



December 2023 Newsletter

GOOD NEWS
For Christmas

Because Good Happens!

*Saint John Lutheran Church
Hattiesburg, MS*



A NOTE FROM YOUR PASTOR



Since it is the season of thankfulness, I think I should pause and contemplate all the things God has given to me. I could list off all the things I like: my spouse, children, meaningful work, a home, and transportation. But even as I make this list, I know there are things that I am missing and take for granted. Some others come to mind: I'm reasonably healthy. Beth and I are able to get our kids to the places they need to be for the most part. My siblings live close to my parents and care for them. This makes it so I am able follow the Lord where he calls more easily. I could go on as I sit and put fingers to the keyboard. But the list of things is not as important, I think, as the attitude of thankfulness or gratitude. And that perhaps is where I struggle in the face of the all the wonderful blessings God has given to me. I can forget what God has done not only in all the blessings but in the eternal unseen ones as well. I can forget how much it cost Jesus to pay for my thanklessness for my missteps, words spoken wrong, and thoughts gone awry. I can forget that I am a creature and not the creator and think the world should bend to my whim.

Psalm 100 is the traditional psalm for Thanksgiving Day services. It reflects the attitude that we should have not only on the Third Thursday of the 11th Month but all the days of our lives. It goes as follows:

A Psalm for Giving Thanks

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he
who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give Thanks to
him, Bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations (ESV).

As we come in and go out Lord Jesus, we sing our praise of thanks to you. Amen

Blessings and peace,
Pastor Chet



The BOD met on November 16, 2023. The primary business discussed was adoption of our recommended budget for 2024. Now that we are supporting a full time Pastor, our budget projections have increased from our previous couple of years. The Annual Congregational meeting is scheduled for December 3, 2023. A copy of the recommended budget is in the church office. You are encouraged to review the budget prior to the meeting. Also on the Agenda will be the election of Board members for another two-year term. The Board recommends Wayland Johnson, Steve Lawrence, and Mark Keyl. Additional nominations may be taken from the floor during the meeting. Your attendance and votes make a difference!

We are looking for a few people who would be interested in volunteering periodically in the church office for a few hours for project work. If you are interested, please contact Chris on the office for additional details.

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.

In his service and yours,

The Board



LWML MITES collected on Sunday, November 5, totaled \$96.08. MITES collected through November 5, 2023, totaled \$1,758.37. This amount does not include the Special Offering of \$1,070.00 collected from the "What's your 80" Challenge. Praise God!!! 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 January 2024.

On October 28, Saint John Ladies Guild (LWML) hosted twenty-three ladies from four churches for the Magnolia Zone Fall Rally. This was the first time Saint John Lutheran hosted the Rally since the 2016 Spring Rally when Rudy and Dorothy Schaser were here. Election of Zone Officers: President: Sandy Ziegenhagen from the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Biloxi, MS. Vice President: Hanna Dunlap from Christ Lutheran Church, Pascagoula, MS. Treasurer: Ginny Hermetz from St. Matthews Lutheran Church in Gulfport, MS. Secretary: Shirley Thone from Saint John Lutheran, Hattiesburg, MS. The members present also voted to update the Zone Rally Schedule. The Spring "Joy Shop" will be hosted by Christ Lutheran Church in Pascagoula. This meeting will be in preparation for the Gulf States District Convention to be held in Prattville, AL on April 26-27, 2024. The Theme: "Return to your Rest" (Psalm 116:7).

On Sunday, December 3, the LWML will hold its final meeting for the year immediately following the Congregation Meeting in the church. Agenda Items: Gulf States District Travel Equalization (\$5.00 per member) and LWML Quarterly Orders (\$7.50). All monies need to be collected before Sunday, December 17, 2023; Election of Officers for Year 2024. Please make plans to attend this important meeting. All women are welcome and invited!

LWML MITES will be collected on Sunday, December 3. 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.

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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





The Peace of Jesus

In Luke 7:28, Jesus said, "I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John."

John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord. He baptized with water and taught the people about repentance. To repent is to begin to find peace within and with others.

The path of peace is Jesus. He establishes peace. Look at what takes place this time of year. During Advent, we prepare the Way of the Lord in our minds and hearts. We ask for new birth within us. This is His peace. Have you been aware of all the charities and different organizations, churches, and individuals working so hard to help others with food, clothes, and toys? It's phenomenal! This is Jesus' peace. There are many people who are not so reliant on the varied religious rituals, and yet, will attend one of the services celebrating Christ's birth. This is Jesus' peace. As families and friends gather throughout the holidays, quite often strong differences of opinions are set aside, arguments are laid to rest, and frequently, estranged family members are reconciled. This is Jesus' peace.

And there are so many miracles that take place. Some will make the news, but most will be shared quietly among friends. And some miracles will simply be held within a thankful heart. We all glorify God in different ways. This is Jesus' peace.

There is a story that in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War that takes place on Christmas Eve. French soldiers and German soldiers were facing each other in trenches a short distance apart. I imagine the tension was pretty intense as with all war situations. But then, a French soldier stood up and began singing "O Holy Night." Then a German soldier did the same and sang "From heaven to Earth Come," Not a shot was fired that Christmas Eve. This is Jesus' peace.

I feel that we instinctually know of our inner altar—a very holy place. Christ's birth is an awakening. Welcome him not into a manger, but into your altar where His holiness abides in perfect peace. Jesus taught the Good News that the Kingdom is at hand. His Kingdom is not of this world because it is in you, and you are of your Father. Let no despair darken the joy of Christmas, for the time of Christ is meaningless apart from joy.

And so, as Christmas Eve draws near, there will be many last-minute shoppers bustling about and people traveling to varied destinations. I know the reality of our world – amid the miracles and wonderfulness of this Holy season, some unpleasant crimes will take place, some people will remain hungry, and there will war in parts of the world. But every year, there's a point during the evening when I sense a kind of hush and calmness envelop the earth. And I know this is Jesus' peace.

Happy Birthday to our Lord!

Christina Keiper
Altar Guild



COMFORT AND HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS

"... I am the one who answers your prayers and cares for you. I am like a tree that is always green; all your fruit comes from me." Hosea 14:8 (NLT)

As I write to you, I glance over the top of my computer, and my eyes are immediately drawn to the Christmas tree in the corner of our family room. Every morning, I get up and switch on the Christmas lights. The sight makes me smile! The tree reminds me daily of that moment that changed the world forever — the coming of our Savior, the moment when hope began in the middle of a lifeless world.

There is a lot of debate over the origin of the Christmas tree, but I love the account of Martin Luther. In her children's book *Luther's Children Celebrate Christmas*, Dorothy Haskins says that Martin Luther was walking through the woods near his house one night. Snow had fallen on the branches of the trees, and they sparkled in the moonlight. He was so taken by their quiet, brilliant beauty.

"The little trees stood there bravely, keeping green while everything else around them went dry and drab and lifeless." So, Luther cut down a tree, carried it home and decorated it with candles. According to Haskins, "He explained to his children that the tree is green in the winter like our faith in Christ. It stays fresh even in a time of trouble. Our faith in Christ stays green even in sorrow. His comfort remains even in the midst of despair."

If you think about it, the beginning of our story started with a tree. When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, He told them they could eat freely from every tree except one. They were forbidden to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or they would die. When the serpent entered the garden, his first act was to make Adam and Eve question God: *"Did God really say you must not eat the fruit ...?"* (Genesis 3:1b, NLT). His second act was to call God a liar: *"You won't die!"* (Genesis 3:4, NLT). His third was to insinuate that God was holding out on them: *"God knows that your eyes will be opened ..."* (Genesis 3:5, NLT).

When Adam and Eve listened to the serpent's lies and not only picked fruit from the forbidden tree but ate the fruit, the whole earth shuddered. Everything changed. Suddenly, Adam and Eve felt shame and hid from God. In His mercy, God clothed them in the skins of animals and sent them out of the garden (Genesis 3:6-21). If they had stayed, they could have eaten the fruit from the tree of life and lived forever ... but forever broken. God loved them too much for that, and He loves us too much for that as well.

So just as our desolation came from a tree, so also our redemption came on a tree. Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, was willing to become a curse in the eyes of God and humanity to bridge the great divide between a holy God and sinners such as you and me. It's hard to take in the weight of that kind of love.

God describes Himself this way: *"I am the one who answers your prayers and cares for you. I am like a tree that is always green; all your fruit comes from me"* (Hosea 14:8). When I think of that image during the Christmas season, I'm reminded He hears our prayers, and He is our constant provider.

If you feel anxious or afraid this season, remember that the evergreen mercy of God is with you. Just as those trees captivated Martin Luther's heart and brought joy to his children by candlelight, you and I can remember as we gaze upon the trees this season that God is always with us. Let's share the light of His love with those around us.

Heavenly Father, thank You that You never change. You are the same yesterday, today and forever. Thank You that You hear our prayers and watch over us always. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Lisa Case



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

Phone: 601.583.4898

Email: stjohnlutheranchurch@gmail.com

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

*Be in the
know.*

Dec. 2: 9:00am Hanging of the Greens-All are welcome to help!

Dec. 3: Annual Congregational Voters Meeting (following the worship service) Items on the Agenda: Budget for 2024 and election of Board members. Up for election: Mark Keyl, Steve Lawrence, and Wayland Johnson.

Dec. 3: Christmas plant support forms will be available. Forms and money will be due by December 17th.

Dec. 10: Angel Tree presents are due—wrapped and with Angel attached, please.



Dec. 6: 6:00pm

Dec. 13: 6:00pm

Dec. 20: 6:00pm



Dec. 24: 10:30 Regular Worship Service

Dec. 24: 6:00pm Candlelight Worship Service

Dec. 25: No Service

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 12pm AA	2 9:00am Hanging of the Greens 10am AA
3 10:30am Worship MITES Collected Congregational Meeting	4 12pm AA	5 12pm AA	6 12pm AA 1:30 Kaffee Klatch 6:00 Advent Service	7 12pm AA	8 12pm AA	9 9:00am Men's Breakfast 10am AA FH in Use
10 10:30am Worship	11 12pm AA	12 12pm AA	13 12pm AA 6:00 Advent Service	14 12pm AA	15 12pm AA	16 10am AA
17 10:30am Worship	18 12pm AA	19 12pm AA	20 12pm AA 6:00 Advent Service	21 12pm AA 6:30pm BOD	22 12pm AA	23 10am AA
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
10:30am Worship 6:00pm Candlelight Service	12pm AA No Service	12pm AA	12pm AA	12pm AA	12pm AA	10am AA
31						
10:30am Worship						

Serving in December

Pastor

Chet Scherbarth

Pianist

Lewei He

Altar Care Team

Shirley Thone Christina Keiper

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

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

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

January Newsletter Deadline — Monday, December 18th.

The Spirit that is St. John:



December Celebrations!



B I R T H D A Y S

Judy Wastvedt	12/1
LaToursha Ezell	12/8
Geraldine Wheeler	12/8
Maggie McMichael	12/13
Julie Radavich	12/19
Nick Weiss	12/23
Thomas Hesselgrave	12/24
Willy Noffke	12/25



B A P T I S M S

Mark Keyl	12/3
Jane Kersh	12/9
Dawn Wright	12/13
Darlene Boortz	12/17
Diahn Lee	12/21
Ethan Noffke	12/28
Jane Johnson	12/29



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

Don & Patricia Shields (61)	12/15
Ron & Regina Johnson (28)	12/17
Kerry & Debbie Geroux (41)	12/18
Dewey & Lisa Case (11)	12/22
Eric & Jean Martin (61)	12/24
Chris & Karla Weiss (30)	12/31
Chuck Westfall & Cindy Landry (28)	12/31



Saint John Lutheran Church

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Email: stjohnlutheranchurch@gmail.com

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