



St. John's Lutheran Church  
New Ulm, MN  
May, 2022 *Fortress*

## Easter isn't Just a Day; It's a Season

*"Jesus said... 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die'"* (John 11:25-26).

I think this year might be the first year in my memory that I didn't sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" with my church family on Easter Day. Even during the COVID closure, as I sat on my couch worshipping with my family as we watched the service on TV, I belted out the lyrics to one of my favorite hymns. But this Easter I *didn't* sing, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The rest of you did. But the pastors were busy distributing the Lord's Supper to all the communicants that came to worship on Easter. Oh well. I don't have to be a part of every tradition.

But, you know what? Easter isn't over. You see Easter isn't just a single day. Easter is a season. I have to remind myself of that as we pick hymns for our Easter Festival service and can't squeeze all my favorites into one service: "It's okay," I tell myself, "We have six more weeks of celebration! We can get to those other great hymns later." And how fitting it is that following the six weeks of Lent, we have six weeks of Easter celebration too! That's why I can still write an article about Easter in the May edition of the *Fortress*!

But, you know what? Even in June, when we begin the long "Sundays after Pentecost" season (twenty weeks this year), Easter still isn't over. Because Easter isn't just a season. Easter is our life. It has meaning for every day. Because Jesus lives, I know that I am forgiven. I know his promises are true. I know who I am; a dearly loved child of God. I know why I'm here; my life has meaning and purpose. Easter impacts every day of our lives.

Want the evidence of that? See how many times Jesus' resurrection is mentioned in the Book of Acts! (No wonder we set aside the Old Testament lessons for a while to read lessons from that book during the Easter season!) Read how often the Apostle Paul mentions Jesus' resurrection in his Epistles, even appealing to the fact that it was the resurrected Jesus, not some other disciple, who gave Paul his apostolic authority! Envision how John portrays the picture of the risen Savior time and time again in the last book of the Bible; our risen Savior still rules all things and will give us the ultimate victory in the end!

So, you know what? Easter isn't just a life. For when this life ends, we will live on still. Easter is our eternal life. Easter doesn't just change the trajectory of our time on this planet. Easter changes our eternity forever. We will live with God forever in paradise, thanks to Jesus' work for us by his death on the cross for us and by his glorious resurrection for us!

Someone once said that every Sunday is a mini-Easter. In a way, that's really true. We don't stop celebrating Easter when Easter Day is over. We don't stop celebrating Easter when the Easter season is over. We don't stop celebrating Easter when the year is over or this life is over. We will *never* stop celebrating Easter. And who knows? Maybe I'll still get to sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" with my church family this May! :)

*God, forgive us for the times that we lose sight of Easter and all that it means for us each day and instead live for the moment and serve our selfish natures instead of you. Thank you for sending your own Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life in our place, never losing sight of his mission. Thank you for raising him from the dead as the proof of our forgiveness, of our peace with you, of our new purpose and meaning in life. Help us to celebrate Easter and all it means for us each and every day. Then help us to live for you in thanks and praise as we celebrate Easter with our lives here on earth and one day and forever with you in heaven. In the name of our risen Redeemer, we pray. Amen.*

In Christ,  
Pastor Rob Guenther

## 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:

June 20 July 18 November 21

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](mailto:rmwalters@hotmail.com).

## Outdoor Clean-Up

The Trustees are scheduling two dates for a cleanup day for outside the church. The first day is May 21 to start at 8 am. The second date is June 4 at the same time. The second date will only be used as a makeup date if the first one is cancelled due to weather.

# Council Digest

The church council met on Tuesday, April 17. A summary of reports and actions from the meeting not reported elsewhere in the Fortress follows:

Membership changes approved

Transfer Out:

Mark and Melanie Griebel; Kiefyr, Kierstin, Olivya, Kyler to St. Paul's, New Ulm, MN

Transfers In:

Samantha Bjerke from St. John's, Dakota, MN

Pastoral Acts

Confirmations:

Elin Sandra Bellig	Eden Ramona Michelle Grubbs
Paige Louise Berg	Nathan Neal Hagberg
Noah Dale Dobberpuhl	Caleb Thomas Hunter
Cohen Michael Domeier	Anastasia Grace Klug
Logan Paul Enter	Kayla Ann Martin
Katelyn Anne Flatau	Madeline Grace Martin
Mackenzie Breann Frank	Isaiah Adrian Smith
	Thomas Harley Wels
	Isabelle Clara Faith Wurster

Funeral:

Apr 8      Claus Sieh

Reports

- A letter from the auditing team was shared with council members. The auditors found the 2021 calendar year financial records "accurate and in good order." The report was presented to the voters for acceptance at the April quarterly voters' meeting.
- Deacon Brad Price shared a report indicating Sunday worship attendance in March increased from the beginning of the month to the end of the month following the first Sunday ice storm. Lenten worship service attendance was steady for each of the services with one exception. The 6:30 PM service increase threefold from the first two weeks to the final three weeks.
- The Elders continued their work to review, update, and assign Elders to the current Inactive Members List and bring recommendations to the voters as appropriate.
- The Evangelism Board completed the Easter baskets and canvassing activity. This was held on April 9th by members of St. John's, St. Paul's, and MLC students. There were roughly 100 people present and the group split with some building Easter baskets to hand out as invites to our churches and the other half of the group canvassing areas of New Ulm. The Evangelism Board continued to gather from multiple outreach events and continued work creating mailing lists tailored to different groups based on their expressed areas and levels of interest.

- The Campus Facilities Task Force, chaired by Dr. Keith Wessel, recently met with representatives of the Task Force, Kitchen Committee, and Childcare Subcommittee to identify and consider prioritization and timeline. The kitchen was prioritized first and further information is being gathered for the next voters' meeting.
- The council took time to prepare for the voters' meeting presentation of the St. Paul's School Support Update. Discussions centered around ways we can positively move our partnership forward.

The following schedule was set for future meetings:

Next joint council meeting Tuesday, May 17, 2022 at 6 pm

Next regular council meeting Tuesday, May 17, 2022 at 7 pm

Next regular voters' meeting Monday, Jul 26, 2022 at 7 pm

Jonathan M. Schaefer,  
Congregational President

## Women of St. John's

The WSJ May meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 3rd at 7 pm in the church basement. There will not be a business meeting. We will be enjoying food and fellowship as well as a presentation by Pastor Guenther on the John and Paul Ministries. Please bring a friend and join us for the evening!

### *In Loving Memory*

<i>Edgar Peehler</i>	Audio/Visual	\$100
<i>Richard Hoffmann</i>	AED (Defibrillator)	\$200
<i>Claus Sieh</i>	Undesignated	\$50
<i>Cathy Vogel</i>	Undesignated	\$25
	Undesignated	\$25

## Church Library

This month we have a few fiction books that were donated last month. These 5 books are considered Amish romance novels. The Amish are famous for using no electricity and no cars. They help each other and belong to an Ordnung, of which there are many. In the Beverly Lewis books, they live in Hickory Hollow, Pennsylvania. They drive buggies but if there is a big distance to travel, they ask someone they know with a car to drive them there. They meet in homes for worship on Sundays and enjoy a pot luck meal afterward. They believe in Jesus as God and obey the bishop. The teenagers go through a Rumspringe, a time when they try English things until they decide to commit to being Amish and are baptized. If they then go against the rulings later, they are shunned.

In the Beverly Lewis book, the "Postcard", Rachel is a widow with a daughter, living and working with her parents to run a Bed and Breakfast. Phillip is an English journalist writing a story on the Amish. He is staying at the B and B. He finds an old postcard in an old desk that makes some people jumpy. Why? Also, is there some help for Rachel who became blind right after her husband was killed at the "Crossroad"!

The trilogy by Beth Wiseman takes place in Lancaster country, Pennsylvania. An Amish couple has a 13 year old son who needs a kidney transplant. Only his English uncle, a doctor, can help.

We also have two other donations to point out this month. We have copies of Pastor Timothy Smith's books on Luke, in 4 volumes.

We also have a copy of "Crucial Hours" which is a classic reprinted by Northwestern Publishing House. It is like a harmony of the Gospels, with much insight. These also can be checked out.

All these books were interesting and are separate stories. They can be checked out of the church library starting in May. Write your name on the card in the back of the book, and put the card in the plastic container on the wooden counter. When returning the book, please place it in the basket. Thank you.

LeiLani Rahn,  
Church Librarian

## Lutheran Military Support Group

Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) is a partnership of WELS and ELS veterans who are working to grow awareness of and bring Christian support to military members and their families in our congregations and beyond.

Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, is a special day for our country as we remember the men and women who gave their lives in service to our great nation. During this time of year, and at Veteran's Day, LMSG asks for donations to help carry out our work of sharing the Gospel with military members and their loved ones.

If you can financially support the work of LMSG, your offerings will be used in a variety of ways including providing support to WELS/ ELS servicemembers with PTS, training WELS chaplains who serve our military on bases and hospitals, and providing family assistance when needed.

Donations can be placed in the green ammo can in the new narthex. For more information, contact LMSG President Brad Price at [bprice@lutheranmilitary.org](mailto:bprice@lutheranmilitary.org).

## Staff Minister Report

**Online Church Directory** - Most members have picked up a copy of our directory. I am now taking the supply of directories away from the table in the Narthex for the privacy of our members. If you had not picked one up feel free to put a note in my mailbox or email me at [sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com](mailto:sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com) and I can print the size you want and place it in your church mailbox. There are slips on the table in the Narthex that may help you in ordering a church directory for yourself.

The Online Directory App really works well. It is secure and our directory is available to only our members and can be updated easily by our members who are signed into the App. Download the App for your Android or iPhone by visiting [instantchurchdirectory.com](http://instantchurchdirectory.com) and downloading the app. I believe you can also visit the Apple or Google Store to download the FREE App. Just type in Instant Church Directory. I have found it to be very easy to access. Once you are signed in on your phone it only takes a second to open and use to find your family and other members at St. John's.

**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 but would like to be included, please call the church office or me at 507-217-7604 to get on the list.

**Streamed/Recorded Services** – Please **SUBSCRIBE** to St. John's YouTube "channel". It does not mean that you will need to pay a monthly fee. It only means that our St. John's New Ulm "Channel" will show up under your Subscribed Channels in the YouTube App in order to access it easily. 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 our services and subscribing to the St. John's New Ulm YouTube channel.

If you have been able to watch our live feeds or recorded YouTube services, you can fill out a **quick & Short response form online** to let us know how we are doing. Go to: <https://bit.ly/SJRecord-Stream> (Click on this link or enter the blue letters in the computer browser address bar.)

**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 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

### WELS Annual Report: Called to Proclaim

We will continue to point out highlights from the WELS Annual Report to their members for 2022. This month the focus is on the section entitled “Called to Proclaim.” The section primarily deals with World and Home Missions, topics we have recently covered in this column. However, it is good to review the information provided on those two topics as mission work is so important to the work of the WELS.

#### World Missions

WELS World Missions conducts and encourages gospel outreach in 44 foreign countries and is exploring additional outreach opportunities in 20 additional countries. There are forty-one world missionaries that partner with more than 400 national pastors to conduct outreach and to train more than 380 students for service in Christ’s kingdom. There are seven primary areas where WELS supports mission work:

1. Apache Reservations in Arizona. The gospel is shared in eight churches, one peaching station, and two Lutheran elementary schools. More than 3,600 baptized members through 5 missionaries, 2 national pastors, and 1 national evangelist are served in the area.
2. Africa. Six existing countries are being served, as well as exploration of mission work in ten additional countries.
3. Asia. The newly formed Asia One Team is coordinating resources and partnering with sister synods to reach out with the gospel in nine different countries.
4. East Asia. Missionaries are coaching and mentoring 45 mission group leaders. Asia Lutheran Seminary is reaching hundreds of new students through new online classes.
5. Latin America. *Academia Cristo* online training is walking more than 360 people through self-led classes. Missionaries have identified more than 25 men in 11 countries as potential church partners.
6. Europe. National churches are partnering with WELS missionaries and the Pastoral Studies Institute to train future church leaders.
7. Multi-Language Productions. Confessional Christian content has been produced in more than 56 languages and on a variety of platforms.

## Home Missions

Five locations were approved for financial support in 2021. They were:

1. Waco, Texas. The Heart of Texas mission core group has been meeting regularly since March, 2020.
2. Durham, North Carolina. The WELS congregation in Raleigh is launching a second site in Durham. Studies show that 75% of people in the area are unchurched.
3. Dickinson, North Dakota. There is a committed core group that has been meeting regularly for livestreamed worship and month gatherings since 2012. Congregations in Bismarck and Mandan will be supporting a new mission start named Amazing Grace.
4. Parrish, Florida. A new mission plant is being started and supported by Risen Savior in Lakewood Ranch, which was a previous home mission church.
5. Collinsville, Illinois. Christ Our Savior in Collinsville has served as a preaching station of Martin Luther, St. Louis, since 2002. Christ Our Savior now has funding to call its own pastor.

In addition, Home Missions approved financial support in 2021 for four existing ministries: Willoughby, Ohio; Hutto Texas; Crossville, Tennessee; and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Next month we will continue to summarize the 2022 Annual Report by looking at the section entitled "Called to Serve."

Gerald Woodley

## Youth Group News!

Thank You so much to the Youth Group for serving the past few months with a Lent Dinner, Easter for Kids, Easter Decorating and Easter Breakfast! Your service is greatly appreciated!

Looking forward, I am currently planning a variety of summer fun activities so stay tuned for those events!

Lastly, Congratulations to all of those who have been confirmed or are graduating.

May the Lord bless you always.

Kristin Ulicky



## Soccer Camp

John and Paul Ministries will host a Soccer Camp this summer!

Who: Ages 4-12

When: June 13-16 from 9 - 11:30 am

Where: MLC Soccer Fields (1910 Oakwood Ave.)

Cost: \$30 per child

(\$20 for each additional child from the same family)

For more information and to register go to [johnandpaulministries.com](http://johnandpaulministries.com). **Registration deadline is May 22.**



## MVL Musical

Bet your bottom dollar---that Annie is back! Come join her and all her friends as the MVL Drama Department takes you back to NYC and the orphanage where Annie grew up. Showtimes will be Friday and Saturday, May 6 & 7 at 7 pm, and Sunday, May 8 at 2 pm. All performances will be held at State Street Theater Co in New Ulm. Tickets are \$4 and \$6 and may be purchased at the door. Come join the fun!

## St. Paul's School Band Concert

The St. Paul Lutheran School Spring Band Concert will take place on Tuesday, May 17 at 7 pm in the school gymnasium. All are invited to come hear the bands play their pieces from the MVL Festival as well as two mass band pieces! The concert will feature The Entertainer by a saxophone quintet, the percussionists in a snare line, and a Star Wars Saga by the Raider Band.

## Camp Shetek

After a two year pause from having a Camp (due to COVID) we are planning to hold Camp Shetek on Sunday, June 19 at 5 pm to Saturday, June 25 at 11 am.

This camp is held at Lake Shetek State Park (south of Tracy, near Currie). For information about this WELS Camp Shetek, go to "[campshetek.org](http://campshetek.org)". Online registration is available.

## Keeping the Unity of the Spirit and the Bond of Peace

We left off with Pastor Reim calling a church council meeting for the next day, Monday, August 24, 1959. Because of the short notice, many council members could not attend. Those who did attend, were not informed of the reason for the meeting. After the meeting was convened, Pastor Reim read a letter announcing his break with the Wisconsin Synod. He added that he was also informing President M. Lenz of the Minnesota District of his decision. Pastor Reim laid out his plan to explain his reasons for severing fellowship with the synod in a series of Wednesday night meetings with all confirmed members who might wish to attend. His stated goal was to convince St. John's Congregation to withdraw from the synod as well. St. John's would become an independent Lutheran congregation. After Pastor Reim finished reading his letter, Chairman Howard Birkholz chaired a spirited discussion that extended almost until midnight. The council insisted that the proper synodical officials be present to offer balance at Pastor Reim's proposed instructional meetings. Pastor Reim would not concede, since falsehood (the decision reached by the synod in convention) should not have any audience with the truth (Pastor Reim's position). Therefore, the council determined that Pastor Reim's instructional meeting would not take place. Instead they decided to call a voters' meeting for September 9th where Pastor Reim could make his plans for the congregation known. At that meeting the congregation would decide whether or not it would continue as a Wisconsin Synod congregation.

Note that the council allowed two Sundays before the voters' meeting - the minimum amount of time mandated by the constitution to give notice for meetings. This placed St. John's in an awkward situation. For the next two weeks they would be served by a pastor who had publicly declared he was not of their fellowship. In fact, he was charging the synod, of which they were members, of being persistent errorists, of living in sin. Awkward, to say the least.

Professor Birkholz, in an evaluation of this meeting, wrote:

***“Certainly this was a hasty action on the part of Pastor Reim and not at all in good order. The council was taken completely by surprise and sat dazed with this letter in their hands. Perhaps the manner in which the case was ultimately determined would have been entirely different if Pastor Reim's approach to the matter had been more considerate of congregation and council. For a matter so vital as this to both congregation and pastor, the brotherly way, the Christian way, would be to consult with each other as pastor and congregation, or at very least as pastor and council, before such a step is taken. For then all concerned would have opportunity to council and be counseled, to admonish and be admonished, to question and gain information so that the spiritual life or the congregation might not suddenly be disrupted.***

***“With his resignation from Synod established as an accomplished fact, Pastor Reim proceeded to outline to the council the course which he intended to pursue with the congregation...”***

On the evening of September 9th, fifty-eight voters were in attendance. Pastor Reim presented his reasons for severing fellowship with the synod and he proposed the course of action he would take to help the congregation become independent. Not long after he finished, a motion was made and seconded that St. John's continue its fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. The voters then began discussing the motion, addressing basic questions pertaining to each course of action.

At this point in the meeting, a letter addressed by the District President to all pastors, teachers and congregations of the Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Synod was read aloud. In that letter a resolution, passed by the recent synod in convention, recognized that called workers and congregations might have difficulty with the decision to ***“continue our vigorously protesting fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod”*** a little longer. In that resolution, the delegates said they

***“...plead in a loving spirit with every brother and congregation to preserve the bond of fellowship and to consult with the District President before acting.”***

Pastor Reim attended the Saginaw convention and was aware of the fact that he should have consulted with his district president *before* deciding to leave the synod. However, he only informed President Lenz *after* the fact. Several times in the course of the lengthy voters’ discussion, Pastor Reim was given a chance to reconsider his decision, but he would not.

A secret ballot was taken and the majority decided to remain in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. After the result of the vote was announced, Pastor Reim was given one last chance to reconsider his decision. At this he arose and said that the congregation’s decision terminated his pastorate at St. John’s and that he was resigning his pastorate.

To clear the air as to whether Pastor Reim was “terminated” or “resigned,” Professor Birkholz summed it up this way: ***“But let me emphasize these particulars:***

***“St. John’s has made no charge whatsoever against Pastor Reim...nor did we, as one hears on the street, discharge Pastor Reim - nor did St. John’s violate any scriptural principle pertaining to a divine call. Pastor Reim separated himself from us - he resigned from the Wisconsin Synod and his pastorate in St. John’s. Pastor Reim terminated the call...”***

***“St. John’s respects the decision of those who have terminated their membership over this congregational decision. They have broken the spiritual fellowship with us, but that need not terminate friendly relations on our part... The congregation stands just where it did before Pastor Reim’s resignation - we have not changed. And it certainly is an unfounded charge that we are ‘guilty of liberalism in doctrine and practice which endangers the whole body of truth revealed in Scripture.’ (New Ulm Daily Journal - Sept. 25, 1959 - p. 3)”***

He then continued to allow those in the congregation who were in turmoil about recent events to take time to gather information and prayerfully consider weigh all the facts before severing fellowship with St. John’s. He even conceded that a few of the undecided may feel the need to be inactive briefly. But he followed with the admonition that it is neither god-pleasing nor spiritually safe to be apart from the Word and sacraments indefinitely.

In Christian charity, the congregation offered Pastor Reim a salary through the month of September and gave his family the use of the 517 S. Washington parsonage extending one month after October 1st or until the church needed it for a future pastor. The proviso in this agreement was that, if Pastor Reim should gather an opposition congregation, it would at that time become the responsibility of the opposition group to provide his housing and his family would have to move elsewhere. These provisions for his housing and salary were, in Pastor Reim’s own words, “most gracious.”

Nevertheless, the controversy of losing a well-loved pastor was the catalyst that moved some St. John’s members to leave with their former pastor. Soon after the convention, Pastor Reim began visiting the homes of some members to explain his stand on the issue. Congregational Chairman Birkholz did his best to follow up with those households. Already by mid-September Prof. Birkholz reported a dozen communicant “resignations.” Another 18 left by the third week in October. The hemorrhaging of members would continue sporadically into the early 1960s.

Word reached Prof. Birkholz that, as early as the Sunday after his resignation, Pastor Reim held a service for about two dozen people at Turner Hall. Thus began the launch of “the opposition church” which became known as Faith Lutheran Church.

Pastor Schmidt of St. Paul's, New Ulm, was the First Vice President of the Minnesota District. His presence at the congregation's transitional meetings was reassuring. He and district president, Pastor Manfred Lenz, met with the congregation in October to help explain the Wisconsin Synod's recent resolution in the light of Holy Scripture.

Professor Martin Albrecht was called again from Dr. Martin Luther College to serve as vacancy pastor on a part-time basis. The congregation agreed to pay him \$250 per month. This would be the last time Prof. Albrecht would step in to assist St. John's. In 1962 he would take a call to be a music professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Pastor Frederic H. Nitz was called on the third ballot to be St. John's third full-time pastor. He left his parish in Cochrane, WI, into order to answer the urgent call to bring healing to the fledgling flock. The Nitz family moved into the 517 S. Washington parsonage already on October 28th and Pastor Nitz was installed on All Saints' Day (November 1).

Respectfully Submitted,  
Pastor em. Wayne Laitinen  
St. John's Archivist