

March 2017

Jesus Came for This Hour

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. ³⁴ The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?" ³⁵ Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. ³⁶ Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. (John 12:27-36)

Many times in life, we anxiously wait for a particular moment. Maybe it is waiting for the show to begin. Maybe it is waiting for the phone to ring or a text to pop up to know if you got the job or to know how the outcome of an operation a loved one is undergoing or to know if the baby has been born or to know if a loved one got home okay while dealing with inclement weather.

Perhaps such anxious events from our own lives can begin to give us a sample of all that Jesus endured for us. You see, Jesus was not only waiting for a particular moment, he knew exactly what he would have to go through to get there. He knew that he was about to be arrested, falsely tried, mocked, beaten, spit upon, crucified and worst of all, that he would be rejected by God and man while bearing the sins of the world on his own shoulders. However, he also knew that once he had gone through that terrible ordeal, the world would be saved from eternal death and damnation. What a glorious hour that would be!

Jesus said, **"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour."** Jesus was fully human. Don't ever think that just because he is also true God that his suffering did not bother him. It was even worse for him, not necessarily because the physical pain was more intense, but because he knew exactly what was about to happen, and because his death and substitutionary sacrifice were totally foreign to his divine nature. He is immortal God, and yet he had to die. He is without sin, and yet he had to carry what he despised the most, the sins of the world, on his shoulders. And yet, Jesus was willing to endure, not only death, but also damnation for you and me. He was willing for he knew what he would accomplish through his atoning work. Jesus speaks of it here when he says: **Father, glorify your name!"**

He had come to bring glory to the name of his Heavenly Father. He did this, first of all, by living a perfect life in our place.

Some years ago there was an incident where a young man who didn't do very well in school, was accidentally confused with another person, having the same name. The other young man was a genius. You can imagine the surprise of the first young man when, wondering whether he would even graduate, received a report card which indicated that he had gotten all A's. That is what Jesus did for us, except that it was no mistake. Jesus' sinless life has been put to our credit so that we are faultless before the throne of God.

Jesus also brought glory to his Father's name by paying for our sins with his own blood. God created us to love him and to live in perfect fellowship with him. However, our sin destroyed that perfect relationship and separated us from God. Jesus came to reconcile us to God. When God was about to pulverize us with the club of his just anger for the wrong we have done, Jesus pushed us aside and took the punishment for us. Jesus told the crowd that he would be lifted up from the earth, and indeed he was. He was nailed to a cross and lifted up -- to the Jews the symbol of being cursed by God. And there Jesus hung, suspended between heaven and earth, rejected by men who condemned him falsely and damned by God who condemned him justly, not because of his own sin, but because of our sin which caused him to cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus Christ was lifted up from the earth having borne the sins of every sinner who ever walked upon the face of this sin-cursed earth.

But by that perfect death, Jesus won life for us all. He himself said: **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."** Yes, Jesus had to die, one person for all people. However, by his single life, which was perfect, by his single death in our place, and by his resurrection from death, he has given life to the world. Jesus is the one Seed who died to produce a harvest with an abundance of grain for God. We are that harvest.

St. Paul expressed it this way in Galatians 4:4-5: **But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.** The time had come – God's time. All that he had promised was fulfilled when Jesus came to this earth to live and die for us.

During this season of Lent we remember the time when Jesus fully met the requirements of the Law in our place, and how he fully paid the debt for all our sins by his death in our place. The humiliation and death of our Savior means exaltation and life for you and me. As we come to worship during this Lenten season, we shall hear again the familiar story of our Lord's Passion. May we also remember and take to heart the words of our Lord who said: **"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"** The hour of glory has come for us all. Let us bring glory to the name of the Father trusting that because Jesus was lifted up from the earth on the cursed cross, we shall be lifted up in exaltation before God's throne. We shall walk as the children of light. For though he was rejected by God on the cross, by his death he has drawn all people to himself and we are reconciled to God. The hour has come, and that hour is the hour of our victory over Satan, sin and death, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

From Your Staff Minister

March 1st is Ash Wednesday and thus begins another season of Lent. Let us rejoice in the victory that is won for us through Christ's perfect life, innocent suffering, and death that pays for our sins. We have the opportunity to attend midweek worship services beginning on March 1st and the five following Wednesdays at 4 pm and 6 pm. Dinner will be provided between 4:45 pm and 6:00 pm.

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."
(Ro. 8:1-2)

Kelly Emde

Your Synod at Work

WELS ANNUAL REPORT

Every year about this time our column reviews information that is contained within the pages of the WELS Annual Report to members. 2017 will not be an exception. There is a lot of material in the Annual Report and we'll do our best to highlight some of the important information.

WELS is the third largest Lutheran church body in the United States with 1,270 churches, 369,221 baptized members, and 293,228 communicant members. They support work in mission fields in the United States and in countries around the world. WELS is a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, an organization of 24 confessional church bodies throughout the world. They are headquartered at N16W23377 Stone Ridge Drive in Waukesha, Wisconsin. They can be contacted by phone at 414-256-3888 or by the internet at wels.net.

Our first review column on the Annual Report will focus on the financial picture. For the 2015-16 fiscal year, Congregation Mission Offerings plus bequests, foundation grants, and other gifts funded \$29.1 million of ministry programs and services. In addition, there were gifts of \$3.1 million that were received from the "One in Christ" special debt elimination offering. These gifts, along with allocation of synod support, resulted in the debt being paid off in December of 2016.

Annual growth of 3.5 percent in Congregation Mission Offerings is necessary to keep pace with cost increases. Unfortunately, in 2016, the Congregation Mission Offerings was 0.3 percent below commitments from congregations and 2.1 percent below prior year receipts. However, increases in operating costs such as wages, benefits, insurance, and utilities continue to outpace the growth of CMO. As a result, special gifts, the elimination of debt payments, and other cost savings are necessary to sustain ministries at current levels. CMO growth of more than 3.5 percent or special gifts would allow for the expansion of support programs for congregations, missions, and ministerial education schools.

Of course, WELS is thankful for the support of congregations and members and ask God's continued blessing on efforts to most efficiently and effectively utilize available resources.

We will have more on the annual report next month.

Gerald Woodley

St. Paul's Lutheran School

BoCD Work (SP Board of Child Discipleship)

Ministry prioritization Board Preliminary **Prioritization for Budget** areas to include 1) an amount of \$5000 toward Technology funding; and 2) an amount of \$4000 to replace an amount being paid by a different source that off-set the cost of a present full-time paraprofessional on staff. These items will be presented to the St. Paul's Council for preparation of a budget. Once all ministries submit prioritization needs, a request will be made to finalize prioritizations according to numbers that match projections of need at the school verses final budget numbers expected at the church. Items added to the school expense budget will affect St. John's according to the school formula.

Enrollment remains at 272 in K-8 with the loss and addition of a student in January. PreK enrollment is at 38. The annual Kindergarten Roundup on February 27-28 provides us with a projection of next year's class sizes. We sent out 60 invitations to members and pre-k contacts. A number of prospects for grades 1-8 have inquired about transferring to St. Paul's either during the second semester or for at the beginning of the next school year. It's always difficult to predict, but it seems enrollment will increase again next year after declining from 281 to 272 this year.

School Improvement Project: With gifts totaling about \$1,750,000 at the present time and expenses of about \$450,000 paid, there is a current balance of about \$1,300,000. St. Paul's church Building Fund committee is working on ways to communicate the need to more stakeholders of the school. Kevin Yager gave presentations to visitors to the Lutheran School Week VIP day activities. An appeal to alumni is being made as well as an effort to add names to the current list of alumni.

Tuition – There was a recommendation to raise the tuition \$30. St. John's Bd of Ed. will be discussing the Tuition Off-Set in their March and April meetings and bring a recommendation to the council and voters in April.

MNSAA– The final year of the present year of MNSAA accreditation has been approved with compliance as the current self-study is in place to renew MNSAA accreditation in 2018. Committees are busy working on verifying with documentation the current standards and will continue to do so throughout the calendar year. The Steering Committee is finalizing surveys for current stakeholders that will be made available in various formats.

MLC Basketball Tournament

The basketball season concluded with the MLC Tournament on February 17-19. Both the 7-8th Girls team and the 8th grade Boys team finished with the 1st Place Trophies. Both won

in the final matches with Mt. Olive, Mankato in the Championship game. The boys won in overtime in an exciting matchup. Thanks to all who support the St. Paul's Raiders! Both teams competed in the Minnesota Lutheran Schools State Basketball Tournament on the weekend of February 24-26. The 7-8th Girls placed 3rd and the 8th grade Boys placed 5th.

MVL Music Festival

Some of our young musicians will be participating at the MVL Music Festival on Saturday, March 4. Students will perform solo, duet, or larger ensemble pieces on piano or band instruments. This is not a competition, but the participants will perform before a judge. Afterwards, the judges will meet with the students to discuss their performance.

School Musical

The Raider Choir will be presenting "*Krazy Kamp*" this year on March 17-18. Mrs. Ring, Mrs. Schone, Mrs. Balza, and Mrs. Schoenherr are working with over fifty - 6th through 8th grade students on the musical. The musical is open to the public and will be funded through a free-will collection. An "Italian Bistro" meal is being planned by the Social Committee on Saturday evening before the musical performance. Details are being published in the church bulletins and Raider Record. Call the office for reservations.

Band Concert – Grades 3-4 Musical

The Raider Band and Jr. Band will be performing in the Band concert portion of the evening of March 23rd. Grades 3 & 4 will be performing the musical, "I Need a Vacation." Come and join us for an evening of music.

Calendar

- Mar. 4 MVL Music Festival
- Mar. 12 Jr. Choir sings at 11 am
- Mar 15 Grades K-4 sing at 4 pm
- Mar 17-18 Raider Choir Musical at 7 pm
- Mar 23 Band Concert/Grades 3-4 Musical at 7 pm
- Mar 31 NO School

School's website: www.splnewulm.org/school

Respectfully submitted,
James L. Dretske,
Administrative Teacher: jdretske@splnewulm.org

Archives

Miscellany

Archives articles for the next few months will recall items from service bulletins, newsletters, and council and congregational minutes from 60, 50, 25, 10, and 1 years ago. Items reported do not necessarily coincide with the time of the year. For the earliest years not all those sources are as complete as for later years. St. John's was organized in January 1948, and thus these miscellaneous items involve a congregation that is part of God's

Kingdom of Grace—making what is reported more than just trivia. Hope you will find them interesting and that they might bring back some memories for some.

1957, Pastor was Rollin Reim. Services—still in the basement Church—were held at 8:00 and 10:00 on Sundays with Sunday school at 9:00; communion was celebrated once per month with registration on the previous Friday. The parsonage was at 517 S Washington. The parsonage phone number was 2005 and the church 955. Mention was made throughout the year regarding planning for the congregation’s tenth anniversary and a special service and banquet to be held in January 1958.

1967, Pastor was Frederick Nitz. Services were held at 8:30 and 10am with Sunday school at 8:30 September to June; a single service at 9am June through August; communion on the last Sunday of the month with registration on the previous Friday. The superstructure had been dedicated on Dec. 11, 1966 and a one-year anniversary was held in December.

1992, Pastor was David Kolander; David Zabel was Director of Christian Education. Beginning in February Council meeting agendas specified the time of each item and also for congregation meetings beginning in July. In August the Council approved the creation of an extra-budgetary fund (Home Operations Reserve Fund—HORA) to allow for gifts and other income to provide for shortages in general operations funds and special expenditures.

2007, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske. A change to the by-laws of the constitution was presented at the April voters’ meeting and approved in July that Board members, members of the Finance Committee, and members of any other standing committee shall receive their office by appointment. Nominating procedure and terms of office were also spelled out.

2016, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske. Staff ministry student, Michael Martens (our present Staff Minister Intern) began doing his early field experience at St. John’s in March.

To be continued.
Bob Krueger

Stewardship

Sometimes it’s good to get back to the basics. When the whirlwind of holiday events and celebrations is over, it’s a good time to take stock of the past year and prepare for the coming year. For some this means remembering its blessings; for others, sorrowing over its setbacks.

Whether rejoicing or sorrowing, however, God is there with us. He was here “in the beginning.” He created it all. When “the earth was formless and empty, [and] darkness was over the surface of the deep, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be’ . . . And there was . . .” (Genesis 1:2,3).

All it takes is a word from God's mouth and there it is. He created it, owns it, and loans it to us for our use. In addition, all the time, he is there with us; never will he leave us (Hebrews 13:5). God has forgiven our past sins, and there is no cause for worry over what the New Year will bring, for God has already been there.

Each of us can make a new beginning; in fact, each day, each moment, can be a new beginning. God promises to provide for all our needs. Paul wrote, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Believing this promise, we do not need to fear for our futures, financial or otherwise. We can afford to be generous givers because we are covered by God's promise to care for us.

By God's grace, let us make that new beginning. May we live according to God's plan for us and manage the vast resources he has loaned to us to the best of our abilities. May we honor him in all we say, in the way we live, and through our generous offerings as we work to make his name known.

Josiah Stoering

Church Council Digest

The St. John's Church Council met on February 21. A summary of reports and action not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

Transfers in

Micah Ray from Trinity, El Paso, TX

Transfers out

Joshua Hartwig to St. John's, Baraboo, WI

Funeral

21 Feb Howard Wessel

Principal Tim Plath and Director of Mission Advancement Jim Hahn of Minnesota Valley Lutheran High school visited the council meeting and reported on the blessings of a Christ-centered education provided for the high school age youth of the 21 association congregations. Current enrollment is 197 students with 30 from St. John's. Future projections suggest an enrollment of 250 by the fall of 2021. An increasing number of students are participating in online courses offered through the Association of Lutheran High Schools Online. Recent facility improvements include repainting and upgrading of the sound system in the gym; a storage garage being built through a partnership with Palmer Bus Company; and a plan to reconfigure the main offices to provide more workstations and improved workflow. Future staffing goals include four areas of priority: a technology coordination, coaching, someone with pastoral training and a learning coordinator. A study will begin soon to determine if facility needs meet future enrollment projections.

Staff Minister Kelly Emde will accompany the Martin Luther College Choir on its spring tour to Texas February 23-March 6.

Our third call for an administrative associate pastor has been returned. The next call meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 27.

Chairman Bill Pekrul of the Board of Evangelism noted that the new congregational photo directory is being proof read and nearing completion.

Board of Trustees Chairman David Rausch indicated that the adequacy of electrical service in several areas of the church is being investigated.

In January, the voters defeated a recommendation for a special offering to defray the 2016 operating deficit. Since the matter was referred back to the council, a recommendation was approved by the council to cover the nearly \$50,000 deficit by using undesignated estate funds, leaving a balance of just short of \$130,000 in the account.

Estate Funds will also be used to provide the minimum amount needed by MLC students who are “sons or daughters” of the congregation for participation in the MLC Congregational Partner Grant when funds raised through the Ministry Scholarship envelope are insufficient. The anticipated need for the 2017-18 school year is approximately \$2,500.

The next Church Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 21, at 7:00 p.m.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt,
Congregational Chairman

Divine Call

On Monday, February 27, St. John's extended a divine call to Pastor Stephen Helwig, who currently serves Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Omaha, NE. He is the father of six children: 20, 18, 15, 14, 13, and 6 and is married to Carrie (nee Milbrath). Please remember Pastor Helwig in your prayers as he deliberates this divine call placed before him by our congregation in the name of Christ our Savior. May the Lord grant him the wisdom to choose how his talents and gifts will best be used for the sake of the Kingdom.

Library News

Added to the devotional section of the library is a book titled “His Days, My Praise” which consists of 365 devotions. The authors are 12 devoted Christian women. There is a short biography for each author. Each devotion includes a Bible verse, suggested Bible readings, and a space for sharing your personal reflections. Since it will be used by many other readers, I suggest that you write your reflections in a separate journal.

“Show Me Your Mighty Hand” was authored by Wendy Heyn, the mother of a special-needs child. She connects the painful stories of nine mothers of special-needs children and her own story with the difficult times in the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She shares the peace found in God’s Word for moms of special-needs children.

With the upcoming observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, there has been much interest in the writings of Martin Luther. He wrote, “A Simple Way to Pray” for his friend, Peter, the Barber. He used the words of his small catechism to comfort his friend and assure him that he was still God’s child despite his sin of killing his son-in-law. He teaches us to concentrate when praying and make our prayers meaningful with the assurance that God hears our prayers. It is a translation from the German text. It provides the reader with a good review of Luther’s small catechism.

New materials are usually found on the library cart. Please check your home library for any overdue materials.

Eleanor Runke
Church Librarian

Women of St. John’s

The women of St. John’s met on February 7, 2017. The evening began with a devotion led by Pastor Bovee who focused on selected verses from II Chronicles 34. This portion of scripture records the reign of Josiah, a God-fearing king, who took over at the age of eight years. God’s Word moved him to purge Judah and Jerusalem of their high places, Asherah poles and idols and to repair the temple of the LORD. God’s word is still living and active today. It pierces through sin and heals us. Every sin is pardoned.

Stephanie Wolff, an MLC student, was our guest speaker for the evening. She spoke about her immersion trip to China. She visited many great attractions, tried some native foods such as Peking Duck and possibly dog meat, marveled at the beauty of the place where even sewer grates are decorated, and gathered for services with other Christians. Learning to speak Chinese is difficult since four different tones can be used when speaking the same sound; each tone changes the meaning of the word. She explained how the written language is made up of pictures, some of which can be connected to stories from the Bible.

Marley Kuckhahn reported that the national LWMS (Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society) convention will be held in Orlando, Florida this year. There is money available to help defray the cost of one first-time attendee. Anyone interested should apply. One woman from our circuit will be chosen by the board to receive \$300. She also informed the group that our Befriend a Missionary assignments have changed. The names and addresses of our new missionaries are available in the narthex for those interested in sending cards and words of encouragement.

Reflections will take place April 2 from 2:30-4:00 p.m. at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church here in New Ulm.

***PLEASE TAKE NOTE of our upcoming meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 7 at 7:00 p.m. We are pleased to have Mr. Brad Price address the group on the topic of WELS Prison Ministry and the Minnesota River Valley Mentoring Program. He will give us an overview of the traditional mentoring that has been done in the past and the non-traditional mentoring that is just starting and ways that we can be involved. Please join us to get an update on what is happening in the WELS prison ministry and to see how you can help!

Christine Baganz
Secretary

Cards of Caring

Our March meeting will be held on Saturday, March 18th, from 9 am until 12 pm, at 308 S. Washington St., New Ulm. We will continue to create cards for Easter and for birthdays for our homebound members and our Befriend a Mission families. We welcome MLC students as well as our members. Contact Lois Willems at 354-7403 with questions.

Reflections

Women of the area are invited to the annual Reflections Service which will be held on Sunday, April 2 from 2:30-4:00 p.m. We will gather at St. Paul's Lutheran Church for dessert, fellowship, and a candlelight service of songs, readings, and prayers. Our theme will be "Eve: Our Sin, God's Grace". More details and the sign-up sheets are found in the narthex or by e-mailing kgrunwald@splnewulm.org. Ladies interested in setting a table are encouraged to contact Mary or Karen or sign up at church. Please invite friends and sign-up by Sunday, March 26.

Questions, please contact Mary Hussman at 354-3001 or Karen Grunwald at 507-217-6229.