



# St. John's

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## Ev. Lutheran Church

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**VOL. 92 NO. 3 MONTHLY**

**MARCH 2016**

### **March Madness, Countercultural Christianity, the Vigil of Easter, and More**

It happened this way last year, too. March Madness, NCAA basketball's big drama, careening into the Church's most holy season, Holy Week and the Easter Triduum.

Seems it didn't affect our congregation much, though. Attendance at all Holy Week services, which handily fell on those days when March Madness was in full swing—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—held solid.

Even as you fill out your brackets this year, keep in mind that we Christians commemorate a far greater drama that week than the underdog team making the Final Four—the agony of the apparent defeat on the Cross and the glory of the victory of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

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“Countercultural.” Something of a buzzword, but it's the label you'd attach to being here at 8:00 p.m. on the Vigil of Easter instead of at the local watering hole for the Final Four match-up *du jour*. This year once again we anticipate a rich Vigil as we witness the drama of the Lord's salvation culminating in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

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Coming off the golden decades of the heyday of the Church in North America, it's probably difficult

to realize that for the vast majority of its 2,000-year existence authentic Christianity has always been countercultural. That is, Christianity has always held forth a way of believing, thinking, speaking, and acting that's significantly different from the prevailing culture. The irruption of March Madness in Holy Week only exposes the great rift between the culture of Christ and His Church and the culture of the world.

Increasingly, though, Christians will be called upon to make consciously countercultural decisions—to hallow the divinely sacred when the culture around us bows to the profane gods of its own making (Ps. 115:5). This is what Paul had in mind when he exhorted the Corinthians to “keep the festival...in sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8).

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Of course, sincerity and truth begins with the recognition that it is Christ who has purged away the old leaven—rescued us from the “evil counsels and purposes of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh that do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come.” We enjoy the Easter Vigil only through faith in the Son of God, who was delivered over to death on account of our transgressions and raised again on account of our justification (Rom. 4:25).

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The *Paid in Full* capital campaign is in full swing now. I hope everyone gets the double-entendre in the campaign's title. If not, Holy Week will certainly drive it home. "It is finished," Christ said from the Holy Cross. And then He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (John 19:30). The Greek word He uses there, τετέλεσται [*tetélestai*], was the ancient equivalent of a big red "PAID IN FULL" stamp on a bill. Christ has "paid in full" our debt of sin. That alone is our motivation, reason, ground, impetus, and drive to invest in the continued vitality of the ministry at St. John's and work together to make our financial debt "paid in full."

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Of course, Scripture is full of talk like this, e.g., "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Or, as it's put somewhere else, "What do you have that you did not also receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

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Speaking of what you've received. What you, as a Christian, do with your resources—that's also countercultural.

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But then again, as a Christian you actually believe the word of the Cross, which is "foolishness to those who are perishing; but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). That's countercultural, too.

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You can get even more of the word of the Cross during Lent. Join us Wednesdays at 12:15 or 7:00 p.m. "The Hand of the Lord Has Done It" is the overarching theme of this year's sermon series.

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And don't forget to keep in your prayers our call process for an associate pastor. You have through 6 March to submit names to the call committee for consideration.

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I hope you like this experiment with a new format of the "front-page article." There's always so much to say. Devoting the entire space to just one topic seems gratuitous. Not only that, but word on the street is that our attention spans are getting shorter (chalk it up to our culture). You can always write and let us know what you think. We covet your thoughts. [jbruss@stjlcms.org](mailto:jbruss@stjlcms.org).



**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,**

### **2016 HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE**

<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Sunday, March 20	8:15 & 11:00 a.m.
<b>Holy Thursday</b>	Thursday, March 24	12:15 & 7:00 p.m.
<b>Good Friday</b>	Friday, March 25	12:15 & 7:00 p.m.
<b>Holy Saturday, the Vigil of Easter</b>	Saturday, March 26	8:00 p.m.
<b>Easter Sunday</b>	Sunday, March 27	8:15 & 11:00 a.m.

## PAID IN FULL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The Capital Campaign is in full swing. Please watch for more details on the key activities listed below and contact Dave Graversen, Campaign Coordinator, at the church office if you have any questions:

1. Prayer Vigil scheduled for Saturday, March 5, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Prayer guides and prayer requests cards will be available at the vigil. There are scheduled times for silent meditation from 6-9 a.m., 10-noon, and 1-5 p.m. The Office of Matins is scheduled at 9:00 a.m.; a Service of Prayer at noon; and the Office of Evening Prayer at 5 p.m. Members are encouraged to attend one session during the vigil but are certainly invited to attend multiple sessions of different formats. To sign up for a time, please email [bevspa@cox.net](mailto:bevspa@cox.net).
2. Continuing the Spiritual Phase of the campaign, members will have an opportunity to hear spiritual testimony and attend spiritual renewal Bible study on March 6 and March 13.
3. The week of March 7 members will receive Newsletter 3 with a Stewardship booklet, as well as an invitation to participate in a Home Gathering. The gatherings are small groups which will meet in members' homes for a short Bible study and to view the campaign videotape and discuss the campaign and its focus on spiritual renewal as well as the stewardship component.

## CONTINUING THE JOURNEY REQUEST

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we ask members to prayerfully consider continuing with their building fund payments with their yellow "Continuing the Journey" envelopes. We encourage you to continue to use these envelopes until the pledge date for the ***Paid in Full*** campaign, 1 May 2016. Any gifts received during this period will help toward our ultimate goal of raising enough to retire our debt in May 2019. The Board thanks you for your prayerful consideration of this request.

The Board of Christian Stewardship

## LENTEN SERVICES

Lenten Services will continue on at 12:15 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on the Wednesdays listed below. Once again, St. John's is 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 March 2, March 9, and March 16.

## LENTEN MEALS

Don't miss the good food and opportunity to visit with others on Wednesdays, March 2 (hamburgers and hot dogs), March 9 (biscuits and gravy), and March 16 (potato soup or broccoli-cheese soup), when the church will host Lenten meals from 5:30 – 6:30 in Luther Hall. You don't have to cook, so you will be free to attend Lenten services at 7:00 p.m. Please join us.

## MONTHLY BREAKFAST

March 13 will be "Fancy Donut Day" in celebration of our Spiritual Pledge day.

**There will also be a potluck breakfast on Easter, March 27.**

## 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:

March 13 & 20; April 3 & 24; May 1; June 5 & 26

## THANK YOU'S

Thank you for your recent gift of \$434.00 for the Wind Ensemble. Your generosity is essential to give students at Concordia the tools they need to prepare in mind, body and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world.

*Concordia University Wisconsin*

## DOORSTEP NEWS

March is St. John's annual assigned month for Doorstep. 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 5 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. We are also in need of volunteers to assist with sorting clothing at Doorstep from 9:00 and 3:00 on Monday, March 28th. Your assistance with this outreach is greatly appreciated!

## TLS NEWS

Invest in Christ-centered education at TLS today! Thank you to our faithful donors, alumni, and friends who generously responded to the recent special appeal. Many donations were matched thanks to a special gift from Pastor and Mrs. Roger Goetz. Thank you to all! While the first goal of reaching \$20,000 by 1-31-2016 was met, we ask that you continue your gifts to the school so that the significant projected budget shortfall for 2015-2016 school year can be alleviated. Invest today in the Christ-centered education for our young children and families at TLS! Go to [www.topekalutheran.org](http://www.topekalutheran.org) and click "Donate" at the top of the page to make on-line contribution, or make your check payable to *TLS Foundation* and mail to 701 SW Roosevelt, Topeka, KS 66603. Thank you for your prayers and support.

## TLS ROUNDUP

Come join us Wednesday, March 30 for an exciting preview of Kindergarten at Topeka Lutheran School! We invite you to meet our teachers and staff from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. and see the benefits of a Christ-centered education. Your child will enjoy a morning of activities while parents hear about the exciting future and learn about the enrollment process. RSVP by March 24 by calling 357-0382.

## SAVE THE DATE

**APRIL 26, 2016**

The 58th Annual St. John's Smorgasbord for Missions will be Tuesday, April 26 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. in Luther Hall. Many helping hands will be needed anytime you can spare for the large meal preparation, beginning Monday the 25th through clean-up the evening of the 26th. Please mark your calendars and let family and friends know about this terrific, annual mission project.

**SAVE THE DATE TWO  
JUNE 18, 2016**

St. John's Annual Golf Tournament this summer will be held at Forbes Field. This is a fundraiser for the youth group and their activities and their trip to Higher Things Conference in July. Plan to participate as a golfer, a sponsor, or as a volunteer! More details will be forthcoming.

**FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK**

We are reaching out to Lutheran artists in the Topeka area to invite you to be a part of our First Friday Art Walk event that is held in conjunction with Topeka's First Friday Art Walk. The event will be May 6, 5:30-8:00 p.m. at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 3625 SW Wanamaker Rd. This is a no-cost opportunity to share your art with the Topeka community. Questions and to register: Please contact Susan Thowe at srthowe@gmail.com or 785-969-4342. Sponsored by The Lutheran Fine Arts Council of Topeka.

**ST. JOHN'S WOMEN'S LEAGUE**

**Mission Gifts (Received in 2015 – Distributed in 2016)**

The St. John's Women's League would like to thank each of you that helped with the Bazaar and Luncheon. The following is a breakdown of how the funds were dispersed towards missions:

Bethesda Lutheran Home & Services, Inc.	\$150.00	LCMS World Relief/Human Care Missions	\$500.00
Concordia Seminary			
Ft. Wayne Student Assistance	\$300.00	Lutheran Bible Translators	\$150.00
Concordia Theological Seminary			
Military Project	\$300.00	Kristin Lange/Project Wittenberg	\$500.00
Concordia University – Seward			
Dennis Hintz Scholarship	\$200.00	Lutherans for Life	\$300.00
Concordia Seminary			
St. Louis Student Assistance	\$300.00	Lutheran Heritage Foundation	\$250.00
Doorstep	\$300.00	Lutheran Hour	\$300.00
Haskell Indian Lighthouse	\$300.00	LWR Quilt & Kit Shipping Fund	\$100.00
KS District LCMS Kansa Seed Deaf Ministry	\$200.00	St. John's Mission Budget	\$300.00
Laborers for Christ	\$200.00	Soldier of the Cross	\$400.00
Let's Help	\$300.00	The Apple of His Eye Ministry	\$100.00
LCMS National Offering Global Missions	\$250.00	The Orphan Grain Train	\$100.00
LCMS World Relief/Human Care – Disaster	\$500.00	Topeka Lutheran School Daily Fund	\$1,000.00
Topeka Lutheran School Center			
For Young Children	\$200.00	Topeka Rescue Mission	\$500.00

**Distributed in January and February of 2016**

**Total: \$8,000.00**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR MARCH 2016**

March 6	Jesus Preaches on the Mount	Matt. 5:1-12
March 13	Jesus Teaches Us to Trust	Matt. 6:25-34
March 20	Jesus Is Anointed	Luke 7:36-50
March 27	Jesus Feeds Five Thousand	John 6:1-14

**No Sunday school or Bible classes on Easter Sunday**

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## **Bible Words for March:**

### **Early Childhood**

- March 6: *Blessed are you . . . for yours is the kingdom of God.* Luke 6:20  
 March 13: *He cares for you.* 1 Peter 5:7  
 March 20: *[Jesus said,] “Your sins are forgiven.”* Luke 7:48  
 March 27: *God . . . richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* 1 Timothy 6:17

### **Elementary Grades**

- March 6: *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.* Isaiah 53:4  
 March 13: *The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open your hand; You satisfy the desire of every living thing.* Psalm 145:15-16  
 March 20: *Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* Luke 7:50  
 March 27: *Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!*  
 Psalm 118:1

Each Sunday morning at 9:45 in the regular Sunday School opening time, the children in grades 1 - 6 have the privilege of learning hymns and playing instruments under the direction of Bethany Woelmer, a graduate student in church music at KU. The Sunday morning sessions also serve as a rehearsal time for singing in the church service periodically. Encourage your children to participate.

### **ATTENTION: PARENTS OF SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Palm Sunday, March 20, the children in grades 1 – 8 will sing in the church services. It is very important for them to be present each Sunday morning from 9:45 – 10:00 to rehearse.

Also on Palm Sunday, preschoolers and students through grade 5 will process with palm branches. The middle school students will assist with the preschoolers.

Easter Sunday, March 27, there will be no official Sunday school classes; however, the teachers in preschool through grade 5 have planned an Easter activity (Resurrection Rolls) for those who will be present at 10:00. Meet in the Sunday school rooms.



### **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.