



The Messenger

January 2024 Edition

A Monthly Newsletter from St. John Lutheran Church and School

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Gather. Grow. Go. To the Glory of God!

Short Stories that Speak Volumes for Our Lives

Devotional Corner: Take a Closer Look

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field". Matthew 13:44

One of North America's biggest diamond mines was discovered in a very unlikely place—in the far north of Canada. Up until a few years ago, you couldn't even give the land away. Composed almost entirely of granite covered by a glacier, it has some of the world's harshest weather and sparsely populated countryside. But at times, some of the most worthwhile things come to those who look past the exterior and take a closer look. That's wise advice.

Jesus had similar advice in a story he once told. It was about a man on a walk who found a valuable treasure hidden and buried in a dusty, dirty field. An ordinary field is definitely not the backdrop Hollywood would pick for a movie about a hunt for buried treasure. There's nothing glamorous about a dirt field, and that's just the point. The man would never have found the treasure had he not taken a closer look beneath the plain surface.

It's easy to miss things. Jesus didn't have the most glamorous life. He was born in a barn beside a Bethlehem hotel with a no vacancy sign out front. He

worked with his hands as a carpenter and spent most of his life around common people. Nothing special, you might say, just like that dirty, barren little field. But wait, take a closer look.

When you dig below the surface of Jesus' simple lifestyle, there's a great wealth of treasure. At Jesus' birth, angels sang him lullabies and kings brought him presents to mark the entrance of the Savior into the world. Some of those common fellows with whom he hung around became his disciples, bringing a message of renewal and joy to the world. By his death, you're given forgiveness for every missed opportunity and failed attempt—and from the guilt that comes along with them. What's more, by Jesus' rising from the grave, you're given the treasure of life forevermore in the joy of heaven. And every day of your life, you don't need to worry or be afraid because Jesus promises to watch over you and provide for your needs. Now those are true treasures!

It's just a story, right? It may appear to be as simple as a dry, dirty, good-for-nothing field. But it's a short story of Jesus that speaks volumes for our lives. Come and take a closer look with us. Together we will unearth more true treasure from God's Word.

In Christ's Service & Yours!
Pastor Mike Gehl



Worship With Us!

Sundays at 8:00 and 10:30am

Thursdays at 6:30 pm

Bible Classes and Sunday School Sundays at 9:15 am

Christian Parenting Today



Christian Parenting Today: What are the building blocks of a strong parent/child relationship?

A Forward in Christ article by Sarah Reik and Rob Guenther

When I initially set out to answer this question, my head was spinning. Thousands of books have been written on the topic of parenting. I believe we all would agree that our main goals as parents are to love our children unconditionally and to teach them about the unconditional love of God. For direction on where to go after that, I decided (with some trepidation as to what I might hear) to turn to the experts—my four children.

Loving communication

My children had quite a few thoughts about the importance of communication in developing and fostering a strong parent/child relationship. Carson (16) said he likes knowing that if he shares what's on his mind, we will listen and do our best to understand from his point of view. McKenna (14) said it's important for her to feel safe and comfortable talking to us, knowing that she won't get a lecture but we'll discuss things calmly and respectfully. Braden (13) said he knows some parents who get angry and put their kids down, but he's glad that the way we talk to him is "kind and encouraging."

*Everyone should be quick to listen,
slow to speak and slow to become
angry. James 1:19*

Loving connection

The book [The 5 Love Languages of Children](#) lists five primary ways we can connect with our children to show them love. This is something we are intentional

about in our family. Sharing *words of affirmation* is one way to connect and clearly appreciated by my children as discussed above. Another way is through *giving gifts*—Braden loves when I run errands and randomly come home with a pair of shorts I think he'll like. We make an effort to connect with all the children through *physical touch* (hugs, kisses, high-fives, cuddling on the couch), as this is a vital love language, especially when children are young. When asked what she thinks helps build a strong parent-child relationship, Julia (11) named the last two love languages: "I like that you support me and help me with what I do (*acts of service*), and I like when we have fun days together (*quality time*)."

My husband is a master at showing love through quality time. Just in the last two days he went golfing with Carson, helped McKenna practice shooting her bow, talked football with Braden, and spent time with Julia at her cross-country run. He makes an effort to connect with them around their interests, and we've observed how it has led to strong bonds over the years.

*Over all these virtues put on love,
which binds them all together in
perfect unity. Colossians 3:14*

Loving corrections

McKenna shared that she likes that we're not over-protective and we don't have many rules. She sees that we give her and the other children freedom and independence, and she appreciates that. My husband and I have made it our goal to be trainers and guides as we come alongside our children to both model and teach what it looks like to lead God-pleasing lives. This does not mean there is a lack of boundaries, but we have taken very seriously the command not to frustrate our children intentionally. As much as possible we strive to allow natural and logical consequences to influence behavior rather than control or punish our children through anger or fear.

*Fathers, do not exasperate your
children; instead, bring them up in
the training and instruction of the
Lord. Ephesians 6:4*

Article continues on next page

Today's Christian Parenting: Building Blocks of Relationships (continued):

Loving example

I was glad to hear that our children feel they have a positive relationship with us and could name reasons for that. It's a testament to the grace of God, because we have not come anywhere close to living out these guidelines perfectly in our parenting.

We do have a perfect example, though. There are so many instances in the Bible of Jesus building relationships in this way. He made time for the people around him, listened to their needs, and spoke kind and encouraging words. He connected with them in love through tender touch, by taking interest in their lives and struggles, and by serving them. He came alongside people to correct their sinful behaviors and to point them toward forgiveness and the gift of salvation.

As you seek to build loving relationships with your children, look to the example of Jesus. Even more than that, look to the life and work of Jesus, whose love for us ensured that our relationship with our heavenly Father will be strong for eternity.

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1).

Sarah Reik

"It's all about relationships." That's what I believe about pastoral ministry. We have a relationship with Jesus because of God's great grace to us. Now it is our privilege to build relationships with others so that we can share Jesus with them. As one friend of mine described our role as Christians: "Our job is to build a bridge between our hearts and theirs so that Jesus can cross over from us to them."

I believe the same is true of parenting. It's all about relationships. As parents, our job is to build a bridge between our hearts and theirs so that Jesus can cross over from us to them. That's all that will really matter in the end.

So, how do we build those relationships? I think of the three *T*s of relationships:

1. Time: How do kids spell love? T-I-M-E. Time with anyone is what builds relationships. Whether it be between pastor and parishioner, husband and wife, or parent and child, time together builds a bond—time

talking, time listening, time doing things together. To that end, I take my boys out on "dad dates." They don't like the title as they equate the term "date" to romance, but I explain that I'm putting a date on the calendar for us to spend time together. We talk and listen—dad and son, one-on-one, usually at a fast-food restaurant (which is the incentive for them to go). The only rule: We have to answer each other's questions honestly—both of us.

2. Talk: I read when an eight-year-old girl named Jessica was once asked "What is love?" she answered, "You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget." People do forget. We need to hear of God's unconditional love for us often. The more we hear it, the more we believe it.

The same is true in our human relationships. Tell your kids that you love them no matter what they do and you always will. For my boys, when it's appropriate, I also add, "And I'm proud of you." Then I try to give specific reasons why. The more they hear it, the more they will believe it, and the more they will live up to it.

3. Truth: As long as you're telling them things, be sure to tell the truth. Tell them, "I'm sorry," when you mess up. An apology can go a long way in restoring a strained relationship. Tell them what they need to hear, when they need to hear it, but speak the truth in love.

Ultimately tell them *the* truth—that God is doing everything to keep his relationship with us strong. He sent his own Son to pay for our sin. He sends pastors, teachers, and parents—and sometimes our own kids—to assure us that we are forgiven. That truth motivates us to live for him and do all we can to strengthen the relationships we have with those around us.

In the end, it's all about relationships. We know that we have a perfect relationship with God through Christ and his work for us. As we rejoice in that relationship, he helps us build stronger relationships with our kids.

Rob Guenther

*To view this article online, visit
[https://forwardinchrist.net/
strong-parent-child-relationship/](https://forwardinchrist.net/strong-parent-child-relationship/)*

Upcoming Events

Long Term Care Seminar at FVL- Thursday, January 18th

It's important to help protect your loved ones from financial, physical and emotional burdens if you should require long term care.

Long term care is the assistance or supervision you may need when you are not able to do some of the basic activities of daily living. You may need assistance if you suffer from an injury, an illness or a stroke. Others may need help because of mental deterioration.

Knowing the benefits of long-term care insurance can help you determine whether it's right for you and your family. These benefits include:

- Giving you the flexibility to participate in deciding where to get care and who provides it
- Helping protect your retirement savings by letting you use them for what it was originally intended – enjoying retirement
- Helping protect the family from providing all the care

The Long-Term Care seminar will be held at FVL's media center on Thursday, January 18th at 6:00 pm. Register at <https://www.fvlhs.org/support-fvl/seminars>.



Blood Drive- Monday, January 22nd

Come and give blood in our gym on Monday, January 22nd, from 1:00 to 6:00 pm. Look for sign-up papers or contact the office to volunteer for set up, take down, registrations, or giving blood. Blood donors of all types are urgently needed! Make plans to give now. Download the Blood Donor App to get reminders, make scheduling easy, track your appointments, and get special promotions.

Gamblers Hockey Dash for Cash- Saturday, January 27th

It is time once again for Green Bay Gamblers' annual Dash for Cash, as teachers from throughout the area compete for money towards projects at their schools. This year, Mr. Solomon will take to the ice in support of St. John Lutheran School! Join us for the fun and for the Gamblers' family night game against the Sioux City Musketeers at 7:05 on Saturday, January 27th. Watch for more information on ticket sales—a portion of all tickets sold will go to our school!



Mark Your Calendars!

- January 1- 2024-2025 School Enrollment Opens
- January 3- Classes Resume
- January 6- Tres Reyes Event (Hispanic Epiphany Celebration and Fellowship)
- January 9- Monthly Fellowship Meal
- January 12- End of Second Quarter
- January 17- FVL Chapel
- January 18- Long Term Care Seminar at FVL
- January 19- Hot Lunch
- January 22- Blood Drive
- January 22- Voter's Meeting
- January 26- No School/ Teacher Inservice
- January 27- Green Bay Gamblers Game
- January 28- Worship with FVL Choir and Guest Preacher
- January 29- PTO Meeting
- February 1- School Choice Window Opens
- February 8-9- No School (Teacher's Conference

Church Highlights

Tres Reyes (Three Kings) Event- Saturday, January 6th

St. John will play host to a Fox Valley Tres Reyes (Three Kings) event on Saturday, January 6th, from 12:00-3:00 pm. Tres Reyes is an important holiday for Hispanic culture, often taking on the importance that Christmas Day holds for other western cultures. Regardless of your culture or language, we invite you to celebrate this special event with us!

We will join with pastors and congregants from St. Paul/San Pablo, Green Bay and Bethel Lutheran/Betel Luterana, Menasha. This event will also help us to begin our own church's outreach to the local Hispanic families, of which there is a large population nearby. There will be traditional foods, a bounce house, and more at the celebration.



School Highlights



Open Enrollment Begins Now!

We are now accepting enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year! Please note that our early childhood (preschool and pre-K) classes fill up fast, so you will want to enroll early.

Parents who wish to have their already- attending students can simply notify Mrs. Stary, our administrative assistant, of their intentions. Families who wish to enroll new students can either visit our enrollment page at stjohnwrightstown.com/admissions or speak with Mrs. Stary. The paperwork needed for enrollment is all available on the webpage.

Keep in mind that School Choice (WPCP) enrollment is also fast approaching! Those who wish to sign up for state funding should do so between February 1st and April 18th. Let Mrs. Stary know if you have any questions regarding enrollment or school choice.

Church Birthdays

Happy birthday to our members celebrating in January!

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Jan 2 Ryan Theunis | Jan 12 Chad Schmidt |
| Jan 3 Deb Schaeuble | Jan 12 Amber Schroeder |
| Jan 4 Ron Zahn | Jan 17 Henry Ollila |
| Jan 4 Jack Zirbel | Jan 20 Leo Solomon |
| Jan 6 Kendra Pohlman | Jan 21 Zaine Gehl |
| Jan 7 Weston Herlache | Jan 21 Noah Pennenberg |
| Jan 7 Faye Patoka | Jan 22 Brent Ritter |
| Jan 8 Aura Lee Gehl | Jan 24 Kristen Kraus |
| Jan 8 Rose Heimmermann | Jan 28 Rodney Kussow |
| Jan 8 Ronald Laabs | Jan 28 Kane Schmidt |
| Jan 9 Michaela Bowers | Jan 28 Levi Schmidt |
| Jan 9 Sara Verheyen | Jan 29 Karen Geiger |
| Jan 11 Brett Toseland | Jan 29 Lawsen Leick |
| Jan 12 James Calaway | Jan 30 Daniel Schmidt |
| Jan 12 Steve Johnson | |

School Birthdays

Happy birthday to our students celebrating during January!

- January 4- Roman H.
- January 7- Trenton D.
- January 16- Austin B.
- January 16- Levi J.
- January 29- Turner G.
- January 29- Lawsen L.
- January 31- Joseph L.



Resolution Resources Available

Did you make any resolutions to work on your spiritual life or interpersonal relationships this new year? We have resources that can help! Visit our synod (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) website, wels.net, to find a plethora of available materials. Some specific areas you may be interested include:

Devotions- find daily and weekly devotions directed to families, teens, military, and more at wels.net/serving-you/devotions/.

Daily Bible Readings- Through My Bible takes you through the entire Bible in a three-year cycle of daily readings. Visit wels.net/serving-you/bible/.

Marriage Enrichment- welscongregationalservices.net/ministry-resources/wels-marriages/ offers multiple marriage enrichment resources, including “Marriage Moments”, weekly videos lasting only a couple of minutes that you can subscribe to that will give you a brief topic to consider.

Special Needs Children- Families with special needs children face several unique challenges, but there is help available! Visit wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/special-ministries/intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities/parents-and-family/ to check out some of the on-line and in-person resources.

Change the World- Have you been wanting to make a lasting impact on the world? There is no better way than share God’s love with people from every corner of the earth! Check out wels.net/serving-others/missions/ to see how WELS missions have been helping people here in America and around the world. Your contributions can make a difference!



Contact Us

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| Pastor Mike Gehl | 920-309-5171 | pastorgehl@gmail.com |
| Tim Raddatz, principal and 4 th -5 th grade teacher | 920-636-5007 | tim.raddatz@stjohnwrightstown.com |
| Dillon Solomon, 6 th -8 th grade teacher | 248-525-3700 | dillon.solomon@stjohnwrightstown.com |
| Rebecca Wicks, 2 nd -3 rd grade teacher | 920-809-8648 | rebecca.wicks@stjohnwrightstown.com |
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