



# St. John's

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## Ev. Lutheran Church

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**FEBRUARY 2016**

### **MEMBER FOR LIFE?**

Enclosed in this edition of the St. John's newsletter is an excerpt from the elders' policy manual called "Inactive Member Policy." The St. John's Board of Elders adopted that policy in 2014 to go into effect in January of 2016. So we wanted to bring it to the congregation's attention now. Perhaps, though, we should retitle it as the "Proactive Active Membership Policy"—a way of doing things that encourages active membership and keeps members from drifting away from regular church attendance. I encourage you to have a close look at it after you've read this piece. But it warrants a further explanation.

Often, we think of "my church membership" as "having my name forever on a church roster because I was baptized or confirmed there." But being on the roster is just a bureaucratic way of expressing what membership really is. Membership is best, finally, and only defined as "abiding in Christ"—abiding in Christ within a particular gathering of Christians around Word and Sacrament in a specific place. In other words, at a minimum, a member of St. John's is someone who regularly attends the Divine Service, regularly receives the preaching of the Word, and, if confirmed, regularly receives the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar at St. John's. Jesus says, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Put differently, "If you do *not* abide in My Word, you are *not* indeed My disciples." It's really that simple.

But maybe it doesn't seem that way. Maybe church membership seems more like being able to say, "Yes," if asked whether you believe in Jesus. It is, after all, faith in Jesus that saves, one of the shorthand ways we talk about salvation. That's true as far as it goes. But a better way to put it would be: "Jesus has saved me; therefore I have faith in Him."

And faith in Jesus is, as Luther says, "a living and active thing." It's restless. It wants more Jesus. It doesn't rest until it has the object of its trust. So it seeks Jesus constantly. And it seeks Him in the only places He can be found, in His Word and Sacrament.

Suppose you knew a married man who lived with another woman 363 days of the year. You'd say that his marriage was just a mere formality on paper. If you had a chance to talk to him, you'd say, "If you really loved your wife, you'd go home to her every night, and you'd tell her you love her every day. Because love seeks its object."

So it is with faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus can't say, "I believe in Jesus," but not seek its object. Instead, faith in Jesus recognizes, "I'm a lost and condemned creature, but Christ has purchased and won me

from all sins, from death, and from the devil's power. I want to have Jesus. I need to have Jesus. Because without Jesus, all I have is my sins, death, Satan.”

Of course, faith in Jesus is constantly doing battle—against the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. That unholy Trinity misleads us, as Luther says, into “false belief and other great shame and vice.” One of the false beliefs is that just being on the rolls of a congregation means you're in Christ. It doesn't. It simply means you're on the rolls. And so our new policy seeks to encourage everyone on the rolls truly to abide in Christ—to come alongside of everyone in their battle against the unholy Trinity and help them to live by faith in the Son of God. Faith that clings to Him and His mercies given to us in Word and Sacrament.

The steps listed in the “Inactive Member Policy” are intended to bring our inactive members back to St. John's where they'll receive God's merciful gifts for their life and salvation. Your support and aid to the pastors and elders is greatly needed and appreciated. In fact, all of us can help out in this. Through our Baptism we're called to “do good to all people but especially to those of the household of God” (Gal. 6.10). So help out your brothers and sisters in Christ in their battle against the unholy Trinity, “encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10.25), that they, with you, may be, remain, and abide in Christ. That's a member for life!



### **INACTIVE MEMBER POLICY**

Adopted by the Board of Elders on November 19, 2014; to go into effect on January 1, 2016

The Board of Elders are charged with oversight over the spiritual welfare of this entire congregation and the spiritual wellbeing of its individual members. The spiritual wellbeing of individuals requires their regular use of the Means of Grace in the divine service of this congregation. To that end, the Board of Elders shall encourage regular, frequent attendance in the divine service.

To encourage active membership, the Board of Elders shall:

1. Receive a monthly report on members who have not attended the divine service for 13-38 weeks.
2. On a monthly basis and with the assistance of the office staff, send a letter to all members who have not attended church for 13-38 weeks encouraging their regular, frequent attendance at the divine service, Bible studies, and Sunday School.
3. On a monthly basis and with the assistance of the pastor(s) and called staff, contact all members who have not attended church for 13 weeks or more via phone, email, or home visit to encourage their regular, frequent attendance at the divine service, Bible studies, and Sunday School.
4. Receive a monthly report on members who have not attended the divine service for 39 or more weeks.
5. On a monthly basis and with the assistance of the office staff, send a letter to all members who have not attended church for 39 weeks or more both **encouraging** their regular, frequent attendance at the divine service, Bible studies, and Sunday School, and **informing** them of spiritual and church-membership consequences of inactivity outlined in the next item:

6. By 2/3 majority vote of a quorum of the Board of Elders remove from membership in this congregation inactive members, defined as those communicant and baptized members of this congregation who have not attended the divine service for 52 weeks or more. Inform those duly removed from membership of the elders' decision by letter, explaining that release is not tantamount to excommunication and that the pastors and elders look forward to working with them to welcome them back to membership in the congregation.

**Senior Pastor - Rev. J. S. Bruss, ext. 104**

**Deaconess - Linda S. Kinnett, ext. 102**

**Kantor - Rev. Roger M. Goetz**

**Visitation Pastor - Rev. Glenn R. Bitter**

**Day School Teachers - Ashley Jensema, Andrea Kosmicki,**

### **CONTINUING THE JOURNEY REQUEST**

As most of you know, our church has contracted with Wittenberg Church Consultants to help us with the next three-year campaign to hopefully pay off our building debt. This campaign won't be completed until late Spring. Since our most recent three-year campaign ended December 31st, we have a gap between that campaign and when our new campaign starts receiving pledge contributions. We would like to encourage members to continue with their giving toward the building fund during this interim period. Any gifts received during this period will help toward our ultimate goal of raising enough in pledges to retire our debt in 2018. Your 2016 envelopes still have the yellow "Continuing the Journey" envelopes in your box. We encourage you to continue to use these envelopes until the new campaign has been initiated. The Board thanks you for your prayerful consideration of this request.

The Board of Christian Stewardship

### **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

In the fall of 2015, the St. John's voters assembly voted to retain the services of Wittenberg Church Consultants to help us retire the remaining debt on the Luther Hall addition. Our campaign leadership team is now in place, and team leaders are assembling their own teams. If you have the opportunity to help out with the campaign, please do—many hands make light work! **The official kick-off for the campaign is Sunday, February 14.** Watch your mail this month for more details.

### **NEW ADULT CATECHESIS CLASS FORMING FEBRUARY**

A new Adult Catechesis class is slated to begin on Thursday, 4 February, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. This class is designed to lead toward communicant membership at St. John's or simply to serve as a great review of basic Lutheran theology. Several regular visitors to St. John's have already indicated their desire to participate in the class. All are welcome, including long-time Lutherans. Please contact Pastor Bruss for details regarding meeting time, duration, etc.

### **LENTEN SERVICES AND MEALS**

Lenten Services will be held at 12:15 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on the Wednesdays listed below. There will be a light meal starting at 5:30 p.m. before each 7:00 p.m. service except Ash Wednesday, February 10. Once again, St. John's will be participating in a Lenten round-robin with area congregations and pastors;

do take advantage of this opportunity during Lent to receive additional nourishment from the Word of God. The remainder of the Wednesday Lenten services will be on: February 17, February 24, March 2, March 9, March 16 and March 25.

### **2016 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES**

If you still haven't picked up your Contribution envelopes you still may do so at the church. If you have any questions regarding contribution boxes/envelopes, please speak with Yvonne Berry in the church office.

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL STAFF MEETING**

Saturday, February 20 at 10 a.m., St. John's Library

### **ANNUAL CHURCH CLEANING**

#### **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH**

With Easter coming earlier this year, the date for the Annual Church Cleaning in preparation for Holy Week and Easter has been set for Saturday, February 27, beginning at 8:00 a.m. or as close to 8:00 as you can make it. Many willing hands are needed to assist with spring cleaning throughout the building (including dusting high and low and washing down walls throughout). This is also the time we work at preserving all the beautiful woodwork in the church and give the pews their annual treatment of a blend of Rub Cut Oil and Naphtha. For over 75 years this task has been lovingly accomplished by hundreds of willing hands.

Help is also needed to dust the nave light fixtures and change batteries in smoke detectors (really tall ladder work). Bring a bucket and some cleaning cloths if you can. Plan to join other members for service and fellowship as we prepare our Lord's house for Holy Week and Easter. Please sign up on the sheet at the Information Center.

### **MONTHLY BREAKFAST**

A group of our men will be treating us to pancakes and sausage on Sunday, February 14, between services. Don't miss it!

### **2016 FLOWER CALENDAR**

Please check the Flower Calendar on the bulletin board outside of the church offices.

Many dates are still available. Some upcoming available dates are:

February 7, 14 & 28; March 13 & 20; April 3 & 24

### **DOORSTEP NEWS**

Souper Bowl Sunday is February 7th! Just around the corner! On this weekend Doorstep asks its member congregations to collect soup and crackers to help restock their food pantry. A can of soup can be a meal and in the past with a successful collection they have had soup and crackers to last into the summer months! Please remember Doorstep when you go grocery shopping and pick up a few items for your neighbors in need.

Also, mark your calendars for the 13th Annual Operation Soup Line! This year it will be on Tuesday, February 23, 2016 and Doorstep will offer lunch and dinner again!

Upcoming for March, St. John's annual assigned month, we will be one of five congregations responsible for providing a significant portion of food to Doorstep. Also, volunteers are needed to work in the clothing room at Doorstep on each of the 4 Wednesdays in the month. Shift times can be arranged between the hours of 8:30 and 2:00. Please call Chris Graversen at 235-9982 if you are able to volunteer. Your assistance with this outreach is greatly appreciated!

### TLS NEWS

Teacher's Aide Needed: Topeka Lutheran School is hiring a teacher's aide for the combined first and second grade classes for the remainder of the year. Please email Chris Francik, TLS principal, at [francik@topekalutheran.org](mailto:francik@topekalutheran.org) for a complete list of qualifications.

Topeka Lutheran School will be hosting their 64th Annual TLS Basketball Tournament on Friday, February 12 and Saturday, February 13. We invite you to attend this tournament and cheer on the Topeka Lutheran Wildcats. A tournament of this nature requires many volunteers. The TLS staff would appreciate any assistance that you would be willing to give.

Topeka Lutheran School invites you to come see the benefits of Lutheran education by attending our Open House event on Sunday, February 21 from 2:00 - 4:00. Staff, students, and families will gather to answer any questions, provide tours of the school, join you in fellowship, and entertain with music. If you have any further questions, please contact Topeka Lutheran School by phone or email and request to speak with Principal Francik, or the admissions counselor, Lynette Chada.

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### EASTER LILIES

Members of St. John's have the opportunity to place an Easter lily in the church for Easter Sunday.

Complete the form and return it to the church office by Sunday, March 6 - with \$9.00 per lily.

**You may take your lily home following the 11:00 a.m. service on Easter Sunday.**

For memorials you may list up to 2 names, or you may prefer "in memory of loved ones."

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

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### SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR FEBRUARY 2016

February 7	John Prepares the Way	Matthew 3:1-12
February 14	The Baptism of Jesus	Luke 3:15-22
February 21	The Temptation of Jesus	Matthew 4: 1-13
February 28	Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael	John 1:43-51

### Bible Words for February:

#### Early Childhood

February 7: *Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*  
John 1:29

February 14: *I have called you by name, you are Mine.* Isaiah 43:1

February 21: *[Jesus said,] “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”* John 14:6

February 28: *[Jesus says,] “Follow Me.”* John 1:43

### Elementary Grades

February 7: *By His grace we . . . become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* Titus 3:7

February 14: *Baptism . . . now saves you . . . through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* 1 Peter 3:21

February 21: *[Jesus] has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* Hebrews 4:15

February 28: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*  
John 6:68

**Thank you, parents for bringing your children to Sunday School and church.**

***“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Parents, this command from God’s Word is for you, and the Sunday school is here to support you in the nurture of your children’s spiritual growth. Please accept God’s invitation to bless your children through the Sunday school and worship service each week.***



### THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

[Jesus said] *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”* Matthew 28:19–20a So that we may obtain faith in Christ, God instituted the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Through the gospel and sacraments, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel. The Augsburg Confession, Article 5.