



St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN
September, 2023 *Fortress*

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

Exodus 18:8-24 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them. ⁹ Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. ¹⁰ He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹ Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." ¹² Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God. ¹³ The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. ¹⁴ When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" ¹⁵ Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. ¹⁶ Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. ¹⁹ Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. ²⁰ Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. ²¹ But select capable men from all the people-- men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain-- and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. ²² Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. ²³ If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." ²⁴ Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.

Vacation Bible School was going to begin in a couple of weeks. Yes, I will admit, I was a bit nervous. Due to the fact we were going to have it a week later than we ever had before, there were conflicts with other events that were beginning that same week. Many of the helpers who had helped in the past or would be eligible to help this year would be involved in soccer, volleyball, and other sports which were starting their practices. Some college age students were headed to school and

would not be available. Some of the crafts I had ordered were suddenly not scheduled to arrive until the day VBS would end. Unlike other years when I knew I would have lots of people to help and everything in place, it just didn't seem to be going that way. I prayed about it.

I remembered Moses. He was called by God to serve his people. Moses tried to take it on all by himself. When I think about being nervous about VBS, it is a little embarrassing and perhaps a bit arrogant to compare myself with Moses, the leader of thousands of people. But there is a lesson to be learned.

Thank God for Moses' father-in-law Jethro, also known as Reuel, since Jethro was probably his title as the Priest of Midian. When Jethro saw that Moses was trying to do everything by himself he offered him some wise and practical advice. He told him to select some capable people to help him. Moses would still lead, but he would delegate work to others. Jethro caused Moses to understand what the body of Christ is able to do as all the members take part and work together to serve God's kingdom.

Like Moses, I may have been thinking I had to shoulder too many things by myself. But God had to teach me a lesson, as he has over and over again.

Suddenly, when I needed them most, people turned out to help. Some taught. Others, younger and older, came forward to assist with crafts, food, and registration. God's people working together made it successful. Even when we were planning on having a simple hotdog and chips luncheon following VBS, without being asked, people brought all kinds of food – beans, salads, and desserts. I joked that it was almost like the feeding of the 5000.

The lesson to be learned for me is that God does not lay the entire burden on only one person when it comes to service in his kingdom. The Holy Christian Church is made up of many members who are motivated by their love for Jesus their Savior who loved them first. They serve God and one another. And they did.

Yes, there is only one person on whom God ever laid the burden of everyone else. That was our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When he died on the cross he died for us all. But by doing so he purchased us with his own blood and made us God's own sons and daughters through faith. It is because of what Jesus did for us that we serve him and one another.

I cannot thank everyone enough who participated in our Vacation Bible School this year to teach, help, or serve in any capacity. I could not be more pleased with the people who enrolled their children and brought them to join in the fellowship of others so that they would hear God's Word.

Yes, St. John's members, there are some challenges that lay before us. But don't see them as insurmountable problems. And don't think you have to shoulder them alone. God has given us many members who are able to work together to accomplish what he desires to have us do.

I cannot thank everyone enough who participated to make our VBS a success. But most of all, we thank God who promises to guide us, guard us, and give us what we need when we need it.

Thanks be God!

In Christ,
Pastor Jeff Bovee

September Sermon Texts

September 3	Matthew 16:21-26	Get Behind Jesus
September 10	Matthew 18:15-20	Seeking Repentance through Offering Forgiveness
September 17	Genesis 50:15-21	God's Plan is to Save the World
September 24	Matthew 20:1-16	God is Always Fair

Bible Classes meet in the Church Basement
The class can also be found online at bit.ly/SJBibleClass

Thursdays at 10:30 am	Hard Sayings of Jesus	Pastor Rob Guenther
Thursdays at 7 pm	The I AM Statements of Jesus	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Fridays at 9:30 am	The I AM Statements of Jesus	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Sundays at 9:30 am	Heart in Focus	Pastor Rob Guenther

Council Digest

The St. John's Church Council met on August 15.

A summary of reports and actions not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

Ministrations

Transfers Out

Jakob Casper to Living Hope Lutheran, Shakopee, MN

Charlotte Hoffmann; Kaylen to Zion, Winthrop, MN

Transfers In

Erica Newman; Hunter, Brielle, Lyla from St. Paul's Lutheran, New Ulm, MN

Adult Confirmation

Kaylee Dittmer; Eli Weigel, Charlotte Dittmer

A new ad hoc committee is setting its meeting times and beginning its work concerning a trend of increasing budget shortfalls over the past three years. The thought is that it will be helpful to explore any possibilities on the expense side before directing the congregation to increase offerings on the income side. The current budget deficit for this year is \$120,000. The committee includes John

Michael-Treasurer, Mike Thom-Bookkeeper, Jason Mohror- Elder's Chair, Steve Balza-stewardship member, Jon Hermanson- BoYE Chair, and Jeremy Berg- Vice President. The president and pastors serve as ex officio members. Members are encouraged to take and answer questions.

Deacon Brad Price and Assistant Deacon Luke Hunter reported 880 baptized and 710 communicant members. August 6 was the special 75th Anniversary Service. There were 257 in the 8 am service and 212 attending the special 10 am service.

Board Reports

Board for Youth and Education Chair Jon Hermanson updated on discussions about different models for supporting St. John's family's tuition at St. Paul's Lutheran School (SPL) might work. These discussions are prompted by St John's current budgetary state. They used as a starting point a) the current cost of education at SPL and b) some approaches that other congregations have been using.

Plans are underway for Sunday School and Sunday Morning Bible Study to begin the Sunday after Labor Day.

Evangelism Board chair Jesse Zahrt updated the council members on opportunities for outreach and fellowship. The Fellowship Committee needs a few individuals to serve individually or as a team. The various service opportunities include coordinating Sunday Morning Bible Study snacks and coffee, coordinating fellowship event details, and organizing fellowship committee planning. Watch for more info in bulletins and the newsletter for more details.

The annual Summer Send-Off event will be held at St. Paul's School on September 9th from 5-7 pm - with an outdoor service to follow at 7:15 pm.

Chair Jason Mohror provided details about the **Elder's** action—two items connected with worship. The Elders have rescinded the COVID-19 policy of refraining from basket passing for the offering during the worship services. The Elders would like the Voters to discuss and decide how the offering should be collected. The Elders have not had a strong consensus on how this should be done.

The Elders have approved of the placement of prayers from the red Christian Worship hymnals in the front of the new hymnals via adhered inserts.

Stewardship Board chair Dan Borgwardt relayed the board's recommendation to enlist the assistance of the congregation's officers, board chairmen, and board members to make telephone contact with every adult congregation member, communicating the financial situation and encouraging a gospel-motivated response.

The **Trustees** (a.k.a. The Board of Properties) Chair Scott Deters updated the council about the boulevard tree removal at 601 S Washington, which was removed by the city at no cost to St. John's.

Preparations have been made for September 9th and 16th as work days for trustees and volunteers. Projects include pressure washing the church, replacing mulch around the church, and installing the AED unit and first aid kit downstairs.

Council Business

The voters made two decisions at the July voter's meeting. They approved the timeline for updating the St. John's Constitution.

They tabled the council's recommendation from the Campus Facility Task Force's proposal to renovate the sanctuary floor and pew cushions until the January, 2024, St. John's voters' meeting.

Future meetings:

Next council meeting - Tuesday, September 19, 7 pm

Next voters' meeting - Tuesday, October 24, 7 pm

Submitted by Jon Schaefer,
Congregational President

Staff Minister

Facilities Projects Volunteers – The Board of Properties (formerly Trustees) have scheduled two work dates in September. Set dates are Saturdays of Sept 9 and Sept 16. Weather permitting, the following projects are being planned. If everything gets done the first weekend, the board will use the second weekend for a meeting.

1) Power Washing the upper level of the church building - a few spots of mold need to be removed before October when the sprinkler system water supply is drained for the winter months. Work will include using a gas powered power washer on scaffolding.

2) Wood Chips are being ordered to fill in some thin spots within the areas around the church that were done a couple of years ago. Bring a rake and scoop shovel if you have them to help fill in these areas.

3) Some Baseboard trim will finish off the kitchen project. Cutting baseboard pieces to fit, the application of adhesive, and applying baseboard to the kitchen walls will be the work needed. If you are able to help with these projects just show up on one or both of these Saturdays. You can also email me at sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com, so that I have an idea of how many are planning to come.

Visiting the Homebound - If you are not on our list to be visited but would like to be included, please call me at **507-217-7604** or email me to get on the list.

St. John's Podcasts (NEW) - St. John's now has a weekly podcast that features an audio file of the previous weekend's sermon. You can login using bit.ly/SJNUPodcast to listen again to the pastor's message of Law & Gospel which condemns our sinful nature but provides comfort and reassurance of the forgiveness that is ours through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen as often as you like. There is no requirement to purchase anything online. Type the above link into your computer or phone browser. Save as a favorite to access quickly each week.

Streamed/Recorded Services – Watch our St. John's YouTube Channel: bit.ly/SJyoutube. Don't hesitate to hit the red **“Subscribe”** button on YouTube. There is no cost. It only means that you will get a notification when we add a new service to our channel.

Please fill out an **Online Quick Response Survey** to let us know how we are doing and leave a comment. Go to: bit.ly/SJRecord-Stream as we are always striving to improve our streaming services.

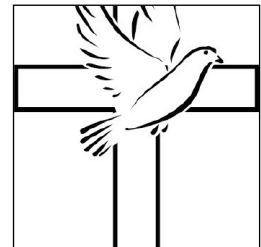
Who or What is a member? Part 2 In response to God's Gift of salvation that comes through Jesus Christ, there are many opportunities for our members to do the things that members do. Some

members don't really know what those are, so I thought I would share a list of some of the things that members do. Maybe you can see yourself in this list. If not, think about taking on something to feel more a part of the membership at our congregation. Some of these are not possible by everyone, but the hope is for you to grow in your membership by continuing to add or change the things you do. There are more specific opportunities listed in our ***Time & Talent Booklet*** (found at bit.ly/TandTbook2022), but here is a list of what some members generally do: Members worship together; Members visit with each other before or after worship and Bible classes; Members commune together in the Lord's Supper; Members support the congregation's ministries with their firstfruit offerings; Members are in the Word outside of worship whether in Bible Classes or personal study; Members pray for each other; Members help each other; Members join together to maintain the church; Members join congregational groups, committees, or boards to do the work of the Lord in various ways; Male members over eighteen years of age become voting members to give careful consideration to the work being recommended by the council; Members are active in the church. These things are needed in our congregation. I pray that you will prayerfully consider adding something on this list if you find that you are not a part of the things on it. (See August *Fortress* for Part 1).

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Dretske

In Loving Memory

<i>Leanne Howard</i>	Undesignated	\$280
<i>Ralph Kuehn</i>	Undesignated	\$10



Church Library

School has started and it is back to routine. Books become important again. So allow the church library to be part of your days and times.

We have 3 books to tell about this month. Two are non-fiction, and one is young adult fiction.

Lee Strobel has written "The Case for Christ," and "The Case for Creation" and "The Case for Faith" and others. His newest "Case" is "for Heaven." He asks questions of his learned friends who have studied the issues, so he can learn, this time, about heaven. Questions such as: are we conscious beyond

the grave? Why trust Christianity on the afterlife? And are there alternatives to eternal torment? All are about what happens after we die. This is a subject we are all interested in.

The second book is shorter. "Patient Parenting" by John Juern. It treats the subject of "Raising your kids in the Shadow of the Cross." Mr. Juern is a family counselor and child psychologist who wrote columns for "Lutheran Parent" for 8 years. He touches on such issues as obedience, honesty, attention deficit disorder, time outs, drugs and alcohol, depression, potty training, birth order, etc. There are 48 issues in all, interesting to all who were or are or will be parents.

The third book is a young adult book, part of the Adventures in Odyssey, part of the Focus on the Family presentations. The team of Emily Jones, and Max Parker, both preteens, solve 16 mysteries using observation and common sense. Can you solve the mysteries before they do?

Please check out these books and learn. Reading is always a learning experience. Remember too, that the new books are on the wheeled bookcase.

LeiLani Rahn,
Church Librarian

Opportunities to Share Your Musical Talent

What a privilege and joy to praise our Savior and proclaim the gospel message through music!

Choir

The St. John's Choir serves to enhance our worship by bringing God's Word to his people in song.

Anyone 8th grade and older are welcome to participate in the choir. There is no audition and you do not need to know how to read music.

Rehearsals will be held in the St. John's balcony on Wednesdays from 7 - 8 pm. The first rehearsal will be on Wednesday, September 6.

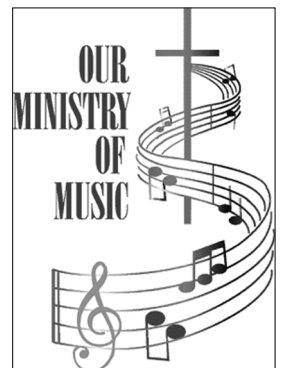
If you have any questions please contact Craig Hirschmann at hirschcr@mlc-wels.edu or 414-690-1106.

Handbells

Anyone 8th grade and older are welcome to participate.

Rehearsals will be Wednesdays from 6 - 7 pm. The first rehearsal will be Wednesday, September 6.

If you have any questions, please contact Becky Berg at rberg@mvlhs.org or 989-280-7674. Please leave your name and phone number if you receive the voicemail.



Our Synod at Work

Grow in Grace for Called Workers

The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has a program for called workers called Grow in Grace. There are several aspects to the program: (1) mentoring for new pastors, (2) celebration of ministry retreats, (3) summer quarter of 1 or 2-week sessions on campus, (4) satellite summer quarter; (5) symposium consisting of 2-day seminars on campus, (6) online courses, and (7) informal growth resources. We will take a more detailed look at some of the programs offered.

Events and Courses

During the even-numbered years there is an on-campus Summer Quarter. During the odd-numbered years, there are satellite courses that are offered in partnership with districts. There are also online courses that are available in spring, summer, and fall. Also, Grow in Grace offers a Master of Sacred Theology degree. Pastors may design their own course in an area of gifts, interests or ministry needed through directed research with a WLS faculty advisor.

Ministry Evaluation Packets

There are three ministry evaluation packets that are available to download:

1. **Ordained for a Life of Growth:** This is an essay and resource package that helps a pastor evaluate how he can guard supporting gifts of time, faith, health, and brothers/sisters.
2. **Reclaiming our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage.** There are four essays and a resource packet to assist pastors in approaching their time in Word and prayer.
3. **Fan God's Gifts into Flame.** An essay, workbook, and resource package that offers pastors a rationale and options for crafting an annual plan for growth in all of their callings.

Informal Learning

There are informal growth resources for pastors found on the Grow in Grace website. They include:

1. **The Shepherd's Study.** Over 150 book reviews of current and classic books that are written by pastors.
2. **Four Branches Review.** This is a monthly digital professional growth resource that offers belief articles in each of the four theological disciplines.
3. **Preach the Word and Teach the Word.** There are current and back issues of a newsletter regarding preaching/worship and another regarding teaching.

Retreats and Mentoring

Each spring Grow in Grace hosts retreats for pastors and their wives who are marking significant milestones since graduation. Grow in Grace also oversees the synod's mentoring initiative that matches trained, experienced pastors as mentors for WLS graduates. The program seeks to provide regular, individualized encouragement to new pastors during their first three years of ministry.

We as WELS church members can encourage and pray for called workers to be lifelong learners as well as providing financial gifts to the Seminary for continuing education scholarships or to the Grow in Grace Endowment Fund.

Gerald Woodley

St. John's congregation will observe its 75th Anniversary in 2023!



Organ Recital on Sunday, September 10 at 3 pm

Our gifted St. John's organists will provide a musical offering of thanks as they walk us through the church year in this special afternoon recital.

MLC Service / College Choir Concert: Sunday, October 15 at 10:30 am

Our concluding event will be a special treat as St. John's member Adrian Smith directs the MLC College Choir in a portion of their fall concert program.

Services that weekend:

Saturday, October 14 at 6:30 pm and Sunday, October 15 at 8 and 10:30 am.

There will be a brief presentation about the college between the Sunday services.

We are blessed to have the college so close and to have so many of its students worship and serve among us.

Women of St. John's

Calling all avid readers!

Our September meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 5th at 7 pm in the church basement. Please bring a book or two that you would recommend to others (or at least title and author). We will also have a brief meeting.

MUMS

MUMS is Back!

Moms Understanding Moms in view of the Savior (MUMS) is a group of Christian moms from St. Paul's and St. John's churches and St. Paul's school that meet on Tuesdays. The meetings will begin the season on Tuesday, September 12 at 9 am in the basement at St. Paul's Church. The focus is to encourage one another in God's Word and prayer. We are excited to get back together.

Please join our Facebook group called MUMs for more details and updates!

If you have questions please contact Cori Waldschmidt at (989) 245-9256.

MLC Ladies' Auxiliary

St. John's is looking for someone to be the contact person for the MLC Ladies' Auxiliary.

Who We Are

The Martin Luther College Ladies Auxiliary is composed of women who are communicant members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and those in Synodical fellowship.

Our Mission

The MLC Ladies Auxiliary exists to support and enhance student life at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is fourfold:

- To promote greater interest in Martin Luther College.
- To promote Christian fellowship among women of WELS and those in Synodical fellowship
- To give financial support to MLC by supplying funds for needed projects which are not included in the Synod budget.
- To support MLC and its students through prayer

The contact lady would be responsible for sharing information from the Auxiliary with her congregation.



The Auxiliary Board

The Executive Committee along with the Pastoral Advisor, the Faculty Representative, a Representative from the Board of Control, Projects Committee members, Promotion Committee members, and two representatives from each conference make up the Auxiliary Board.

Committees

- Program — The Faculty Representative assists in planning the program for the annual meeting.
- Promotion — Three elected conference representatives, the First and Second Vice Presidents, and the Faculty Representative coordinate all promotional activities of the Auxiliary.
- Projects — Three elected area representatives, along with the Faculty Representative, coordinate all activities related to the selection and funding of projects.

To learn more, go to mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary/

OWLS Meeting

Our local MN Valley Chapter 13 OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors) will be meeting on Monday, September 11 (9/11) at St. John's Lutheran Church, New Ulm. Fellowship begins at 11:30 am with a noon potluck meal. Please bring a dish to pass. Drinks and table wear will be provided. A devotion will be held at 12:45 pm, with a presentation to follow by Pastor Glenn and Jackie Hieb, Missionaries to Japan.

Hope you can make it.



St. Paul's School

Regular Worship Attendance for the Spiritual Health of the Family

Regularly attending worship services is not just a weekend activity; it is a powerful tool that nurtures the spiritual health of families. Amidst our busy lives, coming together for worship, especially when led by the father in the family, offers a place where we hear about Jesus' limitless love, instill a relationship with our God, provides us an opportunity to praise and thank God, creates Christian friendships, and find peace when surrounded by temptations.

Consistent worship nurtures spiritual growth. Regular exposure to God's Word and the Holy Spirit enables families to learn and develop faith in Christ our Savior, causing all to search the scriptures. The worship service also provides a consistent way for families to give God our thanks and praise for keeping his promises.

Gathering as a family at your church creates a sense of belonging and community. Reciting the Apostle's Creed or the Lord's Prayer with our family of believers can be a powerful reminder that we are part of a Christian community. Also, children witness the importance of unity and forging lasting relationships.

Life's challenges can strain families, but the promises of God serve as a refuge. Shared prayers and reflections offer solace and cultivate resilience. This shared experience can improve family communication; promote reliance on Christ and one another.

For these reasons, I am thankful to my parents, Dale and Becky Markgraf, for taking me to church regularly. Attending church on a regular basis does not require any type of sacrifice. I look forward to being with my church family to worship our God. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Pete Markgraf, Principal

Summer Send-Off

Join us for Summer Send-off on Sep. 9th from 5 - 7 pm! John and Paul Ministries will say goodbye to summer with complimentary food, bounce houses, games, outdoor worship, and the best seats on the school grounds for the HermannFest fireworks!

See you then and bring a friend!

Many helpful hands and friendly faces are needed to run an outreach event! Please sign up at johnandpaulministries.com to volunteer! Questions? Contact Beth Scharf at scharfbm@mlc-wels.edu.

MLC Homecoming

Free Family Fun for ALL at MLC Homecoming:

On Saturday, September 30, the MLC Alumni Association invites you to campus for Homecoming. The events begin with the Sprinter Fun Run/Walk at 9 am. This 1-mile course (all stroller-accessible) meanders throughout the main campus.

Learn more about the Fun Run and sign up at bit.ly/2023MLCFunRun.

After the Fun Run/Walk, stay to enjoy the free Family Fun Zone that includes Bumper Soccer, QB Challenge, caricatures, inflatables, basketball challenge and more!

Check out www.mlc-wels.edu/events/homecoming for the full slate of events and come see what is new at your college of ministry!

Cards of Caring

As our fall schedules resume, it is time to think about making cards for our homebound and thinking-of-you members. We also include our three LWMS Befriend a Mission families.

We will focus on making Thanksgiving and Christmas cards. All supplies are furnished. If you can't create cards, we have other simple tasks you can do. We welcome those from seventh grade and older, including MLC students.

Meetings are one Saturday a month in September, October, and November. Our first date is September 16, 2023. We meet from 9 am until noon. Come as your schedule allows.

See you at 403 N. Minnesota St. (across from the Glockenspiel). This is an opportunity for fellowship and service to the Lord. Contact Lois Willems at 507-676-1230 with questions.

Central Africa Medical Mission

I had the incredible privilege to travel to Malawi and Zambia in July with three other members of the CAMM Stateside Committee, Gary and Beth Evans and Stacy Stolzman, to see the clinics operated by CAMM, meet the staff, and observe clinic operations. This month's newsletter contains my reflections on our visit to Lusaka, Zambia and the Mwembeshi Lutheran Mission Rural Health Centre.

Our visit to Zambia began with meeting Alisad Banda, the clinic administrator, whose office is in a new building on property in Lusaka that is owned by the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA) – Zambia, which is in fellowship with the WELS. He is currently pursuing his Master's degree in Public Health Administration and will defend his research later this year. He is truly a blessing to the

clinic operations in Zambia. Alisad has a gentle and faithful spirit that is on fire for Christ and he is dedicated to serving the people that come to Mwembezhi with Christ-centered health care.

Alisad drove our group out to the clinic at Mwembezhi, a rural area about a two-hour drive from Lusaka, part of it on dirt roads. Before we departed, we loaded up several boxes which were recently received from CAMM supporters across the country. These boxes contained pill bottles, baby blankets, and baby hats, and we were excited to personally help bring those boxes to the clinic staff. About 160 babies are delivered per year at Mwembezhi, and their mothers really appreciate receiving the baby blankets and hats that you and others have donated.

We were met at the clinic by Jackson Kalekwa, the Clinical Officer in Charge, who introduced us to many of the staff and gave us a tour of the clinic buildings, including the pharmacy, lab, examination rooms, and the labor, delivery, and recovery rooms. The onsite staff is led by Jackson, who is very knowledgeable and diligent in ensuring the clinic is run smoothly and that things are in good order. I was particularly impressed with how clean, orderly, and professional the lab was. The clinic is part of the Zambian government health system, so the government provides many medications and test equipment to keep the pharmacy and lab well stocked. Mwembezhi has a very good reputation, that extends as far as Lusaka, to provide the people with the medications and health care they need

It was amazing to walk around the property at Mwembezhi and to learn that it is in the same location where the missionaries to Zambia established a church, Martin Luther Church, and began their outreach in the late 1950s, nearly 70 years ago.

The original church is still in use, but the original clinic building has been renovated and new buildings have been added, some very recently. The new mother's shelter is bright and clean and is a much improved, comfortable setting for expectant mothers to come for a stay shortly before they are due to give birth. The new staff house, which is modern and well-equipped, looks like it could be a home here in the States. It is waiting for power to be connected before it will be occupied by Mrs. Banda, the midwife.

Alisad showed us where a new chain link fence will soon be installed to keep goats and other livestock in the area from coming too close to the clinic. As we walked around the property, we could see many goats wandering through, so this fence will be a good addition to ensure the clinic area stays clean and sanitary. All of these enhancements to Mwembezhi were only possible due to many donations from churches, schools, and individual supporters like you, and are critical to continue providing a high standard of quality care at the clinic.

We were able to sit in on a meeting with Gary Evans, our Field Director, Alisad and Jackson, where the results of the Zambia Health Professional Council assessment of Mwembezhi, in July 2022, were reviewed. The clinic scored very well in this assessment, receiving a high rating of 93.9 out of 100, which was up from a score of 85 in the previous year. This is a strong indication of the good reputation that Mwembezhi has to provide high quality health care. It was encouraging to hear from Jackson and Alisad that many of those areas identified for improvement have already been addressed by equipment additions, changes to the facility, or procedures, and other improvements are planned as well. We anticipate another strong score in the next review in the near future.

As we were leaving the Mwembezhi clinic, a local woman and member of Martin Luther Church named Gertrude stopped by our vehicle to introduce herself and to say "Thank you, thank you so

much for all you are doing for us.” Her exuberance, joy in Christ, and her humble thankfulness stands out in my memory. So, I would like to close by passing on her words to you: Thank you, thank you so much for your support of the Central Africa Medical Mission and the work to address the physical and spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters in Zambia and Malawi!

“I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Corinthians 1:4

Your sister in Christ,
Vickie Walther
CAMM Development Committee member

Why Did They Do That?! Voters’ Respond to Proposal for Sanctuary Renovations

Have you seen the YouTube video of the gorilla walking through the basketball players passing the basketball? It is a fun way to make a salient point about St. John’s sanctuary. Some of the needed sanctuary renovations are only noticed after people know for what they are looking. Currently, sections of the floor tile are cracked or missing, and the carpet has multiple rips, some six or more inches long. Meanwhile, many pews have worn finishes on the top rail and dated worn-out upholstery in the seats.

It is a logical choice to address these glaring needs for renovation. They are easy to see when looking for them. So why did the St. John’s voters say, “Hold on! Wait a minute!”

The details of the sanctuary renovations have enjoyed broad support. The project was adopted by the 75th Anniversary Committee and endorsed by the voters at their April meeting. The renovations were communicated in numerous bulletin announcements, a July *Fortress* Article, and a multi-week narthex display. The Women of St. John’s and members gave their support to renovate and thus beautify the sanctuary. The proposal included replacing the flooring in the chancel and its auxiliary rooms as well as the nave, refinishing the pews, replacing the pew cushions, providing more handicapped seating, designating a space for the handbells, and painting the walls.

The funding for the renovation has yet to be realized. The proposed cost for the renovations was \$133,000. The 75th Anniversary Committee set a goal to raise \$75,000 for the Semi sesquicentennial, 75th year. It seemed like an appropriate step toward the project completion without exhausting the roughly \$100,000 in the church’s building fund. In July, there was \$12,000 received for the renovations. So, at the July voter’s meeting, while looking at the current \$105,000 deficit for the 2023 operating fund, the voters were not ready to commit to further debt.

The voters defeated the motion to approve the sanctuary renovation contract, with 14 in favor and 16 opposed. The concern was given to our financial position and the timing regarding this project. The voters wanted the members to be aware of both the current financial position and the financial needs for the sanctuary renovations. However, the voters were unanimously resolute in their thanks to the Facilities Task Force for the work done on the contract for the sanctuary

renovations. The voters' next step is to await the success of the anniversary thank offering fund before revisiting the contract for the sanctuary renovations.

Jesus continues to beautify and bless St. John's. He has given the congregation 75 years of gospel proclamation. He has blessed past efforts to build and expand its facilities. He has previously blessed the congregations giving to retire the mortgage. We pray He, through His people, continues to beautify St. John's members and its facilities with His life-giving Word.

Jon Schaefer,
Congregational President