

***St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church***  
**Baroda, Michigan**  
**stjohnsbaroda.com**



**2015 Congregation Annual Meeting**



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

### Pastor's Report

#### ***Building the family of God by spreading the Word of God to all people.***

Last year we approved the above mission statement, but it's quite likely that the majority of our congregation do not know it. It was meant to be short and sweet, something that could be memorized even, so that we're all on the same page in terms of understanding what we believe God is calling us to do as St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church on behalf not just of our membership, but our local communities and beyond. St. John's is "building the family of God by spreading the Word of God to all people."

The most important way we do this is through worship, where we offer the sacrament of Holy Communion every Sunday for all baptized children of God, so that we are united as a body of Christ, so that the Holy Spirit is reignited within us, so that we know we are forgiven and still loved by God. And yet Communion is meant to be a launching pad of sorts, launching us into the world to follow our Lord and Savior at work in the world around us.

For our youth group, they decided to not only continue our emphasis on monthly service projects from last year, but to open them up to the congregation. So far this school year we have helped clean the eating area of The Soup Kitchen in Benton Harbor, as well as helping an elderly gentleman clean his yard in Berrien Springs. These service projects will continue, and again, we encourage people from the entire congregation, and even friends and families, to join us. It is what we are here for, after all: "go in peace and *serve* the Lord!"

While we offer hands-on opportunities in service to our local communities, we have also remain committed to helping those far away. Many of our even younger people (although many slightly older big kids help too) do this through their offerings during the children's sermon, as hundreds of dollars have been given to the ELCA Malaria Campaign and the ELCA World Hunger Walk for Water, respectively. We are a congregation that is "spreading the Word of God to *all* people," near and far away.

Nevertheless, we need to be continually nourished ourselves, even beyond worship and service (although the service is not for us to feel better about ourselves, but for the people we actually serve). For many of the high school youth, they took part in the ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit, where 30,000 teenagers gathered for worship, community service, Bible study, and all-around spiritual growth. Next summer we will be taking part in a mission trip to Kenosha, Wisconsin, June 19-24, 2016.

St. John's also started an important small groups ministry in recent months, as several people of all ages gather to discuss important topics of our faith in a more relaxed environment in people's homes with a discussion starter on DVD from leading theologians in the wider church. Much enthusiasm continues to drive these times of conversation, and we hope that more groups will start, as a way for all of us to grow in our spiritual life with God in between our Sunday worship services.

As a church in the well into twenty-first century, we recognize the need to be present digitally as well. We update our website weekly with upcoming events, bulletins, sermons, our monthly Grapevine and more. We also use our Facebook page to help people see what's going on with pictures and announcements, and we have also started providing a semi-daily devotion on the page as well, in hopes that it may even lead one person to prayer and a deeper connection to God.

In all these ways, St. John's is "building the family of God by spreading the Word of God to all people."

In Christ, Pastor Brad

## **Hickory Creek Learning Center**

HCLC is a Saint John's Lutheran Church outreach program to our surrounding community. It is a ministry of love to both the children and their families. The school endeavors to provide a teaching and caring environment in a Christian atmosphere helping children grow and develop socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. We equip these young folks with the tools they need to be active learners for the rest of their lives.

Currently, we have a combined class. This allows the center to operate economically in a period of lower enrollment. While the school exists as a local mission of Saint John's, we make every effort to be self-supporting through student tuitions, fundraisers and individual contributions.

We are currently scheduled to operate on a balanced budget for school year 2015-2016 and intend to be in a profitable situation for the year, which will help us keep our tuition both competitive and affordable going forward. Your continued support as a congregation as well as individuals towards this mission is always greatly needed and appreciated.

Bruce Nitz  
HCLC Administrator

## **Community Life Ministry Team**

Our Community Life Committee (or Cake-Loving Committee, as some call it) is responsible for much of St. John's outreach to our surrounding community, including Christmas in the Village, helping our youth group with the annual Easter Egg Hunt and Fourth of the July festivities.

We support vital local ministries, such as the food pantry of the Catholic Community Center in Benton Harbor, food baskets during the holidays for families in Berrien County, Michigan Blood blood drives, Relay for Life (supporting cancer research), and our Angel Tree to provide Christmas presents for less fortunate families with children.

We also support global ministries, including Lutheran World Relief, which received \$200 from our noisy offering October 18.

For the life of our church we organize the annual church picnic on Rally Day, and this year's celebrated our 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a congregation! We oversee kitchen supplies, coffee hour, monthly Lunch Club, and our annual Chili Cook-off and Pie Bake-off and corn maze.

Yes, we are a busy and very involved ministry team, but we have so much fun, not to mention all the spiritual rewards in all the outreach we do. Most importantly, however, we couldn't do it without the support and help you, our church family, give. A special thanks to Thrivent members for their financial support as well.

We appreciate those who help set up, clean up, donate food to the baskets, or even attend our many events, and much more.

If you have any questions or new ideas, please feel free to contact:

Chairpersons - Pattie Neal (269-757-1943)  
Sandy Anderson (773-818-7390)

## *Altar Guild*

Altar Guild continues to run smoothly with little change. Thanks to the congregation for the continuous support of purchasing Easter and Christmas flowers. Our day to day supplies remain consistent throughout the year. We will be losing one member next year, thus we would welcome any new members to the committee. Commitment is very minimal - many hands make a lighter load for everyone!

We do have one open item on our wish list and that is to purchase two 'flower trees.' We will be looking to see if anyone would like to 'sponsor' a tree (approximate cost for one tree is \$400.) Each tree will hold 6 plants and would be used to display Easter flowers and poinsettias at Christmas. They would also work nicely for weddings, funerals, etc.

Thanks,  
Kristi Fleisher

## *Property & Grounds*

Our church is like your home. There's always something to be fixed or upkeep to do. We're proud of the help and support we receive. Because of private donations and dedicated memorial funds we were able to purchase an 80" zero-turn lawn tractor from HFS tractor.

Our wish for 2016 is to start replacing all the old outdated fluorescent lights with updated ones. We would also like to modernize Pastor Brad's church office to brighten it up.

It's a lot to maintain our beautiful church, lawn, and garden. So if you are able to help or share your talent, contact Dave Neal. Many thanks for all you do!

## *Finance Ministry Team*

The Finance Ministry Team meets the second Thursday every other month. At the meetings we go over the checks written since the previous meeting, go over the balance sheet, as well as the income & expense report. We then discuss any pressing matters like upcoming expenditures or concerns. At the October meeting we put together the budget so it can be presented to council and then to the congregation. Our next project is going to be putting together a stewardship drive.

Current committee members are Rick Widdis, Pattie Neal, Guy Tollas, Barb Reynolds, and Bob Schreoder, with Pastor Brad attending. If you have any questions regarding the church finances please ask and we will find the answer for you. We are always looking for new members so if you want to learn more about the "business" side of the church please join us.

Thank You

Your St. John's Finance Ministry Team

### **Worship & Music**

We have struggled the past couple of years trying to find a time when people can practice for a choir. Work schedules and school interfere a lot in this day and age with the church. Therefore we have had to adjust to try and find alternate ways of sharing music. We are using the Sunday school children, soloists, contemporary band, and off and on the choir will be singing when we can get together. I am looking for any volunteers to sing a solo in church or play an instrumental solo. If you need to find music, I can help you and also accompany you if needed. The contemporary band and the Sunday school are all trying to sing once a month. Also in November, on the 22nd, we have a college choir coming in to sing at the 9:00 service. Aubrey Risetter sings in this choir, which is called Sweetwine, and they tour twice a year. You can read more about this group in the Grapevine. I hope to have a good turnout that Sunday to welcome them. God has blessed many of you with musical talent. Come and share them and lift your talents and praises up to God. Thank you so much.

Cindy Schroeder

### **Mission Endowment Fund**

The Mission Endowment Fund began many years ago as a way to consistently contribute to mission, God's activity in the world, especially our surrounding communities. With the fund's over \$100,000 balance, we often contribute 5% to various non-profit organizations, charities, ministries, and even individuals who are fulfilling God's mission in the world. In recent years \$6,000-\$7,000 has been given annually to help create an even greater impact in southwest Michigan and beyond.

Last year (2014), the Mission Endowment Fund team (Bruce Nitz, Steve Nitz, Dave Risetter, Kim Schmitz, and Bob Widdis) recommended the following distribution totaling \$6500, and our council approved:

Trinity Lutheran Seminary	\$ 500
Berrien County Cancer Services	\$1,500
Lutheran Social Services	\$ 500
Lighthouse Ministries	\$1,000
Children and Family Services	\$ 500
Safe Shelters	\$1,000
Living Waters Ministries	\$1,000
Amanda Tober Dentistry Mission	\$ 500

### **St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Notes**

Funerals:	Bill Fleisher (2/11/2015)	Confirmed:	Brandon Feole (5/17/2015)
	Eleanor Maier (2/23/2015)		Brenda Rosa (5/17/2015)
	Neal Nitz (4/17/2015)		
	Kendall Tilly (7/29/2015)	First Communion:	Owen Hein (10/25/2015)
			Tyler Hicks (10/25/2015)
Transfers:	Sieler Family (1/14/2015)		Addison Osgood (10/25)
Baptisms:	Drake Tilly (7/26/2015)	Baptized Membership:	210
		Confirmed Membership:	173
		Voting Membership:	146