



# The Messenger

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

## FROM YOUR PASTOR...

"I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
 From where does my help come?  
 My help comes from the LORD,  
 who made heaven and earth.  
 He will not let your foot be moved;  
 he who keeps you will not slumber.  
 Behold, he who keeps Israel  
 will neither slumber nor sleep.  
 The LORD is your keeper;  
 the LORD is your shade on your right hand.  
 The sun shall not strike you by day,  
 nor the moon by night.  
 The LORD will keep you from all evil;  
 he will keep your life.  
 The LORD will keep  
 your going out and your coming in  
 from this time forth and forevermore."

The above is from Psalm 121. In it, we are reminded that our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth and all things visible and invisible. He never sleeps nor rests in caring for his creation. He keeps our very lives in His hand. You are never alone in God the creator of all things He keeps you from all evil. He watches over everything you say, do, think and don't do, say or think. He gives you the very breath you have to praise him and share his love with others.

J is for Jesus.

J is for June.

J in some languages has a Y sound for a year in review.

J is Many other things.

M is for more opportunities.

### J is for Jesus.

Jesus comes to you to bring you to himself. In the above Psalm, Jesus is the one who provides us the assurance of protection, that our foot will not be moved or slip. He gives you his unfailing protection from all things. He never rests from protecting you. Unlike the false god and idol Baal whom the Israelites knew as an enemy of their True God.

### J is for June.

In June we give thanks for all the men who have served as fathers, brothers, and mentors to all of us. Most importantly we honor our Heavenly Father who has called us to himself. We give thanks to God our creator who sent us His son to restore our relationship with the Triune God. In the above Psalm, we are reminded that God the Father the Creator of all things created us in his image. He watches over our coming and going. That is to

say, our heavenly Father knows and sees all things even those things we wish he didn't know about us. Yet he still loved us enough to care for us as only He could God the Father loves us unconditionally and Sent his only begotten Son to live and to die for us to reconcile us back to himself.

In June we will continue our twice-monthly Wednesday Bible Study and view the movie *Fireproof* on the 30<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. The Contemporary service has been canceled due to lack of participation. Also, the end of the year youth and Sunday School Picnic is the 24<sup>th</sup> at Knoebles.

### J in some languages has a Y sound for a year in review.

Last year at this time we were just getting acquainted. It's hard to believe a year has flown by already. It's my prayer that you have been and continue to be blessed by our arrival, and more importantly our partnership in the ministry here at St. John's. What a year it has been! Continued monthly community meals and much activity with Lydia and monthly hoagie sales. Two military Bible stick campaigns, Spanish Bibles, Hurricane relief supplies to Texas and Puerto Rico, Angel tree to the underprivileged youth in our area, Letters & Goodies from home campaign to Jed and his troops, two new adult members, a baptism and a confirmation. Yahweh/Jehovah/Jesus - God truly is in this place. Be assured that the elders and I are working diligently to ensure the next year is equally meaningful to you and to God's Kingdom. We are working to define what makes us unique and special. We welcome your input, as we continue to seek to grow God's kingdom here in this corner of his creation. One of the questions we are wrestling with is what makes us unique and why should people come and see all that is happening here at St. John's. In the above Psalm God is our keeper. How may I better serve you and keep you as your shepherd in this place?

Please bring your bibles to worship and Adult Bible Study along with a notebook and pen so that you can take notes and make notes in your Bibles. The youth will continue their study of adult instruction using the Lutheranism 101 materials.

In Christ's service to you his beloved Children,

Pastor Joe

## 2018—SELCT DISTRICT CONVENTION—CLEVELAND, OHIO

It was a privilege to represent St. John's Hazleton at the SELC convention in Cleveland. The convention opened with a Communion Service with LCMS President Matthew Harrison preaching the uplifting sermon. The congregation got a laugh when he said we are the smallest district and we were his "Favorite". He also said that SELC was the most mission-minded with a lot of church planting happening in FL. The SELC has congregations with multiple ministries in FL. President Harrison also said how he has the Bible on tapes and uses his exercise time to hear 4 chapters of the Bible while on the treadmill, just getting his body as well as his soul spiritually fit.

On Friday, the first ballot Rev. Wally Vinovskis was elected District President. The Vice Presidents of SELC came from other than Eastern circuit since President Wally is from Eastern Circuit and the VP need to come from other than the district the President comes from. At the Circuit Caucus, The Rev. Jim Douthwaite from Vienna, VA was elected the Circuit Visitor for Eastern Circuit, Pastor Curtis Stephens was elected Circuit Visitor for Central Circuit. The delegates to the LCMS National convention in Tampa were also elected during the Caucus.

There were reports from the Mission Field. There is a Tamil ministry, the pastor is out of Lake Mary, Florida. The Pastor, does video conferencing for the service since the congregations are in various states. He visits each congregation once a month.

There were displays from various organizations. Lutheran Heritage Society had one and Don Roegge won a gift card. This is the organization from which we received the Spanish Bibles. They published Bibles and children's Bible story books in many languages.

Lutheran Haven is doing well, in fact they have some new additions to the campus; old buildings have been torn down and new homes have been built in their place. SELC is the only District to have a nursing/assisted living, and retirement homes in the Missouri Synod.

Each day and each evening began and ended with devotions lead by some of the new ministers to the SELC.

I was on the "press" committee which was responsible for publishing the "Beaconette" which had the highlights of the previous day's activities. If you want to see them, they will be on display in the fellowship hall.

The "Harvest Field" is ripe, we need to be out reaching into our communities, bringing the Gospel to the lost people in Hazleton, and beyond.

The convention closed with a closing devotion and singing the hymn "God Be with You 'Til We Meet Again".

Karen Ann Kowalczyk  
St. John's Hazleton Delegate  
to the 2018 SELC District  
Convention—Cleveland, Ohio

### YOUTH NEWS—Jolene Evancho & Carrie Drasher

The Youth are currently working on fundraising ideas to help them raise the necessary money for 2019 gathering. The Youth Group will be having a tricky tray auction on June 9 as well as a trash to treasure sale in July. Please see Carrie Drasher for auction info and Jolene Evancho for trash to treasure info.

The Sunday School students, as well as the youth group, will be going to Knoebel's on June 24 for an end of the school year picnic. Please see Jolene Evancho for all the details on this fun event. Please continue to keep all of the children and youth of St. John's in your prayers.

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On June 9 we will be having a tricky tray auction as part of the fundraising efforts to send the youth to Minnesota.

I am just wondering if any church members would be interested in donating a basket or gift certificate to the auction. I am also looking for anyone who may want to volunteer their time that day either in the kitchen or selling tickets. We are also looking for baked goods or food donations as well.

If you are interested in helping or donating, please let me, Stephen, or Jolene know. I will have sign-up sheets available.

Also, if you have any company in mind that may donate to us, let me know and I will send a donation letter or provide you with one.

Thank you in advance for any help in this matter, and look out for future fundraisers.

## 16th LWML SELC District Biennial Convention—Karen Ann Kowalczyk



I had the privilege of serving as St. John's Delegate to the 16th LWML SELC District Biennial Convention at Zion Lutheran Church, Norridge, Illinois. The Convention

theme was Hope--God's Faithfulness.

The Convention opened with a Communion Church service with Pastor Curtis Stephens, SELC LWML Pastor Counselor, preaching the sermon, his theme was "God's Plan for Us". Saturday there was a Bible Study lead by former SELC District President Carl Kruger. The convention had several speakers, Phil Zielke, from Phil's Friends was the first speaker, a former LCMS teacher, and cancer survivor he told the story of how Phil's Friends was started after his bout with cancer and how God is using him to minister to cancer patients in the Chicago area and beyond.

A few of the exhibitors spoke, a retired Pastor from Lutheran Heritage Foundation, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, spoke on how LCMS missions is using retired pastors to do mission work. They are not paid, but receive their travel expenses, housing, and meals. The LCEF rep spoke about opening an account for grandchildren and all the benefits to the child from that account and how it teaches them "stewardship".

The next speaker was Tim Hetzner, President/CEO of Lutheran Church Charities in Northbrook, Ill., and Tobias, Comfort Dog, and Jonah, Comfort Dog, and their handlers. He spoke of how he was doing disaster work for LCC and after Katrina he saw how people's pets, especially dogs, were a part of their lives, and God showed him how dogs could comfort people in many different situations. They are good listeners, they are confidential, they are non-judgmental, and give unconditional love. That is how the LCC Comfort Dog program was started, with two dogs he "borrowed" from a friend. At the present time there are 132 dogs in over 20 states. Congregations are on a waiting list to receive "their" own comfort dogs. It costs the congregation \$15,000 to get a dog, the dog belongs to the congregation and has various handlers. Needless to say, Tobias and Jonah were the hit of the convention. In fact, the women were busy with the dogs and talking to Tim

that they had to be called several times for lunch. The mission grant voting took place after lunch. There were 9 grants. St. John's Hispanic Bibles was on the list. After several ballots, Zion, Norridge, was the first grant approved for Bibles for Salam Christian Fellowship church. St. John's Hispanic Bibles was the second grant approved while the rest of the grants were approved in various order. The total of the grant budget is \$14,000. Where do we get the money to fund all these projects? The coins and dollars put into the "mite" boxes fund these projects. Please fill those mite boxes so the grants can be paid.

The third speaker was Pastor Hersham, an LCMS pastor who works with Middle Eastern immigrants in the Chicago area. He told how he became a Christian after being a Muslim and how his brother was killed. He had a very inspiring story of how mission work is being done in our country.

The "mission" walk took place in the afternoon after all the speakers. I had pledges totaling \$100. The total collected for the walk was just under \$1,000.

Debbie Larson, Vice President of Organization Resources from National was there speaking on various parts of LWML and gave us some insight into the LWML convention next year in Mobile, Alabama. The evening ended with Inspirational Speaker, Sharla Fritz, who entertained us with music and gave the background of some of our favorite hymns.

On Sunday we attended Zion's Sunday morning worship service conducted by Pastor Kruger. The convention ended with a presentation by the SELC Young Women Representative followed by lunch. The next convention will be held in 2020 in the Eastern Zone, date and location to be announced.

Serving Christ Through LWML,  
Karen Ann Kowalczyk

## PRAYERS FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



We pray Jesus' hand would rest on **Peter Panco, Anna Belko, Bob Gould, Jack Ross, MaryAnne and Frank Gilham, Alma Yale, Anne Goranitis, Gertie and Bob Mandak, Bob Onder, Pauline Onder, Sharon Roegge**, and all in need of His physical, emotional and spiritual care. If you have a prayer chain request, please call Gertie Ann Mandak, (570) 497-9361.

If Pastoral Care is required, please call Pastor Joe (570-459-6423) and the necessary arrangements will be made.

St. John's Evangelical  
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Our Mission and Vision Statement:

"We are to be growing people in our faith and helping others to come to faith and grow in it."



Happy  
FATHER'S  
DAY

COMMUNITY  
LUNCHEON



The next luncheon will be held on Saturday, June 23 from 11am to 12 noon, beginning at 11am. Sponsors are the Thrivent Action Teams. Thank you to all volunteers!

PRESIDENT'S CORNER—Paul Kowalczyk

Summer is almost here, flowers have bloomed and God's handiwork is everywhere and beautiful to behold. We rejoice in all the blessings our Lord and Savior has given to us.

As I reported in my May newsletter article Pastor, Gayle, Don, Sharon, Karen Ann and I traveled to Cleveland to be part of the SELC District Convention. Our District Convention and the over 30 District Conventions are being held this year in preparation for the 2019 LCMS Convention. The most important part of this preparation is the election of Pastoral and Lay Delegates and their alternates who will attend the convention. These delegates will be voting on a number of resolutions that have been submitted from the various Districts. We pray that the Lords will be done at all of the District conventions and the Synod Convention. As the Lay Delegate to the SELC Convention, Karen Ann has reported on the convention in this newsletter. She has additional detailed information on the convention that is too much to include in the newsletter.

Speaking of conventions I attended the SELC District LWML Convention with Karen Ann that was held in the Chicago area. While the trip was lengthy the 2 days of the convention were very nicely planned out (Thanks to Sharon's efforts) and very informative and in some cases the presentations were very moving and emotional. Again, Karen Ann has prepared a report on the convention as part of this newsletter. As one of the 4 males (not including Pastors) attending I was impressed by the speakers and vendors that participated. Our District has much to be Thankful for in the way the Lord has blessed us to spread the Good News and to help and support our neighbors.

At the May 9<sup>th</sup> Church Council meeting we had our usual reports from the 4 Boards but we also discussed the following items:

Community Luncheon attendance - 69  
2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Mission – Military Bible Sticks - \$331 raised  
Contemporary Services update  
SELC Convention  
Web Site Status  
Annual Report – distributed  
Financial Review  
Church Officer Succession Planning  
Youth Group activities and fund raisers  
Cyber Security  
2018 Goals  
Stewardship and Evangelism planning  
Sunday School & Vacation Bible School  
Church Records – Shepherd's Staff updates

This is a typical Council agenda and highlights what the Council members are working on as part of our Lords plan to further the ministry at St Johns. This is the day the Lord hath made, let us rejoice in it.