

# St. John's Newsletter – Summer 2013

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## From His Word ...

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God ... Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist” (Ephesians 6:12-14 NIV).

In our day of zippers, snaps, Velcro, and elastic, we can forget how vital belts were. The belt held everything in place. It kept the loose fitting tunic against the body, so that it didn't flop free entangling the arms and tripping the feet. It kept the scabbard in place, so that the sword was not lost. It also served as the anchor to tie down the lower end of the breastplate. How could the breastplate protect the heart and vital organs if it kept swinging to the right and left at every move?

The belt of truth is under attack. That's nothing new. Think of Pontius Pilate's dismissive question from twenty centuries ago: “What is truth?” (John 18:38 NIV). Or look at how Satan from the very beginning attacked the truth: “Did God really say?” (Genesis 3:1 NIV).

People talk a lot about truth. But their truths keep changing. Many build their truths on their own experiences and feelings. How quickly that sort of “truth” shifts! For example, many who once considered homosexuality wrong change their minds when someone close “comes out of the closet.”

Or consider scientific truths. When I was growing up margarine was healthier than butter. Then studies said that the trans fat in many margarines was bad. So now margarine is made differently. And I forget whether eggs are currently good or bad. (Are the chickens changing the ingredients they put in?) How rapidly these truths change!

Even beyond the medical sciences, scientific truths are always in flux. For example, Newton's law of gravity was modified by Einstein. In fact, unexpected experimental outcomes intrigue scientists most of all. Then they can invent new theories and modify current truths to explain those results.

So when people talk about “truth,” they are not talking about something that is firm and unchanging. At best their idea of truth is a loose, frayed belt that will fall off sooner rather than later. Do we really want to entrust our future to that sort of truth?

So where can we find the truth that does not change, even though the world around us is in constant change and decay? What truth is the firm foundation on which to build our hope for this life and for eternity?

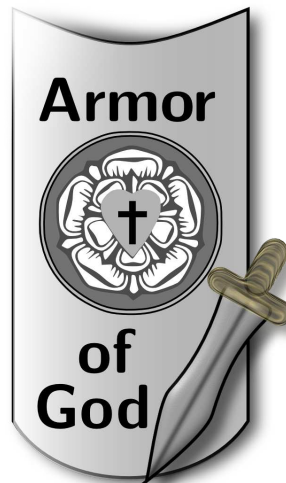
In prayer to his heavenly Father, Jesus said, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17 NIV). The truth of God's Word never fails. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35 NIV), Jesus promises.

Hold on to the truth of God's Word and do not compromise it. Build your hope on the testimony that

God's word gives. For it is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

If we compromise and start thinking that the Bible is only mostly true. Then the belt of truth is slipping away. How then would we know which words of the Bible were really true and which weren't, unless *all* of the Bible is the truth?

But with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, you will not be entangled and tripped by the arguments of worldly wisdom. Rather you will have the sword of the Spirit always ready at your side and the breastplate of Jesus' righteousness firmly held in place. Then you will stand firm against the assaults of Satan and his evil forces.



## Vacation Bible School

VBS begins next week, Monday, July 8, through Friday, July 12. We'll start at 10:00 a.m. with opening devotion and music and go until 12:00 noon. The Bible lessons and crafts will help us think about the armor of God as the Apostle Paul describes it in Ephesians 6:10-18.

Invitations for VBS are available at church so that you can invite others to come. It's open for all children from ages three up to those entering 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

On Friday we plan to have a closing program starting at 11:30 a.m. with pizza following. Everyone is invited to come and see what the children have learned over the week.

We can use anyone willing to help with music, teaching, crafts, or activities, even if you can only make it for one or two of the days. We also need someone to supply snacks for Tuesday and someone else for Thursday. If you can help in any of these ways either sign up at church or call Pastor Bitter (392-5572).

Enclosed is an outline of the lessons for each day.

## Finances

The Lord has opened your hearts to support his work through the first month of summer. The General Fund is still in the black and we are on track for meeting our mission goal of \$8000 for the Congregational Mission Offering (CMO). Keep up the good work. Here are the numbers:

### General Fund:

Balance June 1	\$722.47
June Offering	+\$7700.11
June Expenses	-\$7899.59
Balance June 30	\$522.99

### Congregational Mission Offering:

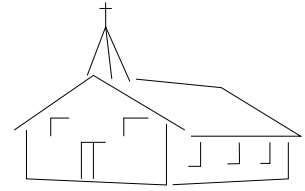
May \$1482.00 – YTD \$4376.50

### Roof Fund:

(-\$4035.68) - See the next article

## Roof Fund

The new shingles look great and the leak in the flat roof has been repaired. However the roof fund has a deficit of \$4035.68. The bill has been paid, so we are not incurring finance charges. But to pay it, money from other funds has been used, which should be paid back. So if you would like to make a special offering toward the roof, please do so.



## Independence Day

For our regular 9:00 a.m. service next Sunday, July 7, we will have a special order of service remembering the blessings God has given us through our country.

## Outdoor Service

On Sunday, July 28, we will join St. Paul's of Morris, in an outdoor service at Pomme de Terre Park at 10:30 a.m. A potluck picnic will follow. So bring along your lawn chair and a dish to pass. You're welcome to bring your own place setting, but paper plates, cups, and plastic utensils will be available in case you forget. Join us to hear God's Word in a different setting and share fellowship and food with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

## Fair Booth

We are planning on having a fair booth with St. Paul's at the county fair again this year. Please sign up for a time to man the booth when the sheet is available.

## Mission Festival

Mission Festival is scheduled for September 15. Pastor Michael Hatzung will be here that day to share with us some of the work we are doing together as the WELS. Look for bulletin inserts in the weeks ahead that will share more about his presentation.

# Armor of God – Ephesians 6:14-17

## Day One

*“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist”* (Ephesians 6:14 NIV84)

**Theme:** Believe God’s truth more than anything else.

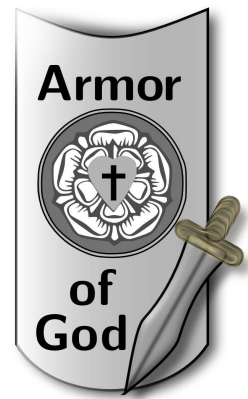
**Bible Lesson:** Creation and the Fall (Genesis 1-3)

**Application:** God created a perfect world for Adam and Eve. All was very good.

But instead of trusting the Lord’s love to take care of them, they believed the devil’s lie. They disobeyed God’s command and became his enemy. Sin and death passed down to each of us. But the Lord promised to send the Savior born from a woman. He would crush the devil’s power to save us. Through Jesus, God brings us into his family. What a promise to believe!

Without the belt, the soldier’s other armor would come lose and be lost. If we give up on God’s truth, we lose all the good things he wants to bless us with. So believe God’s truth more than anything else.

**Memory Treasure:** “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 NIV84).



## Day Two

*“Stand firm then ... with the breastplate of righteousness in place”* (Ephesians 6:14 NIV84)

**Theme:** Trust that Jesus’ right record covers you.

**Bible Lesson:** Abraham (Genesis 12, 15:1-6)

**Application:** God promised Abraham that the Savior would come from his family to bring blessings to all peoples on earth. Abraham believed God’s promise, but Abraham didn’t always do the right thing. He was a sinner like us. For example, he lied to Pharaoh about Sarah his wife. His own righteousness had many holes in it. But Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned. He always did the right thing. Abraham trusted that the Lord counted Jesus’ right record as his own. Abraham had not earned or deserved this blessing. The Lord freely credited it to him at no charge. God makes this promise to you. Trust it!

Just as a breastplate protects the soldier and saves him from death, so also Jesus’ righteousness protects us who believe in him. Because his right record covers you, God counts you as his forgiven child. So trust that Jesus’ right record covers you.

**Memory Treasure:** “Blessed are they ... whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:7 NIV84). or “Blessed are they who transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:7 NIV84).

## Day Three

*“Stand firm ... with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”* (Ephesians 6:14, 15 NIV84)

**Theme:** Spread the Good News of Jesus

**Bible Lesson:** The Shepherds at Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:1-20)

**Application:** God kept his promise and sent his Son. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. What good news! God sent his angel to tell shepherds this good news. Jesus had come to bring us peace with God by taking away our sins. That's the Gospel, which means "good news." The shepherds didn't keep this good news to themselves. They went to the manger and told them what had happened. Then they returned praising God so that others would learn that the Savior had been born.

The gospel of Jesus has brought peace to our hearts because Jesus takes away our sins. So we are ready and eager to spread the good news, just as soldiers were ready to go anywhere when their feet were fitted with the right shoes.

**Memory Treasure:** "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15 NIV84)

## Day Four

*"Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one"* (Ephesians 6:16 NIV84).

**Theme:** Always look to Jesus in faith

**Bible Lesson:** Jesus' Feeds the Five Thousand and Walks on Water (Matthew 14:13-33)

**Application:** The people were hungry. Jesus took care of their need. He provided food for thousands of people from five loaves and two fish. The disciples were caught in a storm on the lake. Jesus took care of their need. He walked out on the water out to them. Peter could even walk on the water out to Jesus, as long as he was looking to Jesus in faith.

The devil shoots his arrows at us so that we doubt God's love and promises. Will Jesus really take care of me? Will he help me in trouble? Will he take me to heaven? Faith holds on to Jesus' promises like a shield. As long as we keep looking to Jesus in faith and listening to his voice, we can do whatever he promises.

**Memory Treasure:** "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake'" (Hebrews 13:5 NIV84)

## Day Five

*"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17 NIV84)

**Theme:** Only Jesus saves

**Bible Lesson:** Christ's Death and Resurrection (Matthew 27:32 – 28:10)

**Application:** Jesus was innocent. He had done nothing wrong. Unlike us, he was sinless. But he suffered the punishment we deserve. He died in our place. He paid for every last one of our sins. God's Son died for us. He rose from the dead as the proof that all your sins are paid for. Here's the proof that he is our God and Savior. Only Jesus saves.

Never leave Jesus behind, just as a soldier wouldn't go into battle without his helmet. Only Jesus saves. Where do we learn this truth? Want alone makes us wise for salvation? Only the word of God, the Bible. That's the sword of the Spirit. Wield it at all times as you keep God's Word treasured in your heart.

**Memory Treasure:** "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21 NIV84).

Dear friends in Christ,

Here is the list for greeters, ushers and cleaners for the next three months (Jul-Sept). If you are unable to serve as scheduled, please switch with someone else. If you would like to be removed from the list, please contact Pastor Bitter.

As we serve one another in these ways, we are serving our Lord, who has ransomed us to be his own. So I give thanks to God for enabling us to work together as members of one body in Christ, each one of us using the gifts he gives to gladly build up the body and serve one another in love.

## **Ushers:**

(List of duties are posted in the narthex.  
The captain is responsible to make sure that two members of his team will be present to usher.)

### **July**

Doug Nelson (capt.)  
Jason Brown  
Collin Brown  
Cody Greiner  
Seth Nelson  
Delroy Thielke

### **August**

Dick Lubenow (capt.)  
John Jepma  
Barry Nelson  
Dennis Schroeder  
Cory Schroeder

### **September**

Duane Hausmann (capt.)  
Scott Boettcher  
Ryan Gray  
Tom Mohr  
Harvey Flaten

## **Greeters:**

(Please be at church 15 minutes before service to hand out bulletins and greet. If you cannot make your Sunday, please exchange with someone.)

### **July**

7-- Scott & Shanon Boettcher  
14-- Rachel Gray and Ryan Gray  
21-- Jason & Amy Brown  
28-- Outdoor Service

### **August**

4-- Shae Brown and Collin Brown  
11-- Eugene DeGier  
18-- Harvey & Mary Flaten  
25-- Jackie Flaten

### **September**

1-- Jeff & Christa Flaten  
8-- Justin & Carrie Flaten  
15-- Jolene Greiner and Cody  
22-- Duane & Bonnie Hausmann  
29-- John & Michelle Hickman

## **Church cleaning:**

(List of duties are posted in the narthex.)

### **July**

Duane & Bonnie Hausmann  
Dennis & Karen Schroeder

### **August**

Dave & Phyllis Joos  
Gerald & Karen Hoffman

### **September**

John & Tawnia Jepma  
Jason & Amy Brown