

May  
2025

# St. John Lutheran Church



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

Web site: [www.stjohnchurchmars.org](http://www.stjohnchurchmars.org)  
Church Office: (724) 625-1830  
Office email: [office@stjohnchurchmars.org](mailto:office@stjohnchurchmars.org)  
Pastor Katie's email: [pastorkmcneal@gmail.com](mailto: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)*

## 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.*

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 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? And how do you live out these promises in your daily life?

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](https://www.facebook.com/stjohnchurchmars)) or Follow us on **Instagram** ([@stjohnchurchmars](https://www.instagram.com/stjohnchurchmars))

## Online Sudy 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 try to find someone to cover and tell the office of the change.

	<b>Acolyte</b>	<b>Offering</b>	<b>Offering</b>	<b>Young Reader</b>
<b>4-May</b>	YOUTH LED WORSHIP	YOUTH LED WORSHIP	YOUTH LED WORSHIP	
<b>11-May</b>	Ella N	Jules K	Ava N	
<b>18-May</b>	Ava N	Anna K	Nathan K	Ava N
<b>25-May</b>	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	
<b>1-June</b>	Carissa M	Lydia M	Cate S	

### Adult Worship Leaders

	<b>Greeters</b>	<b>Usher</b>	<b>Assistant Minister</b>	<b>Bread Baker</b>	<b>Counters</b>
<b>4-May</b>	YOUTH LED WORSHIP	YOUTH LED WORSHIP	YOUTH LED WORSHIP	YOUTH LED WORSHIP	Erin W John T
<b>11-May</b>	Cora S	VOLUNTEER	Emma N	Cora S	Erin W John T
<b>18-May</b>	Cora S	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Cora S	Erin W John T
<b>25-May</b>	Cora S	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Cora S	Erin W John T
<b>1-June</b>	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	David D Cora S

Sign up to volunteer for an open slot using the sign-up sheets in the greeting area  
or at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>

### Easter Sermon Series – Witness the Resurrection

The season of Easter only begins on Easter Sunday! Each week during the season of Easter, **we will hear biblical stories of lives being transformed in the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.** We will hear witness and testimony from people such as Thomas, Lydia, the disciples, a Roman jailer and more. As we hear these stories of new life in the resurrection, we will ask ourselves how we witness the resurrection. What's our resurrection testimony? **How are we transformed by the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection?**

### Youth-Led Worship – May 4<sup>th</sup> (at Mars United Presbyterian)

We love supporting the faith formation and growth of our young people in worship! One way we can support them in their growth is by giving them leadership opportunities and inviting them to design and lead worship for us! Our spring Youth-Led Worship will be **May 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am at Mars United Presbyterian.** Please note the different time and location of worship!

*Worship Notes (continued)*  
**Dinner Church – May 8<sup>th</sup>**

What does it mean to be disciples, followers of Jesus? Perhaps the best place to tackle this question is at the table with Jesus. At Dinner Church, we meet Jesus at the table, the Lord's Table and the dinner table. Dinner Church is a worship service that interweaves Holy Communion, scripture and discussion, dinner, and community building. We begin at 6:30 and typically end around 8:30pm.

All are welcome!

**Pentecost Sunday – June 8**

Pentecost marks the culmination of our Easter celebration as the **50<sup>th</sup> 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.



**Serving Others**  
**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. When people are asked what goods they are most often looking for, they typically respond with items that are not covered by SNAP benefits (i.e. cleaning products, paper products, personal hygiene products) or easy to prepare meals.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Mission Emphasis: Grapevine Center, Inc.**

Grapevine Center, Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization based in Butler County that is consumer-operated and **designed to support persons living with mental illnesses, struggling with homelessness, and reintegrating after recently being released from jail.** Like most support groups, it offers a chance to share problems, advice, and ideas with others who have similar concerns in an atmosphere of understanding, empathy, confidentiality, and companionship. As an organization, it helps to secure employment, furniture, clothes, shoes, coats and food for people in need, regardless of their housing situation. Their building enables them to also offer aid through supplying basic needs like showers and hot meals as well as telephone and computer support. Grapevine Center also offers transportation to important appointments, like the social security office, court, and the grocery store. **This organization offers a lifeline to help people stabilize their living situations, get back on their feet, and reintegrate into the community through learning opportunities, peer mentoring, and offering support for basic needs such as showers and hot meals.** To make an offering to the mission emphasis, mark your envelope "mission emphasis."

**Faith Formation**  
**By Heart**

**By Heart meets Sundays at 10:15am.** By Heart is for those who want to be introduced to faith, those who find the Creed and Lord's Prayer to be rote exercise and the sacraments obscure rituals, those who have the these texts and Luther's explanations of them memorized and hold them near and dear. **By Heart is for all teens and adults looking to ignite and reignite their spark of faith this Easter as together we ask "But what does this mean?"**

Learn more at [stjohnchurchmars.org/byheart](http://stjohnchurchmars.org/byheart)

*Faith Formation (continued)*

### **Adult Bible Study**

Throughout Easter, **our second reading will come from the book of Revelation.** For many in the church, Revelation is a confusing book. It is a book that disturbs us and, especially given many popular interpretations, frightens us. The bizarre, confusing images, however, have inspired poets and artists, musicians and movie-makers. **They also offer us glimpses into who Jesus is and who we are called to be in response.** To help us navigate this text, we will explore the literary style of this book and how it speaks to our Easter season celebrations. **Bible study groups meet on Sundays at 6:30pm (beginning April 27) and Wednesdays at 7:00pm (beginning April 30).** For those who prefer to attend via Zoom, links are available on the website at [stjohnchurchmars.org/upcomingevents](http://stjohnchurchmars.org/upcomingevents)

### **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 4<sup>th</sup>, there will be no Sunday School because of Youth Led Worship. On May 11<sup>th</sup> we will do a special Mother's Day Craft. And on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 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!

### **Kids Club and Youth Group**

The Mars Area Youth Group and Kids Club are joint ministries with Mars United Presbyterian Church. They will lead us in worship on May 4<sup>th</sup>. **On May 11<sup>th</sup> we will have a joint year-end party at Mars United Presbyterian Church from 1:00-2:30pm.** We will then take a break from regularly scheduled meetings for the summer. Stay tuned for summer fun, though!

### **Confirmation Class**

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. **In April, the students were challenged to knit together the stories they have learned over the years.** How are Moses and Noah connected? How do we get from Joseph to David? The students created a timeline that we will use as the beginning of future Faith Formation space decorations. We wrapped up our discussion with a conversation about the cross and the depth of meaning we have in this symbol. **We will have our final class for the school year on May 31.**

### **Messy Church – May 16**



**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.

**The April Messy Church is the Kids Cross Walk.  
We return to our 5:30-7:30 timeframe on May 16.**

# Around the Church

## 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. Weather pending, we will be planning to plant things in the garden the week of May 11<sup>th</sup>. Contact Pastor Katie if you'd like to help plant things!

## Website Updates!

**Have you signed up for the new members portal on the website?** When you visit the website at [stjohnchurchmars.org](http://stjohnchurchmars.org), there is an option to "log in" in the upper right corner. When you log in, you will have access to a member portal. Here you can offer ways to connect with other members, access the latest directory, access the online sign-up board at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>, or view the current vestry. To help keep members safe, the office will approve membership requests.

Do you have other things you'd like to find on the members portal? Tell Pastor Katie!

## Help Needed

Each Christmas, the church building is surrounded by a choir of wooden angels. However after years of faithfully taking their place in the winter weather, many of the angels are ready to retire from their post. We are looking for volunteers to make replacement angels for Christmas 2025. There is a pattern available. If you would like to help, please contact John Tully.



## Ladies' Tea – May 10

Mark your calendar for this year's **Ladies Tea on May 10<sup>th</sup> 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 **tables fill up quickly. The cost is \$20**. But there are still a few spots left, so get your ticket today!



## Thank You!!

Holy Week is an incredibly rich time in the church. During Holy Week, we dwell in the stories immediately surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection. We remember the hopes of the people as he entered Jerusalem for the last time. We remember the last meal he shared with his friends and his shocking act of washing their feet. We remember the love he poured out on the cross. And we remember the confusion at the empty tomb before the celebration of the joy of the resurrection. This year, in addition to our traditional 7pm services on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, and Palm/Passion Sunday and Easter Sunday services, we added two more ways for people to connect with this week that lies at the center of our faith. The Kids Cross Walk and the Stations of the Cross Tableaux were both richly meaningful and appreciated opportunities.

THANK YOU to everyone who generously gave of their time, talents, and treasures to make this week extra meaningful this year! Thank you to those who had the vision and the dream. Thank you to those who said yes when asked to help. Thank you to those who came and participated in any one of the worshipful events of the week. Thank you to those who helped to invite others to come and see.

Thank you to those who held the week in prayer. Thank you. You make a difference.



# Around the Synod

## **2025 Synod Assembly – May 17 (online) and June 12-14 (in person)**

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. This year, those decisions include the election of a new bishop for the synod. **Thank you to David Dreher and Denise Hager for serving as our lay voting representatives this year.**

## Lutherlyn

### **Lutherlyn Summer Camp Registration**

Lutherlyn Summer Camp Registration is OPEN! Many of the camps fill quickly, so plan to register early! If your child would like to attend Lutherlyn, but finances are standing in your way, please contact Pastor Katie. Camperships are available through Lutherlyn! **Finances should never stop a kid from being able to experience the life-changing adventures in faith at Lutherlyn**, a place where each child is accepted, challenged, and sent out into the world to spread the love of Christ.

Learn more about the many different camps and what you can expect at a week of camp at

<https://www.lutherlyn.com/programs/summercamp/>.

### **CampBlast! – May 10**

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.**

## Bishop Eaton's Easter Message

In the Gospel story in the last Sunday in Lent, we hear about Jesus visiting with his dear friends, Martha, Mary and Lazarus. This happened just after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. And Mary was anointing Jesus' feet with pure nard, this incredibly costly, precious substance. And then she dried his feet with her hair. Nard is a very powerful, pungent substance, and the Gospel says the room was filled with the fragrance.

Now I did a little research on nard, and some people would describe the smell as being pungent or earthy, or musty, or musky or like feet. So it was an interesting choice that people had in those days. And they did two things with nard. One, they would use nard to anoint the bodies of the dead in order to offset the stench of death, which Jesus had only encountered with his friend Lazarus a few days before. And it was also used for kings as a sign of royalty because of the luxury of this whole thing.

Well, Jesus was himself, like us, like the first Adam, an earth creature — pungent and full of life, dense in this sense. And this earth creature was obedient to death, reversing the work of the first Adam, who disobeyed and brought sin into the world. And we've suffered the consequences. The chief consequence is death, separation from God.

And now Jesus, the new Adam, the new earth creature, he's anointed, he says to Mary, for his burial and so that he will be using this incredibly pungent substance, while at the same time being very clear that he is, in fact, part of this incarnation, this earth creature. But instead of it being oil put on him to remove the stench of death, it became the anointing of a royal king. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the usual cycle of life and death has been disrupted forever. Jesus' death and resurrection promises new life and brings us new life.

Happy Easter, dear church. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop

# May 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
<b>4</b> <b>Combined Joint Worship</b> <b>at Mars UP, 10:00 am</b> Trustees Meeting 10:15am Adult Bible Study 6:30pm	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Elders' Meeting 7 pm	<b>7</b> Adult Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>8</b> Dinner Church 6:30 pm	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Ladies Tea 12:00 – 2:00
<b>11</b> Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Deacons' Meeting 10:15am By Heart 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club (combined Year End Party) Adult Bible Study 6:30pm	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Adult Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Messy Church 5:30 – 7:30 pm	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b> Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am By Heart 10:15 am St John Specialty 2:00 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30pm	<b>19</b> Communion at Penn Mar 1:45 pm	<b>20</b> Council Meeting 7:00 pm Newsletter Articles Due	<b>21</b> Adult Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>22</b> Worship Planners 7:00 pm	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b> Worship 9:00 am By Heart 10:15 am Sunday School 10:15 am Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Adult Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> Confirmation Class 9:30 – 11:30



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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Address service requested

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