

The Grapevine

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
15 N. Church Street | Thurmont, MD 21788



**Fall 2026
Edition**



Greetings from Pastor Joe

*Grace and peace to you - in
the Name of our Lord Jesus
Christ*

One of the reasons I love living in Maryland is the change of seasons. As much as I am a big fan of summer, I'm not certain I could live in a place that has warm weather all year round. The changing of the leaves and a cool fall evening make my imagination think of drinking a warm cup of coffee while wearing one of my favorite sweaters.

I'm not a huge fan of winter and cold weather, but I can enjoy a nice snowstorm now and then. I especially like looking at the newly-fallen snow that has yet to be touched by a plow or a shovel. But for me, nothing compares to warm temperatures and long summer days. And if pressed, I would say that

spring is one of my favorite times of the year.

After the dark days of winter, we welcome the season of spring and the promise of new life. There is something special about seeing the first appearances of plants popping up from the dirt and the dormant grass turning green again.

The changing of the seasons is a reminder to me what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:1, "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven." Change is inevitable and the older I get the harder it is to accept change. But with some things, change can bring newness, a different perspective or a counter to the phrase, "We've always done it this way." The sound you just heard was my head exploding.

Before I cause a panic, I want you to know that as long as I am your pastor, we will stay true to our traditions and who we are as a church. One thing to remember is that our denomination is named after the great reformer Martin Luther. The Reformation was birthed out of a desire for change. Luther and the other reformers knew that rituals, traditions and structures must always serve the living Word, not

the other way around.

Isaiah 43:19 tells us "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" This prophecy speaks not about doing something slightly *different*, but trusting that God will do a *new* thing and we are invited into this process.

Isaiah asks an important question, "do you not perceive this?" Well, in a word, no, currently I don't perceive exactly where God is leading us. The only thing that I know for sure is that God is always creating and even amongst change there is constancy. God, through the Holy Spirit, will guide us where we need to be.

I ask you for two things as I continue to seek God's direction: first, please join me in praying that God will create in us a new thing as the Spirit leads our church forward. Secondly, consider what changes you may want to see within our church – including our ministries.

In Christ,

- *Pastor Joe*

Council News

by Lisa Riffle, Council President

Greetings from your council president. The church council met in August, and I would like to update you on the decisions that were made in the best interest of the church. At the end of July, the air conditioning unit that supplies the back portion of the upstairs (the choir room and Sunday school rooms) went down. The estimate to replace the unit was \$13,548, which is quite an investment for rooms that are not currently in use. Therefore, we came to the decision that it would be better not to spend that money at this time, and instead, invest in a window unit when any of those rooms are put to use. The other AC units are also getting some age on them, so we want to be cautious with our money in case we would need to replace one of them.

In addition to this, we are also facing financial issues due to increasing electric bills. The cost to cool the sanctuary in the summer skyrockets when the temperature reaches 90-100 degrees. We are also being charged a demand charge of \$130 by the town because of our increased usage. In trying to come up with a solution, we discussed the possibility of moving services to the Fellowship Hall during the hot months of the year to save electric, just like we do to save on fuel costs in the winter. We would like the input of the entire congregation on this matter, so we will be having a special congregational meeting immediately following the service on September 13th. Please plan on attending this meeting and bring any additional ideas you may have.

Now on to more positive reports...the fundraising committee will be returning to having a yard sale this year for Colorfest, so start collecting your gently-used housewares. They will also be selling baked goods and drinks, so please make plans now to support this fundraiser.

We have received over \$2000 in memorial money for Rodman Myers, so we voted to make a \$500 donation in Rodman's name to the preschool to help offset the cost of buying snacks and supplies for the students.

Now that summer vacations are subsiding and we move into fall, we will be resuming our weekly Bible Study. Please join us on Tuesday, September 15 at 11:00am as we continue our study and discussion of the Bible.

As always, if you have any suggestions or concerns, please bring them to the attention of any council member, and we will address them at our monthly meetings.

Current Council Members

Kelli Donaghue | Carolyn Fraley | Chris Kreitz | Lisa Riffle | Barbarateen Roderick | Gayle Spahr

Financial Report

by Chris Kreitz

I know we've all heard the phrase, "*do you want the bad news or the good news first!*" Let's get the bad news out of the way and move on.

- For months our checking account balance had remained in the \$50,000 range but now it is hovering around \$40,000. Just like homes everything is going up! To give you a quick idea of our bills (all approximated):

Electric Bill (August only):	\$ 735.00 month
Oil (for last season) (Preschool pays ½)	\$ 11,000.00 year
Insurance (Preschool pays ½)	\$ 14,000.00 year
Fire Alarm/Sprinkler (Preschool pays ½)	\$ 4,000.00 year
Chair Inspections/Maintenance	\$ 6,000.00 year
Salaries	\$ 5,000.00 month

- Just for these six (high) necessities, they total about \$8,500 monthly. We also have many smaller bills like office supplies, mowing/snow removal, phone, internet, maintenance, etc.
- Monthly giving has remained somewhat stable, but I'm afraid with so many increases that we are slowly falling behind.

Now the Good News!

- Monthly giving is somewhat stable! We have several families that send in their offerings that are not able to attend services. Also, more of us are making up our giving if not here on Sunday.
- Kelli Donoghue is looking into insurance companies to possibly reduce the insurance premium.
- The Neuberger/Berman account has increased.
- Fundraising Committee is pursuing several activities.

Council has called a special Congregational Meeting in September to discuss where to hold worship services to, hopefully, reduce the electric and oil bills.

If you have ideas that may produce more income or reduce any of our current bills, please talk to a Council Member or attend a Council Meeting.

Please pray that together as St. John's family we can agree to do whatever is necessary to provide a safe and comfortable house for worship and fellowship!

Preschool News

by Wanda Mathias

As the summer comes to an end, the new Preschool year will begin with an Open House for the 2's class on August 24 and for the 3/4's on August 25.

The first day of Preschool for the 2's class will be August 28. Teachers for this class will be Candace Delauter, Teressa Kaas, and Heather Price.

September 8 marks the first day of Preschool for the 3's and 4's classes. Teachers for the 3's class will be Jacoba Cassidy, Stacey Shriner, and Teressa Kaas. The 4's class will be taught by Candace Delauter and Josie Kaas.

Lessons for the month of September will include the following: All about Me, Grandparents Day, Transportation, Feelings, Dinosaurs, Farm Animals, My Preschool, and Apples.

As we move into the month of October, Preschool will be closed on the 8th and 9th for the Catoctin Colorfest here in Thurmont.

On October 13, a fundraising event will be held at Fratelli's; more details to be provided as we finalize this event.

Enrollment stands at 48 students for the current year ... and we wish everyone a blessed 2026-2027 school year!



Fundraising Committee

by Mary Lou Royer

Welcome Fall! After a very warm summer, we are all looking forward to the cool breezes and beautiful colors of Fall.

We have looked through the forms you returned to us concerning your thoughts on fundraising. Thank you for your generous ideas and especially for your offers of help. We were sincerely heartened to see so many responses.

Back by popular demand....the **Great Colorfest Yard Sale!** Having tried different events during the mass migration of shoppers to Thurmont, we have decided to return to our original format and have a yard sale. It is a great deal of work, but also pure profit. Consequently, we need your help and your stuff. Please start amassing now everything you don't want or need. You can bring items to the church anytime we are here and put them in the Corbett Chapel. If you need help or a time to drop off materials when the church is not open, please contact us and we will make an appointment to meet you.

We will need help setting up after church on October 4th as well as on Wednesday, October 7th. ***Sale dates will be October 8th, 9th and 10th from 8am to 2pm.*** There is also a possibility of having a bake sale of small "walk-around snacks" like cookies and brownies during the yard sale. We will have signup sheets in the social hall throughout September for both events. Please help! We need the money.

Saint John's is a true blessing to so many in our community and we need to do all we can to keep our doors and hearts open.

Thank you again for what you do for this very special church.

Crystal's Corner

by Crystal Girona Calderon

During our first year at St. John's, my daughter, Beanie (Austin), and I were immediately made to feel like family. From the very beginning, we were welcomed with warmth, kindness, and a sense that we truly belonged.

One of the many things that has made St. John's so special to us is Terrific Tuesdays. What could simply be a children's dinner becomes so much more—a meal shared together, a puppet show, a craft, laughter, and fellowship. It is another example of the love and care this church pours into its children and families.

I am also continually grateful for the way Pastor Joe makes Scripture feel relatable to our everyday lives. A few Sundays ago, he preached about Jesus feeding the multitude with the loaves and fish. One message from that sermon has stayed with me: ***"Bring me what you have, and I will do the rest."***

I think that beautifully describes St. John's.

Here, we all bring what we have. Sometimes it is a smile or a hug. Sometimes it is a thoughtful conversation or simply checking in with one another. It is inviting someone who does not have family nearby to join you for Easter. It is giving a toy to a little girl who loves her "stuffers." And sometimes it is offering grace on Sunday mornings when that same little girl has lots to say—and a desire to sing louder than the entire congregation!

Each of these things may seem small on its own, but together they become something much greater. They become a church family.

Every night, Beanie prays for Pastor Joe and Ms. Linda, but she also makes sure to pray for "everyone at church." She has now spent more than half of her life at St. John's. This is her church. This is our church. This is our home.

And it is not our home simply because it happens to be within walking distance of our house. It is home because of the love, kindness, friendship, patience, laughter, grace, and fellowship we have found here.

To our St. John's church family: thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Each and every one of you is a blessing in our lives. Thank you for bringing what you have and, in doing so, helping make St. John's a place we are so grateful to call home.



Outreach Update

by Carolyn Fraley

“Loved by God . . . to love others!”

A reminder to one and all that this is our St. John's mission statement.

- **Thurmont Food Bank-** As always, the St. John's Outreach Team wishes to thank those church members and friends who contribute to our Food Bank collections on a regular basis. Each donation is truly a blessing for the ever-increasing number of people seeking food assistance here in northern Frederick County!
As we continue with our monthly food collections, please note, too, that personal hygiene products are always a welcome donation, as are boxes, bags and cans of pet food. Thank you, in advance, for whatever you can provide for this truly vital ministry! Just remember to check “expiration dates” ... and no glass jars, please.
- **“Loads of Love”-** Quarters continue to be collected each week in order to assist patrons of Thurmont's Super Suds Laundromat with the cost of their clothes laundering. This outreach opportunity typically occurs on the last Saturday of the month, depending upon Pastor Joe's availability.
- **ELCA “Good Gifts” Ministry** - As of the end of August, we've raised a total of \$213.44 toward our **\$300 goal**, thanks to donations received from our weekly produce “sale” and from a few returned piggy banks. ... We anticipate having fresh eggs and garden goodies available through the end of September - thanks, in particular, to the generosity of Mary Ellen Eyler for her weekly provisions! ... We ask that all remaining piggy banks be brought in by Sunday, October 4, and we thank you, again, for supporting this transformative global ministry! ... For your convenience, below is the list of Good Gifts we are hoping to purchase:

Water Filter - \$30

Piglet - \$30

Mosquito nets for a family (x2 @ \$20) - \$40

Goat - \$50

Seeds and gardening tools - \$50

Serve 50 at a feeding ministry - \$100

- **“Operation Gratitude”** - Please remember to bring in your excess Christmas cards during October and early-November. As before, we'll be sending them to our American military personnel after appropriate notes of gratitude and encouragement are added in each card. Volunteers will be needed, as usual, to write those additional two or three sentences (a sample sheet will be provided). Thank you, in advance, for volunteering your time!



Looking Ahead... *Mark Your Calendars!*

by Carolyn Fraley

- **Bible Study** - Following a two-month break, our Bible Study group is resuming on Tuesday, September 15, and will continue to meet with Pastor Joe every Tuesday at 11:00am in the fellowship hall. Come join us whenever possible as we begin a new study focusing on finding Jesus in the Old Testament.
- **"A Cup of Joe with Pastor Joe"** - A friendly get-together with Pastor Joe on Tuesdays at Dunkin' Donuts, 9:00-10:00am. It's quite a pleasant way to begin the day!
- **Sunday Socials** - Please remember to join us on the **first** Sunday of each month for food and fellowship following our worship service. You'll be happy you stayed!
- **Terrific Tuesdays** - This important ministry meets, typically, on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. Children and parents gather together with Pastor Joe (and his helpers) at 6:00pm for Bible-centered puppet shows and crafts, with food provided. Come join the fun! ... *Please note that November 10 is the only Tuesday that the group will meet during the month of November. Likewise, we will only meet in December on Tuesday, December 8.*
- **"The Journey" - Saturday Worship Experience** - Come join us on the last Saturday of each month at 4:00pm in our fellowship hall for a unique worship experience including contemporary music, prayer, and wrestling with God's word. We hope that you will come as you are, and leave changed!
- **Happy Fall Y'all - S'mores and More** - Embrace the cozy autumn season with an evening of fellowship, faith, and fun for the whole family - **Friday, October 2 at 6:00pm!** Gather with us at St. John's. We'll meet outside, **on the grassy knoll** behind the fire hall, for a joyful time around to roast marshmallows for s'mores, sing a few songs, and create special fall-themed crafts to take home. It's a wonderful opportunity to build friendships and make lasting seasonal memories in a welcoming environment.
- **Colorfest Yard Sale - October 8, 9, 10** - in the fellowship hall; 8:00am - 2:00pm each day Thursday through Saturday. Please see the "Fundraising Committee" article for details.
- **Colorfest Sunday - October 11** - Please note that there will be **NO** worship service here at St. John's that Sunday! However, Pastor Joe will be leading worship, as usual, at Elias Lutheran at 10:30am. Please consider worshiping with *our partners in shared ministry*.
- **All Saints Sunday, November 1** - Join us for worship at 8:30am. In keeping with our tradition, there will be an opportunity to light candles in remembrance of loved ones who are now among the saints in Heaven. Following the service, we invite you to remain for our time of food and fellowship.

- **Annual Congregational Meeting - Sunday, November 15** - Please mark your calendars now and plan to remain after our worship service for this important meeting. We'll be voting on a proposed 2027 Budget and electing members to serve on our church council.
- **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** - Please note that this year's service will be held on Thursday, December 24, at **4:00pm**. Be sure to note the start time and mark your calendars accordingly!
- **Pastor Joe's Vacation** - Please note that Pastor Joe will be on vacation **Sunday, October 18, through Saturday, October 24.**

Worship Assistants' Schedule

September 2026

DATE	ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector)	WELCOMERS
9/6	Kelli Donaghue	Kandy & Steve Hauk
9/13	Chris Kreitz	Kenny & Denise Favorite
9/20	Stacey Brown-Hobbs	Harriet & Randy Valentine
9/27	Chris Kreitz	Kenny & Denise Favorite

Worship Assistants' Schedule

October 2026

DATE	ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector)	WELCOMERS
10/4	Chris Kreitz	Kandy & Steve Hauk
10/11 Colorfest Sunday (No Service here) * 10:30am Service at Elias Lutheran Church in Emmitsburg		
10/18	Stacey Brown-Hobbs	Kenny & Denise Favorite
10/25	Lisa Riffle	Harriet & Randy Valentine

Worship Assistants' Schedule

November 2026

DATE	ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector)	WELCOMERS
11/1	Kelli Donaghue	Harriet & Randy Valentine
11/8	Lisa Riffle	Kandy & Steve Hauk
11/15 Congregational Meeting follows the Service	Stacey Brown-Hobbs	Harriet & Randy Valentine
11/22	Chris Kreitz	Kenny & Denise Favorite
11/29	Lisa Riffle	Kandy & Steve Hauk

****Please Note****

**If you cannot be present on the assigned date,
be sure to trade with another assistant. Thank you!**

“Church greeters provide a tremendous service for the Kingdom of God that impacts people for Christ just as much as the Sunday morning preacher or worship leader.” - Christian writer, John J. Frady

Our Welcomers play a very important role and in essence are the very face of the church for members and visitors alike. Welcomers are usually the first faces people see when they enter the church and they are responsible for creating a positive first impression. If the first impression is a poor one, most likely our visitors will not return. Welcoming goes beyond distributing bulletins. The very definition of the name is to make others feel welcome by being attentive to their needs (especially first-time visitors), and to offer assistance and direction when needed. Welcomers play a crucial role in making sure visitors feel seen, valued and welcomed. We thank God for our Welcomers as they continue to bless our church by serving in this vital ministry.

Birthdays & Prayers

September Birthdays

9/5 Wendell Zentz
9/11 Amy Delauter
9/17 Mary Lou Royer
9/18 Dottie Valentine
9/21 Rick May
9/24 Becky Carpenter
9/25 Carolyn Fraley
9/27 Brian Fox
9/30 Brandon Humerick



October Birthdays

10/1 Mitchell Unger
10/6 Steve Erlitz
10/10 Mary Ann Erlitz
10/26 Donald Creager
10/26 Kevin Fox
10/30 Barbarateen Roderick



November Birthdays

11/8 Sarah Brandenburg
11/10 Alex Hauk
11/17 Linda Herb
11/22 Stephen Hauk
11/25 Austin ("Bean") Girona
11/29 Tom Fox

Prayers

Please remember to pray for our Members:

Luke Bradley	Dan & Tracey Bradley	Fred Balias
Chester & Jean Zentz	Brian Getz	Denny Edwards
Nancy & Donald Creager	Connie Fox	Ross Smith, Jr.
Steve & Mary Ann Erlitz	Dottie Valentine	Richard & Inus Lohr
Mitch Unger		

For pastoral care, contact Pastor Joe @ 443-255-5229 or jherb1@yahoo.com

Birthdays & Prayers (*continued*)

Family and Friends:

Pam Ardery - MM Griggs
P.J. Donaghue - Kelli Donaghue
Sharon Harrison - Sara Hahn
Ethel Brauer - Carolyn Fraley
Mandy Valentine - Harriet & Randy Valentine
Melinda Bitner - Sara Hahn
Carl Thayer - Carolyn Fraley
Nancy & Tommy Fraley - Carolyn Fraley
Jim Latham - The Tankersley Family
The Resch Family - The Tankersley Family
Roger Miller - Tonyia Miller
Debbie Ayers - Darlene Fogle
Joanne Saguban - Ashley Tankersley
Richard & Doris Slavey - Carolyn Fraley
Janice Allgood - Elaine & Michael Baltzell
Sandra Snyder - Chris & Mike Kreitz
Bob & Connie Fream - Carolyn Fraley

Katie Wisnor - MM Griggs
John Oravec - Kelli Donaghue
Alan Cornett - MM Griggs
Patty Reid - Carolyn Fraley
Cindy Parks - MM Griggs
Geoffrey Chandler - Carolyn Fraley
Irene Denning - Lisa Riffle
Dennis McGrew - Lisa Riffle
David Sanders - Tina Mumm
Michael Allshouse - Gayle Spahr
Angela Ashenfelter - Tonyia Miller
Jim & Sandy Schrock - Carolyn Fraley
Becky Gorby - Ashley Tankersley
Kim Foster - Pastor Joe & Linda
Chuck Samuel - Pastor Joe & Linda
Dru Wilders - Gayle Spahr

(Please notify the office of any changes to the Prayer List. Thank you.)

In Service to our Country:

Josh Waldron Nickalas Kath

We offer our heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of Julie Eiseman Balias, who passed away on August 15, 2026. Julie was the beloved wife of Fred Balias and mother of Stuart and Trent Balias. She was also a valued member of our St. John's church family.



HAPPY FALL Y'ALL!

S'MORES AND MORE!

Friday, October 2, 2026

6:00pm

@ St. John's Lutheran Church, Thurmont MD

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT PASTOR JOE AT 443-255-5229

TERRIFIC TUESDAYS!

The Second and Fourth
Tuesdays of the Month



6:00 – 7:00

Join us for dinner,
puppet shows
& crafts



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH



For more information contact
Pastor Joe @ 443-255-5229

Catoctin Shared Ministry-Annual Picnic

On a beautiful late-summer day, the Catoctin Shared Ministry came together as one for a worship service and pot-luck picnic at Emmitsburg Memorial Park. On August 30th, members of Elias Lutheran Church {Emmitsburg} and St. John's Lutheran Church {Thurmont} joined voices to sing familiar hymns, while accompanied by Cheryl Carney, Nita Shank and Scott Snyder on acoustic guitars.

Being the good Lutherans that we are, we continued the tradition of, "If you feed them, they will come." A combined attendance of 45 made for a fun day of eating delicious food and enjoying each other's company.

2027's Catoctin Shared Ministry Annual Picnic will be held at the Thurmont Community Park. If you missed it this year, we hope to see you at next year's picnic!

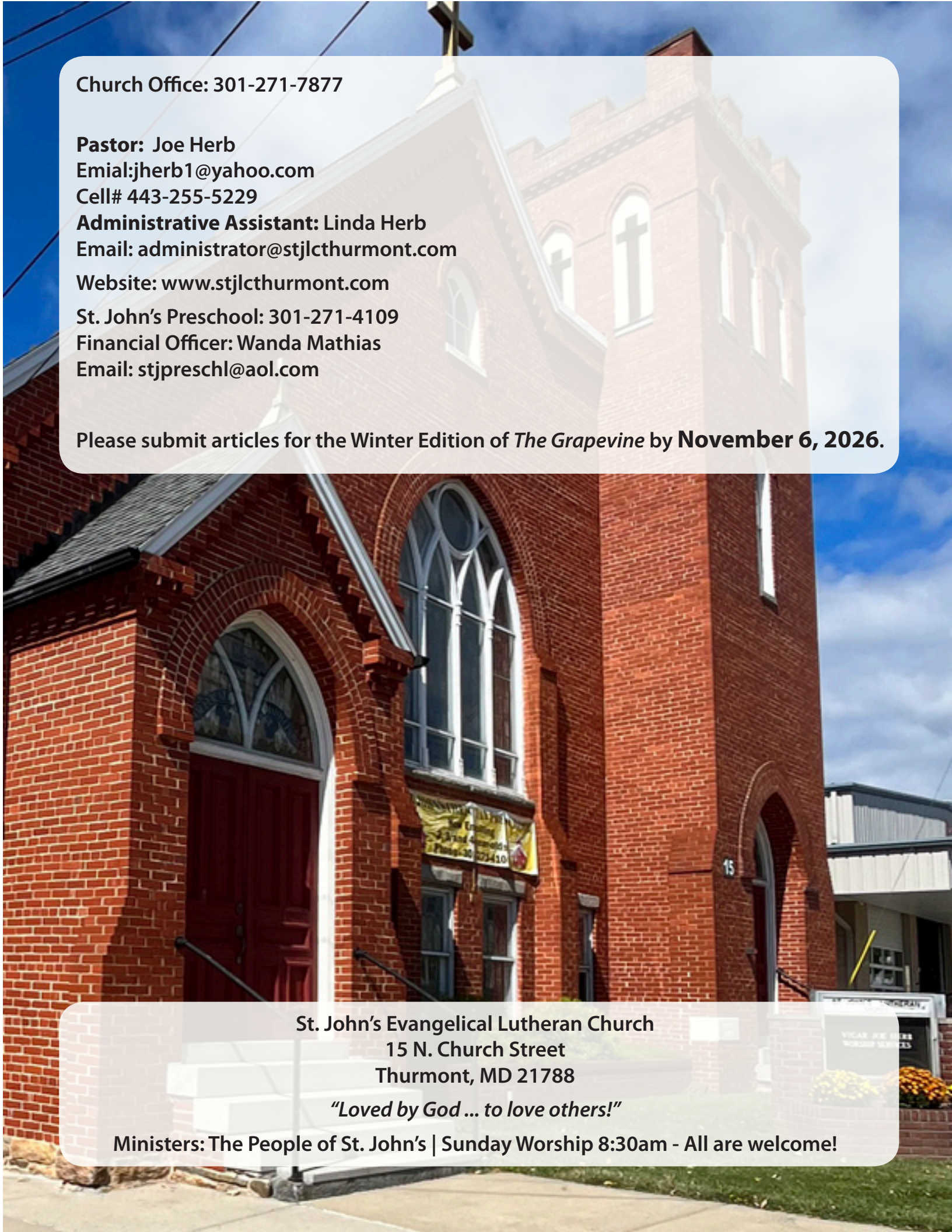


What is “The Journey”?

In the fast-paced modern world we live in, not everyone is free to attend church on Sunday mornings. In an effort to reach as many people as possible, St. John's has begun a new and unique worship service on the **fourth Saturday of each month at 4:00pm**. “The Journey” is designed to be a comfortable “Come as you are” experience, with Contemporary Christian Music lyric videos (playing on a flat-screen television), Holy Communion, prayers, scripture reading, and sermon discussion. You may view it as somewhat of a Bible study with really cool music.

Everyone in life is on some type of journey. The hope through this service is to help worshipers discover who they are in Christ and to come to the realization that we can walk our faith journeys together. If you are looking for a casual service to invite your family and friends to - “The Journey” may be the perfect solution! Come and see!!!





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Please submit articles for the Winter Edition of *The Grapevine* by **November 6, 2026**.

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

15 N. Church Street

Thurmont, MD 21788

"Loved by God ... to love others!"

Ministers: The People of St. John's | Sunday Worship 8:30am - All are welcome!