

A Gift to the Poor



December 2025

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2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

It's that time of year again. Everywhere we look there are advertisements for all the latest gifts and gadgets. Many stores are going back to the old tradition of sending out Christmas catalogs, and our mailboxes are filled with stuff displaying, in full color, everything that is available: clothing, toys, computers, exotic foods, cosmetics, gift certificates... And in this world of sophisticated communications, email and on-line shopping, there is very little which is not accessible to us anymore. If you really want to find it, it's out there somewhere – that is, if you're willing and able to pay the price.

Ah, there's the catch! Nothing in those ads is free. Everything has a price-tag connected to it. Even though there are many products out there we would love to have, we are not always able to afford them. Sometimes the best we can do is to look at the catalogs and dream like many of us used to do when Sears, JC Penney, Montgomery Wards, and Spiegel's used to send their catalogs to us as kids during the Christmas season.

Of course, there are some items which cannot simply remain on a wish-list. There are some things we cannot live without. There are some bills which have to be paid before we can even think about buying toys and jewelry. There are vital needs like food and utilities that have to be met before we can consider our selfish wants.

But how sad it is for the person who cannot even afford the bare necessities of life, much less gifts and gadgets. How tragic it is when a new doll is the last thing on a little girl's mind. How heart breaking it is to think of a child who cannot afford clothing and shoes, let alone the latest styles.

Oh that hearts of love would be moved to look beyond the commercialism and materialism which the world has turned this beautiful season into, and that it would be our endeavor to give to those who cannot afford them, the things they really need. What a wonderful thing it is when those who have are willing to sacrifice in order to give to those who have not.

That is what really makes this season of Advent so special in the Church year. It is the season of hope. This is the beginning of the story about a poor and needy lot of people who could not afford what they really needed. Therefore someone who could provide it made a tremendous sacrifice to give them those things that were absolutely necessary for their lives.

We are the poor and needy people in the story. The vital things we needed which we could not afford are the forgiveness of sins and a right relationship with God. The one who came to supply them by his own sacrifice, everything we were not able to purchase on our own, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one about whom St. Paul speaks when he says: **2 Corinthians 8:9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

We are by nature impoverished spiritually, because our sin prevents us from having a right relationship with God. We could not be what he wanted us to be. We had nothing valuable enough to pay the debt we owed to God for our sin, because God demands perfection.

However, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Heaven, the King of kings and Lord of lords, left his heavenly throne in order to give us what he had. He lived a perfect life in our place and put that perfection to our credit. What is more, in exchange for the righteousness he imputed to us, he took our sin upon himself. He made us rich spiritually by becoming an impoverished sinner on our behalf. He went to the cross bearing our load and dying in our place to remove our guilt. In his mercy he gave us a gift we could in no way have ever been able to afford on our own. He forgave our sins and reconciled us to God the Father so that he now welcomes us with open arms.

Yes, this is a time when we do well to remember the poor and those less fortunate than we are. But more than that, may we be motivated by the love of the one who loved us first. Jesus became poor so that he might offer to us the very best gifts anyone could ever give. May we likewise, in this Advent and Christmas season, open our hearts of compassion to

those in need. And with the Spirit who motivates us to do so, remember the most important thing there is to share with those in need: Share the Savior who shared with us his righteousness. He gave to us the one thing needful, his Word. Let us give the gift of Christ to a world lost in sin, so that all may share the riches of the One who became poor in order to make us rich toward God.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

December Sermon Texts

December 7	Isaiah 11:1-10	From the Branch Will Come the Harvest
December 14	Isaiah 35	Footprints in the Sand...
December 21	Isaiah 7:1-14	Immanuel Has Come
December 28	Matthew 2:13-23	Do Your Hear What I Hear?

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

Sundays at 9:30am	Nicene Creed	Professor Keith Wessel
Thursdays at 10am	Life of David	Pastor Rob Guenther
Thursdays at 7pm	A Simple Way to Pray	Pastor Jeff Bovee

Council Digest

The St. Paul's and St. John's church councils conducted a joint meeting on November 18. During this meeting, we shared church ministry accomplishments and goals. Here are just a few highlights:

Staff Minister Dretske Retirement

The church councils acknowledged Jim Dretske for his many years of service in the ministry. We are thankful for all he has done for St. John's. We look forward to the January 25 celebration of his ministry.

St. Paul's LES Capital Campaign

The school mortgage has decreased from \$3.1 million in July of 2024 to a balance of \$2.5 million. Please consider giving to this campaign if you are so inclined.

Protect His House

Brad Price gave an overview of the training session that will take place at St. John's on January 24, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. Please see the flyer in the narthex to learn how to attend at no cost.

WELS Nation Conference on Leadership

WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership is for all people—men and women, called workers and laity, young and old—who are passionate about the mission of Christ's Church. Through a series of keynotes, breakout sessions, panel discussions, and collaborative opportunities, attendees will receive encouragement and edification as they seek to do all they can with the gospel.

There are 69 sessions to choose from that are focused on areas related to: Called Workers | Challenged Congregations | Communication | Christian Community | Congregational Culture | Societal Culture | Discipleship | Evangelism | Stewardship/Finances | Heritage | Leadership/Management | Men | Planning | Schools | Teamwork/Team Building | Technology | Unique Topics | Vocation | Volunteerism | Worship | Women | Young Adults | Youth/Children

Early bird registration is \$299 through 11/30/25; \$349 through 12/7/2025. Deadline to register is 12/7/2025. Contact Brad Price if you are interested in carpooling. Go to www.lutheranleadership for more information.

Active Threat Awareness Training

Attacks on religious centers in the US have increased in the past decade. These include acts of vandalism and deadly incidents with active shooters during worship services.

A culture of awareness can serve as a primary deterrent when attending worship services at St. John's, your place of employment, and while you are in public settings. Practicing simple steps can go along way in keeping worshippers safe at St. John's, as we work together.

St. John's is hosting a special threat awareness training that will teach attendees about how to prepare for, respond, and survive an active shooter event. This training would benefit ushers, greeters, Council and committee members, and interested members.

Active Threat Awareness Training

St. John's Lutheran Church

Saturday, January 24th

9am – 12pm

This training is being conducted by Protect His House, specialists in church security. All who would like to attend will need to register using the QR code to the right or on the posters found in the narthex. This training is also open to the community. The registration fee is \$29.99 per person. St. John's and St. Paul's members should use the code **SJLCFREE** when registering to attend for free.

Contact Deacon Brad Price with questions or for more information

Community Volunteer Opportunity at the New Ulm Emergency Food Shelter

St. John's supports the New Ulm Emergency Food Shelf by providing volunteers to assist clients on the third Monday of each month from 11:45-3 pm. Duties include accompanying clients as they select their food options based on distribution guidelines, weighing and loading carts, and pushing them to the garage, where clients load their items into their cars. Four volunteers are needed on the third Monday of each month.

If you are interested in volunteering for 2026, please indicate your availability on the sign-up sheet in the narthex. For more information, or if you have questions, call Carla Melendy (507-217-9750) or Deb Beatty (507-276-2722). You will receive a volunteer schedule in December, along with guidelines for volunteers.

Library News

We pray that all of you will have a wonderful and blessed Christmas, after having a blessed Thanksgiving.

For this month, we have three short books that have shorter messages, plus one fiction. The first book, "In the Beginning, God", the topic is Creation from God's Perspective by Joel D. Heck, who is a professor at Concordia University in Texas. In 80 pages he delves deeply into the first chapter of Genesis, verse by verse. He explains the 24 hour days vs. eons. We need to take Genesis as it says, because only God was there and He wrote Genesis, through Moses. Evolution has many problems.

The second book "The First 40 Days" is a book to help those who have a pornography problem. The book has 40 short devotions to help someone to become a Conqueror Through Christ.

The third small book, "A Guide to Mental and Emotional Wellness" is written by Dr. Jennifer Londgren, who lives in Mankato. She is a mental health therapist. She recommends self-care so that you can help others. We are children of God with a mind and emotions. Gratitude is good, as well as good habits. Avoid bad habits, and the best help, besides Christ, is having good social relationships.

A fiction book by Lauraine Snelling is different from her others. "Half Finished" is about four women who start a group and call it UFO for Unfinished Objects. The group is to help each other to finish projects. The group grows from once a month to twice a week. Even men have projects. All have problems too, such as a hubby who dies of a heart attack, but they all help each other with these problems, even finding romance.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas. Maybe you will get or give a good book as a gift.

Women of St. John's

Gift Cards for Nontraditional (Second Career) MLC students ~ Women of St John's will be collecting gift cards (or funds to purchase them) through Sunday, December 7th to give our 19 non-traditional MLC students for Christmas. There is a collection box on the table in the new narthex if you would like to contribute. Thank you to all who have donated so far! Please contact Sarah Logston (507-766-6455) with any questions.

Women of St John's Ladies' Night Out Christmas Party ~ We will be gathering at Carl's Corner in Essig on Tuesday, December 2nd at 6 p.m. for a meal and some fellowship activities. Please note that payment is by cash only and we will be ordering off the menu that evening. Contact Sarah Logston (507-766-6455) with any questions

St. Paul's School

The Blessing of Children Proclaiming the Christmas Gospel

As St. Paul's Lutheran Church celebrates its 160th anniversary, one treasured tradition rises to the forefront: our Children's Christmas Eve Service. Within the WELS church body, involving children in proclaiming the Christmas Gospel is more than a long-held custom—it reflects our commitment to passing on the faith through the very voices of the next generation. When children memorize Scripture, recite the nativity story, and sing the message of Christ's birth, they are doing the work of proclamation. Their voices remind the congregation of the simplicity and certainty of God's promise fulfilled in Bethlehem. The service not only teaches children the truths of the Gospel but allows them to share those truths with the entire congregation in a way that is heartfelt, sincere, and deeply moving. For generations, these young witnesses have helped center our hearts on the miracle of the incarnation, making this service a cherished expression of our identity as a Christ-focused congregation.

A Tradition Full of Warm Memories

The history of the Children's Christmas Eve Service at St. Paul's is rich with memories that reflect both continuity and change. Prior to 1971, students participated in two Christmas Eve services. Between them, the children would bundle up, walk across the street to the school, and enjoy a warm chicken sandwich—a simple, beloved tradition. When the new school opened farther from the church in the early 1970s, the chicken sandwiches gave way to Christmas cookies served in the church basement. Around this time, the congregation continued holding two services, but students were divided alphabetically so no family needed to remain for both.

In the years leading up to 2000, the format shifted again: the entire student body participated in both services, allowing everyone to hear the full program no matter which service they attended. Traditionally, only students in grades 5–8 sat in the chancel area. But after the 1991 church remodel, all students were welcomed into the chancel, creating a beautiful sight as the front of the sanctuary filled with children’s voices. Another beloved element—candy bags—has remained remarkably consistent. For over 50 years, children have received them on Christmas Eve. Early bags were handmade from cloth, filled mostly with peanuts and a small separate packet of candy. Today the bags are paper, but the contents remain familiar: candy and peanuts. Over five decades, St. Paul’s has likely handed out more than 30,000 of these bags, each one a small but joyful reminder of Christmas at church.

Directors and Unforgettable Services

The service has been shaped through the decades by dedicated directors whose leadership left lasting impressions. Before Mr. Fritz Blauert’s years, St. Paul’s used the same Christmas service for nearly 50 consecutive seasons, featuring the cherished main song, “Where Are You Going, Children Dear?” When Mr. Blauert took the helm, he built his own traditions, most famously having the girls sing his “song of the angels,” a moment still remembered fondly.



Ms. Coral Cady added creativity and symbolism, directing services that included flashlights glowing in a darkened sanctuary, candy canes used to illustrate Gospel truths, and even a lit cross revealed within a Christmas tree. In recent years, Mr. Steve Biedenbender has continued this legacy with memorable arrangements and strong musical leadership. His direction has brought out beautiful four-part student harmonies, adding depth, richness, and a sense of reverence to the proclamation of the Christmas message.

Through each era, each leader, and each new group of children, St. Paul’s Children’s Christmas Eve Service has remained a treasured proclamation of Christ’s birth—one that continues to shape the faith of our congregation, young and old alike.

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

DECEMBER 2025
354-6744

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 6:30 pm Elders' Meeting	2 4 pm Oak Hills Living Center Service 7 pm Women of St. John's Meeting	3 11am Worship 4 & 6:30 pm Worship 5:15 pm Handbells 6:30 pm Public & Homeschool Catechism 7:15 pm Choir	4 10am Bible Class 7 pm Bible Class	5	6 <

Christmas Gift for Called Workers and Staff

Dear Members of St. John's Lutheran Church

We at St. John's are blessed with a staff that, individually and collectively, joyfully carries out its responsibilities to share the good news of Jesus' birth. In appreciation for that role of gospel service, the St. John's Church Council is coordinating an effort for those who wish to provide our congregational workers with a monetary Christmas gift. If you wish to participate, please use the accompanying envelope. The envelope may be delivered to the office, placed in the offering box located in the narthex, or in the offering plate by Sunday, December 14. The gifts received will be divided among our workers on a prorated basis according to their employment status (full time, part time, etc.)

Called workers: Support staff:

Pastor Jeffrey Bovee Kathryn Dinse, administrative assistant

Pastor Robert Guenther Geraldine Conrad, custodian

Staff Minister James Dretske Michael Thom, bookkeeper

Teacher Christine Baganz

Teacher Laura Balza

Teacher Phillip Sriver

Teacher Emily Stoering

Some members may prefer to send gifts and greetings directly and personally to our staff members; please feel free to do so. Whatever your preference, let's use this Christmas season as an opportunity not only to praise God for sending His Son, but also to express our appreciation for those who faithfully share the love of God by proclaiming Jesus the manger child as our Savior.

In Christ's service,

Jeremy Berg, President

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Central Africa Medical Mission

At the Lutheran Mobile Clinic (LMC) in Malawi and the Lutheran Mission Rural Health Center (LMRHC) in Zambia, our African staff provide essential preventive health services in poor rural villages. One of these services is antenatal care, which offers healthcare and guidance for women throughout their pregnancies. The Malawi government sees antenatal clinics as vital in lowering the maternal and infant mortality rates in the country. It is primarily nurse-midwives who run these clinics, and who provide the screenings, teaching and care which pregnant women in rural Zambia and Malawi count on to stay well and have healthy babies.

Our clinics offer antenatal clinic once weekly at each site, and normally, women come for three to five visits during their pregnancies. The first visit includes HIV testing and counseling for the pregnant woman and her husband. The women are also routinely tested for syphilis, as these two infections can be treated before they harm the baby. A hemoglobin test is done to check for anemia, blood pressure and weight are taken, and tetanus vaccine is given. A fundal exam of the abdomen is done in a private room to check the size, heart rate and position of the baby. Our midwives are grateful to now have new electronic hand-held dopplers for quickly hearing the fetal heart tones. A midwife reviews the mother's health history and checks for signs of preeclampsia: edema (swelling) of face or hands, urine protein, headaches, sudden weight gain, and high blood pressure. If problems are found, a woman will need to be referred to the hospital.



Malaria is especially dangerous in pregnancy as it destroys red blood cells in the mother and affects vital organs. If a woman is anemic or has symptoms of malaria, she is tested, then treated and referred if positive. The moms are given a mosquito net for use at home at the first visit and a dose of antimalarial medication is given at each visit after the first trimester. Deworming medicine is given once after 13 weeks to prevent another cause of anemia. Moms also receive iron/folic acid pills to be taken daily, they are placed in a hand-sewn cloth bag containing a Bible verse.

Along with these screenings, medications and exams, the nurses take time to do teaching with groups of the women, covering topics such as nutrition, birth preparedness, danger signs, and the importance of delivering in a health center, rather than at home. They stress the necessity of bringing the baby in for a postnatal check and then returning to start their babies in under-fives clinic. The moms are given a layette, including a onesie, hat and blanket for their new babies.

Violet Chikwatu, Nurse in Charge, shared a story of a woman named Malita, pregnant at 19 years old, who first came to our LMC antenatal clinic in Malawi at 30 weeks gestation on July 18th. She looked pale, and her hemoglobin was only 5.4 g/dl. This meant she'd have to go to the government hospital in Lilongwe for a blood transfusion, since her Hb was under 7.5. She had no fever or other symptoms of illness but was tested for malaria and was positive. She received the initial injection to treat the malaria, then went to the hospital for further treatment. She returned in two weeks with an improved Hb of 9.2 and was given her iron tablets. Violet found out that she then delivered a



healthy baby at Chiwamba Health Center on September 13. Malita is just one example of how God has provided this opportunity for our nurse-midwives to help save the lives of women and their babies in rural Malawi.

In Zambia, our medical staff deliver 120-130 infants per year. Antenatal care helps to ensure that these mothers are healthy enough to have safe deliveries at the LMRHC. This month, CAMM is providing a portable neonatal ultrasound machine for our midwives to use in monitoring infants in utero when necessary. Future Biloyi, Nurse-Midwife, was trained in its use when she had her midwife certification and is happy to be able to use this skill and to train others. We are thankful for an American physician who Gary and I knew in Malawi who donated this ultrasound to our clinic. Monetary donations to CAMM provided the ipad for it and the fetal dopplers used at the LMC and LMRHC. The Central Africa

Medical Mission continues to provide a high standard of physical care, along with meeting spiritual needs of our patients in Zambia and Malawi. God is blessing this work through your gifts and prayers. Thank you so much!

Your sister in Christ,
Beth Evans
CAMM Nurse Advisor



Happy Birthday!



- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|----|------------------|----|---------------------|
| 1 | Carter Flatau | 16 | Charles Schaefer | 30 | Helen Krueger |
| | Joshua Koelpin | | Camden Wendland | | Dylan Schroeder |
| | Megan Zahn | 17 | Melanie Mohror | | Marlis Schwartz |
| 2 | Stacy Dobberpuhl | 18 | Sarah Logston | | Emily Stoering |
| | Ashley Hughes | | Adam Wels | | Dawn Weisensel |
| 3 | Mark Bauer | 19 | Naomi Hippert | 31 | Simon Peter Schwark |
| | Ethan Hanevik | | Dan Horner | | |
| | Amelia Hermanson | 20 | Jacob Guenther | | |
| 4 | Janet Halvorson | | Ken Rahn | | |
| 5 | Jacob Behnken | | Noah Wellner | | |
| 6 | Donald Loeck | 21 | Eileen Dallmann | | |
| | Andrea Wendland | | Lydia Grundmeier | | |
| | Maleficent Weston | | Noah Homan | | |
| 7 | David Bellig | | Nichole LaGrow | | |
| | Barb Hennig | | Mark Micheel | | |
| | Katherine Schmoller | | William Swenstad | | |
| 8 | Dianne Minkel | 22 | Karen Thomford | | |
| 9 | Jason Martin | 23 | Samuel Johnson | | |
| | Jennifer Uher | | Mitchell More | | |
| 10 | Pearl Kowalke | | Edison Weber | | |
| | Ann Vogel | 24 | Troy Halvorson | | |
| 11 | Kara Johnson | 25 | Larken Filzen | | |
| | John Russell | 26 | Jacob Kral | | |
| | Mary Thom | 27 | Nash Hagberg | | |
| 13 | Bruce Backer | | Caden Hughes | | |
| | Mike Goeglein | 28 | Luke Hunter | | |
| 14 | Jack Minch | | Phyllis Ulrich | | |
| | Miles Uecker | | | | |
| 15 | Ruth Dobberpuhl | | | | |

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

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December 2025
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/SJBibleClass)

Sundays: 9:30 am

Thursdays: 10 am & 7 pm

Sunday School

Sundays: 9:30 am

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