

February
2024

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 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.*

*St. John Lutheran Church
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Mars, PA 16046
Office Hours MWF, 8a-1p*

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

**"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"
Matthew 11:28**

In the front of the sanctuary is a big stained-glass window with a picture of Jesus. His arms are stretched wide in a welcoming stance, and the words "come unto me" are written beneath his feet. Since the organ was added to the building and the window became an internal window, there has been a practice of not turning on the light behind this window during Lent. However, this year, the light will be on. This year, our journey throughout Lent will be in response to the words on this window and the outstretched arms with which Jesus greets us. We will be exploring different journeys we make in faith and the way that God is with us through it all. We will be listening for Jesus' call to reflect, to act, to grow, and to learn as we make our way to Jerusalem alongside Jesus. As Christians, our journey to the cross is centered around our baptism and the death and resurrection we experience in baptism. So, during Lent, our worship will literally be centered around the font. The baptismal font will be moved to the middle of our sanctuary, surrounded by greenery that will grow over our Lenten journey, reminding us of the abundant life we have in baptism and its central role in the stories we hear and tell. Each week, the font will be joined by symbols of the stories we will hear in scripture. The growing collection of symbols reminds us that our journey is continually building and growing as we hear stories of God's covenant with God's people. And above it all, we will see the stained-glass window illuminated, reminding us of the central call we hear in Lent, Jesus' call to "come unto me," a call rooted in our baptism, a call to follow Jesus to the cross, and a call to remember the promises God has made with God's people across the ages.

As we approach Holy Week, these symbols will fade into the background as we shift our focus to the stark nature of the cross of crucifixion and the light will be extinguished as we strip the altar in remembrance of Jesus' death. Then, as has been our tradition, the light will be turned on at the first alleluia of our Easter celebrations, calling us back to the promises we heard throughout Lent.

Throughout this newsletter there are other ways that you are invited to explore the ways Jesus is calling to you this Lent. I invite you to take time to read through this newsletter to see the different worship, study, and devotion opportunities we have this Lent.

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/channel/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmKsYKssxvQ>

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.

	Acolyte	Offering	Offering	Young Reader
4-Feb	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	
11-Feb	Ava N	Anna K	Nathan K	
18-Feb	Emma N	Luca K	Eva K	Emma N
25-Feb	Abigail C	Ava N	Emma N	
3-Mar	Anna K	Jules K	Abigail C	

Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
4-Feb	Ruth Ann T	John T	Valerie C	Missy K	Erin W David D
11-Feb	Ruth Ann T	John T	Valerie C	Missy K	Erin W David D
18-Feb	Ruth Ann T	John T	Martha W	Missy K	Erin W David D
25-Feb	Ruth Ann T	John T	Valerie C	Missy K	Erin W David D
3-Mar	VOLUNTEER	David D	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Jill W Cindy K

Ash Wednesday – February 14

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 for prayers and to offer ashes and communion between 10:00 am and 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**. This year, we are **focusing on the journeys we take in faith**. On Sundays, we will heed **the call of Jesus to “come unto me”** as we hear again the covenants God has made with God’s people, **calling us to new life in God**. During our weekly Bible Study time and Wednesday worship, **we will follow the journey of the people in exile in the book of Exodus**. There will be a community luncheon and reflection series on Fridays in Lent as well.

Wednesday Schedule

6:30 pm – Dinner-time Fellowship
7:00 pm – Bible Study
7:50 pm – Worship with Communion

Sunday Schedule

9:00 am – Worship with Communion
10:10 am – Sunday School for all ages
6:30 pm Bible Study

Friday Schedule

12:00 pm – community lunch with Lenten speaker series (stay tuned for schedule of locations)

Holy Week Worship Schedule

- + Palm Sunday – Sunday, March 24, 9:00 am
- + Maundy Thursday – Thursday, March 28, 7:00 pm
- + Good Friday – Friday, March 29
Tenebrae service at St. John, 7:00 pm
Community Service with lunch at Mars United Presbyterian, 12:00 pm
- + Easter Vigil – Saturday, March 30, 7:00 pm
- + Easter Day – Sunday, March 31
Community Sunrise Service (location tbd), 7:00 am
Easter Sunday Celebration at St John, 9:00 am

Monthly Worship at Penn Mar

Pastor Katie offers a **simple monthly communion service for residents at Penn Mar Apartments**. We will worship on Tuesday February 27th. Beginning in March, this worship service will be the **last Monday of each month at 1:45 pm**. If you know someone living in the building who would like to participate in this worship opportunity, please let them know or have them contact Pastor Katie for more details.

Lenten Meditations

A common Lenten practice is to increase one’s time spent in devotion. We have lots of opportunities for this aspect of your Lenten journey! In addition to the Bible studies and worship times listed elsewhere, there are several daily and weekly devotionals available online. Pastor Katie will offer a **weekly video devotion early Wednesday morning each week**. There is a **weekly stitch along devotion** offered by a Lutheran pastor (This includes a regular podcast posting and a pattern to stitch throughout Lent, creating an Easter bloom. For more information, see the flier in the greeting area or contact Pastor Katie). There is also a **daily email devotional called “God Pause” created by Luther Seminary**. You can sign up to receive these emails using the link on our website at stjohnchurchmars.org/links.

Worship Volunteers Wanted



Training is available for any position. You are welcome to **sign up for just one week to give it a try or multiple weeks** to practice and get comfortable! Sign-ups are available in the Greeting Area.

- Assistant Minister: Help lead worship by reading scripture and prayers and assisting in the distribution of communion.
- Greeter: Greet people as they enter for worship and hand out bulletins.
- Usher: Ring the bell before and during worship, attend to lights and doors, and coordinate offering collection.
- Bread Baker: Bake or purchase bread to be used for communion during worship.
- Counter (contact Pastor Katie, no sign-up sheet): Serve in a team of two to count the offering after worship.
- Eucharistic Minister (contact Pastor Katie, no sign-up sheet): Visit and take communion from our Sunday celebration to those unable to be physically in worship.
- Altar Guild (contact Pastor Katie, no sign-up sheet): Set up for and clean up after worship; change the paraments to match the color of the day.

Serving Others

St. John Food Pantry

Our **food pantry has been seeing an increase in usage**. If you notice that the outdoor pantry is looking empty, **please move stuff from the inside shelves**. As the weather drops below freezing more regularly, **please be aware of how any items might store in freezing temperatures**. 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 microwaveable meals).

Around the Church

Stewardship Response

With gratitude for the stories people have shared over the course of our 2024 stewardship campaign, **we now invite you to respond with your own stories and intents of participation**. Intent or pledge cards are available in the church office. **We request that all cards be returned to the office by February 18th**.

CPR Training – Saturday, February 17th

CPR training will be available at St. John for interested members. Cost is \$55 per person and registration is required by February 3rd. Contact Denise Hager to register.

New Member Conversation – Sunday, February 25th

We will be hosting a New Member Conversation Sunday, February 25th after worship. These **conversations introduce individuals to the ministry and organization of St. John as well as provide opportunity for community building**. These conversations are open to anyone and do not require a commitment to join St. John to attend. Please let Pastor Katie know if you plan to attend.

Around the Church (continued)

Spaghetti Dinner – Saturday, March 2nd



The Spaghetti Dinner is back and coming soon; mark your calendars for **March 2nd**! The Deacons are handling the organization aspects, but *many hands make the work light*. We are hoping that **all** members of St John will share their **time and talents** to make the dinner a success. **Help is needed with the set-up, cooking, serving, bussing tables, preparing baked goods, clean-up and more.** Sign-up posters will be stationed in the greeting area. Of course, we are also hoping that you will **invite 10-12 of your friends**. 😊 Thank you.

Clean Up Day – Saturday, March 23rd

On Easter morning, the church is filled with the glory of Christ's resurrection! Help us prepare the building for this exciting day by joining us for an indoor church clean-up day! **Caring for our building is one way that we can give of ourselves to participate in the ministry that happens at St. John.**

There will be jobs for people who can climb ladders and people who can get down on the floor, for people who can run up and down the steps and people who need to be more stationary. Many hands make light work! **If you'd like to help but cannot come on the day of, contact the office for a list of jobs that you can do at another time.**

Office Hours

The church office is open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 8:00am-1:00pm. If the door is locked when you arrive, **please ring the doorbell for assistance**. Occasionally, we need to leave the building during these hours, so **it's always a good idea to let us know if you are planning to stop by (weather and holidays also may affect office hours)**. Pastor Katie is typically in the office on Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00am-1:00pm. However, because of the nature of ministry, there are many things that may interrupt the schedule; **please call Pastor Katie's cell phone (included on the front page of the newsletter) in case of pastoral need.**

Faith Formation

Adult Bible Study

During Lent, we will be exploring the **journey of the people in exile in the book of Exodus** and how it relates to our own journeys in and of faith. **Our Wednesday evening Bible study will begin at 7:00 pm, but it will be slightly abbreviated to allow time for a reflective worship service with communion afterwards. The Sunday evening gathering will start at 6:30 pm and be the standard length of about an hour for study and a few moments for prayer following.** As has been our practice, the two sessions will still cover roughly the same material and both sessions will be available for in-person or zoom participation. **Contact Pastor Katie or the office for weekly emails with the zoom link and weekly study sheets.**

Purple Party – February 11

Purple is the traditional color for Lent, so to help us get in the mood for Lent, we are filling our Stewardship brunch with the color purple on February 11th.

Purple attire is encouraged!

Faith Formation (continued)

Valentines for Sunday School – February 11

Sunday, **February 11th**, will be our children's **Valentine's Party** during our **Stewardship brunch**. The Sunday School will be making valentine collection boxes the Sunday prior. **We ask the congregation to please bring valentines to share with our children.**

The children's names are Abigail, Anna, Ava, Carissa, Ella, Emma, Eva, Hunter, Jules, Luca, Lydia, Nathan, Sabrina, Samantha, and Wyatt. (If you know of another child that would like to participate, let us know so that we can include their name!)



First Communion Classes

If you are interested in your child receiving their first communion this year at the Palm Sunday worship service, please contact Pastor Katie and we will schedule a time during which we can **learn the stories and traditions of Holy Communion in our church as well as bake the bread** that will be used on Palm Sunday. The Lutheran church does not have a specific age at which communion is first offered. It is a decision to be made for and with each child and their family.



Confirmation Classes – Third Saturdays (9:30-11:30am)

Confirmation is a faith formation opportunity that helps our young people (typically grades 6-8) engage with their faith and prepare to take ownership of the promises made on their behalf at baptism. **During our meeting in January the students explored just what we mean when we talk about baptism, including time for reflection about what baptism means to each of us.** The words the class thought of in relation to baptism were written on slips of paper that were connected into a chain to adorn our font. We began our study of the other sacrament in the Lutheran church, Holy Communion, but that conversation is still ongoing in our class.

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



Messy Church is an intentionally intergenerational place for people to meet and experience fun and messy ways to engage in faith and worship, including crafts and activities, celebration, and a shared meal no matter their connection to church. At Messy Church, we celebrate the creative, joyful God revealed in Jesus Christ. Faith formation topics and Bible stories are explored in ways that invite our whole messy selves into God's story of the good news of Jesus Christ - that we are freed and forgiven in God's abundant grace

and that God's love is for us, all of us. No registration is required for this free faith formation opportunity. **We begin our time together with the meal and move through the rest of this engaging and interactive worship experience.**

Upcoming Mission Trips

Mars United Presbyterian is **coordinating two mission trips this summer** that we are welcome to also participate in. There will be one just for our joint youth group and another one for adults. Both mission trips will be **out-of-state mission trips**. Contact Pastor Katie or Pastor Brian to be added to the list to receive more information as it becomes available.

Lutherlyn

Grown-Up Winter Retreat

Are you too old for traditional camp at Lutherlyn? Do you want to have all the fun of camp as a grown-up? Lutherlyn has just the retreat for you! **Grown-Up Camp includes all the fun and excitement of camp with some relaxation, fellowship, and extras for adults!** This grown-ups only retreat is the perfect opportunity to enjoy all the fun of camp but with some changes and additions specifically for grown-ups. Anyone **age 21 or older** is invited to join in the fun!

Grown-Up Winter Retreat is **February 23-25, registration deadline is February 12th**. Check out <https://www.lutherlyn.com/forms/retreateventreg/grown-up-winter-retreat.html> for more information.

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. **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.

Confirmation Camp

Each year, Lutherlyn hosts the pastors of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA for confirmation camp. This is a week to gather with youth from across the synod as we explore a different topic relevant to the students' confirmational learning. **This year we will be exploring the Holy Spirit... what is it, what does it look like, and what does it have to do with us?** Contact Pastor Katie for details.

Community Art Projects

Burying the Alleluias in Lent

For some traditions, the word "alleluia" is omitted throughout the season of Lent and during the Sundays in Lent. St. John has historically abstained from speaking or singing "alleluia" during the Sundays in Lent. By abstaining from the usage of alleluia, the joyful nature of the word is more prominently felt when we sing it with great gusto during our Easter celebrations.

Help us prepare to **bury the alleluias on Transfiguration Sunday (February 11th)** by **picking up an Alleluia card to color and bury**. The colored alleluias will be brought back out on Easter!

Lent Activity Crosses

Throughout Lent, the Sunday School class will be challenged to complete at least one activity a day from the Lent activity crosses distributed during class. **As each activity is completed, the section of the cross is to be colored in.** By the end of Lent, the cross will be a colorful reminder of God's love in action in and through us. We will (temporarily) collect these crosses on Palm Sunday so that we can fill our worship space with these crosses on Easter Sunday. **Grab a cross from the greeting area to take home and complete your own Lenten activity challenge!** (Just remember to bring it back on Palm Sunday so that we can fill our sanctuary with these colorful reminders!)

Did You Know?

History and Practices of Lent

Lent is the season of the church that precedes Easter. We count back 40 days from Easter, and we get to Ash Wednesday... well sort of. If you take out a calendar, then you'll see that **there are actually 46 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter.** That's because Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent (This is why we say it's the first, second, etc. Sunday *in* Lent rather than *of* Lent). The season began as a period of fasting leading up to the Vigil of Easter. It was originally a two-day period of preparation; Lent became a three-week period in the middle of the fourth century. Later it was expanded into six weeks, or 40 days. By the end of the fifth century, **Sundays began to be excluded from Lenten practices because Sundays are always celebrated as feasts of the Resurrection.** Lent is a time when we maintain the **practice of renewing and deepening our faith**, whether we have grown up with faith or are new to it. It is a time when we **focus on deepening our awareness of our need for God in our lives, our need for God's forgiveness and grace.** Throughout the church, there are countless ways people strive to observe the Lenten season. Some give up things throughout the season. Some take on faith practices. Some churches have a very sparse worship service, others add elements to the service to invite reflection. There is no one right way to practice Lent. **Instead, we are invited to use the time from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday to reflect on our faith and relationship with God, focusing on the death and resurrection of Jesus and in turn our own death and resurrection found in baptism.**

For Your Thoughts

A Lenten Reflection

(Source unknown)

Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism
Fast from criticism; feast on praise
Fast from self-pity; feast on joy
Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness
Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence
Fast from jealousy; feast on love
Fast from discouragement; feast on hope
Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation
Fast from selfishness; feast on service
Fast from fear; feast on faith
Fast from anger; feast on patience
Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others
Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude

A prayer for seeking deeper knowledge of God

(from Evangelical Lutheran Worship © 2006 ECLA, published by Augsburg Fortress, pg. 76)

Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

February 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3 Combined trip to Peak N Peak 7:00 am-10:00 pm
4 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Trustees' Mtg 10:15am Mission Endowment 11:15 am Adult Bible Study - Mark 6:30 pm	5	6 Deacons' Meeting 7 pm Elders' Meeting 7 pm	7 Adult Bible Study - Mark 7:00 pm	8	9	10 Council Training 9:30 - 2:30 pm
11 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Stewardship Brunch 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Adult Bible Study - Mark 6:30 pm	12	13	14 Ash Wednesday Open hours 10:00 am - 1:00 pm Worship & Communion 7:00pm	15	16 Community Lenten Luncheon 12 pm Messy Church 5:30 - 7:30 pm	17 Confirmation Class 9:30 - 11:30 am CPR 12 pm
18 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	19	20 Council Meeting 7 pm Newsletter Articles Due	21 Lenten Midweek Gathering 6:30pm Dinner 7:00 pm Study & Worship	22	23 Community Lenten Luncheon 12 pm	24 Meatball making
25 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Birthday / Anniversary Coffee hour 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm New Member Conversation 10:15 am	26	27 Communion @ Penn Mar at 1:45 pm	28 Lenten Midweek Gathering 6:30pm Dinner 7:00 pm Study & Worship	29 Worship Planners 7:00 - 9:00 pm	1 Community Lenten Luncheon 12:00 pm	2 Spaghetti Dinner



- 02/05 Emily Greb
- 02/05 Lindsey Greb
- 02/05 Herman Boehmig
- 02/06 Carissa Miller
- 02/11 Geneva Hackworth
- 02/20 Harry Cole
- 02/21 Keith Cardinal
- 02/27 Dorothy Delp

February Newsletter

Address service requested

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