

# Visionotes

St. John's Lutheran Church  
August 2023



God's Work, Our Hands.  
St. John's high school youth on  
their summer mission trip to  
Lake Traverse, South Dakota.

**Blessing of the Backpacks — p. 6**

**2023 28-day challenge — p. 7**

Learning to sit with the spirit.

**ALPHA starts September 10th! — p. 11**

Exploring basics of the Christian faith — together.

**Norway & Sweden trip details — p. 14**

**\$20,000 worth of generous gifts — p. 16-17**

**AWARE Back to School supplies — p. 22**

**Children's ministries resume in Sept. — p. 27**



# We are the church — together.

**Worship in the Sanctuary:** Saturdays at 5pm & Sundays at 9am  
**Livestream Worship on YouTube:** Sundays at 9am  
**Weekly Online Worship** at [www.StJohns-LC.org](http://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
Director of Faith Formation	Karla Wickersham
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
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	Rena Smith
Mutual Ministry	Julie Creek-Hessler
Parish Education	Bethany Steindl
Social Concerns	Debbe Topel
Stewardship	Eric Peterson
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 Share the Peace?

*14th in a series of "why" questions about what we do as a church, particularly during worship*

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“Stand up, face out to our family and friends, put your arms out wide, and say it with me: The peace of the Lord be with you always.” (And also with you.) It’s an important job that our children have during worship, to initiate our time of sharing peace with our neighbor. We do it every week because one thing that our world clearly needs is peace.

This moment of “sharing the peace” is not everyone’s highlight of the worship service. Some people might genuinely be nervous about greeting people. It might be awkward, at times, trying to catch people’s attention or navigate the greeting. A mixture of handshakes, hugs, peace signs, and head bows, along with a smile, is all acceptable. You may wonder how far to extend yourself — should I extend across the center aisle? (Go for it!) Do I dare share the peace with someone I don’t know? (Absolutely.) Are we standing up or sitting down after we share the peace? (Good question! It depends on the day. We’ll try to keep you posted.) At least the moment is scripted for us, with some version of “God’s peace be with you.” Honestly, our time of sharing the peace can be a little chaotic.

But that holy chaos might be someone’s favorite moment of our time together. It’s an opportunity for us to acknowledge and value each other. With our bodies, we express our faith that each person matters and is worthy of our attention. With this simple ritual, we are rehearsing peaceful relationships for the rest of the week, practicing non-violent communication, and expressing our hope for peace for the whole world.

World peace is often lifted up as our common goal. From members of the United Nations to pageant participants, many people and organizations have the goal of achieving world peace. Whether or not it is possible, it’s a worthy goal. But how can we have world peace if we don’t have peace in our nation? How can we have peace in our nation without peace in our city? How can we have peace in our city without peace among neighbors? How can we have peace among neighbors without peace in our hearts? Peace in our hearts is possible because of Jesus.

Jesus came to earth to bring us peace with God and to lead us in peace with our neighbors. When Jesus spoke about worship, he taught us to first seek peace for any conflict with a neighbor. "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). Sharing the peace in worship occurs right before we come to God's table to receive the Lord's Supper. In this way, we are living the words of Jesus from Matthew 5, we speak peace to one another right before we come forward to Christ's table.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he greeted his disciples with a word of peace. From the story of the first Easter, we read that "When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week... Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'" (John 20:19). He didn't only say it once, he said it twice. Jesus rose from the dead in order to bring us peace with God... and to fill us with the peace of God.

The New Testament letters of the early church are full of peaceful greetings: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:2). Not only did the authors greet their churches with peace, but they also instructed their churches to share peace with one another every time they gathered. "Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ" (1 Peter 5:14). Now I'm not advocating for more kissing in church, but by sharing the peace we are the living legacy of our ancestors in faith.

What we do in worship prepares us for living the days ahead. In our world of worries and stress, we come to worship to be filled with the peace of God. Then, as our children lead us, we share the peace of God to prepare us to live in peace with our neighbors. God is the source of peace. God's peace fills our hearts. God's peace flows from us, to our neighbor, and to our world. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with us.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Matthew Lock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." — Jesus (John 14:27)*

# REACHING UP: WORSHIP & PRAYER

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## *August Worship Series: "I Will Give You Rest"*

Many of us are busy people. We are often burdened by stress. We are worn out and weary. According to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, we are not meant to constantly live life this way. There's another way. We can live a full and meaningful life that embraces the rhythms of rest. We can live in the peace and joy of Christ.



The Bible talks about "Sabbath" in order to lead us into God's way of rest. Sabbath was built into the order of creation, from the very beginning. Sabbath rest is on God's top ten list of ways to live; it's on the same list as not murdering! Why do we brush this off as not really that important? Rest is not only a commandment, but it is also an invitation from Jesus to come and abide in his love. Rest is not a reward to be earned; it's a gift that fuels a fulfilling life. It's a time to stop, to pause, to be still, to breathe, to worship, and to remember who God is... and remember that we are not God. Rest helps us to embrace our humanity and our need for God. In today's world, we can help each other to practice Sabbath rest in our lives. Let's rest in God together.

- August 5 & 6... Matthew 11:28-30; Rest in Jesus
- August 12 & 13... Genesis 2:1-3; Rest from Work
- August 19 & 20... John 15:9-15; Abiding Rest
- August 26 & 27... Luke 15:11-32; Rest in the Arms of Grace
  - Polka Party
  - Blessing of the Backpacks
  - Commissioning of Director of Faith Formation Karla Wickersham
- September 2 & 3... Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Sabbath Rest
  - Worship on the front lawn, Saturday at 5pm, weather permitting

### **MORNING PRAYER SERVICE, TUESDAYS @8:30**

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

## Blessing of the Backpacks - August 26 & 27

School backpacks contain work to be done, work that's been returned, books to be studied, and the tools to complete homework. In early September, students jump back into the adventures of learning, and we know that God goes with them. **During worship on August 26 & 27, all students (children, youth, and adults) are invited to bring their backpacks.** Both students and backpacks will be blessed for the coming year of learning. Students will also receive a special "Walk with Jesus" keychain for their backpack to remind them of the words of Jesus to do to others as they'd have others do to them. Teachers and school staff will also be in our prayers. God is the one who calls us to learn and to teach. All the activities and jobs that we perform are made holy as we do them for God's glory and for the good of others.



## Outdoor Worship on September 2

Grab your lawn chairs and blankets, and join St. John's for worship outdoors Labor Day weekend. We'll meet on the church lawn, right in front of the building, on Saturday, September 2, for worship at 5pm. It will be a complete service of Holy Communion, with songs, sermon, children's message, and more. The outdoor setting allows us to enjoy Creation and worship the Creator.

Come one, come all! We've got plenty of room outdoors to worship the Lord! *In case of rain, worship will be indoors in the sanctuary.*

## 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.**

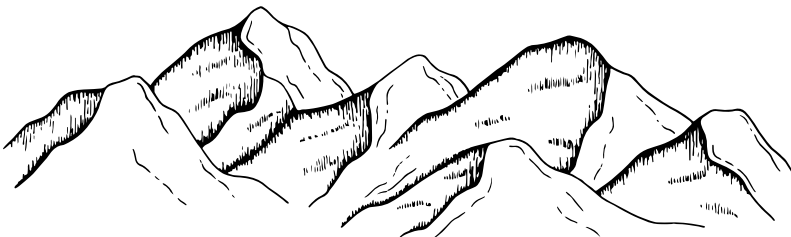
# 28-Day Challenge: Sitting with the Spirit

A prayer. A Bible verse. And 5 minutes of stillness and silence. It's a simple devotional practice to help us center our souls. Christians throughout the centuries have practiced "sitting with the Spirit," and this 28-Day Challenge invites us to join them and allow God to renew us in this way. Though we will do this practice individually, we are also doing it together, everyone who chooses to make the commitment.

From Sunday, August 13, to Saturday, September 9, we will practice "Sitting with the Spirit" in this pattern. Start by finding a comfortable place and position. (Consider using the same place every day.) Take a few deep breaths and then offer the opening praying, the same one every day. (By the end of 28 days, we'll know it well.) Then read the appointed scripture verse, a new one for each day. (You might read it more than once.) Finally, sit still in the presence of God for 5 minutes. (If that's too much, try 2 minutes. If that's not enough, try 20 minutes.) During this time, you might ponder a word from the scripture reading. You might simply try to quiet your mind. Sit in the stillness, aware of God's loving presence. Setting a timer will allow you to relax and not worry about the clock. (A good digital app for this is "Insight Timer".)

God promises to be with us always. As we sit with the Spirit, we will be more aware of God's presence. God will meet us and minister to our hearts. A spiritual habit of prayer, scripture, and stillness can help us center our hearts on Christ, connect with God, and live well. God will bless as we set this time apart to sit with the Spirit.

Pick up a "Sitting with the Spirit" guide on the Ministry Table, and add your name to the list to make the commitment.



# Feature: The Goodness of Prayer Journaling

Have you ever written in a journal? About half of us have done so at some point in our lives, as reported by Psychology Today (10/20/20). What's more, almost 20% of people are active journalers. Journaling is known to have many health benefits. Scientific studies have shown that journaling offers a boost in mindfulness, memory, and communication skills. Other benefits include better sleep, a stronger immune system, and more self-confidence (NYTimes, 10/18). Journaling helps us to face reality, name emotions, and process events both good and traumatic.

Journaling as a form of prayer is not that different; it's personal writing with a "reader" in mind: God. Prayer, of course, is an essential part of the Christian life. Martin Luther said, "to be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." Simply put, praying is spending quality time with God. Prayer keeps our relationship with God strong. It's communication with God that involves speaking, listening, and silence. And prayer can involve writing, too. When our journaling is prayer, we benefit emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Writing prayers is as old as the Bible; many passages in the Bible are personal prayers to God. In fact, the Book of Psalms is filled with personal prayers, like a prayer journal. We see in scripture examples of people writing sincere confessions to God, making specific requests to God, pouring their hearts out to God, and offering praise and thanks to God.

Prayer journaling is a focused, powerful way to pray for many people. **Pastor Matt** began prayer journaling in college. For most of his 15 years as a pastor he has written daily in a prayer journal. He writes early in the morning, using a pattern he has developed over the years. First, he reviews the previous day for acts of love, kindness, service, generosity, faith, etc, and writes one instance of where he saw God the day before: "I saw God...". Second, he makes a list of gratitudes, usually between five and ten entries: "Thank You, God, for...". Third and finally, he writes prayer requests according to his needs and the needs of others.

**Jack Burton** is a junior at Evansville High School. He started prayer journaling after he confirmed his faith. He spoke with Pastor Matt about needing a tangible way to connect with God. Journaling gave Jack a



structure for his prayer, and it provided Jack with good perspective for a quality prayer time. Jack writes in his prayer journal at least weekly, sometimes more often, especially when going through a rough patch. He writes three “thanks” prayers and three “help” prayers. Jack says, “I know I’m going to get what I pray for, but not always in the way I expect. God will give me what I need, more than God will instantly give what I ask for. God is working in the background, and it will all work out.” Jack always writes in his prayer journal at his desk – it’s his “base of operations.” This summer he hopes to find a good space – to prayer journal outdoors. He almost always writes his prayers at night, between 9 and 10pm, so that he’s not rushed. In addition to his prayer journal, Jack finds time to read the Bible to soak in the great truths of God. Jack says, “my journal is like a rough draft for talking to God. Journaling helps to solidify my thoughts and focus my prayers.”



Jack  
Burton



Kathy  
Brandenburg

**Kathy Brandenburg** has taken on prayer journaling as a new practice in the last couple years. Before that, her devotional time was haphazard. She tries to do it first thing in the morning, saying “I find it keeps God a part of my whole day.” Kathy starts by sitting quietly for about 10 minutes. “I think of it as a time to sit with God, trying not to focus on my thoughts, giving God a chance to speak to me, to work in me or just sit quietly with a Friend.” The words from the classic Gospel song “In the Garden” come to Kathy’s mind: “He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.” Then Kathy’s practice has four parts: 1) copying a Bible verse; 2) writing what it means to her; 3) writing a reflection from a daily devotional reading; 4) writing her prayer to God. “Sometimes it’s a ‘brain dump’ where I write everything that’s built up in me. That can be extremely healing!” Kathy has found that journaling keeps her mind more focused. “This practice has helped me to grow closer to God and has helped my faith grow, make it real. I’ve learned so much about God and about myself!”



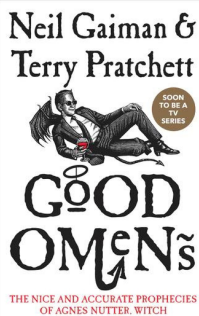
**Carl Anderson** tries to journal every morning, outside if possible. He's been doing this now for almost six years. "It connects me. My journaling gives me the opportunity to say thanks for all that I've been blessed with. That's a great way to start my day, going over all that I have to be thankful for. If something is pressing and weighing on my mind, I address that too. I acknowledge God and all God has done in my life. It's a great way to start my day – humble and grateful. It's a way to say 'good morning' to my friend and savior. It's a vital part of my being. I could not start my day without it. **It's better than a bowl of cereal.**"

Prayer journaling is something you can do almost anywhere, in the midst of summer travels and vacation, and in the daily routines of life. Maybe this summer would be a good time to give it a try.

## Whatcha Reading? with Natalie Beryl



I read the book *Good Omens* by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. The book is based around two characters, an angel named Aziraphale and a demon named Crowley. These two unlikely friends are tasked to start the apocalypse. However, after spending millennia on Earth, the two don't want to see such a beautiful place be destroyed. Aziraphale and Crowley then go around the world trying to delay the beginnings of Revelation. This book is hilarious, and you'll find something to laugh at in each chapter despite the seriousness of the pair's quest. The takeaways I've gathered are: standing up for what you believe in isn't always the easiest thing to do (or the most graceful), and that you can always find friends and allies with those who seem the least likely. From what I've read so far, I'll leave *Good Omens* with a 10/10 rating. I definitely recommend giving it a read!



# REACHING WITHIN: SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FRIENDSHIP

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## Save the Date: Women's Retreat - January 19-21, 2024

Now is the time to set aside this weekend. Block it out on your personal and work schedules. You won't want to miss this weekend at the Prairie Center at Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville. This year we welcome guest speaker, Julie Van Hove from Defined Ministries ([www.definedministries.com](http://www.definedministries.com)). She has spent 25+ years in ministry. She has a heart for God and for women who want to define who they are through their identity in Christ. It's time to take time for you, ladies.



## Alpha Starts September 10

ALPHA Series is back! You are invited to eleven Sunday Evening Sessions (5:30-7pm) starting on Sept. 10th-Nov. 19th, and two Sunday Morning Sessions (10:15-11:15am), Jan. 7 & 14. Mark your calendars now!



### What is Alpha?

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the basics of the Christian faith. Each session looks at a different question around faith, and the talks are designed to create conversation in small groups afterwards. It's totally free, it's hosted all over the globe, and everyone's welcome!

### What happens at ALPHA?

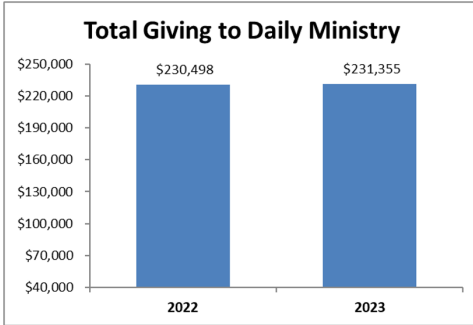
ALPHA has three things in common:

- Food – Most sessions start with food because it's a great way to connect and get to know everyone there.
- Video – The videos explore the basics of the Christian faith and are designed to inspire conversation.
- Conversation – There is a discussion after the video where you can share your thoughts and ideas on the session's topic. You can say anything!

Sign Up on the Ministry Table in the Gathering Area, online, or email Karla at [director@stjohns-lc.org](mailto:director@stjohns-lc.org).

# Mid-Year Financial Report

Thanks for doing your part to provide resources for our mission and ministry together. St. John's people are faithful in their giving to our daily ministries. Simply Giving is our convenient electronic giving funds transfer. Our Simply Giving contributions have increased by 2.4% from one year ago! It's a great way to give consistently, and it helps the church depend on incoming resources. Contact the church office for details to enroll or to update your giving.



Our income is under budget by 10.90%, and thankfully we are also under budget with our expenses. We have a year to date income as of June 30. Our budget reflects the past income and expense trend from the previous year, but annually it is balanced.

Year to date Profit Loss as of June 30, 2023			
	Actual	Budget	Over (Under)
<b>Income</b>	231,355	259,644	<b>(28,289)</b>
<b>Expense</b>	213,261	253,088	<b>(39,827)</b>
<b>Net</b>	18,094	6,556	<b>11,538</b>

## 5 WAYS TO GIVE

**Automated**



**Mail**



**Dropbox**



**Online**



**In Person**



# Making Connections by Glenace Smelcer



St. John's has been my church family for many years. My children attended Sunday School, were confirmed, and married in this church.

It has been a special part of my life, a place to grow spiritually and faithfully in my relationship with my Savior.

I am a retired elementary school teacher and was blessed to work with young children. It was a great joy to watch them learn. In my retirement, I enjoy visiting my children and grandchildren (plus great grands now too,) working with my hands, creating, quilting, knitting, and sewing, plus reading and traveling have been a real inspiration.

I'm always up for a new challenge and my faith keeps me motivated to try new ideas and to serve others in different ways!

## **Why do I give?**

Luke 6:38: "Give and it will be given to you." This verse is a reminder of the many blessings we receive. All of it comes from God! I want to use my gifts to serve others. Our church reaches out to people in need, both locally and worldwide. By sharing we can support many programs and projects and give God's glory to others. God loves a cheerful giver, and sharing my gifts gives me a grateful, unselfish heart.

When is a time that the church was there for you?

Our church is a very caring church. The members cheerfully reach out. St. John's has been there for me when I broke my arm, and also when I was grieving the loss of family members. I appreciate the many cards, comforting words, hugs, food, and phone calls. They always seemed to come just at the right moment, the perfect timing showing God's love at work. Thanks.

## **What do I appreciate about St. John's?**

We are truly blessed with our wonderful church staff, ministers, and congregation members. The energy is unbelievable! This energy is welcoming and really shows God's love growing and strengthening our

faith, trust, and hope. It also has many opportunities for all ages to participate, and many ways we can use our talents. It makes you feel wanted and needed to build a great relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ.

**How do I give my time and talent to St. John’s?**

Joshua 22:5: “Serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

God wants us to use our talents and time for God’s glory. Serving my church is a rewarding, special time to be grateful. Serving as assisting minister and serving communion are two special ways to honor our Lord and fellow members. Baptism services are also special as each person receives a baptismal napkin. I’m part of the prayer team; it’s a perfect way to open our hearts to God, praying for others. God hears all prayers. Attending Pastor’s weekly Bible study helps me learn and strengthen my faith.

Using my hands, I sew quilt tops and knit prayer shawls and baby blankets. To help serve the community, I coordinate members to deliver Meals on Wheels to homebound neighbors. I also try to give for special programs. St. John’s has many, many ways to use our talents and time. I know there is something for all of us. Many hands make light work!

**Norway and Sweden — August 6-17, 2024**

St. John’s is embarking on another adventure across the ocean. This time to many of native Wisconsinites’ roots: Norway and Sweden. Trans World Travel will be managing St. John’s tour to places such as Bergen, Lillehammer, Oslo, Stockholm, and other Scandinavian gems.



Contact Becca Pook at [outreach@stjohns-lc.org](mailto:outreach@stjohns-lc.org) to reserve your spot on the plane!

# 37th Annual Lutherdale Quilt Auction Preview & Fish Fry — August 11, 4-7pm

## Quilt Preview:

Friday, August 11,  
from 4-7 pm

## Quilt Auction:

Saturday, August  
12th

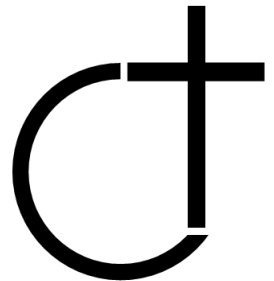


Friday quilt viewing will be inside the Chapel and HOPE Conference Center. Fabric, craft, and gift gallery tables will be open for purchases on Friday. Enjoy a sneak peek and bid on quilts to be auctioned the next day, on Saturday, August 12, at the 37th Annual Lutherdale Fest Quilt Auction.

This event is outdoors. Table sales & silent auction opens at 9am. Live auction of over 300 quilts begins at 10am. Generous support from donors & bidders makes it possible for campers to experience God's love in a powerful way.

## Congregational 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 Tuesdays, August 8 & 22, 1:00-2:00pm.

# REACHING OUT: SERVICE & INVITATION

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## \$10,000 Gift to Scholarship Endowment

In celebration of the life of Delores K Harding, her daughter and St. John's member Cheryl Easland recently made a gift of \$10,000 toward the Endowed Scholarship Fund of St. John's. Delores' mother (Cheryl's grandmother) was a nurse in World War II. Delores always wanted to be a nurse, and during her cancer journey, Delores received excellent care from her nurses. Cheryl has made this generous gift to honor her mother's legacy and to invest in future nurses.



In recognition of this generous gift to the Endowed Scholarship Fund, the Scholarship Fund Committee will identify and support nursing students in Delores Harding's name with ten scholarships of \$1000. Using the guidelines and essay for the Endowed Scholarship Fund, scholarships will be given to worthy members of St. John's Lutheran Church who have been accepted into a nursing program at an accredited college, university, or trade school. Cheryl will have the opportunity to connect with these nursing students and know that her mother's legacy lives on.

Making a gift to the Endowed Scholarship Fund of St. John's is a wonderful way to honor or memorialize a loved one. Talk to a member of the Mission Endowment and Scholarship Fund Committee (page 2), Financial Director Deb Herbers, or Pastor Matt.

### Stay Connected with St. John's



**Online** at [www.StJohns-LC.org](http://www.StJohns-LC.org)

**On Facebook** at [facebook.com/St-Johns-Lutheran-Church-Evansville-WI-145437998849063/](https://facebook.com/St-Johns-Lutheran-Church-Evansville-WI-145437998849063/)

**On Twitter** @StJohns\_53536

**With Daily Nudge Text Message Devotions** at [trunc.us/dB47CB](https://trunc.us/dB47CB)



## \$10,000 Gift to Mission Endowment Fund

The Mission Endowment Fund has recently received a generous gift of \$10,000. Praise God for this generosity! This will grow the principle of our investment and will multiply the impact of the fund for years to come.



St. John's Lutheran Church Mission Endowment Fund supports a strong and growing ministry. The purpose of the Mission Endowment Fund is to receive and invest gifts, grants, bequests, and property. Gifts are received through memorials, wills, trusts and annuities, insurance, and living trusts, as well as through gifts of cash, bonds, stock, real estate, and personal property. The Mission Endowment Fund Committee then administers the income from these investments for the sake of God's mission in our congregation, local community, region, and world. Over the years, the Mission Endowment Fund has supported capital improvements, adult mission trips, emergency assistance, the Care Closet, Aware in Evansville, the Evansville Peace Park Labyrinth, the Evansville Community Garden, Lutherdale Bible Camp, Lutheran Disaster Response, the ELCA Malaria Campaign, and much more. The fund provides financial support to advance God's work among us.

We give because we have a generous God. God so loved the world that God gave his only Son for our salvation. God in Christ has done something generous and beautiful for us. Doing something beautiful for God in response makes our lives worth living. Giving to the Mission Endowment Fund can be a way of doing something beautiful for God and God's church, which will last long beyond our own lifetimes. For more information on making a gift, talk to a member of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee (page 2), Financial Director Deb Herbers, or Pastor Matt.



### **Our Mission Statement**

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

### **Our Core Values**

Inspiring Worship

Faithful Service

Lifelong Spiritual Growth

Uplifting Prayer

Caring Invitation

Christ-Centered Friendships

# Council Matters by Keith Miller

On July 10 the church council met for its regular monthly meeting and discussed many exciting things. First, action on the new preschool continued. Melissa Blake will be the teacher and 4 families are interested for sure, with 8 total families interested. Most of the buzz, though, centered around picking the name. After some lively discussion, the name "Little Fish Preschool at St. John's" unanimously passed. Council members really liked the idea that the name connected with the fish symbol integrating St. John's Logo and referring to them as our "Little Fish". Pastor Matt reported that Mission Mondays with the high school youth had a great day picking up trash, having lunch, and swimming. A new scholarship fund is being established for a student focused on going into nursing (\$1000/year); this fund will continue for 10 years. RIC weekend went well. The Pig Roast had a fantastic turnout; the fellowship hall was full on both days! The church garden has been planted and is being watered. President Jeff was excited to report that a full-size air hockey table was donated to the church and has been put in the south basement. Discussion continues on how to best use the space in the south basement.



## Green Living Tip by Lindsay Trustem

It's hard to believe it is already August. As you plan your end of the summer calendar, think of adding in some eco-friendly activities. Here are a few ideas to help get you started:



- 1. Go biking!** There are many bike trails not far from Evansville. Consider starting on the Sugar River trail in Albany or bike the UW-Madison Lakeshore path.
- 2. Explore Cave of the Mounds!** This natural cave in Blue Mounds was formed over millions of years by the slow dissolution of limestone by groundwater.
- 3. Have a picnic!** Soak up every minute of sunlight by heading out for a picnic lunch or dinner. Use reusable containers & utensils; avoid single-use plastics.
- 4. Visit a "Pick Your Own Farm"!** Summer is known for being a bountiful fruit & veggie season. Eating locally grown seasonal produce means you know where your food comes from. It also ensures your food doesn't have to travel far to get to you; this will help reduce your carbon footprint.

## St. John's Launches 3-year-old Preschool

Sometimes difficult endings bring about great beginnings. At the end of the school year, we said farewell to Nikki Soto and her



**Little Fish Preschool**

Pathway Preschool/4K that was run through our basement. This summer we have been working towards a new adventure ... St. John's Little Fish Preschool! With the help of our Little Fish teacher, Melissa Blake, a south basement room is being set up with furniture, toys, and lots of love. Through the month of August we will be finalizing the licensing process through the Wisconsin Department of Children and Family Services. This preschool program will be held September through May, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8am - 11am. Each year the preschool will be able to provide children between the ages of three and four with a caring environment where they can play, learn and socialize. This program will be a great asset for our St. John's and Evansville community. It's important for children to have a successful beginning to their education journey and what a blessing for St. John's in this exciting new adventure.

### Meet Melissa Blake

Hello to the congregation of St. John's! I am Melissa (Mel) Blake and I'm absolutely thrilled to accept my new role as Lead 3K Teacher for St. John's. I have experience teaching Montessori at the preschool level as well as teaching secondary ELA. I have also enjoyed providing nannying services for dear friends and their newborns, when the opportunities have arisen.



I have resided in Evansville for 7 years now, having moved here from Dardenne Prairie, MO with my husband Stephen and our two daughters, Natalie and Lily. When I'm not sewing memory blankets for my tiny business, Blake W. Hanley Signature Threads, or working at Ceili Coffee, I can normally be found in the car, transporting Nat and Lil to their various activities, or reading a book while said activities are occurring, and loving every minute of it. I am unbelievably thankful for the opportunity to work and play with the little ones of our beautiful community.

# Tangible Support for College Students

Education is a powerful tool that can shape our lives and provide us with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. However, the cost of higher education can be a significant barrier for many individuals. Thankfully church



scholarships emerge as a beacon of hope, offering financial assistance to our youth in pursuit of their academic dreams. St. John's is fortunate enough to not only alleviate the burden of educational expenses, but also to provide support for personal growth, community engagement, and continued spiritual development. St. John's scholarships go beyond financial aid; they serve as a source of encouragement and empowerment for our students. These scholarships acknowledge and validate the potential of students, inspiring them to strive for excellence in all aspects of their lives.

This year St. John's is fortunate to award ten renewal scholarships to students returning to college this fall, in addition to four scholarships already announced to first-year college students. Our renewal scholarship recipients are: Natalie Beyerl (sophomore, UW-River Falls), Brody O'Connor (sophomore, Milwaukee School of Engineering), Kaylee O'Connor (sophomore, UW-Madison), Sam Ross (sophomore, UW-Madison), Jackson Stencil (junior, UW-Madison), Lindsay Carlson (junior, UW-Madison), Taylor Acker (junior, UW-OshKosh), Hannah Roberts (senior, UW-Platteville), Jasmine Elliott (senior, Luther College) and Ashley Bowman (senior, Wartburg Seminary).

In her renewal application, Taylor Acker, reflected on the challenges she faced in college: "I look back on the lessons that God taught me, and I learned that I could bounce back from rock bottom. St. John's was there to catch me when I was falling, I was given a second chance for a scholarship which encouraged me to keep trying and keep going." Church scholarships come with a sense of community.



Natalie Beyerl said, "After my time with church council, God was watching over me, and I decided I had too much free time and not enough time dedicated to helping those in my immediate community. I look for God in everyday occurrences and read the prayer book that Pastor Matt gave me."



By combining academic pursuits with a focus on personal values, our St. John's scholarships help cultivate well-rounded individuals who are not only capable but also morally grounded. Regarding her year abroad in Nottingham, England, Jasmine Elliott said, "I have achieved high marks with the support of my family, flat mates, directors, professors, and St. John's community. The moral and monetary support has afforded me these opportunities to deepen my education and bolster my confidence."



Through these scholarships, students learn the importance of giving back, fostering empathy, and becoming responsible members of society. Lindsay Carlson said, "When someone is down or ill, this value of Christ-Centered Friendship lifts people up. I live this value by always being there for my loved ones. By using God's will, I step out of my way and sometimes even prioritize others over myself, so I am assured my loved ones are thriving."

Three scholarships fund these renewal and first-year awards. The St. John's Lutheran Church Scholarship is an ongoing award given by the congregation from our annual budget. The Golz Family Scholarship of St. John's was established in 2022 by Carol Golz with a gift of \$100,000 in celebration of the teachers in her life. The St. John's Lutheran Church Endowed Scholarship was established in 2022 with gifts from John and Janet Bly in memory of John's parents, Ina and Carroll Bly, and matching gifts from members of the congregation, launched at \$250,000. This fund is set up to receive ongoing gifts to increase and grow our impact. By investing in education, we are investing in the future, creating a legacy of change. These scholarships empower students to pursue dreams, overcome challenges, and make an impact on the world for God's glory.

# Faithful Service Opportunity: AWARE's "Back to School" Supply Program by Amy Floan

*Jesus called for [the children] and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.'*  
— Luke 18:16



Do you feel a rush of excitement when you walk through stores and see the displays of school supplies? Do you miss the days of choosing folders and notebooks? Does the smell of crayons bring back fond memories of school days? If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, then our August service opportunity is for you! It's time for AWARE in Evansville's "Back to School" Supply program! To help local low-income families get the school supplies their children need to start the year, AWARE is looking for your help.

Backpack tags will be available at St. John's and around the community beginning on Thursday, August 3. Each tag lists the gender, interests, and favorite color of a child along with the supplies needed to begin the school year in their grade level. Select a tag and "go back in time" to relive the excitement of shopping for new school supplies, picking up as many of the items listed as possible. Not a shopper? Tax deductible donations can be sent to AWARE in Evansville.

Donations of supplies should be returned to St. John's by Monday, August 21, for AWARE's August 23 distribution. If you or someone you know needs help getting school supplies, contact Amy Floan at [aware@community-action.org](mailto:aware@community-action.org).

AWARE, a program of Community Action, Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties, is a grassroots program created in 1998 to address the needs of Evansville's growing low-income population. All financial and in-kind contributions to AWARE are invested 100% in the Evansville community to help our local friends, families, and neighbors in Education is one of the strongest tools a community has for breaking the cycle of poverty.

# Save the Date: Fall Community Service Day on September 10

Mark your calendars NOW for God's Work Our Hands Day, Sunday, September 10, 10:30am-12:30pm.

2022 Fall Service school kit making and packing.



## School Kits for Lutheran World Relief

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) School Kits contain essential supplies to help children – and in some cases, adults – continue learning in the face of serious obstacles. That learning leads to a better life for them, their families, and their communities. This glorifies God.



The items below are included in each kit. All items should be new.

- FOUR 70-sheet notebooks of wide- or college-ruled paper, approximately 8" x 10 ½"
- ONE 30-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other
- ONE pencil sharpener
- ONE pair of blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well)
- FIVE unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers; secure together with a rubber band
- FIVE black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink); secure together with a rubber band
- ONE box of 16 or 24 crayons
- ONE 2 ½" eraser

# My Faithful Service by Kathy Wells

It's a real challenge for me to consider why I volunteer. Why is it meaningful and how does it connect me to my faith? I think it is just a part of who I am. I was raised in a family where church, volunteering and supporting organizations we cared about was just part of our lives.

When I see that something needs to be done and it's something I am able to do, I sign up to do it. Somehow it usually involves cooking! I always figure, if no-one signs up, how is it going to get done?

When my kids were in school I was in charge of teacher meals during conferences from elementary through high school. I was also in charge of the EHS boys soccer concession stand for 9 years.

At St John's, I've been involved in the early years of establishing the high school youth group "Sweet Wednesdays " meeting with the kids every Wednesday and baking treats. I still assist them with their breakfast fundraisers.

When Pastor Matt mentioned the Open Table free community dinners needed someone to get them going again, I thought it would be a great fit for my skill set. There is a different organization helping host each dinner and the energy they bring lifts me up, each and every time!

God has given me the gifts of cooking and organizing and I am trying to use them to the best of my ability!



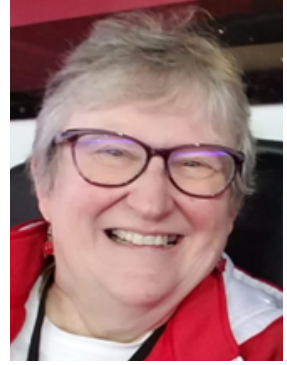
You will often find Kathy Wells in the kitchen, at St. John's, at Creekside, or at her own home!



# Faithful Service Highlight: Children's Ministries

## Deb Herbers

I work with Soul Troop and Faith Corps littles on Wednesday afternoons after school. I sit with six to eight kids from each group for snack and check in with them on how their days and week went. We share highs and lows and many other bits of info together. After snacks are over I do crafts with the Faith Corps kids.



I enjoy working with the littles in our church. I am blessed each time we meet with sweet smiles and happy voices. I missed them so much last year when I took time off to do musical costumes.

I see God in their growth from week to week. In thoughtful comments. In asking for help, in prayers. In smiling faces on Sunday mornings. It truly is a joyful experience!



## Stella Krull

I serve as a helper for Soul Troop and Faith Corps, every Wednesday during the school year. I help with activities such as games and crafts. This includes one on one help if someone needs an extra hand in a project or a game. I also help to make sure all kids are listening when the group leader is talking.

It makes me feel good to be able to donate some of my time to help others, especially younger kids. I also like to be able to give back to a program that I enjoyed for years.



Our leaders are great examples of God's work in this ministry. They volunteer to give their personal time to teach God's word to little kids.

## Sharon George

I help make and serve food for the children at Soul Troop and Faith Corps on Wednesdays.

I enjoy working with children, church staff, and serving the church.

I see God in the heart of the church and the caring the members have for each other.



## Jen Stokstad

I have been a BASIC leader or helper for the past 12 years. I have also taught VBS. This fall I will be a small group leader for confirmation for the first time.

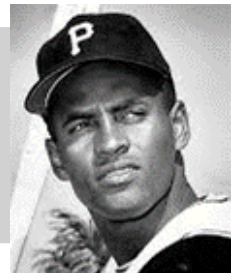
I am blessed to be able to extend my gift as a teacher to the children at church and help them grow in their faith.

I see God in the songs we sing together, the Bible stories that are shared, the smiling, engaged faces of all the children and the activities we do. God is there in the connections being made among the adults and with the children and their families. Seeing faith and God through the eyes of the children reminds me of my own faith and how growing up in the church has been an integral part of who I am.



"If you have an opportunity to make things better and you don't, then you are wasting your time on Earth."

- Roberto Clemente



# CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRIES

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## Children's, Youth, & Family Ministries Resume Next Month

Are you wondering where you, your child, and your family fit into the Children's, Youth, and Family Ministries at St. John's? St. John's ministries include all ages, beginning at birth! Head to [StJohns-LC.org](http://StJohns-LC.org) to register.

## Wednesday Afternoons: Faith Corps and Soul Troop



Faith Corps (K-2nd grades) and Soul Troop (3rd-5th grades) fill the church building on Wednesdays after school until 4:30pm. These two groups gather for spiritual growth through fun activities with friends in a large-group setting. Snacks, music, devotion, and games are just the beginning of the fun.



## Sunday Mornings: B.A.S.I.C.

B.A.S.I.C. (Brothers And Sisters In Christ) meets on Sunday mornings, from 10:15-11:15am, and focuses on children 3 years old through 5th grade. Sunday mornings after 9am worship, kids and small group leaders will gather for Bible stories, songs, crafts, and fun. Then kids will break into small groups to talk about God in their daily lives, pray together, and build friendships with each other and their leaders. Children who are 3 years old by September 1, 2023, are welcomed into this ministry.

## Sunday Mornings: Splash!

Families with children under three are invited to a gathering just for littles Sunday, September 17th at 10:15am in the nursery.



## Upcoming dates to note:

- Blessing of the Backpacks, August 26th & 27th
- Wednesday, September 13: Faith Corps and Soul Troop resume
- Sunday, September 17: B.A.S.I.C. resumes
- Sunday, September 24: Worship Bag Milestone (4 years old by Sept. 1, 2023) at 9am worship, workshop with families to follow at 10:15am
- Sunday, October 8: Bible Presentation (3 years old by Sept. 1, 2023) at 9am worship, workshop with families to follow at 10:15am

# Pictures from South Dakota Trip for High School Youth: July 16 – 21



*15 youth and adults heading out Sunday morning to South Dakota (above).*

*Learning from a new Native American friend on Monday night (left).*

*Time with Kim and Becky Heimrl on the lake and enjoying their generous hospitality (bottom left).*

*Jack Burton getting in touch with his inner Picasso (bottom right).*



# High School Mission Mondays



**ONLY ONE LEFT!**  
Mission Monday  
August 7th!

*Enjoying some kayaking at Gibbs Lake (top left).*

*High school youth serving at Terra Growers Organic Farm in Waunakee (top right).*



*Franklin Street Park cleanup in Evansville (bottom right).*

*Lunch at El Vallarta in Evansville (bottom left).*



# IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

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## St. John's Members

Marjorie Klitzman	Bret Church	Adam Kopp
Michael Adams	Arnold Klug	Jeanette Schunk
John Almond	Diane Quinn	

## Family & Friends

Amber Valdez	Carol Anderson	Michael Schumann
Braiden Bergum	Tom Timm	Laura Scott
Jan Meyer	Sarah O'Sullivan	Bryan Walker
Lori Koch	Olivia Frances	Rosemary Wangard

## Partners in Mission:

Rev. Kyle and Anna Svenningsen & 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, Samantha Ihlenfeldt

## Condolences to:

**Liz Hatlen, Sharon Seagren, and Rick Hatlen** as they grieve the death of Ron Hatlen.  
**Al and Kaye Crocker** as they grieve the death of his sister-in-law Brenda.  
**Maddy and Jaxson Soto** as they grieve the death of their grandmother Sandy Soto.  
**Deb, Erik and Kayla Nelson** as they grieve the death of her mother and their grandmother Shirley Nordeng.  
**Cheryl Easland and Abby McCullough** as they grieve the death of Cheryl's nephew and Abby's cousin Jeff Harding.  
**Ron and Diane Quinn** as they grieve the death of his brother John B Quinn.  
**Cindy and Dan Millin** as they grieve the death of her father Harry Smelser.  
**Carol Harnack, Mike Harnack and Melissa Fisher** as they grieve the death of Carol's husband and Mike's father Louie Harnack.  
**Danny and Christina Crans** as they grieve the death of his grandmother Florence Crans.

## Congratulations to:

**Amanda and Justin Morton** on the baptism of their son Skyler Daniel.  
**Thomas and Tanya Lawson** on the baptism of their daughter Magdalena Lynn.  
**Ashley Thorland** on the baptism of her daughters Sophia Isabella and Emilee Elaine.  
**Sawyer Johnson and Kaitlyn MacPherson** on their marriage.  
**Dee and Rollie Jeans** on the birth of their great-grandson Emmett Donald.

# POINTS OF PRAYER

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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 “Sitting in the Spirit” Challenge**

Gracious God, what a gift you’ve given us in the words of Holy Scripture. Teach us to hear your voice through the Bible, and help us to be still and sit in the Holy Spirit. Strengthen us for this 28-day challenge, and shape us to be your faithful people through daily devotion to you.

## **For peace in regions of conflict**

Lord of the nations, why is peace so elusive? Help us to see the value in people who are different from us, whether religiously, politically, or ethnically. Change us by your love and compassion.

## **For our local neighbors**

God of grace, you give us the gift of community and friendship. Use our hands to reach out and welcome those who live next door to us. Teach us to love our neighbor as ourselves and treat all people with kindness.

## **We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.**

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"Rest is not idle, is not wasteful. Sometimes rest is the most productive thing you can do for body and soul."

— Erica Layne, *Life on Purpose Podcast*





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