

April 2023

V i s i o n o t e s



St. John's is full of faithful servants. On Wednesday evenings in Lent, joyful workers including these – (L to R) Kathy Wells, Julie Creek-Hessler, Karen Finnessy, Nancy Krake, and Diana Crans – hosted delicious meals for the congregation.

Our Lenten journey concludes with powerful worship in Holy Week.

Holy Week Worship, April 1-9 (p. 3, 6)

Join us for the whole story.

Ecumenical Good Friday Events (p.8)

Dan the Magic Man, April 16th (p.14)

Unbinding Your Heart (p.19)

In 6 weeks, grow in faith & friendship!

Seeing God: Nature Photography (p. 21)

Travel to Mackinac Island (p.24)

Love in Action: Jail Ministry (p. 26)

WE ARE THE CHURCH TOGETHER

Worship in the Sanctuary

Saturdays at 5pm and Sundays at 9am

Livestream Worship on YouTube

Sundays at 9am

Weekly Online Worship at www.StJohns-LC.org

Church Office: 608-882-4044, Mon-Thurs, 8am-4pm

ST. JOHN'S STAFF

Pastor	Matthew Pook
Pastor of Congregational Care	Jerry Tews
Office Manager & Children's Ministry Director	Chris Cole
Community Life Coordinator	Becca Pook
Custodian	Steve Schmitzer
Financial Director	Deb Herbers
Music Director	Sharon Magee
Communication Coordinator	Alyse Miller
Ministry Coordinator	Carolyn Butts
Technician	Einar Floan
Nursery	Kira Tortomasi

2023 CHURCH COUNCIL

President	Jeff Updike
Vice President/Life & Growth	Amy Larson
Secretary/Fellowship	Keith Miller
Treasurer	Brandon Mohrbacher
Building and Grounds	Sean Mangold
Memorials	Dan Millin
Music and Worship	Renae Smith
Mutual Ministry	Julie Creek-Hessler
Parish Education	Bethany Steindl
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Youth Ministry	Erika Stoker
Youth Representative	Dayne Miller

Mission Endowment & Scholarship Fund Committee

Rhonda Crans, David Karr, Jenna Mangold,
Lynda Moseley, Jonathan Schalow

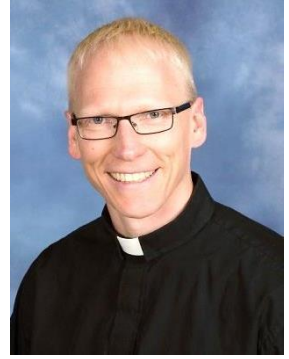
Mutual Ministry Committee

Jeanna Blume, Wanda King, Ann Legris,
Joy Olson, Gordy Miller, Glenace Smelcer

Why Holy Week?

11th in a series of “why” questions about what we do as a church, particularly during worship

When I was 12 years old, I got assigned to be the acolyte for Good Friday worship. I don't remember any Good Friday services before that year, though I am sure I would have attended. But I definitely remember the Good Friday worship service from *that* year. Ever since then I have paid special attention to worship on Good Friday. Let me try to paint a picture with words.



The congregation of my youth had two candelabras of seven candles in the front of the sanctuary. This coordinated with seven scripture readings from the final day of Jesus' life. After each reading, my classmate Heather and I came forward, bowed at the altar, climbed the one step, and each extinguished one candle, from bottom to top. As we extinguished each candle, a hammer was pounded from the balcony, three times. The person pounding the hammer timed it right as Heather and I were snuffing out the candle. Even though I knew it was coming, I would jump each time the hammer first hit. The pounding echoed in the reverberant sanctuary. As I jumped, the bell of my candle lighter would clink on the brass top of the candle. I can still hear it. By the time the last candle was extinguished, the sanctuary was pitch dark, and we could not see where the step was. I remember feeling around with my foot for that one step down from the altar. It was intense! As the lyrics from the song “Were You There” state, “sometimes it causes me to tremble,” and it did.

After Good Friday worship that year, Heather and I knew we wanted to do it again the next year. It was powerful. The words of Jesus' arrest, beating, and crucifixion came to life in the drama. The following year, when I was a 13-year-old 8th grader, the job of acolyte had been handed down to a new 7th grader. But the job of nail pounder was available! You better believe that I hit that hammer as hard as I could, right when the acolyte's bell was hovering over the candle. This was a type of Tenebrae service, which is widely observed in the church in contextual variations. St. John's gathers for an evening Tenebrae Service much like the one of my youth. Good Friday is the middle of *The Three Days* of Holy Week.

Holy Week in the church follows the story of the final week of Jesus' earthly life. We follow closely through the final chapters of the Gospels,

with readings from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Beginning on Palm Sunday we remember how Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph, with palm branches and cheering. Here we recognize that Jesus brings peace and victory. Jesus was loved and honored by the people of his day. In the days to follow, Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem to teach, and the conflict with the religious elites erupted. The plot to kill Jesus moved swiftly forward; Jesus could see it coming, and he told his disciples as much.

The name Maundy Thursday comes from the Latin word for “mandate, command.” We remember how Jesus washed his disciples’ feet on the last night of his life, and he commanded them to “love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12); in other words, life is all about love. Jesus also celebrated the Passover with his followers, and he transformed a tradition over a thousand years old into the sacrament of Holy Communion. This service ends with his arrest in the garden while praying.

Good Friday tells the details of Jesus’ arrest, his trials before the chief priests and Pilate, his mocking and abuse, and his sentencing to death. All this took place overnight, under darkness, to avoid the crowds. Jesus hardly slept, if at all. He was crucified at 9am on Friday. Darkness covered the land at noon. He died at 3pm. All seemed lost for a while, but on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead – **from the saddest day of the year on Friday, to the happiest day in history on Easter Sunday.**

Holy Week is the culmination of our Lenten journey. The Church has been observing Holy Week informally since after the first Easter and officially by the fourth century. The observance of Holy Week has evolved over the years, and today it is celebrated by Christians across denominations and all over the world. It tells the story at the heart of our faith, the story that unites us as God’s people on earth. Every week of the year is important, every day for that matter. But this week is *holy*; it is set apart for the way the church focuses together on the love of Jesus Christ, a love that is greater than death, a love that will never end.

In Christ,



“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”
-Jesus (John 15:13)

REACHING UP: WORSHIP & PRAYER

UNBINDING OUR HEARTS: AN EASTER SERIES

When Jesus was placed in the tomb on Good Friday, he was wrapped up in linen garments; his body was bound up in grave clothes. On Easter morning Jesus was set free from those bindings and came alive in a new way, through his resurrection. Easter can do this



for us, too; it can bring us alive in a new way. Our hearts and our lives can be unbound from the ways of death and despair. Jesus' resurrection brings us alive in a new way, to live from our hearts and to delight in relationships. We can live freely and fully, from our hearts, in healthy and exciting relationships with God, one another, and our neighbors.

This Easter series coordinates with our small group experience around the book "Unbinding Your Heart," an experience that God has used to bring transformation in our church and our lives that began for us ten years ago. In small groups we'll share meaningful conversation and grow in faith. In worship we'll focus on how Easter sets us free from all that binds us up, so that we can live fully from our hearts in a triad of joyful relationships...with God, each other, and all our neighbors.

April 1 & 2... Matthew 21:1-11 (Triumphal Entry)

- Palm Sunday Weekend & the Passion Story
- Children sing in worship
- Beginning of Holy Week (see page 6)

April 9... The Festival of Easter – Matthew 28:1-10

April 15 & 16... Matthew 28:16-20 (The Great Commission)

- Easter 2: "Unbinding Our Hearts"
- Gospel Music Weekend
- Dedication of Piano and Worship Furnishings

April 22 & 23... Acts 10:1-17, 34-48 (Peter's Vision)

- Easter 3: "Unbinding Our Hearts"
- Apostle's Creed Milestone for Fourth Graders

April 29 & 30... Acts 13:1-3; 14:8-18 (Paul's Mission)

- Easter 4: "Unbinding Our Hearts"
- Brief Service of Healing, Saturday, 6pm

HOLY WEEK WITH ST. JOHN'S

April 6 Maundy Thursday

- Worship with Holy Communion Milestone, 5:00pm & 7:00pm (in person and livestreamed online)

April 7 Good Friday

- Ecumenical Luncheon at Creekside Place, 11:30am
Ecumenical Worship at 12:00pm
- Tenebrae Worship, 7:00pm (in person and livestreamed online)

April 8 Prayer Vigil, *no Saturday worship*

April 9 Easter Sunday

- Festival Worship, 6:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am, in person (9:00am livestreamed online)
- Easter Brunch, Served 7:30-8:30am
- Easter Egg Hunt, 8:30am



AN INTRODUCTION TO “THE EASTER TRIDUUM”

Holy Week tells the powerful and poignant story that is at the center of Christian life and faith. Christians around the world focus hearts and minds on the powerful story of the betrayal, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In particular, Maundy Thursday evening through Easter evening is known throughout the Christian church as the Great Three Days of Easter (*Triduum* is Latin for three days). These three days focus intensely on Christ’s passage from death to life. This annual celebration had become a three-day observance by the fourth century.

Worship during Holy Week is best approached as one continuous service. You are invited to remember and witness the entire story.

MORNING PRAYER SERVICE TUESDAYS @8:30am

**St. John’s Prayer Chapel; a 20-minute service of prayer
You are invited. All are welcome.**

WALK THE LABYRINTH IN HOLY WEEK – APRIL 5

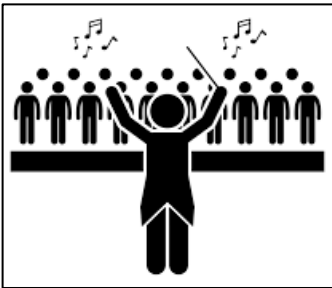


Walking is a form of prayer when we are intentional and mindful. In her book “Unbinding Your Heart,” author Martha Grace Reese promotes a form of walking prayer.

On Wednesday, April 5, in the middle of Holy Week, come gather at 7:00pm at the Peace Garden and Labyrinth at Seminary Park. We

will have a brief introduction and then pray as we walk the labyrinth together. Plan for 30 minutes, much of it in silence. The Evansville Peace Garden & Labyrinth is located in Seminary Park, 26 S. Fourth Street. Whether or not you can join us on April 5, consider walking the Prayer Labyrinth throughout Holy Week and perhaps on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. All ages welcome. Weather permitting. *Save Saturday, May 6, at 1pm, for our next prayer walk on World Labyrinth Day.*

MAUNDY THURSDAY CHOIR EVENT – YOU ARE INVITED



Right after Jesus ate his last supper and inaugurated the sacrament of Holy Communion, he sang a hymn (see Matthew 26:30). In the spirit of remembering Jesus’ last supper with his community, singers of St. John’s will offer a special choral anthem. Singers of all ages and experience-levels are invited to join the choir.

Rehearsal: Wednesday, April 5, 6:00pm, and Thursday, April 6, 6:30pm

Worship: Thursday, April 6, 7:00pm

"Let the resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair to strength and beauty and happiness."

- Floyd W. Tomkins



GOOD FRIDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCHEON AND WORSHIP

The Church on earth is filled with a diversity of understandings of God, but we are all centered on the love of Jesus Christ. On Friday, April 7, 11:30am, you are invited to gather at Creekside Place (102 Maple Street) with all our neighbors to have a light luncheon with a soup buffet, salad, and bread. A suggested donation is \$10; your RSVP is appreciated, to the church office. We will set aside time at 12:00pm, as



one body of Christ, for a worship service with song, scripture, reflection, and prayer, focusing on Jesus' final moments on the cross. This event is hosted by St. John's Lutheran Church, St. Paul Catholic Church, Congregational United Church of Christ, Evansville United Methodist Church, Cooksville Lutheran Church, and Magnolia Advent Christian Church. All members of the community are invited.

A LOOK INTO OUR GOOD FRIDAY TENEBRAE SERVICE

Friday, April 7, 7:00pm, at St. John's

At the heart of the Good Friday liturgy is the passion (which means "suffering") story, which proclaims Jesus as a triumphant king who reigns from the cross. The ancient title for this day—the triumph of the cross—reminds us that the church gathers not to mourn this



day but to celebrate Christ's life-giving passion and to find strength and hope in the tree of life. In the ancient bidding prayer we offer petitions for all the world for whom Christ died. The day's liturgy culminates on Easter morning.

To impress upon the hearts and minds of believers the dreadful consequences of our sin, and the magnitude of our Savior's sacrifice, the ancient church held a special service in the last days of Holy Week, called 'Tenebrae'. 'Tenebrae', which is the Latin word for 'darkness', presents the account of Christ's passion and death. During this service, the candles

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will be successively extinguished. As the candles are extinguished, they symbolize the fading loyalty of the disciples of Jesus, as He was going to the cross. They also remind us that the Life of Jesus is being snuffed out in death. The Sanctuary will become increasingly dark during the service, until we hear of the utter darkness in which our Savior died. At the end of the service, the Christ Candle will be carried out, signifying the burial of our Savior. Worshipers will leave in prayerful silence, pondering Christ's death.

KEEPING VIGIL TILL EASTER SUNRISE, APRIL 7-9

The time from Good Friday until Easter sunrise is a special time to keep watch. Hold vigil. Come near and pray, with or without words. This is what families and friends do at the time of a loved one's death. We think. Talk. Listen. Cry. Remember. Pray. Breathe. This is what will do for Jesus.

St. John's Prayer Vigil starts at 8:00pm on April 7, immediately following the Good Friday worship service. We continue the vigil throughout the day of



Saturday, April 8, and end at sunrise on Easter Sunday morning (by 6:26am). It's a peaceful and sacred time unlike any other. Many people find it to be one of the most holy times of their year. **Sign up for 30 minutes or more, by yourself or with a prayer partner if you wish.**

Prayer is a beautiful and powerful way to meet God. Through conversation with God and intentional quiet time to listen to God, our relationship with God grows. When we quiet our souls and cease from the busy-ness of life around us, we center our hearts and minds on God.

That half hour will be yours in the St. John's chapel for a quiet time of prayer, listening to God, and reflection. See the sign-up sheets on the Ministry Table or online via the St. John's website. Come and be in God's presence on behalf of this church. Pray for our families, our church, our nation, and our world. Give thanks to God for your blessings, and thank God for the life and death of Jesus Christ.

EASTER EGG HUNT – APRIL 9

Did you know that ancient Egyptians exchanged red-colored eggs in honor of spring? This custom spread to the Greeks and Romans and then to the Europeans. In medieval times, eggs were forbidden during Lent, making them a popular treat on Easter Sunday.



Eggs remind us how Jesus emerged from the tomb in his resurrection. Eggs represent new life! If your family is looking for a joyful activity on Easter morning for kids, join St. John’s for an Easter Egg Hunt. **Children ages one year old to fifth grade will meet in the Lounge at 8:30am** to decorate their collection bags. And then the hunt is on!

CLASSIC GOSPEL SONGS FOR WORSHIP

The songs of our faith are a powerful vehicle for carrying the message of the Gospel. Singing has always been a part of the life of faith, going back to the days of Jabal, who is “the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe”



(Genesis 4:21). Even Jesus sang around the Communion table (Matthew 26:30). Gospel Music is a modern, diverse musical genre that is full of dominant vocals and strong harmonies with Christ-centered lyrics. Famous Gospel singers including Aretha Franklin, Elvis Presley, Kirk Franklin, Mahalia Jackson, Johnny Cash, Alan Jackson, and Whitney Houston (whose estate recently released a new Gospel album by her). **In worship on April 15 & 16** we’ll sing out strong to popular Gospel hits like “In the Garden,” “The Old Rugged Cross,” “How Great Thou Art,” and “Because He Lives.” Invite friends and relatives to come sing with joy.

DEDICATION OF STEINWAY PIANO AND WORSHIP FURNISHINGS

Have you been enjoying the beautiful sound from our newly refurbished, century-old Steinway piano? It was returned to us just before last Thanksgiving and has been ringing with praises ever since. Have you



noticed the craftsmanship of our new kneelers and credence table (the small table in the front corner that supports elements for Holy Communion) in the sanctuary? These, along with our three



offering boxes, have been intentionally crafted for our sanctuary by our own Gordy Miller. In worship on April 15 & 16, we'll dedicate these items that support our worship, beautify our sanctuary visually and aurally, and bring glory to God.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE? THE APOSTLE'S CREED MILESTONE

Am I an apostle? And what is a creed? On Sunday, April 23, at 9am worship, **4th graders** will celebrate their Apostle's Creed



milestone. In a workshop after worship students and parents will consider what it means to profess our faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And determine who *is* an apostle and what *is* a creed.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*Reaching Up, Reaching Out, Reaching Within...
because GOD reaches out to us.*

OUR CORE VALUES

<i>Inspiring Worship</i>	<i>Uplifting Prayer</i>
<i>Faithful Service</i>	<i>Caring Invitation</i>
<i>Lifelong Spiritual Growth</i>	<i>Christ-Centered Friendships</i>

HEALING SERVICE – APRIL 29

On various Saturday evenings throughout the year, St. John’s people meet in the front of the sanctuary after 5pm worship for a time dedicated to healing prayer. In about 15 minutes we have the opportunity to light candles, receive anointing with oil, sit in silence in God’s presence, and turn to God *together* for the healing we need in mind, body, and soul.



Children in 3rd–5th grades use their gifts to lead us in worship.

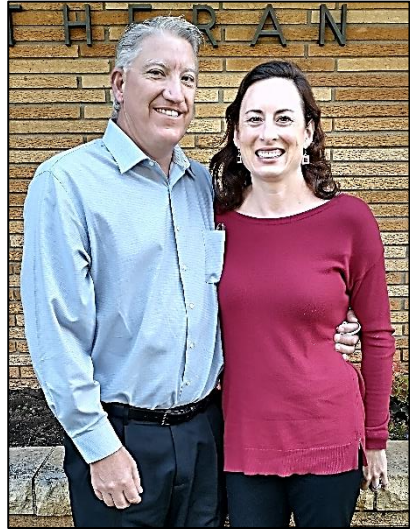


REACHING WITHIN: SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FRIENDSHIP

MAKING CONNECTIONS – ALLISON AND MIKE HILLIARD

by Allison Hilliard

I was born and raised in Victoria, Texas, and regularly visited family in Wisconsin where my parents were from originally. I was baptized in an Episcopal church, though we only attended until I was about 6 years old. As a young adult, I moved around quite often for school and work opportunities, until landing in Milwaukee where I met Mike through a mutual friend. Mike was raised on a dairy farm in Monticello, WI, and attended a United Church of Christ congregation near there through confirmation.



Mike and I moved to Evansville (by the roundabout way of a 2-year stint in Colorado) in 2016. Soon afterwards, we were working together in a wood refinishing business. We have recently started the next chapter in our lives; Mike is a business analyst for computer software, while I work as a project manager in Fitchburg. Both of us enjoy DIY projects (a blessing as we live in a home that presents many opportunities for them) and spending time outdoors in the summer. We go to Milwaukee Brewers games and travel whenever possible.

We started attending St. John's in early 2020 and enjoy the multitude and variety of opportunities to connect with others. I've participated in Altar Guild and help with Faith Corps/Soul Troop on Wednesday afternoons. Mike serves as a confirmation leader with the 6th graders and assists with sound and projection during worship services. We appreciate the social interaction and sense of community that comes with community clean-up days, euchre nights, and especially enjoyed the St. John's trip last summer to see the Passion Play in Germany (see photo on next page).

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St. John's has been an integral part of our faith journey. Similar to the gratitude I feel for the friend that introduced me to



Mike, I experience this same emotion towards my church community. Being part of St. John's enabled me to establish a connection with Jesus Christ, a relationship that I will continue to build for the rest of my life. We know St John's has strengthened our relationship with each other, the community, and God.

We give to St. John's financially because we feel incredibly blessed and it is a good feeling to give! As Gloria Steinem said, "It is more rewarding to watch money change the world than to watch it accumulate." We were encouraged by a friend to try and give more, and it has been a blessing to give. The option of *Simply Giving* (electronic funds transfer) works well for us, is something we can budget for, and ensures that we give even during those times that we might not be present at worship.

DAN THE MAGIC MAN AT ST. JOHN'S – APRIL 16

There's something magical about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To continue the awe-inspiring nature of the Easter season, "Dan the Magic Man" will perform on Sunday, April 16, 10:15am in the Fellowship Hall.

He will demonstrate biblical truths and principles through illusions and magic. Dan is an ordained Lutheran pastor and has performed gospel magic in churches of all denominations throughout the country. An audience of all ages is invited and welcome!



ST. JOHN'S IS ALVIE AND GROWING! WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



BOB AND MAUREEN ANDERSON

Bob and Maureen were invited to St. John's by longtime friends Mike and Debbe Topel. They found St. John's to be so welcoming. They both work at Jefferson School District, one in the district office and one as a custodian. Together they have four adult children, and one adored little granddaughter.

Their faith communities have been Lutheran, Catholic, and non-

denominational. Maureen is a vocalist with fifteen years singing with the Sweet Adeline's. She likes to crochet, read, camp, and bike. Bob enjoys watching sports, being outside, and camping.

KATLYNN KELLEY

Katlynn is mom to fifth grader Anderson, and her husband brings three more children into their family. Anderson is currently preparing for his Holy Communion Milestone. When Katlynn's not parenting, she is a nurse practitioner with UW Health and has years of hospital experience.



After work she likes to sew, craft, hike at Magnolia Bluff, bike, and walk around the neighborhood with the kids. She went to a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod school for nine years near Cedarburg, and she has visited many churches in Madison.

Christian Faith is not new to Katlynn, but she was attracted to the open and welcoming community at St. John's. Katlynn says it feels like home.



MARGARET BALES

Margaret grew up in Oklahoma but moved to Evansville in 2014 to be with her grandchildren. They were the ones who brought her to St. John's after they attended VBS in the summer. She was raised in the Methodist church, and she went to the Church of Christ after she was married. She is a mom of two adult children, and has two grandchildren in Evansville.

One of her greatest passions is her 45 years of nursing. She has worked in surgical units, managed a new outpatient unit, and presently takes calls for recovery. Make sure to ask her about when she was saved in a flood. What a story!



JANICE MOYER AND PAUL WOODARD

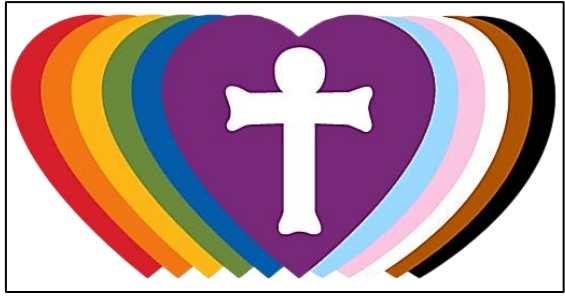
These two are living the dream of retirement. Janice worked in local government for 40 years, and Paul is a (mostly) retired engineer.

They enjoy traveling, hiking, and biking (especially on the new E-bike), and Paul likes to downhill ski. Janice has two adult children and a first grandchild last November. She likes to sew anything and everything, from small Barbie clothes to large quilts.

The newest adventure awaits Janice, as they just purchased a Steinway baby grand piano. They are not strangers to the Lutheran church and liked the energy of St. John's when they visited.

ADULT BASIC FORUM: WHAT IS RIC?

The initials RIC stand for “Reconciling in Christ.” St. John’s is an RIC congregation of the ELCA, which means we intentionally extend welcome to all people.



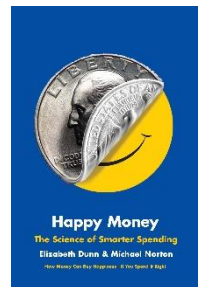
This welcome is especially important for people who have felt unwelcome by the church in the past, for one reason or another. **On Sunday, April 30, at 10:15am**, join St. John’s Love in Action Team and Pastor Matt in the Fellowship Hall to learn more about RIC and our intentional commitment of welcome.

WHATCHA READING?

by Heather Skumatz

Most people tend to believe that money doesn’t buy happiness. But why doesn’t it? **“Happy Money: The Science of Smarter Spending”** by Elizabeth Dunn and Michael Norton gets specific. The authors, both behavioral scientists, use existing research that points to why money often doesn’t buy individuals the happiness they seek. Dunn and Norton also explore how money can be used in ways that make people happier. Those five principles are: Buy experiences; Make it a treat; Buy time; Pay now, consume later; and Invest in others.

This book is a slim and very readable volume summarizing academic research on human beings, their spending habits, and how spending can affect a person’s sense of well-being. It definitely got me thinking about my own attitudes and beliefs about money and gave me some interesting things to ponder.





**The Women of
St. John's
retreated for
fellowship, study,
and snacks in
March!**



ST. JOHN'S WELCOME STATEMENT

Jesus commands us to love one another. We welcome all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, past misdeeds, socio-economic circumstances, immigration status, or anything that too often divides us. We welcome and celebrate diversity and uniqueness.

We welcome you.

UNBINDING YOUR HEART: EASTER SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCE



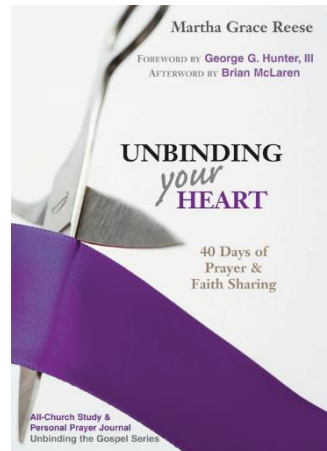
Why am I a Christian? What difference does faith make in my life? How do I pray? Who are the other people of my church? These questions and more are at the heart of our upcoming journey of *Unbinding Your Heart*. You won't want to miss this, whether or not you've done it before.

In 2013 more than 200 of St. John's people experienced this small group journey of prayer and sharing. Over the course of a few weeks, we became more confident in our Christianity! Now we are ready to revisit this book and invite everyone, members and guests alike, into a powerful journey of faith. You are sincerely invited!

This experience involves a guide book titled *Unbinding Your Heart*, by Martha Grace Reese. Your commitment is simply to read each week's chapter (six total), do the daily prayer exercises, and attend six meetings. This book and this journey are about "untying the knots that keep us from living exciting lives with God and with each other...it's about unbinding the Good News that God adores us and everyone else." (Reese, 3)

Small group discussions are strictly confidential. At prayer times, we will help each other know what to do. The group meetings are intended to put us at ease with one another, our faith, and with God. From this experience, people across the country have experienced deeper relationships with God, more meaningful prayer lives, and a new sense of God's activity in their lives. Participants say they can be more 'real' with others as their relationship with God grows ...

and that this extends to relationships within their families and with people in every area of their lives. **We begin the week of April 16 and conclude the week of May 21. Meetings are scheduled for Sundays at 7pm, or other times that you arrange with your own group.**



EXPERIENCING GOD THROUGH NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

In the age of cameras on phones and selfies, snapping photographs on a “real” camera is a beautiful gift and art. The moments captured are never to be seen exactly the same again. God’s enormous creation is witnessed through a small lens. And God’s voice speaks volumes to the photographers. Listen to how God is using nature photography to connect to the beloved ones behind the camera.

LYNN TEWS

I often find God in photography. Last spring I attended the workshop Path of the Spirit at Bethel Horizon located in Dodgeville. This was a 16-person workshop led by photographer and writer Douglas Beasley.

The basic goal of the workshop was to help us “get out of focusing on our cameras” and be open to what is being offered to us. The days were filled with interesting photography assignments, sharing, meditation, listening and visiting.



My goal was to slow down, to renew my creative process, *make* photographs instead of *take* them, and come in touch with my inner self. I want photographs that reflect not just what I see but also show how I feel in my photos.

The highlight for me came on the last day of the workshop. We finally had a great sunny day, and the assignment was to take 5 photos into the sun, looking for signs where we might see God. I walked out onto the deck, sat at a picnic table, checked out my surroundings, closed my eyes, took some deep breaths, and asked God to allow me to receive a gift.

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Opening my eyes, I looked at the sun, which was quite bright. I turned my camera directly into it and began pushing the shutter. When I looked at a picture I took, a song we used to sing after communion in a previous congregation came to mind...

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place; I can feel his mighty power and his grace.



Sitting there I strongly felt God's presence. Looking at the picture, I saw the bright sun with rays surrounding it. To me these were God-rays, revealing how God is present in my life, helping me to be the person I am. I also saw a blue line both vertical and horizontal forming a cross going through the sun. This represented my faith to me. The tree through which the sun was shining represented strength to weather the storms in my life. The bright clouds represented walking in the presence with God in my life. This certainly was a gift for me, a very grace-filled way to end the workshop.



BUTCH BEEDLE

I take photographs of nature because I love the outdoors. Being in a natural setting, whether it is with friends, family or alone, brings a sense of awe and wonder. The walks to find photographic subjects are healthy, cognitively stimulating, and, for me, spiritual.

After a walk where I am searching for things to photograph, my senses are

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sharper, my head is clearer,
and my concerns are
smaller. It's healing, soothing,
and comforting.

For me, the connection felt to
the Creator is very powerful
here. Taking photographs is
just a bonus.



PATRICIA (RICKI) RICKMAN

Photography for me is a beautiful expression of self-care. My heart fills with gratitude and joy. Mother Earth has magical powers for me; a gentle energy that pulsates through my entire body. I allow myself time to pause, pray, breathe, observe, and listen during that pause. I admire all of God's beautiful creations.

I feel the presence and love of present and past relationships; especially, the God connection with my beautiful mama who passed almost 7 years ago. Mama sends daily reminders to me through the presence of hawks.

I have also learned that whatever artistic expression pulls at your heart can help you heal while also finding peace and stillness. In the stillness, God's creations will present themselves to you. For me, this is something that will calm my energies and guide me to clearer thoughts and actions.





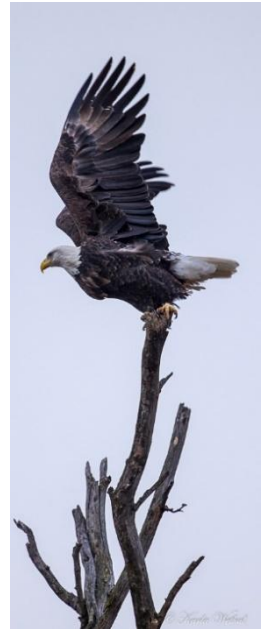
KARLA WETHAL

Oh, so many reasons why I enjoy photography. A picture is worth a thousand words. A picture to me means remembering that moment in time. I do admit some photos have more emotions and feelings attached to them than others, but overall, it gives me a chance to cherish that moment. I really enjoy landscape and wildlife photography.

After my cardiac event nine years ago, I realized priorities needed to change and I needed to start doing things I really enjoy. Traveling was it. I love to explore new places and experience new things,

and while I am there, I want to capture what I am seeing and feeling. At first, I was taking snapshot photos to see where I have been, but soon I figured out I wanted to get my snapshots to look like professional photos you see in magazines. I wanted to capture the “awe inspiring” photograph. It has become my new challenge and/or goal to capture that moment in time. I want to give the feeling of standing where I was standing and sensing the air moving around you, capturing the subtle movement of the leaves of the trees, or the roar of a waterfall, or the view from the top of a mountain.

I have been blessed to travel to several places in the past nine years. I am blessed to see God’s creation and capture the beauty of it. Any chance to be outside enjoying nature, is one of the best ways to enjoy God’s beauty, and being able to share that beauty through photos brings me so much joy. It fills my heart, body, and soul.



TRAVEL MINISTRY – MACKINAC ISLAND

You're invited head to Mackinac Island September 18-22, 2023, on a charter bus with Lutherdale's Travel Ministry. Some highlights of our trip to Northern Michigan include: visits to Mackinac Island, a guided carriage tour of the island, a



boat ride through the Soo Locks, sight-seeing in Sault Sainte Marie, a guided tour of Mackinaw City, and a visit to Colonial Michilimackinac. The cost is \$729 Double Occupancy or \$908 Single Occupancy. (4 nights lodging and 8 Meals (4 breakfasts, 4 dinners) included in price.) Contact the church office now to reserve your spot.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE FAITH CIRCLE

Pastor Jerry facilitates a Congregational Care Faith Circle twice monthly on Tuesdays. This confidential gathering is open to all who are enduring hardships such as illness, loss through death or moving, physical deterioration, unexpected caregiving, or just life in general. God has made a place that we can gather safely, for quality conversation, in the presence of people who care – the Church. Come on April 11 and April 25, 1:00-2:00pm.



5 WAYS TO GIVE

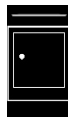
AUTOMATED



MAIL



DROPBOX



ONLINE



IN PERSON



REACHING OUT: SERVICE & INVITATION

MISSION PARTNERS – THE GRULKES: WEAVING LIVES AND MINISTRY

Basket weaving in Botswana is a true art, and Kelsey Grulke has been learning about traditional basket weaving (from before plastics and metal drums were available). Her teacher Boipuso is showing her how to gather the materials. She took Kelsey to her field and gave her a watermelon, saying, “you’re my sister now.” Unfortunately, this month has held a lot of illness for Kelsey. With a 105 degree fever and persistent headaches, they are very thankful for the medical facilities available there.



The hard work has almost paid off; **the Shekgalagari New Testament is so close to publication!** They are in touch with the typesetters and printers. Right now, the team is working on the back matter – maps and things that go in the back of the book.



Life for the Grulkes is not always hard work. The kids’ school had half term break recently, so with the two extra days off, they spent some time together at a safari camp owned by a friend, a very kind invitation. They had a great time renewing.

Please continue to keep the Grulkes in your prayers: for Kelsey’s health to improve and the root cause to be found; for the process of applying for new residency permits, as theirs expire soon; for the Wayeyi community, that they would rally behind their translation project and continue in the momentum they have going; for the Shekgalagari community to find renewed energy for their New Testament launch; and that God continues to provide for their ministry through partners like us.

CHARITY HIGHLIGHT: SOUTH-CENTRAL SYNOD OF WISCONSIN, ELCA

In our 2023 budget, St. John's has made a commitment of 10% of our budget (approximately \$50,000) to support the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin. This is funded through our regular weekly offerings.

As our regional church, the South-Central Synod of



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Wisconsin uses our gifts for global and ecumenical work, care of congregations, leadership development, and mission. **Our gifts “make a difference in the lives of congregations and individuals, equipping them to be gospel in their world.”**

Our financial contributions to St. John's reach beyond our walls and beyond our community. We make an impact around the world. With *this* commitment, we impact the lives of people regionally and globally. Take pride knowing that we are generous as a congregation.

LOVE IN ACTION (APRIL 30) FOR MADISON AREA JAIL MINISTRY

St. John's Love In Action Team will be utilizing the fifth Sunday in a month to help support Madison Area Jail Ministry (MAJM.) Most Sundays

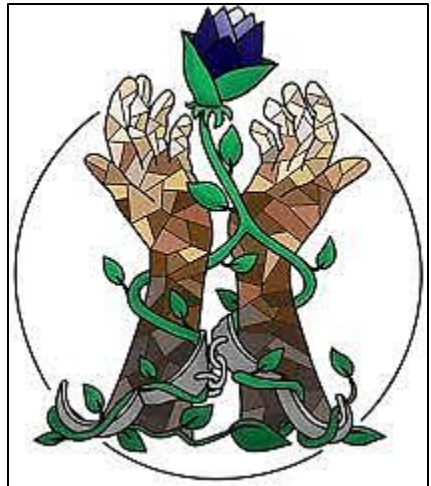
Fellowship is provided by talented bakers' treats. **In April, July,**

October, and December, Love In Action will be providing treats for fellowship as a way to highlight

MAJM and raise money to help support their mission. “We hold

Christian values, grounded in the Lutheran tradition, that all people are children of a benevolent and forgiving God and are worthy of compassion and love. We pray for a just, safe, and compassionate legal

system that recognizes the power of people to transform their lives and communities.” This is an opportunity for St. John's to be generous and put God's Love into action for our neighbors. See you on April 30!



FAITHFUL SERVICE HIGHLIGHT: ALTAR GUILD, BEHIND THE SCENES



When worship begins, our worship spaces are decked in paraments (fancy cloths) which have specific colors and symbols that regularly change to match the liturgical year.

Communion wine has been poured into chalices and small cups, and bread or wafers set out on the altar. For baptisms, water is made ready at hand. At festival times and milestones, special decorations adorn the worship space like beautiful lilies at Easter and poinsettias at Christmas. **Our worship space is prepared and beautified to honor the fact that God is present with us.**

Some worshippers may think that the pastor prepares our worship space for service. But in reality, there's a team of over 20 dedicated St. John's members who beautify the sanctuary and prepare the two sacraments of the Lutheran church—Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. This is the Altar Guild. Ruby Davis, co-chair of the Altar Guild, describes this group as "literally behind the scenes," as they do much of their work before and after service in a room behind the chancel called the sacristy. There the Altar Guild prepares worship and stores and cares for the many sacred materials of the church.



Ruby says she got involved in the Altar Guild because she loves serving her church. **"It's one way that I can serve and help out in a meaningful way."** Ruby has been fascinated by church liturgy, music, festivals, and the different seasons of the church. The members of the Altar Guild learn and explore all of these things, often through knowledge passed down to them from generation to generation by faithful church members.



According to Ruby, Altar Guild members learn a lot about the meaning of church traditions and “why we do what we do.”

Because the Altar Guild doesn’t generally do their work publicly, their service to the church is truly “behind the scenes,” but their

labor benefits the entire church each and every week. Pray for these servants, and pray if this might be a way for you to connect with our church and its ministry.

Contact Ruby Davis or the church office to learn more or to share your gifts as a member of the Altar Guild.

FABRIC KITS FOR LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

The global demand for Fabric Kits is higher than ever across the world. Fabric kits are used in vocational training to teach people useful, marketable sewing skills – the tools to earn an income and break out of poverty.



St. John’s will focus on collecting the following items:

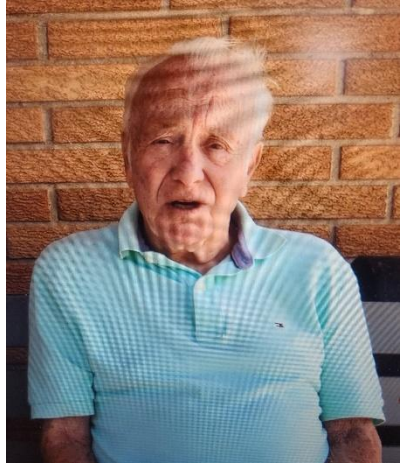
- TWO new spools of neutral-colored, general-purpose thread, 250-300 yards each
 - TWO new pieces of cotton or cotton-blend fabric (no knits or 100% polyester). Each piece should match one of the sizes below: 2 ¼ yards of 60” wide fabric
 - 3 yards of 44” wide fabric
 - 4 yards of 36” wide fabric



Please no religious or national symbols on the material.

MY FAITHFUL SERVICE – ROLLIE JEANS

Long-term commitments are a lost art, unless you have met Rollie Jeans. You will find him at St. John's just about every Tuesday morning. It all started with his wife, Deanna, coming to quilt for Lutheran World Relief every week. He and the other men of quilters decided to work on projects around the church building. Decades later, Rollie has kept his commitment. Why does he come to serve on Tuesdays? First of all, it is for the community. The group gathers for coffee and conversation to start the day, sharing their highs and lows, prayer concerns, and funny stories.



Next, Rollie serves to follow Jesus' command to love God and love others. He hopes God is smiling as he uses his hands to serve others. Serving others has always been a part of Rollie's life. When he worked with 4-H and other agriculture projects, he worked with the soil and grew plants with the youth. He says helping things grow and connecting with Creation draws him closer to God. Rollie is also a member of the Lions' Club. The urgent service of transporting corneas to patients in need is an important part of Rollie's commitment to serving his neighbors. **As St. John's focuses on our core value of Faithful Service, we can thank God for the faithful service of Rollie Jeans.**

**“Service is a limitless opportunity,
it is the reason why we breathe.”**

–Michelle Obama



FAITHFUL SERVICE OPPORTUNITY – CITY TREE PLANTING



For several years, St. John’s has partnered with the City of Evansville to plant trees throughout the neighborhoods. The city digs the giant holes, and we bring our muscles and care to plant the trees. This year we are “putting roots down” on **Saturday, April 22, 9:00am-12:00pm.** (Raindate: Saturday, April 29).



Come “spread your branches” in a new or familiar way to serve this spring!

SAVE THE DATE!

SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2023

ALL-CHURCH SPRING COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY

GREEN LIVING TIP

BY LINDSAY TRUSTEM



Freshen up your home by opening your windows. This will lower the indoor air pollution levels which typically get higher during Winter months. Did you know that “air freshener” products actually add more toxins to the air in your home?

Clean your windows with vinegar and water. Use one cup of vinegar per gallon of water. Use a spray bottle and reusable cloth, and voila! Sparkly windows without the harmful chemicals and paper towels in the landfills.

MINISTRY WITH OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

TWISTS & TURNS: FOLLOWING JESUS CHANGES THE GAME

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2023: JULY 31 – AUGUST 4

From Monday, July 31 to Friday, August 4, our church family and friends will gather together with joy.

Each day between 9am and 12pm, children (ages 3 – 5th grade) and leaders (youth and adults) will join together for *Twists and Turns*

Vacation Bible School. Spin the

spinner, beat the clock, skip ahead, and level up. You'll need to bring your A-game for this year's VBS. Kids, youth, and adults will play their way through VBS while learning that Jesus guides them through all twists and turns of their lives. They'll find that even when they mess up, it's never "game over" with Jesus. Save the date and make plans to participate in this fun week of Children's Ministry. Contact Chris Cole at children@stjohns-lc.org with questions or to share your time. Keep an eye out in mid-May for registration.



Soul Troop (3rd-5th gr) and Faith Corps (K-2nd gr) meet
Wednesdays, 3-4:30pm. Families interested in joining this ministry can contact Chris Cole.



B.A.S.I.C meets Sunday mornings at 10:15am, for children ages 3 through 5th grade. Guests are welcome, and children can join at any time.



During Holy Week (April 2 – April 9) there will be **NO Faith Corps, Soul Troop, Confirmation, or Sweet Wednesday on April 5.**

MIDDLE SCHOOL UP ALL NIGHT – FRIDAY, APRIL 14



Middle school youth know that St. John’s is the place to be on **Friday, April 14, from 7:00-11:00pm!**

We’ll play games, eat, laugh, and hang out. Friends are welcome to join in. Please bring a snack or drink to share and \$3 for pizza. (Everyone must be in by 7:30pm. Advanced permission or the presence of your own parent is needed to leave early.) Make sure to arrange a ride for 11:00pm. By then we’ll all be worn out and ready to crash. Don’t miss it!

“The Way” (Confirmation) will be enjoying a **Parent’s Night Field Trip on Wednesday, April 12th**. All 8th graders preparing to confirm their faith will complete a capstone project, an interview, and a testimony.



Our **high school summer service trip** to Lake Traverse, South Dakota, July 16-21 is full, but we may still be able to add more youth. This will be

a once-in-a-lifetime, never-forget, cross-cultural immersion on a Native American Reservation. Contact Pastor Matt.

Every Wednesday 7:30-9pm is a great time to connect with other high school youth and eat delicious treats!

Middle School youth enjoyed a great weekend retreat at Lutherdale Bible Camp. We are saints and sinners, saved by grace through faith.

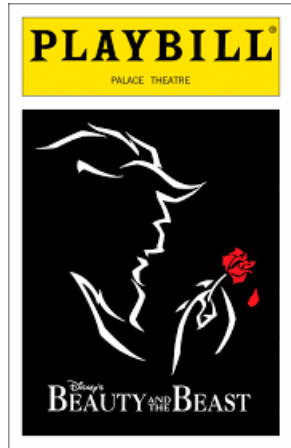


**Have you registered for summer camp at Lutherdale yet?
Visit Lutherdale.org for opportunities for all ages.**

EVANSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTS *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*

by Deb Herbers

St. John's is showing off God's talents in the children, youth, and adults in the spring musical, *Beauty and the Beast*. The show will feature colorful costumes that bring back styles of the Renaissance with a twist of modern. As costume designer for the show, I get a huge running picture in my head of what the students should look like on stage. Then with the help of some very talented women, who have been sewing and collaborating since January, we make the characters come to life for you the audience. This year we will also be featuring costumes for some of the lead performers from a New York rental company. Watch for our versions of the fabulous Belle and the Beast, along with a varied cast of castle characters who will keep you entertained for the entire show. Some familiar St. John's faces you will see on stage: Gemma Holm, 5th grade; Max Mangold, 7th Grade; Ally Walters, 10th grade; Trista Beyerl, 11th grade; Emma Hammond, 11th grade; and playing flute, Kira Tortomasi, 12th grade. **Performances are Friday, April 21 at 7:30; Saturday, April 22 at 2pm and 7:30; and Sunday, April 23 at 2:00pm.**



STAY CONNECTED WITH ST. JOHN'S



Website: StJohns-LC.org



Facebook: facebook.com/St-Johns-Lutheran-Church-Evansville-WI-145437998849063/
(no account needed to view)



Twitter: twitter.com/StJohns_53536
(no account needed to view)



Daily Nudge sign-up (text message devotions):
trunc.us/dB47CB

ABBIE'S ASSURANCES: TAKE THIS VOCATION FROM ME

by Abbie Kriebs

I'm currently reading through the Bible in a year—the first time I've attempted such a feat. Each morning, I crack open my study Bible and read anywhere from one to three chapters, and then listen to a short recap podcast that gives a bit more depth to what I am reading. I'm enjoying it, even looking forward to it each morning (that's also when I grab my first cup of coffee, but I'm sure that's purely coincidental). I mean, Job was a bit of a slog, but I underlined a whole bunch in Leviticus, a book not exactly known for its gripping story.



As I write this, I'm in the middle of Numbers, and the Israelites are beginning what we might call their “testing the boundaries” phase (it's the beginning of their second year in the Wilderness, so I guess developmentally we've hit the Terrible Twos. Makes sense). Leaders of the tribes just scouted out the land of the Canaanites, but only two of the twelve bring back the truth; ten prefer to lie, to place their trust in the past and not in God. There's also a rebellion of some combo of Levites and Reubenites who decide they want to choose their own leader—why on earth does Moses get all the power, anyway?

Truth be told, Moses seems like he'd be glad to give up the gig. He didn't really want it in the first place. In Exodus 4:13, Moses says: “O my Lord, please send someone else.” And now in Numbers 11, he's had it with these grumbling Israelites. They are asking to return to Egypt! Of all the places! Forgetting that they were bound in slavery for over four hundred years, the Israelites think it might just be easier to head back the way they came, where there was fish and cucumbers and onions and garlic... God is dropping manna out of the sky for them each morning, and yet, they'd really rather have some meat (verses 4-6). In verse 15, Moses asks God to put him to death rather than leave him in charge of this complaining group of people.

I can confess to muttering similar, albeit less drastic, phrases under my own breath. *I am not cut out for this parenting gig. Why on earth am I doing this? I am a highly-educated, competent, adult woman and I am arguing with a toddler about TOOTHPASTE?!?*

What I'm really asking: *Why did you choose me for THIS, Lord?*

In my Lutheran Study Bible, there's a note on Psalm 90—the only Psalm attributed to Moses—about vocation. In the final verse of the Psalm, Moses writes: "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, / and prosper for us the work of our hands—, / O prosper the work of our hands!" The note reminds the reader that "every baptized person has a vocation or special calling to serve God and neighbor," and that all work is holy when we carry it out as part of that calling to serve.

Sounds like that even covers toothpaste negotiations.

A lot of our modern world revolves around what kind of job we have. A job determines our schedule, a career determines the people we mingle with, our work becomes part (and sometimes all) of our identity. Our jobs can inform every other area of our life, but still remain someone separate from the whole.

Moses couldn't clock out of his job of leading the Israelites. There wasn't much in the way of vacation time as the leader of the Twelve Tribes. Moses's work was more than a job: it was a vocation, his calling to lead the people through their exodus and toward the Promised Land. A good bit of the time, we could tell he didn't want the vocation he was given, and yet he pushed on—serving God and neighbor, never setting foot on the land toward which he was leading.



April 2023 Visionotes

We see this in Jesus, as he nears the cross: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want” (Matthew 26:39). Jesus in the garden, wanting to give his vocation to someone else if possible.

There’s a good bit of the time I don’t want the vocation I’ve been given. And yet, this is where God has me, though many days it doesn’t make sense and I could think of a thousand easier ways to walk through life.

The part of Psalm 90 that sings out to me isn’t the part about vocation, though. It’s when Moses asks the Lord to “Make us **glad** as many days as you have afflicted us, / and as many years as we have seen evil” (v. 15).

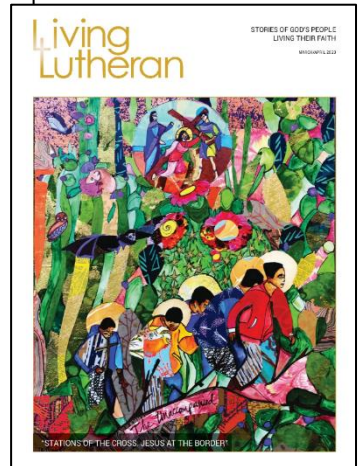
Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us.

May there be joy in the hard, long work of each of our vocations.

“LIVING LUTHERAN” MAGAZINE – PICK UP A COPY & SHARE

St. John’s purchases copies of this national, award-winning magazine. Inside you’ll find news about the church, ideas for ministries, inspiring stories of God at work, and provocative thoughts on faith. *Please feel free to pick up a copy at the Welcome Desk and share it.*

The publication will continue to be in print through December of 2023, but you can read the magazine online now and going forward at www.livinglutheran.com.





IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS



Marjorie Klitzman
Michael Adams
Ron Hatlen
John Almond
Bret Church

St. John's Members
Joe Scarpelli
Arnold Klug
Diane Quinn
Boni Paugel
Adam Kopp

Jeanette Schunk
Georgia Wickersham
Scott Fredendall
Dick Richards

Jennifer Persons
Barb Buttchen
Lynette Kendrick
Pat VanWhye
Brenda Crocker

Family and Friends
Cheris Correa
Amber Valdez
Braiden Bergum
Isabelle
Jan Meyer

Fran Nowak
Ardelle Cardarelle
Lori Koch

Partners in Mission:

Rev. Kyle and Anna Svennungsen & family, in Slovakia
Rev. Carl and Kelsey Grulke & family, in Botswana
Ashley Bowman, Wartburg Theological Seminary
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, New Orleans

Men and Women in Service:

Matt Forster, Nate Madsen, Bailey Olin, JJ Rogers, Tyler Schnell, Hunter Speropulos, Marcus Steindl, Mark Trawicki, Heather Ihlenfeldt, Branden Samela, Jonah Topel, Samantha Ihlenfeldt

Condolences to:

Boni Paugel as we grieve the death of her husband and St. John's member David Paugel.

Jeff (Kim) Gaulke as they grieve the death of his father.

Congratulations to:

Mark and Courtney Trawicki on the birth of their daughter Rosella Trawicki. Proud grandparents are Becki and Karl Trawicki, and great-grandma Joan Fisk.

"Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness."

- St John of Chrysostom

POINTS OF PRAYER

Together we lift up these prayer concerns. Start by reading the prayer topic and “holding” those people or that situation before God. Say the topic over and over in your mind, or aloud, and raise it before God. Then continue in agreement with the petition of prayer. We pray:

- **For our celebration of Easter**

Life-giving God, in the mystery of Christ’s resurrection you send light to conquer darkness, water to give new life, and the bread of life to nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses to your Son’s resurrection, that we may show your glory to all the world.

- **For community outreach**

Holy God, we are thankful to serve as your hands and feet in the world. May our Evansville neighbors feel your love through our words and actions. Reveal to us the needs that are unseen and the people who are not heard. Give us courage to be more like You.

- **For senior adults of St. John’s**

God of life, it is both a joy and a challenge to age. We thank you for the lives of our older adults. Grant them courage and peace to live well, and help us to treasure their wisdom and faith

We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

THE PRAYER TEAM of St. John’s is ready to pray with you – for healing, hope, wisdom, gratitude, and more. See the St. John’s website at www.stjohns-lc.org for a confidential online request form.

PRAYER LEADERS AVAILABLE TO PRAY WITH YOU

During worship you are invited to prayer 1:1, confidentially, with one of our prayer leaders. You’ll find these faithful prayer leaders in the Gathering Area during Holy Communion to lift up your joys and concerns.



312 South Third Street
Evansville, WI 53536



Church Office Hours:
8:00am. to 4:00pm.
Mon.-Thurs.
Phone: (608) 882-4044

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