

March 2023

V i s i o n o t e s



Our youngest participants in worship helped to hide the ALLELUIA for Lent on the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

Lent: The Heart of Jesus (p. 5)

Sermon series, small groups, mid-week events

Holy Communion for Fifth Graders (p.7)

Tablet Ministry (p.8)

How worship is meeting people at home

Bake It or Clean It Challenge (p. 14)

Special collection for the Care Closet

Lent... or lint? (p. 22)

A Liturgy of Technology (p.23)

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
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

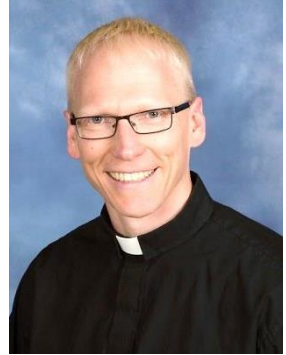
Jeanna Blume, Wanda King, Ann Legris,
Joy Olson, Gordy Miller, Glenace Smelcer

Why (Weekly) Holy Communion?

10th in a series of “why” questions about what we do as a church, particularly during worship

A few months ago, one Sunday morning guest was a young boy, about 8. His cousin was being baptized, and he came with family to witness and celebrate. Worship was a new experience, and he was paying careful attention to it all. When it came time for Holy Communion and people

started coming forward, he asked his mother what was going on. She did her best to explain that people were coming forward for bread and juice. He replied, “Good, I’m hungry.” He was ready for a snack!



To those unfamiliar with the Christian tradition, Holy Communion may seem very odd. Everyone files forward for a snack – a small one, too! What’s more, it looks and tastes like bread and wine or juice, but they have the audacity to call it someone’s body and blood! “What is going on here?” they must wonder. On some level, we all wonder that, too.

To those of us rooted in the Christian faith, Holy Communion is very important. It’s powerful and rich in meaning, a tangible way we share in the life of God. The Lutheran Church teaches that the body of Christ is “in, with, and under” the bread. It’s still bread, but by faith it is also the body of Jesus. The blood of Christ is “in, with, and under” the wine. It’s still wine (or juice), but it is also the blood of Jesus. We simply take Jesus at his word when he says, “Take and eat, this is my body... this is my blood.”

Holy Communion is a sacrament, a holy event, one of the most special things we do as the church. In this simple meal (or small snack), we receive God into our lives. God feeds our souls with love, forgiveness, and grace. We bring God into our bodies so that we might embody God. We’ve heard it said that “you are what you eat.” Communion is the prime example of this! We eat the body of Jesus Christ in order to BE the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ comes alive in us through Holy Communion.

It used to be common for children to wait until after formal instruction before receiving Holy Communion in order to better understand it. I was in 8th grade when I first received Holy Communion, on the day I publicly

confirmed my faith with my peers. Prior to that, I stayed behind in the pew while my parents and older siblings went forward to the table. Maybe this was your experience, too.

In recent years, St. John's has developed the tradition of this instruction in the 5th grade, prior to entering confirmation studies. We invite children, together with parents/guardians, to explore the depth of Holy Communion in the life of faith. This beautiful milestone culminates each year on Maundy Thursday. For some, this is the first time they receive Holy Communion; others have been receiving already. Both children and parents have come to a fuller understanding through our five sessions. We will never completely understand Holy Communion. It is holy and mystical. Still, it flourishes for us as we grow in faith and understanding.

St. John's practices an open table. We try not to put requirements on worthiness – age, understanding, or status – for the sacrament. An open hand is all the faith it takes, as the Spirit leads. After all, Jesus made no such requirements; he invited little children to come to him, and he even ate with Judas, who betrayed him. **Truly, all are welcome at Jesus' table.**

The practice of frequency has also evolved over the years. Some of us might remember days when Holy Communion was celebrated monthly, or quarterly. For me, it was the first and third Sundays of the month. In recent years, the whole church has moved toward weekly celebrations. The fear is that it will become too routine, but the opportunity is to draw close to God in the rhythm of weekly worship and sabbath. Jesus tells us that however often we do it, to remember him and proclaim his love.

Holy Communion is a gift from Jesus to us. It's a gift we need. I feel closer to Jesus through Holy Communion. Here we experience God's love and goodness. Here we are strengthened in faith. We don't need it as a snack, to fill our bodies. We need it as a sacrament, a holy mystery, to feed our souls. Come one, come all; taste and see that the Lord is good.

“Those who eat my
flesh and drink my
blood abide in me,
and I in them.”
-Jesus (John 6:56)

In Christ,


REACHING UP: WORSHIP & PRAYER

LENTEN THEME: THE HEART OF JESUS

How's the state of your heart? Sometimes we have a heavy heart, other times a light one. When we talk about "heart" in these ways, we aren't talking about the incredible, blood-pumping organ that sustains our bodies. Our physical heart we want to be strong, healthy, dependable. But how would you describe your "inner" heart – the one related to your character, feelings, priorities, and ways of living in the world? Though we don't know anything about Jesus' *physical* heart, we know his "inner" heart was full of love, grace, and mercy. **We have a lot to learn from Jesus' heart!** Through daily reflections, weekend worship, midweek services, and small groups during Lent, we'll get to know Jesus' heart better. As we sing, so we pray: "Change my heart, O God, make it ever true. Change my heart, O God, may I be like you."



February 25 & 26... Matthew 18:15-35 (Parable of Unforgiving Servant)

- Lent 1: "The Heart of Jesus" is Forgiving
- Special Music: Children's Classic Songs

March 1... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer Service, 7pm

March 4 & 5... Matthew 20:1-16 (Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard)

- Lent 2: "The Heart of Jesus" is Generous

March 8... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer Service, 7pm

March 11 & 12... Matthew 22:1-14 (Parable of the Wedding Banquet)

- Lent 3: "The Heart of Jesus" is Invitational
- Receive New Members
- *Daylight Savings Time Starts*

March 15... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer Service, 7pm

March 18 & 19... Matthew 25:14-30 (Parable of the Talents)

- Lent 4: "The Heart of Jesus" is Grateful

March 22... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer Service, 7pm

March 25 & 26... Matthew 25:31-46 (Parable of the Last Judgment)

- Lent 5: "The Heart of Jesus" is Lowly

March 29... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer, 7pm

April 1 & 2... Palm Sunday, Matthew 21:1-17 (Triumphal Entry)

- Lent 6: "The Heart of Jesus" is Blessed

MIDWEEK HOLDEN EVENING PRAYER, WITH THE HEART OF JESUS



Each week in Lent St. John's gathers together on Wednesday evenings for a 30-minute, reflective service. Worship will be filled with the music of Holden Evening Prayer and reflections on the heart of Jesus from St. John's people. **Add 7:00pm to your calendars Wednesdays, March 1 – March 29**, to come together to experience God in a beautiful way. Guest speakers from St. John's will share memorable moments of their faith journey, revealing the heart of Jesus in their lives.

"HEARTY" MEALS EVERY WEDNESDAY, FOR A CAUSE WITH A HEART

Join us for midweek supper meals on Wednesdays in March as we gather to nourish our bodies and



souls during Lent. Every Wednesday, our Fellowship Hall will be buzzing from 5:30-6:30pm with friends and family. For a suggested donation of \$7.00, each meal includes a main dish, side, fruit, and dessert; gluten-free options are available on request. **Donations will benefit Lutheran Social Services**, which offers vital services in the areas of addictions, restorative justice, behavioral health, children and families, housing and aging, persons with disabilities, urban ministries, and rural outreach. Make Wednesday nights a time with St. John's – food for your body, fellowship for your heart, and worship for your soul. Let's grow in Lent together!

"LESSONS FROM THE HEART OF JESUS" – DEVOTIONAL BOOK FOR YOU

This Lent we'll read from the Gospel of Matthew, focusing on the heart of Jesus as revealed in the final weeks of his life on earth. Our weekend scripture readings will coordinate with daily scripture readings. **Our own St. John's daily devotional booklet will include these daily readings, along with personal reflections from St. John's writers.** (Pick up your copy now!)

Each day will focus on one key characteristic of the heart of Jesus. We'll thank God for Jesus' heart, and we'll ask God to grow Jesus' heart in us.



A SIMPLE MEAL OF ABUNDANT GRACE:

HOLY COMMUNION CLASS AND MILESTONE FOR FIFTH GRADERS

Our fifth graders and their parents are invited each year during Lent to meet together to explore the mystery of Holy Communion. They explore how Jesus gave us the gift and began this sacrament on his last night on earth. They examine the roots of Holy Communion in the tradition of



Passover meal from the book of Exodus, which is still an ongoing tradition of our Jewish siblings. And they consider how Christ is really present to us in the meal and how Holy Communion prepares us to serve in God's world. This milestone is a wonderful time to discuss its meaning and to receive the bread and wine with new appreciation. Classes begin on February 26 and meet for five Sundays at 10:15am in Fellowship Hall.

Farnsworth Ceramics will lead students in making their chalices. The fifth graders will experience the process of baking communion bread together. Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, is the day each year when we celebrate Jesus sharing the Lord's Supper with his disciples. This year on April 6, in worship at 5:00pm and 7:00pm, our fifth graders are invited to celebrate this milestone as they receive Holy Communion together. For many this will be the first time they receive the sacrament; for all, it will have new and important meaning. May the body and blood of Jesus strengthen our faith and nourish our Spirits.

FLOWERS FOR EASTER

St. John's has a long-standing tradition of placing flowers in the sanctuary to celebrate the Risen Lord. Order forms are available on the ministry table, or contact the church office before March 5th (our deadline with the greenhouse).



TABLET MINISTRY – WORSHIPPING AT HOME

We can look to the covid pandemic for the push it took to launch St. John's Tablet Ministry. In a time when we were working hard to make worship accessible to all, we realized that we have neighbors right in our midst who rarely leave their homes and who do not have internet access. Worship on YouTube wasn't enough to reach them, without a computer and internet. Helping them to be part of worship with St. John's took a little creative thinking and a new resource.

Each week the Sunday morning worship service is downloaded onto our nine smart tablets. These tablets are then delivered to the ill or homebound so they can stay connected to St. John's, no transportation or internet required.

Besides sharing our tablets with individuals, we take one to The Evansville Manor where our ministry can reach even more. (They Kelly House now streams our worship on their smart TV.) We made easy-to-follow directions that our recipients could learn and follow. With a push, a swipe, and a tap, worship is ready.

The Tablet Ministry has proven to be a wonderful blessing to our homebound neighbors. Marion Schulz says, "I don't get out to church, it's too hard with my walker. But every week I can't wait to get the tablet!" Jeanette Almond shared how she appreciates the time to sit, watch, and be able to study the sermon on her own pace. Lillian Jones came to St. John's right before the pandemic, which was enough for us to make the connection to offer bringing her a tablet weekly. "I can't get down to the



Marion Schulz (above) and Lillian Jones (next page) with the tablets that enable them to enjoy worship each week.

March 2023 Visionotes

church, it's just too hard. I'm not a member, but I started attending before covid with Marjorie Klitzman. I was briefly introduced to Pastor Matt and then two weeks later I went again and Pastor Matt knew my name." Regarding our worship service, Lillian says, "I like the music and the sermon." After visiting with Lillian, Chris Cole was able to share her story with Marjorie and Rod Klitzman. Rod shared how Marjorie loves to see the people and Pastor Matt on her tablet each week.

These tablets are delivered by a few faithful servants who help share the work. The Tablet Ministry has been meaningful for them as well. Cheryl Hanson, who was one of the first on the delivery team, said, "I loved seeing the ladies, talking with them and becoming their friend. I miss them." Lorrie Reed says, "I appreciate the opportunity to distribute and collect the sermon tablets in order to help the church serve those who can't attend in person. Good to see technology used in a positive way!"



Marcia Meriedth says, "It is fulfilling and heartwarming to me to visit with the ladies I deliver to. Not being a native of Evansville, I enjoy the stories they share with me about their lives and the community." Chris Cole also delivers tablets on occasion. "It was a little out of my comfort zone since most of my volunteer time is working with our children and youth. But I have come to enjoy it and love filling in for Marcia and Lorrie. I have gotten to meet many amazing people and develop relationships with them. The relationships are the joy of delivering."

Praise the Lord for St. John's Tablet Ministry that is reaching out beyond the walls of the church building and into the homes of God's beloved!

If you or a loved one in Evansville could benefit from having a tablet delivered for worshipping, please let the church office know.

REACHING WITHIN: SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FRIENDSHIP

MAKING CONNECTIONS

By Dan Millin

I was born in Lancaster, Wisconsin, where I grew up in the Catholic church at St. Clements. I attended the church school through 8th grade and then when to public school thru 12th grade. For college I headed off to



UW-Platteville to study computers, finishing a management degree from Cardinal Stritch University, then an MBA in Finance at UW-Whitewater. After serving as Vice President for information technology at an insurance company, I moved into computer consulting, eventually starting my own computer consulting business. I sold the business in 2012.

In college I stopped going to church, and I didn't start attending church again until I met Cindy. She was a lifelong Lutheran, raised in Madison. Together we started going to church at Lake Edge Lutheran Church in Madison. There I served on council a couple of different times. Cindy volunteered in financial record-keeping, while working as an accountant. We raised our three children in Monona and at Lake Edge – Kelsey (Zack), Danielle (Mitch), and Marcus. Swimming was a big part of our family life. The girls competed, I was an official, and Cindy was treasurer of the club.

In 2012 we started building our current house in Albany. We moved in and started attending St. John's. I started serving on the building work group on Tuesday mornings, and Cindy served on staff as the financial director. This past year, when Cindy retired, I was asked to join the church council. This is my first on year council with St. John's. My strengths I bring to my service are in the areas of finance and building and grounds. We currently live 6 months of the year here in Wisconsin, and spend the other 6 months in Sebring, FL. We gladly give financially to support St. John's; they more you give, the more you get back. I learned that whatever you want to get more of, you should give away.

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 March 14 and March 28, 1:00-2:00pm.



OPEN TABLE, MARCH 13 @ CREEKSIDE PLACE

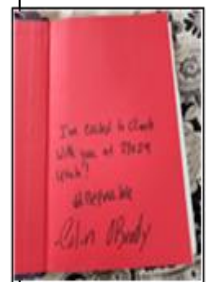
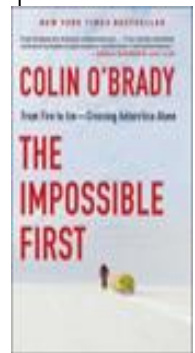
Invite your friends and neighbors! Open Table meal on Monday, March 13, 5:15-6:30pm, at Creekside Place. The tasty meal that evening will be a "Deluxe Soup and Sandwich Buffet." Our own Kathy Wells will be serving at least five different soups and hot sandwiches with salad and desserts. (Gluten free and vegetarian options available.) What a gift to Evansville – a free meal and an opportunity to feast together!



WHATCHA READING?

By Kristian Frinrock

Colin O'Brady's awe-inspiring memoir spans his recovery from a tragic accident to his 932-mile solo crossing of Antarctica. The Impossible First by Colin O'Brady was particularly meaningful to me for several reasons. I was first in my family to graduate high school, to join the military, to graduate college, to start a business, and to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, along with dozens of other firsts. Additionally, I met and completed the challenge #29029Everesting (climbers have 36 hours to climb 29,029 vertical feet) along with Colin. In fact, he signed my book. In his remarkable story, Colin set out to be the first to cross the landmass of Antarctica alone and without support. Less than ten years prior to that, there was doubt Colin would even be able to walk.



DELIGHTFUL DINING AT MARDI GRAS LUNCHEON

Mardi Gras, which means Fat Tuesday in French, is the day before Ash Wednesday. It's a day of feasting and eating rich foods before the ritual fasting of the Lenten season. St. John's hosted our own Mardi Gras, and we celebrated the many who faithfully serve with the ministries of the church. After a New Orleans-flavored luncheon, Rev Nancy Enderle of Holy Wisdom Monastery presented on Spiritual Practices, which includes anything that draws us closer to God and deepens our relationship with God.

Through intentional prayer, meditation, breathing, and scripture reading, **we give God our attention** and put ourselves in a place of least resistance to letting God have God's way with our heart.



REACHING OUT: SERVICE & INVITATION

MY FAITHFUL SERVICE

With Wanda King

In Matthew 20, Jesus says, “...whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant...just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...”

Wanda King embodies Jesus’ call to serve others. When looking at her weekly calendar, you can see her heart pours out Jesus’ love to her neighbors.



She says, “I just want to help people and serve God.” You can find her at the Ecumenical Care Closet sorting through clothes and household items on a regular basis. Since she knows the inventory of the racks and shelves, she can help guests find just what they are looking for. She has a keen eye for treasure as she co-leads the Resale Shop at the Annual Holiday Bazaar. All summer she scours the garage sales for just the items you might be looking for in November.



At the church building, Wanda quilts, both on Tuesdays and Thursdays, to the best of her abilities. “I feel loved while serving, so I guess that love goes to others,” Wanda comments. Her hours of sewing feel that much

more appreciated when the other quilters encourage her with a “job well done.” Wanda feeds both people and plants at the St. John’s building. All those beautiful plants in the Lounge are alive because Wanda cares for them. She is no stranger to the St. John’s kitchen, serving at Sunday Fellowship, funerals, and other hospitality events. As a Befriender, Wanda extends care to people in need. And if all that isn’t awesome, she also serves on the Mutual Ministry team, supporting St. John’s staff. Faithful Service is St. John’s core value theme for 2023; Wanda King is a faithful servant we can depend on.

Thank you, Wanda!



“Life is for service.”

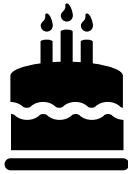
—Fred Rogers

BAKE IT OR CLEAN IT! – COLLECTION FOR THE CARE CLOSET

Do you jump at the chance to put a new recipe in the oven? Or do you high-tail it out of the kitchen, trading for bathroom duty any chance you get? There's something for everyone in the bake-it-or-clean-it challenge for the Care Closet this month! Donations of the following will be collected in the Gathering Area at church, and shopping lists with links will appear in the weekly church news. This is our Faithful Service Opportunity for the month of March.

BAKE IT

Baking soda
Baking powder
Vanilla
Brown sugar
Powdered sugar



VERSUS



CLEAN IT

Dish soap
½ gallon bleach
½ gallon white vinegar
Toilet bowl cleaner
All-purpose cleaner

FAITHFUL SERVICE HIGHLIGHT – PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Do you like to knit or crochet? The prayer shawl ministry needs you! This ministry provides the gift of a shawl to a person in need of a prayer, a warm hug, and a reminder of God's care and love. This simple gift of a 30 x 60 knitted or crocheted shawl serves as a reminder that someone cares and has prayed for the recipient while the shawl is being made. Since 2014, approximately 190 blessed shawls have been given to family, friends, and others outside of our St. John's community.



Thanks to all who have made them. Those who have received these shawls have been uplifted and affirmed, as if given wings to fly above their troubles. The need is great, and we need your help. To learn more about this ministry, please contact Eileen Meredith at 882-5898 or Ann Legris at 608-436-0470.

COUNCIL MATTERS – PLAYING, PRAYING, PLANNING

By Amy Larson

Church Council has taken the opportunity that the New Year offers to reflect back on the previous year, and approach 2023 with purpose and intention. At our monthly meeting, in addition to regular Council business, we reviewed the Annual Meeting that was held on January 29th, and on February 19th, Council members and staff gathered at Creekside Place for an afternoon of play, prayer, and planning.

Much of the focus during our time together this month has been spent sharing victories and concerns related to inspiring worship, uplifting prayer, caring invitation, faithful service, Christ-centered friendship, and lifelong spiritual growth – St. John's core values, as well as hopes for moving forward as a Church. Do you have thoughts related to St. John's Annual Meeting? Are there victories, concerns, or hopes for our Church you'd like to share? If so, please reach out to a council member; we'd love to hear from you.



Last month St. John's enjoyed a great night of euchre! Over 40 people came to play cards and enjoy hearty snacks. The event benefitted our high school youth, who helped to host the night, along with Becca Poock.

MISSION PARTNER IN SLOVAKIA:

PASTOR KYLE AND ÅNNA SVENNUNGENS

Greetings, People of St. John's!

Since our last update for you with the news of our decision not to renew our contract with Global Mission, we have continued about the busy work of serving the people of the Bratislava International Church (BIC) and the wider community. Even though our final Sunday will be July 16, 2023, we have identified many important goals that we are working hard to accomplish here. Many of them related to organization of the church constitution/by-laws and council. We are well on our way to setting these folks up well to welcome the next leaders called to serve here.



With the one year mark quickly approaching since Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we have continued to see and feel the effects of being so close to the war. We continue to have refugees transit through Bratislava, the capital, either looking for work and support, or moving on to another place that has those. The economy has taken a hit here, like everywhere, as a consequence of war. So the jobs that Ukrainians come searching for to support their loved ones back home in a war zone are getting harder and harder to find. We do what we can to be generous with welcoming and supporting refugees when they walk through our doors.

At BIC, we had splendid Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany seasons. Since the new year turned over, my work has been consumed with the normal responsibilities of being pastor, teacher at the bilingual high school, and supervisor to seminary intern Liz Kuster (whom I learned is a former parishioner of Pastor Matt from Iowa!). In addition to all that, I serve as

Vice-President on the board of the Association for International Churches in Europe and the Middle East, of which BIC is a member. When I was elected to this role last May in Rome, I was charged with planning, organizing, and executing our next annual conference. We chose Prague, Czech Republic, as the host for this year's conference. It has been busy but fulfilling work to provide a conference for my colleagues. It will happen the first week of May this year, and our registration goes out soon which means the bulk of our planning and my work is nearly done.

My family has been doing quite well, with minor health challenges here and there. Our youngest son, Magnus, had a procedure in December to drain fluid from behind his ears to help improve his ability to hear. We have noticed a drastic improvement, and he is even started to mimic sounds we are making. We are continuing to work with him on all his therapies. Magnus has been enrolled in a feeding school at the end of March to help him develop the tools and habits to eat well so he can continue to grow. We've had a few rounds of colds go through our house, but all have been made well. We celebrated Anna's birthday in January, and both Magnus and Espen in February, so your birthday blessings are appreciated! Odin continues to excel in elementary school, getting excellent grades for his first semester. We are proud of and grateful for all our boys.

We are grateful to God for this ministry and your partnership in support of it. We pray God blesses you all in this new year, and know that we are always happy to lift up prayers for you if you send them our way (kyle.svennungsen@elca.org and anna.svennungsen@elca.org).

In Christ, The Svennungsens (Odin – 7, Espen – 5, and Magnus – 2)

5 WAYS TO GIVE

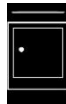
AUTOMATED



MAIL



DROPBOX



ONLINE



IN PERSON



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 of 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.

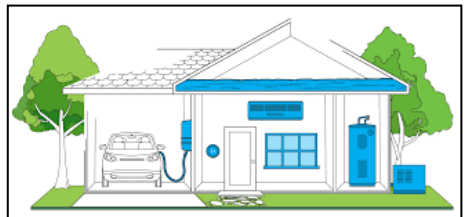
UPGRADING: STOP WASTING

By Lindsay Trustem

When we make energy- efficient improvements to our homes, we use less fossil fuels which reduces greenhouse gases and other air

pollutants. Together, we can improve air quality, help fight climate change, and promote healthy homes. On top of environmental benefits, homeowners could see lower utility bills and may qualify for federal income tax credit. A few energy-efficient upgrades:

- Re-insulate your home
- Replace exterior windows and doors
- Upgrade your breaker box



There are also potential tax credits for many other home improvements. For a complete list, visit Energystar.gov.

STEWARDSHIP WORD OF THE MONTH: COMMITMENT

Sometimes it's easy to dream of a life with no obligations. We could do whatever we want, whenever we want. Though it sounds enticing, such a life wouldn't be any life at all. No one would know what to expect from us... no one would be able to count on us. Our legacy would be limited, and our life wouldn't amount to much. Author, pastor, sociologist Tony Campolo says "We create who we are through the commitments we make. And without commitments we have no identity."

"Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality."
- Abraham Lincoln

You are who you are through the commitments of your life. Some of these commitments you have chosen for yourself. Others are simply given to you without your asking. Either way, they shape you. They give you meaning. And they will end up forming your legacy. As Christians, we take our commitments seriously and choose them wisely. But don't be shy to commit your time, your talent, and your treasure to making a difference in the world. In doing so, you'll find true life.



High School youth enjoyed a weekend retreat at "Quake" in Wisconsin Dells. Speaker Dan Scharnhorst declared God's love for us even when we make mistakes, no matter what we've done. The band led over 600 youth and adults in awesome worship and praise.

MINISTRY WITH OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



We have two spots open for the **high school** summer service trip to Lake Traverse, South Dakota, July 16-21. 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!*

“The Way” (Confirmation) will host an 8th Grade Parent Meeting Wednesday, March 1, 6:00-7:30pm to prepare for all the final projects for the year. All 8th graders preparing to confirm their faith will complete a capstone project, an interview, and a testimony.



Due to Evansville School District Spring Break, there will be **NO BASIC Sunday, March 26, and NO Faith Corps, Soul Troop, Confirmation or Sweet Wednesday on Wednesday, March 29.**

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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.



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.



SPLASH! will meet on Sunday, March 5, 10:15am, for families with children under age 3. Meet in the nursery with Callie Jones.



St. John’s Vacation Bible School for 2023 is July 31-August 4.

LUTHERDALE SUMMER CAMP OPPORTUNITIES

Lutherdale Ministries in Elkhorn, WI, offers a **wide variety of camp opportunities for all ages**, and now is the time to register for summer 2023! Overnight camps are available for kids of all ages. Visit lutherdale.org to see everything that is available and to register. Camp scholarships are also available.



- June 18-23 Confirmation Week (6th-8th gr)
- June 25-30 STEAM Week (STEM+Art) (3rd-8th gr)
- July 9-14 Adventure Week (3rd-8th gr) & Night Owls (6th-8th gr)
- August 6-9 Young Pioneers (1st-2nd); Mini-Mashup (3rd-8th grades)
- August 6-9 Family Camp



Tobogganing (left) and Gaga Ball at Lutherdale Bible Camp

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.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF OUR CHILDREN By Chris Cole

This week I was sitting and eating snack with the Soul Troop kids, and we were talking about what was the next holiday after Valentine's Day. Of course, the children were ready with answers like St. Patrick's Day and Easter. While they weren't wrong, they were missing an important day in their list – Ash Wednesday. So our conversation went a little like this:

LENT
fent
LINT?

Ms. Chris: Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. It is when we come to church and receive ashes in the shape of a cross on our forehead.

Children: Are they human ashes? Did you say lint?

Ms. Chris: The ashes are made from burnt up palm branches and mixed with some oil. The only humans involved are the ones burning the branches. Now about Lent and lint...one is made of junk from your clothes, in between your toes, or in your belly button. The other is a season of 40 days before Easter. (Do you know which is which?)

I think we are back on track! The conversation went much smoother from there (thank goodness!). The children then shared with me about Easter and the days leading up to it, especially Good Friday. It was refreshing to listen rather than teach in that moment, **because I could hear how St. John's and families have been putting our faith into this younger generation.** There is much more they need to learn, but there is also much more that we adults need to learn.

Though Lent has started, it is not too late to jump in and learn! **You can start by taking a Lent 2023 Faith Five calendar from the Ministry Table.** There are activities to do related to fasting, giving, and praying. These activities help us connect to Jesus' life and to resist temptations. It is a simple way to become closer to God. There are also weekly readings listed (for the Bible and the Spark Story Bible) to share together as a family. I invite you to set aside 10 minutes as a family to grow together in faith. Maybe you can discuss lint together.

ABBIE'S ASSURANCES: A LITURGY OF TECHNOLOGY

by Abbie Kriebs

L.M. Sacasas writes a newsletter that explores the relationship between technology and society, and this past fall, he wrote about each of us having a “liturgy of technology,” or a pattern of using technology in our lives that we may or may not



notice, but is there nonetheless.¹ That phrase, “liturgy of technology,” stopped me in my tracks: the religiousness of it paired with the word technology, something that feels outside of religion to me.

Did I have a liturgy of technology? I sure did. It involved checking my email first thing, mentally cataloging all the things I was going to need to attend to when my feet hit the floor, and then reading about all the bad (and occasional good) that the media chose to report on that day. Then—when I had exhausted myself in the name of “rest” (stealing a few more minutes in bed before the tsunami of parenting washed me into the crash of the day)—I rose and started to tend to my real life.

My liturgy of technology wasn't helping me to accomplish any of those attributes I listed in this column last month (kindness, patience, curiosity)... much as I do enjoy that Wordle.

Correcting this ill-fitting liturgy is a larger problem than just not looking at my phone first thing in the morning. It's the task of “putting technology in its proper place,” the subtitle of Andy Crouch's excellent book, [The Tech-Wise Family](#) (which I highly recommend!). Crouch, a former editor of *Christianity Today*, acknowledges how useful technology is to our lives—it's given us means to connect with other people and other believers far beyond the walls of our churches and homes—and yet, technology isn't in its proper place when we let it “overwhelm us with its default settings,

¹ *The Convivial Society*: Vol. 3, No. 15; [Taking Stock of Technological Liturgies](#).

taking over our lives and stunting our growth in the ways that really matter.”²

The option of online worship was truly essential to our young family in the pandemic (and even now, whenever we are waylaid by another round of illness), and it remains essential to many, including those who take advantage of St. John’s tablet ministry each week (see the feature on page 8). Most of my own work happens online, and I’ve made important, lasting friendships in social media spaces like Twitter and Instagram. **But if technology is the primary space where we are living our lives, we’re going to fall short of experiencing the glory of community, the reason God joins us into a church body to begin with.** It’s in community that we become the people God wants us to be.

I was listening to a podcast recently (technology, again!) where the hosts were discussing Sabbath, and one of them said something about Sabbath feeling like work to her—the togetherness of it involved managing her children’s expectations. She said that it would be easier if rest looked like each of them “hopping on their own screens and numbing out.”³

Easier, yes—absolutely. But better for them? She didn’t think so; especially as her eldest approaches high school and those Sabbaths together as a family are numbered.



That temptation to pay more attention to the life that’s out there than the one that is right here in front of us only grows as the access points become more abundant. It is easier to watch a worship service online (the passivity in the word “watch”!) than it is to get everyone up and dressed and out the door on time, preferably with minimal amounts of yelling

² Crouch, Andy; [The Tech-Wise Family](#), page 20.

³ *Pantsuit Politics*; [“Sports Betting with Ken Vogel \(and The Balloon\)”](#); published February 7th, 2023.

about lost shoes (No? Just us?). It's easier to like a friend's Facebook status than it is to text, easier to text than to call, easier to call than to make plans to see each other around varied schedules and winter weather and whatever surprise germ is circulating through one of your families *again* this week.

But Crouch says it so well when he writes on page 38, "The most powerful choices we will make in our lives are not about specific decisions but about patterns of life: the nudges and disciplines that will shape all our other choices."

Those patterns—those liturgies—make up our lives. They make up *my* life. Am I noticing them? Being intentional about them? Actively choosing any of them, and not letting them just... happen?

This is a question I keep asking myself, even as I grow frustrated with how easy it is to slide back into the liturgies I know aren't helpful: **is this forming me into a better person, a person more like Christ?**

Will I better love others? Experience true joy here? Find peace and exhibit patience? Extend kindness? Embody goodness? Act gently? Persevere faithfully? Develop self-control?

Against such things there is no law—but against such things works many a liturgy of technology (Galatians 5:22-23).

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



IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS



St. John’s Members

Marjorie Klitzman
Michael Adams
Ron Hatlen
John Almond

Bret Church
Joe Scarpelli
Arnold Klug
Diane Quinn

Boni Paugel
Adam Kopp
Jeanette Schunk
David Paugel

Family and Friends

Jennifer Persons
Barb Buttchen
Kristen Klein
Lynette Kendrick
Pat VanWhye

Brenda Crocker
Maureen Anderson
Cheris Correa
Jennifer Vasquez
Amber Valdez

Braiden Bergum
Isabelle
Judelle Murphy

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

Condolences to:

Nick and Katie Byers and family as they grieve the death of their friend Vickie Normington.

Congratulations to:

Ryan and Kaia Kopp on the baptism of their son Ryder Kopp.
Nick and Kristin Bitz on the baptism of their son Elijah Bitz.
Kaylee Trawicki and Jordan Durkin on the baptism of their daughter Gia Durkin.

Choosing to take up a more prayerful life for Lent?

Join our **MORNING PRAYER SERVICE on TUESDAYS @8:30am.**

St. John’s Prayer Chapel; a 20-minute service of prayer

You are invited. All are welcome.

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 the activities of Lent**

Jesus, we ask for the time and space to reflect during Lent. Reveal the places in our lives that need nourishment and healing. Direct our lives to repentance and reconciliation. May your sacrifice impact how we live daily.

- **For musicians**

Song of our hearts, we thank you for the gift of music you have given to vocalists and instrumentalists. Open our ears to hear your Spirit’s calling and your good news through the music of composers and lyricists. Encourage us to sing your praises with the music you give us.

- **For doctors, nurses, technicians, and health care workers**

Mighty Healer, guide those whom you have given the gift of healing. Give them wisdom and compassion as they meet those who are sick. Guide them to effective treatment and action. Bless their lives with Sabbath and care as they care for others.

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.

A BREATH PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

A breath prayer is a simple, rhythmic phrase we can pray as we breathe that can help us practice a mindfulness of faith in hard and busy days.

INHALE

O God of dirt and dust.

EXHALE

Bring beauty from ashes.

Written by Kayla Craig, @liturgiesforparnets on Instagram. Reprinted with permission.



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

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