

The Grapevine

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



**Summer 2025
Edition**



Greetings from Pastor Joe

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

On Friday, May 9th, I had the honor of attending the 2025 Commencement Day Ceremony at United Lutheran Seminary (ULS) – my alma mater. I was excited to watch many of my former classmates and current friends finally clear the next hurdle on their way to becoming ordained pastors and deacons. It wasn't too long ago – that I felt the same anxious excitement.

While viewing the graduation proceedings I couldn't help but feel a little nostalgic. As I sat in the beautiful "Church of the Abiding Presence" (ULS's chapel) – I began to think about the fact that this September 1st is my second anniversary as

a called and ordained minister – however, our history together goes back to September 1, 2020. It was on that date that I started my ministry as your vicar.

For the past (almost) five years, I have had the blessing of watching us grow as a church community. Now, you may look at our average attendance numbers and think that I don't know how to count. The fact is that church growth shouldn't just be counted numerically.

May I suggest that we take a look at how we have grown spiritually – not only as a church, but individually too? I will also ask you to pay close attention to the wonderful outreach ministries that our church is contributing to and participating in. From the ELCA Good Gifts Campaign, to the Thurmont Food Bank, Terrific Tuesdays, and our newest outreach ministry Loads of Love – we are the church that continues to bring the love of Christ to our community and beyond.

I spent some of my time with my friends during that day bragging about you. I know I'm not supposed to boast about anything –

but I couldn't contain the blessings that I continue to receive as your pastor. My prayer is that we continue to grow – both numerically and spiritually. And we continue to be the Hands and Feet of Christ in our community. To God be the Glory!

In Christ,
– *Pastor Joe*

THANK YOU!

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you for helping me celebrate the second anniversary of my ordination!

I'm looking forward to celebrating many more anniversaries and life's milestones with you.



Council News

by *Chris Kreitz, Council President*

Summer! What most of us have been waiting for as we complain about the cold, dreary, dark days! Warm weather, vacations, picnics, any reason to be outdoors! Please take time to enjoy all the pleasures this season brings but also remember the church does not take a vacation. There are still necessary bills to be paid just like our routine home bills. If possible, please continue your generous giving to St. John's as you go about your summer fun.

The council voted to make Linda Herb the financial secretary and compensate her the same hourly wage as she is currently receiving as administrative assistant. She is making progress in learning the Church Windows program which we all agree is not especially user friendly. She has also been added to the PNC accounts.

Slow progress is being made on getting information on the endowment fund. It seems every step forward comes with three steps back. When all information is obtained we may need to come together again to discuss future plans.

The church council meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 12:30pm. If you have questions, concerns, or ideas please join us or talk with one of the current council members. We all are members of the St. John's family and your input is very important.

Current Council Members

Julie Eiseman | Carolyn Fraley | Chris Kreitz | Lisa Riffle | Barbarateen Roderick |
Gayle Spahr

Why should I serve on the church council?

Why should I serve on the church council is a legitimate question that is asked by many. After all, it seems that some of us are just too busy to add one more thing to our to-do lists. However, there are some benefits to serving on the council. Here are just a few:

1. **Spiritual Support** - council members pray with and for each other and pray for God to provide direction for the church.
2. **Missional Guidance** - the council provides guidance regarding the mission of the church and how to fulfill that mission.
3. **Strategic Planning** - long-term and short-term planning is essential for the church to continue its mission. Council members have an opportunity to guide the direction of the church and implement ideas to further the church's mission.
4. **Communication** - the council provides an opportunity to voice concerns and opinions of members of the council and of other members of the congregation. Open communication is a key to providing needed information to the congregation.
5. **Serving Opportunity** - as followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to serve the church and each other. Serving provides opportunities to grow spiritually and provides personal fulfillment while being a part of something bigger than ourselves.

Bonus Point - We need you! Smaller churches need an "All Hands on Deck" attitude! Prepare to Serve and Prepare to be Blessed!

Preschool News

by Wanda Mathias

As we have come to the end of the 2024/2025 school year, here is a synopsis of the events that occurred during the month of May.

On May 1 and 2, the Preschool held its annual Pizza party snack for all classes: the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes both ate Pizza together in the Fellowship Hall, and on Friday the 2-year-old class had their pizza snack in their classroom. It was a great success.

During the month of May some of the Educational theme studies included Clouds, Planting, Bugs, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Summer.

We also studied and learned about the butterfly life cycle. The 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes watched the transformation "metamorphosis," which involves four stages: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and adult butterfly. This process takes about 28 days. Once the butterflies emerge from the chrysalis and are ready to fly, the class took the butterflies outside and released them.

The 2-year-old and 3-year-old classes held a special Bring-Your-Stuffed-Animal-to-School Day, and had time to tell their friends all about their stuffed animal and why it's so special to them.

The 3-year-old class held a Fun Day on May 15 and the 2-year-old class' Fun Day was held on May 16 here at the Church in the play yard. Parents were invited to come back to participate in this activity. There were also some fun stations set up for the kids.

Twenty of our Preschoolers have a summer birth date, so May was a busy month celebrating those Preschoolers' special day.

The 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes practiced their songs for the Spring Graduation Ceremony that was held on Thursday, May 22 at 10:30 in the Sanctuary, followed by cookies and punch in the Fellowship Hall.

Our last day of Preschool was Friday, May 23, 2025, with the 2-year-olds holding class.

We will have two summer programs happening the week of June 23-27, 2025. The one will be a summer camping theme and then the 4-year-olds will have the Getting Ready for Kindergarten camp.



Fundraising Committee



Thanks to all of you who gave their time, talents and generous donations to this year's efforts to raise money for the many needs of our Church!

We made just short of \$1,000.00 on the Spring Bake and Flower Sale. We could not have done it without you and a special appearance by our favorite Easter Bunny, Joey The Jack Rabbit!

Please feel free to give us any ideas you may have to continue with raising as much cash as we can with our ever-smaller volunteer numbers. We especially need any suggestions for the weekend of Colorfest in October. The yard sale has always been successful but is a huge amount of work.

Your support has meant so much and we thank all of you from the bottom of our little Lutheran hearts!

- The Fundraising Committee

Should Churches Have Fundraisers?

Many congregations are confronted with this question and the short answer is YES! And here are a few reasons why:

1. It builds a culture of generosity.

Fundraising provides an opportunity for church members to make an impact in the community.

2. It can help subsidize funds for special campaigns.

Fundraising can help offset the cost of building projects and other church ministries.

3. There are Biblical roots of fundraising.

"This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."

(2 Corinthians 9:12)

Fundraisers are a fun way to partner with the church while helping us meet our financial needs.



Outreach Update

“Loved by God . . . to love others!” *A reminder to one and all that this is our St. John’s mission statement.*

At our early-May meeting of the Outreach Team, we affirmed our commitment to continue reaching out both locally and globally as a way of thanking God for His many blessings and showing God’s love through our actions. With that directive in mind, we are asking our St. John’s family and friends to continue supporting these three programs: the Thurmont Food Bank, the ELCA “Good Gifts” Ministry, and “Operation Gratitude.”

in addition to these programs (and thanks to Pastor Joe’s initiative), a “Loads of Love” outreach opportunity was successfully put into action by Pastor Joe on Saturday, April 26, at our local laundromat. (More details are given later in this article.)

- **Thurmont Food Bank-** As we’ve emphasized in so many previous newsletters, our local Food Bank increasingly needs the ongoing support of area churches and organizations, and is so grateful for donations given regularly by St. John’s. An excerpt from a January 2025 information sheet (issued via the Thurmont Ministerium) reported that in 2024 the Thurmont Food Bank, which serves the greater part of Northern Frederick County, *“distributed food 3,719 times to households of varying sizes. This is the equivalent of providing food for 12,711 people.”* So, you can see why our ongoing support is so vital and so appreciated by the Food Bank staff!

The St. John’s Outreach Team wishes to thank those who contribute regularly to our Food Bank collections. We’ve agreed to continue with monthly collections; and in addition to focusing on one food item (canned fruit, for example) or one food category (breakfast foods), we will also highlight one specific hygiene item (like bars of soap). Our weekly church bulletins will continue to specify requested foods and personal hygiene products for each month. Thank you, in advance, for whatever you can provide! Just please remember to check the “expiration date” provided on most items.

- **“Loads of Love”-** As mentioned above, this new local outreach opportunity, launched in March, had its inaugural debut at the end of April. Support for this ministry comes through our weekly collection of quarters placed into a designated “Loads of Love” jar. The money is then used to assist patrons of the Super Suds Laundromat here in Thurmont as they wash and dry their clothes. Pastor Joe is hoping to visit the laundromat on the last Saturday of each month. Please contact Pastor Joe if you wish to accompany him some Saturday morning.

Outreach Update (*continued*)

- **ELCA “Good Gifts” Ministry** - Again this year, we have chosen this particular transformative ministry for St. John’s continued support. We’ve set our goal for 2025 at **\$300**, in order to purchase the following “Good Gifts”:

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

To meet our goal, our Summer Produce display will begin in June with fresh eggs, and then garden goodies as they become available. They will be “on sale” (solely by donation) each Sunday in the fellowship hall. Individual piggy banks will also be available in June for further donations. We have decided not to use a Pentecost change jar this year, particularly as we are already collecting quarters for our new “*Loads of Love*” ministry. We are confident, however, that we can still reach our goal without the use of said jar.

We thank, in advance, those who are able to provide fresh eggs and garden produce and, of course, we also thank our purchasers!

- **“Operation Gratitude”**- Looking ahead to autumn, we will again be encouraging St. John’s participation in our yearly “Operation Gratitude” program, which consists of adding brief notes of thanks and encouragement in Christmas cards that will eventually be sent to American military personnel. Volunteers will be needed in October and November. More details to come later.



Is Outreach Really That Important?

It seems like a silly question to ask - "Is outreach really that important?" But, finding creative ways to reach the community and getting volunteers to reach out beyond the four walls of the church seems sometimes akin to pushing a bolder up a hill. One reason may be that the dreaded "E" word (evangelism) can cause an adverse reaction and strike fear in the hearts of those of us who are less outgoing. Reaching out and speaking to others can be uncomfortable at best and frightening at its worst.

Extroverts (of which I am one) usually don't have an issue speaking to people we don't know. As a matter of fact, we extroverts may be accused of talking too much. I'm certain I have been guilty of this on many occasions.

For introverts it's not quite that easy and the question for them may be, "Do we really need to do this?" The answer is "yes" for multiple reasons. Excuse me while I get all biblical on you, but Jesus commands us to do outreach. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus says, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Now we may read that and think Jesus was talking about his disciples, he wasn't talking about me. Yes, he was talking about you and about me. What Jesus said is a commandment, not a suggestion. This "Great Commission" at times seems to be more like the "Great Omission" because, for whatever reason, some of us seem to avoid it.

We are the ones who Jesus chooses to spread his good news. There's no Plan B - we're it. Besides being commanded by Jesus, there are other reasons we are to reach out into our community. Reaching out to others allows us to live out our faith in tangible ways that can be felt and seen by the community. Reaching out can connect our church and ourselves to others in our community and help build relationships within and outside of the congregation.

Outreach, is a good way to introduce people to our church, our beliefs, our core values, as well as provide an opportunity to potentially lead people into a relationship with Jesus Christ. When we give to the Thurmont Food Bank, when we give to the ELCA's Good Gifts Campaign, when we give our quarters to our new "Loads of Love" ministry, we not only address some of the needs in our community and around the world, we show God's love in a practical way.

I'm one who believes that if Jesus did it - it's probably a good idea that I do it too. Jesus gives us the model of effective outreach ministry. He chose not to sit in the Temple or in a synagogue - Jesus chose to be out among the people. I believe that's a good model for us. My hope is that we get out among the people in our community and (here I go again) be the Hands and Feet of Christ. And for you introverts - Jesus promises to be with you and so do I!

Your Brother in Christ,

- Pastor Joe

Looking Ahead... *Mark Your Calendars!*

by Carolyn Fraley

- **Bible Study** - After we complete our study of *Romans* during the month of June, our Bible Study group will take a break during July and August. We plan to resume on Tuesday, September 2, and will then continue to meet with Pastor Joe on Tuesdays at 11:00am in the fellowship hall. Come join us whenever possible!
- **"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 a very pleasant way to begin the day!
- **Sunday Socials** - Please join us on the **first** Sunday of each month for food and fellowship following our worship service. You'll be glad you stayed!
- **Sunday, June 8, the Festival of Pentecost** - Worship with us as we joyfully celebrate the birth of Christ's Church on Earth!
- **Terrific Tuesdays** - Please note the following schedule change: During the months of June, July and August, children and parents will gather with Pastor Joe (and his helpers) only on the second Tuesday of each month. Bible-centered puppet shows and crafts will continue to be highlighted, and refreshments will be served. Come join the fun ... and please continue to keep this important ministry in your prayers!
- **Pastor Joe's Vacation** - Please note that Pastor Joe will be on vacation during the summer months as follows:
 - Monday, July 14 through Sunday, July 20
 - Monday, August 25 through Sunday, August 31
- **Yard Sale** - Elias Lutheran Church in Emmitsburg on July 24, 25, 26; 9:00am - 2:00pm each day.
- **Annual Church Picnic** - Sunday, September 21, following our 11:00am worship service in the Thurmont Town Park. Elias Lutheran Church, our partners in shared ministry, will be joining us for worship and fellowship. Mark your calendars now ... and remember that all are welcome!

Worship Assistants' Schedule

June 2025

| DATE | ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector) | WELCOMERS |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 6/1 | Kelli Donaghue | Kandy & Steve Hauk |
| 6/8 Pentecost Sunday | Chris Kreitz | Kenny Favorite & Mike Kreitz |
| 6/15 | Lisa Riffle | Harriet & Randy Valentine |
| 6/22 | Chris Kreitz | Tina Mumm & Carolyn Fraley |
| 6/29 | Stacey Brown-Hobbs | Kandy & Steve Hauk |

Worship Assistants' Schedule

July 2025

| DATE | ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector) | WELCOMERS |
|------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 7/6 | Kelli Donaghue | Harriet & Randy Valentine |
| 7/13 | Chris Kreitz | Tina Mumm & Carolyn Fraley |
| 7/20 | Lisa Riffle | Kandy & Steve Hauk |
| 7/27 | Stacey Brown-Hobbs | Harriet & Randy Valentine |

Worship Assistants' Schedule

August 2025

| DATE | ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector) | WELCOMERS |
|------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 8/3 | Lisa Riffle | Kandy & Steve Hauk |
| 8/10 | Stacey Brown-Hobbs | Harriet & Randy Valentine |
| 8/17 | Chris Kreitz | Kenny Favorite & Mike Kreitz |
| 8/24 | Kelli Donaghue | Harriet & Randy Valentine |
| 8/31 | 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!**

The late great heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali once said, *“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”* As a follower of Jesus Christ, we are all called to service to others and service in and to the church. The role of the Assisting Minister (AM) is a reminder that we all share in the Priesthood. The role of the AM goes beyond simply assisting the pastor. The AM is also a visible sign that worship happens when we all participate. We honor those who serve as AMs, and give thanks to God for their leadership in our church.

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 our 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 welcomed 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

June Birthdays

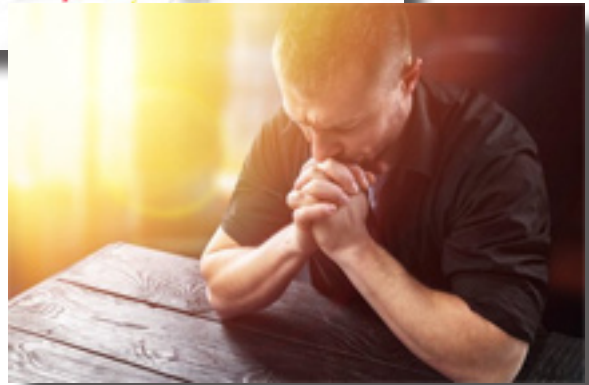
6/3 Traci Getz
6/18 Judy May
6/22 Kandy Hauk
6/23 P.J. Donaghue
6/24 Mary Ellen Eyler

July Birthdays

7/2 Gayle Spahr
7/10 Elaine Baltzell
7/10 Nancy Creager
7/12 Luke Bradley

August Birthdays

8/7 Don Valentine
8/9 Cathy Delauter
8/20 Karen Fox
8/23 Ed McKissick
8/27 Belle Grimes



Prayers

Please remember to pray for our Members:

| | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Luke Bradley | Dan & Tracey Bradley | Fred Balias |
| Jim Riffle | Chester & Jean Zentz | Steve Hauk |
| Brian Getz | Nancy & Donald Creager | Connie Fox |
| Denny Edwards | Steve & Mary Ann Erlitz | Robbie Freed |
| Ross Smith, Jr. | Elaine & Mike Baltzell | Dottie Valentine |

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

Birthdays & Prayers (*continued*)

Family and Friends:

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Don Ardery - MM Griggs | Betsy Kline & Family - Kelli Donaghue |
| Katie Wisnor - MM Griggs | P.J. Donaghue - Kelli Donaghue |
| Hannah Grubb - Lisa Riffle | Christina McCoy - Kelli Donaghue |
| Yvonne Mbella - Tracey Bradley | Angie Bowders - MM Griggs |
| John Oravec - Kelli Donaghue | David Tracey - MM Griggs |
| Linda & Keith Williams - Kelli Donaghue | Theresa Tracey - MM Griggs |
| Mandy Valentine - Harriet & Randy Valentine | Darrell Johnson & Family - MM Griggs |
| Sam Kendall - Tonyia Miller | Austin Miller - Tonyia Miller |
| Barbara Bishop & Family - Carolyn Fraley | Joseph Sease - The Unger Family |
| Tim Pfister - Gayle Spahr | |
| Ethel Brauer - Carolyn Fraley | |
| Alan Cornett - MM Griggs | |
| Cindy Parks - MM Griggs | |
| Carl Thayer - Carolyn Fraley | |
| Nancy & Tommy Fraley - Carolyn Fraley | |
| Chuck Samuel - Pastor Joe & Linda Herb | |
| Cameron Palmer - MM Griggs | |
| Wayne Sanders - Tina Mumm | |
| Jim Latham - The Tankersley Family | |
| Becky Gorby - Ashley Tankersley | |
| Irene Denning - Lisa Riffle | |
| Dennis McGrew - Lisa Riffle | |
| Angela Ashenfelter - Tonyia Miller | |
| Michelle Myers - Harriet & Randy Valentine | |
| David Sanders - Tina Mumm | |
| Michael Allshouse - 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 Larry Edwards, who passed away on April 2, 2025. Larry was the beloved brother of Denny Edwards.

The Origins of Terrific Tuesdays

It's difficult to believe that this September marks the fifth anniversary of Terrific Tuesdays at St. John's. Have you ever wondered how this ministry was started? The concept of Terrific Tuesdays was conceived almost by accident.

During a meeting of the Preschool Board on September 1, 2020, then-Vicar Joe was listening as the board and Interim Pastor Bob Day discussed the merits of whether to keep the preschool open or to close it. This was during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and to say the least, it was a very confusing time. As the board weighed the pros and cons of what to do with the school, Vicar Joe began doodling on his pad. The result of his doodling was the basic framework for what would become Terrific Tuesdays. As a side note, the board, thankfully, decided to reopen the school.

One dilemma was trying to get the preschool families to attend church. Vicar Joe's thought was "if we can't get the preschool families to attend church on Sundays, maybe we can get them to attend Sunday School on Tuesdays" and thus - a ministry was born! Throughout the past almost-five years, we have provided many dinners, performed many puppet shows and presented many craft ideas to preschoolers and their families.

As with all ministries, Terrific Tuesdays is not a one-person show. There have been members of St. John's that have given unselfishly of their time, talents, and treasures to this ministry. Without the tireless efforts of Wanda and Gary Mathias, and Linda Herb, along with Carolyn Fraley and Mary Lou Royer - just to name a few - Terrific Tuesdays would not have been as successful as it is.

Even with the success that we have had over the past few years, we can still use some help. We hope that you will prayerfully consider how you can assist with this ministry. Whether it is helping out with our little ones, cooking a meal, or donating monetarily, giving to this ministry will not only bless us, but we're certain it will bless you too!



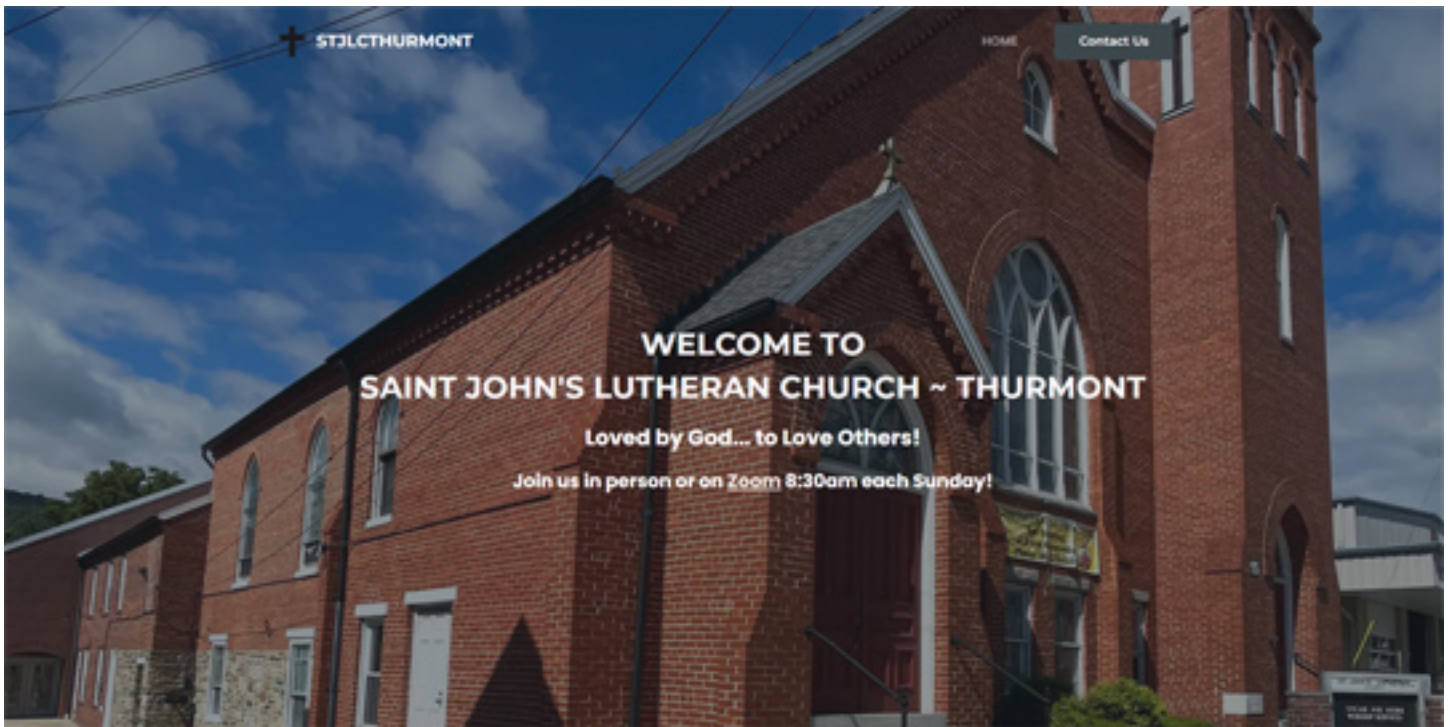
We've Launched Our New Website!

In desperate need of an upgrade, St. John's has launched its new website. With the new design of the website comes a new address: www.stjlcthurmont.com. We also have a new email address for our church administrator Linda Herb - administrator@stjlcthurmont.com.

The new site is user friendly and features our ministries, as well as photos of our members and other useful information about St. John's.

As with anything new, there will be some tinkering with the design and content to assure a pleasant experience for everyone that visits our site. One thing that may take a little getting used to is our church being referred to as "STJLC" throughout some of the content on the site. This was done for two reasons. One, when launching a new website identity, the identity of the church should get an upgrade too. And two, it saves space in the content when using STJLC instead of spelling out the full name of the church.

You're encouraged to go in and take it for a test drive! Comments and suggestions are always welcome. Also, if you have a desire to be a part of our new Social Media Team, please contact Pastor Joe. He's always looking for willing hands to lighten the load.



St. John's in Photos... *Look at us!*





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Please submit articles for *The Grapevine* by **August 8, 2025**.

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!