



St. John's Lutheran Church  
627 S. Washington St., New Ulm, MN

October, 2022 *Fortress*

### **NOT NEW TEACHINGS, BUT TEACHINGS THAT RENEW**

**1 Peter 1:23** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

*Whatever is altered in order to conform to the Word of God is no innovation. All customs, no matter how good they are, must give way to the Word of God. Your own law says this. God and his Word are older than you are, and no doubt, they will also be younger and newer than you and we are, because they are eternal. Therefore the Word must alter and rule both the old and the new and not be altered or ruled by either the new or the old.*

*Martin Luther (Luther SL 16, 927)*

Thus wrote Martin Luther to the clergy at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. Luther reminds us that, despite what his critics may say, he never taught anything new. As revolutionary and innovative as his teachings may have appeared to many of the people of his day, and even today, they were not original. What Luther taught was based squarely on what the Bible had been teaching for centuries before Luther, and will continue to teach many centuries after him and us.

We are thankful that Luther did not attempt to teach anything Anew and Afresh. Because his purpose was not to be on the cutting edge or to find something which was more attractive to the common people than the same old routine week after week. He sought to find the eternal truth of God which he revealed to the people of this world to show them the way to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

However, although it was nothing new, it certainly was renewing and refreshing. Even though he wasn't seeking to be innovative, yet his teaching was on the cutting edge. For the old and enduring message of God's love is always new and fresh.

It came to weary sinners, lost and burdened, and promised that their sins, no matter how great and how many, have been placed on the shoulders of the crucified Christ, who died to pay our debt to God. Luther took the world back to the ancient truth that we are saved, not by righteous things we have done, but solely by God's grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ. Our forgiveness is a free gift of God who sent his Son to live the perfect life you and I could not live in the sight of God, and to die on the cross to take the punishment for our sin. It is Jesus' own righteousness that has now been credited to us so that through faith in him God no longer sees our sin but sees Christ in us.

This is the Gospel message, the Good News Peter speaks of when he says: **1 Peter 1:23** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

We have been born again, just as Luther speaks of his own experience when he finally came to the realization of God's forgiveness in Christ. Luther would write that it was as if the gates of heaven had been flung open and all of Scripture took on a new meaning when the light of the gospel dispelled the ignorance and darkness caused by sin's condemnation. And indeed it had. For it is through God's Word alone that we find forgiveness and peace in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is only through his promise that we know heaven is ours.

This year as we celebrate the Reformation we are reminded that it did not begin or end with Luther. Reformation takes place wherever God's Word is preached in its truth and purity. It is nothing new, but its power to renew always makes it fresh and pertinent to sinners whose most vile transgression are forgiven in Christ.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee

# Reformation

Joint Service at  
MLC Chapel

Sunday, October 30 at 3 pm



## October Sermon Texts

October 2	Luke 17:1-10	Your Duty to Forgive
October 9	Luke 17:11-19	Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart
October 16	Luke 18:1-8	Pray, Christian, Pray
October 23	James 1:1-12	The Joy of Trials
October 30	Jeremiah 31:31-34	It Is Important to Remember

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

Sundays at 9:30 am	Book of Job	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Thursdays at 10:30 am	Great Prayers of the Bible	Pastor Rob Guenther
Thursdays at 7 pm	Minor Prophets	Pastor Jeff Bovee
Fridays at 9:30 am	Women's Class: <i>The Screentape Letters</i>	Pastor Rob Guenther

## Council Digest

The St. John's Church Council met on September 20th. A summary of reports and actions not reported elsewhere in the *Fortress* follows:

### **Ministrations**

#### **Transfers In**

Claire Hirsch from St. John's Lutheran, Lannon, WI  
 Mike and Kristy Wiechmann; Edison, Adeline, Hazel, Autumn, Annie from Christ the Lord, Brookfield, WI

#### **Transfers Out**

Tucker Griebel to St. Paul's Lutheran, New Ulm, MN  
 Deb Schiller to Zion Lutheran, Winthrop, MN  
 Orie Thomford to Our Savior, Burlington, IA

### **Pastoral Acts**

#### **Baptisms**

28 Aug Elliot Trougert Johnson

#### **Weddings**

27 Aug Cayley Collum and Zachary Gonzales

Council Guest, Principal Markgraf, shared the blessings going on at St. Paul's Lutheran School with increases in paras, faculty, and enrollment. Two areas of focus are the *future funding* and *future needs* of the school. Two ad hoc committees are being formed, and both congregations are working to have financial leadership meet to streamline needed financial reporting. Principal Markgraf will report with the St. John's council every other month to continue to forge a working relationship and clear avenues of communication.

Deacon Brad Price reported the comparative attendance trends from 2019 and 2022 for the first nine months. Average service attendance remains 12% lower than the pre-COVID average per service.

Evangelism Board chair Jesse Zahrt updated the council members on the board's activities. The Summer Send-Off event drew +500 from the community. Some were from our local congregations, others were unchurched community members. These events allow us to build relationships with those we do not yet know. The next events include:

- Trunk or Treat is October 29. Last year there were roughly 1,000 people. The event generates leads for our congregation and furthers our reputation within the community.
- Construction of the banners for the entryway arches is on track and will be ready for Christmas. A test banner was up this past weekend. The plan is to put them up through the Advent season. They are double-sided and will be reversed for Christmas day. The banners are meant to be a talking point for members to share the joy of Christmas with people in the community that they know.

Evangelism member Dave Borchert stepped down from his role due to time restraints that prevented him from dedicating the time and effort he would like to BoEV activities. We thank Dave for his service.

The council reviewed budgeting and election procedures for the upcoming October and December Voter's meetings. The 2023 budget is on the Agenda for the October voter's meeting. The council is recommending to St. John's Voters that the congregation move forward with the kitchen project and promote contributions toward it. St. John's members are asked to attend and provide their input.

Future meetings:

Next council meeting - Tuesday, October 18, 7 pm

Next voters' meeting - Tuesday, October 25, 7 pm

Further details for the December Voter's meeting are being planned.

Submitted by Jon Schaefer,  
Congregational President

# “Building for His Habitation”

1963-1966

On the eve of President Kennedy’s assassination, St. John’s members were experiencing an increasing sense of optimism. The Gospel proclamation, administered by Pastor Nitz and the leaders of the congregation, brought much-needed healing to God’s little flock.

This could be seen by the souls that were being added to our numbers. The controversy surrounding Pastor Reim’s departure drew down the membership from the 1958 high of 538 to the 1961 low of 422. The corner had been turned at the end of 1962 with 443. In the final months of 1963 it had increased another 42 souls to 485.

Another manifestation of Spirit-generated optimism was the completion of the 800 S. State Street parsonage. The \$30,000+ home, finished at slightly over \$20,000, was a tribute to the volunteer labor and sacrificial giving of the flock. By February 1963 Pastor and Grace Nitz’s family had moved in. On June 9th it was dedicated.

After that, 517 S. Washington parsonage was sold for \$12,487.25 and the second lot donated to the congregation (S. Washington between 7th South and 8th South) was also sold. This erased the residual debt for building the parsonage and left the congregation with an excess of \$6,000 in the Building Fund. This balance would be used to build the superstructure over the basement church.

## The Necessary Groundwork

By the end of July Pastor Nitz announced that the council had appointed an **Investigating Committee** comprised of three men: Mr. Hugo Bilitz, Prof. George Heckmann and Mr. Charles Steinhauer to research the cost estimates for the proposed superstructure. The committee was to report back to the voters by the October 1963 quarterly meeting.

Their report in October, led to the voters taking the first serious step of appointing two committees:

### The Building Committee

Mr. Hugo Bilitz  
Prof. George Heckmann  
Mr. Elmer Rolloff  
Mr. Charles Steinhauer  
Mr. Henry Wacker

### The Building Finance Committee

Mr. Robert Grebe  
Prof. Theodore Hartwig  
Prof. Roland Honecke  
Mr. Alvin Rolloff  
Mr. Paul Vorwerk



On Sunday, November 24, 1963, the following announcements appeared in the bulletin:

*“In view of the tragic death of our president, John F. Kennedy, on Friday, a special joint service will be held in St. Paul’s Church at 10:00 tomorrow morning (Monday, Nov. 25th)”*

*“There will be no school at St. Paul’s tomorrow because of the funeral of President John F. Kennedy.”*

As citizens of this world, we set aside time to say a special prayer of healing for our country, thanksgiving for God’s gift of public servants and a plea for the protection of our leaders and all those in authority. As citizens of a hidden kingdom, our plans went ahead to build a sanctuary worthy of His habitation.

### **Building for His Habitation**

The Building Committee began by interviewing five architects. By May 1964 they had settled on William Schaefer and Associates of Mankato. Preliminary sketches which were intended to be brought before the congregation in August were redrawn and finally presented in April of 1965.

The Building Finance Committee began their task by studying the financial performance of the congregation from its beginnings in 1948 to the present 1964. Secondly, it resolved not to take pledges but to rely on the spontaneous, free-will offerings of all members. Thirdly, the BFC decided to have special Building Fund envelopes and set “plateaus” for the Building Fund periodically the future. Starting with \$7,000 in March 1964, the first plateau would be to reach \$10,000 by December 31st. Where that was received, the BFC would consider the performance, estimate future offerings and set a reasonable next goal. The second plateau was \$13,000 by September 30, 1964. Generally, the congregation met these plateaus on time. By the end of 1965 the congregation had raised \$30,000 for the superstructure.

In February of 1965 the Building Finance Committee had decided to form a “Visitation Committee” of 20 teams, including husbands and wives. Within 11 days (March 3-14, 1965) they would visit every household in the congregation to (1) bring information from the BC and BFC about the building program and (2) leave a questionnaire to fill out and return to the church at their convenience. The BFC emphasized that these visits were NOT A FUNDRAISING DRIVE...only to bring information of interest.

Late in 1963 the BC and the BFC came up with the superstructure motto: Building for His Habitation. It was inspired by a Bible verse and a hymn verse.

In Ephesians 2:20, St. Paul speaks of Christians as being “... *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*” This passage looks beyond the bricks-and-mortar sanctuary and emphasizes the *goal* of a sanctuary. Where is salvation proclaimed? In the Bible. When Christ, the Cornerstone, is preached from the Bible it serves all the souls who are gathered there.

Similarly, the hymn verse that helped frame our building theme is the third verse of the hymn *Built On The Rock*, 467 in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941)

*We are God's house of living stones, Built for His own habitation.  
He through baptismal grace us owns Heirs of His wondrous salvation.  
Were we but two His name to tell, Yet He would deign with us to dwell  
With all His grace and His favor.*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Pastor emeritus Wayne A. Laitinen,  
St. John's Lutheran Church Archivist

## Youth Group

After a summer break, the Youth Group is back in action. Youth Group is for all students in grades 6 through 12.

For the month of September, the group got together for an Outdoor Movie Night in St. John's parking lot. Food, fun and fellowship were had by all.

Coming up in October will be our annual leaf raking event. Date and times are yet to be determined but we will plan on going out to eat after the event. If you or someone you know are in need of this service, please contact Kristin Ulicky at [kru8880@gmail.com](mailto:kru8880@gmail.com).

## *In Loving Memory*

<i>Erna Zahn</i>	Undesignated	\$160
	Building Fund	\$20
	Kitchen Fund	\$25
	MVL Scholarship Fund	\$25

## Church Library

October has its “bright blue weather.” Beautiful trees and most flowers at their best just before the first frost. Don’t forget that in order to remember why we have Reformation Day at the end of October, read a biography of Martin Luther or an overview of the Reformation by reading books in our Martin Luther section. There are also a few Luther books in the children’s section and a few DVDs on the life of Luther in the DVD section.

The pastors are doing Bible Classes now and one is on the “Screwtape Letters” by C.S. Lewis. Screwtape is a demon who writes to Wormwood, a lower demon and is teaching him how to gain “patients” away from God and His Love. Tricky guy!

We also have more fiction books to introduce. One is by Lori Wick, “Where the Wild Rose Blooms.” It is part of a series but a good series. The story has a young man studying to be a teacher, loving a young woman who loses her sight. Can he still love her? Also Beverly Lewis and her husband David collaborated on the book “Child of Mine.” In this story, a woman whose daughter was kidnapped 8 years ago has been looking for her ever since. Now she hears of a girl that matches her profile and meets the father and the girl. Could this finally be her daughter?

Enjoy the fall.  
LeiLani Rahn, church librarian

## Women of St. John's

The October WSJ meeting will be a ladies night out. It will be held on Tuesday, October 4th at 6 pm at the MLC cafeteria. We will be eating in the solarium. The cost is \$7.50 per person which will be paid that evening.

If you are interested in joining us, please use the sign up sheet in the new narthex.

Please bring a friend and join us for an evening of fun, fellowship and laughter!



## Cards of Caring

St. John's Cards of Caring group meets to make cards for our homebound members, Befriend a Mission LWMS families, members age 85 years or older and other as requested.

We welcome anyone ages 7th grade and older including MLC students. No skills are needed. Cards are made using recycled cards and stamp sets. Supplies are furnished.

Our two fall meetings are scheduled for Saturdays, October 29 and November 19. Come and go as your schedule allows between 9 am - noon.

We meet at 403 N. Minnesota St. (across from the Glockenspiel). This is an opportunity for fellowship and service to the Lord.

Contact Lois Willems at 507-676-1230 with questions.

## Staff Minister

**Online Church Directory** – I continue to get ready for the **2023 Edition of St. John's Church Directory** which will be printing in January. There have been quite a few updates to our member's information in the past 10 months. There are two things that need to be updated. 1) Add New Members and 2) Update pictures of those members already listed.

New Members can fill out an information sheet for their family – Sheets are available in the new narthex on the table. Fill them out and take to the office. If you see me before or after church, ask me to take your picture or submit one that you already have taken. Once I have your information entered, go to [instantchurchdirectory.com](http://instantchurchdirectory.com) to sign up or download the church App for your phone.

Those that are already in the current directory can update their own pictures. They don't have to, but it's always nice to have a current picture. Try the online **Instant Church Directory App** on



your phone or computer. St. John's Directory is secure and only available to our members. Pictures or other family information can also be updated easily. Download the App for your Android or iPhone by visiting [instantchurchdirectory.com](http://instantchurchdirectory.com) or using the Apple Store or Google Play to download the FREE App. Just type in **Instant Church Directory**.

You can also email a photo to [sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com](mailto:sm.dretske@stjohnsnewulm.com) and I will update it for you. If you have changed address, phone numbers, or have children now in college or military, please fill out and update information on sheets available in the new narthex and leave in the office. Save time and include names and only the information that is new.

**Visiting the 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.

Did you know that the pastors from St. John's, St. Paul's and Zion, Brighton/Courtland provide a chapel service to the residents of Oak Hills every week? Attendance is between 15 - 20 weekly at services. Six volunteers from St. John's help out every other week to bring residents to the chapel service and return them to their rooms after. If you are available from 3:30 until 5:00 on Tuesdays, consider adding your name to the list of helpers. Thank you volunteers for your help!

**Streamed/Recorded Services**— If you are watching on YouTube, please **hit SUBSCRIBE**. You will not 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 to access it easily. If you choose to accept notifications, you will receive a notification on your computer or mobile 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 we have trouble with a streamed service, we will try to upload a recording of the intended service. It will then show up under "Videos" rather than the "Live" recordings.

**Other activities:** 1) Helping Evangelism with the Christmas Banners that are expected to fill the arches during the weeks before Christmas. You may have seen a sample of life-sized camels. Not the finished product but it helped us to get a good idea of what works and what doesn't. 2) Finding passed recommendations of the council and voters going back year by year and listing them in an organized way for easier access by our church leaders; 3) Making Church Board Brochures to help inform members of the work that is being done by each and including ways to have other members help in the work they are doing. Look for information presented in future issues of The Fortress.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Dretske

## Our Synod at Work

### Accounting Oversight Committee

The Accounting Oversight Committee serves WELS and its schools, subsidiaries, and affiliates that are under the oversight of the Synodical Council. The committee serves the Synodical Council in four important ways:

1. Assisting management with ensuring appropriate accounting policies and internal controls are established and financial systems are efficient and effective;
2. Retaining external auditors;
3. Assisting in ensuring that financial personnel have the requisite skills; and
4. Assisting in ensuring that financial reports are prepared timely, accurately, and in compliance with accounting principles generally accepted in the US.

The Accounting Oversight Committee keeps the Synodical Council informed of its action through the Synodical Council's appointed member of the committee.

The Accounting Oversight Committee engaged the independent audit firm of Baker Tilly US, LLP to conduct the annual audits of the consolidated financial statements of WELS, its schools, and its Support Services subsidiaries for the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2021. The audits were completed within four months of the end of the fiscal year.

In addition to the annual WELS financial statement audits, the Accounting Oversight Committee also engaged Baker Tilly to audit the WELS VEBA Group Health Plan and WELS Pension Plan for the calendar year of 2021. The auditors did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls.

The fiscal year 2021 audit was the fifth year in the existing audit pricing agreement with Baker Tilly, indicating that a request for proposal process related to external audit services should be conducted. However, the Oversight Committee decided to extend the current agreement with Baker Tilly for three more years due to several factors including: (1) the recent hiring and transition to a new chief financial officer in 2020; (2) better alignment of the next request for proposal to coincide with the transition of the existing Baker Tilly audit partners; and (3) the confidence in Baker Tilly that has been established given their level of expertise and service over the past several years.

Gerald Woodley

## **MLC Ladies' Auxiliary**

The Martin Luther College Ladies' Auxiliary exists to:

1. To promote greater interest in Martin Luther College
2. To promote Christian fellowship among women of WELS and those in fellowship with WELS
3. To give financial support to MLC by supplying funds for needed projects
4. To support MLC and its students through prayer

**The annual Auxiliary Day will be held Saturday, October 1. Registration begins at 8 am in the Luther Student Center with the meeting starting at 9 am in the auditorium.**

Presentations by staff and students will provide attendees with a greater understanding and appreciation of MLC's ministry. Some highlights are: a sneak peek at the MLC musical "Annie Get Your Gun", a presentation about MLC's new Competency-Based Education program, worship in Chapel of the Christ, and lunch in the MLC cafeteria.

The assembly will prioritize the funding projects submitted by MLC faculty and staff and then will have an opportunity to support those projects. Last year the Auxiliary funded almost \$30,000 in projects and scholarships. Mark your calendar for this fun, informative morning – and stay for free admission to the MLC volleyball game vs. Northwestern!

If you would like to be the contact for St. John's, please email the church office at [office@stjohnsnewulm.com](mailto:office@stjohnsnewulm.com).

# MLC Homecoming

## Free Family Fun for Everyone

**Sprinter Fun Run/Walk:** Once again, the 1-mile Sprinter Fun Run/Walk will kick off Martin Luther College Homecoming on Saturday, October 8 at 8:30. This year, it will begin and end at the new Betty Kohn Fieldhouse ([1800 Boettger Rd](#)). The entire route is flat and paved (wheelchair and stroller-friendly). Learn more, sign up, and purchase t-shirts at [bit.ly/MLCFunRun22](https://bit.ly/MLCFunRun22).

While the event is **FREE** and you are able to just come and participate, you must **register by October 6 to be eligible for one of many community-sponsored door prizes. Commemorative t-shirt orders (\$8-\$12) are due by September 26<sup>th</sup>**. Participants are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to donate to the MLC Food Bank. Stick around after the race and check out the new [Betty Kohn Fieldhouse](#) as we thank the Lord and dedicate this wonderful gift.

**Family Fun Zone/Alumni Registration:** After the Fun Run/Walk, enjoy more FREE fun back on campus in the Luther Student Center/Gym. It will begin at 10 AM after the Fieldhouse dedication. There will be carnival activities (Knocker Ball, inflatables, games, etc) as well as coffee, cocoa, and sno cones. Alumni are encouraged to sign-in and claim a complimentary alumni t-shirt.

**Alumni Mixer:** Alumni are invited to finish the day off with a free evening reception (4-7:30 PM) at the Kegel Klub ([416 19th St N](#)).

Check out [mlc-wels.edu/events/homecoming/](https://mlc-wels.edu/events/homecoming/) for the full slate of events (including Knights football and soccer) and plan to spend October 8 at your college of ministry!

## St. Paul's School

The school year is starting differently than any of the last four years. Since I have been principal at St. Paul's Lutheran School, each year has brought a challenge for our families, faculty, and staff. Most everyone remembers the year we started construction on our new building. Does everyone also remember that during the winter, we had ten snow days? We also ended school early that year, 2018-2019. Does everyone remember that the contents of our school were stored in the gym and three trailers over the summer? Teachers had little classroom access, so we started a week late. Construction continued. People may remember the school office housed in the trailer that year. However, by January, we were ready for dedication. Less than two months after we dedicated the building, everyone transitioned to distance learning for the rest of the school year, 2019-2020. In one of our most difficult years, the following year was a mixture of in-person and distance learning for our teachers and students. A positive COVID test was like knocking down pins at a bowling alley as students were quarantined along with their entire families. Does everyone remember we started four-day weeks after Thanksgiving? 2020-2021.

Last year, when we thought it might be all over, we continued with some COVID protocol, which highlighted the invention of our sick table. We used the sick table to pass homework to families so they could grab work in the entryway to school, 2021-2022. At the end of the year, it started to show signs that we had made it through the worst of it, but we won't forget our students' struggles. We must continue to provide support for our students. This year we are focusing on these challenges, and we hope to continue doing that in the future.

We are thankful that this seems to be the year like other years we remember fondly. Pray for our school, faculty, staff, and families. Most of all, pray for our students.

Pete Markgraf  
St. Paul's School Principal