

The Perfect Pearl

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45,46).

Have you found the perfect Christmas gift for that special someone yet? If so, what makes it perfect? Is it perfect because it's unique, like handcrafted pottery? Is it perfect because it fits the personality of the individual for whom you bought it, like a plaid shirt for the lumberjack in your family?

What if you find the perfect gift only to discover that it's beyond your budget? Would you sell your car, your house, everything you own to obtain THE perfect gift?

Jesus once told a parable about a pearl-dealer whose goal was to find the perfect pearl. When he found it, he sold all that he owned so he could buy his treasured find.



The perfect pearl represents the message of salvation found in the Bible. This message is perfect because it tells us everything we need to know for this life and the next. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and deserve God's eternal punishment in hell. But the Bible also says that Jesus came to take that punishment—like your next-door neighbor paying for the fire damage that your hastily strung Christmas lights did to her house. Because of Jesus, our sins are paid for and forgiven!

This message is not only perfect; it's one of a kind. There are plenty of places you can look for the answers to life's questions, but the only place you'll find the perfect pearl is in the Bible. We would be glad to share with you the treasure that God has for us in his Word. The Bible appears to be

like any other book, but within there is a precious message that exceeds everything we've known. It's like the person who pries open a dull clamshell and finds a glowing pearl nestled within that's worth more than any other.

A pearl in a clamshell! That's often how God works. He comes to us in unlikely places to give us his love. Could that be illustrated any more beautifully than it is at Christmas? At Christmas, the Son of God, our Savior, was born in a barn! And then this Jesus willingly gave up his life on the cross to pay for our sins and win us a place in heaven. This message is God's priceless, perfect gift for us.

-WELS Evangelism newsletter

Congregational News

Worship Focus in December A parent says, "I want to give my kids a real Christmas." What do you think that parent means? Perhaps they are thinking of a trimming a freshly cut tree or finding the perfect presents or spending the holidays with extended family. Perhaps they are thinking about all those things. "Then it will be a real Christmas!"

Certainly, all those are wonderful things. However, none of them are what makes Christmas real. The sad truth is Christmas is the most beloved holiday of so many, yet so few know what Christmas is really about. If you want a real Christmas, then you need to observe Advent. Advent is Latin for "coming." In the season of Advent, Christians observe the connection between the first time the Son of God came into our world as the Savior and the second time he will come as the Judge. Advent prepares our minds and hearts, so that we might soon celebrate a real Christmas. Our worship in the season of Advent will follow this theme: A Real Christmas...

- Advent 1 ... Requires Remembering Why Christ Came
- Advent 2 ...Is Rooted in Repentance
- Advent 3 ...Results in Great Joy
- Advent 4 ...Will Lift Up the Lowly

Membership Actions At our November Council meeting, Andrew and Jennifer Sternberg, along with Sadie and Jade, were transferred to Morning Star Lutheran Church in Jackson. We wish them God's blessings in their new church home.

Christmas Invitations Our evangelism committee is providing some nice-looking, full-color Christmas invitation cards for you to share with family and friends. It's an invitation to join us for worship this Christmas to be reminded of how Jesus is the best gift ever given. Pick one or two up and don't put it on your refrigerator; rather, give them to someone who doesn't have a church home, hasn't been attending church, or anyone you think might need a reminder of Jesus, the best Christmas gift.

Greeters Needed Please consider signing up to serve as a greeter for a service or two. No special training needed, simply hand out bulletins with a smile and a greeting. Go to www.zionallenton.org and click on the link for "Greeter Signup December – January near the bottom of the page. There are plenty of spots to be filled.

Advent = Preparation Jesus' birth is second in importance only to his resurrection on Easter. It's fitting then, that we spend some quality time preparing for his birth. This is what the season of Advent is for. The word Advent means "coming into," and is a four-week period of preparation before Christmas. So how can you use these weeks of Advent to prepare yourself to celebrate a truly meaningful Christmas? Here are some suggestions...



- Attend our Advent worship service on December 4th. You're invited to gather for a delicious supper at 6 p.m., then stay for worship at 7 p.m.
- Pick up one of the limited copies of the Advent devotion booklet entitled - *Glory in His Grasp* - on the cabinets in the entryway. These 25 Advent devotions will help you meditate on how Christ

"emptied himself . . . being born in the likeness of men" to come into the world to be our Savior.

- Pick one of the many area Advent / Christmas concerts and attend a concert. You'll find dates and times later in this newsletter

Christmas-Related Events After our national day of Thanksgiving, it seems as if everything pivots to all Christmas all the time. Here are some of the important Christmas-related dates to remember here at Zion:

- ✓ Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14, 21 Christmas practice for Sunday School
- ✓ December 1 Christmas Decorating at church
- ✓ December 4 Advent worship (6 p.m. supper and 7 p.m. worship)
- ✓ December 8 Luther Prep Singers at Zion during worship
- ✓ December 22 Sunday School Christmas final practice at 8:30 a.m. in fellowship hall
- ✓ December 24 Pre-service Carol Sing at 5 p.m.
Christmas Service (Sunday School) at 5:30
Candlelight Worship at 10 p.m.
- ✓ December 25 Christmas Day Worship at 9:00 a.m.

Giving Tuesday is December 3rd

As we wend our way through the rest of the year, you may be reviewing what contributions you still wish to make this year – or are planning for next year. Keep these options in mind:



Qualified Charitable Distribution For individuals who are at least 70-1/2 years old, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) allows a distribution that goes directly from your IRA to a qualified charity of your choice. If you are age 73 or older, you can use a QCD to satisfy your required minimum distribution. This strategy is advantageous if your total itemized deductions fall under the standard deductions. If the stock market is higher at the end of the

year, your QCD will probably also need to be higher – why not donate the increase in value to the Endowment Fund or as similar gift.

Utilizing a Donor-Advised Fund A donor-advised fund is a charitable giving vehicle where an individual, family, or corporation makes an irrevocable, tax-deductible contribution of cash, securities, or other property to WELS Foundation and at any time thereafter can recommend grant distributions to WELS ministries.

The donor-advised fund has been popular in recent years with the higher threshold for itemizing on taxes. People set up a donor-advised fund to bunch gifts and itemize deductions in a particular year. This tax-smart strategy can be especially useful to help reduced taxable income in the year of a significant event. Minimum initial gift into the WELS Foundation is \$10,000.

Company-Sponsored Giving Programs Your company may have a Giving Tuesday or other matching gifts program, where they match whatever contributions you make, thereby increasing the total given. Please consider a donation to Zion.

-Endowment Committee

Christmas Concerts

Below is a list of area musical groups and schools which have Christmas concerts coming up. Attending one or more would be a great way to spend an afternoon or evening. Not only will you be treated to some good music, but that music will go a long way to help you prepare well for Christmas. If you have any questions or need directions to any of them, call Pastor Bode for more information. If you look on the church calendar, you'll be reminded that there's an area concert on that particular date if you see a little Christmas tree next to the day of the month 🎄. Enjoy



God's gift of music as you prepare for Christmas!

-12-1	1:00 p.m.	Lutheran Chorale – Salem, MKE
-12-6-7	7:30 p.m.	Wisconsin Lutheran College
-12-8	2:30 p.m.	Wisconsin Lutheran College
-12-8	3 & 7 p.m.	Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary - Mequon
-12-13	7 p.m.	Crown of Life Orchestra - Hubertus
-12-13	7 p.m.	Joyful Witness – St. Paul – North FdL
-12-14	2 p.m.	Joyful Witness – St. Paul – North FdL
-12-14	2 & 7 p.m.	Crown of Life Orchestra – Hubertus
-12-14	6:30 p.m.	Kettle Moraine Lutheran – Jackson
-12-15	3 p.m.	Luther Prep School – Watertown
-12-17	6:30 p.m.	Lutheran Ceili – St. Paul, Howards Grove
-12-18	6:30 p.m.	Lutheran Ceili Orchestra–St. Marcus, MKE
-12-19	7 p.m.	Winnebago Lutheran Academy – FdL
-12-20	1 p.m.	Winnebago Lutheran Academy – FdL
-12-18	6:30 pm.	German Christmas at Salem, MKE
-12-19	10 a.m.	Luther Prep School - Watertown

KML Korner

New Calls Three new teaching positions, along with the vacant Director of Instruction position, were recently approved by the Board of Directors for the 2025-2026 school year. The additional positions are primarily due to overall enrollment growth of 50-75 students. On November 4th, calls were extended for a Director of Instruction, English teacher, Science teacher, and Computer Applications Teacher. God bless our area Lutheran High School with a full staff to meet the increasing enrollment.



Join KML in Helping Families in Need Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School is partnering with Coffeerville Company to raise money for KML's 12 Days of Christmas fundraiser to support families in need. This year we are

raising money for several families who have experienced hardship and loss this past year. Learn more about the families, order coffee, or make a donation at www.kmlhs.org/12days. Deadline to Order Coffee: *December 6, 2024*. The deadline to make a monetary donation is December 31, 2024.

Area Events and Invitations

Living Nativity Parents, want to give your children a taste of what it might have been like that first Christmas night? St. Paul's Lutheran Church in



Howards Grove is hosting their 22nd annual Living Nativity on **December 6-8** (6-9 p.m. on Friday and Saturday; 4-7 p.m. on Sunday), every 20 minutes.

St. Paul's is located at 441 Millersville Avenue in Howards Grove. Afterwards you are invited to join them in the gym for musical entertainment, cookies and hot drinks. Everything is free...come and prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus!

German Christmas How might our great-great grandparents have celebrated Christmas 175 years ago? The WELS Historical Institute and Salem Lutheran Church invite you to "A Landmark German Christmas Concert" to find out! This free concert will take place on **Wednesday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m.** at the historic Salem Landmark Church and WELS Museum on the campus of Salem Lutheran Church and School in Milwaukee. It will feature carols sung in German and the Christmas Gospel read auf Deutsch. The assembly will sing a few favorite stanzas in English as well!

WELS Night with the Bucks Back for 2025, join WELS members from around the Midwest for an evening of fellowship, fun, and basketball at the annual WELS Night at the Bucks on **Thursday, January 2nd**! The first 200 people to purchase through this ticket offer will be able to shoot a free throw on the court following the game! The **deadline for ordering tickets is December 1st**. Learn more at <https://wels.net/event/bucks2025/>

Young Adults Event Join young adults from SE Wisconsin for this year's Awake and Alive Winter Retreat on January 10-11 at the Holiday Inn in Brookfield. If you are in the 18-25 Generation - We're all looking for relationships, we're all looking for more than facebook friends and Instagram messages and we are all trying to make sense of the world that we live in. If you are the kind of person that believes in the importance of Christian community with your peers, this event is for you. Go to www.awakealive.com to register.

Travel with WELS Groups Interested in traveling with other members of our WELS/ELS faith family where daily devotions and Christian fellowship are integral parts of the itinerary? The OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors) is partnering with Father's World Tours to offer several trips in the coming months. Embark on a 2-week trip to Texas via America's Heartland in November. Or, ring in the New Year on a Caribbean cruise to visit and encourage our WELS missions in St Lucia, Grenada, and Antigua. All trips originate in MN (New Ulm or Twin Cities), have options to fly-in and meet the group, and are open to WELS/ELS members of all ages. Visit: www.fathersworldtours.com or contact Steve Balza at steve@fathersworldtours.com or 507-217-1731.

