

June
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
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Mars, PA 16046*

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Pastor Katie's email: pastorkmcneal@gmail.com
Pastor's Cell #: 412-407-3166*

Please call to ensure availability before coming to the office.

I grew up attending a traditional Lutheran church. I've frequently called myself "a cradle Lutheran." The Lutheran liturgy is familiar and comfortable to me. Sometimes as I lead worship, I realize my body will go through motions on autopilot. My body knows that after the peace, you stay standing for the liturgy of communion. My body knows that after the prayer of the day, you sit down to hear the scriptures. I even recall falling back on bits of sung liturgy when I was trying to figure out how to quiet a fussy baby I was babysitting one night. And yet, I also remember always wondering "why?" Why do we sit for the readings, then stand for the prayers? Why does the service stay the same week in and week out? Those questions stuck with me for a while.

It wasn't until I started studying worship and liturgy that I started to get some answers. But as I learned more about the source of these practices, as I learned more about how human brains and bodies learn and grow, I developed a greater appreciation for the way we worship and how it invites people of all ages and backgrounds to learn through worship. Over the course of this summer, I hope to invite you to the same renewed appreciation for the liturgy we follow each Sunday. Each week we will slow down a different portion of worship, reflecting on the impact of that piece of liturgy and why we do what we do.

Worship is not something we do to get a check mark. It's not something we do because we've always done it. It's not something we do alone. Worship is something we do as the diverse and eclectic body of Christ. Worship is an opportunity to experience the presence of the divine. It is an opportunity to be fed and nourished, renewed in the abundance of God's grace in community. It is an opportunity to give thanks for all that God has given us – ourselves, our time, and our possessions. It is an opportunity to celebrate the good news that God gives to us. Worship is a time for us to connect with the holy in mind, body, and soul. Worship is something we do together to support one another as we, together, seek to experience faith and worship the God who was, who is, and who is to come.

So if you have a question that has been itching at your brain about worship, if you have wondered why we do what we do in worship, whether it has been ingrained into your mind and body since childhood or it is still relatively new to you, you are invited to come and worship this summer. And I pray that in this worship, in the podcast recordings released this summer (see "Facets of Faith" for more information), I pray that your heart is reignited in the wonder, mystery, and holy of worship.

Peace,
Pastor Katie

Find Us on Social Media

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

Online Sunday Worship

Worship with us online! Service is livestreamed on our YouTube Channel at 9:00am on Sundays at <https://www.youtube.com/@St.JohnLutheranChurch-2>

Worship Notes

Young Worship Leaders

During the summer, because of a wide variety of schedules and availabilities, we will invite people to volunteer for worship leadership roles traditionally held by our younger worshippers, including acolyte, offering collection, and young readers. Individuals are welcome to sign up ahead of time or volunteer on the day of, prior to the announcements.

Adult Worship Leaders

Individuals are welcome to sign up to help lead worship in a variety of roles using the online sign up board at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>.

The online sign up sheet is also available through the new church app.

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
7-June	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Casey S	VOLUNTEER	David D Cora S
14-June	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	David D Cora S
21-June	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	David D Cora S
28-June	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	David D Cora S
5-July	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	David D Laura G

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.

Good news! This method provides a higher quality image and sound as well as an easier point of access as there is no password needed!

To access the livestream either during worship or the recording at a later time, visit the church's YouTube page at <http://www.youtube.com/@St.JohnLutheranChurch-2>.

Don't forget to subscribe to the YouTube channel to make finding it easier. The livestream is also available on the church app.

We will be switching to livestreaming worship directly on YouTube on Sunday, June 7th.



YouTube

Facets of Faith

The words we say, the music we sing, the movements we make, the rituals we practice, the space in which we meet, the objects we use... a lot goes into the act of Sunday worship. During the summer, we are shifting gears at Facets of Faith. Instead of digging into the weekly scripture reading, **we are asking the whats, hows, and whys of worship. Each episode will explore a different element of worship and invite listeners to a deeper connection with liturgy (the what?) and what it means to gather in and for worship each Sunday morning.** Episodes will be released weekly. If you have a worship question, feel free to let us know and then stay tuned to see when we'll explore your question on the podcast!

Summer Worship Series

From Advent (four weeks before Christmas) to Pentecost Sunday (the eighth and final Sunday of Easter), the scripture readings used for worship help us to connect with the earthly ministry of Jesus as we move from birth to life to death to resurrection and finally, to ascension. After the ascension, the focus of the church calendar shifts to exploring how we respond to the Good News we have received in Christ. One of the ways we respond to the Good News is in our worship. **During the summer, we will shift our liturgical practices from the traditional scripted language to a more conversational tone wherein we are able to slow down and reflect on the various elements of worship.** Why do we begin each worship with confession? Why does the greeting come after the confession? Why do we offer such a long prayer before communion? Why do we share the peace in the middle of the service? All these questions and more will be tackled by our summer worship podcast (see "Facets of Faith" for more information) and celebrated in our communal worship.

Holy Trinity Sunday – May 31st

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.**

Service of Hope and Healing – June 11th

"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.

Campfire Worship – June 30th

Summertime means campfires! **Gather around a campfire on the lawn for an evening worship service! Worship will begin at 7:00pm.** S'mores will be available after worship. Pastor Katie may very well be ready with some mountain pie supplies as well! **Bring your own chair/blanket and come for this brief worship service including several camp favorite songs!** Campfire worships will continue through the summer, meeting on a different day of the week each month to broaden people's ability to attend at least one during the summer. Join us on Tuesday, June 30th, Wednesday, July 29th, and Thursday, August 20th.

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 also provide assistance.

Church App



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>.



White Elephant Bingo – June 6th

This favorite activity for all ages is back for a summer edition! Bring a small bagged gift for the prize table and get ready to win and steal gifts throughout the afternoon. To add to the festivity, you are welcome (though not required) to bring an appetizer to share. Around dinner time, we'll collect \$5 from each person to order pizza for dinner. People aged 2 – 102, this is always a fun event for everyone! We'll begin the festivities at 3 and play until 7ish.

WHITE ELEPHANT BINGO

June 6th
3-7ish
at St. John Lutheran Church

\$5.00 DONATION FEE towards pizza

Not necessary, but if you would like to bring an appetizer to share,

BRING A BAGGED GIFT for the PRIZE TABLE to WIN & STEAL.

Fun for all ages!

Youth Car Wash Fundraiser – June 27th



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 at Adams Township Park. 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.



We are still in need of financial assistance to support our young people exploring their faith at camp this summer. Please consider offering a designated offering so that money is never a barrier to life changing adventures in faith at camp where each and every child is accepted, challenged, and sent out to share the light of Christ with the world. **Please also hold our young people in prayer** as they prepare for their very first time going on this great adventure.

Stewardship



Stewardship is a condition, a way of being.

– Dr. Marty Stevens



Stewardship Corner

The Foundation of Stewardship

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it; the world, and those who live in it. -Psalm 24:1

The Bible consistently gives us a countercultural and counterintuitive understanding of the world and ourselves. It's so radical that many of us can't accept it.

The idea is that the world belongs to God, and so does everything **IN** the world. Even **US!** We, who proudly think of ourselves as autonomous, self-directed and self-made, actually belong to God. In other words, we don't own ourselves. We are possessions of the Almighty.

Think about that for just a minute. We don't own the earth, our houses, our cars, our possessions, our animals, our children, or even ourselves. It all belongs to God. We belong to God. We are humble servants, slaves, actually.

The reality that God owns everything, even us, forms the foundation for biblical stewardship. If God owns everything, including us, then we are responsible to God for our wisest and best use of the planet, our possessions, our talents and our lives.

Taking that responsibility seriously, God's people will prayerfully make choices that are in accordance with God's wishes. We will care for ourselves, our neighbors, and the earth. We will strive to love the Lord our God with all our being, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Prayerfully consider, how are you doing?

--Rob Blezard

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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>

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



VIBRANT FAITH
GOD SHINES THROUGH US

care, justice, welcome, and creativity, vibrant faith takes shape in everyday ministry. As we gather, may we be

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.

You are also able to watch the proceedings of synod assembly online.

Visit swpasynod.org to learn more.

Juneteenth Celebration – Sunday, June 14th

Continuing our synod's relationship with Bethel A.M.E. Church (2720 Webster Ave Pittsburgh, PA 15219), **you are invited to join a Juneteenth celebration including worship, a community meal, and the blessing of the community garden.** Worship begins at 11:00 am with Bishop Melissa Stoller preaching. The meal and garden blessing will follow worship. Bethel AME Church is the oldest African American congregation west of the Allegheny Mountains. Juneteenth (short for June 19th) is a celebration of the day when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas in 1865 to ensure that all enslaved people be freed.

Funding Forward: Summer Book Study – Thursdays, June 25 – July 30

Join a synod-wide book study on Funding Forward led by Pastor Erin Jones. Drawing on years of teaching, research, and field work, author Grace Duddy Pomroy shows there are no one-size-fits-all solutions for church and nonprofit finances. **Funding Forward** can help ministers and ministries move through the funding forward process from start to finish. Co-sponsored by the Synod's Care and Leadership of Congregations Committee and the Stewardship Team.

The book study meets Thursdays, June 25 – July 30 at 7:00 pm on Zoom. Contact Pastor Katie for the zoom address.

Wayfarer Magazine

Each quarter, the synod publishes a magazine that celebrates ministries happening throughout the synod as well as offers reflections, prayers, and updates from the synod leadership. You can find a printed copy of this newsletter in our greeting area, though we ask that you please leave that copy there. An online copy may be found at <https://www.swpasynod.org/wayfarer> as well as a request form to receive your own copy.

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



We have many neighbors who are deeply grateful for the ministry of the little food pantry. We regularly see a number of items come and go through the pantry as people are making use of the items to help them get through the month.

Spaghetti sauce, vanilla instant breakfast, and cleaning supplies are particularly appreciated by our guests at this time, though a wide variety of items helps to ensure all our guests can find something helpful. **As the weather warms,**

please be aware that certain items are not shelf-stable at high temperatures. These items need to stay inside. If you know of a need for the building to be open at a certain time, Pastor Katie is happy to make appointments for individuals to access the indoor pantry.



Community Garden



The community garden offers members of our community free nutritious produce that is grown without pesticides. The garden includes tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, eggplant, peppers, herbs, and for the first time, leeks! **To bring all these plants to a bountiful harvest, help is needed to water and weed the garden as needed. If you would like to help with either or both needs, please contact Pastor Katie** for the schedule. There are also a few finishing projects to make the garden clean and inviting to our neighbors, including spreading dirt and mulch. Contact Pastor Katie if you'd like to help.

July 4th Parade Hospitality

Each year residents from all over the area gather to watch the Mars 4th of July Parade. A great spot to see the parade march by is right on the lawn of St. John! **Come and help pass out cold water and freezie pops to those in need of some cool hospitality** while waiting for and watching the parade. The parade starts at 5:30 pm. So please arrive around 4:30 pm so that we can offer cool drinks and tasty treats to folks as they wait for the parade to begin.

Faith Formation

Summer Book Discussions

We are pausing our weekly Bible Study meetings and instead reading several short books together over the summer. Each book is around 100 pages and less than 2 hours on Audible. Copies of the books will be available in the church office throughout the summer. Anne Lamott's books are also available on Kindle and Audible. The books and meetings dates are below. Discussion typically lasts an hour and a half. Zoom links will be available on the website and through the Bible study email lists. You are welcome to attend either the Sunday or the Wednesday meetings.

June: *Help, Thanks, Wow* by Anne Lamott

Sunday, June 21, 6:30 pm
Wednesday, June 24, 6:30 pm

July: *Stitches* by Anne Lamott

Wednesday, July 22, 6:30 pm
Sunday, July 26, 6:30 pm

August: *Meta Moments* by Dave Daubert (not available in electronic form)

Wednesday, August 19th, 6:30 pm
Sunday, August 23rd, 6:30 pm

Messy Church Update

We are pausing our regular Messy Church gathering for the summer. If you would like to help shape Messy Church in the fall, please contact Pastor Katie.



Vacation Bible School

Sunday, July 12 – Thursday, July 16!

We are 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. Register your child(ren) today at stjohnchurchmars.org/childrenyouth

A Note from Miss Ruth Ann to her Sunday School Class:

As our sessions in Sunday School (Faith Formation) come to an end for the summer, I want to thank Abigail, Anna, Ava, Carissa and Nathan. They have read and discussed the serious and the not-so-serious topics willingly. Thanks also to the parents of these young people. I have enjoyed our time together. Until September. *Ruth Ann Tully*

God is Here!

At the beginning of each board meeting (the Deacons, Elders, Trustees who are entrusted with the leadership of the congregation), each group reflects on the work they have done as a board and identifies the way God is moving in and through the work and ministry of the congregation. God is present in the sense of community during coffee hours, in the care for those who are struggling and in need of the gift of meals, in the way many hands come together to care for the resources entrusted to us during work days, in the way people feel emboldened to talk about faith with their family and friends in new ways, in conversations sparked in Bible study that linger for days afterward. God is moving in and through the people of St. John! Where have you seen or felt God at work?

June 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Vestry Meetings 7:00 p	3	4 Worship Planners 7:00p	5	6 White Elephant Bingo 3:00 p
7 Worship, 9:00 a	8	9	10	11 Service of Hope and Healing, 6:30p	12 Synod Assembly	13 Synod Assembly
14 Worship, 9:00 a	15	16 Council Meeting 7:00 p	17	18	19	20
21 Worship, 9:00 a Book Study Discussion, 6:30p	22	23	24 Book Study Discussion, 6:30 p	25 Communion at Penn Mar Apartments (Sign up at Penn Mar)	26 Mini Golf Outing, 7:00 p	27 Youth Car Wash Fundraiser Agway, 10a-2p
28 Worship, 9:00 a Birthday/Anniversary Celebration, 10:15a	29	30 Campfire Worship, 6:30 p	1	2	3	4 <i>4th of July</i> Parade hospitality on the lawn



6/05 Gerald Brunson
6/06 Henry Ford
6/08 Cindy Knauff
6/12 Janet Senka
6/13 Laura Gold
6/19 Beth Fitzgerald
6/21 Katie Niklewicz
6/24 Reed Richards
6/26 Alaina Nagel
6/28 Abigail Cardinal
6/29 Gabriella Julio

June Newsletter

Address service requested

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