

# *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, Pennsylvania 17740  
570-398-1676**

**Our Mission:  
*Called Together  
Sharing Christ  
Serving Others***

**August/September 2021**

Check out our congregation’s webpage at [www.stjl.org](http://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](mailto:stjohn@stjl.org)

## Why Isn't the Gospel of Thomas in the Bible?



The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of 114 sayings attributed to Jesus. In this article, Professor of New Testament Matt Skinner writes about this strange book and explains why it isn't included in the Bible.

With the pandemic this past year and a half my bi-monthly messages have been focused on recovery and hope. But as this covid pandemic declines, I want us to return to a focus on the scriptures and their message for us today. Why? Because by learning the scriptures we come to understand Jesus and his teachings more clearly and their knowledge helps us to grow in faith. That is what CHURCH is truly about.

### WHY ISN'T THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS IN THE BIBLE? - MATT SKINNER

#### What is the Gospel of Thomas about?

The Gospel of Thomas isn't really "about" anything. Well, it isn't and it is. That's because the Gospel of Thomas doesn't tell a story. It's a collection -- a list -- of 114 sayings attributed to Jesus, many just a sentence or two in length. The sayings usually don't refer to any narrated action. The book therefore lacks a sense of plot or development, and it has no discussion of Jesus' deeds, death, or resurrection. It reads like those page-a-day desk calendars, except that, instead of 365 Dilbert cartoons or definitions of fancy words, you get 114 quotations.

They aren't even "greatest quotes." Sometimes "strangest quotes" seems more appropriate. A lot of the pronouncements and parables come across as deliberately obscure, as you can judge for yourself (read the book [here](#)). No wonder no one's tried to package it as a desk calendar -- yet.

No one knows who wrote the Gospel of Thomas, or even how widely read it was in the ancient world. A copy of the complete document was discovered only in 1945. (Small portions of the book had been found earlier.) Some ancient Christian authors refer to it, and when they do they are wary of how it depicts Jesus and his message. Still, we know that it circulated in multiple languages probably between the years 150 and 350.

Debates about the Gospel of Thomas and other "extracanonical books" (ancient writings that did not make it into the Bible) have come into vogue in recent years. The majority of New Testament scholars rightly doubts that the Gospel of Thomas offers much by way of new or unique insight into the real, historical Jesus of Nazareth.

### **What does it say?**

A few of the book's quotations resemble words we also find in the biblical Gospels. For example, the 54th saying in Thomas is very close to Luke 6:20 ("Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"). Those sayings may reflect traditions, or remembrances, that many ancient Christians cherished, and that may go back to words Jesus actually spoke.

On the other hand, many quotations in Thomas are quite strange. Consider the 22nd saying, which reads: "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and what is above like what is below, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, when you make a pair of eyes in place of one eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the Kingdom]."<sup>1</sup>

And you thought Jesus said some confusing stuff in the biblical Gospels.

As for understanding why the Gospel of Thomas isn't in the Bible -- read it, and compare it to what you see in the New Testament. It's a very different kind of book, presenting a quite different Jesus.

By and large, ancient Christians were willing to embrace the different emphases that can be observed across the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas, however, just looked too strange, too unfamiliar to those readers -- much too far outside the mainstream memories of who Jesus was and what made his life and death so important.

After all, the Gospel of Thomas is hardly the only ancient "gospel" that was kept out of the Bible. More than 30 books written before the year 600 are referred to as a "gospel." Again, most of these look very, very different from the four that got into the New Testament.

### **Where did it come from?**

The Gospel of Thomas likely came from a group of people sometimes called "[gnostics](#)." These folk tried to make teachings about Jesus mesh with certain philosophical principles that grew in popularity especially between the years 100 and 200. There's a lot we could say about these gnostic ideas and their influence on Christianity, but most other ancient Christians firmly

rejected them, considering them an innovation -- a departure from foundational Christian convictions about Jesus. Gnostic ideas tended to conflict with the belief that Jesus had been a real person with a real body, and that he spoke a message rooted in Jewish beliefs about the God revealed in the Hebrew scriptures (the Christian Old Testament).

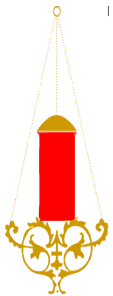
A few scholars insist that Thomas -- or parts of it -- was written around the same time as, if not earlier than, the biblical Gospels (which are usually dated between the years 66–100). Maybe you've heard of The Jesus Seminar, which made a lot of fuss (and a lot of money) when they published a book called *The Five Gospels* in 1993. Those scholars tried to give Thomas a place at the table with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in their efforts to determine which gospel sayings may have really come from Jesus' mouth.

### **Remind me again -- why should we care?**

Certainly, parts of Thomas reflect well-traveled and perhaps authentic words attributed to Jesus. Yet the book's odder parts indicate that it was produced later, probably between the years 100 and 140, as gnostic ideas became more influential. Probably gnostic Christians took material from Matthew, Mark, and Luke and altered it, making Jesus more a disseminator of secret mysteries than an inaugurator of God's kingdom on earth.

The Gospel of Thomas tells us more about different theological movements vying with one another about a century after Jesus left this earth than it tells us about Jesus and how his earliest followers understood him. That's interesting stuff, but it also makes for a pretty good reason for not including the book in the Bible.

*Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Aucker*



The Sanctuary Candle is sponsored by Myrtle long during the month of August in loving memory of my sister.

The Sanctuary Candle is sponsored by Myrtle Long during the month of September in loving memory of my brother.

We celebrate with four of our young people as they completed instruction in the Sacrament of Holy Communion and received the Sacrament with their families in July. Ilanna Green, Foennix Green, Lucy Kalat, and Molly Kalat received their First Holy Communion.

### **Worship Wednesday Mornings 10:00 a.m.**

For over a year now Pastor Aucker has been offering the Sacrament of Holy Communion each Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church. There is plenty of room for more to attend

this half-hour service. If you cannot join us for worship Sunday morning at St. John, you are welcomed to join us on Wednesdays at Trinity Episcopal. Usually there is coffee and snacks afterwards.

**Thank you! Molly Mitchell**

After nearly thirteen years as church secretary of St. John Lutheran Church and the Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator, Molly Mitchell has submitted her resignation effective July 18. We wish her best wishes as she moves to a full-time position with Davis Insurance.

Elsie Parks is now a resident at Nippenose Village. 7190 South State Route 44, Williamsport PA 17702. 570-745-2400. Send her cards and keep in touch with her.

David Kuehl is now a resident at Salem Hill Haven, 424 Heckman Cemetery Road, Spring Mills, PA 16875. 814-422-8435.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Joann Rishel who died on Thursday, May 20, 2021, at Williamsport Hospital. A graveside service was held at the Booneville Lutheran Cemetery on Wednesday, May 26, where she was raised and where her family is buried.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Richard Hurd who died on Monday, June 7, 2021, at Hillside Personal Care in Montoursville. A Memorial Service was held at Helt Funeral Home in Mill Hall on Monday, June 14. Burial will be at the convenance of the family.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Rev. Donald Nice who died on Monday, June 14, 2021 at his residence in Pottstown. A service of Christian burial was held on Saturday, June 19, 2021.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Walter Raymond Gallagher who died on Saturday, June 19, 2021, at Geisinger Danville from Covid. A graveside service was held at the Jersey Shore Cemetery with Military Honors on Thursday, July 8, 2021.

We extend our sympathies to the family of the Rev. Dr. Roger Raymond Fisher, who died on Thursday, July 1, at Washington, Pennsylvania. A Funeral Service was held at First Lutheran Church, Washington, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, July 7 with full Military Honors. Pastor Aucker participated in the service as Roger was a member of St. John Lutheran Church.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Ginny Moffitt who died at her residence on Thursday, July 8, 2021. A celebration of her life will occur on Saturday, August 14, 11:30 am, at St. John Lutheran Church

Conley T Myers, 82, who grew up in Jersey Shore and was baptized, confirmed, and married at St. John Lutheran, died on July 9, 2021 in Englewood, Florida. She taught English composition and literature in the Jersey Shore Middle School and Manheim Central High School. A Memorial Service to celebrate her life will be held on Wednesday, August 11 at 1:00 p.m. at Ravensburg State Park at the picnic pavilion with Pastor Aucker presiding.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Megan Haltenhoff who passed away on Friday, July 16, 2021. She was the granddaughter of David and Christine Barner. A Memorial Service was held at St John Lutheran Church on Wednesday, July 21. Burial was held on Thursday, July 22, at Jersey Shore Cemetery.

### **Vacation Bible School**

Our community Vacation Bible School will be held August 10-12 (Tuesday-Thursday) this year at First United Methodist Church from 6-8 p.m. An information sheet is located at both front and back of the sanctuary. We encourage all our young people, Kindergarten to fifth grade to attend.

### **Distribution of Food**

The New Love Center Food Pantry will host the Food Distribution from 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. on August 13 and 27 and September 10 and 24. The New Love Center Food Pantry Jersey Shore served 245 households in the month of June distributing food to 515 people. Boxes will be packed at 4:00 p.m.; August 12 and September 9. A “Kick-off” will be held on Sunday, August 22 to begin the public part of the Capital Campaign to raise \$2.5 million to construct a new warehouse “food hub” off route 150 outside Avis. We are hoping to have some good news regarding donations towards their goal at that time.

Donations needed in the future:

August: Pudding cups for the backpack program

September: Wide noodles for the food pantry

October: Olive oil for the café

### **Marriage of Nicole Yost and Andrew Scott**

Nicole Yost and Andrew Scott will be united in Holy Matrimony before the Church and their families on Saturday, August 14, 2:00 p.m. at St. John Lutheran. A rehearsal will be held at 6:00 p.m. the evening before.

We wish them many happy years of joy and love.

### **Marriage of Molly Hyland and Justin Lewis**

Molly Hyland and Justin Lewis will be united in Holy Matrimony before their families and friends at the Waterworks in Philadelphia on Saturday, September 18, 4:30 pm. Both Molly and Justin work in Philadelphia.

We wish them many happy years of joy and love.

### **Penny and Ken’s Ride for Luke**

We invite you to sponsor and support Penny and Ken’s Ride for Luke Antolick on Saturday, September 4 as they ride the Pine Creek Rails to Trails north to Wellsboro Junction and then back to Jersey Shore to support Luke as he continues to undergo treatments and therapy. He has made so much progress thanks to all of you.

**Choir resumes Wednesday, September 1, 6:30 p.m. Come and share your joyful voices!**

### **Bible Study Resumes**

Join us for a tour of the Holy Lands on Monday, September 13, 10:00 a.m. in the big Sunday School room. Since we could not meet during the pandemic, Pastor Aucker held off a viewing of his tour of the Holy Lands in January 2020. A picture tour of the region of Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, and various other places mentioned in the Bible will be packed into this one-hour presentation. Invite your family and friends to join us. Bring a covered dish to share as we come together during our first Bible study of the Fall.

On Monday, September 27, Pastor Aucker will be showing pictures from his tour of Petra and Jordan. A beautiful part of the Middle East. Again 10:00 a.m.

### **Fellowship Time**

You are invited to join in a time of Fellowship, lunch and conversation, at the Shore Diner on Wednesday, September 15 at 11:30 a.m. Order from the menu when you arrive.

### **Update on the Rising Anew Campaign**

We continue to pay on the loan from the ELCA Mission Investment Fund. Currently our loan is down to \$362,924. 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 on the envelope and place it in the offering plate. Construction on the new roof over the Sunday School was completed in July.



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

Agnes Cryder, (Sept 12) 201 S. Broad Street, Apt. 2, Jersey Shore PA 17740

Dave Kuehl, Salem Hill Haven, 424 Heckman Cemetery Rd, Spring Mills PA 16875



Barbara (Aug 29) & Charles Long (June 12), 140 Valley View Drive, JS. 570.398.2252

Leila Hiller (June 16), 2331 Marydale Avenue, Williamsport PA 17701. 570.322.1091

Dave Mitchell, (June 14) 516 Allegheny Street, Jersey Shore PA 17740

Mary Pepperman (July 23), 1101 Michael Street, Jersey Shore PA 17740  
570.398.2780.

Phyllis (July 3) & Bob (Sept. 18) Moriarity, PO Box 151, 184 Sassafras Lane, Waterville PA  
17776. 570.753.8766

Elsie Parks (May 8) is now a resident at Nippenose Village. 7190 South State Route 44,  
Williamsport PA 17702. 570-745-2400.

Jane Hunter Shaffer, Rose View Nursing and Rehabilitation, 1201 Rural Ave.,  
Williamsport PA 17701, 570-323-4340

Jim (June 18) & Stella (Aug 25) Barnard, 502 Pine Creek Ave, Jersey Shore,  
570.398.2284



**Remember those serving in the military with your cards and prayers:**

Sgt. Myers, Maddison  
8205b Eberle Loop, Fort Campbell KY 42223

**Automate your regular offering**

Do you know that over \$4,000 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.

**Giving Plus+**



St. John Lutheran is offering a new way to support the ministries of St. John. Now you can download the “Giving Plus+” 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. About once a month we receive a request asking if someone can give electronically by debit/credit card. Now this feature is available. If you have any questions, contact Scott Mitchell.

**We also offer Give+ Text:**

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 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. Give+ Text 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.

### **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. They are also available Tuesday-Thursday from Molly in the office.

### **Our on-going Needs**

Sponsors sheets are available by the Office 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; Weekly bulletin \$17; Flowers are provided by Russell Florists (\$42) or you can provide your own. If you wish to provide your own, please contact the church office. Payment should be made to “St. John Lutheran Church.” Currently we are using wafers during this time of pandemic concerns.

### **The Ruby Eckert Fund**

When I first came to St. John Lutheran on September 1, 1999, I met a wonderful senior member who shared with me the history of St. John. She was a local retired school teacher and lived on Allegheny Street in the same house her parents built. I believe she was in her nineties when she died. She grew up in Jersey Shore in the early 1900s when St. John had a large, active, youth group. “Our youth group at St. John would often go to Williamsport and participate in regional church youth group activities,” she told me. That was a big thing in those days because people did not have cars like we do today. Ruby died years back and unbeknownst to anyone except the surviving family a Fund was established in her name to benefit St. John Lutheran Church for general support. In May we received a check for \$352.17. We give credit to The Ruby Eckert Fund of Thrivent Charitable Impact & Investing and for Ruby in remembering the church that nurtured her Christian faith.

### **What is AmazonSmile?**

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets customers enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features as on Amazon.com. The difference is that when customers shop at AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), the AmazonSmile

Foundation donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organization (in this case, St. John Lutheran) selected by customers. Amazon charges no fees.

How does my charity receive the donations?

Each quarter, the AmazonSmile Foundation makes donations by electronic fund transfer. Donations are transferred approximately 45 days after the end of each calendar quarter. In the last quarter, we received \$32.94. Please try it and help support the ministries of St. John Lutheran. Every small gift can make a big difference.

### **Mission Support**

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 (office in Lewisburg, 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.***

### **Remember St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in your will!**

*Your gifts to the Endowment Fund are held in perpetuity and the interest will continue to support the ministries of St. John and the community forever!*

## **Youth Ministry**

### **“Grab-a-Tab”**

The youth of St. John would like to ask for donations of little tabs from beverage, soup and dessert cans. It doesn't matter what color the tab, just grab them and deliver them to the church office. This project will benefit the Ronald McDonald House of Danville. “Grab-a-Tab” program allows people of all ages to join in the effort of providing a “Home-away-from-Home” to children with cancer or other serious illnesses and their families.



### **ELCA National Youth Gathering**

ELCA National Youth Gathering July 24-28, 2022 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. All High School Students in 2021 are invited to join 40,000+ other youth across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to celebrate the power of Christ in our lives and serve our neighbors. **Registration will be opening this October.** We are hoping a number of our Middle School and High School youth will attend. See Cathy Eisner if you can go.

## **Youth Bike Ride**

We welcome all our middle school age youth to join us on a bike ride Sunday, October 10, for a ride on the Pine Creek Rails to Trails. Bring your bike and meet us at the Waterville Parking lot. As usual, ice cream afterwards.

## **Calling all High School Youth!**

Join us Monday evening, September 27, 6:00 p.m. at St. John Lutheran, 229 South Broad Street. Would you know what to do if you have a flat tire? Or the engine light comes on? Wes McCracken will show us some basic car maintenance tips which would be helpful for every new driver or potential driver.

Friends are invited BUT to ensure we have enough food for everyone, PLEASE text or call Pastor, 570-916-1317 to let us know you are coming by Sunday night (26<sup>th</sup>).

## **Youth Mentors Needed**

We are looking for volunteers to lead the Elementary and Middle School age youth groups. Please contact Cathy Eisner or Pastor if you are willing to lead either of those two age groups. We are seeking parents of children in those age groups who would be willing to volunteer to lead them on Christian activities, studies, and service. Please join us on Monday, August 16 at 7:00 pm as we plan our youth ministry for the coming year.

Remember the deadline for the October/November newsletter is September 15. Please submit your articles to the secretary early.

## **Meeting of Shut-in Visitors**

We give thanks to the volunteers who visit our shut-ins along with the Pastor. There will be a brief meeting of all the volunteers after worship on Sunday, August 22. If there is anyone in the congregation who would be willing to visit our shut-ins and distribute Holy Communion, come to the meeting or see Pastor Aucker.