

April
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
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420 Beaver Street
Mars, PA 16046*

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Pastor's Cell #: 412-407-3166*

Please call to ensure availability before coming to the office.

Throughout the season of Lent, we encountered the human and experienced the divine alongside several key people in the gospel of John: Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the man born blind, and Lazarus. These stories not only lead us to the cross, but also to the waters of baptism, where we are united in the death and resurrection of Christ. Historically, Lent was a season of baptismal preparation as people anticipated their baptism at the Easter Vigil service. The season of Easter, then, was a season of newness as newly baptized people participated in the life of the faith community in new ways and long-term members renewed their own baptismal promises.

We also, recall our baptismal promises and calling throughout the season of Easter as we give thanks for the gift of baptism during worship. I encourage you to also take the opportunity of the Easter season to reflect on your own baptismal life. How does being connected to Christ in baptism change the lens through which you view the world? What does it mean to you to be a part of a faith community grounded in word and sacrament? In what ways does this faith community help you grow in your relationship to Christ and your commitment to your baptismal promises (to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth)? What support do you need to continue your journey of spiritual growth?

Regardless of our age or how long we have been a member of a faith community, we are continually growing in our baptismal identities, much like how the disciples grow in their identity as "Easter people" after the resurrection. Immediately after the resurrection, after the women shared the good news of the resurrection, the disciples were in a locked room, concerned for their own mortality and unsure of what to do. And this is where Jesus meets them: in their questions, their uncertainty, and their fears. This is where Jesus meets us too. As we explore what it means to live in the reality of the resurrection, joined to Christ's death and resurrection in our baptism, Jesus meets us wherever we are and invites us further into life, relationship, and resurrection, turning our attention from living in fear to living in love for God and neighbor. Jesus meets us where we are and invites us deeper into our baptismal calling. This Easter season, you are invited to come and continue to encounter the human and experience the divine in the resurrected Jesus, surrounded and supported by the community of faith gathered in celebration of the new life we have in resurrection.

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
5-Apr	Ava N	Anna K	Nathan K	
12-Apr	Josie W	Lydia M	Abby C	
19-Apr	Youth Led Worship			
26-Apr	Cate S	Ava N	Ella N	Anna K
3-May	Abby C	Carissa M	Henry W	

Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
5-Apr	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Denise H	VOLUNTEER	Denise H Ruth Ann T
12-Apr	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Denise H	VOLUNTEER	Denise H Ruth Ann T
19-Apr	Youth Led Worship				Denise H Ruth Ann T
26-Apr	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Denise H	VOLUNTEER	Denise H Ruth Ann T
3-May	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	Valerie C	VOLUNTEER	Jamie W Laura G



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

Holy Week Worship Schedule

- + **Palm/Passion Sunday** – Sunday, March 29, 9:00
- + **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 Family 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)

Holy Week in Detail (March 29 – April 5)

Details are also available at stjohnchurchmars.org/holyweek

Palm/Passion Sunday Worship: 9:00 am

Holy Week begins with celebration as we wave palm branches with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. But we quickly become somber as we recall Jesus' suffering, death, and burial, preparing ourselves for the slower pace of the rest of the services during Holy Week. This year, we will include a visual element to guide our reflections on the broad scope of the story of Jesus journey from a parade lauded with palm branches to the crucifixion.

Maunder Thursday Worship: 7:00 pm

This service brings us to the table where Jesus ate his last supper with his friends. We recall his shocking act of service as he washed the feet of his friends. We hear his instruction to love one another. We eat together the bread and wine, remembering the gift of life we are given in these mundane elements. And we prepare for the pending death of Jesus by stripping the chancel of all decorations to the words of Psalm 22.

Good Friday Community Lunch and Worship: 12:00 pm

We join with members of the community at Mars United Presbyterian for lunch and worship.

Good Friday Family Cross Walk: 3:00 pm

We will explore the stories of Holy Week in a family-friendly manner that invites participants to actively engage in the story as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Easter morning. This free, all-ages together Holy Week storytelling event is open to all. Registration is requested at stjohnchurchmars.org/crosswalk.

Good Friday Tenebrae Service: 7:00 pm

Tenebrae is an ancient service of light and shadow. We gather in subdued silence before joining our hearts in prayer. We reflect on the story of Christ's death as candles are slowly extinguished, moving the sanctuary into darkness. A loud noise reminds us of the closing of the tomb before we remember God's continuing acts of faithfulness in the face of our repeated rebellion, praying for God's continued mercy following the pattern of Psalm 78. We end the service with a light of hope entering the space.

Easter Vigil Worship: 7:00 pm

The Easter Vigil opens with strong, evocative language that declares the Easter Vigil as the culmination of Holy Week and as the center and apex of the baptismal life. We hear the ancient stories of our faith, proclaim the resurrection of Jesus in word and sign, remember God's promise at the font, and share the food and drink of new life. Raised with Christ, we go forth into the world, prepared to share the good news of the resurrection.

Easter Sunday Sunrise Worship: 6:30 am

As the sun breaks over the horizon, we worship with members of the community in God's creation, celebrating the new day and new life that is promised in resurrection.

(Note: Worship is at the Adams Township Park)

Easter Sunday Worship: 9:00 am

Come and hear the good news! Jesus is not in the tomb. He is alive! We sing our praises and celebrate the joy and life we know in resurrection!

Worship Notes (continued)

Youth-Led Worship – April 19th (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 19th at 10:00 am at Mars United Presbyterian. Please note the different time and location of worship!**

Facets of Faith

During the season of Lent, Pastor Katie, David, and Keith have sat down and explored the upcoming gospel reading for each Sunday. We've heard of people as far as Canada listening! We've even heard stories of people using the podcast to invite conversations about faith with friends and family.

How has this podcast help you connect more deeply with the Sunday readings? Let us know!

We're excited to keep inviting people to think about the scriptural and historical context of the readings as we continue to encounter the human and experience the divine with the risen Jesus during the season of Easter. Find the podcast on the blog on the website (stjohnchurchmars.org/blog). Other streaming sites are listed on the website.

Service of Hope and Healing – May 7

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) This Service of Hope and Healing invites you to lay down your burdens at the foot of the cross. Filled with scripture, song, and prayer, this service offers a quiet, reflective space to dwell in God's promise of hope and healing. Whether you are dealing with illness, grief, anxiety or another kind of hardship, this service offers peace.

Service meets in the sanctuary at 6:30 pm and lasts approximately 30-45 minutes.

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.



Around the Church

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.

New Church App

There is a NEW way to stay connected with St. John throughout the week! There's an app for that! In the Google Play store or the iOS App Store, search for "Church App – Tithely". Download the app, then search for St. John Lutheran Church in Mars. The app has links for the calendar, podcasts, worship leadership, bulletins, prayer resources, and more! Download the app today! <https://tithely.app.link>



Around the Church (continued)

Spaghetti Dinner – April 11 (4:30-6:30pm)



The Spaghetti Dinner is coming soon; mark your calendars for **April 11! We are super excited to support our kids going to camp this summer through the proceeds of the Spaghetti Dinner.** So let's help them get to camp by making this a spaghetti dinner to remember! 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.** If you would like to help make meatballs on March 28, contact a Deacon for more information. 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.

Ladies' Tea – May 2



Mark your calendar for this year's **Ladies Tea on May 2nd from 12-2:30.** This is an event we have been doing for more than 20 years. It's a lot of fun to share a few hours with family and friends. If you are interested, please see a deacon as **tables fill up quickly. The cost is \$25.** If you are able to create a basket for our **basket raffle we ask that you bring it to the church basement by April 26th.** Thank you.

Around the Synod

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>

2025 Synod Assembly – June 12-13 (in person)

Jesus reminds us that faith is meant to be shared and lived openly. Our witness is offered so others may find hope and see God's love at work. This year's theme invites us to notice and celebrate the many ways **God's presence is already shining through our communities.** In acts of care, justice, welcome, and creativity, vibrant faith takes shape in everyday ministry. As we gather, may we be



VIBRANT FAITH
GOD SHINES THROUGH US

encouraged by one another's witness and renewed in our calling to reflect God's grace together.

Voting members from our congregation have an important responsibility on behalf of all the members of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This assembly is the highest legislative authority of our synod; they will be making decisions that impact 143 congregations covering 10 counties in southwest PA. If you are interested in serving as a voting member at Synod Assembly, please submit your name to council by the March council meeting (March 17). Voting members are required to attend both sessions and must have a smartphone or tablet to use as a voting device. This year's synod assembly will be held at PennWest California.

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.

Lutherlyn

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/>.

This year, we are excited to support several of our youth as they attend camp for the first time! Stay tuned for how you can offer support to them and their families as they prepare for an incredible adventure in faith this summer!

CampBlast! – May 9

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 10, 11 am – 4:30 pm, rain or shine.

Stewardship

Stewardship Reflection



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



Water is essential for all life, is a critical element of the global economy and, most importantly, holds a sacred place in our relationship with God. As stewards of all creation, protecting Earth's water is not optional. Water in its various forms is meant to meet the survival needs of all of creation around the globe. Yet typical fresh surface-water sources, such as rivers and lakes, only constitute a small fraction of all available sources. But globally, the water situation is dire. According to the United Nations: Eighty-five percent of the world's population lives in the driest half of the planet. Almost 2.5 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation. 783 million people do not have access to clean water. The United States is not immune to the lack of clean water or access to it. Nearly 1 in 10 watersheds is stressed (University of Colorado) and people throughout the country lack drinkable water in their homes.

To help steward our usage of water, think about these tips:

- Fix any leaks that may be in your home
- Turn off the tap while shaving or brushing teeth
- Make sure the dishwasher or clothes washer is full before running a load
 - Know when and how much to water your lawn and garden
- Wash your car using a bucket or a commercial car wash that recycles water

Find more at <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/start-saving>

Serving Others

2nd Quarter Mission Emphasis: Mars Area Public Library

After sustaining considerable water damage in a recent storm, the Library has a lot of expenses to cover. We are therefore looking forward to supporting this important piece of Mars. **The mission of Mars Area Public Library is to inform, educate, entertain, and culturally enrich by providing books, library materials, facilities, and professional services for all individuals in our area.. If you would like to financially support the mission emphasis, mark your envelope “Mission Emphasis.”**



With generous support, the Mars Area Public Library continues to provide a collection of new and relevant materials, technology, computer access, and free events for all ages and interests, striving to meet the ever changing needs of the community. Your contribution assures that the Mars Area Public Library will continue to be the place where everyone can learn, discover and explore through library operations, community programs, and expansion of their collection.

St. John Food Pantry



Our little food pantry sees more usage than we sometimes recognize. Within the week prior to writing the newsletter, we had two individuals visit the pantry who we do not see on a regular basis.

One person had bought extra groceries and stopped at the pantry on her way home to donate goods. Another person stopped by the pantry to collect items and was grateful for the opportunity to “shop” at the indoor pantry as well.

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., microwaveable 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.**

Community Garden



Gardening season is just around the corner! We are looking to make a plan for the garden this year so that it grows healthy, organic, and delicious food for people in the community. This year we are particularly looking to explore ways to make the garden more accessible to individuals looking to pick their own produce and provide assistance to those who need help harvesting. If you would like to be a part of the brainstorming process to achieve these goals, see Pastor Katie. Weather pending, we will be planning to plant things in the garden in mid-May.

Faith Formation

Confirmation Class – April 11 and May 9

Confirmation class is a time for our students in 6th-8th grade to develop deeper scriptural understanding and more robust connection to their faith and identity as a member of the church. While we cover many topics ranging from Bible study to the Small Catechism to whatever else strikes the curiosity of our students, we continually remind the students that the goal is not to use these classes to learn everything there is to know about faith, church, and the Bible, but rather to **start to practice asking the questions and engaging with our faith on a more mature level that will help carry the students into adulthood.**

Kids Club/Youth Group – April 12 and April 26

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. The groups will meet at the respective churches 4:00-5:30pm with **dinner served at St John Lutheran Church on April 12.** On April 26, both groups will meet at Mars United Presbyterian for a year-end party!

Messy Church – April 17th



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.**

Adult Bible Study – The Women of Scripture

What was it like to be a woman in the biblical period? It depended, in part, on who you were: a queen, a judge, a primary wife, a secondary wife, a widow, a slave, or some other kind of "ordinary woman." We will explore the stories of several women throughout the scriptures and what they can teach us about faith.

Bible study will meet on Wednesdays (7:00pm) and Sundays (6:30pm) beginning on Wednesday, April 15th. The final session will be Sunday, May 24th. Material covered on Wednesday will be repeated on the following Sunday. Both days will have a zoom option.



Vacation Bible School

Mark your calendars for Vacation Bible School!
Sunday, July 12 – Thursday, July 16!

We will soon be looking for individuals to help prepare, advertise, and lead elements of this favorite summer program. Vacation Bible School is a joint ministry of St. John Lutheran Church, Mars United Presbyterian Church, and Valencia Presbyterian Church. Registration is open to children ages 3-12.

Faith Formation (continued)

Children's Bulletins

There is a lot that happens in a worship service! It can be hard for our young worshipers to keep track of everything. To help them **follow along every element of the worship service using age-appropriate language and activities**, we have children's bulletins that teach children about the full liturgy. There are stickers to go along with each level of reader. Our visually inclined young worshipers are invited to make shapes out of pipe cleaners following the prompts in the bulletins. Our students who are still learning to read are invited to practice finding and writing sight words. And our young readers are offered opportunities to learn more about each element of worship with notes explaining what to do for our newest acolytes. **Grab a bulletin for your young worshiper in the Greeting Area next Sunday!**

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. 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 5th 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:

April 5 – Easter Sunday (no class)

April 12 – The Empty Tomb

April 19 – The Great Commission

April 26 – No Sunday School – Youth Led Worship at Mars United Presbyterian

May 3 – The Ascension

Middle and High School

A note from the teacher, Ruth Ann: "The theme for the confirmation aged students during this winter term has been quite interesting. Discussions have been funny and sometimes serious. Some topics have dealt with running away from home - The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32); what it really means to be rich – The rich young man (Matthew 19:16-21) and things that are not fair – the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). We also discussed the word Hell! Always one step away from an adventure with these young people. Just when you think they aren't listening – well think again."

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.

April 5 – Easter Sunday (no class)

April 12 – Kings and Kingdoms – Samuel – Chronicles

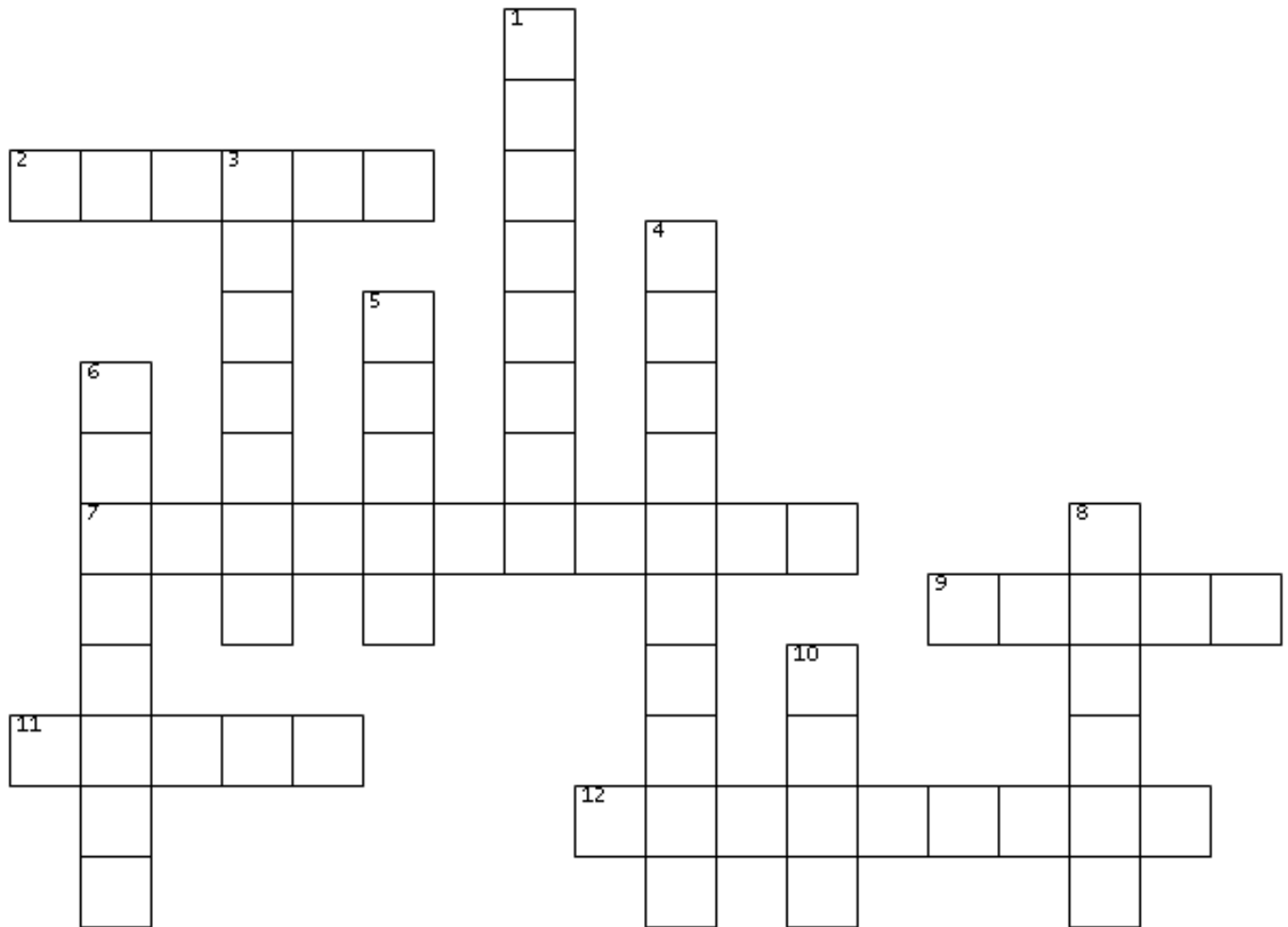
April 19 – Trails of Tears and Joy: 2 Kings – Esther, Lamentations, Daniel

April 26 – When God Speaks – The Prophets

May 3 – For Every Matter Under Heaven – Wisdom and Poetry Books

Test your liturgy vocabulary!

Use the names for different parts of the worship service to complete the puzzle below!



ACROSS

2. the good news! The _____ reading is a story of Jesus' time and ministry on earth.
7. after we confess our sins, we hear a word of _____.
9. a description of what we believe, said as a congregation as an expression of our faith
11. the name of the book that tells the story of God's people. We read several readings from this book during worship.
12. when we receive bread and wine (or juice) and remember Jesus' last supper

DOWN

1. a song of praise celebrating God and everything God has done for God's people sung before the scripture readings in response to forgiveness
3. when we talk to God
4. the time when we remember that we do not always do what we should and that sometimes we do things we should not do. We tell these things to God and listen to a word of forgiveness.
5. the song in which we sing our prayer trusting in God's mercy. This word means "Lord" in Greek.
6. during this time, the gifts of the people are collected and given to the church to help support the church's mission as a way of saying thanks for all of God's gifts
8. the time when the pastor helps us to think about the readings from the Bible
10. a word used for songs in worship, like the _____ of the day after the sermon.

April 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2 Maundy Thursday Worship 7:00 pm	3 Family Cross Walk 3:00 pm Good Friday Tenebrae Service 7:00 pm	4 Easter Vigil Storytelling Worship 7:00 pm
5 Sunrise Service 6:30a Easter Worship, 9:00a Egg Hunt, 10:15a	6	7 Elders' Meeting, 7:00p Trustees' Meeting, 7:00p Deacons' Meeting, 7:00p	8	9	10	11 Confirmation Class 9:30 – 11:30 am Spaghetti Dinner 4:30 – 6:30p
12 Worship, 9:00a Faith Formation, 10:15a Kids Club / Youth Group, 4:00p	13	14	15 Bible Study 7:00p	16	17 Messy Church, 6:00 – 8:00p	18
19 Joint Youth Led Worship, @ MUP 10:00 am Strategic Planning Meeting 11:30a Adult Bible Study, 6:30p	20 Newsletter Articles Due	21 Council Meeting 7:00p	22 Bible Study 7:00p	23	24	25 (Building Rented)
26 Worship, 9:00a Faith Formation, 10:15a Anniversary/Birthday Celebration Kids Club / Youth Group, 4:00p Adult Bible Study, 6:30p	27 Communion at Penn Mar 1:45p	28	29 Bible Study 7:00p	30	1	2 Ladies Tea



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

April Newsletter

Address service requested

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