

May
2026

St. John Lutheran Church



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.*

*St. John Lutheran Church
PO Box 411
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Mars, PA 16046*

*Web site: www.stjohnchurchmars.org
Church Office: (724) 625-1830
Office email: office@stjohnchurchmars.org
Pastor Katie's email: pastorkmcneal@gmail.com
Pastor's Cell #: 412-407-3166*

Please call to ensure availability before coming to the office.

*To live among God's faithful people
To hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper
To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed
To serve all people following the example of Jesus
To strive for justice and peace in all the earth
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 236)*

Throughout the Easter season, we traditionally use a thanksgiving for baptism in place of the confession and forgiveness. We are baptized once, but we remember our baptism every single Sunday and throughout our daily lives. By the water and the Word in baptism we are joined to the death and the resurrection of Jesus. Baptism is a gift from God that we receive by faith alone. Baptism forms us together as a community of faith. Baptism begins our lives of discipleship. And so it is good and right that we should regularly give thanks for the gift we have in baptism, and in so doing remember who we are called to be in our baptism.

The charge above is from our baptismal rite. These are the promises made on behalf of a child or by the person being baptized and these are the promises we make when we affirm our own baptisms. So this season, as we weekly give thanks for the gift of baptism, I ask you: what parts of this baptismal covenant do you resonate with the most? What parts do you struggle with? How do you live out these promises in your daily life? And how does being a part of a regularly worshiping faith community help support you in your efforts to live out these commitments?

I always tell confirmation students that these are very big promises made in baptism. But I also tell them that they are not alone in these promises. We have our community of faith to help support us in these promises. And we have God offering us the strength and courage needed to live into our baptismal promises.

Remember that you are God's beloved. Remember that you have been washed in the waters of baptism. Remember that in the water and Word of the sacrament of baptism you have been freed from the hold of sin and death. And let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Peace,
Pastor Katie

Find Us on Social Media

Like us on **Facebook** (@stjohnchurchmars) or follow us on **Instagram** (@stjohnchurchmars)

Online Sunday Worship

Join Zoom for service: <https://zoom.us/j/5663185411> Meeting ID: 566 318 5411 PW: Luther
Available on our **YouTubeChannel:** <https://www.youtube.com/@St.JohnLutheranChurch-2>

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 find someone to cover and tell the office of the change.

	Acolyte	Offering	Offering	Young Reader
3-May	Abby C	Carissa M	Henry W	Ava N
10-May	Anna K	Lydia M	Abby C	Carissa M
17-May	Lydia M	Jose W	Cate S	Abby C
24-May	Ella N	Ava N	Ella N	
31-May	Carissa M	Anna K	Nathan K	
7-June	Nathan K	Lydia M	Abby C	

Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
3-May	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Valerie C	Jen M	Jamie W Laura G
10-May	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Emma N	Richards	Jamie W Laura G
17-May	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Valerie C	Richards	Jamie W Laura G
24-May	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Valerie C	Richards	Jamie W Laura G
31-May	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Jen M	Richards	Jamie W Laura G
7-June	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Casey S	VOLUNTEER	David D Cora S



Training is available for any position. Sign-up in the Greeting Area or at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>. The online sign up sheet is also available through the new church app. See directions later in this newsletter for how to access the new church app.

Easter Sermon Series – Baptismal Promises

The season of Easter only begins on Easter Sunday! Each week during the season of Easter, **we will explore a different commitment we make in our baptism.** We will hear examples of people living into these promises from scripture. As we hear these stories of new life in the resurrection, we will ask ourselves how we live as baptized children of God. How does our baptism effect our daily lives? **How are we transformed by the promise of life in our baptism?**

Pentecost Sunday – May 24

Pentecost marks the culmination of our Easter celebration as the **50th day of Easter**. We read the story of when **language barriers were broken down** and the Holy Spirit came down by way of tongues of fire after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. **This story marks the very beginning days of the Christian church and its mission in and to the world after Jesus' ascension.** Pentecost is therefore often called the **"birthday of the church."** We will celebrate Pentecost with red throughout the church and streamers to celebrate the joy of this celebration.



Holy Trinity Sunday – May 31

Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday following Pentecost (which is a day, not a season, unlike Easter), has been kept since the tenth century as a special celebration of the mystery of the triune God, as in a similar way the Baptism of Our Lord follows the Christmas season with its trinitarian focus. **When we say God is the triune God, we are saying something about who God is beyond, before, and after the universe: that there is community within God.**

Facets of Faith

During the season of Lent, Pastor Katie, David, and Keith have sat down and explored the upcoming gospel reading for each Sunday. We've heard of people as far as Canada listening! We've even heard stories of people using the podcast to invite conversations about faith with friends and family. **How has this podcast help you connect more deeply with the Sunday readings?** Let us know!

We're excited to keep inviting people to think about the scriptural and historical context of the readings as we continuing to encounter the human and experience the divine with the risen Jesus during the season of Easter. Because we have several listeners who are not connected with the physical gathering on Sunday mornings, **we will now be posting recordings of the sermon and related scripture readings to the podcast as well.** Find the podcast on the blog on the website (stjohnchurchmars.org/blog). Other streaming sites are listed on the website. **Stay tuned for how we might try to build an online group surrounding this online ministry too!**

Service of Hope and Healing – May 7

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) **This Service of Hope and Healing invites you to lay down your burdens at the foot of the cross. Filled with scripture, song, and prayer, this service offers a quiet, reflective space to dwell in God's promise of hope and healing.** Whether you are dealing with illness, grief, anxiety or another kind of hardship, this service offers peace. Service meets in the sanctuary at 6:30 pm and lasts approximately 30-45 minutes.

Online Access to Worship Update

There are many times when we cannot be physically present to worship with the faith community, but we still want to be present in spirit. For those times, we offer a livestream of each Sunday worship service. Traditionally, this has been offered through a zoom account. To help streamline this online ministry and to make access easier, we will be switching to livestreaming directly to YouTube. This will also make accessing the livestreamed service easier through the church app (see more information on that later in this newsletter) as no password will be needed.



YouTube

We will be switching to livestreaming worship directly on YouTube on Sunday, June 7th. Until then, please continue to access worship online through the zoom meeting described previously in this newsletter.

Around the Church

Office Hours

Diane is currently in the office one day a week, on Thursday mornings, working other hours remotely or in the office on a flexible schedule. Holidays may impact this schedule, though. If you need access to the building or assistance with anything, please call ahead to assure availability. Pastor Katie can provide assistance.

New Church App



There is a NEW way to stay connected with St. John throughout the week! There's an app for that! In the Google Play store or the iOS App Store, search for "Church App – Tithely". Download the app, then search for St. John Lutheran Church in Mars. The app has links for the calendar, podcasts, worship leadership, bulletins, prayer resources, and more! Download the app today at <https://tithely.app.link/st-john-lutheran> or use the QR code. See a tutorial for how to download the app and an introduction to its offerings at <https://tinyurl.com/mtpdv6pz>.



Ladies' Tea – May 2



Mark your calendar for this year's **Ladies Tea on May 2nd from 12-2:30**. This is an event we have been doing for more than 20 years. It's a lot of fun to share a few hours with family and friends. If you are interested, please see a deacon as very few seats remain at the writing of this newsletter **The cost is \$25**.

Youth Car Wash Fundraiser – June 27

Our youth will be doing a **car wash fundraiser** to help pay for the costs of activities for the coming year. Mark your calendar to support this fundraiser by coming and **having your car washed on June 27 at Agway, 10a-2p** (and start hoping for a sunny day!).



Annual Church Picnic



Mark your calendars! Our **annual church picnic will be on July 26th**. We will have worship, picnic food, and games! Stay tuned for details.

Lutherlyn

Lutherlyn Summer Camp Registration

Lutherlyn is a place where each child is accepted, challenged, and sent out into the world to spread the love of Christ, and summer camp registration is OPEN! Many of the camps fill quickly, so plan to register early! Learn more about the many different camps and what you can expect at a week of camp at

lutherlyn.com/programs/summercamp/. We already have 4 children

and youth registered for camp at Lutherlyn and another child registered at another nearby church camp. Camp is a great place for kids **to experience life-changing adventures in faith**.

Stay tuned for how you can offer support to them and their families in prayer and financial aid as they prepare for an incredible adventure in faith this summer!



Lutherlyn (continued)

CampBlast! – May 9

Campfire, crafts, gaga ball, archery, pony rides, zipline, bouldering room, hikes, nature activities, hay rides, games, sports, archaeology, disc golf, jump pillow, tours, great food, worship, and MORE!

The best part.... EVERYTHING IS FREE!

There will be special summer camp discounts for NEW campers & for registered campers who bring friends who are NEW to Lutherlyn! Join us for a GREAT day at camp! No registration is needed. Just show up with all your friends, family, neighbors, and anyone else looking for a fun, free day.

Saturday, May 10, 11 am – 4:30 pm, rain or shine.

Stewardship



Stewardship is a condition, a way of being.
– Dr. Marty Stevens



Stewardship Corner

As the weather warms up, a lot of people are **diving into the ritual of spring cleaning**. Sometimes this means going through the closet and the dresser drawers, cleaning out old clothes that no longer fit you physically or stylistically. Sometimes it's cleaning out the toys or the kitchen. Sometimes it's tackling those mysterious corners of the basement or garage. Spring cleaning can often unearth things we no longer want in our homes. **Rather than immediately throwing it away, ask yourself, “is this something that someone else may need or want?” Then find a place to donate items.**

This gives them a second life, provides for the needs of others, all while tackling your spring cleaning!

If you're not sure where you can donate items, ask the church, **we often have connections and resources to help find new homes for different items.**

A Steward's Prayer:

O Lord, we pray that as we be, People of God chosen by thee, That you give us strength and guidance every day, For our role as stewards to portray. That our voice and works may proclaim, The ministry of Christ is our aim. That our actions will speak louder than what we say, Where the security in our life is God's way. That we generously respond to what you first gave, Your Son, a Savior, our lives to save. And when we have decisions to make, To thee, O Lord, our prayers we take. (Keith A. Mundy, 1998)

Did You Know?

The church website has an ongoing calendar! There is only so much room in the newsletter for upcoming events, but the website has all of them, including several months out! See the calendar at stjohnchurchmars.org/calendar.

Around the Synod

Weekly Synod Emails

The synod sends out weekly emails of upcoming programs and important news. Everyone is welcome to receive these emails. Sign up to receive them at <https://www.swpasynod.org/wayfarer>

Around the Synod (continued)

2026 Synod Assembly – June 12-13 (in person)

Jesus reminds us that faith is meant to be shared and lived openly. Our witness is offered so others may find hope and see God's love at work. This year's theme invites us to notice and celebrate the many ways **God's presence is already shining through our communities.** In acts of care, justice, welcome, and creativity, vibrant faith takes shape in everyday ministry. As we gather, may we be



VIBRANT FAITH
GOD SHINES THROUGH US

encouraged by one another's witness and renewed in our calling to reflect God's grace together.

Voting members from our congregation have an important responsibility on behalf of all the members of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This assembly is the highest legislative authority of our synod; they will be making decisions that impact 143 congregations covering 10 counties in southwest PA. Voting members are required to attend the entire assembly and must have a smartphone or tablet to use as a voting device. This year's synod assembly will be held at PennWest California.

Serving Others

2nd Quarter Mission Emphasis: Mars Area Public Library

After sustaining considerable water damage in a recent storm, the Library has a lot of expenses to cover. We are therefore looking forward to supporting this important piece of Mars. **The mission of Mars Area Public Library is to inform, educate, entertain, and culturally enrich by providing books, library materials, facilities, and professional services for all individuals in our area.. If you would like to financially support the mission emphasis, mark your envelope "Mission Emphasis."**



With generous support, the Mars Area Public Library continues to provide a collection of new and relevant materials, technology, computer access, and free events for all ages and interests, striving to meet the ever changing needs of the community. Your contribution assures that the Mars Area Public Library will continue to be the place where everyone can learn, discover and explore through library operations, community programs, and expansion of their collection.

St. John Food Pantry

Our little food pantry sees more usage than we sometimes recognize. Within the week prior to writing the newsletter, we had two individuals visit the pantry who we do not see on a regular basis.

One person had bought extra groceries and stopped at the pantry on her way home to donate goods. Another person stopped by the pantry to collect items and was grateful for the opportunity to "shop" at the indoor pantry as well.

Currently, Thursday morning is the most reliable time for access to the indoor food pantry (or times when there is a meeting or service at the church). If you know someone who needs access at another time, Pastor Katie is happy to coordinate a time to open the building for them.



Serving Others (continued)

Community Garden



Gardening season is just around the corner! We are looking to make a plan for the garden this year so that it grows healthy, organic, and delicious food for people in the community. This year we are particularly looking to explore ways to make the garden more accessible to individuals looking to pick their own produce and provide assistance to those who need help harvesting. If you would like to be a part of the brainstorming process to achieve these goals, see Pastor Katie. Weather pending, we will be planning to plant things in the garden in mid-May.

Faith Formation

Kids Club/Youth Group

The Mars Area Youth Group (grades 6-12) and Kids' Club (grades 2-5) are joint ministries supported by Mars United Presbyterian and St. John Lutheran Church. The groups are on a break from regular meetings for the summer, but stay tuned for summer fun!

Confirmation Class – May 9

Confirmation class is a time for our students in 6th-8th grade to develop deeper scriptural understanding and more robust connection to their faith and identity as a member of the church. While we cover many topics ranging from Bible study to the Small Catechism to whatever else strikes the curiosity of our students, we continually remind the students that the goal is not to use these classes to learn everything there is to know about faith, church, and the Bible, but rather to **start to practice asking the questions and engaging with our faith on a more mature level that will help carry the students into adulthood.** May 9th will be the final class meeting of this school year. 8th graders will be invited to prepare to present their confirmation projects in anticipation of affirming their baptismal promises in front of the congregation in the fall.

Messy Church – May 15th



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. 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. Come and bring your neighbors and friends to share in this interactive, creative, and celebratory worship service! **We begin by eating dinner together at 6:00pm.** Then after a brief, interactive story-telling, activities are opened for families to explore together at their own pace in a flexible environment. At the end of the evening, we bring our whole selves - our hearts, voices, and bodies to celebration of God's creative goodness in praise songs and prayer, **ending at 8:00pm.**

Adult Bible Study – The Women of Scripture

What was it like to be a woman in the biblical period? It depended, in part, on who you were: a queen, a judge, a primary wife, a secondary wife, a widow, a slave, or some other kind of "ordinary woman." We will explore the stories of several women throughout the scriptures and what they can teach us about faith. Bible study will meet on Wednesdays (7:00pm) and Sundays (6:30pm) beginning on Wednesday, April 15th. The final session will be Sunday, May 24th. Material covered on Wednesday will be repeated on the following Sunday. Both days will have a zoom option.



Faith Formation (continued)

Vacation Bible School

**Mark your calendars for Vacation Bible School!
Sunday, July 12 – Thursday, July 16!**

We will soon be looking for individuals to help prepare, advertise, and lead elements of this favorite summer program. Vacation Bible School is a joint ministry of St. John Lutheran Church, Mars United Presbyterian Church, and Valencia Presbyterian Church. Registration is open to children ages 3-12.

Sunday Faith Formation Hour

Each Sunday, we gather in the lower level of the building for Faith Formation for all ages. Hospitality is offered in the form of goodies and drinks. At approximately 10:15am, we begin an all-ages together Bible game to help all of us develop greater familiarity with the Bible. At approximately 10:30am, people are invited to move into age-based groups to explore different topics as outlined below.

Pre-K through 5th Grade

The Pre-K through elementary classes will explore stories of Jesus' ministry through interactive storytelling and crafts. Students are asked to bring their Bibles to each class as they will be encouraged to find stories in their Bible, learning to mark their Bibles as they engage with the story. Students will be given a take-home sheet each week to help families continue the conversations at home. See below for a schedule of lessons to be covered each week this month:

May 3 – The Ascension (Acts 1:6-14)

May 10 – The Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-21, 36-42)

May 17 – Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)

Middle and High School

A note from the teacher, Ruth Ann: "The theme for the confirmation aged students during this winter term has been quite interesting. Discussions have been funny and sometimes serious. Some topics have dealt with running away from home - The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32); what it really means to be rich – The rich young man (Matthew 19:16-21) and things that are not fair – the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). We also discussed the word Hell! Always one step away from an adventure with these young people. Just when you think they aren't listening – well think again."

Adult Sunday Faith Formation

The Bible is full of stories. Stories that are full of success and failure, surprise and expectation, joy and sorrow. Each week we will tackle a different story in the Bible, hear how it fits into the grander narrative of the story of God's people in scripture and discuss how it impacts our own stories.

May 3 – Getting Settled – Joshua, Judges, and Ruth

May 10 – Kings and Kingdoms – 1&2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles

May 17 – Trails of Tears and Joy – 2 Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Lamentations, and Daniel

Sunday School Year End

It's hard to believe that we are nearing the end of the school year! That means that Sunday School only has a few more weeks before we take a break for the summer. On May 17th, we will have our last formal lesson, and on May 24th, we will plant flowers for the outside of the church. **Thank you to everyone who dedicated time and energy to our Sunday School ministry this year – the teachers, the organizers, the parents, everyone!**

May 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 Ladies Tea noon
3 Worship, 9a Faith Formation, 10:15 a Bible Study, 6:30p	4	5 Vestry Meetings, 7p	6 Bible Study, 7p	7 Service of Hope and Healing 6:30p	8	9 Confirmation Class, 9:30a
10 Worship, 9a Faith Formation, 10:15 a Bible Study, 6:30p	11	12	13 Bible Study, 7p	14	15 Messy Church, 6p	16 Clean-up Day 9:00a
17 Worship, 9a Faith Formation, 10:15a Bible Study, 6:30p	18	19 Council Meeting, 7p	20 Bible Study, 7p <i>Newsletter Articles Due</i>	21	22	23
24 Worship, 9a Faith Formation, 10:15a Bible Study, 6:30p	25 Holy Communion at Penn Mar, 1:45p	26	27 Bible Study, 7p	28 Worship Planners 7p	29	30
31 Worship, 9a Birthday / Anniversary Coffee hour						



- 5/02 Josie Wach
- 5/09 Laura Wach
- 5/08 Erin Weaver
- 5/08 Amy Werner
- 5/11 Ruth Ann Tully
- 5/14 Valerie Cardinal
- 5/18 John Tully
- 5/20 Olivia Claus
- 5/23 Steve Schnelle
- 5/24 Jeff Martin
- 5/24 Ella Niklewicz
- 5/31 Carolyn Jarrett

May Newsletter

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