

April  
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 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  
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Office hours MWF 8-1

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## From Pastor's Shelves

I have a lot of books. In fact, I probably have more books than I will ever read all the way through. But every now and then, I scan the titles on my bookshelves, and I pick a book, something that for some inexplicable reason grabs me and demands to be read. My current pick is a book that came out in 2018 written by a *New York Times* bestselling author. I had heard people talking about the author, and a few years ago I saw this book in a discount bookstore in the clearance section. So I grabbed it, paid my \$3, and put it on my shelf to be read "later." Well, later is now. I have only read the introduction to the book, and I already would love to invite you to read this book with me in April.

The book is *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans. She begins her introduction talking about this magical book she knew as a little girl that told incredible tales and how this book pulled the reader into the story, making them a character, showing them how to be brave like David, loyal like Ruth, and tenacious like Jacob. As she grew older, she had more curiosity and more questions about the Bible and its characters. She tells the story of her study of the Bible and how at times it seemed like the Bible had lost its magic and been relegated to a time gone by. But then she tells about how she fell in love with the Bible again, how she came to know the Bible as "living, breathing, confounding, surprising, and yes, perhaps even magic."<sup>1</sup> She shares how it is a book "that is able to equip us to join God's loving and redemptive work in the world."<sup>2</sup> Nadia Bolz-Weber calls the book "a love letter to scripture."

I'm not sure what adventure awaits in this book. But I know that time and time again scripture fascinates me, confounds me, and inspires me. I know that time and time again I am in awe of the timeless truths and poetry of this living book. I know that each time I turn to scripture, God speaks. And I am excited to read a book that is a love letter to scripture.

As we enter the Easter season, I invite you to join me in reading this book, in joining Evans on this journey of love. If you need help in locating a copy, let me know; I'd be more than happy to help! Once you read the book, join me in conversation after worship on Sunday, May 5!

Peace,  
Pastor Katie

<sup>1</sup> *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans, page xx

<sup>2</sup> *Inspired*, back cover blurb

## 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/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmKYYKssxvQ>  
and in the church Facebook group: [St John Lutheran Church Mars PA](#) later in the day

# Worship News

## Young Worship Leaders

If you are unavailable for your scheduled date, please find someone to cover and tell the office.

	<b>Acolyte</b>	<b>Offering</b>	<b>Offering</b>	<b>Young Reader</b>
<b>7-Apr</b>	Anna K	Jules K	Abigail C	
<b>14-Apr</b>	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	
<b>21-Apr</b>	Ava N	Anna K	Nathan K	Carissa M
<b>28-Apr</b>	YOUTH LED WORSHIP AT MUP			
<b>5-May</b>	Emma N	Luca K	Eva K	

## Adult Worship Leaders

	<b>Greeters</b>	<b>Usher</b>	<b>Assistant Minister</b>	<b>Bread Baker</b>	<b>Counters</b>
<b>7-Apr</b>	Sherry D	Bob D	David D	Denise H	Denise H Ruth Ann T
<b>14-Apr</b>	Sherry D	Bob D	David D	Denise H	Denise H Ruth Ann T
<b>21-Apr</b>		Bob D	David D	Denise H	Denise H Ruth Ann T
<b>28-Apr</b>	Joint @ MUP	Joint @ MUP	Joint @ MUP	Joint @ MUP	Joint @ MUP
<b>5-May</b>		Missy K	Jonathan C		Keith C Denise H

### Youth-Led Worship – April 28 (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 **April 28 at 10:00 am at Mars United Presbyterian**. Please note the different time and location of worship!

### Rogation Sunday – May 5

The creation that God declared good is entrusted to the care of humankind. Rogation is an English form of the Latin *rogatio*, which comes from the verb *rogare*, which means "to ask." **The primary purpose of the Rogation Days is to ask God to bless the land, the gift of labor, and the needs of all people** and to honor God for the gift of creation. On Sunday, May 5 we will be celebrating Rogation Sunday. **You are invited to bring in something that helps you to care for creation: a spade, a trowel, a seedling, a bag of seed or feed, a toy tractor, a pair of gloves, etc.** We will offer a prayer for the gardens and fields and farmers in our community.

*Worship News (continued)*

## **Monthly Worship at Penn Mar – April 30**

Pastor Katie offers a **simple monthly communion service for residents at Penn Mar Apartments**. 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.

## **Serving Others**

### **Mission Emphasis**

Our **second quarter mission emphasis is Quality EMS**. This vital service relies on donations to be able to provide quality care to our neighbors in their moments of crisis. **Support their work by making a designated offering to the “Mission Emphasis.”** 100% of the mission emphasis donations will be collected and sent directly to Quality EMS. **We will be welcoming a representative from Quality EMS to share how your donations support the work that they do on Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>.**

### **St. John Food Pantry**

There are people right in Mars who struggle to make ends meet and deeply appreciate the gift of being able to pick up a quick meal or some necessary supplies in our pantry. **A tidy pantry where guests can feel comfortable taking anything is an important part of this ministry.** Whenever you have a few moments, keep the pantry hospitable by **checking expiration dates and reshelving things to keep everything tidy**. Items that are most appreciated by the guests who use the pantry are the items that cannot be purchased using benefits (**paper products, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene supplies, etc.**). Thank you for your continued generosity in providing care to our neighbors in need.

### **Community Garden**

The days are getting longer, the nights are getting warmer, and **we are getting closer to the community garden growing produce again!** We are starting a group of people who will commit to helping plant, tend, and harvest. No previous knowledge required; on-the-job training will be available. We will start by preparing the garden during the outdoor workday on April 13<sup>th</sup>. We plan on planting in mid to late May. **If you'd like to be a part of our garden group, let Pastor Katie know!**



## **Around the Synod**

### **Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Event – April 7<sup>th</sup>**

Join us at House of Prayer Lutheran Church (2100 W Irwin St, Aliquippa) on **April 7<sup>th</sup> for a celebration of the legacy Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with an ecumenical service of Holy Communion. This year's event will highlight some of the stories of the people who kindled and tended the fires of freedom.** This “cloud of witnesses” includes biblical women who proclaimed life in the face of death; historic people who used their voices, hands, and feet to call for freedom; and local voices from Aliquippa and the greater Pittsburgh region who continue to strive for God’s vision of the beloved community. **An educational pre-event will begin at 2pm at Uncommon Grounds Café followed by a Panel Discussion at 4pm, a free dinner at 5pm, and worship at 6:30pm. In-person and livestreamed options are available.** Childcare for children ages 0-5 is available upon registration. Learn more at <https://www.swpasynod.org/calendar/mlk2024>.

*Around the Synod (continued)*

## **Synod Assembly – June 14-15**

It can be hard to hear God's whisper guiding us to faithful decisions and holy outcomes amid the noise of the world. St. Ignatius of Loyola gifted us with **EXAMEN**, a method of reflection that invites God's presence in our daily lives and discernment. In the coming year, between this Assembly and the next, our synod will experience many changes and our leaders will be entrusted to follow God's will in making decisions... not the least of which will be the 2025 election



of a new Bishop. **This Assembly will teach the method of Examen so that we may build new skills, engage in sacred practice, and set out for the year ahead with confidence and clarity.**

Together, we will learn how to transform discernment from a merely theoretical concept to a lived reality that can profoundly shape our shared future. St. John is allocated two lay voting positions at the synod assembly. **If you are interested, contact Pastor Katie.**

Synod Assembly is Fri. June 14, 9:30am – Sat., June 15, 12:30pm in person at PennWest California.

## **Faith Formation**

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

**During our meeting in March the students explored the third article of the Apostles' Creed, and what the Holy Spirit is up to in this world. We also talked about what the Lutheran church believes about Holy Communion and explored some other beliefs that other denominations hold.** This conversation dove into the depths of these statements we make and practices we follow each week during worship.

### **Adult Bible Study**

The world of the early church was very different from the world we live in today, and yet there are many similarities. This invites us to engage with the texts from the early church as writings that are rooted in their context and yet still speak to us today. During the Easter season, our bible study will be **exploring the book of Acts, focusing on the cultural context of the early church.** This will not be an



exhaustive study on either the world of the early church or the book of Acts but will serve as an introduction. No pre-reading is required, though there will be suggested readings to deepen your study. No previous knowledge is required either. **Come as you are! Bring your questions and your curiosity!** The meetings on Wednesdays and Sundays will cover the same materials and each will be offered in a hybrid format (in person and zoom participation

simultaneously). Contact the office to be added to the mailing list for materials. **Study meets Wednesdays (7:00 pm) and Sundays (6:30 pm), April 10 – May 19.**

### **Summer Mission Trips**

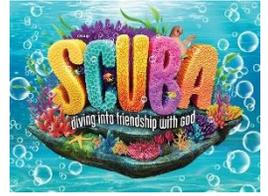
Mars United Presbyterian (MUP) is coordinating two mission trips this summer and has invited us to also participate. **Youth are invited to a week-long mission trip to Savannah, GA June 23-29. An adult-only trip will go to Richwood, WV July 21-26.** Fundraising will be done to support both trips. Our goal is to raise \$500 per person. For both trips, work projects are organized to support the needs and vision of the community and are designed to connect team members to the local community. **The only requirement is a desire to serve! No particular skills are required.**

For more information, contact Pastor Brian of MUP ([pastor@mars-up.org](mailto:pastor@mars-up.org)).

*Faith Formation (continued)*

## **Vacation Bible School Announcement**

This year, we're diving into the deep waters of our relationship with God with SCUBA! Mark your calendars for Vacation Bible School 2024, July 14-18, 2024! **If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Tanya Nagel** (contact information can be obtained by calling the church office). This year we are adding a pre-school program to specifically tailor the week to our young friends!



## **Stewardship Corner**

**What does stewardship mean to you?** Stewardship is the way we care for and use everything that has been entrusted to us. That means it is so much more than money. Each month we will offer a stewardship thought for your consideration. How can we better care for what God has entrusted to us? **One simple thing you can do is care for God's creation through recycling!** Start a recycling bin in your home. Place your used bulletin in the basket by the door to be recycled by the church. Check what the recycling program in your community allows and try to find something additional you can start recycling. Instead of throwing things away, think about if it can be donated instead.

### **A Steward's Prayer:**

O Lord, we pray that as we be, People of God chosen by thee, That you give us strength and guidance every day, For our role as stewards to portray. That our voice and works may proclaim, The ministry of Christ is our aim. That our actions will speak louder than what we say, Where the security in our life is God's way. That we generously respond to what you first gave, Your Son, a Savior, our lives to save. And when we have decisions to make, To thee, O Lord, our prayers we take. (Keith A. Mundy, 1998)

## **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.**

Hear from Erin what she has to say about her Messy Church experience:

I have been coming to Messy Church with my nephews since December. When they get dropped off, the first thing that they do is sit at a table and start rolling the conversation dice. These dice have sparked some great conversations during dinner. I learned everything from what they would take with them to outer space to where they would live to travel to. Then we carefully figure out which stations we want to make sure that we can go to, since there is always more to do than time to do it! At each station is a sign prompting conversation and reflection to engage with the day's theme. In December, I sat down with my nephew to make a manger scene with graham crackers, icing, animal crackers, and candies. As we were building it, we talked about who each person that we created was. This past month's theme was prayer. The first station that we went to was a game station designed to teach kids The Lord's Prayer. I knew that my nephews didn't really know it, so this was a teach moment for them. We also did the station where the kids made prayer beads. My youngest nephew has worn his every day since Messy Church. The next station that we did was a handprint with specific things to pray for above each finger on the canvas. We ended the evening in the sanctuary, and Pastor Katie was reviewing the "Five-Finger Prayer." I got to witness the sweetest moment then: my nephews with their eyes closed holding onto their fingers, deep in prayer. This is what Messy Church is about.



# Around the Church

## Outdoor Clean Up Day – Saturday, April 13

With the coming of spring, it's time for spring cleaning outside the building of the church! **We will be spreading mulch, preparing the garden for planting, and other small tasks around the building.**

There is something for everyone to do! **Come at 7:00am** to work before the sun gets too high!

## Capital Campaign: Gathered Under One Roof

Just three short months ago our church building had a new roof installed. At the same time, we had a new roof installed on the utility garage as well as the parsonage. We did not have liquid assets at the time to pay for the entire cost of the installation of all three roofs and so a loan was obtained to cover the cost in addition to depleting the Maintenance Fund.

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, David Dreher (Council Vice-President) will address the congregation to discuss the specifics of a fundraising campaign called Gathered Under One Roof. The hope and expectation is to raise the money necessary to meet the obligation of the loan and replenish the funds depleted from the Maintenance Fund.

We are making an appeal to every church member to prayerfully consider contributing to this campaign. Our goal is to raise \$50,000. We will present several ways to help achieve this ambitious goal. By surpassing this goal, we can look to other major maintenance needs the building has. The Trustees, working with the Council, have identified several other pressing needs that need to be met in the near future so that our church building and grounds will continue to safely and securely serve our congregational and ministerial needs.

While our church may be small, we remain strong and have always pulled together to meet the needs of the church and community. We have every confidence that we will meet and exceed our goals and continue to be a strong ministerial presence in the community of Mars for years to come.



## Deacons Notes

*Thank you!*

Many thanks to all who participated in making the spaghetti dinner a success. Many thanks to all who baked, cooked, served, ate, and cleaned. A special shout out to Jaime Weaver for going above and beyond the call of duty. There are always such amazing aromas wafting up from the basement on Spaghetti Dinner day!!



## Ladies' Tea

Plans are well underway for the Ladies Tea on April 27th. Please see a deacon or call the office if you are interested in attending. This year we have a well known chalk artist from our area for the entertainment. Tickets are \$20 and the tea begins at 12:00. Also if you are able and willing we are asking for baskets for the basket raffle. Again, please speak to a deacon or call the church office for the particulars.



## Stewardship

If you missed Kelly's report on VANCO (our on-line giving conduit) there are cards in each pew to explain how to sign up. This is a great way to make sure your giving is consistent as church expenses continue even if we are not in the pew on Sunday.

*Around the Church (continued)*

### Online Giving

**How many times have you arrived at church and realized that you forgot your offering?** St John Lutheran Church is pleased to announce our new and improved online giving page through Vanco! It is a **safe and secure way to give and you can direct your giving** to General Offerings, Mission Emphasis, Food Bank or the Roof Fund. How do you sign up? Any questions, please contact Kelly Greb (412) 337-0306 or [kgreb@zoominternet.net](mailto:kgreb@zoominternet.net).



#### Ways to Connect:

##### **Online**

Visit <https://www.stjohnchurchmars.org/giving> and click Donate Online and then Select Log In or Sign up to set up a one-time or recurring donation.

##### **QR CODE**

Scan the QR code to visit our online giving page.



##### **Mobile App**

Download the Vanco Mobile app from your app store to set up a one-time or recurring gift. Search St John Lutheran Church Mars and then Select Log In or Sign up (if first time). Available on Apple and Android devices.

## **Lutherlyn**

### Camp Blast – May 11

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 11, 11 am – 4:30 pm, rain or shine.**

### 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 to learn about the “camperships” Lutherlyn offers. **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 – June 23-28

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 topic relevant to the students’ confirmational learning. **This year we are 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.

# March in Pictures

## Spaghetti Dinner

Many thanks to everyone who made this dinner possible! From your donations of time, talent, and goods to those to come and ate a hearty meal, we couldn't have done it without you!



## Community Lent Lunches

Every Friday in Lent, we gathered around food and listened to a speaker offer a devotion on community. Each week rotated between Mars United Presbyterian, Penn Mar Apartments, and St. John. As many as 65 people gathered!



## Lent Worship

Throughout Lent, we added an image to our baptismal oasis reminding us of the covenants God has made with God's people over the years. Our faith is rooted in these promises as we are washed in the waters of baptism and prepared for the journey of faith.



## Messy Church

A mess was made at Messy Church as we explored different ways we pray.



## First Communion

We celebrated Ella Niklewicz's first communion on Palm Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>. She learned the story of the Passover, the Lutheran beliefs surrounding communion, and how to make tasty communion bread! Thanks to everyone who is supporting her in her faith journey at St. John!



## Making Palm Crosses

Thanks to Sam for teaching us how to make crosses with the palms of Palm Sunday!



# April 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Deacons' Meeting 7 pm Elders' Meeting 7 pm	3	4	5	6
7 Roof Campaign Kickoff Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Messy Church Mtg. 10:15 Trustees' Mtg. 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm	8	9	10 Bible Study 7:00 pm	11	12	13 Outdoor clean-up 7:00 am Family Game Night 3:00 pm
14 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Bible Study 6:30 pm Mission Emphasis Speaker	15	16 Council Meeting 7:00 pm	17 Bible Study 7:00 pm	18 Worship Planners 7:00 pm	19 Messy Church 5:30 – 7:30 pm	20 Confirmation Class 9:30 – 11:30 am
21 Worship 9:00 am New Member Welcome Sunday School 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Bible Study 6:30 pm	22	23	24 Bible Study 7:00 pm	25	26	27 Ladies Tea - noon
28 Combined Joint Worship at Mars UP 10:00 am Bible Study 6:30 pm	29	30 Communion at Penn Mar 1:45 pm				



04/07 John Fritz  
04/07 Zachary Claus  
04/11 Anna Kramer  
04/11 Todd McCormick  
04/20 Martha Ward  
04/22 Benjamin Knauff  
04/24 Karen Collins  
04/24 Susan Bielo

# April Newsletter

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Address service requested

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