holding it, loving it - being so happy with that child that he laughs with it? Can you imagine how wonderful and loving that scene is? Now look a little closer at the face on the child in your imagination. Who is that child? That child is you!

Christ was born on this earth so that we could be born of God. Think again of the paradox: the Son of God became a son of man so that sons of men might become sons of God! And you are a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus! Through Holy Baptism you have entered into a special, loving relationship with the Father. He has washed all your sins away and crucified them with Christ. God loves you because of this. He loves you so much that he promises to work in all things for your eternal benefit. You are incredibly special to him.

And don't think that these are just my thoughts; these are God's promises in Scripture. He calls all those who look to his Son in repentance and faith his saints: his adopted children – holy and precious in his sight! The LORD loves you so much that He sent His one and only Son to save you through his perfect life, innocent death and glorious resurrection.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

This statement summarizes everything Christmas is about. When we see Jesus, we see God in all his glory – and what a unique glory it is! It's the glory of being born as a weak, human baby. It's the glory of being severely

tempted and tried – just like we are - but remaining sinless. It's the glory of being rejected and crucified by the very people he loved and came to save. It's the glory of rising victorious from the grave to open heaven to all who receive him through repentance and faith. This is God's great way of saying: I love you.

Billions of human births have happened throughout time. What makes Jesus' so unique and special? The human eye sees a mother caressing her precious, defenseless baby. The eyes of faith, however, see this baby holding, caring for and actively redeeming both its mother and the entire human race. This is the miracle of Christmas.

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. . . . ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:1-5, 12-14 NIV84)

Membership Changes

Affirmation of Faith: Peter Kavicky

Adult Confirmation: Anne Kavicky

New Sunday Morning Bible Class “My Brother’s Keeper” is a Bible Study that examines how to regain church members who are straying from God, Worship and His Word. Because every Christian is tempted to stray from God, this Bible Study is intended to awaken concern for those who are wandering away from Jesus, as well as give us practical insights as to how we can compassionately call the straying back to Christ. The new class will start at **8am (ish) on Sunday, January 8.**

New Tuesday Morning Bible Class Starting **Tuesday, January 10 at 9 am** we will be studying Paul’s letter to the Galatians – a Biblical book that both stresses the freedom we have through faith in Christ Jesus and how God wants us to use that freedom. Luther intimated that this little New Testament Epistle was his most beloved book of the Bible. Come and see why.

New Bible Information Class This class is both those who are interested in joining Immanuel or would simply like to review the Bible’s main teachings. The course we will use is called “Wonders of God” and is loosely based on Luther’s Small Catechism. Even if you are a life-long member at Immanuel, I highly encourage you to consider joining this class so you can: 1) Be strengthened in your faith by reviewing what you learned in confirmation class. 2) Meet, befriend and encourage people who are considering membership at Immanuel. **Our first class will meet on Sunday January 8th after Church – at which meeting we will determine the best times for future classes.** If you can’t make this first class but would still like to join, please call me and let me know. The Church number is (920) 388 2592. My cellphone is (920) 255 8156.

President’s Letter

It’s hard to believe another year has gone by, how fast they seem to pass. This year is my last of six years as your President. Naturally, as the outgoing president, I wish I had done more. But I want to thank all those who supported me individually and those who served or are serving on boards and committees. It was a blessing to serve and I look forward to my first term as Head Elder, a position I held once before. I encourage everyone to volunteer to serve on a board or committee. Yes, it does take time and effort, but I think you will feel great satisfaction in having served, as I do. Thanks to all, and let’s recommit ourselves and work under the new leadership of Dan Fager, our president elect, to advance our own spiritual maturity, advance Christian education for all children, where the peer pressure is not to conform to worldly ideas and beliefs but to believe and do things

according to the Lord's will, renew our efforts in recalling the straying and reaching out to the lost with the Gospel.

We have a challenge ahead of us with repairs to our large stained glass windows. I encourage everyone to contribute generously to that cause as we did for the organ.

Below is an excerpt from the 23 November 2016 "Time of Grace" devotion.

Leaders Take Care of God's House

"You can tell a lot about a congregation by the appearance of its property. Mown grass, trimmed shrubbery, immaculate rest rooms, and an adequate sound system send a message that the people who claim the place take pride in it and are serious about their mission of sharing the gospel. It also means that they love the God they worship and want his house to be fit for a King."

So this year when we start a fundraising drive to prevent our beautiful stained glass windows from being permanently damaged by getting badly needed repairs done before it's too late, please help in any way you can. Thanks.

You've heard me ask this before, but please give the Boards and Committees your support. Perhaps you cannot serve as a member, but you can do a tremendous service by giving your support in other ways. How can you do this? You can do it by attending the voters' meetings and responding to their queries. Is it asking too much, only four times per year? Your attendance, your commitment of only an hour or so after a Sunday service can have a huge effect. Nothing can be more demoralizing than to work hard to produce something and have no one show any interest in even hearing what you've been up to. Please don't do this to your elected representatives. It's only four times per year! Please come to the meetings. Thank you, and I am sure all the Board members will thank you too.

I wish everyone the most wonderful Christmas, filled with joy in celebrating the birth of our Savior. It's my favorite time of year, the church services, the music, the family get-togethers, the trees, the lights and decorations. The world wants to focus only on the latter things, but we know we do them because we are focused on the first thing, Christ's birth.

Merry Christmas to all,

Glenn M. Brunner

Elders

December is here, official winter will begin soon, and the busy holiday season is here. All that sometimes makes us sad, but did you remember we have started a new year already? Yes, the church year starts with Advent, and the glad reminder of our Savior's coming and what He has done for us. This should help brighten our day!

Pastor has been conducting the pre-service Bible class in church, and this gives us all a great opportunity to study a wonderful lesson and even ask questions, can't do that during the sermon! Come to church early and take advantage of these lessons. Pastor is open to suggestions on topics, too.

We are contacting members to encourage them to attend church regularly. Anyone interested in helping with this important effort can contact an Elder. With the holidays coming up it may be easier to invite people to our many opportunities to worship. And be sure to check the schedule for upcoming events.

A special fellowship event is coming up. A bus to the MLHS Christmas concert is coming up, we have two young members participating in the MLHS concert in Manitowoc, December 22. Sign up in back of church or call Dan Fager 388-2841. If you have an idea for our congregation for a fellowship event, please share it with the Board. A recent suggestion is a Super Bowl Party in the gym? Interested?

Planned Giving Committee has been active in posting info in the newsletters and was responsible for the recent service at church by Pastor Kliest. He gave us an update as to the information and assistance that Synod can offer for planning our financial future and planned giving wishes.

The time and talent survey is still ongoing. Please fill out the forms and return. This is a great way to gather information and ideas from our members so we can direct resources of time and talent to needs.

Continue to read or use the many ways we share our message, the quarterly newsletter, Pastor's daily devotion, the facebook posts, our Forward in Christ, Meditations, etc. Pass these on to others or "leave" them somewhere for others to read- the neighbors, a doctor office, some public place, be creative.

Finally, as we close our year, we will soon be electing many new people to leadership and committee positions at the annual meeting in January. Please, try to attend this important event to help conduct the business of our congregation. All members should attend the meeting, it is your church.

God's blessings to all of us in this Holiday Season.

Dan Fager, Scott Kieckbusch, Bob Heiter

Property

Property Board Goal; To keep Immanuel Lutheran facilities in good repair by careful planning, thoughtful decision making, and the supervision of such activities as they take place.

With the Thanksgiving holiday past us and deer hunting drawn to a close. Christmas is on the way. It's hard to believe with the balmy weather we are having outdoors. Maybe it will be easy on the heating bills, no snow shoveling, in all, making it a comfortable winter season. Let's hope! *(I guess that's what Greg thought when he wrote this. Doesn't seem to be the case as I get the newsletter ready for print).*

I was driving past the church and the nativity scene has been placed with care by Paul Nimmer. Now, that confirms Christmas is on the way. The nativity is so easy to view with that huge overgrown maple tree now gone. One can see the church better too. Other church decorating projects will be in the works very soon.

Your property board is hard at work preparing for the 2017 year. Our only priority project for next year will be the restoration of our stained glass windows. This is a very important and we're going to get this work done!

On behalf of your hard working property board, stay safe over the holidays. We pray to the good LORD that we have a lot of JOY during the Christmas season. You're hard working Property Board

Steve Ihlenfeldt, Bucky Ihlenfeldt, Fred Steffen, Jason Karnopp, Jeff Christian, and Greg Hlinak

Submitted by Greg Hlinak

Youth Christian Education

As 2016 comes to a close, we reflect back at our accomplishments during the year:

- After a two year absence of a 5th and 6th grade Sunday School teacher, Austin Richard volunteered to teach the 5th grade Sunday School class.
- A letter and survey were sent out to all the families of school-aged children to help give us feedback on what programs and activities could be put in place to facilitate our youth on maintaining their relationship and involvement with the Church.
- The WELS International Youth Rally 2016 took place in late June and early July. Our congregation sent two leaders and 11 youth to Colorado to take place in the Bi-annual event.
- The summer VBS program took place August 8th – 12th. The program theme was “Circle J Ranch”.
- The Youth Rally in Colorado introduced us to a training program called “Transformed”. The materials were ordered and will be looked at as a possible teaching tool for YPS.
- David Chaudoir resigned as YPS coordinator and Jill Belter will replace him in that capacity.
- Christmas trees will be put up in Church by the YCE Board.
- Christmas bags for the children will be assembled and distributed on Christmas Eve.
- Our goals for 2016 were to expand and nurture Christian education and encourage participation of young people in our ministries and services. These were accomplished through three approaches: 1) Continue to promote the YPS program 2) Solidify the VBS Program and 3) Attempt to increase Christian School Enrollment.
- Our goals for 2017 will remain essentially the same with perhaps a few tweaks as to how we will accomplish them.

The YCE Board consists of Brian Dax, David Chaudoir, Chris Richard and Jason Belter. If anyone has any questions, ideas or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact any of the board members. The Board members wish each and every one of you a Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year.

Sincerely,
Brian D. Dax, Chairman



Little Lambs playgroup continues to serve the community three times a month.

On the **first Tuesday** of the month we play in the playroom, on the **third Tuesday** we have a themed session. And our last playgroup session takes place in the Family Life Center on the **fourth Tuesday**. At each session, we have a story and songs to teach the little ones (and their parents) a little bit about God's love. I have had an opportunity to reach quite a few families in the community with God's love and although they haven't become members of Immanuel, I pray that the truths they hear at Little Lambs will work faith in their hearts. Please check out Little Lambs - Kewaunee Wisconsin on Facebook. Even if you don't have preschool age children, consider liking the Little Lambs page and sharing the events on your own timeline. Perhaps there is someone in your life who needs Little Lambs.

Evangelism

The new church year is upon us and Christmas, the celebration of God's Gift to us, is right around the corner. In order to spread the news of the birth of our Savior, the Evangelism Board is once again sponsoring a Christmas radio message which will be broadcast on WBDK 96.7 FM. Christmas cards will also be sent out again to residents in the Kewaunee area in a mass mailing.

In other matters we are placing a half-page advertisement in the Kewaunee Chamber of Commerce Directory. The ad states that Immanuel is "A Friendly Place for You and Your Family". The board would like to express our thanks to, Kari Dorner, for using her God-given talents in creating the final product that will be in the directory.

The members of the Evangelism Board wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Blessed New Year!

A Friendly Place for You and Your Family



*Peace with Jesus
Purpose for Life
Hope for the Future*

Immanuel Lutheran Church
1000 Wisconsin Ave.
Kewaunee, WI 54216
920-388-2592
www.immanuel.lutheran.kewaunee.org

Join Us For Worship
Sunday 9:00 am
Monday 6:30 pm

Treasurer's Report

Income Budgeted for 2016 through November: \$223,666.87
Actual Income for 2016 through November: \$227,612.60

Expenses Budgeted for 2016 through November: \$200,862.00
Actual Expenses through November 2016: \$182,710.66

Planned Giving Committee

The Greatest Gift

Once again we come to the beginning of the church year—a time of great anticipation, a time of simultaneous repentance and rejoicing, a time of preparing for the birth of the King Jesus, and a time to proclaim his coming again.

What a glorious gift the Lord Jesus is to us! The Apostle Paul called our Savior God's "indefinable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15), and that he is. Who can comprehend the depth of love the Father has for us to give up his only begotten Son? Who can fathom the love of that Son who willingly laid down his life for us (John 10:15) in order that we might pass from death into life eternal with him?

If eternity in heaven were all God gave us, it would be more than we deserve, but, besides heaven, he gives us good gifts on earth. In his explanation to the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Martin Luther lists some of those great gifts: "food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like." As Luther urges, we would do well to realize that these are God's gifts and to "receive [them] with thanksgiving."

Of course, we cannot repay God. We have nothing to give him that he did not first give us. David, in Psalm 51 comes before God with deep repentance and then expresses complete dependence on his Lord. "O Lord, open my lips," he pleads in verse 15, "and my mouth will declare your praise." And our Savior is quick to respond to our prayer, enabling us to glorify and praise him just as the shepherds did (Luke 2:20) and inspiring us to proclaim with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).

Planned Giving Table

The Planned Giving Committee posts a **Planned Giving Table** on the bulletin board in the church narthex. The table was developed to let the congregation know about projects and items that need funding. The table is not just a "wish list", but it also includes desperately needed projects and items that our yearly church budget might not cover. Anything on the table listed in **BOLD** is high priority. ***One of the top priorities for this next year will be the preservation of our beautiful stained glass windows. Approximately \$85,000 will be needed to preserve them for years to come.***

If you wish to contribute something on the Planned Giving Table, simply put your contribution in an envelope and write on it the project or item it is to go toward. Place the envelope in the alms box or give it Julie Siegmund.

For more information on the Planned Giving Table or planned giving in general, please contact any member of the Planned Giving Committee.

Lou Richard
Charlie Novak
Larry Schnieder
David Siegmund

Merry Christmas and a Happy and Blessed New Year!

Immanuel Women's Ministry

Immanuel women have a wonderful opportunity coming up to gather together around God's word and enjoy each other's company.

A Brand **New Bible Study Only For Women**. We will be meeting on the second Saturday of the month at 8:00am. This will be a chance to get fueled up on coffee (or tea or water) and on God's word before the craziness of the weekend pulls us in many different directions. Starting on **January 14th**, plan on setting aside that hour once a month for *Coffee with Christ*.

If you have any questions, please call Laura Sullivan at 388-6009.

2017 Men of His Word Conference Have you seen the news lately? It's crazy out there. The world attacks our Christian values from every direction on a daily basis. To counter these attacks, the MOHW Conference uses God's Word to empower and equip men to carry out their God-given mission in their homes, churches, communities and the world with the theme, "**BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.**"

Whether you attend for the keynote speaker (*Pastor Mike Novotny from The Core in Appleton*), the relevant, thought-provoking sessions (*20 to choose from*) or the worship experience with 600 other men (with *Koine', the worship band*), God's Word will speak to you.

The 8th annual MOHW Conference will be held at the Oshkosh Best Western Premier Waterfront Convention Center on Saturday, February 11, 2017. Additional details and online registration are available at www.menofhisword.org for the first 650 men (\$40 by January 29th; \$50 from January 30th - February 5th). Please join us for a day in God's Word that you will not soon forget!

Are You Unable To Come To Worship? Please call, email or write Pastor Sullivan so he can include you in his shut-in visits.

2017 Offering Envelopes Offering envelopes should be in the mail shortly. Excluded from the mailing are those on the Automatic Transfer program called Simply Giving. We will still keep a supply of **WHITE** envelopes in the Narthex as a courtesy to our members. Just remember to put your name or envelope number on it for tracking purposes. We also have **PINK** envelopes in the Narthex which are used for special designations – Missions, Family Life Center, Student Aid, Debt Reduction, Stained Glass Window Fund, etc.

And remember, that through our Automatic Transfer Program your offering can be transferred to the church account at various times and frequencies each month and doesn't cost you anything and you can sign up anytime by contacting Julie at 920-304-0228 or e-mail her at juliesiegmund@outlook.com.

New Exercise Class At Immanuel The Strong Bones exercise program (Strength Training Class for ALL ages, Men & Women) will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays, January 9th - March 1st from 9:00-10:00AM at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Family Life Center, Kewaunee. Cost is \$12. Enroll by calling Renee Koenig at the UW Extension Office at 388-7137 by December 30th.

MLHS News & Notes

Year-End Gift Matching – Don't Wait! 2016 is fast disappearing, and with it will be the chance to use your **2016 Thrivent Choice** and/or **Employer matching dollars** for MLHS or your congregations. For THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS which are available to Thrivent Members. Visit www.Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or call directly at (800) 847-4836. For EMPLOYER GIFT MATCHING visit www.matchinggifts.com/mlhslancers. Any questions? Please contact Scott or Connie in the MLHS Development Office (920-682-0215).

Manitowoc Lutheran High School Delegate Report

1. Finance Summary

- a. MLHS is very pleased to inform our parents and Federation congregations that it has completed its independent audit of all financial activity for the 2015-16 school year. The audit, conducted in accordance's with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) by Hawkins, Ash CPAs has been reviewed and approved by MLHS' Finance Committee, Board of Control and Federation Delegates.
 - b. This year we at Immanuel, Kewaunee are committing to a contribution of \$14,000 for the 2016-17 school year. This will be the first increase since 2014-15 school year.
2. MLHS Showcase
- a. The Fall Showcase, a family-festival event connected with the Fall Concert, was held 10/23/16. Many congregations and families created some wonderful theme baskets or prepared pies & desserts for this event. Many families with younger children attended during the day, and the event was capped off with the musical talents of our high school students' Fall Concert. Over \$4,500 was raised.
 - b. The Spring Showcase, a cheese/dessert/wine tasting event at City Limits Banquet Hall, will be held 3/25/17. Many people are involved in organizing the vendors and auction items; your help would be greatly appreciated! Please contact Susie Menk at susiemenk@gmail.com as soon as possible to lend your time & talent if interested.
 - c. The theme for this year's events is "Safe in School, Secure in Christ." Proceeds from this year's events will be earmarked for security improvements to our building (cameras, locks, fire doors, etc) for implementation during the summer of 2017.
3. Teacher Retirements
- a. At the conclusion of the 2016-17 school year three teachers will be leaving MLHS. Jim Carolfi and Rev. Beck Goldbeck have announced their retirement, and Dave Jirikowic will be stepping down to pursue other opportunities. We thank and praise God for his blessings through these faithful servants! The Federation has issued a call to Mr. Nathan Hochmuth (currently serving at Shoreland Lutheran High School) to fill Mr. Carolfi's upper level math teaching duties. Please keep all these men in your prayers.
4. Properties
- a. A Site Plan Committee has begun work reviewing and updating MLHS' master site plan. The current plan is 16 years old. The committee is targeting a completed report and recommendation to the MLHS Board and Federation Delegates in February 2017.
 - b. Heating controls have been replaced throughout the building to provide more consistent and efficient heat, thereby reducing utility bills. The 2015 SCRIP program provided much of the funding for this multi-year project.
5. L-CREW (Lancer Christians Ready Equipped \$ Willing)
- a. MLHS is organizing a new volunteer group for retirees and others. There are several areas in our school and school grounds that could use assistance, attention, or just a tender touch.
6. Upcoming Events
- a. MLHS Christmas Concert: Thursday, December 23, 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. performances. This is a beautiful venue and no tickets are required. FREE ADMISSION, so it's a great opportunity to bring family/friends/neighbors/co-workers to hear these praises.
 - b. I attended this concert in past years. You really should go; it is beautiful and very moving.
7. MLHS School Cash Rebate Incentive Program (SCRIP)
- a. Income generated from the use of MLHS SCRIP provides money to support tuition assistance for families with children attending MLHS as well as other selected projects.
 - b. 50% of the proceeds are normally designated to go to the MLHS tuition assistance account (necessary to maintain the program as a tax exempt program).
 - c. 50% can be designated by name to a particular family/student. We have two students attending MLHS: Dana Richard and Dylan Belter. Designating them as you chosen recipients helps their families with tuition assistance.
 - d. You can open your own account or purchase SCRIP under the Immanuel, Kewaunee account. When using our congregation's account please ensure you specify Kewaunee since there is more than one congregation named Immanuel.

WELS NEWS

Where do you find happiness

2016/12/12/ in FIC Features, Forward in Christ

The world tells us the key to happiness is money, but only God can make us truly happy.

Devon Perkins

Yes, I went Black Friday shopping as I'm sure many of you did as well. And, yes, I probably spent more money than I should have. But hey, I got plenty of great deals and saved lots of money! That makes it well spent, right? Not exactly.

When I got home, I was kicking myself for missing some deals. I was more concerned about what I had missed out on buying. But that's crazy, right?

I was left feeling empty inside as I looked at my shiny new possessions. And it's for the same reason that millionaires aren't content and desire to become billionaires. The world tells us day and night that the key to happiness is money and material possessions. The problem is that almost everyone is fooled. Living in America, we're likely in the top percent of richest people in the world. The real question is why don't we feel like we're in the top percent? Why do we always want more, more, more?

It's because money cannot buy happiness. Material possessions cannot give us happiness. Nothing in this world can give us true, lasting happiness. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless." We can try and deny it, but that would be foolish. Why else would we always desire more?

If these things, however, don't give us true happiness, what can?

God, of course, is the answer. God never leaves you wanting for more. God never leaves you feeling empty inside. True happiness is lasting happiness, and what other than God and his love in this world can last? Just think for a moment about how amazing it is that God, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, creator of the heavens and the earth, loves you and despite your inherent sinfulness forgives you all of your sins because of Jesus. Knowing this is the only thing that can give you true happiness.

It's okay to want something, but the problem arises when you begin to covet and stop being content with what you have. This is when you begin to fall into the trap of thinking, *If only I could have this or that, I would be happy.* But Matthew 16:26 says, "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

Material wealth doesn't last. None of your physical possession can be taken with you past death. Heaven, however, is forever, so you should focus on that rather than your short time here on earth.

I'm going to close with my confirmation passage, which I think fits perfectly with this message. "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you' " (Hebrews 13:5).

Devon Perkins, a junior at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin, is a member of Holy Cross, Madison, Wisconsin.

Meeting the spiritual needs of members in the military

2016/11/15/ in Together

WELS Military Services Committee, part of the WELS Commission on Special Ministries, held its annual conference in San Antonio, Tex., earlier this month. The attendees visited the Center for the Intrepid in San Antonio to see how wounded servicemen and women are being rehabilitated to live as normal of a life as possible after serious injuries. The visit gave the military contact pastors and committee a small glimpse into some of the obstacles veterans face when they return from duty.

Mike and Diane Tracy know the importance of military contact pastors firsthand. Mike served in the military for 24 years, moving the family around regularly. Retired from active service since 2009, Mike is on the Military Services Committee, and he and his wife organized the San Antonio event.

“Military families have unique situations that other families don’t have,” says Diane. “Our [spouses] are deployed. We aren’t near our families. It’s a different type of stress added to your relationship. For the pastors to be able to understand how they can better fulfill those needs and have the congregation help fulfill those needs, it’s important.” She says having a chaplain in Europe was especially meaningful to her family. “We were stationed in Europe. The European Chaplaincy being over there, it gave us a place for our children to be confirmed, it gave us the chance to be able to worship with other WELS Lutherans on a regular basis. That’s the most important thing a military family can have is spiritual support.”

Diane stresses that military families need solid spiritual support as they face their unique challenges. She says, “The biggest thing that WELS members need to know is if they know someone in the military, they need to make sure the pastor who lives closest to them and serves their base knows who they are and how to contact them. Because if the chaplains don’t know they’re out there, they can’t help them.”

If you or someone you know is in the military, you can sign up for spiritual support at wels.net/refer. Learn more about WELS Military Services at wels.net/military.