

Thank God for America

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever. - Psalm 107, v. 1.

Can we, as Christians, thank God for the United States of America? After all, we recognize many flaws in our nation. We remember the flaws of the past, such as the inhumane treatment of Native Americans, slavery, abuse of immigrant workers, and denial of civil rights to various groups. We can easily recite sins of our own day: the lack of protection for the life of the preborn child, the violence and sex promoted through our mass media, the emphasis on materialism in this world, etc. In the future, there will continue to be flaws in the leadership, the institutions, and the people of this land.

Here is a similar question: Can a child give thanks for his/her parents, even though one parent is an unbeliever and the other parent has failed him/her in numerous ways? Most definitely, a child can honor his/her parents with all their weaknesses and flaws and still give thanks to God for the blessings given to him/her through his/her parents.

As Americans, we can give thanks to God for a heritage of faith that has been passed down through the generations. We can read about the faith of godly men and women in the history of our country. Of the 250 people we call Founding Fathers, the vast majority, by their own testimony, were Christians. They believed in the Good News of Jesus Christ. They confessed that He died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification. These men and women, and millions of their fellow citizens, prayed for their nation and the future of their country. They witnessed to the next generation. We are the recipients of those answered prayers, and their witness of faith lifts us up.

We who have been blessed in the United States with the Good News of Christ must confess to the Lord that we have often not been faithful in sharing that Good News. For this, we repent. At the same time we give thanks to God for the Good News of His forgiveness, which is ours through faith in Jesus. Through His Holy Spirit we can be renewed to the task of spreading the Gospel right here in the United States. In our prayers we can ask God to graciously allow our Christian heritage to be transmitted to the next generation.

Throughout our country we can witness God's creation of a glorious land. Travel anywhere from Alaska to Maine and you will see constant visions of indescribable wonder! We in America need to give thanks for the land the Lord has entrusted to our care.

Not only is our nation beautiful, it is also bountiful. Throughout the land we are inheritors of a rich bounty of crops, industry, and natural resources. The standard of living of the average citizen is far above that of people in other parts of the world. We give thanks to Jesus in the words of 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich”. Through the poverty of His incarnation, life, and death, we are spiritually rich beyond measure.

As followers of Jesus, we seek to share the material bounty that God has bestowed upon us. We are called also as citizens to use our freedoms to promote the welfare of those who are in need, within our borders as well as throughout the world.

The freedoms that we celebrate on the Fourth of July were never free. Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were

hounded and persecuted, and some died for their beliefs. On Independence Day, we give thanks to God for those who gave their lives so that we may live in a free land. We give thanks to God for those who risked their lives to protect our freedoms. We also give thanks to God for those in the armed forces who are in harm's way so that we can enjoy these freedoms. As a free people, we have a God-given responsibility to pray for our nation and leaders. We have the responsibility and calling to participate as citizens at the local, state, and national levels. As a free people, we have the responsibility to exercise the freedom of worship that God has blessed us with in the United States. We give thanks to the Savior, Who paid for our sin of irresponsible citizenship. We remember with joy that He has made us citizens of heaven, yet with important responsibilities here on earth.

Here in the United States the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation through Christ alone has been deeply planted. Under the freedoms that we have experienced over the last two hundred and forty-two years, the faith has grown and spread. We in our day have a great opportunity not only to keep that faith alive, but also to help other nations and nationalities have the opportunity to receive the Good News of forgiveness and salvation through Christ alone.

On this Fourth of July, 2018, we give thanks to God for the many blessings of body and soul that He has showered upon us through our country, the United States of America. We pray to God for our nation, our leaders, and our fellow citizens. And we pray to God for ourselves, that He would always keep us faithful to our Savior.

A Grateful Servant of Christ,
Pastor Riley

ALTAR CARE:

Volunteers are needed to help care for our altar which does not require a lot of time each week. There is a sign up sheet in the foyer for the months of July through October and December.



Men, women, and teens are welcome to volunteer. Training will be provided if needed. If you have any questions, please contact Jane McClure (562-0492).

The following have signed up for flowers for the months of July and August:



- July 1 – Sienkiewicz (1)
- July 8 – Caba (1)
- July 15 – Sienkiewicz (1)
- July 22 – open
- July 29 - open
- August 5– Johnson (1)
- August 12 - Sienkiewicz (1)
- August 19 - Caba (1)
- August 26 - open

Sign up in the 2018 FLOWER BOOK located on the round table in the church foyer or contact Jane McClure (562-0492). We can do up to three bouquets per Sunday. The cost per bouquet is \$21.00.



A church greeter is the first and last person people see when visiting a church. The church greeter is the face of any ministry, which makes it one of the most important jobs in the church. St. John's is looking for volunteers to help with greeting. If you are interested, please see Paul Brose, head elder.

Women In God's Service:

The WinGS officers elected for the upcoming year are President – Linda Slozak, Vice-President – Erika Slozak, Secretary – Jane McClure, Treasurer – Susan Owen, and Devotional Leader – Andrea Scully.

WinGS is proud and happy to be able to support so many mission projects - local, national and world-wide. We raise money to fund these projects through our dinners and tag sale. The contributions placed in the monthly "Mission" envelopes found in our offering boxes will go toward these projects as well. This year's mission projects include the Westfield Food Pantry, Price Rite Gift cards, LWML Mites, Hands of Grace, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces. NED Mission trips, LCC-Karre 9 Ministries, LCC Comfort Dogs, Wreaths Across America, Orphan Grain Train, the Bridge, Gbanga School (2 students) and St. John's Radio Ministry.

We also contribute to Stockings for Soldiers, send Christmas cards to military personnel serving overseas, and create Chrismons that are used to decorate Christmas trees that are donated to groups in Westfield.. Members create prayer shawls, provide Welcome Bags for visitors, and serve at the Community Table. We will also be starting a project to create felt lap blankets for St. John's.

As you are cleaning out your closets this summer, please set aside gently used "business casual" clothing which we will donate to Dress for Success. We are also planning on a fall tag sale. Items can be brought downstairs to room 7.



Do you take a vacation ... or take a trip to visit family.... Or go see the kids ??? You can still listen to our Worship Service Broadcast and read the bulletin on our website. No excuse for not getting the Good News, log on to <http://stjohnswestfield.org>
A NEW SIGN-UP SHEET HAS BEEN POSTED OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OFFICE

Please help in the continuing outreach mission project of our Radio Broadcast of Sunday morning Worship . Broadcasts can be heard each Sunday at 7:30 a.m. on WHYN (560 AM). The cost for the program is \$125 per week. 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.

Please see/call Bill Schneeloch (413-568-4906 or 860-604-5264) or e-mail at radio@stjohnswestfield.org with any questions.

Summer Vacations - Worship With The LCMS!

Many of us will be taking vacations this summer. When we go on vacation there is a lot to consider. Did we take enough clothes with us? Where are we going to stay? What restaurants will we visit? What sites will we see? Where will we worship? We should never take a vacation from worshipping our triune God who has afforded us and our vacation. To find a local LCMS church in your vacation area, be sure to visit locator.lcms.org!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:**"Pipe The Piper: Bach, Buxtehude & Before"**

Presented By The 'Soli Deo Gloria'
Concert Series At St. John's
Sunday, August 26, 2018
At 3:00 p.m.

Join us for the third concert of this season with an organ concert featuring music from the baroque and before! Director of Music Jeff Windoloski will perform on St. John's Austin pipe organ with selections from J.S Bach, D. Buxtehude, J.P. Sweelinck, J. Pachelbel and more. Following the concert be sure to join us in the fellowship hall for a reception. We hope that you will join us to celebrate the majesty and splendor of this early music performed on the king of instruments!

Gospel Processions -**A Lutheran Tradition!**

"Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples!" (Psalms 96:3)

A Gospel processional is a staple of the western Lutheran liturgical tradition. A Gospel procession consists of bringing the reading of the Gospel out into the midst of the congregation as opposed to from the altar where it is typically read. This tradition emphasizes the Gospel as the height of the readings. As the tradition is known, the procession is led by the crucifer followed by an altar server carrying the Gospel contained in the Bible with the Pastor behind. The Gospel is then read or chanted by the minister and everyone is recessed back to the lectern. The Bible being held by a lay person represents us receiving the Gospel from Christ's proclamation of it. It is this tradition that is practiced on high feast and festival days including Easter, Christmas, Reformation, Ascension, All Saints Day, etc. Let us then continue this newly begun tradition at St. John's as we continue to joyfully declare His glory and wonders among His people!



Relief for Human Need Worldwide

The New England District Branch of Orphan Grain Train

Open House Picnic/Fundraiser!

Saturday, August 11, 2018
12 – 3 p.m.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
8 Maple Street Terryville, CT

There will be lots of food, activities for children and adults alike! There will also be Warehouse tours to show what we do and how we do it! Cash and/or material offerings will be accepted. Please contact Brenda Bacon at the NED Office to RSVP 413-783-0131, ext .10 or bbacon@ned-lcms.org so we can properly plan.

The Orphan Grain Train's New England Branch, loaded a 40 foot container of needed items for Ghana on June 8, 2018. This is the nineteenth shipment since the Branch was dedicated as the 23rd in the country for OGT on June of 2014. OGT has the use of a warehouse in Terryville that is owned by Mr. Bill Allread who has made space available for this charitable work.

The Ghana shipment included many medical items such as 21 hospital beds, over 100 walkers and 130 canes, 5 neonatal cribs, 31 wheelchairs, Hygiene kits, Layette kits, and hundreds of boxes of medical supplies and clothing. More than 20 volunteers worked at the warehouse to complete the loading that also took hundreds of volunteer hours to pick up items and sort, pack and box what was required for shipment.

Our meetings are open and welcome to all. Please contact Bill Schneeloch if you would like to attend. If you would like to support us financially, Donations can be mailed to: Orphan Grain Train – New England c/o LCMS – NED 400 Wilbraham Road Springfield, MA 01109-2723

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**AUGUST 6-10****9:00 a.m.-Noon**

Come along with us as we sing fun songs, do crazy crafts, eat yummy snacks, play awesome games, and more. Plus, you'll venture onto an uncharted island where kids survive and thrive. Anchor kids in the truth that Jesus carries them through life's storms. Can't wait to see you there!

Register now for Shipwrecked Vacation Bible School! Go to our church's website:<http://stjohnswestfield.org>, picking up a registration form at church or by contacting the church at 568-1417 or Jane McClure at 562-0492.

We are looking for nautical theme props and decorations that we can borrow for VBS. Also outside of the church office, there are items that are needed to be purchased. Please support our outreach by purchasing and bringing to the church as soon as possible.

If you have any questions, please contact Jane McClure (562-0492) or Erika Slozak at (579-4962).



There will be a Parsonage Open House at 125 Glenwood Drive here in Westfield on Sunday afternoon, July 22 following worship. It will be a "come and go" event. You are invited to bring your favorite potluck dish to share in the fun and fellowship. If you have any questions, please see Vicki Riley.



Change of Address

FRIENDLY REMINDER: If you have a change of address, email or phone number (home or cell), please contact the church.

Presenting our Bodies as Living Sacrifices

Some of you will remember that during the Second World War there was a very famous poster picturing our good own Uncle Sam. He was pictured wearing a red, white, and blue top hat. It was a poster used by our government and by the military to recruit men and women to serve their country. The man in the poster had a serious and stern look pointing his finger and saying, "I Want You!" I want you to enter the service of your country. Even though this enlistment could mean death, hundreds of thousands of men and women volunteered for service.

We are told by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1 that God "Wants you!" *"I appeal to you brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy*

and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." It may not sound as serious as laying down your life for your country, but it is! God is saying that He wants you to live and die for Him. He wants you to give your life for Him. God wants you completely. Everything that you are and have should belong to Him. God wants all of you.

In our daily routines, we tend not to take this notion of giving everything to God too seriously. However, God's Word clearly wants us to think more about how we can use our lives and our bodies in service to Him. The question to consider is, "Do we use our bodies in ways that honor God?" Let's consider our hands. Do we use them only to serve ourselves or do we use them in service to God. Do we use our eyes, ears, brains, mouths, etc. in service to God?

God says every part of us is to be used as an act of worship. Everything we do can be an act of worship:

Do we think of the things that we do in our daily routines as being acts of service? We should consider that activities such as cooking meals, cutting the grass, changing diapers, going to school or going to work can be acts of worship. We can also consider refusing to enter into gossip as an act of worship. When we reach out to help a neighbor, we should see that as an act of worship. God is seeking our total commitment.

In Romans 12:1, we are told, *"by the mercies of God, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice."* It is God's mercy and love that motivate us to offer our lives in commitment to Him. Because God loves, God enables us to give all that we are and have.