



THE STORY

FEBRUARY 2023

St. John Lutheran Church

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BLURRING THE LAW AND GOSPEL

Martin Luther once said, "I felt that I had been born anew and that the gates of heaven had been opened. The whole of Scripture gained a new meaning. And from that point on the phrase 'the justice of God' no longer filled me with hatred, but rather became unspeakably sweet by virtue of a great love."

Luther had been studying the Bible—Paul's letter to the Romans to be exact—when he finally came to understand that it was not up to human beings to make themselves worthy in the eyes of a righteous God. Luther had tried—he quit his study of law, entered a monastery and was so rigorously observant that his health suffered. The word of God only seemed to bring condemnation. It tormented him.

But in an instant, all that changed. From hatred to love. Here was the gospel, the good news. We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace for Christ's sake through faith. Thanks be to God!

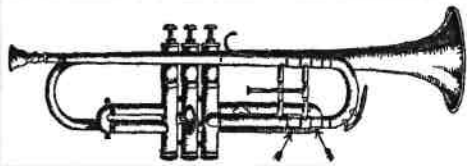
This is a treasure, and it is the church's unique and proper work to preach the gospel purely and to administer the sacraments according to the gospel. "It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel" (Augsburg Confession, Article VII, German translation). The church, of which we are a part, is the only institution on earth given this task.

The Augsburg Confession gives a clear explanation of the gospel: "Likewise, they teach that human beings cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works. But they are justified as a gift on account of Christ through faith ..." (Augsburg Confession, Article IV, Latin translation).

We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace for Christ's sake through faith. Thanks be to God!

I'm concerned that the Lutheran understanding of the word being both law and gospel, and that there is a distinction between law and gospel, is getting blurred. Some define the gospel as social justice—feeding the hungry, standing with the poor and marginalized, racial equity, justice for migrants, respect for the dignity of all people. These are all vitally important ministries in which this church must be engaged. But they aren't the gospel. Rather, these works of justice and mercy flow from the liberation the gospel brings.

In November 1520, Martin Luther wrote his treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian*. In it he makes clear the distinction between law and gospel and between God's work and our work. The gospel, God's gift of grace, has set us free. Luther explains it this way: "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours" (Luther's Works, 48:12-13). No one and nothing can take this away from us. No longer crushed by the weight of self-justification, but gloriously free by being bound to the righteousness of Christ, we are free to serve the neighbor. (Continued on page 7 under council minutes)



HEAR YE HEAR YE

***Please have all items in the office for the March newsletter by February 17th. PLEASE!! Thank you**

***Check out the puzzles** in the free book section in the education lobby. Have puzzles you would like to donate, just add them to the shelf. Great pass time as the weather starts to get cooler. New books have also been added.

***Worship Choir wants your voice**, Please join us for practice at 8:30am on Sundays, no experience needed. ;)

***We invite you to share flowers** for the altar area - to celebrate a special day/person or just to share some beauty with the rest of the congregation. Call the office for details. 524-3615

***Gustvaus Youth Outreach will be at St. John Lutheran February 11th thru the 12th. Starting at 7:00pm on Saturday the 11th and ending on Sunday the 12th following. There will be laughter, singing and fun things to do. We will finish on Sunday with a cinnamon roll fundraiser. Bring a friend too!!**

***Church Basement ladies are looking for containers** for left overs. Most any size will work. Just drop them off in the Kitchen. Thank you!!!

*** Annual Meeting minutes will be available in the Office.**

*** Confirmands will be attending Lenten Service** with their mentors during Lenten worship which will be at 6:30pm on Wednesdays.

WE HOLD IN PRAYER: Ashlyn Bennett, Larry Albrecht, Ariel Glad, Ron Swift , Dick & Ann Kuball, Arleen Hanson, Michelle Birr Straumann and Gloria Schuett

HOMEBOUND MEMBERS: David Treanor, Robert Krengel, Cheryl Bergemann, Betty Borsoski, Arlene Tolzman, Betty Aschlager, Orville Halverson, Audrey Annis and Eloise Ward



Prayers

O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and regains with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Liturgist

February

Mary Larson

Church Council

Members

February

Cathy Pluym

Alan Albrecht

March

TBD

PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear Friends of St. John's-

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, was trying to convince his readers that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Promised Messiah, and because of that truth, they could live in and share God's love feely and boldly. We don't have the same threats and pressures that the early Christians were experiencing, but we do have other forces working against us. And so we still need these words from the Bible:

Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on (Heb. 10:22-25)

Basically, he is saying that to grow closer to God, we should: keep the faith, trust in the Lord and be regular in worship. Good advice!

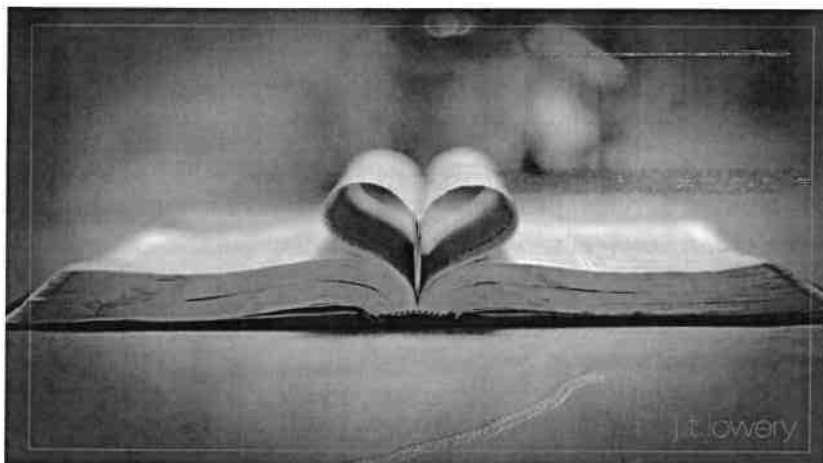
And he also talked about growing closer to our neighbors, as way to live in, and share God's love freely and boldly: be inventive in encouraging love, helping out and spurring each other on.

February is often considered the month of love (Valentine's Day being right in the heart of it). I challenge all of us to make this a month of God's love. Let's commit to growing closer to God and sharing that love with others -freely and boldly!

Then, it will be even easier to make this a year of God's love, which will lead into a lifetime of God's love. And there is nothing that would please the Lord more (or serve our neighbors better).

God's blessing and peace be with you, as you live out God's love!

Pastor Steve



St. John Information

CONTACT/CONNECT

Email: stjohnslutheran.mapletonmn@gmail.com

Berkeland.stjohnslutheran@gmail.com

Website: www.stjohnlutheranelca.com

Streaming: Go to www.youtube.com (type in St. John's Mapleton in the search box). From there you will find all the services.

Items for the newsletter can be emailed to:
thestory.stjohnlutheran@gmail.com

Spiritually Speaking

Please check out our congregation's Facebook page and "like" us. Check us out every few days and "like" some of the inspirational and encouraging pictures and share announcements about events with your friends. This is one



easy way to share information about our church and God's Word with others.

Every Thursday Pastor Steve puts a devotional thought on Facebook for you to enjoy.

LENTEN INFORMATION

In our tradition, when we affirm our baptism (confirmation), we say 'Yes, with the help of God'

to the following question:

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism: to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

During this year's Lenten season, in addition to traditional observances, we will consider the 5 parts of our intention to live in the covenant God made with us in holy baptism.

2023 LENT @ ST. JOHN'S

Feb 22 (6:30 pm) Traditional Ash Wednesday Worship (Ashes and Communion)

March 1 (6:30 pm) Mid Week Holden Service: live among God's faithful people

March 8 (6:30 pm) Mid Week Holden Service: hear the word of God/share in the Lord's supper

March 15 (6:30 pm) Mid Week Holden Service: proclaim the good news through word and deed

March 22 (6:30 pm) Mid Week Holden Service: serve all people, following the example of Jesus

March 29 (6:30 pm) Mid Week Holden Service: strive for justice and peace in all the earth

April 6 (6:30 pm) Maundy Thursday Worship (with First Communion)

April 7 (6:30 pm) Good Friday Tenebrae

April 9 (7:30 am) Early Light Easter Worship

(9:30 am) Festival Easter Celebration

February 2023

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

Join us for Coffee Hour following Worship The Stories are amazing!!!						
			1 Confirmation 6:00pm	2	3	4
5 8:30 Worship Choir practice 9:30am Worship 10:30am Sunday School	6 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm	7 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm Worship and Means Committee 6:00	8 Confirmation 6:00pm	9 Church Council 6:30	10	11 Gustavus Youth Outreach Lock in for 7th grade and up
12 8:30 Worship Choir practice - 9:30am Worship /Children sing 10:30 Sunday School	13 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm	14 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm <u>Happy Valentines Day</u> ♥	15 Confirmation 6:00pm	16	17 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	18
19 8:30 Worship Choir practice 9:30am Worship 10:30am Sunday School	20 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm	21 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm	22 Confirmation students will becoming to Lenten Services At 6:30pm ASH WEDNESDAY 6:30pm	23	24	25
26 8:30 Worship Choir practice 9:30am Worship 10:30am Sunday School	27 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm	28 Quilting 10:00am – 3:00pm	March 1st. Lenten Service 6:30pm Confirmation Students too!			

ST JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH—Council Minutes

The meeting was called to order by President, Jenny O'Rourke at 6:30 p.m. at St. John Lutheran Church on Thursday January 12, 2023

Council Members Present: Jenny O'Rourke (President), Lori Schweer (Secretary), Patti Kregel, Rita Caron, Gary Denn, Aaron Annis, Julie Lux, Gabe Duncanson, Alan Albrecht, Gabe Duncanson, Josh Isebrand

Non Council Members Present: Mike Ward, Scott Schweer

Absent: Cathy Pluym, Paul Osmundson

Opening Prayer:

Pastor led the meeting with prayer.

Secretary's Report: Caron moved to approve the November meeting minutes, Isebrand seconded. Motion passed.

Use of building: Melissa Decker would like to use church for teaching early morning yoga classes (details still in progress), Joanie Marti and Christine Peterson would like to walk through church hallways in winter during regular hours.

Committee reports

Parish Ed/Youth Committee: (Chair – Jenny O'Rourke, Julie Lux)

Mt Kato January 29th

Mutual Ministry Committee: (Rita Caron) ---no meeting

Endowment Committee: (Mike Ward) –no meeting

Worship Committee: (Patti Kregel, Rita Caron & Josh Isebrand) –no meeting

Church Life Committee: (Lori Schweer, Julie Lux & Cathy Pluym) –Valentine's Day Dinner being planned

Stewardship Committee: (Mike Ward) –no meeting

Trustees Committee: (Gary Denn, Paul Osmundson, Gabe Duncanson, Aaron Annis)

Schwicker's fixing the seal on Narthex front door on 1/13/23. Quint Jaeger will be painting the cry room.

This Year Projected Projects Include: Tuck-pointing of Church, Narthex ceiling leakage , Cry room painting (in process), West door by Food Shelf (covering/flashing –working with Food Shelf)

Deacons: (Lori Schweer, Al Albrecht, Paul Osmundson & Patti Kregel) –When receiving communion by station, all are welcome to go to the altar, kneel and pray.

WELCA Committee: (Rita Caron)— Rita Caron will be working with Julie Lux for decorating and updating the cry room.

Pastor's report—MN River Assembly on February 12th, 2023 reach out to Pastor Steve for details if interested.

Treasurer's Report: (Mike Ward) –Reviewed the End of the Year budget. General Fund went down in 2022 by \$8500.00

Albrecht moved to approve the December treasurer's report Krengel seconded. Motion passed

Motion made for the parsonage allowance of \$15,000 by Duncanson, second by Annis. Motion passed.

Other: The basement steps leading to dining area are completed and look wonderful! Annual Meeting will be held on January 15th, 2023 after church.

Mapleton would like to borrow the church's 2 Christmas trees for Burn's night to use in auditorium.

Updated on Narthex leak—steel shingles/flashing, Duncanson volunteered to work on.

Two council members have completed their terms—Jenny O'Rourke and Lori Schweer

Updated 2022 Goals to Proposed 2023 Goals

Focus on fostering youth engagement, participation, and growth in personal relationship with Jesus.

Empower committees/people to be active and engaged in church activities in new and creative ways

Brainstorm and implement new ways to connect with our congregation in challenging times.

Motion made by Lux to use Building Fund for basement steps to pay Kevin Etherington's Labor to remove and install \$1200. Step materials from Nordaas \$894.55, second by Caron. Motion carried.

.Adjourn: With no further business, a motion was made by Krengel and seconded by Albrecht to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Next meeting will be Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 6:30pm.

Lord's Prayer

Respectfully submitted: Lori Schweer (Secretary)

Blurred Lines - continued from front page

Luther wrote: "I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ" (On the Freedom of a Christian).

Lutherans have been accused of quietism in the past. And I sense the current blurring of law and gospel is motivated out of an earnest desire to follow Jesus' command to care for "the least of these" (Matthew 25:1-46). But we aren't quietists. Our faith compels us to be active in the public square.

Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). We don't bring life or salvation. That is God's work, and it has already been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is because of this life, this grace, this freedom that we human creatures are bold to stand with the marginalized and excluded. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton ELCA

Just a Little Humor

If you are not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don't want to go there. Martin Luther

The Minister

A Minister was walking down the street when he came upon a group of about a dozen boys, all of them between 10 and 12 years of age.

The group had surrounded a dog. Concerned lest the boys were hurting the dog, he went over and asked "What are you doing with that dog?"

One of the boys replied, "This dog is just an old neighborhood stray. We all want him, but only one of us can take him home. So we've decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to keep the dog."

Of course, the reverend was taken aback. "You boys shouldn't be having a contest telling lies!" he exclaimed. He then launched into a ten minute sermon against lying, beginning, "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie," and ending with, "Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie."

There was dead silence for about a minute. Just as the reverend was beginning to think he'd gotten through to them, the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said, "All right, give him the dog." - Submitted by Tommy Bennidetto

Never be afraid to try something new. Remember amateurs built the Ark and professionals built the Titanic.



Daily Discipleship - The Son

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare inspirational works of art. They had Everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together, sharing stories about the great works of art.

When the Viet Nam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son.

About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands. He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart and he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for inspirational art."

The young man held out his package.

"I know this isn't much. I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this."

The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the portrait.

"Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift."

The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected. The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great inspirational paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection. On the platform sat the painting of the son.

The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this portrait of the son. Who will bid for this painting?" There was silence. Then a voice in the back of the room shouted. "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one." But the auctioneer persisted. "Will someone bid for this painting? Who will start the bidding? \$100, \$200?" Another voice shouted angrily. "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids!" But still the auctioneer continued. "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?"

Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the long-time gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give \$10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford. "We have \$10, who will bid \$20?" "Give it to him for \$10. Let's see the masters." "\$10 is the bid, won't someone bid \$20?"

The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the painting of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for \$10!" A man sitting on the second row shouted. "Now let's get on with the collection!"

The auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the inspirational paintings. The man who took the son gets everything!"

God gave his son 2,000 years ago to die on a cruel cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is, "The son, the son, who'll take the son?"

FAITHFULNESS

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP



Story of the Sunflower

It is incredible to watch life flow through nature; the way the waves rise and fall at the beach, the way the sun and moon dance their routine of day and night, the way a flower grows and blooms from a tiny seed.

Behind the beauty of nature lies an awe-inspiring God.

I am filled with wonder as I see his painted skies each day, and as I notice the way He clothes every living thing with garments more intricate than what our top fashion designers could imagine. Just think of the many unique patterns on a butterfly's wings for example, the many different shapes flower petals can have. We are always discovering new species, new flora and fauna.

Perhaps as we seek to understand earth's nature more, we will also grow to understand the nature of God who made it all.

Recently, I harvested some giant sunflowers. It is one thing to sow a seed and watch it grow yourself, but quite another to share the process with others. What started as a joke comment turned into reality when some friends at church allocated a spot for my husband and I to sow sunflowers; a spot in their orchard.

Our friend handed my husband a pole, and he dug out some holes. I placed a seed in each hole, and our friend watered the plants on his land. Then, we all waited as our Creator God caused the plants to grow, flower and seed.

The bees came to visit with yellow pollen all over their little heads, and the sunflowers moved to follow the travelling sun wherever it went.

We were updated on the progress of our sunflowers as they grew taller than us, and we tasted the seeds once the flower had passed. At every stage of the sunflower's growth, there was something new to learn, something new to see, and people to share the news with.

These sunflowers reminded me of how God grows His people and His church. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 6 says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

As God's church, we each have different roles, different spiritual gifts, and different areas of influence. Yet we have one Spirit that binds us all in Christ, and it is God Himself who makes a person grow. It is God who matures faith, gives the spiritual harvest and causes love to abound. His harvest is abundant, and He sends many workers into His field.

There are those who identify hearts ready to receive a seeded word of God, and those who prepare that heart for the sowing. They dig deep to know, understand and love the people around them.

There are sowers who speak the word of God to others through encouragement, prophecy and evangelism. There are the ones who water, faithfully and steadfastly pouring streams of God's living water on the thirsty souls.

Then, there are the seeds themselves. Soaking in the presence of the Almighty God, they are nurtured and watered until God's good work springs up in them, breaks through their earthen grave and shoots up into life.

These are the sunflowers of God's kingdom. These are the followers of the Son and wherever He goes, they also go. The glory of God seen in their life attracts others to come and experience it. The messengers hear, experience life in Christ, and transport it to others with the glow of God's goodness all over their faces.

By Kristen Dang - Press Service International (Christian Today)

Pasta with garlic and olives bon appé'tit

4 servings

Ingredients

12 ounces Wide Noodle (pappardelle or other)

add

Kosher Salt

¼ cup Extra-Virgin Olive Oil (plus more for drizzling)

8 Garlic Cloves (smashed)

1 cup chopped Parsley (finely chopped)

1 cup Castelvetrano Olives (pitted)

¼ teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes (crushed)

3 tablespoons Unsalted Butter (cut into pieces)

1 cup Basil Leaves (I think spinach would be awesome in this)

2 teaspoons Fresh Lemon Juice (you can add zest too if desired.)

Step 1

Cook pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water, stirring occasionally, until very al dente, about 2 minutes less than package directions.

Step 2

Meanwhile, heat ¼ cup oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot over medium. Add garlic and cook, stirring often and pressing down on cloves so they make good contact with the bottom of the pot, until golden and soft, about 5 minutes. Add parsley and cook, stirring occasionally, until parsley releases some of its liquid and slightly darkens in color, about 5 minutes. Toss in olives and red pepper flakes and cook another minute to let the flavors meld.

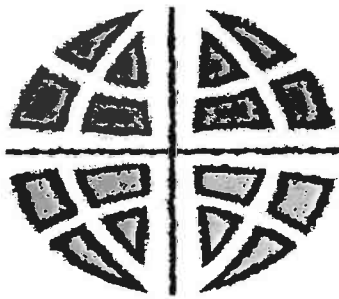
Step 3

Using tongs, transfer pasta to pot with sauce and add butter and ½ cup pasta cooking liquid. Cook, tossing and adding more pasta liquid as needed, until each strand of pasta is coated and pasta is al dente, about 4 minutes. Remove pasta from heat and toss in basil, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Taste and season with salt as needed.

Step 4

Divide pasta among bowls and drizzle with more oil.
(add chicken or shrimp if you desire)

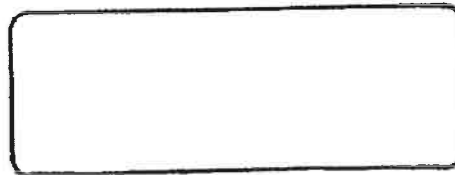




Gods Work Our Hands.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

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Permit No. 3



Bits and Pieces: In other words things to remember ;)

February 12th— Children Sing Please have your child/ren in their rooms by 9:10am. Thank you

February 22nd— Ash Wednesday service at 6:30pm, Confirmation Students will meet with their mentors at this time for worship.

March 1st.—Lenten Services at 6:30pm. Confirmation Students will meet with their mentors at this time for worship.

St. John Lutheran Lock-in for grades 7th and up.

Gustvaus Youth Outreach will be at St. John Lutheran February 11th thru the 12th. Starting at 7:00pm on Saturday the 11th and ending on Sunday the 12th. There will be laughter, singing and fun things to do. We will finish on Sunday with a cinnamon roll fundraiser. Bring a friend too!! Questions? Contact Jason Kregel or Pastor Steve.

Compassion..Commitment..Community..In Christ!