



St. John's Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN  
November, 2019 *Fortress*

## NOW

**2 Corinthians 6:1-2 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.  
² For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.**

As we enter the month of November we also enter into that part of the church year which we refer to as the Season of End Time. During the last four Sundays of the church year we focus on events that teach us about the end of the world, judgment, heaven, and hell. We are reminded that there will be a day when God will bring all things to an end in this world, and what is temporal will be no more. But what is eternal will last forever and ever.

At those times in life when we find ourselves standing next to the hospital bed of a dying person or at the graveside of a departed friend or relative, or when we find ourselves in a situation where an illness or accident has visited our lives, perhaps the final judgment is something we consider more deeply and begin to muse upon with intrigue. And although certain occasions may cause us to reflect on it more than at other times, in the back of every Christian's mind is always the thought and hope that someday Christ will return and there will be the day of judgment.

St. Paul reminded his readers -- the audience of which we are now a part -- that the time of God's favor has come. Paul uses the word "now": **I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.** Paul uses that little word which denotes urgency, something that requires immediate attention. -- now. He uses the word to remind every Christian that this is our time of grace on earth. There may never be another day quite like today. There may not be a tomorrow for this world. As the hymn writer says, "the day is surely drawing near." Jesus shall return.

But of that day and hour, we know not. What we do know for certain however, is what is ours here and now. It is to the “now” that St. Paul causes us to focus our attention, for the now really points us to eternity, not to something that begins in the future, but something that begins here and now and is prolonged even into eternity.

Paul is actually quoting the prophet Isaiah chapter 49. It is a Messianic text, one that speaks of Christ and his saving work. However Paul applies the text to us as recipients of all that Jesus accomplished, and the blessings which overflow to us as a result of his saving work: **"In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."** In other words, what Christ did for us is ours today, even here and now. When Jesus came to this earth, it was to do his Father's will. He became incarnate in order to live a perfect life in our place. When he went to the cross he did so knowing that he was accomplishing the mission his Father had assigned to him, so that by his death in our place he paid the debt for all our sins with his own blood. As the writer of the book of Hebrews reminds us: **Hebrews 5:7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.** Everything Jesus did was well with God, therefore God honored all that he said and did in our place. What is more, all that Jesus did in our place is now ours, yes even here and now. In Jesus our sins are forgiven, even now. In Jesus we have a right relationship with God the Father, even now. In Jesus we are citizens of heaven, even now. Through faith in Christ we now live in the grace of God, declared righteous by Jesus' redemption.

Paul urges us therefore: **As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.** Exactly why he gave this word of warning to the Corinthians it is hard to say. But specifics are not needed to apply these words to our own lives. Right now, we have the blessings God promises us in Christ. Right now, today, every sinner has full pardon for his sins in Christ our Savior. Right now, through faith in Christ, his blessings are imparted to us as a free gift of his love and mercy, and not because we have earned or deserved them. Therefore, Paul exhorts us and warns us not to receive God's grace in vain. To receive something in vain means to nullify it so that it is no longer beneficial. While we are not able, even by our worst sins, to undo what Christ accomplished, yet we personally can lose out on his blessings by forsaking what he has given to us. Separating ourselves from worship and the study of God's word, becoming lackadaisical toward receiving the Lord's Supper, and lazy in our prayer life causes us to become lax and even hardened toward the things of God.

Remember that now is the time. Now, even today, we have the word of God and the Sacraments -- baptism and the Lord's Supper. God gives us the means to strengthen our faith, to live to his glory. God gives us the incentive to want to pray to him and to teach his word to others. God gives us the promise that in Christ eternal life is ours, here and now. We have been born again through faith in Christ. We are citizens of heaven, yes even now.

May we therefore find encouragement from these words penned by Paul through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us hold fast to all that Christ has done so by his grace we may live and die by faith, and in the end receive all that he promises to us, now and in eternity.

In Christ,  
Pastor Bovee

# Archives

## Saints Triumphant

Each year in November on Saints Triumphant Sunday we take note of those members whose deaths we celebrated during the past year and thus have joined the Church Triumphant with their Savior in heaven. This month we'll also note some others from past years which might also bring back some special memories.

1959, Pastors were Rollin Reim and Frederic Nitz; Rudolf Gatzke (age 54), Emil Hempel (age 79).

1969, Pastor was Frederic Nitz; Chester Curry (age 61), Baby boy Montgomery, Franklin Weller (age 56), John Macho (age 87), Otto Wacker (age 60), James Evers (age 26), Alpha Vogel (age 62), Howard Birkholz (age 49).

1994, Pastors were David Kolander and Jeffrey Bovee; Director of Christian Education was David Zabel; Erich Sievert (age 81), Raymond Duchlmeier (age 79), Loren Eyrich (age 76), Edna Kitzrow (age 74), Ordell Kiecker (age 80), Diane Mehlhop (age 47).

2009, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Wayne Laitinen; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske; Lydia Stoering (age 89), Lowell Gieseke (age 73), Jeannette Stoll (age 68), Marvel Boesch (age 85), David Morse (age 88), Adolph Pekrul (age 90), Marion Plagge (age 88), Erhard Wagner (age 94).

2019, Pastors were Jeffrey Bovee and Rob Guenther; Administrative Teacher was James Dretske; Kelly Emde was Staff Minister; Tom Evers (age ?), Valera Reinke (age 84), Norma Sieh (age 89), Doug Walters (age 68), Allen Affolter (age 89), Beverly Affolter (age 86), Sharon Karstens (age 76), Greg Horner (age 70), Linda Schroeder (age 67).

This month's Archives report is brief but important for it emphasizes that our time on earth as Christians who believe in a risen and living Savior who have an even greater goal and hope in life which may be realized at any age or time. It also reminds us that St. John's past is important for the future—even beyond life in this world.

By way of an added note: the total number of deaths and burials since 1951 is 401.

Bob Krueger

## Staff Minister

The Lutheran Chapel Service has been broadcast on KNUJ (860 am) for the last 70 years. I have been serving as secretary for the LCS Board since January of 2017. It is an area for outreach to those who aren't familiar with the WELS or God's Word and inreach for those who are unable to attend a service. It is on the air from 7:45 to 8:30 am on Sundays. Keep it in mind as you attend visitations and funerals as it does need funding to continue as Minnesota's longest running radio program.

Then he said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (Lk 23:42-43)

Kelly Emde

## Wish List

St. John's maintains a wish list of items that are not funded through the church budget, but which could still benefit our ministry. The current list of items and cost estimates that follows has received approval through the Church Council:

- Organ registration memory upgrade (~\$16,000) – This upgrade will help to accommodate our multiple organists in storing registration presets in a digital memory system.
- Handbells, Handchimes, and Accessories (~\$13,000) – This equipment is essential for establishing a handbell choir.
- Timpani (~\$8,000) – Three timpani (also called kettledrums) will eliminate the need to borrow and transport these instruments when needed.

The Stewardship Board encourages members to continue with their regular, proportionate, and joyful support of our ministry plan. We maintain and promote this wish list to provide direction for those who desire to make a special contribution beyond their planned offerings, and to provide suggestions for designation of memorial funds. Anyone who would like to propose an addition to the wish list can obtain a submission form at the church office.

## Church Library

November is the month when we think of giving thanks. Why not every day? But to whom are we giving thanks? God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God gives us everything we have. What is everything? All the good that you can mention. Our children's section has several books about God and Creation. Would your child or grandchild enjoy reading or listening to a book about creation? We also have several children's books on Thanksgiving.

We also can thank the Wartburg Project for working on a new English translation of the Bible. It was published recently and we now have a copy of it in the church library. Even though we have several English translations in our library, this one could be the best. It is called the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV). copyright 2019. The New Testament of the EHV came out about 2 years ago. They are published by Northwestern Publishing House. There are no additional helps in this book, but there may be a book coming out in the future. Translating from the original Hebrew and Greek took this Wartburg Project 200,000 man hours to complete. Check It Out!

LeiLani Rahn  
Church Librarian

## Council Digest

The St. John's Church Council met on October 15. The majority of the meeting was used to prepare for the voters' meeting a week later. Thirty-one voters were present on Tuesday evening, October 22, for the third quarterly voters' meeting of 2019. A combined summary of reports and action from those meetings not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

In a report from Pastor Guenther, the voters ratified earlier Church Council action by approving membership changes and heard a report on ministrations from the last quarter.

- Membership changes

- Transfers Out

- John and Lynda Bauer to Heritage, Apple Valley, Mn

- Allison Bovee to Trinity, Bay City, MI

- Jeremy Pope to Bloomington, Minneapolis, MN

- Transfers In

- Donovan Witte from Trinity, Nicollet, MN

- Ministrations

- Baptism

- 13 Oct Kinsley Rayne Hansen

- Following reports from the called workers, congregational officers, boards and committees, several items of new business were considered.

- A report listing candidates for elective and appointive positions from the Nominating Committee prepared by President Steven Thiesfeldt was approved. The following individuals were elected to three year terms on the church council beginning January 1, 2020: Greg Diersen (vice president); Michael Thom (financial secretary); and Brad Price (deacon). The following

appointments for the same timeframe were ratified: Bob Johnson, John Micheel, and Geraldine Steffen (Finance Committee); Mark Bauer (Endowment Fund Committee); Stan Aufderheide (Board of Youth and Education); Jesse Zahrt and Ron Zahrt (Evangelism); and Jon Roux (MVL Delegate). A Board of Trustees and the archivist position are vacant as of January 1, 2020. The council will continue to work at filling these vacancies by the annual meeting in January and present names for ratification at the annual meeting. If you are a voting member and willing to serve in either of those roles (or know of someone you would like to nominate), please contact Nominating Committee chair Steve Thiesfeldt.

- The 2019 congregational budget recommended by the church council and presented by Treasurer Paul Gunderson was approved by the voters. The \$1,020,256 budget is an increase of about two percent over 2019 and includes salary increases averaging between 1.5% and 3% for our workers. The portion of the budget supporting worker compensation and ongoing expenses (office supplies, plant maintenance and improvement, debt repayment, etc.) is \$864,461. The remaining \$155,795 represents two percent increases in the congregational mission offering for work done by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (\$89,142); MVL support (\$60,489); and adjustments based on an updated per communicant calculation for smaller ministries like the Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association (LIMA), the Lutheran Chapel Service and Jesus Cares.
- Although Treasurer Gunderson noted that the congregation's debt was retired in September, we have an internal loan of \$72,616 remaining for the purchase of the 601 S. Washington property that will be repaid through the Building Fund over the next year. Members are encouraged to continue to make regular contributions to the Building Fund for that purpose. The Campus Facilities Task Force, under the leadership of Dr. Keith Wessel, is conducting a study of future facility needs that may be supported by the Building Fund once all debts have been paid off.
- Anticipating the retirement of St. Paul's teacher and St. John's member Jean Schroeder at the close of the 2019-20 school year, a recommendation from the council to call a kindergarten teacher as her replacement was approved. The call meeting for that purpose was scheduled for Tuesday, October 29, at 7:00 p.m.
- The next joint council meeting with St. Paul's is scheduled for Tuesday, November 12; the next St. John's regular council meeting, for Tuesday, November 19; and the annual voters' meeting, for Tuesday, January 28, 2019.

Steven R. Thiesfeldt,  
Congregational chairman

## **Our Synod at Work**

### **Current Demographic Situation**

The 2019 Book of Reports and Memorials has some rather "shocking" statistics regarding the possible future of the WELS. In the section of Congregational Services it states that Rev. Jonathan Hein, coordinator of WELS Congregational Services, at the request of the Council of Presidents, presented a comprehensive demographic study that illustrated the challenges all Christian churches are facing in the "21st-century, post-Christian America."

WELS has lost members every year except one since 1991. The study illustrated that as the synod ages, those losses will increase. In 2018, WELS lost 1.51 percent of its members, the highest one-year loss in WELS history.

Using various well-established statistical trends, such as baptism, adult confirmations, removals, deaths, etc, there is an attempt to forecast future membership. The report says it “presents something of a dire picture.” In one generation (by 2039), WELS is projected to lose between 75,000 and 123,000 members. In two generations (by 2059), the losses would be between 188,000 and 261,000 members. To state it another way, there is the real potential that within 40 years WELS would be down to approximately 93,000 members.

That decline will be seen in congregations, as by 2039, WELS will lose between 280 and 400 congregations and by 2059, WELS would be down 760 to 940 congregations. That would translate to only 330 WELS churches nationwide.

To help answer the situation, WELS Congregational Services has initiatives aimed at two goals: “opening the front door” (adding new members through evangelism) and “shutting the back door” (encouraging members to remain a part of the congregation and synod).

The first initiative was C18, a synod-wide outreach campaign that set the goal of reaching one million souls prior to and on Christmas Eve. Approximately 70 percent of WELS congregations participated in the program in some way. There were over 32,000 downloads of evangelism and worship resources from [welscongregationalservices.net](http://welscongregationalservices.net). There were more than 1.2 million invitational postcards shared in a variety of ways. From churches that reported, there were 131 congregations that recorded their highest Christmas Eve attendance.

Another initiative of the past year was the Ministering to Millennials module. A commonly identified need in WELS congregations is the challenge to retain or gain Millennial-aged individuals, those people born between 1981 and 1996. A number of studies have shown that this generation has largely opted out of church. The program contains a series of videos that helps congregation better understand this generation and its aversion to organized religion.

There is a Welcome Home initiative underway as well. This program is an attempt to pursue those members who are seemingly drifting away. An analysis of WELS attendance rates demonstrates that approximately 155,000 WELS members attend less than 5 percent of the time.

Congregational Services is working on other programs as well in an attempt to meet the challenge of declining membership.

Gerald Woodley

# St. Paul's Lutheran School

## This Quarter at School

- School began on Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> with an Opening Service without visitors due to the restriction of 300 allowed in the lower level. Mr. Markgraf led the devotion in worship focusing on the theme, "Passion, Priority, Purpose". It is based on Romans 5:8: *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
- The school year officially started with a total of 289 (129 SP 44.5%; 100 SJ 34.5%; 38 Non-member 13.1%; and 22 Other WELS 7.6%) students enrolled in Grades K-8 bringing the total to 346 students, up from 326 students last year. There are presently 56 children in PreK.
- Students in grades three through eight took the first of three MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) tests to be taken this year. Focusing on the areas of math, reading, and language, these formative tests provide immediate results that teachers can use to shape instruction for their classrooms.
- The WELS Minnesota District Teachers Conference was held at Bethany College in Mankato under theme, "The Lord is My Light" with religious keynote speaker: Pastor John Boggs, Divine Savior, West Palm Beach, FL presenting on the theme.
- Mr. Steve Biedenbender received a Divine Call to serve Faith Lutheran School, Antioch, IL, to teach grades 5-6 and church music. Please keep Mr. Biedenbender in your prayers as he deliberates between his current call to St. Paul's and this new call.
- St. Paul's Campaign Committee is planning a Pancake Brunch for Sunday, November 17. Watch the bulletin for details.

## Building Project at St. Paul's

The Lord has continued to bless the project with continued gifts from members of both St. Paul's and St. John's congregations. Since 2015, St. John's members have contributed \$122,971.83 toward the building project. The project is nearing \$3 million in gifts and commitments with updates given in the weekly bulletins. Although at the time of writing this article, the entrance/office areas were not completed, it is hoped that by the time you read this, many things will be completed including: Flooring in the Lower Level: Cafeteria, Entrance Area, and Offices. The office areas are on track to be completed and move-in date is anticipated to be November 8th. The second floor areas including the STEM and Art Classrooms, storage areas, and faculty work room should also be ready for use soon after. Once the entrance/office areas are complete, the workers will focus on the Early Childhood wing. May God continue to bless the work of those who are involved in the process of building. Gifts from our members should be submitted to St. John's—either at the church office or in a separate offering envelop marked "SPL Building Project" Please indicate your St. John's membership in the Memo on any checks.

## Parking Lot Work, Drop-off/Pick-up

Since the entrance area is near completion, the staging area in the parking lot has shrunk enough to allow the parking lot to be replaced. There currently is new curb and gutter installed and the complete parking lot has been replaced and painted. The traffic flows now from Payne Street to Garden Street. Parents are able to drop students off along the Fire lane in front of the south entrance of the building. However, parents are not able to park and wait for students within that Fire Lane. Parents will be asked to park in the parking area. When all of their children have come out of the school, parents will be able to move to the "pick-up" zone on the west side of the parking lot.



### **Parent/Teacher Consultations**

The end of the first quarter is November 1<sup>st</sup>. Report cards will go home on Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup>. Parent/Teacher Consultations are scheduled for Tuesday – Thursday, Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Calendar**

Nov 3 Jr. Choir sings at 11 am  
Nov 6 Gr. 5-8 go to MVL for Vet Program  
Nov 8 NO School - Teacher In-Service  
Nov 12-14 Parent Teacher Conferences  
Nov 17 Gr. K-4 sing at 11 am  
Pancake Brunch at St. Paul's Church  
Nov 21 Forensics Meet  
Nov 22 Forensics Family Fair at 6 pm  
Nov 27-29 NO School - Thanksgiving Break  
Dec 4 Gr. 1-4 sing at 4 pm  
Dec 8 Jr. Choir sings at 8 am

[splnewulm.org/school](http://splnewulm.org/school)

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

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

The Women of St. John's met on Oct. 1, 2019 at Turner Hall. Everyone enjoyed a delicious meal. Afterwards, Denise Karstens led the group in two fun games: *Two Truths and a Falsehood* and *What's in Your Purse*. Donna Dose was the victor in the last game.

There was no business meeting.

Ruth Koelpin gave information about the German murals in the restaurant. Arnold Koelpin had written about the stories connected to the murals of castles. His booklet was made available.

Dr. Ann Vogel gave an update on the Amphitheater in German Park. The goal is to have the project completed by mid-August. When finished, the Amphitheater will seat 550, be 100% ADA accessible and will have new acoustic and lighting capabilities. Community fund raising is strongly encouraged for everyone. Dr. Ann also reported that at a recent funeral, we ran out of food and forks, so this will be looked into for future meals.

The next meeting will be on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>. Our guest speaker will be Austin Claflin. Austin is a junior at MLC on the pastor's track. He has been a published author since 7<sup>th</sup> grade and writes historical

fiction especially focusing on Alexander the Great. The MLC Library has three of his books available.

Attendance:19

Ruth Aufderheide,  
Secretary

## **MLC Ladies' Auxiliary**

The Take Home summary sheet from the Fall annual meeting of the Auxiliary is available on the table in the new narthex. Please take a copy of this new information and consider how you may support MLC through the auxiliary's efforts. Thank you.

Contact person:  
Jeneane Thiesfeldt  
thiesfjm@gmail.com or 507-240-4523

## **Cards of Caring**

Fall is coming and school is beginning, so it is time again for St. John's "Cards of Caring" volunteers to meet for fellowship and to make cards for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthdays for our "Homebound" and "Thinking of You" members.

We will meet on the following Saturday, November 16. You are welcome to join us any time between 9 am and noon as your schedule permits. We will again meet at 403 N. Minnesota St. (front door is on 4th North St.).

We welcome MLC students and members ages 12 and older. There are activities for everyone to do. No "card making skills" are required.

For information, contact  
Lois Willems at  
507-676-1230.