

## Living in Christian Freedom

**1 Peter 2:16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.**

In the month of July we celebrate our nation's independence. On the Fourth of July in 1776 the Declaration of Independence declared the freedom of the original Thirteen Colonies from the tyrannical rule of Great Britain. It is an occasion we commemorate with fireworks and parades, and rightly so. Freedom is our great treasure in the United States of America.

Sadly, however, freedom can be sorely abused. Freedom of the press can give immoral people the right to publish lewd and pornographic literature. Freedom of speech can enable people to slander others. Even freedom of religion, which allows the U.S. Military to consider Satanism as a legitimate religion among all others, can do more to enslave people than to free them.

As members of God's kingdom we also have cause for a freedom celebration. The Bible tells us that we are by nature slaves of the devil. Sin had bound us and imprisoned us. The burden of our iniquities crushed us. But God in his mercy sent a Savior to set us free. Jesus Christ broke the chains that bound us by dying on the cross to pay the debt for our sin. Jesus destroyed Satan's power by taking away our guilt. The devil can accuse us no longer. Jesus' own perfection has been put to our credit so that we are righteous in God's sight through faith in him.

We are free! We have been set at liberty as members of God's kingdom.

But notice what Peter says in **1 Peter 2:16: Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.** All too often when prisoners find they are set free, they understand freedom as the liberty to do whatever they want to do. Even we as Christians can begin to abuse God's grace by believing that it is license to sin. Since I am forgiven anyway, why not sin?

It is because of this that sin enslaves all over again. To sin after we've been set free is to place ourselves back into bondage. Even Paul had to say to the **Galatians in 5:1: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

However, freedom in Christ is not so much liberty to do something. Freedom in Christ is first and foremost, liberty *from* something. Our celebration of Christian freedom is about freedom from the bondage of law, which constantly shows us our sin. It is about freedom from the accusations of the devil, who constantly points out our sin and unworthiness. It is freedom from death and hell, since in Christ we have the promise of eternal life.

Having been freed, Peter tells us to live as slaves (literally). That is because enslavement to Christ is true freedom. Through faith in him we gladly serve God, since we are free to call on his name and worship him. We are free to proclaim his saving message to a world lost in sin, so that every sinner everywhere also may be set at liberty. We are free to render to him our offerings with joy, since we are able to give back to God the blessings he has showered on us.

The Declaration of Independence, signed by the founding fathers of this country has gone down into history as one the most important documents our nation has. For those who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, the greatest document given to the citizens of this world is the Bible. It gives us the right and undeserved privilege of becoming citizens of God's kingdom. For there we find more than freedom from mere earthly enemies. We have freedom from the enemies of the soul -- Satan, sin, and death. The certainty of our freedom is not based on signatures of men written in ink, but in the signature of Christ, which was written indelibly with his own blood that he shed on the cross. The declaration of our Christian Independence is the message that we have been saved by God's grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ. May this be our source of joy and the reason for our celebration as

we lift our voices in prayer and praise to the God who has set us free.

In Christ,  
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

## **Women of St. John's**

The Women of St. John's met Tuesday, June 5 for an evening of fellowship before taking a break for the summer. The evening began with a tasty, light luncheon served by Donna Dose and Mary Thom.

Pastor Bovee led a devotion based on Isaiah 55 following the luncheon. People have a spiritual thirst and hunger, a void in their lives. Satan offers all kinds of things to fill that void, but those things are empty. They are like bread made out of sawdust that fills one up but offers no nutritional value. God tells us in Isaiah 55 that he has something that will truly satisfy us. It is free; it is not earned. He invites us to come to the well of life. We teach the word of God: Jesus came, died and rose for us. It is because of him that we have eternal life. He fully satisfies our hunger and thirst.

Donna Dose shared information about spinning and working with fibers in the final segment of a fun evening. She shared information about raising Angora rabbits, demonstrated how to card fibers, used a spinning wheel to make yarn and made a sock using a 1908 circular knitting machine. We learned about the history behind the machine as well as how it came to be in her possession. It made for an enjoyable evening!

The Women of St. John's group will resume gathering in September. Watch for more information in August. We hope you can join us!

## **From Your Staff Minister**

Vacation Bible School will be held at St. John's from July 24 to July 26 from 9 am to 11:30 am. It will be held in conjunction with St. Paul's. Volunteers are needed to assist with each day with various activities. Sign up on the church website: [stjohnsnewulm.com/news](http://stjohnsnewulm.com/news), contact the church office: 354-6744 or fill out a form located in the narthex.

"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. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (Ro 8:26-27)

Kelly Emde

## **Our Synod at Work**

### **Faces of Faith: WELS Missions**

One of the privileges of serving as a delegate to the WELS Minnesota District Convention is receiving information and reports on the various activities of the synod. One of the booklets and reports that I found interesting was on "Faces of Faith: WELS Missions." It was filled with interesting stories of how our mission work was impacting individual lives. It also contained some impressive facts about WELS mission work.

The presentation contained information that there about 200 countries in the world and that WELS had some sort of mission activity in around 50 countries. Also, WELS supports more than 100 mission congregations as they share the gospel in the United States and Canada.

A section of the report that was very informative was a discussion of our joint mission work. WELS Joint Missions oversees any mission opportunity that is a combination of both Home and World Missions. This includes people-group ministries (connecting people with the same language and culture) and cross-cultural ministries (outreach from one culture to another).

There is recognition on the part of Joint Missions that the world is continually shrinking and our synod's ability to reach even more people and groups seems to be never-ending. WELS is committed to connecting our resources to reach all people—both stateside and abroad. One of the top priorities of Joint Missions is to strengthen the partnership with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in support of the Pastoral Studies Institute, while continuing to focus on current ministry to Hmong, Hispanic, South Asian, Sudanese, and Vietnamese cultures. Here are some other highlights of the work of Joint Missions:

Joint Mission's goal is to establish 15 people-group ministries and identify 15 new people-group ministry opportunities by 2020.

Hmong theological training in Vietnam through the Global Hmong Committee has helped the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam to grow from 65,000 to 100,000 members in the last three years.

The communist government in Vietnam has invited WELS to build a theological training facility in Hanoi. WELS is currently the only Protestant church with official governmental permission to work with the Hmong in Vietnam.

Twenty WELS congregations currently hold worship in Spanish and English.

Joint Missions is working closely with Friends of Vietnam, a ministry out of Peace in Jesus Lutheran Church in Boise, Idaho, that reaches out by supplying English as a Foreign Language teachers to universities in Vietnam and assisting students who desire to come to the United States to study at WELS schools.

Christ Lutheran Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin, will be the location of an International Friendship Center pilot program to reach out to South Asian populations.

Gerald Woodley

## Council Digest

The St. John's Church Council met on June 19. A summary of reports and action not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

Membership changes

### **Transfer Out**

Haley (nee Roske) Wels to St. Peter, Plymouth, MI

Ministrations

### **Baptism**

20 May Peter Jonathan Schaefer

### **Marriage**

16 Jun     Alexa Diersen and Jacob Grefe

## **Funeral**

16 May     Alvin Resoft

Pastor Jeffrey Bovee reported that youth Bible camp was in progress at Camp Shetek during the week of June 17-23 and Vacation Bible School is scheduled for July 24-26.

Administrative Teacher James Dretske reported that St. Paul's Lutheran School principal Greg Thiesfeldt has accepted a call to serve as principal of St. Mark's Lutheran School, Citrus Heights, California. Mr. Peter Markgraf of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has been called to serve as interim principal. Although Mr. Markgraf is not currently serving in ministry, he has previous experience as a teacher and principal in our WELS schools. We await his decision.

Mr. Dretske also provided an update on his health. Recent doctor's visits have been encouraging and his pelvic fractures are healing. He has begun physical therapy and is on track to return to the classroom next September.

Staff Minister Kelly Emde, assisted by David Rausch and Del Dallmann, has assumed a leadership role on our Board of Trustees during a vacancy in the chair position. He has organized several projects in the new parsonage in preparation for the arrival of Pastor Robert Guenther and his family near the end of June. A clothes dryer vent has been installed in the basement, a GFI outlet added in the upstairs bathroom, the frames of the basement windows have been painted, and broken window panes repaired. Additional exterior items will be addressed as weather permits.

A recommendation from the Board of Youth and Education proposed that the piloted/temporary Board of Child Discipleship position for our representation at St. Paul's School be renewed for another three years. During these three years the board will further refine the position description and determine if the position should be permanently added after this second three-year term. The council approved the recommendation and will bring it before the voters' assembly in July. Adding the position permanently would require a change in constitutional bylaws.

Jesse Zahrt, reporting for the Evangelism and Stewardship Boards in the absence of Chairman Bill Pekrul, noted some of the activity of the recently-formed Fellowship Committee. Members are Sarah Zahrt, Laura Balza, Emily Stoering and Laura Price. The group is organizing summer Fellowship Sundays held during the 9 - 11 am time slot. Coffee, donuts, and fruit are being served. About 100 individuals attended the first event on June 17. Similar events are planned for July 22 and August 5. A church picnic is tentatively planned for August 26.

Planning continues for Pastor Guenther's installation on Sunday, July 8, at 4 pm. A meal following the service is being organized. Watch the Sunday bulletin for details.

The next quarterly voters' meeting has been rescheduled from Tuesday, July 24, to Tuesday, July 17, at 7 pm.

The Church Council will not meet in July. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 21, at 7 pm.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt, Congregational Chairman

# St. Paul's Lutheran School

## **BOCD Report**

### **Tuition Assistance**

There was an increase of \$25 of tuition assistance added to recommended amounts to help families that applied through the Joint Tuition Assistance Program by June 30. The increases will be reflected in awarded credits on Registration Day.

### **Present Call for Principal**

A one-year Call for an Interim Principal was made on June 10<sup>th</sup> by St. Paul's congregation to Mr. Peter Markgraf who had been principal and teaching up until about three years ago. He had decided earlier this year to return to the teaching ministry and recently gained a Certification to Return to Ministry (CRM) status and was available to receive a call. He and his wife, Michelle, and two children (18, 20) live in Sioux Falls, SD.

On the evening of June 21, he accepted the call. Since this is a one-year Interim call, his plan is to commute weekly and continue to reside in Sioux Falls, going home on weekends.

Please keep Mr. Peter Markgraf and his family in your prayers as they work through details to serve St. Paul's Congregation and the school.

### **Registration Day**

Registration Day will take place on August 9<sup>th</sup> with two sessions. One will run from 10 am - 2 pm and the other from 4 - 7 pm. LifeTouch Photography will take school ID pictures. Although there will be a Retake day scheduled in September, we urge all children to have their pictures taken on Registration Day, if possible, to get an Identification Card that is used for Lunch already on the first day of school.

A packet of information will arrive in early July with forms to fill out along with other information. If you are planning a vacation and will not be able to come on August 9<sup>th</sup>, please stop in the office before that day to register your child. The school year 2018-19 will begin for grades 1-8 on Tuesday, September 4<sup>th</sup> with an opening service at about 8:20

### **Calendar**

Aug 9	Registration and School Pictures
Sep 4	School Begins: Opening Service: 8:20 am

Respectfully Submitted, James Dretske,  
SJ Administrative Teacher [jdretske@splnewulm.org](mailto:jdretske@splnewulm.org)

SPL Website: <http://splnewulm.org/school/>

## **Layman's Report of Minnesota District WELS Convention**

I wish to express my sincere thank you to St. John's for selecting me to be the layman delegate to the 51st Biennial Convention of the Minnesota District. I truly consider it a privilege to be able to serve in this capacity. I pray that I represented you well.

The theme of "Grace Abounds—100 Years of Grace" was carried out well throughout the three days. A number of speakers addressed the convention, including Minnesota District President Charles Degner who gave his final President's Report, and WELS President Mark Schroeder. I especially enjoyed a presentation by Pastor Timothy Smith, entitled "Grace Abounds—A History of the Minnesota District." It was an excellent summary of our history from our founding to the present. We also received updates from various organizations within the Wisconsin Synod, including home missions, parish schools, adult discipleship, world missions, youth discipleship, and WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

Each delegate to the convention is asked to serve on a committee. I was assigned to serve on the Congregation and District Ministry Committee. We presented the convention with thirteen reports and one resolution. The resolution was that the District Presidium develop and implement a plan to help district congregations reduce backdoor losses and increase front door gains using the resources already produced and currently being produced by Congregational Services. The resolution passed and with God's help will reduce the projected continued losses to membership in the range of 73,000 members synod wise over two decades. All of the committee reports were received by the convention and individuals thanked for their work.

Elections were held. With Pastor Charles Degner retiring as President, we have some familiar faces in new positions as our District leaders. Among those elected were: President—Pastor Dennis Klatt; First Vice President—Pastor Jon Bitter; Second Vice President—Pastor Jonathan Bohn; and Secretary—Pastor Mike Hatzung. Only Secretary Hatzung continues in his same leadership position.

There were several worship opportunities throughout the convention as well. We began the convention with a communion service in the Chapel of the Christ. Pastor Don Sutton gave the sermon and Pastor John Boeder was the Presiding Minister. Other devotions included the topics: Grace Preserves the Word; Grace Gathers the Church; Grace Equips the Church; and Grace Will Bring Us Home. The convention concluded with a service in the Chapel of the Christ.

This is, of course, a very brief summary of the three-day convention. Anyone who would like more detailed information is welcome to contact me. Once again, thank you for the privilege of serving as the lay delegate from St. John's.

Gerald Woodley

## 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.

July 7	Nehl's Park
14	Hermann Heights Park
21	South Park
28	German Park

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

## Library News

The library has recently received a book published by NPH titled "There's a Prayer for That." The prayers are authored by various WELS pastors. It contains prayers of thanks and praise, prayers when facing temptations, prayers for personal trials, and many other categories. Jesus tells us to "present your requests to God" (Phil 4:6), but sometimes we have difficulty finding the right words. This book would be helpful.

The devotional section of the library has many books for men, women, teens, and seniors. "Real Men Pray" has many devotions for husbands and fathers. "His Days, My Praise" was written by 12 devoted Christian women. "Stand Your Ground" was written by teens for teens. A book for seniors is titled "Devotions for the Chronologically Gifted." Because some of the books are meant for a year of daily devotions, the check-out period does not apply.

We are missing a children's CD called "Celebrate Jesus Volume 2." Please check your CD player and return it to the library.

Eleanor Runke  
Church Librarian

## 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](mailto:kruegerh@mlc-wels.edu).

**1958, Pastor was Rollin Reim.** June and July service folders announced various youth activities: an area "rally" at Fort Ridgely, roller skating at Morgan sponsored by the Sleepy Eye Y.P.S., an excursion with St. Paul's Y.P.S. to Minneapolis to visit three mission churches, a box lunch at a park and a stop-over at Excelsior Amusement Park.

**1968, Pastor was Frederick Nitz.** Publication was announced of a special book containing pictures of Minnesota District churches, schools and institutions to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the District.

**1993, Pastor was David Kolander; David Zabel was Director of Christian Education.** July marked the establishment of an Endowment Fund. The church Library was dedicated in November.

**2008, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske.** 2008 included lots of discussion and note of meetings with St. Paul's regarding school support from St. John's. In July, it was decided that tuition for St. John's students would be reduced by \$95 and paid for by St. John's via a voucher.

**2017, Pastor was Jeffrey Bovee; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske.** In December, a special meeting was held to consider the purchase of the house and property at 601 S. Washington St. to possibly serve as needed space for Sunday school, a temporary parsonage or parking space. (Purchase was approved but some problems still need to be ironed out in 2018.)

To be continued.

Bob Krueger

## Vacation Bible School

### Registration

Please join us for Vacation Bible School which will take place on July 24-26, 2018, from 9:30 - 11 am. This year's theme is: "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God." The cost is \$5 per student or \$10 per family. Go to our church web site: [stjohnsnewulm.com/news](http://stjohnsnewulm.com/news), or our Facebook page: [facebook.com/stjohnsnewulm](https://facebook.com/stjohnsnewulm), for online registration. All of the information needed is included in the form. Please feel free to email Missy Hunter at [missyann18@hotmail.com](mailto:missyann18@hotmail.com) with any questions or if you have any problems using the online form. If you do not have internet, registrations cards will be available, but we would prefer that you register online if possible.

If you or your child (7th grade & up) would like to teach or help, there is a signup section for helpers or teachers (The helper slots are at the bottom of the registration sheet). We can use you.

Please feel free to pass this information to others. We hope to see you there.

## **The Lutheran Home Association**

Everyone had to wait their turn as a line formed in the front of the church at Abiding Word Lutheran Church in Houston, TX. “It was an amazing thing to witness, I’ve never seen a line at the baptismal font.” Faith Brown, Jesus Cares Ministries program coordinator at Abiding Word.

Thirteen JCM participants were baptized by Pastor Matthew Brown on Saturday, May 5. Eight were baptized at the church in front of congregation and family members; five were baptized in their home. All JCM participants were welcomed into God’s family.

[www.tlha.org](http://www.tlha.org)