

St. John's Lutheran Church

NEWSLETTER

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Alive in Christ!

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” –

1 Corinthians 15:22

For Christians, Easter has always been the feast of feasts. There is no event more important to our faith.

In the fifteenth chapter of his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul deals with the question of the resurrection of the body. He also assures his readers that because Jesus Christ was raised in His body, we too shall have a bodily resurrection at His return. “Make no mistake,” Paul is saying, “Christ has been raised!” It is done! We know it and believe it! Because we all are descendants of Adam, we all die due to sin. But the Easter victory of Christ’s resurrection assures us that all in Christ will be and are made alive!

Life has been frequently described as an endless procession to the cemetery. Death is real and painful. And yet on the day of the resurrection of our Lord, we see that there is One Who has defeated death. There is One who experienced our death and has risen. Through faith in Him, we are made alive!

The lasting consequence of sin is death—the ultimate enemy which confronts us throughout life and overtakes us at the end of our life. Sin is the cause of death. We all sin and the wages of sin is death. Sin, Satan, and death are real enemies. Life indeed becomes depressing if we think only of the here and now. Satan attempts to make us do just that.

For several weeks after her husband, Prince Albert of England, died, Queen Victoria reportedly still had his clothes laid out in the customary fashion and had a fresh basin of water brought to his room.

She refused to accept the fact that he had died.

A mid-life crisis often results as we get older. We realize we will not accomplish all we had hoped to in life. We can’t do the things we used to and death is one day nearer than it was yesterday. But Christ has defeated death: He has been made alive. The resurrection is a fact. Christ has indeed been raised from the dead! Christ’s resurrection proves His victory over sin, Satan, and death. God has accepted His atoning sacrifice as the all-sufficient payment for our sins. The events of Easter point us beyond this life and death.

In Christ we too are made alive. Christ’s victory becomes our victory through our faith in Him. To be “In Christ” means that we trust completely in Him. His Word and sacraments assure us personally of our connection to Him and bring His salvation to us. Our sins are forgiven. We have peace with God now and for eternity.

His victory makes us alive! The empty tomb gives us the sure and certain hope of life with God today and forever. All of life is rejuvenated by our Lord’s victory, giving us joy and confidence to live for Him. Death has been defeated, and God now uses it to bring us to eternal life. Because Christ rose, we too shall rise at His return. In Christ all will be made alive!

An old Hindu woman was about to die. She asked a Brahman priest, “Where will I go after I die?” The priest replied, “Since you have lived a good life, you will become a noble animal.” The woman continued, “Where will I go when the animal dies?” “You

will become a singing bird,” said the priest. “But where will I go after that?” asked the poor woman. “You will become a beautiful flower.” The woman finally threw up her arms in despair and asked, “But where will I go last of all?” The priest replied, “The cycle will continue indefinitely until perhaps, after many reincarnations, you may attain moksha, liberation and union with God.” Thank God that because of Jesus Christ’s resurrection, we know exactly where we are going, and we know that immediately after death, we will enter eternal life. We will not return to this vale of tears, but live forever in God’s presence.

A Dead Sinner Made Alive in Christ, *Pastor Riley*

AN EASTER PRAYER

All glory to You, dear Father in heaven, for You have fulfilled Your Word and brought Your holy servant Jesus, our Lord and God, through death to resurrection! His resurrection is proof positive that He defeated the powers of sin, death and the devil on the cross. Let this news of redemption spread far and wide, that the joy of the Easter Gospel would be received in faith throughout the world. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

VISIT THE MUSIC MINISTRY ON THE WEB

Be sure to visit our Music Ministry website to view information for our upcoming concerts and recordings from our previous concerts and Sunday services!

www.stjohnsmusic.org

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE:

On Thursday, March 29, at 7:00 p.m. we will observe Individual Absolution and Holy Communion in remembrance of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples.



On Good Friday March 30, at 7:00 p.m. we will remember the death of Jesus for our salvation with the Service of Darkness.

Our Easter Celebrations begin with a Sunrise service at 6:15 a.m. at the Springfield Water Department atop of Provin Mountain.



Alleluia!
He is alive!

The Festival Service for the Resurrection of our Lord begins at 10:00 a.m.

(NOTE: There is no Sunday School on Easter Sunday.)

SPRING CLEAN-UP

Volunteers are needed to help with spring clean-up on Saturday, March 31, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Rakes, shovels, brooms, etc., will be needed. Even if you can only come for an hour or two, your help is welcome. Many hands make light work, so the more that come, the sooner we can finish. Come help ready our church's grounds for the glorious Easter service. If you have any questions, please see Linda Slozak.

GERMAN SUPPER

Our Annual German Supper is Friday, April 6 serving from 6:00 p.m. The delicious menu includes roast pork, hot dogs, sauerkraut, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, bread, rolls, apple sauce and dessert.

Tickets are available after worship services or by calling the church office (568-1417) or Sally Sienkiewicz (562-3186). The cost is \$12.50 for an adult, \$8.00 for children (5-12 years), and children under five are free. Take-out available beginning at 5:30 p.m. Invite all of your family and friends to enjoy this delicious food and fellowship.

The following have signed up for flowers for the months of April and May:



- EASTER - Ferst
- April 8 - Caba
- April 15 - Sienkiewicz (2)
- April 22 & 29 - open
- May 6 - Riley
- May 13 - Fogg & Sienkiewicz
- May 20 - Confirmation
- May 27- Sienkiewicz

If you would like to sign up in the 2018 FLOWER BOOK located on the round table in the church. The cost per bouquet is \$21.00.

Volunteers are needed to care for the altar during the upcoming months. If you are unable to commit to a full month, two weeks would be fine. This activity doesn't take a lot of time and is very easy to do. Training will be provided. See Jane McClure for questions.



From the Elders:

The elder on duty each month assigns the lectors for that month. They are working to provide Jane with the list of readers for the month, one month in advance. If you are interested in being a lector, please see Gary Wolfe who is assigned for May: Bill Schneeloch who is assigned for June.

EASTER VESPERS IN THE LUTHERAN TRADITION of J.S. BACH



Sunday, April 29 3:00 p.m.

Presented by the 'Soli Deo Gloria' Concert Series at St. John's

Join us for the second concert in this season of the 'Soli Deo Gloria' Concert Series with the celebration of Easter! Easter is one of the major annual festivals in the Lutheran calendar; it is a celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In honor of this, we will present evening Vespers as Bach would have known in 18th century Leipzig Germany. Pastor Dwight Riley of St. John's will preach on the historic lesson for Easter from the Gospel of John recounting the disciples and Mary's witness to the empty tomb. The music for the Vespers Concert will reflect this noble theme: The centerpiece of the Vespers will be "Weib, was weinst du?" (Woman, Why Weepest Thou?) by Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) telling of Jesus dialogue with Mary as she discovers Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. The vespers will also feature organ prelude and postlude and choral pieces performed by the concert series chamber choir, the Kantorei, with selections from J.S. Bach and his predecessors. The concerts theme will be echoed throughout the evening's congregational chorales for all to sing accompanied by St. John's pipe organ with improvisations in the German Baroque tradition.

Following the concert be sure to join us in the fellowship hall for a dessert reception. We hope you will join us to celebrate this historic day in the musical tradition of the Lutheran church!



WE WELCOME HIGHER THINGS TO ST. JOHN'S ON MAY 4th & 5th!

It is with great excitement that we announce that St. John's will be hosting the New England District Higher Things Conference this spring! Higher Things is a national mission group of the LCMS designed to assist parents, pastors, and congregations in cultivating a distinctly Lutheran identity among their youth and young adult. The conference will be held Friday, May 4th to Saturday, May 5th. The theme of this year's conference will be "Why do bad things happen to good people?" At last year's conference Higher Things welcomed 80 youth from around the New England LCMS district. At the conference the youth will spend two days immersed in the Gospel. They'll hear about Jesus, and what He has done for them. They will do this by participating in the many worship services in which we join our voices with those of the historic Christian church through liturgy and hymns, and hear the Gospel preached in its purity. Youth will learn in a much greater depth, about our faith, not just what we believe, but why we believe it and why it's important. All this will equip them to talk about their faith to others. And they'll do plenty of that as they get to know other Lutheran youth just like them throughout the worship and catechesis sessions, especially during the free time activities each evening.

Members of St. John's are invited to participate in the worship services held during the conference. The conference will have an Evening Prayer and Compline service on Friday night, and a Matins service Saturday morning followed by Vespers

Saturday afternoon at the close of the conference. Times will be in the May newsletter!

To find out more about the conference and how to get involved please speak with Jeff Windoloski, Director of Music or visit Higher Things on the web at higherthings.org!



stephen
MINISTRY.

Everyone's Job, Everyone's Joy

When was the last time you heard someone say, "That's the pastor's job," when referring to some aspect of ministry? Ministry is not just the job (or, better yet, the opportunity) of the clergy. The opportunity and responsibility for doing ministry has been given to all Christians. The upcoming Stephen Ministry training class is a chance to be trained and equipped for doing ministry. Talk to any of our Stephen Ministers; they will tell you that it is a joyous privilege to share Christ's love with others. Is this chance for ministry the one for you? Think about it. If you have any questions, talk with one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders: If so, contact Paul or Patti Brose at 562-6599, Dan Provost at 977-1525 or Pastor Riley.

WESTFIELD COMMUNITY

TABLE: One of St. John's ministries is to provide a meal to the Westfield area needy at the Community Table every fourth Friday of the month which will be April 27. If your gifts are to help the needy and can spare a few hours each month, we are compiling a list of helpers that we will call to help as needed. The time allotment for cooking begins at 2 p.m. and serving begins at 4 p.m. We are in need of SERVERS. Please call Sally (562-3186) or Doris (568-7440) if you would be part of this ministry.

Radio Ministry

The radio ministry at St John's started shortly after Pastor Gruel arrived in 1982. It was broadcast on WNNZ which was located on Union St in Westfield, and they agreed to put on the broadcast for us for free. We recorded on a reel to reel tape for a few years, then switched to cassette tapes. In 2006, we switched to CDs thanks to a PC that was left over from a church tag sale. That continued until 2014 at which point we stopped using CDs and began posting the recording to a cloud drive and emailing the hyperlink to the radio station where they download and broadcast.

So, much has changed throughout the past 35 years of our radio ministry in terms of the technology we use. But, God's Word remains unaltered and true.

Broadcasts can be heard each Sunday at 7:30 a.m. on WHYN (560 AM). The cost is now \$125 per week for this ministry. If you are interested in sponsoring a broadcast (or a part of a broadcast) in memory of or in honor of anyone please call the church or sign up on the sheet outside the office door. Donations of any amount are welcome. Additionally, we have posted previous weeks' broadcasts on our website along with the associated bulletin. Just log onto <http://stjohnswestfield.org>; links to the broadcasts and the weekly bulletins are on the main page. If anyone would like a CD copy of any radio broadcast, please contact Bill Schneeloch 860-604-5264 or e-mail at radio@stjohnswestfield.org with any questions.

Thanks to all who support this ministry!



Love Filled the Need

The word “love” is used in many different ways: “I just love pecan pie!” “I love my child.” “I love to play basketball.” The word is thrown around so carelessly that its meaning has deteriorated.

If we want to know what love truly means, we can go to God’s Word. There we find that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). We understand what that means only as we continue to delve into Scripture. We find that, since God is love, He acts in love. Everything He does, He does out of love for us, His creation. He doesn’t give us everything we want; He does give us everything we need.

What do we need? We need a Savior, for we are sinners, ‘condemned to die eternally for our sins. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:10), the Apostle John states positively, but his following words demonstrate what God’s love does: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9).

That’s love. Because of love, Jesus did not remain in Heaven but came to Earth to become one of us, to suffer and die for us, and then rise again, a resurrection that we now celebrate – Easter – and

celebrate every Sunday as we gather together to rejoice in this great love that makes us His own.

He gave us Himself, and He wants us to give ourselves to Him in return. Having given ourselves to Him, it becomes a joy and a privilege to share our resources, our time, our abilities with Him by sharing them with others, just as Christ, out of love for His own, shared His very self with us.

THRIVENT NOTES:

The deadline for submitting Thrivent Choice dollars is this week by March 31. If anyone has any questions, contact Jane McClure (562-0492) or call Thrivent directly at 1-800-847-4836.