

ST. JOHN'S NEWSLETTER



BUILT ON CHRIST OUR CORNERSTONE

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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-In God's Grace - In God's Service

“UTOPIA or NEW CREATION?”

Under God's incredible grace and mercy we will very soon be celebrating the advent of the Year of Our Lord, 2022. Even as we rejoice to receive another year under our Lord's blessing, we cannot help but to see the increasing tribulation and growth of coldness, immorality, and wickedness in the world. All of us hope for a better place, but *where* should we look for such?

Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) was an English lawyer, social philosopher, author, statesman, and served as the Lord High Chancellor under Henry VIII.¹ In 1516 his book *Utopia* was first published. In this book, he contrasts the antagonistic social life of European states with the perfectly orderly, reasonable social arrangements of Utopia, an imaginary island state. And it is from this book that we get the word *utopia*, which generally means to us a place that is perfect in its government, laws, and social conditions. And so there have been and still are many who seek to construct such a utopia “for the betterment of all.”

Interestingly, More made a play on words. The Greek word “eu-topos” literally means “good place.” But More used the similar sounding word, “ou-topos,” which literally means “no place,” or “nowhere.” It is questioned whether he actually believed that such a place could be made, hence it is “nowhere” *now*, or if he thought such was impossible and was simply using his book as a method to discuss politics, etc. Yet whether More actually believed that such a state could be achieved or not is not only uncertain, it is, ultimately, unimportant. For both theology (God's Word) and experience prove that it cannot happen.

Christianity does not promise a utopia. We understand that such is truly a “no place,” to be found nowhere in a fallen world. Paradise was lost with Adam and Eve's rebellion. Mankind is now corrupted by sin (original), which leads to all sorts of actual sins, both the commission of evil and the omission of good. Because of this, all who attempted to actualize utopia have left blood, death, and destruction behind them. And not unexpectedly, the same order that was decried and removed with violence is replaced with a new order that, under the external wrappings, looks much the same as the old, since inequalities and injustices remain. To this day, those who promise utopia, external peace, health, prosperity, etc., are promising a “no place,” though they will still exact a great cost as they lead us to “nowhere.”

No, Christians do not have a utopian view of the world because we accept the Fall into sin. We accept that all people are sinners, that the devil is active, and that this world, being run by sinners who are run by the devil, will only bring the good God forces out of it. In fact, the earthly good that they offer becomes a great temptation to turn from Christ, since He and His Church are definitely decried as a major reason people cannot achieve utopia. And there's some truth to that since we speak the truth to this world, the truth that utopia is “no place,” hoping that they will not fall into the trap of going “nowhere,” that is, spiritually, which will leave them condemned.

Speaking of this world, and we who must live in it, Martin Luther wrote,

To the others, who would like to keep their conscience clear, we have this to say: God has thrown us into the world, under the power of the devil. As a result, we have no paradise here. Rather, at any time we can expect all kinds of misfortune to body, wife, child, property, and honor. And if there is one hour in which there are less than ten disasters or an hour in which we can even survive, we ought to say, “How good God is to me!”

¹ Henry later had More executed for treason because he held that the pope, and not the king, was the highest authority over the church. Not surprisingly then, More also opposed the Protestant Reformation, writing polemics against all the major protestant leaders of that time period including Martin Luther. The Roman Church declared him a martyr in and canonized him as a saint in 2000.

He has not sent every disaster to me in this one hour.” How is that possible? Indeed, as long as I live under the devil’s power, I should not have one happy hour. That is what we teach our people. Of course, you may do something else. You may build yourself a paradise where the devil cannot get in so that you need not expect the rage of any tyrant. We will watch you! Actually things go too well for us. We are too happy and content. We do not know how good God is to us and we believe neither that God takes care of us nor that the devil is so evil. We want to be nothing but wicked scoundrels and yet receive nothing but good from God.²

Christians do not live in delusions, but in the reality of this world. While we certainly do works of mercy to help those in need and, by such, do bring some blessed relief, we do not think that we can fix the world since God declares that it must be ended by fire. Yet, we do not live in abject pessimism and hopelessness either. God remains active, continuing to provide daily bread, giving us all we need to support this body and life and so much more. In addition, we know that we are actually on the path, not to *ou-topos* (nowhere), but to *eu-topos* (a good place).

Yes, we live in the certain hope of a new heavens and earth. This is not just trying to fix all the bad, but removing it completely and replacing it with perfect holiness and righteousness. This is not us forcing our version of perfection upon others, but God reinstating the perfection of the universe in which He first made it. God Himself will descend and live with us, His visible presence being the source of everlasting joy, comfort, peace, healing, light, life, and glory for which we so dearly long.

So dear believers, do not seek utopia, as that is, quite truly, *nowhere*. But rightly understood, do seek “heaven on earth,” just remembering that only God can make such happen and that He will do such only when Christ returns in glory and ushers in the fullness of the new creation for us, His redeemed people. And until then, God grant you a blessed New Year in which you again receive and recognize His many gifts to you, rightly rejoice in them, and readily serve others, even when that brings suffering and hardship. For a willingness to give up comforts and endure such for Christ and the neighbor is the proof that your hope is not in some godless utopia, but a Christ-filled *eu-topos* which truly is coming soon!

In Christian hope and love, Pastor Nerud

Apologetics: Pristine Saturn Problem³

What are Saturn’s spectacular rings composed of? This was a great mystery to scientists ever since Christian Huygens first suggested in 1655 that Saturn had rings. It was solved by the great creationist physicist James Clerk Maxwell^a in 1859: they could not be solid, because they would be unstable; so instead, they comprised independently orbiting particles.

But there are still huge unsolved problems for evolutionists. Why are Saturn’s rings comprised mostly of water ice, whereas the less massive rings of Neptune and Uranus have more rock in them? Current evolutionary theories of ring formation, which mostly presume passing objects were captured and pulverized by large planets’ gravitational forces, struggle to provide satisfactory explanations.^{b,c}

So it’s not surprising that Kobe University’s Ryuki Hyodo has said, “The origin of Saturn’s rings remains elusive.”^b Aside from the difficulty of explaining how the icy rings formed, one of the problems is the “question of timing,”^b i.e. according to the evolutionary timeline. That’s because the water ice of Saturn’s rings is too *clean* to be the claimed billions of years in age—interplanetary dust ought to have polluted it, if it really were that old. As Matthew Tiscareno of the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California, observed regarding Saturn’s ring ice, “Even if you can get it in the first place, how does it survive for four billion years and still look pristine?”^b

Actually, one might say that the One whose handiwork adorns the skies did so in such a way as to thwart naturalistic attempts to explain our solar system and the universe beyond. The evidence from NASA probes and other studies of Saturn and its rings and moons now overwhelmingly points to a ‘Young Saturn.’^d This is right in line with the Bible’s account of our universe having been created only thousands of years ago, not billions. The Psalmist indeed said it well: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1)

References and notes

- a. Doyle, S., [Einstein’s Heroes—biblical creationists](#), *Creation* **36**(1):54–55, 2014; creation.com/einsteins-heroes.
- b. Benson, E., Saturn’s rings may be from the whirl of a passing icy rock, newscientist.com, 16 September 2016.
- c. Hyodo, R., and 3 others, Ring formation around giant planets by tidal disruption of a single passing large Kuiper Belt object, *Icarus*, online 29 September 2016 | doi:10.1016/j.icarus.2016.09.012.
- d. Coppedge, D., [Young Saturn](#), *Creation* **33**(3):44–46, 2011; creation.com/young-saturn.

² Luther, M. (1999). *Luther’s works, vol. 46: The Christian in Society III*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 46, pp. 117–118). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

³By David Catchpoole; <https://creation.com/saturn-pristine-problem>. Underlined texts are hyperlinks in the online article.

A Look at the Lutheran Confessions

In Article XIV, Order in the Church, we clearly confessed that only God can convey the pastoral office upon a man, that He does such through His Church when she calls one who fits His requirements given in Scripture, and that this call is then normally confirmed by the Rite of Ordination.

In Article XV, Church Ceremonies, we confess that good, historic traditions, rites and decorations should be kept. However, such are kept to maintain good order and proper reverence in the Church, and as teaching aids for building the people up in the true faith, but never to appease God or to earn the forgiveness of sins. For to place a ceremony which we perform on that level is to debunk the Gospel of grace in Christ as it removes Him as the sole mediator, putting our works in His place.

Augsburg Confession Article XV: Church Ceremonies⁴

Our churches teach that ceremonies ought to be observed that may be observed without sin. Also, ceremonies and other practices that are profitable for tranquility and good order in the Church (in particular, holy days, festivals, and the like) ought to be observed.

Yet, the people are taught that consciences are not to be burdened as though observing such things was necessary for salvation [Colossians 2:16-17]. They are also taught that human traditions instituted to make atonement with God, to merit grace, and to make satisfaction for sins are opposed to the Gospel and the doctrine of faith. So vows and traditions concerning meats and days, and so forth, instituted to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sins, are useless and contrary to the Gospel.

BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday morning Adult Bible class – 8:45am in the Fellowship Hall. The current study is the book of Colossians.



- Men's Bible Study – 7 pm the first Thursday of each month. Topic of study is, "The Genesis Academy".
- Adult Bible study – 1:30 pm the third Thursday of each month. Topic of study is, "The Genesis Academy".



- Please call the office or Pastor if you desire private communion during this time.
- Please call the office when someone is ill, hospitalized, or homebound.
- Please use this email to contact the office: churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org
- Website address – www.stjohnsgeneseo.org
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> All Sunday services are 'Live' streamed at 10am and posted to our church website the following day.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Celebrate a special occasion with flowers given for a Sunday worship service. Sign the flower chart, found on the bulletin board next to the rest rooms. **NOTE: Cost for flowers has increased to \$30.** Put money in a yellow envelope (found by the chart). Fill in the date for the flowers along and occasion/memory and place envelope in the offering plate.



SERVING OPPORTUNITY

We are looking for someone who will be responsible for the Altar flowers each week. This job entails picking up the two arrangements from the Silvis Hy-Vee when needed, putting them on the Altar for each service and then putting them back in the refrigerator, and keeping them watered. More details can be gotten from Terri Hock. Terri will continue to call the orders in as requested by the congregation.

CONGRATULATIONS

Hailie Miller, daughter of Rod and Theresa Miller, graduated in December with a degree in Elementary Education. May God guide Hailie as she begins using her education as a teacher. May her faith in the Triune God shine boldly in her new career.

⁴ *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, Paul McCain, Ed. CPH, 2006

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

5 Drew/Cathy Schillinger (2003) - 19 yrs
14 Richard/Mandolyn Davila (2006) - 16 yrs



25 Alan/Christy Magerkurth (2003) - 19 yrs
27 Thad/Kathy Curry (1990) – 32 yrs

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

3 Alicia Willeford
4 Addison Jorgensen
4 Avery Magerkurth
4 Bridgette Smith
5 Tricia Anderson
5 Emily Marckese
6 Larry Hock
6 Madeline Mosher



7 Makeena Wickwire
8 Jackson Bellmyer
11 Kelly Helge
11 Kyra Nash
12 Mary Jayne Nash
18 Teresa Hock
20 Paul Mosher
21 Aaron Raschke

23 Justine Mitchell
25 Sara Yerkey
27 Marta Haughton
28 Laura Anderson
28 Rylan Mitchell
29 Logan Raschke

JANUARY BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

1 Nathaniel Helg
3 Kenneth Allison
6 Kate Rocheford
9 Alan Magerkurth
11 Laney Esterlein
13 Alicia Willeford



13 Wayne Winchell
14 Cole Freeman
14 Kayci Freeman
14 Larry Kane
16 Jack Magerkurth
18 Michele Barry

19 Heidi McKibbon
20 Carolyn Wildermuth
26 Alex Miller
26 Lucas Thompson
30 Haillie Miller

DATES TO REMEMBER

Pastor Nerud and his family will be on vacation January 3-10th. If you are in need of pastoral care, please call the office or Rev. Mueller. Rev Hagan will lead the Bible class and worship on January 9.

Council members will meet after the worship service January 9 for their 'Leadership Workshop'. This should not be a lengthy meeting but you are welcome to bring a sack lunch if you so desire. This will replace the Tuesday evening council meeting in January.

The 2022 council members will be installed Sunday, January 16. All are asked to attend this service if possible. A Quarterly Voters' Assembly will be held after the worship service Sunday, January 23.



Be ready to share your faith. You can tell how much you need Jesus and how much He has done for you. You need only to point out who Jesus is and what He has done for you. The Holy Spirit uses the Gospel to call people to faith. We can trust Him.

"In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " (Acts 20:35)



And indeed, it is. Does this not strike a chord that resonates in us all? Which of us can't recall the look of surprise and thanks for the Christmas gifts that we labored to give to those whom we love? And the joy written on their face when that gift is received with thanksgiving means more than all the gifts we have received. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Our Lord knew this because He practiced it. He gave of Himself – sparing not even His life in death – in order to give us back to our Father in heaven. He knew that in giving you get more because joy is multiplied in giving. The one who receives and the one who gives both rejoice in what is given and received. And, what is more, the one who receives only wants to give back to the one who gave so generously in thanksgiving.

So it is with our tithes and offerings in church. We want to give because we have received from God all that we are and all that we have. Our giving does not originate in what we must do to earn God's favor. We have God's favor because of His gift of His Son, given through Word and Sacrament. Thus, we are made free from the compulsion of giving so that our tithes and offering are freely given in thanksgiving for what God has so generously given to us.

Why then does the church struggle to make budgets? Why does the church always seem stretched so thin when it is the place where God continually gives us His forgiveness of sins? Why does the church struggle when God, out of love for us, generously pours out His grace and mercy?

It is because we are sinners. Our fallen nature makes us selfish and miserly. It leads us to believe that we can have our cake and eat it, too. Because of sin, we want God's grace and mercy; we want His blessings of body and soul. But we don't want to share it with those around us. We want to remain comfortable in our own self-contained, neat, and tidy lives – without the headaches of loving those around us by helping them in their time of need.

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” Remember that God has placed you in a church, not only to receive His grace and mercy, but to press His eternal and temporal blessings into service to your neighbor.

Your tithes and offerings ensure that those around you have a pastor to preach the life-saving and life-giving Word of God. They ensure that the lights, heat, and air-conditioning are working. They ensure there is water for Holy Baptism as well as bread and wine for Holy Communion. They even ensure that your pastor has food and clothing and presents for his own family. The gifts of God are immeasurable. They multiply and redound to everyone’s good as the fish and loaves in the feeding of the five thousand.

So, remember the words of the Lord Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” And remember the joy that attended the gifts you gave at Christmas. This same joy attends your gifts to the church.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Thank you to the Sunday school children, teachers and all who helped prepare and present the message of our Savior’s birth. May all who heard your words and songs grow in faith and find comfort and peace in these sweet words.



PRAYER REQUESTS

Our Infrequent Attendees –pray the Holy Spirit bring them to understand their need to be in regular worship in church and we as brothers and sisters in Christ would reach out to them.

Our LWML Chapter– that God would continue to bless their work.

Sunday school – pray the Holy Spirit would direct and guide the students to a better understanding of God’s love and mercy in Jesus Christ and that all parents would be diligent in bringing their children each Sunday.

Youth – pray the Holy Spirit would provide the means to work with our youth to keep them faithful to their confirmation promises. Bless and increase their numbers.

Elderly/Homebound - pray that this congregation would continually remember our Elderly and Shut-ins and minister to their special needs.

Confirmation Students – pray that they will be eager to study, learn and grow in the teachings of the Lutheran church and their faith. May they see this is the beginning of a life lived for Jesus.



REMEMBERING THOSE IN NEED!

ST. JOHN’S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy these members of St. John’s:

Linda Aper
Elizabeth Bjork
Paula Chapa
Jim Dahl

Lois Esterlein
Betty Firch
Arlyn Helke
Lillian Hock

Lynne Johnson
Jim Rahn
Drew Schillinger
Carolyn Werner

Marilyn Woods

OUR EXTENDED FAMILY/FRIENDS:

Don Eggers (son of a friend of Marilyn Woods)
Jodi Martins (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)
John & Anita Clausing (missionaries in Kenya)
Marilyn Potts (wife of Cal, former LFC)
Virginia Miller (mother of Jamie Werling)
Delores Gonion (mother of Michele Barry)

Rev Justin Kane (son of Sandra Kane)
Bill Erdman (brother of Bob Erdman)
Joan Barry (mother of Brad Barry)
Susan Goetz (wife of Joel Goetz)
Crystal Krause (neighbor of Linda Aper)

MILITARY, THOSE SERVING & THEIR FAMILIES:

Mandy/Richard Davila (daughter/husband of Linda Aper)
Luke/Nicole Thompson (son/wife of John/Kindra Thompson)
Ken Willeford (husband of Alicia Willeford)
Karl Flynn (son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Flynn)

Zachary/Tiffany Gardner (nephew/wife of Lois Esterlein)
Casey Powers Jr (step-son of Lisa Powers)
Brittany Loenser (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

FROM OUR SEMINARIAN

Winter has finally come to the Seminary. We have a few weeks of classes this quarter before we have our Christmas break. This will probably be my hardest quarter because I am taking the maximum number of classes. All of the classes should be good but all of my time will be spent on school work. Two of the classes I am most looking forward to is a class about the theology of Baptism and another that focuses on the first 18 months of being a pastor. I hope you all have a good Christmas and thank you for all of the support and prayers you have given me.

God’s Peace, Matt Carlson

A Joy-Filled Christmas

“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” Luke 2:10

The song “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” expresses the merry sentiment we all want at Christmas time. Though we may not always feel merry with COVID continuing to impact our lives with losses, social distancing, and restrictions on gatherings. Yet, even if our Christmas isn’t merry, it can be joy-filled.

Consider the stress and difficulties Mary and Joseph endured. Her pregnancy undoubtedly evoked rumors and accusations from many people. They had to travel over 70 miles to Bethlehem where they had no place to stay except a stable. Yet, they had the joy of knowing God was with them and would take care of them and the baby.

God never promised us continual happiness and glee. But he does promise to give us joy in all circumstances. **“Rejoice in the Lord always...the Lord is at hand.”** Phil.4:4 I once knew a nursing home resident who defined joy in the Lord as being glad that God is close by. When we feel sad, we should not force ourselves to look happy for the sake of others. Instead, be honest about our feelings, and remind each other that God is near us during our sad times too.

Focus on the reason for the season: Jesus. It is not about food, gifts, candies and cookies. We celebrate that Immanuel has come to us and remains with us always. Verse three of the song “Silent Night” describes our Savior as **LOVE’S PURE LIGHT**. John 1:9 tells us **The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world**. The light of our Savior’s loving presence chases away darkness and fills us with joy in the Lord. We don’t have to stress about making Christmas merry. Instead, we can have a joy-filled Christmas as Jesus shines his love in us and through us!

Chaplain Jeffrey Harter

Stay Connected with your District

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- † CID’s GatePost (newsletter)
- † Subscribe to the E-GatePost/*News You Can Use*
- † Stay connect with us on Facebook and Instagram -- [Central Illinois District-LCMS](#)

CID Board of Directors’ Meeting Summary

The Board of Directors met at the district office on Tuesday, November 23.

1st Vice President Rev. Rick Milas has retired and moved away from the district, so it was necessary that he resign his position. 2nd VP Rev. Mark Eddy is now the 1st VP. Rev. Michael Mohr, having received the second highest number of votes at the convention, succeeds Rev. Milas as the Eastern Region VP and is ordered as the 2nd VP. This required Rev. James Stunkel to move from Assistant Secretary to Secretary.

President Miller provided updates on the 19 vacancies in the district. Rev. Doug Minton has been appointed as the Iroquois Circuit Visitor to succeed Rev. Tim Hahn, who accepted a call outside of the district.

Trip Rodgers shared information regarding Senate Bill 818, a comprehensive and aggressive sex education program so that parents in congregations can know what non-Biblical views the state will be requiring of public-school education. Plans continue for various youth groups to attend either the National Youth Gathering or Higher Things conferences this summer. Plans are also in the works for the 2022 District Bible Bowl.

Rev. Dr. Ken Schurb shared news from Financial Secretary Jim Frazee that YTD giving is within \$600 (4/100 of 1%) of the anticipated income from congregations. This is the closest we have been in many years.

As financial reports were reviewed, Treasurer Dale Dirks noted expenditures were not as high as anticipated, so the financial picture is even better than previously anticipated.

Following a thorough review, the Board of Directors passed a tentative budget of \$1.9 million in anticipated expenses over against \$1.8 million in anticipated income (not counting pass-through items like National Youth Gathering funds) and roughly \$500k in reserves and cash-on-hand to make a budget balanced according to CID Bylaw 9.01(d).

Members of One Body is the next in a series of *re: Vitality* modules from the Synod’s Office of National Mission. The subject of this module, currently in its final phases of development, is assimilation of new church members. As part of a pilot project, Dr. Ken Schurb will teach the preliminary **Members of One Body** Bible study at Trinity, Springfield on a series of four Tuesday evenings: February 1 and 15 and March 1 and 15. All are invited! If your church might be interested in *Members of One Body*, you can take a taste of it, so save the dates now. Please let us know if you are planning on attending or for more information, contact kschurb@cidlcms.org



St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church—Geneseo IL

January 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am	3 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i> Pastor on Vacation —	4	5	6	7	8 <i>Take down Christmas decorations 9:00 am</i>
9 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am Leadership Meet 11 am	10 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	11	12 Confirmation 5 pm	13 Elders 6 pm Men's Bible Study 7 pm	14	15
16 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am Installation of Officers	17 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i> OFFICE CLOSED	18	19 Confirmation 5 pm	20 Bible Study 1:30 pm	21	22
23 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am Voters' Assembly 11 am	24 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	25 SS Teachers' 6:30 pm	26 Confirmation 5 pm	27	28	29
30 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am	31 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>					



ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
8948 N 1900 AVE
GENESEO IL 61254-8941

Sunday school/Adult & Youth Bible Class - 8:45 am

WORSHIP SERVICES 10 am - (Communion -1st, 3rd Sundays of this month)

**Live Streaming each week
on Facebook**

