



St. John's Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN  
Fortress October, 2020

## From Cope to Hope

This year has been quite the year so far, hasn't it? Virus fears. Quarantines. Civil unrest. Rioting. Looting. Violence. Economic uncertainty. Lost celebrations. Wildfires. And all of this in an election year! Is 2020 almost over?!

We've had to cope with a lot of things this year. But cope we have. We've made it through some challenges, and, with God's help, we will continue to make it through. In fact, throughout this year our members have been planning for when these challenges are over and we're ready to move forward with our mission: **to preach and teach, live, and share God's love.**

So committees have met, ministry has been evaluated, the council has put together a ministry plan, and a proposal has been made to (and approved by) the voters' assembly. Looking forward, we will review our staffing, review our facilities, and review the way we support Christian education at all levels here at St. John's.

But why make such bold plans when we don't know what tomorrow will bring? What's made us move forward with such strategies for the future instead of just trying to cope and struggle through the challenges of the present? It's the hope that we have in Christ.

Our theme verse for our ministry plan is Psalm 130:7: ***"Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption."*** And what a fitting verse it is!

Psalm 130 is one of seven penitential Psalms. That is, it's a call to repentance. The struggles and challenges of 2020 may be God's way of calling us as a nation and perhaps even more so, calling us as *individuals* to reflect on our sin and confess it to the Lord. In fact, the Psalm begins in the first person singular: ***"Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy."*** These "depths" might be the depths of suffering, sickness, or economic disaster; the struggles we've seen in 2020. Or, perhaps the inspired author meant the depths of his own sin, guilt, and shame, since he adds, ***"If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?"*** And the obvious answer is, "no one!"

Born with original sin and steeped in sinful thoughts, words, and actions, none of us could withstand God's judgment on our own. And that judgment would be far worse than anything we've

seen in 2020 so far! It would mean an eternity of torment away from God and his blessings in hell. That's what we all deserve.

But notice, with thanks in your heart to God, that he says, *“If you, Lord, kept a record of sins...”* Thankfully, God *doesn't* keep a record of our sins. Looking ahead to the coming Messiah, the Psalmist joyfully adds, *“But with you there is forgiveness.”* And moving from himself to the congregation at large he says, *“Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.”* This is our hope--our sure and certain hope--that we have God's unfailing love, evidenced by his love for us in Christ, who lived a perfect life in our place and died an innocent death on the cross that you and I might be redeemed, that is ransomed, or bought back from sin, death and hell.

And now, in thanks to him and in this sure and certain hope, we know that, *“With [God] there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve [him].”* (v.4) And that's what our mission is all about. We know that we won't remain in the depths (no matter what the rest of 2020 throws at us), but will live on the heights of glory with the Lord.

The earth will keep on spinning. The COVID crisis will eventually end. In the meantime we wait for the Lord and for his return in glory. And while we wait we do all we can to move forward with our mission: **to preach and teach, live, and share God's love.** May God bless our efforts as we not just cope with all the challenges we face, but move forward and advance the Kingdom in the sure and certain hope that we have in Christ.

Your servant in Christ,  
Pastor Rob Guenther

## Our Synod at Work

### Hymnal Project of the WELS Commission on Worship

This month we will take a look at the WELS Hymnal Project, which is under the Commission on Worship. The Commission on Worship exists to help parishes in their central activity of worship that glorifies God and strengthens his people. One can get a good idea of its scope by reviewing content at the new Congregational Services website as well as the older Commission on Worship website [worship.welsrc.net](http://worship.welsrc.net), which still contains the greatest amount of worship content.

Most members of the Commission on Worship in recent years have been preoccupied with the forthcoming new WELS hymnal and its comprehensive suite of resources. They agreed with Northwestern Publishing House on an earlier release. The release is now scheduled for Advent 2021 instead of 2024. As a result, workflow increased significantly for the Executive Committee and for seven subcommittees. Since May of 2016 the Hymnal Project has become the primary focus for the Commission and the Worship office.

The Executive Committee met for its twenty-second and final face-to-face meeting in November of 2019 to make final decisions about hymnal content. Since that time the focus of Hymnal Project work has shifted to: (1) Production, which includes copyediting, design/layout, and copyright permission; and (2) the work of the Hymnal Introduction Program.

In January of 2020 christianworship.com was launched. The previous hymnal project website, which featured much two-way communication between individuals and the project, was deactivated. Through the older website the committee provided information through more than 120 articles written over the last six years, which provided a window into the process of developing the hymnal. There was also a nine-part series in *Forward in Christ* that explained the hymn selection process.

The purpose of the new website is no longer two-way communication but rather to share details about the suite of resources that comprise the Hymnal Project. For example, a budgeting spreadsheet was added in March, along with more topics under Frequently Asked Questions.

The Hymnal Introduction Program will provide: (1) information before the hymnal resources are released; and (2) introductory workshops in the fall of 2021. Copies of *Christian Worship: Preview* have been mailed to every congregation and school in quantities for leadership groups to review.

Gerald Woodley

## Ushers

On behalf of our usher crews, thank you for continuing to follow distancing guidelines during worship. We appreciate your help to make worship as orderly and beneficial as possible.

I also thank our ushers, who have had their usher routines upended by the pandemic, with new tasks such as sanitizing added. Guys, thank you for your continued flexibility. We appreciate your work!

Have you ever considered serving as an usher or greeter? We would love to have you! Psst! Eighth grade – college age men and women, we would love to have YOU! If you are interested in serving as an usher or a greeter, please contact Brad Price at [brprice005@gmail.com](mailto:brprice005@gmail.com), speak with him at a service, or talk with an usher!

Brad Price,  
Deacon

## October Sermon Texts

Oct. 4	Philippians 1:18b-27	To Live is Christ; To Die is Gain
Oct. 11	Matthew 21:28-32	A Tale of Two Sons
Oct. 18	Luke 1:1-4; 24:44-53	So that You May Know the Certainty of What Has Been Taught ...
Oct. 25	Isaiah 25:6-9	Let Us Rejoice and Be Glad

## Weekday Bible Classes will meet in the Church Basement

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

Thursdays at 10:30 am	Thursdays at 7 pm
Book of Revelation	Angels
Pastor Rob Guenther	Pastor Jeffrey Bovee

## Council Digest

The Church Council met on Tuesday, September 15. The voters' assembly met for a special meeting on September 22. A summary of reports and action from those meetings follows:

- Membership changes approved

Transfers In

Dennis and Mary Caauwe from Risen Savior,  
Austin, TX

Clint and Jennifer Johnson; Tanner, Tori, Taya,  
Antioch, IL

Chad and Rachel Seelhammer; Ava from

Transfers Out

Taylor Fenske to St. Paul's, Muskego, WI

Laurel Hirschmann to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, WI

Timothy, Taytem from Faith,

NorthCross, Lakeville, MN

- Ministrations

- Weddings

- 22 Aug Gina Meyer and Cameron Maurer

- 25 Aug Stacy Hopp and Trevor Toltzman

- 12 Sep Rachael Kuck and Tyler Traeger

- Baptism

- 10 Sep Benjamin Gary Swenstad

- A Nominating Committee has been appointed to consider names of candidates for election and appointment to the council, various boards, and committees beginning with calendar year 2021. The committee is composed of those whose terms of office expire at the end of 2020 or who lead a group with anticipated vacancies for 2021. A list of candidates has been identified and Nominating Committee members will be contacting those individuals in the coming weeks, inviting them to consider service to the congregation in this way. If you are contacted, please prayerfully consider the opportunity to serve. If you have not been contacted and have an interest in serving, please contact St. John's president Steve Thiesfeldt as soon as possible. The list of nominees will be finalized at the October council meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> for consideration at the quarterly voters' meeting a week later.
- A significant portion of the meeting was used to consider the final draft of *Hope in the Lord*, a strategic plan developed on the basis of the *Ministry Review 2020* process. That final draft was shared with the voters at a special single-purpose meeting on Tuesday, September 22. Those present heard an explanation of the document and its connection to the *Ministry Review 2020* process with special emphasis on the analysis of the congregational survey conducted this past May. President Thiesfeldt described it as a "dynamic document" that will continue to evolve as the various studies it directs unfold.
- The document is based upon the message of the psalmist, "Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption" (Psalm 130:7). The following goals were identified for consideration by the congregation:
  1. Assemble a team of called workers that is well equipped and sufficient in number to meet the current spiritual needs of St. John's and to lead us in making full use of our current opportunities to share the Gospel with others. (Public Ministry)
  2. Provide facilities for worship, education, and fellowship that are commensurate with the size, scope, and spirit of St. John's ministry. (Facilities)
  3. Confirm and strengthen our commitment to support the educational ministries of St. Paul's Lutheran School, Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, and our synodical Ministerial Education system. (Christian Education)
- The voters endorsed the plan with the idea that some of the refinements to the document suggested at the meeting would be considered for inclusion and that key ideas will return to the voters for approval prior to implementation. The congregation will receive regular reports on the dynamic document as it continues to develop.
- Treasurer Paul Gunderson entertained questions on the budgeting process for 2021. All boards are expected to finalize their input prior to the October council meeting when the council will finalize a budget that will be presented to the voters for ratification a week later.
- Evangelism chair Bill Pekrul explained that the development of a pictorial directory for the congregation has been delayed. The photographer for the project has suspended photo sessions until further notice because of pandemic concerns.
- Scott Deters, reporting for the Board of Trustees, provided an update on an investigation into the repair of some stained-glass windows with varying degrees of damage. Fortunately, only one of the four will require attention at this time. He is meeting with various vendors to consider the addition of more hand sanitizing stations at various locations around the church facility.

Announcements:

- The next Church Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, at 7:00 p.m.
- The next quarterly voters' meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, at 7:00 p.m.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt, Congregational Chairman

## St. Paul's Lutheran School

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

### Opening Service

School began on Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup> with a Streamed Opening Service without visitors due to the restriction of Covid -19. Mr. Markgraf led the devotion in worship focusing on the theme, "Hope and a Future" It is based on Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future."*

The school year opened with 333 students enrolled in Grades PreK-8.

Although most classrooms are face-to-face at this time, there are a couple classrooms utilizing distance learning. CDC guidelines and recommendations for a safe learning environment make this year a challenge for students, parents, and teachers. Please keep students, parents, teachers and all the other workers including custodians, paraprofessionals, kitchen workers, and the school nurse in your prayers as they continue to be affected by the threat of the virus spreading across the country.

During this time, there is a limited sub pool to fill in for teachers if needed. When there is no substitute teacher available there will be a transition to distance learning for their classrooms. Distance learning will begin after a two day transition giving students time to pick up needed books and supplies.

If you are or know of a former MLC teacher who would be willing to sub, please contact the school at 507-359-2326. Substitutes must be willing to enter the classroom under the COVID conditions. Thank you for considering helping in this way.

If your child has been tested, please provide a copy of any positive results to the school nurse or office.

### Covid – Raider Kids Care

Raiders Kid Care is able to open for students **who have not been quarantined**, but their classroom has gone to distance learning. Please register ahead of time with Tim Plocher so that he can get your information and make plans for staffing at [ascsummer@splnewulm.org](mailto:ascsummer@splnewulm.org).

### Youth Activity Scholarships

The United Way of Brown County Area is offering Youth Activity Scholarships. The scholarships are designed to help cover the costs of activity fees. If you are awarded scholarships, you could

receive up to \$200 for the year. The award would cover up to 80% of the activity fee and up to 50% of the equipment costs.

If you are interested in applying for the scholarship, please call the school office.

### **Ministry Scholarship Fund Envelope**

If you haven't used the envelope in your offering envelope box for Ministerial Education Scholarship Fund (September), consider using it this month. The gifts in September/October will go toward the tuition of members of our congregation who are preparing for ministry at MLC or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. There are currently two member students at WLS and ten at MLC. Gifts to students at MLC are matched through the MLC Partnership Grant Program. \$500 gifts were currently provided to MLC for our current ministerial students enrolled. These result in a \$1000 Scholarship for those students from St. John's. MLC allows gifts up to \$1000 from congregations which would provide \$2000 Ministerial Grants for our students who enroll at MLC. Please give this your prayerful consideration.

### **Calendar**

Oct 15-16	No School
Oct 23	Kindergarten begin having classes on Fridays
Nov 6	Friday -No School – Teacher In-Service

Respectfully submitted,  
James L. Dretske, Staff Minister  
sm.dretske@gmail.com

## **LWMS Fall Rally**

Please join us for a presentation about the mission work being done in Nepal!

The MN Valley circuit of the LWMS will continue to have a rally this Fall on October 17, 2020, beginning at 9 am. This rally will be held at St. Paul's here in New Ulm, however it is actually being hosted by Emmanuel, Owatonna.

All social distancing regulations will be followed, and you will be asked to wear a mask.

Unfortunately, there will not be any food served, but you certainly are encouraged to go out for lunch with friends to make the most of this fellowship opportunity.

Babysitting will be provided, but please inform the reporter in your congregation if you will need that.

Your reporter is Carrie Schaefer. Please contact her if you wish to attend. Her contact information is carriehieb@yahoo.com OR 414-803-0702.

Hope to see you there!

## 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.

**Lexi Fischer** is one of the students who is receiving funds and is attending Martin Luther College.

### **What made you decide to become a pastor or a teacher?**

I've always known since I was little that I wanted to be a teacher. Growing up by New Ulm with campus nearby definitely made the decision to go to MLC easier. After going on multiple mission trips and working with kids it definitely solidified the decision of becoming a teacher.

### **How many years of school do you have left?**

3 Years

### **What class do you enjoy the most?**

I enjoy taking math classes.

### **What class do you find the most challenging?**

Any Science related classes are challenging for me

**Do you have a job while you're in school? If so, what do you do? How do you balance work and studies?** Yes, I work at Kwik Trip. I try to get all my homework done during the day between classes and then I work in the evening if I'm not in a sport at the time.

**What are your hobbies when you're not in class or studying (or at work)?** I like staying active. I play golf in the fall and softball in the spring which keeps me busy along with class and work.

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

I'd like to thank everyone for the support and encouragement as I continue my studies for the ministry at MLC. It makes staying focused and working hard on school much easier knowing that I have so many people who are supporting and encouraging me. Thank you.



## Church Library

Now that it is October, I wish to remind all that Reformation Day is coming on the 31st, and if you wish to bone up on your knowledge of Martin Luther and his life and times, know that our church library has more than a dozen books on Luther and the Reformation.

There are also a few books about Luther in the children's section. Also there are a few DVDs on Luther that can be checked out and watched at home. We thank the Lord for keeping Luther safe for enough years to see the solid start to the Reformation, 500 years ago.

We have 2 new fiction books to introduce this month. Jody Hedlund is the author of both. "The Preacher's Bride" takes place in 1659 in England. The woman Elizabeth saves a baby's life by finding a wet nurse for the baby when the mother dies. The father of the baby is a preacher who preaches about God's love and the Bible. He is in the middle between the Puritans, and the Anglicans, and gets arrested for preaching without a license. This book is loosely based on the life of John Bunyan, who was a preacher who wrote "Pilgrim's Progress" while spending 12 years in prison.

The other book by Jody Hedlund is "A Noble Groom." It takes place in Michigan in 1880. Annalise is a new widow waiting for a new husband to come from Germany, and can farm her homestead. Meanwhile, a man appears who wants to farm for her but seems to know nothing about farming. He is a noble who had an education. These farmers did not. But he is kind to all so what will Annalise do when the real farmer shows up?

Jody Hedlund also wrote a book about Mrs. Luther that we do not have in our library.

I announce here that we will not have a give-away for the videos in the library, since they seem to have disappeared. Sorry about that.

Have a good month, and I hope the school year is going well.

LeiLani Rahn,  
Church librarian

## MLC Ladies' Auxiliary

The MLC Food Bank continues to serve married students with basic non perishable foods, cleaning supplies and paper products. According to the manager, Judy Gosdeck, the shelves were nearly bare. There is a need for many donations because "there are quite a few more" people who will be coming in monthly for assistance. In addition to specific donations of purchased items, gift cards to local businesses and cash donations are greatly appreciated and then used by Mrs. Gosdeck to purchase items which are in short supply or great demand. Donations can be delivered to MLC or mailed. Please contact the college to make arrangements for deliveries. Mrs. Gosdeck also asked me to inform you that if you are a Thrivent member and would be willing to apply for a Thrivent grant, you could then use the grant money to shop for the items you want to donate. Any number of items you can donate will be appreciated. We would like to have the shelves filled as soon as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

Jeneane Thiesfeldt,  
thiesfjm@gmail.com or 507-240-4523

## Archives

### **“As the Twig is Bent So Grows the Tree”**

*- Alexander Pope, 1732*

A History of St. John's Lutheran Church  
New Ulm, MN  
Part 3

“He's a chip off the old block.”

“The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, does it?”

“When you said that you sounded just like your father.”

Children often exhibit the characteristics, mannerisms and even the turns of phrases that their parents have. The same can be said of mother/daughter congregations.

After examining a portion of the minutes of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, I compared what I had read to the traits of her daughter, St. John's (b. 1947).

St. Paul's history modeled for St. John's that the Gospel of Christ deserves our very best efforts.

- July 30, 1865 In a city established largely by Germans who wanted to ban organized religion and lawyers, Friedrich Boock invited like-minded Christians to meet in his house and establish what we know today as St. Paul's Lutheran Church. At the same meeting they voted to buy land and build a brick church building.
- 1869 After applying for membership in the Minnesota Synod, St. Paul's was willing to be corrected by God's Word and make a break with Calvinistic compromises. Consequently, they dropped “Reformed” from their name.
- 1882 The tornado of 1881 destroyed the steeple and roof of their 15-year-old church. Undaunted, the members built a second, larger church across the street (in St. Paul's present location).

After I had moved to New Ulm in 2001, Prof. Em. Arnold Koelpin, who had also served as mayor of New Ulm, graciously gave us a tour of the city. As he did, he shared some history. During one of the services St. Paul's held for laying a cornerstone, members of one of the local societies which opposed organized religion planned to disrupt it by marching around the worshippers with trumpets, drums and other loud instruments. This plan provided a rare moment of solidarity between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. When the Catholic priest heard of it, he told his flock to meet outside the Lutheran service on the appointed day and form a human perimeter to let the Lutherans worship in peace.

St. Paul's also passed on to its daughter congregation the urgency of thoroughly teaching the Gospel to its youth.

In the early years, religious education of the children fell to the pastors. Pastor Reim (served until 1882) and Pastor Albrecht (served 1882-1924) taught them on Saturdays and Sundays. Progress in establishing a Lutheran school was slow, but eventually some parents started a “Schulverein” (school society) and by August 1885, St. Paul's Lutheran School was established. Seventy-five students were being taught in the old church building which had been repaired since the tornado four years earlier. A new building and several renovations made room for the burgeoning number of children over the next 84 years. In the 1960s students remembered that during recess, several ball games overlapped each other on that T-shaped playground. It was no small wonder that there were no serious accidents! Finally in 1971, the present school on 126 S. Payne was built and in 1972, the old school building on the corner of Second Street North and State Street was razed. The enrollment in the fall of 1971 reached the peak of 400 (grades K-8) and was comprised of member children of both congregations.

In 1948, St. Paul's invited St. John's youth to attend their school tuition-free. In grateful response, the fledgling mission sent St. Paul's \$10 per student. By 1979 St. John's supported two teachers at St. Paul's School and budgeted \$55,000 to the Christian education of their children. Today St. Paul's School is subsidized by both congregational offerings and a tuition of about \$6,000 per grade school student.

In the fall of 2020, the enrollment is 332 (pre-K aged 3 through grade 8). Of those, St. John's has 101 children (of a possible 126) enrolled at St. Paul's School. In recent years about 12% of children enrolled in St. Paul's School have come from either families that belong to other denominations or are unchurched.

There is a place in our baptismal service when congregation members stand with the parents and sponsors of the baptized child and give its solemn word "to assist in whatever way possible so that (the baptized child) may remain a child of God until death." Together we say, "Yes, as God give me strength." After that we pray for the child's preservation in the faith. Supporting the education of our children through our regular weekly thank-offerings gives action to that vow and that prayer.

Rejoicing with you in our Great Heritage,  
Pastor em. Wayne Laitinen