

# St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

*A Family Connecting in Christ*



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# WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**At this time our services are for people wearing masks and social distancing!**

Please know that even as we experience this awkwardness, your Good Shepherd holds you close to his heart and goes with you to share his love!

## To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.

## Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church.

We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

## We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

## We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



## Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

## Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net).

April 18, 2021

## DIVINE SERVICE II

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY...** we are surrounded by so many questions and critiques that can stir the Thomas inside of us.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we hear the answer that Jesus gave Thomas (and us), and we are fortified to stand true in a questioning, critiquing world.

### OPENING HYMN

*"He's Risen, He's Risen"*

**Hymn 143**

He's risen, he's risen, Christ Jesus, the Lord;  
He opened death's prison, the incarnate Word.  
Break forth, hosts of heaven, in jubilant song  
And earth, sea, and mountain the praises prolong.

The foe was triumphant when on Calvary  
The Lord of creation was nailed to the tree.  
In Satan's domain did the hosts shout and jeer,  
For Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones fear.

But short was their triumph; the Savior arose,  
And death, hell, and Satan he vanquished, his foes.  
The conquering Lord lifts his banner on high;  
He lives, yes, he lives, and will nevermore die.

Oh, where is your sting, death? We fear you no more;  
Christ rose, and now open is fair Eden's door.  
For all our transgressions his blood does atone;  
Redeemed and forgiven, we now are his own.

Then sing your hosannas and raise your glad voice;  
Proclaim the blest tidings that all may rejoice.  
Laud, honor, and praise to the lamb that was slain,  
Who now sits in glory and ever shall reign.

## INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

## CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

**For faithless worrying and selfish pride,**

**For sins of habit and sins of choice,**

**For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,**

**I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.**

**O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**

## ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

## HYMN

*"Like the Golden Sun Ascending"*

**Hymn 147**

**(Stanzas 2-4)**

Thanks to you, O Christ victorious! Thanks to you, O gloom of night

On the earth its glory spending You have conquered in the strife.

Thanks because you did arise And have opened paradise!

None can fully sing the glory Of the resurrection story.

You have died for my transgression; All my sins on you were laid

You have won for me salvation; On the cross my debt was paid.

From the grave I shall arise And shall meet you in the skies.

Death itself is transitory; I shall lift my head in glory.

Grant me grace, O blessed Savior, And your Holy Spirit send  
That my life and my behavior May be pleasing to the end,  
That I may not fall again Into death's grim pit and pain,  
Whence by grace you have retrieved me  
And from which you have relieved me.

**LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)**

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from  
you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all  
who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O  
Christ.

**C: Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of  
heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

**C: Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

O Lord, our God, govern the nations on earth and direct the affairs of this  
world so that your Church may worship you in peace and joy; through  
your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the  
Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**FIRST LESSON**

Job 38: 1-7; 40: 1-8; 42: 1-3

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said:

“Who is this that darkens my counsel  
with words without knowledge?  
Brace yourself like a man;  
I will question you,  
and you shall answer me.

“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?  
Tell me, if you understand.  
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!  
Who stretched a measuring line across it?  
On what were its footings set,  
or who laid its cornerstone -  
while the morning stars sang together  
and all the angels shouted for joy?

The LORD said to Job:

“Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?  
Let him who accuses God answer him!”

Then Job answered the LORD:

“I am unworthy - how can I reply to you?  
I put my hand over my mouth.  
I spoke once, but I have no answer -  
twice, but I will say no more.”

Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm:

“Brace yourself like a man;  
I will question you,  
and you shall answer me.  
“Would you discredit my justice?  
Would you condemn me to justify yourself?

Then Job replied to the LORD:

“I know that you can do all things;  
no plan of yours can be thwarted.  
(You asked,) ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without  
knowledge?’  
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me to know.

## PSALM 119B

*Refrain*

Lord, you have the words of  
ev - er - last - ing life.

*Psalm tone*

Teach me, O LORD, to follow `your decrees; \*  
then I will keep them `to the end.

Give me understanding, and I will `keep your law\*  
and obey it with `all my heart.

Direct me in the path of `your commands, \*  
for there I `find delight. *Refrain*

Turn my eyes away from `worthless things; \*  
preserve my life according `to your Word.

Fulfill your promise to your `servant, \*  
so that you `may be feared.

How I long for your `precepts! \*  
Preserve my life in your `righteousness.

**Glory be to the Father and `to the Son\*  
And to the Holy `Spirit,  
As it was in the be`ginning, \*  
is now, and will be forever. `Amen. *Refrain***

## GOSPEL LESSON

John 20: 24-31

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

## NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**HYMN**

*“O Sons and Daughters of the King”*

**Hymn 165**

**Choir Stanzas 5, 6, & 7**

O sons and daughters of the King, Whom heav'nly hosts in glory sing,  
Today the grave has lost its sting! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

On that first morning of the week, Before the day began to break,  
The Marys went their Lord to seek. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

An angel bade their sorrow flee, For thus he spoke unto the three,  
“Your Lord will go to Galilee.” Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

That night th' apostles met in fear; Among them came their Lord most dear  
And said: “Peace be unto you here.” Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

*5. When Thomas afterwards had heard That Jesus had fulfilled his word,  
He doubted if it were the Lord. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*6. “Thomas, behold my side,” said he, “My hands, my feet, my body see;  
And doubt not, but believe in me.” Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*7. No longer Thomas then denied; He saw the feet, the hands, the side;  
“You are my Lord and God,” he cried. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

Blessed are they that have not seen And yet whose faith has constant been;  
In life eternal they shall reign. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

On this most holy day of days To God your hearts and voices raise  
In laud and jubilee and praise. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Imagine life without Easter bunnies, no Easter eggs to color, no Easter lilies to sneeze at. We'd find some way to fill in those holes, wouldn't we? Maybe chocolate-covered robins, asparagus festivals, maibock, dandelion arrangements around the altar. Even without Easter bunnies and Easter eggs we'd find some way to go on, wouldn't we?

Now imagine life without Easter. Jesus still dead, body and bones dusted and decayed in a hole in a hill outside Jerusalem. Jesus' promise - "**but I will raise myself back to life**" - hanging out there broken. Jesus' promise - "**Because I live, you also will live**" - hanging out there meaningless. Jesus' words - "**I am the resurrection and the life**" - hanging out there sounding silly. What would you have to hold on to, to look forward to? Imagine life without Easter. Jesus still dead, body and bones dusted in a hole in a hill. Jesus' invitation - "**Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest**" - nothing but a nice thought. Jesus' caring - "**I am the Good Shepherd**" - nothing but a nice picture. Imagine life without Easter. Jesus still dead, body and bones dusted in a hole in a hill. And what about his work as "**the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**" - who knows? What about his payment "**to give his life as a ransom**" - finished, unfinished, paid up, paid off, who knows? So where would we stand with God? What would we have look forward to? Without Jesus, who knows?

*What do people in your life do to fill the holes in their Easter-less lives?*

*Do you ever live an Easter-less life?*

*What do you do to fill the holes in your Easter-less life?*

Imagine life without Easter. Not a life we want to live, is it? Thomas was there, and so many people around us. How do they make it? Some try to fill in the holes by keeping busy - busy with fun and games; busy with work and what-not. Some try to fill in the holes by making the brain numb - numb with drink, drugs, video games. Some try to fill in the holes with custard and cookies, pasta and potatoes, you name it.

And some, they do the Thomas thing. They set themselves up and over. They set themselves up and over as judges over God's truth. They set themselves up as judges over God's proof. They set themselves up and over, as lords over God's truth and proof expecting God to answer to them. And when they don't like God's truth and proof, they make truth and proof to be whatever feels right for them.

*Where can we find such "over and above" thinking?*

Up and over - lord and judge over truth and proof - can feel like a great place to be. Judging, critiquing whatever we don't like; demanding our way - feels empowering. Judging, critiquing whatever we don't like, demanding our way - feels freeing. Up and over, over and above - we don't actually have to have answers - just questions, demands, judgments. Up and over as lords and judges of truth and proof can feel like a great place, until what? Until sooner or later, all the questions and demands, all the judging and critiquing makes it a miserable place to be. Sooner or later, that stew of judging and demanding, questioning and critiquing, sooner or later that stew turns toxic, even for the cook.

But that stew isn't just toxic for the cook and those slurping it up. That stew can be toxic for anybody in the kitchen or at the table. That toxic stew can be like an acid that eats away, always questioning, always critiquing, eating away at trust and confidence, eating away at hope and peace. I imagine most all of us have felt that acid with questions and doubts eating at our faith.

*What questions and doubts eat away at your faith and peace?*

*What questions and doubts do you see eating away at others' faith and peace?*

So what do we do? Sometimes we might plug our ears and refuse to eat that toxic stew. Other times, because we love God and we want to speak up for God ... because we care about the people around us who are eating from that toxic stew ... sometimes we will dig into that stew, not to swallow it, but to figure it out. We want to find the antidote. We want to find the answers. Ever been

there? Trying to have all the answers to defend God? Trying to have all the answers to defend your faith? Trying to have all the answers for God's critics, for those who think of themselves as over and above God's truth and God's proof?

*Trying to have all the answers, how does that feel?*

Trying to have all the answers, thinking we need all the answers for people's toxic questions, what does that do? If we're not careful, too much time with the toxic stew can poison our faith. At the same time, it can set us on edge, making us defensive or even offensive. But that's not all. Even if it doesn't poison our faith, or set us on edge, it can consume so much of our time, so much of our energy that we don't have time or energy for the good eats that Jesus has for us.

Satan knows that. So he uses his questions, not just to poison us, he also uses his questions to distract us, to keep us busy thinking on things that get in the way.

So what do we do? We get to step back from all the questions demanding and judging. We go back to what Jesus has told us: "**Peace be with you.**" To the doubting disciples, Jesus said: "**Peace be with you.**" To Nicodemus with his questions, he put "Peace" this way: "**God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.**" To that thief on the cross who had mocked him as a fake and a fraud, when he turned to Jesus, Jesus put "Peace" this way: "**Today you will be with me in paradise.**" For those times we doubted, for those times we thought Jesus a fake and a fraud, for those times we kept quiet when we should have spoken up, for those times when we got defensive and prickly when we should have been calm and caring, for all that and more, Jesus says to you: "**Peace be with you.**" His life and death covers our doubt, our disbelief, and our judging pride. His life and death covers our silence and our fear. Yes, his life and death covers us, me and you forgiven and loved by God.

*What are some of your favorite lines that Jesus shared with the doubting, questioning, or judging?*

How can we know? He says so. And he showed so. He showed Thomas his hands and his side, not just for Thomas. He showed Thomas for you and for me, so we can step back from our questions and listen to Jesus.

But what about their questions? Peter tells us: “**Always be ready to give an answer .....**” This is why I’m such a big fan of our Bible classes. Not only do we dig into the Bible so we can answer better, we practice answering better. I practice with you; you practice with me. I learn from you; I hope you learn from me. And in a safe place we learn how to be ready to give an answer.

Do we have to have an answer for every question, a defense for every charge and criticism? No. Jesus hasn’t called us to defend him. We don’t have to be an expert on every kind of sin and Bible lie. He isn’t sending us out into the world to argue and defend, to convince the world to think and behave like we do. No, he has better for us. He calls us to be his witnesses, to share his Word, and to let his Spirit do his work.

Now, when I say that Jesus hasn’t called us to argue and defend, or to have to answer for every question, or be an expert on every sin and false teaching, I’m not saying that we shut our ears to the questions and concerns of the world, that we shut our ears and just recite Bible passages out into the world. No, we want to speak to the heart of the world; we want to speak to the concerns of the world. We want to speak to the hurt of the world. But that doesn’t mean that we have to let the world dictate what we talk about. We want to keep the main thing the main thing - Jesus first and Jesus last and Jesus in between.

And then what? Some days, we might get an earful, and not much chance to get a word in edgewise, kind of like Thomas gave his fellow disciples an earful and wouldn’t listen to what they said. Other days, when we listen carefully, and think before we speak, if we don’t give up, we just might have the opportunity to say something that touches a heart with what they need to hear. But every day, no matter who is listening, we get to live as a child of the light showing the light and the love of Jesus.

*Which of those three possibilities are victories?*

Some days we will wish that we could say more, do more, prove more. Some days we might wish that Jesus would say more, do more, prove more. But in our lesson, what do we see? Jesus is willing to say what he will say, do what he will do, and prove what he wants to prove the way he wants to prove it. And then, whoever is willing to believe, he blesses. What do we say to that? **“Lord, I believe; help me in my unbelief.”** Or what Luther said 500 years ago today - **“God, help me! Amen.”**

**HYMN**

*“I Know My Faith Is Founded”*

**Hymn 403**

I know my faith is founded On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;  
And this my faith confessing, Unmoved I stand upon his Word.  
Man’s reason cannot fathom The truth of God profound;  
Who trusts in worldly wisdom Relies on shifting ground.  
God’s Word is all sufficient, It makes divinely sure,  
And, trusting in its wisdom, My faith shall rest secure.

Increase my faith, dear Savior, For Satan seeks by night and day  
To rob me of this treasure And take my hope of bliss away.  
But, Lord, with you beside me I shall be undismayed;  
And led by your good Spirit, I shall be unafraid.  
Abide with me, O Savior, A firmer faith bestow.  
Then I shall bid defiance To ev’ry evil foe.

In faith, Lord, let me serve you; Though persecution, grief, and pain  
Should seek to overwhelm me, Let me a steadfast trust retain.  
And then at my departure, Lord, take me home to you,  
And let me there inherit All you have promised me.  
In life and death, Lord, keep me Until your heav’n I gain,  
Where I by your great mercy The end of faith attain.

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

## THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)  
(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **(Spoken) And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

# LAMB OF GOD

## *Agnus Dei*

Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,  
you take a - way the sin of the world;  
grant us your peace. A - men.

## BEFORE COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord, I am not worthy to be a guest at your holy table. But you are the friend of sinners, and you will not cast me out. This bread is your body, which bore my sins upon the tree. This wine is your blood, which purifies me from all guilt. At your invitation, I come rejoicing. Receive me, my Savior.

## AFTER COMMUNION PRAYER

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for nourishing me in this sacrament with your body and blood. You have given me forgiveness, life, and salvation. Let me always remain in you as a branch remains in the vine. Send me out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

## DISTRIBUTION HYMN

*"This Joyful Eastertide"*  
**Hymn 160 (Choir)**

*This joyful Eastertide  
Away with sin and sorrow!  
My love, the Crucified,  
Has sprung to life this morrow.*

*Refrain:*

*Had Christ, who once was slain,  
Not burst his three-day prison,  
Our faith had been in vain:  
But now is Christ arisen, arisen, arisen;  
But now is Christ arisen!*

*Death's flood has lost its chill  
Since Jesus crossed the river;  
Lover of souls, from ill  
My passing soul deliver.                      Refrain*

*My flesh in hope shall rest  
And for a season slumber  
Till trump from east to west  
Shall wake the dead in number.                      Refrain*

## CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

## CLOSING HYMN

*"This Is the Threefold Truth"*

**Hymn 406**

**(Stanzas 1, 2, 4, & 5)**

This is the threefold truth on which our faith depends;  
And with this joyful cry worship begins and ends:  
Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

Made sacred by long use, new-minted for our time,  
Our liturgies sum up the hope we have in him:  
Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

By this we are upheld when doubt or grief assails  
Our Christian faith and love, and only grace avails:  
Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

This is the threefold truth which, if we hold it fast,  
Changes the world and us and brings us home at last:  
Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

## OFFERING

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## **WELS CENTRAL AFRICA MEDICAL MISSION**

Our WELS Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM) is marking 60 years of service to people in Malawi and Zambia. The first clinic began operating in Zambia in 1961; in 1970, CAMM started a clinic in Malawi as well. By meeting the physical needs of the people they serve, the door opens to share the good news of Jesus.

Over the past 60 years, God has given CAMM the opportunity to provide people with physical care in the name of Jesus approximately three million times. The CAMM clinics in Malawi and Zambia serve all the medical needs short of hospitalization for close to 50,000 people, including:

- Routine child health and nutrition services
- Delivery of babies in Zambia (mandated by the government)
- Pre- and post-delivery care
- Comprehensive HIV/AIDS health services
- Outpatient medical services
- Chronic disease monitoring
- Making sure villages have safe water supplies and adequate sanitation
- Teaching on topics such as general health and how to plant and care for nutrition gardens
- Integrating COVID-19 management strategies to both provide care for and minimize possible infection transmission

### **Growing into Local Control**

Our Zambia clinic has been operating with little oversight from the stateside committee for close to 15 years and thrives! Now, the Malawi clinic will also shift to operate with a fully national staff.

To learn more about the work of CAMM and find out how you can help, visit [wels.net/camm](https://wels.net/camm).