



St. John's Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN  
May Fortress

### A PROPER FOCUS ON CHRIST

**Colossians 3:1-4** Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

As I am writing this article, it is the day after the famous cathedral of Notre Dame in France caught fire and burned. Much of the famous structure was destroyed, including the famous spire that was a landmark in Paris since the 1100's, rising 256 feet into the air.

As I watched it fall, it reminded me of the words of the hymn writer, Nikolai F. Grundtvig (1783-1872):

Built on the Rock the Church shall stand  
Even when steeples are falling.  
Crumbled have spires in every land,  
Bells are still chiming and calling.  
Calling the young and old to rest,  
But above all, the souls distressed;  
Longing for rest everlasting. (*Christian Worship* 529:1)

Although there is hope and determination on behalf of the French and others to rebuild the cathedral, it will not be the genuine old one. Much of the original church is gone. It will have lost its authenticity. Like so many other things in this world, moth and rust, weather and fire have had their way. The things of this world are temporal, no matter how hard we try to make them last.

It is for that reason Jesus warned his followers not to set their hearts on the things of this world where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. It is why Solomon said repeatedly in the book of Ecclesiastes, "Meaningless, meaningless, all is meaningless."

It is also why St. Paul redirects our gaze toward something other than the temporal things of this world that are here today and gone tomorrow. He encourages us to set our hearts on the risen and ascended Christ.

On the day of Jesus' ascension into heaven, the astonished apostles who saw Jesus lifted away into exaltation before their very eyes, stood there gazing into the sky. But the angels who appeared had to tell them not to just stand there gawking at the clouds; instead they were to fix their hearts on Christ, who had risen from death and had ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God until his return in glory. They needed a proper focus on Christ.

A proper focus on Christ is also what St. Paul speaks of in Colossians 3. All too often when we find ourselves struggling with our faith or wrestling with the temptations of this world, we turn our focus inwardly and try by our own reason or moral goodness to find solutions to our problems. We point the guns of conscience, logic, and homespun philosophy at the devil and think we shall ward him off. But he does not play fair. He lies, he deceives, and he is extremely clever. Our defenses become useless, and soon we fall prey to his power and wiles whenever we rely on ourselves.

Paul teaches us instead to set our hearts on Christ and on his saving power. He says: **Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

Setting our hearts on Christ is nothing other than embracing his word and promise. We are sinners who cannot by nature do what God demands of us. But in Jesus, we have died to sin. When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sin died with him there. And as Paul teaches in Romans 6, we were buried with Christ through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from death through the glory of the Father, we too shall live a new life. Jesus removed our sin and guilt by his death on the cross and proved by his resurrection that we are justified in the sight of God. We are dead to sin, and alive to God through faith in Christ.

We do not look to our own goodness for salvation. We do not look to our own reason for the assurance that our sins are forgiven. We do not seek to experience with our emotions whether we are justified or not. We look to Christ and all he has done. When his righteousness and redemption are our focus, no enemy can harm us, and we have perfect assurance that the forgiveness of sins and eternal life are ours through faith in his name. His promises cannot fail, and no enemy can snatch us from his hand.

After having received a focus adjustment from the angels, the astonished apostles returned to Jerusalem with joy because their Lord had ascended to prepare a place for them. May we find the same joy as we focus, not on the things of this world for our hope and comfort, but on Christ who is seated at the right hand of God.

Sadly, even with my French heritage, I will never get the chance to Notre Dame in its former glory. But even when steeples are falling and spires of this world crumble, God's promise in Christ stands forever. I shall see with my eyes the true temple of God in heaven. It will never change. It remains forever.

In Christ,  
Pastor Jeffrey Bovee

## Staff Minister

John and Paul Ministries is a new combined effort between St. John's and St. Paul's. Some of the recent developments have been New Mover postcards and planning for a youth soccer camp this summer.

“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.” (Lk 24:50-53)

## Council Digest

The church council met on Monday, April 15. A summary of reports and action from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

- Ministrations

- Funerals

- 8 Apr Val Reinke

- 9 Apr Norma Sieh

- Baptisms

- 24 Mar Garrett Jonathan Laabs (reaffirmation)

- 24 Mar Eloise Elizabeth Price

- Pastor Bovee reported that he expected to confirm 15 students during the 11:00 a.m. service on Sunday, April 28.
- Pastor Guenther has suggested that the congregation begin planning for the celebration of its 75th anniversary in 2022. A task force will be organized for that purpose in the near future.
- Staff Minister Kelly Emde is getting bids for the regular maintenance and upkeep of our parking lot. It is likely that crack repair and sealing will need to be done this summer.
- Since Staff Minister Emde has informed the congregation of his plans to retire effective January 1, 2020, the Board of Elders is considering various options for a study that will review our staffing needs as a congregation before issuing a call for his replacement. One of the options is to use the services provided by the WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC). Representatives from the CCC are trained to lead a congregation in a self-analysis of its mission and ministry.
- Administrative Teacher James Dretske will be taking a partial medical leave during the 2019-20 school year to recover from the effects of a fall on the playground last year. He will continue to serve the congregation in an administrative capacity but will not serve in the classroom during that time. Please pray that the time away from classroom responsibilities will provide Mr. Dretske with opportunity to heal and that he will be able to resume the full scope of his work, returning to the classroom for the 2020-21 school year. In the meantime, St. John's has granted St. Paul's permission to call a 5-6th grade classroom teaching replacement for the 2019-20 school year with Mr. Dretske's disability insurance covering at least part of the costs associated with the additional teacher.
- The council prepared for the upcoming voters meeting on April 23. By the time you read this, the date of the meeting will have passed. The agenda included a report from MVL Principal Tim Plath on the building plans currently under consideration and discussion for our area Lutheran high school. The voters heard quarterly reports from the various congregational boards, committees and officers and were asked to ratify some recent board appointments. A report on the organization of a Campus Facilities Task Force to consider “the future facility needs of the congregation and propose a plan to address the funding of those needs” was provided.

- The Fellowship Committee for the Board of Evangelism is planning a church picnic at Hermann Heights Park for Sunday, June 23, at 4:00 p.m. Two picnic shelters have been reserved for our use. Details will follow as the date approaches.
- The Easter for Kids event jointly organized by our Board of Evangelism in cooperation with St. Paul's and MLC was held on Saturday, April 13. The event was attended by 103 children and 63 volunteers.
- Reporting for the Board of Trustees, Scott Deters noted that the garbage dumpster for our campus grounds has been upgraded in size. The previous container has been filled beyond capacity during weeks when the congregation hosts fellowship meals. The center aisle carpeting in the church is badly worn and needs replacement. The first bid suggests that the project would cost about \$7,500. The Trustees will consider other needs for the interior of the church before making a final decision on the carpet replacement.
- Cleaning of the church interior took place on April 6th. The Trustees will plan an outdoor workday once the grounds have dried.
- Plans to rent the home at 601 S. Washington Street to the family of a man who will be moving to New Ulm and attending Martin Luther College as a second career student are moving forward. The home would be needed by the family for a period of up to two years.
- Next Church Council meeting – Monday, May 20, at 6:30 p.m. (This is the annual joint meeting with the St. Paul's Church Council)
- Next Voters' meeting—Tuesday, July 23, at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by Steven Thiesfeldt,  
Congregational chairman

## Archives

### Miscellany

More items from service bulletins, newsletters, and council and congregational minutes from 60, 50, 25, 10, and 1 years ago.

**1959, Pastors: Rollin Reim, Frederick Nitz** (as of Nov). St. John's issued various calls for a teacher at St. Paul's which were returned. Mrs. Erich Sievert and Mrs. Roland Hoenecke accepted a call sharing duties at St. Paul's for fourth grade until a permanent call could be extended after January.

**1969, Pastor was Frederick Nitz.** The Ladies' Aid is described in May as planning its annual bus trip—in this case for July to the Twin Cities.

**1994, Pastors: David Kolander, Jeffrey Bovee; David Zabel was Director of Christian Education.** Pastor Bovee was installed as Associate Pastor on June 26 (25 years ago).

**2009, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske.** During the year there was much discussion within the congregation and with St. Paul's regarding shared costs and reduction in staff at St. Paul's School.

**2018, Pastors: Jeffrey Bovee, Rob Guenther** (Associate as of July); **Administrative Teacher was James Dretske.** In October: thanks to Eleanor Runke who developed and served as Church Librarian for 16 years. LeiLani Rahn welcomed as new Librarian.

To be continued. Bob Krueger [kruegerh@mlc-wels.edu](mailto:kruegerh@mlc-wels.edu)

# Church Library

The church library recently received two books that are the first two in a series. “The Wandering Pirate Ship” is book one and book two is “Moon Glow and Twisted Brew.” The author, Mary Schmal, plans more books in the series, but the copyright of these two is 2018. Mary Schmal is the daughter of Prof. Lawrenz, a former professor at our WELS Seminary. The main characters in this series are children from a large family. So, I wasn’t sure if they were written for middle schoolers or older. Each book teaches one of the children a fruit of the Spirit such as love or peace while solving a mystery. DMLC, here in New Ulm, is even mentioned since the story takes place in 1884, the year the school started.

Another new book is “Praying Luther’s Small Catechism “ by John Pless. Martin Luther used the 10 Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer as his foundation for daily prayers. This book helps us do it, too. Have you checked out the several books about Martin Luther and his life and beliefs? We have several in our library. All of them are good biographies. He knew his Bible !

Check us out!

LeiLani Rahn  
Church Librarian

## St. Paul’s Lutheran School

[splnewulm.org/school](http://splnewulm.org/school)

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**BoCD Work** (SP Board of Child Discipleship)

### **New Tuition Rate for Non-WELS Members**

The BOCD discussed the tuition for non-WELS member students and raised the rate for the 2019-20 school year to be \$2,550. This amount is 50% of the current cost of education for each child. There are currently 34 non-WELS students scattered throughout grades K-8 and are considered for classrooms which are not filled to capacity, therefore, not requiring the need to call an extra teacher. The current rate had been twice the SP Tuition rate for these students, which was about 44% of the cost of education. The BOCD will continue to discuss the tuition rate for non-WELS students.

### **PreK Rates increased for 2019-20**

With the PreK portion of the Building Project not to be completed by this fall, the PreK opportunities will remain at 2-day and 3-day sessions. The 2-day session will go up to \$970 and the 3-day will go up to \$1,440. These reflect about a 4.4% increase from the current amounts charged (\$927/\$1,377). The BOCD will be discussing the PreK programs available for future years with recommendations coming from the Preschool Action Committee to consider opportunities for childcare.

### **PreK Call -part time teacher**

At an April 14 meeting, the SP Voters extended another one-year call to Mrs. Kate Carlovsky to teach Tuesday and Thursday afternoon sessions for PreK. Please keep her in your prayers as she deliberates this call. The Voters also are requesting a one-year call of the Assignment Committee to fill the need of classroom duties for grades 5-6 during Mr. Dretske’s recovery. If there are no candidates available, the BOCD has been approved by their voters to make a one-year call from a list acquired from District President Klatt of those available from the area.

### **Grants for Education**

The BOCD will be working with Paul Wessel to identify possible grants that may be advantageous to write to acquire available funds in connection with STEM, energy, technology, and other areas

for which the new construction may qualify. Current accreditation through MNSAA allows the school to take advantage of available grants. The BOCD is looking for grants that would not jeopardize our commitment to Christ-centered instruction or doctrine.

### **Spring Sports**

Take a look at the school website calendar during the last month of school for the many scheduled sporting events. With the weather being unpredictable, watch for updates as schedules may change quickly. The school will use the SchoolReach system to notify parents of last minute changes.

### **Tuition Assistance Envelope**

If you haven't used the envelope in your offering envelope box for K-12 Education Assistance (Feb-March), please consider using it. Your gifts help support families who send or want to send their children to St. Paul's Lutheran School or MVL, but are unable financially to do so.

If there are families that find that they are in need of additional assistance for St. Paul's School, please submit an Application for Tuition Assistance before June 30<sup>th</sup> in the school office. Distributions are given prior to Registration Day for St. Paul's School following a review of these applications.

[www.splnewulm.org/school](http://www.splnewulm.org/school)

### **Calendar**

May 10 Dig In Gala at Concordia Lanes  
May 23 Closing Service at St. Paul's Church  
May 24 Last Day of School: 3 pm dismissal  
May 28-31 Final Packing / Emptying Classrooms  
Jun 3-4 Faculty In-Service

Respectfully submitted, James L. Dretske, Administrative Teacher  
[jdretske@splnewulm.org](mailto:jdretske@splnewulm.org)

## **Our Synod at Work**

### **2019 WELS Annual Report: Called to Proclaim (Home Missions)**

This month we will continue highlighting information contained in the 2019 WELS Annual Report to their members by looking at the section entitled "Called to Proclaim." This section primarily deals with home and world missions, but also includes information on such ministries as the WELS Campus ministry. As a result of the valuable information contained in this section, we will spend two months highlighting the section.

WELS Home Missions proclaims God's Word to those in the United States, Canada, and the English-speaking West Indies. It also supports campus ministries, cross-cultural ministries, and a variety of other outreach activities in North America.

Last year the Board for Home Missions authorized support for ten new mission starts as well as support to enhance mission-minded ministry in seven established congregations.

The ministries receiving financial support for a new mission include:

1. Reno, Nevada, where two area congregations are partnering to start a congregation in the Northern Valleys area of greater Reno.
2. Phoenix, Arizona, where Crosswalk in Phoenix is opening a second site to reach out into downtown Phoenix.
3. Joplin, Missouri, where a strong core of WELS members from the two nearest churches are helping support this mission.
4. Brandon, South Dakota, which is near Sioux Falls. This new congregation includes core members from two WELS' original congregations and an Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation.
5. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where Grace in downtown Milwaukee is establishing a new location in the area known as the Third Ward.
6. Bluffton, South Carolina, has developed through the efforts of Risen Savior in Pooler, Georgia, a multi-site ministry.
7. Mansfield, Ohio, where a Lutheran Church congregation of a Missouri Synod congregation that was closing contacted WELS to see if our synod might be interested in opening a mission in the area. Some of the church's members have joined the new WELS mission and are working with WELS members in the area to launch this new congregation.
8. Richland Center, Wisconsin, is part of a multi-site effort being supported by St. John in Hillpoint and Trinity in Lime Ridge.
9. In Hobart, Wisconsin, Mount Olive in Suamico is starting a second site in Hobart.
10. Horicon, Wisconsin, has members of St. John's in Juneau seeing an opportunity to reach out in nearby Horicon, where 90 members of St. John's live.

Home Missions is also financially supporting mission-minded enhancements to existing congregations in Corona, California; Anchorage, Alaska; Seattle, Washington; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Knoxville, Tennessee; Waukesha, Wisconsin; and Racine, Wisconsin.

In addition Home Missions assists more than 550 campus ministries across the United States and Canada. The ministry supports full- and part-time campus pastors, and provides assistance for WELS congregations as they reach out to college students in their area.

Next month we will review the information contained in the Called to Proclaim section on World Missions.

Gerald Woodley

## **Women of St. John's**

The Women of St. John's met on April 2, 2019. Pastor Guenther conducted a devotion on a parable about the vineyard owner whose son was killed by his renters. We were reminded of God's great patience with us even though we often abuse or neglect the gifts, time, and talent that He gives us.

There was no business meeting. Our presenters were Annette and Lance Hartzell who taught us how to make an Easter craft. Using only 4 small pieces of cardboard, some yarn, 3 buttons, felt and a glue gun we were able to create a fluffy Easter bunny. Amid all the laughter, we were all successful.

## Kitchen Committee

The kitchen committee is asking that dishes and pans left in the church kitchen fellowship meals and funeral lunches would be picked up by our members by June 1st.

Eventually, unclaimed items will be donated to Treasure Haus.

Thank you.

## Youth Group

**Thank you** to all the youth who helped with the many Easter preparations in April!

Our next event will be Friday, May 31. We're going to the **Kato Escape Room**. I will need to know ahead of time how many people can go, so I can reserve the right number of rooms. *Please let me know if you will be coming by Friday, May 17.* Depending on how many people are able to come the cost could be as low as \$12.50 per person.

**We will also need drivers!** Parents, please let me know if you are able to drive to Mankato for this event at [ali3b2g@gmail.com](mailto:ali3b2g@gmail.com) or text 507-217-7117.

Thank you!

Mrs. G.