



St. John's

Ev. Lutheran Church

901 SW Fillmore | Topeka, Kansas 66606-1445 | 785.354.7132 | www.stjohnlcmstopeka.org

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HOW DO I KNOW THAT I'M A CHRISTIAN?

If we have paid attention to the sermons recently, we will have heard many times that we cannot do anything to gain salvation or to even please God for our redemption. It is so natural for us to want to point to things we have done to convince ourselves that we are Christians. "I pray," "I go to church," "I'm a good person," "I am generous with my money."

So, if we can't *do* anything, what hope do we have? Where do we look for salvation?

If someone were to ask me if I am a wife, I could point to my wedding ring, my marriage certificate, and the good man standing next to me to prove that I am married. If someone asks me if I am an employee, I can show them where I work, my pay stubs, and my time sheet.

But if I'm asked if I am a good wife, I think about times that I have failed my husband, acted selfishly, and been anything but a good wife. If someone asks, "Are you a good employee?" I think about the times I have wasted time on the job. I may think I am a good employee, but maybe my boss thinks otherwise.

To answer these "good" questions, we have to look inwardly to find the answer, and then, if we are honest with ourselves, the answer may not be "good."

What about the question, "Are you a Christian?" Are we to look inward to find the answer? Must we explore our hearts, test our actions, focus inside ourselves to get to the right answer? Do you really believe? Do you really love your neighbor? Do you really lead a moral life?

If we look inside ourselves for evidence, we will find a heart that is deceitful above all things, a heart from which flow evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander; a conscience that testifies that nothing good dwells in you, that the evil you do not want to do, you nevertheless keep right on doing.

If we look at our deeds to answer the question, we will find that all our righteousness is as filthy rags; we have the desire to do what is right but not the ability to carry it out. Only doubt comes from such a viewpoint.

The answer is found not within us but within Christ. Our assurance is in His objective, external work of salvation on our behalf. Not in our hearts, but in the heart and life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ do we receive assurance that we are the children of God.

Coming into the season of Lent, how do we answer the question, “Are you a Christian?” Look outward in faith. Everything that Jesus did, He did for you. His life, death, and resurrection made you a Christian in the waters of your baptism. Now He works in you to will and the do that which is pleasing to God.

Based on the writings of Chad Bird at www.chadbird.com.

Deaconess Linda

Senior Pastor - Rev. J. S. Bruss, ext. 104

Associate Pastor – Rev. D. M. Kerns, ext. 101

Deaconess - Linda S. Kinnett, ext. 102

Kantor - Rev. Roger M. Goetz

Associate Kantor - Bethany M. Johnson

TLS Teachers - Ashley Brandmahl, Andrea Kosmicki, Edith Kerns, Rachel Kathman

STEWARDSHIP BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITY

Plan to attend! In Ephesians, the apostle Paul writes, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Every Christian has a calling, a vocation or set of vocations through which he or she acts as “God’s hands on earth” to accomplish His purposes in service to others. Starting February 28 at Sound Words Academy, we’ll be exploring what it means to live out our calling as faithful stewards, particularly as we interact with our neighbors in the various places in which we find ourselves (which Luther refers to as “estates”). The “Placed with a Purpose” Bible study, taught by Rev. Dan Galchutt, runs at Sound Words Academy at 5:55 p.m. on Wednesdays Feb. 28, March 7, March 14, and March 21.

2018 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES

If you find that you still haven’t picked up your 2018 envelopes, they are now in the church office. If you have any questions regarding contribution boxes/envelopes, please speak with Yvonne Berry.

2018 LENTEN SERIES

‘As Surely as I Live,’ God Said: Meditations on Confession and the Office of the Keys

Our sins are a great burden and enemy; the weakness of the flesh plagues Christians their whole life until they are taken to the Lord in heaven; and unrepentant sin in the Body of Christ is like a cancer. How are we on this side of glory to deal with it all? The Lord Jesus said, “Come unto Me, all you who are weak and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” In Confession and through the Office of the Keys, we come to the Lord Jesus at His command and commend our lives to His Word—His Word of both Law and Gospel—and find in Him our “righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

This year’s mid-week Lenten series is titled, “‘As Surely as I Live,’ God Said: Meditations on Confession and the Office of the Keys.” “‘As Surely as I Live’” is a series of sermons designed and preached by Pr. Bruss (St. John’s, Topeka), Pr. Galchutt (LCMS Kansas District), Pr. Kerns (St. John’s, Topeka), Pr. Ockree (Calvary, Topeka), and Pr. Woelmer (Zion, Vassar). Our mid-week Lenten worship opportunities fall on Wednesday, 21 & 28 February and 7 March, 14 and 21 March at 12:15 and 7:00 p.m. Mid-week Lenten meals will also be served from 5:00 p.m. until 6:30/6:45.

SOUND WORDS ACADEMY COURSE LISTING: CURRENT

CHILDREN:

Rhythm of Faith Choir (3 January – 9 May, 5:30-5:55 p.m.; Bethany Johnson & Marcia Lange)

Rhythm of Faith uses God's gift of music to confess the truth of His Word in song. Learn the rich heritage of Lutheran hymnody and liturgy.

Jr. Lutherans (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Daniel Sweet)

This fast-paced Bible, Catechism, and Lutheran history trivia game places Lutherans aged 4 – 12 yrs. in competition with one another and eventually teams from other congregations. It's trivia that is hardly *trivial*.

ADULTS:

New Testament Greek (5:00-5:50 p.m.; Pr. Bruss)

Continuation of last year's New Testament Greek course.

Leviticus (7 weeks; 17 January – 21 February, 5:55-6:55 p.m.; Pr. Kerns)

Stated bluntly, God is holy and you are not. And it's dangerous for us to be around God. He is the One who has to do something about that, and gratefully He has.

Hebrews (Spring Term; 5:55-6:55 p.m., Dennis Hintz)

Luther describes Hebrews as a marvelously fine epistle. It discusses Christ's priesthood masterfully and profoundly on the basis of the Scriptures and extensively interprets the Old Testament in a fine way.

COLLEGE STUDENTS & YOUNG ADULTS:

Sharpening Our Discernment Skills (17 January – 9 May, 7:45-8:40 p.m.; Pr. Kerns)

We will watch various non-Lutheran pastors who deal with the topics of the Lord's Supper and Baptism pausing to test and see if what they teach accords with sound words. This will allow us to be better equipped to spot false teaching.

CATECHESIS:

Spring Adult Catechesis (14 weeks; 17 January – 9 May; 7:45-8:40 p.m.; Pr. Bruss)

Youth Cat I (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Dens. Linda)

Youth Cat II (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Prs. Bruss & Kerns)

MONTHLY BREAKFAST IN FEBRUARY

On Sunday, February 11, between services, a group of men will cook pancakes and sausage for us. No need to bring anything. A freewill offering will be taken. Come dine and join the fellowship.

IMPORTANT CONGREGATIONAL AND VOTERS MEETINGS THIS MONTH

There will be an important informational meeting for the congregation between services on Sunday, 18 February, at 9:45 a.m. regarding the financial situation of Topeka Lutheran School and the association's Board of Directors' plans to address the situation, along with an alternative. This will be followed on Sunday, 25 February, at 9:45 a.m. by a special voters meeting to address the same matter.

FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN (FMSC)

"For I was hungry and you gave me food." Matt. 25:35

We have been offered an opportunity to participate in a humanitarian project called "Feed My Starving Children," a NGO which packs and sends nutritious food to children in 70 countries where starvation is rampant. The organization began in 1987, and has grown tremendously. Over the last thirty years, 99.9 percent of the food and 92.7 percent of the monetary donations go directly to the children who need help the most.

We all have seen pictures of skin stretched over bones and bloated bellies. These children do exist, and our church has been asked to make monetary donations and to volunteer **just two hours** to package food. FMSC appears to be a safe and efficacious way to answer Jesus' mandate, *"for I was hungry and you gave me food."*

In partnership with other churches in the Topeka area, the packaging of the food will take place on March 3, 2018 here at St. John's in Luther Hall. Children as young as five and adults as young as 100 and everyone in between are welcome and encouraged to participate. No cooking is involved. The ingredients are shipped to the site ready to be packaged on an assembly line. Our church's goal is **(100) volunteers**, but the more we have the more packages that can be sent. The reports from earlier volunteers from all over the country suggest that the experience is not only rewarding, but also enjoyable. For those who prefer, sit-down jobs are available. Please consider helping as a team, as a family, or individually. If you even just think you might be able to help, please **sign up in the breeze way**.

Five or six churches are going together on this project. Right now it looks like we are about \$2,000 - \$3,000 away from reaching the monetary goal, and St. John's is about 40 volunteers short of our goal of 100. The packing times on Saturday, March 3, are:

1. 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
2. 12:00 noon – 2:00 p.m.
3. 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Also we will need about 20 people to help set up on Friday, March 2, from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. and 20 more to clean up on Saturday from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

If you have a preference on the shifts, please place a 1, 2, or 3 by your name on the sign-up sheet by the Information Center. If you have no preference, let me know by writing n/p by your name. I will record those names and times on the website. Tell your friends about this opportunity; there will never be too many workers.

CHECK OUT THE PACKET OF FOOD . . .

. . . on the table outside the Information Center. That is what we will be packaging on March 3, 2018, in Luther Hall. We hope to send 100,000 meals to starving children over the world. Sign up to be a part of this project of mercy.

YET AGAIN: A BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITY

Plan to attend! “Well done, thou good and faithful servant!” You’ve probably heard those words before, but what does it mean, exactly, to be a good and faithful servant? As Christians, we’re all called to occupy particular places in life, places where we can use the gifts God has given us in service to others (e.g., church, community, home). Starting February 28 at Sound Words Academy, we’ll learn more about what it means to be “Placed with a Purpose,” particularly with respect to our personal stewardship of God’s resources for the good of others. The study, taught by Rev. Dan Galchutt, runs at Sound Words Academy at 5:55 p.m. on Wednesdays Feb. 28, March 7, March 14, and March 21. (Yes. We know this is a repeat. We hope you can attend!)



TLS NEWS

TLS Open House will be held on Sunday, February 25, at 2:00pm at the TLS main campus (701 SW Roosevelt). Do you have family members or neighbors with young children who might be interested in learning about TLS? Encourage them to stop by for a tour of the school and a “meet and greet” with Principal Francik and teachers. Refreshments will be served.

TLS Kindergarten Round-up will be held Wednesday, February 28 at 9:30am at the main campus (701 SW Roosevelt). Staff and volunteers will lead prospective new students in a variety of activities, while parents receive information about the benefits of attending TLS. Please call the school office at [785.357.0382](tel:785.357.0382) for more information. We hope to meet many new parents and children that day and look forward to another robust kindergarten class next school year!

Go TLS Wildcats! Join us in supporting the boys and girls basketball teams as they participate in the annual **TLS basketball tournament** scheduled for Friday/Saturday, February 16/17 in the TLS Gym. Game times will be announced at a later date.

Thank you from TLS and the Foundation for the prayers and support from members of the TLS association churches throughout 2017. If you haven't already done so, you may make a tax-deductible gift payable to TLS Foundation and mail to: TLS Foundation, 701 SW Roosevelt St., Topeka KS 66606. All gifts benefit the school directly to provide resources for tuition assistance, operation expenses, and building maintenance and upgrades. Thank you again for your generosity and faithful prayers!

YOUTH NEWS

50's SOCK-HOP at the COURTYARD CAFE! The St. John's Youth Group will be hosting a sock-hop for St. John's members in the courtyard/fireside room on Saturday, February 10 (with food being served from 5:30-7:00 p.m.) Tickets are still available. Call Kathy Gehrke at 785-727-3943 **if you would like to attend.** \$8 (for any age) will include an entree, side, drink and dessert along with lots of 50's fun like dancing to Elvis (with a live pianist!), bubble-gum blowing and hola-hoop contests, popcorn, costume judging, friendly young waiters and more. Poodle skirts and saddle shoes are optional!

COLLEGE STUDENTS & YOUNG ADULTS (single or married)...are invited to join the St. John's Youth Group (grades 6-12) for their annual ski trip to **SNOWCREEK in Weston, MO** on Saturday, February 24. Students from Haskell University in Lawrence will also be joining us and a group of 20 or more will get us a nice group rate. We plan to meet at church at 9:00 a.m. to carpool there and then ski until 3:00 (but you can stay later, if you work that out with your driver). Price details and liability forms can be found on the youth bulletin board in the breezeway or call Kathy Gehrke at 785-727-3943 for more information or to sign up. This is a great way for you to ski at **half-price** and hang out with fellow St. John's people! **Money and forms are due by Sunday, February 18.**

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS

Members have asked how they might contribute to St. John's through their IRA's when the government requires that funds have to start to be withdrawn once a person reaches age 70 ½. The below information is from the IRS website giving some information on how this might be accomplished. If you have questions, we suggest that you talk with your financial advisor in getting this set up.

What is a qualified charitable distribution?

Generally, a qualified charitable distribution is an otherwise taxable distribution from an IRA (other than an ongoing SEP or SIMPLE IRA) owned by an individual who is age 70½ or over that is paid directly from the IRA to a qualified charity. See [Pub. 590-B](#), Distributions from Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs)) for additional information.

Can a qualified charitable distribution satisfy my required minimum distribution from an IRA?

Yes, your qualified charitable distributions can satisfy all or part the amount of your required minimum distribution from your IRA. For example, if your 2014 [required minimum distribution](#) was \$10,000, and you made a \$5,000 qualified charitable distribution for 2014, you would have had to withdraw another \$5,000 to satisfy your 2014 required minimum distribution.

How are qualified charitable distributions reported on Form 1099-R?

Charitable distributions are reported on Form 1099-R for the calendar year the distribution is made.

How do I report a qualified charitable distribution on my income tax return?

To report a qualified charitable distribution on your Form 1040 tax return, you generally report the full amount of the charitable distribution on the line for IRA distributions. On the line for the taxable amount, enter zero if the full amount was a qualified charitable distribution. Enter "QCD" next to this line. See the Form 1040 instructions for additional information.

You must also file Form 8606, Nondeductible IRAs, if:

- You made the qualified charitable distribution from a traditional IRA in which you had basis and received a distribution from the IRA during the same year, other than the qualified charitable distribution; or
- the qualified charitable distribution was made from a Roth IRA.

In order to qualify for the Charitable Tax Distribution the Financial organization must make the check payable directly to the church, it cannot be made to the member and then signed over to the church.

LUTHERAN FINE ARTS COUNCIL EVENTS

The Lutheran Fine Arts Council of Topeka will be sponsoring a CHILDREN'S ART WORKSHOP featuring local artist Lila Bartel on Saturday, March 3, from 10:00 a.m. to noon with fun projects for children to take home. The free event is for children grades 2 to 6 and will be held at the former Avondale East Elementary school at 455 SE Golf Park Blvd. Questions and reservations-call Ann Mah at 266-9434 or email at annmah@att.net.

The A CAPPELLA CHOIR from Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska, will be in concert at First Lutheran Church, 1234 SW Fairlawn, on Saturday, March 10 at 7:00p.m. The 72-voice choir is under the direction of Dr. Kurt E. von Kampen. The event is sponsored by The Lutheran Fine Arts Council of Topeka. Free will offering. Host families are needed to house students the evening of March 10. If you are available, contact JoLana Pinion at 478-3786. Please note: The A Capella Choir will also be singing in our 11:00 a.m. Divine Service at St. John's on Sunday, 11 March.

THANK YOU

Dear St. John's family,

As I look back on the many blessings God has bestowed on me this year, steadfast supporters like you are among them. Simply put, I could not continue to serve God and His Church in the capacity I do, without financial support and prayers of many. Thank you!

In Him,
Kristin Lange

DOORSTEP NEWS

February is a busy month for Doorstep! They have **SuperBowl Sunday, February 4** where they ask member congregations to collect soup and crackers to help stock our food pantry! **Their goal for 2018 is 4 1/2 ton... 9,000 pounds!** Last year's goal was 4 ton, and they received 8,491 pounds!! Watch for sales and bring donations to St. Johns, or to Doorstep directly!

The month of February brings cold weather, and what is better on a cold day than hot soup and chili! One of Doorstep's major fundraisers, **Operation Soup Line**, is in its 15th year! Mark your calendars for **Wednesday, February 28**. They will have lunch and carry out available this year. As always, they will offer delivery on orders of 10 or more during lunchtime (11am – 1:30pm). They will have celebrity servers, entertainment, and the theme basket silent auction. Food will be available from 11:00am – 2:00pm.

Ticket price is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under. You will receive your choice of soup or chili, dessert and a drink. We hope you will plan to attend and support Doorstep's fundraiser by coming to the Ag Hall on February 28! The funds raised at this event are used to help our neighbors in need with emergency services, and agency needs throughout the year.

Finally, **Thank You** to everyone who participated in **Doorstep's Christmas Store** this past December! They provided gifts and food to **259 households with 824 individuals!** They could not have accomplished this without the help of dedicated volunteers and donors who wanted to help their neighbors in need at Christmastime!

IMPORTANT SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We have new Sunday School curriculum starting with those students in first grade through the Middle School students. This new curriculum is exciting! It was chosen, in part, because it follows the One-year Lectionary which we follow at St. John's. This means that the Sunday School lessons will match the readings during the church service, particularly the Gospel reading. This curriculum should be more challenging for our students, and it will give them a more in-depth study of the lessons. The students each have their own workbooks that all the lessons are in. They will bring home the workbooks at the end of each quarter. Unfortunately, with when the curriculum arrived, we were getting ready for Christmas we were not able to start this quarter in December, so the first several lessons were skipped. Please take this opportunity to look over these lessons when the book comes home.

Thank you, parents for bringing your children to Sunday school where they can be nurtured in the faith through the Word of God. Even the two-year-olds have their own class! Why not set a good example for them and attend one of the Bible classes during the Sunday school hour.

EASTER LILIES

Member of St. John's have the opportunity to place an Easter lily in the church for Easter Sunday, April 1. Complete the following form and return it to the church office by Sunday, February 25 – with \$9.00 per lily. **You may take your lily home following the 11:00am service on Easter Sunday.** For memorials you may list up to 2 names or you may prefer "in memory of loved ones."

Name(s) _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____

In memory of: _____



THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19–20a)
So that we may obtain faith in Christ, God instituted the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Through the gospel and sacraments, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel. (*Augsburg Confession*, Article 5)