



March, 2022

St. John's, New Ulm Fortress

A New Thing Springs Up

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” ~ Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)

Is winter almost over? Growing up in the Seattle area, if we had an inch of snow, that was a lot! The record high in Seattle is one hundred degrees. The record low is zero degrees. It's never been colder. So... for this Washington boy, some of these long, cold, winter days of Minnesota, well... they sure can get tiring. I don't know about you, but I sure could go for some warmer temperatures, some more sun, some leaves on the trees, and flowers in my flowerbeds again. I'm ready for Spring.

The good news is that Spring is almost here. Technically March 20th marks the beginning of Spring this year. With the tilt of the earth's axis, longer, warmer, sunnier days are just around the corner. Well, at least longer days are. Even if we have more snow in March or even in April. (We did have 3" of snow in April of 2019 and you had 10" of snow in April of 2018! So we're not out of winter yet!) But no matter how long it takes, we know that eventually the snow will melt and Spring will come.

Similarly, no matter what "Winter" of life you're going through right now, you know that "Spring" will come. There will be a reprieve from the cold, harsh, broken relationship you wish were much better. The struggles you have with the dark problems you face today will soon dissolve in the light of eternity. Our own icy hearts will melt into pure joy when we go to be with our God, one day soon.

For God promises, ***“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”*** (Isaiah 43:18-19)

The truth is, it's not just the cold, dark, harsh environment out there that makes this life challenging at times. It's also my own cold, icy heart that makes the "Winters" of this life. My sin against others damages relationships. My selfishness causes problems. My ego stands in the way of peace. And I create my own "Winter." And, to be sure, I deserve an eternal "Winter" without the Son, forever banished from God and his presence in hell.

But God promised through the prophet that he was making something new to spring up! What was it? Isaiah goes on, ***“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”*** (Isaiah 43:25)

God, in his grace, blots out our transgressions as if they never happened! God in his love, forgets our sin as if it never took place. “What sin?!” he asks. “I don’t remember you doing any such selfish thing! I remember my Son, Jesus, doing that. And I remember that cold, dark day when I punished him for it as he hung on a cross. But you... no... I don’t remember *you* doing any such thing.”

Because Jesus took our place in life, keeping God’s holy law at every moment, and gave us credit for his perfection... because Jesus took our place in death, on a cross, and in the hellish torment of being separated from God the Father, to pay for our every sin... Our transgressions are blotted out. Our sin is no longer remembered by God. Talk about something new!

So, no matter what “Winter” of life you’re going through right now, you know that “Spring” will come. The day will come when you will no longer have to shovel any snow. The day will come when you will never again be cold. The day will come when you will have no sorrow or pain or frustration or discomfort. For you will be with Jesus. You will see him face to face. And all your sorrows, all your troubles, all your fears will melt away.

Rejoice in Jesus, friends, as you look forward to that day and as you live for him in thanks right now, doing all you can to bring as many as you can with you into his paradise.

In Jesus’ name,
Pastor Rob Guenther

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

Sundays at 9:30 am	Bloodstained Path	Pastor Rob Guenther
Thursdays at 10:30 am	1 and 2 Thessalonians	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Thursdays at 7 pm	Psalms	Pastor Rob Guenther
Fridays at 9:30 am	Women’s Class: Colossians	Pastor Jeff Bovee

March Sermon Texts

Mar. 2	Matthew 26:18 ESV	“I will keep the Passover”
Mar. 6	Luke 4:1-13	He was Tempted and We are Victorious
Mar. 9	Luke 22:31-32	“Satan has asked to Sift All of You as Wheat”
Mar. 13	Jeremiah 26:8-15	God’s Word: Tell It Like It Is
Mar. 16	John 18:12	“They Bound Him”
Mar. 20	1 Corinthians 10:1-13	Learn from the Mistakes of Others
Mar. 23	Luke 22:66	The Semblance of Legality
Mar. 27	Isaiah 12:1-6	Draw Waters from the Wells of Salvation
Mar. 30	Luke 23:13-16	A Part for the Whole?

Council Digest

The Church Council met on February 15. A summary of reports and action from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

Membership changes approved:

Transferred out: Clyde and Karen Long to Good Shepherd Lutheran, Midland, MI

The council welcomed two guests, MVL Principal Tim Plath and St Paul’s Principal Pete Markgraf.

- Principal Plath thanked St. John’s Congregation for their prayers and support. MVL is experiencing a slight drop in enrollment which is projected to rebound over the next few years. Work continues on their facilities to upgrade the septic and prepare for Hwy 14 expansion as the Building on the Rock capital campaign is on hold until a new mission advancement director accepts the call. They are extending calls for the director of mission advancement and science.
- Principal Pete Markgraf thanked St. John’s for their partnership. St. Paul’s has extended a call for a Learning Coordinator to St. John’s member, Mrs. Melissa Hunter. Please keep Melissa in your prayers as she deliberates this call.

A team of auditors has been contacted to review the 2021 financial records with the goal of having the report ready for the voters at the April quarterly voters’ meeting.

Evangelism chair Jesse Zahrt noted the Marriage Tune-up series on select Sundays. The next scheduled session is March 6, 2022, from 4-6pm. That time frame will be the same for the other session dates: 3/20, 4/3, 4/24, 5/8, and 5/22.

The Stewardship Board recommended supplementing the impending shortages in the funds for the

Lutheran Chapel Hour and Lutheran Institutional Ministries, with an additional \$1,000 transferred to each account in the budget from the endowment distribution account. They also recommended using endowment funds to purchase a new adjustable bench for our organists. The adjustable bench will replace the current bench that is adjusted using books and papers. The council approved both recommendations.

A kitchen committee to study upgrades to our kitchen held their first meeting and shared some preliminary discussion about focusing on upgrading and replacing appliances that could be moved should there be an addition to the St. John's facilities. They toured some local kitchens and one committee member is working on some drawings that represent priorities for improvements.

A divine call was extended by the voters at the annual meeting on January 25. James Dretske was called to serve St. John's as staff minister for one more year on a half-time basis. Details of a Medicare package were approved by the council during their February meeting at the direction of the voters.

An opportunity was shared by the Board for Youth and Education Chair, Paul Wessel. The New Ulm community is in need of additional childcare beyond what currently exists. The city expressed a willingness to provide the adjacent green space at Lincoln Park to the congregation should St. John's offer childcare. The council had initial questions about how the opportunity could fit into St. John's ministry.

St. John's received a reply letter from St. Paul's in response to our voter's letter from October 2021. Our St. John's Council had some clarifying questions about several items included in their reply letter. St. Paul's is providing a forum for our council to ask these questions at their council meeting on March 22, 2022.

St. John's is scheduled to host the next semiannual joint council meeting with St. Paul's. An invitation will be extended for Tuesday, May 17, prior to the regular St. John's council meeting.

The next Church Council meeting: Tuesday, March 15, at 7 pm.

The next quarterly voters' meeting: Tuesday, April 26, at 7 pm.

Jonathan M. Schaefer, Congregational Chairman

Stewardship

Qualified Charitable Distribution

Are you over 70½? You can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA to your favorite charity. If you don't need your retirement fund income and prefer not to pay tax on it, this is a great way to give as it will allow you to give these pre-tax dollars.

Depending on your income bracket, your charity could see 30% more impact than if you were to write a check or give cash (which is post-tax). To set up a QCD you need to work with the company that manages your retirement fund. Below are some main points to keep in mind:

- Contributions need to be made directly to St. John's by the company managing your IRA to qualify as nontaxable distributions.

- St. John's cannot include QCD contributions on your St. John's contribution statement since they are already treated as pre-tax contributions.
- The company that manages your IRA sends you a Form 1099-R after the end of the year to report distributions from your IRA. The company can send you a letter stating the total non-taxable amount distributed to a qualified charitable organization as a QCD, but you might need to request such a letter from the company.
- In addition to your contribution statement, St. John's can send you a letter at the end of the year stating the total amount distributed from your IRA as a QCD.
- You cannot claim a charitable contribution deduction on your tax form for any QCD funds not included on your tax form as income.

Dan Borgwardt, Stewardship Chairman

St. Paul's Lutheran School

It's Time Update

Capital Campaign: St. Paul's School Gala

Once Upon a Time, there were two St. Paul's School Dig In Galas that could not be held in person. This year is different. As we prepare for this enchanting event, we look forward to spending time together for an evening of food, fun, and Fairy Tale endings, to benefit the It's Time Campaign.

Save the date for Friday, May 6! If you own a business that would like to help sponsor the Gala this year, please contact Campaign Committee member, Amy Rich, at stampinnnut@me.com.

Financial Snapshot

	May 21	October 21	January 15	February 13
Campaign Offerings:	\$4,080,126	\$4,220,070.74	\$4,459,151	\$4,497,843
Fund Balance:	\$215,683	\$235,473,98	\$179,947	\$188,299
Current Loan Balance:	\$3,775,231	\$3,730,888.00	\$3,616,891	\$3,607,092
Offerings for Month:	\$16,546	\$42,668.50	\$60,224.43	\$25,328

Pete Markgraf, Principal

splnewulm.org/school/

Church Library

This month starts the Lenten season so we will have twice a week to worship and also partake of a meal on Wednesdays. Dwelling on God's great exchange to us (His death for our sins) is something we should never forget.

We have two books to introduce this month. "Always Jan" by Roxanne Henke, is fiction but has normal problems to solve. Jan is married but only thinks of herself and is planning to have cosmetic surgery to fight ageing. But then she is hit with a virus that harms her face, and changes her thinking. Another character is Kenny who has 3 kids and another on the way, plus he has a garage to run, fixing cars, and selling gas in a small town in North Dakota. His finances are close and he worries about making ends meet and keeping up with his business. His new baby is a son after three daughters, but he has Downs Syndrome and Kenny is devastated. The third character is Ida who is now in a nursing home after she fell at home. Kenny is her nephew so she prays for him. Ida meets Jan when they are both getting physical therapy. How will God change each character as He invades their thinking?

The other book is "Waking Up in Heaven" by Chrystal McVea. Chrystal died in a hospital and woke up in Heaven but Jesus sent her back and told her to tell others. Her life up until then was broken. Her NDE (near death experience) is interesting.

I enjoyed both books. Happy reading !

LeiLani Rahn, church librarian

Volunteers Needed

St. John's members have an opportunity to volunteer at the New Ulm Emergency Food Shelf on the 3rd Monday of each month from 11:45 am - 3 pm. Two to three volunteers are needed for the following dates:

May 16	July 18	November 21
June 20	October 17	December 19

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.

Men of Truth Conference

The 6th Men of Truth Conference, Leading in a Darkening World, will be held April 2nd at Martin Luther College Auditorium, New Ulm, 8am-2:45 pm. Three featured speakers led by Keynote Speaker Jeremy Mattek (Time of Grace) will explore topics of 1) Spiritual Leadership, 2) Living in a Darkening World (Integrity) and 3) Personal/Spiritual Growth. Lunch will be in the MLC Cafeteria 11:45-12:30 pm and is included in the registration.

For more information and to register for the event, go to menoftruth.org. Take advantage of an early registration discount!

Cards of Caring

The St. John's Cards of Caring volunteers will meet on Saturday, March 12th.

We will be making Easter cards for our Homebound and Thinking of You members.

You are welcome to come as your schedule permits between 9 am and noon at 403 N. Minnesota St. All materials are provided. Join us for fun, fellowship and a way to serve the Lord.

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

Staff Minister Report

Online Church Directory Copies have been placed in the new narthex on the table by the windows. About 300 directories have been taken so far, so most families may have them. If you have not taken one yet, please take one. More copies will be printed, as needed. If the supply is depleted, feel free to contact me at sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com. I can print the size you want and place it in your church mailbox.

At the direction of the Evangelism Board, a small **PEW COPY** version has been produced at the MLC Printshop. It contains only the *"Picture Portion"* of the directory from those who have submitted pictures. There are links on the back for sites to connect with the online application or my email to submit pictures for the next printed version. Please use these **Pew Copies** to get to know the other members here at church. Say "Hi" to someone new each week and introduce yourself—We are Family! Please place these directories back to the ends of the pews at the end of the services. Thank you!

Visiting 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 regularly but would like to be included, please call the church office at 354-6744 or me at 507-217-7604.

Streamed/Recorded Services We have had some issues with NUCat in the recordings that are seen on the New Ulm Public TV and on YouTube. We are working to resolve these issues but would welcome knowing if you are having issues while watching. Feel free to contact me to let me know what type of issue you are having. Our goal is to provide a high quality recording so that your focus can be on the worship and praise of our God and not on the distractions from a poor broadcast. Thank you for your patience while we try to remedy the situation. If you have been able to watch our live feeds or recorded YouTube services, you can fill out a quick response survey online to let us know how we are doing. Go to: <https://bit.ly/SJRecord-Stream>

In regard to YouTube, it is recommended to **SUBSCRIBE** to St. John's YouTube "channel". This does not mean that you will need to pay a monthly fee. It only means that our St. John's, New Ulm YouTube "Channel" will show up under your Subscribed Channels on the app. If you choose to accept notifications, you will receive a notification on your computer or phone whenever St. John's, New Ulm uploads or streams a new video. Thanks for watching and subscribing.

To our Homebound or older members: There were a number of members who indicated on the Time & Talent Survey last fall under **"Member Concern"** that they would be interested in helping others.

The next step is to find out what is needed help with. If you find that you need help with something, please don't hesitate to call me at 217-7604. I can help to find people who would be willing to help you with things you can't do or can't do alone. We want to help!

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Dretske

Our Synod at Work

The WELS Annual Report to Members for 2022

The Wisconsin Synod has published and sent out their Annual Report to Members for 2022. It has been standard in this column to spend a few months reviewing the highlights from the report. This month we will take a look at "WELS in Brief" and also present some comments from WELS President Mark Schroeder's introductory message.

First, let's take a look at some of the statistics associated with WELS:

1. WELS is the third largest Lutheran church body in the United States. It has 1,264 churches, 344,244 baptized members, and 275,259 communicant members.
2. WELS has 12 districts to allow for more area-specific ministry, personal contacts, and member involvement.
3. WELS-congregations—either individually or as federations—operates 282 Lutheran elementary schools, 368 early childhood ministries, and 27 area Lutheran high schools.
4. WELS maintains four schools for the education of pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. They are: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin; Martin Luther College in New Ulm; Lutheran Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin; and Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Michigan.
5. Known as the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry, the synod's headquarters in Waukesha, Wisconsin, also houses the WELS Archives and the WELS Visitor Center. Tours to the Visitor Center returned in 2021.
6. WELS is a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, which is an organization of 34 confessional church bodies throughout the world.

WELS President Mark Schroeder wrote a Message from the President that introduces the Annual Report. Some of the highlights of his comments include:

1. God's People Gather was one of the themes that defined 2021 for the synod. The pandemic caused great disruption in 2020 with almost all congregations needing to make major adjustments to their worship and ministries. Travel was restricted and ministry projects were postponed.
2. However, 2021 was a year in which God's people once again gathered together for in-person corporate worship and for carrying out the mission that God has graciously given us.
3. As life began to return to normal, God continued to place gospel opportunities into our lives. His Word was preached, and his sacraments administered. Home missions were planted, and world mission work was expanded.
4. One of the most pleasant and unexpected blessings was the fact that even in a year of "getting back to normal," God opened the hearts of his people to provide more financial support than ever before for the work that we do together as a synod.

In the months ahead, we will look at the sections contained within the report. These sections include: Called to Prepare; Called to Proclaim; Called to Serve; and Called to Support.

Gerald Woodley

Evangelism

Did you know that St. John's launched a phone app last year?

In our app, you will find a wide variety of useful information and tools like upcoming events, online Bible classes and church services, a Bible reading plan, links to our website and social media sites, songs from worship, and much more. The Board of Evangelism is currently working on getting a podcast added to the app to share our weekly sermon in audio format as well.

Since our SJNU church app's go-live in June 2021, we've had more than 250 app downloads, 1,450 app launches, and 435 media plays through the app.

If you haven't already checked it out, you can find it by searching for "stjohnsnewulm" in the Apple App store or the Google Play store.

While you're in your app store of choice, make sure to download the Instant Church Directory as well. That is the online church directory we began using last year as well. It gives you up to date member info to help you get connected when needed. For security, it does require a user account using the email address you have on file with our church office.

Feel free to reach out to Jesse or another member of the St. John's Board of Evangelism if you have questions on either app. We always welcome contact from anyone interested in serving with our Evangelism efforts for outreach and fellowship.

Jesse Zahrt, Board of Evangelism evangelism@stjohnsnewulm.com

Student of the Month

Through the generous donations of members around the globe, MLC offers a Congregational Partner Grant Program. Our congregation awards a grant to any undergraduate student who is our member and is also enrolled at MLC. MLC then matches that grant from \$100 to \$1,000 per student! If you'd like to help support our MLC student members financially, please use the "Ministerial Education" envelope in your offering envelope box. (It's between September 5th and September 12th). Thanks for your prayers and gifts of support for our students!

Justus Borgwardt is one of the students who is receiving funds and is attending Martin Luther College.

1. What made you decide to become a pastor or teacher?

When I went to church growing up, I always looked up to my pastors. I thought that talking about the Bible every week would be such an incredible job. Now, as I learn about different aspects of pastoral ministry, I continue to think it would be a great way to serve God's kingdom.

2. How many years of school do you have left? I have six years of school left: three at MLC and three at the Seminary. I will also serve a vicar call for a year before my final year at Seminary.

3. What class do you enjoy the most? I enjoy the Latin classes I have taken. Latin isn't a Biblical language, but Luther used it in many writings. By studying those works in the original language, I have deepened my understanding of many Biblical doctrines.

4. What class do you find the most challenging? My most challenging class so far has been Greek. The workload is heavy and it isn't easy to get used to a language so different from English, but it will help me in higher-level classes and my ministry.

5. Do you have a job while you're in school? If so, what do you do? How do you balance work and studies? During the school year, I work at AMPI, a butter factory in town. It is a perfect job for busy college students because they have flexible hours. I can work on nights where I know my workload will be lighter.

6. What are your hobbies when you're not in class or studying (or at work)? If I'm not studying or working, you would probably find me beating my friends in sheepshead, fishing, or watching football or hockey. I have also tried to learn guitar off and on for a few years but only have a couple of songs in my repertoire to show for it.



Thank you, members of St. John's! Your support is greatly appreciated and helps alleviate the financial burden for me and the others MLC students of our congregation. God's blessings!

MVL

Pork Chop Dinner and Band Concert



Come and get it! The MVL Booster Club is putting on their annual pork chop dinner on Sunday, March 6th from 10:30 am until 1 pm. The event will be held at the high school and is open to the public. Free will donations will be accepted. The Winter Band Concert will immediately follow at 1:30 pm. Come out and enjoy a delicious meal and stay for the concert to be entertained by our talented musicians!



Open House

Tuesday, March 15th from 6:30-8:30 pm
For new families and incoming freshman
Tours will be available
Presentation by Principal, Tim Plath
Course registration and school year application



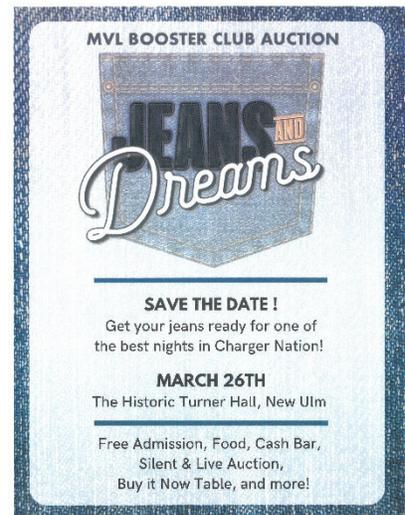
MVL Jeans & Dreams Auction

Get your jeans ready for one of the best nights in Charger Nation! Join us at Turner Hall in New Ulm on the evening of Saturday, March 26 for the MVL Booster Club Auction.

Come in your favorite denim for a delicious dinner, spectacular socializing with the MVL family, and an amazing array of items and new experiences for 2022.

The Booster Club supports the "extras" of MVL student life by funding non-budgeted items for ALL of our co-curricular programs. Over 90% of students each year participate in at least one athletic, academic, or fine arts activity!

If you or your business is interested in donating an item or experience to be auctioned off, please contact MVL Booster Club Auction President David Bendix at dbendix@gmail.com.



Youth Group

During February, the Youth Group joined together for two fun activities. The first activity was bowling on February 6th which was a great time of fun and fellowship. On the 20th, we were able to support the drama department at MLC by attending the MLC play The Westing Game.



Looking forward, the Youth Group will be hosting a Lent Dinner on March 16th. A sign up sheet was sent. Please consider signing up for food donations and/or serving that night.

Also, on April 2nd, the Youth Group will be hosting Easter for Kids. More information and a sign up sheet will be sent soon.



Blessings,
Kristin Ulicky