



Fortress
January 2019

A NEW START WITH CHRIST

Lamentations 3:19-23 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. ²⁰ I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. ²¹ Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: ²² Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

As you look back on the old year that has passed, and step forward into the New Year, are there things you wished you had done differently? Do you wish there was such a thing as a rewind or a do-over on life?

The writer of the book of Lamentations, who we believe to have been the prophet Jeremiah, wished such a thing for the people of Israel and Judah. Even though Jeremiah and many others had warned them, they defied God, hardened their hearts against him, and continued to sin until God brought against them temporal judgments and harsh discipline. He gave them over to their enemies, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and God's people went into exile.

The book of Jeremiah chapters 39-40 tell us how the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah, and took the people captive. Jeremiah was swept along with them, bound in chains. However, the Bible tells us that when they came to Ramah, the birthplace of the Prophet Samuel, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial Babylonian guard recognized Jeremiah as the one who had prophesied disaster against Judah; and so he let Jeremiah go free.

It was not much consolation for Jeremiah. His people, the Jews, had been conquered and subjugated, and they were still all prisoners of war. The city of God, Jerusalem, had been burned, its wall pulled down, and the beautiful temple of Solomon was demolished.

As Jeremiah remembered it, he said: "I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me."

However, Jeremiah also remembered something else -- something joyful, something wonderful, something that superseded his sorrow. He said: "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Jeremiah remembered God's love. He remembered God's compassion. He recognized the great truth that even though God had to discipline his wayward children in order to correct them and lead them to godly sorrow over their sin, God in his grace and mercy had forgiven their sins. In fact, God had given them a do-over, a new start, a renewed life. Because God does not keep a record of sin, it is forgotten before him. Our guilt is erased, and God's grace covers all our sins.

With this same joy and zeal, we as God's children can enter into the year ahead of us and leave behind the ills and troubles of the past. That is because, come what may, we know that every day we have a fresh start with God. Jesus

Christ made it so. When he died on the cross he took away our sin by paying our debt with his own blood. He put his perfect righteousness to our credit. He declared that all who believe in him as their Savior will not perish but have eternal life. Therefore, with the rising of the sun on each new day, we can recall these words of Jeremiah: "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." With the dawn of each new day we get more than just a rewind or a do-over. God completely renews us and looks on us as faultless in Jesus. We have no sin in God's eyes. The slate has been wiped clean. We wear the perfect righteousness of Jesus our Savior. God's mercy is new every morning, and his faithfulness is great. We can leave behind the baggage of our sin and walk forward into the future with the confidence of knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we have peace with God in Jesus our Redeemer.

Therefore, let us step into the New Year with courage and hope. God who is almighty has already stepped into it before us, knows all things, and will continue to lead us. He will never leave us nor forsake us, and his compassions never fail; they are new every morning.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

January Sermon Texts

Jan 6	Ephesians 3:1-12	God Reveals His Mystery
Jan 13	Titus 3:4-7	Washed Clean and Born Again
Jan 20	John 2:1-11	Jesus Revealed as the Miracle Worker (His 1st Miracle)
Jan 27	Luke 4:11-21	Jesus Revealed as the Prophet

From Your Staff Minister

2019 has arrived! Thank you to all of you who served, who offered financial gifts, and who prayed for the good of the Church. The Lord has blessed St. John's through you.

Thank you for your Christmas prayers and gifts as I see the Lord working through you! God's blessings on your 2019!

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." (Mt 2:1-2)

Kelly Emde

Archives

Those Who Served

Over the years St. John's has held elections just like our government does. Though this article may just be names, it might also bring back some special memories and indicate some changes in the organization of the congregation. Their service was important for St. John's and the Kingdom of God.

1958: Pastor, Rollin Reim. For 1958 the 1958-59 Handbook names John Oldfield as Moderator and the following as members of the Church Council: Roland Hoenecke, Chairman and Elder; Delmar Brick, Secretary; Allan Affolter, Treasurer; Elmer Rolloff, Financial Secretary; Al Rolloff and Henry Plagge, Elders; Elmer Kitzrow, William Brei, and Arley Rolloff, Trustees; and Rudy Gatzke, Deacon.

1968: Pastor, Frederick Nitz. Robert Grebe was Moderator; Paul Vorwerk, Secretary; Thomas Steinberg, Treasurer; Harvey Meyer, Financial Secretary; Eldon Hirsch, Harold Schroer and Eldor Timian served as Elders; Dennis Vogel, Raymond Laabs and Harvey Starke as Trustees; and Sigurd Tjernagel as Deacon.

1993: Pastor, David Kolander; David Zabel, Director of Christian Education. Mark Lenz, Charles Enter, Dennis Jaspersen, Robert Johnson, Wayne Wels, John Paulsen, Arnold Koelpin, Thomas Hartwig, David Morse and Douglas Patterson served, respectively as President, Vice President, Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Deacon and Chairs of the Boards for Stewardship, Education, Trustees, and Evangelism.

2008: Pastors, Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher, James Dretske. Serving on the Church Council were officers: President, Roger Klockziem; Vice President, Robert Krueger; Secretary, Paul Willems; Treasurer, Wayne Wels and Financial Secretary, David Stoering. Mark Bauer served as Deacon, Philip Leyrer as Stewardship Chair, Paul Fritze as Youth and Education Chair, Rod Karnitz as Trustees Chair, Ben Strackbein as Evangelism Chair, and Bill Dinse as Elders Chair.

For **2018 and for 2019** you may refer to the 2018 Annual Report.

Many others also served over the years as members of boards and committees, ushers, officers and leaders of other organizations and in other capacities. Some names will appear in future articles. Over the years some names reoccur for various offices and positions. Thanks to all.

Bob Krueger

Cards of Caring

The Cards of Caring volunteers will meet Saturdays, January 19, and February 9, to make Warm Winter Wishes, Valentines, Easter, and Anniversary cards for our "Thinking of You" and homebound members.

We meet at 403 N. Minnesota St. between 9 am and 12 pm. We welcome MLC students and members age 12 and older.

Come and join us for this fun volunteer project. Contact Lois Willems at 507-676-1230 with questions.

Council Digest

The Church Council met on December 18. A summary of reports and action from the meeting follows:

Membership changes approved

Transfer In

Catherine St. John from St. John's, Mukwonago, WI

Transfers Out

Caleb Dinse to Our Savior's, Brookings, SD

LeRoy and Mary Jo Levorson to St. Paul's, New Ulm

Rachel Moldan to St. John's, Sleepy Eye, MN

Confirmation

5 Dec Michael Ulicky

Ministrations

Funerals

13 Dec Gloria Morse

Pastor Guenther noted that he has now visited 220 members since last October in his quest to complete an every-member visit as a way of getting to know our members better.

The meeting functioned as an orientation for new members who will begin their term of service on the council in January, 2019. Dan Borgwardt will join the council in the new year as chair of the Board of Stewardship. The meeting began with a fellowship meal provided by members of the council completing a term of service at the end of the current calendar year. Installation of all council, board and committee members elected to new terms at the last voters' meeting will take place during the 11 am service on Sunday, January 20, 2019.

A number of appointive congregational positions remain open. At the present time, the vacant positions include the Board of Elders (1 position), the Board of Stewardship (2 positions), and the Endowment Committee (1 position). Voting members with an interest in one of these positions are asked to contact President Thiesfeldt.

St. John's has a Benevolence Fund used to help individuals or families with special needs on a discretionary basis. A recent distribution by the congregation's Executive Committee has left the fund nearly depleted. The council designated this year's Lutheran Charities envelope for use in replenishing the fund. If you have not used the special envelope in your packet yet, please consider a gift to this important fund designed to help brothers and sisters with special financial needs.

Elders chair Bill Dinse reported that part time custodian Paul Fritze will retire from his work at the end of the calendar year. Matthias Borgwardt has been hired as his replacement. We thank Paul for his service to the congregation and pray that God will bless the efforts of Matthias as he begins his training later this month.

Board of Evangelism chair Bill Pekrul reported on the success of the recent Christmas for Kids activity and on plans for a local outreach activity in April under the theme Praise and Proclaim. The latter is a coordinated joint effort also involving St. Paul's and Martin Luther College. The event will be preceded by a community screening of the new WELS video production To the Ends of the Earth at MLC in March. More details will be announced as plans develop in the new year. The board is also cooperating with St. Paul's to produce a postcard that can be used to welcome new families to the community and invite them to consider St. Paul's or St. John's for their church home. In his role as interim chair for the Board of Stewardship, Mr. Pekrul outlined recent efforts to inform our members of service opportunities in a letter prepared by Board of Stewardship member Roger Klockziem. The letter included a summary of the year-end financial picture for the congregation.

Treasurer Paul Gunderson reported that his investigation of local banks at the council's direction led to the opening of a new savings account with a significantly-higher rate of interest. A report on operational fund balances for the current calendar year showed a significant shortfall in the general operating fund and in our commitment to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. Our Building Fund and WELS Congregational Mission Offering support are on pace to meet the established goals. The council approved Treasurer

Gunderson's recommendation to designate a portion of this year's Endowment Fund distribution as needed to cover any shortfall in commitments to the external ministries supported by St. John's.

Chairman John Paulsen of the Lighting, Audio-Visual, and Acoustics Committee provided a detailed report based on a recent meeting to consider a wide variety of topics. The topics included maintaining an adequate supply of wireless microphones, training for users of our audio-visual equipment, recording worship services for public broadcast, possible live streaming of services in the future, and the

possibility of installing 80-inch television screens on both sides in the front of the church that could be used to project text, music, images and video before, during and after worship services. Additional feedback will be sought from our congregational membership before moving ahead with the latter.

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

The annual voters' meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 22, at 7:00 p.m. Reports for this meeting are due in the church office no later than Monday, January 14.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt, Congregational Chairman

Women of St. John's

The Women of St. John's met on December 4 for their annual Christmas party. The evening began with a devotion led by Pastor Bovee. He started by talking about Advent – the meaning behind the colors used during this season and the different meanings behind the Advent wreath – and how it represents Jesus shining the light of the Gospel upon us. While there are different thoughts behind the meaning of the colors of the candles of the Advent wreath, the pink candle, the Rose or shepherd's candle, always stands for joy. When the angel appeared to the shepherds that first Christmas night, he announced, "I bring you good news of great joy..." As each candle is lit it dispels the darkness. Long ago, it was thought that Christmas was celebrated on the darkest day of the year; each successive day got lighter. In contrast, the day selected for celebrating John the Baptist's birthday was the longest day of the year, for he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease (John 3:30, KJV)." Isaiah 9:2 says, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." Jesus is the light of the world. He alone lifts us from the darkness and despair of our sin and gives us forgiveness and hope. Praise be to God!

Karen Grunwald, Mary Hussman, and Nancy Boston planned a fun-packed evening once again. Multiple Christmas cards were cut into four pieces. Each lady chose a piece and then located the other three ladies who held the remaining three pieces. Then each group of four hummed a Christmas hymn, and the other groups guessed the name of it. We ate scrumptious treats such as schaum torte, shared a favorite family recipe of the Christmas season, and participated in a white elephant gift exchange. One lady was surprised to find she had received an entire box filled with old shoulder pads! We finished the evening by singing a few Christmas hymns selected by women who have birthdays in December.

You are invited: Our next meeting will take place on Tuesday, January 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the church basement. Karen Grunwald will be presenting and will tell about the HOPE movement class she conducts after school, the movement exercises she does with her students, and what she has learned about movement and children's learning. Please come! Even if you do not have children of your own at home anymore you probably know someone who could benefit from this program.

We are in need: We need a leader! We were unable to fill the position of president at our election in November. It is a two-year term. Please let one of the officers know (Jeneane Thiesfeld, Donna Dose, Denise Karstens, Christine Baganz, Ruth Aufderheide) if you would possibly be willing to serve in this way. You would have a great

executive committee with which to work. If you know someone who would make a good leader, approach that person about serving and encourage her to submit her name. Sometimes all it takes is a little nudge.

St. Paul's Lutheran School

www.splnewulm.org/school

BOCD Actions:

The BOCD did not meet in December

School Closings

School will resume on Thursday, January 3rd. There will be NO SCHOOL on January 14 with the faculty involved with a History Curriculum Conference at MLC on that day. The end of the 2nd Quarter will be Friday, January 18 (Early dismissal at 1:00pm to match District 88 Busing) with report cards going home the following Friday. There will be no school on Monday, January 21. There is a day reserved for Faculty In-Service.

MAP Testing

MAP testing will take place during the first two weeks of the 3rd Quarter. Beginning January 22, students will take tests in the areas of Reading, Math, and Language.

TWINS Caravan

Members of the Twins organization will be visiting the school on January 22nd and will be doing some activities in the gym with students in grades 4-6. "The goal is to put bats and balls in the hands of kids and get them playing the game." Twins players will make their way around the gym and give students tips and encouragement.

Lutheran Schools Week

LSW will be held the week of February 10-16. The K-8 children will be singing at the beginning of LSW on Sunday, Feb. 10, at the beginning of the 11:00 service. Children will be singing an anthem written by alumni, Phil Biedenbender.

PreK Open House

PreK Open House for 3 & 4 year old is Monday, January 14 from 2 - 6 pm. Visit school, let your child "try out" the room and talk to Mrs. Meyer about the Pre-K program! Contact Heidi Meyer, Pre-K Director, at 507-354-2329 with questions. Members of St. John's and St. Paul's are welcome to register early, January 1-14. (Public registration begins Jan 15).

Calendar

Jan 3	School Resumes
Jan 14	NO School: In-Service
Jan 18	Early Dismissal
Jan 21	NO School: In-Service
Jan 22	Twins Caravan
Jan 27	Gr. 1-8 sing: 8 am
Feb 11	Gr. K-8 sing: 11 am
Feb 15-18	NO School: Mid-Winter Break

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

MVL Announcements

MVL Chargers in Kwik Trip Tournament The MVL Chargers will be participating in the Kwik Trip Holiday Basketball Tournament. The tournament will be held at Bethany Lutheran College Dec. 27-29. Visit blc.edu for more information.

MVL Anniversary Shirts MVL has anniversary t-shirts available for purchase, \$10 for adults (S-3XL) and \$7 for youth (S-XL). Limited quantities in certain colors and sizes, so order yours soon! Contact Kristin Matzke at kmatzke@mvlhs.org or 507.354.6851.

Our Synod at Work

Information from the MLC Semester One Report

Martin Luther College has issued their Semester One Report along with a pamphlet that talks about their programs. There are a lot of very valuable statistics in this information and although sometimes statistics aren't the most exciting reading, they give a great picture of the important work that MLC is doing and it is important to share them.

First of all, we are very fortunate to have Martin Luther College right here in New Ulm. From a secular standpoint it is very important to the City of New Ulm, since many individuals who work at the college own homes, pay taxes, and shop in the city. It also gives many businesses employees with some college students seeking part-time employment.

The real value of Martin Luther Colleges is, of course, the spiritual training it gives students. There are 764 undergraduates on campus (48% female and 52% male). There are 564 education students enrolled and 200 pre-seminary students. In addition, the Early Childhood Learning Center has an enrollment of 79 children with four lead teachers and eight student teachers. There are 930 Continuing Education students and 128 Graduate Studies, 47 of which are enrolled in Master of Science Educational Administration.

Martin Luther College prepares students through daily chapel, mentoring, ministry assistance, bible history and doctrine courses, co-curricular activities, and liberal arts.

Support for the college comes from a number of sources: 49% is made up of student and family tuition payments; 17% comes from donations, scholarships, and grants; 21% is from synod support (Congregational Mission Offerings); 7% from activity fees and sales; and 6% from government taxpayer support.

There are a number of ways that individuals can help. For example, some ways are cash donations, matching gifts (Kraft, IBM, Thrivent, etc.), electronic fund transfers (credit card or checking account), real estate, and securities (stock, bonds, etc.). Individuals can also help through deferred gifts, such as life insurance designation, estates, charitable gift annuities, trusts, and donor-advised funds.

With the permission of WELS Conference of Presidents, MLC will conduct a two-year capital campaign in conjunction with the 2020 silver anniversary of MLC. The title, "Equipping Christian Witnesses" will reflect the mission of the institution.

Gerald Woodley

Southwest Area Lutheran Chorale

The Southwest Area Lutheran Chorale invites you to participate in their 2019 season.

Our first rehearsal is scheduled for Sunday, January 13th at St. John in Redwood Falls from 2 - 5 pm.

Our concerts will be held on Sunday, April 7th, at St. John's, Fairfax at 2 pm and St. Paul's, in St. James at 7 pm.

A complete schedule will be distributed at our first rehearsal. You can also learn more by contacting our Organizational Committee: Jim Renz 507-327-7222 (director), Linette Scharlemann 507-227-2161 (director), and Pastor Scott Muske 507-426-7007 (pastoral advisor).

New members are always welcome!

Men of Truth

WHAT'S IT MEAN TO BE A "MAN OF GOD"?

Husbands, fathers, and young men, join us for the 4th Annual Men of Truth Conference as we are encouraged from Scripture on what it means to be a "Man of God" on Saturday, March 23, 2019 at Martin Luther College.

www.menoftruth.org