



St. John's

Ev. Lutheran Church

901 SW Fillmore | Topeka, Kansas 66606-1445 | 785.354.7132 | www.stjohnlcmstopeka.org

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LIFE IN THE RIFT

It's probably the clash of gods that does it to me this time of year—or rather, the clash of the gods of this age with the One True God. But here it goes again, another piece on countercultural Christianity.

During Lent the battle din gets pretty loud. It began with ~~Valentine's Day~~ Ash Wednesday. It continues now with ~~the Olympics~~ Midweek Lenten services (12:15 and 7:00 every Wednesday). For the next 32 days we'll live it as we go through ~~March Madness~~ the penitential season of Lent. It'll begin to crescendo on the 25th ~~for the final game of the East Regional~~ Palm Sunday, reach a fevered pitch ~~during the Final Four~~ at the Vigil of Easter (8:00 p.m. on the 31st), and culminate on ~~April Fools' Day~~ Easter Sunday, when the foolishness of the cross (1 Cor 1:18) will erupt in the glory of the resurrected Christ, the firstfruits of eternal life (1 Cor 15:20).

It's not that Lent is the best example of the clash of the two cultures. It's that Lent just makes it, well, so obvious that you can't avoid it.

And yet, the rift between the cultures—between the culture of the citizens of heaven who are only passing through this world (2 Pet 3:8-13) and the culture of the citizens of this world for whom this world is all that there is—that rift is visible everywhere. It's the platform you live on, the air you breathe.

Now, to make it clear: there's no virtue in living a countercultural life just to live a countercultural life. The Christian counterculture is good not because it's a counterculture, but because it's Christian. Which is to say, it clings to Christ as the only Redeemer from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.

But such a life does indeed swim against the tide, go against the grain, whatever metaphor you want to use for it. Why? The culture of this world is passing, going away, and dying, but Christians cling to Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever (Hb 13:8). This culture operates by a calculus that seeks to get the most out of this go at it, but Christians live in view of eternity, in the full knowledge and hope of everlasting life (Phil 3:20). This culture lives with its own accusations and excuses for sin and sin's terrible consequences, but Christians cling to the blood of Jesus, the propitiation for all sins (Rm 2:15, 5:1-5). This culture lives with nothing but its own end in view—death—, but Christians live, dead and hidden with Christ through their Baptism (Col 3:3), in view of the resurrection of all flesh (Rm 6:3-9).

And I'm happy to say that this Christian counterculture is alive and well at St. John's. We see it every Sunday morning, when continually more and more come to receive from the Lord Jesus what He here gives. We see it on Wednesday evenings at Sound Words Academy, where our brothers and sisters in Christ take a break from the TV to “gladly hear and learn” God's Word. It's evident by what human forecasters would have called a pretty dismal budget year in 2017 ending with a negligible deficit—for

where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. In the parents faithfully bringing their children to the water of holy Baptism, and then in all earnestness raising these little ones in the faith (church is getting louder; sdcg!). In our thriving *Jr. Lutherans*. In the parents so keen that their children have for themselves what they have that they selflessly bring them week in and week out for three years to Youth Catechesis. In thronging ~~Valentine's Day~~ Ash Wednesday Divine Services. In people building up one another in Christ. In Christians seeking pastoral counsel in the face of life's difficulties. In ever more Private Confessions heard and Private Absolutions given.

That's your congregation. That's the Christian counterculture the Lord is fostering here. And He's not using coercion or gimmicks. He's using His Word. Through it He's strengthening the walls of Zion (Ps 51:18) in the midst of a culture increasingly tone-deaf and apathetic to His Word, and making Himself a wall of fire around His people (Zech. 2:5). And it is your pastors' daily prayer that He would continue to do so—for you—not only in this time of year when Christianity appears at its countercultural best, but at all times.



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

Associate Pastor – Rev. D. M. Kerns, ext. 101

Deaconess - Linda S. Kinnett, ext. 102

Kantor - Rev. Roger M. Goetz

Associate Kantor - Bethany M. Johnson

TLS Teachers - Ashley Brandmahl, Andrea Kosmicki, Edith Kerns, Rachel Kathman

THE VIGIL OF EASTER

Three-thousand four-hundred and sixty-four years ago God's people, the children of Israel, underwent a night of watching—that's what a vigil is. It was a night of watching for their rescue from the slavery of Egypt. Actually, while they kept vigil, the LORD did, too. Ex 12:42, "It was a night of *watching by the LORD*, to bring them out of the land of Egypt." And Moses goes on to say, under the LORD's inspiration, "Therefore this same night is a night of watching kept *to* the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout all their generations." Christ, our Exodus, has come. Christ, *our* Passover, has been sacrificed. "Old Israel"—the Israel by faith in the Christ who was to come—has given way to "New Israel"—the Israel by faith in the Christ who has come. And so Christians continue to observe the Passover and Eve of Easter as a Vigil, now commemorating the rescue that the Passover only pointed to—the rescue from the last enemy, death itself, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's Son, from the dead. We invite you to make the celebration of the Vigil of Easter a standard part of your annual celebration of the Lord's great redemption in Christ. **This year's Vigil will be held on Saturday, 31 March, at 8:00 p.m.** After meeting in the courtyard for instructions, we'll gather around the Paschal fire outside, process into church in a darkness that evokes our captivity to sin and death, only to see that darkness put to flight by the proclamation of the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. We hope to see you there.

STEWARDSHIP BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITY

Plan to attend! In Ephesians, the apostle Paul writes, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." Every Christian has a calling, a vocation or set of vocations through which he or she acts as "God's hands on earth" to accomplish His purposes in service to others. Starting February 28 at Sound Words Academy, we'll be exploring what it means to live out our calling as faithful stewards, particularly as we interact with our neighbors in the

various places in which we find ourselves (which Luther refers to as “estates”). The “Placed with a Purpose” Bible study, taught by Rev. Dan Galchutt, runs at Sound Words Academy at 5:55 p.m. on Wednesdays Feb. 28, March 7, March 14, and March 21.

ST. JOHN’S PARISH ASSISTANT POSITION OPENING

St. John’s has a position opening for a part-time parish assistant (20 hours/week = 50% FTE). Application deadline Monday, March 5. Qualifications, position description, and application procedure available from the church office. Review of applications to begin immediately.

2018 LENTEN SERIES CONTINUES

‘As Surely as I Live,’ God Said: Meditations on Confession and the Office of the Keys

Our sins are a great burden and enemy; the weakness of the flesh plagues Christians their whole life until they are taken to the Lord in heaven; and unrepentant sin in the Body of Christ is like a cancer. How are we on this side of glory to deal with it all? The Lord Jesus said, “Come unto Me, all you who are weak and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” In Confession and through the Office of the Keys, we come to the Lord Jesus at His command and commend our lives to His Word—His Word of both Law and Gospel—and find in Him our “righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

This year’s mid-week Lenten theme is “‘As Surely as I Live,’ God Said.” Taking its title from the first line of the great Nicolaus Herman hymn, *LSB* 614, “‘As Surely as I Live’” is a series of sermons by Pr. Bruss, Pr. Dan Galchutt (LCMS Kansas District), Pr. Kerns, Pr. Ben Ockree (Calvary, Topeka), and Pr. Joshua Woelmer (Zion, Vassar). Our mid-week Lenten worship opportunities in March fall on Wednesday, 7, 14, and 21 March at 12:15 and 7:00 p.m.

SOUND WORDS ACADEMY COURSE LISTING: CURRENT

CHILDREN:

Rhythm of Faith Choir (3 January – 9 May, 5:30-5:55 p.m.; Bethany Johnson & Marcia Lange)

Rhythm of Faith uses God’s gift of music to confess the truth of His Word in song. Learn the rich heritage of Lutheran hymnody and liturgy.

Jr. Lutherans (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Daniel Sweet)

This fast-paced Bible, Catechism, and Lutheran history trivia game places Lutherans aged 4 – 12 yrs. in competition with one another and eventually teams from other congregations. It’s trivia that is hardly *trivial*.

ADULTS:

New Testament Greek (5:00-5:50 p.m.; Pr. Bruss)

Continuation of last year’s New Testament Greek course.

Placed for a Purpose (4 weeks; 28 February – 21 March; 5:55-6:55 p.m.; Pr. Dan Galchutt, LCMS KS District)

This Bible Study looks at the vocation of faithful stewards as they serve their neighbors in church, community, and home. Interactive discussion, close attention to Scripture, and new insights on being a “mask of God” as you live in your vocation.

Hebrews (Spring Term; 5:55-6:55 p.m.; Dennis Hintz)

Luther describes Hebrews as a marvelously fine epistle. It discusses Christ’s priesthood masterfully and profoundly on the basis of the Scriptures and extensively interprets the Old Testament in a fine way.

COLLEGE STUDENTS & YOUNG ADULTS:

Sharpening Our Discernment Skills (17 January – 9 May, 7:45-8:40 p.m.; Pr. Kerns)

We will watch various non-Lutheran pastors who deal with the topics of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism pausing to test and see if what they teach accords with sound words. This will allow us to be better equipped to spot false teaching.

CATECHESIS:

Spring Adult Catechesis (14 weeks; 17 January – 9 May; 7:45-8:40 p.m.; Pr. Bruss)

Youth Cat I (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Dcns. Linda)

Youth Cat II (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Prs. Bruss & Kerns)

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The only SWA class that will meet on Wednesday, 21 March, is Placed for a Purpose. We will have our regular Lenten service that evening, as well.

MONTHLY BREAKFAST IN MARCH

On Sunday, March 11, between services, the breakfast will be pot luck. So, come join your fellow members by bringing your favorite breakfast dish to share.

ANNUAL CHURCH CLEANING SATURDAY, MARCH 24TH

The Annual Church Cleaning in preparation for Holy Week and Easter has been set for Saturday, March 24, 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. Last year we had an excellent turnout, which helped complete our cleaning in record time, and we hope as many will join us again this year.

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.

FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN (FMSC)

“For I was hungry and you gave me food.” Matt. 25:35

We have been offered an opportunity to participate in a humanitarian project called “Feed My Starving Children,” a NGO which packs and sends nutritious food to children in 70 countries where starvation is rampant. The organization began in 1987, and has grown tremendously. Over the last thirty years, 99.9 percent of the food and 92.7 percent of the monetary donations go directly to the children who need help the most.

We all have seen pictures of skin stretched over bones and bloated bellies. These children do exist, and our church has been asked to make monetary donations and to volunteer **just two hours** to package food. FMSC appears to be a safe and efficacious way to answer Jesus' mandate, *“for I was hungry and you gave me food.”*

In partnership with other churches in the Topeka area, the packaging of the food will take place on March 3, 2018 here at St. John's in Luther Hall. Children as young as five and adults as young as 100 and everyone in between are welcome and encouraged to participate. No cooking is involved. The ingredients are shipped to the site ready to be packaged on an assembly line. Our church's goal is **(100) volunteers**, but the more we have the more packages that can be sent. The reports from earlier volunteers from all over the country suggest that the experience is not only rewarding, but also enjoyable. For those who prefer, sit-down jobs are available. Please consider helping as a team, as a family, or individually. If you even just think you might be able to help, please **sign up in the breeze way**.

Five or six churches are going together on this project. Right now it looks like we are about \$2,000 - \$3,000 away from reaching the monetary goal, and St. John's is about 40 volunteers short of our goal of 100. The packing times on Saturday, March 3, are:

1. 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
2. 12:00 noon – 2:00 p.m.
3. 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Also we will need about 20 people to help set up on Friday, March 2, from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. and 20 more to clean up on Saturday from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

If you have a preference on the shifts, please place a 1, 2, or 3 by your name on the sign-up sheet by the Information Center. If you have no preference, let me know by writing n/p by your name. I will record those names and times on the website. Tell your friends about this opportunity; there will never be too many workers.

CHECK OUT THE PACKET OF FOOD . . .

. . . on the table outside the Information Center. That is what we will be packaging on March 3, 2018, in Luther Hall. We hope to send 100,000 meals to starving children over the world. Sign up to be a part of this project of mercy.

CHOICE DOLLARS®

St John's received \$5,223 in charitable outreach funding in 2017 through Choice Dollars® from Thrivent. All 2017 Choice Dollars® are now available to be directed to a charitable organization. 2017 Choice Dollars® must be directed by March 31, 2018 or they will be forfeited. If you are a Thrivent member, please consider directing your Choice Dollars® to St. John's. Choice Dollars® are extremely beneficial to St. John's. These funds allow matching funds to continue to be distributed to the LWML (Bazaar), Christian Fellowship (Smorgasbord) and St. John's LYF (Golf Tournament). The matching funds directed to the LWML and Christian Fellowship are used to support various Missions. The LYF matching funds are used to support LYF events—including Higher Things.

ST. JOHN'S WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Topeka Zone LWML Spring Fling – Saturday March 10, 2018
 Christ Lutheran Church, 3509 Burlingame Road, Topeka
 Registration, Coffee and Service Project starting at 9 a.m. with \$5 registration
 Meeting starting at 10 a.m.
 Speaker – Barry Feaker, Director of Topeka Rescue Mission
 Ingathering – paper towels, toilet paper, Kleenex, diapers (1-3) for the Mission
 Please respond with number of attendees by Saturday, March 3
 to LaJean Rinker lajean.rinker@sbcglobal.net

WOMEN'S MISSION BLANKET PROJECT

Sunday afternoon, at 2 PM, March 18, provides an opportunity for St. John's women to work on mission blankets. Ladies of all ages, including students who need volunteer hours for school, can help with the easy job of tying knots. We'll work in the undercroft, so please enter the church by the office doors. March is a busy month, but consider taking time on a mission project that not only helps prepare blankets for

Lutheran World Relief, but also locally for Doorstep, Topeka Rescue Mission, and Haskell Light Ministries. Refreshments will be served along with a short devotion.



TLS NEWS

Do you have family members or neighbors with young children who might be interested in learning about TLS? Encourage them to stop by the TLS main campus at 701 SW Roosevelt on **Sunday, March 11**, from 2:00 to 4:00pm, for a tour of the school and a “meet and greet” with Principal Francik and teachers. (This event had previously been scheduled for February 25).

Wednesday, March 14 is the new date for the Kindergarten Round-up, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at the TLS main campus. (This event had been rescheduled from February 28.) Please contact the school office at [785.357.0382](tel:785.357.0382) for more information or if you have any questions.

If you are a Thrivent member and eligible to participate in the **CHOICE** program, the deadline to direct your 2017 CHOICE dollars is **March 31**. The gifts received by TLS through this program provide immediate resources for the school’s tuition assistance program. Go to www.thrivent.com or call your Thrivent representative for more information about how to direct your CHOICE dollars to TLS. Thank you to those who have already done this - your participation is a blessing to the school!

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS

Members have asked how they might contribute to St. John’s through their IRA’s when the government requires that funds have to start to be withdrawn once a person reaches age 70 ½. The below information is from the IRS website giving some information on how this might be accomplished. If you have questions, we suggest that you talk with your financial advisor in getting this set up.

What is a qualified charitable distribution?

Generally, a qualified charitable distribution is an otherwise taxable distribution from an IRA (other than an ongoing SEP or SIMPLE IRA) owned by an individual who is age 70½ or over that is paid directly from the IRA to a qualified charity. See [Pub. 590-B](#), Distributions from Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs)) for additional information.

Can a qualified charitable distribution satisfy my required minimum distribution from an IRA?

Yes, your qualified charitable distributions can satisfy all or part the amount of your required minimum distribution from your IRA. For example, if your 2014 [required minimum distribution](#) was \$10,000, and you made a \$5,000 qualified charitable distribution for 2014, you would have had to withdraw another \$5,000 to satisfy your 2014 required minimum distribution.

How are qualified charitable distributions reported on Form 1099-R?

Charitable distributions are reported on Form 1099-R for the calendar year the distribution is made.

How do I report a qualified charitable distribution on my income tax return?

To report a qualified charitable distribution on your Form 1040 tax return, you generally report the full amount of the charitable distribution on the line for IRA distributions. On the line for the taxable amount, enter zero if the full amount was a qualified charitable distribution. Enter “QCD” next to this line. See the Form 1040 instructions for additional information.

You must also file Form 8606, Nondeductible IRAs, if:

- You made the qualified charitable distribution from a traditional IRA in which you had basis and received a distribution from the IRA during the same year, other than the qualified charitable distribution; or
- the qualified charitable distribution was made from a Roth IRA.

In order to qualify for the Charitable Tax Distribution the Financial organization must make the check payable directly to the church, it cannot be made to the member and then signed over to the church.

LUTHERAN FINE ARTS COUNCIL EVENTS

The Lutheran Fine Arts Council of Topeka will be sponsoring a CHILDREN'S ART WORKSHOP featuring local artist Lila Bartel on Saturday, March 3, from 10:00 a.m. to noon with fun projects for children to take home. The free event is for children grades 2 to 6 and will be held at the former Avondale East Elementary school at 455 SE Golf Park Blvd. Questions and reservations-call Ann Mah at 266-9434 or email at annmah@att.net.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, SEWARD, NEBRASKA CHOIR

The A CAPPELLA CHOIR from Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska, will be in concert at First Lutheran Church, 1234 SW Fairlawn, on Saturday, March 10 at 7:00p.m. The 72-voice choir is under the direction of Dr. Kurt E. von Kampen. The event is sponsored by The Lutheran Fine Arts Council of Topeka. Free will offering. Host families are needed to house students the evening of March 10. If you are available, contact Sharon Rosenow at 640-7317. **Please note:** The A Capella Choir will also be singing in our 11:00 a.m. Divine Service at St. John's on Sunday, March 11.

THANK YOU'S

Topeka Lutheran School Chili Supper

Thank you on behalf of the students, families and staff of TLS! The chili supper went extremely well this year. The PTL will be able to make significant contributions to the school through your support and generosity. **Thank you!**

DOORSTEP NEWS

Doorstep's **2017 Christmas Store** was a great success thanks to everyone who worked together to provide for those less fortunate. They helped a total of 259 households with 824 individuals with food, gifts, toys and household items spending \$17,699! The staff is grateful for all of the volunteers who gave of their time to help them provide Christmas to these families.

Thank you to everyone who donated soup and crackers during their **Souper Bowl Sunday** collection and also thank everyone who contributed to their **15th Annual Operation Soup Line!**

Doorstep will again sell **cinnamon rolls and tamales** this Spring! We'll take orders in April with delivery in early May! Keep your eyes open for flyers on dates!

IMPORTANT SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We have new Sunday School curriculum starting with those students in first grade through the Middle School students. This new curriculum is exciting! It was chosen, in part, because it follows the One-year Lectionary which we follow at St. John’s. This means that the Sunday School lessons will match the readings during the church service, particularly the Gospel reading. This curriculum should be more challenging for our students, and it will give them a more in-depth study of the lessons. The students each have their own workbooks that all the lessons are in. They will bring home the workbooks at the end of each quarter. Please take the opportunity to look over the workbook and discuss the lessons with your children.

Thank you, parents for bringing your children to Sunday school where they can be nurtured in the faith through the Word of God. Even the two-year-olds have their own class! Why not set a good example for them and attend one of the Bible classes during the Sunday school hour.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

Clocks “Spring” ahead Saturday night, March 11

EASTER LILIES

Member of St. John’s have the opportunity to place an Easter lily in the church for Easter Sunday, April 1. Complete the following form and return it to the church office by Sunday, March 11 – with \$9.00 per lily. **You may take your lily home following the 11:00am 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: _____



THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“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. (*Augsburg Confession, Article 5*)