

A Proper Focus On Christ



May 2026

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Colossians 3:1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

As you perhaps remember from your history classes, or for those of you who were already born at the time and lived through it: In June of 1940, Adolf Hitler was the terror of the world. His aim was to rule the earth. His armies marched across Europe, conquering, country-by-country. As he approached France, however, the French devised a plan to ward off his attack. Against the advice of General Charles de Gaulle, they built the “Maginot Line.” It was a huge wall, fortified with cannons facing the French/German border. It seemed almost as if the Maginot Line was impregnable because it was so tall, and its guns were so great. It was lined with barbed wire entanglements. Underground chambers provided spaces for communications systems, hospitals, storerooms, and living quarters. It seemed to be the perfect defense system.

However, as the French army sat waiting with their guns pointed toward Germany, a terrible thing happened. The German army attacked from another direction. They came from the north through Belgium, rather than from the east as France had anticipated. Suddenly the French army was in a great dilemma. You see, the guns which they had fixed on the Maginot Line only faced one direction--east. As the German army approached from the rear, the French were unable to defend themselves. In two weeks, France was conquered.

On the day of Jesus’ ascension into heaven, the astonished apostles who saw Jesus lifted away into exaltation before their very eyes, stood there gazing into the sky. But the angels who appeared had to tell them not to just stand there gawking at the clouds. Instead, they were to fix their hearts on Christ, who had risen from death and had ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God until his return in glory. They needed a proper focus on Christ which turned their hearts in the right direction. A proper focus on Christ is also what St. Paul speaks of in Colossians 3. All too often when we find ourselves struggling with our faith or wrestling with the temptations of this world, we turn our focus inwardly and try by our own reason or moral goodness to find solutions to our problems.

We point the guns of conscience, logic, and homespun philosophy at the devil and think we shall ward him off. But he does not play fair. Like Hitler’s forces attacking France from the north to avoid the Maginot Line, our defenses become useless, and soon we fall prey to his power and wiles whenever we rely on ourselves.

Paul teaches us instead to set our hearts on Christ and on his saving power. He says: **Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

Setting our hearts on Christ is nothing other than embracing his word and promise. We are sinners who cannot by nature do what God demands of us. But in Jesus, we have died to sin. When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sin died with him there. And as Paul teaches in Romans 6, we were buried with Christ through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from death through the glory of Father, we too shall live a new life. Jesus removed our sin and guilt by his death on the cross, and proved by his resurrection that we are justified in the sight of God. We are dead to sin, and alive to God through faith in Christ. Our baptisms are a true reminder of it.

We do not look to our own goodness for salvation. We do not look to our own reason for the assurance that our sins are forgiven. We do not seek to experience with our emotions whether we are justified or not. We look to Christ and all he has done. When his righteousness and redemption are our focus, no enemy can harm us, and we have perfect assurance that the forgiveness of sins and eternal life are ours through faith in his name. His promises cannot fail, and no enemy can snatch us from his hand.

After having received a focus adjustment from the angels, the astonished apostles returned to Jerusalem with joy because their Lord had ascended to prepare a place for them. We likewise find the same joy as we focus, not on the things of this world for our hope and comfort, but on Christ who is seated at the right hand of God.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey Bovee

May Sermon Texts

May 10	1 Peter 3:13-22	In Your Heart, Set Apart Christ as Lord
May 17	1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11	God Offers Hope for the Sorely Tired
May 24	John 7:37-39	Let it Flow!
May 31	2 Corinthians 13:11-14	The Triune God Grants Us His Three-fold Blessing

Bible Class meets in the Church Basement

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

Sundays at 9:30am	Never Learned That in Sunday School	
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 April 21, 2026. A summary of reports and actions from the meetings not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

Membership Changes

A. Transfers Out

NA

B. Transfer In

NA

Pastoral Acts:

Confirmation

Jacob Arthur Baganz

Lillian Grace Brandes

Larken Abbey Filzen

Dylan Timothy Fischer

Alex Logan Goeglein

Amelia Lynn Hermanson

Emma Christine Martin

Alivia Brynn Meyer

Cody Alan Schroeder

Weston Kurk Sriver

Raelee Kay Shoen

Nathanael Edward Smith

Johnathan Paul Stoering

Council Reports

Financially, the congregation continues to be blessed. The council approved both the Financial Secretary's and Treasurer's reports, noting that year-to-date giving is up compared to this time last year. There are several invoices coming due. Plans are underway to complete the annual financial review. There was also an update on St. Paul's delayed review of the shared resolutions, with further discussion anticipated at the upcoming joint council meeting.

Looking ahead, the council approved a proposal to begin developing a comprehensive campus facilities and site plan to guide future decisions, and is currently identifying a chairman to lead this effort. A recommendation was also made to move to two voters' meetings per year (January and October), and preparation continues for the April 28 voters' meeting. The next joint council meeting with St. Paul's will be held on May 19 at St. John's, beginning with supper at 5:30 PM, followed by the meeting at 6:00 PM.

Future meetings:

- Next regular council meeting - May 19 @ 7 PM
- Next regular voters' meeting - April 28 @ 7 PM
- Next joint council meeting - May 19, 2026

Respectfully,

pp J. Berg, Congregational Chairman

J. Schaefer, Congregational Secretary

Library News

Happy spring to all! Confirmations and Graduations. End of the school year, Grass turning green. Time to mow, plant the garden, start a project.

Hey, we found the third book in our “Mark of the Lion” trilogy by Francine Rivers. We had book 3, and then got book 1 (last month), and this month we have book 2, An Echo in the Darkness. Hadassah, a Jewish slave from book 1, is not dead. She is saved from the lions in ancient Rome by Dr. Alexander. She covers herself because she is disfigured, but she is a help to Alexander. She remembers the family that had sent her to the lions but they don't recognize her. Meanwhile, Marcus, a Roman, travels to Palestine to see if the Bible stories that Hadassah had told them were true. Did someone really rise from the dead? I found this trilogy very intriguing.

Dr. Bruce Becker earned his PHD before he started work with “Time of Grace”. Now he wrote a book titled True Crimes of the Bible. 10 crimes from the Bible are studied although there are many others. Each of the ten gets a chapter. Like Moses, David, and Cain. Each was a murderer. What did God do? He forgave Moses and David but not Cain. The difference was their faith in God's mercy. Cain did not have it. Other crimes treated are Ahab and Jezebel, King Herod, and even St. Paul. Each was also a murderer, but here only one was forgiven. Faith makes the difference.

Last month we had a book by Max Lucado titled He Chose the Nails. Max wrote many books and here is another, Traveling Light. Using Psalm 23 as a guide, he explains how we can travel through life with less baggage when we know that God is our help. In 18 chapters, he wrote about bags we carry around, such as self-reliance, discontent, worry, hopelessness, guilt, loneliness, and fear of death. The Lord can take all of our baggage since he is our Shepherd. He will replace the bags with hope, love, and no fear. We shall not want.

What are you reading? What book of the Bible are you on? We have all of them in our library. Happy reading!

LeiLani Rahn

LMSG

Lutheran Military Support Group Ammo Can Campaign – Each May and November, Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) seeks donations in support of our military men, women, and families. LMSG, a partnership of ELS and WELS Veterans, is working to grow awareness of and bring Christian support to our Christian Warriors and their families in our congregations. By placing your gift in the Ammo Can located (in the narthex, insert location), you are supporting the spiritual and mental health of our Christian Warriors through programs like our retreats and workshops, educational support for pastors serving military families, Veterans pursuing a second career in public ministry, and more. Visit www.lutheranmilitary.org for more information. Thank you for standing Shoulder to Shoulder in Service with those who serve our Nation!

What is that Ammo Can for? – Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) seeks donations through our Ammo Can Campaign each May and November. Your financial gifts go toward supporting WELS/ELS active-duty Service Members, Veterans, and their Families. By placing your gift in the Ammo Can located (in the narthex, insert location), you support:

- Spiritual and mental health resources for Christian Warriors and their Families impacted by trauma and moral injury
- Continuing education support for pastors serving near military installations
- Scholarships for Veterans pursuing public ministry as a pastor, teacher, staff minister, or chaplain
- Printed resources such as the Christian Service Members' Handbook for active-duty and National Guard Warriors
- And more!

Visit www.lutheranmilitary.org for more information. Thank you for standing Shoulder to Shoulder in Service with those who serve our Nation!

Women of St. John's

All ladies are invited to a picnic at Kara Johnson's home on May 5 at 6:00 pm, 810 S Washington St. Besides having a meal we will play some games and share in some fun fellowship. If you know beforehand, please RSVP by signing up on the sheet in the new narthex. Otherwise, just show up! If you would like to bring an appetizer, side dish or dessert, that would be great too. The main dish will be provided. Hope you can come and bring a friend along with you!

St. Paul's School

On May 6, if the weather is good, Mrs. Dorn's students in grades three and four will travel to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School (MVL) for a field trip focused on launching a weather balloon and learning about God's creation through the study of the atmosphere. The students in Mrs. Dorn's classroom have been practicing in preparation for the launch.

The morning will begin with a live weather balloon launch. Students will help prepare and release the balloon, learn how tracking equipment works, and follow its projected flight path. Mrs. Dorn's father and people from Martin Luther College (MLC) will be there to volunteer their help. Students will practice tracking techniques and observe how data is collected during the flight. Through this experience, students will see how temperature, air pressure, and other conditions change with altitude and affect the weather we experience each day.

After the launch, the students will head to the art room at MVL where they will participate in a pottery session. While they are in the art room, they will also have the opportunity to learn more about MVL.

This trip is designed to build understanding of the world God has made while encouraging curiosity and teamwork. Students will work together, learn from others, and see how science can be used to explore and appreciate creation. The trip is also a great opportunity to witness the partnerships we enjoy with MLC and MVL, here in New Ulm.

Thank You!

Dear Members of St. John's,

Thank you for your contributions toward the purchase of music folders for our Junior Choir. We have enjoyed using them this past semester! These will help preserve our sheet music for many years to come.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Emily Stoering & the St. John's Junior Choir members



In Loving Memory

Del Ulrich	Technology Fund	\$25
Del Ulrich	Technology Fund	\$25

Central Africa Medical Mission

“Our purpose is to build the Church.” Unified under this call, CAMM organized a short-term medical camp from February 10th to 14th in Chabera, Kenya. Kate Wood, Field Director/ Executive Director, and retiring Field Director, Gary Evans, led 6 WELS volunteers, coordinated with the African Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) leadership, engaged LCMC church volunteers, and partnered with the Kenyan Health District in the third “pop-up” medical camp in Kenya. The first medical camp in the underserved Chabera area drew just shy of 2,400 children, women, and men in 5 days, many arriving by foot and some by motorcycle taxi traveling up to 5 kilometers for free medical services, medical screening, and medication.

"A cord of three strands is not easily broken." Our core team of 12 “strands” included Paul Mboya, John Michoro, Pastor Sammy Mwangi, Bishop Onunda, and 8 CAMM representatives from America and England. We flourished, unbroken, relying on collective strengths to witness God’s amazing provision in Kenya’s rainy season, which arrived early, stirring up sticky, red mud, and in cross-cultural relationships. We weathered communication lapses that can happen when diverse cultures work together and faced myriad opportunities to meet the daily surprises - surprises to us; God undaunted! Creatively, we pivoted to address dwindling medicine supplies, giving urgent IV support when we lacked equipment, and transporting a critically ill patient to the hospital. We bonded in God’s diverse, resourced family!

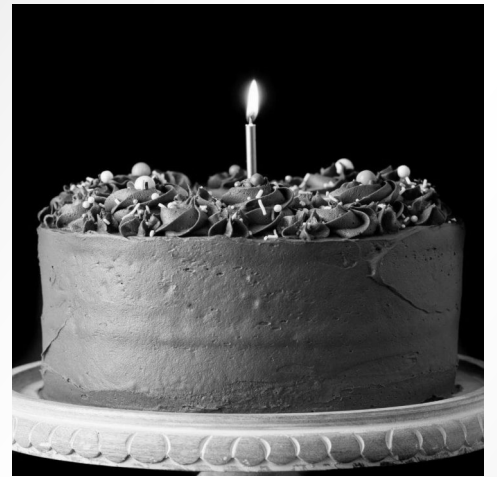


“His mercies are new every morning.” The LCMC advertised the medical camp through flyers, word of mouth, and a couple of large banners at crossroads in the community. Kenyan medical professionals provided screening, consultation, and education, assisted by CAMM volunteers. The LCMC staged large event tents, acquired plastic outdoor chairs, and designated pathways with red twine to guide people through the camp for services. Every patient received a gospel based welcome, a printed booklet to take home, and often individualized prayer. Witnessing a pastor kneel and place his hands on the patient to pray, framed possibilities for complete healing. When wind upended a tent and pouring rain carved a stream through the pharmacy tent, God’s people scrambled and showed up with many hands and hearts to ensure everyone’s safety, righted chairs, and filled troughs with stone. We experienced God’s mercies every day in Africa and hold fast to His mercy in deeper ways as we return home.

“Read your bible, pray every day if you want to grow.” Simple lyrics sung by Chabera’s church children during a three-hour worship service set the tone and rang through camp every day. The song welcomed 10 first-time visitors the Sunday we worshiped together, and welcomed patients, young and old. Singing, beautified with hand motions, became our anthem, sparking God’s love and faithfulness through fatigue, uncertainty, and at times, frustration. Pray for the Chabera church and community, and stay tuned to see how God continues to bless them. Check out the CAMM’s website and Facebook page for wonderful pictures that words cannot capture. Our hearts are with the people of Kenya! Asante sana from the CAMM Chabera volunteers, Janet McElvaine, together with Beth Evans, Pam Geidel, Katie Matloff, Nola Pallot, and Suzanne Schmidt



Happy Birthday!



1 Douglas Dallmann
Eden Gohl
Jon Hermanson
Olive Hunter
2 Gary Meinert
Evelyn Strackbein
4 Ruth Anderson
Wendy Lambrecht
Jasmine Zacate
5 Lois Luhman
7 Jonathan Bleick
Lainey Peterson
Jared Schmit
Gerald Woodley
Kathryn Wurster
8 Arlyce Lueck
Gene Slettedahl
9 Ruth Bartsch
Jason Brandes
Miranda Deters
Sawyer Frank
Nils Gunderson
Harrison Landkammer
Michael Thom
Derek Wendland
10 Stacy Domeier
Tori Johnson
Jonathan Schaefer
11 Jesse Helget
Peter Schaefer

12 Sam Holzbauer
Myron Rich
Douglas Schwartz
Tiffany Wellner
13 Elyse Johnson
14 Pastor Bovee
Stephanie Dose
Walter Grubbs
Mandi Thom
15 Paul Grubbs
Erika Grundmeier
16 Gabbie Bleick
Cassandra Goeglein
Ron Pizel
18 Katelyn Flatau
Harrison Schaefer
19 Isaiah Hermanson
Mason Schmidt
Jordan Schmidt
John Ulicky
20 Amy Bauer
21 Reva Ecker
Krista Stadick
Lois Willems
22 Dylan Fischer
Evelynne White
Haley White
23 Grace Biesterfeld
Annie Wiechmann

24 Amanda Frank
25 William Gieseke
Erica Newman
26 Zachary Enter
Katie Hermanson
27 Steve Balza
Debra Beatty
Galen Dallmann
Mark Kowalke
Ron Zahrt
28 Alison Deters
Scott Deters
Perry Meyer
29 Taylor LaGrow
Elizabeth Stoering
30 Yvonne Havemeier
Steve Thill
Sarah Zahrt
31 Cora Baggenstoss
Mark Berdan
Cindy Dretske
Kathleen Pettersen
Kya Schwab
Jojo Schwark

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church
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May 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

Staff

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Pastor Rob Guenther

pastorguenther@gmail.com

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Bookkeeper

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