



Holy Cross—St. Mark Newsletter January 2025



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Upcoming Events

Jan. 6: HC Ladies' Aid - 1pm
Jan. 13: SM Voters' Meeting - 6pm
Jan. 30: HC Voters' Meeting - 6pm

Devotional Thoughts

By Pastor Crass

Are you living for happiness or joy? On the surface, these two might seem like synonyms. Both involve warm feelings. Both of them are caused by good news in your life. But the truth is, joy and happiness are very different things. Let me give a couple examples.

A woman sat in her favorite chair and settled down to watch her favorite Christmas movie. She had seen it many times, but watching it felt like getting together with a warm and familiar friend. About halfway through the movie, her doorbell rang. It was her daughter who had driven hours just to see her. As you can imagine, the woman was excited to turn off her Christmas movie and welcome in her daughter. She was so happy.

A young child had been waiting for months for Christmas to come. He was excited for the family to get together, even if dad couldn't be there this year. His father was overseas in the service. On Christmas Eve, a large box showed up on the front porch. As you can guess, there were numerous tears of happiness when he opened the box and hugged the best boxed gift he would ever receive, his father who had returned home. In his dad's arms, the boy was happy.

These are examples of happiness. These are people who have such strong feelings because the Lord has blessed them with something incredibly special. We can think of the moments in life when we have been happiest. Maybe it was your wedding day or the birth of your first child. Maybe it was an act of kindness from someone or a situation that just turned out perfectly. That's happiness, and happiness is a wonderful gift from God. But joy is built on something that cannot be taken away.

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WELS News

God's kingdom grows one soul at a time

Sometimes missions happen organically. Even though I have only been in the mission field a couple months, God is still growing his kingdom as his faithful people care for one another and reach out to the lost and straying. A couple stories from West Lafayette, Ind., illustrate the words of Jesus: "All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head" (Mark 4:28).

West Lafayette is home to Purdue University, and while the WELS campus ministry presence there has been small recently, the students who participate are active. Students are faithfully inviting their friends to worship and on-campus Bible class. For weeks and months, they have been reaching out, but sometimes it takes many tries before anyone joins us. Yet God is using these Christians and their everyday witness to bring people into his church.

In one instance, a student invited a young man ("Jin") to Bible study. Jin was looking for a Christian community, and he saw at work an on-campus Bible study. He came to worship that Sunday. It just so happened that my wife, a very talented cook, invited everyone in worship that Sunday to come to our house for a house-warming party. Not only did this young man join us for lunch, but he even helped cook one of the dishes. During lunch, he was able to visit the members of the church and talk to me about the WELS stance on the Bible. We thank God for these opportunities provided by faithful Christians inviting their friends to join them!

On another occasion, a car was parked in the church parking lot. I stopped over to see if everything was all right and introduce myself. I came to learn the gentleman sitting there (Kyle) was waiting to go to work; he often stops by our parking lot to sit and think. He had trauma in his church growing up, coupled with more recent struggles. Kyle wants to get back in the church and hear the Word of God. After following up, we set up a time to meet. Kyle started a Bible instruction class, and we look forward to our time together in God's Word.

Slowly, one by one, the kingdom of God grows, through the faithful outreach of God's people and God putting people in our paths. But this kingdom grows all by itself as the Holy Spirit works through his Means of Grace. It's just like our Lord says, "[The kingdom of God] is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants" (Mark 4:30). God is providing shelter for his people as his Word works in and through his people.

Written by Rev. Andrew Ewings, home missionary at Lamb of God Lutheran Church in West Lafayette, Ind.

Dual Parish Update

- Both churches discussed setting our 2025 congregational mission offering plan to the synod. They will set this at the January voters' meeting.

St. Mark Council Update

- The review on the revised constitution has been completed by the district committee. Council will work through the few changes they suggested and present it to the voters for final approval. Thanks to everyone who reviewed it and gave feedback.
- Along with the new constitution, the council will be working to figure out what positions are set to come due for re-election on what years. This should allow our current council members to step back from their positions when they desire to and encourage other men to step into these roles and serve our church this way.

Holy Cross Council Update

- Council members worked with Brotherhood Mutual Insurance to get a quote to compare to our current property insurance. After receiving the quote, our current insurer, Church Mutual, was found to be a better price.
- The replacement part that has been causing issues with the sound system has been ordered. It is currently on backorder, but hopefully we will be receiving it soon to make the repair.

Who Can I Pray For?

Below are some of our shut-ins that you can pray for, call, and even visit (please call ahead before any visits).

- Luella Dahlberg - (906)788-4228 - W4642 County Rd. 346, Wallace, MI 49893
- Carol Heydn - (906)788-4445 - W5744 14 Lane, Wallace, MI 49893
- Kristin Bates - (906)280-8276 - W6450 Cty. Rd. 358, Daggett, MI 49821
- Harold and Virginia Schlenvogt - (906)753-4326 - W5209 Cty Rd 348, Stephenson, MI 49887
- Evelyn Smith - (920)370-2361 - W3124 Cty Rd 366, Daggett, MI 49821 (currently living at Menominee Health Services in Menominee)
- Cheryl Bussler - (906)290-0881 - N222 Willow St, Stephenson, MI 49887
- Jim and Carlyn Lynch - (906)241-1488 - N10438 M-35, Cedar River, MI 49887

Would you like to be included on this list? Please reach out to Pastor Crass.

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A woman was dying in the hospital. Her cancer had spread and her earthly life was coming to an end. One day, as her husband of thirty years was sitting next to her in the hospital room, their pastor came to visit. And the pastor asked both of them a question they didn't expect: "Are you finding joy in your present situation?" At first, the man was mad at his pastor. How could he be so insensitive as to ask a question like that? Didn't he know this woman was staring death in the face? But then the pastor kept talking, and reminded them that this Christian woman was not facing a painful end, but a gracious beginning. He pointed to the true meaning behind Jesus' work, to win eternal life for a world full of sinners. A few weeks later, this woman died in the joy of salvation and got to see her Savior face-to-face. And her husband was joyful, even as he mourned the loss of his beautiful bride.

God's promises bring us joy. And even when we don't have happiness, even when all our situations in life seem to turn against us, we put our hope in that thing that can never be taken away. This allows us to rejoice through tears at funerals. It allows us to give thanks even when life is crashing down all around us.

As we leave 2024 and enter 2025, there are lots of hopes we have for a new year. Many of those hopes involve news that will make us happy. But even if our new year is filled with a lot of sadness, there is nothing that can take us from the love of God in Christ. It's what we celebrated on Christmas. It's what delivers the highest joy in his resurrection on Easter morning. This year, live for joy and not for happiness, dear friends. Amen.

Member Announcements

"Both Christa and I would like to thank you for all your warm wishes, gifts, and especially prayers this Christmas season. We are greatly blessed to be serving here with you and we look forward to how the Lord blesses our churches in the year ahead."

- Pastor and Christa Crass

January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday															
<p>8am Bible Class at St. Mark</p> <p>8:45am Worship at St. Mark</p> <p>10:30am Worship at Holy Cross</p> <p>11:30am Bible Class at Holy Cross</p>	30																				
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<p style="text-align: center;">Holy Cross</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Ushers</th> <th>Counters</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1/5</td> <td>Team 3: Kedsch</td> <td>Team 3: Sean Trout & Jeff Hacker</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1/12</td> <td>Team 4: Sivula</td> <td>Team 1: Jerry Karry & Kristin Sivula</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1/19</td> <td>Team 1: Trout/Karry</td> <td>Team 2: Ken Hacker & Terri Sivula</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1/26</td> <td>Team 2: Kunize</td> <td>Team 3: Sean Trout & Jeff Hacker</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>							Date	Ushers	Counters	1/5	Team 3: Kedsch	Team 3: Sean Trout & Jeff Hacker	1/12	Team 4: Sivula	Team 1: Jerry Karry & Kristin Sivula	1/19	Team 1: Trout/Karry	Team 2: Ken Hacker & Terri Sivula	1/26	Team 2: Kunize	Team 3: Sean Trout & Jeff Hacker
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