



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

## The Anxiety Cure

A Fortress Article for June 2020

***“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”***

(Philippians 4:4-7)

“Is anxiety a sin?”

A friend from Wisconsin called me a few weeks ago. He wanted to know if anxiety was sinful. I read between that lines understanding that or someone in his family was anxious. Who can blame him, right? After all there's a lot to be anxious about right now, isn't there?

We can be anxious about our health. “Will I contract COVID-19? And if I do, will I recover? What about my aging parents?! They're high risk! Will a vaccination do anything to help? Will they find a cure?”

We can be anxious about our relationships. “I don't know if I can take another day cooped up with these same people I live with!” “I know I shouldn't have said that. Will my family member forgive me?” “I feel so lonely in this assisted living facility. When can I have visitors again?”

We can be anxious about the economy. “What if the economy never recovers? What will become of my retirement?” “Will my small business survive this? What about my paycheck?” “Will I be able to pay my bills? Or will this bring about my financial ruin?”

We can be anxious about worship. “When will I get to gather with my fellow believers in worship again?” “Will we be able to sing when we do?” “Will Pastor Guenther still make us confirmands go through public examination?” (The answer to that last one is “Yes,” by the way.) ☺

There is so much to be anxious about right now! So, “Is anxiety a sin?” I told my friend I thought it was. Here's what I wrote him:

I guess my short answer is, “Yes, anxiety is a sin.” It's hard to say otherwise when God gives a direct prohibition against it: **“Do not be anxious about anything.”** (Philippians 4:6) Cf. also Proverbs 12:25, Ecclesiastes 11:10, or do a search at BibleGateway.com for “worry,” which is probably a synonym for anxiety. See how often Jesus himself says, **“Do not worry.”** A woman I know always tried the loophole, “I'm not worried; I'm just very concerned.” And I suppose there's some truth to the fact that we can be *concerned* about something without being *worried* or *anxious*. But there's a fine line there. In the end, worry or anxiety really says, “I don't trust you to deal with this or to work it for my good, God.”

And yet, of all the sins, anxiety seems pretty prevalent right now, doesn't it? In fact, I read somewhere that in Australia deaths by suicide have outnumbered deaths by COVID-19 since March of this year. That's a strong testament to the power of worry and anxiety! But of course, what makes

this anxiety all the worse is that it's sin. And that sin separates us from our God. And who of us has ever been immune to worry or anxiety?

Don't worry though. (See what I did there?) There's a cure for anxiety. There's a cure for worry. There's a cure for our sin. And I didn't leave my friend hanging with the law. Here's how my response to him continued:

But thankfully, when God gives the prohibition against worry or anxiety, he also gives the remedy: ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”***

(Philippians 4:6-7) And thank God that Jesus' blood covers our sins of worry and anxiety that at times seem so central to who we are! Thank God that we're really sinless saints in his sight through Jesus' work for us!

We know that we are forgiven in Christ, who never worried, but perfectly trusted the Father in everything all the time. We know our sins of anxiety, worry, and doubt have all been removed by Jesus who took them to the cross and paid the hell they earned. We know that we have peace with God no matter what happens to our health, the economy, or any other relationship. We know that we are going to heaven one day soon because of the One who left heaven for a time to come rescue us. We know that the Lord is near; right here with us all the time, caring for us as he sees fit. We know that the Lord is near; his return is imminent, and with it, our full rescue!

And because we know these things, we can rejoice—always! We can rejoice even should we or a loved one contract COVID-19. We can rejoice even should the economy crumble and we are forced to rely on the charity of others to stay alive. We can rejoice even if we lose every earthly blessing or every loved one that we hold so dear. ***“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard [our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus.”***

***Have we trials and temptations?***

***Is there trouble anywhere?***

***We should never be discouraged—***

***Take it to the Lord in prayer.***

***Can we find a friend so faithful***

***Who will all our sorrows share?***

***Jesus knows our every weakness—***

***Take it to the Lord in prayer.*** (CW 411:2)

I'm praying for you, saints, for your physical, mental, and especially your spiritual health in these anxious times! And I'm rejoicing with you that we have the cure for anxiety—the same cure for despair, sin, death, and hell—our Savior, Jesus!

Your servant in Him,

Pastor Guenther

## Church Library News

How was your spring? Spending time inside is not the easiest. And yet, some of the flowering trees have been beautiful in May. Now we are back to mowing our lawns.

I am introducing two new books this month. The first is called “Islam, Prophesized in Genesis” by Dennis Avi Lipkin, AKA Victor Mordecai. He is a Jew living in Jerusalem who feels that Jews and Christians should join forces against Islam which is out to destroy the world. For instance, he says that Allah Akbar means “Allah is Greater.” Greater than God. He uses prophecies found in Genesis to show how Islam considers Ishmael rather than Isaac as the promised son, and other ideas. So Islam is the opposite of Judeo-Christian ideas, and the work of the devil. The second book is more of a booklet. The “Monk Who Conquered Rome” is an overview of Martin Luther’s life by John V. Moldenhauer. It seems it would be good for a review, or a teaching tool, and perhaps it was one earlier.

You may check out books each weekday from 8 am until 1 pm as well as during the weekend when the church is open for worship.

Have a great summer!

LeiLani Rahn,  
Church librarian

## June Sermon Texts

June 7	2 Corinthians 13:11-14	Receive the Blessings of Our Triune God
June 14	Deuteronomy 11:18-28	Let God’s Word be Your Constant Guide
June 21	Matthew 9:9-13	The Best Health Care Plan
June 28	Exodus 19:2-8	You will be God’s Treasured Possession

## Upcoming Bible Classes

Sundays at 7 pm	<i>Screwtape Letters</i>	Pastor Rob Guenther
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# Stewardship

At its May meeting, the Stewardship Board reviewed the offerings received in the eight weeks since suspension of corporate worship. Contributions have been received at about eighty-five percent of budgeted need. While we were disappointed that we had not been able to gather for worship for two months, we are nevertheless encouraged that the grace of God has shown itself in the ability of his people to financially support congregational ministry efforts at St. John's during this time of widespread unemployment and economic downturn.

We share the confidence of the apostle Paul, "God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work" (2 Co 9:8 EHV).

We also discussed the Wish List; there really is none at this time as there are currently no items on it. Part of this is due to the ongoing work of the Campus Facilities Task Force. The most recent projects have been completed: the handbells and timpani have been delivered and the organ upgrades have been installed. Contributions that were received after the fulfillment of the handbells have been applied toward sheet music for them.

Because we strive to maintain a variety of projects on the Wish List that are not funded through the normal budgetary process, members who would like to suggest an item are encouraged to obtain a submission form from the church office.

Dan Borgwardt,  
Stewardship chairman

# Council Digest

The St. John's Church Council met on May 19. The council hosted the members of the St. Paul's Church Council for a joint council meeting, held semi-annually between the two congregations. The historic purposes of these meetings include mutual communication, encouragement, and cooperation. Pastor Rob Guenther, of St. John's, led the opening and closing devotions. Attendees heard reports from Pastor Nathan Scharf of St. Paul's, Pastor Rob Guenther of St. John's, Principal Peter Markgraf of St. Paul's School, and Administrative Teacher James Dretske of St. John's. A summary of topics addressed follows:

In addition to the partnership we share in the operation of St. Paul's Lutheran School, the two congregations cooperate in a variety of activities.

Those activities are organized under the name

John and Paul Ministries (see the website for updates at [www.johnandpaulministries.com](http://www.johnandpaulministries.com)). The group's goal is to host 10 annual events with a primary focus on outreach. As reported by St. John's Board of Evangelism chair Bill Pekrul from a report by John and Paul Ministries coordinator Beth Scharf, here is a list of targeted activities for a typical year:

## **January** Winter Carnival

In 2020, Winter Carnival was held at St. Paul's School with over 300 attending. Information was offered on our school, our churches, MVL, and upcoming events.

## **February** MLC Early Childhood Center Event I

This event awaits approval from the committee overseeing the Early Childhood Center. The focus of the event is to model storytelling and leading devotions for parents of young children.

#### **April** Easter for Kids

This event went well in 2019 (2020 was canceled because of the pandemic). The Easter message was proclaimed through a series of traditional activities.

#### **May** Community Picnic

The earliest opportunity for this event would be in 2021. A community picnic could be coordinated with a Friendship Sunday or a Bible Information Class launch, as well as provide an opportunity to promote the blessings of our Lutheran elementary school.

#### **June** Soccer Camp

In 2019, Soccer Camp filled to capacity. Each child received soccer items and a Bible. Pastors from both churches led devotions and Pastor Bovee, a worship sing-a-long. Soccer Camp 2020 has been canceled due to CoVID-19 restrictions.

#### **July 2021** Vacation Bible School and Family Bible Nights

St. John's hosts a Vacation Bible School over 3-4 consecutive days. St. Paul's holds 3 weekly Family Bible Nights on Wednesday evenings in late July and early August. In each case, attendance hovers around 100.

#### **August 2021** Early Childhood Center Event II

This proposed event would be held on the Early Childhood Center grounds and serve as a "welcome back to school," recruitment-themed event. Currently, ministry staff from both congregations present a children's devotion at the center each Tuesday morning and have been guest preachers for the Christmas programs at the Center.

#### **September 2021** Summer Send-Off (*Back to School Block Party*)

We have not held this event yet. There was a plan to launch this event in 2019 on the school grounds, but construction delays made it impractical. A joint worship service was in the works as part of the event. Friendship Sunday could follow the next weekend to correspond with the start of Bible information classes.

#### **October 2021** Trunk or Treat

This event enjoyed large attendance from the New Ulm area over the past two years. Visitors toured our Lutheran Elementary School and rubbed shoulders with members and ministry staff from both churches.

#### **December 2021** Christmas for Kids and Christmas for Families

These events were held on different weekends at the respective churches. One event featured a "drop off" approach; the other, a "family" approach.

At the last joint meeting, considerable time was devoted to discussion of the school support formula used to determine St. John's share of operational costs at St. Paul's School. Following a period of dialogue between representatives of the two congregations, St. Paul's presented a plan that bases support levels on a current cost per student of approximately \$5,000 plus \$1,000 for ongoing capital expenses. St. John's share of the cost would be calculated using its average five-year K-8 student enrollment minus the amount paid for our teachers on the school staff. Recognizing that the application of this formula results in a substantial increase for St. John's as a congregation, it would be phased in over a five-year period. Details will be shared with our voters at the next quarterly meeting after the council has had an opportunity to study the plan more carefully.

Both congregations shared modifications and accommodations implemented as a result of the current pandemic. Plans are being developed to resume a more traditional approach to ministry as soon as circumstances allow.

The next joint meeting will be hosted by St. Paul's and was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 17.

After the St. Paul's council was dismissed for the evening, the St. John's council continued with an abbreviated regular meeting. A summary of reports and action not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

Membership changes approved

Transfers In

Jonathan and Karen Ladner from Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, MN

President Thiesfeldt provided an update on the progress of our *Ministry Review 2020*. The every-member survey was distributed via email on May 14 and will remain open through the end of the month. As of the date of the meeting, 100 responses had been received. Boards were asked to review the final survey results at a June meeting, conduct any follow up investigation, and use the data as they prepare any recommendations related to the ministry review process. The council will continue its development of a strategic plan with a primary focus on staffing and facilities through the summer months. The council discussed and tentatively supported the idea of a special voters' meeting in September to share the results of the plan. **Please contact the church office at 354-6744 if you would like a hard copy of the survey.**

Board of Youth and Education Chair Heath Dobberpuhl reported that recognition of teacher Jean Schroeder's 40th anniversary and retirement from the teaching ministry will be held during a regular worship service once we are able to resume face to face worship opportunities.

The Elders, assisted by the Worship Committee, have begun an investigation of transitioning to a new hymnal. The cost of the books is estimated at \$17,500; the cost of accompanying digital materials is not yet available. Voters will have an opportunity to approve a transitional plan and related costs at the October voters' meeting. The pastors also consulted with the Elders to develop a plan to offer communion to our members by appointment should social distancing restrictions remain in place for an extended period of time.

Board chairman Scott Deters, representing the Trustees, reported that trash pick is being shifted to an "on-call" basis for the summer in an effort to save on costs. The repair and refinishing of the basement floor is about 90% complete. Major repairs were required to a main water line and related water damage in the house being rented at 601 S. Washington.

Pastor Guenther reported in his role as an MVL delegate and noted that Rev. Tom Westendorf has been called part-time to teach three sections of sophomore religion for the 2020-21 school year. We await his decision. Donated site work for future parking expansion and the new gymnasium location will begin next week in anticipation of eventual completion of the current master plan. Discussion of a 1:1 digital device policy is underway at the high school.

As a part of the *Ministry Review 2020* process, the Board of Youth and Education has proposed that the separate Board of Child Discipleship representative to the St. Paul's Board of Child Discipleship be moved from pilot status to a permanent position as a voting member of the St. John's Church Council with advisory responsibilities to the St. John's Board of Youth and Education. The recommendation requires a change in our constitution. The council will react to the proposal at its June meeting.

The following schedule was set for future meetings:

Next regular council meeting - Tuesday, June 16, 7 pm.

Next voters' meeting – Tuesday, July 28, 7 pm.

Submitted by Steven Thiesfeldt, Congregational president

# St. Paul's Lutheran School

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

### **Calls/Staffing**

--Mrs. Emily Stoering accepted the call to teach 5th/6th grades and direct choir.

--The BOCD recommends to the SP Council to allow a Flexible Call from 60%-100% including Teacher and Teacher assistant depending on enrollment into the PreK program over the summer.

-- Jean Schroeder ended her 40th school year being awarded the KEYC Golden Apple Award. A special anniversary service/reception is being planned for when church services are allowed. We thank God for providing called workers who bring the message of salvation along with academics to the next generation.

--Mr. Dretske was thanked for his service to the BOCD and the school for the past twenty-two years. Mr. Dretske accepted the call to be Staff Minister at St. John's.

--Mrs. Connie Weilage, the PM PreK para accepted a position at MLC Early Childhood Learning Center. The church bulletin recently announced the need to hire a teacher assistant to fill this position.

### **Sevis Registration for International Students**

The BOCD recommends to continue paying the biennial fee to allow the enrollment of international students. The school passed inspection in the last two years and hopes to offer enrollment to potential international students.

### **Kindergarten Enrollment**

Currently thirty-two students have registered for Kindergarten for the 2020-21 school year.. The BOCD will monitor the enrollment numbers and entertain a recommendation to add a para if the enrollment increases.

### **Basketball Court**

Construction has begun on a 50' x 50' basketball court south of the parking lot. Various grass-intended areas of the school property were hydroseeded. Once the Basketball court is completed, work will be done to put the top layer of asphalt on the main parking lot, followed by line striping and signage updates to regulate traffic flow.

### **Registration Day**

TBD - Watch the bulletin for information on dates to be determined.

### **School Calendar 2020-21**

Although the calendar has been adopted, the BOCD will be monitoring the Covid situation and adjust dates if necessary. The anticipated start to the school year is September 1st. With a start before Labor Day, a Friday/Monday school closure is planned.

### **Calendar**

Aug	Registration and Pictures TBD
Sep 1	First Day of School: 8:20 Opening Service
Sep 4 & 7	NO School: Labor Day Weekend

Respectfully Submitted, James Dretske, SJ Administrative Teacher  
jdretske@splnewulm.org

## **Sending Offerings through Bill Pay**

Several members of St. John's have asked if there is a way for them to make their weekly offerings automatically either online or by an automatic bank transaction.

St. John's is investigating our online giving options, but are not yet ready to receive online gifts. For the time being, we suggest that our members consider using your bank's online Bill Pay service to make weekly or monthly gifts to St. John's.

If you have questions about using Bill Pay to make donations, please contact Financial Secretary Mike Thom at 507-217-7671.

## **Thank God for the Mother Who Brought Us into the World**

History of St. John's Lutheran Congregation, New Ulm  
Part 1

Above the doors of St. John's main entrance (behind the balcony) are a set of three stained glass windows. They are best seen at night when they are lighted from inside.

For now, I would draw your attention to the window on the left.

Here you will see the full armor of God mentioned in Ephesians 6. Can you find...

...the belt of truth?  
...the breastplate of righteousness?  
...ancient footwear of the readiness of the Gospel of peace?  
...the shield of faith?  
...the helmet of salvation?  
...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God?  
...that ancient dragon, the devil, who is slain by the sword of the Spirit?

The symbolism of the sword of the Spirit in this window serves a double purpose in St. John's history.

First of all, it cements our unity with the Christian church throughout the ages. For centuries Christian churches were positioned so that the altar faced toward the east, where the rising of the sun indicated the dawn of a new day. Quite appropriately, the west end of the church indicated the close of the day. Thus the theme of west windows often portrayed the close of this tired world's history - the Last Days. During this time we can survive the schemes of the devil, our fallen nature and the corrupt influences of society only when we put on the full armor of God. The sword of the Spirit is THE essential weapon the Spirit uses to sustain our faith.

The second reason why St. John's incorporated the image of the sword into our west window is a tribute to our recent history. Throughout the centuries, the Christian church has used the image of a sword for St. Paul, since he used the phrase "sword of the Spirit" in his epistles. In this window St. John's Congregation also gives thanks to God for the earthly mother who brought us to life and sustained us in our infancy.



- St. Paul's Lutheran Church, New Ulm.

Next month, we will dig into a brief overview of how Lutheranism got started in New Ulm and a quick overview of our "alma mater" (nourishing mother).

May the quiet, settled peace of Jesus rule your hearts!

Pastor em. Wayne Laitinen

## OWLS

### OWLS PLANS FOR 2020 RESTART

As one of the most vulnerable sections of the population to the coronavirus pandemic, The OWLS have not met recently; nor will OWLS meet either in June or July. Safe plans for the opening up of America are still in process of being developed and negotiated under our Governor's guidance and all eyes still need to be focused on the rate of progress or regress by the virus as it works its way into rural America. Another very disappointing meeting casualty for us is the planned and exciting prospect of hosting the Annual National OWLS Convention in October. We were to have been its hosts. We were looking forward to greeting the many senior friends it would have brought to New Ulm from far places. We were also eager to hear the special topics and speakers that the Annual Convention is able to schedule. The gathering would have centered at MLC during the college's fall break and lodging accommodations would have been furnished to our guests at a motel. Business arrangements had to be cancelled quite early to avoid forfeitures; and plain courtesy to busy presenters required timely cancellation, as well. Health officials were consulted carefully about the advisability of our fall meeting for seniors and were unanimous and decisive in advising against it. The OWLS national board and other OWLS officers felt the need to agree and just last week sent out the letters of cancellation nationally, together with other concerns caused by cancellation that will be addressed in later congregational monthly newsletters.

The currently scheduled OWLS meeting dates, as well as the cancellations of previously scheduled meetings, follows:

June 8: The previously scheduled meeting is cancelled.

July 13: The tentatively scheduled German Park Music date plus root beer floats at St. Paul's is also cancelled. The park location is actually still under construction.

August 10: The 4:00 p.m. OWLS picnic at Gerald and Geraldine Steffen's house and backyard will mark the resumption of 2020 OWLS meetings! We may be meeting earlier than 4:00 pm for backyard games in the Steffen's inviting backyard. Watch for announcements. The Steffens live at 1415 N. Minnesota Street.

September 14: Noon potluck followed by a Scrip Presentation and a Bible discussion of Pandemic Issues: Where is God When It Hurts? Who deserves credit or blame? etc.

Who is invited to attend? St Paul's and St. John's seniors, as well as other area congregation seniors are cordially invited to come as they can. Watch for topics of interest to you but recognize that even just chatting with your sisters and brothers can be an opportunity to expand others and your own shrinking horizons. Sharing and receiving friendly support as age marches swiftly onward and before it surprises us with lethargy or poor mobility is good seniors practice. See you at the August picnic! We'll keep everybody informed!

Dar Raddatz

# Central Africa Medical Mission

Last month's newsletter ended with the Psalm 121:8, "The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." That verse is a relevant promise for the Lutheran Mobile Clinic. The last Friday in March was the final clinic visit before our work in villages outside Lilongwe was put on hold. As was mentioned, the inevitability of the COVID-19 pandemic reaching Malawi was upon us. Our clinic staff had worked for 2 weeks to enforce handwashing, spacing between patients, limiting patients in the buildings, and teaching the measures needed to protect against the virus, while carrying out our usual busy days in malaria season with hundreds of patients gathered to be cared for. It was agreed by them and the CAMM committee that our mobile work could pose a risk of spreading the coronavirus. We needed to wait to see what would happen and to think and pray about how and when to continue our work safely. Gary and I had been advised to try to get a flight out of Malawi, but it was canceled when the government stopped all air travel in and out as of April 1. We had thought we'd be staying, and began preparing to spend many weeks in isolation. As it turned out, God opened the door to us being on the last flight out of the country on March 31 and we safely arrived in Wisconsin April 1st. The next day, the first cases of COVID-19 started to officially appear in Malawi. As of this writing, there have been 39 patients with positive tests and three deaths reported. However, testing is limited, and it appears to be spreading within the urban communities.

The "going" was difficult. Having to stop our operations, communicate with everyone involved, make sure all government reports were finished, and ensure all of our staff would still continue to be paid—those physical tasks had to be done in a very short space of time. But it was the emotion of leaving many dear people who were experiencing the same fears we were, and not knowing when we could return that was hardest. Our staff had told us that they were concerned about our safety with the virus so widespread in the US. They were more worried for us than themselves, and promised to pray for us. God did watch over us on the journey and we are healthy, keeping isolated, yet with projects to keep us busy, and much communication and decision-making to do. We regularly check in with our staff and they keep us updated on how the government and their communities are handling the crisis. So far, they are keeping well and some are busy harvesting their maize.

Gary and I are so thankful for our supportive mission family in Malawi. Pastor Mark Panning and Mrs. Mindy Holtz agreed to help out with the financial oversight and banking that had to take place to be sure our house, clinic and village staff continued to be paid. Miss Jere, our head nurse, and our driver, Mr. Supu, took the monthly reports to the District Health Office and saved copies for our files. We had wanted to find a way for some of our epilepsy patients to receive the monthly medicine they needed, as the local government health centers often don't often have it. We asked our new clinician, Alfred Nkhoma, to go with Mr. Supu to two government health centers closest to our villages, and give them some of the needed medicines from our pharmacy supply, which were gratefully received. Pastor Beza at Mwalaulomwe had reported that albino patients were coming to look for sunscreen which we normally supply. Mr. Supu and Alfred also dropped off bottles of sunscreen with Pastor Beza, who agreed to distribute them. We heard from Lozias Sinoya, our registrar, that one of our Health Surveillance Assistants, a government employee, is continuing weekly under-fives vaccinations and assisting family planning clients at Msambo. We pray that the Lord protects and provides for our patients and staff during this time.

One of the blessings of being isolated is having time for on-line church services and Bible studies. During a recent Bible study, I was reminded of a verse in Isaiah, chapter 43. The Lord is speaking to his redeemed people in this chapter and reminding them not to be afraid. Verse 4 states, "Since you are precious and honored in my sight and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and other people in exchange for your life." It was a reminder of God's love for us regardless of what we accomplish, and that running the Lutheran Mobile Clinic successfully is not dependent on Gary, me or any individual. It is God's grace that allows us to continue this mission and provides the means to do it. Meanwhile in Zambia, the Lutheran Rural Health Center staff are continuing their daily clinic work and are busy preparing for COVID-19. We pray God spares Mwembezhi from this virus, while we ask for

guidance for our “coming” back to Malawi in His timing. Thank you for your continued support and prayers. God bless and keep you.

Yours in Christ,  
Beth and Gary Evans