



Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This will be my last newsletter article to the wonderful people of St. John's. My interim work will take me elsewhere and St. John's will soon be blessed with the man God will send as your next Senior Pastor. I'd like to share a few parting thoughts that formed the foundation of my interim work among you.

First, is the wonderful Bible word HOPE! In what many have labeled a 'post-church' era in American History (borne out by the steady decline in attendance in all denominations) it's easy for God's people to lose hope for the future. What we must remember is the basic Biblical principle that hope is a by-product (not of numbers) but of purpose and a sense of mission. As we clearly define and pursue our unique role in this community, we grow in hope.

HOPE IN ACTION

I point out two key elements that make St. John's a beacon of hope in our community. First, is our Christian Day School. Over the past decades over half of the schools that once populated the LCMS are now closed. This is tragic, for it sacrifices one of our synod's greatest assets - our commitment to offering educationally excellent, Christ-centered education in a safe, nurturing environment led by dedicated staff and supported by involved parents. What we have at St. John's is increasingly unique and worthy of ongoing support with prayers, encouragement and gifts. Taking a long range view of St. John's future, our school will be a blessing to this community. Keep up the good work!

Second, is our commitment to be engaged in community ministry. St. John's has been a willing and supportive partner for many community based benevolent agencies. Numerous members engage as individuals, while the congregation is supportive and involved. We wear the face of Christ when we step out of the four walls of our church and into the city streets. There we find

those of whom Christ spoke when He said, 'when you have done it to the least of these my brothers, you have done it unto Me.' Continue to be the face and voice of Christ's hope in this community.

KEEPING A STRONG FINANCIAL BASE

I have shared with our leaders a five part roadmap for financial stability. In 45 years of ministry I have yet to encounter a congregation that declares, 'we have all the financial resources we need.' This is simply not the reality for any congregation, ours included. Finances are always a struggle. Toward the goal of financial stability we have discussed the following five steps.

1. **Regularly preach and teach sound Biblical principles of stewardship.** While much of our Sunday preaching rightly revolves around the Second Article of the Creed (the Person and Work of Jesus Christ), we must not neglect the First Article (God's Creation and our care of it). We are stewards of that which belongs to another. God creates all things, owns all things and graciously shares them with us. We are not owners, but caretakers. When we keep the ownership issue clear, it is much easier to overcome the selfish impulse of our 'old Adam' and carry out our role as Christian stewards.

2. **Strive each year to live within a balanced budget.** Of the five points this is the most challenging. It's an annual struggle to weigh what we want to do, with what we have the means to do. At budget time congregations wrestle with balancing anticipated financial support with ministry opportunities. It's a give and take that 'comes with the territory.' Sometimes we make painful decisions to scale back some areas of ministry, and other times we determine to move boldly forward. We are people of faith, who remember God sanctifies our mind to make difficult decisions.

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3. **Be debt free!** On this point St. John's has boldly stepped forward with a campaign to eliminate all long term debt from our books. Our \$180,000 CEF note will be below \$65,000 by the end of January (with enough cash and commitments to pay off the remainder in the foreseeable future). Once the debt is eliminated, it is much easier to concentrate resources on General Budget needs (thus easing the pressure on point 2 above).

4. **Maintain a growing, ministry friendly Endowment Fund.** Our leadership is revising the current Endowment Guidelines to allow our Fund to be more engaged in addressing the unexpected needs that regularly arise (especially in the area of facility care and up-grade). By avoiding delayed maintenance we keep long term costs to a minimum while we honor the care of God's House. With a 'ministry friendly' document in place, it also becomes more inviting for those planning their estate to set aside a gift for St. John's Endowment Fund. In planning the final distribution of our worldly blessings, remembering the Lord's work in our home congregation should be at the top of our list.

5. **Set tuition rates for our school** that reflect the resources needed to support the classroom teachers who work with our children about 180 days a year. In my view our congregation should provide, and care for our facilities and, provide for the our school's administration. The responsibility of our school families is to financially support the classroom teachers who have such a positive influence on their children. The hearts of parents goes out to their beloved teachers.

This clear balance of congregational and family responsibilities is the being phased in by our administration. It will take a couple of years (quantum jumps on tuition become counter-productive) but the goal is in sight.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

An important aspect of St. John's transition we did not put into place is revision of our administrative structure to make it more effective and efficient. We shared enough with our leaders for them to get a sense of how a revised structure would operate. We deliberately delayed further steps until our next pastor is part of the process. I have volunteered (upon request) when St. John's is ready, to share a Saturday morning workshop to present the details and begin the process of adoption.

INTERIM GUIDELINES

As previously shared there are two clear guidelines interim pastors must honor. The first is knowing an interim can never be considered for a call to be the congregation's next pastor. The second is ending the formal interim period several weeks prior to the arrival of the next pastor. While God has not yet revealed who that man will be, we know we are in the final stage of our transition period. I will complete my work at the end of January and then spend two months helping the congregation of my first interim back in 2010.

It is always bitter/sweet when an interim ends. The 'sweet' part is knowing God's people have prepared themselves for the leadership of their new pastor. This brings joy to an interim's heart. The 'bitter' is saying goodbye to a congregation of wonderful Christians who have been welcoming and supportive. My wife Lorelle and I thank you for all your kindness during the past 14 months and promise to keep you in our thoughts and prayers as you enter the exciting future God has prepared for St. John's. Continue to grow in God's grace through Word and Sacrament, and remain true to your confession to 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified'. In the Name of the Risen Christ,
Ronald C. Moritz, Interim Pastor

Pastor Lassanske and **Pastor Hamilton** have agreed to serve us as vacancy pastors, leading us in worship, bible study, shut-in visits and emergency calls until our new Senior Pastor arrives. Please contact the church office for any pastoral needs and/or for more information.



Lutherans For Life

Next. That word can drive excitement, especially when we've been anxiously waiting our turn. Perhaps it is to get on a new ride at an amusement park. Maybe it is something as simple as waiting to be next in a long supermarket checkout line or to turn left at a traffic light. Or maybe it is your turn to go into the patient room to talk to the doctor about your tests results. Unfortunately the word "next" may also bring a feeling of dread. At least if your test results bare out bad news of something terminal, you know you can count on support and guidance from the medical professions, family and friends to help make your remaining days as comfortable as possible, right? Not necessarily.

Thanks to the dreadful slippery slope of trivializing life in the womb, many cities and states here in the U.S., would rather charge you \$1.20 to end your life rather than spend any money to try to save it. This is what one terminally ill woman in California, where doctor-prescribed suicide law has been in effect less than a year, found out. Rather than pay for a promising clinical trial, a Medicare representative said the company wouldn't approve the UCLA-based trial, but instead would charge just \$1.20 for a medication to end her life. What a deal. Just like abortion, all we have to do is plop some money on the table, in this case a mere \$1.20, and all our problems can just go away. That is exactly how much human life is valued by the world – here's a buck, go kill yourself.

Proponents of euthanasia and assisted suicide believe they are helping people achieve death with dignity and less pain. What they are actually doing is deciding who they personally think is worthy of life and those that should make the world a better place by killing themselves. They are giving others a chance to, just like abortion proponents claim as well, make their problems simply go away – perhaps a burdensome sickly child or an aged parent. In the Netherlands, children as young as 12 can request euthanasia without their parent's consent. Parents allow their children to choose dying, some because of terminal illness and some due to permanent medical issues. Rather than nurture and show love and care for their children, they see it as a favor to the child. What they're really saying to the child is **I don't want** to watch or have to deal with you dying or having to live in your present condition. I can't be the parent you need, you're better off dead.

Those that do kill themselves sometimes do so to escape the pain of dying. Some want to escape not death but a life of disability. Others may simply be depressed and in need of nothing other than counseling. Some are victims of family members who want to be rid of them being a burden. Others kill themselves thinking they are relieving their loves ones of being a burden. Recently New York City Detective Steven McDonald was buried with full honors. His life, he thought, was a burden to him and his family after becoming a paraplegic from a teenager's bullet. Instead, God used his life to witness to the great love He had for him and for even the teenager who shot him. If McDonald had called it "quits" and taken his own life, we never would have heard of the ability of God's forgiveness to heal him, his family, and the community. His life and death would have been just a tragic story instead of a witness of God's great love for all people.

Praise be to God that He values all human life from conception to natural death! Men value fame, money, power, good looks, athleticism, prestige. But God values the blind, the lame, lepers, the deaf and those that are dying. Man looks at those people and sees brokenness, worthlessness, revulsion. God looks at those people and sees the very reason He sent His Son to die and save them from their sins and its effects. God sees opportunity for His children to minister to their neighbor, to proclaim His love for the least among us in His word and by our deeds. God sees the opportunity for His children to walk with those who need to be comforted, supported, nursed and attended. God also sees the opportunity for those with broken bodies and minds to be witnesses of His great and saving love. That even as death envelopes our deteriorating flesh, we joy in being one of His children and trust Him.

We may not see any "value" in our suffering and want our problem to just go away so we can get on with our "reward" – heaven. But our reward isn't ours to take, it is God's to give. Our real reward is walking with God now and every day. We are not God and we don't know what is best for us, those around us, or for His kingdom. Even in dying we can witness to the love of our God as we trust in His timing and method. People around you can see the love you have for God and the love God shows you through those who are ministering to you. Our actions and the actions of those who minister to us in Jesus stead speak louder than any sermon ever preached. Those moments touch the hearts of those who need to not only hear the truth, but also see the truth.

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School Auction News

Join us on St. Patrick's Day for an Auction Celebration to benefit St. John's Lutheran School on Friday, March 17 at Portobello's upstairs in the Piano Factory at 6:00pm. Dinner served at 6:30pm

*There once was a family from St. John's,
They were starved for a day of vacation.
So they came to the auction
And ever since they've been talkin'
'bout their experience that caused much elation.*

Our annual auction is the school's largest fundraiser, raising about \$18,000 last year. Come join the festivities, donate, join the auction planning committee, bring friends and family and celebrate what makes St. John's community great! Tickets available in the school office or after church.

Walk in my Shoes "Short Shoe Drive"

St. John's Lutheran School would like to help reach the goal of 7,500 pairs of Shoes for the Walk in my Shoes "Short Shoe Drive". Clean out your closets and bring in your old "gently used" shoes to donate and help others. All shoes will be sent to micro-enterprising organizations in developing countries to help restore hope for their families as they are able to create revenue from our unwanted shoes. Money is also paid to the Encounter Project at 40¢ per pound of shoes. They will be working on renovating a green house for "At Risk" Youth at Central High School, Grand Haven. Shoes collected until February 9. Drop off at St. John's Lutheran School Collection Box.

Box Tops for Education

Don't forget to save those Box Tops! It adds up!

BUY CLIP SAVE EARN.

St. John's just received a check from Box Tops for \$270.40! Thanks Mrs. Staley for being our Box Top Coordinator.



St. John's Spring Auction

Friday, March 17, 2017



Save Your Christmas Cards

"What do YOU do with those beautiful Christmas cards that you received?"

Looking for a great way to repurpose them? Mrs. Kooi would love to have them. Please give them to her or drop them off in the school office. Thank you!

Norton Pines Athletic Club

Mark your Calendar!

Don't miss this! St. John's Lutheran School/Church families can enjoy the rock wall, bounce house, open swimming, family whirlpool, open gym, snack bar & grill & more at Norton Pines Athletic Club (1350 Judson Rd., Spring Lake) on Friday, March 3, 5:00-8:00pm. Cost is \$20 per family (max. 6 persons), \$15 per couple, \$12 per Individual. Half of all admissions will go back to St. John's!

It's Easy to Buy SCRIP

1. Go to www.ShopWithScrip.com, then "SHOP" tab
2. Click on a merchant, then "Find a location near you"
3. Enter a zip code to see locations available
4. Order online (if you're registered with St. John's), OR complete a SCRIP order form from the school.
5. Orders submitted with payment by Tuesday at 9:00am are available by Thursday of the same week.

CLASSIFIED AD SECTION OF YOUR LOCAL ST. JOHN'S NEWSLETTER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Augsburg Confession Bible Study will resume on Sunday, March 4 and we will start again on Topic 3 Original Sin! In the meantime attend Pastor's Bible Study. See you on March 5 at 9:30am in the 5th/6th grade classroom.

----- **Cake Reception for Pastor**

Moritz: We thank Pastor Moritz for his incredible job of leading us through the interim process. Please join us for a cake reception in his honor on Saturday, January 28 after our 5:00pm worship service or on Sunday, January 29 in between services.

2017 Offering Envelopes can be picked up from Narthex. *[Please note new #'s have been assigned.]* Thank you for joining us in the support of our Lord's mission through the ministry we do here at St. John's.

----- **Lots of Openings Available for**

Altar Flowers: Check out the altar guild poster in the narthex - flowers can be purchased in memory or in honor of loved ones.

----- **14th Annual Sauerkraut**

Supper!! St. Luke Lutheran (11261 South St., Nunica) is hosting its annual Sauerkraut Supper on Saturday, February 4, 4:00–7:00pm. Sauerkraut with pork/kielbasa; hot dogs; mashed potatoes & gravy; spatzten; green beans; drink and dessert. Adults (12 yrs+) \$10. Children (4–11 yrs) \$5. 3 yrs & under free. Carry-outs Available. Tickets available by calling (616) 837-6059, pre-sale reservation, and at the door. **Alternate date due to bad weather is Saturday, February 11.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ladies of St. John's: On February 2 at 1:00pm, Dr. Carol Markiewicz will share with us her "35 Years of Experience Caring for Women". Please join us and bring a friend! This promises to be an interesting and enlightening program. For those attending who are members of Ladies Aid, there will be a short meeting following Dr. Markiewicz's program.

----- **Being Mom & Dad**

Convention: On February 11, join St. Matthew, Grand Rapids for an in-depth discussion on how the Gospel should transform your parenting and family life. No formulas, no how-to's, only the good news of Christ crucified meant to inform your vocation as a parent. Guest speakers are Elyse Fitzpatrick, Dr. Scott Keith, and Jessica Thompson. www.givingkidsgrace.com.

----- **Let's Talk Male & Female**

(Gen. 1:27), the MI District Theological Conference at Our Savior Lutheran, Lansing, Saturday, February 11. Keynote Speakers Rev. Dr. Todd Biermann, Rev. John Pless, Dr. Angus Menuge, Rev. Dr. Mark Seifrid. Sin continues to corrupt the world and everyone is inundated with confusing messages on sexual freedom, sexual orientation, gender identity, and dysphoria. What does a loving, caring God have to say to His creation in His liberating, life-giving Word, and how do we lovingly communicate the blessing of that truth? www.michigandistrict.org/theological17

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2017 Lenten Worship

Schedule: This year we are again offering two Wednesday Lenten services at 10:00am and 7:00pm beginning on March 1 through April 5. (Children from our Day School worship with the adults at 10:00am.)

----- **Family Fun at Craig's Cruisers:**

Join us on Friday, February 17 for a night of family fun at Craig's Cruisers in Grand Rapids. Cost per person is \$18.99 includes pizza buffet and 4 attraction tickets. We will car pool from St. John's at 5:30pm and return at 9:30pm. Please RSVP to Craig Kaschube by February 12, at ckaschube@silcs.org.

Volunteer Opportunity: Positive Options, a service of the Lakeshore Pregnancy Center, is offering receptionist training and male and female client advocate training on February 20, 21, and 23. Email Sheila.markvlower@lpcenters.com or visit www.lpcenters.com for more information.

Voice of Care "Set to Serve" training workshop, Saturday, April 1 at St. Matthew, Grand Rapids, is designed for church workers, parish nurses, educators, ministry boards, camp staff, and volunteers. Interactive sessions address how congregations can help provide a range of disability ministry options. Cost is \$10/person and includes lunch and all materials. Register by March 25 at VoiceOfCare.org or request registration forms via office@voiceofcare.org or (630) 231-3862.



...to the **St. John's Lutheran Church** volunteers that have recently helped with the painting and other upgrades to the parsonage.

National Lutheran Schools Week was January 22-28. Upon this Rock..."trust in the Lord Forever for the Lord God is an everlasting rock" Isaiah 26:4

...special thanks to all of our school families and staff for making this year's Lutheran Schools Week special. A big thanks to our new middle school teacher, **Mrs. Tamara Zevalkink** for organizing this year's Science Fair. **Mrs. Rosie Anderson** for the wonderful St. John's Book Fair, **Mrs. Jamie Phipot** for our special school assembly, and to **Mrs. Tracy Wood** for conducting our Eagle Ringers and our school choir.

Lutherans For Life (Continued from page 3)

We can support euthanasia and assisted suicide as a loving alternative that God would want us to use to help alleviate suffering in the world. This of course would be a lie. God didn't say to sit on His throne and decide the fate of other individuals by choosing who should live and who should die based upon your whims at the moment. He didn't say that because you can't deal with the result of sin in this sin sick world you can decide who gets to live or not. Rather God commands us to speak the truth in love that in spite of all the suffering, hurt, pain and turmoil in our world, His Son has conquered the world. His Son has died the real death we should have died and instead will relieve us of all suffering in this life when the time is right. Jesus shuddered to His very soul at the thought of His death. Yet, even though He not only suffered great pain, torment and the very worse, being forsaken by His own Father, to the end of His life He looked forward to the glory that was before Him and simply gave His soul into His Father's hands. May God grant that we too trust Him with our bodies, souls, and all things.

FROM THE CHURCH RECORDS

Deaths

12/9/16 **Bert Ohlendorf**, grandfather of **David* (Trisha*) Ohlendorf**, great grandfather of **Samuel* Ohlendorf**

12/21/16 **Betty Grimm**, mother of **Peg* (Wilber) Buehler**, grandmother of **Jami* Schmidt**, great-grandmother of **Logan* Schmidt**

12/25/16 **Loretta Dutmer**, grandmother of one of our day school students, **Nicholas Taylor**

12/25/16 **Dolores Aspinall**, grandmother of **Stuart* Aspinall**

12/26/16 **Bernard "Bud" Ruiter**, brother of **Mickey* (John*) Dora**

Transfers

Kevin & Kristen Collier to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Spring Lake, MI

Releases

Krystal Waters to Augustana Lutheran Church (ELCA), Washington, DC

*** Members of SJLC**

Our current membership stands at 574 baptized, 468 of whom have confirmed their faith.



Movie Night: War Room

Don't miss the opportunity to see this excellent movie here in the comfort of our Social Hall on Friday, March 24 at 6:45pm. Refreshments and childcare will be provided.

Tony and Elizabeth Jordan have it all-great jobs, a beautiful daughter, and their dream house. But appearances can be deceiving. Tony and Elizabeth Jordan's world is actually crumbling under the strain of a failing marriage. While Tony basks in his professional success and flirts with temptation, Elizabeth resigns herself to increasing bitterness. But their lives take an unexpected turn when Elizabeth meets her newest client, Miss Clara, and is challenged to establish a "war room" and a battle plan of prayer for her family. As Elizabeth tries to fight for her family, Tony's hidden struggles come to light. Tony must decide if he will make amends to his family and prove Miss Clara's wisdom that victories don't come by accident.



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Rev. Ronald Moritz, Pastor pasmoritz@dls.net
Craig Kaschube, Youth & Family Life Director ckaschube@sjlcs.org
Laura Harvey, School Administrator/Business Manager lharvey@sjlcs.org

Worship Services:

Sacred Song (Traditional): 8:15am
Blended Voices (Contemporary): 10:30am
Night Song (Saturday service): 5:00pm

Please check calendar for all worship times!

God's Blessings To:

You and your
family!

**St. John's Lutheran Church has extended a
solemn call of Senior Pastor to the
Rev. Kurt R. Wenzelburger!**



**Please be in prayer as Pastor Wenzelburger considers
our formal notification.**