

Visionotes

St. John's Lutheran Church
September 2023



God's Work; Our Hands
Fall Service Day:
Sunday, September 10th

Adult Learning Lineup in September — p. 7

B.A.S.I.C & Alpha return for fall.

It's Back: Men's Retreat in October — p. 11

Feature: Grace in the Transition — p. 13-19

Members share how God meets them there.

Fall Community Service Day: Sept. 10 — p. 21

Children, Youth, and Family Ministries — p. 30

Wednesday & Sunday ministries resume!



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

| | |
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| Pastor | Matthew Pook |
| Pastor of Congregational Care | Jerry Tews |
| Director of Faith Formation | Karla Wickersham |
| Office Manager & Children's Ministry Director | Chris Cole |
| Community Life Coordinator | Becca Pook |
| Custodian | Steve Schmitzer |
| Financial Director | Deb Herbers |
| Music Director | Sharon Magee |
| Communication Coordinator | Alyse Miller |
| Ministry Coordinator | Carolyn Butts |
| Nursery | Mikayla Samuelson |

2023 Church Council

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

Why public baptism?

15th in a series of "why" questions about what we do as a church, particularly during worship



I recently had the pleasure of attending a kids triathlon event in Oregon. I've completed a number of swim-bike-run events myself, but this time I found myself as a spectator. And it was an inspiring experience.

Along the course, people were cheering for kids they clearly did not know. The crowd would learn an athlete's name and shout out encouragement – "you are strong!" Adults were weaving through the course to find kids to cheer for them. At one point I even saw two kids holding hands on the run! Volunteers were everywhere helping kids know the path. And the kids certainly did better because of the crowd: at the finish line you could see kids muster up their strength and give it their best in response to their adoring fans.

The life of faith in Jesus has some beautiful parallels to this triathlon event. Being a Christian is both an individual commitment and a communal experience. Every one of us "swims-bikes-runs" the race set out for us. We each make decisions about practicing faith and following Jesus. We each choose (every day) the path to follow and whether to trust God or not, to live for God or not, to love God and others or not.

But we are not alone. We are a community of Jesus Christ. We cheer each other on toward love and good deeds. We help each other along the way to know the path to follow. Sometimes we hold each other's hand as we make our way down the journey. And we are better because of it. We trust God better together. We live for God better together. We love God and others better as we do it together.

Yes, you can be a Christian on your own, just like you can do a triathlon on your own. But it's a lot harder. I know that I've had a great cloud of witnesses and supportive saints around me who have helped me to know the way of God and have cheered me on to live for Jesus. I don't want to swim-bike-run the Christian journey without a community. And our public entrance to this community is the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Holy Baptism is also an individual event and communal experience at the same time. So many things happen in Holy Baptism. In the waters of baptism, we are washed clean of all our sins and mistakes — past, present, and future. In the waters of baptism, we are filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit; we are claimed as a child of God and given a permanent identity that supersedes any identity that others put on us, an identity we can remember every day thereafter. God uses water – the most life-giving substance in the universe – to bring us to life spiritually. Holy Baptism is a deeply personal encounter with God. It is once and for always. It is for all people. It is pure gift. It is God’s public declaration to the world about you. It’s less about our commitment to Jesus; it is entirely about Jesus’ commitment to you, daily and forever.

As personal as it is, Holy Baptism is a fully communal experience. As we are baptized into Christ, the church receives us as “a fellow member of the body of Christ, child of the same heavenly father, and a worker with us in the Kingdom of God.” In Holy Baptism we become family – God’s family. We are adopted by God, and God “signs” the adoption papers so that it is fully and forever. We are brought into a community of Christ – a community centered on love for God and all people.

At the end of a baptism, it’s tradition to walk with the newly baptized into the congregation. This is symbolic of entering the community of Christ, represented by the people gathered as witnesses on behalf of the whole church. Can someone be baptized privately? Yes; it is valid. The Bible tells of occasions when someone was baptized with just the baptizer present (the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8). Yet Jesus was baptized in the presence of many others, and the early church baptized hundreds of people and entire households together. Baptism in the presence of the church community is a rich celebration. Witnessing a baptism reminds us of our own, re-commits us to one another, and forms us as a community of love. I don’t want to be a Christian on my own. I need you; we need each other. We are God’s gift to each other. We are on the same team, stronger together.

In Christ,



“For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”
— 1 Corinthians 12:13

REACHING UP: WORSHIP & PRAYER

No Turning Back: A 6-Week Worship Series

Life turns in a moment. Sometimes we wish we could turn around and make a different choice or go down a different path. Other times we make a decisive commitment not to turn back to unhealthy ways of doing and thinking. We turn to God for strength and support as we put the past behind us and set out on a positive, hopeful future.



Turning to God helps us move forward on the path that brings new life. For six weeks we'll turn to ancestors of our faith in the Old Testament and learn from their twists and turns as we navigate our lives.

- September 9 & 10... Genesis 2:4b-25 (Garden of Eden)
 - No Turning Back, Week 1: Turning from Loneliness
 - All-Church Community Service Day, Sunday 10:30am-12:30pm
- September 16 & 17... Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7 (Isaac Born to Sarah)
 - No Turning Back, Week 2: Turning from Disbelief
 - Commissioning youth and children's ministry leaders
 - African-American Spirituals during Worship
- September 23 & 24... Genesis 32:[9-13] 22-30 (Jacob Wrestles God)
 - No Turning Back, Week 3: Turning from Fear
 - "Welcome to Worship" Milestone for 4-year-olds
- September 30 & Oct 1... Exodus 1:8-14; 3:1-15 (Moses & God's Name)
 - No Turning Back, Week 4: Turning from Self-Doubt
 - World Communion Sunday – Celebrating the Global Church

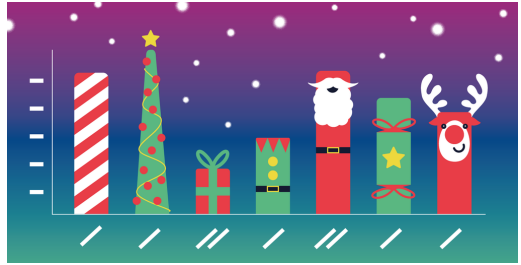
MORNING PRAYER SERVICE, TUESDAYS @8:30

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

You are invited. All are welcome.

Christmas Eve Congregational Poll

With Christmas Eve on a Sunday, we need your input! **Which Christmas Eve worship service are you most likely to attend?** Saturday, Dec 23, 5pm? Sunday, Dec 24, 9am, 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, or 7pm?



All services will be Christmas Eve special services. Only one vote per household please. Watch your email by mid-month for the survey, or if necessary, look for a paper copy at the Ministry Table. This is not your reservation! Only your opinion.

4K Milestone: When They Leave the Nursery

All 4K students are invited to celebrate the “Welcome to Worship” milestone on Sunday, September 24th at 9am.

Students and their families will participate in a workshop with Pastor Matt at 10:15am following the service.



An hour is a long time for younger children to sit still. They are not reading at the pace the congregation reads and sings, so St. John’s special milestone for children who can no longer go to the Nursery is just the right step toward participating in worship.

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.

REACHING WITHIN: SPIRITUAL GROWTH & FRIENDSHIP

September Adult BASIC: Forums, Studies, Speakers

Our Adult BASIC (Brothers And Sisters In Christ) learning hour will resume on Sundays this fall. We will gather 10:15-11:15am to grow and learn in faith. After service, grab a treat and find a spot in Fellowship Hall.



Sept 17: Bible Study with Pastor Matt

Sept 24: Adult Forum with Ward Hurtley Funeral Home

Oct 1: Dementia: Diagnosis, Now What? Planning Ahead with Karen Tennyson

Oct 8: QPR Suicide Prevention with Sean Mangold (90 Minutes)

Alpha Starts September 10

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



What is Alpha?

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

What happens at ALPHA?

ALPHA has three things in common:

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

Sign Up on the Ministry Table in the Gathering Area, online, or email Karla at director@stjohns-lc.org.

Dementia Training — October 1st

Did you know that 1 in 3 seniors die with Alzheimer's or another dementia? Maybe you have noticed some memory loss with a loved one. **You are not alone.**

St. John's is committed to welcoming all people, including those who are struggling to remember and their caregivers. (Make sure to notice the stickers on our front doors.) Dementia Training will aim to empower caregivers, family members, and friends with insights into the complexities of dementia allowing them to foster a more compassionate and informed environment.

On Sunday, October 1, 10:15am, St. John's will host Karen Tennyson from the Rock County Aging and Disability Resource Center.



Question. Persuade. Refer. Suicide Prevention Training — October 8th

We can all save lives! Many of us know the life-saving effects of CPR. Early intervention is the key for surviving a cardiac arrest. QPR has the same effect on those who are considering suicide. Come on October 10th to learn the warning signs for suicide just as we have learned the signs for heart attack. The signs of crisis are all around us.



QPR believes that quality education empowers all people, regardless of their background, to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know. Join us for an Adult BASIC in Fellowship Hall after service on Suicide Prevention. Our very own, Sean Mangold, will be here to present and train us on this very important topic.

Making Connections: Ann and Ray Legris

by Ann Legris

Ray and I grew up in the Cross Plains area. We both came from large families. Ray has 12 siblings, and I had seven. We were both baptized and confirmed in the Catholic church. We were high school sweethearts and have been married for 49 years. We have two sons, Matthew and Bruce. Both sons are married, and we are blessed with two daughters-in-law, four grandchildren, and a 100 lb. grand-dog.



Ray worked for the Rock County Public Works Department just short of 30 years. He spent many years working on highway 14, doing maintenance and snow removal, where many people got to know him and see him working daily in the traffic. Ray now works two Saturdays a month at the local recycle center and enjoys this time because he gets to see many friends and neighbors. The highlight of this job is socializing and handing out suckers to the kids and dog treats to the pets. He has had parents tell him the kids beg to go with and get so excited when they see the "dump guy"; there are also dogs that start to howl and bark when they see him. He makes friends with them all! Ray's motto is "If I can make someone smile, I've done my job."

I worked for Mercy Health for 17 years in the business office. Ray and I both retired four years ago. We spend our days enjoying our time together. We both like gardening, fishing, riding UTV trails, and visiting people. Our summer is busy attending our younger grandchildren's softball and baseball games. This keeps us busy with tournaments on the weekends and games during the week. We love spending time with our family when we can. Ray's hobbies include doing odd jobs for people who are elderly. He also helps his buddy with minor construction projects. My hobbies are crocheting animals, prayer shawls, baptismal shawls, and just about anything someone asks me to crochet. I also enjoy reading and painting.

We came to St. John's when our neighbors invited us to join them. We felt very welcomed and everyone was so friendly. Many people knew Ray

from working out on the highway so he fit right in. I think the deciding factor for joining St. John's was when we received a note from Pastor Matt about two days after attending the service, telling us he enjoyed meeting us and that we were welcome anytime. This reminded us of our priest Fr. Klink, who knew all his members and was certain to introduce himself to any and all visitors, just like Pastor Matt does. That priest retired and we just felt the church had changed so much we needed to be open to other options. After several months Ray and I became a part of the St. John's family. What I like about St. John's is the friendly atmosphere and many opportunities to be involved. Ray likes St. John's Saturday service because it is a relaxed atmosphere and more personal.

Ray gives his time and talents being an usher for the Saturday evening service. He looks forward to seeing and chatting with everyone, making sure to open the doors for those who need it, walking them out to their car if it is helpful. Ray and I have also done many mission trips with Acts 29. We like helping people! I started a Women's small group shortly have joining St. John's with Becca's help and encouragement. This group has been meeting for almost 10 years and is still going strong. I am an assistant minister, reader, a Faith Corp volunteer, and a Befriender. As a befriender, I take communion to several homebound members, a very important ministry. I also contribute to the prayer shawl and baptismal shawl ministry. I love working with the Faith Corp children. They are so full of energy and fun to watch grow in faith throughout the school year. I am grateful to have opportunities to serve others through St. John's.

When Ray and I had an automobile accident 6 years ago, St. John's was there for us. The prayers, phone calls, cards, and the kind words were so supportive and appreciated. By God's grace, we were not seriously injured. We give to St. John's to help support the necessities to run a church and to support the charitable giving that St. John's promotes.

Ray and I give and praise God because we are blessed and grateful!

5 WAYS TO GIVE

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| Automated | Mail | Dropbox | Online | In Person |
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One Year to Live: Men's Retreat, Oct. 13-15th

MacKenzie Environmental Education Center; Poynette, WI

Lutheran Men in Mission presents "One Year to Live," a 45-hour experience at the MacKenzie Center. Men of all ages want real friendships and a deep relationship with Jesus; this retreat will meet men where they are. Participants arrive 5:30-6pm on Friday and depart at 3pm Sunday. Registration costs (\$150 before Sep. 13) include 2 nights, 5 meals, and materials. Sign up at the Ministry Table or contact Becca Pook.

Here's what men say about the weekend:

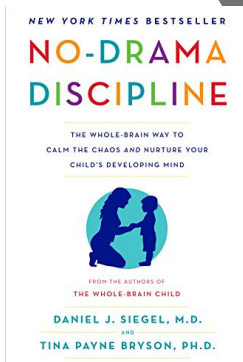
- "You will come out of the weekend a better man."
- "Like most men I used to have only passing conversations with other men at church. Now I have brothers in Christ."



Whatcha Reading? with Becca Pook



One of my strengths from *Strengthsfinder* is "Input." I LOVE learning and soaking up information, and as a parent of three, I am often looking for resources to learn how to be a better parent. This book is a fantastic read on how to be a gracious parent by seeing discipline as a "teaching" moment, not a punishment moment. I found big connections as the authors identify the word "disciple" as a student or follower. (What?! That's church language!) So when I discipline my children, what is it that I want them to learn? Another nugget: both parents and children are human. (I know: real deep.) The authors point out that we are all learning how to regulate our bodies, minds, and emotions. I think this is a gracious way to look at parenting. "I don't have it all together, so why should I think my 13-year-old is going to?" God met me in my study of this book to speak words of patience and love for my children.



The Bus is Leaving to Mackinac Island

On September 18, St. John's is joining 30 other siblings in Christ with Lutherdale Bible Camp to Mackinac Island. Please be praying for safe travel, meaningful connections, and many God-sightings on the adventure, September 18-22.



Pray for these 22 from St. John's by name:

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Al and Kaye Crocker | Susan Meredith | Monica and Scott Snittler |
| Diane Guernsey | Cindy and Dan Millin | Denise and Jeff Stier |
| Cheryl Hanson-Liu | Patty Nimz | Debbe and Mike Topel |
| Ann and Ray Legris | Jayne and John Ruchti | Carolyn Butts |
| Edie Manke | Glenace Smelcer | Pastor Matthew Pook |

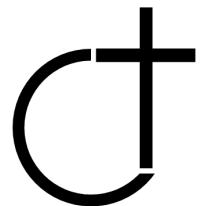
Christ in Our Home Devotional Books

This daily devotional resource is a great way to read the Scriptures and grow in faith. The current edition (Oct-Dec) will be available mid-Sept. at the Welcome Desk in the Gathering Area. Whether alone or with your family, let these one-page readings be a guide for prayer and reflection.



Congregational Faith Circle

Pastor Jerry facilitates a Congregational Care Faith Circle twice monthly on Tuesdays. This confidential gathering is open to all who are enduring hardships such as illness, loss through death or moving, physical deterioration, unexpected caregiving, or just life in general. God has made a place that we can gather safely, for quality conversation, in the presence of people who care — the Church.



Come on Tuesdays, September 12 and 26, 1:00-2:00pm.

Feature: Grace in the Transition

Most of Creation seems to handle seasons changing pretty well. The trees follow the cue to lose their leaves. The perennials nestle their bulbs deep into the earth. The birds fly south to warmer weather. Even bears start filling their tummies for the great hibernation.



But we humans seem to struggle. We're not quite sure when to put the shorts and sandals away. We keep our grills out for the great tailgating parties in the fall. And even if our tomatoes have all dried up, we keep our gardens growing until our final pumpkins have been picked.

Beyond the summer changing to fall, we also endure some very big transitions in our lives. Mental health experts agree that transitions like moving, family changes, and starting new jobs are the most anxiety-provoking times in our lives. And through all the change, God is our constant. Our stability. Our strength. Here are a few St. John's members who experienced the impact of transition in their lives and how God met them where they were.

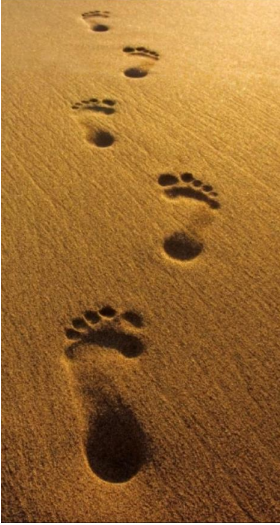
Penny and David Messling by Penny Messling

I truly feel that everyone has many transitions during their lives. Some of them are easier to make it through than others.

The one main transition that has impacted us the most in our family is one that happened in a flash — or should I say crash — back in 2016. David was going in reverse on his 4-wheeler and the gas throttle stuck on his Grizzly Yamaha. The UTV hit a small tree and David fell off onto his neck. This resulted in him becoming quadriplegic due to the crushing of his spinal cord at the cervical-



5 level. He is able to move his arms, but has no use of his fingers. He cannot feel anything from the breast line down.



I immediately went on autopilot to cope with the situation. This allowed me to get a contractor to make our home handicap accessible (widen doors, rip out carpet/hardwood floors, roll in shower, ramp), run to the hospital and then to the rehab center to see David, care for our family, find caregivers, learn how to care for David, and keep my job teaching for four years. The poem by Mary Fishback Powers, "Footprints in the Sand," carried me through the first year or so. Our congregation, friends, and family kept in touch with cards, calls, and prayers so we were not alone. When caregivers were hard to maintain during COVID times, I had to retire.

I have gone through all the phases of grief even though David is still here with us. Is it wrong to transition through all phases of grief and back again? No, it is not — and we all adjust and transition through life changes/traumas at our own pace and in different ways. **My suggestion to anyone is to reach out to family, friends, and counselors; to join small groups at church and take time for yourself when you need it.** Some days are going to be lower than low: that is when you hang on tight, scream, pray, and/or make a phone call to a peer. Remember, you are loved and you are important!

Rachael Whittier and Mark Crans by Rachael Whittier

In August of 2022 Mark and I moved from a family of 4 to a family of 6. As Mason and Lola's mom and dad were going through some hard times, Mark and I offered our home to the littles. However it became apparent quickly that the temporary situation would most likely move to a more permanent situation.



In November, I was granted legal guardianship of both children.

Prior to Mason and Lola, Mark and I were transitioning into a quieter household with two teenagers: Alan and Rylee are active in sports, have great academic and work ethics, and are fairly independent. The amount of juggling schedules between teens and toddlers has been challenging, and I'm fairly certain I have been given the title of 'Mom Taxi' and "Chaos Coordinator' most days. I have learned to find time in my days to be me, whether it's reading, painting my nails, or singing. I have learned the importance of good organizational skills and food preparation! I am still working toward the art of relaxation and going with the flow; sometimes I can be very rigid in my schedule and, lets be real, with a family of 6 you have to be flexible.

God has provided me stability, peace, and happiness. When I feel my cup is empty, I look up to God and ask him to help me walk through whatever my trouble may be. If anything, my faith during this time of transition has grown.



We watched Alan get confirmed in the Spring of 2022, and Rylee began her confirmation classes in the fall of 2022. We have talked heavily with them on the importance of having God in your life and the importance of church milestones. In the spring of 2023, Mason and Lola were baptized. Alan and Rylee are their godparents and it may have been one of my proudest church moments just watching all my children partake in such a big church milestone. It's moments like those that I know God is walking with me.

As I have walked through this transition, I have relied heavily on my faith. If I could say anything to someone going through a transition, big or small, it would be to trust God. Allow him to walk with you, and talk with him. I am a firm believer in everything happens for a reason. **Even though I'm not sure the reason for this transition, I do know that we are embracing this transition with open arms. Always know there are hard days and there are good days.** This hasn't been easy for myself or my family, but one thing that has made it easier is putting my trust in God.

Taylor Puckett-Jensen



When I was pregnant with my daughter, everyone told me how my life would change, and though becoming a parent is one of the hardest things, it is the most gratifying job in the world. When I was pregnant with my daughter, Addison, I constantly struggled with questioning how I would be as a mother. Growing up, I had a distant relationship with my biological mother, which created thoughts and doubts that I was not suitable for the task. So many people told me that it was a common thought to have. Still, I couldn't help but have an uneasy feeling about becoming a mother.

Time came to be induced to have my daughter due to medical reasons, and as I was in the hospital hooked up to different machines, trying to induce labor I still had the same thought. I remember looking in the mirror in the bathroom on the labor and delivery floor, staring at myself in disbelief that I would in a matter of hours be a mom to a human being. Like many others, my labor was difficult and challenging, which led to me having an urgent C-section. When my daughter came out, she was limp and not crying. What seemed like an eternity was only about three minutes, and after that three minutes, the team of doctors and nurses had my little girl crying and swaddled to bring over to me to meet her. My husband brought her to me and for the very first time I laid eyes on my daughter.

This was the greatest transition I have ever felt in my entire life. Within an instant, my complete view of the world had changed. In that exact moment, I knew why God had put me on this earth. The instant love and connection that beamed from my soul on that day will forever remind me of the constant love that we receive through God.



My faith helped me through a lot during my pregnancy, but I will admit that without my faith, my postpartum journey would have been very difficult. While I was pregnant with my daughter, I prayed to God every day for him to show me that everything would be OK and that my little girl would be safe and healthy. When my daughter and I came home from the hospital, I struggled with processing my birth, because I felt like my body had failed me. I prayed to God and asked him why he had put me through that journey. Through many prayers and self reflections, I now get to help others who have been in a similar situation, and truly feel like that is why God chose me to overcome that difficult life experience.

Now that I am on the other side of this journey, I see that God has always had a plan for me, despite it being a very difficult one. I would be lying if I said this didn't create doubt in my faith as well. In the midst of my healing journey, I reflected upon the several births I have witnessed myself working in the hospital setting as a respiratory therapist. I asked God why he chose to take some mothers and even their babies from this earth when they had done nothing wrong.

What I would tell someone going through a transition is that I know you're tired, and that you are drained mentally, physically, and emotionally. I would also tell them that it is totally normal to have doubts and question your faith as you go through hard life transitions. I would remind someone going through a very hard time that even when you feel like God isn't listening, he is always listening to you and that you are not alone.

If I was talking to someone going through a hard transition with a new baby, I would like to tell them that they are not alone. **Postpartum depression and other postpartum struggles are more common than they realize. Please lean on your loved ones. Someone is always willing to help, and I promise that. Brighter days are ahead, and God's love is endless.**



Tanya and TJ Lawson by Tanya Lawson

We transitioned from a family of three to a family of four and moved into a new home that needed some work while our daughter was just a few weeks old. Before the transition, we were comfortable. We knew what to expect from our day to day life and everything had a place in our home. I try to be an organized person and generally feel that we function better when we have an organized house. After our daughter was born, things were a little hectic, but I felt that going from one toddler to a toddler and a newborn was not as difficult as I thought it would be. She fit into our lives like she had always been there.



And then we moved... we are renovating the house so not all of our things have a home. I feel scatterbrained and stressed. I am also struggling with guilt for not giving our daughter the one-on-one time that our son got when he was a newborn. I feel like I blinked and she is almost four months old — and most of my time has been spent chasing our toddler, organizing/cleaning the new house, painting/renovation projects, and other family activities that make our life fun but very busy. We are starting to get back into a groove... but a new transition is taking place as I head back to work with the new school year.



I know that God is a person and he guides us. I trust in that guidance and always try to follow when I have "a feeling" about something. There are moments in my life that I have felt that guidance more than others. I have always known from a young age that I wanted to be a speech therapist and I felt his guidance when I applied for colleges/grad school. I felt his guidance when I decided to give my husband another chance after an "interesting" first date.

I felt it when picking our first apartment and our first house and again when it was time to move on to a new one. I do try to trust my "feeling" but there are always worries/doubts. It is difficult to trust the unknown. We have come across a few hiccups in the new house which has made me doubt if moving our family was the right choice. My husband and I have had a few conversations about what would have happened if we would have waited to move instead of jumping so soon after our daughter's birth. When we walked through the house the first time I had that "feeling" — the same one I had that has helped guide me through all the transitions in my life, resulting in my happiest moments. So even though there are doubts, I trust my "feeling" as I know it is God guiding me towards the path he has planned for me.

To those going through a transition, I would encourage them to breathe and trust in God's guidance. **Take everything one day, hour, minute at a time. It may feel like things are falling apart because you don't have control over the situation — but God does.** You will move past this transition and season in your life and one day you will look back and say "Remember when...?"

God is with us in every time of transition. As Isaiah 43:19 says:
"I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert."

A Thank You by Carol Golz

Thanks doesn't cover how much all the prayers, cards, calls, visits, and food was appreciated at the time of my surgery and beyond! One doesn't realize how much a call could make my day.

St. John's has the greatest and most caring friends ever.



REACHING OUT: SERVICE & INVITATION

Council Matters by Keith Miller

On August 14th the Congregation Council met for its regular monthly meeting; it was a productive evening. Dan Millin, who was responsible for treats, brought in a delicious, strawberry layer cake. It was so good that I almost missed typing in the first motion in the minutes because I couldn't stop eating it! After that, the council prayed for each other in triads after sharing their highs and lows. The treasurer's report was very uplifting: July giving was up compared to last year, and participation was up as well — by 27%. Online worship had 80 viewers last week, which includes the number of people that watched it live on YouTube and those who viewed it during the week. Pastor Matt was on vacation, so Karla Wickersham presented to the council. She shared that VBS went very well this year with 102 kids and 30 youth leaders participating along with the adults. Karla is settling into her role as the Director of Faith Formation. She just finished setting up and organizing the small group leaders for confirmation. Next, a motion was made to approve St. John's revised Personnel Manual, a project spearheaded by Amy Larson. It was approved unanimously. Last year's youth representative on the Congregation Council was Dayne Miller. This year, we have selected Jack Burton, a senior at Evansville who is deeply involved in the life of St. John's. Lastly, the Congregation Council Secretary, me, will be gone September and October on a retirement road trip out west; Erika Stoker enthusiastically volunteered as Substitute Secretary.



Stay Connected with St. John's



Online at www.StJohns-LC.org

On Facebook at facebook.com/St-Johns-Lutheran-Church-Evansville-WI-145437998849063/

On Twitter @StJohns_53536

With Daily Nudge Text Message Devotions at trunc.us/dB47CB

Faithful Service Opportunity For the Month: Fall Service Day — September 10th

On Sunday, September 10, St. John's will join with other congregations from across the country for a day of service in our local communities.

"God's work. Our hands."



Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbors. Like our previous service days, we will have multiple options for people of all ages and abilities. Card writing, roadside litter pick up, flower bed care at Lake Leota, stick pick up at Lake Leota Park, Franklin and Brzezinski Park clean up, Maple Hill Cemetery weed and trim, Adopt A Park, high school staff goodie bags, LWR School Kit assembly, and quilting will be the many ways to serve. **Sign Up sheets will be in the Gathering Area along with a Sign-Up Genius link on Facebook and in your email. We plan to have a hearty snack in the Fellowship Hall before working from 10:30am-12:30pm.**

"I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us, and we change things."
- Mother Teresa



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 Faithful Service by Johann Kleisch

One of my most meaningful service opportunities is making my scalloped potatoes and ham dinner as one of the Wednesday night Lenten meals. It's become quite popular the last two years because good news travels fast! Some of the best things to hear as a chef (or even just an everyday cook) is "that's the best I've ever had" and "can I have your recipe" and "you have to make that again". I've had multiple people say all those statements after they had my scalloped potatoes and ham at church. It's proof that incredible cooking and greatly satisfying people does not have to be complicated. **Serving others can be simple.**



Serving connects me to my faith because serving others is part of my personal mission statement. The actual words that I recite every morning are "Every day I take actions to serve others and make the world a better place to live". My main motivation is that I truly believe it's God's desire and that we are put on this earth to serve others and make it a better place to live. I've found the stronger my faith becomes the stronger my desire to serve others becomes and that is no coincidence.



Green Living Tip: Eco-Friendly Back-to-School



Whether you attend school in person or virtually, there are some easy eco-friendly tips to help reduce, reuse and recycle. Small changes can lead to long lasting outcomes which will help rescue waste, save money, and protect the planet.

The clothing industry is the second largest polluter in the world. **Buying second hand clothing** will help save you money and embody the reuse principle of going green.

Generous Hearts Fill AWARE Backpacks

St. John's members purchased and filled 28 backpacks to help 28 students in Evansville School District. Thank you for your generous hearts.

God, we pray for the students who will carry these backpacks. Carry their burdens. Create stability in their life with healthy food, affordable housing, consistent employment, healing from sickness, and relief from financial burden. Give them peace in their hearts so that they can learn and grow. And use these backpacks to show them Your deep Love for them. Amen!



by Lindsay Trustem

Inventory your supplies before buying more. Make a list & stick to it; this will reduce your consumerism & avoid impulse purchases. Opt for supplies that use minimal packaging, are made from recycled materials, and are durable enough to last the entire school year.

Use a reusable non-toxic lunch box, food containers & water bottle. Packing a whole food lunch (not processed/pre-packaged) is a healthier option for your child & the planet. Get your children involved in choosing lunch options so they are less likely to dispose of stuff they don't want to eat.

If you attend school in person & are close enough to **walk or bike**, consider this alternative versus driving or riding the bus.

Faithful Service Highlight: Fellowship Hosts

Each weekend St. John's hosts a time of fellowship living out our value of Christ-centered Friendship. Two extraordinary bakers provide the sweet treats throughout the month, and St. John's members "host" the morning. They provide a fresh fruit and start making the endless pots of coffee. They prepare the serving table with plates, silverware, and mugs. As a congregation that cares for Creation, we use real dishes. So, as the last mug is set in the dish window, the Green Team and Fellowship Hosts get to work rinsing and loading the dishwasher.



We have several faithful servants who regularly serve as Fellowship Hosts. One sister in Christ calls the office each week to make sure there is someone hosting, and if not, she graciously steps up. Maybe the kitchen has never been a strong area for you. Well, maybe the church's kitchen is for you! Maybe you love serving people — this is a great place to serve your heart out. Maybe you LOVE coffee; those coffee pots are calling your name! Hosting fellowship is a short-term commitment that you and a friend can tag team or your whole family can do together. All directions are in the kitchen, and there is always someone around who can help guide you.

This time set apart after worship is a holy time. It is a time to connect with those we don't see during the week. It is a time to sit in a Christ-centered community. It is a time to meet new siblings in Christ that God is calling to St. John's or to your personal life. **Thank you Fellowship Hosts for serving St. John's each week! Your service fills our cup, both literally and figuratively.**



Missionary Update: The Grulke Family

And she's off! MaryJane is attending high school in Denver, Colorado and living with Kelsey's brother and sister-in-law. It's a HUGE transition for her and for all of us, but we really believe it's the right choice for her. Kelsey is here in Colorado to help her settle in for a couple of weeks. Pray for a smooth transition please. We are also feeling so thankful that MJ has so many family members who were willing to give her options for high school.



What a blessing our families are!

Carl was invited to join LuminAfrica, a South Africa-based Bible translation collaboration for their leadership meeting to talk more about cooperation in the region. It is a chance to network and increase our relationships with other organizations to work towards our goals in Bible translation. The group had a chance to talk about strategies around project coordination, funding, strategic communication and more. Carl was very blessed by the gathering of the other partners and has been invited to continue to be a part of this group as we look to increase collaboration and cooperation throughout Africa.

On September 11, Term 3 starts at Matshwane Primary School for Audrey, Judah, Isaac, and Gideon.



Prayer Requests from the Grulkes:

- For the printing of the Shekgalagari New Testament
- For the Shekgalagari Advisory Committee as they plan the launch of their New Testament
- For Maryjane's transition to school in America
- For a well-deserved rest as we take a week for vacation
- For the process of appealing our residence and work permits
- That God would continue to provide for our ministry through partners like you.

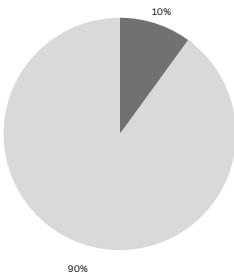
Stewardship Word of the Month

Tithe: the word “tithe” literally means tenth.

The biblical concept of the tithe is that 10% of our regular income would go to our temple, which is today the church, the place we regularly worship, to support the “priests” and the shared ministry. The Lord said, “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting.” (Numbers 18:21)



For Christians today, the tithe is not mandatory; we are free to give out of mission and gratitude. Still, the practice of giving 10% is a helpful benchmark for our generosity. Many Christians over the centuries have simply “moved the decimal point” on their paycheck over one place (i.e. \$1230 income, \$123 tithe) to give to the church.



Sound scary? It takes trust.

Jesus invites us to trust him that we can give regularly and generously without fear.

Thank God for Einar Floan

Einar Floan has been the Audio-Video Technician at St. John's officially since 2019, but he's been behind the board for much longer. He would mix the live sound during services, Center Stage events, children's programs, and other events. During the pandemic, he mastered the service recording with Pastor Matt and Becca. And then he took St. John's to the next level with YouTube live streaming during the 9am worship service! He created the PowerPoint slideshow each week and ran the worship slideshow (Especially during the pandemic, he was a one-man show: sound, video, and powerpoint!). Einar ended his contract position with us mid-summer, on good terms. He's looking forward to worshipping at St. John's from a new location: beside his family in a pew.



Open Table Meal: Monday, September 18

St. John's is hosting the Open Table Meal on Monday, September 18th! Come for an Asian-inspired meal of pork chop suey, Thai peanut noodles, fried rice and more — including dessert! Vegetarian/Vegan/Gluten Free options are available. **We need lots of hands to make this meal a reality: signup to serve, host, and bake.** Let's serve our community, St. John's!

BRING YOUR FAMILY & FRIENDS
TO DINE TOGETHER AT THE

OPEN TABLE

FREE COMMUNITY MEAL

MONDAY, SEPT. 18

5:15-6:30 PM

**CREEKSIDE PLACE
102 S. MAPLE ST.**

Mindy Brice Called to a New Vocation

What is an End-of-Life Doula/Death Doula?

An EOL/Death Doula is someone who provides non-medical support to those who are nearing the end-of-life, as well as their family members and loved ones. A death doula provides guidance and emotional support by helping to create a serene and loving environment where a dying person's last days can be experienced with dignity and respect. A death doula can help put together resources to support the dying person's wishes and help them communicate those wishes to loved ones. This may include the environment they would like to be in, visitor schedule, life summary, vigil planning, legacy project planning, sitting with the dying person to give the family some respite, and grief support.

Most people prefer to die at home. A hospice team might only visit your home 1-2x a week for an hour, leaving many hours for a spouse, family, or friends to cover. Caregiving for a sick and dying person can be extremely taxing on top of an already emotionally taxing time.



*"For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under
heaven: a time to be born,
and a time to die."
—Ecclesiastes 3:1-2*

How has becoming a Death Doula impacted my personal life?

Recently, my dad entered hospice care three weeks after I had received the training to be a Death Doula. Due to this invaluable training, I was better prepared to face my dad's death. Spouses or children aren't always able to take off work to be the main caretaker, or they may have their own health concerns. I was fortunate to be able to take leave from my job to take on this role. Knowing what to expect during the dying process allowed me to better enjoy the time we had left rather than be stuck in fear. My training gave me the courage to have the hard and deep conversations with him about his life, his death, and what he might experience in order to alleviate his own fear of the process. His greatest desire was to be home and surrounded by loved ones always holding his hand. Thankfully, we were able to provide that for him.

My father had his wishes written down so we didn't have to guess or make decisions in an emotionally charged state. Knowing his wishes would be honored brought a sense of peace to him during this time. Knowing his wishes was a gift to us all.



Death is an inevitable part of life we will all face. Too often, we put these conversations off because we fear death to a point that immobilizes us. The sooner you can have a conversation around death and dying, the better off you and your loved ones will be when the time comes. Let's be better prepared so we can help walk each other home with as much love, comfort, and peace as possible. If you would like to sit down one-on-one with me to prepare your wishes for end-of-life care (beyond the scope of funeral planning and financial planning). If you or a loved one is facing their end-of-life and you are interested in receiving additional support, please contact me: 608-228-4104 | mjbrice2@hotmail.com

See the church office for resources on planning for a funeral. Pastor Matt & Pastor Jerry are available as spiritual support during life transitions.

*"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."
— Jesus (Luke 23:43)*

The Evansville Care Closet

The Care Closet follows the "Food Drive Five":

1. Protein foods (nuts, seafood, poultry)
2. Fruits (packed in juice, dried, or sauced)
3. Soups (with protein and vegetables)
4. Whole grains (pasta, cereal, oatmeal)
5. Colorful vegetables



Plus, choose lower-sodium options and check for expiration dates.

These items are always needed:

peanut butter, cereal (including oatmeal), and canned fruit.

CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRIES

The Way: Confirmation Ministry for Middle School The Bible and Small Catechism

Karla Wickersham has been working this summer on planning another great year of Confirmation Ministry. On Wednesday, September 6, from 6:00-7:30pm, our 6th, 7th, and 8th grade youth and their parents will meet for confirmation orientation, a chance to hear about the year and to reconnect with one another. We'll take care of registrations, resources, and a host of information. Mark your calendars for this important evening.



Mark your calendar! Lutherdale Retreat for grades 6-8 happens on February 23-25, 2024.

Sweet Wednesdays: High School Ministry

During the school year, high school youth are invited to a weekly event called Sweet Wednesdays. We meet on Wednesday evenings, 7:30- 9pm.



This gathering is exclusively for youth in grades 9-12 along with a few adult leaders. After three years of confirmation ministry, our high schoolers are ready for the next step in their faith journey. We'll use these gatherings to hang out as friends, talk about school and the world, see what God has to do with our lives, and plan special events like trips and service projects. Why call them Sweet Wednesdays? It has something to do with the great time we're going to have... and the delicious treats we'll enjoy.

If you are a youth or adult who wants to know more or get involved with leading, contact Karla Wickersham: 882-4044 | director@stjohns-lc.org

Mark your calendar! QUAKE High School Event, February 16-18, 2024.

2024 High School Summer Trip Meeting — Sept. 12 at 6pm



High school is a great time to experience different places, different people, and different opportunities. And when you add time to grow in your faith too, it's a transformational time! On Tuesday, September 12, St. John's high school youth and parents are invited to hear the options and cast their votes on the 2024 Summer Trip. Make sure you are there! *Cost, fundraising, options, and more will be covered.*

Wednesday Afternoons: Faith Corps and Soul Troop



Faith Corps (K-2nd grades) and Soul Troop (3rd-5th grades) fill the church building on Wednesdays after school until 4:30pm. These two groups gather for spiritual growth through fun activities with friends in a large-group setting. Snacks, music, devotion, and games are just the beginning of the fun. **Starts Sept. 13th!**

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

B.A.S.I.C. (Brothers And Sisters In Christ) meets on Sunday mornings, from 10:15-11:15am, and focuses on children 3 years old through 5th grade.

Kids and small group leaders will gather for Bible stories, songs, crafts, and fun. Then kids will break into small groups to talk about God in their daily lives, pray together, and build friendships with each other and their leaders. Children who are 3 years old by September 1, 2023, are welcomed into this ministry. **Starts Sept. 17th!**



Splash!

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



2023 VBS A Success! by Chris Cole

We kicked off the month of August with our Twists and Turns Vacation Bible School and it went off just perfectly! It was so perfect even the weather cooperated. Every summer we invite the youngest members of our congregation and our Evansville community to participate in this opportunity to learn about and live our faith together.



With over 100 campers (ages 3 to 5th grade) and over 50 middle and high school youth and adults our week went just how we wanted. It was filled with songs, Bible stories, games, arts and crafts and a great time of Faith Alive (our Bible study session). Pastor Matt and Ms. Becca led us through the twists and turns of our week as Pat Sayjill and Fanna White through the game show Tournament of Champions. We loved the daily minute to win it games that included audience participation.



I think my favorite part of VBS week is standing back and listening to the noise in the sanctuary. The songs, story telling, and laughter in the sanctuary is so joyful. I love watching all the kids and youth jump up to their feet and dance. All of the excitement brings the whole building to life. This year I had a new favorite part... I had the opportunity to co-lead our 2023 Vacation Bible School with our own Jack Burton, a senior here in Evansville. Jack chose to co-lead VBS with me for his senior project. It was a blessing to watch Jack learn and grow through his week as a leader.



Jack deserves a big pat on the back for choosing to spend each morning with over 150 people and coordinating all the beautiful chaos that comes along with that!

Just like we do during our weekly worship, we continued our tradition of collecting the noisy offering to purchase water filters. Since January, we have collected enough noisy offering to purchase 45 water filters. It feels so great to be a part of our generous congregation. Without you, our VBS week wouldn't have had all the supplies that we need to make every activity and snack the best that it can be!



Throughout the week our youth leaders were busy working together to assist station leaders, guide and care for the campers, but most importantly they have their time to shine as mentors to the campers. It's not all work for them though. This year youth leaders were invited to have fun after VBS on Tuesday and Thursday with Ms. Karla and Pastor Matt. On Tuesday, the youth enjoyed lunch and hiking at Magnolia Bluff and on Thursday, they enjoyed lunch and canoeing on the Sugar River. Thank you to everyone who made these extras happen!

Children, Youth & Family (CYF)

Calendar Highlights for September 2023:

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

IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

St. John's Members

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Marjorie Klitzman | Bret Church | Adam Kopp | Jeff Farnsworth |
| Michael Adams | Arnold Klug | Jeanette Schunk | Wanda King |
| John Almond | Diane Quinn | Warren Yoerger | |

Family & Friends

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

Partners in Mission:

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

Men and Women in Service:

Matt Forster, Nate Madsen, Bailey Olin, JJ Rogers, Tyler Schnell, Hunter Speropulos, Marcus Steindl, Mark Trawicki, Heather Ihlenfeldt, Branden Samela, Samantha Ihlenfeldt

Condolences to:

Eric Peterson and family as they grieve the death of his father, Dean Peterson.

Hannah and Tyler Thompson as they grieve the death of their son, Julian Harvey.

Rita Carpenter and family as they grieve the death of her sister, Paula Siegelmann.

Congratulations to:

Kate Wethal and Alec Coleman on their marriage.

A Prayer for Times of Transition

God of Love,

You are with us in every transition and change.

As we enter into this new era with excitement and even some anxiety, we recall your deep compassion, presence, and abounding love.

We thank you for the gifts, talents and skills with which you have blessed us.

We thank you for the experiences that have brought us to this moment.

We thank you for the work of others that gives breadth and depth to our own work.

Be with us as we move forward, rejoicing with you and supporting one another.

We ask this in your Holy Name.

— *Joseph P. Shadle, Xavier.edu*

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 all those beginning school routines

Jesus, the great Storyteller and Teacher, we praise you for schools for all types of students. Thank you for the new rhythms and adventures school will provide. Thank you for the employment for so many in our community. Bring comfort to those who return to school with anxiety or fear. Shine light and wisdom into their darkness.

For Fall Ministries of St. John’s Lutheran Church

Holy Spirit, fill us with your wisdom and energy. Strengthen our congregation to know and trust you. Bless children, youth, and adults returning to fall routines and new learning ministries. Draw us closer to you and to each other. Thank you, God, for this faith community.

For those who are grieving and rebuilding after fires, specifically Hawaiians and Canadians

Water of Life, pour into the dry, brittle, and burned places in our siblings’ lives. Provide safety and nourishment for those who are without secure housing. Fill their hearts with hope. Open a wellspring of time and space to grieve the loss of loved ones, belongings, and home. Strengthen those who are cleaning up and beginning the rebuilding process.

We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

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.



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