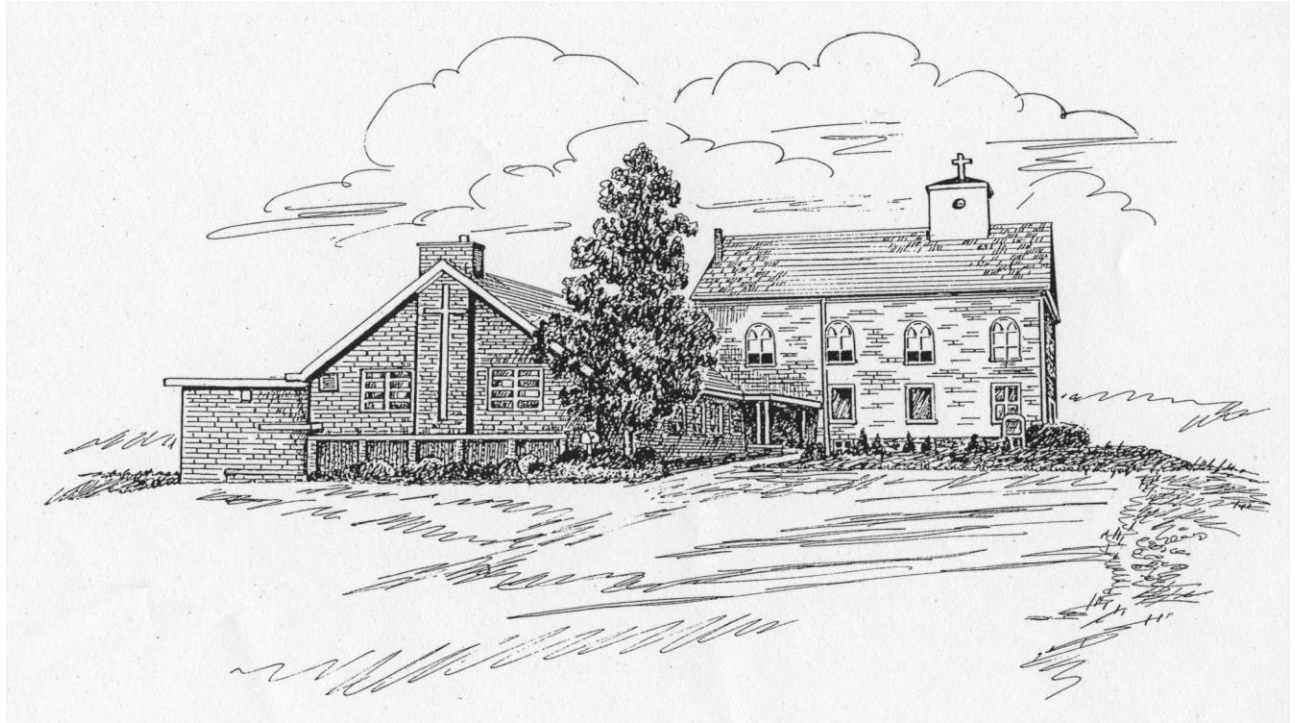


# *WISPS OF STRAW*



## *St. James Lutheran Church Newsletter*

*March 2012*

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*“Serving Christ in Word and Deed”  
for over 260 Years*

# *The Pastor's Letter*

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

*<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

*<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,*

*<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*



Dear Friends,

When you read this we will be in the midst of the "season" of the church year known as Lent. Lent is the time in the church when we focus on the central act of Jesus' life, his suffering death, and at Easter his resurrection. The tone of this season is always a bit subdued. In worship we have no hymn of praise, or thanksgiving response after Eucharist. In fact at St. James we have chosen to replace the psalm reading with the canticle, "Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us".

Why do we do this? One reason I can think of is that this time in the church year has a real "meditative" quality to it. By this I mean we are given the opportunity in quiet prayer and reflection to understand the great cost in securing our salvation, because God loved you and me so much.

Historically, this has meant for some Christians certain "disciplines" of giving up something, or taking up extra prayer, spiritual readings, and worship. One of my "Lenten traditions" every year is to read the great spiritual classic The *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a' Kempis. I am sure those of you read this article have something you do to make Lent special too.

If you don't, why not ask God to show you what might make this time of church year valuable to you? Just as each of us is "individual", so our relationship with God the Father through our baptism and faith in Jesus is unique and "individual" as well. By making your Lent special, you will find Easter that much more wonderful. Then perhaps on Easter you too will echo the words of Paul's great "early hymn" of the church: "<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Your Brother in Christ,  
Pastor John

## *Pastor John's New Synod Appointment*

Pastor John has recently been appointed Dean of the Western Mission District, a position created in a reorganization of the New Jersey Synod. Below is a letter he wrote introducing himself to the other Pastors in the District.

February 20, 2012

Dear Friends,

As you may already know, Bishop Riley has appointed me to be Dean of the Western Mission District, in the reorganization of the synod, as passed by Synod Council this month. While I am sure at one point in the life of this Synod, there were Deans, and Districts or Conferences; this launches a whole new avenue of partnering and doing ministry together. I am very grateful to have the partnership of Pastors Trozzo and Hansen, cluster counselors of the Central and Northwestern Mission Clusters. Along with my cluster, the Western Mission Cluster, that makes up our Western Mission District.

In this letter I thought it would be good to introduce myself to you, since my presence in this synod is rather recent. I am a native of Upstate New York, originally from Rochester, NY. I have been married to my wife Pam for 35 years. We have two grown children both residing in Buffalo, NY. I have been in ordained ministry for 27 years. I have served churches in Ogdensburg, NY, Welland, Ontario, Canada, several congregations outside of Buffalo, then for the last nine years served a congregation in Syracuse, NY. I have served the Upstate New York Synod in various short term assignments, and then was elected Dean of the Central Crossroads Conference in 2008.

In May of 2010 I accepted my current call to St. James in Phillipsburg. Currently I have also been serving on the Philadelphia Seminary's committee to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg as the New Jersey representative.

I look forward to partnering in ministry with you as we begin this venture. Our first task together will be to hold a Mission District meeting on March 6<sup>th</sup> at Good Shepherd in Somerville from 7-9 pm. It is my prayer that we will have as good attendance as possible, in that we will have direct input as a district in the life of our church by electing one female lay representative to Synod Council, and one lay male to the next church wide assembly. Representation at the meeting from the various churches in our mission district will be the same as that of synod assembly.

I realize that for some of you this may not be an ideal date. If a pastor cannot make it please send lay representation, for as I have noted previously our contributions to this round of elections are both lay folk.

Outside of this initial district meeting, it would seem best in this initial phase of our journey together, is for me to get know you and you me, and be in a spirit of prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide us in how we can be in mission together. I welcome having opportunities for you to get to know me and I you. In the meantime, I commit myself to pray for the churches in this district. I ask you prayers for me as well.

Sincerely,

Pastor John H. Van Haneghan, Dean Western Mission District

## *Holy Week and Easter*

We are approaching the time to worshipfully commemorate our Lord's suffering and dying for our sins, and then to rejoice in the celebration of his glorious resurrection. Here at St. James we will have a full schedule of services for this most holy time of the Christian year.

Maundy Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup>

7:00 pm Worship

First Communion

Good Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup>

7:00 pm Worship

Saturday, April 7<sup>th</sup>

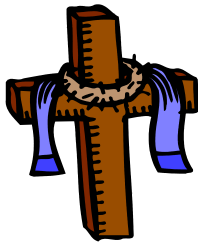
6:00 pm pre-Easter Worship

Easter Sunday, April 8<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am Sunrise Service (Cemetery)

8:45 am Worship

10:00 am Worship



Our Lenten Wednesday evening soup and sandwich suppers in Frey Hall are continuing through March 28<sup>th</sup>. Each supper is being followed by an installment of the Gospel of Mark, in a video presentation by Max McClean. The evenings conclude with a brief service of Holy Communion.

## *"Fifth Sunday" Service*

Since next month will have five Sundays, we will on April 29<sup>th</sup> have a brief service of Holy Communion at 11:30 am, after Sunday School.

Please consider taking part if for any reason you are unable to attend the regular services.

## *† In Memoriam †*



Long-time active member Joan Fleming went to be with her Lord on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Joan contributed much to the life of St. James, serving on Council and as a member of the choir.

Joan also served the wider community in numerous volunteer organizations. Among them were several fire companies and the Pohatcong Playground Association.

We offer our condolences to, and prayers for, her husband James and the entire family.

Robert Paulus joined the Church Triumphant on February 9<sup>th</sup>.

A member of the "greatest generation", Bob served during WW II in the U.S. Navy - appropriately enough, aboard the battleship USS New Jersey.



His wife Agnes, along with his family, have our sincere condolences and are being remembered in our prayers.

## *Note to On-line Givers*

If you support your church through scheduled on-line giving, please be aware that our web site also allows you to make one-time donations for Lenten and Easter. Go to [www.strawchurch.org](http://www.strawchurch.org).

.....  
*He who angers you, controls you!*

## *Congregational Meeting*

The annual Congregational meeting was held on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. In addition to approving the budget, elections were held to fill several vacancies on Council due to expiring terms.

The Council for 2012 will consist of the following officers, committee chairs and members:

Polly Sue Avard	President and Chair, Music and Worship Committee
Jeffrey P. Raub	Vice President
Barbara Wrede	Treasurer (March - May), Council Secretary (June onward) Chair, Education Committee
Robert G. Babcock	Council Secretary (March - May)
Pastor John H. Van Haneghan	Pastor and Chair, Membership Committee
Elizabeth Van Blarcom	Secretary and Financial Secretary
Janice Youpa	Assistant Financial Secretary
Glen Gercie	Chair, Property Committee
Marcia Kelly	Chair, Evangelism Committee
Ken Kutzman	Chair, Stewardship Committee
Carol Meixsell	Chair, Social Ministry Committee and Senior Committee
Anderson C. Raub	Chair, Staff Support Committee
George A. Scherer	Chair, Finance Committee
Bob Agans	
Alan Hardenberg	
Shirley Johnson	
Amy Martin	
James McClain	
William Shepherd	

Please bring your suggestions or concerns to the attention of any of the above Council members. Your Church Council is here to serve all the members of St. James.

The outgoing 2011 Council wishes to express their thanks to Pastor John and Pam for the delicious breakfast they hosted on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

## *Help Needed*

The dedicated people who have made the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday breakfasts a significant contributor toward our fund-raising efforts have become victims of their own success. Please earnestly consider if you could give them a few hours of your help each month, whether as an order taker, food server, or in the kitchen. Contact Steve Stocker at 908-454-1265 if you can pitch in.

## *Youth Group News*

Regular Youth Group meetings were held in January, and the members had a great time bowling at Warren Lanes in February.



Activities schedule going forward:

Junior High Group (6<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup>) meets Sunday, March 4<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Senior High Group (9<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup>) meets Sunday, March 18<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

The combined Youth Groups spring and Easter celebration will be on Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>

Youth Sunday will be observed April 15<sup>th</sup>

Laser Tag and Crop Walk to take place in May, dates to be announced

## *Boy Scout Sunday*

Scout Sunday was observed at St. James on February 5<sup>th</sup>, with several Scouts and Cubs receiving religious medals for participation in the various God & Country programs. The Scouts honored were:

God & Me Program:

Cub Scouts Tanner Cicale, Joel Capaldi, and Ryan Van Pell

God & Family Program:

Cub Scouts David Blake, J. P. Shupp, Christopher Toh, and Patrick Van Pell

God & Church Program:

Boy Scouts Eli Mallory, Tucker Seese, and Wayne Van Blarcom



Each boy received a small patch featuring a silver knot on a purple background, signifying his commitment to fulfilling his Duty to God.

## *Faith in Action*

Missionaries in the birthplace of Lutheranism?

In Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church, sparking the Reformation and changing the world.

But fast forward almost 500 years and today only one in five people in Wittenberg, the birthplace of the Reformation, state that they are Christian. The United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany is struggling with declining membership, particularly in the eastern area, where Wittenberg is located and which suffered 40 years of Communist religious oppression.

That's one of the reasons leaders of the German church have asked the ELCA, including ELCA pastor and missionary Arden Haug in particular, to work side-by-side as they strive to renew their church and their congregations.

The ELCA's most recent partnership with this German church started over 12 years ago with the opening of the ELCA Wittenberg Center. The center hosts educational programs for visitors and encourages them to experience historic sites important to Lutheran identity.

Twila Schock, director for ELCA Missionary Sponsorship, believes the German church has an important story to share with the ELCA. "This is a historic church," she says, "and it's gone through the same cycles that churches in our country have. It's important for us to work together, and especially important that we have an ELCA missionary in Wittenberg, because we can support each other. We have a lot in common and a lot to learn from each other."

## *Lutheran History in America*

(From ELCA's timeline, 'Our History in Context'.)

Samuel Simon Schmucker was known as the "Americanizer of the Lutheran Church." From 1828 to 1845, perhaps no single person had more influence on the Lutheran Church in the U.S. than Dr. Schmucker.

He was the son of a Lutheran minister, educated in the classics at York Academy, the University of Pennsylvania, and Princeton. When in 1820 he was licensed to preach by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, he was considered "undoubtedly the best educated young man of American birth in the Lutheran ministry."

As the guiding spirit in the organization of the General Synod, Schmucker wrote its constitution, formula of government, hymnal, and discipline. In 1825 the General Synod established its seminary at Gettysburg, and he was elected its first professor.

The most prolific Lutheran theological writer of his generation, his Popular Theology passed through eight editions, and was read in many Lutheran homes. It was a controversial "unionist" view that many saw as compromising confessional Lutheran theology.

According to one biographer, Schmucker's later writings "labored to depreciate the old confessional system of the church and even to disparage those...confessions...which teach the Lutheran doctrine of the Sacraments." His positions scandalized both European theologians and later immigrant Lutherans suspicious of a "protestantized" American Lutheranism.

## *Senior League – “Fellowship over Fifty”*

At the February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting Senior League hosted “Sing for America”. This is a volunteer family theatrical and singing group that performs exclusively to benefit the families of our armed forces. During the recent holiday season, they staged Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” at the Ice House in Bethlehem. You can learn more about this talented and generous family at [www.singforamerica.com](http://www.singforamerica.com). Naturally, all donations offered that evening were given to the troupe to further their worthy cause.



There will be no meetings during Lent. The next meeting will be after Easter at 6:00 pm on Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. Please note the change from the usual date, and join us for good food and a lively game of Piracy Gift Exchange. More details will be available in the Sunday bulletin inserts. Contact Carol Meixsell at 908-454-6734.