

# V i s i o n o t e s



What a great crew to plant trees around Evansville last month! For many years now the City has called on St. John's to plant for their terrace tree program, in partnership with Pleasant Prairie Greenhouse. It's our calling to serve! Mark your calendars for our Spring Community Service Day on Sunday, May 7, 11-1pm.

**Seasons of Church & Nature** (p. 3 and 32)

**A "Major" Concert on May 6<sup>th</sup>** (p. 6)

Local pianists to put Steinway to grand use

**Confirmation Sunday is May 21<sup>st</sup>** (p.7)

**Feature: Our Ministries Go "Pro"** (p. 8)

**Travel with St. John's** (p. 15)

**Celebrate a Local (Pew) Hero** (p. 25)

**Praying Without Ceasing** (p.26)

**Spring Service Day on May 7<sup>th</sup>** (p. 27)

We gather together in faithful service

# 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](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
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

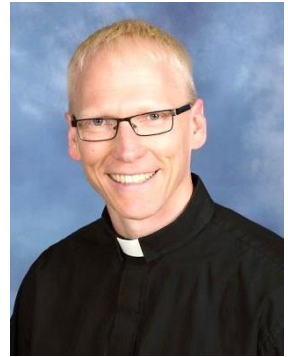
### **Mutual Ministry Committee**

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

## Why Seasons?

*12<sup>th</sup> in a series of “why” questions about what we do as a church, particularly during worship*

If you don't like seasons, the upper Midwest is not the place for you. As much as I like sunny and 70-degree weather, I wouldn't want it all year long. I happen to enjoy the four seasons of nature that we experience here in southern Wisconsin. Each season has a gift and a burden, and each has something to teach us, too:



- **Summer** sends us outside in heat and daylight to enjoy the beauty of nature in bloom. But I know as well as anyone about the dangers of UV rays. Summer can teach us joy and community.
- **Fall** brings brilliant colors and delicious harvests, from squash to apples. But shortening days and decreasing temperatures can create a sense of loss. As trees let go of their leaves, fall can teach us to let go of regrets and grudges.
- **Winter** finds us resting more and snuggling in for movies, board games, puzzles, and warm beverages by the fire. But travel can be perilous, which can lead to a sense of isolation. Winter can teach us patience, stillness, and quiet.
- **Spring** is a season of anticipation and hope for the future. But the weather can be very wet and quite unpredictable – it can even snow in Wisconsin in May! Spring can teach us to bloom where we are planted, and that new life is always possible.

Nature, with its seasons, can be a wonderful spiritual teacher if we pay attention. Father Richard Rohr (b.1943), a Franciscan (Catholic) friar and ecumenical teacher, wrote, “the natural world is the first and primary Bible.” Creation clearly came before written scriptures and is infused with God’s fingerprints. This builds on the wisdom of St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), who encouraged deep spiritual reverence for the earth and all living things. Both the Old and New Testaments draw our attention to the natural world and its creatures to connect with God. The Psalms convey how creation declares the glory of God. Jesus spoke of sheep, harvests, the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field to teach us about God. As we move through the season of spring, what can *you* learn about God?

The church has a seasonal calendar as well, to help us mark time and remember the work of God. Since Christianity was birthed from Judaism, which had many festivals, early Christians began holding festivals that focused on Jesus, developing into the seasons we know. The church's calendar walks us through the complete story of Jesus annually. Its central point is his death and resurrection (Holy Week). Because the date of Easter moves, based on the lunar cycle, from March 22 to April 25, the dates on the church calendar fluctuate to some degree. Most Christians around the world follow the church seasons, uniting us across the globe and throughout history. The seasons of the church focus us on Jesus and connect us to God's people, each with their own gifts and lessons:

- **Advent** (4 weeks) teaches us patience and preparation. We anticipate Christ's coming in history and at the end of time.
- **Christmas** (12 days) teaches us God's commitment to be with us and live among us. We celebrate God's appearance in the world as a baby.
- **Epiphany** (4-9 weeks) teaches us that Jesus is the light in the darkness for all people in the world. We focus on Jesus as teacher and healer.
- **Lent** (6 weeks) teaches us the power of repentance, prayer, and giving to draw us to God. We walk with Jesus to the cross.
- **Easter** (7 weeks) teaches us that love is stronger than hate, that life is stronger than death. We celebrate Jesus' victory over sin and death.
- **Pentecost** (1 day, then up to 29 weeks) teaches us the power of the Holy Spirit for our "ordinary" daily lives (this season is also called Ordinary Time.). We focus on the church and living our faith.

Every season, of nature and the church, has a gift, and then it gives way to another time with another gift. All these seasons together teach us that nothing lasts forever. Impermanence is a key characteristic of life on this earth. The seasons prepare us for the seasons within our lives. We all experience times of joy and grief, times of planting and harvesting, times of growing and dying. It can be tempting to hold on to a season that is fading. But then we miss the opportunity to embrace the new season, and the new gift, that is coming.

In Christ,



“For everything  
there is a season,  
and a time for every  
matter under heaven.”  
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

## REACHING UP: WORSHIP & PRAYER

### **WORSHIP SERIES: UNBINDING OUR HEARTS (AND OUR VOICES)**

Our faith in Jesus Christ is a treasure. It brings so much goodness into our lives!

Our faith leads us into healthy relationships with God, with a community of God's people, and with our neighbors. These relationships bring



tremendous meaning to our lives. **Recognizing the value of our faith in Jesus is the best motivation for sharing our faith with others.** Like us, the neighbors right around us are looking for meaning and purpose, for a community that accepts them and loves them, and for a life-giving relationship with God. How will our neighbors know this treasure unless we share it? Most of us first learned about God's love through another person. Are we willing to share the goodness we've found? What would we lose inviting someone to come to worship with us? The biggest barrier to attending worship is often not knowing anyone. We all want to find meaning in our lives, and a vibrant relationship with God provides meaning, hope, and peace. As we continue our Easter worship and small group series, we'll unbind our hearts to realize the treasure of our faith. We'll also pray for enough love to unbind our voices to share this treasure with our neighbors.

**May 6 & 7...** Romans 1:1-17 (Gospel as Salvation)

- Easter 5: "Unbinding Our Hearts"
- Soul Troop leads worship
- All-Church Community Service Day, Sunday, 11:00am-1:00pm

**May 13 & 14...** Romans 5:1-11 (God's Love Poured Out)

- Easter 6: "Unbinding Our Hearts"

**May 20 & 21...** Romans 6:1-14 (Hope of Resurrection)

- Easter 7: "Unbinding Our Hearts"
- Confirmation (Affirmation of Baptism), Sunday, 10:30am

**May 27 & 28...** Acts 2:1-4, Romans 8:14-39 (Nothing Can Separate Us)

- Pentecost – Wear Red
- Outdoor Worship, Saturday

## WORLD LABYRINTH DAY – MAY 6

The Evansville community is invited to celebrate World Labyrinth Day, **Saturday, May 6, 1:00-1:30pm**. We'll "walk as one at 1," joining others around the world to create a wave of peaceful energy washing across the time zones. In her book "Unbinding Your Heart," author Martha Grace Reese promotes a form of walking prayer. Walking is prayer when we are intentional and mindful. We will have a brief introduction and then pray as we walk the labyrinth together. Plan for 30 minutes, much of it in silence. The labyrinth was dedicated on World Labyrinth Day in 2016. The Peace Garden & Labyrinth have come a long way since then! The Evansville Peace Garden & Labyrinth is located in Seminary Park, behind the Seminary Apartments, 26 S. Fourth Street. All ages welcome.



## "A MAJOR" CONCERT—SATURDAY, MAY 6, 6:30PM

Let's celebrate the beautiful, restored, 100-year-old, Steinway grand piano! On Saturday, May 6, at 6:30pm, local pianists will show off the instrument as they tickle the ivories with classic and modern selections. **Our concert pianists will include Callie**



**Jones, Deb Buckingham, Becca Poock, Cheryl Deininger, Donald Maas, Paul Haakenson, Pastor Elizabeth Lippke-Ganzel, Jeanne Julseth, and more.** Heavy appetizers will be served following the Saturday service to celebrate the generosity to make the restoration happen. What a gift to have such "A Major" piece of artistry and music in a worship space!

**MORNING PRAYER SERVICE, TUESDAYS @8:30am**  
St. John's Prayer Chapel; a 20-minute service of prayer  
You are invited. All are welcome.

## CONFIRMATION SUNDAY, MAY 21, 10:30AM



For the past three years, **17 young disciples** have been intentionally preparing to affirm their baptism and confirm their faith. Through interviews with Pastor Matt and personal faith expressions in their Capstone projects, we know that these 17 are ready! This is a milestone in their journey of faith that marks their maturing relationship with Jesus.

On May 21 worshippers at 9:00am will offer a blessing at the end of the service. In worship at 10:30am we will welcome extended families and guests as we pray for their futures and bless their ministry to the world. (See p. 16 for reflections from seasoned confirmands on years gone by.)



Pictured: Johann Kleisch, Karla Wickersham, Michelle Samuelson, Joanne Peckham, Shelley Meredith. Not pictured: Diane Quinn

Thank you, small group leaders of our 2023 confirmands! Your caring commitment has blessed our young disciples and permanently impacted their lives.

### STAY CONNECTED WITH ST. JOHN'S



Website: [StJohns-LC.org](http://StJohns-LC.org)



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



Twitter: [twitter.com/StJohns\\_53536](https://twitter.com/StJohns_53536)  
(no account needed to view)



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

## SCHEDULING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

by Becca Poock

One of the first Visionotes I received at St. John's (2010) included a separate piece of paper. It fell out after I opened the seals around the edges. (Maybe you recall this insert as well.) On this paper I found a



calendar with the upcoming month and a bunch of codes to decipher. Letters like SBO, AM, G, R, and U. Next to these codes were names. After reading through the names to see if I knew anyone, I discovered MY name after an R. Having an infant at the time, I knew I didn't sign up for anything. Then I began to fester over the possibility of Matt signing me up for something; that was not the case. This bonus sheet in my Visionotes was a Worship Leader Sheet. St. John's people would check each month if they were assigned a role during worship at one of the services. The code was cracked, and it seemed I was going to read the third weekend of the month. My next thought was, "What am I going to do with Baby Eleanor while I read?"

Over the years, St. John's has moved away from this process of seek-and-find in the monthly newsletter. At first, when the sheet was done away with, the office staff started making personal phone calls every week to fill the roles. As St. John's grew both in numbers and ministries, this became ineffective and inefficient. Paper and phone calls worked for a while, but the church needed to figure out how to connect digitally with a culture that was moving forward. Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP) has empowered St. John's to do that.

**This scheduling program has put the power of choice into the hands of the congregation as we step up to use our gifts.** Worship leaders and helpers can choose weekends, services, roles, and even substitutions. Middle school students can sign up to acolyte through MSP. Fellowship hosts can plan ahead to share their hospitality. And families who are filling their calendars with school, work, sports, and activities can plan



ahead to serve. Chris Cole (Office Manager) and Carolyn Butts (Ministry Coordinator) are making fewer phone calls and sending fewer emails. This has been a wonderful blessing for our hard-working office staff.

Here are some thoughts from St. John's members who are using MSP:

**Allison Hilliard:** I've been using Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP) since it was first introduced at St. John's. It is a simple way to plan and schedule worship leadership roles all in one convenient location.



My Tips and Tricks:

1. Download the MSP App – Finding an App on your phone is easier than searching for an email with a link. Then it takes just seconds to access. (For those who prefer the website, just add it to your “Bookmarks” on your web browser.)
2. Service Preferences and Serve Times – Update these for your schedule. Maybe you only want to serve on Saturdays. Or maybe you always have a conflict the second weekend of the month. You can set your and each member of your family's availability as far in advance as needed...then you won't get auto-scheduled when you're unavailable.
3. Set Goals – Make goals for yourself and sign up in advance. Maybe you choose to be a Greeter once a month. Or you might challenge yourself to try something outside of your comfort zone. Maybe you commit your whole family to participate in the same service. Set the goal and sign up in advance!
4. Intentional Time Off – Serving as a worship leader should be something to look forward to, and not a chore! For this reason, everyone needs a break. Decide what this means to you and enter in times you can't serve into your profile. This feature isn't only for when you're out of town.
5. Ask for Help! – Most importantly, don't hesitate to reach out to St. John's staff. Have you been wanting to try something new, but you're not

sure what exactly is needed from you? Let the office know and you can get paired with someone who has already served in that role.

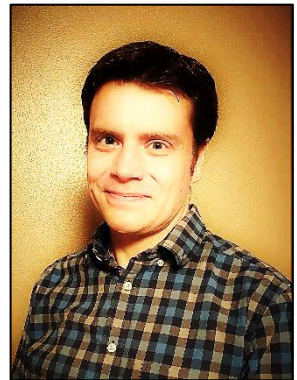
MSP is a quick and easy way to plan time as a Worship Leader...in about 5 minutes per month. One last feature that I love – I use it at the beginning of worship if I see someone I don't recognize. I can look up the current date, and it helps to put a name with a face!



**Julie Creek-Hessler:** I love using the MSP app to sign up for worship support for the church. I am able to sign up a few months ahead, and I can quickly see what areas need to be filled. I like when the app will remind me of upcoming times that I have signed up for, so I don't forget. The best part is when I am unable to make it to a service I signed up for, all I have to do is request a sub on the app. Then my request goes out to everyone who has the app,

and others are able to sign up for my time.

**Derek Blume:** I have found MSP to be a valuable tool for me and my family to help our church fulfill its mission. It is simple to volunteer, and it provides notifications when a member of our family is assigned to help with a service. **I find that we volunteer more often since we started using MSP.**



**Heather Skumatz:**

With four church members in our household (all of whom have different schedules), our family uses MSP to select worship leader dates that work best for our individual availability. I appreciate that MSP allows you to easily switch between users. We can do our family's individual scheduling in one session, a few months ahead. The feature that allows you to

input 'cannot serve' dates/times increases calendaring efficiency even further. For our family, using MSP means we all keep serving our church as frequently as we can.



**Shane McCullough:** Our family uses MSP to schedule our dates and times to help with worship. It's easy to see what positions need to be filled and then schedule members of our family into those open spots. It's nice being able to look ahead at the future schedule. The request-a-sub feature is very useful too!

**Tim Seichter:** I enjoy serving and in the past had managed to find ways to help. MSP is a great tool and allows me to be more purposeful with serving. It has many benefits such as:



- ✓ Easy to log in and use.
- ✓ Allows you to look into the future and choose the “what’s and when’s” that fit *your* schedule.
- ✓ You can input dates and times that you’re available as well as off limits – such as when you’re planning to be out of town.
- ✓ It easily allows you to request a sub should you find that your personal schedule changes and you need to be away. This also helps identify to the office when we may need help.

There are probably many more benefits I have yet to discover, but I do know it’s very convenient and easy to use.

## 5 WAYS TO GIVE

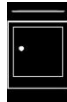
AUTOMATED



MAIL



DROPBOX



ONLINE



IN PERSON



## BACCALAUREATE – HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE GRADUATES



Every spring St. John's hosts a baccalaureate service to honor the graduating class. On **Sunday, June 4, 2023**, we'll celebrate the accomplishments of students earning diplomas in high school and degrees from college and beyond. What a joy for the church to bless our graduates and send them into future endeavors! **For those earning degrees beyond high school, please call the church office** to share your name so that we can recognize you and celebrate with you.

### WHATCHA READING?

by Kurt Krueger



I'm reading "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" by John Mark Comer. We were ringing in the new year with friends and making our resolutions. One of my resolutions was to "Be present." My dear friend stood up, left the room, and came back with this book. I was slowly moving through the book and came upon this quote, "If you want to experience the life of Jesus, you have to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus." Some questions came to my mind. Questions like, what is the lifestyle of Jesus. How close am I to living the lifestyle that Jesus did? What must be arranged or rearranged in my world to become fiercely present? The author frames answers to my questions and so many more by eliminating hurry through the following four concepts:

1. Silence and solitude
2. Sabbath
3. Simplicity
4. Slowing

The book presents these four concepts with connections to faith and opportunities for reflection. Comer offers suggestions that are easily understood and allow the reader to create their own understanding of how hurry is eliminated by following the teachings of Christ.

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## **REACHING WITHIN: SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FRIENDSHIP**

### **MAKING CONNECTIONS – MIKE AND DEBBE TOPEL**



Mike was born and raised in Janesville with four brothers. Both of us were raised in the Catholic church but were married in a Lutheran church. We've been married for nearly 33 years and raised our two boys in the Lutheran church. About ten years ago we joined St. John's and have felt at home ever since. Mike and I both enjoy being outside biking, hiking, walking, and kayaking. Our 15-year-old dog, Nitschke, helps to get us out for walks. We also like to read, and I enjoy

sewing/crafting while Mike enjoys golfing and fishing. Mike retired from GM and works part-time for Mercy. I retired from education and am thoroughly appreciating the time to do some things I had been putting on hold. One of those things is becoming more involved in church.

About eleven years ago, we were looking for a new church. I had had some contact with St John's through Cub/Boy Scouts and appreciated the welcoming feelings from Deb Fredendall and Pastor Matt. Some of our friends, who were also looking for a new church, had attended St John's and mentioned how much they enjoyed it. We weren't sure if we were ready to join a new church after experiencing some unfortunate events at our prior church, but after attending St John's several times, we were willing to give it a try. Since then, **Mike and I have found many opportunities to become involved at St John's.**

St John's has become just what we were looking for in a church community. Pastor Matt's upbeat personality and love for God was definitely a draw. He is so open and welcoming to people of all ages. That was really important to us when we joined because Jonah, our youngest, had not yet completed confirmation. Pastor Matt and Amy Floan were a huge help for us getting Jonah through confirmation and instilling a sense of faith for him. Seeing how that affected him ten years later has been a blessing to see. We also appreciate how St John's is so God-centered, and youth are included and encouraged to participate. There are so many opportunities for people of all ages with types of services, prayerful

## May 2023 Visionotes

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events, movies, book studies, educational classes, mission trips, community involvement, and world-wide involvement.

Mike and I feel a part of St. John's family, and as a family needs everyone to join together to make it thrive, we have joined many different opportunities provided by St. John's. I have recently joined St. John's Council, which was one of the things I had put on hold while working. I'm looking forward to going to the Synod Assembly next month. We've been involved in Acts 29 (service trips) since its beginning and hope to get another trip organized in the near future. We have made communion bread with the 5th graders as they get ready for their Holy Communion Milestone. It's been fun to work with them in their excitement! Some of our other activities have included the Community Service Day, kitchen help, Father/Daughter Night, AWARE backpacks, Love Light Tree, St. Mark's Community Meal in Madison, GIFTS in Janesville, Kids Against Hunger, Befrienders, women's retreats, book studies, inclusivity classes, the Pride group, and the Love In Action team.

St. John's has supported us since before we even joined and has continued to support us in many ways. It truly is a family to us. When Mike's mom died, Pastor Matt was there for us and all of Mike's family. At her funeral, Pastor Matt made everyone feel comfortable and made the service memorable. **We feel so supported by St. John's and, in turn, want to support St. John's financially.** We use *Simply Giving* to make it easier on us. We want to see St. John's continue on its amazing path to do God's work, to show how our actions often speak louder than words as we reach in, out, and up to be God's hands and feet.



Above, Mike serves with a team on a trip with Acts 29. Below, Mike works on the Hope Retreat Center at Lutherdale in 2019.



## TRAVEL TO MACKINAC ISLAND IN FALL 2023

Join Pastor Matt for a visit to Mackinac Island September 18-22, 2023, on a charter bus with Lutherdale's Travel Ministry. Over a dozen St. John's people have already signed up, and there's room for 15 more. Some highlights of our trip to Northern



Michigan include visits to Mackinac Island, a guided carriage tour of the island, a boat ride through the Soo Locks, sight-seeing in Sault Sainte Marie, a guided tour of Mackinaw City, and a visit to Colonial Michilimackinac.

Pastor Matt will be leading devotions and community time throughout the trip. The cost is \$729 Double Occupancy or \$908 Single Occupancy, which includes 4 nights lodging and 8 meals. Register now at [lutherdale.org/travel](http://lutherdale.org/travel) and notify the church office.

## TRAVEL MINISTRY MEETING – EXPLORING A TRIP TO SCANDINAVIA

Do you love to travel? Do you love to discover new cultures – people, food, traditions? Maybe you like the adventure of seeing all the diversity in creation. Or maybe you love to travel together with others.

**On Thursday, May 25, 6:30pm,** St. John's will meet to discuss both domestic and international travel plans.



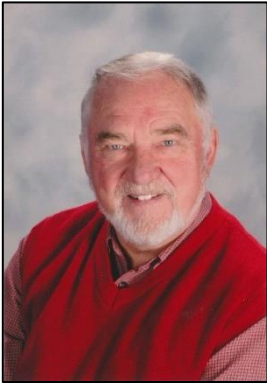
Germany trip, 2022

St. John's values both lifelong spiritual growth and Christ-centered friendship. Traveling is one way to live deeply into these core values. Invite your traveling buddies, prepare to grow your heart and faith, and get your suitcase ready!

## MEMORIES OF FAITH: REFLECTIONS ON CONFIRMATION

The Affirmation of Baptism (what we often call Confirmation) is an important step in the process of faith formation in youth or adults. This milestone, and preparing for it, has a long tradition, not only among Lutherans, but also in many Christian denominations.

These St. John's members (below) reflect on their own Confirmation Day. Their responses remind us of the significance of this day in our journey of faith. We thank God for these siblings in Christ.



**Pastor Jerry:** I was confirmed when I was 12 years old following two years of studying the catechism, quite similar to how things are done today. It happened in our little country church 20 miles west of Appleton, Wisconsin. One of my memories of my confirmation is that I was confirmed by myself as the only other person in my small parochial school class—my cousin Harold—got the mumps and could not be present. In our family, when we were confirmed

we received our first watch, a Bible with our name embossed on it, a new suit or dress, a special family dinner with extended family attending and giving gifts of money, and a formal picture taken by a professional photographer!

What did confirmation mean to me then? Unfortunately, all the "other things" meant more to me than seeing myself as a baptized child of God able to confess my faith in Jesus with commitment. These "other things" to me meant I was now "grown up." I was special—at least for the day. I was no longer to be considered a child, for after all I was now confirmed! Later on, the real beauty and meaning of being a confirmed child of God became part of who I have become.





**Joanne Peckham:** I confirmed my faith at St. John's in Evansville when I was 15 years old. I remember reciting the books of the Bible in front of the congregation. I also remember my confirmation classmates and some of the memories we had. When I was confirmed, honestly, I was just going through the process. I didn't understand what

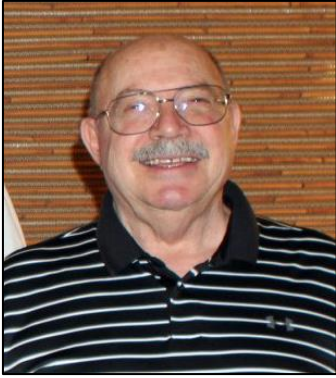
confirmation was until later in life. **Confirmation means, through my eyes, having a fulfilling relationship with God, giving me strength to stay true to God's word, and staying focused on the journey which God has planned for me.**

**Karla Wickersham:** I was confirmed at age 14, in the 9th grade. I was a member of St. Stephen's United Church of Christ located in Merrill, WI. The Confirmation Program began in 7th grade, and it was on Wednesday afternoons right after school. A group of us would walk to church, get a snack together, complete workbook lessons, and have conversations with



the Pastor that led it. I remember it being fun, but sort of "dry" as we did not have music or any sort of project work. However, we did participate in lock-ins and service days. The memory I have of Confirmation Day was the gathering at my house afterwards. It was a celebration with a wonderful meal. We invited my extended family members and our Pastor and his wife. It was a joyous occasion opening gifts, and enjoying the nice, warm, spring day.

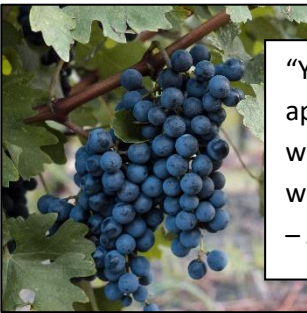
Confirmation means that I have affirmed my faith in God and that I will and want to commit to God's ways. **I know that I can always ask for forgiveness and guidance when days get hard.** It also means that I am a part of a larger group/family of believers that share in the teachings of Jesus. Confirmation helped me appreciate and embrace a loving and supportive community as a result of working through the teachings and learning why it is so important to be confirmed.



Growing up Methodist, **Dave (Doc) Rhoda** did not have any “Confirmation” classes or group with his pastor. There was an important woman who was his Sunday School teacher in third grade. Her favorite verse was John 3:16; “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” Dave recalls this verse and teacher as an important

foundation for his belief in Jesus. “She made the story real.”

Fast forward to veterinarian school, Dave found himself in a “spiritual wilderness.” He questioned, “Is there a God?” One Saturday, he distinctly remembers going on a walk with this question. He stopped in front of the Methodist church. And there, the Spirit spoke to him. **His faith was affirmed when God revealed that through all the intricacies, creativity, and minute detail in creation, there was no way it could have been without God.**



“You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.”

– John 15:16, NRSV

### **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.**

## ST. JOHN'S NEWEST MEMBER – CLARA KROETZ

Clara is a lifelong Lutheran, having been baptized, confirmed, and married at St. John's Lutheran Church in Fox Lake, WI. She likes knowing that she is now a member of another St. John's congregation. She joined at the invitation of her daughter and son-in-law, Shirley and Dick Richards.



Clara and her husband raised their two daughters in Madison where they were members of Lake Edge and Bethel Lutheran Churches. Clara was an office assistant for an American Family Insurance agent for over 40 years, retiring at the age of 86. She moved to Stoughton Meadows Assisted Living approximately two years ago. At Stoughton Meadows, she enjoys playing bingo and volleyball (played with pool noodles and balloons), as well as completing word search books. She especially enjoys visits and communion with Pastor Jerry.

### 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 Tuesdays, May 9 and May 23, 1:00-2:00pm.**



## AN INSPIRING CONCERT WITH WARTBURG COLLEGE



St John's hosted the Wartburg College Wind Ensemble on April 25th. Over 80 people enjoyed the profoundly moving music. Our sanctuary proved to offer wonderful acoustics for the ensemble. We hope to host other collegiate ensembles in the future, likely during spring concert tours.

Wartburg students live lives of leadership, service, faith, and learning. Our thanks for the 15 St. John's host homes who extended our hospitality to these wonderful young adults for an overnight stay and breakfast.



Our own Becca Pooch played in the Wartburg College band and sang in the Wartburg Choir with the current tour manager for Wartburg music ensembles. Wartburg College and Luther College (Pastor Matt's alma mater) are nationally renowned rivals. Pictured here is director Jeff de Seriere and tour manager Sarah Bouska with the Poochs in rival college gear.

## REACHING OUT: SERVICE & INVITATION

### **COUNCIL MATTERS by Amy Larson**

The regular monthly meeting of the Church Council was the day following Easter, so it was both timely and appropriate that we dedicated meeting time to discuss Holy Week. What a joy it was to learn that **the Good Friday Ecumenical lunch and service held at Creekside Place was a great success!** Hopefully it was the first of what will become an annual



gathering. Attendance at St. John's Holy Week services grew over last year. Thank you to everyone who joined us in worship – onsite and online. And thanks to all those who helped share the Easter story; your faithful service is appreciated.

Our core value of Faithful Service was the focus of our strategic planning session at April's Council meeting. We will be working to centralize service opportunities through the use of Ministry Scheduler Pro (see p. 8) and possibly an electronic kiosk.

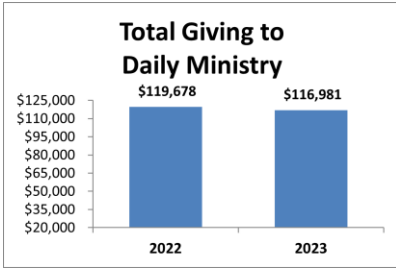
**Regarding our building, Pathway Preschool will be closing after this school year.** For ten years they have leased space in our south basement and welcomed many children and families into our facility. For some families it was a warm introduction to our church. We've had a wonderful relationship with this 3-year-old preschool and 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) run by Nikki Soto and her team, many of whom have been St. John's members. At April's meeting, Church Council began considering options for that space. If you have thoughts on how this space could be used to support one or more of our core values, please reach out to a council member (see p. 2). We'd love to hear from you.



Song time with Pastor Matt and special events in our sanctuary were part of our friendship with Pathway Preschool over the years.

## FIRST QUARTER 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 6.7% 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.



### Year-to-date Profit Loss as of March 31, 2023

	Actual	Budget	Over (Under)
<b>Income</b>	121,203	125,629	(4,426)
<b>Expenses</b>	109,257	131,464	(22,207)
<b>Net</b>	11,946	(5,834)	17,780

Our income is under budget by 3.5%, and we are also under budget with our expenses. So we have a net income of \$11,946 as of March 31. This is without paying for our full-time Director of Faith Formation; stay tuned for an exciting announcement on that staff position soon! Our budget reflects the past income and expense trend from the previous year, but annually it is balanced.



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

## BABY CARE KITS NEEDED FOR LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF (LWR)

In May, St. John's is switching gears and focusing on Baby Care Kits through June. A new baby is a blessing, but bringing a baby into the world can be a difficult and scary thing for a mother living in poverty. Keeping a new baby healthy, clean, and comfortable can take a lot of resources. The items included in a Baby Care Kit provide the basics a family needs to care for their newest members and introduce them to the world with pride.



**Donate any or all items, and a team will assemble them.**

Each Baby Care Kit includes the following, size 6-24 months:

- **Two** lightweight cotton t-shirts (no onesies)
- **Two** long- or short-sleeved gowns or sleepers (without feet)
- **Two** receiving blankets, medium-weight cotton or flannel, or crocheted or knitted with lightweight yard, between 36"-52" square
- **Four cloth diapers, flat fold preferred**
- **One** jacket, sweater, or sweatshirt with hood, *or include a baby cap*
- **Two** pairs of socks
- **One hand towel (dark color recommended)**
- **Two** bath-size bars (4-5 oz each) of gentle soap, in original wrapper; no mini or hotel size bars
- **Two** diaper pins or large safety pins



## OPEN TABLE – MONDAY, MAY 8



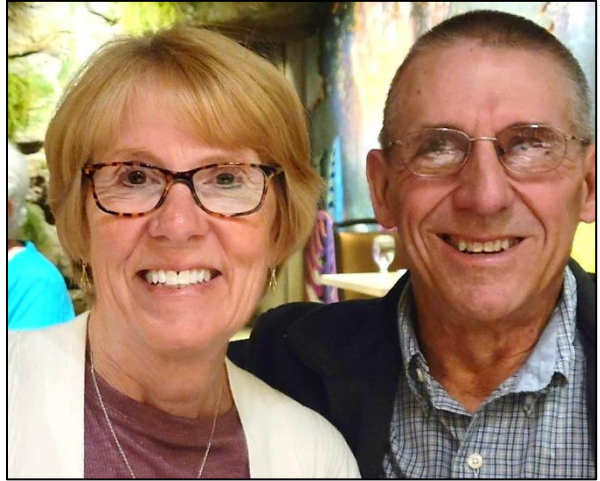
Mark your Calendars!

Evansville BASE Pride Team and Kathy Wells are hosting the May Open Table Meal on Monday, May 8, 5:15-6:30pm. Find a seat with your community at Creekside Place, 102 S. Maple St.

**MENU:** Pasta Buffet: 3+ kinds of pasta, hot side dishes, a salad bar, desserts, & beverages (vegetarian/vegan/gluten free options) The event is sponsored by Evansville Lion's Club, Tipi Produce, and Evansville BASE Pride Team.

## MY FAITHFUL SERVICE – ALLAN & KAYE CROCKER

When Chris Cole called to ask us if we would write an article for the Visionotes about “a” meaningful serving experience, we both felt we have had “many” meaningful experiences. Together we serve in many small ways including



Tuesday morning work group (which also includes small church maintenance), ushering, weekly money counting, altar guild, and kitchen help at funerals.

Allan especially enjoys building or making things that are needed in the church. He constructed the giving shelf and risers for the quilters’ table so they don’t have to bend over to do their quilting. He said being able to share his talents in building things that make life easier for our church family gives him so much gratification!



Kaye enjoys her church commitments, also. She especially feels blessed when, after a funeral meal, family members peek into the kitchen and thank all the ladies for being there for them. They always rave about the wonderful lunch they just had.

Why do we serve? It warms our hearts to feel needed! **It is also God’s work and our hands!** Because our Church Family is so important to us! And we feel we are setting a Christian example for our grandchildren. We feel truly blessed to be a part of St. John’s Lutheran Church!



## THANKS TO DEB BUCKINGHAM, PEW HERO

The Sanctuary pews get quite the workout on the weekends and on most Wednesdays. Many people sit down and use the hymnals, Bibles, scratch paper, pencils, and prayer request cards. Have you ever wondered how they stay so neat and cared for? Deb Buckingham. For years Deb paid particular attention to sharpening pencils, refilling paper/cards, and tidying up any leftover drawings and secret notes. She cared for our pews with a prayerful heart, too. Deb is finding new ways to serve, so she is stepping away from being St. John's Pew Hero. Thank you, Deb, for your dedicated service to St.



John's. You have prepared the pews for worship with care and intention for many years. We are grateful for you, and for your spouse Chris, who often helped, too. Thank God for servants like Deb Buckingham!

### GREEN LIVING TIP – CLEAN OUR PARKS

By Lindsay Trustem

The warmer spring weather finally seems here to stay! Now is the time to get outside and enjoy all the beauty God's creation has to offer. **If you are able, visit one of our fabulous local parks and bring a bag to pick up trash you find along the way.** You can bring friends or family and turn it into a scavenger hunt game! We can do this together, too! **St. John's is hosting Spring Service Day on Sunday, May 7** with many opportunities to pick up trash. Invite someone to come serve with you. *\*Use safety precautions when picking up trash*



## FAITHFUL SERVICE HIGHLIGHT: PRAYER TEAM

The St. John's Prayer Team started as five women around a dining room table. They would pray over new requests, discuss older prayer requests, and plan for opportunities like the Prayer Vigil, making prayer beads, prayer shawls. After St. John's focused



on Unbinding Your Heart and a year on our core value of "Uplifting Prayer," the team expanded, as did the opportunities to pray.

Today the Prayer Team includes many more people praying for the church, the community, and the world. Each week a confidential email is sent to a group of people committed to praying for St. John's. Prayer request cards from worship and the website are distributed to the Prayer Team. You will also meet some of this team in the Gathering Area during Holy Communion. There they will confidentially pray for you and what is burdening you that day.

These days, instead of a dining room table, siblings in Christ gather on Tuesday mornings at 8:30 to pray through the A.C.T.S. prayer:

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. This time is a special and holy experience of the Holy Spirit interceding in our



prayers. Praying for the hurts, struggles, joys, and victories of the Church and the world can be an overwhelming task. But, **knowing that Jesus is on the other end to receive these prayers and take the burden upon himself frees St. John's Prayer Team to continue to pray without ceasing** (1 Thess 5:17).

**FAITHFUL SERVICE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE MONTH:**

**SPRING COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY - SUNDAY, MAY 7**



Spring inspires us to clean out the cobwebs and dust in our homes. The basement beckons a good purging, and the yard is ready to shed the leaves from last fall.

Sunday, May 7, St. John's is "springing" into service in homes, parks, and

roads. Those with school-aged children, St. John's students can make gifts for their teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week, May 8-12.

Here are some projects to sign up for, either on the Ministry Table or online:

- Three trash pick-up sites
- Lake Leota Park (flower bed cleaning/weeding, trash pickup, monthly Adopt-a-Park walk-through)
- 5-6 Homes of St. John's members (inside and/or outside help)
- Teacher Appreciation Station
- Quilting (north basement)
- Letter writing to EMT and Police Dept for EMT/Police Month



**“Do your little bit of good where you are, it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” – Desmond Tutu**



## MINISTRY WITH OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### **MILESTONE: HOLY COMMUNION ON MAUNDY THURSDAY**

On Maundy Thursday, 29 students celebrated and received the gift of Holy Communion after a 5-session course. Welcome to the table!

Aaliyah Bergum  
Elijah Bitz  
Tyler Bitz  
Ava Crans  
Oscar Floan  
Leah Heelein  
Gemma Holm  
Ian Holm  
Lucas Jobe  
Addie Johnson

Anderson Kelley  
Annabelle Koberle  
Emma Kopp  
Steven Krueger  
Celia Lyons  
Bennett Nellen  
Lyric Nunn  
Kingsley Phillips  
Micah Pooch  
Tucker Putnam

Dawson Reese  
Elaina Samuelson  
Zach Schmitzer  
Nolan Spaeth  
Irene Stokstad  
Amelia Thym  
Luke Vike  
Joshua Wickersham  
Taylor Wilson



Clockwise, from top left: Fifth graders watch each other as they receive Holy Communion together; Joshua receives Jesus' blood shed "for him"; James washes Lewis's feet as we remembered Jesus washing his disciples' feet; These four are poised and ready to receive this special milestone.



## **THE SERVANTS OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, & FAMILY (CYF) MINISTRY**

**by Chris Cole**

It is crazy to watch the end of the school year come nearer. Our 2022-2023 school year has been filled with joy, love, and the Good News. From September to May, our Children's Ministries are in full swing!

This year we have approximately 80 kids that attend our Wednesday Soul Troop, Faith Corps, or Sunday morning BASIC ministries. These children are guided through their faith journey with some amazing adults.



On Sunday mornings, Laura Brusberg, Jen Stokstad, Jessica Mohrbacher, and Cindy Armour share their time to teach, lead, and care for the children. And of course, we can't forget the musical talents that Becca Pooch and Jeff Herbers share with us on Sundays (and as an added bonus, they are quite the comedy duo).

On Wednesdays after school, many leaders work together to make the busy afternoon run smoothly during large group, snack, and activity times – Pastor Matt, Becca Pooch, Jessica Westby, Sharon George, Linda Rehfeldt, Pat Stoehr, Daria O'Connor, Jody Harris, Deb Herbers, Allison Hilliard, Ann Legris, Lindsey Jobe, Elizabeth Halverson, Marabeth Cole, Stella Krull, and Paige Burton. These leaders all have a consistent leadership role that they do, but they never shy away from stepping in and helping in another role. As Children's Ministry Director, I am surely blessed with the dedication that these faithful servants put forth in their faith. Our children are blessed, and our church is blessed!

## TWISTS AND TURNS: VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS)

### SERVANT WORKERS NEEDED

The week of July 31-August 4, 9am-12pm, we invite children to learn that following Jesus changes the game. Spin the spinner, beat the clock, skip ahead, and level up. You'll need to bring your A-game for this year's VBS. Kids, youth, and adults will play their way through VBS while **learning that Jesus guides them through all the twists and turns of their lives.** They'll find that even when they mess up, it's never "game over" with Jesus. Children who are three years old through completed 5th grade can register for VBS. Register now: \$15/child or \$25/family. Confirmation, high school students, and adults can serve as servant workers on our adventure!



Online registration is open. Head to St. John's website for the link. Or email Chris Cole, Children's Ministry Director [children@stjohns-lc.org](mailto:children@stjohns-lc.org). Contact Chris with questions or to serve.



Dan the Magic Man (and ELCA pastor) delighted kids of all ages with a special performance the week after Easter.



Our middle school youth delight in songs, games, pizza, and fun at our quarterly Up All Night events. It's also a great opportunity to welcome the friends of our church youth.



## **ABBIE'S ASSURANCES: A SEASON FOR EVERYTHING**

**by Abbie Kriebs**

I have, I think, an odd answer to the question, “What’s your favorite book of the Bible?” It’s Ecclesiastes. Probably not what you’d have guessed, but I’ve always found a bit of comfort in the reminder that “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (v. 3:1).

I find it really easy in our modern world for my life to look the same regardless of whether it’s Tuesday or Saturday—or even a Tuesday in May versus one in October or January. Furnaces and air conditioners can keep my house in the mid-60s to mid-70s all year long, regardless of the outdoor temperature. Artificial light gives me the same amount of time to get work done each day of the year; no more burning candles in order to extend reading and writing into the evenings. Groceries shipped from all over the world allow me to eat produce year round that only grows in the height of summer. My kids can (and would like to!) eat fresh berries even in the dead of winter—if I’m willing to pay the right price at the grocery store, that is.

It’s easy to feel like we’re on a treadmill to nowhere if we don’t take the time to acknowledge the season that we’re in, both the literal season of spring outside (it’s snowing as I type this, so “spring” is a bit of a stretch), or the season of life that we are in, be that a season of raising teenagers, a season of in-between as we anticipate a big move or change, or a season of letting go of something—a job, a friendship—that we thought would always be there.

“Once we stop wishing it were summer, winter can be a glorious season in which the world takes on a sparse beauty and even the pavements sparkle. It’s a time for reflection and recuperation, for slow replenishment, for putting your house in order,” writes Katerine May in her book *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*. When I can recognize that I’ve been in a prolonged season of “winter” as May calls it, I can let the season be what it needs to be, instead of what I want it to be.



For me, this is the season where my toddlers become kids. Where I struggle to meet my work deadlines *and* be present for my family. A season for learning my limitations and asking God to take over when I struggle to meet my own expectations. This is not the season to finally finish a first draft of my novel. This isn't the season for big international vacations, or honestly, even feeling well-rested most of the time. It's not the season for long stretches of deep-thinking, for reading a book cover-to-cover in one sitting, or for planning life out years or even months in advance.

It's a season for planning week by week and day by day, leaning into the needs my kids and I each have as we grow into the people we are all becoming. It's the season for planting a garden and helping my kids to learn how the food we eat enters the world and the work it takes, whether we are the ones to grow it or not. It's a season of asking big questions about how to spend the hours that make up our days that make up our lives. It's a season for building a foundation for a family, for revitalizing a marriage that accumulated a bit of dust while its partners met the incessant needs of babies and small children.

In her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston writes "There are years that ask questions and years that answer." That sounds right to me, that there are seasons where we ask questions and seasons where we live out the answer; seasons where we tear down, refinish, and build again—and seasons where we get to live in the place and the moment we have worked to create.

If we honor the liturgical calendar, pausing to observe Lent or Advent or to revel in the extra days that Christmastide gives us for celebration, we are living into the season that God has for us as believers, marking our calendar year with the story of Christ. In doing so, we remind ourselves in each season that Jesus came, died, rose from the grave, and will again return one day to make all things new—the most hopeful of springs is yet to come. **Our winter can't last forever, not in our own lives or in the life of the church.**



## IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS



Marjorie Klitzman  
Michael Adams  
Ron Hatlen

### St. John's Members

John Almond  
Bret Church  
Arnold Klug

Diane Quinn  
Adam Kopp  
Jeanette Schunk

### Family and Friends

Barb Buttchen  
Lynette Kendrick  
Pat VanWhye  
Brenda Crocker  
Cheris Correa

Amber Valdez  
Braiden Bergum  
Isabelle  
Judelle Murphy  
Jan Meyer

Lori Koch  
Carol Anderson  
Larry Toelke  
Tom Timm  
Sarah O'Sullivan

### 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:

**Deb Fredendall, Amy (Jamie) Larson and Ellie, and Jeff (Jeff Cunningham) Fredendall and family** as we grieve the death of their husband, father, and St. John's member Scott Fredendall.

**Friends and family** of Lillian Jones as we grieve her death.

**Kim Senn and Annabelle** as we grieve the death of their husband, father, and St. John's member Jon Senn.

**Friends and family** of St. John's member Dee Leeder as we grieve her death.

**Samantha (Anderson) Macaulay and family** as we grieve the death of her mother and St. John's member Jane Anderson.

### Congratulations to:

**Rachael Whittier and Mark Crans** on the baptisms of their children Mason and Lola.

**Austin and Ainae Schmaus** on the baptism of their daughter Jordan.

## 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 St. John’s confirmands and all disciples**

*Stir up in us the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.*

- **For first responders – EMT, Police, and Fire**

*Gracious God, first responders ride an emotional roller coaster. Even when their efforts are successful, the things they see and do take a heavy toll emotionally. Guard their hearts and minds. Restore their mental and emotional resources when they have been depleted. Let them not become weary in their good work.*

- **For those with mental illness**

*Loving God, strengthen our hope in you. Bring healing for those with mental illness. Guide parents in caring for the mental health of their children. Strengthen children to be understanding of the mental health of their parents and help them find places of safety. Help friends to resist the temptation to try to “fix” and to recognize the simple power of their loving presence.*

**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](http://www.stjohns-lc.org) for a confidential online request form.

**O God**, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW p. 317)



312 South Third Street  
Evansville, WI 53536



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

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