

“He Set His Face”



March 2026

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“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51 NIV) That’s the way the New International Version says it. But I still like the way the ESV (English Standard Version) or the KJV (King James Version) that I grew up with put it. They don’t interpret the idiom for us. They leave it as the Greek says it: **“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”** (Luke 9:51 ESV)

The first reason I like the older versions is that there’s something steady and unflinching in those words, **“He set His face.”** Jesus knew exactly what awaited him in Jerusalem: betrayal by a close friend, mockery by crowds of people, scourging that would shred his back, a cross that would end his life, and the hell of being forsaken by his Father as he laid sin of the world on his back and damned him for it all.

And still... **“He set His face.”**

Often people think of Lent as a time about us... We give something up. We put ash on our forehead. We repent and turn to God. But Lent is not first and foremost about our resolve. It’s about Jesus’ resolve. He knew what he would face and chose it anyway.

He chose the hard, difficult, painful, tortuous path of the cross. And he did it for you and me when we so often choose the easy, comfortable, selfish, and sinful path. “Pain? No thanks. I’ll take pleasure. Difficult? Not for me. I want easy. Hard? Nah. I prefer fun.” And when we retreat the second that following Jesus becomes even remotely uncomfortable, Jesus **“set his face.”**

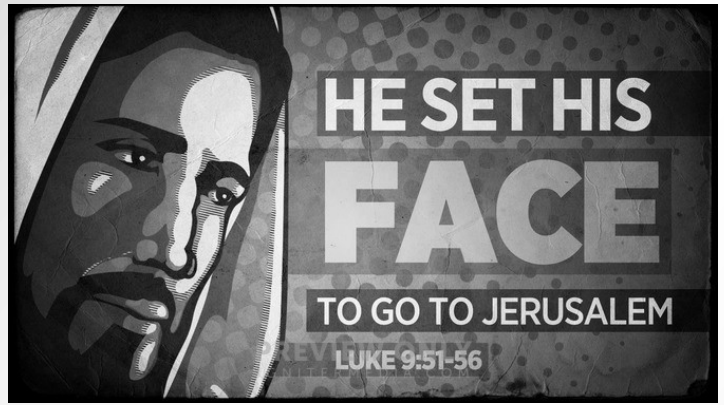
The second reason that I still prefer the ESV or KJV of Luke 9:51 is that it doesn’t interpret “taken up.” They leave it as the Greek says it: **“When the days drew near for him to be taken up...”** (“to heaven” isn’t in the Greek). So it might not be about Jesus being taken up to heaven at his ascension. It might be a reference to him being taken up... to a cross; nailed there, hoisted up in humiliation, tortured and killed... and not a reference to his ascension and victory completed. (Sorry, NIV, for calling you out for adding stuff...)

So for all of the times that I have hesitated where obedience to God might hurt, might cost, might be inconvenient, Jesus paid for all of it on my behalf. When I try to avoid suffering whenever possible, Jesus didn’t turn aside, but **“set his face.”** He set his face to go to Jerusalem because he already set his heart on rescuing me and you.

Every step toward Jerusalem that Jesus took was a step toward your forgiveness and mine. Every mile was mercy in motion. That's why Lent isn't about gloomy despair or beating ourselves up for our sinful rebellion. Lent is about sober joy in what Christ has done for us.

Sir Isaac Newton, the great mathematician and physicist, invented the telescope, made huge advances in optics, mechanics, and the study of gravity, and is generally considered the most influential scientist of all times. But when he was asked what his greatest discovery was, he answered, **“I have made only two really important discoveries in my life: the one, I know that I am a very great sinner; the other, I know that Jesus is an even greater Savior.”**

Jesus resolved everything for us. Now we resolve to live for him. As we walk through this season, we do so knowing that our salvation doesn't depend on how firmly we set our face. It rests entirely on how firmly Christ set his. God bless your walk to the cross this Lenten season!



In Christ,
Pastor Guenther

March Sermon Texts

March 8	Romans 5:1-8	God Demonstrates His Love
March 15	John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39	That the Work of God Might Be Displayed
March 22	Romans 8:11-19	Welcome to the Family
March 29	Zechariah 9:9-10	The King Is Our Savior

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

Sundays at 9:30am	One by One	Pastor Rob Guenther
Thursdays at 10am	A Simple Way to Pray	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Thursdays at 7pm	The Life of David	Pastor Rob Guenther

Council Digest

The Church Council met on February 17, 2026. A summary of reports and actions from the meetings not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

Transfers Out

Naoko Meyer to St. Paul's, New Ulm

Barb Hennig to Good Shepherd, Midland, MI

Transfer In

Jason Horn from Reformation Lutheran San Diego, CA

II. Pastoral Acts

Adult Confirmation

Jason and Amber Melby

Profession of Faith

Xerxes Machtemes

The council reviewed financial reports and received an encouraging update on the congregation's financial position as of January 31, noting improved balances and strong investment performance. The treasurer shared updates on the Church 360 database, which is now live and offers improved tools for giving records, communication, and administrative efficiency. The financial secretary's report was tabled for further review at the March meeting. A question was raised regarding whether the Stewardship Board may recommend moving funds into board-designated reserves; this will be explored further in upcoming meetings.

Significant discussion took place around our shared ministry partnership with St. Paul's Lutheran School. The council approved three proposals: first, that members of partner congregations who are called to teach at St. Paul's Lutheran School be given the option to remain members of their current congregation; second, that the distribution of called teachers try to reflect the proportion of student enrollment from partner congregations; and third, that these recommendations be discussed with St. Paul's Council at the upcoming Joint Council meeting in May—or preferably at a specially scheduled meeting prior to that date.

In new business, the council approved hosting and serving a Lent meal featuring a baked potato bar, continuing a well-received tradition from last year. The council also received reports from the Elders, Board of Evangelism, and Board of Properties. Highlights included ongoing benevolence support for members in need, continued outreach through Friendship Evangelism initiatives, planning for Easter canvassing, and strong attendance at recent fellowship events. Property updates included maintenance and repairs to facilities, upgrades to meeting spaces, and continued care for rental properties.

Future meetings:

- Next regular council meeting - 3/17 @ 7 PM
- Next regular voters' meeting - 4/28 @ 7 PM
- Next joint council meeting - 5/19 - Supper @ 5:30 PM, meeting @ 6 PM @ SJLC

Library News

We have only two non-fiction books to introduce this month. The Jesus I Never Knew by Philip Yancy was written 30 years ago but the truths of Jesus are always true. The author relates how the Jesus he learned about in Sunday School is not the Jesus he discovered after reading and studying the Bible more thoroughly. He discusses and studies the Temptation of Jesus and the Beatitudes in detail. He realized Jesus' goal for everyone is heaven (blessed). The poor look forward to heaven, but the well-to-do don't think of heaven or others. And in the first century, the Jews wanted a warrior Messiah, but God wants all men to be saved. Easter and the Resurrection are the core of Christianity.

The second book is Inashood by Eric Hartzell. Rev. Hartzell lived on the Apache Reservation as a child, and is a pastor in Arizona. So he knew several Inashoods. That was the name the Apaches gave to the missionaries from the WELS who came to Arizona in 1893. This mission field was different, a different language, and culture. There were interpreters, thankfully. Eventually the missionaries learned Apache (even wrote a book) and the Apaches learned English. Weather in Arizona was either hot (summer) or cold (winter). Despite that, bad roads, and living in tents, the Inashood started schools and church services. There is a list of missionaries from 1893 to 2000 and I recognized several names. Plocher, Harders, Guenther, Nitz, Uplegger, Hartzell, Schliesser, plus many others. Love developed between Apaches and Inashoods for each other and their families. The beginnings of the first foreign mission field for the WELS were in German, but the Lord blessed the work and it is still going.

Studying about Jesus is a good thing to do during Lent. Easter is coming.

LeiLani Rahn

Women of St. John's

63rd Annual LWMS (Lutheran Women's Missionary Society) International Convention

When: June 25-28, 2026

Where: Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison, WI

Theme: Cast Out Your Nets

Registration: Opens March 1 online (along with hotel booking)

Closes June 1 (pending capacity)

Additional details are available on the table in the new narthex.

We hope to see you there!

St. Paul's School

Jitterbug Juliet

St. Paul's School students are working hard on their production of Jitterbug Juliet. This musical performance is scheduled for two nights: Friday, March 13, or Saturday, March 14. The show starts at 7 pm both nights. Here is how the musical is described for the viewers on their website. If you are looking for some high-flyin' fun of the post-war 1940s is packed into 90 minutes with eight original, exuberant jitterbug, boogie-woogie, and jump 'n' jive songs, all in the big band spirit, you won't want to miss this show! Venice Beach is the location for this 20th century family feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. Mr. Montague and his son Ron are planning a jitterbug dance contest. Mr. Capulet and his daughter Juliet are rehearsing "Romeo and Juliet." When the community center gets double-booked for both these events at the same time, it's up to Ron and Juliet to settle the grudge between their fathers. If they don't succeed, the mayor threatens to shut down both family businesses. But with a nosy cleaning woman, a slimy lawyer and his escaped con henchman fueling the fire between the families, this tragedy quickly turns into a hysterical comedy. This full length musical has it all — great comedy roles, toe-tapping chorus numbers and a spectacular show for dancers to strut their stuff! We invite you to come out, support our students, and enjoy an evening of laughter, music, and fellowship together at St. Paul's!

New Ulm Food Shelf

St. John's will again sponsor a food drive for the New Ulm Emergency Food Shelf in March. The New Ulm

Food Shelf serves people in New Ulm, Lafayette, Hanska, Searles, Essig, and Courtland.

We will be collecting donations of non-perishable food items such as:

- Healthy cereals
- Proteins such as canned meats and peanut butter
- Canned goods (soups, vegetables, etc.)
- Low-sodium canned goods (soups, vegetables, etc.)
- Crackers (Regular/low-sodium)
- Flour, sugar, vegetable oil

Place food items in the boxes in the narthex or monetary donations in a clearly marked envelope in the offering plate (if you write a check, please make it payable to the New Ulm Emergency Food Shelf) by Sunday, March 29.

Active Threat Training Recap

Over 130 people from St John's, St Paul's, and area churches attended the active threat training that was held in January at our church. Thank you to the many St John's members that attended!

Highlights from the training that all members can make use of:

- Be aware of your surroundings. If you see something or someone suspicious on campus, tell an usher, pastor, or council member.
- Welcome our guests! Engaging with guests in the parking lot and inside the building will let them know that we are glad they are here and that they are welcome. It also tells a person who is considering hurting our church family that we see them and serves as a deterrent.
- Be prepared mentally and physically for emergency situations.
- Safety is everyone's responsibility.

Since this training, we began collaborating with New Ulm Police Department that included a security walk through of our campus. They shared recommendations for us to consider that would make our campus safe and prepared for emergencies while also being welcoming to the many people who attend and visit St John's. These recommendations will be considered by the Board of Elders and implemented as appropriate. Changes to our current practices will be shared with members. Thank you in advance for your patience and your cooperation.

One change that you may have noticed since the first of the year is that the 7 th Street door is locked shortly after worship services begin and unlocked shortly before services end. Worshippers are encouraged to enter at the Washington St doors instead. The 7 th Street entrance is the least used and least monitored door during worship and allows for the most access to the sanctuary. It is being locked as a proactive safety measure. It can still be used as an exit.

Again, thank you to all those who attended the training and provided feedback afterwards. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we review our safety practices and procedures and make positive changes. And thank you for welcoming our guests, one by one!

Brad Price
Safety Coordinator

ST. JOHN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
NEW ULM, MN 56073

MARCH 2026
354-6744

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Lent 2 WORSHIP 8 & 9:30 AM W/ COMMUNION 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School	2 6:30 pm Elders Meeting	3 7 pm Women of St. John's Meeting	4 11,4,6:30 Midweek Service 6:30 pm Public Catechism 5:15 pm Handbells	5 10 am Bible Class 5:30 pm Board of Discipleship 7 pm Bible Class	6	7 1:30 Easter Canvas WORSHIP 6:30 PM
8 Lent 3 WORSHIP 8, 9:30 & 11 AM 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School SPRING FOWARD	9 11:30am OWLS 6 pm Evangelism Meeting 7 pm Education Meeting	10 6 pm Sunday School Teachers' Meeting	11 11,4,6:30 Midweek Service 6:30 pm Public Catechism 5:15 pm Handbells	12 10 am Bible Class 7 pm Bible Class	13	14 WORSHIP 6:30 PM W/ COMMUNION
15 Lent 4 WORSHIP 8, 9:30 & 11 AM W/ COMMUNION 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School	16	17 4 pm Oak Hills Living Center Service 7 pm Council	18 11,4,6:30 Midweek Service 6:30 pm Public Catechism 5:15 pm Handbells 7:15 pm Choir	19 10 am Bible Class 7 pm Bible Class	20	21 9 am Sunday School Christmas Rehearsal WORSHIP 6:30 PM
22 Lent 5 WORSHIP 8, 9:30 11 am Sunday School Christmas Service	23	24	25 11,4,6:30 Midweek Service 6:30 pm Public Catechism 5:15 pm Handbells 7:15 pm Choir	26 10 am Bible Class 7 pm Bible Class	27	28 8 am Easter For Kids WORSHIP 6:30 PM
29 Palm Sunday WORSHIP 8, 9:30 & 11 AM	30	31	<p>Correspondence Pastor Jeffrey Bovee Pastor Rob Guenther Jim Dretske Church Office Mike Thom</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> revbovee@gmail.com pastorguenther@gmail.com sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com office@stjohnsnewulm.com bookkeeper@stjohnsnewulm.com </p>			

Looking Ahead

- Apr. 2 Maundy Thursday Services
11am, 4 7 6:30 pm
- Apr. 3 Tre Ore Service @ St. Paul's at 12pm
- Apr. 3 Tenebrae at 7 pm
- Apr. 4 No Saturday Service
- Apr. 5 Easter Services
7 & 9:30 am
- Apr. 5 11am Easter Brunch
- Apr. 6 Office Closed

Stewardship

STEWARDSHIP OF TIME, TALENTS, AND TREASURES

As we think about the three “T’s” mentioned in the title of this article, each of us should be asking ourselves what are we doing with our time, talents, and treasures to further prosper our congregation and God’s Church here on earth. God has given us all resources to steward and responsibilities to manage. Our resources aren’t just things to stockpile or use for our personal use only. How can we live generously with what God blesses us with?

(We love Him because He first loved us. I John 4:19)

Use your time to help further the Kingdom of God. This can be an unbelievable amount of different things to get involved in. You can volunteer for any number of church groups and/or organizations that the congregation has established. Many, if not all, could use another body, or two, or three, to help establish and carry out the goals and responsibilities they are working towards or are involved in doing. Choir, ushering, luncheons, Sunday school, worship slides, maintenance, committees, and Boards, just to name a few! Ask yourself, “How could I use my time to help our congregation, and God’s Church, be more effective?”

(Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:15-17) God has equipped you with unique talents and skills! Using them to serve God and your fellow man is reflecting the love that God has shown to each of us individually through Jesus, and it is what God expects of us. Consider the gifts and abilities that God has blessed you with and ask yourself how you could use them to benefit the congregation, and your fellow man in any of the aforementioned ways.

(Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. I Peter 4:10) Living by faith challenges us to see finances as God’s provision entrusted to our care, not just for personal use, but also for the giving back to God our provider. Faithful stewards consider ways to return their gifts to God in ways that support congregational efforts towards church and schools, synod support, mission work, and other God pleasing ways that we might support financially.

(Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:38)

Board of Stewardship
Kurk Kramer

In Loving Memory

Linda Wellman	Ministerial Education Endowment Fund	\$50
Jack Havemeier	Undesignated	\$25
Carl and Cleo Melendy	Wish List: Piano	\$1,000

Cards of Caring

Members of St. John's are invited to help make cards we give to congregation members — homebound, elderly, and others. We use donated, recycled, and create our own cards. Cards to be made include Valentine, Warm Winter Wishes, Easter, Confirmation, and Birthday. Help is needed with writing messages, stamping, and assembling cards. Please join us at 403 N. Minnesota St. between 9:00am and noon on Saturday, March 21st. Come and go as your schedule allows. Thank you for helping to serve our members. Contact: Lois Willems (507-676-1230).

Join John & Paul Ministries

Daylight Savings canvass in our community on Saturday, March 7th! Don't like the idea of talking to strangers? You can just hang the packets on house doors if you like! Meet us in the St. Paul's Church fellowship hall for a complimentary pizza lunch at noon. Then head out into the community around 1:00 pm to hand out invitations to our Good Friday and Easter services along with a packet of coffee to help them with the time change. Please register using <https://bit.ly/40jvqG8> for an accurate pizza count. Questions? Contact Laura Martens (event coordinator) at lmartens@splnewulm.org.

Central Africa Medical Mission

As we continue in the Season of Epiphany, we are reminded that Christ, the Light of the world, is revealed not only through words but through acts of love and service. Good works are the fruit of faith flowing naturally from hearts transformed by God's grace. Through charity, care, and compassion, we reflect Christ's light to those in need, giving glory to God alone.

As we begin 2026, we are thankful for the malaria reports from our clinics and government hospitals in the country. Compared to the previous season, cases of malaria from our clinics have declined by half. In 2024 we saw 15,777 malaria cases, and in 2025 we saw 7,522 malaria cases. This is great news, the increased access to malaria vaccines, indoor spraying, net distribution alongside ongoing public health education and prevention efforts are bearing good fruits. While other challenges remain, this progress is a hopeful sign that sustained medical outreach and prevention are making a real difference in people's lives. Through the work of the Lutheran Mobile Clinic, we continue to witness how medical care, vaccination awareness, and community engagement bring healing and hope, especially to the most vulnerable.

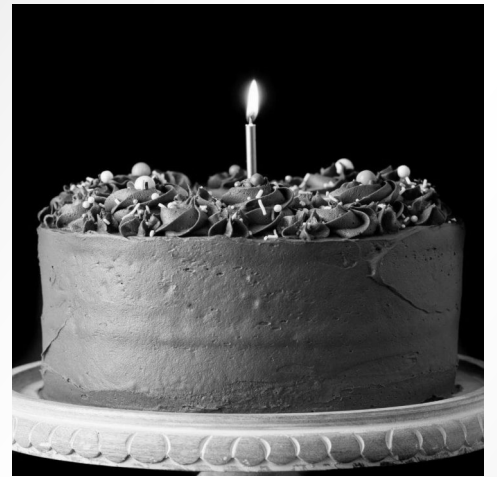
Malawi has also received steady seasonal rains this year, which are vital for agriculture. These rains bring renewed hope for a better harvest in the coming months. For many families who depend on subsistence farming, a good rainy season means improved food security, better nutrition, and greater stability. We pray that these rains will continue to be enough to nourish crops and sustain livelihoods without causing flooding or disease.

In Malawi and much of central Africa, maize is an essential crop used to make nsima, the nation's food staple. Below average rains in recent years have meant poor harvests, leading to shortages and increased prices. Therefore, we wish to acknowledge and applaud President Arthur Peter Mutharika and the government for taking decisive action to improve food availability. The procurement of 200,000 metric tonnes of maize from Zambia, with the initial delivery of 3,400 metric tonnes and the first phase expectation of 103,000 metric tonnes to be delivered before March, has helped stabilize supply and has contributed to a reduction in maize prices across the country. As of November 2025, the maize price was above Mwk100,000 (or \$57) per 50kg bag and now with this development in January 2026, the bag of maize is now selling at or below Mwk45,000 (\$25). This emergency relief procurement aims to support over 4 million people facing hunger due to an 800,000 metric tonne national deficit experienced in the previous poor harvests. This is welcome relief for many households that have struggled with high food costs, and it brings renewed hope during this agricultural season.

As a faith-based organization, the Lutheran Mobile Clinic remains committed to serving in Christ's name, bringing medical care, dignity, and compassion to communities in need. We thank you, our supporters and partners, for walking alongside us. Your prayers, generosity, and encouragement enable this light to continue shining. May God bless you richly as together we reflect the light of Christ through service and love.

Your Sister in Christ, Lusungu Mwambeye Clinic Administrator

Happy Birthday!



- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|----|-------------------|
| 3 | Poppy Schmoller | 20 | Arleen Bruns |
| 4 | Heath Dobberpuhl | | Emma Grundmeier |
| | Jerry Johnson | | Greg Holden |
| | Levi Schwark | | Karen Ladner |
| | Lori McDermott | 21 | Drew Domeier |
| 5 | Jeremy Berg | | Michelle Grubbs |
| | Kyle Wellman | | Monica Wellner |
| 7 | Carolyn Nachreiner | 22 | Shane Toltzman |
| 9 | Clayton Iverson | 23 | Brian Orth |
| | Jack Swenstad | | Lincoln Uecker |
| | Mason Thom | 24 | Jessie Berdan |
| 10 | Keith Howard | | Judith Gosdeck |
| | Adrian Smith | | Daniel Vanderlouw |
| 11 | Eric Schmidt | 25 | Phil Scriver |
| 13 | Val Bovee | 26 | Noah Dobberpuhl |
| | Taya Johnson | | Sam Hunter |
| | Jill Roux | 27 | Paul Bases |
| 14 | Diane Roman | | Delilah Brandes |
| | Judith Schroer | | Brielle Newman |
| | Shelley Zacate | | Nick Price |
| 15 | Magdala Diersen | | Danielle Scriver |
| | Beth Enter | 28 | Landon Karstens |
| | Zander Fischer | | Joanna Wessel |
| 16 | Eden Grubbs | 29 | Susan Paulson |
| | Michael Kiecker | | Carrie Schaefer |
| 18 | Abigail Deters | | Megan Swenstad |
| | Timothy Fischer | | Desmond Toltzman |
| | Larry Vanderlouw | | Stephen White |
| 19 | Kaylee Hunter | 30 | Jean Schroeder |
| | | | Richard Schroeder |

31 Jayne Romsdahl

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church
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New Ulm MN 56073

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March 2026

FORTRESS

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church • New Ulm, Minnesota

Welcome to St. John's!

627 S. Washington St.

507-354-6744

www.stjohnsnewulm.com

Worship Times

Saturdays: 6:30 pm

Sundays: 8, 9:30 & 11 am

and online at:

[YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Search: Saint John's New Ulm

Adult Bible Class

(In person and online at: bit.ly/SJBibleClass)

Sundays: 9:30 am

Thursdays: 10 am & 7 pm

Sunday School

Sundays: 9:30 am

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Pastor Rob Guenther

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