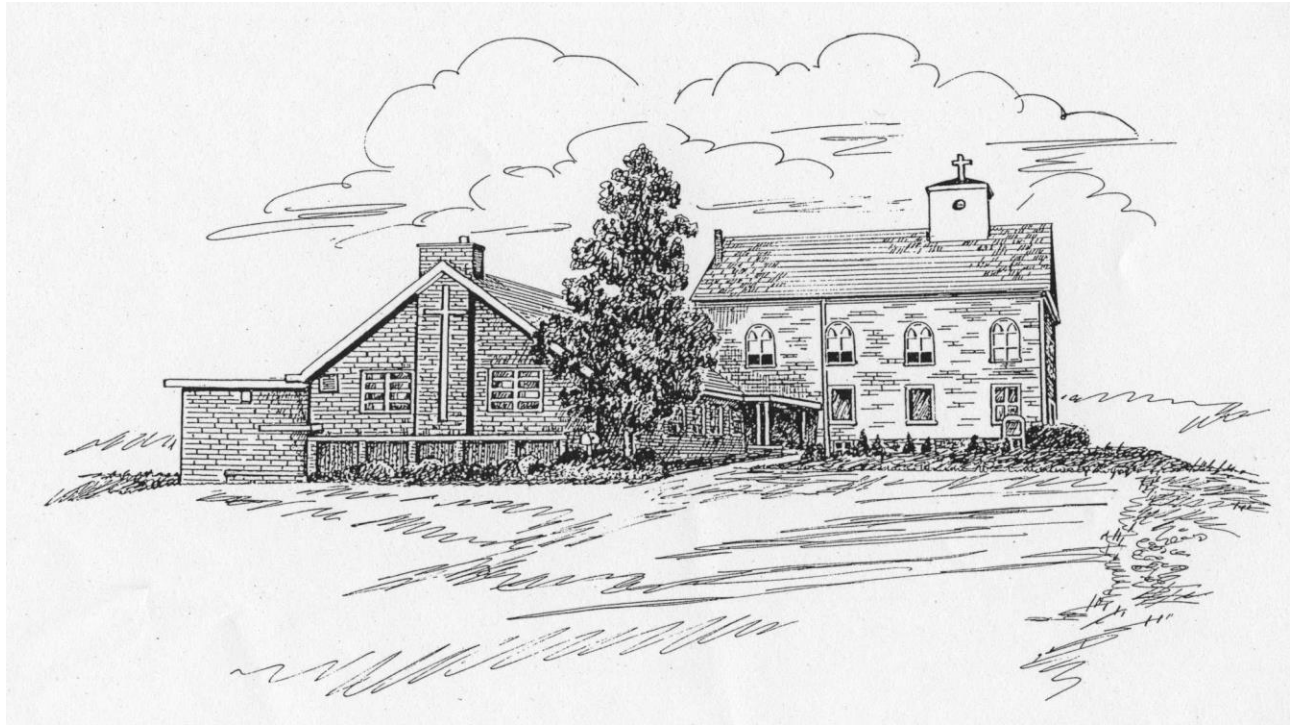


WISPS OF STRAW



St. James Lutheran Church Newsletter

February / March 2018

Pastor: The Rev. Bernard Kelly

Church Office Phone: 908-454-2864

E-mail: strawchurch@gmail.com

Web site: www.strawchurch.org

*“Serving Christ in Word and Deed”
more than 265 Years*

From the Pastor's Desk

A Lenten Triptych (A triptych is a work of art presented in three panels.)

The Right Panel

Is Lent about giving something up or gaining something? For so long, Christians have approached Lent with the idea that in making some form of sacrifice for Christ, they could deepen their understanding of and appreciation for the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. On one level, there is some value in this. We would all do well to consider what it cost God to reconcile us to Him in the same way we might consider what our parents or spouse sacrifice for our sake. However, over time, the ritual of "giving something up for Lent" has become, in many instances, just another way of focusing on ourselves. We tend to share and compare what we gave up for Lent: "I gave up chocolate for Lent." "I gave up watching television for Lent." "Me? I gave up my New Year's resolutions." Rarely, if ever, do we say anything like, "Gosh, it was so hard for me to even give up chocolate that it made me appreciate all the more what Jesus gave up for me." Or, "How could my little sacrifices ever reflect God's sacrifice for me?" So, giving something up for Lent *can* be of value if we get a deeper appreciation for God's love for us. But this takes intentional reflection, dedicated prayer and spiritual contemplation. As we approach Lent, might I suggest that we be intentional in our reflection, dedicated in our prayer and open to God is whispering to us?

The Left Panel

Lent is about resisting the temptation to sin, right? Well, yes, but only in the same way that taking a pain reliever is the best way to treat a broken arm. We often think of sin as the problem. Actually, sin is the *symptom*. Our broken relationship with God is the condition that needs mending. But there is no way we can mend that relationship; we are the ones that broke it. And because we cannot fix the condition, we focus on the symptoms. We try to stop gossiping, or we commit to forgive others more, or be more regular in our worship, and yet we grow no closer to God. We grow no closer for two reasons. The first is that even if we *could* stop sinning, the breach in the relationship we caused by our prior sins still remains and we cannot mend it. The second reason is that we can't actually *stop sinning* by sheer willpower any more than we can stop the pain of a broken arm by willing it away. Sin is the symptom of the broken relationship. However, if we focus on our relationship with God, and allow God to mend the break, we may just find that the desire to sin fades away, and as the desire fades, the practice does too. Lent is really about intentionally drawing closer to God.

The Center Panel

In the center, is ALWAYS God. Lent is a forty day season which reflects the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness. (Just a note, if you ever want count the days of Lent, start with Ash Wednesday being the first and count each day EXCEPT Sundays. We don't count Sundays because every Sunday is a little Easter.) God goes before us to lead us, walks beside us to comfort us, stands behind us to strengthen us and is above us to watch over us. God always makes the first move in reconciliation and in restoring the breach. But we have difficulty seeing it, trouble believing it and set-backs living as if it were true. The forces of evil and the ways of the world dull our senses and cloud our belief. But the disciplines of Lent: worship, prayer, fasting, the study of Scripture as well as reflection and contemplation bring the Truth into focus. So, I encourage each of you to avail yourselves of the extra times of worship and to engage in all the disciplines of Lent.

Pastor Kelly

Lenten Evening Soup Suppers and Prayer

Once again, we will be keeping Lent with our sisters and brothers at Grace. We will gather each Wednesday evening at 6:00 for a light supper of soup, salad and bread. This will be followed by a conversation about prayer led by Deacon & Pastor Kelly. We will close each evening using the beautiful Holden Evening Prayer. The first Lenten Evening service will be Feb. 21st and will be held at St. James. Then, we will meet as follows: 2/28 at Grace; 3/7 at St. James; 3/14 at Grace and 3/21 at St. James.

The conversation on prayer will cover several aspects of prayer: Why do we pray? How shall we pray? Different types of prayer; Why should we pray if God is going to do what God is going to do anyway? It promises to be a lively and inspiring conversation. Please sign up (sheets are in the Frey Hall foyer) if you are willing to bring something, but that is not required. Everyone is welcome! Consider inviting a friend!

Spring Bake Sale



The spring Bake Sale will be held in conjunction with the Straw Church Country Breakfast on Saturday, March 3rd. Proceeds will be used to help defray our copying and printing expenses.

There is a sign-up sheet in the Frey Hall foyer for those willing to donate baked goods to sell. Please drop off your items between 6:00 and 7:00 pm on Friday, March 2nd, or by 8:00 am on Saturday.

Discourse From the Deacon

1 Corinthians 12:26, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."

I would like to sincerely thank everyone for their prayers and cards both on the death of my sister-in-law, Betsy and the surgery and recovery of my brother, Bob. It has been a difficult time for our family. Your care and kindness really makes me feel like we are members of one body: working together, caring for one another, sharing our joys and sorrows. Thank you.

Another huge thank you to all those who had anything to do with making my installation as Deacon not only come to fruition, but such a wonderful, joyful event! I am overcome with emotion when I realize how much hard work, care, and sacrifice went into it from the very beginning. From the initial work done by the Shared Ministry Task Force, the honest and sometimes difficult conversations to the planning, cleaning and painting, the preparation, the music...THANK YOU!!! You have all demonstrated what we can accomplish when we work together toward something which I believe God is calling us to do. I know I have said it before, but I am really excited to see what else God has in store for us and where He may lead us!

Matthew 19:26, "For God all things are possible."

Ed. Note: Photos of the Installation can be seen on Page 6.

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When you get to your wit's end, you'll find God lives there.

Youth Group Happenings

Many thanks to Sara Bergstresser (Grace) for the idea and all her hard work in getting the luminary fund-raiser off the ground! Thanks also to all those who helped with and supported this fund-raiser. The church looked beautiful with the sidewalks lined in the glowing lights on Christmas Eve. We sold 35 luminaries so we *grossed* \$350. The money made is going toward the National Youth Gathering this summer. If anyone else has any ideas for other fund-raisers for this event, please let me know! We aren't there yet!

On January 7th we had a great time bowling, despite Pastor Kelly's left-handed throw (because of his right rotator cuff injury) and Deacon Kelly's fall after releasing the ball! The kids did much better than we did! Attending the event were: James Fortuna, Jon Fortuna, Cael MacIntyre, Kim Eaton, Lexi Rosetti and her friend Julia. The adult chaperones were Pr. & Deacon Kelly, and Cassie and Thomas Fortuna.

We also took a trip on February 9th to the Lehigh Valley Phantoms (minor league ice hockey) game against the Hershey Bears, thanks to the generous donations of three tickets. Going to see the Phantoms beat the Hershey Bears (5-1) were Kim Eaton, Jon and Cassie Fortuna, and Pastor Kelly. Below is a picture from our seats.



Finally, and this is **CRITICAL**, all youth going to the ELCA Youth Gathering are **REQUIRED** to attend a mandatory meeting on Saturday, March 3rd, at 10:30 am, at the Straw Church Country Breakfast. You will be able to have breakfast there, and there will also be a bake sale going on. We will find folks to cover for the youth who normally work the Breakfast. We will be making some solid plans for the Gathering and giving details like our hotel, travel plans, and due dates for payments. If you **ABSOLUTELY** can't make it, you **MUST** give me a call (215-872-0949)

Deacon Karen Kelly

Fastnacht Generosity Party a Huge Success!

Thanks to everyone who made our Fastnacht Generosity Party a wonderful success. On Tuesday, February 13th we had 33 people (16 from St. James and 17 from Grace) in attendance, and we had a great time of good food, fellowship and conversation about generosity. We missed the two couples who were unable to make it because of sickness. We DO hope you feel better. We want to thank **Janet Bray** for making some delicious heart-shaped cookies and **Liz Kolba** for making some rice pudding to add to our traditional fastnachts and regular donuts. We also want to thank **Bob Babcock** for getting there early to start the coffee and greet at the door.

Hopefully, now the folks who came to our party will help us broaden and deepen our congregational conversations about the Godly-joy of being generous. Check out the pictures below.



Again, thank you to all who came and made it so much fun.

Pastor & Deacon Kelly

Links of Love

This year our Eastertide Links of Love will be on sale in Frey Hall after every worship service from February 24th through March 25th (Palm Sunday). Money raised will be donated to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center in Washington, NJ, a shelter for at-risk women. (<https://www.dasacc.org/>)

Looking Ahead

The next **Adult Bingo Night** will be held in Frey Hall on Saturday, March 24th following evening worship.

We will have a **sunrise service** for Easter Sunday at 6:30 am in the cemetery across the street from church, with refreshments after the service at St. James.

The Easter morning worship will be at **8:30 am** rather than 8:45.

A Note from the Council President

"If you build it they will come" is a famous quote from the Kevin Costner movie *Field of Dreams*. While that quote refers to building a baseball field to financially solve a landowners' dilemma, by analogy it also can have a spiritual basis. When I was recently elected Council President of St. James, I was asked by many...how are you going to solve a dwindling membership, financial concerns and a divided congregation? My answer is quite simple, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! If we build a congregation full of faithfulness, spirituality, and compassion to one another at St James, I believe people will come. We need to come to church each week as a refuge from what is taking place in life, sickness, pain and mental and physical suffering. I come to church to raise up my heart and soul to God.

I want to bring joy back to St James. We have so many talented people here and I want to utilize all of their skills to get St. James back on track. As far as council is concerned, it will be run like a business with no bullying or condescending comments. Our website is being overhauled so that the congregation and surrounding communities can see all the good things we are doing and to remind the communities we are here, please come!. The Social Ministry Committee is truly amazing in what their efforts are accomplishing. I have been here 21 years and didn't realize it, so thank you from my heart.

We now have a puzzle and book exchange section in Ed Frey hall. Please stop by and do a piece of the puzzle or grab a book to take home. There is plenty of space to exchange some puzzles or books that you may have at home. We have a great monthly breakfast that you should stop by and bring some friends. We are always looking for new volunteers! Show them what a great place St. James is to socialize and pray. We have free Bingos and Vendor fairs. There is a lot of good will at St. James and we have plans to come up with more events to interest both the members and surrounding communities.



So my plan is if you build a place that unites and not divides, where all are welcome...they will come.

God Bless,

Dominick Esposito

Deacon Karen Kelly's Installation at Grace, January 28th



Scout Sunday

At worship on February 4th we celebrated our annual tradition of recognizing the important parts our scouts have always played in the life of the St. James family. Thanks to all of them and their adult leaders.



Chuckle Corner

Actual announcements taken from church bulletins:

The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind and they may be seen in the church basement on Friday.

An online timeline and conversation of Lutheran history



Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, where Martin Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses in 1517.
Photo: Martin Lohrmann

In Lutheran Quarterly's "Timeline of Global Lutheranism," 10 topics for each of the five centuries since Martin Luther's posting of the 95 theses help tell the story of the Lutheran church. Different subjects highlight Lutheran experiences in various times and places. The list invites readers to consider what they think is missing and what they would suggest adding – making the timeline an open conversation.

This timeline highlights the diverse, global nature of the church that Protestant reformers envisioned when they presented the Augsburg Confession in 1530. Even so, there remains a need to keep sharing, hearing and learning histories, and the timeline helps encourage faith communities to share new and old stories of life in the body of Christ.

Each timeline subject has a paragraph describing its significance for Lutheran history, helping connect individual moments with larger movements. Lutheran Quarterly essays accompany the topics, adding opportunities for deeper study and introducing readers to existing historical work. Images and weblinks add media elements for further exploration.

Lutheran Quarterly and Johns Hopkins University Press have made this timeline available for free. View the timeline at timeline.press.jhu.edu/lut_reformation by clicking on the time periods at the top of the page.

From ELCA "Seeds for the Parish"

Worship Leaders Schedule February & March

FEBRUARY

Day/Date	Special	Communion Set-up/Clean up	Greeters	Lector	Liturgist	Ushers	Counters
Sat. 24		Kelly Perna		Rick Brunsell	Kelly Perna		
Sun. 25		Marly Raspe (S)	Dave & Charlotte Morris	Polly Sue Newbold	Steve Stocker	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble	Charlotte Morris Janice Youpa

MARCH

Day/Date	Special	Communion Set-up/Clean up	Greeters	Lector	Liturgist	Ushers	Counters
Sat. 3		Sue Miller		Sue Miller	Karen Kelly		
Sun. 4		Marlie Raspe	Lois Steible Carol Steible	Marlie Raspe	Jamie McLain	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble	Bob Babcock Steve Stocker
Sat. 10		Marion Martin		Kaern Kelly	Cindy Aloise		
Sun. 11		Marlie Raspe	Janet Bray	Bob Babcock	Ralph Avard	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble	Lois Steible Janice Youpa
Sat. 17		Holly Chemidilin		Holly Chemidilin	Lexi Rosetti		
Sun. 18		Marlie Raspe	George & Chris Scherer	Jamie McLain	Polly Sue Newbold	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble	Shirley Johnson Dave Morris
Sat. 24		Kelly Perna		Mark Aloise	Sue Miller		
Sun. 25	PALM SUNDAY	Marlie Raspe	Charlotte Morris Dave Morris	ALL READERS PLEASE BE AVAILABLE	Jamie McLain	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble	Charlotte Morris Janice Youpa

In the event that you are unable to serve on your assigned date, please remember to find a replacement and notify the office of the change.

Social Ministry Took Part in Project Homeless Connect, January 24th

In addition to the plastic sleeping mats shown below, St. James distributed thirty hygiene kits - all during the first hour the event was open!



Janet Bray representing NORWESCAP



Quilts made from pieces of old blankets



Plastic sleeping mats to which we donated. Many from St. James cut up plastic bags, and Lois and Carol Steible crocheted them.



Students of Cosmetology gave free haircuts



Hot and cold lunches were served to all



NORWESCAP filling bags to distribute food



Catholic Charities had piles of warm clothing



(left) Operation Chill Out from Long Valley gave out backpacks filled with thermal underwear, hoodies and warm pants, hats, gloves and socks