

March
2023

St. John Lutheran Church



St. John Lutheran Church
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Mars, PA 16046

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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.*

I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?"

Daniel 12:8

I have always been a curious person, but I'm not always very good at sitting with my questions. With my smartphone in hand, I'm always quick to pull it out and look up any- and everything on the internet when the curiosity strikes.

So when I looked at the lectionary readings for Lent this year, I was excited to see all the questions and all the ways that scripture was encouraging such curiosity. But then... many questions in scripture are open. A quick internet search is unlikely to answer the questions we'll encounter this Lent. And yet they are before us, asking to be... asked. There are nearly 1000 questions in the Greek New Testament alone. They clearly have an important place in our connection with the Word.

Which makes me curious... why are there so many questions in scripture? Perhaps it's because questions invite curiosity; questions invite further dialog; questions invite us to dive deeper. In our very first reading in Lent, God invites us into relationship with God by calling out to us, inviting us to bring our vulnerable selves before God with a question: "Where are you?"

Questions are never static. Questions are about relationships – whether troubling them or deepening them. Questions are about pushing a thought further. Questions invite people to wonder.

Oftentimes, we shy away from questions in faith. We might worry that having questions implies that we have doubt, that our faith is not as strong as it "should be." But what if instead of thinking of questions as barriers to faith, we think of questions as a vital part of faith? What if we open ourselves to ask the questions along with scripture?

In our readings this Lent, Jesus is asked a lot of questions, but he often responds by asking another question. So, if we start asking questions, we might just keep finding more questions. And maybe, just maybe, with practice, we can learn to sit with the questions without feeling the need to have all the answers, and we can see the questions as gifts as they are, as further invitations to a deeper connection with God and the Word.

So now I ask you: What questions do you have at the onset of our Lenten journey? How has your faith journey inspired questions in you?

Peace,
Pastor Katie

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/UC35PpgMPeMqDRNmKykKssxvQ>
and in the church Facebook group: [St John Lutheran Church Mars PA](#) later in the day

Worship News

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 |
|---------------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| 5-Mar | Abigail C | Anna K | Nathan K | |
| 12-Mar | Anna K | Jules K | Abigail C | |
| 19-Mar | Nathan K | Ava N | Ella N | Emma N. |
| 26-Mar | Ava N | Luca K | Eva K | |
| 2-Apr | Emma N | Jules K | Abigail C | |

Adult Worship Leaders

| | Greeters | Usher | Assistant Minister | Bread Baker | Counters |
|---------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 5-Mar | Denise H. | John T. | Dave K. | John T. | Erin W. Cindy K. |
| 12-Mar | Denise H. | John T. | Dave K. | John T. | Erin W. Cindy K. |
| 19-Mar | Denise H. | John T. | Dave K. | John T. | Erin W. Cindy K. |
| 26-Mar | Denise H. | John T. | Dave K. | John T. | Erin W. Cindy K. |
| 2-Apr | Cardinal Family | TBD | Valerie C. | Denise H. | Mike S. Denise H. |

Volunteers Needed

Please check out the **sign-up sheets in the Greeting Area** for how you can serve on Sunday mornings! Because we have two entrances into the sanctuary, it's most **helpful to have two Greeters** each morning. **Ushers are needed** to make sure that lights are on and doors are unlocked before worship, bells are rung during worship, and lights are off and doors locked after worship. Training is available for all positions!

Lenten Mid-Week Worship – Wednesdays in Lent (March 1 – March 29)

This year, we are **focusing on the many questions of faith**: the questions we have in scripture, the questions we have about our faith, the questions we have about God and life. We will have **two opportunities for midweek worship, fellowship, and discussion.**

If you are able and willing to provide a simple meal for one (or more) of these worship and fellowship opportunities, please sign up in the greeting area or by contacting the office.

Mid-Day

12:00 pm – Worship

12:30 pm – Lunch-time Fellowship and Discussion

Evening

6:30 pm – Dinner-time Fellowship

7:00 pm – Worship (available on our Sunday morning Zoom link)

7:30 pm – Bible Study and Discussion

Holy Week Worship Schedule

Palm Sunday – Sunday, April 2, 9:00 am

Maundy Thursday – Thursday, April 6, 7:00 pm

Good Friday – Friday, April 7, 7:00 pm

Easter Vigil – Saturday, April 8, 7:00 pm

Easter Day – Sunday, April 9, 9:00 am

Worship at Penn Mar

Pastor Katie has begun offering a **simple communion service for residents at Penn Mar Apartments** on the **last Tuesday 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.

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.**

Serving Others

St. John Food Pantry

Maintaining the food pantry is a community effort! We have community members who drop off food and goods for the pantry, community members who need the food and goods from the pantry, and community members who spread the word about the food pantry! Be sure **to invite people to make use of the food pantry as they need!** And please help us make sure nothing in the pantry is expired. **If you think something is no longer good, please feel free to dispose of it! Outdoor pantries can be tricky with the fluctuating weather, so we want to be careful of what we keep in it.**

First Quarter Mission Emphasis Project

The Mission Endowment Fund will be **matching gifts made to this quarter's Mission Emphasis Project up to \$1000.** To support the Mission Emphasis, please mark your envelopes "Mission Emphasis." In addition to monetary collections, we are **collecting twin sheets and comforters, towels and wash cloths, and children's clothing** through the end of March.

Victim Outreach Intervention Center (VOICE) is a private, non-profit organization located in Butler County that provides services to any **victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or other crimes.** Their services are **also available to family and friends** of those who have been assaulted. Many people believe that VOICE only provides support services to woman, this is untrue. They provide **advocacy services** to those in Butler County regardless of age, gender, race, color, religion, culture, national origin, sexual orientation, and economic status. The range of services provided is extensive, including, but not limited to **crisis intervention, advocacy-based counseling, emergency housing, legal advocacy**...all services are **confidential and free.** If you have need of their services, the emergency **24-hour hotline is available at 1-800-400-8551.**



Mission Endowment Committee

The Mission Endowment Committee is a committee dedicated to **sharing money the church has dedicated to funding projects and ministries beyond the scope of the congregation and the congregational budget.** As a congregation, we have investments in an ELCA pooled trust. Each quarter, we receive disbursements from this fund. **The committee then determines recipients of these moneys while trying to balance support across local organizations as well as ELCA supported missions at the synod, national, and international levels.** The committee meets approximately once a quarter as disbursements become available. The principal of the fund is not used in the money given and is from a variety of gifts made for this purpose, many of which were memorial gifts or estate planned giving.



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Around the Church

Giving of Our Time and Abilities

Throughout February, we heard from several different voices about why church is important to them, and **why supporting the church with their time, talent, and treasures is a vital part of their faith journey**. To help connect people with ways that they can use their time and talents in the church, we are collecting **“Time and Abilities Exploration Forms.”** These forms include a number of ways you can participate in and support the life of the church. **Pick one up next time you’re in the building and submit it to the office!**

VBS Coordinator Wanted

Each year, dozens of children and adults look forward to our joint VBS with Mars United Presbyterian. After years of faithful service, Denise is stepping down as VBS coordinator. Believe it or not, it is time to start thinking about VBS! We need **someone from St. John to step up to work with the Mars United Presbyterian coordinator to make VBS a fun and memorable week** for all involved. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Katie for more information.

Birthday/Anniversary Coffee Hours

Plan to join us for a **coffee hour the last Sunday of each month to celebrate the birthdays and anniversaries of the month**. Volunteers to help host a coffee hour are appreciated!

Office Hours

The church office is open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 8:30-1:30pm. 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**.

Synod Notes

Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Event – March 26th

Join us at Berkley Hills Lutheran Church (517 Sangree Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15237) on **March 26th at 4:00 pm for a celebration of the legacy Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with an ecumenical service of Holy Communion** to which all are welcome. The service will encourage membership of the SWPA synod and the synod's partners to be engaged actively in the practice of nonviolence in our continuing efforts to build the Beloved Community in Pittsburgh. **The focus of this year’s service is “A Home for ALL in the Beloved Community.”** Worship begins at 4:00pm. There will be a food truck at 5:00 pm and a panel discussion at 6:00 pm. Learn more at <https://www.swpasynod.org/calendar/mlk23>.

Upcoming Events

Bowling Outing – Sunday, March 12th

Join us for an afternoon of fun at Family Bowlaway in Butler, PA! **We will have a pizza brunch after Sunday School** (around 11:15 am); after enjoying some time enjoying good fellowship and food, we will move the party to **Family Bowlaway** (540 Fairground Hill Rd, Butler, PA 16001)! **Bowling will start at 12:30 pm. Cost is \$15 per person** (includes lunch, shoes, and bowling for 2 hours). All are welcome, including friends and family!

Spaghetti Dinner – Saturday, March 18th



The Spaghetti Dinner is **Saturday, March 18th from 4:30 pm- 6:30 pm!** Adults are \$10 each, kids 6-12 are \$5, and kids five and under are free. But before we have a spaghetti dinner, we have a **Meatball Making Party! Join us at 9:00 am on March 4th** to help prepare the meatballs! 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.

Mission Emphasis Speaker – March 19th

We will be hearing from a **representative of VOICe** about the kinds of services VOICe provides and how our support helps to further their mission in the area. They will be **speaking at the beginning of worship**, right after the announcements.

Ladies' Tea – May 13th

Mark your calendar for this year's Ladies' Tea and stay tuned for more details!

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

March 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|--|---|--|--|-----------|--|
| | | | 1 Mid-Day Gathering 12:00 pm Evening Gathering 6:30 pm | 2 | 3 | 4 Meatball Making 9:00 am |
| 5 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School Trustee's Mtg 10:15 Youth Group 1 pm Kids Club 1 pm | 6 | 7 Deacons Meeting 7 pm Elders Meeting 7 pm | 8 Mid-Day Gathering 12:00 pm Evening Gathering 6:30 pm | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School Bowling Outing 12:30 pm | 13 | 14 | 15 Mid-Day Gathering 12:00 pm Evening Gathering 6:30 pm | 16 Spaghetti Dinner Donations Due | 17 | 18 Spaghetti Dinner 4:30 -6:30 pm |
| 19 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School Youth Group 1 pm Kids Club 1 pm | 20 Newsletter Articles Due | 21 Council Meeting 7 pm | 22 Mid-Day Gathering 12:00 pm Evening Gathering 6:30 pm | 23 Worship Planners 7 pm | 24 | 25 |
| 26 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School | 27 | 28 Worship @ Penn Mar 1:45 pm | 29 Mid-Day Gathering 12:00 pm Evening Gathering 6:30 pm | 30 | 31 | |
| | Office Hours M, W, F 8:30 am - 1:30 pm | | Indoor Pantry Hours M & W 9 am - 1 pm *Other times by appt. | | | |



03/01 William Greb
03/11 Janet Ford
03/13 Ellen Hrach

March Newsletter

Address service requested

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