



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

## THE PASSION OF OUR LORD

**Isaiah 53:5** *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

The Biblical account of the passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is gory and graphic. Historically the innocent Son of God, Jesus Christ, was punished unjustly and then suffered a death that was intended for only the most heinous of criminals.

Some years ago, Christian contemporary singer Amy Grant published a children's Bible, nicely bound and brightly illustrated. Sadly, she purposely omitted the account of the crucifixion of Jesus regarding it as too graphic and violent for young children. For this she received a great deal of criticism. After all, what is the gospel account of the Lord Jesus Christ without his crucifixion, which also means no resurrection.

A few years later, actor Mel Gibson produced his controversial movie, "The Passion of the Christ," which perhaps went the other extreme and focused almost entirely on the bloody, bitter suffering of Jesus, from his arrest, mockery, scourging, and then crucifixion, with as much blood as could be viewed on the big screen.

But whatever the books and movies may portray about Jesus' suffering and death, let us be aware of the Biblical emphasis placed on the Passion of Christ. The Passion is not merely intended to show us how horribly Jesus suffered from whips, fists, and then by having had nails driven through his hands, which really did happen. The purpose of the Passion is not that we leave feeling sorry for Jesus, although perhaps we do.

No, it is a matter of first of all, understanding that our sin put him on the cross. He willingly suffered mockery, beatings, and crucifixion for sinners like you and me. He was dying to pay the debt for our sins. Worse than any Cat-of-Nine-Tails that was laid upon his back were the sins we sinners laid upon his shoulders so that he cried out, My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me? For at that moment Jesus was suffering for us all the very pains of hell sinless God separated from the Heavenly Father because of our sin. It is unthinkable and beyond our human reason. The hymn writer was correct when he wrote (*CW* 127 - Stanzas 2b and 3):

Many hands were raised to wound him,  
None would intervene to save.  
But the deepest stoke that pierced him  
Was the stroke that justice gave.

If you think of sin but lightly  
Nor suppose the evil great  
Here may view its nature rightly,  
Here its guilt may estimate.  
Mark the Sacrifice appointed,  
See who bears the awful load;  
'Tis the WORD, the LORD'S ANOINTED,  
Son of Man and Son of God.

The justice of a purely righteous God who hates sin, and the perfect love of a gracious God who is merciful to us, met at the cross. Jesus took our sins on himself and in exchange put his own perfection to our credit. Jesus became loathsome to God and man -- a curse. Jesus died for us all the death that should have been ours.

However, by his death Jesus put us back into a right relationship with God. Jesus paid the debt for us all, a debt we were not capable of paying ourselves. Our guilt and sin have been removed.

And of course, the story does not end at the cross either. Jesus rose from death. His resurrection proves that our sins are really forgiven, and that his death on the cross was not in vain. We have victory in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thus, we view the Passion of our Lord with many emotions. We do have sympathy and sorrow for the innocent Christ who suffered such mistreatment and a brutal death. We are ashamed that our sin put him on that horrible cross. We, like Rembrandt in his famous painting of the Crucifixion see a self-portrait of ourselves hiding in the shadows near the cross, knowing that it is our fault. But strangely, we as Christians view this horrible and gory scene with joy and hope. For the Passion and death of our Lord is life and peace for us. In the end those most disturbed by the graphic death of Jesus are those who reject what Jesus accomplished through that death. However, those who believe on his name shall always see in his wounded hands, crown of thorns, and spear-pierced side, the joy of salvation that Thomas had when he himself saw the wounds of the risen Christ for himself and exclaimed: My Lord, and my God!

In Christ,  
Pastor Bovee

## February Sermon Texts

|         |                  |   |
|---------|------------------|---|
| Feb. 7  | Mark 1:29-39     | Why Does It Hurt So Much?                                 |
| Feb. 14 | Mark 9:2-9       | Experience the View from the Mount of the Transfiguration |
| Feb. 17 | Psalms 110       | Savior in the Psalms                                      |
| Feb. 21 | Romans 8:31-39   | You Are Secure in Christ!                                 |
| Feb. 24 | Psalms 69        | Savior in the Psalms                                      |
| Feb. 28 | Genesis 28:10-22 | This is My Covenant with God                              |

## Weekday Bible Classes will meet in the Church Basement

The classes can also be found at  
[bit.ly/StJohnsBibleClass](http://bit.ly/StJohnsBibleClass)

|                       |                                   |                      |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Sundays at 9:30 am    | First 1,000 Years of Christianity | Prof. Keith Wessel   |
|                       |                                   |                      |
| Thursdays at 10:30 am | Angels                            | Pastor Jeffrey Bovee |
|                       |                                   |                      |
| Thursdays at 7 pm     | Book of Revelation                | Pastor Rob Guenther  |

## Council Digest

The Church Council met on January 19. A summary of reports and action from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

- Ministrations

Wedding

2 Jan Rylee Weisensel and Joe Quandt

Adult Confirmation

Tucker Griebel

Brody Griebel

Greg Miller

- President Thiesfeldt reported that he has not had any success in his search to fill vacancies in the positions of treasurer, financial secretary, and Board of Stewardship (2). Our constitution requires that all these positions be filled by qualified male voting members. If you would like to nominate someone (or volunteer for consideration yourself), please contact Steve Thiesfeldt at 507-217-9516.
- A team of auditors is being sought to review the 2020 financial records. The team would begin work after the report has been approved by the voters at the annual meeting to be held on Tuesday, January 26. The audit work is typically completed in time to provide a report to the voters at the April quarterly meeting.
- Because of the vacancies in the financial secretary and treasurer positions, outgoing members Mike Thom and Paul Gunderson, respectively, have agreed to serve through the 2021 annual meeting. Their willingness to serve beyond the end of their terms is greatly appreciated. Financial Secretary Thom noted with thanks to God that receipts for 2020 totaled over \$1,000,000 for the first time in the history of the congregation. He also reported a Building Fund gift of \$20,000 intended specifically for future construction of a new kitchen. Treasurer Gunderson reported that all congregational financial obligations for 2020 have been met and the congregation enters the new year with a healthy balance in the operating fund.
- President Thiesfeldt noted the Minnesota District Leadership Workshop at St. Croix LA, Sat. 3/13 from 9:00-3:00. In addition to members of our congregation's staff, boards, and committees, all members are invited to attend. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Guenther prior to February 16 and he will include you in the registration.
- Evangelism chair Jesse Zahrt noted that many activities normally carried out by the Evangelism Board in recent months have been cancelled due to pandemic restrictions. In spite of that, planning for future events continues with a prayer that restrictions will be lifted soon. The Fellowship Committee is reviewing treat options for Bible classes. John & Paul Ministries plans include a March canvass to promote "Easter for Kids" on March 27 and Easter Sunday services at both St. John's and St. Paul's. An Easter activity bag give-away including items like a religious comic book, a craft, something for the parents, etc. is being considered. A venture that would have St. Paul's School students decorate coffee cup sleeves used at local coffee shops is being investigated. Rev. Eric Roecker, Director of WELS Commission on Evangelism, has been contacted regarding the possibility of local congregations hosting a WELS School of Outreach.
- A fourth goal has been added to Hope in the Lord, St. John's strategic ministry plan. The goal articulates and outlines the work being done by our Board of Evangelism. The goal and its three initiatives follow.

Goal 4: Outreach, Evangelism, and Fellowship

*Develop and implement a unified, comprehensive plan for congregational outreach, evangelism, and fellowship.*

Initiative 4.1) Educate members on outreach and evangelism work done at St. John's.

Initiative 4.2) Develop ways for members of St John's to become involved in ways that appeal to their interests and talents.

Initiative 4.3) Provide educational opportunities to develop outreach and evangelism areas of service.

- Plans are in place to have MLC president and St. John's member Rich Gurgel preach for worship services on February 20-21 to make our members aware of the *Equipping Christian Witnesses* capital campaign at MLC. President Gurgel would follow up with a Bible class presentation sometime during the first quarter of 2021 pending arrangements to work out the details.
- Board of Trustees chair Scott Deters provided an update on three items: 1) the conversion to LED lighting in the office area and adding a dimmer switch to the secretary's work area has been completed; 2) development of an annual property checklist continues; and 3) the possibility of renting the 601 S. Washington property when the current tenants move this coming summer.
- The details of two council recommendations to the voters at the annual meeting in January were finalized. The voters will be asked to extend two divine calls at the meeting: 1) To make the one-year call of Emily Stoering as one of our teachers at St. Paul's School permanent; and 2) To call Staff Minister James Dretske for one more year on a half-time basis.

Future meetings:

- The next Church Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 16 , at 7:00 p.m.
- The next quarterly voters' meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 27, at 7:00 p.m.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt,  
Congregational Chairman

## Our Synod at Work

### The 2021 Synod Convention

The WELS website has some interesting information regarding the 2021 Synod Convention. In this column we will share some of that information.

The 2021 Synod Convention was scheduled to take place on July 26-29 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Michigan. The Conference of Presidents is responsible for planning the convention. At their January meeting the Conference of Presidents looked at the options for holding the convention this summer, considering the disruptions that might be caused by COVID-19. It is impossible to know whether current restrictions on the size of gatherings in Michigan will remain in place, whether travel difficulties will remain, and whether travelers from certain states will still be required to quarantine after travel. Also, there is the situation that a number of people may not be comfortable with traveling, gathering in crowds, or staying in a dormitory.

Three options were discussed:

1. Have the convention as normal in the hope that the situation will have changed by July;
2. Cancel the convention and entrust the Synodical Council to make necessary decisions; and
3. Hold a "mini convention" with a reduced number of in-person delegates and have the remainder of the delegates attend virtually.

The third option was chosen by the Conference of Presidents. The convention will take place in Watertown, Wisconsin, at Luther Preparatory School. The reason for moving from the Seminary was that Wisconsin has been less restrictive in its COVID-19 guidelines than has Michigan.

All delegates will be assigned to floor committees. Each floor committee will have a chairman, secretary, and lay representative. These individuals will be appointed by the synod praesidium. These committees will meet via Zoom in early July. The purpose of the Zoom meetings will be discuss their assigned area of the Book of Reports and Memorials, as well as to discuss broader issues such as the ministry financial plan, memorials, bylaw changes, and pension issues. Synodical area of ministry advisors will attend the appropriate floor committee virtual meetings and present any necessary information. Only the Chairmen, secretaries, and one designated layman from each floor committee will attend the convention in person. This means only 50 to 60 delegates will meet in person instead of the usual 400. These in-person delegates will be authorized by their floor committees to vote on behalf of those who will not attend in person.

All elections will take place electronically prior to the convention, with voting open to all delegates. The convention will be livestreamed to enable all voting and advisory delegates to observe.

The districts will be asked to appoint the same delegates to the next synod convention in 2023 so that they don't miss the opportunity to attend a synod convention in person.

As an individual who has had the privilege of serving as a lay delegate to a synod convention a few years ago, this is quite a change, but I certainly understand the need to make these changes.

Gerald Woodley

## **St. Paul's Lutheran School**

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

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“Go tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and everywhere;  
Go tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born.”

Students and families who have been a part of St. Paul's Lutheran Grade School have been learning the true story of Christ's virgin birth for over 130 years. This hymn's history goes back farther than that. Could it be that in the modern form of this hymn your ancestors sang this song in one of the beautiful buildings we have called St. Paul's Lutheran School? If your family has been in the New Ulm area for that many centuries, you can probably imagine a great, great grandmother attending second grade to proclaim the same faith in Christ's birth as we do today. St. Paul's has a long rich history, and we are thankful especially this month as the school celebrates Lutheran Schools Week.

The faculty, staff, and students want you to be aware of how grateful we are. God has blessed us to be able to proclaim Christ as the Savior of all mankind for so many years due to the commitment of St. Paul's, New Ulm; St. John's, New Ulm; and now, St. John's, Sleepy Eye.

To maintain a school with the quality and standards that St. Paul's has for so many years, it needed the support of many church members for many generations. The support of dedicated

volunteers continues to allow our school to offer wonderful programs. This includes our current parent support group known as the Raider Events Committee. These parents work tirelessly to plan and implement wonderful events and programs that support the students and the financial stability of our programs and building. We also celebrate the kind-heartedness that has allowed our school to experience many buildings and additions so that we can provide Christian education in the best facilities. We are now in the middle of such a financial drive to support our brand new addition and renovation that allowed us to expand our preschool and improve student experiences in the renovated building. We also benefit from the prayers of God's faithful people. We know there is a prayer army asking God to keep our faculty, staff, and students healthy and safe during this extraordinary time of the pandemic.

Our students will continue to be able to proclaim "that Jesus Christ is born" for many years to come because of the generous and kind hearts of the people throughout our school's partners: St. Paul's, New Ulm; St. John's, New Ulm; and St. John's, Sleepy Eye. Celebrate Lutheran Schools' Week with us and a huge thank you for your support!

Pete Markgraf  
St. Paul's School Principal

## Church Library

For a February theme of "love," we can find love in both of our books this month.

Billy Graham has written many books. He has preached many sermons for most of his life. This book "The Reason for My Hope...Salvation" was written when he was over 90. It explains God's love, salvation and why we need it, why Jesus is the only way to heaven, how we can win over sin, and why hell is the goal we do not want. The Bible has the answer.

Jan Karon has also written a few books, but they are novels. The Mitford series tells the ins and outs of an Anglican pastor and his life and lives of other townspeople, in the town of Mitford, North Carolina. In this 13th book in the series, Jan Karon tells the love story of Dooley and Lace's wedding, how they wanted to save money, but still have the day be special. The author's humor shows through once again. Our church library has the first 12 books in the series and they are popular. This book will fit right in.

We also have a copy of a study guide to the book "Civil Government" part of the People's Bible Teachings.

The guide is not by Prof. Deutschlander who wrote the book. It is by Prof. Thomas Kock. Our library has all of the People's Bible Teachings.

Have a good February!

LeiLani Rahn,  
Church librarian

# **MLC Ladies' Auxiliary**

## **Bingo Night Is On!**

Bingo Night is on the calendar for Tuesday, March 2! The Ladies' Auxiliary, with wonderful help from the MLC Events Team and Student Senate, will use some cool technology to conduct this fun evening with virtual bingo cards and appropriate social distancing.

While the organization of the event will look much different from past years, we will still hand out, with your help, fabulous prizes of gift cards and quilts! (Baked goods cannot be shared this year.)

Please help us with this fun break for our MLC students that will be so needed during this semester of limited activities and events. Mail in cash donations for the purchase of gift cards and, of course, bring in your beautiful QUILTS by February 23. Thank you, from many grateful students!

## **The MLC Food Shelf Is Active!**

Many married students at MLC still get assistance once per month from our food shelf. The food shelf is stocked with all sorts of non-perishable foods and household essentials that are very important to our local non-traditional students.

Check out our Food Bank donation list for foods that are most needed by our students. Also, monetary donations are always welcome and are used very carefully by our food shelf workers. Donations can be brought to the main entrance at the campus reception area and MLC staff will bring the food down to the food shelf for you.

We welcome your donations! If you have cash donations, mail them to 1995 Luther Court, New Ulm MN 56073. Call ahead to 507-354-8221 and bring food donations to the reception area or email [mlcauxiliary@mlc-wels.edu](mailto:mlcauxiliary@mlc-wels.edu) with any questions.

Jeneane Thiesfeldt, contact person,  
507-240-4523, [thiesfjm@gmail.com](mailto:thiesfjm@gmail.com)

## **Archives**

### **St. John's: More than an Idea**

The formation of St. John's Lutheran Church began with a series of events in the years 1946 and 1947.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church was feeling growing pains. All the pastoral duties had to be covered by one man: Pastor Gerhard Hinnenthal. He had served the burgeoning congregation for 22 years when he was laid low by a lingering sickness in 1946. The congregation responded by calling a second full-time pastor to help share the burden. Pastor W. J. Schmidt took his place beside Pastor Hinnenthal on September 1, 1946.



Even with two pastors, however, St. Paul's building was too small. Three services were held on Sunday morning: A German speaking service 8 AM, and two English services at 9 AM and 10:30 AM. Holy Communion was offered only at the late service. There had been discussion at council meetings about the possibility of adding on to the 1882 structure. Or should they move to a new location and build from the ground up? Perhaps it was time to start a daughter congregation in New Ulm? All of these possibilities had surfaced in recent years.

In the summer of 1947 two Missouri Synod pastors from Mankato contacted Pastors Hinnenthal and Schmidt. They wanted to inform St. Paul's that several Missouri synod members had moved from Mankato to New Ulm and wished to open the first LC-MS congregation there. This generated a lengthy discussion at St. Paul's, August 14th, Council Meeting. They finally decided to send a delegation to meet with Missouri Synod leaders in order to voice their "dissatisfaction". Did this serve as yet another catalyst to start a second WELS congregation in New Ulm?

St. Paul's decided to conduct exploratory services and gave permission to their members to attend. On October 17, 1947, eighty-one people met in St. Paul's School gym which was located on the southeast corner Second Street North. Martin Albrecht, a pastor and a music director from DMLC, led the service and preached the sermon. Bruce Backer was asked to be "organist or pianist" and the collection of the new congregation was to be kept separate from St. Paul's funds. Retired DMLC professor Bruce Backer played organ, directed the adult choir over the intervening years and has been a St. John's member to this day.

One month later, St. Paul's appointed Dr. Martin Luther College Professors Voecks, Hoenecke, Albrecht and Jahnke to conduct a canvass of the entire City of New Ulm to find the unchurched and other Lutherans who might be interested in joining a new, Lutheran congregation. With the help of several more men and a large number of students from Dr. Martin Luther College, the entire city of New Ulm was canvassed in one day - Friday, November 7, 1947.

On December 1st, the canvass committee reported back to St. Paul's congregation that there was significant interest in New Ulm for starting a second congregation. Interestingly, St. Paul's reimbursed Prof. Hoenecke \$12.23 for the necessary "canvass material."

Next issue: St. John's first pastor and a worship space of its own.

Respectfully submitted: Wayne Laitinen, Archivist