

Matthew 12:14-21 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope."

Jesus Will Lead Justice to Victory

We are now in the Easter season. We have gone beyond Golgotha and the blood stained cross to the empty tomb. We have celebrated the Resurrection.

But even as we look ahead to new life and the joys of Easter, we still look back. We have to. We still need to see the three crosses planted on the Place of the Skull. We still gaze with awe on the cross in the center, stained with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are reminded that our salvation, although a free gift to us, was not something obtained for free by Jesus. He paid for it dearly. He gave his own life for it. Perfect God became a sinner for us to take away our sin. Immortal God died in our place so that by death he might conquer death for us. For so it had to be. Jesus had to satisfy God's perfect justice by becoming a perfect sacrifice for all sinners for all time. And so, even now, we are reminded by one of our most cherished Lenten hymns: *"Many hands were raised to wound him, none would intervene to save; but the deepest stroke that pierced him was the stroke that Justice gave."* Justice – the righteousness of God had to be fulfilled by Jesus. Justice, the perfection on which Jesus stood by the impeccable life he led, had become his most bitter enemy as he was nailed to the cross.

But the glory of the Gospel message is the great truth that Justice did not remain the enemy of Christ. For though Jesus had to become a sinner for us, by taking our sin on himself, in order to take the punishment we deserved, he conquered sin when he died on the cross. After having been separated from God by the damning burden of our sin, which was laid upon him, he was then reconciled to God. He commended into the hands of his Heavenly Father his spirit. And as he did so, Justice became, not only the ally of Christ, but our ally as well. Yes, at one time justice would have condemned us, because we are sinners. But Jesus has removed our guilt. The innocent Jesus has put his own righteousness to our credit. So that when God looks upon us in Christ, he no longer sees a sinner, but he sees Christ in us.

If God is just, he must damn the sinner. If God is perfect, he must accept those who are perfect. We are saved by perfection. We will go to heaven because of a perfect life. The perfect life is not the one we have lived, however. It is the perfect life of Jesus who leads Justice to victory. Justice, which dealt the death-blow to Jesus on the cross, now, in Christ, proclaims life to you and me. The righteousness of God has been fulfilled in us through Christ our Lord. We are saved by Justice. All is well between God and us because of Christ.

That was Jesus' mission, as Isaiah had written: "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope."

He came here, not to condemn us, but to take the weakest flicker of faith and fan it into a flame of confidence. He came to take the most frail tottering Christian with faith as weak as a cattail hanging by a few fibers, swaying in the wind, and mend it, making him as strong as a granite pillar. He has come to proclaim justice, says Isaiah. He came to lead justice to victory.

Today we have victory in Jesus. It is the victory over sin and its condemnation. It is the victory of knowing that in Jesus we have eternal life forever. It is the victory of the empty tomb which failed to keep our Lord enclosed. Amen.

PRAYER

We pray: Almighty God, by your justice you condemned the world. But we praise you that by the atonement of your Son Jesus Christ justice now acquits the world of sin. For in Jesus we are now perfect in your sight by grace. As we serve Christ, we move on victoriously, knowing that in Jesus the justice of God has been met for us. Teach us to rely solely, dear Lord, on your righteousness, strength and forgiveness; for in you alone are we saved. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

May Offering Envelope

The **Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service** (WLCFS) is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, affiliated with, but not financially supported by, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

They offer the following services and programs: *Christian Family Counseling, The Gardens of Hartford Assisted Living, In-Home Care Programs, Member Assistance Program and the Wisconsin Lutheran Living Center.*

Your Synod at Work

WELS Annual Report - Called to Serve

We continue with pointing out highlights from the 2016 WELS Annual Report to its members. This month we will summarize information contained in the section "Called to Serve." There is a lot of information contained in this section, but we'll try to point out some of the important pieces of information.

Worship

The Commission on Worship has developed resources to assist congregations with plans to

celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

More than 60 people are immersed in the many details of researching and planning for the next WELS hymnal.

Special Ministries

A new referral link, wels.net/refer, has made it easier to submit names of people who often have a hard time receiving personal gospel ministry. This includes WELS members in the military, those incarcerated, or people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Congregational Counseling

In the past two years, the Commission on Congregational Counseling has helped 40 congregations assess and adjust their ministry to achieve more zealous gospel proclamation.

Evangelism

A WELS' outreach website, WhatAboutJesus.com, was redesigned and updated. New articles are posted regularly as well as the Commission on Evangelism's popular daily devotions.

A new workshop, *Telling the Next Generation: Utilizing Our Schools for Outreach*, was developed by the Commissions on Evangelism and Lutheran Schools to serve congregations with planning, assistance, and resources for implementation of outreach strategies in elementary schools and early childhood ministries.

Ministry of Christian Giving

The Ministry of Christian Giving mailed a series of postcards informing eligible WELS members about a new law that allows them to make qualified charitable distributions from an individual retirement account to their church, synod, and other WELS organizations without counting the distributions as income for federal tax purposes.

Gerald Woodley

From Your Staff Minister

A Vacation Bible School planning meeting will be taking place at St. John's on May 10, at 6 pm. If you would like to be involved with VBS please come to the meeting. No dates or times have been set for VBS.

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.” (Eph. 5:8-10)

Kelly Emde

St. Paul's Lutheran School

BoCD Work (SP Board of Child Discipleship)

2017-18 School Budget

Although the SP Budget is not yet complete, the SP Council is suggesting only the top priority from the B OCD Recommendations: To fund a technology line item in the budget for \$5000 and added funding for Paraprofessional to replace an amount that had been provided through Golden Home. The congregation will make the final vote on their church's budget in June.

School Lunch – price increases in 2017-18

K-2 Increase from \$2.55 to \$2.65

3-8 Increase from \$2.80 to \$2.90

Guest Increase from \$3.80 to \$3.90

2017-18 Pre-K Tuition Proposal

The board passed a Recommendation for 2017-18 tuition rates for the pre-kindergarten:

Two day - \$97 per month (up \$3 – per month)

Three day - \$145 per month (up \$4 per month)

Building Project

About \$34,000 continues to be added each month on a regular basis. The Building Planning committee will continue to watch the totals and determine when the building project can move forward.

2017-18 Calendar

The adopted calendar was revised and approved to begin the 2017-18 school year on Tuesday, September 5. The final calendar was revised with attempts to match as many days as possible to the District 88 calendar to take advantage of busing and Special Services of which several students are able to use at public.

MNSAA

A survey was sent out via email and also by paper forms to get input from “stakeholders” of the school. Results will be viewed by committee members to aid in fill out reports that give an indication of compliance of accreditation standards. Various committees will work to complete their reports and obtain documentation to show evidence of compliance prior to a MNSAA Team visit in April of 2018.

Quarterly Report – a review of the last three months

Feb. - MLC BB Tournament – Boys and Girls 8th grade teams participated in the annual tournament in February. The girls and the boys took 1st Place –**LSW** –Lutheran Schools Week took place during the second week of February which included many events to emphasize the many blessings we have at St. Paul's School.

March – Concerts - The Raider Band and Jr. Band; and Grades 3-4 with the mini musical: "I Need a Vacation" were performed in early March on two different nights this year and both were well attended, yet this year everyone could sit down. **School Musical** -- 6th through 8th grade

students performed “Krazy Kamp” in March on consecutive evenings. An Italian Bistro meal was offered before the Saturday evening performance. The musical was directed by Cindy Ring, Carol Schoenherr, Laura Balza, and Sue Schone and was well attended. All aspects of the musical were done well. Praise the Lord!

Calendar

- May 5 NO School - Teacher In-Service
- May 9 Grades 1-2 Musical at 6:30 pm
- May 10-11 PreK Spring Programs (various times)
- May 16 Spring Band Concert at 7 pm
- May 18 Redwood Falls Track Meet
- May 19 Kindergarten Spring Show
- May 24 Closing Service / 8th Grade Confirmation
- May 25 Last Day of School / Picnic
- May 26 Faculty In-Service
- Aug 8 Registration with ID Pictures taken

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

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

Archives

Miscellany

More items from service bulletins, newsletters, and council and congregational minutes from 60, 50, 25, 10, and 1 years ago.

1957, Pastor was Rollin Reim. A March service bulletin includes a reminder of a Ladies aid project, cleaning the kitchen on one day and the rest of the church later. In April following the cleaning: “Some 36 women of the congregation volunteered to give our church a most thorough wall to wall scrubbing and polishing. They tactfully suggest that there are better places than the bottom of a pew for the disposal of chewing gum.”

1967, Pastor was Frederick Nitz. In January the congregation voted to end the separate dismissal on communion Sundays. The Ladies’ Aid ordered 100 red hymnals. The need for more to fill the pew racks was noted.

1992, Pastor was David Kolander; David Zabel was Director of Christian Education. 1992 was a year for sampling new liturgy settings for the WELS-produced hymnal planned for introduction in fall of 1993 which would take the place of the Synodical Council hymnal of 1941 copyright. Congregations were considering whether to use and order the new edition (our present hymnal). A fall six-week Bible class titled “How Christians Worship” was part of the introduction.

2007, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske. After considering various proposals and options and the results of a survey, it was decided that the windows in the new narthex remain as clear glass versus stained glass art work as earlier proposed.

2016, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske. In May Pastor Laitinen announced his intention to retire at the end of the calendar year.

To be continued.

Bob Krueger
kruegerh@mlc-wels.edu

Truth in Love Ministry

Your journey to being a better witness starts here.

Christians often struggle with where and how to witness. Truth in Love Ministry has a solution. With 35 years of experience witnessing to Mormons, Pastor Mark Cares has developed a distinctive, biblical approach to address the unique challenges—and opportunities—of witnessing to Mormons. This approach is quickly becoming recognized worldwide.

We consistently find that when Christians train with Truth in Love Ministry, they inevitably find greater courage and confidence in sharing their faith with ANYONE. Find out more by attending a Truth in Love Ministry Bible class led by John Sebald on Sunday, May 14 at 9:30 am.

Church Council Digest

The St. John's Church Council met on April 18. A summary of reports and action not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

Rev. Marcus Schulz, currently serving as outreach pastor at Emanuel Lutheran Church, New London, Wisconsin, is still considering our divine call to serve as administrative associate pastor.

A detailed report was provided by Board of Education Chairman Steve Balza. A summary follows.

Sunday Bible study: Prof. John Boeder will be leading the Sunday Bible Study for the next three weeks (April 23, April 30 and May 7). The lessons will mirror what is being taught our Sunday School children with a goal of encouraging discussion of the stories at home. On May 14, former member John Sebald of Truth in Love Ministry will share information on reaching out to Mormons. Starting May 21, the Bible Study hour will move to 11:00 a.m. with our summer worship schedule. Pastor Bovee will lead a study in the book of Hebrews.

Confirmation: Eighteen youth of our church will be confirming their faith in Christ on Sunday,

April 30, during the 11:00 a.m. service.

Senior youth: Several members of our senior youth group helped serve at the Easter breakfast. Fifteen youth have signed up to participate in mission trips this summer. This is about twice as many as last year. The trips provide a wonderful opportunity for our young people to share their faith and serve their Savior in a variety of ways. St John's provides a modest subsidy to cover a portion of the cost of these trips. The youth will share their experiences during a portion of one of the Sunday morning adult Bible studies next fall.

St John's members at MLC: St John's is blessed to have fourteen members enrolled to train for ministry at MLC during the 2017-18 school year. That represents approximately 2% of the entire student body and is believed to be the largest number of students from one congregation preparing for ministry. For a second year,

we will participate in the Congregational Partner Grant Program. Using estate funds, St John's will support each of the seven MLC students entering their first or second year with a \$250 grant that will be matched by a special MLC scholarship fund. Student members in the upper classes will benefit from grants given through a St John's scholarship envelope next fall.

Thank you: Please take a moment to express your appreciation to the following individuals for their faithful service: Sunday school teachers Christian Walz, Rylee Weisensel, Peggy Pekrul, Ashley Urbanek, Rachel Smith, Gwynn Gutzke and Denise Karstens; senior youth leaders Carrie Schaefer and Melanie Mohrer; nursery leaders Natalie Borgwardt, Becca Koelpin and Michelle Grubbs; Adult Bible study leaders Pastor Bovee, Keith Wessel, Kermit Moldenhauer, Dan Fenske, Dave Gosdeck, Brian Hennig and John Boeder.

The Board of Elders, chaired by Jim Rathje, indicated support for a request to utilize female members of our congregation as money counters. The Finance Committee will seek willing participants for the work that takes place on Sunday mornings during the late service.

Chairman Bill Pekrul of the Board of Evangelism noted that the new congregational photo directory is in the hands of the publisher and nearing completion after several delays. Arrangements have been made in partnership with our sister congregation St. Paul's to sponsor a joint screening of the new Luther movie commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation at the local movie theater for use as a community outreach event on Wednesday, May 3, at 6:30 p.m. The event is already sold out. Another showing will take place at MLC in November.

The Board of Stewardship Chairman Josiah Stoering noted that the first quarterly letter to increase awareness of Biblical stewardship principles and to serve as an encouragement has been distributed to our members.

Board of Trustees Chairman David Rausch recently recruited a crew that mulched flower beds and did a spring grounds cleaning around the church.

The next quarterly voters' meeting has been rescheduled for Tuesday, May 9, at 7:00 p.m.

The next Church Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 16, at 7:00 p.m.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt,
Congregational Chairman

Library News

A new addition to the library which was recently featured in “Forward in Christ” is titled “2,000 Demons: No Match for My Savior.” It was written by E. Allen Sorum, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. As the director of the Pastoral Studies Institute, he trains men from various ethnic and immigrant backgrounds to serve as pastors. This has given him a unique perspective and understanding of the spirit world. He writes “that although it seems like there is more activity of demonic forces in our world today, the Christian can rest assured Jesus has infinite power over Satan and his evil spirits.”

“Without This Ring” was written by Donna Pyle and published by Concordia Publishing House. It was written as a guide for people who have recently been divorced. The author uses Scripture and Bible Study as well as professional counselor's tools to bring healing to those experiencing the trauma of divorce.

With the end of Sunday School classes and Bible Class on Sunday morning, there is less traffic in the church basement. However, since our library has a self-checkout system, you can still check out or return items whenever the church is open. Please check your home library for any overdue materials from the church library.

Eleanor Runke
Church Librarian

Women of St. John's

The Women of St. John's met on April 4, 2017. Pastor Bovee conducted a devotion based on Galatians 6:11-18. There was a problem in Galatia. Some thought salvation could be earned by keeping the law and were “trying to compel” others to be circumcised. Paul took them back to the fact that God demands perfection to inherit eternal life, and no one is perfect – not even those who are circumcised. That is why He sent Jesus. The cross was reserved for the most heinous of criminals. Yet, Paul says, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Christ paid for our sins, not His own. In the cross is atonement for all people. This horrible death became beautiful for us.

JoElyn Krohn, the Financial Literacy Coordinator at MLC, was our presenter for the evening. The amount of student loan debt that students are taking on is growing. On average that amount is about \$25,000. Her job is to financially educate students both entering and leaving MLC, so that they are not weighted down by an exorbitant amount of debt at graduation. She helps freshmen estimate the amount of loans needed to complete their degree, and then helps them set goals to reduce their overall loan debt and start an emergency fund. The seniors meet with JoElyn to learn how to set up a budget. She stresses to them that they cannot spend more than they make. The majority of those who meet with her feel better about their financial situation after meeting. The financial aid website directs students to employment opportunities and scholarship links.

Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be May 2. We will be forming small groups to review our mission, constitution and format of meetings. Please come share your thoughts and ideas as we re-evaluate. In the words of President Jeneane Thiesfeldt: “Re-evaluating is always a good process so that we keep our purpose and mission in mind. My desire is that Women of St. John’s would be an organization that is as vibrant, interesting, and useful as possible for those who attend the monthly meetings as well as our congregation at large.”

Christine Baganz
Women of St. John’s Secretary

May Sermon Texts

May 7	John 10:1-10	Jesus - The Perfect and Only Shepherd for Us Sheep
May 14	John 14:1-12	Do Not Let Your Hearts be Troubled
May 21	John 14:15-21	The Love of God is Made Known
May 25	Luke 24:44-53	Ascension
May 28	John 17:1-11	To God be the Glory

MLC Ladies’ Auxiliary

MLC Ladies Auxiliary Annual Bingo Night was another successful event enjoyed by over 300 students.

A variety of baked goods, over \$2,200 in gift cards and cash as well as quilts and blankets were given away.

Thank you to all who participated in this event.

Jeneane Thiesfeldt
MLC Auxiliary contact person
thiesfjm@gmail.com, 507-359-7018