

November 2026

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Remember the Lord, and Be Thankful

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

It is already November, and we near the end of the Church Year. At the tail end of it all, we celebrate a semi-religious festival, which has become, for all practical purposes, a part of our religious calendar. It is Thanksgiving. It is a good holiday because its focus, even from its conception, was supposed to be an occasion to thank God for all his blessings to us.

However, we as sinners sometimes forget the LORD. In fact, every time we sin it is because we disregard the First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me." Whenever we sin, we either put ourselves or someone or something above God in our lives. We can be very self-serving and self-righteous. We can forget the Lord.

A classic example is taken from the lives of the people of Israel, at the time they were supposed to cross over the Jordan River into the Promise Land. God told them: You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." He knew that it would be a great temptation for them. When they finally had everything they needed, they would be tempted to forget where it came from and to whom the glory belonged.

It can happen to us also and sometimes does. When everything is going well, we might be tempted to say to ourselves, "I didn't really need God after all. Look what I've done for myself! I'm well supplied." When we are successful, we want to take the credit for it. We say, as did the children of Israel, my own arm and my own ingenuity got me where I am. I'm a self-made person.

Or, when things aren't going our way, we might become angry and accuse God of being unjust and stingy. After all, he's God. Can't he give me something better than this if he loves me?

The truth of the matter is, we are sinful people who have been blessed even in spite of and not because of our goodness and diligence. God reminds us, as he did the people of Israel, that even our talents and abilities which we possess to work and earn a living are blessings from him. Our health and our strength are gifts from God, not to mention every material blessing we have, from the clothes we wear to the food on our tables.

There is nothing good we deserve from God. What we do deserve is punishment. Unless we understand that, our sinful pride and arrogance turn us into sinful, self-righteous egotists who become so full of ourselves that there is no room left for God's grace. Because we have sinned, we deserve to go to hell. Yes, it's all too easy for us to forget the LORD.

But thankfully, the LORD does not forget his promises to us. He told the children of Israel he would bring them through the desert to the land flowing with mild and honey. It was not a matter of "if." He promised, and he fulfilled his promise.

God also made a promise to us. He sent his only Son to live and die in our place. Jesus Christ came to save us from the sins that condemned us. His death on the cross paid our debt to God. His perfect righteousness was put to our credit so that we are declared innocent in God's sight.

God promises that through faith in him we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. All this God did, not because of our goodness, but because he is loving and gracious. We have many things for which to be thankful, but by far the greatest blessing God imparts to us is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Always remember what God did for us in Christ. When we keep Jesus in the forefront, we will see things from a proper perspective and have the right motivation to serve God.

Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of
Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Let us remember the LORD, for he will never forget us. He delivered us from slavery, and he never forgets his promises to us. He wants to bless us. He wants us to live life to its fullest to the glory of his name.

But most of all, he wants us to know that we have a Savior who lived and died for us all. May our Thanksgiving celebration center on that great truth so that in all circumstances we give all glory to God, knowing that we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Thanks be to God, now and forever.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

November Sermon Texts

November 8	Isaiah 52:1-6	Wake Up!
November 15	Matthew 25:14-20	Faithful Servants
November 22	Daniel 7:9,10,13,14	Reign Over Us, O King of Kings
November 29	Mark 13:26-37	Wake up and Stay Alert!

Bible Class meets in the Church Basement

The class can also be found online at bit.ly/SJBibleClass

Sundays at 9:30 am	Ruth	Pastor Rob Guenther
Thursdays at 10 am	Isms	Pastor Rob Guenther
Thursdays at 7 pm	Bible Information Class	Pastor Jeff Bovee

September Council Digest

The Church Council met on September 15, 2026. A summary of reports and actions from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

I. Membership Changes

A. Transfers In

Jeff & Connie Majesky from Zion in Winthrop, MN.

B. Transfers Out

None reported.

II. Pastoral Acts

Baptism: Jack Koberg – September 16, 2026

Baptism: Adelaide Behnken – September 20, 2026

III. Council Reports

Financially (Financial Secretary J. Ladner & Treasurer P. Meyer)

August receipts totaled $95,798.17, bringing year-to-date receipts to $759,825.87. Home Operations receipts are currently at 101.5% of budget for the year, or $8,527.73 ahead of budget. WELS Missions and MVL General receipts are at 91.6% and 96.4% of budget, respectively. As of August 31, St. John's had $351,041 in cash and $491,356 in investments, with total fund balances of $841,624.

Board of Youth and Education (N. Schmoller)

The BoYE reports that the FACTS tuition assistance process for St. Paul's Lutheran School went smoothly, with nearly $38,000 in assistance distributed this year, compared with approximately $30,000 in 2025. Sunday School and fall Bible classes are off to a good start, with a strong group of St. John's members and MLC students serving as teachers. The youth group continues to see strong participation under the leadership of Michael Wiechmann, with help from members of both St. John's and St. Paul's. The board also plans to evaluate interest and volunteer availability for bringing back the summer soccer camp or another similar educational/outreach event. Budget work for the coming year is also underway.

Board for Evangelism (J. Zahrt)

The BoEV reports that the August church picnic drew approximately 100 people, while the September 12 Summer Send-Off drew 566 attendees, including more than 500 at the outdoor worship service. The board is planning a new pew directory and considering a winter Pizza and Puzzles fellowship event. The BoEV is also seeking replacements for two members whose terms end in December. In addition, the board continues to consider ways to strengthen fellowship and the visitor experience at St. John's, including monthly coffee and treats, greater use of St. Paul's student musicians, and other opportunities to encourage members to serve and connect with one another.

Properties (M. Schwark)

The Board of Properties continues to address necessary maintenance throughout the church and rental property. Air conditioner #10 has failed and cannot be repaired because of its age; replacement is estimated at approximately $9,000. The rental property roof replacement has been completed, although three windows will eventually need replacement. The front church ceiling fan motor has burned out, and the board received a $3,400 quote to replace all three fans and switches. Plumbing issues in the lower-level women's restroom are also being addressed.

IV. Looking Ahead

The council continues to work toward the upcoming fall ministry and congregational priorities, including continued development of the Church 360 system, financial planning, and ongoing care for members and congregational property. The September meeting also included continued attention to the practical needs of St. John's ministries and preparations for the upcoming voters' budget and elections meeting.

October Council Digest

The Church Council met on October 20, 2026. A summary of reports and actions from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

Administrative Pastor Report

I. Membership Changes

A. Transfers In

Lukas and Emily Bogwardt (Petra) from Our Savior, San Antonio, TX.

B. Transfers Out

Dylan Borchert to Cross of Christ, Las Cruces, NM.

Jason, Hope, and Reuben Horn to St. Matthews, Port, WA.

Meg Carrasquero to Risen Savior, Brown Deer, WI.

Anna Schaefer to St. Paul's, New Ulm, MN.

Joel and Karen Thomford to Christ Our Rock, Rochester, MN.

II. Pastoral Acts

A. Deaths

Ruth Anderson – October 7, 2026.

Bruce Backer – October 8, 2026

B. Funerals

Bruce Backer – October 17, 2026.

III. Council Reports

Financially (Financial Secretary J. Ladner & Treasurer P. Meyer). September receipts totaled $71,886.93, bringing year-to-date receipts to $831,712.80. Home Operations receipts are at 96.9% of budget, approximately $20,571 behind budget. WELS Missions receipts are at 88.2% of budget, and MVL General receipts are at 93.1%.

As of September 30, the congregation held approximately $306,701 in cash and $489,428 in investments, with total fund balances of $795,380. The decrease of approximately $46,000 from the previous month reflects higher-than-usual disbursements, including a catch-up payment for WELS Missions and payment for the rental property roof replacement, along with negative investment earnings. A new renter is scheduled to begin occupying the rental property at 601 S. Washington Street on November 15, bringing rental income back into the budget.

Board of Youth and Education (N. Schmoller). The Board of Youth and Education reports that the FACTS tuition assistance process for St. Paul's Lutheran School went smoothly. Nearly $38,000 in assistance was distributed in 2026, up from approximately $30,000 in 2025. Sunday School and adult Bible classes are underway, with a good number of congregational members and MLC students serving as teachers. The youth group continues to experience strong participation under Michael Wiechmann's leadership, with assistance from members of St. John's and St. Paul's. The board will consider whether to resume the summer soccer camp or offer another summer education and outreach event, depending on interest and volunteer availability. Budget planning for the coming year is also underway.

Board for Evangelism (J. Zahrt). The Board for Evangelism prepared nominations for the October voters' meeting. The board reviewed proposed 2027 event funding for the Winter Carnival, Easter Canvass, Sleepy Eye Waterpark, Bavarian Blast Parade, Church Picnic, Summer Send-Off, and Parade of Lights. The soccer camp is expected to be self-funded. The board is also working on an updated pew directory, encouraging members to submit updated family photos, and planning a winter Pizza and Puzzles fellowship event. The board discussed finding space in the church shed to store the Lent and Advent archway banners, which are currently stored at a member's home. Making space available onsite would simplify storage and setup as board leadership changes.

Properties (M. Schwark). The rental property roof replacement was completed, and the September financial report reflects the related disbursement. The building fund balance at September 30 was approximately $117,548. A new renter is scheduled to begin at 601 S. Washington Street on November 15. The council also tabled the Properties portion of the strategic ministry plan until its November meeting.

IV. Looking Ahead

The council reviewed the proposed 2027 budget and approved presenting it to the voters with the discussed changes. A significant portion of the increase in the proposed budget relates to support for St. Paul's Lutheran School. The congregation's 2025–2026 school-year expenses exceeded the school's budget by approximately $131,000, and St. John's had an outstanding balance of $43,342. The proposed 2027 budget includes a substantial increase in direct school support to catch up on payments and return to a regular payment schedule. The council also discussed three health insurance budget options for called workers, including whether to include Pastor Bovee's health insurance expense and whether to fund allowances at the Plan 2 or Plan 3 level. Rather than select one option, the council agreed to present the alternatives to the voters for consideration at the October Voters' Meeting

The council approved presenting the proposed candidates for elected and appointed positions to the voters. Several positions remain open, including the stewardship chair, Finance Committee members, and an Endowment Committee member. Members are encouraged to suggest additional candidates, and nominations may be made from the floor at the voters' meeting.

The council also received an update on the Twelve Days of Christmas devotional project. All twelve devotion writers have been identified, and the writing and cover artwork are underway. The devotions will be reviewed by the pastors during the first half of November, with volunteers needed to assemble the devotional bags before Thanksgiving. The project aims to strengthen devotional habits among members and families while providing accessible volunteer opportunities.

The council was also informed that Pastor Guenther will help provide preaching and catechism instruction for St. Paul's in St. James during its pastoral vacancy, requiring adjustments to his schedule and additional coordination of ministry coverage.

V. Future Meeting Dates

Next regular Voters' Meeting: October 27, 2026, at 7:00 PM

Next Joint Council Meeting: November 17, 2026, at 6:00 PM

Next regular Church Council Meeting: November 17, 2026, at 7:00 PM

Respectfully,

J. Schaefer, Congregational Secretary

For J. Berg, Congregational President

The 12 Days of Christmas: Scripture, Family, and Service

What is one thing to do in order to reduce self destructive behaviors, lower personal struggles, while positively impacting faith?

For over eight years the Center for Bible Engagement (2012) surveyed over 100,000 people about their spiritual lives and found that engaging with God's Word, the Bible, four or more times a week has a profound impact on an individual's life!

This Christmas season, you are invited to join us for The Twelve Days of Christmas, a congregational devotional project designed to help us grow in God's Word, strengthen our faith at home, and serve others. Beginning December 25, each day will include a short Scripture reading, a devotional reflection, a question for family discussion, a prayer, and a simple activity or service opportunity.

Each day will include a short Scripture based devotion by member pastors and teachers from our congregation, reflective question(s) for family discussion, a prayer, and a simple activity or service opportunity.

Our hope is that this shared experience will help us build meaningful devotional habits, grow together in faith, and strengthen the connections we share as a congregation. Whether you work through the devotions on your own, gather your family around the table, or find ways to serve a neighbor, there is an opportunity for everyone to participate.

Moving forward: The project team is preparing the devotional materials for printing and distribution ahead of the Christmas season. Assembling devotional packs will take place on November 17 @ from 3:00-4:30 PM, with distribution beginning with Advent.

Looking forward to sharing more details in the service bulletins and St. John's Fortress Newsletter as we get closer to the launch.

Jon Schaefer
Congregational Secretary
Project Lead

Cards of Caring

Members of St. John's and MLC students are invited to help male cards our congregation sends to homebound members, LWMS-Befriend a Mission Families and others from our church. We use donated, recycled, and created cards. Supplies are furnished. We need help writing messages, stamping, and assembling cards. This fall our main focus will be on Thanksgiving and Christmas. We meet Saturday mornings between 9am-12pm at 403 N. Minnesota St. (across from the Glockenspiel). We will meet on November 14th, 2026. Thank you for considering to serve our members. For further information contact Lois Willems at (507) 676-1230.

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church

New Ulm, MN 56073 354-6744

November 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Reformation **Worship** **8, 9:30 & 11 AM** **w/ Communion** 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School	2 6 pm Elder's Meeting	3	4 6:15 Public Catechism 7 pm Choir	5 10 am Bible Class 6 pm Handbells 7 pm Bible Class 7 pm Choir	6	7 **Worship 6:30 PM**
8 Pentecost 24 **Worship** **8, 9:30 & 11 AM** 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School	9 11:30 pm OWLS 6 pm Evangelism Meeting 7 pm Education Meeting	10 6 pm Sunday School Meeting	11 6:15 Public Catechism 6 pm Handbells 7 pm Choir	12 10 am Bible Class 7 pm Bible Class	13	14 **Worship 6:30 PM** **w/ Communion**
15 Pentecost 25 **Worship** **8, 9:30 & 11 AM** **w/ Communion** 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School	16	17 5:30 pm Joint Council Meeting	18 6 pm Handbells 7 pm Choir	19 10 am Bible Class 7 pm Bible Class	20	21 **Worship 6:30 PM**
22 Last Sunday **Worship** **8, 9:30 & 11 AM** 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School	23	24 4 pm Oak Hills Service	25 6:30 pm Thanksgiving Service	26 9 am Thanksgiving Service Office Closed	27 Office Closed	28 **Worship 6:30 PM**
29 Advent 1 **Worship** **8, 9:30 & 11 AM** 9:30 am Bible Class and Sunday School	30					

Correspondence

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Mondays: 6 pm
Tuesdays: 1 pm
Thursdays: 10 am
on
Comcast Channel 14
Nuvera Channel 3

St. Paul's School

After many years of faithful service by Mrs. Elen Stark, St. Paul's Lutheran School welcomed Mrs. Laura Price as our new school nurse this summer. Laura also serves Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. I asked her to share a little about her new position and what brought her into school nursing.

Laura had never considered becoming a school nurse until learning of Mrs. Stark's retirement. After talking with Elen, she realized that her nursing experience had prepared her well for the position. "God opened my eyes and heart to the job last spring," she shared.

One thing that attracted Laura to our schools was the opportunity to bring her Christian faith into her work. "We can have all the best medical treatments, but our times are still in God's hands, and His will is best for us, even though we don't always understand it."

Her days include caring for injured or sick students, communicating with parents, reviewing immunization records, managing medication orders, and following up on health screenings. She has also been surprised by the many Minnesota laws governing school health services.

Laura especially enjoys getting to know the students, faculty, and families. "Every family has its own story, and every person in that family has a part in that story."

Laura also appreciates being home with her family after school each day. "God knows what He is doing and cares for us so well."

We thank God for Elen's years of service and for bringing Laura to this ministry!

MVL School

Tis the season!… MVL will once again be selling wreaths, swags, crosses, and live garland to help bring the sights and scents of Christmas to your home or business! Wreath orders are now open and all orders must be placed by Sunday, November 15th. This year all ordering will be done online. Simply go to the MVL website, click on wreaths, and place your order! We hope to deliver most products to your church by Thanksgiving weekend. Thank you for your support!

Central Africa Medical Mission

In the United States, September marks the return to school. Summer break ends, bedtimes are reinstated, and early morning commutes resume. For many, change is uncomfortable. We settle into routines and expectations, and when those shift, we either struggle or learn to adapt.

Over the past seven years, our clinics in Malawi and Zambia have seen many changes. Gary and Beth Evans began working in Malawi (again) in 2019 as Clinic Administrator and Nurse-in-Charge. As the clinic staff began to get comfortable with their leadership, it wasn't too much longer before the COVID-19 pandemic began. While the pandemic didn't affect many people in Malawi, it changed the way we ran clinic - including running clinic without Gary and Beth's leadership, when they were instructed to return to the U.S.. After their return to the field, change was in store for the Mwembezhi clinic in Zambia. Since the clinic staff in Zambia had been nationalized for several years, the One Africa Team (OAT) requested Gary Evans then assist with managing clinics in both countries, requiring frequent travel between Malawi and Zambia.

In 2022, Gary and Beth's tenure with the Lutheran Mobile Clinic concluded, and the Malawi clinic staff was fully nationalized as well. This change meant that day-to-day operations would no longer be overseen by expatriate leadership. Instead, Gary stepped into a new role as Field Director, visiting both countries three to four times per year. Under this model, clinics in both Malawi and Zambia continued to flourish. Encouraged by this stability, the CAMM Stateside Committee (CAMMC) began exploring opportunities for expansion, provided that growth would not jeopardize ongoing operations.

In 2024, we held our first short-term medical camp in Kenya. Many CAMMC members volunteered their time, talents, and treasures to assist with this new and exciting change. Now, in 2026, we find ourselves in another season of change.

I (Kate) was selected as the new Executive Director of CAMM, after serving on the CAMMC as secretary for over three years. In my new role, I spent eight months learning about clinic operations, administration, and management from Gary Evans, prior to his retirement. This change has affected not only the two of us, but also our staff in Malawi and Zambia, the Committee, our families, our One Africa Team missionary partners, the LCMC-Kenya team, and many others.

Change is rarely easy, but I am working to embrace it. I am establishing new routines, setting new expectations, and relying on my education, my background in health care administration, and my experience on the CAMM Stateside Committee to guide me.

While this change is significant for me personally, it is also another opportunity for all of us to adapt and grow. I am eager to continue building on the work carried out by CAMM leadership over the past 65 years, and I look forward to seeing where God leads the Central Africa Medical Mission in the years ahead.

Kate Wood, Executive Director

Donations Needed for John and Paul Ministries!

The Parade of Lights is coming up in November and John and Paul Ministries is asking for donations of hot chocolate packets. These packets will be handed out along with Advent and Christmas worship invitations. Please consider donating a box of hot chocolate packets by November 14th. All donations can be dropped off at school or the church office.



Happy Birthday



1 Virginia Backer
Brandon Filzen
Brixton Wendland

2 Jamie Milbrett
Gary Schroeder
Morgan Thom

3 Michael Mack

4 Rich Gurgel
Konnie Kuck
Ella Martin

5 Grace Bauer

6 Angela Domeier
Craig Hirschmann

7 Roman Schmoller
Matthew Uecker

9 Jacob Baganz
Britta Berg
Cody Gilman
Davin Meinert
Kayla Stanoch
Gerald Steffen
Julie Wiethoff

10 Alan Uher

12 Joelle Nilson
Jackson Rieke

13 Rachel Howard
David McClellan

14 Jody Enter
Miranda Peterson

15 Max Price
Samson Price
Mia Schmoller
Whitley Scriver

16 Judy LaGrow
Zachary Lingl

18 Haddie Grundmeier
Wyatt Lang
Larry Vogel

19 Scarlett Thompson

20 Josiah Guenther
Ambrose Strackbein
Benjamin Strackbein
Derek Weisensel

21 Edward Kowalke
Rachel Lang
Justin Pettersen
Brian Wels

22 Del Dallmann
Kaylee Dittmer
Janet Kramer
Marley Kuckhahn
Sheldon Pearse

23 Emma Martin
Rachel Shoen
Lance Toltzman
Eli Weigel

24 Sandra Boesch
Bill Price

26 Mercy Dobberpuhl
Charlotte Fritze
Ross Martin

29 Cheyenne Blackwell
Charlotte Dittmer
Jeni Johnson
Nathan Hagberg
Sarah Strackbein

30 Gwen Kral
Jason Mohror

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church
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November 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
Search: Saint John's New Ulm

Adult Bible Class

(In person and online at bit.ly/StJBibleClass)
Sundays: 9:30 am
Thursdays: 10 am & 7 pm

Sunday School

Sundays: 9:30 am

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