

# GOOD NEWS FROM ST JOHN

March/ April  
2017

## NEWS FOR ALL

### *Pastor's Ponderings*

Hola, mis amigos! What a fantastic vacation Rose and I had in Spain and Portugal! It's always amazing, and very educational, to see how people live in other lands and cultures, to experience different values, new foods (some yummy, some I wouldn't care to try again), and amazing landscapes.

God was very much a part of our days away (as he is at home), so it was easy for us to exclaim, "That's a God-thing!" or "Don't you just love how God's fingerprints are all over this?" If you're familiar with C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, you may remember Aslan, the Lion (who represents Christ). In one of the seven books, the children set out with the comment, "We'll take the adventure that Aslan sends us." Rose and I have held this as our motto during the last few trips we've enjoyed together. It stood us in good stead when we arrived from Chicago to London too late to catch our connecting flight to Madrid—and again when we arrived in Madrid and our luggage didn't! And when we tried to shop, at 11:00 p.m. in Portugal, for replacement clothing, not knowing a word of Portuguese. . . . (We were finally reunited with our bags five days later; then we each had to wrestle *two* suitcases to and from the airport.)

Let me share just one of our adventures of "wandering in the wilderness" (which Rose and I do a lot of). We spent two nights in Seville (our favorite city), staying at the "Hotel Don Paco." We had an entire afternoon free to explore the city (following a morning bus tour with information and an overview of the many wonders there). Before leaving us "downtown," our tour guide gave us small photocopied maps with notes on where to go and what to see. She told us we could walk back to our hotel in just 20 minutes, even though it took our bus almost half that time, making its way up and down one-way streets and turning really sharp corners (we were blessed with a very skilled driver!).

*(Continued next page....)*

#### 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](mailto:stjohnelca@gmail.com)

#### WEBSITE

[www.stjohnelcaedgar.org](http://www.stjohnelcaedgar.org)

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

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

### *Pastor's Ponderings (Continued...)*

We had a lovely time walking through one of the main business sections, then riding in a horse-drawn carriage for a 50-minute tour past beautiful churches, flowery hotels, and a large municipal park. (The carriage ride was necessary for very tired feet and a chance to sit!) Then we found our way to the entrance of the third largest cathedral in the world, Santa Maria (after St. Peter's in Rome and St. Paul's in London). We got thoroughly lost inside, going in circles around portions that were fenced or screened off for various reasons. When it was closing time, everywhere we went someone official would tell us to leave and point us in a different direction. That happened three times, leading us to dead ends, before we found someone who walked us to the exit.

By then it was too late to visit another historic site, so we pulled out our maps and followed them about two blocks. Then the reality we were seeing was vastly different from the images on paper. We walked, we hobbled, we limped, and we were probably as close to an argument as we have ever been, trying to figure out how to get to the next recognizable segment on the map. Somehow we made it, but by then we were both tired and hungry as well as footsore, so we stopped for supper at an outside café, where we shared *paella*, a typical Spanish dish of rice and either meat or seafood. (While we sat outside eating, we saw probably two dozen dogs on leashes, being walked mostly by men; lots of dachshunds and yorkies and golden retrievers.)

Thus fortified and rested, we set out on the final leg of our journey back to "Hotel Don Paco." The map was easier to follow at this point until we got almost to the end; then the map went straight but the street didn't, and we weren't sure which way to go. And our feet were again weary and sore. I took a guess and headed down one street and practically shouted for joy when I saw ahead of us "Hotel Don" (the rest of the name was covered by another building). Energy renewed, we plowed ahead, doing our final window-shopping of the evening until we came to the next street corner—where we looked up and saw, in the very place our hotel was supposed to be, "Hotel Dona Blanca." Even though we could barely stand at that point, we laughed at this newest adventure Aslan had brought us. Then we looked again at the map, found the name of the street we were on, and knew our hotel had to be there. Again we debated which way to go—until I turned around and saw "Hotel Don Paco" right behind us.

There's a theological interpretation to this long-winded story of our adventures. Like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness after being delivered from slavery in Egypt, we had wandered a foreign city and been delivered. But like many Christians who deeply desire to be faithful to God, we had almost reached the wrong destination ("Blanca" instead of "Paco"). Yet when we turned around, we found what we had been seeking right where it had been all the time.

*(Continued on next page...)*

## Pastor's Ponderings (Conclusion)

Somehow this doesn't sound as powerful written down as it felt when we were experiencing it. But it was, for us, a powerful reminder that when we seek God, God is always willing to be found if we just look in the right way or place.

Photos are printed and sorted and will soon be whittled down (from 217 for me and 206 for Rose) to a more manageable number. If you'd like to look through them, just let me know! Hasta la vista!

*Pastor Gail*

## St. John Family News

107 were in attendance as three of our young people received communion for the first time on Sunday, February 5th. Blessings to *Blake Bargender, Ashley Hollatz, and Corey Schilling.*



As we embrace becoming a yoked congregation with St. Stephen, we have enjoyed joint mid-week services after sharing a Soup Supper meal throughout the weeks of Lent. The location has alternated between the church buildings and the services have had a slightly different look, but each have been a blessed time of reflection and worship. *Many thanks to those who have served to provide for the Soup Suppers and lead in worship.*

**The final Soup Supper** will be at St. John on Wednesday, April 5. The Council is signed up to host.

**Palm Sunday** is on April 9th, and the annual Youth Pancake Brunch will be served following worship until 11:30am. *Many thanks to all who have signed up to provide needed supplies!*



The **Maundy Thursday** service, April 13th, will be at St. Stephen at 6:30pm, and there will be a **Good Friday** service at each church location on April 14th. St. Stephen will hold theirs at 1pm, and St. John will have worship at 6:30pm. Join us as we reflect on our awesome God's great love, that moved him to GIVE his only Son . . .



**The Easter Resurrection Celebration** will begin at St. Stephen with a Sunrise Service at 6am with Breakfast following from 7-8am. **St. John's Easter Worship** will be at 9am. *The Sunday School children will bless us by singing a special song.* St. Stephen will hold Easter Worship at 10:30am.

**ALL are welcome to join us in these times of joyful celebration and worship !**

## St. John Family JOY !

It was our joy to welcome **McCoy Raymond Mueller** through the waters of Holy Baptism on Sunday, March 26th. His parents are Mitch & Morgan Mueller, and sponsors are Austin Knetter and Andrea Mueller. God's blessings to all!



**And this just in . . .** Welcome to **Harper Beth Bargender!** She was born to Josh & Nicole on Tuesday, March 28 at 2:30pm. Harper weighed in at 6lbs. 10oz. and was 19 1/2 inches long. All are doing well, and she joins big brother Kaden and sister Brynlee who are anxious to welcome her home! Congratulations and God bless you as you receive this new bundle of joy into your family...

## Women of the ELCA



A BLESSED AND HAPPY EASTER TO ALL!

The May meeting for the women will be held on Wednesday, May 3, at 6:30 PM. We will make the final arrangements for the Salad Supper which will be held on Tuesday, May 16. All women are invited to attend and bring guests. There will be a signup sheet on the bulletin board for the number of attendees. Again we will invite the ladies from St Stephen's.

The Spring Rally for the Chequamegon Conference will be held on Saturday, May 20, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Unity. The theme is "IMPROVING YOUR BATTING AVERAGE". Registration deadline is May 11, and the fee is \$15.00 before and \$20.00 after. They are receiving in-kind offerings to support their food pantry. Look on the north bulletin board for the poster. For more information please contact Bev Umnus.

THANK YOU to all who donated to the Basket of Promise collection for the Health Kits. Our project for April, May, and June is for the Baby Layettes. Now is the time for the garage sales. Please watch for good used baby items. Items we need lots of are sleepers, sweaters, and socks. We also use other baby items such as onesies and receiving blankets.

The Triennial Convention for the ELCA will be held in Minneapolis this year. There are a couple of busses going from the Northwest Synod. We do have ladies that will be attending from the area. I have directions for a pair of Hand-Warmers that the Synod women will be passing out to other ladies as a "token" gift. If you are interested in making some, please contact Bev Umnus for the directions. I will make sure that they are delivered to some of the attendees. They also are collecting in-kind gifts. Check the north bulletin board for more information.

Bible Study for April will be held on Tuesday, April 4. We encourage more people to attend, women and men.

Hopefully, SPRING is here. Enjoy the warmer weather.

*Bev Umnus. W/ELCA president*

# Many thanks to our YOUTH for hosting the Soup Supper on March 8th !



*Thanks to everyone who helped prepare and serve the meal and clean up afterwards... Many hands made for light work. You are great young people and parents to work with!*

*Thanks,  
Niaomi*

*Thanks to Shannon & Niaomi Treankler for leading our Youth and for sharing these photos!*

## From Our Confirmation Class . . .

*It has been a joy to be able to include writings from our young people in the last two newsletters! Thank you so much for submitting your reports Skylee, Nathan and Lauryn!*

My report is about “Operation Backpack”. “Operation Backpack” was founded by teachers at an elementary school in Iowa City. Not many people think that things like this could happen here, because Iowa City is in the United States.



At an elementary school for children who didn’t have a lot of money, is where it all began. Teachers noticed that children were taking food from the school home for their families because they were afraid they wouldn’t have enough for the weekend. They noticed this and thought they needed to do something about this problem, and then they came up with “Operation Backpack”.

“Operation Backpack” is where the teachers at the elementary school in Iowa City would raise money for students who didn’t have food for their family and themselves. The only problem was that since there was not many people living close (and the people that did were not the rich) it was very hard to get money and food. But even though there is not many people with money, there are very many children and their families getting food for the weekends.

So now that you know about “Operation Backpack”, and the troubled children, you could help out by getting a backpack, and filling it with food for the children and their families on the weekends.

For everyone that did support “Operation Backpack”, we would like to thank you and hope you will keep donating. The children and their families that you helped are very happy and excited for the food on the weekends.

*—Skylee Manecke*

### **Jordan Syrians Find Refuge**

*by Nathan Drabek*

With war in Syria on the rise, it has been necessary for many people to flee and find refuge elsewhere. Jordan is home to the Za’atari Refugee Camp, one of the biggest refugee camps in the world. Here, over 80,000 refugees live and receive much needed assistance. Such as Elham Amwar, with his two children, Rema and Ayman. With help from Lutheran World Federation and gifts sent to Lutheran Disaster Response, Elham, and his family receive much needed food, water, and medical and survival supplies. It is no doubt that without the help from many people in the Lutheran community, many refugees would find it much more difficult to prosper. *(Turn the page to see an article from Lauryn W.)*

## Further thoughts from our YOUTH

### ELCA World Hunger

After reading a booklet on World Hunger, I have realized that it is a severe problem in the modern world today. If we take action now and help others to improve their community, we could possibly make new friends and save a life. If we all donate just 1 cent every day for a year, we all will have donated only \$3.60.

In a starving person's eyes you will be a hero and be one person to be able to feed them food. We don't just stop at starving either...what if we went overseas and took action ourselves, making them food personally and teaching them to cook. We could change their lives by teaching them all this stuff. It will mean a lot to them only if we do all this. But why stop at 1 cent? What if you donate 1 cent every day for 5 years? You will have raised 18 dollars to help these poor people trying to survive.

Think of it this way; would you want people to help you if you were one of these people who can't afford food? Of course you would want their help! So if you're not one of these people, let's stand up together and help stop world hunger.

Your friend,  
Lauryn Wiesman

***Again, many thanks to our young people for submitting their thoughtful articles!***



The Youth sponsored *Palm Sunday Pancake Brunch* in coming up SOON. Make sure to join us for a DELICIOUS time of fellowship after the service on Palm Sunday, April 9th. *Many thanks to those who have already signed up to donate needed supplies!*

**The Youth have a HIGHWAY CLEAN UP coming up on April 23rd!** Save the date and come roll up your sleeves, put on some gloves, boots and a safety vest to help with this community service project. Many thanks to the leaders that work to cultivate a service mindset in our young people, *just like Jesus!* (Rain/ snow date would be Sunday, April 30th).

**The QUARTERLY MEETING** takes place immediately following the service on **April 23rd too!**





## *Reflections from Rose*

Whew! What an amazing trip...So much beautiful architecture, so much rich history. We saw so many overwhelmingly BEAUTIFUL cathedrals, palaces and plazas it was staggering. Literally, I didn't know which direction to focus my gaze on first. First wander this way, then that...and we walked so MANY STEPS

*(footsteps AND stair steps on some days)* it may have added to the staggering as well, I suppose . . . but I digress.

It was wonderful to be present in another part of the world. To see the people and the country-sides with their storks, sheep, olive groves, vineyards, and cork trees, was wonderfully refreshing. Also to hear the story of another country *(with its struggles and growing pains)* and how its people are coming through it was ...comforting and encouraging.

Growth always involves struggle I guess. We see it in the illustration of the butterfly struggling its way out of its chrysalis. We as parents have seen it first in our own struggle to grow into maturity, and then witness it in our children. We heard of it in Spain and Portugal, as we heard of the struggles between Moorish (Muslim) and Christian (Catholic) control over cities and provinces.

As a result of this struggle, we were able to see what is now a beautiful cathedral actually built INSIDE a mosque in the city of Cordoba, which is the city in Spain with the most notable Moorish influence. When the Christians regained control over the city, the king saw the mosque in all its beauty and couldn't abide the thought of destroying it. So he ordered that the Catholic altars for worship be built INSIDE the magnificent structure that was already there. In the craftsmanship we saw evidences (signatures) that reflected the workmanship of Christians *(crosses)* and Jews *(the Star of David)* as well as the obvious Muslim influence. I found it very thought provoking in a comforting sort of way. Evidence that we can grow side by side, being faithful, without destroying each other—even though we might not see things the same. How refreshing!

There were some challenges: a missed flight, lost luggage and minor communication challenges related to language barrier *(Pastor Gail "oinked" like a pig to a waitress, true story!)* but these things just added to the adventure. As did my traveling companion, who really does speak very fluent Spanish. We just savored the adventure we were blessed to share and were very thankful...We appreciate your prayers and the warm "welcome home"s on our return. It's good to be back to the comforts of home and those we missed while we were gone.



## Adventures of the Church Mice . . .



Hmm . . . A curious communication was received from one who claimed to be “Tully the church mouse” asking for an extended deadline because he was frantically trying to find a way home from Italy after being separated from some “lost luggage”...it was a bit confusing.

He mentioned being distraught over news of a sudden death in the family (*occurring in Pastor Gail's kitchen!?*) and not being sure of just when he would be able to get his sub”mous”sion in to the news . . . anyway, he sends his mouse-sincere regrets....and directs any concerns or questions to Pastor Gail.

-----

**Ministry Partners NEEDED!** We at St. John are so blessed to have those among us who are willing to step up and fill in the gaps where help is needed. However, those that have been volunteering to be Readers, Ushers, Greeters, etc. have really been getting a work out due to losses in the ranks that have occurred. So we are looking for some additional volunteers to avoid “burning out” the ones that have been so willingly serving for quite some time.

If YOU would be willing to serve in one of the following listed Ministry Groups, please sign your name on the line to indicate your area of interest. It would be our goal to have enough volunteers so that each needs to serve only once every OTHER month.

Please put the filled-out sheet in the Secretary's mailbox outside her office. Thank you so much for considering giving of your time in this way! It's appreciated by Pastor Gail, Rose, and those who have been faithfully serving and continue to do so...YOU are one of God's favorite resources!

### **GREETER** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible for giving a warm friendly greeting and making sure newcomers sign the guest book, know where to find bathrooms, and explain about Sunday School for any children that they might have.

### **USHER** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible for helping to take up the offering, collecting communion cards, and helping with traffic flow during communion as well as helping worshippers find seats if they are having difficulty getting seated. Also hand out bulletins, songbooks, and any other materials needed for worship.

### **READER** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible to assist with the reading of scripture during Worship, by reading (out loud) the designated passages for the particular service. It's a good idea to acquaint yourself with the readings ahead of time and PRACTICE! But perfection is not a requirement.

Please include your Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**GOOD NEWS**

St. John Lutheran Church ELCA

W1000 Hwy N

Edgar, WI 54426

We're on the Web  
[www.stjohnelcaedgar.org](http://www.stjohnelcaedgar.org)

**March/ April 2017**



**See Inside for Articles:**

- Pgs. 1 & 2 Pastor's Ponderings
- Page 3 St. John Family News
- Page 4 St. John Women of the ELCA
- Pgs. 5, 6, 7 News from Our Youth
- Page 8 Reflections
- Page 9 A Message from The Church Mouse
- NEEDED: Ministry Partners

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.

**Easter Joy !**



**Deadline for May 2017 News**  
**April 24**