

February
2017

St. John Lutheran Church

St. John Lutheran Church
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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.

Below is the February reflection of our Southwestern PA Synodical Bishop Kurt Kusserow that I thought worth sharing in my regular space as he candidly connects the church's season with our everyday reality. - Pastor Bob Zimmerman

Mother Emanuel

The Conference of Bishops met for its annual Academy in Charleston, South Carolina the week of Epiphany. It was also the week of sentencing for Dylann Roof.

Do you remember the horrific killing that took place there a year and a half ago, when nine members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church were killed during a Bible Study? Do you remember learning that their killer was a member of an ELCA congregation?

In something of a pilgrimage of repentance and accompaniment, our bishops and spouses who were present for the Academy, about 100 people, walked to Mother Emanuel, and in respectful silence filed into the first several pews of the nave. We waited for Pastor Eric Manning to arrive. He was a little later than expected. He had spent the day at the court house.

We waited in silence. Silence and stillness reveal things that tend to remain hidden when people run 100 miles an hour all day long just to keep up with what they believe is their work. (Try this for yourself. Start reading this page again, slowly, and let a full minute pass between paragraphs. It will only take fifteen minutes or so. What does this practice reveal to you?)

I realized in that silence that only two of our group were persons of color.

Others pointed out that Jesus and his disciples, painted on the wall of Mother Emanuel's chancel, looked like white people. We asked about this. It's what the pictures in illustrated Bibles looked like in 1816 when the church was built.

Pastor Manning arrived and addressed us. Bishop Eaton and Bishop Johnson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada replied (the Canadians join us for Academy). Nine of us prayed for the Mother Emanuel Nine. We all sang Amazing Grace from memory, slowly, a Capella.

The next week Dylann was sentenced to death. Does the death penalty solve the problem of killing?

Does killing solve the problem of the differences between people?

Is the fact that people are different from each other a problem?

(continued)

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The Sundays after Epiphany mean to show us Jesus and his way of life. This year, after Epiphany's narrative of the Magi from the East explains to us that Jesus, Emmanuel, belongs to the whole world, and not to Israel only, we get seven more revelations:

- That this person, Jesus, is the Son of God.
- That Jesus' ministry is to take away the sin of the whole world.
- That following Jesus may actually mean leaving home and family.
- That being reviled by the world for Jesus' name is a blessed state.
- That the light of the children of God is not meant to be hidden.
- That honoring the letter of the Law does not come close to keeping its spirit.
- That the law of retaliation is empty and void. Wrong is not overcome by revenge, but by love and grace and forgiveness.

Holding these Epiphany texts up against my recent visit to Mother Emanuel, I can only weep for the pale and faltering record of the Church's attempts to live into its calling. While our confession is that Jesus is divine, we have made him into a personal commodity. While our history is that Jesus' first disciples experienced a significant transformation in their lives, our current practice is to avoid anything that would make potential visitors feel uncomfortable about coming to worship.

I don't mean to be overly dramatic, but the fact is that the seventh Sunday after the Epiphany this year explicitly rejects the idea that justice is done by exacting death for killing. And in the place of this solution to human violence, the life of Jesus, as recorded in all four Gospels, moves inexorably to the cross, where in a miracle we cannot yet fully fathom, God ends the business of retaliation by accepting an unjust death and giving life as a gift to the guilty in return.

Think about these things these next few weeks, and see if they do not call you to a new and courageous exercise of your faith as a witness to Jesus our Savior.

With you in Christ,
+Kurt

<http://www.swpasynod.org/about-us/bishops-page>



This Lent we will participate in the World Hunger emphasis 40 Days of Giving, a special opportunity to lift up the church's hunger and poverty ministry. The goal is to raise \$1 million from across the ELCA during Lent to help give our brothers and sisters around the world opportunities to earn a fair, sustainable living with dignity. Look for more information as Lent draws closer

On Wednesday evenings during Lent join us at 6:00 for a soup supper followed by a devotional study that will help us explore how our Lutheran faith shapes our perspective and role in the economy. Each of the five weeks we will look at one key aspect of the economy and explore questions related to economic justice. The first supper and devotions will be on March 8.



In late August of 2016, more than 160 homes in Connellsville, PA were damaged in flash flooding which dumped up to five feet of water in some homes.

You are invited to participate in a mission trip to help rebuild homes affected by the flooding. Christian brothers and sisters from the Roman Catholic *Dioceses of Pittsburgh and Greensburg*, the Byzantine Catholic *Archeparchy of Pittsburgh*, and the *Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will work together as a sign of our unity in Christ to bring hope and healing to people whose homes were damaged in the flooding.

What you need to know:

- **The trip will take place sometime between April 21 – 30, 2017.** Exact dates will be determined based on the availability and interest of participants. We will either be doing a three-day weekend, or perhaps a five-day trip.
- **Accommodations will be in a local church** in the Connellsville area, where we will share a communal sleeping area (feel free to bring a cot or inflatable bed), meals, and prayer and reflection on our shared service.
- **Cost for participants will be \$20 a day.** You are encouraged to ask your parish/congregation to sponsor your mission trip. We also are soliciting donations of Home Depot or Visa Cash cards for supplies.
- **All skill levels are needed.** Construction skills are a bonus, but we need people to do simple, easy-to-learn repair and building tasks, as well as people to clean up the site, run to the hardware store, cook for the group, etc.

*Please contact Pastor Zimmerman by February 15
if you are interested in participating*



Scripture calls the church to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick as Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:31-46) and describes how the early church cared for one another and “distributed to each as any had need.” (Act 2:45), so that there was not a needy person among them. (Acts 4:35) It is consistent with our call to be the people of God in the place to create a means that St. John can assist

those in our congregation and community that are in need. Local agencies are very effective at helping in certain circumstances but not all, and it seems appropriate to have a mechanism to do that when other avenues fail.

Last fall the congregation council approved establishing a special fund with it’s own bank account and specific guidelines to serve as a pastor’s discretionary fund called the “**Good Samaritan Fund**” for those in need. In January the account was established. The fund will be sustained by special designated giving specifically to the fund. No general funds from the congregation will be used, so it is dependent on your needed special contributions.

This special fund shall provide an immediate means to assist financially or provide resources while maintaining essential confidentiality for those in need. Only the pastor and treasurer of the congregation will know who the recipient of assistance is.

If you wish to give an offering to help establish this fund giving, please designate that on the memo line of a check.



Fellowship Light Breakfast

Join us this Sunday, February 5, between services for a light breakfast, good food and conversation.

Sunday School Valentine Party

This Sunday, February 5, will also be our Sunday School Valentine Party. Each child will have a box for valentines and you may bring valentines for the children if you wish.

The children’s names are: **Abigail, Anna, Ava, Brentley, Ciara, Dominic, Emily, Emma, Gabriella, Jonathan, Lindsay, Luca, Makenna, Nathan, Rylee, Serafina, Scarlett, Sydney, Wesley.**



**Bible Study
Wednesdays – Noon**

Bring your lunch and your bible and join us for bible study each Wednesday at noon. All are welcome!

**Quilting Group
February 13 – 6:30 pm**

Our group meets on the second Tuesday of each month. If you have an interest in quilting or would just like to learn, please join us!

**Ladies Book Group
February 22 – 7:00pm**

Come and enjoy our discussion. New members are always welcome! If you have any questions, see Denise Hager or Sally Foster

Youth Group News

Food, Fun & Faith

February 4 – Senior Bowling @ SJLC – 1:45 pm

**February 5 – Food, Fun & Faith – following
worship**

**February 12 – Family Bowling – pizza after
worship, then bowling**

*Thank
you*

To the people of St. John,

Thank you so much for the Barnes & Noble gift card. I spend a lot of time in that store.

I enjoyed my years as Financial Secretary and miss it, but it was time to pass it on to someone who is more computer literate than I am.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Jarrett



The Great Surprise.....Jesus is Alive

Here is another opportunity for St. John to reach out to not only our families but those of the surrounding community. Parents and children enjoy activities and learn together and it all focuses on Jesus. There are seven stations for families to visit and through these activities discover that Jesus is Alive.

Families are warmly welcomed and given sacks to collect activity station goodies.

At the amazing Animation Station everyone hears the Easter story. At the Confounding Creation station, they will make colorful bouncing balls, a reminder of the Resurrection. Joining hands at the extraordinary Energy station causes energy sticks to spring to life. Guess what floats or what sinks and get a prize, a Bible Tag with a Jesus centered Bible verse.

Silly props make for memorable family “fotos”. Enjoy a snack and interact with other families. At the Marvelous Mirascope small things float in the air. Everything points to the ultimate Easter truth: Jesus is alive.

The event is planned for Saturday April 8th. More information to follow about how we can individually or jointly sponsor an activity station.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 02/01 Kathryn Davidson
- 02/05 Herman Boehmig, Jr.
- 02/05 Emily Greb
- 02/05 Lindsey Greb
- 02/16 Chuck Olescyski
- 02/11 Geneva Hackworth
- 02/19 Kelsey McDonough
- 02/20 Harry Cole
- 02/21 Laurie Passione
- 02/21 Keith Cardinal
- 02/23 Frieda Carbo
- 02/25 Suzanne Berol
- 02/27 Dorothy Delp
- 02/28 James Marshall

Upcoming Events
February 5 – Food, Fun & Faith (Youth)
February 12 – Youth Group Bowling
March 1 – Ash Wednesday – Worship at Noon and 7 pm

Communion Bread Schedule
January – Kim Richards
February - TBD
Counters for February
Matt Claus & Missy Kramer

FEBRUARY
Worship Helpers
 Please check the bulletin board in the greeting area for the new worship helper sign-up sheet for all worship helpers for each Sunday for the remainder of the year.

Assisting Ministers
 8:00 am Dave Knauff
 10:30 am Missy Kramer

Ushers
 8:00 am
 10:30 am Matt Claus

Communion Assistants
 8:00 am
 10:30 am

February Newsletter

Address service requested

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