

*March 2024
Newsletter*



Because Good Happens!



**Saint John Lutheran Church
Hattiesburg, Mississippi**



A NOTE FROM YOUR PASTOR

You Do You

How often have we heard these words, said these words? What do we mean when we say them? I think it can mean different things to different people. For me personally, it means I'm done with whatever is going on. The person I am speaking to has ceased to listen to my logic no matter how convoluted it might be. Others take it as permission to do a thing that isn't normal. For instance, it can be something that isn't illegal but isn't helpful. Way back in Genesis there is an incident that happens between God and Cain. After Cain kills Abel, God asks Cain, "Where is your brother?" And Cain responds, "I do not know; am my brother's keeper?" And as the account goes God confronts Cain on his actions of murder of his brother and Cain is sent away from working the earth. He is forbidden from it.

This phrase, "Am I my brother's keeper" is of the spirit and ilk of saying "you do you." Instead of a blatant lie to hide a murder, we commit a sin of omission. It means we have given up on the person we say that to. We have washed our hands trying to dissuade them from the course they are taking. And I do not think this response is one of love. It is an unhealthy product of our sinful nature and we commit soft murder with it instead of hard murder and cover up.

My sinful nature rails against the thought of throwing out the "you do you." No longer would it have the excuse to let a brother or sister be devoured oh, so slowly by the acid of whatever thing that has ensnared them. It means investing time and energy into someone who will probably return very little of it and may even return none of it. It also means I am doing the things that I want to do and disregarding the wisdom of the Lord given through faithful people. I have to pause, listen and self-examine is this thing I do in accordance with all righteousness.

What is the example our Lord Jesus gives us? Does he say when entering into the messy lives of ours, "you do you?" No, He does not. He says stop, don't do that, turn back to Me! He reaches out his scarred hands to grasp us in an embrace. He calls us to return to the safety that is in him. He calls us to act in love toward our neighbor to gently restore them to the community of believers. Our Lord keeps us in his hands. Instead of "you do you," "be Jesus, give Jesus."

Blessings and peace,
Pastor Chet



Report for February 2024

The BOD met on February 22, 2024. The financial report reflected that our receipts are similar to this time last year. We are starting with a deficit of \$1,444.00 for January. Please keep in mind we weren't supporting a Pastor last January. Otherwise, we remain in good shape financially.

BOD actions taken:

- Discussion on updating the church By-Laws
- Discussions on church maintenance.

The Board would like to thank those who helped in trimming the trees and bushes. during the Saturday workday.

We encourage you to review the Board minutes on the bulletin board in the narthex and if you have any questions, please feel free to ask. Also, please share any concerns you may have with members of the Board. We are at your service.

In his service and yours,

The Board



LWML MITES collected on Sunday, February 4, 2024, totaled \$372.25. Once again, thank you for your prayers and support of the Mission Grants selected in convention by the Gulf States District and National LWML. There will be no Business meeting in March.

Alleluia! Christ has risen! He has risen Indeed! Alleluia! On Sunday, March 31st, the LWML will host a Coffee Fellowship in the church narthex from 9:00-10:00am prior to the Resurrection Service. Please make plans to come and greet our visitors, friends, and members with some sweet breakfast goodies, coffee, and juice. Also, there will be something special for the children. If you would like to help or bake something, please contact Lillian Smith or any LWML member.

The Gulf State District Convention will be held in Prattville, AL, on April 26-27, 2024. Theme: "Return to your Rest," (Psalm 16-7). Julie Radavich and I will represent Saint John Ladies Guild Delegate and Alternate. At the February meeting, LWML members voted to collect "ALL BABY ITEMS" beginning the first Sunday in April for the Autauga Interfaith Center in Prattville, Alabama. These "Gifts from the Heart" items will be collected in a "Pack 'N Play" placed in the church narthex. Watch for more details in the Bulletin.

The Magnolia Zone Spring Rally will be held at Christ Lutheran Church in Pascagoula, MS, to make plans for the Gulf State District Convention sometime in late March or early April. We would like to bring a good group of ladies and plan to carpool. If you can drive or want to attend this important meeting, please let me know. The Magnolia Zone is scheduled to host the next District convention in 2026.

LWML MITES will be collected on Sunday, March 3, 2024. If you are unable to attend worship, you may make your check out to Saint John Lutheran LWML and mail it directly to Christina Noffke at 108 Ramblewood Drive, Hattiesburg, MS 39402.

LWML MISSION STATEMENT

As Lutheran Women in Mission, we joyfully proclaim Christ, support Missions and equip Women to honor God by serving others.

Until Next Time "Serve the Lord with Gladness!!!"
Shirley Thone
President LWML



From the Altar Guild

Giving Up or Giving?

Here's a question I used to hear frequently this time of year: "What are you giving up for Lent?" Fasting used to be the norm during Lent for many people of varied religious beliefs. Every year, I was faithful to it. However, one day I realized my personal fasting tradition had actually become self-serving rather than moving into a deeper relationship with my Lord. I had myself convinced; I had myself fooled!

The most common things to "give up" are chocolate, sweets, cigarettes, and alcohol. Yep, Lent is a great time to lose weight or give up an unhealthy habit. Self-serving indeed. Then Lent seemed to take on a Giving trend: donating to a charity, helping at a soup kitchen or any manner of helping others in need. All good things, but is there an element of self-serving lurking just below the surface?

How about this focus? Why not begin a new habit of giving for forty days that would be a positive witness for Christ? One idea to consider is giving up 40 minutes of screen time each day. Use that time to make a phone call, send an email, or a personal note to a member of your family or church family, a neighbor or coworker. There are so many who are lonely, discouraged or in pain.

We may think our seemingly ordinary lives, and our place in God's plans, seem insignificant. We may think, "What can one person do that will really matter?" Look to the Bible. It is full of accounts of ordinary people who become part of God's great story. There are also plenty of people doing good works that touch other lives and perhaps influences their faith in profound ways. If possible, thank them in person, or with a phone call or a personal note.

You may not recognize the unique and important ways that you have been a blessing for the faith and life of others through the years. But God knows, and that's all that matters. As you continue to let the Word of Christ fill your heart and mind and life with the riches of his grace, the Holy Spirit will help you realize that your seemingly ordinary life is, in fact, a sacred life that is playing a necessary and important a role in the fulfillment of God's plans and promises.

A Prayer ~

Loving Lord, you have loved me beyond measure. Help me to open the eyes of others to your loving presence among us. When I feel small and insignificant, by your grace and guidance, may my small story play a vital role in lifting up your great story of salvation. In Jesus name. Amen.



Growing Your Faith

When You Want To Get off the Worry Wheel

"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope ..." Lamentations 3:21 (ESV)

What do we do when negative thoughts threaten to take over?

In his suffering, the writer of Lamentations said, *"My soul continually remembers it"* (Lamentations 3:20, ESV). Negative thoughts are like a ride at the fair, spinning around and around — except this worry wheel isn't fun and doesn't plan to stop.

Then the poet made one small shift in a different direction: *"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope ..."* (Lamentations 3:21). That verse changes everything. It says God doesn't leave us helpless to spiral in negative thoughts. We can direct our brains to choose a different path. We can *"call to mind"* hope (Lamentations 3:21) and train our brains toward better thought patterns.

What might this look like for us today? Lamentations says:

- We can recall the *"steadfast love of the LORD,"* which *"never ceases."* (Lamentations 3:22, ESV). Worry has no memory of good moments. It skips the times God was faithful to us in the past. So to fight back, **we can deliberately recall the goodness of God in our past and proclaim it for our future.**
- We can ground ourselves in the present. Our minds get stuck when we dwell on the past or fixate on the future, but God's mercies are *"new every morning"* (Lamentations 3:23, ESV). They are for us *today*. Maybe you can try saying what you're sensing: "I see the trees God made, feel my sweater, hear birds singing ..." Maybe when your thoughts begin to spiral, you switch to your alphabetical gratitude list: *I'm thankful for apples, blankets, coffee ...* **We can train our brains to come back to today and look for God's goodness here.**
- We can declare our eternal reality: *"The LORD is my portion"* (Lamentations 3:24, ESV). We always have Jesus, both in this life and eternity. Even if the worst does happen, our future remains secure. Sometimes we have to look that spiraling thought in the eyes and say to it, *Jesus is my portion. He was, is and always will be enough for me. And you, worry, have no place here.* **We can fight fear confidently because in Jesus, heaven is already ours.**

It is OK to come before God with our honest thoughts and feelings. He loves us and wants to help us step off the spinning wheel of worry, fear or negative memories. When we do step off that ride, standing on the solid ground of God's Truth feels oh so good.

God in heaven, how great and kind You are! You know how our thoughts can get stuck in a negative loop, pulling us down into a pit of despair. Thank You for providing us with tools to retrain our brains to come back to You. We love You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Lisa Case



Feasts and Festivals

March 19 - St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus

God the Father chose St. Joseph to be the foster father and guardian of Jesus. He was the protector and provider for the Holy Family, for Jesus as a child and as He grew into manhood. One example that portrays the difficulties and trials that Joseph underwent to guard Jesus and Mary was their long journey fleeing to Egypt to escape death by Herod's soldiers. They came to a land that was totally unfamiliar to them, seeking to earn a living in a country in which they did not speak the language. St. Joseph's role of guardian of our Redeemer is extremely important to us, for we needed a redeemer to restore what was lost by the original sin of our first parents.

In this present age of broken families, St. Joseph stands out as a wonderful, positive role model for all those raising children that are not "biologically" their own, whether from previous marriage or adoption. As the man who gave Jesus His name, raised Him, protected Him, provided for Him, taught Him a trade, and loved Him as his very own, Joseph was much, much more than a "guardian;" he was the greatest stepfather in history!

March 25 — The Annunciation of Our Lord

The Solemnity of the Annunciation celebrates the coming of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary to announce to her the special mission God had chosen for her in being the mother of His only son. The feast of the Annunciation began to be celebrated on this day during the fourth and fifth centuries soon after the date for celebrating Christmas was universalized throughout the Church. This feast celebrates the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity and the salvation of all mankind.

The Annunciation is the beginning of Jesus in His human nature. Through His mother He is a member of the human race.



Church Office Hours: 8:00am – 12:00pm, Monday – Thursday

Pastor's Hours: Tue-Thu: 9:00am – 1:00pm; Fri – Sun: by appt; Mon: off

Phone: 601.583.4898

Email: stjohnlutheranchurch@gmail.com

Midweek Lenten Services: 4:00pm each Wednesday evening. Soup served afterward.

Easter Plants – Order forms are now available. Please have money and forms turned in by March 24th.

Flower Chart

The 2024 Flower Chart is available with dates open for Altar flower purchases and support for our Eternal Candle. Write your name and phone number by the date(s) for which you wish honor or remember a special person or occasion. Use the envelope designated for either Flowers or Eternal Candle, make your checks payable to St. John Lutheran Church, and place in the Secretary's mailbox in the narthex. Please try to have payment ready two weeks prior of your requested date. Both are a wonderful way to remember someone or a special event. Your commitment to the beauty of our Altar is truly appreciated.



Palm Sunday: March 24th, 10:30am service

Maundy Thursday: March 28th, 6:00pm service

Good Friday: March 29th

Resurrection Sunday: March 31st, 10:30am, with coffee and breakfast fare prior to service.



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2nd - Men's Breakfast - meets at Chesterfield's Restaurant at 9:00am.

3rd - MITES - The LWML will be collecting MITES. If you cannot give in person, please mail your mites to Christina Noffke at 108 Ramblewood Drive, Hattiesburg, MS 39402. Make your check payable to Saint John Lutheran LWML.

6th - Kaffee Klatsch - meets at 1:30pm.

9th/10th – Fellowship Hall in use

13th - Avenues Study Group - meets in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00am.

13th/14th – Fellowship Hall in use

17th – Elder's meeting after the worship service

20th - Kaffee Klatsch - meets at 1:30pm.

21st - BOD - meets at 6:30pm.

27th - Avenues Study Group - meets in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00am.

Serving in March

Pastor

Chet Scherbarth

Pianist

Lewei He

Altar Care Team

Debbie Frederick and Diana Rymarz

Live Streaming of Worship Services — www.saintjohnhattiesburg.com.

***Portals of Prayer* for (January-) March** are available in the Narthex.

March Newsletter — available via the church website and printed copies are near the foyer mailboxes. Thanks to all those who contributed!

April Newsletter Deadline — Monday, March 25th.

The Spirit that is St. John:



March Celebrations!



B I R T H D A Y S

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Glen Stengrim | 3/3 |
| Diahn Lee | 3/5 |
| Tessa Blair | 3/11 |
| Terry Lovdahl | 3/14 |
| Cameron Karle | 3/15 |
| Lyn Pye | 3/18 |
| Myla Scherbarth | 3/20 |



B A P T I S M S

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Bob Cubly | 3/1 |
| Warner Boortz | 3/15 |



A N N I V E R S A R I E S W E D D I N G

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| Van & Mary Lowry (56) | 3/14 |
| Warner & Darlene Boortz (42) | 3/20 |



Saint John Lutheran Church

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