



St. John's Lutheran Church  
New Ulm, MN  
March, 2024 *Fortress*

## Sing the Easter Hymn of Praise

**Psalm 96:1-3 Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.**

For several weeks -- six to be exact -- we celebrated the season of Lent. We focused on the Lord's Passion and listened to the detailed account of the events of Holy Week. From the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the closing of the tomb on Good Friday we followed our Lord. In its wake the path to Easter left behind the cloaks and palm fronds lying on the ground, the coins of the money-changers and the feathers of the doves scattered in the temple courts, the basin used to wash the apostles' feet, the dishes of the Passover meal where Jesus instituted the Sacrament, the silver coins of Judas' betrayal thrown across the temple floor, the tell-tale rooster which proclaimed Peter's denial of the Lord, the crown of thorns, the blood-stained cross, and the grave clothes emanating with the scent of burial spices.

But then comes the morning of the Resurrection. Oh, the music and the hymns! Suddenly, with that one great event, all of the other events of the Lenten season become the initial score of a great symphony which had been building up into a crescendo, reaching its climax on Easter Sunday, where every instrument of creation bursts into song, and voices from earth and heaven blend together in harmony to sing the praises of God who redeemed the world by his grace.

Furthermore, the song continues to echo and re-echo throughout the ages, even until this very day. We are a part of that great symphony. As we come before God with our hymns and prayers of thanksgiving we join in the chorus of heavenly host.

When the Psalmist invites us to sing a new song to the Lord, it is not a song new in age, but new in that it is different -- new in quality. The song he speaks of is the song of the gospel. It is not like the old song of the law which bound us and condemned us. It is the song of liberty and renewal.

Under the curse of the law we found ourselves lost and condemned, even dead in sin. As we look to the cross, we can see by the law the pain and sorrow our sin brought on us. Our Lutheran Confessions remind us that at the cross of Christ we do see the depth of our sin.

But the same Confessions also remind us at the same time, that the cross promises us forgiveness, mercy, and peace with God. At the cross we see the fulfillment of the law as God's perfect justice falls upon the

innocent Christ who became a sinner for us. But it is also there we see the saving grace of God as he removes our sin and pronounces us righteous in his sight for Jesus' sake. In Jesus' death we find atonement and redemption. It is a message which supersedes the law, and shines with greater glory, so that the cross, that terrible implement of death, which cannot but remind us of God's justice, becomes the greatest symbol of God's love and mercy. It is no longer the place where we wallow in guilt, but the token of our forgiveness and freedom from sin, death, and the devil.

Now we celebrate the Resurrection and are reminded that what was done on the cross is really ours. Since Jesus has risen, we know our sins are forgiven. We know God accepts us, because he accepted the sacrifice Jesus made for us. We know that because Jesus lives, we too shall live.



The celebration of Easter did not end on Easter Sunday for the apostles. For them it went on, even beyond the forty days Jesus remained with them on earth. They sang the song to countless souls, so that the words of the Psalmist were fulfilled: **Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.**

May it also continue with us, as we sing our new song to the Lord. May we with joyful hearts sing this song to the hearts of sinners everywhere so that they too may find peace and forgiveness in Christ our Savior. Sing this song to the glory of God until the day we are with him in heaven.

In Christ,  
Pastor Bovee

## March Sermon Texts

March 3	1 Corinthians 1:18-25	The Foolish Wisdom of the Cross
March 6	Matthew 26:57-75	Testimony
March 10	Ephesians 2:1-10	You Are Alive!
March 13	Luke 23:26-34	Sympathy
March 17	Isaiah 43:1-7	He Only Has Eyes for You!
March 20	John 18:33-40	Truth
March 24	Zechariah 9:9-12	Look Up and See Your King!
March 28	1 Corinthians 10:16-17	Maundy Thursday: This is the Lord's Supper
March 29	Tenebrae Service	Good Friday
March 31	1 Corinthians 15:19-26	Easter Sunday

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

Thursdays at 10:30 am	The I AM Statements of Jesus	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Thursdays at 7 pm	The Hard Sayings of Jesus	Pastor Rob Guenther
*NEW Fridays at 7 am	Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Fridays at 9:30 am	Book of Esther	Pastor Rob Guenther
Sundays at 9:30 am	Book of Job	Pastor Jeff Bovee

## Council Digest

The Church Council met on February 20, 2024. A summary of reports and actions from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

**The following Pastoral Act was reported**

**Baptism** 4 Feb Harper Joy Kempenich.

SPLS has organized a Study Group led by St. John's member John Bleick to look at potential governance structures for SPLS. The school has many different stakeholder congregations and organizations, so the question to study is what the different governance structures for effective and efficient governance are. They stressed that they are neither a committee for action or decision-making. The group is working to gather the pros and cons of as many different structures as possible. They are working to gather the information over the next few months.

Chairman Schmoller shared that the Board for Youth & Education approved using FACTS, a third-party company, to evaluate the financial needs of the members who apply for additional financial aid (2024-25 school year) to attend St. Paul's Lutheran School. The Board will produce a letter and email to go to the members with children attending St. Paul's Lutheran School to know about the change that the voters passed at our last voters' meeting regarding the elimination of the tuition offset. This letter will be sent to the members in March.

Chairman Mohror provided updates about member care and yearly reviews. Work is moving forward with active and inactive member care. Planning is being done for connecting further with members ages 14-25 years old. Coordination with Josiah Stoering and Mike Wiechmann will focus on young adults beginning to navigate life away from local school and/or home. The elders have started their yearly review with pastors, staff minister, and secretary.

Chairman Maurice and the stewardship board have several giving areas on the front burner. Gifts to WELS and MVL are on the list. Also focusing on student support for Ministerial Education through the St. John's Ministerial Education Endowment.

Chairman Hunter updated on the upgrades from the Properties Board for spring. The parking lot lighting has been upgraded with unity in color temperature and lumens. The upgrade is projected to provide an annual savings of \$900. An energy rebate for this project was submitted to the City of New Ulm and approved for \$630.

The council approved an adjustment to the sanctuary renovation. The sanctuary renovation contract with Sharpe's was signed and the initial payment of \$71,862 was made. The plans were adjusted following voter feedback to accommodate our handicapped population and handbell choir better while allowing additional space in the front of the church. The changes included:

- 1) To eliminate the first pew on each side of the sanctuary,
- 2) To make two additional cut-outs to the front two pews on each side (rows 2-3) to provide for front-row handicapped seating, and
- 3) To order 16 wood-backed pew chairs with armrests to fill in the seating in the four handicapped cutouts or serve as a front row on either side of the sanctuary as needed.

The council has begun a process to renew St John's ministry plan. The current plan was initiated in 2019, five years ago. Pastor Guenther has been directed to write an initial draft. The various boards and committees are to share pertinent goals and initiatives with him. The council will review an initial draft at their March meeting.

The council recommended the following constitutional change to Article IX. The recommendation changes the word "audit" to "financial review" in a few places and create an outside review of St. John's books for transparency and good practice. Proposed change to Article IX:

*An annual financial review of the congregation's financial books and all organizations within the congregation shall be conducted by a committee of two congregation members or by an outside source. The financial review by an outside source is to be conducted for years divisible by five beginning for the year 2025. The committee from the congregation conducts financial review for the years not divisible by five.*

The recommendation will be brought to the voters at their next meeting.

The council adopted common [Fund Descriptions](#)

Future meetings:

The next Council meeting is Tuesday, March 20, at 7 pm.

The annual voters' meeting is Tuesday, April 23, at 7 pm.

The next Joint Council Meeting between St. John's and St. Paul's is May 21, 2024.

Jon Schaefer,  
Congregational Chairman

## Staff Ministry Intern, Ben Haferman

Dear Members of St. John's New Ulm,

On January 21st, 2024, I, Ben Haferman, was installed as your Staff Ministry Intern for this semester. My family and I have attended St. John's since October of 2021, but before I talk about the present, let me talk about how I (and my family) got here.

I was born on November 10 (this is important; remember it for later), 1992, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to my parents, Lyle and Cynthia Haferman. My dad was an engineer for General Electric working with medical equipment (x-rays and MRIs I believe). He was the person you would call before a technician was sent out. He worked there for over 30 years before his retirement. My mom worked as a nurse in downtown Milwaukee at Columbia St.



Mary's in their progressive care unit (PCU). A PCU is a bridge between an ICU and a medical-surgical unit.

I am the middle child of three kids. My older sister, Alysse, is approximately two years older, and my brother, Chris, is approximately two years younger. Alysse uses her gifts in math and computer science at Thrivent in Bloomington as an application programmer/developer and Chris uses his gifts in engineering at TARDEC, outside Detroit, Michigan, which works on ground vehicles for the U.S. Army.

My childhood was spent in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, where I attended school at St. John's Wauwatosa from preschool through 8th grade. During my time at St. John's, you could have asked me, "Ben, what do you want to be when you grow up?" My response would have been, "Dunno." Therefore, going into high school at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, I did not try to focus on one class or another. I mainly focused on sports (football, wrestling, baseball, track and field, basketball, and softball). I did not have a goal, besides to graduate. I got to my junior year and that is when I realized that there is a life after high school. I did not know how to go about organizing my future endeavors, so I decided to look at my report cards to see if they could tell me what I should do. After looking at the report cards, I realized that my highest grade was in religion. At that point I decided to pursue teaching, namely in religion and theology.

I went through the typical college search and narrowed my choices down to two. I finally decided on MLC because I wanted to explore options outside the Milwaukee area. Before I started at MLC, I talked with my admissions counsellor about becoming specifically a religion teacher. I did not know about the call process or really anything about the public ministry. He informed me that only becoming a religion teacher was not an option; but if I did want to teach theology, then I should go through the pastor track. So, I did. From 2011-2016 I studied in the pre-seminary track and graduated.

Digression time. During my junior year at MLC, some friends and I took a Daylight trip down to Las Vegas, Nevada, to assist a church with canvassing and a one-day VBS. During my time there, I noticed a young woman. Long story short, that is how I met Dorothee, my wife. If you want the longer, more romantic version, you will need to talk to her. Side note: Dorothee's birthday is January 29th, which is the same as Katharine von Bora Luther's, and remember mine? It is the same as Martin Luther's. Dorothee and I were married July 9th, 2016, at St. John's Wauwatosa.

I decided to not continue with Seminary for various reasons. A couple of months after making that decision, we found out that Thea was on the way. Over the next years, our lives were work, love Thea, and love each other. Dorothee worked as a teaching assistant at Risen Savior in Milwaukee, and I held multiple positions, including as a dispatcher at UPS and a delivery driver at Chick-fil-a. But during this time, I had continual thoughts that I should go back to studying for the ministry. After much discussion and prayer, I decided to start the Staff Ministry track in January of 2021. After completing one online course, over the summer we decided to move to New Ulm so I could complete the program faster.

After two years and three months, Thea is now six years old and Dorothee is a paraprofessional in the 5th-6th grade classrooms at St. Paul's. Our family is expecting a baby boy, David, this March, and I am in my final semester at MLC. I am blessed to be serving alongside Pastor Guenther, Pastor Bovee, Staff Minister Dretske, and all the members of St. John's.

May God bless you as we continually spread his love in New Ulm, and in all parts of the world.

Ben, Dorothee, Thea, and David Haferman

## March Food Drive

Isaiah 58:6b “Share your food with hungry people.”

St. John’s members have the opportunity to share with our community by donating to the New Ulm Emergency Food Shelf during the month of March.



The New Ulm Food Shelf serves people in New Ulm, Lafayette, Hanska, Searles, Essig, and Courtland.

In 2023, the NU Food Shelf served 1,439 families which included 1,628 adults, 692 seniors, and 786 children.

The donations can be placed in the boxes you see in narthex from March 1-24.

We will be collecting donations of non-perishable food items such as:

- Healthy cereals
- Proteins such as meat and peanut butter
- Canned goods (soups, vegetables, etc.)
- Low sodium canned goods (soups, vegetables, etc.)
- Crackers (Regular/low-sodium)
- Flour, sugar, vegetable oil

Monetary donations (cash or checks made out to the New Ulm Emergency Food Shelf) can be placed in a marked envelope in the offering plate.

Thank you!

Deb Beatty and Carla Melendy

## Cards of Caring

Cards of Caring will meet Saturday, March 9th from 9 am until noon to make Birthday and Eater cards.

These cards are sent to our homebound and thinking-of-you members and to our three Befriend a Mission families. We welcome those from 7th grade and older including MLC students.



We meet at 403 N. Minnesota St. This is an opportunity for fellowship and service to the Lord. Contact Lois Willems at 507-676-1230.

## Church Library

March brings us the end of winter, Lent, and ends with Easter itself. March 31st is one of the earliest dates for Easter. Spring seems to be here already and winter seems to have been shoved out. Still, we have the opportunity to attend six Lenten services as well as Sundays. Thanks be to God who has given us His Son for our salvation.

I am introducing four new books this month for the church library. First, we have another Bible study by Naomi Schmidt, a pastor's wife in Wisconsin. This one is titled Ruth . It is a thorough study of the four chapters of the book of Ruth. Ruth has unfailing faithfulness to her mother-in-law Naomi, and becomes an ancestor of Jesus.

If you read *The Shack* by Wayne Jacobsen, you will like *He Loves Me* by the same author. "Learning to live in the Father's affection" is the theme of the book. For those of us who waver from he loves me to he loves me not, reading this book would help . God's love does not depend on how we think. His love is always there, even when we doubt. After all, Jesus died and rose for us and the world.

Wayne Jacobsen collaborated with Dave Coleman to write another book. *So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore* . In this story, the main character, Jake, is a pastor who meets another man (angel?) several times, named John. John listens to Jake's complaints, ask questions, and gets Jake onto the idea to seek what God wants. It takes many months but Jake faces his darkest fears and gets to joy and freedom in God.

The last book is fiction by Louraine Snelling. We have other books by her in the library. This one is called *Dakota Dawn*. Nora from Norway comes to North Dakota to marry Hans , but he just died from the fever. Carl, a German immigrant, has just lost his wife in childbirth, and has a newborn to worry about. These two marry to save the baby, and joy replaces grief as they both learn English.

We ask God to bless our annual refreshment of Jesus' passion, ending with the wonder of Easter. Thank the Lord.

LeiLani Rahn,  
Church librarian



*In Loving Memory*

<i>Ikuko Poetter</i>	Undesignated	\$25
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## Friendly and Smiley People Needed!

Are you looking for a new way to serve at St. John's? Do you appreciate good order in our worship services? Are you comfortable socializing with others? Is it important to you that our worshippers feel welcomed and part of the fabric of our congregation? If any of these describe you, consider serving as an usher or greeter!



Our ushers ensure the good order of our worship services and serve as the front line of evangelism for guests attending St. John's. Duties include welcoming worshippers, collecting the offering, ensuring good flow during the Lord's Supper, and any other duties that ensure good order and hospitality during worship services.

Our greeters ensure each worshipper feels welcome, knows where to go, and can easily find information about St. John's. Greeters are friendly, smiling people!

We are blessed with several generational usher and greeter crews. Consider serving as an usher or greeter with one of your family members!

There is availability on all the greeter crews for each of our services. There is a need for ushers on our Saturday evening crews, with some openings on Sunday crews.

No experience is necessary. Men and males in 7th grade or higher are encouraged to consider serving as an usher. Our greeter program is open to any member of St. John's and youth in confirmation class.

For more information, contact Brad Price at [deacon@stjohnsnewulm.com](mailto:deacon@stjohnsnewulm.com) or 507-479-9715.

## Board of Stewardship

We welcome new faces on the board this year. Along with returning member Steve Balza, new members include Kurk Kramer, Mark Haefner, and Mark Maurice. We greatly appreciate the counsel of Pastors Bovee and Guenther, Staff Minister Jim Dretske, and Treasurer Mike Thom.

We especially thank outgoing members Roger Klockziem and Dan Borgwardt for their dedication to encouraging God's people with opportunities for service.

2023 was a special year of blessings as we celebrated the 75th anniversary of St. John's! How do we top that? Where do we go from here?

Let's continue the momentum in 2024 in two ways:

1. With daily thanksgiving to God for the many blessings in your life.
2. Consider what areas of ministry at St. John's really touch your heart. There are ways to support those areas that are very meaningful to you in your spiritual journey.

Next month, we'll explore several ways you can support those areas of St. John's that are especially meaningful to you. Until then, God's peace be with you!

Mark Maurice,  
Stewardship Chairman



## Women of St. John's

Our March meeting will be held on  
Tuesday, March 5 at 7 pm in the church basement.

We will have a Lent by Candlelight.  
Please join us as we gather to focus our eyes on Jesus.



## Our Synod at Work

### The 2024 WELS Annual Report: Your Gifts, God's Blessings

The Wisconsin Synod has released their 2024 Annual Report to Members. It is entitled “Your Gifts, God’s Blessings” and is divided into four sections: Called to Prepare, Called to Proclaim, Called to Serve, and Called to Support. It has been the custom of this column to spend a few months reviewing some of the important information that is contained in the report and this year will be no exception.

The report begins with statements by WELS President Rev. Mark Schroeder. He comments that “we look to see what God has been doing to bring his saving message to people of all-cultures and nations. Cross-cultural ministry has been expanded here in the United States and beyond. God is giving us numerous new opportunities to reach the lost in places like Vietnam, Africa, and Asia. He’s not only giving us the opportunities, but he is also providing the manpower and opening the hearts of WELS people to support those efforts with the thank-offerings.”

As many of us know, WELS is the third largest Lutheran church body in the United States with 1,243 churches, 335,648 baptized members, and 269,032 communicant members. During the past year, we have lost 7 churches, 4,463 baptized members, and 3,523 communicant members. WELS is divided into 12 districts, which allows for more area-specific ministry, personal contacts, and member involvement.

Congregations—either individually or as federations—operate one of the largest parochial school systems in the United States. This system includes 280 Lutheran elementary schools, 356 early childhood ministries, and 30 area Lutheran high schools. Over the last year we have lost 4 Lutheran elementary schools and 6 early childhood ministries, but we have gained 1 area Lutheran High School.

WELS maintains four schools for the education of our pastors, teacher, and staff ministers—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin, Martin Luther College right here in New Ulm, Minnesota, Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin, and Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Michigan.

Known as the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry the synod’s headquarters is in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and houses WELS’ areas of ministry and support staff as well as the subsidiaries, WELS Archives, and the WELS Visitor Center. From collections that document the administration of WELS to individual congregational records, the WELS Archives helps preserve and share the history of our synod.

In the months ahead we will continue to review the Annual Report.

Gerald Woodley

## OWLS

Our local MN Valley Chapter 13 OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors) will meet on Monday, March 11, at Oak Hills Living Center, 1413 8th St N, New Ulm. Fellowship begins at 11:30 am, with a lunch at noon. Part of the meal cost will be covered by Thrivent Action Team moneys.

Each attendee is asked to bring \$5 for the meal. Any extra money will be given to the European Civilian Chaplaincy.

If you have not signed up for the meal, contact Myron Fluegge at flueggemtj@hotmail.com or call 507-359-2424 by Wednesday noon, March 6. Following the meal, a presentation will be made on "What does Oak Hills provide and what do they need?" Hope you can attend.

## Men of Truth

**Lead the Next Generation**

**Saturday, March 16, 2024**

Men of Truth invites you to a one-day men's conference, *Lead the Next Generation*. Pastors Jeremy Mattek and Dan Schmidt will take us through three sessions focused on leading the next generation. Join us to explore a life of service to Christ, identifying youth service gifts and understanding and engaging our youth. The day will also feature time for fellowship, encouragement, and reflection.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8:00 – 8:30 am | Registration w/ Light Refreshments

8:30 – 8:35 am | Opening Remarks

8:35 – 10:15 am | **Jeremy Mattek: Living Life in Service to Christ**

10:15 – 10:30 am | Break/Ministry Partners

10:30 – 11:45 am | **Dan Schmidt: Building Relationships with Our Youth**

11:45 am – 12:45 pm | Lunch in the MLC Cafeteria

12:45 – 2:00 pm | **Jeremy & Dan: Awareness of the Challenges Around Us**

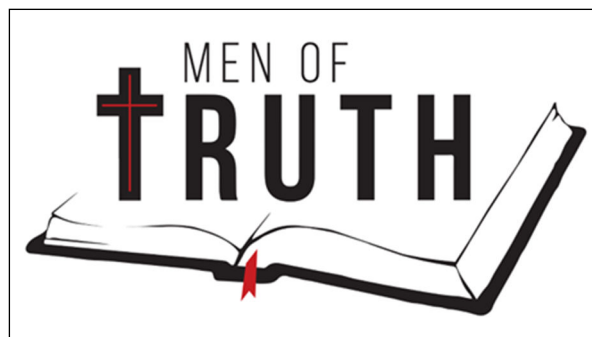
2:00 pm | Final Wrap Up and Survey

### LOCATION

Martin Luther College  
1995 Luther Court  
New Ulm, MN 56073

### NEXT STEP

Visit [MenofTruth.org](http://MenofTruth.org) for information on how to register

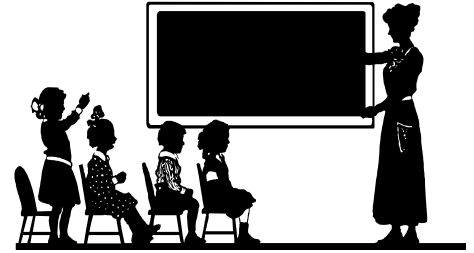


# St. Paul's School

## Brace for the Impact

For 138 years, St. Paul's Lutheran School has been teaching students.

During the week of February 11, St. Paul's celebrated Lutheran Schools Week in a big way. It was a reminder of our school's impact on so many families and generations. On Monday, February 12, the Very Important People (VIP) that the students invited showed up at school. The VIPs were asked to share where they traveled from to attend our VIP Day on our whiteboard. The whiteboard filled with locations. Some came from a few blocks away. Others came from throughout the state of Minnesota. Others came from nearby states. The one I have not verified but is carefully written; Germany. I don't doubt that we had a visitor come from Germany. However, it reminds me of the impact of our school. How many thousand students have been taught about Jesus' grace and mercy? How many families? How many of our students have entered into the public ministry? In Matthew 28:19-20 God tells us: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."



It takes resources and finances to run our school. When you consider the impact that we have on children's lives, it makes every penny spent worthwhile. I say this with a bias, but there is no better way to invest in their future. Thank you for your continued financial support.

Pete Markgraf,  
St. Paul's School Principal



Southwest Minnesota  
Area Lutheran Chorale  
*Presents in Concert*  
**HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD**  
— — — — —  
Sunday, March 17, 2024  
2:00 pm - St. John's Lutheran  
Wood Lake, MN  
*and*  
7:00 pm - Grace Lutheran  
Hutchinson, MN

Offerings gathered at our concerts  
will be used to support the school building  
project at Immanuel Grace Lutheran School  
in rural Hutchinson, MN.



**Dio, Cibo e Musica**  
**(God, Food & Music)**



# ITALIAN BISTRO



Saturday, March 16  
Social Hour: 4:30 PM Dinner: 5:00 PM

**Adults: \$12 Children: \$8 (10 and under)**  
**Immediate family maximum: \$50**

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RSVP by March 8 at: [bit.ly/ItalianBistro24](http://bit.ly/ItalianBistro24)

There is a maximum capacity, so RSVP early to  
guarantee your spot!

.....  
**Menu: Salad, Spaghetti and Meatballs,**  
**Breadstick, Cheesecake**

.....  
Then stay for the Raider Musical  
at 7:00 PM.

.....  
All proceeds go to supporting  
the Raider Musical.

