



St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN
May, 2021 *Fortress*

“Here I Stand”

A few years ago my parents asked me for some suggestions for a Christmas gift they could buy for me. I suggested a wall calendar that was made for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Each month, as I turned the page, I entered the historic events into my personal calendar online and made them repeat annually.

So now I pause regularly to reflect on our Lutheran heritage on these new “holidays” marked on my calendar; “holidays” such as “Galatians Day” (when Luther first published his commentary on that book), “Theology of the Cross Day” (when Luther articulated his faith at the Heidelberg Disputation), and “Staupitz Day” (when Luther first met his mentor who helped shape Luther’s theology). And as Pastor Bovee mentioned in the Sunday Services, April 18th was “Here I Stand Day.”

A little more than five hundred years ago, on April 18th, 1521, Martin Luther made his now famous “**Here I Stand**” speech at the Diet of Worms. Even though he may have never said those exact words, he refused to take back what he had written and taught about God’s Word (unless he would first be convinced by Scripture and clear reason that he was wrong). Even though he risked being declared a heretic who could be killed on sight (which my calendar says he was on May 25th - “Heretic Day”), nevertheless, he took his stand. He said he was bound by the Scriptures. His conscience was captive to the Word of God. What courage Luther showed! He was willing to die rather than give up the truths he found taught in the Word of God!

Would that *I* had such courage.

I’m reminded of what the prophet Isaiah said to King Ahaz, “***If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.***” (Isaiah 7:9)

How often I’ve failed to take a stand for the truth of God’s Word. Oh, I may speak boldly when I am safe and secure, surrounded by those who believe as I do. But when I risk losing something -- and not even my life! -- only losing my *comfort*, trying to avoid an awkward situation, how quick I am to pipe down and clam up. And if not in my too quiet proclamation, surely in the way I live my life, I am too slow to stand firm in my faith and live for Jesus the way I know he would have me live. What a wretched man I am! And for the way I’ve failed to take a stand for God, I know I deserve to fall for all of eternity.

Thank God that my salvation doesn’t depend on how bold a stand I take. And neither does yours! Thank God that Jesus took a stand for us! On trial before the rulers of his day, “***Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied.***” (Matthew 27:11)

Even though Jesus knew where his trials would end -- not just being declared a heretic, but being tortured to death on a cross -- nevertheless, he would not back down. Too much was at stake: Your soul and mine. So he willingly endured the persecution, the torture, death, and hell to pay for our sin. He took away every time we've been too timid to make our stand for him. He gave us credit for his firm stance, always clinging to God's Word, always keeping it perfectly.

Now we are forgiven. Now ***“since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”*** (Romans 5:1-2)

I hope you have a happy “Heretic Day” this May 25th. And I hope even more that, reflecting on Luther's bold stand he took 500 years ago and even more on Jesus' bold stand he took for us some 2,000 years ago, you might be moved to stand firm in your faith and boldly proclaim what God has done for us!

***No guilt in life, no fear in death, This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man Can ever pluck me from his hand;
Till he returns or calls me home, Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.*** (CWS 752:4)

In Christ,
Pastor Guenther

Evangelism

Greetings Brothers & Sisters of St. John's,

For those of you who don't know, Lifetouch Photography is no longer in operation - at least in terms of providing pictorial directories for churches. Because of this, the Board of Evangelism looked into different ways to be able to provide a pictorial directory to our members. It has been a useful tool in helping match faces with names.

After researching options available and balancing overall value in terms of both cost and substance, we decided to move forward with an online church directory. This option is very affordable while giving us far more flexibility than we had previously. Some of these benefits include:

- **Always up to date.** Church administrators can edit all accounts. Individual members can edit their own account for photo and informational details.
- **Multiple platforms.** You can view it online via the website or on the mobile app.
- **Printable directories.** The church administrators have the ability to create and print paper copies of the pictorial directory to distribute to members.
- **Secure.** Access is limited to members who create a login for the site. This login is only able to be created with the email address on file with St. John's.

We have already been testing this site and have a number of us from the Board of Evangelism and church administrators already in the directory. This online church directory will officially go live the first week of June, 2021. To get to that point, we are using the following roll-out process:

- (Completed) Test the site with the Board of Evangelism and St. John’s church administrators.
- The site will soon be active at <https://www.instantchurchdirectory.com>.
- You will be able to select “Church Member Sign In” and then “Create Login.”
- Only email addresses that St. John’s has on file will work as the login email (if you aren’t receiving weekly emails please contact the church office at stjohnsnewulm@gmail.com or 354-6744).
- If you don’t have email, please contact the church office at 354-6744.
- In the first week of June, we will activate the sign-up request process that will send an email to all St. John’s members’ email addresses on file asking them to sign-up.
- Going forward, members will be able to update their individual or family photo, update information (address, phone, etc), and select what is visible to other members. (None is visible to non-members or members who choose not to create their login.)
- Future state: Once we have a solid base of member sign-ups, we can move forward with using this site to generate and print hard copy versions for distribution to members.

We look forward to seeing members sign-up and complete their online directory listing. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have.

Jesse Zahrt
 Board of Evangelism
thezahrts@gmail.com

May Sermon Texts

May 2	1 John 3:18-24	Don’t Listen to Your Heart
May 9	Acts 11:19-26	The Hand of the Lord is with His People
May 13	Ephesians 1:16-22	Open Your Eyes
May 16	Acts 1:15-26	Chosen by the Lord
May 23	Ezekiel 37:1-14	You Need Breath to Live
May 30	Isaiah 6:1-8	The Three-fold Praise of the Three Person God

Weekday Bible Classes
meet in the Church Basement
The classes can also be found at
bit.ly/StJohnsBibleClass

Sundays at 9:30 am	May 2: New Hymnal Project May 9, 16, 23: Book of Joel	Prof. Keith Wessel Prof. Tom Nass
Thursdays at 10:30 am	Civil Government	Pastor Jeffrey Bovee
Thursdays at 7 pm	Book of Revelation	Pastor Rob Guenther
Fridays at 9:30 am	Women's Class: Hot Topics	Pastor Rob Guenther

Church Library

“What’s So Amazing About Grace?” is a discussion that Phillip Yancey has in several chapters. Grace is undeserved love. God gives it out all the time and nothing we do can make God love us more. The author talks of grace and “ungrace” and uses anecdotes and Bible stories to explain grace and ungrace. Mother Theresa is an example of grace. The older brother of the prodigal son would be an example of ungrace, as would the travelers that pass by the man saved by the Good Samaritan. I found the book to be very interesting.

Also found on our library shelves is a trilogy that takes place in Minnesota in 1862. The main characters are Native Americans. Two Stars is a warrior but is determined to do right. The woman is a French/Native named Genevieve LaCroix. When her Indian mother dies, her French father sends her to the Sioux Mission on the Minnesota River. There she learns of Jesus, while helping the missionary’s wife and children. In the first book, “Valley of the Shadows” the Indians are fighting back when their land is taken from them. Two Stars is thought to be part of the Indians hung in Mankato in 1862. In the second book “Edge of the Wilderness,” Daniel Two Stars has become an army scout, appreciated by some army officers, but distrusted by many. Genevieve is now married to the missionary who is working with the Indians. He gets sick unto death and asks his relatives to take his children so Gen can return to her people. In the third book, “Heart of the Sandhills,” Genevieve Two Stars is up against prejudice against Indians in her quilting club, but eventually the white women realize that she is no different than them. One white man causes trouble but eventually all of the Indians find peace on a Nebraska reservation. The cities of New Ulm and Mankato are mentioned in the books. Trusting in God grows in each character as the trilogy goes on. I learned much about those early 1860’s times in Minnesota.

LeiLani Rahn,
Church librarian

Council Digest

The church council met on Tuesday, April 20.

A summary of reports and action from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

- Membership changes approved

Transfer Out

Lukas Borgwardt to Immanuel, La Crosse, WI

Transfers In

Tom and Krista Stadick; Aiden, Alex from

St. Paul's, New Ulm, MN

Ministrations

Confirmations

Grace Biesterfeld	Gage Stanoch
Kaden Peterson	Tatum Toltzman
Benjamin Price	Zachery Toltzman
Dylan Schroeder	Claudia Weisensel

- Serving in his appointed role as the circuit pastor of our regional pastors' conference, Pastor Bovee noted that St. John's has received a request for its future consideration. The congregations of Zion Lutheran of New Brighton and Courtland Lutheran of Courtland are currently vacant and being served by a vacancy pastor. They have asked whether the two congregations could be served at some point in the future by the St. John's pastors if a third pastor were added to the St. John's staff. The Elders are currently studying the matter of staffing as a part of our strategic ministry plan, Hope in the Lord. This request will become another option for them to consider.
- After consulting with the Elders, Pastor Guenther has agreed to fill an unexpired term on the Minnesota District Mission Board, at the same time allowing his role on the Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School Board to come to an end at the close of the current school year. The Elders are also considering a request to restart the Friday morning women's Bible class. After a thorough investigation of Minnesota Department of Health guidelines, it appears that the implementation of some reasonable precautions will allow the resumption of this important opportunity to study the Word in the near future.
- The council approved two requests from the Trustees: 1) They were authorized to address safety concerns by having some chancel lights replaced and the cross lighting rewired; and 2) The home at 601 S. Washington will have some plumbing repairs and entry door replacement before new tenants move in this summer.
- The Campus Facilities Task Force, chaired by Dr. Keith Wessel, recently met with representatives of the Trustees to identify and consider some remodeling and upgrade needs in the sanctuary.
- The membership on the newly-formed Technology Advisory Committee has been finalized. The group will include Mark Bauer, Michael Bovee, Jim Dretske (advisory), Rachel Feld, Paul Grubbs, Jamie Milbrett, John Paulsen, Jim Rathje, Jill Roux, Steve Thiesfeldt-(chairman, pro tempore), Mike Tracy (advisory), and Jesse Zahrt. The group's first task will be to hold an organizational meeting and develop a mission-vision statement describing the scope of its work. In the meantime, Staff Minister Dretske, assisted by Staff Ministry Intern Mike Tracy, have led the way in an effort to have the church rewired by local contractor Nuvera.
- The Stewardship Board is focusing its efforts on the development of an every-member "Time and Talent" survey that will launch sometime in the coming months. The survey would be used to develop a spreadsheet identifying tasks that could be performed by our members in service to the Lord.

- The Evangelism Board has been investigating tools to develop an online pictorial directory that would allow making printed copies. One option under consideration is Instant Church Directory. Follow the link to view the information.
- Board of Youth and Education chair Paul Wessel shared concerns about some of the humanistic teachings that have become the norm in our public school systems and encouraged our pastors to find ways to alert our families who use public education to the spiritual dangers involved.
- The following schedule was set for future meetings:
 - * Next joint council meeting with St. Paul's – Tuesday, May 18, 6 pm.
 - * Next regular council meeting - Tuesday, May 18, 7 pm.
 - * Next voters' meeting – Tuesday, July 27, 7 pm.

Submitted by Steven Thiesfeldt, congregational president

Our Synod at Work

“CALLED TO SERVE”

We continue with a review of the 2021 Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's Annual Report to members. This month we will offer some of the highlights of the section entitled “Called to Serve.”

The WELS Congregational Services hosted the very first WELS Conference on Lutheran Leadership in Chicago, January 21-23, 2020, before COVID restrictions took place. There were appropriately 800 people in attendance, made up of both called workers and lay members. About 350 WELS congregations were involved. They met to hear five live speakers and attend a selection of breakout sessions. The conference planning committee is exploring options for a second WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. The conference is likely to be held sometime in 2022.

WELS Congregational Services offers resources and training modules for congregations. New resources include:

1. Congregational Evangelism Kit that contains video-based training for congregational evangelism. The purpose is to ensure that a congregation has a solid foundation to reach the lost in their community.
2. Youth Ministry Made Simple program that includes video and print resources that offer straightforward tips for starting an effective yet simple youth ministry.
3. C20—the Greatest Gift is a Christmas outreach program that provides materials for congregation to invite neighbors to Christmas Eve services.
4. Acoustics and Audio for Worship teaches what factors need to be considered when creating a worship environment that enhances the spoken word and allows for dynamic singing as well as takes into consideration those who need hearing assistance.
5. COVID-19—For Such a Time as This has articles and resources to assist pastors and congregations as they serve their members and communities during the pandemic.

WELS Discipleship also has begun offering a variety of new resources to help members grow in their faith. Included in these resources are:

1. Family devotions—offered three times per week, these devotions coincide with the previous Sunday’s Bible readings. In addition to Scripture, each devotion includes a set of questions for different age groups, a prayer, and hymn verses that can be sung or spoken. They are available at wels.net/family-devotions.
2. Marriage Moments—This new series of videos explores one marriage thought per week as well as a question or exercise “for further thought”—all in two minutes or less. It is available at welscongregationalservices.net/marriage-moments.
3. Youth Bible Study—Focused Living in Christ—This four-part Bible study for teens is based on Colossians 3:12-15 and includes video lessons. You can find the study at wels.net/youth-ministry.

Other support services within WELS include Christian Aid and Relief, the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving, and WELS Communication Services (which is responsible for Forward in Christ).

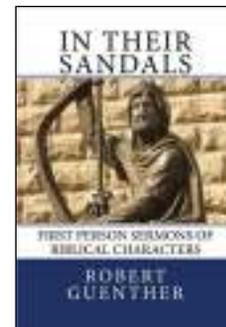
Gerald Woodley

Women of St. John’s

The May meeting will be held Tuesday, May 2nd at 7 pm in the church basement with physical distancing and masks required.

Pastor Guenther will be our speaker and will be telling us about the books he has published.

We invite and encourage all ladies to attend.



Student of the Month

St. John's recognizes the importance of supporting the future called workers of the WELS and has created the **Ministerial Student Scholarship Fund** as a means of assistance to St. John's members training for service in the ministry. These funds are equally distributed to the St. John's members who are third and fourth year students at Martin Luther College or attending the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Chris Gorr is one of the students who is receiving funds and is attending Martin Luther College.



1. What made you decide to become a pastor or a teacher?

Working in law enforcement (I'm a second career student) often showed me people at their lowest moments (incarcerations, loss of loved ones, addictions, domestics/broken families). I longed to share the hope and joy I have in Christ with those I met, but was often unable to due to limitations with my position. In addition, law enforcement was rapidly changing and I began looking into pastoral ministry as a second career option.

2. How many years of school do you have left?

I am scheduled to graduate from MLC's seminary certificate program this spring and will start WLS this fall (2021).

3. What class do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy them all, but if forced to pick I'd say Advanced Christian Rhetoric - we are learning how to preach and write sermons to effectively share (God willing) his Word with future congregations.

4. What class do you find the most challenging?

At times both biblical languages (Greek and Hebrew), although I enjoy each immensely and cherish the ability to read/understand the OT and NT in their original language.

5. Do you have a job while you're in school? If so, what do you do? How do you balance work and studies?

While attending MLC I've worked at Kraft (which employs many MLC students). During the school year I work one shift a week (Friday afternoon/evening) which allows me to focus my time on my studies during the week. During semester breaks or during the summer Kraft allows me to work full-time hours.

6. What are your hobbies when you're not in class or studying (or at work)?

As a second career student, I'm married and my wife Jennie and I are blessed to have six children - three girls (Madison, Hailey and Sarah) and three boys (Tate, Zachary and Keenan). I enjoy the outdoors and like to take our family fishing, camping, biking or going on walks.

7. Anything else you'd like to say to the St. John's members who support you?

I want to thank St. John's for your financial support with the Congregational Matching Grant Program. As a student with family, I have limited income and our family is on a strict budget. Programs like this help tremendously to offset the costs of tuition - thank you! I pray you may continue your support of your members entering into public ministry.

St. Paul's Lutheran School

splnewulm.org/school/

Teacher Appreciation Week

Is it possible to give 110%? I have heard that phrase before and often wondered what 110% effort would look like. After spending time in our teachers' classrooms and observing the amount of time teachers are preparing and doing paperwork. I think that I have seen 110% effort. Our teachers are dedicated to their work and would not have it any other way. We are truly blessed to have such a mission minded and tireless group of teachers.

So, how do we honor such commitment and caring? Do we bake them a cake? Do we bring them donuts? Do we hand write a letter to them? Maybe give them a night out compliments of a gift card? Start their day with a nice cup of coffee or Mountain Dew? There are so many ways to recognize our teachers for all of their hard work. From May 3 to May 7, Teacher Appreciation Week in the US, our school families have the opportunity to show appreciation. Our own Raider Events Committee, a group of volunteers who have a heart for St. Paul's, has planned a week's worth of activities to show how thankful we are for our teachers. I would also encourage others who know one of the teachers from St. Paul's or St. John's to come up with a creative way to honor them.

I doubt that I will ever see someone give 110%, but if I had to describe it today, it would be our faculty at St. Paul's. Thank you, teachers!

Mr. Markgraf

Save the Date!

BE A SUPERHERO by supporting the School Building Project! Join in the fun with the St. Paul's School Virtual Superhero Dig In Gala. Here's how:

- √ **Bang!** Purchase your tickets at <https://buytickets.at/stpaulsschoolnewulm> and plan to gather in small groups to amp up the fun! If you'd rather, you can also purchase your ticket to watch on the big screen in the St. Paul's Church Fellowship Hall. Your ticket enters you into a drawing for local gift cards!
- √ **Kapow!** Purchase your party box on the ticket website to help enhance your fun from home!
- √ **Zap!** Get ready to bid on some amazing auction items, including a Disney vacation!
- √ **Splat!** Follow the "2021 St. Paul's Super Hero Dig In Gala" page on Facebook for pre-Gala fun and announcements.
- √ **Raiders Assemble!** Gather together at home with your fellow Superheroes to view the action online on May 7 at 7 pm.

Find these details and more on the ticket website! <https://buytickets.at/stpaulsschoolnewulm>

In Loving Memory

<i>Ron Harper</i>	WELS Missions	\$40
<i>Edgar Poehler</i>	Audio/Visual Fund	\$100

St. John's Cancer Group

St. John's Cancer Group will begin to meet again on Sunday, May 16, at 2 pm.

Members of St. John's who were diagnosed with cancer or who have a close family member who was diagnosed with cancer are encouraged to join us. Come whether the cancer was diagnosed recently or long ago, is being treated, is post treatment, or is in remission. Spouses or a person with whom you are sharing your journey are also welcome to attend.

We will gather upstairs in the church sanctuary, where maximum social distancing can be done. Masks or face coverings are required by state order. In deciding whether to attend, please follow other state and CDC guidelines that apply to you. No food or drink will be served.

Pastor Guenther will lead us in a devotion, followed by time to share and encourage each other.

If you have questions, contact Wayne Wagner at 359-7371 or Pastor Guenther at 507-240-2433.

OWLS

We are getting closer to the time when our local OWLS officers for St. Paul's and St. John's Lutheran churches will feel it is safe to convene as an OWLS group. OWLS throughout the Synod have been following a variety of local pandemic guidelines; many have not met or have seldom been able to meet. St. John's and St. Paul's communicants over 55 will soon be invited to gather for regular OWLS meetings. We are eager to invite new people to join us when we restart our monthly routine. OWLS meetings will be a good opportunity for us to renew the acquaintances that have floundered during this time of elbow bumps and near wordless noddings at each other. It has been difficult for us to sustain what makes for the warm and uplifting Christian friendships that provide mutual encouragement and joy. New faces can also lead to stimulating new ideas, new programs, new directions, all of which deserve to be explored. Let's think about it!

Our National Committee has been working and meeting by Zoom. They have reworked a mountain of plans that needed renewal after last fall's Covid-19 cancellation of our National Convention. It is

rescheduled for **October 20-22, 1921, at Martin Luther College and mainly at the Green Mill Conference Center (in the Best Western)**. Complimentary bus transportation between sites will be provided.

The lineup of activities from which we may choose is sure to be especially interesting for our local area seniors (55 and over). Now is a good time to begin making plans to attend by blocking out your calendar. A list of activities will be provided in the next series of Monthly Newsletter installments and very soon a full schedule of events will be made available for pick up in our narthex.

Submitted by Dar Raddatz

Stewardship

The Stewardship Board has been tasked with several responsibilities under the *Hope in the Lord* congregational ministry review; our present focus is an initiative to complete an every-member time and talent inventory and determine the level of support for congregational volunteerism. The end goal is to match as many members as possible with opportunities of ministry service. Watch your email inbox for that survey.

You will notice an additional offering envelope for Christian Family Solutions (Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service) among your May envelopes. WLCFS—Christian Family Solutions provides professional Christian counseling services and care for seniors. If you are in a position to contribute, please consider this additional stewardship opportunity.

Dan Borgwardt, chairman