

# Visionotes

St. John's Lutheran Church  
March 2024



**Soul Troop at Lutherdale**  
Third through fifth graders designed  
“Care of Creation” logos.

## **Holy Week Services — p. 8-10**

Make plans to experience the full triduum this year!

## **Easter Series: New Testament — p. 11**

Join in a study as part of Adult Confirmation.

## **Holy Community: Euchre Fundraiser — p. 16**

## **Spice It Up! vs. Wipe it up! — p. 20**

Help the Care Closet stock these needed items.

## **Acts29 is back and headed to Kentucky! — p. 20**



# We are the church — together.

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

## St. John's Staff

Pastor	Matthew Pook
Pastor of Congregational Care	Jerry Tews
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

# Where is God in Tragedy?

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When it comes to tragedy, I'd rather listen and learn than pretend to have answers. Part of my role as your pastor is to accompany people experiencing tragedy, and I continue to learn from you as we share the journey. With reluctance and full humility, permit me to comment on God's presence and power in the hardest times of our lives.

Our church family recently experienced destruction during the February tornado. We experienced loss of a roof, loss of buildings, property damage, and devastation to trees and woods. Our extended church family completely lost a home, and dozens more dear neighbors were affected by the tornado. The questions on our minds often begin with the word "why". Why would God allow this to happen? It's also an important question to ask why the damage and loss were not worse. Why didn't the tornado hit the mobile home communities? Why did we survive in the midst of this horrible storm? Some are even asking why they are still alive.

Are we to attribute all this to God? If God is all-powerful and controls everything, then everything happens according to the will of God. But I do not believe it was God's will for some people to lose their roof and others to lose their home and some to have no damage at all. God did not choose certain people to suffer in this tornado and spare others. So if this tornado and its destruction were not God's will, is God all-powerful and in control? **God is still God, and God is in charge, but God is not controlling.** God has chosen *not* to control everything.

It's important to know that God is not the only one with power. I've become increasingly less comfortable with saying that God is all-powerful, because God does not have all the power. Yes, God is mighty and powerful, but **God has chosen to share power with creation.** You and I have power. For instance, every time we sin, we use our power against the will of God, and God's will is not done. God does not will us to sin. God has chosen to limit God's power by sharing power with us, and with creation. Consider cells in a body; they have power to multiply, and when they do so erratically, cancer can form. This is not God's will. Consider the

weather; even wind and atmospheric pressures have power. I do not believe it was God's will for a tornado to damage our community.

Even Jesus experienced an unexpected and violent storm. He was in a boat with his disciples when they nearly sank in the Sea of Galilee. Jesus commanded the wind to be still and the waves to calm. We could say that God allowed this to happen, or at least God did not prevent the storm from occurring. But Jesus brought peace in the midst of the storm.

We will all experience storms in life. We all experience tragedies. Perhaps God saves us from experiencing far more than we do. In the midst of those storms and tragedies, God is there. **God is there to hold us.** God comes with helpers in the form of emergency personnel and neighbors. God comes to grieve with us when we experience tragic loss.

At a February media briefing, a Rock County official said he was amazed at the outpouring of support from Evansville in the aftermath of February's tornado. He said he'd never seen anything like it. That's the power of holy community. People texting and calling each other. Neighbors knocking on doors. Communities coming out to walk fields and clear debris. Food pouring in to feed families and workers. That's where God is in the midst of tragedy. God is in our courageous feet, our helping hands, our listening ears, our compassionate hearts.

I do thank God that this tragedy was not any worse, and I wonder if God protected us from much more loss. But then I'm left to wonder why God did not prevent other tragedies, like a death in a car accident, or the death of an infant, or Jesus' death on the cross. We do not have any easy answers as to what God allows or prevents. But we are confident to declare that God's love will see us through whatever storms we face. God has given us a holy community to be the hands and feet of God, to bring the love of God to all in need. I thank God for the Holy Community we have together. We are better together. And in the name of Christ, we will face this and every storm of life together.

In Christ,



*"No storm can shake my inmost calm  
While to that Rock I'm clinging.  
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and  
earth, | How can I keep from singing?  
— How Can I Keep From Singing, ELW  
Hymn #763*

# REACHING UP: WORSHIP & PRAYER

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## *How to Live: A 6-Week Series for Lent on Happiness, Meaning, & Community*



## **Lent 2024 HOW TO LIVE**

With Happiness, Meaning,  
& Community

Jesus offers an alternative vision for how to live in this world. The world teaches us competition, and Jesus teaches us cooperation. Our sinful nature tells us to grab, and Jesus invites us to give. The devil tempts us to value success and achievement, and Jesus invites us into humble service. In our Lenten series "How to Live," we will explore the pillars of Benedictine spirituality distilled from the alternative vision of Jesus. Jesus shows us how to live in a way that is eternally satisfying.

*"How open am I to new ways of thinking, new ideas that knock at the door of the mind? Benedictine hospitality calls on me to question whether I am at home enough in my own beliefs to disagree with others without feeling betrayed by them." (Judith Valente, "How to Live," p.130)*

- March 2 & 3... Mark 12:1-12 [13-17] (Parable of the Tenants)
  - How To Live - Week 3
- March 6... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer
- March 9 & 10... Mark 12:28-44 (Great Commandment)
  - How To Live - Week 4
- March 13... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer
- March 16 & 17... Mark 13:1-8, 24-37 (End of the Age)
  - How To Live - Week 5
- March 20... Midweek Holden Evening Prayer
- March 23 & 24... Mark 11:1-11 (Triumphal Entry)
  - How To Live - Week 6
  - Palm Sunday Weekend & the Passion Story
  - Beginning of Holy Week
- March 31... The Festival of Easter - Mark 16:1-8 (Resurrection)
  - Easter Services at 6:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am, in person (9:00am live-streamed online)

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

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

You are invited. All are welcome.

## Lenten Midweek Meals

What a joy it's been to be at the church building on Wednesday nights! It's buzzing with fellowship, spiritual growth, and Holy Community. Grab some dinner before

Confirmation or small group, and stay for worship at 7pm.

St. John's is hosting midweek supper meals on Wednesdays in Lent in the Fellowship Hall from 5:30-6:30pm with friends and family. For a suggested donation of \$7.00, each meal includes a main dish, side, fruit, and dessert; gluten-free options are available on request:

- March 6 — Asian
- March 13 — Italian
- March 20 — Ham + Scalloped Potatoes



## Lent 2024 HOW TO LIVE

With Happiness, Meaning,  
& Community

## Lenten Midweek Worship: Wednesdays at 7pm

Each week in Lent St. John's gathers together on Wednesday evenings for a 30-minute, reflective service. You are invited to be filled with the music of Holden Evening Prayer and listen to stories from St. John's siblings on how to live. **Add 7:00pm to your calendars Wednesdays, March 6 - March 20** to experience God in a calm, reflective way.

## Generosity in Lent

**All gifts at the Lenten suppers and offering at Midweek worship will benefit Lutheran Social Services**, which offers vital services in the areas of addictions, restorative justice, behavioral health, children and families, housing and aging, persons with disabilities, urban ministries, and rural outreach.

## Flowers for Easter

Did you know that 95% of potted Easter lily bulbs are produced by 10 growers on the Oregon-California border? The bulbs are harvested in fall, then shipped to commercial greenhouses. It takes careful timing and tending to bloom the lily just in time for Easter morning. These trumpet-shaped blooms recall the horns that heralded the resurrection of Christ.

St. John's has a long-standing tradition of placing, not just lilies, but many beautiful perennial flowers in the sanctuary to celebrate the Risen Lord. Order forms for lilies, tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, mums, hydrangea, and azaleas are available on the ministry table, or contact the church office before March 5th.



## A Simple Meal of Abundant Grace: Holy Communion Class and Milestone for Fifth Graders

Our fifth graders and their parents are invited during Lent to meet together to explore the mystery of Holy Communion. They explore how Jesus gave us the gift and began this sacrament on his last night on earth. They examine the roots of Holy Communion in the tradition of the Passover meal from the book of Exodus, which is still an ongoing tradition of our Jewish siblings. And they consider how Christ is really present to us in the meal and how Holy Communion prepares us to serve in God's world. This milestone is a wonderful time to discuss its meaning and to receive the bread and wine with new appreciation.



**Classes begin on February 25 and meet for five Sundays at 10:15am in Fellowship Hall.** Farnsworth Ceramics will lead students in making their chalices on site. And they also will experience the process of baking communion bread together.



Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, is the day each year when we celebrate Jesus sharing the Lord's Supper with his disciples. This year on **March 28, in worship at 5:00pm and 7:00pm**, our fifth graders are invited to celebrate this milestone as they receive Holy Communion together. For many this will be the first time they receive the sacrament; for all, it will have new and important meaning. May the body and blood of Jesus strengthen our faith and nourish our spirits.

### Maundy Thursday Choir on March 28th

Look for an email about a pop-up choir and rehearsal details for Maundy Thursday, on March 28th!

# Holy Week with St. John's

## March 28: Maundy Thursday

- Worship at 5:00pm
- Worship with Holy Communion Milestone at 7:00pm (in person and live-streamed online)

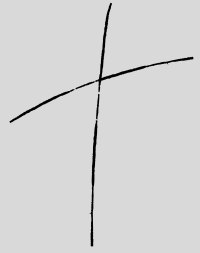
## March 29: Good Friday

- Ecumenical Luncheon at Creekside Place, 11:15am
- Ecumenical Worship at 12:00pm
- Tenebrae Worship, 7:00pm (in person and live-streamed online)

## March 30: Prayer Vigil; no Saturday worship

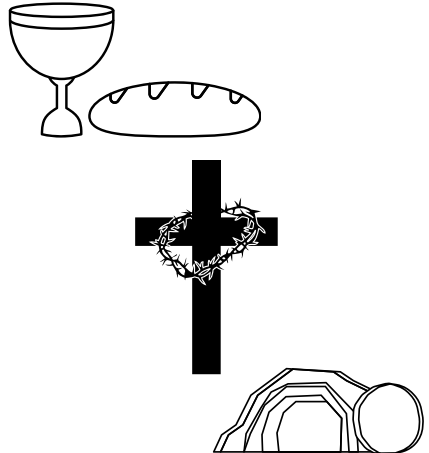
## March 31: Easter Sunday

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



## An Introduction to "The Easter Triduum"

Holy Week tells the powerful and poignant story that is at the center of Christian life and faith. Christians around the world focus hearts and minds on the powerful story of the betrayal, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In particular, Maundy Thursday evening through Easter evening is known throughout the Christian church as the Great Three Days of Easter (Triduum is Latin for three days). These three days focus intensely on Christ's passage from death to life.



This annual celebration had become a three-day observance by the fourth century. **Worship during Holy Week is best approached as one continuous service.** You are invited to remember and witness the entire story.



## Good Friday Ecumenical Luncheon and Worship

The Church on earth is filled with a diversity of understandings of God, but we are all centered on the love of Jesus Christ. On Friday, March 29, 11:15am, you are invited to gather at Creekside Place (102 Maple Street) with all our neighbors to have a lasagna luncheon with a gluten free or vegetarian option and salad. **A suggested donation is \$10; your RSVP is requested to the church office by Monday, March 25.**



We will set aside time at 12:00pm, as one body of Christ, for a worship service with song, scripture, reflection, and prayer, focusing on Jesus' final moments on the cross. This event is hosted by St. John's Lutheran Church, St. Paul Catholic Church, Congregational United Church of Christ, Evansville United Methodist Church, Cookeville Lutheran Church, and Magnolia Advent Christian Church. All members of the community are invited.



### A Look into our Good Friday Tenebrae Service

*Friday, March 29th, 7:00pm, at St. John's*

At the heart of the Good Friday liturgy is the passion (which means "suffering") story, which proclaims Jesus as a triumphant king who reigns from the cross. The ancient title for this day—the triumph of the cross—reminds us that the church gathers not to mourn this day but **to celebrate Christ's life-giving passion** and to find strength and hope in the tree of life. In the ancient bidding prayer we offer petitions for all the world for whom Christ died. The day's liturgy culminates on Easter morning.

To impress upon the hearts and minds of believers the dreadful consequences of our sin, and the magnitude of our Savior's sacrifice, the ancient church held a special service in the last days of Holy Week, called 'Tenebrae'. 'Tenebrae', which is the Latin word for 'darkness', presents the account of Christ's passion and death. During this service, the candles will be successively extinguished. As the candles are extinguished, they symbolize the fading loyalty of the disciples of Jesus, as He was going to the cross. They also remind us that the Life of Jesus is being snuffed out in death. The Sanctuary will become increasingly dark during the service, until we hear of the utter darkness in which our Savior died. At the end of the service, the Christ Candle will be carried out, signifying the burial of our Savior. Worshipers will leave in prayerful silence, pondering Christ's death.

## Keeping Vigil Till Easter Sunrise — March 29-31

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



St. John's Prayer Vigil starts at 8:00pm on March 29, immediately following the Good Friday worship service. We continue the vigil throughout the day of Saturday, March 30, and end at sunrise on Easter Sunday morning (by 6:26am). It's a peaceful and sacred time unlike any other. Many people find it to be one of the most holy times of their year. **Sign up for 30 minutes or more, by yourself or with a prayer partner if you wish.**

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

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

## Easter Egg Hunt – March 31

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



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

## Easter Series: New Testament

This Spring join in 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 *Collaborate: 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. This 75 minutes will consist of discussion time with Sue Reese based on weekly readings and the *Collaborate* workbook, plus time with Pastor Matt for Q&A.



## 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? This New Testament small group is part of a bigger plan for St. John's Adult Confirmation Ministry. The series started with Alpha last fall, and continues with the New Testament group this spring (info above!). Adults who would like to be confirmed will participate in all six groups — *Alpha, two Old Testament, two New Testament, and Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers*. All these experiences are great for anyone interested in expanding their knowledge and diving deeper into their faith.

## Worship Hospitality at St. John's

It's not always easy to know how to greet one another before and after worship. The sanctuary is filled with first time guests, returning guests, regular worshipers, and even returning worshipers. How do we help people feel genuinely welcome without too much pressure or any judgment?

### AVOID

- "Where have you been?"
- "I haven't seen you in a long time."
- "So, did you like it, and you think you'll come again?"

### REMEMBER

- "Good to see you."
- "Glad you're here."
- "Hope to see you again."
- "I'm not sure if I've met you before. My name is \_\_\_\_."
- "Would you remind me of your name? My name is \_\_\_\_."

In this way, we'll help everyone to feel at home with the church. And when we feel more at home with the church, we might feel more at home with God.

# REACHING WITHIN: SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FRIENDSHIP

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## FEATURE: What is your favorite part of Holy Week?

**Becca Poock:** Maundy Thursday has always been my favorite service. It is the last meal Jesus shares with his disciples. The disciples did not realize how soon they would lose him, but Jesus knew how important it was to be with his friends before his death. I love sitting around the table after a meal, sharing conversation and stories. I'm encouraged that Jesus loved it too.

**Carolyn Butts:** My favorite time of Holy Week varies from year to year, but I think the most consistent would be the Tenebrae service on Good Friday. I like the reverence in the service, especially the nails being pounded and the Bible being slammed. I think part of it goes back to when Todd, my five-year-old son, died. We had the visitation on Good Friday and once the Tenebrae service had concluded, the funeral home filled with /our St John's family. It was so comforting.

**Chris Cole:** My favorite Holy Week worship service is Good Friday. I love the intensity of the hammer hitting the nails, the slow darkening of the Sanctuary, and the strength of Jesus' last seven words. As we walk out in silence, I can take the stillness with me into the waiting throughout the weekend until Easter morning. I also appreciate taking that stillness into the Prayer Vigil.

**Pastor Jerry Tews:** My favorite part of Holy Week is actually the emotional flow of all the services during the week. The celebration and somber invitation of Palm Sunday, the personal caring relationship of Maundy Thursday, the stark harsh reality of Good Friday and finally the ecstatic excitement of Easter Sunday. The best life-giving week of the year!

**Callie Jones:** I always look forward to the procession of the palm branches during the Palm Sunday service. I have fond memories of participating in the procession as a kid (especially arguing with my siblings about whose palm branch was the biggest, which often led to spontaneous palm-branch duels). Now as an adult, this commemoration of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem is a welcomed break of the somberness that is often felt during lent.

**Jeff Herbers:** The somber tone of Good Friday and the reminder that Jesus willingly went to the cross to suffer and die for me.

**Sharon Magee:** Good Friday service is the most meaningful for me. It is an awakening of the depth of Jesus' love for me. What God asked of his son to do for all. The hearing and feeling of the nails being driven into His body is a reminder of God's message of His grace and love.

**Deb Herbers:** My favorites revolving around Holy Week include the nail pounding at the Good Friday Service. Also, I love the colorful garden of flowers and the ceiling of balloons on Easter Morning.

**Pastor Matthew Poock:** I'll be blunt: Holy Week is a lot of work for worship leaders. But it's worth it. I love Holy Week. I love the parade on Palm Sunday, waving branches and declaring Jesus as king. I love Maundy Thursday, serving Holy Communion to many young disciples for the first time and washing the feet of our children. I love the solemnity of the Good Friday Tenebrae Service, when the darkness increases and the gravity of Jesus' death resonates deep in our souls. I love the unstoppable joy of Easter morning, declaring victory over the grave for Jesus and for us all. If you've not experienced all the worship services together, I highly encourage it. Together they draw us into the central core of the good news of Jesus Christ and the riches of our faith.

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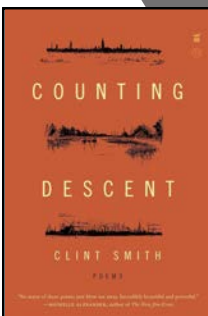
## Whatcha Reading? with Courtney Adams



### Counting Descent by Clint Smith

Prose is not the only format in which stories are told: just look at the poetry in the Psalms. It may not hold the dates and facts about David, but it certainly shares his heart and soul for God.

Of Clint Smith's *Counting Descent*, Courtney Adams says: "It's beautifully and thoughtfully written and prompts the reader to understand people's experiences and to foster empathy. It is a coming of age story that addresses lineage and tradition. The author lives in the juxtaposition of belonging to a loving, welcoming Black community and a world that associates Blackness with fear. If you are seeking a poetic story that forces you to wrestle with what you learned growing up, and what you want to unlearn moving forward, this book is for you."



## Open Table Meal on March 11



Invite your friends and neighbors! Open Table meal is on **Monday, March 11, 5:15-6:30pm, at Creekside Place.** The tasty meal that evening will be a New Orleans theme. Our own Kathy Wells will be serving a variety of delicious foods from the French Quarter in Louisiana (Gluten Free and Vegetarian options available). What a gift to Evansville – a free meal and an opportunity to feast together!

## Hanging Flower Basket Fundraiser

Pleasant Prairie Greenhouse is generously providing hanging baskets to defray the cost of the high school trip to the national church youth gathering in New Orleans in July. Whether your porch faces East or West, there is a flower basket to beautify your home just in time for Mother's Day. The 12-inch hanging basket is filled with annual flowers either for sun or shade. **Place your order by Friday, March 8.** Each basket is \$35. Quantities are limited, so get your order in soon. Checks should be made to St. John's with "Hanging Basket" in the memo line. Or scan St. John's QR code at right to pay by card. Baskets will be picked up at Pleasant Prairie Greenhouse (16907 W County C) Friday, May 10 from 4-6pm ,or Saturday, May 11 from 9-10:30am.



### Our Mission Statement

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

### Our Core Values

Inspiring Worship  
Faithful Service  
Lifelong Spiritual Growth

Uplifting Prayer  
Caring Invitation  
Christ-Centered Friendships

# My Sense of Community

## by Steve & Sylvia Schneeberger

In 1977, we arrived in Evansville as a young married couple with a newborn. We knew no one, other than one person, Steve Hagen. Steve and Sylvia were housemates their senior year at UW Platteville. We had no other family or friends, for they were all back in Illinois. We purchased a home on East Main Street and had wonderful neighbors that welcomed us as friends and part of their families.



Within a few years, we met more new friends and became involved with Jaycees/Jaycettes. This is a service/social organization that young adults can join that does just that, serve the community and socialize with other younger adults. Through this organization we were able to meet many wonderful young adults that were from the area, and there were others that were just like us - new to the community. This group was our family away from home. We were able to reach out to one another for childcare or ask for a helping hand with a chore that we could not accomplish by ourselves.

We continue our friendships with many of these new family members to this day. Many have left the Evansville community and have established new family members in their new communities. As we reflect on those years of establishing lifelong friends, we look at each of them and realize their strong relationships with God. They are not all Lutherans, but members of the many other denominations here in Evansville and surrounding area. This is a HOLY Community, and we are so thankful to say that we are part of this 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.**

# Holy Community Opportunity: Euchre Night to Support High School Youth Trip



Our high school youth are heading to the ELCA National Youth Gathering this summer. While spending time in New Orleans, our youth and adults will be affirmed and challenged in their faith, experience new perspectives, and consider their vocation. There will be thousands of participants. This will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for our group.



**On Saturday, March 16, at 6:00pm**, our high schoolers will host a night of cards at St. John's to raise funds for this memorable trip. Invite your favorite Euchre partner (or let us choose your partner) and make plans to play. Cost is \$15 per person and can be paid when you arrive; hearty snacks and drinks included. Sign up on the Ministry Table or contact the church office.



Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much."  
— Helen Keller

## Stay Connected with St. John's



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

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

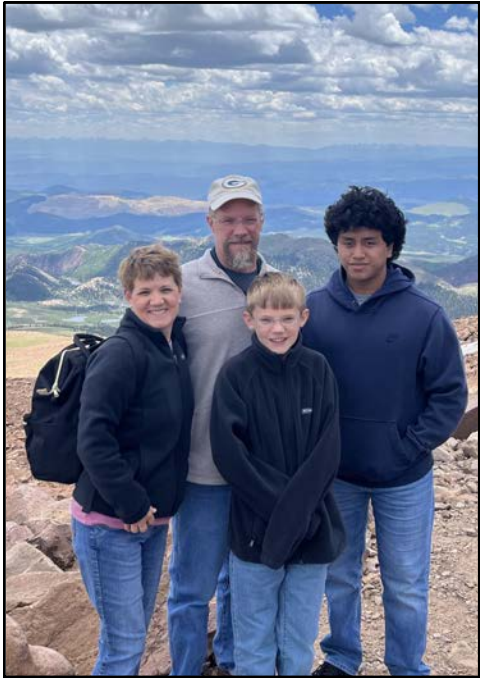
**With Daily Nudge Text Message Devotions** at [trunc.us/db47CB](https://trunc.us/db47CB)



# Making Connections: Kari & Mark, Noah and Allen Schwengels

By Kari Schwengels

Our family of four lives in Evansville. Mark is in IT and works for American Transmission Company. I teach kindergarten at Levi Leonard. We have two children: Allen (13), a 7th grader and Noah (19), a freshman in college. We enjoy traveling, hiking, and biking. We began attending St. John's shortly before our youngest turned three. We were looking for a church family that we could call home. I was working in Milton and we didn't know many people in the community. We wanted to find a local church that we could call home that had a strong children's ministry.



We attended St. John's for the first time on Christmas Eve in 2013. Both Mark and I were amazed at how welcoming and friendly everyone was to complete strangers. We felt a sense of belonging even though we didn't know anyone yet. We began attending Sunday services and got the boys involved in children's ministries. We soon decided that St. John's was "checking all the boxes" of what we wanted in a church and we decided to become members, 10 years ago this month. Shortly after we became members, my dad died unexpectedly. Although we had only been attending St. Johns for three short months, people reached out and supported our family.

We have watched our children grow and develop through the experiences and activities that St. John's has to offer. Both of our children have participated in the children's ministry programming Noah was confirmed in May 2019, and Allen is currently in confirmation and will be confirmed in May 2025.



In addition to the children's ministry, St. John's offers children opportunities to try new things and take risks that they might not otherwise, helping them grow their faith. Allen has enjoyed participating in the children's Christmas programs and playing piano during worship services. Noah enjoyed going to Lutherdale and also went on a mission trip to the Apostle Islands. As a family, we have enjoyed participating in worship services. Mark and Noah have served as ushers. Allen enjoys serving as an acolyte and as Assisting Minister. I enjoy serving communion and greeting people. As a family we have also served at Fellowship and helped with the Green Team. We enjoy doing the spring and fall clean up days and the Kids Against Hunger meal packaging.

We give a financial gift to St. John's monthly as a way for us to give back to show our gratitude for all the blessings we have been given. We appreciate the church leadership, programming, and all the ways St. Johns helps us to grow our faith and live the way Jesus wants us to live. Continual financial giving allows St. John's to continue what they are doing for not only our church, but to support others outside our church walls. Christ-Centered Friendship is the core value that speaks deeply to our family. Of all the churches we have attended, this is the only one in which we have found that makes every effort to help people feel like they matter and they belong. We have formed lasting relationships and friendships at St. John's. Our children have grown up here. We have made lots of friends here. We have grown our faith here. This is truly our church home and family.



## Care Circle

The Congregational Care Faith Circle is a confidential gathering open to all who are enduring hardships.  
**Come on Tuesdays, March 12 & 26, 1:00-2:00pm.**

# REACHING OUT: SERVICE & INVITATION

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## Council Matters by Keith Miller

On February 12, the Church Council met for its regular monthly meeting and delicious treats provided by Debbe Topel. The Valentine chocolates and windmill cookies were delicious! After calling the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, we prayed in triads sharing our highs and lows for the day. Then we listened to Mark Chapter 10 concerning Jesus explaining that with God, all things are possible. Next, the council unanimously approved the January Minutes. Pastor Matt included in his report that 17 kids were at Lutherdale this past weekend. About 60-65 students are attending on Wednesday after school for Faith Corps and Soul Troup. Thirty-four women attended the women's retreat, and 11 men went to the men's retreat. The "We are the World" Pop-Up Choir organized by Jeff Updike was wonderful, and we packaged 25,484 for Kids Against Hunger! There has been high attendance of church services at the Evansville Manor, Heights, and the Kelly House, so much so that Pastor even ran out of communion cups!

Tornado relief: St. John's is committed to help support families and their needs. There is a community task force set up for the long-range plans to help. The storm water situation is getting closer to resolving.



The council then discussed Chapter 5 of the book When Church Stops Working. The treasurer's report included that expenses were up just over 13% from last year, as expected, and total income was down about 4%. That said, we did have one less week in the month this year vs. last year. Weekly average attendance for January 2024 was up 17% over January 2023 (five weeks last year). Lastly, a motion to adjourn was made at 8:35 pm and unanimously approved and then the council ended as they always do with the Lord's Prayer.

## Spice it up! Wipe it up! – Collection for the Care Closet

Do you prefer a little spice in your life? Or do you sweep through the house wiping everything in sight? There's something for everyone in the spice-it-up-or-wipe-it-up challenge for the Care Closet this month! Donations of the following will be collected in the Gathering Area at church, and shopping lists will be on the Ministry Table.



### Spice It Up!

Garlic powder (unsalted)  
Onion powder  
Italian seasoning  
Dried onion flakes  
Iodized salt  
Black pepper

VS.

### Wipe It Up!

Paper towels  
Napkins  
Facial tissue  
Toilet paper

## Acts 29: Helping Kentucky Flood Victims April 14-20

ACTS29 is finally on the move again! We are going to a town in eastern Kentucky to help with flood recovery. There are presently 432 homes that were destroyed and 4,667 homes that have been flood affected. We will leave on Sunday, April 14 with a return date of Saturday, April 20.

Are you interested or need some more information? Contact Linda Rehfeldt at [rehfeldtldr@gmail.com](mailto:rehfeldtldr@gmail.com) or 608-295-6723.



# Men's Retreat



*Eleven men retreated to Bethel Horizons in February to prioritize holy community.*

## Stewardship Word: Intentional

It's great to be able to respond with a financial gift to special needs as they arise, or to make an offering gift spontaneously. When tornadoes devastate a city or a hurricane blasts the coast, our compassion urges us to share financial resources. But most of our financial giving benefits from making a plan.

With your monthly income in mind, consider the church and other meaningful charities in your life. Financial planners will echo God's invitation for us to be thoughtful and intentional about the percentage of income we want to share for the greater good. Contact the church office if you'd like some confidential assistance on budgeting. We all want what's best for you and for our shared mission.

*Caution: intentionally making a plan for your generous giving may result in abundant joy.*



# We Met Our Simply Giving Challenge for 2024!

More than 24 households began or increased their financial offering through *Simply Giving* already in 2024!

The winners of the \$100 Piggly Wiggly gift cards are Eric Elliott and Genny Kleisch.

Congratulations to everyone who has already made giving a priority this year, and it's never too late to start! *Questions about Simply Giving? See our website or email financial director Deb Herbers at [finances@stjohns-lc.org](mailto:finances@stjohns-lc.org).*



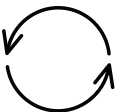
## No Venmo? No Worries.

Did you know St. John's has a QR code? That's right! You can quickly make a payment for a retreat or send in the offering you left in your purse on the weekend by scanning this code. You can choose checking or credit card. Mark what it's for in the memo line under the amount (Ex: Lent book). There is a 2.65% fee for cards. Please consider paying through checking or paying the fee. Our generosity goes further when it's towards God's mission and less towards the business fees. St. John's QR code is just one more way to easily share the gifts of God.



## 5 WAYS TO GIVE

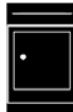
Automated



Mail



Dropbox



Online



In Person



# Love in Action: One Extra Chromosome

By Sandy Thompson and Taylor Jones

On Thursday, March 21, St. John's will recognize World Down Syndrome Day. Everyone is encouraged to wear colorful, attractive, or mismatched socks to show our support to our neighbors and their families who have a little something extra. Friends with Down syndrome have 3 copies of the 21 chromosome, therefore 3/21 is the special day. Why fun socks? Chromosomes look like socks; therefore to show support, we draw attention to our "chromosome-looking" apparel.



St. John's member, Taylor (Juen) Jones has firsthand knowledge as Kaci's mother. Kaci has Down syndrome. Taylor shares her heart and passion for others to understand and know more about DS. "Down syndrome (or Trisomy 21) is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of an extra 21st chromosome. Down syndrome can cause distinct physical features such as almond shaped eyes, low set ears, low muscle tone, and crooked pinky fingers! Along with the physical characteristics, Down syndrome can cause speech and learning delays. Because of these differences, in the past, people with DS were not accepted in society and led very difficult lives. For example, during the Holocaust they were sent to concentration camps and gas chambers. In the US, most were immediately institutionalized after birth, up until the 1990's! But NOW, in the present day, they are given opportunities. They are given the chance to learn and grow with their peers.



They are given the chance to prove themselves and all they can do. Because of this, some people with DS have jobs, can drive, and even live independently. People with Down syndrome want the same as you and I — to be loved, accepted, included, and wanted. When you look at it, typical people and those with Down syndrome really are more alike than we are different!"

**So pick out your brightest, boldest, silliest, mismatched socks on Thursday, March 21, and step out with Kaci, the Jones family, and all those who live with Down syndrome.**

## 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.

## Meals on Wheels in April

St. John's is delivering Meals on Wheels to Evansville residents during the weekdays of April. Volunteers will pick up meals at Creekside Place Monday-Friday at 11:00am. Then the joy of serving our homebound and elderly begins as we deliver to their homes. Just pick one day on the Ministry Table or call the office to select your day. *Any questions, contact Glenace Smelcer at 882-5726.*





## Prayer Shawl Ministry



Do you like to knit or crochet? The prayer shawl ministry needs you! This ministry provides the gift of a shawl to a person in need of a prayer, a warm hug, and a reminder of God's care and love. This simple gift of a 30 x 60 knitted or crocheted shawl serves as a reminder that someone cares and has prayed for the recipient while the shawl is being made. Since 2014, approximately 190 blessed shawls have been given to family, friends, and others outside of our St. John's community. Thanks to all who have made them. Those who have received these shawls have been uplifted and affirmed, as if given wings to fly above their troubles. The need is great! *To learn more about this ministry, please contact Eileen Meredith at 882-5898 or Ann Legris at 608-436-0470.*



### Green Living Tip: Coffee

by Susan Becker



For most of us, the daily cup of coffee is a necessity in order to jump-start the workday or enjoy a leisurely breakfast. Despite how essential this robust beverage is to our lifestyle, it is so commonplace that we take it for granted, overlooking the culmination of efforts, logistics, and conditions required to produce that perfect cup. Small farmers in coffee growing regions face many challenges, including threat of violence, climate change, and large scale plantations dictating the market.

With such uncertainty about the future of coffee, it is ever more important to seek a closer connection with your coffee grower through greater consumer knowledge about what is on your shelf. By picking up coffee with the Equal Exchange label or the SPP symbol (Just Coffee from Madison, for example), drinkers will know that farmers are being paid according to the actual value of the coffee they grow. Making informed choices about how you buy your coffee reflects the support you would give to small growers and farmers in Wisconsin when purchasing from small local producers. In turn, that money helps to build our own communities and ensure a better future here at home. When we make that same investment in our coffee, we can ensure that we are supporting better communities and futures for the farmers who cultivate this important staple.

## Abbie's Assurances by Abbie Kriebs

I have an ongoing text chain with a few other friends. We live all over the country, attend all different kinds of churches (or none at all), and have different jobs and priorities. Some of us have never met in real life. Our common denominator is that we were all parenting young children in the early days of the pandemic, and we needed to hear "It's hard for me, too" appear in those little blue-and-green bubbles on our phone screens when we couldn't be physically present with our communities.



Even now, several years in, we text each other encouragement, share big and small wins or losses, and offer up advice (and commiseration) when a toddler stops sleeping for more than a few hours at a time. Some weeks go by and no texts fly back and forth. Other days, it's a bevy of activity lighting up our phone screens. And we always pick up where we left off, being present even from far away; bearing witness to one another's lives.

I've been a part of different kinds of communities over the years. Some have been healthy and thriving, and some have proven to contain layers of dysfunction. One community wanted the skills and attention I could offer, but ignored gentle suggestions of how to make the community better for all involved. Another went out of its way to be nice, but came undone structurally when the person in charge refused to lead the community to its next level. No community has been perfect, but all have been there for me in the seasons when I needed them. And I had to gain the courage to walk away when they weren't what I needed any longer, hoping desperately to find a new community to fill the void left by the old.

What has been constant in all of these communities is that they are made up of human beings living messy, chaotic lives, most of whom are doing the best they can with the resources they have, physically and emotionally. It's hard to remember that in the moment, especially when you are hurt.

The ability to duck out of any situation where we encounter difficulty is made so easy by the myriad possibilities open to us. In an episode titled "How To Discover Your Own Taste" on [The Ezra Klein Podcast](#), Klein interviews journalist Kyle Chayka on what it takes to develop a taste all your own, not just bending to the next algorithmic suggestion. Chayka says "When you're

surrounded by infinite possibilities, when you know around the next corner is another video that might be funnier or more to your liking, you're never going to sit with the thing that's in front of you. You're never going to be forced to have the patience, or the fortitude maybe, or the kind of willpower to fight through something and figure out if you truly like it or not." If that's true for funny cat videos on the Internet, it is certainly true of sticking with a community when it gets hard.

We all long for community, but in a world where many of us have nearly unlimited options available to us at our fingertips or by driving to the next town over, we can lose track of the fact that sometimes, community means sticking close when things are tough, staying and working to make the current one better, rather than high-tailing it as soon as what we need is no longer offered in the exact-right package tailored to fit us. And because these communities are always made up of those flawed humans living messy, chaotic lives (including the person typing this!), there has to be a lot of grace for one another when that mess shines through. This doesn't mean we as a community excuse repeat bad behavior, or allow abuse to run unchecked in our midst, but it does mean pausing before we check out entirely, taking a moment to examine our discomfort and ask more questions. Holy community isn't just agreeing on everything or leaving when we don't; holy community means saying "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" and "Why don't we try this, and if it doesn't work we'll try something else."

The text chain I have with a group of friends from all over is an easy community to be a part of — there's no conflict, there's no pressure to be physically available for these women who are hundreds of miles away. I never have to choose between my plans for the night and responding to their emergency request for child care because one kid took their brother's dare and earned a trip to the emergency room. The online-only community has served its purpose well, and it will continue to be a bright spot in my life, but it doesn't keep me from yearning for an in-person community that does the same, that can respond to those emergency texts, and whose texts I can respond to, too. In-real-life community has more friction, more sticky spots. But it's worth it, when you shift a schedule a bit to take a friend's child when they get called to jury duty, because the next week they'll hand you the keys to their pickup when your car starts spewing oil (pray for my Dodge Journey, please. Her name is Maude.).

We are made to live and serve in community together, and it requires a lot of patience and grace along the way. Let's make sure we stick with it long enough to get to the truly good parts.

# CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRIES

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## 2024 VBS: Camp Firelight!

Save the date! We'll be filling the church with music, fun, and JOY from **July 29 to August 2** this summer!

We'll need volunteers for everything from sound system operation to group leaders to kitchen help — if you are a willing servant, we've got a job for you!



## Lutherdale Summer Registration is OPEN!

Register by April 1st and receive a camp t-shirt!

- Young Pioneers (Grades 1-2) July 7-9 or July 10-12
- Adventure Week (Grades 3-8) July 7-12
- Fireflies (Completed 4th-5th Grade) July 14-19
- Night Owls (Completed 6-8th Grade) July 14-19



*Head to [www.lutherdale.org/summer-camp](http://www.lutherdale.org/summer-camp) to get more info and to register, or contact the church office for more details.*

## Children, Youth & Family (CYF)

### Calendar Highlights for March 2024:

- Sunday, March 10 at 10:15am - SPLASH
- March 24-31 - Evansville School District Spring Break
  - No BASIC, Faith Corps, Soul Troop, Confirmation, or Sweet Wednesday
- Sunday, March 31 at 8:30am - Easter Egg Hunt
- Wednesday, April 3 - Confirmation Parents Night with Field Trip
- Friday, April 5 - Confirmation Up All Night

*Questions about ministries for children 5th grade and younger?  
Contact Callie Jones at [children@stjohns-lc.org](mailto:children@stjohns-lc.org)!*

## Photos from High School Youth at Quake!



Our high school youth attended the Quake: Youth Encountering the Gospel event in the Wisconsin Dells February 16th-18th.



# IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

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## St. John's Members

Michael Adams	Adam Kopp	Jeanette Schunk
John Almond	Warren Yoerger	Barb Nieman
Kent Englund	Amy Rowley	Tammy Landen

## Family & Friends

Braiden Bergum	Marlene Jones	Jodi Seyer	Georgan Nicholson
Rosemary Wangard	Craig Thompson	Sarah O'Sullivan	
Lori Koch	Barb Buttchen	Tom Timm	
Sandra Zahn	Jim Carlsen	Mike Feirn	

## 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:

**Friends and family** of Elaine Skoien as they grieve her death.  
**Carol Golz** as she grieves the death of her nephew Ken Farberg.

## Congratulations to:

**TJ and Sandie Herbers** on the birth of their son Frederick Theodore. Frederick is welcomed by grandparents Jeff and Deb Herbers.

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## 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

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

## **For new members and guests of St. John’s**

God of new life, we thank you for gathering us together as the church and leading us to share in your mission to love others. Help us all to find our place in the ministry that we share. Give us hearts of hospitality, that we may welcome and invite each other into meaningful relationships with you and your people.

## **For women around the world (International Women’s Day, March 8)**

Creator God, you have made us unique and diverse people. We seek healing in the world for places that reject the gifts and influence of women in their communities. Make a path to freedom and empowerment. Open our eyes to see injustice. Enable our hands to work for good for our sisters and their families.

## **For those who were affected by the February tornado**

Jesus, bring healing and hope to those whose homes and livelihoods were damaged or destroyed by the tornadoes. Give them courage to lean on others. Provide the resources to rebuild. And Spirit, bring peace as they continue to grieve and heal from the trauma they endured.

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

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*“Come Lord Jesus,  
be our guest,  
let these gifts  
to us be blessed.”*

## **Holy Community**

Lenten Suppers; Wednesdays  
March 6, 13, & 20  
5:30-6:30pm



312 South Third Street  
Evansville, WI 53536

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Address service requested

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