

January
2024

St. John Lutheran Church



St. John Lutheran Church
PO Box 411
420 Beaver Street
Mars, PA 16046
Office Hours MWF, 8a-1p

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And the child[, Jesus,] grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Luke 2:40

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.*

Have you ever noticed how quickly we as a culture move on from Christmas? The radio stations stop playing Christmas music just as suddenly as they started. The trees start getting tossed to the curb just days after Christmas. Christmas parties quickly become New Year's parties. And it's suddenly a faux pas to send Christmas cards. By the time we get to our Lessons and Carols Christmas season worship service, the Christmas busyness has passed, and the world seems to have moved on.

But I want to linger in the wonder of Christmas and not just because Christmas is a 12-day long season in the church. I want to linger in the wonder of Christmas because it really is absolutely incredible that God, who is all-knowing, all-powerful, beyond time and space, and bigger than we can ever dream, decided to come into the world as a fragile human baby who would grow up and heal the sick, preach good news to the poor and the oppressed, and offer life and love to all, overcoming death.

For me, lingering in Christmas does not necessarily mean I refuse to take down my Christmas tree. Lingering in Christmas is lingering in the shock that God would choose this way to show and share life and love in and with the world. Lingering in Christmas is giving ourselves time to process just how very incredible it is that an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present God would come into this world as a tiny, fragile human baby, a baby that would grow slowly and yet all too quickly into the young man that would heal the sick, preach good news to the poor and the oppressed, offer life and love to all, and overcome death. It is a joyful story that at once gives great hope and humbles us beyond measure. It's a story that takes more than just a few days to unpack. We spend Advent preparing, but are we ever really ready for Christmas? When we hear this story, this story of Emmanuel, God-with-us, being born as a baby, are we ever really ready to process it? We give the season 12 days because we need to linger in Christmas. The rest of the world may be tossing out Christmas trees and taking down lights, but we linger in the wonder of Christmas. And at the end of the twelve days, if we're still not quite ready to move on? Throughout the season of Epiphany, we still get to marvel that God revealed God's self to us in this little baby, in this very human person!

Let us linger and praise God!
Pastor Katie

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING NOTICE

Annual Meeting - Sunday, January 28, 2024

We will review 2023, vote on a budget, and approve the congregational council for 2024. The congregational meeting will be held after the worship service on January 28.

Worship Notes

Young Worship Helpers

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
31-Dec	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	
7-Jan	Ava N	Anna K	Nathan K	
14-Jan	Emma N	Luca K	Eva K	
21-Jan	Abigail C	Ava N	Emma N	Carissa M
28-Jan	Anna K	Jules K	Abigail C	
4-Feb	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	

Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
31-December	VOLUNTEER	Dave K	Denise H	Denise H	Denise H Katie N
7-January	Ruth Ann T	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Sherry D Valerie C
14-January	Ruth Ann T	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Sherry D Valerie C
21-January	Ruth Ann T	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Sherry D Valerie C
28-January	Ruth Ann T	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Sherry D Valerie C
4-February	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Erin W David D

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 **YouTube Channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmkyKssxvQ>

Worship Notes (continued)
Service of Lessons and Carols – December 31

A service of Lessons and Carols is an opportunity to **dwell in the richness of God's Word** and the promise of God's Word incarnate, Jesus Christ through scripture and song. **Worship is at 9:00 am.**

Worship Volunteers Wanted

As we enter a new year, we are looking to fill out worship volunteer schedule. **Training is available** for any position. You are welcome to **sign up for just one week to give it a try or multiple weeks** to practice and get comfortable! Sign-ups are available in the Greeting Area.

Assistant Minister

Help lead worship by reading scripture and prayers and assisting in the distribution of communion.

Greeter

Greet people as they enter for worship and hand out bulletins.

Usher

Ring the bell before and during worship, attend to lights and doors, and coordinate offering collection.

Bread Baker

Bake or purchase bread to be used for communion during worship.

Counter

(contact Pastor Katie, no sign-up sheet)

Serve in a team of two to count the offering after worship.

Eucharistic Minister

(contact Pastor Katie, no sign-up sheet)

Visit and take communion from our Sunday celebration to those unable to be physically in worship.

Altar Guild

(contact Pastor Katie, no sign-up sheet)

Set up for and clean up after worship; change the paraments to match the color of the day.

What is Epiphany?

Epiphany is **one of the oldest traditions** in the Christian church, dating back to the second century. From our liturgical resource, Sundays and Seasons: "The feast of Epiphany ("manifestation") **concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God's glory revealed** in the person of Jesus Christ for all people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. **We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God's love to all people.** Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th, 12 days after Christmas. In worship, we will celebrate Epiphany on the Sunday following January 6th. Following the day of Epiphany, we observe the "**season after Epiphany**" until we begin our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday, which this year is February 14th.



Vestry Installation – January 7

We are so grateful to those who dedicate time and energy to **serve in various leadership roles** within the congregation. As we begin a new year, the vestry will be charged with leading the congregation through the coming year during **the installation of the vestry during worship on January 7th.**

Serving Others

St. John Food Pantry

Our **food pantry has been seeing an increase in usage**. If you notice that the outdoor pantry is looking empty, **please move stuff from the inside shelves**. As the weather drops below freezing more regularly, **please be aware of how any items might store in freezing temperatures** (typically items with liquid should not be outside during freezing temperatures). People who use our pantries have asked that we focus our offerings on **toiletries, cleaning supplies, and paper products as well as easy-to-make meals** (e.g., soups or other microwavable meals).

Mission Endowment Committee

Have you heard about the Mission Endowment Committee? This group meets a few times each year to **determine where to send the funds** earned as interest on a fund dedicated solely for this purpose. The Mission Endowment Committee works to see that **our support includes organizations that serve local, regional, and global needs**.

Thank You!

Thank you to all those who helped to bake dozens upon dozens of cookies and goodies for the participants in the local Meals on Wheels program. The goodies were so appreciated throughout December!

Once again, St. John took on the challenge of 90 tags on the Angel Tree... and once again, every single tag was taken and replaced with a gift under the tree for a person under the care of Glade Run Services! Thank you to all who helped make Christmas special for these children and youth!

Around the Church

2024 Church Directory

It's time for us to **update our church directory!** There will be a copy of 2023's directory in the Greeting Area for the first few weeks of January. Please go through the directory and **add or edit any information you would like included in the 2024 directory**. If you have contact information that you do not want in the directory but would like to make sure is **updated for the office's records, please contact Pastor Katie or the office directly with that information**.

Newsletter Mailing List Update

We are **updating our Newsletter Mailing preferences**. Each month, we **email** a PDF version of the newsletter, **mail** physical copies, and have **copies available in the Greeting Area**. If you would like to be added to or removed from either the electronic list or physically mailed list, please contact the office.

Vestry Retreat – January 27

The newly installed vestry will gather for a day of planning and visioning on **Saturday, January 27th from 9:30am – 2:30pm**. The vestry retreat is a great way to set the tone for the new calendar year as we pray for and strategically plan for the coming year.

Around the Church (continued) **Garden Update**

One way to help maintain the ecosystem of the garden over the winter is to leave dead plants into the winter so that bugs can find a safe place to live during the cold winter months. By keeping the dead plants in the garden, we return some nutrients back to the soil as they decompose. By minimizing disruption to the soil, we give microorganisms a chance to build up in the soil and continue from last year to next. And by placing a blanket of straw over the whole garden, we protect the top layer of the soil, and we minimize weed growth in the spring.

Believe it or not, **it will be time to start seeds soon!** This year, we'd love to **include vegetable varieties that you love to have in your own garden!** We will adjust our garden signs to reflect why each variety is a favorite of a member of the St. John community. Pastor Katie is happy to start seeds for you, or we will aim for a planting of seedlings in the garden in late May/early June. If you plan to bring seedlings to the church garden, **please let Pastor Katie know so that she can plan the garden** to have room for everything and a variety of produce for people to enjoy.

Fellowship Opportunities

Christmas Continues! December 29



Come to the church on **Friday, December 29th at 6:00 pm for some Christmas classics!** We will have pizza and hot cocoa and popcorn while we enjoy a couple of classics of the season. Blankets and comfy clothes (or PJs!) are encouraged! (Due to copyright concerns, we cannot advertise specifics, but we're happy to share them individually!)



New Group for Adults

We are looking to start a social group of adults. This group could attend plays and events together, play cards, participate in volunteer activities, etc. All seasoned saints or retired individuals who would be interested in attending an organizational meeting on Monday, January 15th or January 22nd, please contact Missy Kramer 724-316-5590.

White Elephant Bingo – January 20

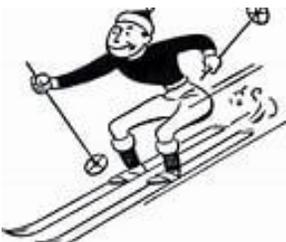
Saturday, January 20th, 3:00 – 7:00 pm

The rules are simple. Everybody brings a **wrapped white elephant gift**. Everyone can **play as many cards** as they wish. **When you get a Bingo**, you **choose a gift** from those on the table, or you can take a gift from someone else. Each participant is asked to **contribute \$7 for pizza and drinks**.



Kids Club and Youth Group Ski Trip – February 3

Ski season is here! Join the Kids Club and Youth Group for their annual trip to **Peak n Peak on February 3rd**. If you're interested, please contact Pastor Katie for more information. Cost and logistics are partially dependent on number of attendees. Sign up deadline is January 21.



Faith Formation

First Communion Classes

We will have two sessions to help children preparing to receive communion for the first time learn the stories and traditions of Holy Communion in our church. **If you are interested in your child receiving their first communion this year** at the Palm Sunday worship service, please contact Pastor Katie and dates will be selected for these sessions. The Lutheran church does not have a specific age at which communion is first offered. It is a decision to be made for and with each child and their family.

Confirmation Classes – Third Saturdays (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. **During our meeting in December the students explored the story of Saul, David and Solomon and considered the ways our Christian faith is deeply connected to the Jewish faith and how God's Word is True and speaks to both traditions.**

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. 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 and bring your neighbors and friends to share in the fun!

Adult Bible Study

Over the next year, our Sunday morning gospel readings will come primarily from the gospel of Mark. Join us for this **5-week series exploring the context and audience of Mark** as well as themes found throughout this short gospel. Contact the office to receive **weekly outlines and a schedule of topics and readings for the series.** Zoom links are also available by contacting the office. Wednesdays and Sundays will have the same material to offer flexibility in attendance patterns. We will meet **Wednesdays, Jan. 10-Feb. 7 at 7:00 pm and Sundays, Jan. 14 – Feb. 11 at 6:30 pm.**
All are welcome regardless of previous knowledge of church attendance!

Kids Club and Youth Group

The Mars Area Youth Group and Kids Club are joint ministries with Mars United Presbyterian Church. Youth Group (Grades 6-12) meets at Mars United Presbyterian Church and Kids Club (Grades 2-5) meets at St. John. We are looking forward to getting back to our regularly scheduled meetings! **Each group will meet in their respective locations on January 14th and 28th, 1:00 – 2:30 pm.**

December News and Updates

Angel Tree



It's always incredible to see the pieces of paper on the tree get transformed into a car full of gifts!

Live Nativity at Mars United Presbyterian

Thank you to all who joined us for this live-action retelling of the Christmas Story alongside the people of Mars United Presbyterian and some very fuzzy animals!



Meals on Wheels Cookies



Thank you to all our bakers who made tasty treats for December!

Pancake Breakfast

The pancakes were so good! Thanks to everyone who came and enjoyed some delicious pancakes!



A Very Messy Christmas

Messes were made as we celebrated Christ born as a baby at Messy Church!



Sunday School Craft

Our Sunday School made gifts for those unable to come and worship with us.



Kids Club and Youth Group Caroling

We walked the halls and made a joyful noise at St. John Senior Living!



2024 Vestry

Below is the 2024 Vestry as elected in our December Congregational Meeting. At the December Vestry Meeting, chairs, representatives to council, and secretaries were selected for each board. The Vestry also elected officers to council. Council is comprised of the officers (president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer) and the chair and representative to council from each board (Deacons, Elders, Trustees). The council will be approved by the congregation at the January congregational meeting.

Council President – Denise Hager
Council Vice-President – David Dreher
Secretary – Jamie Weaver
Financial Secretary – Kelly Greb
Treasurer –

Deacons

Sherry Davidson - Secretary
Kelly Greb
Denise Hager
Cindy Knauff – Representative to Council
Laura Kramer
Jill Wilkes
Erin Weaver - Chair

Elders

Valerie Cardinal
Keith Cardinal - Chair
Jen Miller
Vern Miller
Chuck Olescyski - Representative to Council
Kim Richards
Ruth Ann Tully - Secretary

Trustees (*Chair and representative pending*)

Bob Davidson
David Dreher
Dan Kramer
Todd Niklewicz
John Tully
Jamie Weaver - Secretary
Larry Werner

Board and Committee Meeting Schedule

Deacons: Monthly, 1st Tuesday at 7:00 pm
Elders: Monthly, 1st Tuesday at 7:00 pm
Trustees: Monthly, 1st Sunday after worship
Council: Monthly, 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 pm
Mission Endowment: Quarterly, as needed
Mutual Ministry: Quarterly, as needed

Other Standing Committees

Mission Endowment

Beverly Crislip	Missy Kramer	Janet Senka
Beth Fitzgerald	Dave Knauff	Ruth Ann Tully

Mutual Ministry

Keith Cardinal	Ruth Ann Tully	David Dreher
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January 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Deacons' Meeting 7 pm Elders' Meeting 7 pm	3	4	5	6
7 Worship 9:00 am Vestry Installation Sunday School 10:15 am Trustees' Meeting 10:15am	8	9	10 Adult Bible Study - Mark 7:00 pm	11	12	13
14 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Adult Bible Study - Mark 6:30 pm	15	16 Council Meeting 7 pm	17 Adult Bible Study - Mark 7:00 pm	18	19	20 Confirmation Class 9:30-11:30am White Elephant Bingo 6:30 pm Newsletter Articles Due
21 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Adult Bible Study - Mark 6:30 pm	22	23	24 Adult Bible Study - Mark 7:00 pm	25	26	27 Vestry Retreat 9:30am - 2:30pm
28 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Annual Meeting 10:15am Birthday / Anniversary Coffee hour 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Adult Bible Study - Mark 6:30 pm	29	30	31 Adult Bible Study - Mark 7:00 pm			



- 1/01 Laura Kramer
- 1/16 Chuck Olescyski
- 1/21 Kathy Marshall
- 1/24 Madison Cardinal
- 1/27 Gianna Julio



January Newsletter

Address service requested

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