

December
2023

St. John Lutheran Church



St. John Lutheran Church
PO Box 411
420 Beaver Street
Mars, PA 16046
Office Hours MWF, 8a-1p
(please call ahead to confirm availability)

Web site: www.stjohnchurchmars.org
Church Office: (724) 625-1830
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Pastor's Cell #: 412-407-3166

*And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...."*

Luke 1:46-47a

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.*

Throughout Advent, we will be joining Mary in singing these famous words. Known as "The Magnificat," Luke's account of Mary includes a song that gives thanks to God for making her the mother of the promised Savior, speaks of God's love for the poor and humble, and praises God's faithfulness to the covenant made with God's people.

Mary's song is revelatory, though it is not new. Throughout the song, there are references to many songs and prayers in the Old Testament. Yet they are still words that can still change the way we move in the current and future world. Mary's song gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of God fully realized. It's a song that not only hopes in the possibility of God but trusts whole-heartedly that God will continue to keep God's promises, as God has for generations before. Mary may not fully understand what it means for her to be the mother to God's son, but she can lean into the faithfulness of God; she can trust that God will keep God's promises.

Mary's song is timeless. It recounts words from generations past. And it hopes and trusts in the future of the fullness of God. And it gives voice to praise and thanksgiving now. So we sing it. We sing it several times. We sing it so that it can become our song too, so that our souls proclaim the greatness of God and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior, God Emmanuel, God with us, who was, is, and will be among us in Jesus, Mary's son.

This Advent, as we light candles to watch for Messiah, may we trust in God's faithfulness, may we sing with Mary, proclaiming God's greatness, God's strong justice and love, may we remember all that God has done, is doing, and will do, lifting the humble of heart, filling the hungry with wondrous things.

*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 **YouTube Channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmKYKssxvQ>

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING NOTICES

Vestry Election - Sunday, December 10, 2023

Vestry elections will take place following the worship service on Sunday, December 10. The congregation will be asked to vote on the slate for the 2024 Vestry.

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 Leaders

If you are unable to be present, please find someone to cover and tell the office of the change.

	Acolyte	Offering	Offering	Young Reader
3-December	Emma N	Luca K	Eva K	
10-December	Abigail C	Ava N	Emma N	
17-December	Anna K	Jules K	Abigail C	Abigail C
24-December (9:00am)	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	
24-December (Christmas Eve)	3:00p - TBD 7:30p - TBD	3:00p - TBD 7:30p - TBD	3:00p - TBD 7:30p - TBD	
25-December (Christmas Day)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
31-December	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	

Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
3-December	VOLUNTEER	Dave K	Denise H	Denise H	Denise H Katie N
10-December	VOLUNTEER	Dave K	Denise H	Denise H	Denise H Katie N
17-December	VOLUNTEER	Dave K	Denise H	Denise H	Denise H Katie N
24-December (9:00am)	VOLUNTEER	Dave K	Denise H	(No communion)	Denise H Katie N
24-December (Christmas Eve)	VOLUNTEER	3:00p - TBD 7:30p - Dave K	3:00p - Denise H 7:30p - TBD	Denise H	Denise H Katie N
25-December (Christmas Day)	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	None	(No communion)	Volunteer
31-December	VOLUNTEER	Dave K	Denise H	(No communion)	Denise H Katie N

Worship Notes (continued)

Volunteer Spotlight: Greeters

When you walk into a church, **how you are greeted can really set the tone.** Does someone say hello... hand you a bulletin... answer questions about where to find things? Does someone make you feel welcome? These are roles the Greeters have. **It's best to have someone at each entrance looking to welcome people to worship and help everyone know that we are glad that they are here.** Please sign up in the Greeting Area to help us fill this role of hospitality on Sunday mornings.

Advent Begins – December 3



Advent is the **season of preparation** as we get ready for Christmas. Regardless of what day of the week Christmas is, Advent is always the **four Sundays leading up to Christmas.** Because Advent is defined as the four Sundays before Christmas Day, this year the fourth Sunday of Advent will fall on December 24 (There will be no Sunday School on Dec 24). **Our 9:00 am worship celebration on December 24 will be a special service of Advent**

Lessons and Carols. Join us in worship as we wait for the coming Christ child and get ready for the gift of Christmas. Make sure your child gets their own **Advent calendar to count down** to Christmas. If you and/or your family would like to volunteer to participate in worship by **helping with lighting the Advent Wreath, please contact the office!**

Blue Christmas Worship Service – December 21

While Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Many feel the stress of expectations around Christmas. **A Blue Christmas service provides a time and place of solace.**

Join us **at Mars United Presbyterian Church** (232 Crowe Ave) in sharing and hearing prayers, scripture, and music that acknowledge that God's presence is for those who mourn and struggle this time of year. **Worship is on December 21, the longest night of the year, at 7:00 pm.**

Christmas Eve Worship Services – December 24

Join us for our **traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight worship services** filled with beloved hymns and carols, prayers, and scripture readings. **All are welcome as we come to celebrate Christ's coming** into the world.

Worship is at 3:00 pm and at 7:30 pm.

Christmas Day Worship Service – December 25

God did some surprising things by coming to earth! **Join us as we open gifts and tell the story of God with us, Emmanuel, in this interactive worship experience.** Worship will be at 9:00 am.

Service of Lessons and Carols – January 1

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. **Worship will be at 9:00 am.**

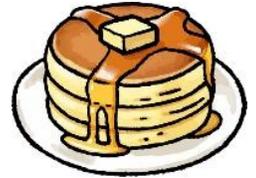
Around the Church

Living Nativity – December 8

Mars United Presbyterian Church is once again hosting the Living Nativity! **This year it will be a one-night only event on Friday, December 8, but you're not going to want to miss this!** There are going to be lots of live animals joining the performance. The Living Nativity show runs every half hour from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Join us for cookies and hot cocoa after the performance!

Pancake Breakfast – December 9

Who doesn't love a plateful of delicious pancakes?! Join us on **Saturday, December 9th from 8:00am-11:00am for a Pancake Breakfast at the church!** We will be collecting a free-will offering, but there will be no specific entrance fee. **Invite your friends and come eat pancakes with us!**



Youth Group and Kid's Club

The Joint Youth Group and Kids Club will be caroling at St. John Senior Center and having a combined **Christmas Party on December 17, 1:00 – 2:30 pm.** There will be lots of **games and snacks and other fun Christmas** activities! Know a kid in grades 2-12 who hasn't been to Kids Club or Youth Group yet? Invite them to join us for the party! **All are welcome!** While no reservations are required, **it's helpful to have an idea of who to expect so that we can prepare supplies.**

Greening of the Sanctuary – December 17

Help us with our final preparations for Christmas as we **prepare the sanctuary by putting up decorations.** If you are able to help decorate the church for Christmas, please stay after the worship service. Your help will be greatly appreciated. **Many hands will make light work!**



Faith Formation for All Ages

Sunday Morning Learning and Fellowship

All adults are welcome to join us during the Faith Formation hour (Sundays, 10:10am-11:10am) to discuss the scripture read during worship and how it applies to our daily lives. **Questions to guide and prompt discussion will be available as well as time to bring your own questions. Grab a cup of coffee and join us in the basement.**

Our younger students are invited to participate in one of our three age-appropriate classes (pre-readers, elementary school, and middle/high school). All our younger classes begin Sunday School together, learning a song and about the Apostles' Creed.



Faith Formation (continued)

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. **Our meeting in November; the students explored what we mean when we talk about the Word. We also explored just what church and worship are and how they are similar and different.**

Messy Church – Third Fridays (5:30-7:30pm)



Join us for a Very Messy Christmas on December 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.** 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

After we complete our series on the Lord's Prayer, we will take some time off before diving into **our next series: the Lutheran perspective on Mary**, the mother of Jesus. We will read various places in scripture where we see her faith in action as well as discuss how she impacts our own faith stories. **We will continue to have two different opportunities each week to engage with the material to allow people flexibility in their schedules. Our next series will meet on Sundays, 6:30-7:30 pm Nov. 26-Dec. 10 and Wednesdays, 7:00-8:00 pm Nov. 29-Dec. 13.** As always, weekly information sheets and zoom links are available. Contact the office to be added to the weekly emails with this information.

All are welcome to participate in the conversation! A new series will begin in January.

Serving Others

October, November, December Mission Emphasis – Boaz House

Our fourth quarter mission emphasis is the Boaz House. **The Boaz House is an independent clothing and food ministry** that serves in affiliation with Glade Run Presbyterian Church. The Boaz House serves 20-30 families with pantry food items each month and runs a continuous clothing closet for people from all over, offering as many clothes, coats, and sheets as they need. **There is no limit to who they will serve. They are particularly in need of children's clothing.** To contribute to the Boaz House through our mission emphasis, mark your offering "mission emphasis."

Meals on Wheels Cookie Baking – December 2

Get ready for an epic baking party! **We will be baking enough cookies for all the participants in the Meals on Wheels program to enjoy throughout December.** It's going to be an all-hands-on deck affair! Some cookies will have pre-made dough; some we'll make from scratch during our baking time. All levels of bakers are welcome to join us! We start baking at 9:00 am. To bake goodies at home to share, sign up in the Gathering Area at the church.

St. John Food Pantry

Maintaining the food pantry is a community effort! Help us to keep it stocked with items with a long shelf life, especially **personal hygiene, cleaning, and paper products.** And be sure **to invite people to make use of the food pantry as they need!** Outdoor pantries can be tricky with the fluctuating weather, so we want to be careful of what we keep in it. **Access to the indoor pantry is every Monday and Wednesday 9a-1p** with additional times available by calling Pastor Katie or the office.

Angel Tree



Sign up for a tag and help **make Christmas special for kids served by Glade Run Lutheran Services!** On the Tree in the Gathering Area are **tags with information for kids who need gifts** this Christmas. Gift cards should be placed in an envelope with Glade Run's tag attached. Please write the amount on the tag or on the card itself. Donated items should be unwrapped. **Attach Glade Run's tag to your donation** so it is visible. **Gifts are due by December 3rd.** Beyond the gifts under the tree, donated items received through Glade Run's annual drive provide joy, relief, and comfort all year long.

Did You Know?

The Advent Wreath

From our liturgical resources, Sundays and Seasons: "One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting in the midst of growing darkness **strengthen some of the Advent images** found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly **an image of everlasting life**, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that **Christ reaches into our time to lead us to everlasting life.** The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its **evergreen branches lead to the evergreen Christmas tree.**"



Wishing all of the St. John congregation and your families a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas season.

December 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 Cookie baking for Meals on Wheels 9:00 am
3 1 st Sunday of Advent Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Trustees' Meeting 10:15am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Deadline for Angel Tree Gifts Bible Study- Mary 6:30 pm	4	5 Deacons' Meeting 7 pm	6 Bible Study- Mary 7 pm	7	8 Living Nativity at Mars UP (232 Crowe Ave.) 6-8 pm	9 Panake Breakfast 8 – 11 am
10 2 nd Sunday of Advent Worship 9:00 am Congregational Mtg. 10:15 Sunday School 10:15 am Bible Study- Mary 6:30 pm	11	12 All Vestry Meeting 7 pm	13 Bible Study- Mary 7 pm	14	15 Messy Church 5:30 – 7:30 pm	16 Confirmation Class 9:30 – 11:30
17 3 rd Sunday of Advent Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1:00 – 2:30 pm	18	19	20 Newsletter Articles Due	21 Longest Night Service @ MUP	22	23
24 4 th Sunday of Advent Worship Service 9:00 am Christmas Eve – 3:00 pm and 7:30 pm	25 Christmas Day Worship – 9:00 am	26 Office Closed	27 Communion @ Penn Mar 1:45 pm	28	29	30
31 1 st Sunday of Christmas Lessons & Carols 9 am						



12/01 Dominic Cardinal
 12/07 Nathan Kramer
 12/11 Serafina Julio
 12/25 Jim Hager



December Newsletter

Address service requested

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