

The Grapevine

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



**Spring 2026
Edition**



Greetings from Pastor Joe

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

As I pondered what I wanted to write in this newsletter article, I took some time for a little self-reflection. For some reason the words from Sir Paul McCartney rolled around in my mind. To be specific, the chorus from one of The Beatles' sillier songs "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da" was an unwanted distraction as I tried to write. I could hear McCartney sing these words over and over; "Ob-la-di, ob-la-da, life goes on, brah. La, La, La life goes on."

I'm curious to know how many of you that know this song began to sing it after you read that last sentence. As a Beatles fan, many of their lyrics have spoken to me. But there's one lyrical sentence that John Lennon sings in his song "Beautiful

Boy (Darling Boy)" that has me thinking about how I live my life these days. Lennon wrote this song to his son Sean and in this one sentence - "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans" - is his advice to his son to live in the moment.

With all of the distractions we face it can be difficult to just live in the moment. It can be especially difficult during this time in the church season. If we're not careful we'll race past the days of Holy Week into Easter and right into late spring and summer without taking time for self-reflection and living in the moment. And more often than not, we will find ourselves exhausted.

During these times we would do well for ourselves to heed the words that Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

In these words Jesus is extending an invitation to let go of all the things that weigh us down. We are invited to give the burdens

that we were never meant to carry to Jesus. We are invited to take some time to sit with Our Resurrected Lord and to place on Him all the things that weigh us down. It's an invitation to take just a few minutes to live in the moment.

The work of the church and the work in our lives will go on. But, Our Savior, who humbled himself to the point of death on a cross, invites us to rest in Him. My prayer is that we will accept the daily invitation from Jesus to lean on Him and to live in the moment.

In Christ,

- *Pastor Joe*



Council News

by Lisa Riffle, Council President

Greetings from your new council president. As my first official duty, I oversaw the congregational meeting on Jan. 18th. Once again we were faced with the tough decision of moving our Sunday services down to the Fellowship Hall through March 22nd, in order to lower heating costs. I realize that this is not a popular decision, but I commend all of you for tolerating this move, and continuing to support our congregation through difficult financial times.

The important thing to remember is that we are still able to come together as a congregation to worship God ... and what an honor and privilege that is. To really appreciate that, just think back several years to 2020, when we had to shut the doors for months, due to COVID. At that time, we would have given anything to gather together to worship ... we would have even been happy to meet in the basement. So, as we are able to be together to worship God, Life is Good!

Another concern brought up at the meeting, by Rodman Myers, was the large amount of money we have sitting in the checking account. He suggested that we invest some of that money in a CD, so that we can be earning interest on it. This was brought up at our February council meeting, and we were in agreement that it would be a good idea.

Linda and Chris are currently working on moving our accounts from PNC Bank to Woodsboro Bank, so as soon as that transfer is complete, we will pursue investing in a CD at Woodsboro Bank.

Also, after my plea for help with the Property Committee, Mike Kreitz and Kenny Favorite have agreed to help with property issues as they are able, but they would appreciate help from other members when needed.

I look forward to serving this congregation as council president, and please feel free to approach me or any council member with any problems or concerns you may have.

Current Council Members

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

Preschool News

by Wanda Mathias

During the month of February, the Preschool celebrated Valentine's Day with each class having a party and sharing Valentine's Day cards and treats.

We celebrated Shrove Tuesday on February 17, with all classes eating authentic Fastnachts for their daily snack, purchased from and made by St. James Lutheran Church in Gettysburg. This fundraiser supported the Youth group and Ministries of St. James.

As we move into March, all classes will be studying Dr. Seuss during the first week. They will also be learning primary and secondary colors, shapes, sorting, rhythms, and coloring by numbers. In addition, students will learn about and celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

Then for the remainder of March, classes will focus their study on everything relating to Jesus and Easter. We will also be holding registration for the 2026/2027 school year.

The Preschool will be closed for Easter Break, April 3-10, 2026.

Wishing everyone a Happy Easter!



Fundraising Committee

by Mary Lou Royer

Spring has never been more welcome than this year! After weeks of what seemed like living in a Polar climate, the warmer weather will be a true blessing.

Plans are moving forward for our annual **Easter Plant and Bake Sale**. The event itself will be on **Saturday, April 4th, from 9am to 12 noon in the Church Social Hall**. Set-up will be on Friday, April 3rd prior to our Good Friday service. Baked goods can be dropped off at that time or at 8:30 am on Saturday. Cakes, pies, cookies, brownies and cupcakes are always in demand.

This event has always been very popular with our local friends as well as with members of the church. A sign-up sheet will be located in the Social Hall starting **March 15th**. Your baked goods are truly welcome, and any time you can spare to help on the day of the sale is appreciated.

Weather permitting, we will display some of the flowers in front of the church. We will feature tulips, lilies, hyacinths and daffodils if they are available.

We look forward to seeing you at the Sale and looking forward to a Blessed Spring and Easter. Thank you for all you do to support our fundraising efforts and especially Saint John's.



Guess who is wearing the bunny costume?

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-** “Thank you” to all those who faithfully support our local Food Bank through our monthly collections here at St. John’s. As we’ve been told many times, “every contribution is a blessing” for the constantly growing number of people needing food assistance within the greater-Thurmont community. For that reason, we ask that everyone prayerfully considers bringing in a requested item or two each month.

As we continue with these **monthly** food collections, please note that **personal hygiene products** are always a welcome donation, as are boxes, bags and cans of **pet food**. Our weekly church bulletins will continue to specify requested food items each month. 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 at 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 on Pastor Joe’s availability. To be sure, we thank you for supporting this relatively new ministry here at St. John’s.
- **Further Outreach** - The Outreach Team will meet with Pastor Joe sometime in March or April to explore other opportunities for outreach in 2026. Please pass along any suggestions to Carolyn, Mary Lou or Pastor Joe. ... **Additional volunteers are always welcome to join the team!!!**



Looking Ahead... *Mark Your Calendars!*

by Carolyn Fraley

- **Bible Study** - A group meets with Pastor Joe every Tuesday at 11:00am in the fellowship hall. We are currently studying the book of Psalms and invite you to join us whenever possible.
- **"A Cup of Joe with Pastor Joe"** - We continue our weekly get-together with Pastor Joe every Tuesday at Dunkin' Donuts, 9:00-10:00am. It makes a pleasant, relaxing way to begin the day. Stop by sometime - we'd love to see you!
- **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 gives parents and children the opportunity to understand the Bible using puppet presentations and crafts. We typically meet with Pastor Joe (and his helpers) at 6:00pm in the fellowship hall on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, with food provided. Come and join the fun!
- **Yard Sale at Elias Lutheran Church in Emmitsburg** - For the bargain hunters among us, you'll have a chance to browse through a large selection of wares at Elias on March 12, 13, 14. The Sale runs 9:00am - 2:00pm each day, with assorted baked goods also available for purchase.
- **Our Holy Week and Easter Services are as follows:**
 - Palm/Passion Sunday** - March 29 at 8:30am
 - Maundy Thursday** - April 2 at **4:00pm**
 - Good Friday** - April 3 at **4:00pm**
 - Easter Sunday** - April 5 at 8:30am

Everyone is invited to experience each phase of this spiritual journey, which culminates in the glorious Resurrection of Our Lord on Easter morning.

- **Annual Easter Flower and Bake Sale** - This popular fundraising event will be held on **Saturday, April 4, 9:00am - 12:00pm**, here at St. John's in the fellowship hall. A variety of homemade treats will be on sale, along with our usual selection of potted plants. Be sure to spread the word to your friends to come out and support us!
- **Sunday, May 24, the Festival of Pentecost** - Worship with us as we joyfully celebrate the birth of Christ's Church on Earth!

Worship Assistants' Schedule

March 2026

DATE	ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector)	WELCOMERS
3/1	Kelli Donaghue	Harriet & Randy Valentine
3/8	Chris Kreitz	Kandy & Steve Hauk
3/15	Chris Kreitz	Kenny Favorite & Mike Kreitz
3/22	Chris Kreitz	Harriet & Randy Valentine
3/29 Palm Sunday	Lisa Riffle	Kandy & Steve Hauk



Worship Assistants' Schedule

April 2026

DATE	ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector)	WELCOMERS
4/2 Maundy Thursday Service at 4:00pm	Chris Kreitz	Mike Kreitz
4/3 Good Friday Service at 4:00pm	Lisa Riffle	Mike Kreitz
4/5 Easter Sunday	Chris Kreitz	Kandy & Steve Hauk
4/12	Kelli Donaghue	Kenny Favorite & Mike Kreitz
4/19	Lisa Riffle	Harriet & Randy Valentine
4/26	Chris Kreitz	Kenny Favorite & Mike Kreitz

The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 6:9, *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”* 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.

Worship Assistants' Schedule

May 2026

DATE	ASSISTING MINISTER (and Lector)	WELCOMERS
5/3	Stacey Brown-Hobbs	Harriet & Randy Valentine
5/10	Lisa Riffle	Kenny Favorite & Mike Kreitz
5/17	Kelli Donaghue	Kandy & Steve Hauk
5/24 Pentecost Sunday	Chris Kreitz	Harriet & Randy Valentine
5/31	Stacey Brown-Hobbs	Kandy & Steve Hauk

****Please Note****

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

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

March Birthdays

3/5 Dan Bradley
3/9 Harriet Valentine
3/11 Amanda Unger
3/12 Richard Lohr
3/24 Chester Zentz, Jr.
3/28 Kaitlin Fox



April Birthdays

4/6 Michael Delauter
4/9 Rodman Myers
4/15 Randy Valentine
4/16 Darlene Fogle
4/18 Stacey Brown-Hobbs



May Birthdays

5/2 Ryan Delauter
5/11 Zachary Getz
5/25 Scott Hahn
5/26 Brian Getz
5/29 Lisa Riffle
5/30 Inus Lohr
5/30 Kristin Fox
5/31 Nathan Fox

Prayers

Please remember to pray for our Members:

Luke Bradley	Dan & Tracey Bradley	Fred & Julie Balius
Chester & Jean Zentz	Brian Getz	Denny Edwards
Nancy & Donald Creager	Connie Fox	Ross Smith, Jr.
Steve & Mary Ann Erlitz	Dottie Valentine	Richard Lohr
Rodman Myers		

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

Birthdays & Prayers (*continued*)

Family and Friends:

Pam Ardery - MM Griggs	Katie Wisnor - MM Griggs
P.J. Donaghue - Kelli Donaghue	Yvonne Mbella - Tracey Bradley
John Oravec - Kelli Donaghue	Debbie Fornwald - Carolyn Fraley
Mandy Valentine - Harriet & Randy Valentine	Carol Hobbs - Gayle Spahr
Ethel Brauer - Carolyn Fraley	Sharon Harrison - Sara Hahn
Melinda Bitner - Sara Hahn	Sidney Kolega - Gayle Spahr
Alan Cornett - MM Griggs	Jim & Patty Reid - Carolyn Fraley
Cindy Parks - MM Griggs	Dan Gilfus - Mary Lou Royer
Carl Thayer - Carolyn Fraley	Jackie Kolega - Gayle Spahr
Nancy & Tommy Fraley - Carolyn Fraley	Geoffrey Chandler - Carolyn Fraley
Jim Latham - The Tankersley Family	The Resch Family - The Tankersley Family
Becky Gorby - Ashley Tankersley	Jim Bostian - Harriet & Randy Valentine
Irene Denning - Lisa Riffle	Angela Ashenfelter - Tonyia Miller
Dennis McGrew - Lisa Riffle	David Sanders - Tina Mumm
Michael Allshouse - Gayle Spahr	Janice Allgood - Elaine & Michael Baltzell

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

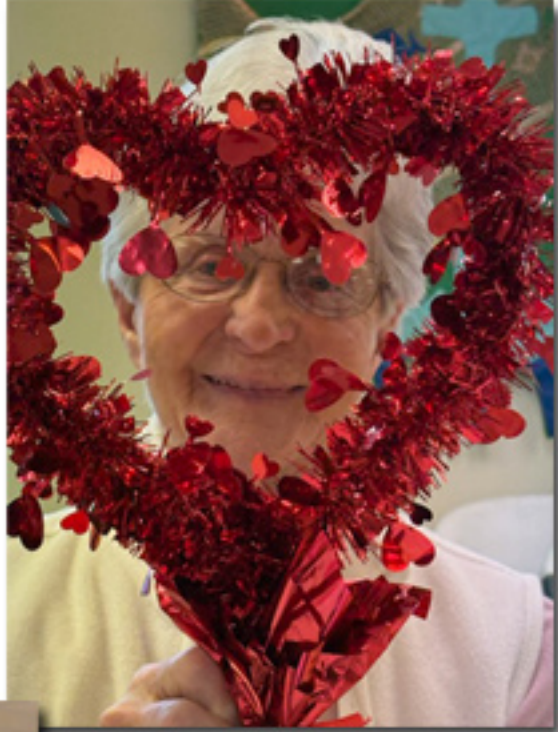
In Service to our Country:

Josh Waldron Nickalas Kath

Photos from our *First Sunday of the Month Social* February 1, 2026







Church Office: 301-271-7877

Pastor: Joe Herb

Emial:jherb1@yahoo.com

Cell# 443-255-5229

Administrative Assistant: Linda Herb

Email: administrator@stjlcthurmont.com

Website: www.stjlcthurmont.com

St. John's Preschool: 301-271-4109

Financial Officer: Wanda Mathias

Email: stjpreschl@aol.com

Please submit articles for the Summer Edition of *The Grapevine* by **May 8, 2026**.

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

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