

St. John Lutheran Church

February-March 2018

Bi-Monthly Publication

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Lent begins this month on Ash Wednesday, February 14



*We begin our season with ashes and end with the triumph of Palm Sunday.
Join us as we journey together.*

This season of Lent, we will be offering many ways for our community to learn more about Jesus' journey to the cross. At the heart of our community is worship—we gather to worship God and give thanks to God. And then we are sent as God's ambassadors into the world to heal, comfort and serve those in need.

We also come as we are—with all of our burdens, our physical and spiritual pains, and our needs. And here in this place, God is who we turn to in prayer. And we trust that God hears our prayers and responds.

You are welcome here in the community of St. John. We hope and pray that you find a place here for you, and that you make this community a family of support, care and love for you and your loved ones.

Thoughts from Pastor Sarah



January has been a hard month for many of us with the flu and other ailments being passed from hand to hand. I pray that this newsletter finds you in better health or continued good health! Please be careful, and rest as you need to!

Several weeks ago, I decided on this reflection for the newsletter—and I ask that you bear with me and read it in its entirety. Hear me out, if you will. It's important.

Do you have your plans in place in the event of your death? (Who better to ask you than your pastor?) But seriously, do you? Regardless your age, and I mean that, do you have your family or close friends instructed on where your paperwork is, and what to do if you die unexpectedly?

I ask this because I have sat at too many tables with family members in shocked grief who cannot answer basic questions because while there may have been a will, nothing was left *in writing* to help the family make decisions regarding *burials, services, favorite hymns, and memorials*. I have had family members make decisions that I know my beloved member would not have liked, but with nothing in writing, I cannot advocate for him/her. It is heart-breaking for pastors to sit with adult children we do not know and watch as they struggle.

About 5 years ago, Pete and I drew up our wills, our patient advocate forms and our “end of life” decisions. A few years later, this pastor realized—I did not even have for MY family what I would desire in the event of my death—where to find papers, what kind of service I would like, what my favorite hymns are... what a burden this would be on my own family, in their time of grief, to plan out my celebration of life.

And so, I ask you to join me. Write it down. Take an hour and write down your wishes for burial, where and what type of service you would like, your favorite hymns and Scripture, where you want any memorials to go to. Write it all down, make a copy and pass it on to the church and to your lawyer. I have a file here at St. John that *will always be here, locked away, until needed*. And when it is needed, the pastor will pull out your wishes and make sure that they are done. This is the best gift you can give your loved ones. So please, do it sometime during Lent, and pass it on to me at the church.

And did you know? With the new hospital privacy laws, no one calls the church anymore to let us know if you are in the hospital. Even if you tell the nurses at registration your church name and affiliation, we do not receive a call. You or your loved one must call the church. And often, I do not find out about hospitalizations until you are home. Even if you don't want “fuss,” and I understand that, still let me know.

These are heavy thoughts for our newsletter, but very important ones. If you have any questions, please call me. And to help assist you, we do have a form that we created here at the church for those who would like to use that for funeral planning and memorials. Simply call the church office and I can email or mail it to you.

Blessings to you all this Lenten Season, I pray I see you often as we journey to the cross with our Savior.

Pastor Sarah

A very heartfelt thank you to the congregation of St. John from me, Pete and our family. We were again overwhelmed by the gifts, cards and well-wishes at the holiday season. We are blessed to serve with you! We are blessed by your generosity and love. We are so blessed. Thank you.

Lenten Season Highlights

Sunday, Feb. 4	Worship at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School at 9:15 Souper Bowl Sunday of Caring
Sunday, Feb. 11	Worship at 9:30 a.m.; NO Sunday School Annual Meeting for our Congregation immediately following. Youth Fundraiser at P.J. Whelihan's from noon to 4 p.m. Arts at St. John Concert at 4 p.m. Boy Scout Sunday Transfiguration Sunday
Wednesday, Feb. 14	Ash Wednesday, Lent begins. Brief Service of Word and Prayer at 12:15 p.m. Worship Service with Communion at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 18	Worship at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School at 9:15
Wednesday, Feb. 21	Soup Suppers from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m. Mid-Week Prayer Service at 7:30 p.m. This will continue every Wednesday through March 21.
Sunday, Feb. 25	Worship at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School at 9:15 This will continue every Sunday through March 18.
Sunday, March 25	Holy Week Begins with Palm Sunday Worship at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.; NO Sunday School
Thursday, March 29	Maundy Thursday Worship at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 30	Good Friday Worship at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 31	Vigil of Easter Worship at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 1	Easter Sunday Worship at 7:30 and 10:30 a.m. Easter Breakfast Potluck served from 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Save this page for your home calendar!
Or, add the events to your Google Calendar from our website's Google calendar!

A Report from our Treasurer

A Summary of 2017 Financial Results

On behalf of Pastor, Church Council and myself, I would like to thank all the members of St John for their generosity in 2017. Our members responded strongly to the 2017 Stewardship drive. Overall giving to the Current Fund was up 9.5% over the prior year. We have not seen that kind of increase in giving in years.

Current Fund

That strong response in giving allowed us to reduce our draw on the Endowment to meet our current expenses from \$67,000 in 2016 to \$60,000 in 2017. It is important to note this has reversed a long-term trend of increasing reliance on the Endowment to pay our current bills. With your continued support, it is everyone's hope that St. John will be able to reduce the draw on the endowment to pay current expenses to \$45,000 in 2018.

This year you will see St John's Current Income and Expenses reported quarterly to the congregation in a new format.

Current Fund 2016-17

Account	Actual 2016	%	Actual 2017	%
Total Current Fund Income	\$289,744.29	100%	\$294,968.17	100%
Congregational Giving	\$181,530.28	63%	\$198,814.17	67%
Weekly Current Envelopes	\$163,846.77		\$175,858.33	
Plate Offerings - Current	\$4,339.51		\$4,978.34	
Non-weekly Envelopes	\$9,247.00		\$13,482.00	
Bulletins/Flowers	\$4,097.00		\$4,495.50	
Third Party Income	\$41,214.01	14%	\$36,154.00	12%
Nursery School	\$23,318.00		\$23,684.00	
Visual Arts Program	\$14,630.00		\$12,470.00	
1810 House Rentals	\$-		\$-	
Misc. Room Rental	\$-		\$-	
Prior Inc. Sources	\$3,266.01			
Endowment Funds	\$67,000.00	23%	\$60,000.00	20%

Endowment Funds Used	\$67,000.00	\$60,000
Total Current Fund Expenses	\$282,007.79	\$290,806.90
Pastoral Care	\$93,102.16	\$95,944.04
Worship & Music	\$51,734.34	\$53,724.82
Parish Administration	\$51,917.84	\$51,336.09
Building Services	\$81,864.13	\$87,176.38
Christian Education	\$3,389.32	\$2,625.57
Income Less Expense	\$7,736.50	\$4,161.27

As you can see the three sources of church funding are clearly outlined with the percentage of total funding each source contributes. In 2018 we hope your generosity will continue and we can increase Congregational giving to 69% to 70% of the total. This year we added **1810 House Rent** and **Miscellaneous Room Rentals** to Third Party Income to increase revenue from rental income sector to 15% to 16% of total funds contributed. Last year we had to use those two sources of income to help fund several unexpected major building repairs. Finally in 2018 we hope to reduce the use of endowment funds to 15% to 16% of total funds needed.

Endowment

Our Endowment saw strong financial performance in 2017. We earned an 11% return on our investments, well above our average 6% to 8% return. This past year we were able to both meet our needs and still grow the Endowment. However, we had to use 70% of the investment income we generated in 2017 (in a great year for the market) to cover all of the endowment disbursements. In the longer term we need to reduce our use of annual investment income to the 50% range. This will allow us to increase the growth of the endowment so we have a better cushion for those years when the market is flat or down.

Capital Expenses

On the Expense side 2017 was a tough year for unexpected major capital expenses. We had a costly sewage blockage that required digging up and replacing a section of sewer pipe and the removal of a tree and roots that caused the problem. Several other trees were removed due to danger to people or property. It was necessary to block where bats were getting into the church attic and clean up a great deal of bat guano so we could safely service some of our HVAC systems. Hopefully that will be a one-time expense. We needed a roofing replacement for a section of the church/school building. We had major HVAC repairs done. We replaced four windows in the church office area that could not be repaired. Finally, in the fall we had to replace and re-grade a section of cracked sidewalk that was allowing rainwater to seep into the Fellowship hall. In total, we had to spend \$28,783 for Capital Expense projects in 2017. Fortunately, we were able to find enough additional sources of revenue that we were able to limit our draw on the endowment to \$11,500 for Capital Expenses.

Jack Ruse, Treasurer

Children and Youth News



From our Nursey School Director, Carrie Engel. The frigid weather has helped bring many lessons about snow and ice to life in our classrooms. Discussions and activities about snowflakes, snowmen, freezing and melting, winter animals and hibernation can be heard and seen throughout the halls. The Nursery School took part in the MLK Challenge through the Giving Tree. Families donated socks, granola bars and crackers. On January 19th, the PreK rolled the donated socks around a granola bar and a pack of crackers getting them ready to give warmth and nutrition to those in need. Sock rolls will be handed out to homeless men in Norristown and Philadelphia. Valentine's Day is right around the corner, students are looking forward to celebrating their friends with card exchanges and a special treat! We have begun registration for the 2018-2019 school year. There is space available in each age group. As always, we appreciate your support and recommendations of our nursery school to friends and neighbors! Our website is stjohsns.com



Our Sunday School meets almost every Sunday at 9:15 a.m. We made a conscientious decision to use a Lutheran curriculum that follows the readings we have during worship. Children from 3 years old through 6th grade are taught using the materials from Whirl. We give thanks to the teachers who faithfully teach our children weekly, and we pray for our students who come and learn the stories of Jesus in an open setting.



Our Confirmation Students meet on Sundays at 9:15 a.m. We have a group of students that are walking through the stories of Jesus while also learning about the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Our students will complete their confirmation studies this year—we will affirm their baptisms on Pentecost Sunday. Please pray for these four students as they continue to grow in their faith and prepare to affirm the baptismal vows that their parents made many years go.



Our High School Youth meet on Sunday mornings at 9:15 in the Youth Room. Currently, they are preparing for their summer National Gathering trip to Houston, Texas.

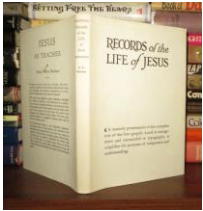
Our HS Youth will have a **Fundraiser at PJ Whelihan's on DeKalb Pike called *Dine and Donate*** on Sunday, Feb. 11 from noon to 4 p.m. When you dine at PJ Whelihan's and *share with your waitress that you are from St. John Lutheran Church/Blue Bell*, a portion of your meal cost will be donated to the HS Youth. Please tell your friends and family—anyone who eats at P.J.'s and shares this information will assist our group's profits!



Pastor Sarah is planning on attending Bear Creek Camp this summer with campers from St. John Lutheran Church! Pastor Sarah is looking at July 15-21 as her best week to go. Can your elementary or middle school student attend, too? Visit their website for registration details! <http://bearcreekcamp.org/the-experience/> And be sure to let Pastor Sarah know if you are attending that week!

Camp is open to all—so you are welcome to invite your best friends to attend with you, too.

Often, we give up things in Lent—and we give up “things” we probably should decrease or do without every day—like soda, candy, sweets, screen time, etc. This type of “fasting” may be popular, but does it benefit us, truly, where we need it the most? This Lent, challenge yourself to give up the “thing-fast” and instead take on a new spiritual opportunity for growth. Below are several options that will help you learn more, grow more and do more in the name of our Lord. Come to worship, join us at Soup Suppers, study the Word. By doing so, you may experience a deeper journey to the cross this Lenten Season.



On Sundays at 9:15, adults gather for Adult Bible Study.

This group meets in the large classroom downstairs. Led by member Andrea Greyson, the group is using the book, Records of the Life of Jesus, to study the synoptic gospels. This study is unique and requires no prep work between Sundays. Come as you are and give it a try. Questions? Please contact the Church Office, or you can send an email to the church and we will forward it to Andrea.



Pastor's Morning Bible Study meets on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. We gather in the large classroom downstairs, and often have coffee and treats to share. Our topic for Feb. 4 and 11 will feature stories of the “bad girls and boys” of the Bible—but on Feb. 18, we will begin a Lenten series authored by Pastor Sarah based on our Sunday Morning readings. Pastor will guide us through the Scriptures using many different resources for reflection and learning. You are welcome to come! Bring your favorite Bible, or borrow one of ours. See you there!



St. John Book Club meets next on Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 7:30 p.m. Our book for February is The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot. All are welcome to join us for a lively discussion on the book and to help pick out our next title for April (we will not meet in March).



Pastor Sarah invites all 21 through 50 year olds to join her for a night of dinner, drinks and discussion, otherwise called Pub Theology. We meet monthly. Our next gatherings are February 13 and March 13 at 7:30 p.m. at a local pub. Hire a babysitter, feed your pets!, and take the night off from Netflix... we want you to join us. February's topic—Why is love so complicated? Yes, we will discuss that....



Formerly called Boomers at the Bar, we realized quickly that we liked good food as well as good conversation. Join us for **Thirsty Theology** at Catina Feliz in Fort Washington for dinner, drinks and discussion. Please RSVP to the Church Office by Sunday, Feb. 25. This gathering is for all baby boomers and older who like a good night out!

Connecting with Others



bring a mat or towel to use. Questions? Please connect with the Church Office.

Our popular yoga class continues on Thursdays at 2 p.m. Sessions are ongoing, drop-ins are welcome. Our instructor, Kellie Pannepacker, will guide us through gentle moves, poses, and breath. All levels of skill are welcome; Kellie is quick to assist you. The cost for the 8 week session is \$40, or you may drop in for \$8 a session. No pre-registration is necessary. Please



Our Visual Arts Program continues! But in February we are offering a special, one-time class. Paint Along with Ann will meet on Tuesday, Feb. 20 from 7 to 9 p.m. The class will complete a winter scene watercolor painting that will be ready for framing. Class size is limited, so RSVP now to the Church Office. The cost of the class is \$25 payable the evening of the class. You are also welcome to bring a beverage of your choice!

And watch for more details about Ann's next 10 week session for the Spring.



Join us for Soup Suppers this Lenten Season on Wednesdays, Feb. 21 through March 21. We will gather for food and fellowship from 6:30 to 7:15. Soups, breads and salads are needed each week for all to enjoy. Can you provide a soup or salad? Sign up today through our website or by calling the Church Office. We also will be sitting all together at one table this year—so do come! We would love to see you.



Lutherans traditionally gather on Wednesday evenings, after a soup supper, to prayerfully celebrate the season of Lent. ***St. John offers a mid-week service every Wednesday, from Feb. 21 to March 21, beginning at 7:30 p.m.***

Our service this year is unique. We will be gathering for a time of mindfulness, prayer and reflection as we listen to readings and Scripture. Our evenings will center our hearts on the season, while also allowing us space to breathe and be with God. Join us as we gather with Prayer Around the Cross. Even if you have not attended a mid-week service before, please come! And if its been several years since you have attended, make an effort to join us as a community in prayer for one another.



Yarn Crafters: Knit & Crochet is our monthly gathering of people who knit and crochet. We gather to share ideas, teach new skills, and share in fellowship with one another. We also do a variety of service projects for our community and beyond. Materials are available for beginners. Our next meetings are AFTER mid-week worship on Wednesdays, Feb. 21 and March 21. If you are interested in attending, please come! If you have questions about the group, please speak with Pastor Sarah.

Special Events



Sunday, Feb. 4 is Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday and we will be collecting donations to pass on directly to the Mattie Dixon Community Cupboard in Ambler. We will collect monetary donations as well as canned soups to stock their shelves! Please be generous! You can also bring your donations on Sunday, Feb. 11.



Gertrude Hawk Easter Candy Sale begins on Feb. 4 and will end on Sunday, Feb. 25. Orders forms are in the Great Room; we encourage you to buy for yourself and to also sell to friends, family, and coworkers. This year, we have a very special need at St. John. All proceeds from this year's sale will be given toward the cost of the bell tower replacement. Questions? Please speak with Betty Jeanguenin. Thank you for your support!



On February 10, at multiple sites in the synod, we will gather as a body to prayerfully discern and prepare for our next Bishop election at this year's 2018 Assembly in May. Our bulletin has shared the available locations for the meetings—Pastor Sarah will be attending the meeting at Trinity/Lansdale on Feb. 10 from 10 to 11:30 a.m. All are welcome to participate.



Our annual Chili Cook Off and Potluck Meal is planned for Saturday, Feb. 24 at 6:30 p.m. We look forward to the tasty chilis! Don't like chili? That's fine! We also encourage people to bring other dishes to share and pass, potluck-style. You may bring a main dish, salad, or dessert. BYOB is also allowed. Friends and visitors are welcome! Join us!

Arts at St. John's Concert Series continues...

Our next Arts at St. John's Concert is Sunday, Feb. 11 at 4 p.m.

Our concert features the Wissahickon Trio and will include words by Bach, Pergolesi, Ibert and Goossen. A small reception will follow. Join us for this night of beautiful music!

If you are able to donate finger foods for the reception, please sign up today, or speak directly with Patti Whitcomb or Cheryl Posen.



Serving God Together



St. John could not serve others without the leadership and assistance of its members and friends. Volunteers are the hands and feet for all we do at St. John. We have multiple committees with many of the same members; we also have a very dedicated Council whose members all serve on at least one committee each.

We also have a small staff with limited hours to do all that needs to be done. This is a common issue in the business world, but within church communities—it is especially challenging.

Your involvement at St. John can make a difference. Whether it is volunteering monthly to serve during our worship services, serving on a committee (especially if you currently NOT on a committee), subbing as a teacher/leader in Sunday School, counting our offerings on Sundays, joining the Nursery Care rotation, offering to clean up after special events, bringing soup... you can make a difference. There is a lot to be done! Most of the tasks are not glamorous, but nonetheless, they are God's work for the Kingdom. Please pray about ways that you would like to serve here at St. John, and speak with Pastor Sarah.



Dear St. John Community: **Christian Service Monday Morning Quilting Group** wants to thank you for your consistent support. With your help we were able to donate locally: 16 quilts to Mattie Dixon Community Cupboard and 6 to The Being Beautiful Foundation. Thank you again for helping to make this community service possible! *Our group meets on Monday mornings at 10 a.m. in the Youth Classrooms downstairs. We create beautiful block quilts to be used by charities locally and globally. We welcome all helping hands—no sewing experience is required.*



We continue to collect non-perishable food for the students at the local Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia. The students have their own food bank at the seminary, and many of them use it due to the rising costs of seminary, housing, and materials. Our gifts are greatly appreciated. Also, we need someone to drive the food every month to the seminary. There is a clipboard to sign up hanging above the food boxes in the Great Room coat area. There are instructions and a map for drivers. Thank you for your support!



Our collection of toiletries is also on-going for the local foster care program, Being Beautiful Foundation. Our offerings help the foster home save money on providing healthy environments to girls in foster care. Our collection bin is in the coat closet in the Great Room.

Also—does anyone know where our collection of used glasses can go? Please feel free to take the glasses and deliver them to their next donation site.

We also have a collection of Soup Can labels and Box Tops that can also be passed on to an agency that will use them.

Thank you for your help!



Kathy Erdman organized a group from St John Lutheran Church to go to First Presbyterian Church in Springfield for their Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service on January 15. They have had this event for several years now, and groups were making hoagies for Whosever Gospel Mission in Germantown, decorating greeting cards for Philabundance and making up

lunch bags for Face to Face in Germantown – just to name a few of the many things they did to help and serve our greater community. We hope to organize our own Day of Service at St John next January.

Each Sunday over the next few months, we will be collecting items again for the food bank at the Lutheran Seminary. The students there are often short on funds for everyday things; they appreciate what we have brought over to them in prior years. Along with the usual food items that are always needed, keep in mind they can always use baby items. Pre-prepared foods of any sort are a huge help to them. Thank you for your continued generosity. Items can be put in the closet in the Great Room.

A quote from Martin Luther King, Jr : **“Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'”**

Steve Taylor, Chair of the Social Ministries Committee



Contact Us

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stjohn1802@gmail.com

Website:
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@stjohnbluebell

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Office Hours:
9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
on T, W, & F

12:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. on TH

Nursery School Info:
610-272-7163

Website:
stjohnsns.com

School visits are
available by
appointment only.

Staff Listing

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Barry Stock, Facilities Coordinator	stock825@comcast.net
Carrie Engel, Nursery School Director	carrie@stjohnsns.com
Katie Myers, SS Director/Website	stjohnbluebell@gmail.com
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**Evangelical Lutheran
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God's work. Our hands.

