



ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF THE ERIE LUTHERAN PARISH

"You belong here."

The Parish Post

Monthly Newsletter



Mitten Tree:

St. John's Mitten Tree was kindly adorned with mittens, hats, and scarves that were donated by the Cub Scouts from Pack 9. The items were collected at their November Pack meeting and were collected by the whole pack. Every year, the Pack collects toys for the Toys For Tots program, but decided to collect winter items for the Mitten Tree this year to show their appreciation for the church being willing to let the Pack use the facilities during the pandemic when they were not able to meet at their normal place. The items were delivered by David Haffley and hung lovingly by the members of St. John's during our decorating party on November 21st.

**Worship is now being broadcast
around the church neighborhood!**



**Worship locally or in the
parking lot on 94.3 FM.**

MASK UPDATE



Please continue to wear your masks all the while that you are on the church campus (no matter what your vaccination status).

#youbelonghere@StJohnsErie

† ST JOHN'S VISION STATEMENT †

Loved by God, alive in Christ Jesus, and guided by the Holy Spirit, St. John's unconditionally serves God's people and shares Christian love.

Prayer Requests: Do you have someone or something to pray for? Use the “Prayer Request” link on our church website (<http://stjohnserie.org/prayer-request/>). Enter your request and we will publish it in the Parish Post as well as be able to petition it during the prayers in worship. Prayer Requests/Names will be removed on the 1st of each month unless otherwise requested. If you would like a name on the prayer list, please use the “Prayer Request” link on our church website or email, phone the church office.

Just a Reminder: If you would like anything put in the *Parish Post*, please have it submitted to the church office no later than the 20th of the month prior. The office email is: office@stjohnserie.org or call the office at (814) 456-7596. A weekly bulletin for worship will be published sans announcements in addition to the newly-minted *Parish Post*.

Worship Resources: We have individual disposable communion elements available now. Also, most of our traditional worship liturgy and hymnody used during this pandemic can be found in our old green hymnal. If you would like either a green hymnal or disposable communion elements to have and use at home, stop by the church during regular office hours and pick up what you need.

Check In for Worship: As you attend worship with us virtually please remember to check in. Record your attendance through the app on our “Worship With Us” web page. Or you can check in via email, letting us know where you were, who you were with, and what worship you attended, by texting or emailing that information to attendance@stjohnserie.org.

Don’t Forget: 2022 Offering envelopes are available! Don’t forget to pick up yours today!

Fathers & Sons Retreat: on February 18th through 20th. A weekend just for the boys! Our traditional Fathers and Sons favorites (Trail of Five Fires Worship, Gaga Challenge, Junkyard Wars, and Blessing Service) now has a winter twist! It will be a weekend of fun, faith, and relationship building.

“Super Bowl Sunday”: On Sunday, February 13th, take part in “Super Bowl Sunday”, The Rams and Bengals might be playing but The Overflow Shelter will be winning! Vote for the team you think should win with any type of **breakfast or cereal bars**. There will be two table in the West narthex, each in team colors. For every item put on your favored team’s table they will get a point. Whichever team gets the most points wins “our Super Bowl”; but more importantly, our neighbors-in-need will fully benefit from the same.



ABOUT WORSHIP: Why Don't We Use Alleluias During Lent?

taken from http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/faq/church_year/lent_alleluias.html

Because of the penitential character of the season of Lent, singing or saying the word "alleluia" has historically been suspended during Lent's forty days. This period of individual and congregational reflection on the quality of our baptismal faith and life suggests that the joyful nature of alleluia is more appropriately reserved for our Easter celebrations when it is given full and jubilant voice. An alternate gospel acclamation for Lent that omits the alleluia is provided for all settings of Holy Communion in both *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *With One Voice*.

The omission of alleluia during Lent goes back at least to the fifth century in the western church. The custom of actually bidding it farewell, however, developed in the Middle Ages. The hymn "Alleluia, song of gladness" (*With One Voice* #654) contains a translation of an 11th century Latin text that compares an alleluia-less Lent to the exile of the Israelites in Babylon. The text then anticipates the joy of Easter when glad alleluias will return in all their heavenly splendor.

Along with a sung farewell to alleluia, some congregations have embraced the practice of physically "burying" the alleluia. This may take the form of actually placing a visual representation of alleluia in a hole in the ground, or of hiding it away after carrying it in procession around the church or worship space. This ritual practice is especially delightful and meaningful for children.

When do we bury the alleluia?

Alleluia is appropriately bid farewell on the Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday (the Transfiguration of Our Lord, also called the last Sunday after the Epiphany). This is the last Sunday when alleluia will be used until the Vigil of Easter, or Easter Sunday for those congregations not holding a Vigil.

When and how do we "resurrect" the alleluia?

At the Vigil of Easter or on Easter Sunday, hearty congregational singing of multiple alleluias proclaims the resurrection, unleashing pure Easter joy. The Lenten fast has now ended.

Is it appropriate to use alleluias at funerals during Lent?

The historic practice of most western liturgical churches is to fast from alleluias even at funeral during Lent. However, Christian funerals properly recall and celebrate our death and resurrection with Christ in baptism. The paschal candle is lighted at all funerals to remind us of the presence of the risen Christ with us. Christian funerals always proclaim the resurrection, pointing us toward Easter and toward the promise of eternal life with God. Because of their Easter orientation, it seems reasonable and pastoral to conclude that funerals may appropriately suspend the "rule" against using alleluias during Lent.

Ash  *Wednesday*
Lent begins on
March 2nd

YOUTH MINISTRY



ELCA Youth Gathering

6h · 🌐



After much prayer, conversation and tears, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the 2022 Gathering, MYLE and the tAble due to the ongoing pandemic, the recent COVID-19 surge and public health considerations.

We know there are thousands of young people who will not get to experience the Gathering, and our hearts break for them. This was not an easy decision, and we ask for your prayers and your grace. We understand the impact this decision will have on our youth, volunteers and planning teams, and we hope to return to Minneapolis for a future Gathering.

Registered congregations can visit their registration accounts starting Monday, Feb. 7, to select their desired refund option. For more information and FAQs, please visit elca.org/Gathering.


With God's power at work in and through us, we can do far more than we dare ask or imagine! The ELCA is fully committed to supporting the young people of our church and to seeing that the ministry of the Gathering, MYLE and the tAble continue for years to come. With that assurance, we are turning our attention toward 2024 for the next Gathering. Stay tuned to Gathering communications for a location announcement this summer.

Grace and peace.

2022 ELCA
YOUTH GATHERING
boundless
GOD BEYOND MEASURE

Confirmation Class Parents and Students: We will be meeting at 8pm every 2nd and 4th Tuesday night beginning in November via **St. John's Zoom account (Meeting ID 873 8272 4355 / Passcode 888888)** for fun and games and for work on our journey as disciples. Plan on this "class" being a great review for you parents and a great start for you students. As a reminder: this year's theme will be "Lutheran Living", where we talk about our particular brand of Christian theology and how it affect everything we do and how we are to view the world and others. This is open to all students currently in 7th grade and up and their families. Contact Pastor Erik for more information.

Please check your schedules: If you are on the schedule to help with Flower Delivery and/or Panera Bread pick up and wrapping, thank you! If you would like to help with those things please contact Diane Bestvina. If you are on the schedule to help as A/V Control or Worship Leaders—thank you! If you would like to volunteer to help in this way, please contact Pastor Tom, Pastor Erik, or Erin Harper.

Flower Delivery	Feb. 6	Feb. 13	Feb. 20	Feb. 27	Mar. 6	Mar. 13
	Denise & Jim Scott	Julie & Scott Zoumbaris	Sandy Burton	Marj Quinn	Diane Bestvina	Shantel Kay

We Need You!

St. John's asks for your help with the Overflow Shelter on Wednesday, February 16th through Tuesday, February 22nd from 7pm to 11pm. We are in need of 3-4 volunteers each night. The location is the Mental Health Association, if anyone is interested in volunteering for an evening please reach out to our office via phone or email with your name, email address, phone, and a list of evening(s) that you are available.



Lutherans explore meditation, mindfulness, and contemplative practices: by Meghan Johnston Aelabouni

Two years into a global pandemic, the toll on human life and livelihood is undeniable, and the toll on mental, emotional and spiritual health is no less profound. Enormous shifts in the way we work, gather and worship have left many people reeling.

Julie Stevens, once a nurse practitioner and now director of contemplative practices at Gloria Dei Lutheran in Rochester, Minn., said that this challenge to human health and well-being is also an invitation to the church. “We see so much anxiety and angst,” she said. “As a spiritual community, how can we be a resource?”

For a number of ELCA communities and leaders, contemplative practices offer just such a resource for people who are weary, overwhelmed or simply searching for something more—a different way to encounter God in a time when so much is suddenly different.

Perhaps you’ve heard these common phrases associated with mindfulness: “Let go and let God” or “Don’t just do something—sit there!” But how do we let go or sit still when we are surrounded by constant pressure to achieve, accumulate and act?

That’s where contemplative practices come in—concrete, specific activities and exercises designed to facilitate “a direct experience of God’s presence, of divine love,” said Ian Hill, pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Hamilton, N.J., where he has taught a weekly mindfulness class since 2016.

The new year is often a time when we open ourselves to new experiences. Perhaps now is a time to consider contemplative practices for yourself, your congregation or your community. In a time of deep change and uncertainty, such practices can bring body, mind and spirit together to engage in what Stevens calls “a heart encounter with God.”

To get you started, several Lutherans with experience leading and participating in contemplative ministry share advice and tips below, as well as reflections on what these practices have meant in their lives. Contemplative practices are both ancient and new—and authentically Lutheran! Practices such as silent meditation, centering prayer, walking a labyrinth or yoga may feel unfamiliar to some Lutherans, but contemplative practices have a long history within Christianity.

The Gospels describe Jesus going off alone to pray and be in God’s presence. Some early Christians, the so-called desert fathers and mothers, withdrew to isolated areas to dedicate their lives to various contemplative practices. Martin Luther reportedly spent four hours per day in prayer. And in more recent decades, Catholic and Protestant theologians such as Thomas Merton, Howard Thurman, Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault and Barbara Holmes have popularized contemplative Christian practices in the United States that draw on both Christian and non-Christian traditions, such as Zen meditation or yoga.

Hill’s meditation group, Peace of Mindful, is rooted in Buddhist practice, and he is clear that the ministry is “interfaith work.” But he also finds strong support for meditation in Lutheran theology, including Luther’s sacramental understanding of divine presence “in, with, around, under” ordinary human and earthly matter, which reminds us that we are part of something bigger. Luther also described sin as a state of being curved in on the self, an anxious preoccupation remedied only by grace.

Hill likened the ego-death of meditation to the apostle Paul’s reflection “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). “Meditation at its root is about letting go of the ego,” Hill explained. He likened it to the apostle Paul’s reflection “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20) and to John the Baptist’s declaration that “[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Luther further insisted that in baptismal life we die and rise with Christ every day, an idea that resonates with Hill's concept of meditation. Christians, he said, understand that "we let go into something, and what we experience is that we're held."

This experience is amplified by participating in a group, something Hill considers an expression of the communion of saints: "It's easy to think of meditation as something you're doing alone, but you're not."

For members of Peace of Mindful, the silence of meditation isn't just an absence of sound but a presence shared by the whole group, like the presence of a friend who sits with you wordlessly at your most difficult hour. "We are here with each other in the sitting," Hill said. "It's a palpable kind of community."

You can start anytime—and there is a practice for every personality.

The Looking Within Center at Gloria Dei, which Stevens now directs full time, started small. In 2016, Stevens—then part of the congregation's music ministry—offered a decluttering class based on the work of Marie Kondo for about a dozen members, who then realized the practice could be applied to their inner lives too. Now Gloria Dei offers prayer classes, monthly "reset" mini-retreats and a Facebook page called "[Looking Within Collective](#)."

For newcomers to contemplative practice, Stevens recommends *lectio divina*, a slow and reflective reading of Scripture. "Take a short passage and read it several times, with silence in between," she said. "Then ask yourself: 'What is God saying to me? What do I need to hear?'"

An alternative is the [Daily Examen](#). Developed by Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish priest and theologian, this simple exercise involves looking back on the day, asking where you saw God and naming one example. It teaches you to recognize God's presence in your life.

Emily Meyer is an ELCA pastor and director of the [Ministry Lab](#), a resource center at the [United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities](#) in St. Paul, Minn. She said one of the benefits of the contemplative practices taught by the lab is that they're mobile: "You can engage in it anywhere. Your breath is something you carry with you wherever you go."

Meyer teaches an introductory mindful-breathing exercise that encourages people to focus on "inhaling the breath of God, exhaling and letting go of what I don't need." Given that the purpose of breathing is to take in life-giving oxygen and release carbon dioxide, mindful breathing, she said, is "both physiological truth and spiritual practice." Martha Newfield, a member of the [Christian Mindfulness Community](#) at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Cincinnati, was raised as a Baptist but turned to the Lutheran faith when she had breast cancer. Resurrection was the closest church to her house, but beyond proximity, she said, "I was searching for something."

One benefit of the contemplative practices taught by the lab is that they're mobile: "You can engage in it anywhere," said Myer. "Your breath is something you carry with you wherever you go."

Whatever contemplative practice you try, the Lutherans interviewed all agreed that the practice is worth the trouble—and will change you. "There are all kinds of ways people can be in prayer and meditation, and it can be liberating," Hill said.

Meyer agreed: **"We're built to be in relationship with God. There is no downside."**

February 2022 St. John's Lutheran Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Fri.	Saturday
		1 6PM Theo Pub (online)	2 3:30PM Lu- ther Memorial Basketball	3 12PM AA 3:30PM Luther Memorial Bas- ketball 5:30PM Be- reavement Group 7:00PM Volley- ball	4	5 5PM WORSHIP
6 10AM WORSHIP 11AM Bell Choir Practice 12PM BREW- CREW 5PM WORSHIP	7 3:30PM Lu- ther Memori- al Basketball 6:30PM ACA 7:00PM Vol- leyball 8:00PM AA	8 6PM Theo Pub (online) 8PM Confir- mation Class	9 3:30PM Lu- ther Memorial Basketball 7PM CONG. COUNCIL	10 11:30AM WELCA 12PM AA 3:30PM Luther Memorial Bas- ketball 7:00PM Volley- ball	11	12 5PM WORSHIP 4PM -10PM STARDUST DANCE
13 10AM WORSHIP 11AM Bell Choir Practice 5PM WORSHIP	14  3:30PM Lu- ther Memori- al Basketball 6:30PM ACA 7:00PM Vol- leyball 8:00PM AA	15 6PM Theo Pub (online) 7:00PM Duf- ford Terrace Board 8PM Confir- mation Class	16 3:30PM Lu- ther Memorial Basketball	17 12PM AA 3:30PM Luther Memorial Bas- ketball 7:00PM Volley- ball	18	19 5PM WORSHIP
20 10AM WORSHIP 11AM Bell Choir Practice 5PM WORSHIP	21  3:30PM Lu- ther Memori- al Basketball 6:30PM ACA 7:00PM Vol- leyball 8:00PM AA	22 6PM Theo Pub (online) 8PM Confir- mation Class	23 3:30PM Lu- ther Memorial Basketball	24 12PM AA 3:30PM Luther Memorial Bas- ketball 7:00PM Volley- ball	25	26 5PM WORSHIP
27 10AM WORSHIP 11AM Bell Choir Practice 5PM WORSHIP	28 3:30PM Lu- ther Memori- al Basketball 6:30PM ACA 7:00PM Vol- leyball 8:00PM AA					

St. John's Lutheran Church

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