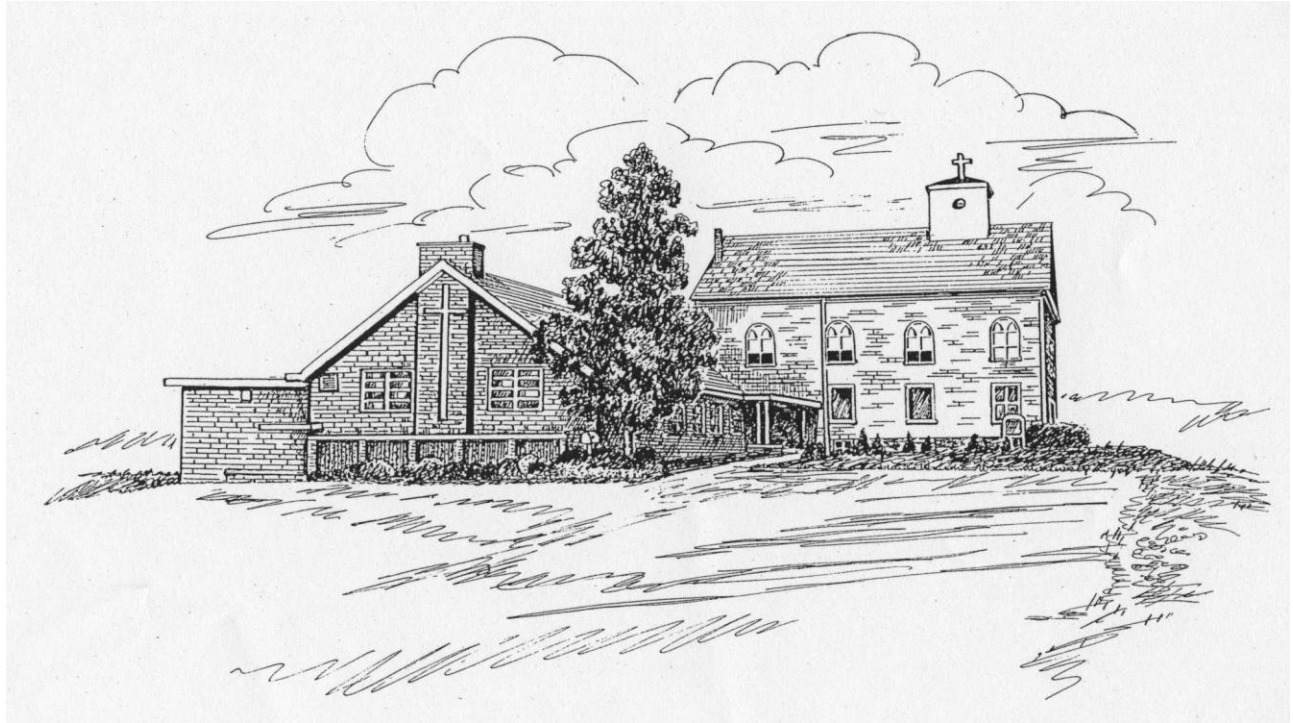


WISPS OF STRAW



St. James Lutheran Church Newsletter

March - April 2014

Pastor: Rev. John H. Van Haneghan

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Web site: www.strawchurch.org

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

Pastor's Letter

*"I want Jesus to walk with me
I want Jesus to walk with me,
All along my pilgrim journey
Lord I want Jesus to walk with me" (African American Spiritual)*



There are so many different ways of looking at Lent. For some it's just marking time to get to Easter. For others, this must be the time we need to give something up. For still others it could mean that it "might be a good thing to go to church at least once before Easter".

Lent for me, though, has to do with walking closer with Jesus in an intentional way. What is most encouraging to me is that the walk with Jesus is not one that takes Jesus to glory but one that takes him to the cross. It may sound a bit strange I would say such a thing, but here is why I feel this way. Living in this world there is pain, suffering, unjust situations abounding. Sometimes we experience them directly, or through our interaction with the media. What makes it even worse sometimes is these things either come out of nowhere, and either we or others are powerless to make them better.

When we get closer to Holy Week, our Gospel lessons turn toward a Jesus who is opposed and confronted by the very religious authorities who should embrace him. Holy Week, though opening with hosannas, goes even deeper in to rejection, suffering, pain and death. Jesus, God's son is being inflicted with every horrible thing that could be done to one human being and there is absolutely no sense of justice at all. While Easter celebrates Jesus ultimate victory in his resurrection, the Jesus I see, who walked through all the horribleness of Holy Week, is most surely the one I want to walk with me. One of my favorite scriptures which I quote from time to time is in John's Gospel when Jesus says, "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37). So the one we as Christians can go to is not there just to make things better, but wants to walk with us in a strength and understanding he alone gives by experience and not just because he is the son of God.

Walking with Jesus in such a way, though, also means there is resurrection, there is victory. We may not see it now, we may not even see it later, but we know we will see resurrection and life because we walk with Jesus. So, YES, I do want Jesus to walk with me.

Your brother in Christ,
Pastor John

Holy Week and Easter

With every passing week we draw closer to the most holy time of the Christian year. The solemnity and introspection of Lent takes us toward confronting the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice for us, and yet we are assured that his resurrection is proof of the eternal life that awaits us.

Our schedule of services at St. James will be:

April 17th at 7:00 pm

Maundy Thursday Service
First Holy Communion

April 18th at 7:00 pm

Good Friday Tenebrae
(please bring a flashlight)

April 19th Saturday at 6:00 pm

Light Easter Vigil

March 31st, Easter Sunday

7:00 am Sunrise Service at
St. James Cemetery,
8:45 and 10:45 am

Communion Services

There will be a light
Continental Breakfast between Sunday
Services.



Lenten Mid-week 2014

As you are able I would invite you for some food, fellowship, and thinking about our life with God then receiving the forgiveness, life and closeness to God which comes in celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion, receiving the true body and blood of our Lord.

This year our program part should get us thinking. It is a video out of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota called "Good God Questions". A few seminary professors chat about tough questions people ask about God and God's relationship to us. The video segments do not last longer than 15 minutes (the last week). Hopefully there will be time to discuss their answers, along with our personal experience of these "tough questions".

Topics for the remaining weeks are:

March 19th: What are Bad Answers to Suffering?

March 26th: What are Some Personal Answers to Suffering?

April 2nd: If I am Forgiven, Why Will I be Judged?

April 9th: Why did Jesus Have to Die?

Pr. John

NJ Synod Western District Spring Assembly – March 25th

7:00 - 9:00 pm at St. Mark's Lutheran church, Morristown, NJ

- Election of lay male member to synod council
- District celebration of holy communion
- District ministries: reports and information
- Diana Butler Bass video lecture & discussion: "Where is the church heading?"

Two voting members are needed from St. James. Contact Pastor John if interested.

Links of Love

This season, Social Ministry will again be conducting the Links of Love campaign to benefit the less fortunate. Links will be on sale in Frey Hall after all weekend services from March 11th through April 13th.

This year the proceeds will be divided between ELCA World Hunger and a local Food Pantry. We are also applying for a Thrivent matching grant to increase the value of your contributions. Please support this worthwhile effort as you have done every year in the past.

Thank You

Our Bake Sale at the March 1st breakfast raised the sum of \$200. Of this, \$100 will go toward church expenses and \$100 will be used to offset costs of the summer family picnic.



For Thrivent Members

As a final reminder, the deadline for directing your remaining 2013 Choice Dollars to benefit St. James is March 31st. Please check your accounts to see what you have available. Directing the Choice Dollars is quick and easy, and costs you nothing. If you need any information about the procedure, you may contact your Thrivent Representative or our Congregational Advocate (George Scherer, 908-387-0139 or email regalcsqs@verizon.net).

Also, please note the flyer on the last page for information on a useful free workshop being held at St. James next month.

27th Annual NJ Synod Assembly **May 30th – 31st, 2014**

(Optional Thursday evening activities, May 29th)

Ocean Place Resort and Spa

One Ocean Boulevard

Long Branch, New Jersey 07740

REGISTRATION INFORMATION:

Voting Member registration: \$95

Visitor Registration: \$10 (Optional banquet ticket: \$45)

RESORT INFORMATION:

A "Grab-n-go" breakfast will be available on-site for Friday & Saturday mornings, as well as lunch on Friday.

There is also a buffet restaurant on-site and many local venues nearby.

Synod Event Room Rate: \$139 per room/ per night (plus tax & resort fee)

For any special needs, please call Ocean Place Resort at 732-571-4000 and ask for the In-House Department. Please let them know that your reservation is for the New Jersey Synod Assembly to get the agreed rate. This rate is valid for May 29th & May 30th and guaranteed only until the deadline of May 15th.

Work Day

Following the close of assembly, there will be an opportunity to volunteer in the West Long Branch area. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, there are still years of work left. Sign up for more information about helping for the afternoon when you register for assembly.

Two voting members from St. James are needed for this assembly. Please contact Pastor John if you are interested in serving.

.....
God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.

Sunday School Notes

We sang at Saturday 6:00 pm worship service. We had sports Sunday, Dr. Suess Sunday, crazy mixed up clothes day, wear green day, crazy hair day, and pajamas day. We have been learning lessons from the New Testament about Jesus for the last few weeks.

Please come join us each Sunday 10:00 am to 11:00 am. We have classes for age 3 to Grade 6. Teens are welcome to help.

Sunday School Lenten Project

Easter is coming and, along with St. James Social Ministry, St. James Sunday School children will again be offering Links of Love to be sponsored during Lent. The Sunday School children received banks today to collect money during Lent. Proceeds will be given to ELCA World Hunger and a local food pantry.

Over one in five children go hungry every day. Join us to help feed those in need. Thank you and God Bless!

Youth Group News

Grades 6 to 12 Welcome

We have met about once a month for games, pizza and a devotion.

At our February Youth Group meeting we gave compliments to one another and learned about friendship.

In March we played games that involved balloons. Our favorite was each team keeping their balloons up in the air without touching the floor as we kept adding more and more balloons.

We will be painting the youth room in a few weeks.

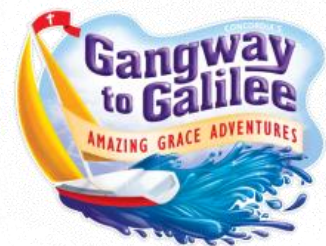
Director Needed for 2014 VBS

We already have many talented people in place to run the activities and already have the program picked out. You will have a great team to work with. Please pray and see if this is what God is calling you to do to help with this wonderful ministry we have at St. James. Please let Pam Van Haneghan, Holly Chemidlin or Pastor know if you are interested or have any questions about this great opportunity or helping in any other way.

Coming This Summer to St. James Lutheran Church

Gangway to Galilee (Amazing Grace Adventure) Vacation Bible School

July 21th to July 25th
Please post on your calendar



Fund Raising

Two new events to benefit St. James are being planned for the next few weeks, both from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm in Frey Hall:

Vendor Bridal Show - Saturday, March 22nd

Spring Vendor Craft Fair and Bake Sale -
Saturday, April 12th

We will need volunteers to help with set up, operation, and clean up each time. Signup sheets are in the Frey Hall lobby. Contact Kathy Raub at jkraubfarms@verizon.net or 610-253-1419 for more information.

Of course, don't forget our next two justly famous breakfasts, on April 5th and May 3rd.

Remember also our easiest fund raiser of all - the Shop Rite Gift Cards where 5% of everything you spend at the store using them comes right back to St. James at no cost to you.

Senior League Notes *"Fellowship over Fifty"*



Old Man Winter forced cancellation of our February meeting, and of course we do not hold meetings during Lent because of the Wednesday evening Lenten services. Our next get-together will be at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, May 7th. This will be the simple social gathering, with a spaghetti and meatball dinner, that would have been held in February. Please call Carol Meixsell at 908-454-6734 if you plan to attend.

Our Church – Our Concern

We are grateful for your generosity over the past year. It is in that spirit of generosity we want to call to your attention something we're sure you have had to deal with, our winter weather.

Obviously, we've had to deal with increased utility bills, as perhaps you've had as well. But we have also had a situation where understandably people have stayed safely home in this weather, which has resulted in lower offerings for a number of weekends. The upshot is that our ability to meet current expenses from offerings and fund raising has become somewhat precarious.

So as the weather gets more tolerable, and more of us are able to again attend worship with our usual regularity, please prayerfully consider what you can do to make up for the lower amount of funds that have come in. Whatever you can do, we thank you for supporting the ministry of our church.

First Holy Communion

On April 17th, Maundy Thursday we will celebrate, tentatively, with these seven young folk who will be receiving their first communion:

Kimberly Eaton
Stephen Glossick
Nathan Galusha
Gigi Holman
Emma Raub
Jeffrey Raub
Zimran Yaqub

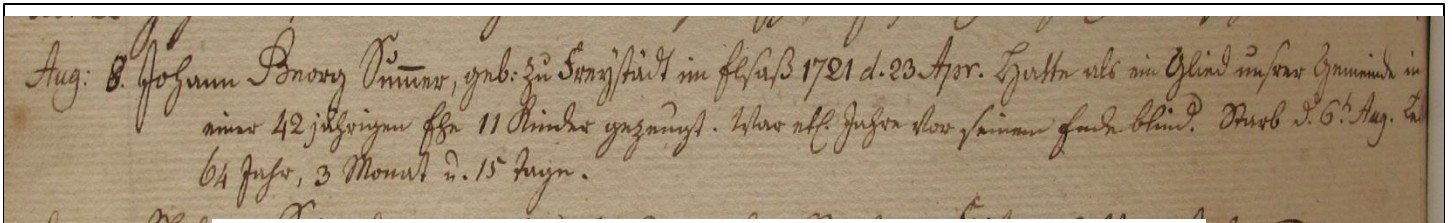


St. James History Corner

A while ago an article in a 1933 Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey came to our attention, containing translations of 1780s and 90s German-language death records from Straw Church. What was most astounding was a particular entry saying that the deceased had been a member of the congregation for 42 years, or since 1743 - seven years earlier than our accepted founding date of 1750.

"1785, Aug. 8. John George Summer, born in Freystadt in Elsa, April 23, 1721. He was a member of this congregation forty-two years and had eleven children and blind for eight years, age 64 years, 3 months and fifteen days."

We decided to do an independent translation from the original record, in order to either verify or correct the information. This turned out to be substantially more than a straight translation issue, since the records are written in an obsolete style of German cursive. In addition, they contain some archaic word and spelling forms, and the penmanship is not the best!



The original German handwritten Straw Church Death Record

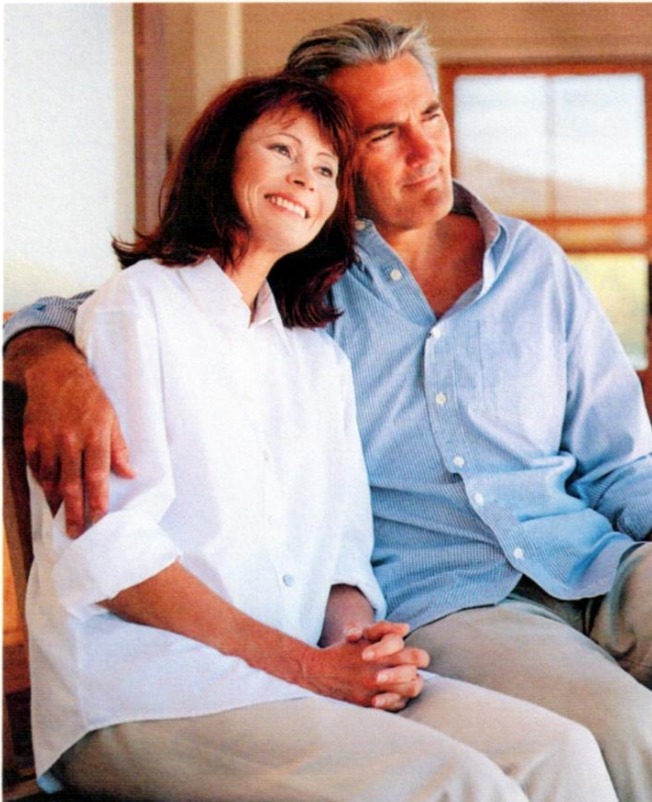
We received a lot of help from information provided by two ladies who are his 6th great-granddaughters. Some facts their research uncovered included his marriage (in Germany) in 1745, and that he had emigrated from his native village in 1752. As a result we were able to generate what we believe to be an accurate English version showing that his marriage, not membership, was what spanned approximately 42 years. Words in parentheses are added because of the abbreviated writing style and/or where German usage implied them in associated words.

"1785, Aug. 8th Johann Georg Summer, born at Freystadt in Alsace, April 23rd 1721. Had as (a) member of our congregation in a 42 year marriage raised 11 children. Was eleven years (with) cataract(s) (at) his end blind. Died Aug. 6th. Lived 64 years, 3 months and 15 days."

We are indeed fortunate to still be able to make these connections to our pioneer members of so long ago.

**"STRAW CHURCH: PRIDE IN OUR PAST, STRENGTH IN OUR PRESENT,
LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR OUR FUTURE"**

You Are Invited to Attend



Retirement & Estate Strategies Workshop

Join special guest speaker Richard J. Hopkins, Financial Consultant • Thrivent Financial for Lutherans • 30 Years Experience in the Financial Services Industry.

Rich will share strategies on:

- How to accumulate and distribute money for retirement.
- How to pass money onto heirs or charities in a tax wise manner.
- Increasing the probability of investment success.
- Multi-generation IRA planning ... and more!

This workshop is hosted by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and your local representative Mel Kent, Associate

Refreshments and coffee will be served.

Please call 877-657-9363 x9 or email rich.hopkins@thrivent.com to reserve a place for yourself and a guest.

You can also register at Thrivent.com/findaworkshop.

Event Details

Thursday, April 24, 2014

2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

St James Lutheran Church
US Route 22 at County Rt 519
Phillipsburg, NJ 08865

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