



St. John Lutheran Church

FREEDOM TOWNSHIP

16035 Co. Rd. U ♦ NAPOLEON, OH 43545

Serving Christ in Freedom

Worship • Stewardship • Mission

March 23, 2025

VOL. 91

NO. 12

Rev. Gary Bender, TIM Pastor
Miss Tracy Germann, Principal

Cell: 989-770-0005; Church: 419-598-8961
School: 419-598-8702
Church Website: www.sjl.org

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Sermon: "The Power of Sin & Repentance" *Ezekiel 33:7-20*

Order of Service: Printed

Hymns: **579 ~ 609 ~ 722**

WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS

Welcome in the name of the Lord. We pray that through this time of stillness and song, prayer and proclamation, you may experience the Spirit of God at work in your life. May God richly bless your worship today! Please fill out the blue Rite of Fellowship card from the pew rack in front of you and drop it into the baskets at the doors as you leave. If you do not have a local church home, we extend a warm invitation to you to become a part of our church family.



SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE THIS MORNING

- ✘ Elaine Buenger *Organist* ✘ Anna Sausser, Anika Rosebrock *Acolytes* ✘
- ✘ Dave Badenhop, Denny Von Deylen, Jerry Short, Dan Wiechers *Ushers* ✘
- ✘ Deb Von Deylen, Elaine Buenger, Teresa Weller, Pat Mahnke *Altar Guild* ✘

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEYS – Today, March 23rd, and next Sunday, March 30th, we will be administering congregational surveys after worship in the sanctuary for all adult members to complete. The services will be shortened to include the surveys in our normal timeframe. These surveys are an important part of our process of calling a new pastor, so please plan to be here!

EASTER FLOWER ORDERS – It's time again to order Easter flowers. We are now taking orders for the various flowers to purchase "in memory of" or "in honor of" someone special in your life. Pink order forms were inserted in last week's bulletin, and more can be found on the narthex table. Drop your order form and payment (to St. John Lutheran Church) into the container on the narthex table, or return it to the church office. **Order deadline is next Sun., March 30th.** No later orders!

Date	Time	Activities
Today	9:00 AM 10:20 AM 1:30 PM 2:30 PM	Worship Service with Surveys to Follow Adult Bible Study; Sunday School and "The Lamp" Gerald Busy Fingers 4-H Meeting GriefShare Support Group – Topic: "Hope & Resilience"
Mon.	5:30 PM	NO SCHOOL – Professional Development <i>Bread from Heaven</i> Food Pantry Distribution
Tues.	8:35 AM 7:00 PM	Kindergarten Screening School Chapel Elders' Meeting
Wed.	10:00 AM 5:00 PM 5:45 PM 7:00 PM 8:00 PM	Women's Lenten Bible Study Lenten Supper prior to midweek service Junior High Confirmation Class Midweek Lenten Service ; Offering – <i>Worship Anew</i> Organist: <i>Sharon Damman</i> Acolyte: <i>Westen Cowell</i> Ushers: <i>Denny Bockelman, Dave Myles, Tim Badenhop</i> Altar Guild: <i>Deb Von Deylen, Elaine Buenger, Teresa Weller, Pat Mahnke</i> Adult Choir Practice
Thurs.	6:30 AM	Men's Bible Study Breakfast
Sun.	9:00 AM 10:20 AM 10:20 AM 2:30 PM	Worship Service with Surveys to Follow Voters' Meeting Sunday School and "The Lamp" GriefShare Support Group – Topic: "What Do I Live for Now?"

PASTORAL EMERGENCIES – In the event you require emergency pastoral care, please call Pastor Gary at 989-770-0005. *NOTE ABOUT HOSPITALIZATION: If you are planning to spend time in a hospital (more than just out-patient) for surgery or other issues, please notify the Church Office or Pastor Gary, so he can arrange to visit you while you are there. He will need to know the dates involved and which hospital you will be staying at (preferably in writing). Thank you!*

MATTERS FOR PRAYER – Please keep these people in your prayers:

- ❖ *Melba Elling, Norma Damman, and Rozella Gruenhagen* at Genacross
- ❖ *Lawrence Behrmann* at Northcrest Nursing & Rehab
- ❖ Our Shut-Ins: *Irene and Willie Joost* and *Leona Durham*
- ❖ Military: *Justin Atkinson, Jason Rohrs, Emily Carmon, Jordan Lange, Cody Hoffman, Joshua, and Kyle*
- ❖ *Lowell Petzoldt* and *Cheryl Yaw*, for health concerns related to cancer
- ❖ *William Niebergall* undergoing heart surgery
- ❖ *Marietta Damman* recuperating from hip surgery
- ❖ *Gloria Maringer* who was moved to hospice care on Tuesday

FINANCIAL FACTS:

	Home Fund	Synod & Missions	Building Fund
Weekly Need	\$11,710.59	\$500.00	\$961.54
Rec'd 3/16/2025	\$10,924.69	\$140.00	\$240.00

ATTENDANCE: 128

LENT 2 (3/12): \$1,149.00 for Orphan Grain Train Domestic Disaster Relief; Attendance- 79

PREPARING OUR EARS TO HEAR – In today’s Scripture readings we hear that *Jesus Calls You to Repentance*.

“Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5). By this warning, the Lord would turn us away from wickedness and bring us to life in Himself. For He is patient with us, that we would not be cut down in our sin but live and bear fruit in Him. As He lives, the Lord has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezek. 33:11). So the Scriptures have been “written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor. 10:11), that we should not desire evil but trust in Christ. He alone is faithful, the Rock who feeds us with His “spiritual food” and pours out His “spiritual drink” (1 Cor. 10:3–4). *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15).*

DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY – If you were not able to attend the demographic study presentation on March 9th, copies of the report are available on the Narthex table.

“WHAT I HEARD” REPORT – Pastor Gary has written a report titled “What I Heard” based on his one-on-one meetings that were held in the fall. Copies are available on the Narthex table.

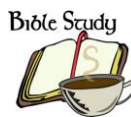
THE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT IS COMPLETE! Pick up a copy on the Narthex table today. If you didn’t get your directory updates in prior to printing, please still let Leah (churchsecretary@sjl.org) know if you have any changes, so we can update our records accordingly.

WOMEN’S LENTEN BIBLE STUDY – The Women of Freedom have two more weeks of their Lenten Bible Study. Join us in the cry room this coming **Wed., March 26th at 10 AM.**

All ladies are invited; no sign up necessary! This week starts a new theme, so you can jump right in!



MEN’S BREAKFAST BIBLE STUDY will meet each Thursday in Lent until Maundy Thursday. **Join us this Thursday morning** at 6:30 AM for **Men’s Bible Breakfast**. It’s a great way to start your day! Good food, good friends, and a good Word from God!



LENTEN SUPPERS – We will have a Lenten supper this Wed., March 26th at 5 p.m. prior to the midweek service. The meal is being provided by the *Elaine Buenger* and *Linda Riefers*, and the menu is hot ham (plain or sandwich), scalloped potatoes, green beans, sheet cake, Jell-O, and applesauce. A free-will offering will go to the youth group. We are looking for volunteers interested in hosting meals on Wed. April 2nd and 9th. Contact the church office if you are interested or have questions. Thank you to all who provide this nourishment and fellowship for the congregation!



EASTER FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST – The sign-up sheet for our annual Easter Fellowship Breakfast will be on the Narthex table soon. The breakfast will start around 8:15 a.m. between the Easter Sunrise and Festival services on April 20th. The menu includes eggs, sausage, and hash browns. Anyone wanting to help with preparation and serving are welcome to do so. Thank you for helping in this way as we celebrate the joy of Easter together!

EPIC AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE! – Mark your calendars for **Vacation Bible School** the week of June 9th to 13th from 9-11:30 a.m. This year’s theme will be “Epic Australian Adventure” from Concordia Publishing House. More details to come!



ANNUAL CHURCH CLEANING – A list of the people appointed for this year’s church cleaning is available on the narthex table. If you feel you are not physically able to help with the cleaning, let your co-chair know and we’ll make a note of that. Thank you to all who show up to do this each year!

****Group 1 will be having their cleaning sessions on Mon. April 7th and Tues. April 8th starting at 5 p.m.** If you have questions, please contact co-chairs *Nick and Kelly Sonnenberg* or *Larry and Cheryl Sausser*. **

VOTERS’ MEETING – Mark your calendars for March 30th. We will be having a voters’ meeting in the sanctuary after worship to discuss the hiring of a part-time first and second grade teacher.

GRIEFSHARE, a class offered at St. John for anyone grieving the loss of a loved one, meets on Sunday afternoons 2:30 p.m. from now until March 30th. It is led by the team of Rev. Gary Bender, our TIM, and Nancy Nemoyer, a member of St. John. You are invited to pray each week for the comfort of participants and the wisdom of leaders. Brochures with more information are on the back table.



Upcoming class videos, with workbook and discussion, in March, will be:

Sunday, March 23 Hope & Resilience

Sunday, March 30 What Do I Live for Now?

FACEBOOK VOLUNTEER – We are looking for a volunteer to help manage our church Facebook page. This volunteer will create posts and share information about our worship services, events, etc. This can be done from the comfort of your own home as long as you have internet and a smartphone or computer! Anyone with interest or questions can email Leah at churchsecretary@sjl.org.

THRIVENT CLIENTS – Don’t forget to direct 2024 Choice Dollars® prior to 3/31! If you’re an eligible Thrivent client and have Choice Dollars available to direct, please call your Thrivent office or direct them online by visiting thrivent.com/thriventchoice. Keep up the good work! Your designations are making a difference here at St. John.

LWML NAPOLEON ZONE SPRING RALLY – Ladies, mark your calendars for the LWML Spring Rally on Sat., April 5th at St. Luke’s. The flyer is found on the bulletin board in the back of the church. The featured speaker is *Rowen Turner*, a Fort Wayne Seminary student. He has an interesting story to tell about his faith journey. The in-gathering is for the Fort Wayne Seminary Food Bank. There will also be an opportunity to donate to Mites and Napoleon Zone.

ENDOWMENT FUND CONTACTS – Do you have questions about the St. John Endowment Fund? *Krista Gerken* and *Dave VonDeylen* are happy to provide more information to anyone who has questions or interest in making a donation. *Krista* can be reached at 419-966-2596 or lkgerken@henry-net.com. *Dave* can be reached at 419-438-1844 or davevd21@gmail.com.

ENROLLING NOW – St. John Lutheran School is enrolling students preschool-grade 8 for the 2025-’26 school year. Interested families can contact Tracy Germann at 419-598-8702 or tgermann@sjl.org.

SCHOOL POSITION OPENING:

- **Music Teacher** - This is an open position as of November 1st. This is a one day a week position responsible for teaching children in grades K-5 music according to the state standards. If you know of anyone for this position, please contact Miss Germann at tgermann@sjl.org.

THE SPRING LWML QUARTERLY is available in the tract rack for any ladies to pick up a copy!

HOPE-FULL LIVING DEVOTIONALS – Worship Anew offers a resource called *Hope-Full Living* which are devotions “written for and by seniors.” Visit hopefulliving.org to read or listen for free! They also offer the option to subscribe to a quarterly mailing of the devotions for \$16/year.

CHURCH SECRETARY DAYS – Leah Saylor is in the church office on Wednesdays and Thursdays. She can be reached by phone at 419-598-8961 or by e-mail at: churchsecretary@sjl.org. Bulletin submissions will now need to be turned in by end-of-day *Tuesday* in order to be included in Sunday’s bulletin.

‘BREAD FROM HEAVEN’ – Our food pantry’s next distribution will be tomorrow, March 24th, at 5:30 p.m. A note to St. John members needing food assistance – If you could use food assistance from our food pantry, please speak with *Pastor Bender*. We are required by the *Northwestern Ohio Food Bank* to keep a record with your name, but pastor will keep your record separate and absolutely confidential.

Contributions can be made at any time. Monetary gifts can be given to the *Good Neighbor Fund* (note it on your offering envelope). Food donations for our pantry can be dropped off in the box by the Archives display cases. **Food items especially needed at this time are: crackers, soup, and cereal.** Any and all contributions are always greatly appreciated. Thank you so much! As we learn in the meaning of the Fifth Commandment, “*We should fear and love God that we...help and support our neighbor in every physical need.*” (*Small Catechism*)

ST. JOHN WEBSITE – Did you know you can listen to Pastor Gary’s sermons and access current and past bulletins online? Just click on “St. John YouTube Channel” or “Worship Service Resources” on the home page of sjl.org.

VENMO IS HERE! Exciting News...St. John now accepts donations via Venmo! If you need internet access, use our guest wifi **SJL Open** with the password **sjleagles##** Then scan the QR code beside this announcement to visit our donation page.



AREA EVENTS

- ◆ **CPC WOMEN’S HEALTH RESOURCE** (our local pregnancy center) is having its annual **SPRING BENEFIT AND SILENT AUCTION** in Archbold on Tues., April 8th at 5:30 p.m. The event features a meal and guest speaker. More details are on the bulletin board.
- ◆ A **“CHRIST IN THE PASSION” PRESENTATION** will be held at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Liberty Center, on Tues., April 15th at 7 p.m. More details are on the bulletin board.

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Thought for the Week...

Don’t run with the world; walk with God.

MIDWEEK LENTEN SERVICES

During Lent, we gather for special midweek services each Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. Pastor Gary is preaching a series titled “Words that Last Forever.” Please join us!

Words that **LAST FOREVER!**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Offering</u>
Mar. 26	“Forsaken!”	Worship Anew
Apr. 2	“Thirst!”	Lutheran Hour Broadcast
Apr. 9	“Finished!”	Mission Endowment
Apr. 17	“For You!”	Home Fund
<i>(Maundy Thursday)</i>		
Apr. 18	“Hands!”	Home Fund
<i>(Good Friday)</i>		

We also look forward to our Easter celebrations on April 20th!

Easter Sunrise Service – 7:00 a.m.

Easter Fellowship Breakfast – 8:15 a.m.

Easter Festival Service with Communion – 9:30 a.m.

Confirmation Class during Lent will be held from 5:45 to 6:45 p.m., dismissing in time for students and families to attend the evening service.