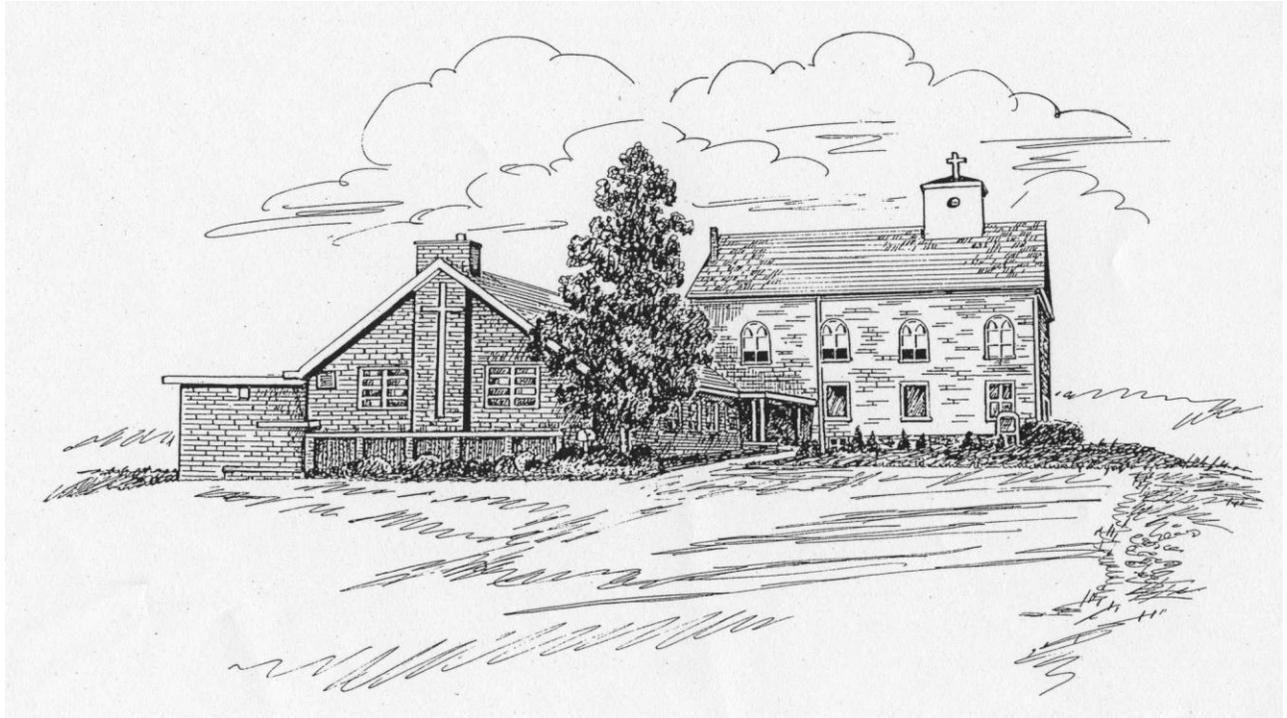


WISPS OF STRAW



St. James Lutheran Church Newsletter

May 2011

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Web site: www.strawchurch.org

*“Serving Christ in Word and Deed”
for over 260 Years*

The Pastor's Letter

"For all that has been, thanks, for all that will be - YES" Dag Hammarskjöld

Dear Friends,

Believe it or not it was about 1 year ago, Pam and I came to be with you here at St. James. Since this is the first year in a number of years that you have had your own called pastor, how has it been going?



First of all, we have begun to set a pattern and routine for worship that is reflective of who we are as a congregation without having to always consider the style of the supply pastor that comes in. This was especially evident during Lent when we had a successful series of Wednesday Soup and Sandwich dinners with a brief Communion service following. For the first time in a number of years we had an Easter Sunrise Service this year. We have also provided training for worship assistants and acolytes, adding a few more to help in that ministry. An Adult Bible Study has also been added and held on a regular basis. We have also begun to see some of our old friends return to worship, and have added some new folk to our church family.

We are trying to minister to our homebound on a regular basis. In that regard I know that there are more out there, so please inform myself or the church office. I am more than happy to visit as well as offer the Sacrament of Holy Communion

Secondly, we become more intentional in our youth ministry, from having youth gatherings, getting our older Confirmands involved in worship, to a very fine youth Sunday where there was almost total participation by our youth, with about 20 youth participating.

We have also begun to understand, welcome, and engage the Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops who meet here at St. James as an extension of youth ministry. Finally we have continued to affirm, re-energize, and highlight what has been a key ministry here at St. James - Sunday school, Youth Choir, and Vacation Bible School.

Thirdly, we are "stepping up to the plate" and involving ourselves in ministry in partnership with other congregations in Christian mission and witness. For the first time in a number of years (for the community as well) we hosted an Ecumenical Service of Thanksgiving, with many local churches (including our Roman Catholic friends) participating, and showing excellent hospitality by providing a wonderful ham dinner. I meet regularly with the Phillipsburg Ministerial Alliance, participated in ecumenical Holy Week Services, and the Crop Walk held this month that helps deal with hunger issues in our community. Along with that we are continuing to see how we can be friendly neighbors to the community at large; with AAA meeting here, Weichert Realty having their planning meetings here, a craft fair last November, and Well - Fit Chiropractic holding a "maximized living" seminar here.

So there is much for which to give thanks, but there is also so much more good work to be done. We urgently need to find a way to highlight and display our marvelous history and heritage as a gospel witness to this community for over 260 years. My participation in the 300th anniversary celebration committee of Henry Melchior Muehlenberg's birth should help in that regard. Also, we need to have more times of Church family fellowship outside of the excellent ministry of our Senior Group.

Finally, every one of us needs to, in the midst of all the wonderful things God is doing here; ask the Lord what our financial commitment to it should be. The level of support that was generously given during the time of vacancy really needs to be increased if we want to be continuing this exciting ministry in years to come.

So the Lord has blessed us with some marvelous blessings in this first year, and Pam and I are very, very grateful to be partners in fellowship and ministry with you.

Your brother in Christ,

Pr. John

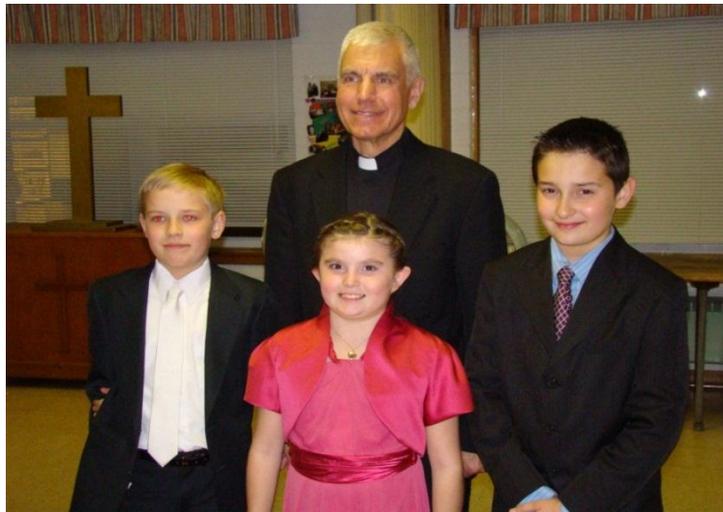
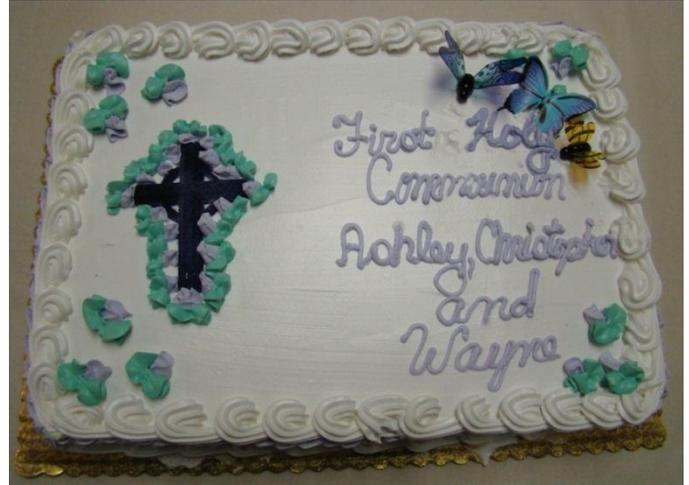
Maximized Living Seminar Held

On Saturday morning, May 14th, Dr. Dan Eleutari, from Well Fit Chiropractic across the street in the Wal-Mart plaza, held an excellent seminar called Maximized Living. Dr. Dan gave many valuable insights, and tries to help in the pursuit of the goal of a healthy lifestyle that we can have now and in the future. Using the question, "Do you want to spend the last part of your life on a Cruise Ship or in a Nursing Home?", he showed that health, diet, and exercise were all parts of the answer. If you could not make it to the seminar and are interested, call Well- Fit Chiropractic (908-878-0102) and ask for Dr. Dan.



First Holy Communion

On Maundy Thursday, April 24th, we welcomed three young people to the Lord's Table. We had a nice attendance of members, as well as families and friends of our first communicants. A reception in their honor was held afterward in Frey Hall.



Pictured with Pastor John are the three happy communicants, (l-r), Wayne Thomas Van Blarcom, Ashley McKenzie Wrede, and Christopher Adam Kromar.

Confirmation



This year we have 5 young folks to be confirmed at 8:45 worship on June 5th. They are: Megan Chemidlin, Shannon Hardenbergh, Jason Holman, Shawn LaCourte, and Douglas J Wrede. Please make a special effort on that day to attend and rejoice with our newest group of members at St. James!

Sunday School Palm Sunday Egg Hunt

Over 500 eggs appeared at Saint James on Palm Sunday for our Sunday school students to find. With Pastor John leading, the congregation shared in our traditional opening. This included the singing of John 3:16 to help us remember the important Gift we were being given during Holy Week. Later, with our tummies full from the sweets, it was off to the hunt to find some much anticipated treasures.



Notice

Highway and retaining wall construction at the front of the church (Rte. 22 westbound) is scheduled to begin June 6th. **Church services and activities will not be interrupted during construction.** However, the western parking lot (small lot) may not be accessible during this time.



St. James Participates in CROP Walk

On Sunday, May 15th, St. James youth and their families participated in our community's "CROP Walk" dedicated to help those hungry in our community and around the world. Several other local churches participated. While the final complete total has not been announced, we at St. James raised \$320.00, well over our goal of \$ 200.00! Thank you to all who contributed and participated.



Heifer Project (Links of Love)

Thanks to everyone who participated in our Sunday School and Social Ministries Links of Love fund raiser. As evidenced by the Links chain that almost completely surrounded our sanctuary balcony for Easter, \$518.00 was raised by our congregation and Sunday school. In addition, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has matched \$1.00 for every \$2.00 that we raised, bringing the total to \$777.00!



A heifer and other, smaller, farm animals to be selected by our Sunday school children will be purchased for Heifer International, and given to a needy rural family in a third world country.

Baptisms

At the 8:45 am Worship on May 1st, we joyfully welcomed young Danae Leigh LaPlaca to the faith through the sacrament of Baptism. Danae is the daughter of Joseph and Erika LaPlaca, and sister of Elijah LaPlaca, of Phillipsburg.



At Sunday Worship on May 15th we had the pleasure of witnessing the Baptism of another young Christian, Mason Grey Varga. Mason is the son of David and Janelle Luzietti Varga, and the brother of Isabella Varga, of Phillipsburg.

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When you get to your wit's end, you'll find God lives there.

Youth Activities Gallery



Junior High Youth Group Relay



Youth Sunday



Combined youth groups on Laser Tag trip eating at Rita's

Our youth group is a great way for young people to participate in wholesome, fun-filled activities and at the same time serve the Lord by contributing time and energy to projects that benefit the community as a whole. Under Ms. Pam's leadership, they have been setting an excellent example, not only for other young people but for us adults as well.

For more information on becoming a part of this fun and very fulfilling group, call the church or Ms. Pam at (908) 777-3068

A More Convenient Way to Support St. James

Our lives today are busier than ever and often we fail to follow through on things we intend to do, despite the best intentions. These may include making up offerings for times we cannot attend Worship. Most businesses today are aware of the time pressures their customers face and have for some time made it possible to pay recurring bills automatically by direct withdrawal or charges to credit or debit cards.

Council has decided to implement similar means for the convenience of our members. Starting May 25th you will have the option of making your offerings to St. James in several new ways, in addition to the traditional offering envelopes. All methods will be totally secure, using a system endorsed by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. This system is already successfully employed by numerous Lutheran congregations around the country.

First, and easiest, you may arrange to have a set amount withdrawn periodically (e.g., weekly or monthly) from your checking or savings account. This would remain in effect until you decide to change or halt it.

Second, you may arrange to have your offering charged to your credit or debit card.

Either arrangement can be made by filling out and submitting a printed form available at the church, or by filling out the form accessible on the St. James web site through the "Donate" button.

Food Donations Needed

With summer vacation about to start, many poorer children will no longer be getting the nutritious meals they need at school. This will increase the demands on NORWESCAP and other food banks. Please bring non-perishable and non-breakable food items to the barrels in front of Frey Hall, so that NORWESCAP can continue to supply this needed service to our less fortunate neighbors.

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People are funny; they want the front of the bus, the middle of the road, and the back of the church.

Seniors (and all Others)



The May 4th meeting was our traditional Spring pizza and sundae night. Some of the sundae creations were really works of art!

Our final meeting before summer will be on June 8th, the second Wednesday instead of the first. The youth choir will be singing for us, **and we are inviting all members of St. James, not just the seniors, to this event.** Bring a covered dish to share, and enjoy the music and fellowship. Please contact Carol Meixsell at 908-454-6734 if you plan to attend.

Vacation Bible School



We are gearing up for our 2012 Vacation Bible School, PandaMania, August 15th-19th from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. Children as young as 4 will explore God's love for us through Psalm 139. Our friend, Chadder Chipmunk, will help open each day as we work together to solve the Mystery of the Missing Pandas. Chadder first joined our VBS journeys last year in our High Seas Expedition. Other new friends joining us this year are: Fez, a bird with amazing colors, reminds us that God made us; Amanda, a raccoon with pointy ears, reminds us that God listens to you; Boomer, a panda, reminds us that God watches over us in darkness and light; Pogo, a mischievous snow leopard, reminds us that God loves us, no matter what; and Lulu, a golden monkey with a beautiful blue face, reminds us that God gives good gifts.

Our mixed aged crews will rotate through various stations including Bible Stories, Sing & Play, Wild Bible Adventures, Bamboo Blast Games, Treetop Treats and Crazy Crafts. Each station and crew is run by St. James volunteers. Our VBS adventure will conclude with a covered dish lunch for all our participants and their families. The entire family is invited to join us on Friday, August 19th at 12 noon as we celebrate God's love for us all with the children sharing their experiences in song and displaying their crafts and mission project. For more information, please contact the church office at 908-454-2864 or by email at strawchurch@verizon.net. Advance registrations help us to have enough supplies to make this a great experience for all our children. A donation of \$15.00 per child (no more than \$40.00 per family) is requested to help defray the costs of VBS. (Arrangements to waive the registration fee can be arranged should it be difficult for any family to pay the registration fee.) Please register online at <https://www.groupvbspro.com/vbs/ez/strawchurch2011> or contact the church office for a registration form.

Teen and adult volunteers are needed. Please sign up at <https://www.groupvbspro.com/vbs/ez/strawchurch2011> to volunteer. Can't commit to a full week? Perhaps you can help organize craft supplies, handle on-site registrations Monday morning, be the contact for food donations for our closing celebration, or help set up and create sets and decorations. There's so much to do, but with your help we can make this a huge success.

Spring Church Trip

Our spring outing on Saturday, May 14th, was to the well-known Hunterdon Hills Play House just off I-78. After a delicious meal, topped off by a visit (or two?) to their famous dessert buffet, we enjoyed their presentation of the Noel Coward play, "Blithe Spirit".



The plot concerns a well-to-do British Author who is trying to get a feel for the nature of a séance, in order to assure some authenticity when including one in his next novel. He gets more than he bargains for when the séance unintentionally summons up his first wife, who had passed on some seven years earlier. She proceeds to cause endless comical problems for him (the only person who can see and hear her), his second wife, and their household.

Our trip coordinator, Christine Scherer, is already working on ideas for the Fall Trip. Anyone with suggestions can contact her at 908-387-0139 or regalcsqs@verizon.net.

Boy Scouts & Cub Scouts: What We've Been Up To!

Boy Scout Troop 56 has been quite busy over the past several months, and we are happy to share some of our adventures with you. Some of our recent activities included: 'Woodsman Weekend' Campout. This campout was dedicated to outdoor pioneering activities, including creating useful camp gadgets, and larger projects, using large sticks, logs, and plenty of rope.

Troop members assisted our local community by lending a hand at the St. Phillips & St. James Soup Kitchen. We held a Car Wash/Clothing drive fundraiser to help raise funds for our upcoming trip to the 'Florida Sea Base' High Adventure camp. We also conducted an 'Earth Day' project at the church where the troop worked hard to spruce up the church grounds as well as cleaning pews and setting up chairs in the sanctuary. The troop members really enjoyed this project and we look forward to working more closely with the church council and the parishioners in the future.



The troop also welcomed five new scouts to our troop as well as supporting two scouts who attended the 'National Youth Leader Training (NYLT)' course. This training provided some advanced tools and techniques to help these scouts lead our troop in the future. The troop will be hosting a Court of Honor on Wednesday, June 1st, from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, in the Ed Frey Memorial Hall. A Court of Honor is a formal Awards & Recognition event where scouts, and leaders, are recognized for accomplishments such as rank advancements, merit badges, training, and other special awards. If you are interested in learning more about our troop, we welcome you to join this event with us.

Cub Scout Pack 56 has also been quite busy. The Pack held their annual Blue & Gold Dinner where three Cub Scouts made the cross-over journey to Troop 56, where they will continue on the scouting trail as Boy Scouts.

The Pack is planning a graduation event at Jugtown Mountain campsites in June, which will include a bonfire ceremony, overnight camping, and hiking.

Boy Scout Troop 56 and Cub Scout Pack 56 would like to again thank the church for their support over the years. We cannot do it without you!

David Zurine
Scoutmaster Troop 56

Bishop Hanson's Easter Message

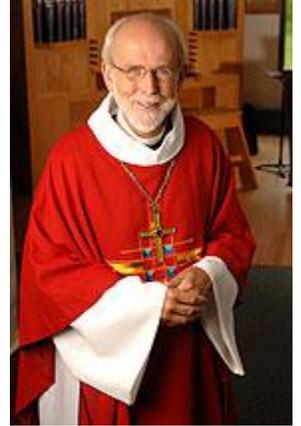
So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

- Matthew 28:8

Mary Magdalene and Mary walked to Jesus' grave, expecting to find death. It's understandable. Images of violence filled their minds. Thoughts of their vulnerability and mortality deadened their spirits. Death had become the defining story of their lives.

Instead of death, the women met a resurrection messenger who said, "He is not here: for he has been raised, as he said." As they hurried to tell others, the risen Jesus met them. They were changed. Now resurrection, not death, would define their lives.

Jesus lives! Now resurrection, not death, defines our lives. Jesus continues to meet you in resurrection messengers, just as Jesus met me in Pastor Josephus Livenson Lauvanus, president of the Lutheran Church of Haiti. As we walked through the ruins and rubble that lie in the aftermath of Haiti's earthquake, Pastor Livenson Lauvanus proclaimed, "We will not be defined by rubble, but by restoration, for we are a people of the resurrection."



Baptized into Jesus' death and raised to newness of life we, too, are people of the resurrection. We, too, are resurrection messengers. We, too, are about God's work of restoration.

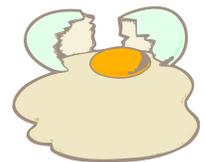
The world aches to hear the message we have to tell. Sing with joy! Jesus lives! We are a people of the resurrection.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Last but not Least



Don't forget to come out for the monthly Omelet and Pancake Breakfasts held on the first Saturday of each month in the Ed Frey Hall. Omelets can be had with almost any combination of add-ins you can name, and they



are DELICIOUS! You'll be satisfying your hunger while helping support your church - an unbeatable combination. Cost is only \$8.00 for adults and children 10 and over, \$5.00 under 10 years, and includes omelet and/or pancakes, sausages and a juice and coffee bar. The next breakfast will be on June 4th, from 7:00 am to 12:00 noon.