

November
2024

St. John Lutheran Church



St. John Lutheran Church
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Office Hours MWF, 8a-1p

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Ask the complicated questions. Do not fear to be found out; for God makes strong our weakness, forging faith in fires of doubt.

For in the struggle we discover truth both simple and profound; in the knocking, asking, seeking, we are opened, answered, found.

“Ask the Complicated Questions”, verses 1 and 4
Text by David Bjorlin

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.*

How many questions do you ask in a day? Curiosity is a strong force. It drives learning. It fuels exploration and innovation. It leads to discovery and growth. Throughout scripture, there are hundreds and hundreds of questions: questions as people struggle to make sense of their situation, questions as people wonder about God's magnificence, questions about enigmatic stories of faith and how they apply to daily life. Sometimes it can feel isolating to ask questions of our faith, as if the questions are a sign that our faith isn't as strong as we'd like it to be. But what if questions are actually an essential part of our faith journeys? Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said, “We are closer to God when we are asking questions than when we think we have the answers.” In our first confirmation class, we were reminded of the powerful faith practice of asking questions. In response to this reminder, we invited people in worship to offer their questions. Where is curiosity present in your faith? What would you like to learn more about? What topics do you struggle with in your faith? Where does faith provoke questions in your daily life?

To encourage ourselves to practice asking questions, we will be collecting the questions of the congregations for the first few weeks of November. There will be a box available in the Greeting Area for you to submit your questions. We hope to use these questions to help guide worship and Bible study in the beginning of 2025.

To be fair, not every question can be answered. Sometimes we must rely on faith and trust. Sometimes the mystery of God is deeper and bigger than our human minds can comprehend. But even when we can't know the “right” answer, the questions can help us explore our faith, deepen our faith, be in an interactive and engaging relationship with God. So ask the questions. Let your curiosity be a strong force in your faith. You never know where a question will lead you or the community in which you ask the question.

Peace,
Pastor Katie

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/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmkyKssxvQ>

Worship Notes

Young Worship Leaders

If you are unable to be present, please find someone to cover and tell the office of the change.

	Acolyte	Offering	Offering	Young Reader
3-November	Ava N	Anna K	Nathan K	
10-November	Carissa M.	Ava N	Lydia M	
17-November	Youth Led Worship			
24-November	Anna K	Jules K	Abby C	
1-December	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	

Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
3-November	VOLUNTEER	Larry W	Denise H	Denise H	John T Jamie W
10-November	VOLUNTEER	Larry W	Emma N	Denise H	John T Jamie W
17-November	Youth Led Worship	Larry W	Youth Led Worship	Denise H	John T Jamie W
24-November	VOLUNTEER	Larry W	David D	Denise H	John T Jamie W
1-December	VOLUNTEER	Dave K	David D	Denise H	Denise H Ruth Ann T

Volunteer Spotlight: Greeters

When you walk into a church, **how you are greeted can really set the tone.** Does someone say hello... hand you a bulletin... answer questions about where to find things? Does someone make you feel welcome? These are roles the Greeters have. **It's best to have someone at each entrance looking to welcome people to worship and help everyone know that we are glad that they are here.** Please sign up in the Greeting Area or online to fill this role of hospitality on Sunday mornings.

Flowers in Worship

If you would like to **provide flowers for our altar during worship**, please sign up in the Greeting Area. Stay tuned for information about purchasing poinsettias for Christmas!

Adult Choir

For major festivals (like Christmas Eve!), there is **a choir of dedicated singers** who prepare and offer a song for worship. If you'd like to be a part of this group, contact our Music Director, Maizy.

Online Sign-Ups

Did you know that St. John has an online sign-up board? Slots are open between now and next summer! We particularly need people to serve as Greeters. There are two slots for greeters so that we can greet people at both entrances to the sanctuary. Sign up today at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>.

Worship Notes (continued)

All Saints Worship – November 3

Commemorating the saints of the church has been a practice since the 4th century. In the 8th century, the festival commemorating all saints was set on November 1st. Protestant churches (including Lutherans) believe that all Christian dead are saints, and there is no need for release from purgatory. In our bulletin on November 3, we will be remembering all of our loved ones who have died. **As we remember them, we recall the witness they gave through their lives, what they meant to us as fellow Christians, where they have led the way, and what they have left for us yet to accomplish.**

Joint Youth-Led Worship – November 17

Our Joint Kids Club and Youth Group with Mars United Presbyterian Church will help curate and lead worship on November 17 at 9:00am. **To celebrate this joint ministry, the members of Mars United Presbyterian Church will come to St. John and Pastor Brian will preach.**

Advent Begins – December 1



Advent is the **season of preparation** as we get ready for Christmas. Regardless of what day of the week Christmas is, Advent is always the **four Sundays leading up to Christmas**. Join us in worship as we wait for the coming Christ child and get ready for the gift of Christmas. Make sure your child gets their own **Advent calendar to count down** to Christmas during worship on November 24, the last Sunday of the church year. If you and/or your family would like to volunteer to participate in worship by **helping with lighting the Advent Wreath, please contact the office!**

Christmas Worship Schedule

We have an abundance of opportunities to come together to celebrate Emmanuel, God with us. At Christmas we celebrate God coming among us in the baby Jesus. December 24 is the fourth Sunday of Advent in the morning (stay tuned for details about that service!), then later in the **day we celebrate the birth of Jesus with services at 3:00pm and 7:30pm. On Christmas Day, December 25, we will gather for a relaxed and interactive retelling of the story at 9:00am.**

Around the Community

Mars Light Up Night – November 30



Mars Borough is once again hosting Light Up Night! This is a great community event to kick off the Holiday season! Light Up Night will include a **Holiday Market** on Pittsburgh Street from 4:00-8:00 pm, **Tree Lighting** at the Saucer at 5:30 pm, and a **Parade** at 7:30 pm. Hope to see you there! For more information, visit marsborough.com/light-up-mars.

Living Nativity – December 13

Mars United Presbyterian Church is once again hosting the Living Nativity! **This year it will be a one-night only event on Friday, December 13, but you're not going to want to miss this!** There are going to be lots of live animals joining the performance. Stay tuned for more information about how you can get involved!

Around the Church

Chili Cook-off November 2



Who doesn't love a bowlful of delicious chili?! Join us on **Saturday, November 2nd** from **Noon -2:00 pm** for a **Chili Cook-off at the church!** Tasting Fee - \$5.00. **Invite your friends, and come eat chili with us!**

Blurb from the Deacons

Many thanks to all who helped with Applefest in any way. We had three great teams, one making halushki, one setting up Friday evening, and our Saturday workers. The pastries donated were well received, and we sold out of most of those items, the halushki, and the lamb stew. The proceeds of \$1382 will be applied to the roof fund. We also entertained many young families with apple bobbing and other crafts for kids. We had a very nice presence on Grande Avenue. Please mark your calendars for the Chili Cookoff which will be held at St John on November 2nd.

Roof Campaign Update

About 6 months ago we began our fundraising campaign to pay off the loan for replacing our church roof and the roofs of the garage and parsonage. Our goal was to raise \$50,000 to repay the loan and re-establish our major maintenance fund. **Due to the wonderful generosity of congregation members, we have already surpassed \$31,000. Thank you to all who have contributed! Please continue to prayerfully discern your ability to donate to this fund as we close in on our ultimate goal.** Our congregation is a generous family and we know we can achieve this goal if we all work together to maintain our church home for prayer, worship and community celebrations.

Communications Preferences

There are a lot of ways to stay tuned with everything happening in and through St. John: weekly bulletins with announcements, monthly newsletters, and social media posts. **If you'd like to be connected through any of these communication tools, please contact the office. You may also contact the office to update your communication preferences.** The bulletin and announcements are emailed every Friday as well as mailed to homebound members. The monthly newsletter is available to be mailed, emailed, and found on the [website](#) and in the greeting area. Social media posts are posted to [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Stewardship Corner

Did you know that St. John has an online giving platform? You can give through a card number or EFT. You can give a one-time gift or a recurring gift. You can give to the general fund or to one of the designated funds of the congregation. Giving online is a convenient alternative to cash and checks and can provide the church stability with recurring giving. **Recurring gifts can help establish your charitable gifts as a part of your monthly budget and provide predictability for the donor as well as the recipient.** With St. John's online giving platform, you can adjust your recurring gift at any time if your circumstances change. And you can give from anywhere you have internet access! eGiving brings flexibility to your generosity. Learn more about eGiving options or give online today at stjohnchurchmars.org/giving.

Around the Church (continued)

Serving on the Boards

St. John is run by three boards, the Deacons, the Elders, and the Trustees. We also have a Mission Endowment Fund Committee and a Mutual Ministry Committee. Each December we elect individuals to serve on each of the boards and the Mission Endowment Committee (the Mutual Ministry Committee is filled by appointment). **We are always in need of new people willing to serve. Each term is 2 years long and individuals are welcome to serve for 1 or 2 terms.** Though there is often some overlap, each board has its primary areas of responsibility. The **Deacons** are largely responsible for visiting the homebound, overseeing stewardship practices and events, and planning fellowship opportunities. The **Elders** are largely responsible for Christian education and faith formation, evangelism, and worship life within the congregation. The **Trustees** are primarily responsible for taking care of the physical property of the church and overseeing the finances and budget. The Mission Endowment Committee listens to the community and disburses funds collected as interest on an account set aside for mission support. **If you have interest in serving or know someone you think has gifts for serving in one of these areas, contact the office to be put in contact with a member of the nominating committee** (the committee in charge of preparing the ballot for election to the boards/committee).

Around the Synod

Neurodiversity 101 – November 7, Online via Zoom

There is a lot of buzz about neurodiversity. With better diagnostic tools and increased awareness, more and more people understand how their brains are wired. So, what exactly is neurodiversity? How should we think about it in the church? **Vicar Amy Kelly (House of Prayer, Aliquippa) will help us explore neurodiversity, discuss how it affects the church, and learn about small changes we can implement toward inclusion.** Registration is requested, but not required.

The Zoom meeting begins at 7pm. More information can be found at

<https://www.swpasynod.org/calendar/nd101>.

Responding to Domestic Violence Competently, Compassionately, and Faithfully November 23, at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wexford, PA

Domestic violence affects every community, yet most of us are not confident in our knowledge or resources to support victims. **Our synod's Church in Society Committee invites ministers and congregation leaders who want to be equipped to help those experiencing domestic violence, and to be empowered to speak to the issue in public spaces, to learn from a local magistrate judge, a shelter worker, a therapist, and a pastor about how to provide practical help.**

RSVP by Saturday, November 16, \$10 includes lunch.

More information and registration can be found at [swpasynod.org/calendar/dv2024](https://www.swpasynod.org/calendar/dv2024).

Serving Others

Fourth Quarter Mission Emphasis – Mars Police Dept.

Our fourth quarter (Oct., Nov., Dec.) Mission Emphasis project is the Mars Police Department. To contribute to our mission emphasis, mark your offering "mission emphasis."

Serving Others (continued)

Sunday School Thanksgiving Meal Offering

This year our Sunday School students will be taking a Class Trip in mid-November to shop for Thanksgiving meals for five (5) local families in need. Turkeys are being donated, but we will have the kids focus their shopping excursion time gathering the traditional Thanksgiving fixings including Cranberry Sauce, Gravy, Rolls, Veggies, Stuffing, Desert, etc. Since our typical class participation level has averaged ten students, we thought we would buddy up the students in groups of (2) and send them off, properly chaperoned of course, into the great unknown of what IS the Seven Fields Giant Eagle along with \$30 cash and a shopping list. **To defray the cost, we are collecting cash donations for this event and will track our progress towards a goal of \$150** on a Fundraising Thermometer to be prominently displayed in the Greeting Area. Offerings can be given directly to Keith Cardinal, Denise Hager, Pastor McNeal or placed in the offering plate in an envelope labeled "SS Thanksgiving Shopping." Any amount collected over the \$150 goal will be evenly distributed amongst the five (5) shopping crews. One thing I have come to respect about this Congregation is its overwhelming generosity when it comes to helping those in need. Therefore, I thank you in advance for what I know will be a wonderfully well supported event! God bless ~ Keith Cardinal

St. John Food Pantry

Maintaining the food pantry is a community effort! Help us to keep it stocked with items with a long shelf life, especially **personal hygiene, cleaning, and paper products**. And be sure **to invite people to make use of the food pantry as they need!** Outdoor pantries can be tricky with the fluctuating weather, so we want to be careful of what we keep in it. **Access to the indoor pantry is every Monday and Wednesday 9a-1p** with additional times available by calling Pastor Katie or the office.

Serving Others (continued)

Angel Tree

Stay tuned for more information about how you can participate in this opportunity **to brighten the holiday season for children and youth** served by **Glade Run Lutheran Services** by getting a gift for a child or family in need! Beyond the gifts under the tree, donated items received through Glade Run's annual drive provide joy, relief, and comfort all year long.



Faith Formation for All Ages

Glimpses of Grace

There is a new podcast! **Each week, Pastor Katie will post a podcast celebrating the ways that God's love is made real all around us** in and through things that happen in and around the congregation of St. John. Sometimes it's a reflection from a moment observed on Sunday, sometimes a reflection from daily life, sometimes a story from a congregation member, sometimes it's whatever struck inspiration. **Podcast episodes are typically released on Thursdays on the [website](#), [Spotify](#), [Amazon podcast](#), and [Apple podcasts](#).** If you would like to be interviewed to share a glimpse of grace, contact Pastor Katie.

Faith Formation (continued)

Sunday Morning Learning and Fellowship

All adults are welcome to join us during the Faith Formation hour (Sundays, 10:15 am-11:15 am) to discuss the scripture read during worship and how it applies to our daily lives. **Questions to guide and prompt discussion will be available as well as time to bring your own questions. Grab a cup of coffee and join us in the basement.**

Our younger students are invited to participate in our all ages together Sunday School Class. All our younger classes begin Sunday School together, learning a song and about the theme of the day. Once students begin confirmation classes, they are invited to participate in the middle and high school class after learning the song with the rest of the Sunday School.



Confirmation Classes – One Saturday per month (9:30-11:30am)

Confirmation is a faith formation opportunity that helps our young people (typically grades 6-8) engage with their faith and prepare to take ownership of the promises made on their behalf at baptism. **Our first meeting was in October and the students explored the Reformation and how Martin Luther's studies and writings influence how we approach faith and worship.**

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

We had so much fun at our first Messy Church in October! We cannot wait until the next one! **Messy Church is an intentionally intergenerational place for people to meet and experience fun and messy ways to engage in faith, including crafts and activities, celebration, and a shared meal no matter their connection to church. At Messy Church, we celebrate the creative, joyful God revealed in Jesus Christ.** Faith formation topics and Bible stories are explored in ways that invite our whole messy selves into God's story of the good news of Jesus Christ - that we are freed and forgiven in God's abundant grace and that God's love is for us, all of us. **If you would like to help with this ministry, contact Pastor Katie.** No registration is required for this free faith formation opportunity. Check out our pictures below from our first Messy Church! Come to the next one on November 17th and bring your neighbors and friends to share in the fun!



Adult Bible Study

Starting October 16th and 20th, we will be **diving into some of the parables Jesus told in our weekly Bible study gatherings on Wednesdays (7:00 pm) and Sundays (6:30 pm).** Parables are deeply rooted in their context yet still offer timeless truths about God and what it means to be a follower of Christ. These short stories sometimes seem quite straightforward yet have a complexity to explore under the surface. Other times, the parables are hard to understand or even challenging to hear, and it takes a deeper dive to find the good news of Jesus Christ in them. **All are welcome to come and bring your curiosity as we explore together what we can hear in the parables Jesus told. Each session can serve as a standalone session.**

An Advent Activity

Attention glue gun slingers and craft store fanatics, here I got a project for you!



Go find five tealight candles, five mason jars, a small box, some blue or purple paint, glue, and something to use as a base (think of the cardboard base of a frozen pizza).

Then paint four of the mason jars blue (or three purple and one pink), glue them onto the base, and put tea lights inside the jars. Then set the box in the center and put the Advent Centerpiece Wreath you've just made in a place of gathering in your home or a place you regularly spend time (i.e., a dining table).

Next to the Advent Centerpiece, place a stack of small papers and a pen to be used throughout the coming Advent season.

As many times as you'd like throughout the week, do as follows:

- Between **December 1st and 7th** light one tealight, and consider the following question: "What has made me **hopeful** about the future this week?" Write down or draw what you all come up with and put it into the box. As you put your paper in the box, pray for God to continue to offer you hope in your life.
- Between **December 8th and 14th** light two tealights, and consider the following question: "Where have I found **peace** this week?" Write down or draw what you all come up with and put it into the box. As you put your paper in the box, pray for God to continue to offer you peace in your life.
- Between **December 15th and 21st** light three tealights, and consider the following question: "What has given me **joy** this week?" Write down or draw what you all come up with and put it into the box. As you put your paper in the box, pray for God to continue to offer you joy in your life.
- Between **December 22nd and 24th** light all four tealights, and consider the following question: "Where have I found **love**?" Write down or draw what you all come up with and put it into the box. As you put your paper in the box, pray for God to continue to offer you love in your life.
- Then, on Christmas morning or any of the **12 days of Christmas** before Epiphany on January 6th, remove the box, replace it with the 5th mason jar and tea light. **Light all five of the candles and read through all the hope, peace, joy, and love** accrued over the season of Advent! All a blessing come to full fruition in Christmas!

May the coming Christ bless you all!

*Please take these materials as a suggestion and have fun modifying it as makes sense for you!
Originally created by Pastor Chris Halverson (ELCA) in 2017.

November 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 Chili Cook-off Noon - 2:00 pm
3 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Congregational Mtg 10:15am Trustees' Mtg. 10:15 am Bible Study 6:30pm	4	5 Deacons' Meeting 7 pm Elders' Meeting 7 pm	6 Bible Study 7:00 pm	7	8	9
10 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Bible Study 6:30pm	11	12	13 Bible Study 7:00 pm	14	15 Messy Church 5:30 – 7:30 pm	16
17 Youth Led Joint Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Bible Study 6:30pm	18	19 Council Meeting 7 pm	20 Newsletter Articles Due Pastor @ First Call Theological Ed.	21	22	23 Confirmation Class 9:30 – 11:30 am
24 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Congregational Mtg 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm	25 Communion at Penn Mar 1:45 pm	26	27	28	29	30



11/01 Matthew & Jeannette Claus – 38 yrs.
11/03 Keith & Valerie Cardinal – 23 yrs.
11/05 Charles & Cheryl Davidson – 47 yrs.

11/02 Ariel "Buzz" Kelly
11/05 Tanya Nagel
11/07 Michael Sauers
11/07 David Knauff
11/07 Vern Miller
11/09 Mary Gross
11/17 Cheryl Davidson
11/17 Linda Sabbagh
11/23 Nancy McCormick
11/23 Dan Kramer

November Newsletter

Address service requested

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