

February 2023 Newsletter



Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Its official name is “Day of Ashes,” so called because of the practice of rubbing ashes on one’s forehead in the sign of a cross. Since it is exactly 40 days (excluding Sundays) before Easter Sunday, it will always fall on a **Wednesday**—there cannot be an “Ash Thursday” or “Ash Monday.”

What does the Bible say about Ash Wednesday?

While the Bible does not mention Ash Wednesday, it does record accounts of people in the Old Testament using dust and ashes as symbols of repentance and/or mourning (2 Samuel 13:19; Esther 4:1; Job 2:8; Daniel 9:3). The modern tradition of rubbing a cross on a person’s forehead supposedly identifies that person with Jesus Christ.

Where do the ashes come from that are used on Ash Wednesday?

In many congregations, the ashes are prepared by burning palm branches from the previous [Palm Sunday](#). On Palm Sunday, churches bless and hand out palm branches to attendees, referencing the Gospels’ account of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when onlookers lay palm branches on his path.

The ashes of this holiday symbolize two main things: death and repentance. “Ashes are equivalent to dust, and human flesh is composed of dust or clay ([Genesis 2:7](#)), and when a human corpse decomposes, it returns to dust or ash.”

When we come forward to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, we are saying that we are sorry for our sins and that we want to use the season of Lent to correct our faults, purify our hearts, control our desires and grow in holiness so we will be prepared to celebrate Easter with great joy.”

With this focus on our own mortality and sinfulness, Christians can enter into the Lent season solemnly while also looking forward in greater anticipation and joy to the message of Easter and Christ’s ultimate victory over sin and death.

A Prayer for Lenten Grace

Loving God,
During the sacred season of Lent, bring me closer to you.
Prepare a place in my home and heart for silence and solitude, so that I may re-discover the grace of a prayer-full life.
Help me to fast from those things that threaten the well-being of body and soul and remind me of the grace of simplicity.
Enlarge my heart so that I give to those in need and, in so doing, re-discover the grace of gratitude and generosity.
May this season be a grace-filled time to rekindle my love for and faith in you.
Amen.



“On Wings Like Eagles”

...but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
They shall mount up with *wings like eagles*,
They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.
Isaiah 40:31



**St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
PO Box 2, 772 St. Johns Road
Saint Johns, PA 18247**

**Church Office Phone Number: 570.788.2685
Email: stjohns@epix.net
Facebook: [SJELC.StJohnsPA](https://www.facebook.com/SJELC.StJohnsPA)
Website: www.sjlutheran.org**

**Pastor Designate: Reverend Michele Kaufman
Organist: Arlene Poltrock
Church Secretary: Rose Fox
Phone: 570-788-2685**

Office Hours: M-W 9 am to 1 pm; F – 9 am to 12 pm

Our Purpose

(Our sense of what God is calling us to be and do in the mission of the Church)

God's purpose for our congregation is to be a Christ-centered community, glorifying God and sharing the gospel and blessings with our neighbors.

Sunday Mornings

Youth Sunday School 8:45 am

Coffee Hour following Worship first Sunday of the month

Catechism Classes

Catechism Classes for youth in grades 6, 7, and 8th grades is available.

Parents and P. Kaufman agree to a schedule that is compatible for all.

All are invited to join us for our worship/fellowship opportunities

Contact Information

Pastor Michele Kaufman – Pastor Designate

Phone Number: 570-881-2371

If you have a pastoral need such as a request for a hospital visit, pastoral care need, or spiritual counseling, please contact P. Kaufman.

For other requests such as a baptism, funeral, or wedding, please contact the church office @ 570.788.2685. If necessary, please leave a message including your full name, phone number, the reason for your call, and the best time to contact you.

2022 Church Council Officers/Members

Melody Hinderer – President	Janet Brady
– Vice President	Jim Cassarella
Carolyn Kuehn – Secretary	Kim Deliman
Donna Cassarella – Assistant Secretary	Jan Jacobus
Jennifer Cipriani – Treasurer	Sheila Maslo
Sherry Grenzberg – Assistant Treasurer	

Church Ministries – See Calendar for Scheduled Meetings/Events

Finance Team – To be named, Chairperson
Knot-A-Quilt – Theresa Steinman
Lay Eucharistic Ministry Team: Melody Hinderer, Judy Mundie
Learning Ministry Team: Kim Deliman, Chairperson
Lutheran Church Women (LCW): Mary Ellen Sims, President
Prayer Circle Ministry: Kim Deliman, Chairperson
Prayer Shawl Ministry: Peggy Hawk
Property Team: Jim Cassarella, Chairperson
S.E.R.V.E. Ministry: Donna Cassarella, Melody Hinderer, Co-Chairpersons
Worship and Music Ministry Team: Arlene Poltrock, Chairperson

We offer many opportunities for ministry. If interested, please contact the church office, a council member, or the chairperson(s) listed above.

Our Guiding Principles #1

We proclaim Jesus as our Lord and Savior.



PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Almighty God,

My parish family is composed of people like me.

I help make it what it is.

It will be friendly, if I am.

Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.

It will do great work, if I work.

It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I am a generous giver.

It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship, if I invite and bring them.

It will be a parish family of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and a parish with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, and filled with these same qualities.

Therefore, with the help of God-

I will dedicate myself to the task of being all the things that I want my parish family to be.

Bless my journey Lord God, that I might build the Church through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

From Pastor Michele Kaufman

LENT IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER... "Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Lent is the church's way of telling time. How much longer to Calvary? How much longer to Easter? It is the church's way of remembering the adult Jesus and how everything ended ... rather than the baby Jesus and how everything began. Once upon a time, Lent was a preparatory period ... a time of instruction ... getting candidates ready for Easter baptism. Today, it's much more than that. Or can be. For some, Lent is a disciplined effort at self-improvement. More than "forty days to thinner thighs," Lent might involve a conscious decision to better the self in ways deemed necessary or spiritually beneficial. Services rendered

Habits reformed
Chapters read
Worship attended
Kindness rendered
Reconciliation extended ...

While for others, Lent is the church's permission to look inward.

To delve into our soul

To deepen, rather than widen

To replicate the forty days our Lord spent in the

wilderness and stare down temptation ... step up our obligations ... saying, "this I mustn't do" ... countering with "this I ought to do"

It can also be a time to Listen for God; to meditate or pray or journal or merely make peace with silence.

As for giving something up ... or taking something on ...you be the judge. And as for doing better versus digging deeper ... well, you be the judge of that. Ask yourself a question: "Which needs more work, my behavior or my interior?" Only you can know.

Highlights from the Church Council Meeting January 12, 2023

Attendance: Janet Brady, Jim Cassarella, Jennifer Cipriani, Melody Hinderer, Jan Jacobus, Carolyn Kuehn, Pastor Michele Kaufman. Excused absence: Donna Cassarella, Kim Deliman. Unexcused: Sherry Grenzberg. Guest: Frank Costello

Council minutes from December 8, 2022, approved. Treasurer's Report for December 2022 approved. Pastor's Report/Mileage: December 2022 Mileage 229 miles and 18.75 hours approved.

Council met with Frank Costello. Discussed and reviewed several issues with the cemetery.

Team Reports

Worship Team:

- I-Pad, no update for receiving help in restoring the recordings.
- Ash Wednesday Service : Feb 22nd. Waiting for the Feb pastor supply schedule to see if we have a pastor.
- No Lenten Services, Conyngham Methodist will possibly have services during the Lenten season. (Updates to follow)

SERVE Team:

- Team Meeting for Jan 10th was cancelled. Team members were notified and asked to submit any future plans for the next 3 to 4 months.
- Member directory is still being worked on.
- Future plans: create a children's library and an adult library, also video rentals.
- SERVE Team would like to have a soup and sandwich dinner before the Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday Feb 22nd.
- March 18th – indoor craft sale, food sale.
- Sunday, June 11th, luncheon for first responders held after church.
- Hobo Party – to be held in the fall.
- Looking for a group to have a Passion Play at our church. Advertising for a group will be put on FB.
- Next meeting January 26th @ 6:30 pm.

Property Team:

- Mountain Top Paving plan to pave handicap area in the spring of 2023.
- Sausage Supper – Saturday April 22nd, 2023.
- Discussed changing the light bulbs in Luther Hall.
- A new battery was put in the doorbell by the office area.
- The hand sanitizer in the hall by the office was repositioned on the wall.
- Cooper lent Jim their bucket truck to put 2 new light bulbs in the lights by the cemetery.

LCW: No report.

Lay Eucharist: Calls are being made monthly.

Finance Team: Chairperson needed. Sherry Grenzberg will present the 2023 Planned Expenditures at the annual meeting.

Carillon Team: No report.

Anniversary Celebration – 2024. Need to form a team in 2023.

Continuation of highlights from Church Council Meeting...

Old Business:

- Parochial report is due by January 31, 2023.
- Lockbox will be closed as soon as it is feasible for the bank.
- No updates on the pavilion (Scouts).
- Council Members Nomination: 26 valid nominating ballots received. The following members have agreed to place their names in nomination: Melody Hinderer, Jane Krouse, and Patty Phile.
- Articles for Feb newsletter due Feb 15th.
- Annual reports due now.
- Congregation Annual Meeting, January 29, 2023.
- Wreaths Across America went very well. Will continue going forward each year.

New Business:

- Quorum of 25 is needed for the annual meeting. Motion will be made to change quorum from 25 to 19 for future congregation meetings.
- Church council members installation for 2023 year is Sunday Feb 5th, 2023. Feb 5th is also Boy Scout Sunday.
- Boy Scouts have reserved Luther Hall for March 24th and March 25th. Scouts will be spending the night on the 24th. The scouts will be instructed in First Aid.
- Feb 12th – “Souper Bowl Sunday” – donations will go towards the ELCA Hunger Appeal.
- Offering envelopes – discussed possibly going towards a new envelope.
- Estate of Irene Hoch – St. Johns was listed as one of the beneficiaries to her estate.
- Baptism scheduled for April 23rd for Luke Alexander Thomas, parents are Jenni and Michael Thomas.

Next council meeting is February 9th, 2023 @ 7 pm, meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm, closed meeting by praying the Lord’s Prayer.

Supply Pastor Schedule

February 5 – Pastor Michele Kaufman

February 12 – Pastor Melvin Mundie

February 19 – Pastor Chip Fairchild

February 22 (Ash Wednesday) 7 pm – Pastor Chip Fairchild

February 26 – Pastor Melvin Mundie

Altar Flowers

In Memory of Lucille Boyer

In Loving Memory of Gene E. Mundie

February Bulletin Sponsors

February 5 – In Memory of James & Priscilla Mundie by Judy Mundie

February 12, 19 & 26 – In Memory of John Zamba by Sandy Zamba

February Birthday, Baptism and Anniversary Celebrations

We publish these celebrations with permission and information given by our members. If your celebration is missing from our list, please call the church secretary with the information and your information will be updated. Thank you!



Feb. 1 - Karen Schell Howley

Feb. 1 – Sheri Klick

Feb. 7 – Donald Wenner Sr.

Feb. 8 – Debra Fulton

Feb. 20 – Betty Wenner

Feb. 27 – Brad Koch

Feb. 28 – Betty Kushner

Feb. 28 – Matthew Barbush

Feb. 6 – Jared Crawford

Feb. 10 – Camden Coxe

Feb. 14 - Arlene Poltrock

Feb. 15 – Shelia Maslo

Dawn Klick

Feb. 1 – Betty and Donald

Wenner Sr.

Bulletin Sponsors

Church members have the opportunity to sponsor our weekly church bulletins for 2023. The cost for one week is \$10.00. Available Dates Chart and forms are available in the St. Stephen's room. Please fill out the form along with your check payable to St. John's Lutheran Church and return it to Rose Fox, our church secretary.



Altar Flower Sponsors

A reminder that our 2023 Altar Flower chart is available in the St. Stephen's Room. Several Sundays are still open to sponsor flowers, but they are starting to fill up. In February, the available dates are February 12th and 26th.



WANTED CRAFTERS
MARCH 18TH, 2023
8 am - 3 pm.

Spring “Indoor” Craft & Bake Sale
 at
 St. John’s Ev. Lutheran Church
 772 St. John’s Rd., Drums, PA 18222

This event will benefit our church
 & help kids attend the 2024 Youth Gathering.

Tables can be reserved for \$10.00 + a Tricky Tray donation.
 Display & sell your crafts.

Call Donna at 570-436-2168 or Church Office btwn. 9:00 & 12:00
 at 570-788-2685 stjohns@epix.net

FOOD, BAKE SALE & TRICKY TRAY RAFFLE

Emmaus Road Drivers Needed!



We are in dire need of drivers to take our travelers to grocery stores, the Valley Food Pantry, and to routine medical appointments.

Some of our most dedicated drivers are unavailable due to having surgery, physical rehab or other acute health issues or needing some time off the roster to be family caregivers.

We need a larger pool of drivers to meet the needs of those we help and also so as not to overload our ministry team.

This valuable outreach ministry which brings the Gospel to life out in the community could possibly collapse if we do not increase driver availability. Please consider if the Spirit is calling you to work with us to help provide access to food and medical services for those who have no or very limited access to transportation.

To find out more or request an application, call or email Brother Fred at 570 956-5991 or

f3jaxheimer@gmail.com



Monthly Coffee Hour

On February 5, after church, the February birthdays will be celebrated with a coffee hour sponsored by the Schultz and Leitner families. Each first Sunday of the month Coffee Hour will be observed. There is a sign-up sheet in the St. Stephen's room for members/church teams to sponsor.

Worship Service Volunteers Needed

Since the Covid restrictions have been lifted, we are reverting back to our "normal" worship services which include coming forward for communion and offering collection. There is a sign-up sheet in the St. Stephen's room for volunteers to fill the following responsibilities for our Sunday worship services:



Head Usher/Building Attendant, Assistant Minister/Wine Pourer, Altar Guild (fold bulletins, etc.), Altar Guild (set up the altar for communion, etc.), Greeters, Crucifer (if needed), Acolyte, Communion Bread Provider, Bring Wine and Bread forward, Communion Ushers, Collection Ushers.

If you have any questions about any of the responsibilities above, please see a council member. We need volunteers in all areas, thank you.

Luther Hall

As a member of our congregation, Luther Hall is available to you if you need a place to hold a function such as a birthday party, baptism celebrations, first communion celebrations, confirmation celebrations, anniversary parties, and funeral dinners. For non-members, our hall is available for certain functions (funeral dinners not included) and there may be a fee depending on the usage of the hall (kitchen, etc.). All requests from members or non-members will have to be approved by the church council. If you are interested in reserving Luther Hall, please contact Jim Cassarella or Melody Hinderer.



Church Member Directory

There have been many requests to publish a church member directory. Our last directory is outdated and much of our member's information has changed. Our church secretary, Rose Fox, will be contacting our members to get permission to have your information published. The information we are seeking is a current mailing address, current phone number, and email. We will not publish any information that you do not want published. As before, our directory will only be given to our members to use for sending cards for lifetime events such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc. This will be a time-consuming project and if you want to call the church office and give your information before Rose calls you, please do so as that will move this project along more quickly. Thank you for your cooperation.

Divine Providence



Our church provides a nourishing evening meal once a month for the Divine Providence Homeless Shelter in Hazleton. We are in need of someone that would work with Donna in organizing the volunteers to make the dinner and the delivery of it to the shelter. It's only once each month on the 3rd Saturday for their 7:00 pm meal.

Please contact: Donna Cassarella @ 570-436-2168 (S.E.R.V.E. Team Outreach Initiative)

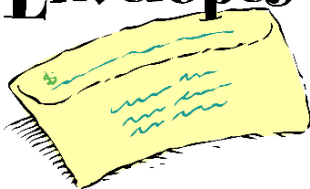
Valley Food Pantry

Thank you for supporting the Valley Food Pantry which provides food for 60 families. We also would like to thank the devoted volunteers who work diligently for the pantry. The pantry is in need of paper products (paper towels, toilet paper, napkins) and canned chili (Hormel for example). Please make sure the products are within the expiration date. Your generosity is appreciated.



Food Pantry
Donations Needed

Offering Envelopes



2023 Offering Envelopes Update

I spoke to the company on 1/12/2023. The envelopes are still in production, and they are hoping to get them to us by February, however, there is no guarantee. There are blank offering envelopes for all funds available in the St. Stephen's Room and narthex. If you need additional envelopes, please feel free to contact me. – Jen Cipriani /Treasurer

Prayer Circle



Although we enter into the new year filled with hope and gratitude, we still have many prayer concerns for the congregation and the world in which we live. Be diligent with your prayers as we care for those around us. Share a smile, hug, or kind word. Invite someone to church. You never know how one small act can impact a day or a life for someone. Say a prayer for the suffering as well as the rejoicing. If you have a prayer request for yourself, someone else, or would like to join the Prayer Circle and receive the list of prayer concerns; Please contact Kim Deliman at 570-788-4459.

Leave a message with your contact information, prayer request and if possible, the duration the prayer request will be needed. (Example: week(s), month(s), indefinitely etc.) Let me know what is to be done for the requested name, whether it is to be included in the bulletin, placed on the prayer circle list, or if the person would like to be contacted by Pastor Michele Kaufman. You may also call the church office or, sign the Prayer Request list located on the table in the St. Stephen's Room. With your help, the members of the church can keep the Prayer Circle current and enable us to fulfill the needs of the church, community, and the world in which we live. * Please keep me informed when a name can be removed from the Prayer List.

* Psalm 33:22 Let your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you

Will you answer the call?



Learning Ministry is facing a challenge and we need your help. We have been struggling to keep the Youth Sunday School Program going this year. We still do not have a teacher. Sunday School is being covered by volunteers on a month to month basis. It is with regret and sadness that we made the decision not to offer Sunday School January and February. We are hoping to take this time to regroup and move forward with plans for the future. In Order to start SS back up in March, we need volunteers to help us support the children with their classes. Sunday School runs until the end of May. That means we still need to cover three months of instruction. Prayerfully consider giving your time to the kids on a weekly or monthly basis. Team up with someone if you aren't comfortable doing it alone. Any help would be greatly appreciated. It isn't necessary to figure out lesson plans. We have an easy curriculum available to use and explore together. Weekly, monthly or a permanent volunteer would be a blessing. It is so important for the children to have a strong foundation in their faith and that begins with Sunday School. Will you answer that calling? Our SS group is small in numbers but not small in the need to continue growing through instruction and fun. We are open to any suggestions on how to make this happen. If you feel you can help us in this matter, please reach out to the Learning Ministry team. Kim Deliman (chairperson), Jennifer Cipriani, Donna Cassarella, Melody Hinderer, Patty Phile



“Souper Bowl” Sunday – February 12th

Who loves football?

Many, many people do and look forward to the game and the half-time show.

Parties are held , lots of food, and lots of fun.

Lots of cheering and lots of frustration, all depending on which team wins.

The ELCA Hunger Appeal wants every person to win. By that, I mean, that all should be fulfilled...fulfilled as no hungry men, women, or children in this world. We, at St. John's, support the ELCA Hunger Appeal every year through our giving and special events such as the “Souper Bowl”. This year is no different. Let us help those whose stomachs are not full, those who are suffering from malnutrition, and those who have no idea where their next meal is coming from.

Our giving does and has made a difference in our world.

Let's not give up that one day, there will be no one hungry.

Until then, please consider giving to the “Souper Bowl” collection on February 12th.

Wreaths Across America

Our scout units organized a Wreaths Across America ceremony on Saturday, December 17, 2022. It was a great success and there are plans to hold this event annually. They were able to have representatives from the Marine Corps., Butler Township Police, Christian Motorcycle Association, and State Representative Michael Cabel. There were 234 wreaths sponsored for 2022 out of the goal of 330. They are hoping for 2023 to be able to place a wreath on every veteran's grave. Please save the date for this year's event, December 16, 2023. Wreaths can be sponsored online at www.wreathscrossamerica.org/pages/167755 or given directly to Jennifer Cipriani. It cost \$15 to sponsor a wreath and they can be specified for specific graves upon request.







- ❖ February 1st – Prayer Shawl Ministry @ 9:30 am
- ❖ February 2nd – Scouts Committee Meeting @ 7 pm
- ❖ February 5th – Scouts Sunday; Church @ 10 am with installation of 2023 Council Members; Coffee Hour

- ❖ February 6th – Scouts @ 6pm
- ❖ February 8th - Choir @ 2 pm
- ❖ February 9th - Church Council Meeting @ 7 pm
- ❖ February 12th – “Souper Bowl” Sunday; Church @ 10 am

- ❖ February 13th - Scouts @ 6 pm
- ❖ February 14th – Valentine’s Day
- ❖ February 15th – March Newsletter Deadline; Prayer Shawl Ministry @ 9:30 am; Choir @ 2 pm
- ❖ February 18th – Divine Providence Meal
- ❖ February 19th - Transfiguration of Our Lord; Church @ 10 am

- ❖ February 20th – President’s Day; Scouts @ 6 pm
- ❖ February 22nd - Ash Wednesday Service @ 7 pm
- ❖ February 23rd – S.E.R.V.E. Meeting @ 6:30 pm
- ❖ February 26th – Church @ 10 am

- ❖ February 27th – Scouts @ 6 pm

Upcoming COMMUNITY EVENTS

Easter Crystal Sale: Christ Church UCC (460 Main St., Conyngham) is accepting orders for Easter Crystals. They are \$14.00 per box and orders are due by March 15th. The pick-up date is April 1st between 10 am to 12 pm at the rear of the church. Call Barb to order at 570-788-3246.