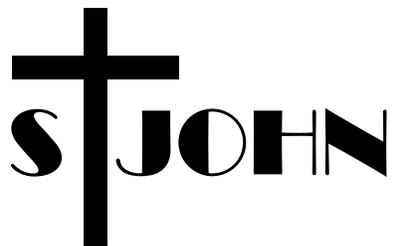


GOOD NEWS FROM ST JOHN



January
2019

NEWS FOR ALL

SUNDAY WORSHIP

9:00am

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

120500 County Road 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 20th of the preceding month.

Pastor's Ponderings

My worst nightmare! I don't know any pastors who don't occasionally have nightmares about arriving late for worship, or finding themselves in the right place but still in pajamas, or getting into the pulpit to preach and seeing either that there's no sermon there or they brought the wrong sermon. . .

The last Sunday in December my worst nightmares were surpassed by the reality of the day. At St. John I walked down the aisle before the announcements and asked the congregation to sing "Happy Birthday" to my friend Michael. I put my cell phone on speaker, and when his answering message ended we all sang to him, and I thought I'd pushed the button to end the call. I made it through the announcements all right, and we started reading Psalm 148 (in unison, thank heaven!), and all of a sudden I heard the voice of "Siri" speaking from my phone, saying something like "If you want to place a call, press . . ." I hit the "end" button but she didn't stop talking. I did it again, with the same result. By this time I wasn't even trying to read the psalm, I was just staring at my phone in horror and punching random buttons. I felt dreadful—Psalm 148 is a beautiful psalm and I'd really wanted to stress parts of it. I apologized to the congregation and went on with the service. At St. Stephen we did the same thing—but I told them before dialing what had happened at St. John. As soon as we'd sung I successfully hung up on Michael's answering machine (he'd been in church the whole time), and someone reminded me to be sure my phone was turned off. I said it was—and then another phone in the congregation began to ring. I felt somewhat vindicated! (I also felt better when I asked a St. John member what she thought of the event, and she replied, "It was a hoot!")

Please don't ever put your pastor—me or anyone else!—on a pedestal! We are human. We are sinners. We are broken. We also are called by God and by the congregation to serve God and all people, and we do it with open hearts, and with the fallibility of human beings. One of my prayers before every worship service is, "Don't let me get in the way of anyone's worship." For the times I've failed, please forgive me. And please remember that God must have a sense of humor, or he would never have called me, of all people, into ordained ministry!

Thank you to all who extended Christmas greetings by cards, calls, and gifts. I appreciate your kindness, and my prayer for all of you is that 2019 be a year filled with God's richest blessings for you and all those you love!

—Pastor Gail

St. John Family News!

Our Sunday School students delivered a wonderful presentation of their Christmas program "What Would You Do?" on Sunday, December 16th in the 9am service. 152 were in attendance!

Many thanks to Lana Strasser who wrote, and directed the program. Much appreciation also to the Sunday School teachers & helpers who assisted in the practices and presentation.



Of course, a big "thumbs up" to all our young people and their parents for their efforts in practicing and presenting this production to honor Jesus Christ our Savior, the real reason we celebrate Christmas!

.....
We joyfully welcomed two new families into membership at St. John ELCA during the service on December 9th. They had blessed us with their presence in Worship and Sunday School for awhile, and decided they were ready to join us.

We welcome the **Kraft Family**
(on the left): Russel & Brianna and their children Dayton (*age 4*), Callon (*age 3*) and McKenna (*10 months*)
and the **Nowak Family** (on the right): James & Jollene and their children Carson (*age 10*) and Addyson (*age 8*)



We are delighted that you've chosen to make St. John your church home, and pray that you will be strengthened, encouraged and blessed as we continue our faith journey together.

RAFFLE for PUERTO RICO reaches it's GOAL of \$10,000!

A **BIG** thank you to ALL who purchased and sold the raffle tickets for Lutheran Disaster Relief in Puerto Rico! Due to your generosity we made our goal of selling all 500 tickets.

Thank you to Pastor Gail who purchased the last unsold tickets from both congregations!!

We were able to send a check for \$10,000 for ongoing relief efforts in Puerto Rico following the wide-spread devastation in the wake of hurricane Maria in 2017. We are thrilled to have met the goal set for our first major JOINT outreach fundraiser for St. John/St. Stephen Lutheran Parish. See the letter of thanks received from Rev. Lydia on the following page. *It was translated by her interpreter for us.*

St. John-St. Stephen Lutheran Parish (ELCA)
 W1000 Highway N
 PO Box 95 N 3rd Ave.
 Edgar, Wisconsin 54426

Carta Agradecimiento Pastor Gail . . . **(Thank you letter for Pastor Gail)**

Dear brothers and sisters:

Our Lord Jesus Christ summed up the ten commandments of Moses with the following words: “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Mathew 22:37-39).

With this action, carried out for the benefit of the people affected by the disaster in Puerto Rico, whom we serve through Lutheran Disaster Response, you have shown the fulfillment of this commandment which our Lord and Savior Jesus has given us.

On behalf of our LDR-PR Program, the Caribbean Synod and its Bishop, Rev. Idalia Negron, and me, we give you our most sincere thanks for all your efforts to lend us this donation. We are especially grateful for that sense of brotherhood that overflows in your hearts to help others in need.

I commit myself to comply with this task in accordance with the agreements between us. May the grace of God in Christ overflows in all of you and the mission that the Lord has called you to do.

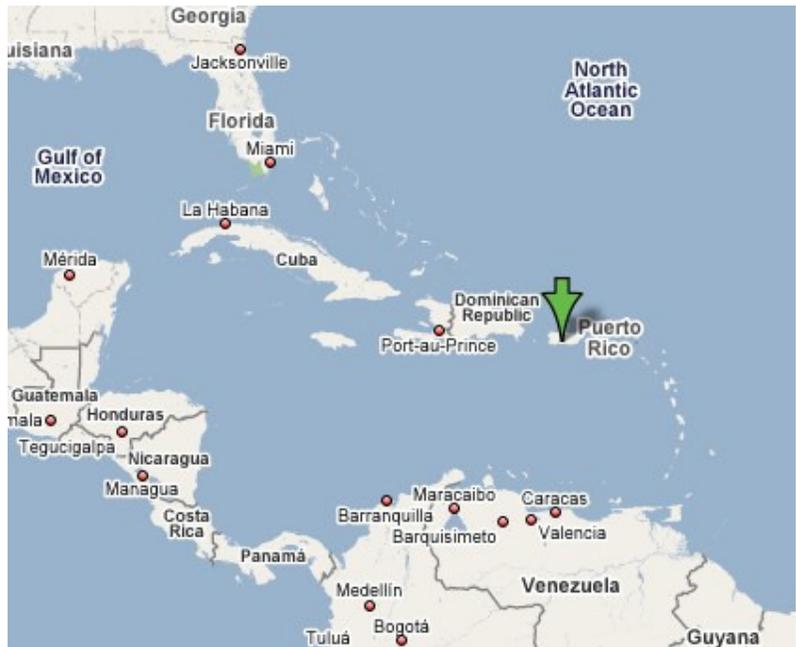
In the love of Christ.

Rev. Lydia Morales Kuilan

Partnering for
PUERTO RICO

Here is a list of the final ticket winners:

- 9th place-Kathy Bowe – Chippewa Falls
- 8th place-Marilyn Franke-Edgar
- 7th place-Pastor Gail-LDR
- 6th place-Kelly Baumann-Edgar
- 5th place-Pastor Gail-LDR
- 4th place-Warren Braunel
- 3rd place-Pastor Gail-LDR
- 2nd place-Audrey Kaminek
- 1st place-Pastor Gail-LDR



LDR—stands for **L**utheran **D**isaster **R**elief which is the branch of the ELCA which is doing the “foot work” on the ground in Puerto Rico. Pastor Gail designated THEM to receive the winnings should those tickets be drawn!

The drawing was held on December 16 at St. Stephens at 11:30 and was celebrated with a pot luck of delicious dishes! This was our first major fund raiser for the St John/St Stephen Parish and we are always looking for new projects to take on. *If you have any ideas, please let someone on either council know.*

Cookie Walk



The ANNUAL Cookie Walk took place downstairs immediately following the Sunday School Christmas program. There was a wide variety of delightfully tempting Christmas treats from which to choose. Many thanks to all who baked AND shopped. \$300 was received from sales!

Operation Christmas—A good assortment of gifts were donated for Homme Youth & Family Services in Wittenberg. Many thanks to those who gave, and to Bev Umnus for delivering the gifts. Three Quilts were also donated by the Quilters.



We were happy to be an additional “channel of blessing” as part of Operation Christmas this year. We were able to share with a local family in need as well as Homme Youth and Family Services. Many thanks to ALL who shared in these holiday giving opportunities

The Sunday School raised \$600.00 for ELCA Good Gifts this Christmas season. They created decorative holiday gift jars for purchase, and displayed a CHRISTmas Blessings Board which offered other specific ways to sponsor an ELCA Good Gift to help those in need. Their Action Team received assistance from THRIVENT to help with these holiday giving projects. **HUGE** thanks to all who supported their outreach!

The St. John/St. Stephen Parish Community Mission Project received an abundant collection of warm winter socks & mittens that were distributed by members of our yoked Parish to patrons at **Circle of Joy** on Wednesday, December 19th. *Many thanks to all who shared!*



Sharing Christmas Joy!

The women of St. John & St. Stephen enjoyed a **Christmas Salad Luncheon** together at St. Stephen on December 11th at noon.

A delicious buffet of many different salads, cookies and other Christmas treats were available to enjoy as each woman brought a dish to pass. The Christmas decorations provided by the women of St. Stephen made a beautifully festive setting for our time together!

Time was shared around God’s Word as together the women studied a devotional found in the “Gather” magazine. A time of singing favorite Christmas hymns topped off our time together wonderfully!

Many thanks to the Women of St. Stephen for hosting!

Christmas Windows 2018



How we enjoyed the Christmas windows!

Thanks to those of you who shared your Christmas reflections with us in this way. We hope you’ve taken the time to savor each one. Some of them were created in loving memory of a dear one who is spending Christmas in their eternal home, some were created by Sunday School class groups. ALL of them helped us to ponder God’s glorious love for us that moved him to send his Son! *Thank you.*



Women of the ELCA

Next Bible Study—Tuesday, January 9, at 1pm. (at St. Stephen).

Next General meeting—Sun. March 3, at 10:10 am.
Next Bible Study is January 8, at 1pm at St. Stephen.



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The 2019 Yearbook for the St. John Women of the ELCA is out. If you have any changes in the contact information printed in the book, please let Vicky Finke know.

The STEWARDSHIP PROJECT for the months of January, February, and March is Personal Care Kits:

- Bath-size towels-approx. 52" x 27" (dark colors recommended)
- Bath-size bars of soap (4-5 oz.)—any brand, in original wrapping
- Adult-size toothbrushes—in original wrapping. Multi-packs may be used by sealing an individual in a business envelope—NO plastic bags or wrap.
- Sturdy combs
- Metal nail clippers

Soon all the WHITES sales will start. It's a good time to get these items!

..... **Quilters Taking a BREAK!**

The Quilters have been very busy and are now taking a break for an undetermined amount of time. SO keep your eyes on the bulletins and your ears open , because the time to begin again will be announced SOON. Many thanks to all who have provided resources for our Quilters. It is SEW much appreciated! The Quilters have requested that **NO further DROP-OFFS** of supplies be made unless you have discussed it with one of the Quilters (*ie. Sharon Schumacker, Shirley Rosien, Judy Totzke*). This request comes due to very specific needs, and limited storage space. *Thank you for your understanding!*

..... LOOKING AHEAD in 2019:

- The Annual Meeting** is January 20th, following the service. . . .
- *annual reports are due** to the secretary by THIS Wed., **Jan 9th.**
- First Communion Sunday** is February 24.
- Ash Wednesday** is March 6.
- EASTER** is April 21st this year.



Adventures of the Church Mice . . .



Oh my paws and whiskers, I'm so excited, I'm running in circles! This is Tully, the "First" Church Mouse at St. John, and I just heard Rose and Pastor Gail talking about their trip through the Panama Canal, and Pr. Gail said she thought they should take one of the Church Mice, and they both decided that I would be the one!!!! I still remember the first time I stowed away in Pastor Gail's backpack, when they went to Alaska the first time, and I didn't have a name yet but they saw Tully's Coffee Shop and decided when they got back to Edgar they would name their Church Mouse "Tully". (They didn't know I was there with them.)

Let's see, what do I need to take with me? I know I won't be hungry, because Norwegian Cruise Lines has LOTS of food, I mean, **LOTS**. There's always at least 1 restaurant open. I know we have to fly to Miami on January 17, and our ship, the *Norwegian Star*, sails at 5pm the next day. Our first 2 days will be at sea, and that's good, because on Sunday we'll be able to have our worship service in the chapel on the top deck. (On the Alaskan cruise Sunday is always an "at sea" day, so Rose and Pastor Gail always have a service in the chapel, and there are almost always other people there to worship. So far Pastor G has been the only Pastor, but she keeps saying it would be fun to share with another minister.)

Then on Monday we stop at Cartagena Colombia. Maybe they'll leave me on the ship when they take their canoe adventure, I'm not sure I'd feel safe in a little boat. Then the big excitement: we go through the Panama Canal before it gets dark that night! Another day at sea, and on Thursday (1/24) the ship stops at Puntarenas Puerto Rico. This time I want to go ashore, because they're going to take an **AERIAL TRAM RIDE THROUGH THE TREETOPS OF THE RAINFOREST!** That sounds exciting, but I hope I can stay in someone's pocket, because I don't want to get snapped up by one of those big Central American birds!

The next day we dock in Corinto Nicaragua and we're going to a Horse Show. I don't think they'll get to ride a horse, but they said we can watch some training and then a show. The pictures sure look pretty! And then the next day (I think it's Saturday) we stop at Quetzal Guatemala, and the shore excursion is a "safari drive-through."

Then it's Sunday again, with another chance to worship in the chapel. By this time I guess they'll know a lot of people and might even have learned some hymns in other languages! On Monday, 1/28, we'll be in Acapulco. The highlight of that trip (for them—I can't get too excited about it) is watching baby sea turtles..... Another day at sea, then Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, and this is the excursion they're most excited about, they get to ride **CAMELS** on the beach! Maybe I'll stay on the ship for that 1, I might get sick bouncing around on a camel.

One more day at sea, and then "home" in Los Angeles. I hope I'll be allowed to stay at the hotel in Van Nuys! Pastor Gail's son Paul and his wife Deb and the twins, Nathaniel and Logan, have a very small house, so we'll be at a hotel 2 miles away. I think the boys would like me, but I don't know about a room steward at the hotel?? (Speaking of room stewards, on the ship our room steward, or stewardess, will make "animals" out of towels. I wonder if they'll try to make a mouse? I'll be sure to ask Rose to take some pictures of me on the towel animals!)

This is the first time Rose can meet Pastor Gail's family. I hope the twins will be gentle with me, they're pretty lively I understand. . . . Then finally we fly home on Monday, 2/4; if all goes well we'll make a close connection in Salt Lake City and be able to drive home from Milwaukee that night.

I hope Twink will let me sleep a long time before she wants to hear all the news!

This is Tully, signing off—see you next month!



Reflections from Rose



What a joy to be here for the Sunday School Christmas program! So well written, and the kids did such a great job of presenting! It was adorable, and yet very thought provoking, and it took my breath away when the entire cast turned around and knelt down to worship the new-born King at the end! Oh my, the tears welled up. Thank you to ALL who invested in that wonderful Christ-honoring presentation! I always wish I could just S L O W down during the Advent/Christmas season to really savor the glory of that which we celebrate..."What Would You Do?" helped **me to do** that.

It was also a joy to be able to be part of distributing the mittens & socks at the Circle of Joy on Wed. Dec. 19th. It was great to see those coming in encouraged by being able to freely receive helpful things that were shared through the caring of others. It was nice to be able to just chat with them and personally wish them a Merry Christmas. I was blessed.

How wonderful it was to be the happy recipient of so many blessed Christmas wishes! There were cards, delicious cookies, gifts, and gift cards. Thank you to everyone for your outpouring of kind thoughtfulness! Some of the gifts I received were devotional booklets, cards, or calendars that had encouraging quotes, scriptures, or sayings in them. I LOVE that! They not only bless & encourage me, but I can slip them into bulletins or newsletters to share the blessing with you. Sometimes you may even see them on a church sign!

Well there isn't too much time to reflect and savor the joys of the holiday season, because there is much to DO! I realized when I printed the January calendar, that vacation time is coming SOON! There are many things to get in place before we leave...

I'm SO looking forward to the adventures that await. To see things I've never seen before. To DO things that I've never DONE before (and will probably never do again). The natural beauty, warmer climate, different people groups, and BIG WATER...a lot of time at sea. I look forward to meeting more of Pastor Gail's family in person, and hugging HER grandchildren (*if they'll let me!*) And board games! LOTS of time for board games....That's one of our favorite shared pastimes. It will be nice to be free from deadlines for awhile, I'm not gonna lie...but YOU, our dear ones at St. John, remain in our thoughts and prayers as we go. We'd desire YOUR prayers for safety, wellness, and time to relax and recharge while we're gone. Also for the safety & wellness of those we leave at home. **Thanks!**

Much JOY and many blessings to you, as together we go into the New Year!

The Word became flesh and lived among us. John 1: 14

On the eleventh day of Christmas
I feel the stretch.
Presents unwrapped, put away,
family gone, New Year's past,
resolutions already broken...
and here we are still counting days.
That one bright night,
angels and candles and all,
was not a singular event, but a lasting truth.
God, you are not just passing through.
You are here for the long haul:
the chemo regime,
the enduring grief,
the extra year of school...

- the parenting that never ends,
- the long work of aging.
- Give me courage.
- Give me perseverance, to last,
- to go the distance
- on the long road of wisdom,
- to healing, to justice, to joy.
- Help me trust you are here,
- all the way.

Steve Garnaas-Holmes
Unfolding Light
www.unfoldinglight.net

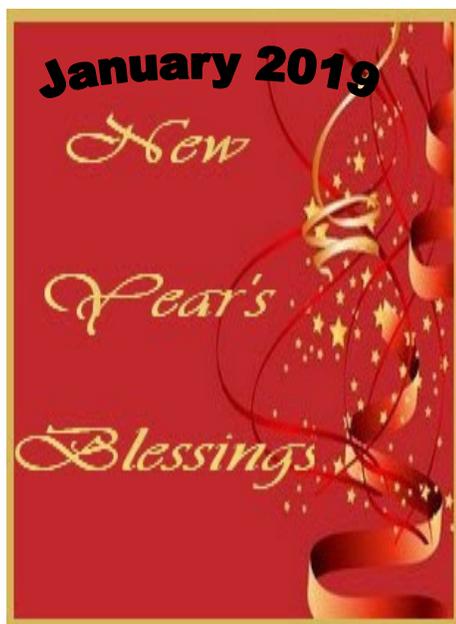


Embrace the New Year Everyone,
Emmanuel!
(GOD is with us!)

GOOD NEWS

St. John Lutheran Church ELCA
120500 County Road N
Edgar, WI 54426

We're on the Web
www.stjohnelcaedgar.org



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Embrace the New Year!

Deadline for Feb. 2019 News



January 21st

Joint Mission Statement of St. John/St. Stephen Lutheran Parish, ELCA:

*"Saints united to be the body of Christ in the world, freed by grace
to live faithfully, witness boldly, and serve joyfully."*