



## **From Darkness to Light: The Joy of Our New Life in Christ**

My friends, we are entering at last into one of my favorite times of the year: springtime. Sure, we can give winter its due. The first snowfall of the year is always beautiful and inspiring. The old traditions of Christmas are romantic and endearing. And there's something alluring about the thought of cozying up before a roaring fire while the cold wind howls outside.

But by the time we get into late January and February, for most of us winter has worn out its welcome. We're tired of the cold. We're weary of the gloom. We're itching to get out of the house (which has, of course, been getting messier by the day) without having to bundle up. We're sick of shoveling snow. And, come to mention it, we're probably just sick in general.

But then—God be praised!—comes spring. The weather begins to warm. The sun begins to shine. The birds begin to sing. Delicate green buds appear on the many fingers of once barren trees. Early blooming flowers—crocuses and tulips and daffodils—burst up out of nowhere from the ground. People everywhere emerge from their cramped and cluttered houses, forsaking their heavy winter coats, to work and play freely in the mild springtime air. Everything is once again green and the world, which seemed so dead, is alive. Spring. It's a time of joy and renewal, a time of freshness and life—and, to speak personally, it's one of my favorite times of the year.

But aside from giving us an earthly sense of joy, spring can also serve a higher purpose, for it also gives us a beautiful illustration of the gift of God in Christ, namely, the *new life* that God freely offers to us through faith in Him.

Yeah, by nature we were all born under the power of sin and the captivity of the devil. We were “dead in [our] trespasses,” as Paul says (Ephesians 2:1). And what did that mean? It meant an existence of hopelessness and despair. An existence of sadness and gloom. An existence of futility and of anxiety and of the deepest, most profound fear. The power of sin reigned darkly over us. The devil, in all of his cruelty and malice, held us captive. Death was our lot. We were idolaters, adulterers, blasphemers, murderers,

and thieves—and in our sin we stood under the just condemnation of God. All around us today we see a world living under the power of sin and dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death. And at one time we were all right there with them. Our life was once a winter life, a life of barrenness, hostility, and gloom.

But then came Jesus. Long ago, out of His love for us, He left His glorious throne in heaven and stepped down into our world of darkness. He bore the sin of all. He suffered the punishment we deserved. He shed His own innocent blood on the cross. He died in our place. And then in the dawning light of Easter He rose again in glory from the dead. In this way, Jesus paid the price for the sins of the world and graciously accomplished our eternal salvation.

And now Jesus comes to us, offering this salvation as a free gift through faith in Him. Not only does He assure us of forgiveness and a gracious reception by the Father, but He promises us a new life, a life of joy and holiness empowered by His Spirit. This is a blessing of baptism, and something truly to be cherished. As Paul says, “We were buried therefore with [Jesus] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

A new life. It is ours through the resurrection of Christ, even now. It is a springtime life, a life of peace and joy, a life of warmth and light, a life of righteousness and of freedom and of love. It is the life of God's Spirit, in which we bear good fruit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). This is the gift of Christ, which we believers have in our baptisms at this very moment. Yeah, for the time being this new life is still hindered by our old, sinful flesh, so that we “do not to what [we] want” (Romans 7:15). And yet it is nevertheless at work in us and will be made complete in us when Christ returns and we are perfected. Indeed, it is the golden life of heaven, given to us now.

Continued on the next page...

Continued from Page One...

So as we watch springtime burst forth around us, I would have you remember two things. First, remember that the gift of Christ includes a new life, which we live even now by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Martin Luther says in our Small Catechism, "[Jesus] has redeemed me...purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil...that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness" (SC II, 3). The goal of Jesus' salvation is, in fact, a new life.

But, secondly, remember the true joy of this new life. Don't be deceived when the world tells you that the life of sin will make you happy. No, that is a life of hopelessness and fear. Instead, the new life that we have in Jesus is truly the good life, for it is a life lived in the freedom and comfort of the Gospel, a life that affirms our nature as God's creatures, a life in which we rest under His care, a life shaped as He has intended. In short, this new life works in us all that we were meant to be. And, even though we will still face hardships in this world, our new life is still a life of the highest joy.

So open your eyes to the gift of Christ, cherish the new life He gives, and set yourself to live according to it every day. For Jesus has risen. And, in your baptisms, so have you.

Pastor Aaron Vergin

### **Listen to Sermons Online**

Did you miss a sermon or want to listen to it again? We post sermons on our website and on SoundCloud. You can listen to all of the sermons by scanning the QR code below.



### **Men's Monthly Bible Study**

You're invited to join the monthly Men's Bible Study at 9-10:30 a.m. Saturday, May 4, in the Social Hall.

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Vergin at [pastorvergin@stjohnsgrandhaven.com](mailto:pastorvergin@stjohnsgrandhaven.com).

### **Spring Clean Up on June 1**

The weather is warming up, which means it's time to clean up the St. John's campus.

Join us 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Saturday, June 1 to spruce up the grounds. Please bring wheelbarrows, rakes and other helpful outdoor tools. Many hands make light work!

### **Voters' Meeting on May 21**

A voters' meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 21, in the Sanctuary. Voters will take action on the 2024-25 fiscal year budget. The church's new vision statement and logo will also be unveiled.



### **Eyeglass Collection Drive Starts on May 11**

Your used eyeglasses are needed!

It's time to start collecting your old eyeglasses and non-prescription sunglasses for the eyeglass drive taking place from May 11 - June 16.

These will be sent to MOST (Mission Opportunities Short Term) Ministries where they will be used for eye clinics. A collection box will be placed in the Social Hall.

### **National Day of Prayer Service**

You're invited to join us for our National Day of Prayer Service! It will be held at 1 p.m. Thursday, March 2, in the Sanctuary.

### **Pentecost Sunday on May 19**

Join us for our special Pentecost and Confirmation celebration! We will have one worship service at 10 a.m. Sunday, May 19. A reception in the Social Hall will immediately follow. We will also have worship at 5 p.m. Saturday, May 18.



### **Updating Church Records**

Do we have your correct email, phone number and home address? Please contact us if you have any changes. The church office can be reached at [office@stjohnsgrandhaven.com](mailto:office@stjohnsgrandhaven.com) or 616-842-4510.

### **Rummage Sale in June**

As you do your spring cleaning, keep the Rummage Sale in mind!

You're welcome to drop off donations at the church 4-7 p.m. June 12 and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. June 13. The sale will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. June 14, and 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. June 15.

The Ladies Aid appreciates all donations and volunteers. If you're interested in volunteering during set up or take down, please contact the church office at 616-842-4510.

# St. John's Lutheran Church Congregational Finance Snapshot

As of March 31, 2024

## 1. Receipts and Expenses

	Actual – Month 3/31/24	Actual – YTD 3/31/24
All Receipts	\$104,459	\$913,652
All Expenses	\$98,249	\$970,014
Extraordinary Adj.	–	–
Over/ (Under)	\$6,209	(\$56,362)

	Budget – YTD 3/31//24	Actual – Prior YTD 3/31/23
All Receipts	\$843,152	\$778,442
All Expenses	\$991,673	\$916,874
Extraordinary Adj.	–	\$101,157
Over/ (Under)	(\$148,521)	(\$37,275)

**Receipts:** The envelope giving in March was \$74K for a 5 Sunday month. March of last year was \$50K for a 4 Sunday month. This represents a 19 percent increase for March based on average weekly offerings. March YTD offerings are \$673K as compared to \$576K during the same time last year. An uptick of \$47K or an increase of 8.2 percent overall. Most of the increase on a YTD basis has occurred since Dec. 1. This does not include the “Jesus for Next Generation” extra giving. All other YTD church offerings total \$98K which includes loose plate and “Jesus for the Generation” offerings. March of last year for other offerings was \$17K.

Total Day School receipts were \$5K for March and are \$85K for March YTD with \$12.6K of that coming from gifts and other.

Day Care & Early Ed had receipts of \$20K for March & \$107K year to date. Day Care & Early Ed receipts have averaged just about \$11K for the entire fiscal year.

**Expenses:** The expenses for March YTD are \$970K or on average \$97K per month. Therefore, receipts need to be \$97K or greater in order for St. John's to break even in any given month. I mention this to give all of you a perspective of the total financial operations and total expenses for the church, school, and Early Ed/Day Care. March YTD budgeted expenses were \$992K.

**Operating Results, Operating Cash & Forecast:** Operating results for March were a surplus, receipts being greater than expenses, of \$6.2K. With those

results operating cash is \$60K at the end of March. Nothing was paid against \$40K Line of Credit that we currently owe to CEF. The cash will probably be held in anticipation of May, which usually is a high expense month and the summer months that follow which are normally the low points of the St. John's normal cash flow cycle.

## 2. Operating Cash

Cash in the bank as of 3/31/2024	\$145,563
Less: Current Liabilities	\$1,916
Dedicated Accounts	\$83,607
Net Operating Cash	\$60,040

- A. Current Operating Cash reflects current operating results.
- B. Increase of Operating Cash due to “Jesus for the Next Generation” extra giving and envelope offerings both in December. Envelope offering increased in March, too.

## 3. Investment

CEF Cash Account \$1,712

## 4. Debt

CEF Short Term Line of Credit	\$40,000
Long-Term Loan	---
Total Short Term Debt	\$40,000

## 5. Special Giving Projects

Capital Improvement Fund	\$16,600 (A)
Bell Tower Fund - Receipts	\$83,872 (B)
Bell Tower Fund - Expenses	\$54,597 (B)
Net Account Balance	\$29,276
Parsonage Repair	\$1,858 (C)

- A. March's activity included donations of \$360 to this account.
- B. Funds continue to trickle into this fund with \$230 coming in during March. No charges against this fund either during the month.
- C. Funds to be used when the Parsonage A/C invoice comes in. To date, no invoice has been received yet.

## Electronic Giving

Did you know that you can give monetary donations online? You can download the Vanco App on your phone or give online by scanning the QR Code.



## Diaper Drive May 12 - June 16

The Board of Social Ministries is collecting diapers to support Positive Options. The drive starts on Mother's Day, May 12, and ends on Father's Day, June 16. A collection table will be set up in the Social Hall.

## **New Member Reception on May 5**

The Board of Evangelism/Fellowship will host a reception to honor and welcome all new members who have joined the St. John's family from January 2023 until the present.

The reception will take place on at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, May 5. If you are a new member, we are so glad that you have chosen St. John's as your place of worship! If you are an existing member, we would love this opportunity to visit with our Christian family.

New members will receive additional information in the mail. We hope you can all attend!

Cheryl Thomas  
Board of Evangelism/Fellowship



## **Unity Music Festival 2024**

Mark your calendar for Unity Music Festival!

The annual event will be held Aug. 7-10 at Heritage Landing in Muskegon. Tickets are on sale now. Tickets will cost \$40 per person for a one-day pass, \$75 per person for a three-day pass, and \$325 for a family three-day pass. May 5 is the deadline to purchase tickets.

Unity includes music, a children's area, and booths featuring various ministries. This year's main stage artists include Zach Williams, Matthew West, Mac Powell, Tenth Avenue North, Matt Maher, Brandon Heath, and Tasha Layton.

## **Geraniums for Pentecost**

If you would like to purchase geraniums, please use the envelopes that are available on the bulletin board by the church office. Geraniums are \$6 per plant.

Thank you to Bosch's Best Bushes for their continued partnership!

If you have any questions, please contact the church office by calling 616-842-4510 or by emailing [office@stjohnsgrandhaven.com](mailto:office@stjohnsgrandhaven.com).

## **Muskegon Supper House on May 27**

It is that time again to support the Supper House of Muskegon. A donation box will be available in the Social Hall the weekends of May 4 & 5 and May 11 & 12.

Donation requests include personal items of sample-sized of deodorant, hand sanitizer, individual Kleenex packets, shampoo, conditioners, Band-aids, toothpaste, and soap. Toothbrushes are not needed at this time.

Food requests include granola and breakfast cereal bars, cheese and crackers, raisins, nuts, fruit snacks, and 8 oz. water bottles. Expired items cannot be used.

We also need people to donate a dessert for the Friday, May 31 supper. These can be dropped off in the church office until 12 p.m. May 31.

Thank-you to all who have volunteered and donated supplies for the goody bags in the past. We need your continued generosity. The Evangelism/Fellowship Board hopes to donate 70 bags – 35 bags filled with five+ food items, and 35 bags filled with five+ self-care items.

## **Church Picnic on June 9**

The Fellowship/Evangelism Board is hosting a church picnic 12-4 p.m. Sunday, June 9, at Rycenga Park.

We will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, and all the fixings, plus potato chips, water, lemonade, and iced tea. Please bring an additional dish to pass. We will not have access to electric outlets, so plan your food choices accordingly.

Activities will include a children's area for face painting, sand painting, a pinata, relay races, and more. A cornhole tournament will be held along with plenty of games and activities for the whole family.

Our site includes use of a Pavilion and picnic tables, but feel free to bring lawn chairs for relaxing with your friends and family. There is plenty of shade at this venue. We have direct access to the playground, baseball diamonds, and restrooms.

Parking is available adjacent to our site. Guests are welcome.

For planning purposes, please register by scanning the QR code below. This is a FREE EVENT!



## Life Team Updates

### What We Can Learn from a Solar Eclipse

With the April solar eclipse God showed us his will for great and beautiful intricacy as Creator of the Universe. For a solar eclipse to occur, there has to be a perfect alignment between the Sun, 93 million miles away from us and the size of 1,300,000 planet Earths, the Earth orbiting around the sun, and the moon with its own earthly orbit about 239,000 miles away. If we were able to drive a car to the moon, at 70 miles per hour, it would take us about 4-1/2 months of constant driving. This would not be a good plan for a vacation if you had children in the backseat! Speaking of children and at the other end of the spectrum, Jesus Christ as the "Author of Life" (Acts 3:15) participates in the creation of all of us in equally great detail in our mother's womb. A baby with about 26 billion cells at birth is formed from what nine months earlier was a human fertilized egg barely visible to the naked eye. In a miraculous way, these cells will differentiate into what they are supposed to be and become positioned where they belong.

Because God is master and creator of all, a recent Life Thoughts on the Lutherans For Life webpage tells us it is therefore not our "right or responsibility to decide what kind of life a neighbor may have or when any human life ought to end. Rather, we rejoice to repeat the message of repentance and forgiveness (Luke 24:47) for every sinner and every sin—abortion and assisted suicide included."

The perfect alignment needed for a solar eclipse to occur reminds us of a similar matter of position expressed by the word "conformity." At times the sun, and the worlds of moon and earth will be aligned, and the result is amazing and pleasing to see. But regarding human conformity, the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:2 that we should NOT be conformed to this world. How true this is in so many ways, especially regarding abortion and assisted suicide. The world would tell us that abortion and assisted suicide are acceptable, and that the argument is not "yes" or "no" but "when." Solar eclipses have a 'when', but not abortion or assisted suicide.

In a few minutes, a solar eclipse transforms light into darkness and then darkness into light. In Romans 12:2 Paul goes on to tell us that we also must be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." This pertains to thought and will as they relate to morality. The Bible gives us the light to know God's will on issues of life and death, and it is clear that abortion and assisted suicide are simply wrong.

Randy Cooper

### Life Team Library, Resources

The Life Team Library includes films and books related to Life issues. The materials are all available to check out in the Social Hall. The information sheets and pamphlets are free to take.



**LUTHERANS  
FOR LIFE**

### Speaking Up for Life

"Our true identity turns us back toward our Creator, the one who not only made us but also defines us in His Word. So, permit me to remind you of that truth once more: You are a created child of God. You are handmade by Him, loved by Him, redeemed by Him, and sustained by Him. The gifts you possess are gifts He's given you; all that is good comes from Him. Your identity and your value are, always were, and always will be, found in Him."

Michelle Bauman,  
Y4Life

"Today, we often find lines, divisions, and hate, but we hope to spread a little love and hope. Life is a valuable gift at all ages and all stages of life, and it should be protected."

Kambria Steinhaus,  
Knights 4 Life

"I encourage everyone that I meet with to check my words and teaching against God's Word. Ask questions, challenge everything by that Word. I want them to know Jesus and to have that faith which says, 'This is what Jesus says: I am forgiven! I am set free! I am serving and living as a disciple of Jesus! I will go into heaven because of Jesus! ... I am part of God's family!'"

Pastor Darren Green, Redwood Falls,  
Minnesota

For those who have had an  
abortion—a Word of Hope.

888.217.8679  
www.word-of-hope.org

# St. John's Lutheran School



## Enroll Today!

There's still time to enroll for the 2024-25 school year! Call us today to learn more about the faith-based education, low student-to-teacher ratio, academic excellence, and opportunities that await your children and family!

If you have any questions or would like to schedule a tour, please call us at 616-842-0260. You can also contact Director of Admissions Nicole Socia via email at [nsocia@stjohnsgandhaven.com](mailto:nsocia@stjohnsgandhaven.com).



## Educational Trips

Our fifth- and sixth-graders visited the wastewater treatment plant on April 9.



## Chapel

Everyone is invited to worship with our staff and students during Chapel at 10 a.m. Wednesdays.

## Talent Show

You're invited to join us for an afternoon of talents being displayed!

The Talent Show will be held at 1 p.m. May 16 in the Sanctuary. It's sure to be an entertaining and delightful time!

## School Picnic

The school picnic will be held on May 29. This fun annual event will be held outdoors, weather permitting.

## Last Day of School

We've been richly blessed throughout the 2023-24 school year.

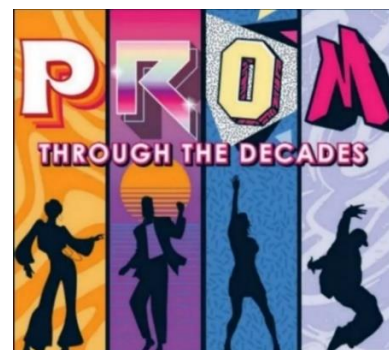
Our academic year will end on May 31. We thank everyone for their continued support. We pray everyone will have a wonderful and safe summer.



## Running Club

Springtime means that it's time for Running Club!

Mrs. Harvey and Mrs. Kelly work with students after school each week. Students are working toward running 5ks later in the spring and summer.

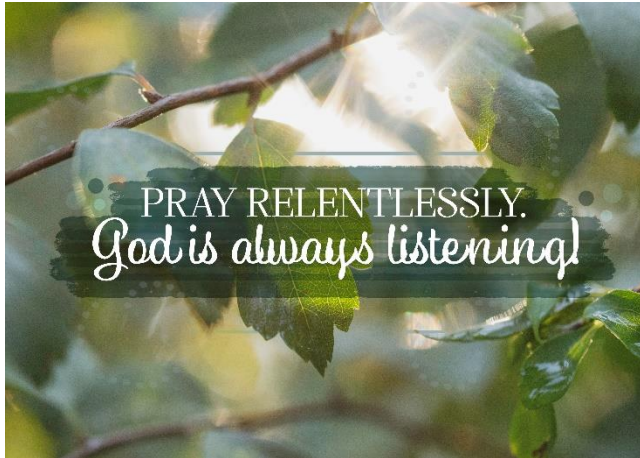


## Thank You!

A HUGE thank you to everyone who helped make our annual auction for the Day School a success!

We are already looking ahead to the 2025 auction.

## Prayer Group



### Prayer Calendar for May 2024

May - what a wonderful month! The flowers arrive along with the warmer temperatures and the opportunity to be outside. Summer is just around the corner. May is also filled with celebrations and opportunities to give thanks to God and that is what we will be doing throughout this month.

#### Church Prayers

**May 5:** Welcome to all our new members! We thank you, Father God, for each person that has joined St. John's Lutheran Church this year. We hope that they feel welcome as they join our church family. May we show proper respect to each other and your love in our words and actions as stated in 1 Peter 2:17.

**May 12:** On this Mother's Day we give thanks for those who have raised us and for those who have "mothered" us throughout our lives. God, you have provided for our needs through them. Thank you. Love is patient, kind, always protects, trusts, and perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5.

**May 19:** Today on Pentecost Sunday, we commemorate the fulfilled promise of Jesus in giving to us the Holy Spirit who encourages, empowers, guides, and directs us. "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." John 14:26.

**May 26:** Memorial Day is the time we honor those who have died protecting our country and our freedoms. "Greater love has no one than this, that he will lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13 God, be with all those men and women who are in our country's military service and their families who miss them. Thank you for granting them your strength and protection. Amen.

#### School Prayers

**May 5:** Grant the students clear understanding and the ability to focus during this week as they take the MAP exams. Be with the end of the year class trips. May the students see and enjoy new things that expand their understanding of the world around them.

**May 12:** Bless the preschoolers and kindergarteners that graduate this week. Be with the graduating eighth grade students who are concluding their time at SJLS. Be with these students and their families as they will be transitioning to new schools.

**May 19:** We give thanks for each student and the fruit that they have produced this year. May they continue to bear fruit for God's kingdom. Jesus said "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit..." John 15:5.

**May 26:** Be with our students and staff as they finish this school year. We give thanks for a year filled with so many gifts from your hand, Father God, that we cannot count them! Bless the students and staff along with their families throughout this summer and guide them back next fall.



#### Prayer Group Meets Weekly

The St. John's Prayer Group continues to meet 9-10 a.m. Thursdays in the Social Hall.

All are welcome, even if you aren't there every week. We offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving as well as supplications for individuals, families, our church, school, community, and nation.



**St. John's Lutheran  
Church & School**  
527 Taylor Avenue  
Grand Haven, MI 49417



**Worship Times:**

5 p.m. Saturdays

8:15 & 10:30 a.m. Sundays



To stay up to date  
on the latest  
information, visit  
our website:

[www.stjohnsgrandhaven.com](http://www.stjohnsgrandhaven.com)

**Contact Us!**

Church: (616) 842-4510

School: (616) 842-0260

[office@stjohnsgrandhaven.com](mailto:office@stjohnsgrandhaven.com)

**Pastor** Aaron Vergin

**Youth & Family Life Director**  
Craig Kaschube

**Administrator/Business  
Manager** Laura Harvey

**Administrative Assistant**  
Krystle Ryke

**Bookkeeper** Karen Losee

**Director of Music**  
Hannah Coomer

**Director of Admissions**  
Nicole Socia

**Director of Children's Ministry**  
Leah Appold



We offer a faith-based education  
for preschool- eighth grade.

Call 616-842-0260 to learn more  
and enroll today!