

ST. JOHN'S NEWSLETTER

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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BUILT ON CHRIST OUR CORNERSTONE

Vol. 127, No. 4
April 2024

From the Pastor

“The Present Work of the Ascended Lord”

We have just celebrated Holy Week, with its special emphasis on the suffering and death of Jesus and His triumphant resurrection from the dead. This is the fulfillment of the promise of the Savior first given to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15), and which was declared throughout the whole of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44). It is this fulfillment that is the Gospel message, the message of salvation for the whole world (John 3:16). Christ *has done* it all for us! But what, if anything, is He doing *now* while we await His return?

Forty days after our Lord rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.¹ It is time to ask that good Lutheran question, “What does this mean?” Here, as always, we must let Scripture inform us. So let’s look at some appropriate passages to help us see what His Ascension really is all about.

1. Does His Ascension to the right hand of God mean that Jesus is far away?

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20b) While it is true that Jesus removed His *visible presence* from His Church when He ascended, He made it very clear that He was still with His people. He did not say He would be with us in our emotions or memories, or that He would be with us as true God only. Jesus, true God *and true man*, will be with His Church always, until He *visibly* returns in glory.

This really comes down to realizing that when Jesus ascended into heaven, He did not fly away into some far reaches of outer space. While many in the church’s history have seen heaven (and hell) in spatial terms, this is truly not the Scriptural teaching.² For example, Jesus says, *“For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”* (Matt. 18:10) Thus the angels who are guarding children on earth are in heaven beholding God *at the same time!*³

2. What is the right hand of God?

[God] seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. (Eph. 1:20-22)

¹ Ascension Day is May 9th this year.

² Spatial means in physical space: heaven on top, earth (creation) in the middle, hell on the bottom. While the Bible does occasionally use such language, we must let the whole Bible speak, and not set some verses against others. For example, the “spatial error” caused a major break during the Reformation when some separated from Luther because they denied that Christ, as man, could be present in the Lord’s Supper since, as true man, He was in heaven, which is far away (spatial concept) from the earth. This shows the danger when any form of human interpretation is allowed to overrule *the clear teachings of the Bible*, in this case, “This is My body... this is My blood”!

³ See also 2 Kings 6:17, where God’s mighty angels are at work on earth while still invisible to human eyes, and Acts 7:55-56 where Stephan, who is very much on earth while being stoned, is granted a vision of heaven to encourage him. Thus heaven is where God reveals Himself in His glory, and is present only in His love and mercy. Therefore, it is not in some “far off” location, though it is invisible to us unless God opens our eyes so that we can see such realities. Equally true then is that hell is where there is only God’s unquenchable wrath.

Jesus being at the right hand of God refers to the unending dominion that He has entered, since the “right hand of God” is a figure of speech for God’s omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.⁴ The true man Jesus now always and fully uses the divine powers that were His from all eternity as the only-begotten Son of God, but which He did not always or fully use during His earthly ministry as He came in the form of a servant to save us. (Phil. 2:5-8)

3. What is the importance of His Ascension to the right hand of God?

Let’s look again at the passage just mentioned, but this time focusing on who receives advantage from Christ’s Ascension. *And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything **for the church**, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.* Jesus, God and man, continues to act, right now as *the* Prophet, Priest and King **for our (believers’) good**. As our Prophet, He sends people to proclaim His Word by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:10-12; Luke 10:16; John 16:7) As our Priest He continues to pray and plead for us before the Father. (Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1) As our King, He rules and governs all of creation, even all forces of evil, for the protection and benefit of His Church and her mission, the bringing of the Gospel of salvation into the world of condemned sinners. (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 28:18-19; Eph. 1:20-23)

Jesus is not on some extended “heavenly” vacation until He comes back. The Lord Christ, true God and true man, is even right now acting as the head of His Church and king of all creation. He is present in His Word and Sacraments, creating and strengthening faith. For those who believe His Gospel, He is present in an intimate way, actually dwelling within His people, joining Himself to them as His own cherished brother or sister. (John 14:23) Because of His great love for those He dwells within, He is present wherever His people are, and as king over all of creation, He protects them and makes sure that all things, even the bad, work out for their eternal good. (Rom. 8:28)

Therefore, don’t let the words, “[He] ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father”⁵ pass by without a prayer of joyful thanksgiving. The crucified and risen Savior has entered into His glory to rule all things for the eternal benefit of the Christian Church as a whole, and each of us individual believers! And even now, He is working all things to their conclusion. And when all is complete, He will return in His glory. Then all creation will acknowledge Him as Lord of all,⁶ and He will take His faithful to be with Him forever in the new heavens and earth. All praise and honor to the Ascended Lord Jesus, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is One God, now and forever. Amen!

In Christ’s service,

Pastor Nerd

APOLOGETICS: CONFRONTING a CLEVER CLASSROOM CON⁷

Many Christian students in secular universities can relate to this scenario: An evolutionist college professor is doing his best to convince his class that biblical creation is absurd. To this end, he peppers students with challenging questions: How can you see distant starlight in a young universe? If there was a global flood, where did all the water come from? Where did it go?

One of the unspoken assumptions behind this barrage of questions is that you shouldn’t hold a particular worldview unless you know the answers to all possible objections. If a student can’t answer on the spot every objection the instructor throws out, it’s seen as evidence that biblical creation is inherently irrational.

However, this is an intellectual con job. Knowing the answers to all possible questions would require perfect knowledge, which none of us possesses. If one follows this logic to its natural conclusion, it means that no one—evolutionist or creationist—is allowed to hold any kind of worldview! But how can you live your life without some kind of belief system? How can you function if you can’t trust the information coming from your senses? And why even bother to do science or anything else if you think the world is an illusion?^a

Of course, evolutionist professors who challenge biblical creation don’t hold themselves to the same standard they impose on their Christian students. They insist that living things somehow arose from non-living chemicals, yet they have no idea how this happened.^{b,c} Despite this enormous unanswered question at the very foundation of their belief system, you can be sure evolutionist academics don’t consider their worldview to be irrational.

Unfortunately, many Christians also won’t consider biblical creation unless they get all the questions answered ahead of time. This “wait and see” approach results from a lack of faith in God’s Word. Furthermore, although it may seem intellectual, the approach has a huge practical problem. Our limited knowledge makes it impossible for any of us to answer all questions up front.

⁴ See Psalms 89:13; 118:15-16; 139:9-10 for further usage of this term.

⁵ Nicene Creed.

⁶ Cf. Philippians 2:9-10. A joyful declaration of praise for believers and one of abject terror for those who denied Him through their life.

⁷ By Dr. Jake Hebert; <https://www.icr.org/article/confronting-a-clever-classroom-con/>

Actually, creation scientists have excellent reasons for their “bias” in favor of biblical creation. There is zero scientific evidence that life can or ever did arise from non-living chemicals. Evolutionists acknowledge that living things appear designed, although they vehemently deny this is the case.^d The billions of fossils found in water-deposited rock layers all over the world are exactly what one would expect from the global Flood described in Genesis 6–9, as are the hundreds of traditions and stories of this catastrophic event in cultures throughout the world.^{e,f}

Biblical creation makes far better sense of the big picture of Earth history than does the evolutionary story. Creation scientists have already answered many questions and objections simply by taking the Bible’s narrative at face value. Yes, questions remain, but we’ll never correctly answer them by starting from a flawed evolutionary premise. Those who accept evolutionary ideas should quit leaning on their own understanding ([Proverbs 3:5-6](#)) and instead trust the words of the perfectly truthful, all-knowing, all-powerful Creator. Genesis really does have the answers.

References

- a. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see Lisle, J. 2011. *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books.
- b. Horgan, J. [Pssst! Don’t tell the creationists, but scientists don’t have a clue how life began](#). *Scientific American*. Posted on [blogs.scientificamerica.com](#) February 28, 2011, accessed July 29, 2019.
- c. Esson, A. [\\$5 Million Tech Prize Seeks Answer to Origin of Life](#). *Front Line Genomics*. Posted on [frontlinegenomics.com](#) March 1, 2018, accessed August 1, 2019.
- d. Guliuzza, R. 2011. [Evaluating Real vs. Apparent Design](#). *Acts & Facts*. 40 (1): 10-11.
- e. Morris, J. 2012. *The Global Flood*. Dallas, TX: Institute for Creation Research.
- f. Morris, J. 2014. [Traditions of a Global Flood](#). *Acts & Facts*. 43 (11): 15.

* Dr. Jake Hebert is Research Associate at the Institute for Creation Research and earned his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Texas at Dallas.

A LOOK at the LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

Last month, we continued our reading Article XXVII, Monastic Vows, and saw how monasteries were originally a place of learning, but that over time many in the church erroneously came to believe that monastic vows were greater than Baptism and that those who took them earned forgiveness of sins and other graces. This month we confess the Scriptural truth on the lack of binding authority of monastic vows, with a special view on the vow of chastity.

Augsburg Confession Article XXVII: Monastic Vows, 18-26⁸

First, concerning monks who marry, our teachers say that it is lawful for anyone who is not suited for the single life to enter into marriage. Monastic vows cannot destroy what God has commanded and ordained. God’s commandment is this, “Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife” (1 Corinthians 7:2).⁹ It is not just a command given by God. God has created and ordained marriage for those who are not given an exception to natural order by God’s special work.¹⁰ This is what is taught according to the text in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” Therefore, those who obey this command and ordinance of God do not sin.

What objection can be raised to this? Let people praise the obligation of a monastic vow as much as they want, but they will never be able to destroy God’s commandment by means of a monastic vow. Canon law teaches that superiors can make exceptions to monastic vows; how much less are such monastic vows in force that are contrary to God’s commandments!

If, in fact, an obligation to a monastic vow could never be changed for any reason, the Roman popes could never have granted exceptions to the vows. For it is not lawful for someone to make an exception to what is truly from God.¹¹ The Roman pontiffs have wisely judged that mercy is to be observed in these monastic obligations. That is why we read that many times they have made special arrangements and exceptions with monastic vows. The case of the King of Aragon,¹² who was called back from the monastery, is well known, and there are also examples in our own times.

⁸ From *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, Paul McCain, Ed. CPH, 2006. Due to the length of this Article, it is being broken into smaller sections.

⁹ Let us note that it does not say “committed girlfriend,” but *wife*. Marriage between one man and one woman is the only God-pleasing outlet for our sexuality. Outside of such a marriage it is sin. Within such a marriage it is not only “not sinful,” *but is blessed by God who gave the gift in the first place!*

¹⁰ This means the special God-given gift of chastity, that is, perpetual virginity. Jesus speaks of this gift in Matthew 19:11-12.

¹¹ Again, consider this in light of footnote #2. God has commanded sex only in marriage. Whatever excuses we might give, the simple fact is that there are *no exceptions permitted*.

¹² Ramiro II (ca. 1075 –1157), a monk, was released from his vows after the death of his childless brother so that he might assume the throne. The Kingdom of Aragon was located in the northeast of modern Spain.

QUARTERLY VOTERS' ASSEMBLY SUNDAY, APRIL 28

THANK YOU



one of you.

There are many people we wish to thank for helping out in numerous ways during the Lenten season and Easter Sunday. We appreciate those who volunteered to host the midweek suppers. The tasty food and wonderful fellowship were truly enjoyed by those able to attend. We also thank those who helped out with the preparations and serving of the Easter Breakfast. Many hands contributed to providing a great meal and time of celebration of our Lord's resurrection. God's blessings to each

THE LUTHERAN WITNESS

This is a FREE monthly Lutheran magazine with different topics related to our beliefs. If you would like to start receiving a copy, there's a sign-up sheet by the coat room or contact Marilyn Woods if you would like to be added or removed from the mailing list. April 14th is the last day to sign up.

LWML NEWS

We are no longer collecting used postage stamps. We thank you so much for your past support of this mission project.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER, MAY 2, 2024

Join with Christians throughout the United States on Thursday, May 2, to pray for our nation. A bulletin insert has been prepared for Sunday, April 28, with prayer suggestions. If you are unable to attend the worship service that day, you can request one from the office and it will be emailed to you.



OFFICE INFORMATIONS

Please call the office or Pastor when someone is ill, hospitalized, or homebound or you desire private communion.

- Please use this email to contact the office: churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org
- Website address – www.stjohnsgeneseo.org
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/>
- All Sunday services are 'Live' streamed at 10am and posted to our church website the following day.
- **All newsletter articles need to be into the office no later than the 15th of each month.**
- **Bulletin announcements must be to Terri by Wednesday morning each week.**



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

4 Mary Jo Gehn
8 Brian Magerkurth
9 Brad Gehn
13 Jennifer Magerkurth
15 Thad Curry
15 Olivia Loenser



20 Sabrina Smith
21 Trevor Eastburn
21 Margo Schillinger
22 Jamie Eastburn
22 Rylie Hallendorff
23 Marcia Helke

23 Christian Loenser
23 Linda White
24 Brenda Hallendorff
30 Gannon Marckese
30 Theresa Mosher
30 Sarah Nerud

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

5 Ken/Lisa Allison (1986) - 38 yrs
8 Carl/Heidi Freeman (2006) - 18 yrs
8 Marty/Coni Himmelman (1995) - 29 yrs
14 Randy/Karen Rasmussen (2009) - 15 yrs
18 Don/Sarah Hock (1998) - 26 yrs

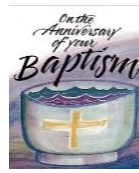


21 Jerry/Peggy Hickenbottom (1990) - 34 yrs
26 Thomas/Emily Marckese (2008) - 16 yrs
27 Gary/Kathy Post (1968) – 56 yrs
30 Jason/Cassie Dahl (2011) - 13 yrs

APRIL BAPTISMS

1 Carolyn Werner
5 Beverly Peterson
8 Luke Davila
10 Roselyn Maeltzer
10 Paul Mosher
12 Joseph Schillinger
13 Dan Maeltzer

13 Karen Rasmussen
14 Justine Mitchell
14 Marilyn Woods
15 Kathy Remick
15 Mike Kolb
19 Logan Raschke
22 Derek Helke



24 Caleb Nash
27 Gayla Kroll
27 Avery Magerkurth
28 Jaimie Jorgensen
29 Brian Magerkurth
30 Mary Jo Gehn

A DOLLAR FOR MISSIONS

Pastor Pablo Dominguez serves Cristo Rey Lutheran Church, East Moline. He also travels to Beardstown to play a vital role at St. John Lutheran Church.

DFM is funding new prison ministries in central Illinois. If a congregation lends its pastor to prison ministry one day a week, Central Illinois District is in a position to thank that church with \$5,000 per year.

The current DFM project is to continue a project already begun. In 2023, DFM funds were raised to begin ministry in as many as four new prisons in central Illinois during 2024. With the funds gathered, CID started to fund one in January, and hopes to start more before the end of this year.

Now in 2024 the DFM project is to gather sufficient money to make sure such new work in prisons and county jails can continue to be funded into 2025, or so work can be started in a new prison or jail in 2025. **Amount to be funded:** \$10,000 **Project:** Continue prison ministries begun in 2024 or to start ministry in prisons not currently being so served



CHRISTIAN LIVING

Whose Is It Anyway?

If you have ever bought or sold a house, you are acquainted with the concept of a “title search.” Before you can sell your house, and before anyone else will feel comfortable putting down the money to buy it, you have to prove that you really own it. So a title company looks through the public records to ensure that you bought it from the person who really owned it, who bought it from the person who really owned it before that, all the way back to the earliest records of your state, including when your state was only a territory or colony of England.

Peak into a preschool classroom during playtime and you’ll see a simplified version of this. A child starts playing with a ball, but another child says, “That’s mine: I had it first.”

You can’t understand the Seventh Commandment without understanding this concept of ownership or title. As the Small Catechism puts it:

You shall not steal. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor’s money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

Your neighbor’s possessions are *his*: you don’t have a right to take them. And likewise, your possessions are yours. Ownership and property rights are foundational to any functioning society.

But there is something deeper to know about ownership, and that is the question of who has the title and ownership *to you*? Paul says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19–20).

If you yourself are owned by God, then of course everything that you own, you really only possess by God’s leave: all of it, at bottom, belongs to Him since *you* belong to Him. For you were bought with the blood of Christ.

This notion is the foundation of all Christian stewardship. It all belongs to God. It should all be used for things that bring honor to His name, blessings to our neighbors and the extension of His kingdom.



Things have been busy as you will notice. 1) March Devotions were handed out to the students. 2) We have ordered the Higher Things materials for VBS 2024 which will be focused on Prayer. 3) The students processed with palm branches at the beginning of the service Palm Sunday. 4) The bulletin board next to the youth room has been updated. All are welcome to add to this collection of student activities. We invited you to take a moment and check out what our children are doing. We are so proud of them. Please continue to pray for our children and encourage them to remain steadfast in the faith of their baptism.

SPECIAL COLLECTION FOR PREGNANCY RESOURCES

Our LWML is asking for your help in collecting items for Pregnancy Resources. You are invited to bring the listed items anytime from April 7 – April 26. Items needed include:

Diapers (Newborn and size 5-6), Newborn clothing (boy and girl), Diaper wipes, Toddler clothing (2T & 3T boy and girl), New baby bottles, Burp cloths, New pacifiers, Receiving blankets, Baby shampoo & lotion (no powder or oil), Small baby toys (teethers, etc.), Baby bath towels, Baby washcloth, Monetary checks made to "Pregnancy Resources"

PRAYER GROUP (CHAIN)



All are invited to participate either by becoming an email prayer warrior or asking for prayers. Prayer warriors receive requested prayers from the Pastor via email which then can be used as they pray throughout the day. Those desiring prayers can make a request to the Pastor. This is a blessing to those requesting prayers and those praying for our brothers/sisters in need of prayers.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Our Infrequent Attendees – pray the Holy Spirit bring them to understand their need to be in regular worship in church and we as brothers and sisters in Christ would reach out to them.

Our LWML Chapter – that God would continue to bless their work.

Sunday school – pray the Holy Spirit would direct and guide the students to a better understanding of God's love and mercy in Jesus Christ and that all parents would be diligent in bringing their children each Sunday.

Youth – pray the Holy Spirit would provide the means to work with our youth to keep them faithful to their confirmation promises. Bless and increase their numbers.

Elderly/Homebound - pray that this congregation would continually remember our Elderly and Shut-ins and minister to their special needs.

Confirmation Students – pray that they will be eager to study, learn and grow in the teachings of the Lutheran church and their faith. May they see this is the beginning of a life lived for Jesus.



REMEMBERING THOSE IN NEED!

ST. JOHN'S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy these members of St. John's:

Elizabeth Bjork

Betty Firch

Jessica Johnson

Denise Winchell

Paula Chapa

Arlyn Helke

Aaron Raschke

Marilyn Woods

Joyce DeFauw

Lynne Johnson

Drew Schillinger

Carolyn Wildermuth

Linda Lundquist

Anthony/Sami Sedotto (Seminararian)

Don Eggers (son of friend of Marilyn Woods)

Jodie Martin (daughter of Gary/Darla Johns)

Jon/Anita Clausing (missionaries in Kenya)

Mike Erdman (nephew of Bob Erdman)

Shandel Loenser

Paul Werner (brother of Dan Werner)

Ron Powell (friend of Brad Gehn)

Justin Rittenhouse (grandson of John/Nancy Wickwire)

Ellen Bauer (grandmother of Joel Werling)

Marty Cavato (cousin of Mary Jo Gehn)

Todd Erbst (former member of St. John's)

Ron Powell (friend of Brad Gehn)

Don Lutz (husband of an LWML friend of Liz Neumann)

Please remember to call the church office if you are needing prayer. Also let us know when we can remove your name because your health has improved and you are living a regular life. We love to give thanks to God for His healing just as we send Him our requests.)

MILITARY – We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

Mandy/Richard Davila (daughter/son-in-law of Linda Aper)

Casey Powers Jr. (step son of Lisa Powers)

Luke/Nicole Thompson (son/daughter-in-law of John/Kindra Thompson)

Brittany Loenser (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

Karl Flynn (son of Mr/Mrs Paul Flynn)

Rylie Hallendorff (grand-daughter of Carolyn & Dan Werner)



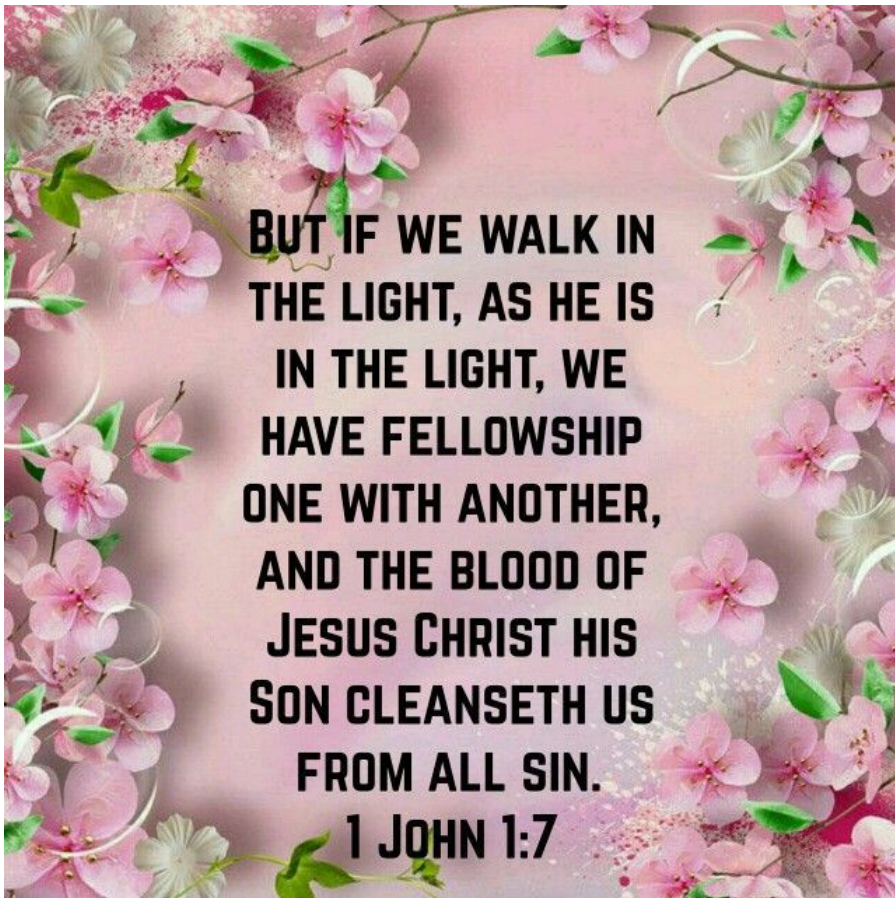
ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
 GENESEO IL
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April 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	2	3 Confirmation 5 pm	4 Men's Bible Study 6:30 pm	5	6
7 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am Elders' 11:30 am	8 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	9 Council 6 pm	10 Confirmation 5 pm	11	12	13
14 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am	15 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i> <i>Pastors' Conference</i>	16 LWML 1:00 pm	17 Confirmation 5 pm	18 Confirmation Elders' Review 6:30 pm	19	20
21 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am Youth 11:30 am	22 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	23	24 Confirmation 5 pm	25 SS Teachers 6:30 pm	26	27
28 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am Voters' Assembly 11am	29 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	30		<p><i>For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:21</i></p>		



ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
8948 N 1900 AVE
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**Sunday school/Adult & Youth Bible
Class 8:45am**

**WORSHIP SERVICES 10 am
(Holy Communion 1st, 3rd Sundays)**

Live Streaming each week on Facebook