

July
2024

St. John Lutheran Church



St. John Lutheran Church
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“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry.’” John 6:35a

I love bread, and I know I am not alone in that statement. Just take a walk in the grocery store. There is an entire aisle dedicated to bread... and another one for gluten free breads and flours. And that doesn't even include the bakery bread or the frozen breads and bread doughs. It can be overwhelming to think about how many options there are when it comes to acquiring bread to fit our tastes, dietary needs, and even schedules. And if you're going to make your own bread, the world of bread is even more complex! Making bread is a full-body experience. First there's deciding what kind of bread you want to make, there's getting the ingredients, there's setting up your workstation. Then you can smell the yeast at work as it mixes with the warm water and sugar or as the bread bakes. You can see the bread rising as it rests on the counter. You can knead the dough with your hands until you feel that it is done. When it comes out of the oven, you can tap on the bottom to hear if it really is done. And last, but not least, you can taste it; even a tiny morsel can fill your mouth with flavor.

Sometimes bread is utilitarian, something we grab to make a sandwich or for a quick snack. Sometimes bread is in the spotlight as artisanal breads find their way to the table. And sometimes bread is an experience that engages our entire being. But almost always, bread is more than just food. And maybe this is why bread is a common presence in our culture, and bread has been a central part of life for millennia. Before the Israelites left Egypt, they made unleavened bread. When Elijah asked a widow for some food when it seemed as though she had none, it was bread that miraculously sustained Elijah, the widow, and her son (1 Kings 17). When Jesus ate the Last Supper with his disciples, he took a loaf of bread and made it holy. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God would give us our daily bread. So when Jesus says "I am the bread of life," there are so many things that that one sentence can include.

In today's culture, bread sometimes carries baggage with it too: allergens, ethical choices, concerns about carbs, struggles with disordered eating. But in Jesus, the bread of life, is about so much more than just eating bread. It is about experiencing what bread is, what it represents, and what it does. And starting on July 28, we will enter into what I jokingly call "The Season of Bread": five weeks when we will read from John 6, the chapter centered around Jesus' statement, "I am the bread of life." Come and explore the experience of Jesus as the bread of life as Jesus nourishes us, sustains us, and satisfies us every day, and we need him every day... just like our daily bread (in whatever form that might take).

Pastor Katie

Mission Statement

*St. John is a living witness to the **love of God** as shown in Jesus Christ.*

*We **gather** faithfully in God's name to **worship** and praise God; and we go forth in peace to **share the Good News** and to **serve** the world around us.*

Worship Services on Zoom

Join Zoom for Worship: <https://zoom.us/j/5663185411> Meeting ID: 566 318 5411 PW: Luther
Available on our YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmKsXsvQ>
and the church Facebook group: [St John Lutheran Church Mars PA](#) later in the day.

Worship Notes

Young Worship Leaders

We love having our young worshippers helping with worship leadership! If you are unable to be present for your scheduled service, please try to find someone to cover and tell the office of the change.

	Acolyte	Offering	Offering	Young Reader
7-July	Ava N	Anna K	Nathan K	
14-July	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	
21-July	VBS Worship			
28-July	Carissa M.	Ava N	Lydia M	Carissa M.
4-Aug	Abby C	Luca K	Eva K	

Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
7-July				Denise H	
14-July				Denise H	
21-July	VBS Worship				
28-July	Church Picnic			Denise H	
4-Aug				Denise H	

Campfire Worship – July 11



Thursday, July 11th, join us outside around a campfire on the lawn for singing and an evening worship service! Worship will begin at 7:00pm. S'mores will be available after worship. Bring your own chair/blanket and come for this brief worship service including several camp favorite songs!

Serving Others

Third Quarter Mission Emphasis Project

Our third quarter (July, August, September) Mission Emphasis project will be the Adams Area Volunteer Fire Department. Please plan to join us on July 7th as we welcome a representative from the fire department to tell us about how our contributions support the work that they do. To contribute, **please mark your envelopes “Mission Emphasis”** so that we can be sure the funds are appropriately designated.

God’s Work Our Hands Sunday (Sept. 8)

Mark your calendars: we are going to be observing God’s Work Our Hands Sunday again this year! **On this Sunday we will restructure our worship to incorporate a service project as an integral part of how we worship.** This service reminds us that we worship not only with our words and our thoughts but also with our actions. Stay tuned for more information about this year’s service project.



Harvest Street Mission

Save the date! **We will be serving some of the homeless and food insecure population of Pittsburgh on Sunday, September 29th.**

Preparing and packaging of the meals will happen on Saturday, September 28th. We are collecting bottles of water to be included in the 100+ sack meals provided. Donations can be brought to the church to be stored until we package everything. Stay tuned for more details.

St. John Food Pantry

In the recent weather, the temperature in the outdoor pantry can get high. Unfortunately, not every shelf-stable item can be safely stored in these temperatures. Help us keep things in safe places. Check to see if there are any temperature notes on packaging. Help us to keep the things that need to stay inside in the indoor food pantry. But as you’ll notice, there are a lot of items that come and go through our little food pantry. So you can also help us by donating goods for others to make use of.

Consider bringing in an extra can of chili beans (a request) or easy to prepare meals (another request) or paper products (another request) or any other shelf-stable item. **Please be sure any donated items have not yet expired.** And whenever you have a few moments, keep the pantry hospitable by **checking expiration dates and reshelving things to keep everything tidy.** Thank you for your continued generosity in providing care to our neighbors in need.

Community Garden

The garden is growing very well so far! There is a lot of work in maintaining the garden, so if you would like to help with any garden chores, let Pastor Katie know.

Pretty soon we will begin harvesting lots of veggies from the garden. Harvesting help is available on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9a-1p most weeks and Sundays after worship. If you know of someone in need of some fresh produce, please invite them to come check out the garden!



Around the Church

Synod Assembly Recap

The theme of this year's synod assembly was "Examen," utilizing the Ignatian Spirituality prayer practice by the same name to guide our reflections and devotions. From the synod's website: " We each make thousands of decisions daily that impact, not just ourselves, but our families, congregations, and communities. It can be hard to hear God's whisper guiding us to faithful decisions and holy outcomes amid the noise of the world. St. Ignatius of Loyola gifted us with **EXAMEN**, a five-step method of reflection that invites God's presence in our daily lives and discernment.

Thanksgiving, Petition, Review, Response, Look Ahead

In the coming year, between this Assembly and the next, our synod will experience many changes and our leaders will be entrusted to follow God's will in making decisions... not the least of which will be the 2025 election of a new Bishop. This Assembly will teach the method of Examen so that we may build new skills, engage in sacred practice, and set out for the year ahead with confidence and clarity. Together, we will learn how to transform discernment from a merely theoretical concept to a lived reality that can profoundly shape our shared future."

July 4th Parade Hospitality

Each year residents from all over the area gather to watch the Mars 4th of July Parade. A great spot to see the parade march by is right on the lawn of St. John! **Come and help pass out cold water and freezie pops to those in need of some cool hospitality** while waiting for and watching the parade.

Vacation Bible School Joint Worship and Picnic – July 21

This year Vacation Bible School is a joint ministry between three churches: St John, Mars United Presbyterian Church, and Valencia Presbyterian Church. **To celebrate our joint ministry and to invite new friends we have met through Vacation Bible School, we will be worshipping together in the park on the Sunday following Vacation Bible School (July 21).** We will sing songs from VBS and join together in a picnic after worship. You are encouraged to bring a dish to share and an extra chair in case we need extra seating. If access to this service is a concern, please contact Pastor Katie and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

Annual Church Picnic – July 28



Our **annual church picnic will be on July 28th.** This year we will be back at our regular **park pavilion, the Township Pavilion.** We will have worship, picnic food, and games. **Worship will begin at our regular 9:00 am.** To find us, enter at the main gate, go straight past the new splash pad, drop down a right slight grade, turn left into the parking area by the playground. If access to this service is a concern, please contact Pastor Katie and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

Game Day – August 3

Bring one of your favorite games or play one of ours! **From 3:00 – 7:00 pm on Saturday, August 3, we will be in the cool basement of the church playing board games, card games, table games, whatever games!** All are welcome! Donations are welcome to help defray the cost of snack and pizza. Snacks to share are also always welcome!

Around the Church (continued)

Summer Hospitality Hour

Throughout the summer, there will be a **hospitality hour after worship**. When the weather permits, we will be **on the lawn offering light snacks as people linger and mingle after worship**. If you would like to sponsor or host one of these weeks, please contact Denise Hager. Contact the office if you need her contact information.

Faith Formation

Messy Church – Third Fridays (5:30-7:30pm)

Messy Church is an intentionally intergenerational place for people to meet and experience fun and messy ways to engage in faith and worship, including crafts and activities, celebration, and a shared meal no matter their connection to church.

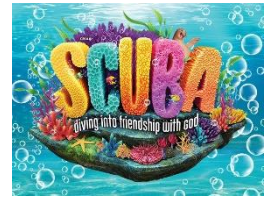


This month, as we continue our week from diving into our relationships with God from VBS, we will be outside playing water games and celebrating the gift of baptism. All are welcome for this

free, intergenerational, interactive worship. Messy Church is Friday, July 19th, 5:30-7:30 pm.

Vacation Bible School

This year, we're diving into the deep waters of our relationship with God with SCUBA Sunday through Thursday, July 14-18, 2024! This year we are adding a pre-school program to specifically tailor the week to our young friends! Each evening of VBS runs 6:00-8:20pm. Registration is free and open. The link is on the website at stjohnchurchmars.org/childrenyouth.



Stewardship Corner

Water is essential for all life, is a critical element of the global economy and, most importantly, holds a sacred place in our relationship with God. As stewards of all creation, protecting Earth's water is not optional. Water in its various forms is meant to meet the survival needs of all of creation around the globe. Yet typical fresh surface-water sources, such as rivers and lakes, only constitute a small fraction of all available sources. But globally, the water situation is dire. According to the United Nations: Eighty-five percent of the world's population lives in the driest half of the planet. Almost 2.5 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation. 783 million people do not have access to clean water. The United States is not immune to the lack of clean water or access to it. Nearly 1 in 10 watersheds is stressed (University of Colorado) and people throughout the country lack drinkable water in their homes.

To help steward our usage of water, think about these tips:

- Fix any leaks that may be in your home
- Turn off the tap while shaving or brushing teeth
- Make sure the dishwasher or clothes washer is full before running a load
- Know when and how much to water your lawn and garden
- Wash your car using a bucket or a commercial car wash that recycles water

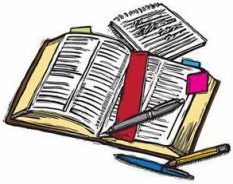
Find more at <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/start-saving>

Faith Formation (continued)

Sunday School Meeting – July 14

It's hard to believe that we're already thinking about the beginning of Sunday School! But we will be meeting after worship to debrief last year's Sunday School program and think about ways we can continually improve our children's faith formation program.

Adult Summer Study



As we slide into “Ordinary Time” in the church, we are diving into ordinary spirituality with James Hazelwood’s book “Everyday Spirituality: Discover a Life of Hope, Peace, and Meaning.” James Hazelwood is the retiring bishop of the New England Synod of the ELCA. In her review of the book, Laura Everett calls it “**the kind of book that feels like a front porch conversation on that first warm summer day shared with an old friend over glasses of cold lemonade.**” Come for a cool glass of lemonade and explore with Bishop Hazelwood how those things we do every day, every week, and every so often is a part of our spiritual journey. From the description of the book on Amazon: “Everyday Spirituality is for people who have left the church, never went, or are still hanging on. What they all have in common is, the old way just isn't working. Not because it wasn't of value, instead because, well, life got crazy, work took over, and who has time to sit and pray and read a devotional every day for an hour? **Instead, what if your life was prayer?** Your walk in the mall, your dinner with friends, your questions, your travels, even your time at the gym...what if you saw all that as a connection to that which is timeless, eternal and holy. Would your life be different, better, filled with hope? You bet it would.” Copies of the book are available at the church, or you can purchase your own. The book is also available as an audio book for those who prefer to listen. **We will meet on June 23, July 21, and August 11 from 6:30-8:00pm. Zoom participation is also available and welcome. Wednesday meetings may also be available if there is sufficient interest in that time.**

We will return to our weekly Wednesday gathering on Wednesday, July 24th. We will begin our discussion at 7:00 pm and enter a time of prayer around 8:00 pm to conclude our evening. We will either take time to consider the Apostles' Creed or the book of Daniel. If you are interested in one topic over another, contact Pastor Katie!

From the Congregation

Puppy Seeking Home

Contact Fritz Bielo if you are interested in giving a loving, life-long home to Heeler mix puppy.
Contact the office for contact information.

You're Invited!

Pastor Katie is getting married! **You are invited to come celebrate with her, her fiancé (Cody), and their families on Saturday, September 28th.** The ceremony will be held at St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church (45 East Steuben St, Crafton, PA) at 2:30 pm. The ceremony is open to all who would like to celebrate with a light cookie and cake reception following.

July 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Deacon's Meeting 7 pm	3	4 July 4 th Parade Hospitality, 3:00 pm on the lawn	5	6
7 Worship 9:00 am Mission Emphasis Speaker during worship 'Trustees' Mtg. 10:15 am Hospitality Hour 10:15 am	8	9	10	11 Campfire Worship 7 pm	12	13
14 Worship 9:00 am Hospitality Hour 10:15 am Sunday School Meeting 10:30 am VBS kick off dinner 5 pm VBS 6:00 – 8:20	15	16	17	18	19 Messy Church 5:30 – 7:30	20 Newsletter Articles Due
21 Joint VBS Outdoor Worship Book Study 6:30 – 8:00pm	22	23 Council Meeting 7 pm	24 Bible Study 7:00 pm	25	26	27 Elders' Meeting – By-Laws 10 am
28 Worship at the Park 9:00 am Church Picnic	29 Communion @ Penn Mar 1:45 pm	30	31 Bible Study 7:00 pm			



7/12 Victoria Lydon
7/13 Christopher Julio
7/13 Marcia Shepard
7/14 Katherine D'Amico
7/19 Jean Claus
7/20 Luca Julio
7/21 Jonathan Ciora
7/20 June Siembieda
7/22 Jeff Ward
7/26 Chester Carbo



7/12 – David & Cynthia Knauff – 49 yrs.
7/14 – Todd & Katherine Niklewicz – 17 yrs.
7/21 – Larry & Amy Werner – 45 yrs.
7/25 – Michael & Cheryl Sauers – 60 yrs.

JULY NEWSLETTER

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