

The Eagle

*“I carried you on eagle’s wings
and brought you to myself.”*

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
229 South Broad Street
Jersey Shore PA 17740
570-398-1676

Our Mission:
Called Together
Sharing Christ
Serving Others

December 2023/January 2024

Check out our congregation’s webpage at www.stjl.org
or St. John Lutheran on Facebook

“The average Lutheran invites a friend to worship once every 26 years.” Pat Keifert.
Let’s break the average. Invite your neighbors and friends to worship and make our congregation
Grow! Encourage them to encounter the Holy Spirit among us in Word and Sacrament.

Please send us your email so you can receive updates from St. John at: stjohn@stjl.org

“Hey Pastor, how are you doing?” I’m doing well I respond with a smile on my face. But inside...my heart is sad. You see back in January 2020, four years ago, I traveled with a group of clergy from the Allegheny Synod for an enlightening experience touring the Holy Land. I visited the towns around Galilee, Nazareth, Capernaum, rode a boat on the Sea of Galilee, then traveled south through Palestine to Bethlehem where we stayed for five enchanting evenings visiting Shepherd’s field, and the church of the Nativity historically believed to be the birthplace of Christ in Bethlehem. We then crossed through the large cement wall separating Palestine from Israel into Israel to visit Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, the site where Jesus prayed before his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane and traveled down to Jericho, the Dead Sea, the caves of Qumran, and other Biblical sites before going into Jordan and visiting Petra and Amman. While in Palestine we had some wonderful meals at restaurants and saw camels and had the chance to speak to the citizens. We visited the well where Jesus offered the woman water and eternal life. We came west from Capernaum to the Mediterranean coast where we saw a Roman amphitheater then traveled south past many Israeli settlements surrounded by barb wire fencing but we were not allowed into Gaza. As United States citizens we were allowed to travel through the wall between Palestine and Israel because we were tourists. But Palestinians are not allowed to cross the wall unless they have special work permits. They must stand in line for hours waiting to cross and the wall could be closed at any moment meaning they could not walk to their workplace. When we arrived in Bethlehem at our hotel we were on the Palestinian side, only a block from the wall separating Palestine and Israel. I walked to the wall and took pictures. The Palestinian people treated us warmly. Many we encountered were Christians. Some were Lutherans since we were in Bethlehem close to the Lutheran Church. We learned many young people are trained at the three Lutheran Schools which provides a high-quality education compared to public schools which are poorly funded. Our group worshipped together in a Lutheran Church in the city of Jerusalem.

And so, I am sad by the destruction of property and the deaths of thousands of Palestinians and Israelis in this war. I condemn the actions of Hamas, the abduction of innocent people, the deaths of both adults and children, ... this is not what God wants of us. It is not what Jesus taught his disciples. He calls us to find ways of peace. To serve humanity. To care for our neighbors. To make this world a better place.

Our choir will be singing the anthem, “Let There be Peace on Earth.” Let us each take time each day to PRAY FOR PEACE here and around the world! Our individual prayers can have a collective impact.

In this year’s Christmas Eve service, we will follow a common theme in the New Testament Gospel texts about Jesus. “The people walked in darkness.” The Old Testament texts speak of how God sent prophets, judges, and rulers over the Hebrew people. Sometimes they

obeyed and sometimes they disobeyed and followed their own ways. The Gospel of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Abraham to Jesus as the Hebrew people experienced 400 years of silence between the Old and the New Testaments.

We read, “The people walked in darkness.” And then Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The promised Messiah had come. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” He offered healing, hope, and salvation to all who believed in him. We’ve all experienced times in our lives when we walked in darkness and tripped over the bed post or carpet. But when we turn a light on or the morning comes, we can see our way clearly for the light has come. This Christmas eve we begin the service in darkness and introduce the “Light of Christ” as we light our candles. As we hear the stories of the birth of Jesus and the hope he brings to the people we can walk out of the sanctuary and share the love of Christ to those around us. That light, JESUS, we carry with us, in our hearts, in our speech, in our actions, to those who are lost and those who think they are found. Come celebrate this transition from darkness to light and carry the light of Christ forward to all. On behalf of my wife and I, may God bless you as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

*Yours in Christ,
Pastor Aucker*

We extend our sympathies to the family of Elsie Parks who died Thursday, October 26, 2023 at Haven Place. Her Memorial Service and fellowship were held on Friday, November 10 at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church from 6-8 pm.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Linda Caris who died Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at JS Hospital. Her Memorial Service and fellowship will be held on Saturday, November 18 at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church at 6:00 p.m.

Peyton Renee Saar, daughter of Emilie and Ben Saar will be baptized on November 26, 2023 at St. John Evangelical Lutheran. She will be exactly one year old that day as she was born November 26, 2022 at Geisinger Medical Center, Danville. Welcome the newest member of our congregation and the body of Christ.

Congratulations!

Maxine Shields, Atlas Dittmar, and Theresa Hollick completed instruction in the meaning and proper reception of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. They received the body and blood of Jesus for the first time on Reformation Sunday.

Our on-going Needs

Sponsors sheets are available on the second-floor tower bulletin board for the Sanctuary Candle, Weekly Bulletins, Flowers, and Bread Donors. You can sponsor any of the above by placing

your name on the sponsor sheets and they will be listed in the bulletin. Enclose money in your offering envelope: Sanctuary candle \$6/month; Weekly bulletin \$10; Flowers provided by Russell Florists (\$50), or use our beautiful arrangement of silk flowers \$25; or you can provide your own. If you wish to provide your own, please contact Mrs. Aucker. Payment should be made to “St. John Lutheran Church.”

Distribution of Food

The New Love Center Food Pantry will host the Food Distribution from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on December 8 and January 12. The New Love Center Food Pantry Jersey Shore served 237 households in the month of October with 530 individuals served. Boxes will be packed at 4:00 p.m.; December 7 and January 11. Donations needed: December-pudding cups.

Fellowship Time

We invite you to join us for a time of fellowship on Wednesday, December 20 at Restless Oaks and January 17 at the Shore Diner, at 11:30 a.m. Come and enjoy the fellowship. You order off the menu.

Worship at Nippenose Village

Pastor Aucker and a member of St. James will offer worship and the Sacrament of Holy Communion at Nippenose Valley from 1-1:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 31 and January 28. You are invited to join us if you have loved ones at Nippenose. We currently have one member at Nippenose Village.

Update on the Rising Anew Campaign. We continue to pay on the loan from the ELCA Mission Investment Fund. It was ten years ago when we began the remodeling projects with a total cost of \$1.5 million dollars. Over the ten years we brought that loan down to \$185,445 which is incredible. Thank you everyone for your support in paying down the loan and your continued commitment to the ministries of St. John Lutheran Church. For those who wish to contribute to the Rising Anew Campaign, please write your check to: St. John Lutheran, earmark on the memo line: “Rising Anew” and put it in an envelope with your name and envelope number on the envelope and place it in the offering plate.

Remember our Home bound members with your prayers, cards, and visits

Jim Allen, Jersey Shore Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation

Michael Brunner, Jersey Shore Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation

Agnes Cryder

Mary Pepperman

Jane Hunter Shaffer, Rose View Nursing and Rehabilitation

Sallie Dershem, Nippenose Valley Village

Mary Bowers, Haven Place

Linda Caris

This newsletter is posted on our website and is open to viewing by anyone around the world. Churches are being warned of malicious activity by those on the internet taking advantage of our elderly and urging congregations not to publish addresses, phone numbers, or emails of our members. If you desire an address, ask the Pastor for a church directory.

Automate your regular offering

Do you know that nearly \$3,800 per month is given electronically by members of St. John? St. John Lutheran Church wants to remind you that we offer electronic giving as a way to automate your regular offering. Electronic giving provides convenience for you and much needed donation consistency for our congregation. Getting started is easy. Authorization forms and additional information are available from the church office, 570-398-1676.

Vanco Mobile app

St. John Lutheran offers a convenient way to support the ministries of St. John. Now you can download the “Vanco Mobile Faith” app from your app store for your cell phone. This feature is also on our web site and Facebook site. Enter your email, make up a password, and walk through the choices to give the church an electronic donation by check or debit/credit card. If you have any questions, contact Bob Wehler.

We also offer VancoText:

Simply send a text message to 570-865-1101 with the amount you would like to contribute (example: 25). Within a few minutes, you’ll be sent a text with a link to register. Click on the link and enter your cardholder’s name and credit or debit card information. Once your registration is complete, you will receive a text verification and a receipt of your donation via email.

For future giving, send a text with the amount you wish to give, and it will process automatically! You can even text “repeat” to make it a recurring donation. VancoText is one of the fastest, easiest ways to give.

We hope you enjoy this new way to share your generosity and we thank you for supporting your church.

Mission Support

You can do your part to “make the Good News of Jesus Christ known around the world.” Mission Support is a separate item that is not part of our church budget. Mission Support goes to support the salaries and ministries of the Upper Susquehanna Synod (including Camp Mt. Luther, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (office in Chicago) and its numerous ministries around the world including youth ministries, ministries supporting congregations, theological training of pastors at our eight seminaries, and our disaster response partnerships around the world. Your regular contributions, as a separate line item electronically or on your envelope, to support the wider ministries of the Church are greatly appreciated. *If each family at St. John made a commitment to give \$15 per month to Mission Support, we could not only fulfill our commitment as we did in the past, but we would be supporting the wider ministries of our Church to make Christ known throughout the world.*

Advent/Christmas Offering

Each year the Advent/Christmas Offering is received during the Advent/Christmas season and given to two mission projects that will benefit people in need. This year ¼ of offerings received will go to United Churches of Lycoming County which helps a lot of local people and ¾ will go to Mission Support to help spread the love of Jesus Christ to people around the world. Your gifts are greatly appreciated. Advent/Christmas envelopes are in the pews.

Women of St. John Bazaar

The Women of St. John will host their annual Bazaar on Saturday, December 9 starting at 9 am. Come see the wonderful crafts, food, and other items that are made by the gifted people of St. John.

Christkindl Market

If you enjoy the Spirit of Christmas as I do, you will find Christmas joy, crafts, and food at the annual Christkindl Market in Mifflinburg. This year the time will be 4:30-9:00 pm on Thursday, December 14, 10 am-9 pm on Friday, December 15, and 10am-8pm on Saturday, December 16.

Christmas Eve Services

This year Christmas Eve is on Sunday. Worship services will be:

9:30 a.m. St. John Lutheran

4:00 p.m. St. John Lutheran

7:00 p.m. St. James Lutheran

10:00 p.m. Special Music at St. John Lutheran

10:30 p.m. St. John Lutheran

Invite your friends to come as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Remember Our College Students in your Prayers

Madison Beasley, Pennsylvania College of Technology

Lily Dincher, Penn State, Abington Campus

Olivia Anne Eisner, Temple University

Max Ferguson, Brown University

Arabella Fiedler, Ithaca College

Bri Gallagher, Shippensburg University

Quinn Green, CIA, Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY

Andrew Mitchell, Pennsylvania College of Technology

Dylan Rhea, Lock Haven University

Carter Stackhouse, Cedarclift College, Ohio

Cora Stackhouse, Lock Haven University

Jillian Waldman, Lock Haven University

Grace Welshans, Penn State University

Riley Welshans, Penn State University

Gus Wool, Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology

Hannah Wool, Ithaca College

Kane Wright, Pennsylvania College of Technology

Please call Pastor with corrections/additions.

Year to Date 2023 Finances as of 10/31/2023

Current Budget YTD \$131,520

Current Received YTD \$131,283

Deficit - \$237.

Mission Support Pledged YTD \$15,580

Mission Support Received YTD \$ 8,780

Deficit - \$ 6,800

{ Your donations to Mission Support are greatly appreciated. Please mark your donation on your envelope as Mission Support. Mission Support is not part of the congregation Budget }

Weis Certificates

As a special fundraiser for church projects, we are selling Weis Markets gift certificates each Sunday after worship or during office hours during the weekdays. You can buy \$10, 20, 50, 100 certificates. You pay \$10, take them to the store and use them like cash to buy \$10 worth of groceries. The church earns 5% from Weis Markets. While that may not seem like much, if 100 families in the congregation spend \$100 per week on groceries that 5% would add up to \$26,000 per year with very little effort other than buying and reselling them. It is a great way to support the youth ministries of St. John.

Thank You So Much!

The congregation gave an offering to the Fairplay Brass on Reformation Sunday of \$235 for their incredible performance. They in turn decided to donate it back to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. Thank you!

Chili Cook Off was GREAT!

Thank you to all the volunteers who cooked chili and chicken noodle soup and donated cakes and other items and tasted and purchased soup. Even though it was a small crowd the members of St. John were generous and raised \$500 for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. Thank you!

The Pastor's Discretionary Fund is used to help local people, including members of St. John, in need. I don't get that many requests but when they come, they usually are two or three in a row. Rent is paid to the landlord. Utilities are paid directly to the utility. No money is given directly to the person. After helping two people this summer the funds were depleted. But thanks to so many of you for your donations, the fund is now over \$2,000. Thank you!

Youth Ministry

Youth Group Meetings

December 3 – Making Gingerbread houses after worship in the big Sunday School room for all the young and young at heart.

December 9 – Here is something the youth group has not done for years. Travel to Hershey Park to see the wonderful Christmas lights. Leave St. John at 2:00 p.m.

December 16 – Youth going Christmas Caroling to our shut-ins. Leave St. John at 5:00 p.m. Parents are invited to accompany the group.

Check out our congregation's webpage at www.stjl.org.

Our worship services are broadcast live each Sunday morning on Facebook at 9:30 a.m. on St. John Lutheran, Jersey Shore, Facebook site.

Remember St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in your will! Your gifts to the St. John Lutheran Endowment Fund are held in perpetuity and the interest will continue to support the ministries of St. John and the community forever! See Chuck Gottschall.

Remember Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in your will! Your gifts to the Trinity Lutheran, Avis, Endowment Fund are held in perpetuity and the interest will continue to support the recreation programs in Avis, the Avis Fire Company, United Seminary in Gettysburg and Philadelphia, and College Scholarships for local students forever! See Nicole Green.

The Stump the Pastor box is active again. It is located by the Thompson Street entrance by the water cooler. Leave questions for the Pastor that will be answered in upcoming issues of *The Eagle*. No names please.

“The average Lutheran invites a friend to worship once every 26 years.”

Pat Keifert.

Let's break the average. Invite your neighbors and friends to worship and make our congregation grow! Encourage them to encounter the Holy Spirit among us in Word and Sacrament.

Words to start the New Year

The best New Year's resolution is a determination not to give up, but to live—and to do it with joy. –Malcolm Boyd

“I have the opportunity once more to right some wrongs, to pray for peace, to plant some trees, and sing more joyful songs. –William Arthur Ward

“You are never too old to set a goal or to dream a new dream.” - C. S. Lewis

“Smile at or hug a grouch on New Year's Day.”

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the Earth, burst into jubilant song with music.”

-- Psalm 98:4

*“To Leave the old with a burst of song,
To recall the right and forgive the wrong;
To forget the thing that binds you fast
To the vain regrets of the year that’s past;
To have the strength to let go your hold
Of the not-worthwhile of the days grown old;
To dare go forth with a purpose true
To the unknown task of the world that’s new;
To help your brother along the road
To do his work and to lift his load;
To add your gift to the world’s good cheer,
Is to have and to give a Happy New Year.”* --Robert Brewster Beattie

Our Savior went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate. He took the little children in his arms and blessed them, and spoke words of hope and comfort to the weary mothers. With unfailing tenderness and gentleness, he met every form of human woe and affliction. Not for himself, but for others did he labor. He was the servant of all.” --Ellen White

“Many individuals make it impossible for themselves to find happiness in the present moment by choosing to focus their attention on the past. Their depression, resentful hostility, or guilt pangs are all kept alive by their mentally dwelling in the past, a past that no longer exists.” --
Father James Gill, S.J.

A little girl asked her grandpa: Grandpa, did God make you?” The grandfather replied: “Yes, God make me.”
“Did God make me, too?” she asked.
“Yes, He did,” her grandpa answered.
The little girl went to a mirror and studied her reflection for a few minutes, then looked closely at her grandfather. “You know, Grandpa,” she said, “God is doing a lot better job lately.” --Bill Swetmon

A little girl in New York recited the Lord’s Prayer as follows:
“... and lead us not into Penn Station...”

Signs and Wonders –from the Joyful Newsletter, Jan-Feb 2024

Christmas sign at Lititz Moravian Church: “Jesus still occupies humble places.”

Sign at the exit from the church parking lot at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Baldwin, MD: “Stop...and pray.”

Sign outside a Catholic Church: “God created you to do great things!”

Sign outside St. John's Episcopal Church, Kingsville, MD:
"Make Lent less about giving up and more about giving back."

Remember the deadline for the February/March newsletter is Jan. 15. Please submit your articles early to the church office.