



The Messenger

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

FROM YOUR PASTOR...

Happy Epiphany! Happy New Year! In January we have much to celebrate the Magi arrive from the East. The Baptism of our Lord on the following Sunday. We flip our calendars to a new year which many of us aptly see as a chance for new beginnings. We have 365 new opportunities to do things better than we did last year. Many of us make a variety of resolutions or promises to improve our lives, health, finances, relationships or some other important facet of our lives. We will be spending some time on New Year's Eve looking at God's Promises in comparison to man's promises in our evening service. For now, though we look to the Gospel of Mark and the Father's words to his only Begotten son at his baptism.

A brief devotional from Mark 1:4-11

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like

a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; ^[a] with you I am well pleased."

As sons and daughters of God, you too have had the words of Your Heavenly Father spoken to you. This is my son or daughter with whom I am well pleased. Rejoice in your baptisms. Amen.

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. A youth Sunday event will also be determined. Alexis will be confirmed January 7th during our regular divine service. Barry and Lucille will be received as new members on January 21st, and our 2018 Council members will also be sworn in on this day.

In Christ's service to you his beloved Children,

Pastor Joe

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Off

Tuesday-8:30-5:00

Wednesday-8:30-5:00

Thursday-8:30-5:00

Friday-By Appointment

Saturday-9:00-3:00

Sunday-8:00-12:00

Pastor will be available for emergencies as needed.

ORPHAN GRAIN TRAIN

PRAISE GOD the Puerto Rico container was received a few days before Christmas. What a blessing this will be for those who received all the items on the container. Thanks for St. John's members who brought items and those who did Thrivent Action Teams. We are grateful to all. This will show the Gospel message through our actions.

There is a great need for Health Kits for Liberia. A container will go out in the near future and one of the many requests is health kits, as well as school kits. The Trovitch, Roegge and Kowalczyk families have done health kits for OGT in the past. Is there anyone who would want to help out with these projects. The people of Liberia realize that hygiene is an important part of preventive health care to prevent some of the diseases they have in that country. Please contact me if you would like to do a OGT project.



God's Blessings in the New Year as we serve the Lord with Gladness and help our brothers and sisters in need.

Karen Ann Kowalczyk
Maryland OGT Disaster Coordinator

COMMUNITY MEALS



With the start of the new year, we are looking for Thrivent members to sponsor luncheons by applying for a Thrivent Grant. If you are interested in helping us by applying for a grant, please contact Nancy Trovitch. Our January luncheon will be held on the 27th at 11:00am.

UNUSUAL NEW YEAR'S TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

*In Estonia it's all about eating the New Year's traditional food. People eat seven times on New Year's Day to ensure abundance in the new year.

*In Scotland the first person to cross the threshold of a home in the new year should carry a gift for good luck.

*In Ireland they hit the walls with bread to get rid of evil spirits.

*In Denmark people climb on top of chairs and literally "jump" into the New Year to bring good luck. Another tradition in Denmark is they save all of their unused dishes and plates until the 31st of December when they affectionately shatter them against the doors of all their friends and family.

*In Colombia they carry their suitcases around with them all day in hopes of having a travel filled year.

*In Switzerland they celebrate the New Year by dropping ice cream on the floor.

*Every year at the end of December people in the small Peruvian village of Takanakuy fist fight to settle their differences. They then start the year off on a clean slate.

*In Spain the New Year's tradition for good luck revolves around grapes. If you can manage to stuff 12 grapes in your mouth at midnight you've achieved good luck for the next year.



MITES—JANUARY 2018—Sharon Roegge



In a remote area of Tanzania, southeast of Lake Victoria, is an extremely

arid region of 19,601 square miles. Many young women live here in small villages who do not go to school or work. They are at the mercy of their villages for assistance. Some end up with AIDS or unexpected pregnancies, with no means of support. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania-South-East Lake Victoria Diocese (ELCT-SELVD) is aware of their situation and wants to help them. So ELCT has established the Bishop Makala Sewing Center to teach young women sewing, life skills, and the Gospel. Their goal is to build classrooms with a 50 student capacity, along with a dormitory. The ELCT is dedicated to helping these girls, bringing them to the Good News of Jesus and baptizing them. Teaching them to sew will help them sustain them physically as they make items for others that can be purchased. Teaching them about Jesus will sustain them spiritually.

This center will be a school and a place to live. All the supplies, including sewing machines, sewing supplies, furniture, and instruction will be provided with this grant of \$25,000. The churches in the district are very compassionate and caring, showing their support by purchasing the items the girls make. Thanks to the church leaders, there are also markets where these goods can be sold. This center will help the ELCT-SELVD fulfill their mission of connecting with all their people, even those living in the remote bush areas, bringing them the Gospel and the hope of

eternal life with Jesus. After one year at the school, each will have her own pocket money, be able to feed herself for one year, have enough money to buy her own sewing machine, and have enough money to bury her materials for projects to sell for the next year.

Two of the grants have been paid in full – \$100,000 to Mercy House for Women and Children, Franklin Avenue in Flint, Michigan and \$100,000 to Current Missionary Need, LCMS International Mission. For more information on these and other 2017-2019 Mission Grants go to www.lwml.org.

LWML SELC District Convention – The convention will be held May 18-20, 2018 at Zion Lutheran Church in Norridge, Illinois. Our LWML Representative will be Debbie Larson, Vice President of Organizational Resources, mission speakers will be President/CEO Tim Hetzner of Lutheran Church Services and CEO Phil Zielke of Phil's Friends, our Saturday evening Inspirational speaker will be Sharla Fritz, and also Hesham Shehab pastor of Salam Christian Fellowship who works with Middle Easterners. We also will have at least one LCC Comfort Dog coming. Lydia Society is eligible to send 2 delegates. We have nine mission grants on the ballot with one being for Lutheran Bible Translators for the Hispanic Bibles we gave out from them.

Serving the Lord and the LWML SELC with Gladness,

Sharon Roegge

PRAYERS FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



We pray Jesus' hand would rest on **Peter Panco, Anna Belko, Bob Gould, Lorraine and 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.

ELDER'S INCORPORATING INFORMATION INTO ST. JOHN'S DOCUMENTS

This is the fourth and final section of the information provided as a result of work completed by the Elders at St. John's in response to the information and directives provided by our Synod. This section is entitled "What we Believe with regard to Sexuality, the Sanctity of Human Life, and Marriage". If you have any questions about the information included here, please contact one of the Elders Dave Trovitch, Chuck Zschunke, or Don Roegge.

We Believe Re: Sexuality and the Sanctity of Human Life

Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term marriage has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of St. John's, as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the St. John's members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by St. John's in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of [the organization]

Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps. 139).

We Believe Re: Marriage

St. John's marriage policy is and always has been consistent with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod's beliefs on marriage. We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24-25), as God created them and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church (Eph. 5:32). *The official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as set forth in 1998 Res. 3-21 ("To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions"), is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator's design (Rom. 1:26-27). These positions and beliefs can be found on the LCMS website, along with other statements, papers and reports on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex civil unions and "marriage." Our pastor will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church property may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.*

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BONANZA
All Day! Lunch or Dinner
September 15, 16, and 17, 2015
Help support Aubrielle Marsicano

It has been a year since Aubi was diagnosed with meningitis. Since then she has had both her legs amputated at the knees and her finger tips. She is 14 months old.

Let us make this a successful fundraiser for this little trooper. A coupon is attached, but more can be obtained from Karen Ann Kowalczyk or Nancy Trovitch. You don't have to cook and Thrivent Financial will supplement the funds raised. Donations will be accepted if you cannot attend and want to help. Thank you.

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621 N Vine St
Hazleton PA 18201
Rev Joseph L Leech, pastor
Phone: 570-459-6423
Email: stjohnshazleton@gmail.com
Website: stjohnshazleton.org



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



Since we have updated our internet service, the church's email has changed. The new email address is: stjohnshazleton@gmail.com

Please make a note of this in your records.

SNOW PLOWING



If you can help with
snow removal
around the church,
let Kevin know.

Happy New Year to everyone!

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas with family and friends. May 2018 bring you much peace, love and prosperity. The new year is filled with many things to do personally and the same is true for St. Johns.

In January Alexis Drasher will receive the Rite of Confirmation as she completes her Christian study of the Scriptures under Pastor Leech's instruction. This will complete several years of study by Alexis as she reaches the goal of being a confirmed member of St. John's congregation.

Also in January we will be accepting 2 new members into the congregation. Lucille Adamoyurka and Barry Gangwer will complete their adult study of Lutheranism 101 and on Sunday January 21 they will be accepted as full members of St. John's.

On January 21 during the church service we will be installing the officers for Church Council. These individuals have agreed to serve our Lord and Savior as officers and caretakers of St. John's. As they are sworn into their various Council positions before the altar remember that they have a special responsibility to uphold the office they were elected to hold. Also remember that everyone in the congregation has a responsibility to help and support them and Pastor as they carry out the ministry of St. John's to the best of their ability.

There are also the mundane things to be accomplished in January. We have an annual report to prepare. We have taxes to report to the IRS, state and local governments. Snow may have to be cleared. There is the Community Luncheon. In the midst of these everyday items we have the main responsibility to conduct church services, hold Sunday School and adult Bible class in order to learn and understand scripture better.

We offer a host of activities not only in January but throughout the year. Why not participate and enjoy the GOOD NEWS.

□ New members and church officers will be
□ received on Sunday, January 21.
□

Annual reports are due by the end of January. Place them on the secretary's desk.