

GOOD NEWS FROM ST JOHN

February
2017

NEWS FOR ALL

SUNDAY WORSHIP

9:00 am

Sunday School
9:15am—10:00am
(during the school year)

Holy Communion
1st & 4th Sunday

PASTOR

Gail Sowell
Office Hours: 9am-1pm
Tuesday-Friday
(*And by appointment*)

SECRETARY'S HOURS

Monday-Friday
9:00-1:00

ADDRESS

W1000 Hwy N
Edgar, WI 54426

PHONE/EMAIL

715-352-2524

EMERGENCY PHONE

715-352-2492

stjohnelca@gmail.com

WEBSITE

www.stjohnelcaedgar.org

Items for print MUST be submitted by the 24th of the preceding month.

Pastor's Ponderings



How God must laugh at us and our “deepest desires” and our “solemn promises” sometimes! As my “semi-sabbatical” winds down (January 31st is the date) I have to confess that the devotional book I started out to write will never be written. It began well! After 6 weeks I had 143 pages of Bible passages printed out—but that was way too many for a daily devotional. So I modified the plan: I was going to write a Bible study! The working title was: *The Non-Devotional: A Basic Bible Study for Beginners and other Believers*. I thought that might catch some attention and maybe even motivate reading.

Then TECHNOLOGY failed me. Or I failed technology. I'd saved the whole 143 pages of scripture and my first 30 pages of commentary to a “flash drive” that basically died—I couldn't retrieve anything at all from it. The Geek Squad at Best Buy wanted \$550 (that's *five hundred fifty dollars!*) to try to recapture 6 weeks of my life. Not gonna happen! So I bought a brand new flash drive and settled in to re-type 170 pages. But no, wait—I can't find the new, improved flash drive on my computer to save the new text.

For a while I wondered if perhaps God didn't want me to complete this project, but I rejected that idea. I still feel passionate about proceeding, but it'll have to wait till someone can teach me Computer 101 basics. – Any volunteers?

Meanwhile, Lent is fast approaching. It seems we just gathered to worship the baby born in the stable, and now we're preparing to walk with him to the cross. Ash Wednesday will be a joint worship service at St. Stephen at 6:30 p.m. on March 1st, preceded by a soup supper at 5:30. Please plan to be there! Information about the other mid-week Lenten services will follow soon.

Mission Statement: *Getting to know Jesus and making Him known through our Worship and Serving.*

St. John Family News

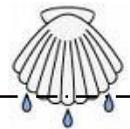
We welcomed **Jeff Reiche** to our service on January 8th. He spoke about his recent trip to Zambia with *The Fellowship of Christian Athletes*. He even included a special Children's Time for the kids. Many thanks, Jeff, for coming to share this experience with us!

The Installation of Officers took place in the service on January 15th. Much appreciation to those who have agreed to serve for the furtherance of God's work through St. John. Those who had been previously elected and were installed that Sunday were:

PRESIDENT: Steve Robers VICE PRESIDENT: Linda Kovalik TREASURER: Bev Umnus
 DEACON: Ann Bonsall TRUSTEE: Cal Tackes CEMETERY BOARD: Gerald Borchardt
 FINANCE COMMITTEE: Sharon Schumacker, Mark Bargender, Enola Willhite
 AUDITING COMMITTEE: Naomi Sebold, Troy Wiesman, Leon Werner
 PARISH ED COMMITTEE: Bonnie Bargender, Michelle Hollatz, Cindy Manecke, Jenny Olmsted

Let's encourage them with our words of appreciation and support them with our prayers and hands-on help as needed!

We had the joy of welcoming **Jaxon Timothy Swoboda** through the water of Holy Baptism in our service on January 22. His parents are Ben and Hillary (Kirsch). Sponsors are Hayley Kirsch and Andrew Swoboda. God's blessings on little Jaxon and his family!



The Annual Meeting took place immediately following the service on January 22.

Many thanks to all for submitting your Annual Reports well-done and in a timely fashion!

There are extra copies of the report on the table in the Narthex.

Please remember to check your mailboxes and pick up your annual giving statements.

Splashes of Joy!



It was our great JOY to welcome McCoy Raymond Mueller to our service on January 29th. Having been born on Thursday, January 26, he was only 4 days old! His parents are Mitch & Morgan Mueller, and he is welcomed by two older brothers, Paxton & Brennan too!



Give a gift
that isn't easy
to wrap.

www.elca.org/goodgifts

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We had a wonderful giving opportunity this past Advent & Christmas season as the Sunday School Department led the way in a Good Gifts Giving Tree Project. ***It is with great delight that we bring the following articles to you from our Confirmation Class regarding the outreach of that project. Thanks to all who supported them in that effort!***

Good News from Our Confirmation Class !

ECLA Good Gifts

The Advent Good Gifts Tree raised \$823.00 this year, an impressive amount from our small congregation. How, might you ask, is this money used and how can I be assured this money goes where it is supposed to go?



Let's start with the purchase of animals, the most popular gift from our tree. The idea of giving an animal is so people can use these animals for food for their family as well as generate an income to buy food or improve their living conditions. For example a flock of 10 chickens gives eggs, meat, and also allows you to sell eggs. A goat allows a family to have fresh milk, or allows an income from selling milk as well as having a "saving account" to cover a special need.

Projects and animals are dispersed when recipients request them through a grant. We have people from companion churches already in the area who know what is needed in their communities and are trusted to make the right decisions on the grant applications. Staff also makes sure the recipients know how to care for their animals.

If you gave money for animals, vaccinations, clean water, school supplies, mosquito nets, fruit trees, or where it is needed most, you can be sure it helped change a life and a family in this country and around the world. The confirmation class will be submitting personal stories over the next few months of how ECLA Good Gifts made a difference one family at a time. Thank you. Lavone

Good Gifts Pig Story

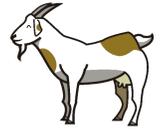
Many families bought animals from the ELCA Good Gifts tree and wondered exactly where did their donations go? One animal in particular is the pig.

Huon Sok from Cambodia has received pigs and now her family has started a business on the land given by her government to her family. It took a while to clean up, but now they use it for their pig farm. Their family's future is looking brighter, including having her children go to school from the steady income. They have started planting food to stay healthy.

With one contribution you can turn someone's life the right side up. Huon Su went from having a dollar a day, to now being able to have a better quality of life because of one family. Thank you for your contributions to the ELCA Good Gifts tree. –Griffin Treankler

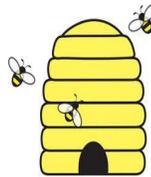
Good Gifts by Dylan Hollatz

Nassolo barely a teenager was an orphan of AIDS, a big sister and a caretaker. She and many others suffer from diseases and starvation, and poverty. Nassolo has seen it all. Living in Uganda this teenage girl is doing her very best to look after herself and her siblings. By giving a goat to this family it gives them hope, along with many necessities. In dry climates goats are very useful; being a hardy animal they are able to survive the roughest conditions.



Daily fresh milk provides nourishment for Nassolo and her family, and the goat offspring can be shared or sold at markets. This also provides some income to get things like medicine, school fees, clothing, food and other basic necessities. So just donating one goat could really change someone's life in Uganda. Nassolo says that as she plans for the near future she hopes that with the goats she can support her family. Goats in Uganda give hope, and everything a family needs to live for a little bit.

Dylan



Submitted by Ella Bauman

Do you remember when we asked you to donate money for somebody in need? You might have saw that you could've bought somebody bees. That might seem crazy, what could someone do with bees? I thought that also, but Sonamuni Tudu has a different perspective on that.

Sonamuni Tudu lives in West Bengal India and is a farmer. To support Somanuni's family he relies on the land to produce crops. He says that changes in weather patterns have created challenges in food production. He could either migrate or work at a stone quarry, but he knows both of those carry heavy risks. He is very thankful for the gifts through the ELCA World Hunger with the Lutheran World Service India Trust.

People in the Santhal tribe, like Sonamuni, have turned to a more sustainable option- **beekeeping**. Beehives require neither additional land, nor compete with agriculture. Honey is in demand in markets around this region. "The extra money we earn from honey production has increased our family income, which we use to invest in our children's education, cover health care costs, and improve our living situation," Sonamuni says. Sonamuni's family feels that they're earning their money with dignity in an eco-friendly environment.

Both me and Sonamuni's family would like to say **thank you so much** for supporting ELCA World Hunger. Through all your gifts, the rural and tribal farmers in West Bengal, India, now have a modified solution that will help put an end to world hunger- for good.

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

February 7 will be our Bible Study (weather permitting). The book we are studying is Galatians – Christian Faith and Christian Freedom. This session is CHILDREN OF GOD THROUGH FAITH. We welcome more people (men and women) to attend. The session lasts approximately one hour. If you are interested, contact Bev Umnus or the secretary for a printout of the study.

Our regular monthly meeting date has been changed to February 22 because of March 1 being Ash Wednesday. At this meeting we will be reading the revised constitution and bylaws for adoption. We also will be planning the Salad Supper which is held in May. We are working on the kits for Lutheran World Relief. Our project for Jan – Mar is the HEALTH KITS. During Lent we will be designating a certain item for each week. We DO NOT need toothbrushes. Our most needed items are **towels** (27X52), dark in color is preferred, **soap** and **nail clippers**. Watch the bulletins for the suggested items each week. We will also discuss the two Wednesday night SOUP SUPPERS – March 22 and April 5. We are looking for volunteers for the two weeks.

Our Spring Rally for Chequamegon Conference will be discussed also. At this time I do not have a specific date. I hope to have more information at the meeting. The Rally will be held at Trinity Church in Unity.

A BIG Thank You is extended to all the women that helped with the projects in December. This is a reminder that BACKUP is needed for all positions. Please consider getting more involved with helping.

Our May meeting will be held on May 3rd. At this time we will finalize the plans for our Salad Supper. Tentative date will be May 9th or 16th. Other options will be discussed also.

The March newsletter will include the results of the general meeting.

Bev Umnus, President of WELCA





Adventures of the Church Mice . . .

Oh my paws and whiskers! It's Twink (Merry Twinkle) from St. John writing today, and I'm all in a tizzy! I don't know whether to be jealous or hurt or annoyed, but Pastor Gail was seriously considering trapping a mouse in her parsonage! She was going on and on (and ON) to Rose about how this poor mouse kept going up on her kitchen counter, and she really wished it would go away. THAT I could live with! But then she decided to buy a live trap and turn that kitchen mouse into a PET! And that's just WRONG! So she went out and bought 2 live traps (she wasn't sure which size to use), and a CAGE and a WATER BOTTLE, and bedding, and chewy sticks to file down its teeth, and she was so excited it really hurt my feelings. I mean, Tully and I are here every day at St. John, and she doesn't even bother to talk to us sometimes. Well, anyway, after she bought all that stuff (almost \$50 worth!!!) the mouse stopped going up on her kitchen counter. So she had to RETURN it all to Petco. And she was really disappointed. (Golly gee, she never spent \$47.83 on me and Tully! And I don't think she spends a lot on Miri at St. Stephen!) I guess we're back to status quo, or square one, or whatever humans say. So I spent all that energy being jealous and angry all for nothing. (Pastor Gail will probably say that's a good lesson for a mouse to learn, I think she talked once about Matthew's gospel where Jesus told everyone not to worry about tomorrow because tomorrow will have its own problems.) *Bye for now.*



Something to Consider

Would you like to walk in Jesus' footsteps—literally? I'd like to take a tour to the Holy Land in January of 2018. It's 10 days total, including 2 rather full days of flying. We'll visit Caesarea and Megiddo, Haifa and Mount Carmel (including a visit to the cave where Elijah met God in a "still small voice"); Tiberias, where we'll cross the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum and visit Tabgha (where Jesus probably fed the 5000) and the Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. On to Cana (site of the wedding where Jesus turned water into wine) and Nazareth (the Church of the Annunciation is one of the most fabulous I've ever seen!), then on to Jerusalem, where we'll spend 3 full days. Total cost including air fare and surcharges is \$3000 per person from New York (it'll be slightly more from Chicago or Minneapolis).

My trip to the Holy Land in 1996 changed my life and faith. This tour is provided by Nawas, with whom I took a group "In the footsteps of Paul" to Greece and Turkey. We don't need to be concerned about wars and unrest in that part of the world. Tour groups NEVER lose a participant. If necessary, they change the itinerary or timeline when there are local disturbances. I need six travelers in order to form the minimum group of 7 (and I already have Rose—and maybe her husband Jeff!). **If you're interested, let me know and I'll share the basic information with you!**

Spain and Portugal: Meanwhile, back to our vacation this year: Rose and I leave on Thursday, March 9, for a 9-day trip abroad: O'Hare to London to Madrid; 3 nights in Portugal, including 2 in Lisbon; 2 nights in Seville; 2 more nights in Madrid; then a direct flight from Madrid to O'Hare on Saturday, March 18. If flights and shuttle are on time, I'll be back for worship on Sunday, March 19. I'll miss Sunday, March 12, and our midweek Lenten service at St. Stephen on March 15. Coverage has already been arranged for worship and emergencies.

A Message from Our Pastor's Heart

My deepest desire as your pastor is that St. John ELCA in Edgar (Town of Wien), Wisconsin, be known as a congregation that *warmly* and *sincerely* welcomes all people and discriminates against no one. These *Words of Sorrow* were read from the altar on Sunday, January 29, 2017, in response to a very hurtful and inappropriate act. Because we are the church, the body of Christ, we are called to love one another as Jesus has loved and loves us; to love our neighbor as we love ourselves; and to lift up one another, bearing one another's burdens. May God give us all strength and courage to do those things.

Words of Sorrow (by Pastor Gail)

Last Sunday something very sad and very wrong happened in our St. John family. After the congregational meeting someone stepped forward and offered to fill an important position at St. John. When this volunteer returned home, there was an anonymous bullying phone call saying basically, "You're not worthy to do this job, you're not wanted, you're not welcome."

This is wrong on at least three levels! First, we don't have the right to judge the worthiness or welcome of anyone! Jesus himself said, "**Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone**" (John 8:7). Judgment and worthiness belong to God!

Second, anonymous messages are never okay. If you have an issue with someone in the congregation, say it face to face. In the tradition of the Church—the body of Christ—such situations should be handled during the worship service *before* you make an offering or receive the Lord's Supper. That's why we share the peace before offering our gifts. In the gospel of Matthew Jesus himself gave this instruction: "**If you're offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to that person; then come and offer your gift**" (Matthew 5:23-24). Face-to-face communication, or at least open and honest dialogue, is the only biblically acceptable way to work out broken relationships.

And third, what will happen to the church, to St. John, if volunteers are turned away? Will anyone else volunteer for anything? The church is the body of Christ, the fellowship of believers, the communion of saints.

In Romans Paul wrote these words: "**I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought. . . . Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us**" (Romans 12:3-6a).

Wrong has been done to a member of the body of Christ here at St. John. I beg the person who made the phone call to call our injured member again, to confess and apologize. If that's something you don't feel you can do, I urge you to come and talk to me, so we can begin to make things right—to make atonement for the hurt you caused.



“What can I do to help?” you might be asking in light of the preceding “Words of Sorrow” and the surrounding circumstances...

If you would like to write a note of support to our offended member, put it in a sealed envelope marked “Dear Member” and put it in the secretary’s mailbox. Rose will forward it. *Please hold all who are involved in your prayers.*



Reflections from Rose

I have a “Bible App” on my phone. There is a verse of the day that it sends me every morning. I really enjoy that, it helps me get my thoughts focused on God and his Word every morning.

This morning the verse is Philippians 3: 13-14. *“Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But this one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

I often talk to God about what He says in his Word. I asked him, “So how do I forget what is behind when I live in the shadow of the consequences of yesterday’s mistakes?”

As I sat quietly soaking in the sunshine at Minnow Ponds (*in my car, before work*) this thought came to me: When I walk INTO the light, my shadow is BEHIND me. So when I struggle with the disappointment, or regret of things past, I need to make sure I am walking INTO the light (Jesus). Then, I’m NOT walking IN those shadows, they are BEHIND me and should be forgotten. WOW! It was an “Ah-ha” moment for me.

So, how do I walk INTO the light? I spend time reading God’s Word, allowing it to transform the way that I think and act. I pray, spend time in worship, and ask God to show me how I can minister to others in His name and then DO IT. Like Paul, I certainly haven’t arrived yet... but I (*we*) just need to keep PRESSING ON!

We’re all in this together, lets help each other **keep those shadows behind** and forget about ‘em!

—Rose



What Kind of flowers do you never give on Valentine’s Day?
Cauliflowers!





Ash Wednesday is on March 1st this year. That marks the beginning of Lent and it's coming FAST! St. John and St. Stephen will be holding joint services that will alternate between the two sites. St. Stephen has graciously decided to change the time of their services to 6:30pm with the Soup Supper preceding at 5:30pm. This has been the custom at St. John for the past several years.

The Ash Wednesday service will be at St. Stephen this year. There will be Soup Supper at 5:30pm, with the service at 6:30pm. The FOLLOWING Wednesday, March 8th, will be at St. John, and the YOUTH will be serving Soup Supper at 5:30, with the service following at 6:30pm. It will be a blessing to share the responsibilities of serving between the two congregations.



Please plan to attend these special services of reflection and worship. Your help would be so much appreciated too when it comes time to serve. **Watch for sign up sheets.** *Thanks!*



As the Lenten season draws to a close, we will be anticipating Palm Sunday and the Pancake Brunch. **Palm Sunday is April 9th** this year, which means **Easter follows on April 16th!**

Please make a point to be here as we have special times of worship to focus our attention on the amazing love of our awesome God that moved him to GIVE his only begotten Son...



Walking Together: GETTING THE WORD OUT, Saturday, March 18, 9am—4:30pm at UW-Eau Claire, Davies Center. The purpose of WALKING TOGETHER is to equip God's people to do ministry and build up the churches in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.

At WALKING TOGETHER you will be equipped with new ideas, inspiration, resources, and materials that you can actually take home and use in your congregation. This is a very practical event taught by experts and practitioners who are excited to share what works in their congregation. Registration is \$20 per person. *More information and registration forms can be found on the bulletin board in the Narthex.*



Remember to bring your ALUMINUM CANS (*in clear plastic bags*) to the shed for recycling. *No pie tins, beer bottles or foil please!* Again thanks Herbie & Mary Jo for heading up this project that's for the good of our environment AND good for St. John



MANY THANKS to those who continue to help with snow management !

Hopefully not much longer...who pays attention to Puxatony Phil anyway ?!

GOOD NEWS

St. John Lutheran Church ELCA
W1000 Hwy N
Edgar, WI 54426

We're on the Web
www.stjohnelcaedgar.org

February 2017



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Please remember to check your bulletin for updates. If you would like to have us e-mail the Newsletter to you, please let us know.



**Deadline for March 2017 News
February 24**