

Camping is so.. In Tents



July 2026

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I love camping. I love getting back to nature. I love getting away from screens (and cell signals... for a time). I love the chance to enjoy God's creation, to sit around a fire, to reconnect with family and friends.

But camping isn't always fun. Sometimes it's in tents. Sometimes it's intense. (Sorry... someone gave me a "Bad Dad Joke of the Day" calendar.) :/

A few years ago someone recommended Father Hennepin State Park (just north of the Twin Cities). Our family went with the pop-up. But... "This is a rare and exciting year," the ranger told me... "This only happens every 8 years that this particular caterpillar breeds for just a few days! Now look! They're in the thousands!" ("Yeah... I noticed!" I replied.) They were raining from the trees, dropping in our cups, on our plates, in our hair. It was intense. We barely made it through the night because they made their way into the camper in droves. We left first thing the next morning.

Camping can be fun. It can also be miserable.

The children of Israel went camping. They were traveling in the wilderness in tents... for 40 years! And it wasn't always fun. "This water stinks!" "Did we pack enough food?" "There are other people in our spot!" And they grumbled and complained without the option of packing up and going home... to slavery in Egypt... (Talk about intense!)

And the children of Israel continued to go camping... on war campaigns... when they didn't know if they would live or die the next day... on a trip into exile, being pulled by chains... in foreign lands... as punishment for their sin.

But a few faithful continued to put their trust in the Messiah to come who would not only take away their guilt and make them right with God, but would give them a permanent home; a mansion in heaven with Jehovah. And that Messiah did come...

He came camping. ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."*** (John 1:14) *Literally the Greek says that he "tabernacled," or "tented" among us. Just as God was with his people in the wilderness wanderings, now God was with his people walking among them in the flesh. No longer did God appear in a tabernacle made of the hides of animals, but in a person conceived and born in human flesh.*

And you know why he "tented" among us: To live a perfect life for us, to be tortured for us, to be killed for us... with the weight of the guilt and shame of the sin of the world on his shoulders. (Talk about intense!) What love! What grace! What joy is ours! And so we long to live for him.

I hope you camping enthusiasts get a chance to get outside for a few days this summer. Take a vacation. Take a chance to refresh, recharge, reconnect, and renew your energy. Vacations are good. God designed them into his mandatory calendar of festivals.

But whether you're staying in a tent in the rain warding off the mosquitos or in a luxury AirBnB with air conditioning and a hot tub, when you go on your travels and your vacations, don't take a vacation from God. Also take time to reflect. In those quiet moments when you're staring into the fire or up at the stars or fishing on the river, consider all that God has done for you.

And when you pack for your vacation, don't take a vacation from God. Pack your Meditations, use your phone as a hotspot just for an hour to watch a live stream service, or take a devotion book along.

God will never take a vacation from you. When the Israelites were camping in the wilderness for 40 years, God went camping with them. His presence never left them. He was there in the pillar of cloud and fire. The same is true for you: He is still with you. He's promised: ***"God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?'"*** (Hebrews 13:5-6)

So don't take a vacation from him.

Life is sometimes in tents. Life is sometimes intense. But you're never alone. God will be with you wherever you go. The empty cross and the empty tomb are the proof. Show your thanks to him by taking his Word with you wherever you go. Blessings on your vacations, saints! See you when you get back!

In Christ

Pastor Rob Guenther

July Sermon Texts

July 5	Genesis 1:26-31	Made in the Image of God
July 12	Psalms 145:15-16	He Satisfies the Desires...
July 19	Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 2:14	Born Under the Law to Redeem Us
July 26	Ephesians 1:18-23	I Believe in a God Who Rules for Me

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

Sundays at 11 am	Ephesians	Pastor Rob Guenther

Council Digest

The Church Council met on June 16, 2026. Because a quorum was not present, a summary of reports and discussions from the meetings not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

I. Proposed Membership Changes

A. Transfers Out

Martin and Nicole LaGrow to Faith Lutheran in Excelsior, MN
Nathanael Smith to St. Paul's, North Mankato, MN
Sharon Heck to Mount Olive Lutheran in Shakopee, MN
Cheyenne Blackwell to Sure Foundation in Brandon, SD
Brian and Donna Dose to St. Peter in Globe, AZ
Mark and Mary-Jane Maurice to St. John's, Wauwatosa, WI

B. Transfer In

Shari, Scarlet and Addison Kuck from St. Paul's, New Ulm, MN
Malachi Schwark from Courtland Lutheran, New Ulm, MN
Sharon Gieseke from Zion Lutheran in Courtland, MN
Josie Glowicki from St. John's, Milwaukee, WI

C. Profession of Faith

L. Laura Schafer

II. Pastoral Acts

1. Baptism

Kayce Alexander Decker 5/17/26
**Roman James Fix 4/27/26*

2. Funerals

Del Ulrich 4/28/26
Dewayne Blaaid 5/2/26

3. Weddings

**Luke Sandgren and Madalynn Nachreiner 5/15/26*
**Elijah Slater and Brianna Lienig 5/16/26*
Kathryn Dinse and Caleb Pavelchik 5/30/26
**Benjamin Schoch and Madelinn Romsdahl 6/4/26*

Larry Vanderlouw Jr. and L. Laura Schafer 6/13/26

4. Release

Stephanie Dose to a church outside of our fellowship.

** Not St. John's Members*

II. Council Items

Although no formal decisions were made, the council had a productive discussion on several topics that will be returned to for future consideration. One conversation focused on the current process for approving membership changes, particularly as voters' meetings become less frequent. Previously, the council presented at the voters' meeting an amendment to the congregation's bylaws that would change the regular schedule of voters' meetings from four meetings each year to two primary meetings—an annual meeting in January and a decision-focused meeting in October—while preserving the ability to call special voters' meetings whenever needed. The proposal is intended to encourage greater participation by focusing meetings on significant decisions, such as the annual budget, elections, and ministry review, while reducing meetings with limited action items. Additional discussion in June included voters' approval of membership changes in the two-meeting structure.

Other discussions centered on maintaining clear records of baptisms, weddings, and funerals held off the St. John's campus to ensure accurate historical and membership records. Regular reports and agenda items, including financial reports, strategic planning, and old business, were deferred until a future meeting when a quorum is present.

Library News

How is your summer going? June was cooler than usual but I heard no complaints about it. The grass is green and the corn is knee high. The summer should be good.

We have three non-fiction books this month to introduce to the library. The first book is for pre-teens, teens, and everyone. Sergio Cariello is an illustrator and loves drawing enough to draw a whole book, something like a big comic book, but the subject matter is serious, The New Testament, Action Bible. He started at the beginning of the New Testament, Matthew, and kept going through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, into Paul's missionary journeys, and even to Revelation. This book is a cute way to introduce the Bible to a new believer, or a review for others.

The second book is a devotional written by a pastor from years back. Henry Paustian wrote Heavenly Grace Notes with 80 meditations, that connect the good we see in our lives with God's grace. So we need to sing a Song of Salvation. He mentions Bible events, and hymns that praise, and Psalms are great showing God's grace, every day.

The last book studies the history and meaning of the Nicene Creed that we use twice a month in church. Timothy J. Winterstein writes Worshipped and Glorified to tell or show that the Creed goes back to the 300's A. D. Then there was a controversy concerning Jesus being God or not. How can there be a trinity, or 3 gods? So the Council at Nicea argued the controversies and consulted the Scriptures. What does the Bible say about Jesus? The answers were formulated into the Creed that we still use today, 1700 years later. "Enrich your understanding of what it means to confess our faith together. "

All three books will enhance your faith.

Happy reading !

LeiLani Rahn

St. Paul's School

What Kind of Fruit Are You? (26-27 School Year Theme)

"I am the vine, you are the branches; if you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

—John 15:5

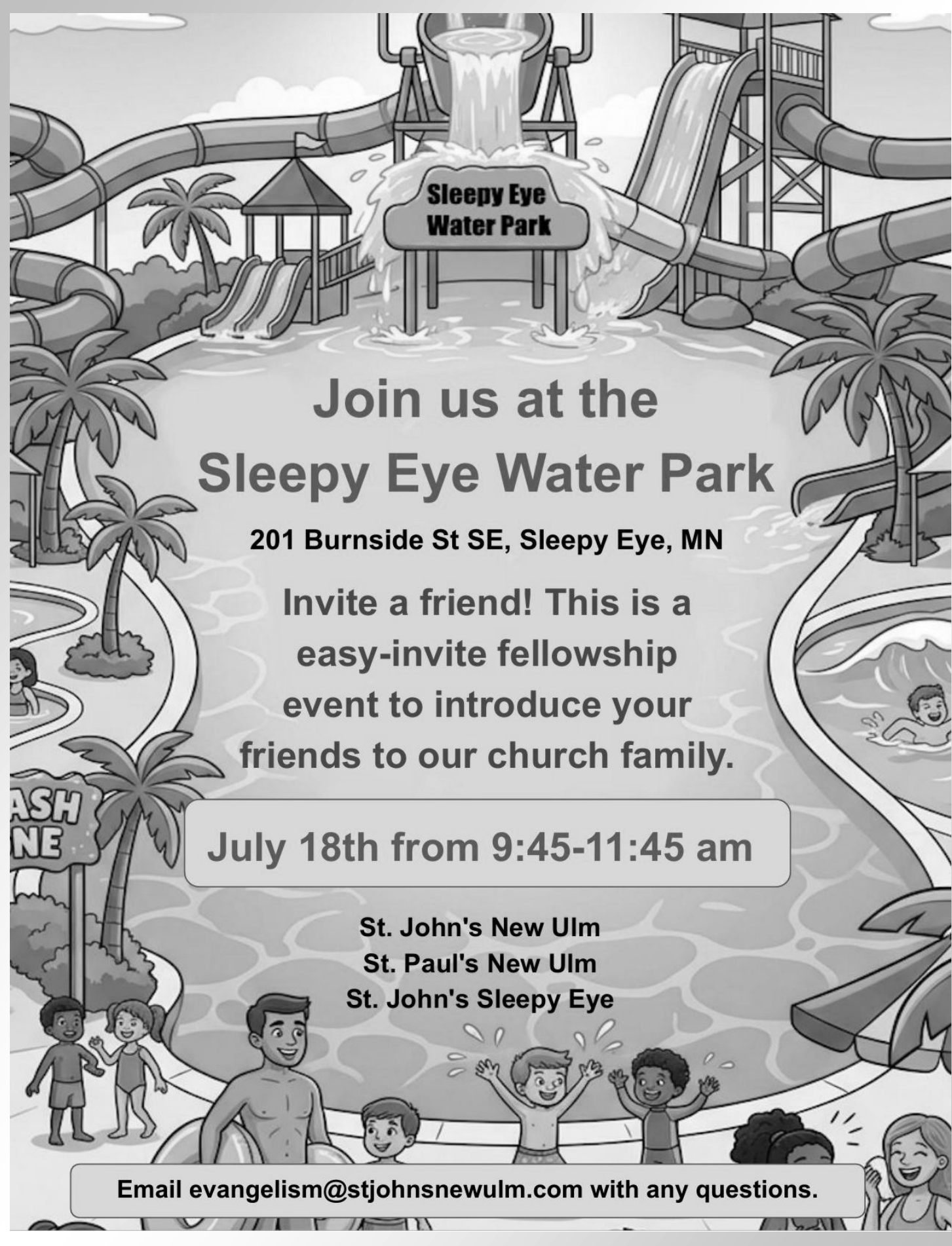
Is it odd for your school principal to ask, "What kind of fruit are you?" Our school year theme passage tells all of us, "...remain in me." You are right to think that "me" is Christ. As he shares this message with us, each of us should take this personally and with great responsibility. Christ asks you to remain in him. What is the result? You will bear much fruit.

Here is where I can ask, "What kind of fruit are you?" John tells us that we will bear much fruit. The Apostle Paul tells us what the fruit looks like. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul calls it the fruit of the Spirit, which includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Ultimately, I am not looking for apples or oranges; I am asking how Christ's love is showing up in your daily life. We don't produce the fruit on this list by working harder on our own strength. Our only job is to *remain* in him—to stay tightly connected to the vine through Bible study, regular church attendance, and prayer through faith. When we do these, traits like patience during stressful times or kindness to a neighbor grow naturally. So, embrace the question. Stay rooted in Him, and your life will easily overflow with the fruit.

In Loving Memory

Bruce Savoy	Undesignated	\$1,000
Dewayne Blaalid	Wish List	\$15
Dewayne Blaalid	Wish List	\$1,271

A detailed black and white illustration of a water park. In the center, a large sign reads "Sleepy Eye Water Park". Water is pouring from a large funnel into a pool below the sign. To the left, there's a slide and a small gazebo. To the right, another slide is visible. Palm trees are scattered throughout the scene. In the bottom left, a sign says "WASH NE". In the bottom right, a person is swimming in a pool. At the bottom, a group of children and adults are playing in the water.

**Sleepy Eye
Water Park**

Join us at the Sleepy Eye Water Park

201 Burnside St SE, Sleepy Eye, MN

**Invite a friend! This is a
easy-invite fellowship
event to introduce your
friends to our church family.**

July 18th from 9:45-11:45 am

**St. John's New Ulm
St. Paul's New Ulm
St. John's Sleepy Eye**

Email evangelism@stjohnsnewulm.com with any questions.

JULY 2026
354-6744

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Stewardship Committee

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence has arrived. We celebrate our inalienable rights, which include Liberty-- Freedom.

As Christians we rejoice that we do have the freedom to worship without interference from any government authority. That's a rare freedom in the history of the world.

As Christians we also know, that even if our freedom of worship is taken away, we have a greater freedom that can never be taken away. It is the freedom that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know what that means. Scripture clearly teaches that everyone is born in slavery, the slavery of sin. We are in bondage, under the power of Satan and there is no way we can escape by our own power. But Jesus took on human flesh and blood so that he could set us free. He was tempted in every way, just as we are, but he defeated every temptation as our substitute. He then offered himself as the sacrifice of atonement on the altar of the cross so that our sins were paid for in full. He rose from the dead on the third day to show us that even death cannot rob us of the freedom he has won for us. Paul says to the Galatians, **It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.** Gal 5:1

How would we be burdened again by the yoke of slavery? By indulging the sinful nature. By doing whatever we want, instead of what the God who set us free wants. By serving self instead of serving others.

Paul explains that freedom in Christ is not just freedom from sin, death and Satan. Freedom in Christ means that we are free to serve. We are free to serve God in faith and thankfulness for rescuing us from a fate worse than death, eternal slavery, and free to serve one another in love (Gal 5:13)

Having been set free in Christ, we get to make God's will our priority. We get to support the work of the church with our time, talents, and treasure. We get to encourage our fellow Christians with the word. We get to pray for each other. We get to bring a meal to someone who is recovering from illness and sit with those who may be lonely. We get to forgive those who sin against us knowing that Jesus has forgiven us for much more. We get to show love to a neighbor, or someone we meet on the street, or while shopping, or at the coffee shop, treating them with patient love as Jesus would, and looking for opportunities to tell them that Jesus came to set them free too.

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence reminds us of the great blessing of freedom we enjoy in our country. As we think about freedom, may we be reminded also of the greatest freedom of all, our freedom in Christ. As Paul says, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

Mark Haefner

Stewardship Board Member

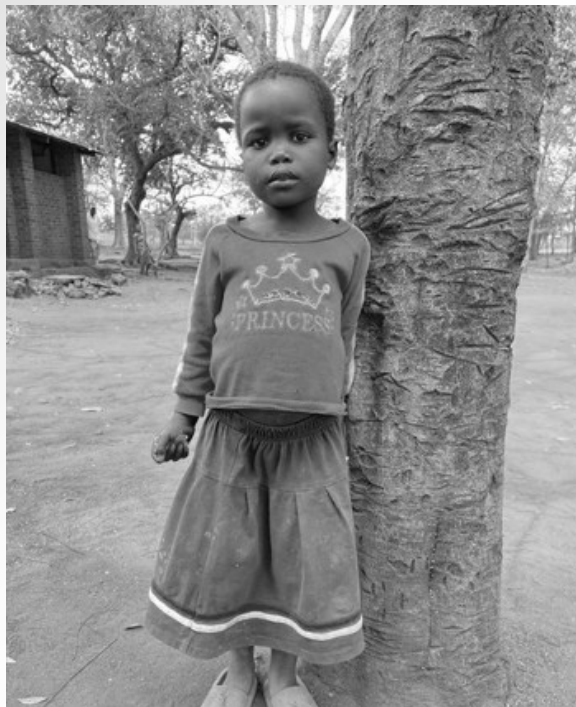
Central Africa Medical Mission

Recently, Kate Wood, along with Beth and Gary Evans visited Zambia, Malawi and Kenya. While we were in Zambia we attended the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference in Lusaka. The conference was attended by church leaders from all over the world, it was a great opportunity to network and tell them about the work of the medical mission. We were also able to give a presentation to the conference on the work of the medical mission that focused mainly on our short-term medical camps in Kenya. There was a lot of interest from other African churches in arranging similar medical camps in their own countries, especially from the Ugandan, Nigerian, Tanzanian and Ethiopian Churches. The Ugandan church has even gone so far as to discuss a potential CAMM exploratory trip with their mission representative. We're hoping to visit Uganda later this year.

We also visited the Mwembezhi clinic in Zambia. The clinic is doing well and continues to set the standard in health care within the Shimbuyunji district. Many of the staff were not at the clinic as they were out visiting the various villages within our catchment area as part of a polio vaccination campaign. We were able to inspect the construction of the clinic's new ablution block, or wash house. Up until now the clinic has not been able to provide a



proper washing facility for our patients, especially recent mothers. The ablution block will have running water complete with showers, flushing toilets and hand basins. It should be finished in a few weeks.



We visited Kenya to continue the process of organizing our next medical camp. We travelled west from Nairobi to Nyamira County where (like this year) our next medical camp will be held in the Town of Chabera. We went to Laura Church, the site of the camp. The visit was in part sad because Mr. Alexander Joseph had recently died. Mr. Alexander, as we call him, had given part of his land to the church and was an active volunteer at our last camp. We went to his house along with leaders from the Kenyan Church to greet his family and say prayers of thanks for Mr. Alexander. Next we visited two patients, Gift and Jessica, who had visited our medical camp back in February this year. Both are severely disabled children who are unable to walk and

need to be carried by their mothers everywhere they go. Thanks to the generosity of a Bible study group at St Marcus Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, we were able to supply both children with wheelchairs which we pray will give them a level of mobility they so richly deserve.

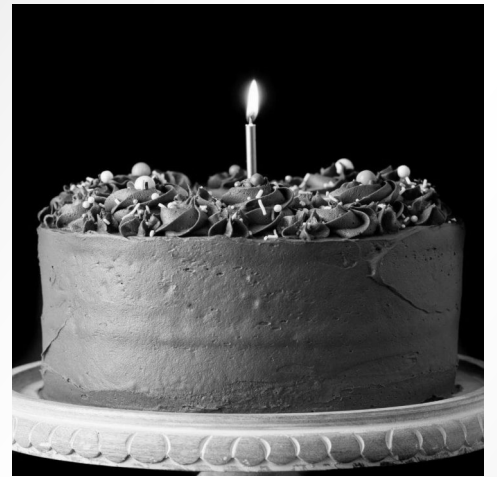
Beth spent a few more days in Malawi, assisting Violet Chikwatu with reports and seeing how Lusungu Mwambeye's challenges with high fuel costs affect work that depends on transportation to remote rural villages. Next to Hong Kong, Malawi has the second highest fuel costs in the world. Beth visited Msambo clinic and enjoyed greeting the five disabled children and their mothers who are assisted by the Lutheran Mobile Clinic to receive physical therapy services. One little boy named Smith is now able to walk on his own after a year of therapy. His smile said it all!

Jean Kanyemba, our nutritionist, told of a newborn baby who was brought to clinic for formula by his grandmother when his mother could no longer breastfeed. At two months old, he developed cellulitis on his back, which turned into a raw open wound. He was given antibiotics and was seen regularly for wound care over a period of months. Now at 10 months old, the wound has healed completely and he is growing well.

Our medical staff and volunteers work hard to treat patients and give preventative maternal-child services with excellent care, as well as with the love of Jesus. Our maintenance worker at Msambo – Mr. Landiran Manyozo - is a church elder who gives the morning devotion at clinic. We learned that Pastor Msiska, who has his own congregation at St. Peter's in Lilongwe, comes one Sunday a month, rotating to one of our three churches where clinics are held, to preach, do baptisms and communion. We thank God for how Pastor Msiska has provided spiritual support to our clinics over the years and continues to support church elders in their ministry. In Christ, Gary and Beth Evans



Happy Birthday!



1 Darrell Berg
2 Leona Dinse
Mack Dinse
Brandy Martin
Louann Meyer
3 Becky Berg
Alex Stadick
5 Glen Gaub
Rodney Karnitz
Dane Wilson
6 Dean Bartsch
Ben Duan
Becky Guenther
Lincoln Weber
7 Radley Shoen
Dorothy Russell
8 Robert Orth
Samantha Rieke
Jonathan Ladner
9 Madison Brase
Joan Gaertner
10 Peter Baganz
Michael Ulicky, Jr.
Ruth Ulicky
11 Michael Grob
Rogan Sriver
12 John Micheel

13 Austin Enter
David Paulson
Lailah Schaefer
Lisa Toltzman
14 Nick Roman
Shanna Wels
15 Rickey Meyer
17 Levi Homan
Stacy Scheid
18 Johnathan Stoering
19 David Black
Bernice Kirchoff
Kurk Kramer
Douglas Patterson
21 Sue Gurgel
Michael Hughes
Julie Thill
Wyatt Uecker
Emily Ulicky
Tim Vogel
22 Keith Besemer
23 Alan Frank
Meredith Gunderson
Eric Ulicky
24 Jackson Lang
Marie Thiede
25 Joyce DeForge
Gregory Howard
Beverly Schmidt

26 Bruce Kuck
Jonathan Roux
27 Allison Bovee
Caylee Iverson
Timothy Johnson
Bryant Karstens
Raelee Shoen
29 Jaycee Nilson
30 Kaiden
Hammerschmidt
Aiden Stadick
31 Ruth Mack

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July 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 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: 11 am

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