

St. John's Lutheran Church
New Ulm, MN
August, 2017 *Fortress*

SUMMER IS ALMOST OVER

Proverbs 6:6-8 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! ⁷ It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, ⁸ yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Not long ago skeptics tried to discredit the Bible when they came across the above verses from Proverbs which made the claim that during the summer ants store up food for the winter so that they have provisions when food cannot otherwise be found. Those who scoffed at this passage of Scripture claimed that Solomon must have kicked over an ant hill one day and saw the ant eggs in the nursery of the colony and mistook it for grain. They tried to mock at his ignorance.

However, more recently there is undeniable evidence produced in the world of entomology that there are indeed "harvester ants," as they are referred to, which do indeed store up food in the summer so that they have a food supply to live on during the winter. And it should not surprise us. After all, the Bible tells us: He [Solomon] described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom (1 Kings 4:33-34).

But more than that, Solomon was an inspired writer; the Holy Spirit moved his heart and pen to write the truths he recorded on the pages of the Bible. Therefore we have more than just information about the animal kingdom here. There is practical wisdom from God.

This passage teaches us not to be lazy. A sluggard is someone who refuses to work and as a result produces nothing for himself or anyone else. Most of all, he does not serve God with any zeal either. But more than that, this is a passage which teaches us to be good stewards of God's blessings. To be sure we will want to be diligent about the use of our time, talents, and treasures; these are all gifts from God. However, our greatest treasure, the one which we will want to put first and manage wisely, is the stewardship of God's Word.

In the month of August, we find ourselves in the last third of summer. During the summer months we may become distracted with all kinds of things, whether they are projects around the house or vacations. But summer is also of a time of preparation. Like the ant who stores us up food in the summer so that he has provisions for the winter, even so, our souls need to store up spiritual food so we are ready to endure the hardships and cold spells of life in this world. There will be times when we may find ourselves in a harsh climate of persecution or times when the cold world around us can lead us into doubt and despair. But we will endure if we have the Word of God. We will be able to weather any problem that may enter our lives as long as we know that Jesus Christ lived a perfect life for us, and that he died on the cross to save us from our sins. We will never have to worry that we will be starved out and so lose our faith as long as we hold to the promise that God saved us by his grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. May we take as an example the ant, who without a commander knows that he must be prepared for what is to come. We know that our Lord will return someday, and even before that time, he might take us from this earth. In either case, we shall be ready if we are found trusting in God's salvation which is ours through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. All that we need to know about him has been given to us in the Bible where God reveals himself to us. May we then prepare ourselves. Summer is not over yet, but winter is coming. May we be diligent and faithful stewards of the Means of Grace.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

From Your Staff Minister

I have placed information sheets in the bulletin boxes of the students who graduated from high school this year. Please fill them out and return them to me so that our youth can continue to be connected to St. John's.

Sunday School and the full schedule of Bible classes will begin after Labor Day. We will resume the 11 am service on August 20.

“But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” (Ro 8:25-26)

Kelly Emde

Archives

Miscellany

Some more items from service bulletins, newsletters, and council and congregational minutes from 60, 50, 25, 10, and 1 years ago. Hope you will find them interesting. Comments, questions, suggestions and even corrections are welcome at kruegerh@mlc-wels.edu.

1957, Pastor was Rollin Reim. The Synod convention was to be held in August in New Ulm and a July service folder included the suggestion that members invite Synod delegates into their homes on Sunday when there would be no sessions. Convention issues mentioned included fellowship with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and expansion at Doctor Martin Luther College.

1967, Pastor was Frederick Nitz. Allan Hoffman (age 24), a member of St. John's serving in the United States Marine Corps, was killed in action in the war in Vietnam. Funeral was held on July 8.

1992, Pastor was David Kolander; David Zabel was Director of Christian Education. Reports to both the congregation and the Council included frequent references to the financing of a new organ—cost about \$126,000. Dedication was set for March 1993.

2007, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske. Plans and discussions regarding the coming celebration (in 2008) of the St. John's 60th anniversary were noted throughout the year. In May teacher Wendy Ristow celebrated her 25th anniversary in the ministry. Paul Fritze was hired as a half-time custodian.

2016, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske. A report to the Council in November included a review of the Endowment Fund. It noted growth in value from \$175,000 (2004) to \$240,000 (2015).

To be continued.

Bob Krueger

Council Digest - July 2016

The St. John's Church Council met on July 11. The second quarterly voters' meeting was held a week later. A summary of reports and action from these meetings not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

• Membership Changes

Transfers Out

Benjamin Dose to Mt. Olive, St. Paul, MN
Samuel Dose to Mt. Olive, St. Paul, MN
Joyce Diels to Zion, Allenton, WI
Cindy Kewatt to St. Peter, St. Peter, MN
Richard and Elizabeth Schmidt to
 Good Shepherd, West Bend, WI
Christian Walz to Good Shepherd, Indianola, IA

Released

Jay Schroeder
Kaydra Schroeder
Tim Waibel
Dan and Shelly Wenninger
Charles Wieland
Jim Zahn

- **Pastoral Acts**

- **Baptisms**

- 28 May Elyse Fay Johnson

- **Funerals**

- 22 Jun Alice Otto

- 29 Jun Ken Ubel

- 7 Jul Phyllis Rolloff

- Since the congregation's seventh call for an administrative associate pastor was returned, a call meeting was scheduled to correspond with the regularly scheduled quarterly voters' meeting. At that meeting on July 18, a divine call was extended to Rev. Jonathan Hackbarth of Salem Lutheran Church, Woodbury, Minnesota.

- A planning timeline for development of the 2018 calendar year budget was established:

- Aug 15: Planning overview
 - Aug 15-Sept 18: Boards and committees prepare proposed budgets
 - Sept 19: Boards and committees present proposed budgets to council
 - Sept 19-Oct 16: Boards and committees adjust as needed and finalize budget proposals
 - Oct 17: Council finalizes proposed budget
 - Oct 24: Council presents proposed budget to voters for approval
- The budgeting process is by Treas. Paul Gunderson.

- The October quarterly voters' meeting agenda will include elections and appointments to various congregational boards and committees. A Nominating Committee has been organized under the direction of Vice President Greg Diersen. This group is responsible for preparing a slate of candidates for the various elective positions in preparation for that meeting.

- Financial Secretary James Grunwald's report to the voters showed that, in spite of reduced expenditures for salaries during our pastoral vacancy, offerings gathered in support of home operations have fallen short of our goal by over \$45,000. Fortunately, Treasurer Paul Gunderson's report showed that budgetary underexpenditures have left the Home Operations account short of actual needs by less than \$3,000. Support for Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School also lags behind by over \$5,000. On the positive side, WELS Missions to date is at 97% of its goal and Building Fund receipts are slightly above projected needs through the end of June.

- Chairman Bill Pekrul of the Board of Evangelism provided a report to the council that included plans for another showing of the new Luther movie in September as part of the 500-year commemoration of the Lutheran Reformation. The joint effort between St. John's and sister congregation St. Paul's will serve as an outreach effort. Details will be announced as the plans are completed. The Evangelism Board is also holding discussions on ways to make our worship experience more visitor friendly and considering the addition of way finding signage to entrances, the gathering space, and narthex.

- The Board of Stewardship, chaired by Josiah Stoering, continues development of a booklet describing the purpose and function of all congregational organizations.

- Board of Trustees Chairman David Rausch reported that the Trustees are considering three main projects this year: 1) improving wheelchair accessibility at the drive through portico; 2) installing a gutter on the backside of the portico to prevent ice buildup during

the winter; and 3) refinishing the floor in the basement fellowship areas.

The next Church Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 15, at 7 pm.

The next quarterly voters' meeting has been rescheduled for Tuesday, October 24, at 7 pm. because of a conflict with the Minnesota District Pastors' Conference on the original date.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt, Congregational Chairman

Women's Summer Devotions in the Park

The Friday morning women's Bible study group invites all women and moms to join them during the summer months for devotions in the park. We meet at 10 am at the listed park and read a devotion followed by free play and a picnic lunch (optional). Feel free to bring a friend! If you have any questions please contact Sarah Strackbein at 612-361-0425.

August 4	Hermann Heights Park
11	Lincoln Park
18	Harman Park
25	Highland Park

Women of St. John's

We had a fantastic turnout for our June 6th gathering. Many women gathered to share a fellowship meal in the church basement. There are pictures from that fun evening located in the new narthex. Please take a look at them.

The next gathering will take place on **September 5th**. Melanie Mohror will give us up-to-date information about the Southern Minnesota Crisis Nursery, located in the Ivy House in New Ulm. We will also continue sharing from our May gathering our small group discussion points regarding our mission and constitution. Please join us!

Christine Baganz

OWLS Picnic

The OWLS picnic will be on Monday, August 14, beginning at 4:30 pm at Gerald and Geraldine Steffen's home at 1415 N. Minnesota St. The cost is \$5 payable at the picnic.

Contact Dale Markgraf to register at demarkgraf@gmail.com or 354-2735.

Cole slaw, German potato salad, potato chips, relish tray, baked beans, brats, ice cream with hot fudge and drinks. If you prefer something other than brats feel free to bring your own choice.

And a hearty invitation to all our churches' seniors. We eagerly welcome new faces, new friends, to get to know better.

Your Synod at Work

MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN GIVING

The WELS Ministry of Christian Giving serves on behalf of the Conference of Presidents. Its purpose is to encourage every WELS member to "excel in the grace of giving" through Christ. They consider it a privilege to help God's people make gifts to Jesus for his work in their congregations, synod, and other WELS organizations. They do this in a number of ways, including working with Congregation Mission Offerings and direct gifts from individuals and foundations:

1. In the area of Congressional Mission Offering, their efforts are focused on supplying congregations with information on ministry opportunities and needs as well as with stewardship training resources.
2. In the area of direct gifts from individuals, they regularly mail and e-mail appeals that explain our gospel work and encourage support of synodical ministries. They also provide information to donors about Christian estate planning and other planned giving options. Also, they support Christian giving counselors across all twelve districts of WELS to assist God's people with gifts of any kind.
3. Gifts from foundations often result from consultation with foundations regarding funding of new ideas and enhancements to ministry.

On December 18, 2015, the US Congress passed legislation to make permanent the giving opportunity known as the qualified charitable distribution. With this type of gift, anyone who is 70.5 years or older can make distributions from his or her IRA to charity tax-free for federal tax purposes. Since January 1, 2016, the Ministry of Christian Giving has worked to communicate this opportunity through postcard mailings and counselor visits. The WELS Foundation processed \$635,652 in qualified charitable distributions in 2016.

The Ministry of Christian Giving has 12.8 full-time equivalent Christian giving counselors

(some counselors are semi-retired).

This year's stewardship program for 2017-18 is called "Joyful Generosity" and will include worship and Bible study resources. It will cover two years due to expected heavy use of Reformation-related materials this fall.

Gerald Woodley

Stewardship

We are more than halfway through our budget year. Now is a good time to see how we are meeting our commitments as a congregations. As we give our offerings, it's also nice to know where the needs are. This is a basic summary of where our congregation stands year to date (YTD).

Home Operations: Our YTD budget is \$362,768. Our YTD offerings for home operations are \$316,359. This amount is about \$30,000 better than our home operations offerings at this time last year. Though we are \$46,000 short of meeting budget, we are only about \$2,000 short of meeting our expenses year to date. This is due to not paying a second pastor's salary since January, because we have been careful with our expenses, and because some expenses are greater in the second half of the year than in the first half.

WELS: We have given \$39,877 towards our commitment to our synod this year. This is only about \$1,330 short of where we should be YTD.

MVL: We have given \$22,554 towards our commitment to MVL this year. This is about \$5,000 short of where we should be YTD.

Building Fund: We have given \$41,185 to the building fund this year. This slightly exceeds our expectations YTD. In fact, we were able to make an additional monthly payment in April. The remaining debt on our building is \$244,403. We are on track to pay this debt off completely sometime in late 2019.

We are thankful for the generous spirits and loving offerings of our members that have enabled us to keep up with our ministries this year. May God in his grace give us the ability and willingness to continue to do so.

Josiah Stoering

St. Paul's School

BoCD Work (SP Board of Child Discipleship)

Kindergarten

Thirty-one students have signed up for kindergarten at this point. Members who may have not yet registered should get their registration in. Enrollment is expected to increase slightly in the 2017-18 school year with the number at about 275 (up from 271) at this point for K-8 (St. John's -91 students (down from 93)– 33.1% The number last reported for PreK is 45 students. Ms. Kate Carlovsky has been hired to replace Nikki Steenbock and to help out with the sessions of Pre-K which are over the 10 student limit for a teacher.

Facility Improvements

Bathroom tiles were repaired or replaced as needed this summer for work that was done unsatisfactorily in the new bathrooms last summer. The gym floor was also resealed in July. The hallway and cafeteria floors were also stripped and sealed this summer. New projects which are part of the new building project are on hold until funding is sufficient to complete the first phase. The goal is to not borrow more than \$1.5 million. There is about \$1.8 million available from gifts bringing the total funding possible at this time at \$3.3 million. This is really exciting, but that still puts us about \$1.2 million away from the anticipated \$4.5 million first phase which includes a new entrance with office areas near the entrance, handicapped elevators, various classroom space available on the second level, and the early childhood/daycare wing, as well as the refurbishment and updating of the current building. The much needed gymnasium/kindergarten rooms phase has been put into a second phase that would need an additional \$3 million to complete.

Please keep the building project in your prayers. We know that the Lord will move the hearts of those who will provide the funding so that the children of our congregations can continue to get the Christ-centered education that has been a major part of our congregations' ministries for many years. We are thankful for those who continue to provide special and regular gifts to the building project.

Tuition Assistance

Following the June 30 deadline for submitting assistance applications at St. Paul's School, the T-A Committee met to distribute funds available. Tuition assistance grants were awarded to 19 families (47 children). Five families benefited from the policy that allows the fourth and any additional children to enroll tuition free. Grants from various assistance funds totaled \$15,475.

Registration

Registration will take place on **Thursday, August 10th** and includes Lifetouch school pictures for students and staff from - **10 am - 2 pm** and **4 pm - 7 pm AT ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, PARISH CENTER. (Air-conditioned)**

The 2017-18 school year will begin on Tuesday, September 5th for grades 1-8 following the Opening service at about 8:20. Kindergarten will begin on Wed., Sept. 6. Kindergarten will not have classes on Fridays until after the MN District Teacher's Conference in October.

Outdoor Movie Night

The movie *Finding Nemo* will be shown after sunset on August 11. Concessions will be available at 8:30 pm and the movie will start once it is dark—anticipated to start about 9 pm. The movie will be held in the gym if the weather is bad.

Home Visits

Parents will be asked to sign up at the HOME VISIT TABLE on Registration Day, August 10th, for their children's teachers to visit each child in their homes. Teachers really appreciate the opportunity to meet the parents and the child, and if possible, in their homes.

Grades 7-8 have an Open House Orientation night in September and will not need to sign up for a home visit. There may be special circumstances of other teachers who will not be able to visit each home. See the Sign-up Sheets on Registration Day or talk to your child's teacher. Your teacher will contact you if you are unable to make it to Registration Day this year.

Calendar

- Aug 8-9 Faculty In-Service meetings
- Aug 10 Registration Day: 10-2 and 4-7; at St. Paul's CHURCH
- Aug 11 Outdoor Movie Night: Concessions at 8:30, Movie starts at 9 pm
- Aug 16 Faculty In-Service at MVL: 9-12 pm
- Sep 5 2017-18 School Year Begins: Grades 1-8
Opening Service at 8:20 am
- Sep 6 First Day for Kindergarten

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

Connection - July 2017

School Survey

In April, St. Paul's sent out the 2017 school survey. The survey, developed by the self-study steering committee, had 185 respondents by the time we closed it on May 25. We thank everyone who gave us feedback on the state of our school. It shows how parents and supporters of St. Paul's School feel we are doing as we work to meet the standards of educational excellence established by our accreditation agency, MNSAA (Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association).

The survey included a broad spectrum of school topics, including mission and philosophy, teaching and learning, climate, communication, personnel, and administration. Survey-takers rated 41 statements by choosing "agree" or "disagree" for each. They also could choose "no opinion" for statements they did not feel qualified to evaluate, and they could write in comments related to each statement.

Generally, responses to the survey were very positive. Of the 7585 statements evaluated, 6453 (85%) of the responses were either “agree” or “strongly agree.” 800 (11%) of the responses were “no opinion.” Only 332 (4%) were “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” We are thankful that these numbers indicate a high level of satisfaction.

We appreciate that many survey-takers took the time to help us identify strengths and weaknesses. How will the information be used? Here is an example. The

responses to statements about communication will help us evaluate how well we share information about school events and pupil academic progress. Out of the 185 survey respondents, 19 (about 10%) disagreed that the school communicates well. Furthermore, the feedback to another communication-type statement showed that 26/185 (about 14%) disagreed that the school gives supporters enough opportunities to share their views.

It was rare for any “disagree” totals to reach 10% or more; therefore, items such as those mentioned above are noteworthy. The self-study steering committee will use feedback like this when designing improvement objectives and strategies within the next school strategic plan.

More details about the survey will be shared with school parents and supporters in the coming months. We encourage you to watch for them!

Greg Thiesfeldt,
St. Paul’s School Principal

August Sermon Texts

Aug 6	<i>Joel 3: 12-16</i>	<i>Lord is Near in the Valley of Decision</i>
Aug 13	1 Kings 3:5-12	What do you ask of the Lord?
Aug 20	1 Timothy 4:4,5	Christian Freedom: A Gift of the Lord’s Goodness
Aug 27	<i>Exodus 14:10-31</i>	<i>Stand Firm in the Lord</i>

Divine Call

On Tuesday, July 18, St. John's extended a divine call to Pastor Jonathan Hackbarth, who currently serves Salem Lutheran, Woodbury, MN. He is the father of two children: 12 and 11- years-old and is married to Jennifer (nee Perry).

Please remember Pastor Hackbarth 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.