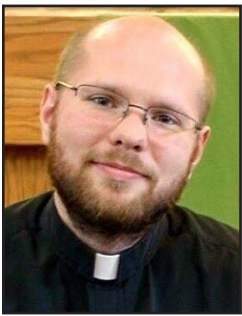


THE MESSENGER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, STERLING, IL
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PASTOR'S POINTS

A heart-shaped box of candy or sack-cloth and ashes?



Some coincidences are just hard to ignore. Over the past few weeks, I've been thinking about how unique it is that

this year February 14 is the home of not just Valentines Day but also Ash Wednesday. It's a seemingly odd combination of a holiday traditionally associated with romance to also be linked to the start of a season of repentance and self-reflection.

I'm sure that there are probably some tongue-in-cheek jokes that could be made about this oddity of overlapping events. Although, it is difficult to think of any that that would be rated PG in their nature.

However, this does make me start thinking about how often folks say they love people or things. Just the other day I overheard a conversation at the grocery store where a couple of shoppers were

talking about how much they loved a particular product. Moments later they then started talking about how they loved a type of produce, and how they loved their nephew. While I was glad that this individual was undoubtedly feeling the love of so many things, I couldn't help but be curious about why we human beings don't distinguish between the kinds of love we feel.

I would hope that love one feels for, let's say, pizza is not the same kind of love one feels for their children. Sure, there might be those moments one really wants to toss a hand full of cheese at their kid, but I'd be gravely concerned if after doing so they slid them into the oven at 350 for 15 minutes. Clearly there must be two very different kinds of love being talked about.

Yes, I know we understand that these are different feelings and grim examples likely over emphasize the point. Yet, then again, the season of repentance and self-reflection that Ash Wednesday kicks off isn't a season all to itself either. Lent

propels us into Holy Week. To come face to face with not just the cross and tomb but also a display of God's love for this world. A love that is more than boxes of chocolate and roses, a love that brings forth life where there was death. A love that claims us as God's very own.

Perhaps it is a happy coincidence that this year both Valentines Day and Ash Wednesday are the same day. Maybe by starting this season with a holiday about love we might take a moment to remember the love our Lord Jesus has always had for each of God's children.

On this February 14 my you know that while we are all dust and will one day return to dust, the hands of God that formed us from the dust of the earth do so out of a love that will one day rise us each up from the same dust we will one day return.

The love of God and the peace of Christ be with you at the start of this Lenten Journey.

Rev. Jacob M. Gaudin

FEBRUARY 2024

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BRANCHES BRIEFS

Youth & Family Ministries news

LSSI BIRTHDAY BUDDY

Sunday School Students partnered with the Social Ministry Committee to make cards for our LSSI Birthday Buddy.



NOISY OFFERINGS

February's noisy offerings will be going to the YWCA Domestic Violence Program and Sexual Assault Program. Donations help support the 24-hour Hotline: The crisis line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Phones are answered by trained professionals. YWCA can help callers access emergency services including safe shelter, medical care, obtaining Orders of Protection and much more. 815.626.7277 or 815.288.1011.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

2/4: Activity-Make Valentines

2/11: Music & Popcorn

2/18: Lesson 7-The Lord's Prayer

2/25: Lesson 8 -Woman at the Well

NURSE NOTES

Preparing for grandparenting

In recent decades, grandparents have stepped into more supportive roles for their grandchildren. For many, the COVID-19 pandemic changed their roles even further. To be helpful as you can for your family, consider these tips:

- Prepare and review — Try to address potential health hazards in advance, such as securing stairways and storing cleaning chemicals out of reach. It's also a good practice to review guidelines that may have changed, including those on car seats, safe sleep practices and solid foods.
- Get up to date — Get vaccinated to reduce the risk of being too ill to provide care. This includes vaccines for COVID-19, flu, Tdap, shingles and pneumococcal disease. These vaccines are especially important if your grandchildren are not vaccinated or have issues with their immune system.
- Communicate about expectations — Your children and their partners will ultimately have the final say on how their children are raised. But if you babysit, gently let the parents know that, while you respect their rules, things might be a little different at your house. These small differences may even help your grandchildren learn to be more flexible.
- Practice self-care — Make time for yourself. If you feel overwhelmed or unusually anxious, seek mental health care. Your health matters to you, but it also matters to your children and grandchildren. They need you to live a balanced life in order to provide the best care.
- Encourage other options — Don't feel obligated to be the sole caregiver. This allows you time for your own health and wellness.

From the Mayo Clinic Health Letter. Submitted by Nancy Rasmussen, Parish Nurse.



Food Pantry Sunday!

The Congregation Council has once again designated the first Sunday of each month as Food Pantry Sunday. A receptacle will be available for donations. We stopped focusing on this during the pandemic and have not resurrected the practice of intentionally making donations. Considering the increasing need in our community we would like to increase our community involvement once again. All non-perishable food items are acceptable and welcome.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

1

- Paul & Brock Heppel
- Addison Preston

2

- Michael & Druann Bushman
- Ellise Keaschall
- Leanne Miller
- Trevor Sisson
- Henry Workman

4

- Emma Cooperrider
- Andrew Miller

5

- Robert Collins
- Adin Taylor Jr.

6

- John Hall*
- Rod Kleckler
- Janna Klocke
- Michael Kuba
- Blake Ruiz

7

- Jane Dettman
- Ryan Gonzales
- Jocelyn Pink
- Peggy Sucher

8

- Alan McFalls

9

- Lisa Judd
- Amber Smith
- Brenda Turner

10

- Marilyn Deets*
- Jamie Hay

11

- Dennis Blevins
- Michael Westbo

12

- Thomas Amesquita
- Courtney Gillette
- Kennard Green*
- Macsen Reaver

13

- Zachary Stokes

15

- Amanda Armstrong
- Michael Barton
- Timothy Granzow
- Bradley & Beth McFalls
- Jamie Schmitt

16

- Marsha Francis
- Chris Gierhart
- Timmy Hurd

17

- Amanda McCormick

18

- Jonah Gawlik

19

- Mike Doughty
- Suzy Stanley

20

- Cynthia Bragg
- Beth Johnson
- Sandra Wolfe*

21

- Andrew Gomer

22

- Diana Hosler
- Alicia LeFevre
- Blake LeFevre
- Kelsey Marsh
- Constance Sciacero
- Amelia Workman

23

- Marilyn Wolf*

24

- Robert Dorathy

25

- Madelyn Pink

26

- Teri Moses
- Ivan & Darci Schmitt
- Kenneth Smith

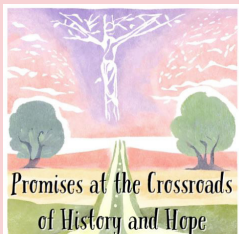
27

- Faith Davis

28

- Kelley Breneman
- Geni Clark
- Patricia Loos
- Grae Wolfe

*Indicates 80-plus-year birthdays and 50-plus-year anniversaries.



Join us for Mid-Week Lenten Worship!

Throughout Lent we will be teaming up with Tri Church congregations and utilizing a synod-wide Lent series entitled *Promises at the Crossroads of History and Hope* written by the Rev. Dr. Charlene Rauchy Cox for mid-week worship services. This resource is provided free for congregations to use through the Northern Illinois Synod. The season of Lent affords a unique opportunity to prayerfully consider this crossroads of history and hope. We are invited to reflect upon who and what we have been while also pointing to Christ - promise fulfilled, love incarnate, and hope embodied for the sake of the whole world. Throughout Lent, we will be immersed in the history and hope of the Abrahamic family. We will remember we are a people and a story with a past and future with innumerable experiences, both life-giving and life denying. Our series invites us to proclaim and embody a sure and certain hope.

Please join us for mid-week Lenten Worship Midweek at 12:15 pm at Immanuel and at 6:30 pm at St. John's with Tri Church Congregations. Food will be available prior to each worship beginning at 11:30 am and 5:30 pm respectively. You are welcome to sign up to assist in providing food outside the church office. All are welcome!

February 21: Abraham—God Calls and Covenants; February 28: Hagar—God Sees and Sets Free; March 6: Sarah—God Declares and Delivers; March 13: Ishmael—God Hears and Helps; March 20: Isaac—God Protects and Provides

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

PASTOR'S REPORT

- The 2023 Christmas Eve Barn Service was successful. Thank you to those who helped setup and cleanup at Copper Bit Ranch, and to Joan & Tom for hosting. For the first complete service since before the pandemic, about 50 people attended, and there has been a lot of positive feedback
- Moving Beyond the Page group will start reading *Flash: The Homeless Donkey Who Taught Me about Life, Faith, and Second Chances*. The first conversation will be 2/8.
- With schools back in session after break, Sunday School has returned to its regular classes.
- St. John's was the host for the first joint confirmation class of the new year. Thank you to the White family for preparing lunch for the class. Immanuel will be the host for class on 2/11.
- Resources for this year's Synod Wide Lenten Series are now available to worship leaders. This year's series is called *Promises at the Crossroads of History and Hope*. It is designed to immerse participants in the history and hope of the Abrahamic family - Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac.
- Planning is underway for VBS 2024, with the next meeting scheduled for 2/12.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

- Several amendments were made to the 12/19/23 meeting minutes before the amended minutes were approved.
 - Under the Finance Report, a suggestion had been made to

include "approval of the monthly financials" in the written report.

- Under Old Business, the motion to approve Marci Fisher to a two-year council term was passed.
- Under New Business, the motions to approve the Special Offering designations for January (Buddy Bags), February (Rock River Hospice and Home), and March (LOMC) were approved.
- Under New Business, the amount to be sent to the Synod as an additional benevolence was \$500.
- The three motions to approve Paul Wolfe as President, Dave Geil as Vice-President, and Denise Norman as Secretary were passed.
- The minutes were submitted by Chrissy Murphy.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Concern over the locations of our homebound and nursing home residents and keeping our records up to date was discussed. This is an ongoing issue if the church office is not notified of these changes.

FINANCE REPORT

- Interest received from the Behrens Endowment through the ELCA was higher than budgeted, which helped make up the shortfall in 2023 offerings income.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SOCIAL MINISTRY:

- The committee will start collecting hats and mittens earlier next year.
- Positive feedback was received for the Salvation Army Mitten Tree.

- The committee will host the Lenten Soup and Sandwich supper 3/13.
- Immanuel and St. Paul appear to be on board with joining us for school kit collection in 2024.
- The committee will not meet in February. Next meeting is 3/9 at 10:00am. All are welcome!

OLD BUSINESS

- Minutes from the special meeting with Pastor Josh Ebener were shared and the general feeling was that the meeting was helpful. One of the suggestions was to take 30 minutes at each Congregation Council meeting to focus on future planning. We will use his ideas to guide us as we move forward.

NEW BUSINESS

- Three transfers were made from the Undesignated Account #8005 in December. \$3,000.00 was transferred to the Parish Nurse Account #7072 as repayment for funds used earlier. \$236.16 was transferred to Parish Nurse Account #7072, and \$236.15 was transferred to Music Account #6997. These transfers move interest received from the ELCA to the appropriate designated accounts.
- Lenten Soup Suppers: The church will be opened at approximately 4:30 pm on evenings when supper is being served, with serving beginning at 5:00 pm. The schedule was reviewed and all evenings are covered.
- A discussion concerning future continuing education opportunities for Pastor Jacob was begun. Before decisions are made, some research is needed to help guide the planning. Information will follow as it becomes available.

SAYING THANKS

Dear Denise,

We want to thank you and members of St. John's Church for your recent donation to the Loaves and Fishes breakfast program. We greatly appreciate it. The program could not survive without community support.

We are currently serving about 500 meals a week, so the need continues.

Thank you again,

Sue Abate

Corresponding Secretary

Loaves and Fishes

St. John's Sunday School and Family!

You have made my day by giving me a beautiful gift bag and poinsettia. Thank you so much for thinking of me!

Hope you all have a great holiday and healthy 2024!!

Blessings to All!

Judy Dryson

Thank you very much for the nice Christmas plant and the gift from the Sunday School Dept. They were all very much appreciated.

Blessings,

Marilyn Deets

Dear Denise Norman & St. John's Church,

Thank you for your generous donation of hats, gloves & scarves for our students. Our nurses were thrilled to receive them and the students will benefit greatly!

Thank you!

Sterling Public Schools

Thank you for remembering me on Christmas. The poinsettia is beautiful and adds much cheer to my kitchen. The bag filled with goodies, a puzzle-book, and other items is much appreciated.

Brigitte Wilken

Thank you for the pretty poinsettia and gift bag.

Mary Ann Heppel

Thank you so much for thinking of me. The poinsettia was lovely and all the other goodies in the bag as well. It truly was appreciated.

God's blessing to you all,

Ruth Dietz

Thank you for the beautiful poinsettia and gift bag for Christmas. It was really appreciated. Wishing everybody a great 2024!

Janet Carl

St. Johns,

It has been a rough year as far as being able to travel to Pine Ridge. My husband has been fighting cancer for the last year and a half which has affected my ability to travel. As an alternative, packages were shipped several times and then I was finally able to travel to Pine Ridge when my husband was able to stay home a few days at a time by himself. In the last five months I have made three trips to Pine Ridge.

Some of the things we accomplished this year:

- Extra food for several families
- Pet food for families
- Dog food for homeless dogs
- Sleeping bags, clothes and toiletries for the homeless
- Christmas bags for 112 students
- Goody bags for children in Fraggie Rock Community
- Christmas items for children in Child Protective Services
- Clothing donations for Manderson community
- Donation of quilts made by church quilting group
- Miscellaneous items donated by local family
- Christmas gifts for a struggling family
- Lap blankets and picture frames for nursing homes
- Christmas decorations for veteran's shelter
- Diapers for a newborn
- Diaper bags filled with baby items
- Blankets

Thank you to everyone who has donated physical goods or monetary donations. We couldn't continue to do what we do without your support. I am looking forward to what we accomplish next year!

Susan, Blue Feather Alliance



PURPOSE STATEMENT

St. John's is a Lutheran family striving to build relationships that will serve our community and God's World

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Jesus is our Lord and Savior.
2. We make prayer, Bible study and dialog the center of our decision making.
3. We are willing to change as we discover God's mission for us.
4. We invite everyone. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." ~ Matthew 28: 19a
5. We recognize and give thanks for our blessings.
6. We act for the discovery and fulfillment of God's mission.

COUNCIL AFFIRMATION STATEMENT

The Council affirms that ministry is a core tenant of our Mission and that established ministries will continue and the opportunity for expanding into additional ministries will be evaluated when presented. The Council fully understands the complex nature of ministry, but as long as God's people are willing to engage in good works, we will do everything in our power to support those ministries.

PARISH REGISTER

DEATHS

- None

WEDDINGS

- None

BAPTISMS

- None

MEMBERS RECEIVED

- None

MEMBERS REMOVED/TRANSFERRED

- None

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- None

STAFF BIRTHDAYS

- None

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

PERSONNEL

Rev. Jacob Gawlik, Senior Pastor
 Rev. Leo Patterson, On Call/Visitation Pastor
 Daudi & Kellen Msseemmaa, Missionaries to East Africa
 Dawn Zeigler, Minister of Music & Bell Choir Director
 Nina Peters, Office Manager
 Andrew Stutzke, Systems Administrator
 Kyle Morgan, Technical Director
 Mont Cessna, Facility Maintenance
 Stahr Media, Newsletter & Website
 Nancy Rasmussen, Parish Nurse
 Council Rep for Tri-Church, Vacant

CONG. COUNCIL

- Paul Wolfe, president*
 - Dave Geil, vice president*
 - Denise Norman, secretary*
 - Larry Kradle
 - Marci Fisher
 - Rhonda Stutzke
 - Karen Wolfe
 - Chrissy Murphy
 - Lois Rowzee
- *Exec Committee member

CHRISTIAN ED

- Michelle Gawlik
- Chrissy Murphy
- Jan Klocke
- Denise Carl
- Mont Cessna

STEWARDSHIP

Vacant

PERSONNEL

- Denise Norman, chair
- Lois Anderson-Rowzee
- Rev. Jacob Gawlik
- Dave Geil

FINANCE

- Nancy Breed
- Druann Bushman
- Mike Doughty
- Dave Geil

FUNERAL

- Dave Geil, chair
- Linda Geil, chair
- Druann Bushman, chair

MEMORIAL

- Dave Geil, chair
- Rev. Jacob Gawlik
- Brian Luebke
- Nancy Rasmussen
- Jannet Taylor

PROPERTY

- Dave Geil, chair
- Art Frey
- Tom Leesman
- Ken Smith

WORSHIP ARTS

- Dawn Zeigler, chair
- Denise Carl
- Karen Wolfe
- Shawn Wolfe

SOCIAL MINISTRY

- Paul Wolfe
- Shari Baker
- Marsha Keime
- Larry Kradle
- Denise Norman
- Lois Rowzee
- Amy Smith
- Gary Smith
- Sharon Zinanni

WORSHIP TECH

- Anita Carl
- Dan Eads
- Charlene O'Connell

CONG. LIFE

- Denise Norman, chair
- Lois Anderson-Rowzee
- Michelle Gawlik
- Nancy Rasmussen
- Pat Redfield
- Shari Baker

SJLC Activities ~ Feb. '24

February Open/Close:
Marci Fisher (Larry Kradle 2/21)

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 7:00-Al-Anon	2	3
4 FISH collection 9:30-Worship Acolyte: Brynna C. Asst.: Denise Norman	5 6:00-Men's Group	6	7 6:00-Worship	8 4:15-Exec mtg 6:30-Moving Beyond the Page 7:00-Al-Anon	9	10
11 Tri-Church Confirmation at Immanuel 9:30-Worship Acolyte: Josie P. Asst.: Jeff Fischer	12 6:00-Finance Committee mtg	13	14 1:30-Parkway communion 6:00-Ash Wednesday Worship Acolyte: Josie P.	15 2:30-Allure of Sterling communion 3:30-Citadel communion 7:00-Al-Anon	16	17
18 9:30-Worship Acolyte: Noah R. Asst.: Chris Rucker 1:00-TriChurch Youth Open Skate @ White Pines	19 Newsletter items due	20 6:00-Council mtg	21 11:30-Lenten Lunch @ Immanuel 12:15-Lenten Worship @ Immanuel 2:30-Heritage Woods communion 3:30-Morningside communion 5:30-Lenten Supper hosted by Council Committee 6:30-Worship	22 6:30-Moving Beyond the Page 7:00-Al-Anon	23	24
25 9:30-Worship Acolyte: Sarah D. Asst.: Mike Doughty	26	27 9:00-Newsletter Assembly 6:30-NAMI group	28 11:30-Lenten Lunch @ Immanuel 12:15-Lenten Worship @ Immanuel 5:30-Lenten Supper hosted by St. Paul @ St. John's 6:30-Worship	29 7:00-Al-Anon		

MOVING BEYOND THE PAGE

Join us for faith, fellowship, and book study on February 8 & 22 at 6:30 pm in the church library. We'll be discussing *Flash: The Homeless Donkey Who Taught Me about Life, Faith, and Second Chances*. Copies will be available upon request. Please speak with Pastor Jacob.

Lenten Suppers Looking Ahead

- **March 6 at 5:30p** – Lenten Supper Hosted by Handbells & Worship Arts Committee
- **March 13 at 5:30p** – Lenten Supper Hosted by Social Ministry Committee
- **March 20 at 5:30p** – Lenten Supper Hosted by St. Paul @ St. John's



February Special Offerings

The special offerings for February have been designated by the Congregation Council to be donated to the Rock River Hospice and Home. The in-patient facility that also houses the administrative offices for the

organization was built in 2017 and is a gift to our community that was sorely needed. Rock River Hospice & Home is a free-standing, community-based, non-profit hospice serving five counties in Northern Illinois, including Whiteside, Lee, Carroll, Ogle, and Bureau counties. For more than 38 years, Rock River Hospice & Home (formerly Hospice of the Rock River Valley) has provided compassionate quality hospice care regardless of the patient's ability to pay. The focus of the organization includes:

- Keeping the patient comfortable in his/her own home or place of residence.
- Helping the patient and family gain a sense of control and competence.
- Promoting the patient's and family's dignity, autonomy, and right to privacy.
- Enhancing the time the patient and family share.

None of us know when our family may need the services provided by this organization. Consider a generous donation to help others receive compassionate care in their time of need.

The Messenger is a monthly publication of St. John's Lutheran Church, a church of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Join us for worship at 9:30am Sundays and 6:00pm Wednesdays. If you would prefer to receive The Messenger via email, contact the church office at office@stjohnsonthird.org.

St. John's Lutheran Church
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