

March  
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 him; 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*

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## What is Holy Week?

Holy Week is an incredibly busy week in the life of the church. Beginning with our Sunday worship on Palm/Passion Sunday through the celebration of Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday, Holy Week includes seven opportunities for worship, each with its own character and emphasis. We begin with celebrating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, remembering that Jesus knew why he was there, but the people celebrated and waved palm branches, still not fully understanding what was happening. We feel this sudden whiplash in emotions as we move to the telling of the Passion on the same day. But if we read the Passion on Sunday, why do we tell it again throughout the week? Because this story is too big to fit into one day. We hear it on Palm Sunday as an introduction to the week, and then we slow down and linger in the story throughout the week

On Maundy Thursday, we remember Jesus' last supper with his disciples, hearing Jesus' mandate for his disciples to love one another as he has loved us. We remember Jesus being handed over the death as we strip the chancel area and reflect in its starkness. We continue our Holy Week worship on Good Friday, we focus on the cross and the suffering and death that it brought even as we remember the cross as a sign of forgiveness, healing, and salvation. On the night before Easter Sunday, we gather to celebrate Jesus' transition from death to life. We tell stories of the faith, waiting, anticipating the moment when we proclaim Christ's resurrection and triumph over sin and death. Each service looks a little different as we structure the service to reflect the part of the story in focus on each day.

By slowing down the story, we can really appreciate just how amazing the joy of Easter Sunday is. By taking our time to remember and worship God throughout the week, we remember the whole story, and all the weight and depth it carries. So this Holy Week, I invite you to consider all the worship services not as a burden on your calendar, but as an opportunity to slow down and appreciate the depth and mystery of this story that is at the center of our faith: Christ died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

May your Holy Week be a blessed week of prayer and reflection.

Pastor Katie

## 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/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmkyKssxvQ>  
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.

	<b>Acolyte</b>	<b>Offering</b>	<b>Offering</b>	<b>Young Reader</b>
<b>3-Mar</b>	Anna K	Jules K	Abigail C	XX
<b>10-Mar</b>	Nathan K	Ava N	Ella N	XX
<b>17-Mar</b>	Abigail C	Anna K	Nathan K	Abigail C
<b>24-Mar Palm/Passion Sunday</b>	Emma N	Luca K	Eva K	XX
<b>28-Mar Maundy Thurs</b>	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	XX
<b>29-Mar Good Friday</b>	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	XX
<b>30-Mar Easter Vigil</b>	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer
<b>31-Mar Easter Sunday</b>	Ava N	Ella N	Emma N	Emma N
<b>7-Apr</b>	Anna K	Jules K	Abigail C	XX

## Adult Worship Leaders

	<b>Greeters</b>	<b>Usher</b>	<b>Assistant Minister</b>	<b>Bread Baker</b>	<b>Counters</b>
<b>3-Mar</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	David D.	Keith C.	Kim R.	Jill W. Cindy K.
<b>10-Mar</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	David D.	Jonathan C	Kim R.	Jill W. Cindy K.
<b>17-Mar</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	David D.	Jonathan C	Kim R.	Jill W. Cindy K.
<b>24-Mar Palm/Passion Sunday</b>	Miller Family	David D.	Martha W	First Communion Class	Jill W. Cindy K.
<b>28-Mar Maundy Thurs</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	David D	Dave K	Kim R.	
<b>29-Mar Good Friday</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	David D	Denise H	None	
<b>30-Mar Easter Vigil</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Todd N	Denise H	Kim R.	
<b>31-Mar Easter Sunday</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Todd N	Denise H	Kim R.	Jill W. Cindy K.
<b>7-Apr</b>	Sherry D	Bob D.	David D	<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Denise H. Ruth Ann Tully

## Lenten Worship and Study Schedule

Lent is a time for us, as Christians, to take extra time in prayer, devotion, and/or worship. We begin the season with ashes, remembering our humanity and mortality. Then, as we journey to the death and resurrection of Jesus, we **reflect on our faith and strive to deepen our connection with God**. This year, we are **focusing on the journeys we take in faith**. On Sundays, we will heed **the call of Jesus to “come unto me”** as we hear again the covenants God has made with God’s people, **calling us to new life in God**. During our weekly Bible Study time and Wednesday worship, **we will follow the journey of the people in the book of Exodus**. There will be a community luncheon and reflection series on Fridays in Lent as well.

### **Wednesday Schedule**

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

### **Sunday Schedule**

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

### **Friday Schedule**

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

## Holy Week Worship Schedule

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

## Monthly Worship at Penn Mar

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

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 **first 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.

## ***Serving Others (continued)***

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

Having the little Food Pantry outside and inside is a  **blessing to our community**. 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 toiletry and cleaning supplies in our pantry.  **A tidy pantry where guests can feel comfortable taking anything there is an important part of this ministry.** Whenever you have a few moments, help 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.

### **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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## **Community Art Projects**

### **Lent Activity Crosses**

Remember to look at your Lenten Activity Cross! Try to complete 6-7 activities a week and color in the section as you do. On Palm Sunday, bring back your crosses so that we can decorate the church with their cheerful colors on Easter!

## **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** to which all are welcome.  **This year’s event will highlight some of the stories of the people who kindled and tended the fires of freedom,** often from behind the scenes. 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**

We each make thousands of decisions daily that impact, not just ourselves, but our families, congregations, and communities. 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 will be Friday June 14, 9:30am – Saturday, June 15, 12:30pm in person at PennWest California (formerly Cal-U).

## **Around the Church**

### **Stewardship Reflection**

To be a good steward is to be a good caretaker and manager of that which has been entrusted to us. **One of the ways we can practice stewardship is how we care for the places where we gather, in our homes and in our church.** Everything we do to care for the places is a part of our stewardship. We can think about what supplies we use to care for these places, where those supplies come from, and how we are developing these places as places of comfort and hospitality for all who gather there. **Our building is used for much of our ministry.** Our building speaks to guests about what we do and how they might see themselves becoming a part of this community on a longer-term basis. Our official stewardship campaign is ending as we collect the pledge cards, but the stewardship we practice continues all year round. **Check out the information about the clean up days for how you can practice good stewardship of the building we rely on for so many things.**

### **Spaghetti Dinner – Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4:30-6:30pm**

**Come one, come all to the annual Spaghetti Dinner!** As always many hands make the work light...and more fun. This year the proceeds are designated to help pay for the new roof so it is especially important to support the event by coming to eat, helping to serve, and inviting everyone you know! The dinner will be 4:30-6:30 and the cost is \$10 for an adult. Take out will be available.

### **Indoor Clean Up Days – Saturdays, March 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm**

On Easter morning, the church is filled with the glory of Christ's resurrection! Prepare the building for this exciting day by coming for an indoor church clean-up day! **Caring for our building is one way that we can give of ourselves to participate in the ministry that happens at St. John.** There will be jobs for people who can climb ladders and people who can get down on the floor, for people who can run up and down the steps and people who need to be more stationary. Many hands make light work! To accommodate schedules, we will have organized clean-up days on Saturdays, March 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:00am-12:00pm. **If you'd like to help but cannot come on the days of, contact the office for a list of jobs that you can do at another time.**

## **Around the Church (continued)** **Ladies' Tea – Call for Baskets**

The much anticipated, annual **Ladies' Tea will be on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 12:00-2:30 pm**. Seats fill quickly, so be sure to talk to a deacon soon to make a reservation! Each year, the Ladies' Tea includes delicious food, entertainment, good company, and the basket raffle. The basket raffle is always a popular event but calls for many baskets of various themes to make it a success. **If you are willing to provide a basket (or two) please contact one of the deacons or the church office. We will need them in hand by Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup>.** All money earned from the raffle will be applied to the roof fund.  
Thanks in advance.

## **Office Hours**

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

## **Spring Ahead! March 10, 2am**

Don't forget to move your clocks **AHEAD** one hour at 2am on Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup> (or before you go to bed on Saturday March 9<sup>th</sup>), losing an hour.

## **Faith Formation**

### **Youth Group Holy Week Lock-In – March 28-29**

Our joint Youth Group with Mars United Presbyterian will be observing Holy Week with a Lock-In this year! We will gather at Mars United Presbyterian (MUP) before worship (at MUP) on Maundy Thursday. **After worship, we will fill our evening with games and devotions.** On Friday morning, **we will walk around Mars Community, stopping along the way to remember the events leading up to the crucifixion.** Pick up will be around 11:00am on Friday. (If youth want to participate in the worship service at St. John, we will have our Maundy Thursday service at 7:00pm, then go to MUP for the remainder of the event.)

### **Adult Bible Study**

During Lent, we will be exploring the **journey of the people in the book of Exodus** and how it relates to our own journeys in and of faith. **Our Wednesday evening Bible study will begin at 7:00 pm, but it will be slightly abbreviated to allow time for a reflective worship service with communion afterwards. The Sunday evening gathering will start at 6:30 pm and be the standard length of about an hour for study and a few moments for prayer following.** We will have meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays February 18<sup>th</sup> – March 20<sup>th</sup>. As has been our practice, the two sessions will still cover roughly the same material and both sessions will be available for in-person or zoom participation. **Contact Pastor Katie or the office for weekly emails with the zoom link and weekly study sheets.**

Stay tuned for the topic of our Easter season study!

**Faith Formation (continued)**  
**Confirmation Classes – Third Saturdays (9:30-11:30am)**

Confirmation is a faith formation opportunity that helps our young people (typically grades 6-8) engage with their faith and prepare to take ownership of the promises made on their behalf at baptism. **During our meeting in February the students explored the first two articles of the Apostles' Creed.** This conversation dove into the depths of this statements we make each week during worship. We talked about belief in God and what Jesus has to do with each of us.

As a part of the conversation, the students were invited to come up with a sentence (about 150 characters) describing what Jesus means to them. **Now it's your turn! In 150 characters or less, what does Jesus mean to you?**

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



**Messy Church is an intentionally intergenerational place for people to meet and experience fun and messy ways to engage in faith and worship, including crafts and activities, celebration, and a shared meal no matter their connection to church.** At Messy Church, we celebrate the creative, joyful God revealed in Jesus Christ and the ways that our whole messy selves our invited into God's story. No registration is required for this free faith formation opportunity. **We begin our time together with the meal and move through the rest of this engaging and interactive worship experience.**

**Celebration of First Communion – March 24<sup>th</sup>**

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a powerful moment in the life of a Christian. In this simple meal is a declaration of grace and forgiveness and a rich story of God's presence throughout the ages. This year we will have a celebration of **first communion on Palm Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>.** Come and support our young people as they partake in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, receiving the elements for the first time! As we prepare to welcome our young people to receive the elements for the first time, **we will gather on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 12:00pm,** to bake bread, share the stories included in the celebration of the eucharist, and explore what this sacrament means in the Lutheran Church.

**Upcoming Mission Trips**

Mars United Presbyterian is **coordinating two mission trips this summer** that we are welcome to also participate in. There will be one just for our joint youth group and another one for adults. Both mission trips will be out-of-state mission trips. An **informational meeting will be offered on Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 11:15 am at Mars United Presbyterian Church.** Contact Pastor Katie or Pastor Brian to be added to the list to receive more information as it becomes available.

**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!



# Lutherlyn

## 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 different topic relevant to the students’ confirmational learning. **This year we will be exploring the Holy Spirit... what is it, what does it look like, and what does it have to do with us?** Contact Pastor Katie for details.

## Did You Know?

### Biblical Literacy

From the blog on the SWPA Synod’s Website (<https://www.swpasynod.org/stories/childrensliteracy>):

What do you think of when you hear the term biblical literacy? Memorizing the books of the Bible in order? Naming the major characters in the Old and New Testaments? Citing Bible verses by heart?

At 1517 Media, our congregational and book imprints support and build children’s biblical literacy in a more holistic way. We publish several illustrated story Bibles and NRSV Bibles to accompany our *Frolic*, *Spark*, and *Whirl* curricula. These Bibles help support biblical literacy because they are typically encountered in a Sunday school setting so that kids explore texts in a supportive pedagogical environment where they receive context and can ask questions. They interact with these biblical texts in all kinds of ways—younger children use illustrated story Bibles to point to pictures, trace the story’s action, and make connections with their own lives of faith....

**Here’s the amazing bonus that happens when your congregation supports biblical literacy in kids—you are also supporting print literacy! And print literacy is one of the strongest predictors of educational achievement and a host of other markers of healthy development. Imagine that!**

Your church supporting biblical literacy—listening to and reading Bible stories, asking questions, remembering past stories, connecting events and themes to their own lives—is also supporting children’s exploration of print, language, plot, character development, and more. What a powerful statement we make as the church when we convey how we are supporting holistic child development!

As the publisher of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we have been releasing Bibles for many years, but more recently we added a children’s book imprint to our company—Beaming Books. This imprint publishes dozens of titles designed to help kids thrive. Many of their books support biblical literacy in additional ways by inviting kids into deeper exploration of Bible times (the four-book *Curious Kid* series for elementary-aged kids). Many titles also provide devotional content that is rooted in scripture, prayers for families, and stories rooted in the major events of the church year. Check out [beamingbooks.com](http://beamingbooks.com) for more titles, and keep reading to your kids!

# March 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Community Lenten Luncheon 12:00 pm	2 Spaghetti Dinner 4:30 – 6:30 pm
3 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Trustees' Mtg. 10:15 am Adult Bible Study 6:30pm	4	5 Deacons' Meeting 7 pm Elders' Meeting 7 pm	6 Lenten Midweek Gathering 6:30pm Dinner 7:00 pm Study & Worship	7	8 Community Lenten Luncheon 12:00 pm	9
10 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30pm	11	12	13 Lenten Midweek Gathering 6:30pm Dinner 7:00 pm Study & Worship	14	15 Messy Church 5:30 – 7:30 pm Community Lenten Luncheon 12:00 pm	16 Clean-up Day 9:00 am Confirmation Class 9:30 – 11:30 am
17 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Adult Bible Study 6:30pm	18	19 Council Meeting 7 pm	20 Lenten Midweek Gathering 6:30pm Dinner 7:00 pm Study & Worship Newsletter Articles Due	21	22 Community Lenten Luncheon 12:00 pm	23 Clean-up Day 9:00 am 1 <sup>st</sup> Communion Class - noon
24 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Youth Group / Kids Club 1-2:30 pm	25 Communion at Penn Mar 1:45 pm	26	27	28 Combined Holy And Cross Walk at Mars UP 8:00pm-11:00 am Maundy Thursday Service 7:00 pm	29 Week Sleepover (232 Crowe Ave.) Good Friday Comm. Serv. Noon Good Friday Service 7:00 pm	30 Easter Vigil 7:00 pm
31 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Birthday / Anniversary Coffee hour 10:15 am						



03/01 William Greb  
03/11 Janet Ford  
03/13 Ellen Hrach  
03/16 Lydia Miller

# March Newsletter

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