

June  
2025

# St. John Lutheran Church



## Mission Statement

*St. John is a living witness to the love of God as shown in Jesus Christ.*

*We gather faithfully in God's name to **worship** and praise God; and we go forth in peace to **share** the Good News and to **serve** the world around us.*

St. John Lutheran Church  
PO Box 411  
420 Beaver Street  
Mars, PA 16046  
Office Hours MWF, 8a-1p

Web site: [www.stjohnchurchmars.org](http://www.stjohnchurchmars.org)  
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Office email: [office@stjohnchurchmars.org](mailto:office@stjohnchurchmars.org)  
Pastor Katie's email: [pastorkmcneal@gmail.com](mailto:pastorkmcneal@gmail.com)  
Pastor's Cell #: 412-407-3166

Please call to ensure availability before coming to the office.

I have been watching a lot of the show "The Great British Baking Show." At this point, I've watched each series available for streaming several times through. Yet I'm still always astonished at what the bakers can do... especially with cakes! And it's not just about how they decorate it! There are many more kinds of cake than I ever knew. Each cake is made up of the same basic ingredients, but slight changes in the ratio of the ingredients, how the ingredients are mixed together, and how it is baked can have drastic effects on how the judges describe the final product. And that's not including the flavor combinations that the contestants develop! From the little interviews they do throughout the show, the contestants spend lots of time in trial and error as they figure out what tastes good together and what doesn't. They experiment and fail and try again, hoping for to discover the recipe that is unique to them and will earn them accolades from the judges. It's a lot of work, but for each of them, it is a work of passion – to create something beautiful and delicious that they can share with others.

At the beginning of the year, the vestry came up with the acronym CAKE to describe the culture we want to embody as St. John Lutheran Church. We are striving to show **C**hrist-like **A**cceptance and **K**indness for **E**veryone. At the beginning of the summer (beginning June 22), we will have a summer worship series that will help us explore our unique style and flavor of being a CAKE congregation. Like the cakes on "The Great British Baking Show," there are basic elements that most congregations have as bodies of Christ, welcoming people as Christ has welcomed us. However, each congregation will put these elements together in different ways and at different ratios; they will introduce their own flavors and personal touches; and they will present it to their surrounding communities differently. St. John is a CAKE congregation – we accompany people through different milestones of faith and life with cake at every opportunity and we strive to offer **C**hrist-like **A**cceptance and **K**indness for **E**veryone. What specific kind of CAKE we are, what flavors we choose to use in our CAKE, and how we present it to the world are unique to us, and I'm excited to spend some time this summer developing our CAKE recipe together!

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 try to find someone to cover and tell the office of the change.

	Acolyte	Offering	Offering	Young Reader
1-June	Carissa M	Lydia M	Cate S	
8-June	Ava N	Ella N	Abby C	
15-June	Cate S	Jules K	Eva K	Ava N
22-June	Abby C	Ava N	Ella N	
29-June	Anna K	Lydia M	Cate S	
6-July	Jules K	Anna K	Nathan K	

### Adult Worship Leaders

	Greeters	Usher	Assistant Minister	Bread Baker	Counters
1-June	Lydia M and Family	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Keith C	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	David D Cora S
8-June	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Keith C	Denise H	David D Cora S
15-June	Sherry D	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Keith C	Denise H	David D Cora S
22-June	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Keith C	Denise H	David D Cora S
29-June	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Keith C	Denise H	David D Cora S
6-July	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Missy K <b>VOLUNTEER</b>

### Pentecost Sunday – June 8

Pentecost marks the culmination of our Easter celebration as the **50<sup>th</sup> day of Easter**. We read the story of when **language barriers were broken down** and the Holy Spirit came down by way of tongues of fire after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. **This story marks the very beginning days of the Christian church and its mission in and to the world after Jesus' ascension.** Pentecost is therefore often called the **"birthday of the church."** We will celebrate Pentecost with red throughout the church and streamers to celebrate the joy of this celebration. Wear red to add to the celebrations!



## *Worship Notes (continued)*

### **Volunteers Wanted**



As we enter a new year, we are looking to fill out worship volunteer schedule. **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 up to volunteer for an open slot using the sign-up sheets in the greeting area or at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>

#### 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.

### **Dinner Church – June 24**

What does it mean to be disciples, followers of Jesus? Perhaps the best place to tackle this question is at the table with Jesus. **At Dinner Church, we meet Jesus at the table, the Lord's Table and the dinner table. Dinner Church is a worship service that interweaves Holy Communion, scripture and discussion, dinner, and community building.** We begin at 6:30 and typically end around 8:30pm.

All are welcome!

### **Graduate Recognition**

We are so proud of our graduates! We joyfully give thanks for the ways God has nurtured them and helps them grow into who they are and are becoming, but we know that people are pulled in many different directions during this time of year, especially as our graduates navigate this time of transition. In response to their varied schedules, **we will be celebrating our high school and college graduates during worship as they are available.**

### **Summer Worship Series**

Throughout the summer, we will be focusing our worship services on a couple of different topics. We will begin our summer with a series exploring what it means to us to be a CAKE (Christ-like Acceptance and Kindness for Everyone) congregation. **This will include a sermon series exploring different expressions of being a welcoming and hospitable congregation along with discussion questions congregation members are encouraged to explore during a fellowship hour after church or throughout the week.**

More information will be coming, but after Vacation Bible School we will have another worship series tackling the hard questions offered by congregation members this past Advent.

## **Serving Others**

### **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. **When people are asked what goods they are most often looking for, they typically respond with items that are not covered by SNAP benefits (i.e. cleaning products, paper products, personal hygiene products) or easy to prepare meals.**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Mission Emphasis: Grapevine Center, Inc.**

Grapevine Center, Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization based in Butler County that is consumer-operated and **designed to support persons living with mental illnesses, struggling with homelessness, and reintegrating after recently being released from jail.** Like most support groups, it offers a chance to share problems, advice, and ideas with others who have similar concerns in an atmosphere of understanding, empathy, confidentiality, and companionship. As an organization, it helps to secure employment, furniture, clothes, shoes, coats and food for people in need, regardless of their housing situation. Their building enables them to also offer aid through supplying basic needs like showers and hot meals as well as telephone and computer support. Grapevine Center also offers transportation to important appointments, like the social security office, court, and the grocery store. **This organization offers a lifeline to help people stabilize their living situations, get back on their feet, and reintegrate into the community through learning opportunities, peer mentoring, and offering support for basic needs such as showers and hot meals.** To make an offering to the mission emphasis, mark your envelope “mission emphasis.”

### **Community Garden**



Gardening season is here! The plants are in the ground, and now it's time to tend to them and do our part to help them grow into strong plants that will produce a bountiful harvest! **Volunteers to water (as needed) and weed are always wanted! Tools and training are available.** We are so grateful for our little garden space that grows healthy, organic, and delicious food. Fresh produce and herbs can be a luxury for many, volunteering to help maintain the garden helps to bring these luxuries within reach for our neighbors. Contact Pastor Katie if you'd like to help tend to the garden.

## **Stewardship**

### **Stewardship Corner**

We are stewards of God's creation. We are called to the task of caring for creation. **As you gear up for summer yard work, think about ways you can care for God's creation in your own lawn.** What products do you use? Do you have plants that offer food or homes for different members of the ecosystem? How do you use water in your space? **In the community garden, we strive to be examples of ways to be good stewards of creation even while we use it for our purposes.** We try to use organic gardening practices, using herbs and flowers to deter pests instead of chemicals that can hurt our garden friends. We collect rainwater so that we don't need to use borough water in our garden. We plant extra so that critters can share in our harvest. We offer the produce to our neighbors in need and see to it that nothing goes to waste. **You may not be able to do everything possible in your space, but is there one practice you can adopt this summer to be a better steward of the piece of creation under your care?**

# Around the Synod

## **2025 Synod Assembly – May 17 (online) and June 12-14 (in person)**

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. This year, those decisions include the election of a new bishop for the synod.

At the opening of assembly on May 17<sup>th</sup>, names were brought forth for consideration for the position of bishop. Further ballots will take place in June. To learn more about the nominated individuals and other proceedings of the 2025 assembly, visit <https://www.swpasynod.org/assembly2025>. **Thank you to David Dreher and Denise Hager for serving as our lay voting representatives this year.**

**SYNOD ASSEMBLY OFFERING** Each year our collected offering supports a ministry special to the heart of our synod; we encourage congregations to take a special offering to send along with its voting members. 2025 Offering Designation: The Levi Fund is a new synod fund created in honor of Bishop Kurt Kusserow's tenure as our synod's bishop. In Numbers, the Lord told Moses, "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest so that they may assist him." It was a demonstration that leaders do not work alone. And so by underwriting the salaries of critical synod staff positions, the goal of the Levi Fund is to ensure that our next bishop is able to have the necessary support to fulfill the duties of the office. Offering can be brought in person to the June portion of Synod Assembly, or made in advance using this QR code or at [swpasynod.org/levi](https://www.swpasynod.org/levi) Individuals are also welcome to show their appreciation with a donation.



## **Emanuel Nine Commemoration – June 16**

**Monday, June 16: 7 PM**

**St John-Wayman AME Church (15 Mulberry Street, Bridgewater, PA)**

The synod's Authentic Diversity and Justice working group invite you to a combine worship service remembering the martyrdom of the Emanuel Nine—the nine people shot and killed on June 17, 2015, during a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.

## **Lutherlyn**

### **Lutherlyn Summer Camp Registration**

Lutherlyn Summer Camp Registration is OPEN! While many camps are full, there are still spots throughout the summer! If your child would like to attend Lutherlyn, but finances are standing in your way, please contact Pastor Katie. Camperships are available through Lutherlyn! **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/>.

### **Worship at Lutherlyn**

You are invited to worship at Lutherlyn throughout the year. Everyone is welcome and invited to join us. Communion Worship starts at 3:30pm (plan to arrive early to allow time to park and walk to worship). If it is raining, we will worship in Baker Chapel.

#### **2025 Worship Dates:**

June 8, 2025 – Chapel Hill (Summer Camp theme worship)

September 7, 2025 – Amphitheater

December 7, 2025 – Baker Chapel



# Around the Church

## Website Updates!

**Have you signed up for the new members portal on the website?** When you visit the website at [stjohnchurchmars.org](http://stjohnchurchmars.org), there is an option to “log in” in the upper right corner. When you log in, you will have access to a member portal. Here you can offer ways to connect with other members, access the latest directory, access the online sign-up board at <https://signup.com/go/JPakfVA>, or view the current vestry. To help keep members safe, the office will approve membership requests.

Do you have other things you'd like to find on the members portal? Tell Pastor Katie!

## Ladies' Tea Update



**Many thanks** to all who contributed to the Ladies' Tea. If you attended, contributed a basket, helped to serve and/or clean up your efforts have not gone unappreciated. **It takes ALL of us to make this event a success.**

Around 100 people came together to enjoy good fellowship, good food, and good music provided by harpist Rebecca Yulie. We collected around \$3,000 to support the ministries of the church. Money was collected through ticket sales as well as the over 50 baskets raffled off. Additionally, over \$500 was collected for the 50/50 raffle! The 50/50 raffle proceeds will go to support a local family as they work to recover from recent storms.

## Youth Car Wash Fundraiser – June 21



Our youth will be doing a **car wash fundraiser** to help pay for the costs of activities for the coming year. To help get ready for the car wash, **we need lots of rags**, so start saving up those rags! You can also support this fundraiser by coming and **having your car washed on June 21 at Agway, 10a-2p** (and start hoping for a sunny day!). Get a flier in the Greeting Area at church to hang up wherever you see fliers up!

## Annual Church Picnic

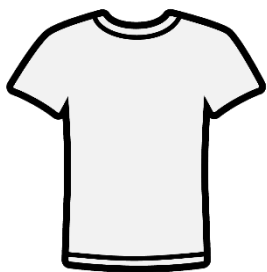
Mark your calendars! Our **annual church picnic will be on July 27<sup>th</sup>**. We will have worship, picnic food, and games right on the church lawn! Stay tuned for more specific information.



## Murder Mystery Dinner

A new thing is coming to St. John! Stay tuned for a Murder Mystery Dinner at St. John in the late summer/early fall! Tickets will be pre-sold.

## St. John T-Shirts!



**We are looking to order St. John T-shirts! If you are excited about T-shirt design, we'd love to see your ideas!** All designed must be submitted by the end of June. Bonus points if it celebrates St. John as a CAKE congregation! Shirts will be available for pre-order later this summer so that we can premiere them for the upcoming Applefest!

# Faith Formation

## By Heart

**By Heart meets Sundays at 10:15am.** By Heart is for those who want to be introduced to faith, those who find the Creed and Lord's Prayer to be rote exercise and the sacraments obscure rituals, those who have these texts and Luther's explanations of them memorized and hold them near and dear. **By Heart is for all teens and adults looking to ignite and reignite their spark of faith this Easter as together we ask "But what does this mean?" (Final gathering on 6/8)**

Learn more at [stjohnchurchmars.org/byheart](http://stjohnchurchmars.org/byheart)

## Adult Book Study – Real Faith for Real Life

During the summer months, we will engage in a book study to help us nourish our spiritual selves. We will meet monthly to discuss different parts of the book **“Real Faith for Real Life” by Michael W. Foss**. In this book, Foss invites readers to engage with the Marks of Discipleship (enumerated in his book as: daily prayer, weekly worship, daily Bible reading, serving beyond the congregation, nurturing relationships, and giving a tithe and beyond). **“The Marks of Discipleship are spiritual aids that are biblical and have grown out of the tradition of the Christian Church,”** (pg 4). They “are the practices of our faith that re-ground us in our call, our hope, and our joy,” (pg 9). Presently, the schedule is to meet on Sunday evenings, 6:30-8:00pm. Depending on scheduling requests, we may either switch days or add a second option. As of now the reading schedule is: discussing chapters 1 and 2 on June 29<sup>th</sup>, chapters 3 and 4 on July 27<sup>th</sup>, and chapters 5 and 6 on August 24<sup>th</sup>.

## Messy Church – June 20<sup>th</sup>



**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. **If you would like to help with this ministry, contact Pastor Katie.** No registration is required for this free faith formation opportunity. We gather for dinner at 5:30pm and move to activities and celebration, ending at 7:30pm.

## Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School is just around the corner - Sun, July 13 - Thur, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:00-8:30p  
**This year at VBS, we will learn about how Jesus is our true north!** Kids will foster a deeper connection with our faithful friend, Jesus, while discovering the great Alaskan frontier. As kids trek through the tundra of Alaska and experience what it means to trust in Jesus, prepare for amazing faith connections to unfold! We will celebrate the end of the week with a special worship on July 20<sup>th</sup>. And best of all, it's free for everyone! Registration is free and OPEN. The link is on the website at [stjohnchurchmars.org/childrenyouth](http://stjohnchurchmars.org/childrenyouth).

## Adult Bible Study – Fall Series

**During the summer, we will be taking a break from our weekly Bible study. In the fall, we will explore the Nicene Creed!** This year marks the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea at which the Creed was formalized. This series will explore the historical context of the authorship of the creed, including the teachings it guarded against, and some of the scriptural basis of the statements made throughout the creed. Stay tuned for specific start dates!

## **Sunday School Recap**

The 2024-2025 St. John Lutheran Church Sunday School year came to a close on Sunday, May 18th. We marked the end of the year with our traditional beautification project of planting flowers in pots and placing them at each of the main entrances to the building. Many thanks to Mars Agway and Chuck O. for donating plants and time to this effort.

Let us take a look back and review the year beyond the Flower Planting though. We started with Rally Day, where we got the kids (and grown-ups!) sugared up with ice cream. Animal Friends visited our class to kick off our tithing campaign and brought a puppy for the kids to enjoy. They explained to our kids how to properly approach a dog, that we should always ask the owner if we can pet their dog, and that dogs love to sniff and lick us! Over the course of the year, we collected \$272.54 for Animal Friends, along with a small tote of food and toys for the animals in their care to enjoy.

Our standard class routine of opening, music, story, craft, and snack was often intermixed with cake, which kept things fresh and new. Ruth Ann Tully maintained a schedule of meeting with the Confirmation class students throughout the year while the younger children were in class. The fact that we, as a Church Community, have a place for our children of all ages to spend time learning about and growing in their Faith is a true blessing.

As we moved into Advent, Maizy led the kids in a bell choir for the Christmas season in a manner that still amazes me. How she gets 10 kids to play bells and make music without them just clanging away noisily and chaotically is a mystery to me! As we entered 2025 and the Lenten Season, our classroom setting pivoted away from the Lectionary readings and towards learning the story of Moses. We started with Moses as a baby being placed in the river for Pharaoh's Daughter to take him in. We then moved to Moses confronting Pharaoh to tell him God's demand to "Let my people go," followed by the 10 plagues, the Exodus story, the parting of the sea, and the 10 Commandments. Over the course of five consecutive weeks, we drilled into detail and created a picture board each week on the chalkboard. It was wonderful watching the kids learn and visualize this story, and they did an amazing job remembering it from week to week! Many thanks to Emma Niklewicz, who organized crafts for the kids during this session and helped throughout the entire year. What a wonderful blessing she is to our Congregation!

During this time, Pastor Katie introduced the kids to a few new sing-along songs, which the kids really enjoyed. I remember one Sunday when they were belting out the song louder than I have ever heard them sing. It was wonderful to just stand back and watch joyful noise being made to God from such young souls!

Easter brought with it the opening of our Alleluia box, where the kids had the opportunity to decorate the walls of our church with Hallelujah signs. In early May, the Kids Club and Youth Group partnership between St. John Lutheran and Mars United Presbyterian worked on a Youth-led worship service held at MUP. All the kids did an amazing job leading us in worship that day.

As we enter the summer, we plan to meet and discuss how we want our physical classroom space to be decorated and organized. Denise Hagar, Pastor Katie, Beth Fitzgerald, Ruth Ann Tully, and I already had a brainstorming session, and I am excited to see where those ideas take us as we move into the 2025-2026 school year.

For now, I want to say thank you to all who helped bring the Word of God to our kids these past nine months. Denise Hagar, who keeps me on track and organized and who cares deeply for our children.

Emma Niklewicz, who, as mentioned above, has grown into an amazing example of Faith and Service. Ruth Ann Tully, who gives our older children a place to voice their questions and stretch their Faith. Beth Fitzgerald, who brings a wonderfully positive attitude to story time each week. These folks make possible the things we do for our kids, and it is by their dedication to the Sunday School program that we get to see our young children grow into the amazing adults we are celebrating this month as graduates of both college and high school.

God bless.

Keith Cardinal  
Sunday School Coordinator



# June 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Worship 9:00 am Trustees Meeting 10:15am By Heart 10:15 am Adult Bible Study pm	2	3 Elders' Meeting 7 pm	4 Adult Bible Study 7:00 pm	5	6	7
8 Day of Pentecost Worship 9:00 am Deacons' Meeting 10:15am By Heart 10:15 am	9	10	11 Campfire Worship 7:00 pm	12 Synod Assembly	13	14
15 Worship 9:00 am	16	17 Council Meeting 7:00 pm	18	19	20 Messy Church 5:30 – 7:30 pm Newsletter Articles Due	21 Car Wash @ Agway 10a – 2p
22 Worship 9:00 am	23	24 Dinner Church 6:30 pm	25	26	27	28
29 Worship 9:00 am Anniversary/ Birthday Coffee hour 10:15 am Book Study 6:30 pm	30 Communion at Penn Mar 1:45 pm					



6/11 – Jamie & Erin Weaver – 20 yrs.  
6/29 – Henry & Janet Ford – 62 yrs.

6/05 Gerald Brunson  
6/06 Henry Ford  
6/08 Cindy Knauff  
6/12 Janet Senka  
6/13 Laura Gold  
6/19 Beth Fitzgerald  
6/21 Katie Niklewicz  
6/24 Reed Richards  
6/26 Alaina Nagel  
6/28 Abigail Cardinal  
6/29 Gabriella Julio

# June Newsletter

Address service requested

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