

November
2013

St. John Lutheran Church

St. John Lutheran Church
PO Box 411
420 Beaver Street
Mars PA 16046

<http://www.stjohnchurchmars.org>
(724) 625 - 1830
Office email: office@stjohnchurchmars.org
Pastor Mark's email: pastor@stjohnchurchmars.org

Mission Statement

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

We gather faithfully in His name to worship and praise Him; and we go forth in peace to share the Good News and to serve the world around us.

Individual Highlights:

Sisters & Brothers in Christ	1
New Families	2
Food Bank, etc.	2
Other News	3
Lutheran Basics	4
Upcoming Events	5
Singers	6
SS Newsletter	7
Birthdays	8

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

November begins with All Saints Day (or All Hallowed's Day) – a celebration of those that have come before us in our faith. Some of these people are still with us, others have joined the church triumphant. Regardless, All Saints Day helps us to remember how our faith depends on parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters who shared with us the love of God.

Many of us experienced this in the waters of our baptism, especially those of us baptized as infants. At our baptismal service there are four groups that make promises (assuming that the one being a baptized is not an adult). First parents make a promise on behalf of their child. The promises are as follows: 1) live with God's people, 2) bring them to worship, 3) teach them the Lord's Prayer, Creed and 10 Commandments, 4) give them a Bible, 5) nurture them in faith & prayer, 6) teach them to trust God, 7) proclaim Christ with words and actions, 8) care for others and the world God made and 9) work for justice and peace.

Whew! That's a lot of promises to make and keep. The sponsors or godparents make an abbreviated version of the above promise to support the child. Crucially the congregation also makes promises on behalf of the child as well: to support and pray for them in their new life in Christ. This is why baptism is best done as a part of the church service, to welcome the baby into the Christian community.

Through our baptismal service you can see how important saints are to the Christian community. For many of us it was our parents who kept their baptismal promises – who were and are saints in our lives. Dedicated godparents, like aunts or uncles might have taught us in Sunday School. Sisters and brothers may have supported us in faith. All of these people are saints in our lives who passed on to us the gift of faith.

All Saints Day (November 1st – though All Saint's Sunday falls on the first Sunday of November, November 3rd this year) remembers how important saints and community are to the Christian faith and life. These are the people who have passed on to us the gifts of faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

There is one other promise made in baptism. God promises in the waters of our baptism to always be with us, claims us as his own and promises his eternal love. The saints – the sisters and brothers who have preceded us in faith are some of the people who help bear God's promise, ho share with us the warmth of God's love.

Peace in Christ,
Pastor Mark

The office at St. John's will be closed on November 28th and 29th for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Thanksgiving Food Bank Collection

On November 17th from 1:00 to 2:30 pm we will be picking up food for the Lighthouse Food Bank from the neighborhood around the church. We are looking for volunteers to help pick up food and also folks to help hand out fliers the week before the collection.

God gave us a gift of 86,400 seconds per day to use as we choose. I choose to use one of those precious seconds to say "THANK YOU" for all that helped and contributed to make the bake sale for Applefest a success.



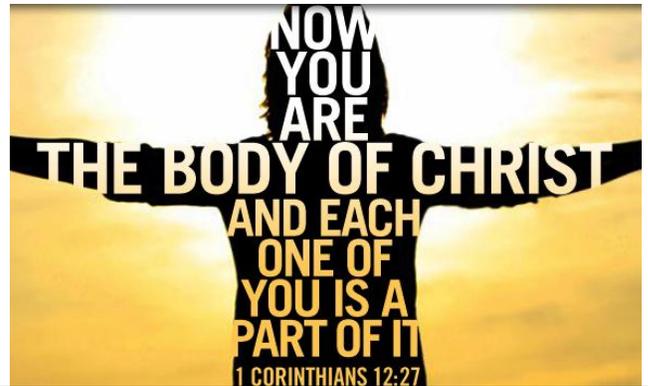
Also Thank You

To all who helped at the *Harvest Dinner*, to make that event a success. We couldn't have done it without you!



The Doors Are In!

The doors have been installed and look great. Thanks to your generous gifts we have money set aside for the doors. Thank you for your generosity!



There are new families who are joining our congregation!

This month we will have a number of new families joining our congregation. Some are old friends: Gary & Marlene Rindfuss, Tonya & Alaina Nagel, Denise Rightmyer and Evelyn Olejar. Some of the folks joining are new to the area; the Bates family (Bill & Bonnie, William, Brynlee and Paxton), the Karasacks (Ryan & Sarah, Jocelyn). We hope that you help pray for and support our sisters and brothers in Christ who are joining St. John.

Theology on Tap

**Third Wednesday of the Month at 8:00 pm
November 20th and December 18th**

Men from Lutheran churches in our area will be gathering for fellowship and to speak on matters of faith and life. We will meet at Domenico's Restaurant in Cranberry which is located at Piazza Plaza 20550 Rt. 19 N, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066. (724) 776-6455. Invite a friend for theology and a great gathering.

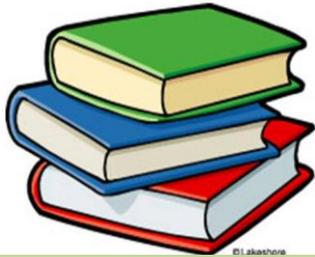
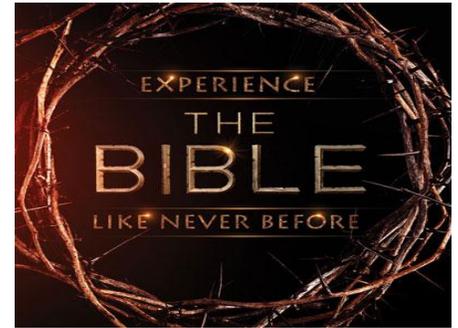
Worship Helpers

There is a sign-up sheet in the greeting area for all who may be interested in being a lector (the person who reads the lessons on Sunday morning, a communion assistant (someone who shares the presence of Christ on Sunday morning), or an acolyte (the candle lighter who also assists with communion). Your help is requested, please consider signing up for services.

The Bible Miniseries – Learn the Basics of the Bible – For Beginners and Experts Alike

Sundays at 9:15 a.m. in Pastor Mark's Office

One of the resolutions in the recent church-wide assembly was to continue connecting with the book of our faith, the Bible. We will be watching "The Bible" miniseries to start. As a part of that, our Adult Discussion Group will be meeting in Pastor Mark's office on Sundays at 9:15 a.m. We will have donuts, coffee and we invite you to join us!



Ladies Book Study

Beginning in November we plan to meet every third Monday of each month at 7 pm to review and discuss a chapter. We will begin with "Bad Girls of the Bible" by Liz Curtis Higgs. Ten of the Bible's best-known femme fatales parade across the pages with situations that are familiar and relevant even today. Please read the first chapter prior to the first meeting.

SKATING PARTY

November 3 – 12:30-2:00 PM
Skate Castle, Butler, PA



\$4.50 per person
\$1.25 Skate Rental
\$2.50 Blade Rental

Lunch provided after late service. Directions available upon request. Please use the sign-up sheet or let Pastor Mark know you will attend.

Movie Afternoon

March of the Penguins



November 24 – After Services

Movie after church, we hope you can join us! This movie is acceptable for all ages, but we are especially hoping to continue a group that met a few times during the summer. We hope to have a discussion that engages adults as well as children. Bring a covered dish for lunch and enjoy the intersection of faith and life.

Brown Bag Bible Study - Moving to Monday - Lunch at 12:00 p.m., Bible Study at 12:30

The Brown Bag Bible Study will be moving to Mondays beginning on November 4th and continuing each Monday this month (4th, 11th, 18th, & 25th). We will be having lunch together and then studying scripture.

In November, we are finishing up Galatians, and in December we will watch Babette's Feast or Walking the Bible together before starting another book.

We're a friendly group of folks and we hope you can join us!



Lutheran basics – the Solae – Solae Fidelis (Faith Alone)**In the Reformation (which we will say began on October 31st 1517 with the 95 theses)**

Martin Luther and the other reformers spoke of *solae* (a Latin word meaning sole). These are ideas which they say are foundational to be Christian (certainly they are foundation for our faith). The *solae* that the Reformers spoke of principally were: grace alone, faith alone, scripture alone.

Key Bible Verse – Ephesians 2:8 – 10

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”¹

Grace Alone

Last time I talked about principle among what it means to be a Lutheran is to be saved by grace through faith – and I elaborated about what it means to be saved by grace through faith. This time I am going to be talking about what grace means.

In our world:	you get	what you deserve
	You can work hard	so you can play hard
	The early bird	gets the worm
	Hard work	gets ahead of the game

We think of life in terms of a contract. Our life is filled with contracts – from car payments and mortgages (which are explicit contracts) to implicit ones: if we study and work hard in school, then we will get good grades. If we do what we are supposed to in our careers, then we will be promoted, get a raise. If we love our family, then they will love us back.¹ When someone doesn't hold up their end of the bargain, then we are free from the terms of the contract. If we follow the rules then we get rewarded.

There is a temptation to think of our salvation in that way. It is a natural human impulse to think that God will reward the good things that we do and that it is these good things that win us salvation. There are after all some Scripture passages that seem to support this (e.g. Luke 12:33, James 2:26). It is frustrating for us to think that we are following the rules of the Bible as best we can for all our lives – and that our reward will be the same as someone that converts on their deathbed. It doesn't seem fair. It doesn't seem like that person is getting what they deserve.

Well God isn't fair. And thank goodness he isn't. Because if God was fair, the person who converted on their deathbed to a belief in Jesus wouldn't know God's kingdom for all eternity, which might sound okay if we didn't like that person. But, we wouldn't know God's kingdom for all eternity either. We are told that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a)¹ which means that the just reward for sin – for any sin is death – is to be separated from the light of God's love and faithfulness for all eternity. That is what we deserve. If God was fair – that is what we would get.

But we are also told that “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23b). Grace means receiving something that we do not deserve, that we did not earn, did not pay for. It is a gift – not a payment, not a reward – a gift, with no strings attached to it.

¹ Both scriptures I have chosen have come from the writings of the Apostle Paul. Some of this is that he wrote more than any other author in the New Testament (13 books). Some of it is also that Paul influenced Luther and the other reformers more than any other source.

¹ Of course as we become adults we recognize that many of the contracts in life do not work out that way. Just because we keep our 'side' of the bargain does not always mean that other people do as well. However ¹ Yep Paul again.

We as Lutherans believe that salvation is God’s gift that comes to all who believe. It is an undeserved gift – and it is only this gift that wins us salvation. Nothing else does. This idea – that it is God’s grace is foundational to what it means to be a Lutheran¹. The hymn “Amazing Grace” reminds us of God’s wonderful grace – that saves us – and that nothing we can do can.

Thank God for his grace!

¹ Almost all other Protestant groups – Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc. believe this too. Indeed, the word Protestant comes from those that protest – the denominations that protested Catholic rules and therefore formed their own denominations.

*A **Book of Remembrance** is in the greeting area. Please feel free to add the names of loved ones – sisters and brothers in faith who have preceded us. These people are saints who have joined the church triumphant. If in our worship you wish someone to be remembered in our prayers, please list the name of the loved one who has died.*

Thanksgiving Eve
Worship will be on **Wednesday, November 27th at 7:00 pm** at Valencia Methodist Church, 66 Almira St., Valencia, PA 16059. This service will be in concert with Valencia Presbyterian and Valencia Methodist Church. We invite you to join in this worship as we give thanks for God’s good gifts.

Time & Talent Sunday
Sunday, November 10th is Time and Talent Sunday. In our worship we celebrate the rich gifts with which we have been blessed and how we can utilize them for God’s will and service. This will be a celebration at both services and we look forward to your participation.

Save the Date
December 7th
Gingerbread House Decorating
December 13th
Women of Faith Family Christmas Program
December 15th
Congregational Meeting to elect Vestry
December 22nd
Longest Night



Gingerbread House Decorating
Saturday, December 7th – 10 am to 1 pm
Plan to attend the annual Gingerbread House Decorating Party! This is a great event for kids and adults alike. We hope you can join us!

Attention Singers!

We have a choir that will be singing for church festivals (Christmas, possibly Christ the King, etc.)

We hope that you can join us for this. If you are interested please speak to John Thickey. Most likely this choir/ensemble will be meeting between services to practice and help raise a joyful noise.



Join the Choir...
You'll Be Glad
You Did!

The Festival Choir will be singing for Christmas Eve Worship. They have been practicing between services. Check the weekly announcements for additional practice time information.

Breakfast - This Month November 10th @ 9:15 a.m.

Normally we have breakfast together the first Sunday of the month – however, in November we are eating together on the second Sunday, November 10th.

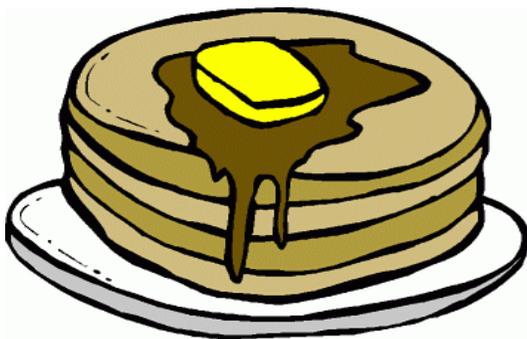
I hope that you can join us for this breakfast. And a big thanks to Denise and Jim Hager, and Sally Foster for helping with this. If you can give them a hand, give them a call!

Men's Night Out Beacon Hotel

November 5th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

We are headed to the Beacon for a shrimp and crawdad boil – which they have the first Tuesday of every month. If you can join us, this event is for all the gentleman of the congregation and we always have a good time.

The Beacon Hotel is located at:
 231 Beacon Rd, Renfrew, PA



Love of God Newsletter

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy November! Now that Halloween is past and the kids are, hopefully, coming down from their sugar high, we can set our sights on turkey, stuffing, and pumpkin pie! I LOVE this time of year. Let's face it – this is the season that defines and cements some of the most precious memories for our children. Enjoy the start of yet another set of wonderful memories, for as my father reminds me, they grow up so quickly.

This month, I have a few things to cover:

1. I received a little feedback on the NAME for our newsletter and figured I would try-out one of the suggestions I received. It's not too late to submit a name idea. Just drop me an e-mail and we will have the kids vote on their favorite (I originally wanted to have the vote on Sunday October 20th, but felt compelled to give a few more weeks for any last minute suggestions).
2. On November 17th, we will be decorating cards for our Advent Bags. There are ten (10) bags the Deacons are distributing this year to members in unique situations. For instance, my family was blessed with one of the bags last year because of the addition of Abigail Grace to our household. Madison and Dominic LOVED opening the gifts (1 each day) throughout Advent. We thought it would be nice if the Sunday School kids personalized some cards to go along with the bags! So, please make sure your child can participate in this event on November 17th. We will do the decorating in place of the Sunday School opening that day.
3. On Saturday December 7th from 10:00am – 1:00pm, we will be having our annual Gingerbread House Decorating Party. This is a wonderful event where the kids get to go bananas decorating gingerbread houses. There are other activities to go along with the Gingerbread House decorating, so don't miss out on this opportunity to enjoy time with the kiddos making houses full of sugar, frosting, and candy!!!
4. One of my absolute favorite Service opportunities is the Samaritan's Purse "Operation Christmas Child" (aka Operation Shoebox)! We will be participating in this event again in 2013. God has blessed my family with gifts beyond imagination, and though we try to be as generous with our time, talents, and property throughout the entire year, Christmas reminds me specifically of families who struggle to provide a few luxuries for their little ones. I am always in awe of the magnificent, royal gifts three Kings delivered to a babe in a smelly, straw filled manger about two thousand thirteen years ago. It reminds me that ALL I have, my family, my friends, my health, my house, EVERYTHING, comes from God Almighty and BELONGS to Him. Therefore, it warms my Soul when I give back to God what is rightfully His by participating in an event like this. By the time you read this, I will have information posted on the table directly below the Sunday School Offering board. Donations are due by Sunday November 24th (I will deliver them on Monday the 25th which is, technically, the due date). All you need is a shoebox or two (2) and a glad and generous heart!

In closing, I offer the following prayer:

- Almighty God, thank you for the season we are entering into and thank you for the blessings you pour out upon us every day. Please bless us, our families, and our friends as we gather together to celebrate Thanksgiving. We ask that you instill within us glad and generous hearts not only during this particular time of year, but all year long. We ask these things in Your Son's Holy Name. Amen.

Peace in Christ.

Keith Cardinal

kvcardinal@yahoo.com

Pew Pads

In an effort to get more visitors to use pew pads, to be more welcoming and to focus evangelism, as well as to make use of them for our annual reports, etc. the ushers will be distributing pew pads today and in the coming weeks, during the announcements. Please sign the pads and pass them to your neighbors.

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://www.stjohnchurchmars.org>

November BIRTHDAYS

- 11/2 Ariel Kelly
- 11/4 Christopher Knauff
- 11/6 John Kennedy
- 11/7 David Knauff
- 11/8 Robert Rigg
- 11/8 Lynn McDonough
- 11/14 Katie McCormick
- 11/16 Katherine Rinehart
- 11/17 Lynn Sabbagh
- 11/17 Cheryl Davidson
- 11/19 Shirley Kelly
- 11/20 Mark Bringman
- 11/21 Jillian Wolfe
- 11/22 Brooke Claus
- 11/23 Nancy McCormick
- 11/26 John Roberts
- 11/28 George Murray
- 11/29 Joseph Baysek

Worship Helpers for November

Please look in the Greeting area for worship helper sign-up sheets for acolyte, usher or acolyte for any Sunday in November or December.

Here are the folks signed up so far...

Ushers

8:00 am	Larry Werner
10:30 am	Cardinal's

Assisting Minister

8:00 am	Larry McDonough
10:30 am	Carolyn Jarrett

Address service requested

ST JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
 420 BEAVER STREET
 P.O. BOX 411
 MARS, PA 16046