

Mar/Apr
2023

**ST. JOHN'S
CONGREGATIONAL
LEADERSHIP**

Rev. Don Reidell
president

CJ Ullrich
vice president | personnel

Lee Dryden
secretary | mutual ministry

Ellen Pancoe
treasurer

Ginny Hohl
financial secretary

Rick Bosch
building & grounds

Lisa Leach
fellowship

Candy Scorsone
worship & music

Shirleen Besch
social ministry

Brian Hirschev
finance

THE PASTOR'S NOTE...

I met a friend for coffee the other day and about halfway through our conversation he said, "Can I be honest with you and real for a second?" By the time I had replied, "Of course," my mind had already raced through a dozen possible ways this conversation was going to go. I braced myself for what was coming the way we sometimes do when a friend says: we need to talk.

I was put at ease when my buddy said, "I want to talk about faith." That is a conversation I am quite comfortable tackling with honesty – being real.

The dilemma my friend was wrestling with is one that Christians (and I presume people of other faith's) have struggled with for ages. See, he was praying more, but things pretty much stayed the same. He read the Bible more, but only found himself with more and more questions. And most of all, he felt like he was growing in faith, but didn't feel like a "better person." In fact, he was waking up to destructive patterns in his life he assumed were harmless. He felt confronted by scripture and unworthy of grace.

Since we were being real and honest, I didn't hold back. I told him that is how it goes. I shared my belief that our faith journey is not one in which we improve daily until one day we finally arrive. I said we call it Good News because we are the bad news. And most of all I tried to emphasize what I have come to realize most over these last few years:

The closer you get to Jesus the more you realize you need Jesus.

A faith journey that is centered in the goodness of God (and not the goodness of self) leads us down a path of self-realization where we are confronted with our depravity, frailty, and inclination to sin. As we grow in faith we do not exclaim: its no wonder God loves me. Rather we wonder: How? Why? Really? A real, honest faith journey has its joys and blessings, but at times (often times) it pushes us down and not up – off our soapboxes and to our knees.

It is in that place – or maybe we should say those places – that we are greeted with unconditional love and amazing grace. In other words, our faith is strengthened and renewed not because we got it right, but precisely because we got it wrong. We grow not because of anything WE say or do, but because JESUS gets the last word.

In scripture, St. Paul wrote to the Roman church and confessed – *Oops, I did it again. The good things I want to do, I don't. The bad things I don't want to do, I keep doing.* (Romans 7:19) By the end of his ministry he describes himself as the *chief of all sinners.* (I Timothy 1:15) While we might expect Paul to describe himself like this at the beginning of his ministry (in those first few weeks after murdering Christians) he doesn't. He describes himself this way after a profound and legendary ministry as the last Apostle.



St. Paul should have been receiving a lifetime achievement award, but he didn't even feel worthy to go to the banquet. The closer St. Paul got to Jesus, the more he realized he needed him.

The more Paul grew in faith & the father he journeyed along the way, the more aware he became of his weakness and shortcomings. Friends, it is the same for us.

In the season of Lent we are invited to walk with Jesus. We are invited to use this season to take steps towards the cross. That journey starts with, "I'm sorry." "I'm struggling." "I'm scared." "I'm frustrated." "I'm lonely." "I'm tired." "I'm sad." In this season we lament. We confess. We place our hope in God and not ourselves. We are reminded of Jesus' words: *unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.* (John 12:24) Often times we want the way up to be up. In Lent we are reminded that sometimes the up is down.

So if you're not feeling perfect or even good. That's okay. This is the Way.

In Christ,
PSDH

**Pastor Scott will be in
the Holy Land from
March 20-28th.**

Pastoral Acts

A celebration of life was held for
Donna Wylie on January 21st.
A celebration of life was held for
Edward Utz on February 11th.

Altar Flowers

This year we are reintroducing Altar Flowers to our worship. We encourage members to sponsor the altar flowers each week in honor, memory, or celebration of loved ones and events.

A sign-up sheet is posted in the narthex. Please place the short altar flower form in the offertory plate or return to the main office.

There are two arrangements and they cost \$30 each (\$60 total).

youth updates

First Communion will be held
on April 2nd.

Confirmation students are serving as
acolytes during the Lenten Season.

Wednesdays in Lent

Dinner 5:30 - 6:30PM

Mid-Week Service

6:45 - 7:30PM

Scripture 101

*getting to the heart of
a book unlike any other.*

All are welcome.

COUNCIL UPDATE - JANUARY

The January Council Meeting began at 7PM with a passage from Micah (do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God) and prayer. The agenda and minutes were approved and Pastor shared his report.

Pastor Scott shared thoughts on his ministry with the fire department and with the youth at St. John. It was noted that Christmas Eve worship went well. Pastor expressed gratitude to our membership, leadership, and staff for taking care of things while he was 'benched' with covid. Pastor Roger Griffiths presided at a funeral and Pastor Marsha Irmer covered Sunday AM worship.

The committees offered the following reports:

- **Social Ministry** – the donations for Family Promise were delivered. Family Promise (which helps homeless families) has requested a summer drive to collect additional items if St. John can manage it. Gift cards for Homeless Veterans will be our next project.
- **Fellowship** – we are looking for help on this committee. Our 190th celebration will be held on 2.5.23.
- **Worship & Music** – 8:30 & 10:30AM worship will continue through Memorial Day. There will be a mid-week Lenten dinner/program.
- **Personnel** – mandated trainings for staff will be completed.
- **Youth** – First Communion will be held this spring. Families who are interested should contact the office or Pastor Hannon.
- **Building & Grounds** – lots of projects are being tackled. There was an additional cost to clear our parking lot after the blizzard.
- **Cemetery** – we finished 2022 with a \$6,600 surplus. A scattering garden continues to be developed.
- **Financial Secretary** – We finished 2022 with a surplus of \$25,000+. Weekly income in December was surprisingly strong. This surplus will be applied to 2023 and significantly reduces our anticipated deficit.

In the business section the council voted to disburse \$1,500 to the Heather Moore Foundation and \$1,500 to the Taggart Family fundraiser.

The meeting concluded with prayer at 7:49PM.

Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday 8:30 & 10:30

Maundy Thursday 7PM

Good Friday 7PM

Easter Sunday 8:30 & 10:30

EASTER EGG HUNT
APRIL 2nd at 9:30AM
For kids up to grade 4.



COUNCIL UPDATE - FEBURARY

The February Council meeting was called to order shortly after 7PM on the 21st. The meeting began with Psalm 51 (return to the Lord your God) and prayer. Once the agenda and minutes were approved, Pastor shared his report.

Pastor Scott noted youth happenings, 190th celebration, and pastoral care. There were three funerals in the past month. Pastor will be in Israel/Palestine from March 20 – 28th. Members of St. John are encouraged to greet guests and visitors on Sunday morning. Approximately 5-6 families are joining St. John this Lenten season.

The **executive committee** approved a motion from Pastor to reduce the sexton's hours for the time being.

The committees offered the following reports:

- **Social Ministry** - \$325 in gift cards were collected for homeless veterans.
- **Fellowship** – the 190th luncheon went well. We are requesting help from members planning and holding future events.
- **Worship & Music** – a wider variety in music is being explored for the 8:30 service.
- **Personnel** – check-ins with the staff will be held in the next week or so.
- **Christian Education** – we need a couple of teachers to help us wrap up the spring semester.
- **Youth** – the youth group went bowling over February break. We hope to find a youth director to help run the program. Confirmation students are encouraged to acolyte during worship this Lenten season.
- **Building & Grounds** – many thanks to Jim and Roy for their ongoing painting projects. Many thanks to Paul for tackling many other additional projects. Many thanks to Norm for his work on the boiler. Looking ahead we anticipate a \$8,500 boiler project.
- **Finance** – insurance coverages will be reviewed.
- **Cemetery** – National Grid removed a problematic tree. Moving ahead when a section of fence is damaged it will be replaced by a boulder. An Eagle Scout project is in the works to improve the landscaping and appearance of part of the cemetery.
- **Financial Secretary** – January weekly income was lower than what was budgeted. Expenses have exceeded income by \$6,500+. A new rental agreement will be finalized with the Arc Erie County. We hope that our additional snow removal charge after the blizzard will be reimbursed by LDR (Lutheran Disaster Response).

In the business portion of the meeting the council discussed

Lenten happenings:

- Ash Wednesday worship will be held at 12:45 (following a luncheon) and at 7PM (depending on weather).
- A midweek program will be held on Wednesday evenings in Lent. Dinner will be served from 5:30 – 6:30PM. The service will be held from 6:45 – 7:30 in the Gathering Space.

The council will not meet in March.

Easter Services will be held at 8:30 & 10:30AM on Sunday, April 9th.

Depending on how things progress a service may be held in the Outdoor Ministry Center.

The meeting adjourned shortly before 8PM and ended with the Lord's Prayer.



**Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast in the
Fellowship Hall
March 5th, 2023 8:30-12:30**

ELCA World Hunger Synodical Spring Appeal

"BEE GENEROUS: PLANT SEEDS OF JUSTICE"



As we anticipate earth's greening after a long and bitter winter, and renewed by the promise of Lent and Easter, we are challenged this spring by our synod Hunger Justice Team to support ELCA World Hunger ministries that are seeking to make God's creation more sustainable and support families in need through the development of community gardens and bee colonies.

A basic community garden setup, which includes seeds, soil, tools and training, combined with the development of a honeybee colony, costs approximately \$220.00. Based on these figures, every congregation in our Synod is challenged to give \$440.00 to cover two gardens and bee colonies. A garden will help a family to be self-supporting; and the honeybees are not only providing honey to eat, but to make beeswax soap and candles which allow a family to start a small business.

The gift from St. John will be taken to Synod Assembly in June, where we will reflect on the theme of "Restorative Justice", based on Amos 5:26: "Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream".

St. John* has been generous in this effort to create a more just world. Thank you and bless your generous hearts.

* Please make checks out to St. John Lutheran Church.

Pastor Marsha Irmer,
on behalf of the Hunger Justice Team.



On behalf of our entire family, please accept our heartfelt and sincere thanks for making the celebration of Donna Wylie's life so special and wonderful! Your understanding and compassion were truly blessings at this most difficult time. The musicians, the officiant and all the others who helped combined to make a ceremony a beautiful tribute. Thank you so much!

Pat & Sandy Crowley

PS: Pastor Roger was awesome!!

To Judy and all those who sewed clothing protectors,

Thank you so much for the beautiful and cheerful clothing protectors. The residents enjoyed receiving them. I was especially glad there were ones that the male residents would like.

Thank you for thinking of Beechwood,
Holly Lange



Thank You!



Family Promise
of Western New York

St. John Lutheran Church,

Thank you so much for your congregation's incredible donation of housewarming items. We are so grateful for all of your support!

-Family Promise

March 31 Thrivent Deadline

for designating your 2022 Thrivent Choice Dollars to St John.

All qualifying money you have accumulated from your product for 2022 is listed and ready for you to give to St. John. Any money designated this year will go toward camperships at LCLC. Please do so before March 31.

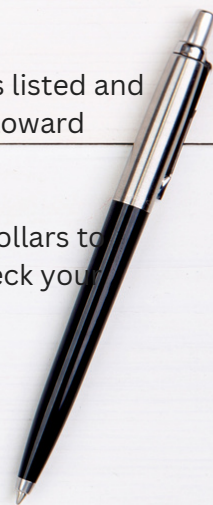
Does your Thrivent product qualify? call 800-847-4836 and say Choice Dollars to find out. Thrivent reps will help you. Or go to thrivent.com, log in, and check your choice dollars and designate St John.

Call or email me for more information.

Jane D'Agostino Thrivent representative to St. John

716-713-8167

dagosdino@gmail.com





Youth Bowling Fun.

- Members:**
Pam Figel
Judy Nitchke
Deb Francis
Jane D'Agostino
Charlotte Carnes
Nancy James
Barb Tiffany
Sandy Langl
Diana Brock
Iris Reese
Barb King
Pat McCarty
Candy Pankow



A few of the Creative Ministry team hard at work!

THE OUTDOOR MINISTRY CENTER PROGRESS



The framing continues.



Potluck Sign-Up Sheet

Where: _____
 When: _____

| My Name | What I'm Bringing | How You Can Contact Me |
|---------|-------------------|------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
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Ash Wednesday Luncheon

ST. JOHN PRAYER LIST

Hospitalized and Homebound

Colleen Gunning, Ann Henry, Wayne Yendall & Ethel Semrau

Loss and Bereavement

Family and Friends of Alice Webber

Healing, Comfort & Special Concerns

Bobbie Traina, Rick Bosch, Bob Tiffany, Wayne Yendall, Gayle Bosch,
Jerry Szykowny, Jennifer Ekberg, Judy Yendall, John Sivak, Ethel Semrau

Alan Benjamin, cousin of Pam Figel

Guy & Mary Wilcox, friends of Marsha Irmer

Mary Ann Kroecker, friend of Judy Nitchke

Rosemary Glavinic, sister-in-law of Kathy Wood

Greg & Denise Deville, nephew & niece of Brigid Monica

Cheri Anterline, friend of Pam Figel

Tom & Barb Roman, friends of James & Candice Pankow

Jen Diakun, daughter of Kate & Jim Olson

Miriam Benson, friend of Kate & Jim Olson

Joanna Graser, niece of Jean Delamere

Paula Altieri, friend of Iris Reese

Rev. Gene Ferguson, father of Lori Schonrank

Mary Mussel, family of Susan Hadala

Rick & Jan Vincent, sister of Deb Francis

For wise governing dealing with world tension, suffering, and war in Ukraine.

Healing, comfort and strength for those seeking refuge from climate change and natural disasters, especially those in Turkey and Syria.

For all suffering after mass shootings, especially our neighbors in East Buffalo.

Those victimized by any form of violence, racism, abuse, coercion, and addiction.

Military

Matt Newman, Drew Steinhilber, John Wendelin, Nicholas Ford, Ben Hoyt

Names will be kept on the prayer list for 4 weeks, if you need your loved one on for longer, please let the office know and we will be glad to keep them on.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

March

Mridul Pawlowski 03/01
Colleen Gunning 03/02
Susan Hadala 03/02
Kathleen Wood 03/02
Megan Manning Weber 03/04
Harvey Webb 03/04
DeWayne James 03/05
Jessica Licht 03/05
Bill Boling 03/06
Amy Martin 03/06
Lara M. Reece 03/06
Kristen SanFillippo 03/06
Terry Slaper 03/06
Yvette Haller 03/07
Brian Blake 03/08
Beth Aquilina 03/14
Brenda Burow 03/15
Becky Brock 03/17
Jeffery Gilbert 03/18
Ken Krantz 03/20
Joseph Tobia 03/21
Suzanne Aquilina 03/23
Gregg Merlihan 03/23
Dave Ekberg 03/26
Daniel Rubino 03/26
Thomas Schugardt 03/26
Bob Rosa 03/27
Thomas Suszynski 03/27
Brielle Wark 03/27
Matthew Webb 03/27
Susan Szykowny 03/28
Gayle Bosch 03/29

April

Alan Aquilina 04/01
Patricia Pancoe 04/02
Susan Rojek 04/03
Mary Cox 04/04
Klansee Reynolds-Bulmer 04/04
Alexei Goubiski 04/05
Chris Rainero 04/05
Eric Markarian 04/07
Joseph Zahn 04/08
Gretchen Bruning 04/13
Timmy Mayer 04/13
Ethan Burd 04/14
Carter Scorson 04/14
James Lawida 04/16
Michelle Licht 04/16
Andrew Menzies 04/16
Millie Webb 04/16
Frederick Hong 04/22
Thomas Schugardt 04/22
Dale Menzies 04/25
James Dryden 04/26
Walter Hadala 04/26
Derek Howe 04/27
James Steinman 04/27
Jared Steinman 04/27
Jill Otterstein 04/29
Cecilia Rubino 04/29
Madeline Reid 04/30

FIRST BIBLE – God’s Word for Us!

On Sunday May 21, seven children in our congregation will be officially receiving a Bible. When we were brought for Baptism, our parents promised to place the Holy Scriptures in our hands. We now have the opportunity as a congregation to help our children to get to know more about the purpose God has for our life. On three Saturdays, the children and their parents will gather to learn more about and how to use the Bible. What a wonderful challenge!

In Christ,
Jane D’Agostino

