

**St. John
Lutheran
Church**

Late Winter/Early
Spring 2019

Look Inside...

Special Events

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Ministries**

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The Revelations



**Lent begins on Wednesday, March 6, with Ash Wednesday.
We will have services at 12:15 and 7:30 p.m.**

Our 12:15 service is a brief order of the Word, with imposition of ashes and prayer. We offer this service for those who do not drive at night, or for those who would like to receive their ashes on their lunch hour.

Our 7:30 p.m. service features the imposition of ashes, our choir, and also communion.

Enter into the season of Lent through intentional prayer and worship. These 40 days offer a dedicated time for reflection on our faith and our callings while focusing on the journey to the Cross.

Lenten Vespers will be every Wednesday beginning March 13.
This year, our service will begin at 7:30 p.m.--the sanctuary will be open beginning at 7 p.m. Our liturgy is different from our Sunday worship—we encourage all members to attend at least one Lenten Vespers. We will also collect a special offering each Wednesday which will be dedicated to the ELCA Hunger Fund.

Thoughts from Pastor Sarah

The Lord God dwelt with the Israelites as they wandered in the desert for 40 years.

Our Lord Jesus dwelt among us as the Word Incarnate.

During Lent, we are strongly encouraged to dwell with the Word for 40 days—reflecting on Jesus’ ministry and journey to the cross while also examining ourselves and our faith in practice.

Personally, I find Lenten journeys hard.

One year, I avoided it—and yes, I was a pastor at the time. But at that specific Lenten time, things were extremely difficult, and we were struggling with so many things—it was hard enough, then, to wake up and do “what needed to be done.” In hindsight, I see that God dwelt with me that hard Lenten Season and guided my steps. I had never felt so alone or lost—and yet, I wasn’t. God was there.

Lent requires us to pause from “getting things done” in our personal and spiritual lives, and reflect deeply on where we are. It’s like holding a mirror to our faces and deeply looking into our eyes. It is a time to ask ourselves how we are doing, where we are heading, and what areas do we need to pray and discern... Lent offers 40 days to do so.

Lent also allows us the space to search out the places we feel the most pain, and to seek healing and renewal. Lent allows us to deepen our relationship with God with a new energy. Lent allows us simply to be in silence to hear the Word speak anew.

I am a visual person now—getting more so each day. This year, I purchased a Lenten journey tool--a wooden-swirled circle with candles marking the days of Lent as well as a wooden figure of Jesus carrying his cross. Its hard to explain, but think of it as a Lenten Calendar (and see our front cover here). I plan on using this at home in the evening. I don’t have a fancy devotional for Lent—I’ll probably use the Word in Season, or something maybe online. For those who need some direction, I will share a link on our website for a suggested reading plan for Lent—it utilizes all 4 Gospels as well as First Corinthians.

The key is *to do something for Lent* that helps you center for the season spiritually. If giving up something really helps you center on Jesus—by all means, do so. But I don’t find that as helpful personally—I find doing a new spiritual practice like reading, praying or serving to be more meaningful. But of course, I leave the choice up to you.

If you are a new visitor to St. John, an older member of St. John, or someone who has not been present in some time—make this Lenten Season a time of renewal by attending worship, trying something new, and alms-giving of yourself or your treasures. Find your own way to dwell in the Word and deepen your faith. My prayers are with you all this Lenten Season, and for the community that surrounds us.

In Christ,

Pastor Sarah

Council Update

Greetings,

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and let you all know that I am truly honored and excited to be your new council president. My wife, Michelle, and I have been attending St. John for over 10 years and are so proud to call it our home. Our son Hank is 5, and is already very active with his friends in helping out around the church on Sunday mornings. (As well as voicing many opinions and embarrassing family events). I look forward to the upcoming year and the many challenges that this position will present. I truly feel we are in an exciting time at St. John, and am glad to be a part. Feel free to reach out, ask questions, voice opinions, and be active! The church is people, all of us, and you are a vital piece. Please be active and in prayer for our church, the leaders, each other, and yourselves. Look daily to the Lord with a listening ear for His leadership.

Yours in Christ,

Phil Vande Berg
Council President

Finance Update

A complete year end report was shared with the congregation for the Annual Meeting on February 10, 2019. Copies of the Annual Report are in the Great Room and also in the Church Office. We are very transparent with our numbers, our budget and also our needs for more giving from members. If you did not attend the Annual Meeting, please pick up a report and review it. Our needs continue to grow, and our income is not meeting our needs. At this time, the staff and council are working hard to keep expenses down, but it is difficult when there are some expenses we cannot cut.

What can you do? If you haven't yet, please do pledge an amount to St. John for 2019. You may email our bookkeeper, Marcie Godby, with your pledge at stjohn1802bookkeeper@gmail.com. This year, there were 48 pledge cards received and an additional 14 who use Simply Giving (but did not fill out a card) for a total of 62 pledges. We are grateful for that, but with just over 100 households who give something each year, we would like a higher number of pledges.

We are also encouraging all members to consider giving an additional \$5 a week to St. John. If all households did this, we would automatically have more than \$25,000 added to our giving. A very easy way to do this is through the Simply Giving program which automatically deducts from your checking account your specified amount on your chosen dates. You can also set up an automatic payment through your own banking system. If you have questions about either option, please connect with Marcie.

In the meantime, the council will continue to review our finances monthly. In September, we will review where we are with our current budget and see if giving has risen. If not, we may need to discuss cuts to better meet our giving.

If you have any questions, please speak to a council member, or our treasurer, Jack Ruse.

Children and Youth News



The morning **Sunday School** meets at 9:15 a.m. every Sunday in the Fellowship Hall for worship time, and then the children and youth split into their age-respective classes.

We give thanks for our awesome teachers!

We also will begin Communion Class with Pastor Sarah in March to prepare those for first communion.

Starting Saturday, March 9 at 5 p.m., we begin a monthly **Family Movie Night!** Come down to the Fellowship Hall on the second Saturday of every month to watch a G or PG rated family movie. Popcorn will be served!



Middle schoolers meet in the Middle School room at 9:15 a.m. every Sunday for confirmation class with Pete Stobie.

High schoolers meet in the High School room at 9:15 a.m. every Sunday for a Small Group time with Vince Bruno.

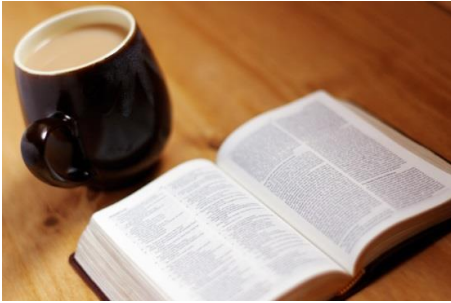


Starting on February 10, we began our evening Youth Group every Sunday evening! Youth Group is open to students from 6th grade through 12th grade. Check out the upcoming schedule:

- February 24 @4pm-8pm: Marvel Night
 - We are setting up a big projector and an awesome sound system to have a Marvel Movie Night in the Fellowship Hall! Popcorn will be served! Movies rated PG-13.
- March 3: Bowling Night!
 - Details TBD. Keep an eye out for more information!

Please feel free to email Vince Bruno, the Youth and Family Director, with questions or suggestions at stjohn1802youth@gmail.com. Also let Vince know if you'd like to be added to the email list (if you're not already) to receive weekly updates on upcoming events for children and youth.

Adult News

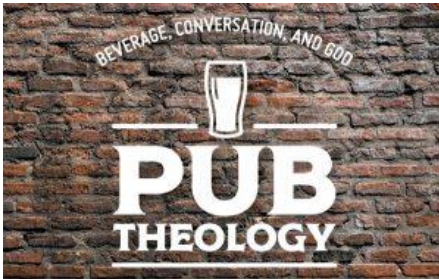


Pastor's Morning Bible Study meets on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. We gather in the large classroom downstairs, and often have coffee and treats to share.

Our group is currently reading through books of the Old Testament. Sounds boring? You haven't been to one of our studies...

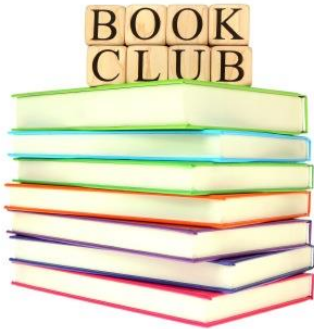
Sunday Morning also offers a Bible Study for Adults at 9:15. Led by Andrea Greyson, no preparation is needed—and newcomers are welcome!

Make this part of your intentional Lenten journey.



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 the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Hallihan's Pub in Flourtown. We have a lively discussion on world issues, faith in our current lives, and also world religions. Actually, we cover everything! Join us!



St. John Book Club meets monthly and chooses its next book at each gathering.

If you are interested in learning more about our group, please connect with Linda Carpenter or call the Church Office. Please watch your weekly bulletin, eNews, or website for the most current details! All are welcome to join us.



St. John will be hosting the Lower Montgomery Spring Gathering for the Women of the ELCA in our synod. The gathering will be Saturday, April 27 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. We will have a guest speaker, the Rev. Rebecca Ehrlich, who will discuss Christian Minimalism. This is very timely with the popularity of Marie Kondo! There is no cost for the gathering, but registration forms will soon be available. An offering for a local charity will also be collected. Watch our bulletin for more details. Pastor Sarah is also looking for a small team to oversee the hospitality—we anticipate 50 guests from other churches! All women from St. John, no matter your age, are welcome!

Connecting with Others



Join us for *Paint Along with Ann* on Tuesday, March 12 from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Cost is \$25.00 and all materials are included. The ACTUAL painting can viewed in the church Great Room.

This class is truly approachable for all skill levels. Ann shared at the Annual Meeting that everyone can paint, and to think of this class as a “paint by number.” Be sure to RSVP for each class in advance.



Our Visual Arts Program continues!

Ann Brennan, our instructor, will offer a new session soon. Watch our bulletin for details.

To register, please contact Ann Brennan at annlb609@gmail.com This class does have a limit to participants, so registration is necessary.



Our popular yoga class continues on Thursdays at 2 p.m. Sessions are ongoing, drop-ins are welcome. Our instructor, Kellie Burnette LMT, CYT, AHC, 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 bring a mat or towel to use. Questions? Please connect with the Church Office. For a full description of our yoga classes, please visit our website.



Our next Flower Arranging Classes will be May 14 and June 4 at 7 p.m.

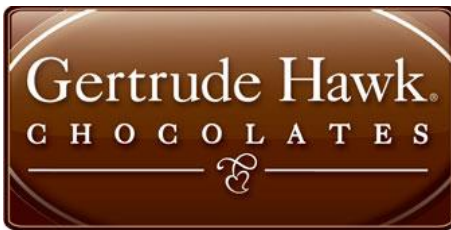
The cost remains \$20, and all proceeds benefit our Mortgage Fund.

RSVPs will open SOON since space is limited. You may do so by calling the Church Office and leaving a message. We need your full name and email address. Thank you!

Serving God Together



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!



An easy way to “serve” St. John is by promoting and selling chocolates for the Easter Season!

This annual fundraiser helps our budget with special projects! Please pick up a sales form and sell candy through March 10. Betty Jeanguenin is our sale coordinator.

Evangelism Committee Updates

Many activities continue to take place at St. John in order to have fun and fellowship as well as to invite community members onto our campus. Our ongoing activities include: Yoga at 2 p.m. on Thursdays, Pub Theology on the second Tuesday of each month and Book Club on fourth Wednesday of the night.

Loaves of Love was held on February 3, 2019, at Tiferet Beth Israel Synagogue. Participants shared lunch with their hostesses, learned the tradition of making challah bread and went home with two loaves they had made. It was a wonderful way to get to know some of our neighbors and learn some of their traditions.

Believe it or not, many have already asked questions regarding the car show. Yes! Any donations of items for raffle baskets will be gratefully accepted now. We also have scheduled a new Paint Along with Ann for March and 2 dates for Flower Arranging Class beginning in May. A Progressive Dinner is also scheduled for June 1. Watch your bulletin for more details on that! Questions about anything? Please speak with Joan Linton.



Every Sunday is “bring a friend” Sunday. As Pastor Sarah stressed at our Annual Meeting, we must invite people to join us here at St. John if we desire new members to join our community. We also need to be welcoming to those who come. **Would you like to serve on the Hospitality Team?** Please connect with Lisa Scalise for more details about this important opportunity!

Arts at St. John Upcoming Event

We gather in the evening to sing as part of our Lenten pilgrimage.

We invite you to join us for

Lenten Vespers



Join us for an expanded setting of Evening Prayer
with additional choral works by Michael Joncas,
Alice Parker, Egil Hovland and J. S. Bach's
penitential cantata BWV 131

"Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr, zu dir"

(Out of the Deep I Call to You, O Lord)

led by

St. John's Festival Choir

Lawrence Baker, Director

March 31, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

For additional information call the church at 610-277-1086 + www.stjohnbluebell.org

Lenten and Holy Week Worship News



On March 3, we will have our traditional Ash Wednesday service at 7:30 p.m. (we will have a brief order of the Word with imposition of ashes at 12:15 p.m.). Our 7:30 p.m. service will feature our choir, special music and communion.

Beginning March 12, we will have our Lenten Vespers at 7:30 p.m. Please note—we will not have soup suppers this year.



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Holy Week begins on Sunday, April 14 with Palm Sunday/Passion of Our Lord. We will have services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday at 7:30 p.m. We will have Easter Services at 7:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. with an Easter Potluck Breakfast.

Nursery School News



St. John's Nursery School students participated in the MLK sock challenge for the Giving Tree. The PreK rolled socks around cracker packs and granola bars, all donated by the school children, to be donated to homeless men in Philadelphia and Norristown. Our students were able to assemble and donate 316 sock rolls! Several families also participated and enjoyed the St. John's Day of Service. We thank you for including our families in your awesome event!

Our Students will be participating in a trike a thon to benefit St. Jude in March. We will create an indoor track for the students to ride, celebrating their strength and good health while giving to those not so fortunate. March also brings Nursery School Day at church. We are hoping to see many families attending the 10:30 service and excited to share our students' art work through the school classrooms and halls that will be up and ready for the student art show and ice cream social.

After a wet fall and cold, wet winter, we are thrilled that Phil saw his shadow and are hoping that brings us back to the playground soon. All of our children are ready to run, climb and play!

WANTED: Our button container is running low! If your button bag has gotten too full and you would like to donate some larger sized buttons, any shape or color would be appreciated!

Registration has begun for the 2019-2020 school year. The link to register is <http://stjohnsns.com/newSite/registration/register.php?sy=2019>.

St. John's Nursery School serves children 2-5. We appreciate any recommendations from the congregation!
Carrie Engel, Nursery School Director

A Word of Thanks

Thank you cards and notes we receive as a church are first shared with Council and then placed on the bulletin board in the central hallway leading up to the Church Office and Nursery School Wing.

We also receive "thanks" we are asked to share:

The Milano and Jeanguenin Family would like to extend their gratitude to the community of St. John Lutheran following the passing of Bev Oertel. Your cards and prayers were much appreciated.

The Property Committee wishes to thank the church for their patience and understanding as we continue to work with contractors and our insurance company regarding the repairs in the Great Room.

A thank you to the congregation for their gifts to the staff and pastor this past Christmas Season. It was much appreciated.

Earth Day Reflection from our Presiding Bishop

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we share a deep love for all of God's creation and a profound responsibility for it. Made in the image of God, we are called to continue what God is already doing for the earth (Psalm 104), enabling it to flourish. God assigns humans to care for the earth as God does, in loving servanthood. (Philippians 2:7, Genesis 2:15).

Daily we witness the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. At the same time, we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, is defiled by pollutants and waste, resulting in ecological crisis. As a member church of The Lutheran World Federation, we affirm "that the global ecological crisis, including climate change is, human-induced. This is a spiritual matter. As people of faith, we are called to live in right relationship with creation and to not exhaust it."

The effects of the warming climate are felt in nearly every corner of the globe. These include increased migration, food insecurity due to changing agricultural landscapes, national security issues and health problems. As bad as it is for all creation, the most vulnerable people around the world are suffering the most. Yet they have contributed the least and, as noted in the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are ill equipped to adapt to or mitigate the effects of a changing climate to build resilient communities.

An honest and credible look at the increasing environmental degradation and climate change names the neglect, carelessness and wrongs of industry, civil society and global governmental leadership. It also recognizes how human beings individually and collectively worsen the attacks on God's creation. As a church, we must confess our frequent lack of urgency in addressing environmental degradation and slow action to address a changing climate. We also must pledge to acknowledge the intersections of racial and environmental injustices and strive to involve the voices of those most affected in the process.

In grateful response to God's grace in Jesus Christ, this church carries out its responsibility for the well-being of society and the environment. Our "concern for the environment is shaped by the Word of God spoken in creation, the Love of God hanging on a cross, the Breath of God daily renewing the face of the earth." Our concern is, then, propelled by hope and guided by principles of justice. We find our hope in the promise of God's own faithfulness to everything God has made. We seek justice for all of creation in concert with God's creative and renewing power. We do so understanding that we have the ability and responsibility to act together for the common good, especially for those who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

As presiding bishop, I give thanks for all the ways this church embraces our common responsibility to care for all of God's creation. I call on us as individuals and congregations to continue efforts through stewardship, education and advocacy. I am reminded of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly resolution "Towards a Responsible Energy Future," among others, that urges members of the ELCA and its related institutions to exemplify personal and institutional responsibility. Such efforts could include practicing energy conservation, congregational energy audits, purchasing more energy efficient appliances and vehicles, and investing in renewable energy systems. These resolutions also urge advocating at all levels of government for public policies that support clean, renewable energy sources.

The present moment is a critical and urgent one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as individuals, citizens, leaders and communities of faith in solidarity with God's good creation and in hope for our shared future. We claim God's promise in Revelation 21 for "a new heaven and a new earth" as we pray together:

"Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us coworkers in your creation. Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature so that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." *In Christ, The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

Celebrating 250 years of mission and ministry, 1769-2019

Celebrating our 250th year at St John

2019 marks our 250th anniversary here at St John. Sometime in the spring or early summer of 1769, Pastor Schmitt came from Philadelphia to this area, and set up a Church in Blue Bell known as St. John. For that reason, we will be starting the recognition and celebration of 250 years in June.

A 250th celebration committee has been established, and began working on plans back in September. Linda Catherwood and Barry Stock are the Co-Chairs leading this effort. Currently, there are 17 people on the committee. They have many exciting and interesting things planned for the year, with some listed here.

June 9, 2019: Anniversary kick-off on Pentecost Sunday with one service followed by a catered lunch

September 7, 2019: Annual car show

October 12, 2019: Revolutionary war re-enactors, historical cemetery walk, lunch and other activities

January 20, 2020: Second annual MLK Day of Service

June 7, 2020: Congregational brunch to conclude our celebration year

We will begin work this spring on a new pictorial member directory. Several members have volunteered to take pictures before or after Sunday services.

There will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer at specific events. It is not too late to join the planning committee if you would like. If you have any ideas for the celebration you would like to share, please feel free to talk with Linda Carpenter or Barry Stock.

This is also a time for us to “brag” a bit about our service to the community over these 250 years. As well as sharing God’s word, St John has been active in supporting the area in many ways. We will all be learning more about how our Church has been an active part of Blue Bell since before the Revolutionary War. Be proud of what your Church has accomplished!

A Thank You to Ann Brennan for her updated drawing of the church—we will use this often in our publications as we celebrate the 250th!



Contact Us

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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
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**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

