

*February 2025  
Newsletter*

**GOOD NEWS**

*Because Good Happens!*

**Saint John Lutheran Church  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi**



# A NOTE FROM YOUR PASTOR

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## Spiritual Confusion

I recently had an experience to enter into a multi-religion prayer room. It reminded me of my days back in the National Guard. I was going to re-class or switch my MOS to Chaplain assistant. As I was going through the course work. I learned it would be my responsibility to take down all the sacred things used for Christian worship and clear a way for Muslim, Hindu, Wicca, Mormon or any other such religion that had need of a worship space. And I could not bring myself to continue on that path. I could not participate in the spiritual confusion that would result. There are men prepared by God that are equipped to better navigate that than I.

To this day that remains with me. When I entered the prayer room the Spiritual Confusion was overwhelming. On the wall was a stained-glass window resembling a sunset of sorts. And by the door was a bucket of prayer rugs. On the back wall was a very pretty wood shelf made of various compartments. Yet in each compartment there were statues or icons from different religions. In one corner was Mary and Jesus, in another Buddha, in another a Quran another the angel Moroni. On the shelves below like a magazine rack were all the different religious Holy scriptures. Don't get me wrong, I understand the "good intent" the designers had for this room. I however see the confusion it sends. It treats all religions as if they were and are the same and they are not. As if you can take your God off the shelf and just spend a little time with him/or it depending on what shelf you are reaching into. I can't help but be drawn back to the Old Testament In 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel when the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant. They placed in the temple next to the statue of Dagon. Dagon kept falling down before the Ark. God does not share his worship space.

If God does not share, we should be wary of the same thing. I can pray anywhere in any place that is true. And I choose not to pray in a place that offers such confusion. By making that Choice it is walking in the steps of Daniel. It is better to go back to your room where no other gods convolute your worship space and pray to God. When you do that there won't be the whispers of false prophets and gods. Mohammed will not die for your sake, nor will his true followers do likewise. Buddha has long since ceased caring about your spiritual fate and journey. The rest seek to see if you have checked the box and performed the rite, rightly.

None give you a place in heaven nor share their righteousness with you except Jesus. As I write this, I know that there are things like this around us all the time. We don't live in little cloisters isolated nor can we. We, however, can make choices that are clear and not creating confusion. Jesus was not confused when he went to the cross to redeem us from the twisting mire of sin. He clearly saw the way of salvation for us. Shut the door on the confusion and walk with Christ.

 Walk with  
JESUS 



## Board of Director Report

February 2025

The BOD met on January 23, 2025. We reviewed the end of year giving and thanks to our prayers being met, the congregation finished the year in the black. As we consider our tithes for 2025, let us prayerfully consider our abilities to increase as we are able.

Remember, to Him goes all the Glory!!

BOD actions taken:

- Voted to use \$10,000 of saved building funds to pay on the mortgage.
- Voted for electrical work to support the new LED sign, outside lighting, Sanctuary fans, and other minor electrical upgrades.
- Voted for upgrading of sanctuary sound system, visual aids, and installation of new equipment on or about May 2025.

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 2025

## Newsletter 2025

The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord – February 2nd

February 2nd may be known by most as Groundhog Day. However, on February 2nd we celebrate an ancient feast known by several different names: The Presentation of the Lord, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Candlemas. Interestingly, the Old Testament and Gospel readings are the same: Malachi 3: 1-4 and Luke 2:22-32.

The Presentation of Jesus is not the circumcision of Jesus because the circumcision would have taken place 8 days after his birth according to God's law given to the Hebrews and recorded in Genesis 17. Luke is the only Gospel writer to record the story of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus traveling to the Temple in Jerusalem to present the baby Jesus 40 days after his birth. The Holy Family, devout Jews, followed the Law of Moses, and thus were performing the ritual sacrifice for Mary's purification, following childbirth.

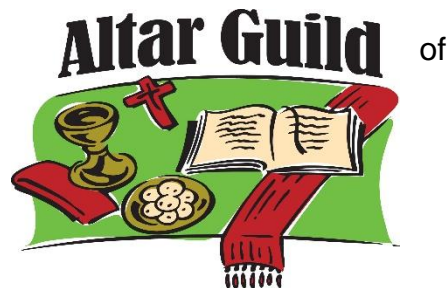
According to Leviticus chapter 12, a woman who loses blood is rendered ritually impure. One who gives birth must undergo 40 days of ritual purification prior to being allowed to worship in the Temple. Part of the purification ritual for Mary, prescribed by Jewish law, was that she should sacrifice a lamb upon presenting herself and her child to the Temple priests. Levitical law indicates that if no funds were available to purchase a lamb for the sacrifice, two doves or pigeons may be offered. Luke tells us the Holy Family offered "a pair of doves or two young pigeons"; this is one bit of evidence that the Holy Family was poor.

This feast is significant because it is an amazing moment in history where God returned to the Temple. In 587 BC, God left the Temple Solomon had built centuries before. He left the Temple just prior to the Babylonians burning it to the ground. The Incarnation took place in the Second Temple Period, when God was not dwelling in his temple. Yet, on this Feast of the Presentation, 40 days after his birth, Jesus who is fully man and fully God returned to the Temple. The prophet Simeon declares this, and the Old Testament reading from the prophet Malachi foreshadows it.

This Christian festival of the presentation of Jesus at the Temple of Jerusalem also refers to him as the light of the people Israel. On this day Candlemas, Christians take candles to be blessed in church.

May His Light be revealed in your heart,

Christina Keiper, Altar Guild Chair





## LWML NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2025

LWML "MITES" collected on Sunday, January 5, 2025, totaled \$370.77. Thank you for your continued prayers and support of the Mission Grants selected in Convention by the Gulf States District and National LWML. "MITES" will be collected next on Sunday, February 2, 2025.

(Jeremiah 29:11-12) For I know the plans I have for you, "declares the Lord", plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

These words from Scripture have a very special meaning to me. Several years ago, I shared "My Story" in BJORN'S CORNER of Saint John's Newsletter. Those who may remember-early in Spring of 2016. I have gone through many trials in my life that I did not plan, but I know that God has been with me through it all. One reason I am so comforted by these words is because I know that God's "Plans" for me were made before I was even born, and His plans are always the best! What a Blessing!

On Sunday, February 2, the LWML will hold the first Business meeting of the year in the Community Room immediately following the worship service. All women are welcome and invited, especially if you are new to Saint John Lutheran. Please come and share your "gifts" in serving the Lord! We will begin making plans for the 41st Biennial National Convention in Omaha, Nebraska, on June 26-29, 2025. Sandy Ziegenhagen, Zone President, will be the Delegate from Good Shepherd Lutheran in Biloxi. Julie Radavich will be Alternate Delegate from Saint John Lutheran in Hattiesburg. We will be meeting for the Magnolia Zone Spring Rally at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Biloxi, Mississippi on Saturday, April 26, 2025. We will be planning for the National Convention in Omaha, Nebraska.

LWML "MITES" will be collected on Sunday, February 2, 2025, after worship. 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, LWML President

*IT'S EXTRA TABLE FOOD COLLECTION TIME*

*AND*

*YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE*

Extra Table is a non-profit organization committed to ending hunger in Mississippi. We have the opportunity to support the food collection drive that Extra Table is currently sponsoring.

Cities in Mississippi have been designated to collect specific food items to support the Extra Table mission. Below is a list of the cities in our area of Mississippi and the food items they have been asked to collect.

Look for your city and its designated food item. Purchase as much of that item as you wish and either take it to the City/Town of your choice or bring it to St. John by February 21, designated to the location you desire. A collection box/basket will be set up in the hallway across from the nursery and Sunday school room.

Columbia dry beans – one pound bag  
Ellisville granola bars  
Hattiesburg peanut butter – 16 oz. jar  
Laurel canned tuna  
Lumberton canned fruit  
Petal canned fruit  
Poplarville rice – one pound bag  
Purvis canned green beans  
Sandersville canned green beans  
Sumrall canned corn  
Wiggins rice – one pound bag

This is a painless way to participate in a community effort and pay back to the community that gives us so much support for Oktoberfest. Hope you will feel motivated to participate.

Should you have any questions, please contact Brenda Hesselgrave or Mark Keyl

## *Benevolence Corner*

**A gentleman that we have helped several times**

**called with good news. He has a brand-new job and has a new apartment**

**lined up to move into next month. He is thrilled. He sees God working in his life.**

## February 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					12pm AA	<b>1</b> 9 a.m. Men's Breakfast 10am AA
<b>2</b> 9:15am Sunday School & Bible Study  10:30am Worship MITES Collected, Meeting	<b>3</b> 12pm AA 1:30 Kaffee Klatsch	<b>4</b> 12pm AA 7pm adult confirmation	<b>5</b> 12pm AA	<b>6</b> 12pm AA	<b>7</b> 12pm AA	<b>8</b> 10am AA
<b>9</b> 9:15am Sunday School & Bible Study  10:30am Worship	<b>10</b> 12pm AA	<b>11</b> 12pm AA7pm adult confirmation	<b>12</b> 10:00 a.m. Avenue Bible Study 12 pm AA	<b>13</b> 12pm AA	<b>14</b> 12pm AA	<b>15</b> 10am AA
<b>16</b> 9:15am Sunday School & Bible Study  10:30am Worship  <b>23</b> 9:15am Sunday School & Bible Study 10:30am Worship	<b>17</b> 12pm AA 1:30 Kaffee Klatsch  <b>24</b> 12pm AA	<b>18</b> 12pm AA 7pm adult confirmation  <b>25</b> 12pm AA 7:pm adult confirmation	<b>19</b> 12 pm AA  <b>26</b> 10:00 a.m. Avenue Bible Study 12 pm AA	<b>20</b> 12pm AA  <b>27</b> 12 pm AA	<b>21</b> 12pm AA Last day bring food for Extra table  <b>28</b> 12 pm AA	<b>22</b> 10am AA



# ENDURE

JULY 19-23, 2025; NEW ORLEANS, LA



## **REGISTRATION OPEN for 2025 National Youth Gathering!**

Registration is now open for the 2025 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Youth Gathering.

The Youth Gathering, held every three years, is the largest event organized by the LCMS and brings together thousands of Lutheran youth and adults.

The 2025 event will take place **July 19–23, 2025**, in New Orleans. This year’s theme, ENDURE, will focus on the endurance of faith in Christ, grounded in Hebrews 12:1–3.

All LCMS congregations were mailed information about the Gathering and are encouraged to attend the event for the opportunity to come together as a community of God’s people. For five days, participants will learn about Jesus Christ, the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity as they spend time together in God’s Word, worship, service and fellowship.

The Gathering registration fee (\$425/person until March 4, 2025, when it will then increase to \$475/person) covers all Gathering program and administrative costs, participant items, post-Gathering resources, and secondary insurance for all participants. The registration fee does not include meals or lodging.

Registrants may submit either the full amount or a non-refundable deposit of \$150 per person to secure their registration.

Key dates to remember:

- Young Adult Volunteer applications close: Dec. 31, 2024
- Team Flex Volunteer applications accepted: Jan. 15–April 30, 2025
- Gathering registration fee increase (\$475): March 4, 2025
- Gathering registration closes: May 29, 2025
- 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering: July 19–23, 2025

Registration remains open online until May 29, 2025, at [lmsgathering.com/registration](https://lmsgathering.com/registration).

More information about Gathering registration, including the registration book, necessary worksheets and important deadlines is available at [lmsgathering.com](https://lmsgathering.com).

Along with written resources, monthly Zoom meetings are also available to help prepare congregations that are taking a group to the Gathering.

[\(Information obtained from LCMS Reporter\)](#)

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*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”*  
*(Hebrews 12:1-3)*

## ***GIVING TO ST JOHN in 2025***

### ***Do you have a Traditional IRA?***

Are you at least 70 and a half years of age? You can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) payable to the church and you do not have to pay income tax on that amount. Or are you taking the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA? You can reduce the amount of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) that is subject to income taxes by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to the church from your IRA before receiving your portion of the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) paid direct to the church by your IRA trustee is not taxable AND it can count as part of your Required Minimum Distribution. That means you can meet the IRS rules for your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) without increasing your taxable income and you can contribute more to the church. Talk to your trustee / IRA manager about making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to St John before taking any payments from your IRA.

# February Celebrations!

## **Birthdays**



Steve Lawrence	Feb. 1
Doris Schneider	Feb. 1
Pat Potesta	Feb. 3
Sandy Barnett	Feb. 4
Shirley Thone	Feb. 8
Alex Meyer	Feb. 10
Shannon Elledge	Feb. 17
Helga Herrington	Feb. 22
Johnathon Stringer	Feb. 25

## **Baptism Celebrations**



David Grunig	Feb. 4
Geraldine Wheeler	Feb. 6
Thomas Hesselgrave	Feb. 13
Brenda Hesselgrave	Feb. 22
Shirley Thone	Feb. 23
Sheila Curry	Feb. 27

## ***Wedding Anniversaries***

