

February  
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  
420 Beaver Street  
Mars, PA 16046

Web site: [www.stjohnchurchmars.org](http://www.stjohnchurchmars.org)  
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Pastor's Cell #: 412-407-3166

Please call to ensure availability before coming to the office.

There was this little girl, maybe 3 years old. Her name was Abby. She worshipped with her parents at the church where I had just started working as the Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator. For months, she'd look at me shyly from behind her parents' legs as I talked with them. I don't remember when or how it happened, but after months of spending time with her family before or after worship, Abby asked if she could sit with me in worship. I wasn't leading worship. I was just going to sit by myself in the front row as I typically did. So, with her parents' permission, Abby came and sat with me in the front pew. After that, she sat with me most Sundays. At first, she would go back to her parents at some point in the service, but eventually, she stayed for the whole service, even if I had to stand up and preach or help with communion. I loved having Abby with me in worship. On some level, I loved it because it felt like I had reached a point of success as the Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator. On some level, I loved it because guiding her through the worship service brought new meaning to the service for me. But ultimately, I loved it, because in this little girl was God.

In the way Abby sat with me, just wanting to be near me, I felt God's desire for closeness with us. In the way Abby wanted to hear all about my pets at home and tell me about her dog, Noel, I felt God's desire to know us and be known by us. In her times of busyness and fidgeting, I felt God's desire for activity in our faith lives. In her quiet patience when I had to do something in the service, I felt God's patience, waiting for us to return to our place in God's love. In the way she giggled at whatever toddlers giggle at, I felt the joy of God in the simple delights of Creation. I saw this little girl for maybe an hour or two once a week. But in that time, Abby showed me God.

Worship is a communal activity. We worship God as a group, not a group of individuals, but as a group in relationship with one another. Maybe that relationship only lasts for as long as the service, but in that relationship, there is God. In the people sitting with us in worship, whether next to us or across the sanctuary, there is God. In the distracted people and the focused people, there is God. In the children and in the adults, there is God.

Years have passed since she was a young child sitting with me in worship. I almost don't recognize the teenager from the latest Christmas card from her mom. But I still think about the wonder of her choosing to sit and worship with me after all those months when she wouldn't even say a word to me. I remember looking down at her sitting next to me and seeing God in that precious child. And I give thanks for the ways that she helped me to learn and practice seeing God in every person with whom I worship, for wherever two or more are gathered in God's name, there is God among them.

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
<b>1-Feb</b>	Ava N	Carissa M	Ella N	
<b>8-Feb</b>	Josie W	Anna K	Nathan K	
<b>15-Feb</b>	Cate S	Lydia M	Abby C	Carissa M
<b>22-Feb</b>	Abby C	Josie W	Cate S	
<b>1-Mar</b>	Anna K	Ava N	Henry W	

### Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
<b>1-Feb</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Emma N	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Katie N John F
<b>8-Feb</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Casey S	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Katie N John F
<b>15-Feb</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Missy K	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Katie N John F
<b>22-Feb</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Missy K	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Katie N John F
<b>1-Mar</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Keith C	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Missy K John T



**Training is available** for any position. Sign-up in the Greeting Area or at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>.

### Serve as a Eucharistic Minister

For a variety of reasons, some people are unable to come and worship with the congregation in person on Sunday mornings, so we take worship to them! Eucharistic Ministers take elements reserved from the previous Sunday's worship service and follow a simple liturgy to bring communion to people in their homes. Surrounding this brief service in the home is opportunity for fellowship and relationship building with these valued members of St. John.

If you are someone who loves to visit with people in their homes and would like to welcome them to a continuation of the communion celebration from Sunday, contact Pastor Katie. Daytime availability is a plus for this ministry. Training will be scheduled based on availability of individuals.

## **Ash Wednesday – February 18**



We begin the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. Marking our foreheads with ash (dust), we remember that we come from dust, and to dust we shall return. At the same time, the ash traces the life-giving cross marked on our foreheads at baptism. We mark Ash Wednesday in the church with **a service of Holy Communion and the Imposition of Ashes at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary.** For those who are unable to come to evening worship, Pastor Katie will be **available in the church to offer ashes and communion 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.**

## **Lenten Worship and Study Schedule**

Lent is a time for us, as Christians, to take extra time in prayer, devotion, and/or worship. We begin the season with ashes, remembering our humanity and mortality. Then, as we journey to the death and resurrection of Jesus, we **reflect on our faith and strive to deepen our connection with God and grow in our faith lives as disciples.** This year, we have multiple ways for people to connect with their faith lives each week. On Sundays we will have a traditional Bible study exploring the book of Matthew as we explore God's purpose for the church in Christ. On Wednesdays we will have an integrated time of worship, dinner, and faith exploration as we meet Jesus at the table at Dinner Church, focused on readings from the gospel of Matthew. There will be a community luncheon and reflection series on Fridays in Lent as well. As a bonus, stay tuned for a **NEW podcast** released the Thursday before each Sunday in Lent featuring Pastor Katie and members of the congregation as they explore the gospel reading for each week and the facets of faith we learn from these stories.

### **Wednesday Schedule**

6:30 pm – Dinner Church

### **Sunday Schedule**

9:00 am – Worship with Communion

10:15 am – Sunday School for all ages

6:30 pm Bible Study

### **Friday Schedule**

12:00 pm – community lunch with Lenten speaker series

February 20 at Mars United Presbyterian

February 27 at Penn Mar Apartments (MUP hosting lunch)

March 6 at St. John Lutheran

March 13 at Penn Mar Apartments (St. John hosting lunch)

March 20 at St John Lutheran

March 27 at Penn Mar Apartments (MUP hosting lunch)

April 3 at Mars United Presbyterian with Good Friday worship to follow

## **Holy Week Worship Schedule**

- + Palm/Passion Sunday – Sunday, March 29, 9:00 am
- + Maundy Thursday – Thursday, April 2, 7:00 pm
- + Good Friday – Friday, April 3
  - Community Service at Mars United Presbyterian, 12:00 pm lunch, service following Kids Cross Walk, 3:00-5:00 pm
  - Tenebrae service at St. John, 7:00 pm
- + Easter Vigil Service of Storytelling and Communion – Saturday, April 4, 7:00 pm
- + Easter Day – Sunday, April 5
  - Community Sunrise Service (Adams Township Park), 6:30 am
  - Easter Sunday Celebration at St John, 9:00 am

### *Worship Notes (continued)*

#### **Adult Choir**

For major festivals (like Easter!), there is a **choir of dedicated singers** who prepare and offer a song for worship. If you'd like to be a part of this group, contact our Music Director, Maizy.

#### **Chime Choir**

Have you ever wanted to make music with friends in praise and worship of God? **We are collecting names of individuals who might be interested in starting a chime choir at St. John.** Chimes are like handbells but require much less specialized care and technique in playing. Chime choir is excellent for people of all musical abilities – even if you don't read music! Reach out to Pastor Katie or Vern M if you are interested in learning more. No commitments are needed at this time.



### **Around the Church**

#### **Open Stage at St John – Saturday, February 28**



Whether you have some (church appropriate) comedy to share, music to play or sing, or a favorite dance to perform, come on down and perform for a loving and supportive audience. All ages are welcome to participate! Talented cooks and bakers are welcome to bring goodies to share their talent too! Sign up in person. Bring your talent or come and support others! Open Stage time begins at 5:00pm and will last approximately 2 hours.

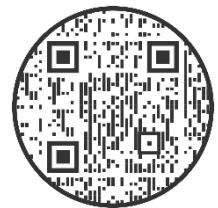
#### **2026 Church Directory**

The 2026 directory is now available! Hard copies are available in the Greeting Area, and electronic copies are available in the members section of the website. If you have further edits, please contact the office and we will update the electronic copy on the website.

#### **Strategic Planning Team**

St. John has witnessed incredible transformation of the Mars area over the last 125 years. As we look forward to what the future of St. John will hold as the area continues to grow and change, **we will be exploring the core identity of St. John as we plan to shape the future of ministry at St. John.**

This work will help to position the congregation to **be ready to invite and welcome people to experience the good news of Jesus Christ through the particular mission and ministry of St. John.** To help guide the conversations that will take place as part of this journey of self-discovery, the council has appointed a team of six individuals to serve on a strategic planning team: Keith C, David D, Denise H, Jeff M, Casey S, and Tim W. Please plan to come to one of the listening sessions scheduled at the church in the next month to share your stories and help to formulate the guiding principles that will lead St. John into the coming years. The questionnaire form is also still open and may be found at <https://forms.gle/VreBtwvRAYBMLcUH8> or at the QR code to the right.



#### **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.

*Around the Church (continued)*

### **Gathered Under One Roof Campaign Update**

We have collected \$41,000 for our Gathered Under One Roof Campaign! Please prayerfully consider how you can continue to support this capital campaign so that we can match our goal of \$50,000. Funds raised from this campaign are used to pay back the loan that was used to pay for the roof as well as replenish the Maintenance Fund used for other large maintenance projects that extend beyond our regular operating budget.

### **New Ministry with Wheelchair Van**

At the January 18<sup>th</sup> congregational meeting, the congregation voted to accept the donation of a wheelchair van from Quality EMS. We are grateful to receive this gift, and anticipate wonderful ministry opportunity with it. The wheelchair van can transport two individuals in wheelchairs simultaneously. In a trial period, the van has been used to pick up members of St. John who reside at the specialty care center and bring them to Sunday worship. It is a wonderful gift to see their faces in worship again! If you are interested in being a designated driver for the van, please contact Denise H.

## **Around the Synod**

### **Training for Congregational Councils – February 21**

Being a member of the congregation council is a significant commitment in the life of a disciple. This gathering for congregation leaders is intended to strengthen your skills and your faith. From stewardship and financial management to constitution and bylaws, there will be training for a variety of council interests and duties. Registration will be available soon. Contact Pastor Katie for updates on registration. Training is available to all interested individuals on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:30am – 2:30 pm.

### **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>

## **Lutherlyn**

### **Grown-Up Winter Retreat – February 20-22**

**Grown-Up Camp includes all the fun and excitement of camp with some relaxation, fellowship, and extras for adults!** Anyone **age 21 or older** is invited to join in the fun!

Grown-Up Winter Retreat is **February 20-22, registration deadline is February 9<sup>th</sup>**. Check out <https://www.lutherlyn.com/programs/grown-up-winter-retreat.html> for more information.

### **Maple Sugaring Saturday Safari – February 28**

This Saturday Safari features winter tree identification, tapping a maple tree, collecting sap, and observing the evaporation process. Dress to be outside. There will be a morning session from 9:30-12:00 and an afternoon session from 1-3:30. Please register for one session only. Registration deadline is February 24<sup>th</sup>, though spots fill quickly, so register now at [https://www.lutherlyn.com/programs/environmental\\_education/safari.html](https://www.lutherlyn.com/programs/environmental_education/safari.html).

### **Lutherlyn Summer Camp Registration**

Lutherlyn Summer Camp Registration is **OPEN** as of **February 1!** 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. Lutherlyn camperships are available! **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/>.



# Stewardship

## **Called into Faith; Called into Life Together; Called into the World**

(from the Stewardship and Financial Support Committee of the SWPA Synod's stewardship campaign by the same title)



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



As Lutherans in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, we take the work of being church seriously. What we mean by being church is even in our constitution (C4.02e):

*“To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall... nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.”*

We begin in the Bible, the Word of God. Through the Word we meet God who loves us, provides for us, and calls us into lives of faith and service. With that foundation, we then respond to God's call into faith, life together, and the world. As Lutherans we believe that faith comes to us as a gift. By the power of the Holy Spirit acting in our lives, we are shaped into God's faithful people. So what does that mean for our lives? What does it look like to live as God's faithful people?

The pattern of God's action and our response is the rhythm of the life of faith. We are loved, and so we love. We are fed, and so we feed. We are forgiven, and so we forgive. Our faith is lived out in our life together in the church and in the world.

Stewardship is the name the church gives to that response. Stewardship is how we respond to all that's been entrusted to us. It's how we respond to all that God has done.

As people who have been called into faith, we understand ourselves to be the creatures God has made. We are not God... God is God. Likewise, all that has been created doesn't belong to us... it belongs to God. The world and our lives are not ours to do with as we please.

As stewards, God has entrusted us with the care and management of all that God has made. The natural resources of the earth, the other animals, knowledge and scientific discovery, our time and our possessions, our relationships – we are stewards of all these things, managing them for God. As stewards, God expects us to bring our best to the stewardship of our life together, to nurture and care for each other and our whole congregational community as best we can and to further the mission and ministry of the Church. And we accept the responsibility to 'proclaim the good news of God in Christ in word and deed, serve all people following the example of Jesus, and strive for justice and peace in all the earth.' As God's faithful people, called to be stewards, we understand that it's not somebody else's job to feed the hungry, care for the poor, work for justice and make sure resources and wealth are shared. It's our job. That's what it means to live as God's stewards in the world

**This month, you are invited to reflect on your own response to what God is doing. What does it mean for you to be a steward of all that God has entrusted to you? How are you participating in God's mission in and through St. John Lutheran Church?**



Luther asserts that faith is a gift, not something we come to on our own.  
If that's so, how can we be good stewards of the gift of faith?  
What do you think God expects us to do with the faith we have been given?



How are you and your congregation proclaiming the good news of God in Christ in word and deed, serving all people following the example of Jesus, and striving for justice and peace in all the earth?

# Serving Others

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Mission Emphasis: Inspired Hearts and Hands

Inspired Hearts and Hands (IH2) is a community-wide coalition of inspired hearts and hands collectively focused on addressing economic hardship and food insecurity through food box distributions, community events, holiday angel trees, educational enrichment programs, and student appreciation activities. Together, we are serving those who are less fortunate, not just because it is a good thing to do, but rather because it is our hearts' desire to share our blessings with others.

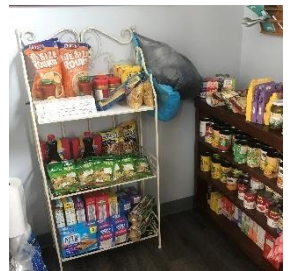
To learn more about this organization, visit <https://inspiredheartsandhands.com/>.

You are invited to support this organization through designated financial contributions. To designate funds to be given to Inspired Hearts and Hands, mark your offering "Mission Emphasis." 100% of funds collected for mission emphasis go directly to the named organization. Stay tuned for other ways that you can support Inspired Hearts and Hands.

## St. John Food Pantry



As Christians, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, and we do this by keeping the food pantry in good supply, even of thinking of items that might in some circles be considered "treats." On behalf of everyone who visits the pantry, thank you. Please continue inviting people to make use of the pantry as needed! 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). 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.

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). **We also have had several special requests for favored food items. These include Kellogg Raisin Bran, Lucky Charms, Carnation Instant Breakfast packets (vanilla), and pasta sauce.**

## 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](http://stjohnchurchmars.org/calendar).

## Faith Formation

### Confirmation Class – February 28

Confirmation class is a time for our students in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade to develop deeper scriptural understanding and more robust connection to their faith and identity as a member of the church. **In December, the students explored the gospel of Matthew.** The plan had been to explore the gospel of John as well, but we strive to follow the curiosities of the students. Questions about the Trinity (one God, three persons... okay, but what does *that* mean?!), about what it means to be a "voting member" of the congregation beyond just voting at the yearly meeting and about worship practices like dressing nicely steered the conversation in other directions. We happily followed the students' lead and had a fruitful conversation about all of this and more. John can always wait until February's class. 😊 Class meets the fourth Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30am.

### **Kids Club/Youth Group – February 8 and March 1**

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. Each group meets approximately twice per month, sometimes meeting in the church buildings (Youth Group at Mars United Presbyterian, Kids Club at St John), sometimes meeting together for joint social and service events.

In February the groups will meet at the respective churches 4:00-5:30pm on **February 8 with dinner served at St. John** after the meetings. Mark your calendars for the annual **trip to Peak N Peak on February 21<sup>st</sup>!** The groups will meet at the churches on **March 1 and 15**. To sign up to receive updates and the group's schedule, please fill out the form at [stjohnchurchmars.org/childrenyouth](http://stjohnchurchmars.org/childrenyouth).

### **Messy Church – February 20**



**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. In February, we will hear part of the epic story of Joseph, hearing the promise that God is with us always, just as God was with Joseph in good times and hard times.**

### **Communion Classes**

Each week, we give thanks to the ways God has moved in and through God's people across scripture before we remember Jesus' last supper with his disciples. **Communion class offers an opportunity for people to hear the story of Jesus' last supper and its connection to the exodus in the Hebrew Bible.** We will explore the different supplies and practices surrounding communion as well as bake bread to be used at an upcoming worship service.



**If you are interested in your child receiving their first communion this year** at St. John, 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 baptized child and their family. The class is not required for a child to receive communion, but will help the child put the ritual into context. Classes are aimed at children in and around 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and plans for an adult in the family to participate alongside them.

### **Adult Bible Study – The Book of Ephesians**

**Ephesians is an invitation into a world of grace, sweeping us into an all-encompassing vision of God's eternal plan to redeem all creation.** In this letter, we learn about the geography of grace where God labors to fulfill the mystery of the divine plan. Come and learn how the first listeners may have heard this letter and explore what the letter has to say to readers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**This series began on January 14 (Wed.) and January 18 (Sun.) and will continue to meet through Wednesday, February 11 and Sunday, February 22 (snow makeup day).** Attendance at previous sessions is not required for participation in upcoming sessions. Bible Study meets on Wednesdays at 7:00pm and Sundays at 6:30pm. A Zoom option is available for both days. Material on Wednesday is repeated the following Sunday for those who need a flexible schedule.



## *Faith Formation (continued)*

### **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. You are welcome to go downstairs immediately following worship and begin enjoying these goodies. 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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:

**February 1** – The Boy at the Temple  
**February 8** – Jesus Goes to Nazareth  
**February 15** – Transfiguration  
**February 22** – Zacchaeus  
**March 1** – Greatest Commandment

#### **Middle and High School**

A note from the teacher, Ruth Ann: "We use Bibles each session, and I am hoping students will bring their own personal Bibles. They will be encouraged to mark, highlight, and put notes in their Bibles for future assistance. Thank you for sending me these inquisitive young people. I will do my best to broaden their Biblical knowledge, connecting their faith to daily life."

Over the course of the year, students will explore the following topics:

- 1.) Do you believe in miracles?
- 2.) Stepping out of the boat, using the story of when Jesus and Peter walk on the water
- 3.) The seven "I am" statements of Jesus
- 4.) Mountaintop surprise – exploring the story of the Transfiguration

#### **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 and daily lives.

**February 1** – Beginnings: Genesis  
**February 8** – God's People on the Move: Exodus and Deuteronomy  
**February 15** – Getting Settled: Joshua – Ruth  
**February 22** – Kings and Kingdoms: Samuel – Chronicles  
**March 1** – Trails of Tears and Joy: 2 Kings – Esther, Lamentations, Daniel

### Pastor's Reflection

As I wrote about my time worshiping with Abby, I remembered an article written by a colleague 10 years ago. We are all worshiping together, and we all share in responsibility for helping one another of all ages find a safe space in worship, continue to develop our faith, and develop relationships with God and with one another. There's nothing earth-shattering in the article, but I find it full of good reminders all the same. I hope you do as well. -Pastor Katie

### **What To Do When a Noisy Family Comes to Church by Karen Ware Jackson**

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/voices-of-faith/noisy-children-worship/> (edited for space)

**Smile** - even if you're nervous and don't know how to deal with children, even if you're annoyed that kids kick the pews, even if you worry the baby may scream and interrupt the sermon, even if you wonder why they didn't take those kids to the nursery, especially if you are happy they came to church. **Because you've been blessed with the chance to be like Jesus - to teach and listen and care for the littlest among us.**

Here's how:

- **Say a prayer** that Christ will open your heart to the wild, wiggly, shy, kind, thoughtful, silly, sweet children in your church. Then go where God leads - even if it means moving seats to get close enough to interact with that family.... We all need help. We all need to experience the love and grace of Christ from another person. Guess what? If you are reading this, that person is YOU!
- **Introduce yourself**, and not just to the grown-ups! If your body will cooperate, crouch down or sit so that you and the child are on the same level. Offer your hand for a shake or a high five. Say what you wish to be called- whether it's Mrs. Roper, Mr. Pete, or Grandma Sally - and ask their name. Some children might be too shy to respond so you may need to ask an adult later, but pay attention to the child and be patient. Remember their names.... Don't be afraid to write them down.
- **Kids rarely arrive to church empty handed....** Has he brought in a special toy? ... introduce yourself to Mr. Bear, Pretty Baby, or Big Truck. Does she have a pack of crayons? Grab a pencil that you can pass along when those crayons end up on the floor, and make sure she has enough paper. Does he have a book? ... Show interest in the things that they love.
- **Look the kids in the eye and SMILE.** Whether we are 1 month, 1 year, 11 years, or 100 years old, **eye contact = connection.** You can generate a lot of joy with a game of peekaboo! Babies, preschoolers, even older children enjoy a special wink or a silly face.
- **Help the family follow the worship service.** This can be as simple as finding the right page in the [bulletin], or helping young readers find their place in prayer. Children also benefit from simple explanations and visual cues, so use yourself as a model for worship. "This is how I pray, with my hands open and eyes closed. Can you show me how you pray? Let's help Mr. Bear pray."
- **Point out interesting things in the worship space** - like stained glass windows, banners, the baptismal font or altar rail. Make sure to direct their attention to important moments in the service - like the priest breaking the bread or the pastor reading the gospel.
- **Draw a picture of the scripture and give it to the child.** Don't worry if you aren't an artist. A picture (and the effort and intention) is worth a thousand words, especially to a child.
- **Make sure to pass the offering plate to the kids.** Everyone has gifts to offer to God - it might be a picture or a stone or a hug - but we all need the chance to give. We dishonor children and God when we assume they don't have anything to offer. Extra points if you help them prepare their gift so they are ready for the offering moment.

[...]

- **Say, "I'm glad you are here. It's important for kids to come to church."** (This is true, so say it like you mean it!)

In all these things, **seek to build a relationship with the family.** You probably won't be able to use all these tips..., but if you are blessed to join them in worship for a season, you will be amazed at how you all grow in your worship of our wild and wondrous God. It all begins with a smile and a prayer!

# February 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Worship 9:00 am Faith Formation 10:15 am Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	2	3 Elders' Meeting 7:00 pm Trustees' Meeting 7:00 pm Deacons' Meeting 7:00 pm	4 Adult Bible Study 7:00 pm	5	6	7
8 Worship 9:00 am Faith Formation 10:15 am Kids Club / Youth Group 4:00 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	9	10	11 Adult Bible Study 7:00 pm	12	13	14
15 Worship 9:00 am Faith Formation 10:15 am Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	16	17 Council Meeting 7:00 pm	18 Open Sanctuary, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm Ash Wednesday Worship 7:00 pm	19 Strategic Planning Listening Session 6:30 pm	20 Lenten Lunch, 12:00 pm Messy Church 6:00 – 8:00 pm Newsletter Articles Due	21 Peak n Peak Synod Council Training
22 Worship 9:00 am Faith Formation 10:15 am Anniversary/ Birthday Coffee hour 10:15 am Strategic Planning Listening Session 10:30 am Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	23 Communion at Penn Mar 1:45 pm	24	25 Dinner Church 6:30 pm Strategic Planning Listening Session 12:00 pm	26	27 Lenten Lunch	28 Confirmation Class 9:30 am Open Stage 5:00pm



02/05 Emily Greb  
02/05 Lindsey Greb  
02/05 Herman Boehmig  
02/06 Carissa Miller  
02/11 Geneva Hackworth  
02/19 Cora Steigerwalt  
02/13 Dawn Scott-Barill  
02/20 Harry Cole  
02/21 Keith Cardinal  
02/22 Deb Martin  
02/27 Dorothy Delp

# February Newsletter

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