



ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH ELCA

MONTGOMERY, MINNESOTA

Proudly Serving One Master Since 1861

MARCH 2017

A HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DUST & ASHES

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Genesis 3:19

These aren't new words that we hear, but instead, that age old word of woe spoken to Adam in the midst of his turning from God's word of life to a word that promises death. They have become familiar words for us, because they resound every year for us during our Ash Wednesday liturgy and reverberate throughout the days and weeks of lent. For many, this is a time when some prepare to do their Lenten 40 day trip back to the wilderness. However, for you who aren't so lucky to just use this time to empathize with what it might have been like, but instead you have come face to face with real struggle and loss – or – you are looking ahead as death draws near. No one has to describe the wilderness to you, because you are already there.

Abraham used it as a marker for his identity in his advocating for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20) when he addressed God, "*Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes (Gen 18:27).*"

And the psalmist in Psalm 104 names the sting of death:

*When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust (Psalm 104:29).*

And once more, Job in the midst of going through all that he went through (death of loved ones, personal physical affliction, and mental, emotional, & spiritual strain) knew he was dust and ash:

*He has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes.
I cry to you and you do not answer me; I stand, and you merely look at me.
You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me.
You lift me up on the wind,
you make me ride on it, and you toss me about in the roar of the storm.
I know that you will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living (Job 30:19-23).*

So where is the Hope in the midst of the dust and ashes? Well of course, it is in knowing God and in trusting in His word in the midst of the wilderness and in the dust and the ashes of death. It is alive through faith in the one who is in the midst of suffering. For in one breath they name the dust and ashes, and in the next they turn back to God's promises alive in Christ.

For the psalmist continues:

*When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground (Psalm 104:30).*

(Continues)

And it is alive in Job:

*“For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see on my side,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me (Job 19:25-27)!”*

When that smudge of ash still stubbornly lingers on your foreheads, trust in your hope of what God as fulfilled through Christ, be filled with the peace of Christ in your victory over death, and remember that other mark of oil with God’s word, “You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.”

*May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works-- (Psalm 104:31)*

Peace of Christ,

Pastor Jason

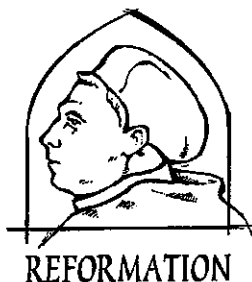
EVER-REFORMING: A REFORMATION 500 CROSS-GENERATIONAL STUDY

In 2017, we recognize 500 years of Reformation. The Reformation was a time that of recognition that we are ever-reforming. Not changing to keep up with the culture and the times, but understanding that we are always being drawn a back to scripture and the mercy that we have received through God sending His Son, Jesus Christ into this world and our brokenness to save and redeem us. It is from this that we live out of the life that we have in Christ. Throughout this year, we will be offering various 6-week congregational Reformation/Bible Studies on a number of topics connected to Lutheran Theology and the Reformation.

In March, we will be starting a 6-Week Reformation Bible Study developed by the North Carolina Synod with the intent to be use in other Synods and the churches within them. Ever-Reforming is intended to be taught for a wide audience – from middle schoolers to seasoned church members. It isn’t intended for Lutherans alone, but is open to those from all backgrounds (Christian and other traditions). Please come, learn, and share with us! We will be offering weekly topics on **Monday evenings at 6 PM** and **Thursday mornings at 10 AM** (in the downstairs education room or fellowship room depending on attendance).

DATES AND TOPICS TO BE STUDIED

March 6th and 9th	God with Us – A Theology of the Cross
March 13th and 16th	Death and Life – A Theology of Law and Gospel
March 20th and 23rd	Saved by Grace – Theology of Justification by Grace through Faith
March 27th and 30th	Simul Justus et Peccator – A Theology of Saints and Sinners
April 3rd and 6th	Vocation of Marriage and Family
April 10th and 13th	The Priesthood of All Believers – A Theology of Vocation



March Worship Helpers

Readers

March 5 Jesse Skluzacek
 March 12 Jessica Westerman
 March 19 Cindy Curtis
 March 26 Diane DeWitte

Head Usher

Eric Schroeder

Ushers / Greeters

March 5 Jesse & Gail Skluzack
 Eric Schroeder
 Lynn Schuknecht
 March 12 David and Rhonda Solberg
 Phillip Solberg
 Myrna Terwedo
 March 19 Berlyn & Garie Teig
 Rich & Wendy Vargo
 March 26 Rich & Liz Vlasak
 Paul Bollmar
 Cindy Westerhouse

Communion Assistants

March 12 Erin Krautkremer
 Don Marcussen
 Tammie Pan
 March 26 Rhonda Solberg
 Charles Richter
 Cheryl Schulte

Acolytes

March 5 Wyley Peterson
 March 12 Natalee Korbitz
 March 19 Caleb Cihak
 March 26 Wyley Peterson

Altar Guild

Tammie Pan

*If you are unable to help on the day assigned,
 please EXCHANGE with someone else
 and call the church office at 507-364-5002.
Thank you for your help!*

Remember in your Prayers...

Anne Anderson (Paige Nordling's sister-in-law), Marc Peterson, Jeff Erkel (Lori Helling's brother), Tom Trenda, Steve Scheffert, Gail Pollington (Pastor's aunt), Dale Benson, Elsie Schultz (Diane's mother-in-law), Blanche Sorenson, Heidi Huewe (friend of Renee Sorenson), Lisa (Bartyzal) Indhl, Jaime Schultz (Diane Schultz's step-daughter), Kim Edel, Gauge Kodada, Lindsey Jensen, Greg Vlasak, Keith (Zeke) Zahratka, Lois Schmidt (Megan Pratola's aunt), Gail Embretson, Rev. Bob and Ardyce Boda, Nancy Creger, Phyllis Swidorski, Amy Korthuis (Judy Ferguson's sister-in-law), Reinhold West (Carol Kiekow's father), and Kris Huhner (Kathy Peterson's sister).

Remember those serving our country...

Travis Ferguson, Colin Hulke, Shane Morris, Matthew Astorino and Adam Vlasak.



Our Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to the family of Don Holms who passed away Sunday, February 19.

We extend our sympathy to the family of Karen Hendricks who passed away Sunday, February 19.

We extend our sympathy to Nicole Schwitzer upon the death of her grandmother Mary Eliot Schweitzer on Monday, February 27.

Gifts

Gift received in memory of Tom Mariska. Thank you.

Gift received in memory of Milton Bauer. Thank you.

Baptism

Delaney Jane Krocak was baptized Sunday, Feb. 12. Delaney was born October 3, 2016 to Martin and Sarah Krocak. Her sponsors are Bobby Krocak and Scott Mathis. God's blessings to Delaney and her family.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who contributed aluminum cans. The cans brought in \$153 for the Food Shelf. Thank you to Paul Busch for taking cans to Mankato and thank you to Jim Heyda for replacing the plywood on the trailer.

Have an announcement for the bulletin or newsletter?

Drop off or e-mail (stjohnelca@frontier.com) information to the church office by:

- ◆ Thursday for the bulletin.
- ◆ The 24th of March for the April newsletter.

Financial Corner General Fund - January

	January	Year to Date
Receipt	\$ 13,229.86	\$ 13,229.86
Expenses	\$ 15,792.35	\$ 15,792.35
Cash Flow	\$ (2,562.49)	\$ (2,562.49)

St. John Church Council Minutes

February 21, 2017

St John Church Council was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Kathy Peterson. Pastor Jason opened with devotion from Martin Luther; 'Who has called us to be leaders? God gives us growth to serve for the benefit of others'.

Present: Kathy Peterson (1/20), Renee Sorenson (1/19), Liz Vlasak (1/18), Connie Cihak (1/18), Steve Schroeder (1/20), Eric Schroeder (1/18), Wendy Vargo (1/20), and Pastor Jason.

Absent: Greg Westerman (1/19)

Also present were: Audit Committee: Cindy Westerhouse, Rhonda Solberg, and Liz Krocak. Following ELCA Guidelines, they presented the committee's recommendations. The Council is considering their findings and will begin to implement them. The Audit Committee will be meeting with other committees in the church to share best practices.

Motion made by Renee Sorenson, seconded by Wendy Vargo, to accept the following officers of St. John Church Council: Eric Schroeder, Chairman, Greg Westerman, Vice Chair, Liz Vlasak, Treasurer, Connie Cihak, Secretary. Motion carried.

Liz Vlasak gave the Treasurers report. Motion to approve by Wendy Vargo, seconded by Renee Sorenson, motion carried.

Usher Update: Eric Schroeder will be head usher for March; Steve Schroeder will be head usher for April.

Feed My Sheep: Two recipients noted.

Recycling: Designated to go to The Food Shelf. Thank you to Paul Busch and Jim Heyda for the repairs!

Old Business:

Discussed bell tower – Eric will lead this project; seeking out additional alternatives/options.

Motion by Kathy Peterson, Seconded by Liz Vlasak to increase Youth Activity Director's wage by two percent, effective 1-1-2017. Motion carried.

Chairman elect Eric Schroeder took over the meeting.

New Business:

Eric reported Pam Edel's resignation from Church Council, per Constitution the Council will appoint someone to fill the vacancy until the next annual meeting.

Pastor Update: A review of activities, confirmation, Minnesota River Conference attendance, Mandatory Reporting with Synod, filed 2016 Report to ELCA Church wide, upcoming baptisms and on Lenten Services.

Per compliance with ELCA Internal Best Practices Guidelines, we will be removing Dan Hardel and Kay Busch as signers at Frandsen Bank and Trust. Adding as signers Eric Schroeder and Liz Vlasak at Frandsen Bank and Trust; Kathy Peterson will remain as third signer. In addition we will add Eric Schroeder and Liz Vlasak as signers to the Safety Deposit Box at Frandsen Bank and Trust; Kathy Peterson will remain as third signer. Motion made by Wendy Vargo, seconded by Renee Sorenson; motion carried.

Review of Church Membership Roster, which we did before the Annual meeting.

We discussed Committee assignments and will make any necessary changes next month.

Eric led us with the Lord's Prayer; Kathy moved meeting adjourn at 8:35 p.m., seconded by Wendy; motion carried.

Next meeting March 21, 2017

Respectfully submitted,
Connie Cihak

March Music Notes

On Ash Wednesday, March 1, we will have the imposition of ashes. The service starts at 6:30 p.m. Ashes symbolize death and grief as well as the repentance we feel because we have not lived up to being the person God intends us to be. On the five Wednesdays following Ash Wednesday we will use a Liturgy for Lent with readings from the Gospel of John called "That You May Have Life." We meet the people who encounter Jesus: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

On Maundy Thursday, April 13, we will present the "Living Last Supper" Drama at 7:00 p.m. When God called these twelve men to be His disciples, He chose flawed individuals, people just like you and me, men who were not saints or even finished products, but works in progress; men whose qualities needed to be honed, molded and channeled in positive ways. We are reminded that He is not yet finished with any of us and that every one of us is guilty of denying and betraying Him. The most important lesson of this presentation is that His love and mercy covers every uncertainty and His will is perfect, even if it is difficult to understand.

On Good Friday, April 14, we will recreate the passion according to St. John. The service starts at 7:00 p.m.

On Easter Sunday, April 16, the Bells of St. John will ring and the Women's Choir will sing at both services (9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.) The Women's Choir will rehearse 3 Wednesday evenings. Please let Kathy know if you will be singing so she can get choir folders ready.

Mark your calendars: Rehearse Wed. March 22 after the Lenten service

Rehearse Wed. April 5 after the Lenten service

Rehearse Wed. April 12 from 6:30 – 7:00 p.m.

March 1 (Ash Wednesday)

Bells of St. John will ring "I Need Thee Every Hour"

March 12

N/P/K and Grades 1-4 will sing

March 19

Rock'n the Church will sing "He Is Mine" with Anne Schroeder, soloist

March 26

Bells of St. John will ring "A Disciple's Prayer" with Liz Krocak, violinist



CRISIS OF IDENTITY

Tuesday, March 28, 6:30-8:00 p.m., Megan Pratola, MA, MTH, will be doing a brief presentation at St. John Lutheran on her book on Christians as Minorities in the Holy Land.

Books will be available to purchase with 10% of book sales going to the St. John Youth Mission trip to Pine Ridge.

Please come and join us and learn more about this interesting and relevant topic.

YOUR CHURCH – YOUR FAITH – OUR STORY

CONFIRMATION STUDENTS

My Church

My church is a safe and open area to ask questions or to share ideas with other people that you can feel comfortable sharing with. It is important that the church includes me and other people my age to help out with others or even just to get ideas or questions answered, too. My church can support me by helping me out if I have questions or even by just keeping me and others happy by sharing the word of God. A gift I have to share with my church is my young and still developing mind that can see what others can't, so, in other words, a different perspective.

My Faith

Many people have helped in my developing faith, my parents, grandparents, Sunday school teachers, and the many pastors I have seen and listened to. Not many people have shared their faith story with me, only a few, as in the ones I have listed for helping develop my faith, because they shared theirs with me. It is important to share faith with others, so they can understand that they are not alone and someone is there for them, including us and God.

My Story

Like I said, "I am still young and don't have much of a story," but, as with most others, my story is connected to Christ by my choices and when He is there for me. Not saying that Jesus is only there once in a while, but with me every step I take. Jesus helps me solve my tough problems I might have. I can share things with Him, and He will, at least, listen or give me an answer to one of my questions.

What is our story

Well there aren't a whole lot of stories to go off of to tell our story, just yet, but, thankfully I have a few and thank you to those who did them. Our story is showing that Jesus is a person who listens to us and helps us through our faith in God and Him (Jesus). While He listens to us He also wants us to hear His word and to look for Him when we have troubles. Jesus will always help you with your problems and give you the choice you should make.

Thank you for taking your time to read this segment,

Preston Anderson (8th Grade Confirmation)

My church means a lot to me because of the people. We are one giant family that cares about one another. I always feel safe and supported when I go to church.

The people who have helped develop my faith are my mom and dad, my grandparents, my mentor, and Pastor. My parents and grandparents do different things with me that help grow my faith. My mentor will help guide me during my confirmation and will help me grow spiritually through and after it. My godparents also help me grow because they are good role-models in and out of church. They also share their faith with me.

I feel that it is important to share my faith with others because I've always liked having God in my life. He helps guide me and he always makes me want to learn more about him. I want other people to have that guidance in their lives, especially when things get hard in life. I think that God will always have a special connection with me because I keep him close to me.

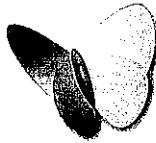
Madelyn Wehe (9th Grade Confirmation)

Grief Support Group

A support group will be held at the church this spring for anyone in our community who has experienced a loss through death. The group will be held in a supportive and confidential environment.

"One of the realities of grief and loss is that the rest of the world seems to keep on going forward, while we feel like we have been stopped in our tracks." - Alan Wolfelt

More information will follow in next month's newsletter. If you have any questions you may call Brenda Peterson, 701-658-9069.



2017 Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign

This March we are joining with other faith communities, as well as food shelves, businesses and organizations across Minnesota in the movement to end hunger. For 35 years the March Campaign has, with your help, restocked local food shelves. Please bring nonperishable food or monetary donations to worship service during the month of March so together we can strive to #ENDHUNGER.

Did you know hunger is still a problem in Minnesota?

- 1 in 10 Minnesota families experiences food insecurity.
- In 2015 there were over 3.2 million food shelf visits in Minnesota, half of which were made by children and seniors.
- Last year the March Campaign raised more than 5.2 million pounds of food and \$7.9 million for food shelves around the state.
- 100% of contributions go towards hunger relief.
- Your local food shelf can make each dollar donated stretch further through their access to low-cost products.

***"You must actively help the hungry and feed the oppressed.
Then your light will dispel the darkness..."***

-Isaiah 58:10

Lenten Worship Services

Weekly Lenten Worship Services began on Ash Wednesday, March 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Again this year a simple supper will be served starting at 5:00 p.m.

Please join us on Wednesday evenings during Lent for fellowship and worship.

Groups & Organizations that meet at St. John!

To ensure our calendar is correct and that we have the church open for your event, please inform Pastor Jason or Kay of your planned meeting dates.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Personal Kits

WOTC are looking for donations for the personal kits they will be putting together for Lutheran World Relief. Items needed are Ivory bar soap (regular size), tooth brushes, bath towels and combs. You can place your items in box in fellowship hall.

Thank you

TWO GREAT WAYS THRIVENT FINANCIAL CAN HELP IN OUR MINISTRY HERE AT ST. JOHN

Do you know how to designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to St. John Lutheran?

Do you know how to create Thrivent Action Teams that can help by assisting with projects (\$250 per qualifying project) within the life of St. John Lutheran?

On **Sunday, March 5th**, Thrivent Associate, Channelle Braekkan, has offered to come to St. John Lutheran following the 9AM service to help members designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars and put them to great use here. **Thrivent Dollars need to be designated by March 31, 2017.**

She will also help by talking about great ways to put **Thrivent Teams** into action for **Fundraisers, Service Events, or Educational Events**. **Benefit Members** are eligible for **TWO PROJECTS** a year; **Associate Members** are eligible for **ONE PROJECT** a year. Members can create one action team for one event. Qualifying projects will receive a **Seed Money Card** in the amount of **\$250** to use on the project.

We also have literature on both of these located in the downstairs information area and upstairs on the table outside of the Sanctuary.



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HOW TO RECOMMEND AN ORGANIZATION FOR ENROLLMENT IN THRIVENT CHOICE®

You must be a Thrivent Financial benefit member.

Online

1. Visit **Thrivent.com/thriventchoice**.
2. Log in.* At the top right, enter your Thrivent Member ID and password and click **Log In**. Answer any security questions, then click **Continue**.

*If you prefer not to register or log in, skip this step. (Be sure to have your nine-digit member ID number available. It will be required when you complete the Recommend an Organization form.)
3. Under the Making a Difference tab, click on **Thrivent Choice**. Then, scroll down and select **Recommend organizations**.
4. Enter the information for the organization that you are recommending along with your personal information.
5. Click **Submit**.

By phone

1. Call **800-847-4836** and when prompted, say "**Thrivent Choice**."
2. **Press 1**
(If prompted, say or enter your phone number and date of birth.)




Note: Please have your nine-digit Member Identification Number or contract number available.
3. A representative will work with you to make the recommendation.

Recommend where Thrivent Financial gives back!

The Thrivent Choice® charitable grant program engages Thrivent members and chapters in providing grants that support charitable activities, furthering Thrivent's mission and its purposes under state law. All grants are made at the sole discretion of Thrivent. Directing Choice Dollars® is subject to the program's terms and conditions available at Thrivent.com/thriventchoice.



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Consider Simply Giving

St. John Lutheran Church invites you to consider our electronic giving program as a way to automate your regular weekly offering.

Electronic giving offers convenience for individual congregation members and provides much needed donation **consistency** for our congregation. We anticipate that electronic giving will appeal to many church members—from longtime worshippers who will appreciate an alternative to frequent check writing to younger members and others who prefer to pay or donate by electronic means whenever possible.

Direct Debit Giving is used to automatically transfer funds from your checking or savings account to the church's bank account. If you are already using direct debit to make mortgage and car payments or to pay utility bills, then you know how it works.

Credit and Debit Card Giving lets you make offerings automatically on a predetermined schedule using a credit or debit card. Today, many families use debit cards as a convenient alternative to checks or use credit cards in a responsible manner to manage a wide range of obligations.

We presently have 24 families who give to St. John through Simply Giving or through our website giving option. If you are interested in participating or have any questions, contact Kay Busch in the church office.

Help us grow

Electronic Giving is a convenient, consistent way to help our church grow.

Consider scheduling a recurring electronic contribution today. It's easy! You will no longer need to write out checks and prepare envelopes every week. Even when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, your electronic contributions will continue to be received on an uninterrupted basis.

Get started today!
Ask for an authorization form in the church office. Or visit our church website.



ST. JOHN YOUTH

T-shirts for Sale!



Youth sizes M & L \$10 Adult sizes XS-XL

T-shirts are available Sundays after church service or during the week through Kay in church office or Missy in youth office.

March is Minnesota Food Share month!

Junior and Senior League will bring food and monetary donations to the Montgomery Food Shelf on Saturday March 25th, 11:45-12:45pm. Meet at church and we will bring collected food to food shelf and help them organize the shelves. Please pick up kids at the food shelf at 12:45.

Easter Basket Event

Little and Junior League will fill Easter basket on Sunday, April 2nd 11am-noon. We will put together Easter baskets to be delivered to the shut in members of the church.



Little League Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday April 8th 10- Noon. We'll have an egg hunt, snacks and crafts! Open to kids under 3rd grade with a parent.

Upcoming Mission trip fundraisers!

Thursday March 16th we will be at Pizza Ranch in New Prague. We get a % of all sales from 5-7 PM, as well as tips!

We will have puffins during coffee hour on March 19th highlighting the puffin fundraiser. Stock up on these delicious pastries!

Easter lily sales will be March 5-19. They can be purchased to take home or left to decorate at church for the Easter services. We appreciate your support.!

Youth League Parents

Missy has set up an account on **remind.com**. This is a great way to keep in touch with all the activities going on in the youth group. Head to <https://www.remind.com/join/missygre> They have an email and text option and an app! Let Missy know if you have any questions.

Scholarship Applications

We will be accepting college scholarship applications from this year's senior class Starting March 5th. Applications will be available on the church website and on the youth bulletin board. Applications must be turned into Kay or Missy by 10 am on Sunday, April 30th. Awards will be announced at the Graduates service on Sunday, May 21st. Applicants must be present at this service. Please contact Missy with any questions.