

Visionotes

St. John's Lutheran Church
April 2024



Euchre Night Fundraiser

Over 50 people played cards to support St. John's youth going to the ELCA National Youth Gathering in July.

Pastor Matt's Speaking of Faith — p. 3

Do you avoid religion in conversations?

Faith Circle on Pastor Jerry's NEW Book — p. 8

New six-week study starts April 9th.

Small group on The Refugee Crisis — p. 10

Learn, share, and grow alongside others.

Reflections from All-Church Service Days — p. 16-20

Love in Action: Autism — p. 24-25

Center Stage Showcase: April 27th - p. 12

All-Church Service Day: May 5th — p. 28



We are the church — together.

Worship in the Sanctuary: Saturdays at 5pm & Sundays at 9am
Livestream Worship on YouTube: Sundays at 9am
Weekly Online Worship at www.StJohns-LC.org
Church Office: 608-882-4044, Mon-Thurs, 8am-4pm

St. John's Staff

Pastor	Matthew Pook
Pastor of Congregational Care	Jerry Tews
Office Manager	Chris Cole
Community Life Coordinator	Becca Pook
Children's Ministry Director	Callie Jones
Financial Director	Deb Herbers
Music Director	Sharon Magee
Interim Custodian	Jeff Herbers
Ministry Coordinator	Carolyn Butts
Communication Coordinator	Alyse Miller
Nursery	Mikayla Samuelson
Little Fish Preschool Teacher	Melissa Blake

2024 Church Council

President	Jeff Updike
Vice President/Mutual Ministry	Julie Creek-Hessler
Secretary/Fellowship	Keith Miller
Treasurer	Brandon Mohrbacher
Building and Grounds	Sean Mangold
Memorials	Dan Millin
Music and Worship	Renae Smith
Life and Growth	Kaye Crocker
Parish Education	Bethany Steindl
Social Concerns	Debbe Topel
Stewardship	Eric Peterson
Youth Ministry	Erika Stoker
Youth Representative	Jack Burton

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

Speaking of Faith



Politics and religion. These two topics often lead the list of things *not* to talk about at family gatherings or in casual social settings. It's interesting to think about why this is the case. Our society has deep divides and big opinions when it comes to both these topics, both of which can lead to heated conversations and even broken relationships. We can let ourselves be easily offended when someone questions our deeply held beliefs. We're out of practice with calm, reasonable conversation on things that matter. But isn't that what we should be talking about — things that matter most?

I don't mind talking about the weather; it's one thing we all experience together that is out of our control. I enjoy talking about current events; I care what's happening to people around me and around the world. And I can even enjoy talking about politics when I remember to stay open, humble, and respectful. After all, politics is about how we can best live together, and the debate thereof. But what I really thrive on is talking about religion and faith.

Faith talk gets to the core of our priorities, our values, and our connections. It leads us to consider our identity (who am I?) and our purpose (why am I here?). It asks great questions of our origins (where do we come from?) and our goals (where are we going?). It causes us to examine ourselves (am I living with integrity?) and challenges us to strive for meaning and impact in the world (what is my legacy?).

Speaking of faith doesn't have to be about telling others what they "should" believe. It doesn't mean shaming people for their beliefs or behaviors. It doesn't mean trying to prove you're right and they're wrong. Speaking of faith can help us wrestle with deep questions. It can open us to others and to the Ultimate Other.

For me, and maybe for you, too, it's easiest to speak of faith when we are with our church community. But most of us, myself included, can get nervous when speaking of faith with the wider public. This includes family and friends whose religious convictions are unknown to me, or knowingly

different than mine. I don't want to offend anyone with my faith. I don't want others to think I'm judging them, nor do I want them to judge me. The sad result is that we are often kept from speaking of faith out of fear.

We can, however, speak of faith and the things that matter most to us if we check our intentions, humble our hearts, and open our ears. First, we put aside any agenda to coerce or control. Second, we acknowledge that we don't have all the answers and have plenty to learn. Third, we gently approach speaking of faith with honest questions, and we listen. Jesus himself was a master at asking questions that mattered, and he listened to people's answers. Finally, when we do speak of faith, we share from our personal experience.

Imagine a conversation with a friend or co-worker. You start catching up and sharing about your weekend. You mention you went to worship with your church. You say a few things about your church... what you enjoy about it, how it helps you, how much you experience God's love. And before you go too far, you ask if they have ever been part of a church. You might ask, "What do you think of church? Have you had any positive experiences with church? Negative experiences?" With an open heart and spirit, you listen and see where the conversation leads.

Another approach might be a little bolder. To a friend or family member you might say, "Did you celebrate Easter?" Or, "What do you think about religious faith? Have you ever had any experiences of God?" Then — most importantly — listen and be respectful. If they ask you a question in return, don't worry about what you don't know about Christianity; "answers" are overrated. Just share what your faith means to you, which is a good question for us all to ponder: ***What does your faith mean to you?***

When speaking of faith, listening matters. It might plant a seed that grows in surprising ways, in others and in us. As for the growing part, we leave that to God, trusting God to build stronger relationships and open our hearts to God and each other.

In Christ,



"Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger."
— James 1:19

REACHING UP: WORSHIP & PRAYER

Planting the Seed: Stories of the Early Church *A 6 Week Sermon Series*



Planting the Seed Stories of the Early Church

The resurrection of Jesus from the grave altered the course of human history. The change started small, like a seed, with Jesus' band of ragtag followers. Their lives were transformed from dismayed disciples to powerful preachers.

Disciples such as Peter and Paul became bold witnesses of the resurrection, preaching forgiveness and salvation by the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ. Their preaching and testimony changed lives in Jerusalem, Judea, Thessalonica, Corinth, and beyond. The seed of faith grew and grew until it spread all over the Mediterranean region and eventually the world.

Over the seven weeks of the Easter season, we'll focus on stories of the early church, celebrating how the seed of faith was planted as the Holy Spirit worked through God's people to change the world for good. Across 6000 miles, 2000 years, and dramatic cultural changes, the seed of faith has been planted among us and in you.

- April 6 & 7... Acts 1:1-14 (You Shall Be My Witnesses)
 - Planting the Seed - Week 1
 - Gospel Music Weekend
 - Brief Service of Healing, Saturday, 6:00pm
- April 13 & 14... Acts 3:1-10 (Peter Heals in Jerusalem)
 - Planting the Seed - Week 2
 - Apostle's Creed Milestone for Fourth Graders
- April 20 & 21... Acts 17:1-9; 1Thessalonians 1:1-10 (Church at Thessalonica)
 - Planting the Seed - Week 3
- April 27 & 28... Acts 18:1-4; 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (Church at Corinth)
 - Planting the Seed - Week 4



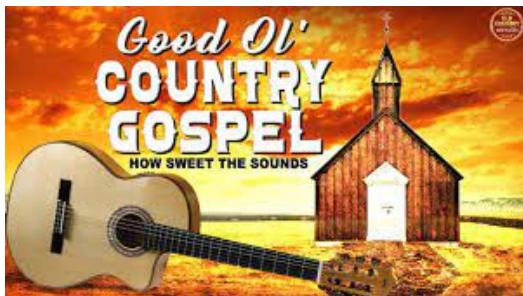
MORNING PRAYER SERVICE, TUESDAYS @8:30

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

Classic Gospel Songs For Worship

The songs of our faith are a powerful vehicle for carrying the message of the Gospel. Singing has always been a part of the life of faith, going back to the days of Jabal, who is “the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe” (Genesis 4:21). Even Jesus sang around the Communion table (Matthew 26:30). Gospel Music is a modern, diverse musical genre that is full of dominant vocals and strong harmonies with Christ-centered lyrics. Famous Gospel singers include Aretha Franklin, Elvis Presley, Kirk Franklin, Mahalia Jackson, Johnny Cash, Alan Jackson, and Whitney Houston.

In worship on April 6 & 7 we'll sing out popular Gospel hits like “In the Garden,” “The Old Rugged Cross,” “How Great Thou Art,” and “Because He Lives.” Invite friends and family to come sing with joy.



Healing Service: Saturday, April 6



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

What Do We Believe? The Apostle's Creed Milestone

Am I an apostle? And what is a creed? **On Sunday, April 14, at 9am worship, fourth graders will celebrate their Apostle's Creed milestone.** In a workshop after worship, students and parents will consider what it means to profess our faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And determine who *is* an apostle and what *is* a creed.



Communion Stands: Simply Beautiful

Have you experienced the clatter and crash of the basket of cups as you returned after communion? Well, fear no more! The gold stands and plastic-lined baskets have been replaced. A big thank you to Pastor Jerry and Gordy Miller for crafting two new stands for worship.

Gordy constructed the stands out of cherry and maple wood in a style to match the rest of our sanctuary furniture, and added soapstone bases for stability.

Pastor Jerry put his turning skills to great use, creating two large bowls out of dark walnut to receive the empty communion cups. Go ahead, try to lift it: the bowl is magnetized to the base. What a gift our church can delight in as we receive communion each week and remember Jesus' gift to us!



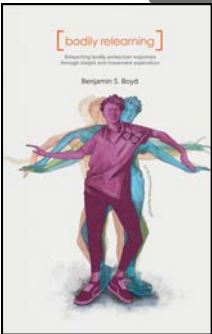
Whatcha Reading? with Lucas Koenecke

Bodily Relearning by Benjamin S. Boyd

It's a book filled with hope for people who deal with chronic pain! While it provides scientific information for a clinician, it also speaks to the everyday person. Boyd breaks down concepts into usable, practical applications.

So many of us either struggle with chronic pain or know someone whose life is held back because of their pain.

This positive book provides hope to those people looking for freedom from their pain, serving as a great resource with non-medical actions to take that can help alleviate pain, rather than offering only medical or surgical answers.



REACHING WITHIN: SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FRIENDSHIP



Core Values + Beliefs: Faith Circle

Who helped you become who you are today? Your parents or grandparents? A guardian? A close friend? A teacher? Who shaped your faith development? Life is a journey and looking back can help us understand who and what helped form us into the person we are today.

You are invited to “travel” with Pastor Jerry as he shares his journey in a short book he has written Core Beliefs and Values. Assisted with excellent photography pieces provided by his wife Lynn, this six-week adventure promises to be thought provoking and internally rewarding.

**We will meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month.
April 9 + 23, May 14 + 28, June 11 + 25
1:00-2:30pm in the St. John’s Lounge**



Our Mission Statement

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

Our Core Values

Inspiring Worship	Uplifting Prayer
Faithful Service	Caring Invitation
Lifelong Spiritual Growth	Christ-Centered Friendships

New Testament Small Group

This Spring join a small group experience to dive into the New Testament with other adults that are ready to learn more about faith and the Bible.

Starting on Wednesday, April 10 at 6:00-7:15pm, we will be meeting for seven weeks together to look into half of the New Testament. Using *Colaborate: Lutheran Confirmation* we will take an honest look at the holy mystery and complexity of Scripture leading participants onto a path of growth and discovery.



These 75 minutes will consist of discussion time with Sue Reese based on weekly readings and the *Colaborate* workbook. A retired nurse, Sue is a woman of deep faith and trained through theology and Bible classes with the synod (regional church.) Each session will end with Q&A with Pastor Matt.

Adult Confirmation

Did you loathe going to Confirmation? Or maybe you were never confirmed. Are you looking for a more meaningful experience in your faith journey? The New Testament small group (above) is part of a bigger plan for St. John's Adult Confirmation Ministry. The series started with Alpha last fall, and it continues with the New Testament group this spring.



Adults who would like to be confirmed will participate in all six groups: *Alpha*, two Old Testament classes, two New Testament classes, and *Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers*. All these experiences are great for anyone interested in expanding their knowledge and diving deeper into their faith.

Stay Connected with St. John's



Website www.StJohns-LC.org

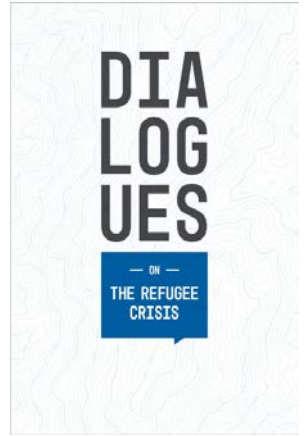
Facebook St. John's Lutheran Church; Evansville, WI

YouTube St. John's Lutheran Church Evansville, WI



Love in Action: Small Group on The Refugee Crisis

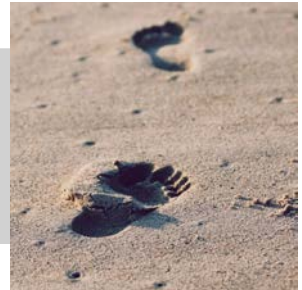
Did you know that Wisconsin resettled 168 refugees in February 2024? From October 2022-September 2023, the US welcomed 60,000 refugees forced to leave their homes fleeing violence, persecution, and war. In January 2019, St. John's passed our Welcome Statement that explicitly welcomes people of all cultures and immigration status. As we continue to explore what this statement means for our congregation, we invite you to join Amy Floan and other adults for *Augsburg Fortress's Dialogues On: The Refugee Crisis*, a conversation about refugees and their impact on the church, the local community, and the country's culture.



Throughout this eight-week course, we will discuss topics like people without a place, network of care, facing our history, and where do we go from here? Participants will also build communication skills to help continue the conversation with others outside of the small group.

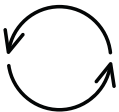
***Dialogues On: The Refugee Crisis* small group will take place on eight consecutive Tuesday evenings, 6:30-8:00pm**, in the Chapel, starting Tuesday, April 9. Sign up and get your book on the Ministry Table in the Gathering Area.

“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”
— African Proverb



5 WAYS TO GIVE

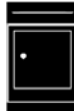
Automated



Mail



Dropbox



Online



In Person



Making Connections: Dick & Shirley Richards



We met at UW-Whitewater the first week of our freshman year. Dick was from Palatine, Illinois, and Shirley was a lifelong Madison resident. After getting married in 1970, we lived in Madison prior to moving to Evansville in 2001.

When moving to Evansville, we planned to continue our membership at Bethel Lutheran where we had been members for about 25 years. Being active members of a church in Madison became somewhat problematic, so we started attending First Lutheran in Stoughton. When Dick retired in 2015, we again visited St. John's, and we were impressed with the friendliness of the congregation. Pastor Matt also impressed us with his sermons (as well as his incredible ability to remember our names), and we made the decision to join. We continue to enjoy the friendships we've made since joining, and sincerely appreciate the fellowship Pastor Jerry provides to my mother, Clara, who lives in Stoughton Meadows. We also very much enjoy Becca's singing "O Holy Night" at the Christmas Eve service.

Dick retired in 2015 after 37 years at St. Mary's Hospital laboratory where he was pathology supervisor, safety & facility coordinator, and technical specialist. Shirley retired in 2017 from Dean/SSM Health where she worked for almost 20 years in Administration supporting the General Counsel and legal department. Dick is a member of the Tuesday Work Group, while Shirley is more of a "behind the scenes" volunteer making craft items for the Holiday Bazaar and crocheting prayer shawls and baptismal blankets.

In addition to Shirley's 98-year-old mother, our family includes two adult children, Cyndi (husband Joe) who lives in Stoughton, and Paul (wife Jess) who lives in Eau Claire with our two grandchildren, Scarlet and Emmitt. We also have two very spoiled cats. We enjoy spending time with our family and friends, and have made a few trips this past school year to

attend our senior granddaughter's show choir and acapella choir competitions, as well as our grandson's band concerts. We also enjoy spending time at our little cottage on Lake Minocqua where Dick enjoys fishing. Shirley is a member of Strong Women at Creekside and enjoys the book clubs through the library.

The prayers Dick received during his heart surgery in 2023 and post Covid hospitalization in 2020 were very uplifting. Pastor Matt's care, prayers, and concern during Dick's battle with post-Covid was unforgettable.

We financially support St. John's because we strongly believe in the mission of our church. We believe we have been blessed, and continue to be, by our Lord through many of life's experiences. Something that we very much like about St. John's is that one never feels pressured to give to the church — you just want to because of all the good people and good works that are present in our congregation!

Holy Community Opportunity: Center Stage Showcase

On **Saturday, April 27**, St. John's will host the Center Stage Showcase featuring vocal selections of fun, light-hearted music. Songs from Broadway, folk songs, or jazz will fill the Sanctuary. The entertainment will bring solos, duets, and groups of local artists to sing their hearts out.



The night begins right after worship with dinner, and audience members will easily move to the Sanctuary for the opening act. Invite your friends and neighbors to an evening of community and entertainment.



My Sense of Community

by Alli Uphill

I have always been a very introverted person. I spent seven years in post-high school education where people and friends came and went. "Community" never crossed my mind. I went on to start a career, met Brian, got married, and eventually, started a family. Community for us was mostly family. Brian and I joined St. John's in 2015 to have our son baptized. Little did we know what an impact that decision would have on our lives!



Fast forward: we met a lot of people. I learned a lot about faith. We celebrated and commiserated with other parents. (We loved SPLASH!) We found ourselves part of a community where we were starting to make friends, feel a sense of belonging, and find the beginnings of a support network we could rely on. Then... Covid happened. I remember the intense feeling of isolation in those first weeks. Quite quickly though, we felt the continued connection to our church community. There was the beautiful birthday message scrawled across our driveway in chalk and signed "Your St. John's family loves you!" Shortly after was the amazing car procession to celebrate Easter with decorated cars, honking horns, and that incredible feeling of togetherness.

St. John's provided so many opportunities to safely gather that our connection to the church community not only remained, but it grew. We gained close friendships that became an integral part of our perseverance through the pandemic. Here we are on the other side. I have never felt more connected, supported and understood. Thank God for community!



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.

Lutherdale Travel Ministry: Smoky Mountains - October 14-19

The splendor of the Great Smoky Mountains paired with the dazzling shows of Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg! Share it all with friends through Lutherdale Travel Ministry's trip on **October 14-19**. You'll get a guided tour of the Smoky Mountains, visit historic downtown Gatlinburg, and enjoy a variety of music and entertainment.



Cost is \$989 per person (double occupancy), which includes 6 days/5 nights, transportation, 8 meals, and tickets to 4 separate shows. For more information and reserve your spot, contact Lutherdale at (262)742-2352 or by email: info@lutherdale.org. They will handle all travel details, but sign up at the Ministry Table to see who else will be on the bus with you!

LifeFest — A Party With A Purpose

In February, St. John's high school youth experienced the energy and ministry of Life Promotions at Quake in Wisconsin Dells. The Spirit moved in the gathering and the hearts of our youth, **so St.**

John's is taking a road trip to Oshkosh for more.



On July 11-14, Lifest will host music headliners like We the Kingdom, Zach Williams, Newsboys, Matt Maher, Riley Clemmons, and many more. The days and nights are filled with hearing the Good News of Jesus through music and speakers. Plus there's a 5K, artzone, ferris wheel, bonfire worship, inflatables area, prayer times, dance party, and much more. Contact the office to reserve your tickets.



REACHING OUT: SERVICE & INVITATION



Council Matters by Keith Miller

On March 11, the Church Council met for its regular monthly meeting. After calling the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, we prayed in triads sharing our highs and lows; then we listened to Mark 13 concerning Jesus explaining that heaven and earth will pass away, but his words will never pass away. The council unanimously approved the February minutes, and Pastor Matt reported that Amanda Koenecke is putting in lots of time in preparation for the New Orleans Youth Gathering. Quake in the Dells was fantastic for the high schoolers; 28 Confirmation youth and adults went to Lutherdale, and the 8th graders are continuing their preparations for confirmation. Many new visitors have been attending services. The Midweek Lenten dinners are going well — the food almost runs out!

The council then discussed Chapter 6 of the book When Church Stops Working about the idea of a church having a “watch word” that represents what we focus on in our church. Discussion included that our mission statement continues to be fresh and active for St. John’s. The treasurer’s report included that expenses were up 17% compared to last year and giving is down 6%, however, the giving YTD weekly average is up. Attendance is also up from last year at this time. Staff member Carolyn Butts attended the meeting and mentioned that the staff is very cohesive.

There is exciting news about St. John’s hosting a new intern: Christopher Beaver, from Luther Seminary, will start just after July 4th. Christopher is from Madison, which eliminates the need to find housing. He has visited our staff and toured the building. It feels like a great fit for everyone.



The storm water issue has taken a significant step forward with a signed release of past issues so that we can now procure bids to do the actual work of resolving future water drainage. Lastly, a motion to adjourn was made at 8:28 pm and unanimously approved. We ended, as always, with the Lord’s Prayer.

FEATURE: Reflections from St. John's All-Church Service Days

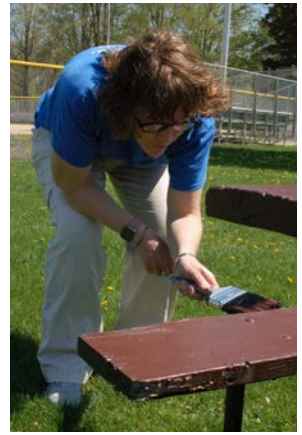
Mark your calendars for our next **All-Church Service Day on Sunday, May 5th!** Signups will be available starting in April. *Need a St. John's t-shirt? Contact the church office.*

Denny & Karen Reese: We enjoy participating in service days for the church and the Evansville community. We have served the meal prior to "send off," cleaned up parks and neighboring yards, and picked up garbage on Territorial and Cemetery Roads. The tasks never feel like work when we enjoy the company of our fellow church goers! We grow our church and community friendships when we get to know each other working side-by-side. This twice-a-year event also creates opportunity for inviting friends and neighbors that do not attend church, helping them learn more about St. John's and our faith. Our service projects express our commitment to taking care of God's creation, which extends way beyond the walls of our building.



Deanna Jeans: I choose to serve with the Lutheran World Relief (LWR) projects. The quilts and kits are blessed at the worship services at the Fall All-Church Service Day before shipment to the LWR warehouse. I help box, count, and get the quilts and kits ready for shipment. Some of the quilts are donated for local needs, but most are sent abroad. The All-Church Service Day culminates a whole year long of making quilts, collecting items, and assembling kits. I really love serving. I see God in the servant-hearts of all who are out helping people. I pray our efforts are helping care for people in need.

Amy Floan: When St. John's has its fall and spring service days, I tend to choose projects that involve some physical labor, like painting picnic tables at Lake Leota Park or providing gifts for our neighbors in assembling little care packages to be delivered. Serving as a church is important to me because it helps me to see that I am not alone in the work I am doing on God's behalf. We can do so much when we work together, and I want to be part of it!



I most often see God through other people, and on service days, I see God everywhere I look. I see God in the diversity of projects available that were dreamed up by the planning team, and in the variety of ages, interests, and abilities of the people working on the projects. As I see pictures from the day and hear about what was accomplished, I again see God and God's love at work in the world to bring about change through each one of us.



The McCullough Family — Abby, Shane, Cade, Brady + Rylan: We love serving on the church service days! We always gravitate toward outside service opportunities like Lake Leota Park clean up, yard work for church members, tree and brush cleanup at Levi and TRIS schools, tree planting around

town, and cleaning up around the new walking path on the west side of town. It's always rewarding to see a completed job when we are done!

It is important for us to serve because giving back feels good. We are very blessed and thankful for what God has given us. We enjoy feeling like we are doing God's work by reaching out within our community and to other church members. We try to take a moment each time we are out on a service day site to take in the beauty of God's creation around us, maybe give thanks for a great weather day,

or show appreciation for our fellow service day friends that work alongside us. Talking to our boys about the importance of giving back through a heart of service is an important life lesson for us to share with them and getting to show them through our own participation is valuable. It's always a fun family day together!

When we see all the hands at work and we see all the blue shirts in church on service day morning, it's pretty awesome to see so many people come together to bring the saying "God's Work, Our Hands" to life! The church is the people — not a building. Seeing the team response with people of all ability levels completing a variety of service jobs is truly where you can see God at work.

John & Sandy Decker: The two projects we choose most often are cleaning up the flower beds in Leonard-Leota Park and raking leaves at neighbors' homes. Both let us be part of a larger team and to carry out the motto on our St. John's t-shirts: "God's Work, Our Hands." We end our worship services with the sending message:



"Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." That's what we do very intentionally on service days. We remember from the Gospel of Matthew and from the First Letter of John that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. John also tells us that if we love one another, God abides in us and God's love is perfected in us.

Johann Kleisch: In the past my family has picked up trash, cleaned out flower beds, trimmed weeds and trees at the houses of church members, and planted trees around town. Giving back and helping others is part of our life's purpose and it feels great! I see God when many kind people joyfully give their free time to help others and make the world a better place to live.



Stacie Putnam: When I was growing up, there were always a couple of spring-time activities that were mandatory in my family. One was picking rocks in the fields before planting, and the other was marching up and down the nearby highways and country roads collecting trash that was left over after the snow melted. As a kid, I viewed these tasks as awful, dreaded events. Why should I have to pick up after other people? Why can't I play with my friends instead of combing through the ditches and getting my hands dirty? Why should I care?



As an adult, I learned the answers to all of my adolescent questions. We should care because God gave us this beautiful Earth to live on; we need to take care of it! I now have a family of my own and we choose to participate in All-Church Service Day by cleaning up the ditches along Territorial Road. We focus on this road because it's where my parents now live (the original garbage pickers!) and we want to help make our Earth beautiful, healthy, and clean, helping out our neighbors that live along the road. What a great way to spend some time outside and serve God. The blue t-shirts reading "God's Work, Our Hands" that flood the congregation is a testament to this! God works to bring everyone together to make a difference.

My parents have instilled the importance of "garbage clean up" in me, and I hope that I'm passing down the importance to my kids. Grandma Kaye praises my kids up and down when they pick up garbage unprompted, and has ingrained in their heads that we should never, ever litter. Grandpa Al teaches them the importance of recycling and that God gave us one Earth: we need to protect it for their future. Of course, it never hurts when you find some cold, hard cash lying in the ditch. (Finder's keepers: just ask Tucker!)

Evelyn Stencil: For our All-Church Service Days, I have helped with park clean-up, roadside clean-up, and the weeding of flowerbeds. I love being outside, serving with other church members, and helping to make the areas in our parks beautiful for the Evansville community.

Service work provides a tangible way of living out our faith by serving others. Volunteering reminds us of the teachings of Christ, the teachings of compassion, kindness, and selflessness. The service projects our church performs involve collaboration and teamwork within the church community. Working together towards a common goal fosters a sense of unity, strengthens our relationships, and builds a supportive community where members can rely on each other. By actively participating in service projects, our church addresses the needs of our local community. It shows us that anyone can spark positive change, even if it is simply picking up trash at Lake Leota.

I see God's love at work on Service Days. I see His love in others following Christ's example of serving others, spreading His love and light, and by people coming together for a shared purpose. I see God's love not only in the service being performed, but in the gift of relationships being formed. His love in the interactions of our volunteers, families working together, the building of church community relationships, and the creation of a collective memory/experience. I see God's love in people giving their gifts and those gifts being welcomed. I experience God's love in the joy individuals have for taking care of the environment and making our little corner of the world a little better/cleaner.



Prayers for ACTS29 Mission Trip

On Sunday, April 14, twelve members of the St. John's ACTS29 group is heading to Kentucky for a week to help with flood relief.

Lift up these siblings in Christ in prayer. Pray for safe travels, good health, strength and endurance to serve, and opportunities to share God's love with those they meet. They return on Saturday, April 20.



Lea Kuqo
Ray Legris
Keith Miller

Brenda Muth
Ken Muth
Joseph Myatt

Linda Rehfeldt
David Stadt
Martha Stadt

Debbe Topel
Jonah Topel
Mike Topel

Graduation Announcements

St. John's will celebrate the accomplishments of all graduating seniors on Sunday, June 2, 9:00am. High school graduates will wear their robes and process throughout the worship service. There are also many students who have graduated from undergraduate degrees, trade school, boot camp, or graduate school. And several students graduate mid-year. St. John's would like to recognize all students on their achievements and bless them as they move to the next stage of their lives.



Contact the church office by May 20 to share your or your student's good news or add your name to the list to be recognized. If you or your family member is moving, please update the mailing address so St. John's can continue to share God's words of love and encouragement.

Fabric Kits for Lutheran World Relief



Sewing is a valuable skill that can help people earn reliable income. Fabric Kits provide fabric and thread for vocational training programs teaching sewing, and for newly trained tailors to launch their sewing business. Families in Burkina Faso use the kits to mend their clothing and extend the life of their limited wardrobes. In El Salvador, women are trained in making clothing for themselves and their children, giving them the personal satisfaction of caring for their families in this way. And in Mali, vocational training centers teach young women and girls to sew as a means of earning an income, building a brighter future from themselves and their families.

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

- TWO new spools of matching or neutral-colored general-purpose thread, totaling a minimum of 500 yards to a maximum of 800 yards.
 - Combinations could include, but are not limited to: 2 spools of 400 yards
- 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 58"-62" wide fabric
 - 3 yards of 42"-45" wide fabric, or
 - 4 yards of 34"-37" wide fabric.

Please no religious or national symbols, or congregation's name on the material. Rabbits, eggs, and poinsettias are acceptable.



Holy Community: Tree Planting

Trees play a critical role in creating healthier, safer, and more connected communities. They clean our air, filter our water, and even slow storm surge and flooding in our cities. Neighborhood trees have shown the ability to reduce stress, improve overall health and development in children, and encourage physical activity. **St. John's is serving our Evansville neighbors with a community-wide tree planting on Saturday, April 20, 9am-12pm.**



The city will arrange all the trees and holes; we will plant the tree and tuck it into its new home for years to come. 10-15 people are needed of all ages. (Some children who have participated in the past delight in pointing out the trees that they planted around town!) Signup on the Ministry Table or call the office.



Charity Highlight: Lutherdale Bible Camp

Our 2024 budget includes a commitment of **\$5000 to support the ministry of Lutherdale Bible Camp**. St. John's is a committed partner in ministry with this vibrant outdoor ministry of the ELCA. Lutherdale is a faith community, dedicated to building lives in Christ, through the wonder of God's creation and the study of God's word.

Lutherdale provides a ministry of hospitality and fellowship to people of all ages and stages of life. The summer is busy with camp programs and the fall, winter, and spring are bustling with retreat programs, day trips, week-long travel trips, and congregational events for all. Lutherdale has something for everyone to enjoy a "life-changing adventure".



Love in Action: On Autism with Kristie Carlsen

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication. According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects an estimated 1 in 36 children in the United States today.



There is not one autism but many subtypes, each a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently.

Several factors may influence the development of autism, and it is often accompanied by sensory sensitivities and medical issues such as gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, seizures or sleep disorders, as well as mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression and attention issues. Within the St. John's community, many children are identified with autism. But people live with autism their whole lives.

Kristie Carlsen shares her testimony as an adult with ASD: "I deal with a lot of the same things all adults do. The difference is it can at times be more challenging as someone with ASD has a brain that is wired differently than the "typical" person. An example of this is trying to get a job; the process can be challenging in ways some might not expect. Interviewing can be a big challenge as eye contact is not always possible for someone who experiences autism, and this is often a gauge employers use to judge a person's skills.



"Even the choice to share that you experience autism is a hard one: it may set expectations up that you cannot do the job, based solely on the employer's understanding of autism.

“Many autistic adults use a technique called masking. Most of us learn this in our childhood. We experience our actions being called weird or wrong, so we watch others around us. We then apply this to ourselves acting like those we’ve watched to appear as normal as possible. Although some autistic people use this to get by in the world, it can be very harmful and take its toll on our mental health.



All of us experience autism differently, but we all contribute to the world in meaningful ways. We all deserve understanding and acceptance.

AUTISTIC SELF ADVOCACY NETWORK
www.asan22.org

“One challenge I run into when greeting people is the expectation to shake hands. Another challenging thing is that our automatic instinct as humans is to comfort people by touch. Both of these scenarios can be a challenge to come up with a way to tell people I don’t want that. Touch is not something that I personally am opposed to at all times, but when it is coming from someone I am not closely familiar with, it can feel very uncomfortable and sets my already struggling sensory system into a panic. Group-wide changes, such as peace signs over hand shakes, provide a lot of comfort to those of us who struggle to find a way to express ourselves during the sharing of the peace at worship.

“I was once asked “would I cure my autism” if I could. The answer to that, for me, is no. Autism has helped shape me into the person I am. While it has its challenges, it has also given me a lot of things that are crucial to the person I am.

“If you have any questions about my experience as an autistic, please feel free to ask. Just remember my brain is wired differently than yours, so the conversation may be different as well.”

For more information about autism, visit www.autisticadvocacy.org.



Missionary Moment

by Ashley Bowman

I'm now in my final semester of classes, and excited to see where things go next. I've been working hard on my master's thesis on child abuse and gender-based violence. I am really passionate about this topic and look forward to continuing to write about it after I'm done with school. One of my classes this semester is a deep dive into the book of Acts, which looks at how our churches today can learn from the earliest churches in history. I am taking a preaching class focusing on preaching at weddings, funerals, and public events — things beyond the typical Sunday sermon. My remaining classes are all about creativity — creativity in leadership, creativity in worship, and connection to faith via creative projects. They are all helping to prepare me for the next step, which will be a pastoral internship.



I am often struck by how perfect God's timing is. People have been telling me since I was a teenager that I should be a pastor, and I resisted until I was 35 years old. Sometimes I felt bad about this, like I should have listened sooner. But more and more, I am realizing that it wouldn't have been the right timing if I would have gone to seminary after finishing college. I needed to experience everything that brought me to this moment. If I hadn't had those experiences, I wouldn't truly understand the responsibility and importance of this career. And I believe that it's because I have had those experiences that I will be more fully able to minister to people in need than I would have if I just went right to seminary when I was 20.

At the start of this journey, I felt certain that I wouldn't be in the process of becoming a pastor for very long. I had convinced myself that someone was going to tell me I was not the right person to become a pastor. I had long lists of reasons why people might stop me from doing this, rooted in formative years in a community that said women can't lead. As more time

passes, it's harder and harder to feed the insecurities that are rooted in my own feelings of unworthiness. Surrounded by a supportive community that cheers me on and encourages me, I've stopped feeling guilty for waiting so long to start seminary. **I know that this is exactly where I'm supposed to be, and this moment is exactly when I'm supposed to be going down this road.**

Romans 8:38 says that nothing can separate us from God's love. I now believe nothing can separate any of us from being a part of God's plan.



Green Living: Protect the Rainforest by Butch Beedle

Ever heard the word "endemism"?

A place that contains high levels of endemism contains many species found nowhere else on the planet. It's a word that can be used over and over again about rainforest ecosystems. From the dry coastal forests to the high altitude cloud forests and everything in-between, the rainforests found in South America cover just 7% of the planet's land surface, but are home to more than half of all species — including two-thirds of all plants! — on the globe. As human development has encroached on the rainforest to extract the abundant natural resources, this unique and important biodiversity becomes more and more threatened.

But we can do something all the way up here in Wisconsin! I have been involved in rainforest conservation and education for about 35 years. Our group, Save The Rainforest, is co-sponsoring a 4K run/walk on April 20. This event raises awareness and funds to support two Wisconsin-based non-profit organizations dedicated to preventing the loss of tropical forests that are critical to protecting biodiversity and global climate.

Run for the Rainforest 4K Walk/Run — April 20th, starting at 1pm at the Sondregger Science Center on Edgewood College Campus
Registration: \$30+ (Kids under 8 are free!) at ceiba.org/donate/run-for-rainforest/

Come join us and make a difference!

Spring All-Church Service Day

We all have our own to-do lists as the seasons change. Maybe you need to clean the gutters or even clean out your closets of items you never wore this winter. But there are also the to-do lists of our community that always seem to get longer and longer.



This spring, St. John's will gather on Sunday, May 5 to start checking those items off the list. We will serve the schools, city, Care Closet, and work on several other projects.

"God's Work. Our Hands" is a nationwide motto for the Lutheran church (ELCA.) And St. John's keeps this "faithful service" value at the core of who we are. There is something holy that happens in our hearts and minds when we humbly serve God and serve our neighbors.

So clear your morning schedule May 5, 10am-12pm. Find your St. John's t-shirt. And get ready to use your hands and feet to love this holy community.

2014 All-Church Service Day
More than a decade of service!



CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRIES

Vacation Bible School 2024: Camp Firelight

From 9am-12pm on July 29 through August 2, children and leaders will gather together for a VBS summer camp adventure! Campers are invited to an exciting adventure where they learn to face their fears while putting their trust in God no matter what situation life brings!



Children who are 3 years old through those who have completed 5th grade are eligible to attend. Registration will open in early May. Contact Callie Jones children@stjohns-lc.org with any questions, or to volunteer your talents to serve.

Children, Youth & Family (CYF)

Calendar Highlights for April 2024:

- Friday, April 5: Confirmation Up All Night from 7-11pm
- Sunday, April 14: Fourth Grade Apostle's Creed Milestone during the 9am service, and Workshop at 10:15am
- Sunday, April 28: Last Sunday of BASIC before summer!

Up All Night for 6th-8th Graders — April 5

On Friday, April 5, St. John's will host another Up All Night at the church building from 7-11pm! Middle schoolers will hang out for four hours playing games, eating pizza and snacks, hanging out with friends, and spending a little bit of time in worship. All students need is a snack and \$3 for pizza. Invite a friend too!



IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

St. John's Members

Michael Adams	Jeanette Schunk	Kent Englund	Arnold Klug
Adam Kopp	Barb Nieman	Amy Rowley	
Carol Buss	Tammy Landen	Marie Gallman	

Family & Friends

Braiden Bergum	Tom Timm	Lori Koch
Barbara Buttchen	Mike Feirn	Mark Baenen
Jodi Seyer	Sarah O'Sullivan	Monica Gulesserian
Billy Outlaw	Jim Carlsen	

Partners in Mission:

Rev. Carl and Kelsey Grulke & family, in Botswana
Rev. Bridget Gautieri in Germany
Ashley Bowman, Wartburg Theological Seminary
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, New Orleans

Men and Women in Service:

Matt Forster, Nate Madsen, Bailey Olin, Tyler Schnell, Hunter Speropulos,
Marcus Steindl, Mark Trawicki, Heather Ihlenfeldt, Branden Samela, Samantha
Ihlenfeldt, Evi & Joey Kahana

Condolences to:

Jeanette Almond and family as they grieve the death of her husband John Almond.

Donna Wickersham and family as they grieve the death of her husband Lyle Wickersham.

Rick Hatlen, Leah Purdy, and family as they grieve the death of Liz Hatlen.

Mary (Bruce) Richards and family as they grieve the death of her niece.

Hugh (Dulcie) Bergsma and family as they grieve the death of his mother Nell Bergsma.

Jessica (Ryan) Westby and family as they grieve the death of her stepdad John Nelson.

Erika (Scott) Stoker and family as they grieve the death of her aunt.

Congratulations to:

Kurt and Madison Bennett on the baptism of their daughter Gemma Elizabeth.

Bible Study on Thursdays at 1:00pm with Pastor Matt

You are invited to join Pastor Matt every Thursday afternoon at 1:00pm for Bible Study in the lounge. Each week we'll preview the upcoming weekend's scripture reading through reflection and conversation. No experience necessary. Come when you can; our group is different every week. What remains constant is that we always laugh and learn together.

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 taking care of our Earth

Creator, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us co-workers in your creation. Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature so that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty.

For community outreach

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

For refugees

God of rebirth, we pray for immigrant adults and children who have been forced to leave behind all they have ever known. Heal them from the trauma of fear, deprivation, loss, and abuse. Comfort them and give them peace and wholeness. Prepare us to be supportive friends who embrace them in their uncertainty.

We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

A Blessing from Mount St. Scholastica Benedictine Sisters



May the Lord look upon you with kindness.
May the Lord fill your heart with holy peace.
God’s love be forever within you.
May the Lord always bless you and keep you.

— How to Live by Judith Valente; page 187



312 South Third Street
Evansville, WI 53536

Address service requested

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 3
Evansville, WI
NON PROFIT