



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

## INWARD CHANGE WITH OUTWARD RESULTS

**Psalm 51:10-15 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

Once again, we enter into a new year. As usual, it is a time when we think of the typical New Year's resolutions, and have a sort of feeling that it is a time to start all over again fresh.

Perhaps it's good for us to think in those terms, and to put new effort into resolving old problems that are within our realm and ability to change for the better. An effort to take off a few unwanted pounds or the promise to ourselves to get more exercise, to endeavor to read some of the more substantial literature that has been waiting for us on the shelves, to spend more time with loved ones, to get better organized. They are all good things.

Lest anyone is waiting for the other shoe to drop and hear about how our good intentions are not always carried out, and how New Year's resolutions are seldom kept, that is not the message here. May your efforts and intentions instead bear fruit, and may you fulfill the promises you made to yourself this year.

No, the purpose of this message is to give encouragement from another angle and for another purpose. But it still does key off on a promise of starting all over again fresh with the hope of a better life now and in the future. It is the promise and prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 51. There he prays: **Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

We can put a lot of effort into changing our outward circumstances, and sometimes do so with positive results. However, David reminds us that the greatest change that must take place in us is an inward change. What is more, the change is not contingent upon what we do to make ourselves better, but fully depends on the power of the Holy Spirit who renews our hearts and minds to serve the Lord.

Traditionally, we used to sing these words as the Offertory in *Common Service* liturgy. They are familiar words. They are powerful words. They are life-changing words. They are words of a penitent sinner who realizes he cannot save himself or make himself ever good enough to be what God wants him to be. Therefore he pleads to God, that the Lord would create in him a pure heart, and that God would renew a steadfast spirit within him – a new image, created after God’s will. He asks for the joy that comes from knowing God has saved him from his sins, and a willing spirit to serve God according to the new creation he has become through faith in God’s gracious promise of forgiveness and salvation.

Above any other resolutions we make for our lives at the beginning of a New Year or at any other time in our lives, we need first to step back and realize that even our best efforts are not going to make us what God wants us to be; for we are sinners, whose best efforts are tainted by sin.

Return instead to the one place where we know everything has been made right with God, and that is to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ where our sin was atoned for and we were reconciled to God. There is the oasis of refreshment in the midst of this desert of sin. There we find the renewal David speaks of. For in Christ alone we find the forgiveness of sins. And in his gospel message, the Holy Spirit works to change us from within.

And having been changed, David says: **Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

Through faith in Christ, I will bring the saving message of Christ’s forgiveness and salvation to a world lost in sin. The gospel will continue to change hearts, so that other sinners will be converted and turn back to God in repentance.

Even the “bloodguilt” of original sin which clings to us from Adam and Eve, no longer condemns us, for Christ’s blood cleanses us from all sin. Therefore we well up in praise, and our lips declare what great things the Lord has done for us.

In the end, this is an encouragement to make good New Year’s resolutions. Don’t give up on making yourself the best you can be. But this is, above all, an exhortation to trust in the grace of God, and to seek his mercy and forgiveness. Make these words of David be our daily prayer. Ask that God would change us from the inside out in order to that we may truly be what he created us to be, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Blessed New Year.

In Christ,  
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

## January Sermon Texts

January 1	Exodus 33:12-23	In the Presence of God
January 8	Matthew 2:1-12	Why Do You Seek the King of Kings?
January 15	John 1:29-41	Look, the Lamb of God!
January 22	1 John 2:3-11	In with the Old; In with the New
January 20	1 Corinthians 1:26-31	It's Time to Boast and Brag!

**Bible Classes meet in the Church Basement**  
**The class can also be found online at [bit.ly/SJBibleClass](http://bit.ly/SJBibleClass)**

Sundays at 9:30 am	Book of Job	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Thursdays at 10:30 am	Minor Prophets	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Thursdays at 7 pm	Great Prayers of the Bible	Pastor Rob Guenther
Fridays at 9:30 am	Women's Class: <i>The Screwtape Letters</i>	Pastor Rob Guenther



## Council Digest

The Church Council met on December 19. A summary of reports and actions from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

### **Ministrations**

### **Transfers Out**

Jessica Bovee to Emmanuel Lutheran, Owatonna, MN

Brandon Karstens to Redeemer Lutheran, Cedarburg, WI

## **Transfers In**

Luke and Lydia Gohl; Eloise from St. John's Lutheran, Wood Lake, MN

## **Adult Confirmation**

Rob Gieseke

## **Pastoral Acts**

### **Baptisms**

27 Nov Max William Price  
27 Nov Samson James Price

### **Funerals**

2 Dec Beverlee Haar

The December council meeting often serves as a mini-orientation for new members who begin three-year terms of service on the council the following year. Jeremy Berg will join the council as Vice President to replace Greg Diersen in the new year. Mark Weinkauff will replace former Financial Secretary Jim Grunwald, who moved to Manitowoc, WI. Brad Price will continue to serve as Deacon. The council and voters expressed their appreciation for the outgoing members who completed years of service in their respective positions. We pray that God will bless Jeremy, Mark, and Brad as they carry out their responsibilities on behalf of the congregation. Further orientation will take place with the January council meeting. Installation of all council, board, and committee members elected to new terms at the voters' meeting will occur during the 11 am service on Sunday, January 8, 2023.

Treasurer John Micheel noted the possibility of year-end deficits in our commitments for financial support to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School and the WELS Congregational Mission Offering. He anticipates a year-end home operating fund balance and recommends that undesignated funds be applied to these year-end deficits as needed. The recommendation was approved. An anticipated deficit in the church's operating budget was also reported.

Led by chair Mark Bauer, the Endowment Fund Committee met recently and recommended the following distributions:

- No new distributions from the endowment fund be made ; and
- Previous unused endowment funds be used when needed as directed by the council

Winter Carnival - On January 21st, we will host this outreach and fellowship event at St. Paul's school as a John and Paul Ministries event. It will be a "Summer" theme with fun programming, games, and treats. This is a community outreach event but has also included a great opportunity for fellowship.

Marriage Tune-Up/Parents' Night Out will be kicking off at the end of February. This is a continuation of the idea from the MLC students who won the Shark Tank event for hosting a parents' night out to provide supervision of children so couples could get out and have some time together. Marriage "tune-up" topics are incorporated to provide encouragement (and date-night conversation topics) to the date night that is the second half of each of the scheduled nights. These events will be held every 2 weeks starting 2/19/22 with the exception of Easter Sunday that falls in the middle of that rotation. We will be posting information about signing up in January.

The stewardship board recommended finalizing the installation of AEDs, using the current Wish List balance to fund, and Endowment distribution funds if more funding is needed. The recommendation was approved.

The Elders recommended that the St. John's voters extend Mr. James Dretske a part-time permanent call. The council will be considering the details at their January meeting. The council approved the recommendation for presentation to the voters at the January 2022 annual meeting.

Future meetings:

The next Church Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 17, at 7 pm.

The annual voters' meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 24, at 7 pm. Reports from the various officers, boards, and committees for this meeting are due in the church office no later than Tuesday, January 10.

Jon Schaefer,  
Congregational Chairman

## Staff Minister

**Online Church Directory** – The 2023 Edition will print in February. I hope to have a display of current pictures in the Narthex during January. Look for me between services to take your family picture, otherwise, ask someone to take your picture and send it to me. Any member can submit an updated picture via email to [sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com](mailto:sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com).

If anyone has a changed address, phone number, or have children now in college or military, please fill out and update information on sheets available in the new narthex and drop it off in the office. Thank you!

**Church Board Brochures** – Updated two-sided colorful brochures will become available in the narthex in January that give some brief, yet essential information about the responsibilities of those who serve on boards at St. John's behind the scenes most of the time. In December, new chairmen were elected and several board positions were appointed to fill vacancies from expired terms. We are thankful for all the men and women who serve on various boards and committees to do the work of the Lord in various ways. There are many other people that serve the Lord in abundant ways here at St. John's. It takes a lot of people to do everything that happens here at St. John's to provide a place for members to worship, learn via Bible Classes or Sunday school, or even a place to eat and have fellowship between Advent services.

**Visiting the Homebound** - I continue to have the privilege of joining the pastors in visits to members who are homebound—sharing the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. If you are not on our list to be visited but would like to be included, please call the church office or me at **507-217-7604** to get on the list. Six volunteers from St. John's help out every other week to bring residents to the chapel service at **Oak Hills Living Center** and return them to their rooms after. If you are available from 3:30 until 5:00 on Tuesdays, consider adding your name to the list of helpers. Thank you, Oak Hills Volunteers for your help!

**Streamed/Recorded Services** – If you have watched an online service and feel that the video or sound had issues that could be fixed that would improve people’s experience in watching our services, please send me a message via email so that I can address these issues. We would like all visitors to our online services to have an enjoyable experience. You could fill out a **Quick Response Survey** online to let us know how we are doing and leave a comment. Go to: <https://bit.ly/SJRecord-Stream>

**Time & Talent Surveys** – Members are encouraged to fill out a new Survey each year. You can fill out one of the paper surveys located in the narthex or fill out the electronic survey found at <https://bit.ly/TaTSurvey>  
The Time & Talent Booklet is under review, yet can be found in its current form at <https://bit.ly/TaTBooklet>

Respectfully submitted, Jim Dretske

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



The planning committee has chosen Sunday, August 6 as the special day of celebration.

Two services with communion will be held at 8 and 10 am. We will not have a Saturday evening service that weekend.

Former St. John’s pastor David Kolander will be the guest preacher.

A fellowship meal is also being planned. Watch for more details in upcoming church bulletins and newsletters.

## St. Paul’s School

**St. Paul’ Preschool is so grateful for your support:** Prayers! Enrolling your child! Recommending our programs to your friends and family! Supporting our staff!! Offering donations of various art supplies, educational toys, etc.!

And, again, Prayers! ~ that God help us be a blessing to many young children and their families!

### Preschool Updates:

- ~ This is our first year with all **3 classrooms “up and running!”**
- ~ Our **5 Christmas Programs** (1/group of preschoolers) held in our large movement room, went well!
- ~ In mid-December we **passed** our “Unannounced **Licensor Review**” (annual visit from the MN Department of Human Services)

- ~ **January 16 is our Open House** for new students from 2 - 6 pm!
- ~ It seems early, but **preschool registration has begun** for the 2023-2024 school year. Some programs fill up by February! (Open registration for the public begins on January 16, 2023.)

**Details about our various preschool programs:** In the coming 2023-2024 school year we will continue to offer blended classes of three, four and five-year old children. We have **part-time classes** two, three and five days per week. St. Paul's Preschool also has **full-day classes**, every day of the school week.

To **Apply for Enrollment or for more information**, go to St. Paul's School website: <https://splnewulm.org/school/>.

**May God help us plant love & gratefulness for our Savior Jesus in our students' hearts in 2023!**

Mrs. Heidi Meyer,  
St. Paul's Preschool Director/Teacher

## St. Paul's School Winter Carnival

Come to John and Paul Ministries' Winter Carnival: Summer Edition for warm fun indoors during cold January!

This event on Saturday, January 21 from 1 - 3 pm at St. Paul's School features indoor bounce houses, LIVE performances of summer songs, frozen hot chocolate, a "Summer Break" Escape Room, games, and gift cards awarded throughout the whole event!

Can't wait to see you there and bring a friend!

### To Volunteer:

Join the Winter Carnival: Summer Edition Team!  
Sign up at [johnandpaulministries.com](http://johnandpaulministries.com) to volunteer for this event on Saturday, January 21st from 1 - 3 pm at St. Paul's School.

Questions? Email Beth Scharf (event coordinator) at [scharfbm@mlc-wels.edu](mailto:scharfbm@mlc-wels.edu).



## Church Library

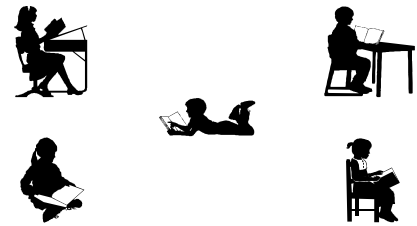
Happy New Year! It looks like the new year should be less dry after all this snow melts. Thank the Lord for snow blowers and shovels. We thank him for all the blessings received in 2022.

Left over from last month's letter was a non-fiction book, "Believing is Seeing" by Michael Guillen, a man with many degrees in math and physics. He was a great fan of science. But the more he studied science, the more he realized that science requires faith, as does religion. And it changed his world view. It changed him from an atheist to a Christian, and the book explains how it happened. There is also a CD that goes with the book.

New this month is the Concordia series on sex education for the family. We have an older set, but this one is updated to 2015. There are eleven books in this set. Five books are for boys ages 3-5, ages 6-8, ages 9-11, ages 12-14, and ages 14 and up. Five other books cover the same age levels, but for girls. The eleventh book is for parents, "How to talk Confidently with Your Child about Sex." It covers some newer subjects recently in the news, such as pornography, homosexuality, birth control, STDs, abortion, etc. These books are an "honest Christian approach to the body, relationships, and sex."

I pray that God our Help in ancient past, our Hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home, still be our guard while troubles last, and our eternal home.

LeiLani Rahn  
Church Librarian



## Women of St. John's

The January Meeting of the WSJ will be held on Tuesday, January 3rd at 7 pm in the church basement.

Please join us for an evening of Bunco, refreshments and fellowship.





## Volunteers Needed

Thank you to all the St. John's member volunteers who offered their time and talent this past year to help out at the NU Emergency Food Shelf for 2022. We have another opportunity to volunteer at the Food Shelf, 1305 S. Valley St., on the 3rd Monday of each month from 11:45 am - 3 pm. Two to three volunteers are needed for the dates referenced below. High school and college students are welcome to volunteer.

March 20	June 19	September 18	December 18
April 17	July 17	October 16	
May 15	August 21	November 20	

Please consider signing up for a Monday or two. High school and college students are welcome.

Please contact Rita Walters via phone or text at 507-351-8603 or email at [rmwalters@hotmail.com](mailto:rmwalters@hotmail.com) to sign up.



## Our Synod at Work

### WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership

Recently the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership sent out a flyer that contained some rather shocking information:

1. In 1980, one out of three Americans who did not have a church home was looking for one. Today, that has dropped to only one out of twenty.
2. In 2020, for the first time in United States history, the majority of citizens identified as having no religious affiliation.
3. In one generation, atheism has doubled.
4. A recent Pew Research survey asked people about the statement, "Religion does more harm than good." One-third of those under the age of thirty agreed.
5. In the 1990s, WELS had about one church close every twelve months. In the past five years, WELS has averaged one church closing ever seven weeks.

As a result of that information, in 2020 the first WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership was held. The presentations discussed our cultural and strategic challenges, charted an optimistic path forward, and shared ministry best practices that the Lord seems to be blessing around our synod. The conference included attendees who serve in formal leadership capacities in their congregations—pastors, teachers, church officers—as well as church members who simply wanted to support their church's mission by providing the type of leadership that come by example.

The next WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership will be hold at the Hilton Chicago on January 16-18, 2023. The conference is open to anyone passionate about gospel ministry: called

workers and lay members, men and women, retirees and high school students. The Conference believes there is enough interest that they could double attendance from the last conference to have about 1,500 attendees.

The conference is founded on twin convictions:

1. The gospel is the power of God for salvations. It alone has the power to create and sustain faith in Jesus Christ. There is no way to God except through Christ; and
2. God expects the Christian to use his reason and intellect, gifts God himself gives as part of his image, to formulate how to best proclaim the gospel in his corner of the world.

They are hoping to have the finances to be able to give out grants, especially to:

1. WELS campus ministry and high school students;
2. Members of the several hundred challenged congregations that are wondering how much longer they survive; and
3. Lay people who are open to the possibility of second-career ministry.

Gerald Woodley

## **Thank You**

December 12, 2022

St. John's Lutheran Church  
627 S. Washington St.  
New Ulm, MN 56073

Dear Members of St. John's Lutheran Church,  
We would like to thank you for the donation of grocery items you have been sending to the Martin Luther College food shelf.

Because of donations like yours our Food Bank is able to serve the married students.

We continue to open the Food Bank the second Thursday of the month, including the Summer months. At this time the families are able to obtain groceries based on their family size. We use cash donations to purchase meats and other needed items.

The "food shopping" is very much appreciated by the students. We sincerely thank you for your contribution! It is truly a blessing to our future teachers, pastors, and staff ministers.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year

MLC Married Students

Judy Gosdeck, MLC Food Bank Committee Representative

## Cards of Caring

St. John's Cards of Caring group meets to make cards for our homebound members, Befriend a Mission LWMS families, members 85 years and older and others, as needed.



We welcome anyone ages 7th grade and older including MLC students. No skills are needed. Cards are made using recycled cards and stamp sets. Supplies are furnished. We will be making Valentine and Winter cards.

Our meetings are scheduled for Saturday, January 14th and Saturday, February 4th. Come and go as your schedule allows between 9 am and noon.

We meet at 403 N. Minnesota St. (across from the Glockenspiel). This is an opportunity for service to the Lord and fellowship.

Contact Lois Willems with questions at 507-676-1230.

## *In Loving Memory*

<i>Timothy Koestler</i>	Undesignated	\$50
<i>Beverlee Haar</i>	Undesignated Missions Kitchen Fund	\$525 \$100 \$20
<i>Sharon Leppla</i>	Kitchen Fund	\$20

