

The Mustard Seed*

Newsletter for members and friends of
St. John's Lutheran Church, Waterloo
(Bennington) ELCA



2026



From Pastor Beth

For a little over a year, I've been meeting with a strength and fitness trainer. After all the transitions of Bob's death, selling my house, buying a smaller place, moving into that new place and getting two houses ready (one for market and one for me!), I found myself doing a lot of "stationary reflecting," also known as sitting. Eventually, I realized I wanted to get back to some sort of regular working out. Because I needed the accountability of showing up for an appointment, I signed on for some 1:1 personal training. With a few exceptions for vacations and such, we've met twice a week. Each time we've met, my trainer has challenged me a bit more, and

Key dates to be aware of:

March

- 1:** 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship with communion
- 4:** No Confirmation / Dunkerton Girls State Basketball Game
- 8** 9 AM: Sunday School 10 AM: Worship/Kuenstling baptisms
LYO after worship
- 11** 7 PM: Confirmation
- 15** 9 AM: Sunday School—**Green-St Patricks' Day party**
10 AM: Worship w/Holy Communion
- 18:** 7 PM: Confirmation
- 22:** 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship
- 25:** 7 pm: Confirmation
- 28:** **3-4:30: First Communion Class**
- 29:** **9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM Palm Sunday Worship & Sunday School Sing and Share; 1-2:30: First Communion Class**

April

- 2:** **7 PM: Maundy Thursday worship with first communion**
- 3:** **7 PM: Good Friday worship service**
- 4:** **7 AM: Festive Easter Worship with communion and LYO Easter Breakfast afterward**
- 8:** 7 PM: Confirmation
- 11:** 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship; LYO After worship
- 15:** 7 PM: Confirmation
- 19:** 9 AM: Sunday School 10 AM: Worship with communion & Sunday School Sing and Share; Council Meeting
- 26:** 10 AM: Worship
11:30-1 Last day of Sunday School party at WTTC-Farm Site

more than once, he's believed in my ability more than I have.

For example, we did an exercise recently called a pillar. Basically, one grips the weight and leans sideways, all while keeping one's posture erect. I've done pillars before.

"Why don't you go pick out the 50# dumbbell," my trainer said.

I was a bit dubious, "Did I hear you right?"

"Yes," he said.

"Okay, I'll try."

So it was that I did 4 sets of 8 pillars/side with a 50# dumbbell. And yes, my arms felt a bit like Gumby arms afterward, too.

As we move deeper into Lent, it's occurred to me that strength training and the life of faith have a lot in common. I did not start my training with a 50# dumbbell! Instead, we worked the muscles—and the mind—to get to that point.

The life of faith doesn't start with the biggest things. The life of faith starts with the foundational things that help us build our faith muscles— noticing beauty in God's good creation, worship, music, love, praying, learning, caring for others and

—See Olson, pg. 2.

*Why "The Mustard Seed?" In Matthew 17 and Luke 17, Jesus said that mustard seed size faith is enough. God is the one who makes things happen! Even a little belief is enough from us! This newsletter is a little glimpse into life here at SJB. Enjoy! We're also on Facebook! Look for the church page and the youth and Sunday school page, too

Church Council Highlights

(full minutes are posted on the board in the small conference room.)

Church council met on 2/8. Newly-elected council members Denise and Jerry were welcomed.

Opening devotions and varied reports shared.

Council followed up on annual meeting items raised: Drafting a policy for camera footage access and getting a counting system in place to cross train more people on the financial end of offerings and record-keeping. More information at coming meetings.

Pastor reported on the LSI visit she had and how appreciative LSI is of the support SJB has given over the years. Noted that Lent starts Feb. 18 and secured people to assist with that service.

Trustees to look into separate safe for offerings and documents. Also will work on memorial bench for cemetery from designated funds for said project.

Discussed council meeting dates for 2026.

A Chuckle to Coincide with the Start of Baseball Spring Training



Quilt and Kit Blessing Sunday is Mar. 22

The third Saturday in March is National Quilting Day. This year, that date is March 21.

Appropriately, then, St John’s will bless its quilts and school kits for Lutheran World Relief on March 22 and learn more about how LWR works in countries around the globe, including the United States.

Stories told via videos and essays from givers and receivers will be part of the service.

In 2025, Lutheran World Relief celebrated 80 years of loving our neighbors.

This global relief agency started in the aftermath of World War 2 and has continued to be a source of hope and strength for many.

Olson, from pg. 1

supporting people and causes, for example.

We then strengthen those good muscles by getting involved more, by branching out, by being generous in various ways, by seeing the larger picture of God at work in the world and so on.

Another connection between God and strength training is that God believes in us more than we sometimes believe in ourselves! God has made us, claimed us in love and calls us beloved. That’s a pretty strong faith foundation to build on.

Strength training and faith training both can mean getting stronger in one way or another.

God has given us the foundation in Jesus, and we can build our faith muscles from that solid start through love, compassion, generosity, service, outreach, learning and more so that we mature and grow stronger because of Christ.



The butterfly reminds us of new life and the Resurrection. After three days, Jesus rose from the dead and brings us the hope of new beginnings. This simple craft helps children celebrate that joyful truth.

What you need:

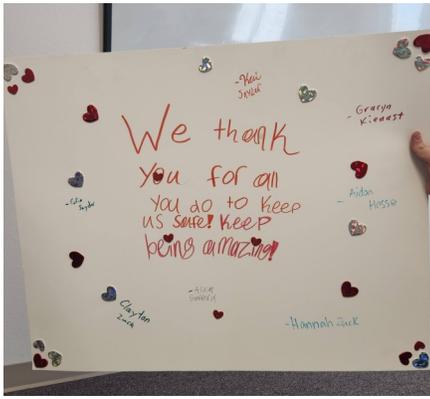
- Light-colored construction paper
- Card stock
- Glue
- Paint
- Paintbrush
- Paper towel or baby wipe



What you do:

- Cut out a butterfly body from the construction paper.
- Glue the butterfly body onto the card stock.
- Use a paintbrush to coat the palm of one hand with paint.
- Press your painted hand beside the butterfly body to create a wing.
- Repeat with your other hand to make the second wing.
- Clean your hands with a paper towel or baby wipe.
- Optional: Add Luke 24:5-6 (NIV) around the butterfly or on its body:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!”



Love Shows Up!

We've preached over the years that a large part of the Christian witness is showing up in love. While that happens often in and through St. John's, love showed up in some special ways this past February. From the top: Some members of our LYO group made thank you care bags for Dunkerton First Responders and included a heart-felt thank you note. Our Sunday School had their annual Valentine's party with snacks, games, crafts and love-pictures. And in worship, the trio pictured helped with the offering. A morning full of love. Thank you, St John's, for showing up for God and for others!

Special Mission Collection from now-May 24: Paper products for the Dunkerton Food Bank

"There's always a need for paper products," Denise Smith of the Dunkerton Food Bank said recently. To help fill that need, SJB will collect paper towels, toilet paper, wipes, Kleenex, napkins, paper plates, bowls and glasses from now through May 24, the last Sunday of Easter. June, our mission collection will be treats for the Alive and Running 5K, and then July and August will be school supplies for the LWR school kits that we assemble in the fall each year.

From Lutheran Services in Iowa: Shining a Light on Disability Support

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, Brain Injury Awareness Month and Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month, making it the perfect time to highlight LSI's services for individuals with disabilities.

LSI provides respite care for those caring for loved ones with mental and developmental disabilities along with 24 hour care, hourly options and host homes. Last year, LSI provided over 366,000 hours of services to those living with disabilities.

For families caring for a child or adult with disabilities, the demands of around-the-clock care can be overwhelming; respite care makes a meaningful difference, and offers caregivers a personalized break while also ensuring their loved one continues to receive quality care. A trained respite provider can step in for a few hours or up to an entire weekend in varied settings.

As one parent put it, "Respite helped me step back and rethink things, breathe and start over again with a better mind set! I truly believe that respite has changed my family and my life."

LSI's thorough matching process and ongoing oversight help ensure the success and quality of respite services. One of our respite providers met her client and his family when they moved into a new neighborhood. They connected almost immediately, and the provider knew that she wanted to provide respite services to him. After being introduced to our respite program by the provider, the family worked with LSI to enroll the client in services.

They started out with small amounts of time, and as the years went by, the amount of respite increased. This provider has now been providing respite services to this client for over 10 years. Their relationship has continued to grow: the client spends a weekend a month at his provider's home, thus giving the client's parents a scheduled break each month.

The respite provider said, "I became a respite provider because it offered me an opportunity to earn some extra income around my family's busy schedule. What I was not expecting was the learning opportunities that occurred for both my children and the respite children in our home. It has been an amazing experience to see the children grow. Through respite care you are able to make a difference!"

If you want to learn more about respite services or about becoming a provider, contact Kay Baker at 319-883-9583.



The Mustard Seed

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