

THE MESSENGER

November 2023

St. John's Lutheran Church at Stone Bank
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Praying in the Particular

"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18. Since the brutal terrorist attack by Hamas in early October, where over 1300 Israelis were killed along with 200 or more hostages taken nearly all civilians and many, children; and since Israel's fierce response that cost the lives of at least 8000 Palestinian civilians including many children, not to mention the thousands more Palestinian civilians who now face starvation, I have tried to pray.

I believe in prayer, not as a magic trick to try to fix the unfixable, but as the forging of a web of love that connects me to the suffering ones and all of us to the Almighty, so that in this holy web the victims might somehow be buffered, and by God's mercy their pain eased in ways beyond understanding.

So I tried to pray, but this time I failed. There are just too many of them. There are too many, Lord. I don't know how to pray for 10,000 Israelis and Palestinians living through worse times than I can imagine.

Then I saw a story reported on the news two days after the terrorist attack, and I decided that instead of praying hopelessly for thousands, I will pour all my praying energy into this one particular family, three people whose pictures I have seen, including one whose story I have heard her tell. So if you are similarly struggling with how to pray in this catastrophe I offer this story to you too.

I don't remember the name of the young woman whom the reporter spoke to, so I will call her Sarah, but her name could just as easily be Yasmin, a common Palestinian name. And no worries! There are no atrocities in this story, or even any deaths at least as far as can be known, and at the end of the interview, Sarah still spoke with a kind of desperate hope. Sarah looks to be in her early thirties, dark and attractive though worn looking. She speaks English with a slight accent and talks fast and earnestly, answering the reporter's questions readily. She and her husband I'll call Sam, she said, had been together for 10 years and had waited to have children but now they have a one month old baby daughter. A photograph shows them together, with the tiny baby, her husband, bearded and pleasant-looking and smiling broadly—"He's a film-maker, and a wonderful father!" she told the reporter.

Because they lived near the border of Gaza they had learned to take precautions, so when the gunfire began, they looked up and waited, expecting it at first to fade away, but the shots grew louder and soon there were shouts outside their house, and then an arm coming through the window. They had hand signals set up—the person closest to the baby (rocking baby motion) was to slip out the nearest exit first—so Sam across the room in the doorway gave the signal and Sarah picked up the baby and darted out a side door. That's the last time she saw her husband.

She hid in the bushes at first—there were men shooting all around—then she inched down the street trying to keep the baby quiet until finally neighbors she hadn't even met saw them and offered them shelter. They all hunkered down inside the house for over 20 hours. Every time the baby cried, Sarah said, it seemed the shots grew louder—"They wanted to get this baby, but they couldn't." and finally everything quieted down. During this time she had no baby formula, so their 1 month old became badly dehydrated—"Her skin was pasty white, and when she cried there were no more tears," Sarah told the reporter, her own eyes a little teary.

When it was finally safe to leave, she took the baby to the hospital—"No she's fine now—she's strong!" Sarah said. Then she went back to their house and looked at every single dead body she could find in the area, but there was no sign of Sam.

Can you imagine what it took to do that? "I can only pray that he's been taken hostage," she told the reporter, her voice breaking a bit.

At no time did she express hatred toward the terrorists, let alone the Palestinian people or all Muslims. Her entire being, seemed to be focused on her family, her little daughter, the fate of her husband. Which is also true of the other Israeli family members of hostages I have heard interviewed. All anyone wants is their loved ones home.

So I will pray for Sarah, and I will pray for Sam, and I will pray for their baby daughter. For strength and resilience and hope for Sarah. Courage and endurance for Sam and his safe return. For the baby to thrive. I will pray: Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

In humble thanks for our own safe neighborhoods and homes, blessings on your autumn days!

Pastor Karen



CHURCH NEWS

Appreciation for Lutheran World Relief Donations

Thank you! Thank you! to everyone who so generously donated their time, supplies and monetary donations for the Lutheran World Relief items. Thanks also to Scott Hampton for delivering the boxes to Waukesha on October 14th. There were 17 quilts, 16 health care kits and 56 school kits that were boxed up.

What actually happens once these items are delivered? They are shipped to one of two LWR warehouses in Minnesota or Maryland. Once the items reach the warehouses, they are sorted and packed by staff and volunteers, both to prevent damage but also to ensure efficient and cost-effective packing. It takes about a month from the time these items arrive at the warehouse to when they are processed, repacked and ready for shipment.

In the meantime, staff work with partners overseas to determine where and what items are most needed. LWR then notifies the warehouses to prepare the necessary materials for shipment. This process takes one to two months. These materials travel by ocean freight to the receiving partner in countries around the world. From there our partners get items cleared through customs, transfer them to storage (where they can be safely held until they are distributed) and sort them according to local needs.

The time and care put into each step in the journey of these items are meant to ensure that our gifts arrive safely and in good condition, and in a manner that promotes the dignity of the recipient.

--Judy Swanton

Outreach for Hope Thank You Letters

St. John's received the two very appreciative thank you notes for our contributions to Outreach for Hope's Ride Run Walk event.

Dear Friends at St. John's,

Thank you for continuing to remember Outreach for Hope in your giving. We are blessed by you. Thank You! God's Blessings to you all.

Peace,
Rev. Chris Manke
Executive Director, Outreach for Hope

To Our Outreach for Hope Donors,

We send you gratitude from our hearts for the difference you make in our lives and faith. The sharing of God's love in holy baptism, holy communion, the Gospel, feeding ministry, work against lead-poisoningthese and SO many other ways of being the church are possible across our synod due to your generous giving. PLEASE come and visit Hephatha some Sunday at 9 am and allow us the honor of thanking you in person! God's peace to you from all of us.

Hephatha Lutheran, Outreach for Hope Ministry Partners

Thinking Ahead to Year-End Benevolences

As you plan your end of the year charitable giving, consider an extra contribution to St. John's as we cope with short term income loss. Because of the unplanned loss of parsonage rental income over four months and, as we readied the house, unforeseen plumbing repairs and the need to paint the entire inside, we could use a financial boost to keep us stable until we recover. Thanks for your prayers and past generosity and for keeping us in mind now!

Do You Have a THRIVENT Policy or Account??

If you have a THRIVENT life insurance policy, insurance, or investment account, you are able to direct Thrivent Choice Dollars. Choice dollars amounts are determined by the value of Thrivent holdings and are dispensed to the organization or cause as directed by the account holder. There are a few ways to do this: Call 800-847-4836, go to [Thrivent.com/thriventchoice](https://thrivent.com/thriventchoice), or by downloading and using the Thrivent app on your phone (which is very easy!). 2023 Choice dollars need to be directed by March 31, 2024.

St. John's Lutheran Church at Stone Bank is an option as a place to which to direct your choice dollars.

If anyone would like some help setting up the app, accessing your account through the internet ask Nancy Barr, or leave a message with the church office asking for help.



New Staff Members Scott Hampton and Bennett Shebesta

We are very excited that Scott Hampton has accepted the building manager position at St. John's! Scott will be responsible for general maintenance and support of the church building. Scott and his wife, Debbie, have been part of the St. John's community since 1987. Scott and Debbie were in charge of the youth group for several years and their children grew up and were married at St. John's. Scott's grandsons, Dillon Michael and Owen Michael, were confirmed last year at St. John's.

Welcome to Bennett Shebesta, our new custodian. Bennett is a familiar face at St. John's and a section leader in the choir. Life is busy for Bennett as a full time Retail Sales Merchandiser for The Wonderful Company and a member of the Milwaukee Symphony Chorus. Bennett is also getting married in May, 2024.

Youth Education Classes

Youth Education classes will resume November 12th and run through December 17th. The classes will begin after Communion is served and end around 10:30 am. The classes are designed as preparation for Confirmation. All youth from kindergarten through 7th grade are invited to attend.



Godspell Production at Mukwonago High School

St. John's received the nicest email from Mukwonago High School inviting us to their performance of *Godspell*! Discounted tickets for church communities are available for the Thursday, November 9 at 7:00 pm performance. Make sure to check out the video!

Good Morning St. John's (Oconomowoc)!

I hope that this message finds you and your congregation well! My name is PJ Uhazie and together with my students at Mukwonago High School, wanted to invite you and your fellow church members to our production of *Godspell* happening on November 9th-12th in our beautiful Greenwald Foundation Performing Arts Center (605 W Veterans Way, Mukwonago WI). As a special way of inviting you, my students have **made a video** for you all, inviting you to our production: <https://youtu.be/UuZhDPuyyTo>

Godspell reimagines the Gospel according to St. Matthew, conveying powerful messages of love, kindness, and unity. Knowing that this show and its great message might be of interest to your congregants, we are offering **discounted tickets** to our Thursday night show (11/9) in order to encourage a night of fellowship and fun for our local church communities. To receive the discount, please head on over to <https://gfpac.boottix.net/index.php> and use the discount code **FELLOWSHIP**.

Thank you for spreading the word and we hope to see you and some of your congregation there!

Sincerely,
PJ Uhazie, Claire Vock, and the cast of MHS's *Godspell*

Support the Troops WI Collection for Veterans Day

In honor of Veterans Day, help us collect items for Support the Troops WI!

Support the Troops WI was started in 2007 by LeAnn Boudwine of Hartford who had 2 sons in the military overseas. Her sons told her that they shared their goodies with soldiers who never received any packages. After hearing this, LeAnn recruited family and friends to send packages to those serving in the US Military. Support the Troops WI has grown! They now have item drop sites and a facility to store and package items for the 14,000 care packages sent so far – all from donations.

St. John's will be collecting care package items through November. See the list of items needed below. Pop tops on soups, etc. are best. Glass jars, aerosols or outdated items are not accepted. Monetary donations are needed for postage as well. Soldiers also enjoy receiving current hunting or fishing magazines or *People* magazine. Support the Troops WI is a registered 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible

Soldiers appreciate letters too. You can write a letter and bring it to church or there are "Letters from Home" sheets available in the Fellowship Hall.

To have a package sent to someone serving in the military, call or text LeAnn Boudwine at (262) 853-6225.

For additional information, volunteer opportunities or to read a few thank you notes from soldiers, see their website supportthetroopswi.com. LeAnn is also available at the number above to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your support!
Jessie Bohlen
(920) 253-7376

Suggested Items to Donate:

Food Items – Spicy spices, hot salsa, LifeSavers/Mint/Gum, peanut butter, protein bars, ground coffee, teas, beef jerky, hot chocolate, powdered drink mix, SlimJims, Trail mix, Chex mix, canned or dried fruit, nuts, microwave popcorn, crackers, tuna or chicken salad kits

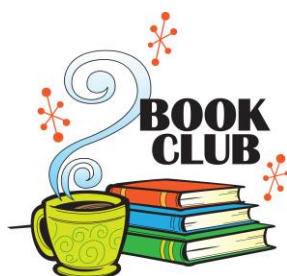
Toiletries – Baby wipes, hand, foot warmers, razors, deodorant (no aerosol), foot powder, odor eaters, sun block, boot laces, laundry detergent pods, ziplock bags (quart or gallon)

Recreational Items – International Phone cards, flashlights, headlamps, AA or AAA batteries, card games, travel board games, sports equipment, sunglasses, safety glasses, gloves

Travel Sized Items – baby wipes, shampoo, conditioner, mouthwash, lotions, soaps, deodorant, laundry detergent

No glass jars, aerosols or outdated items. Pop tops on soup, etc. are the best.

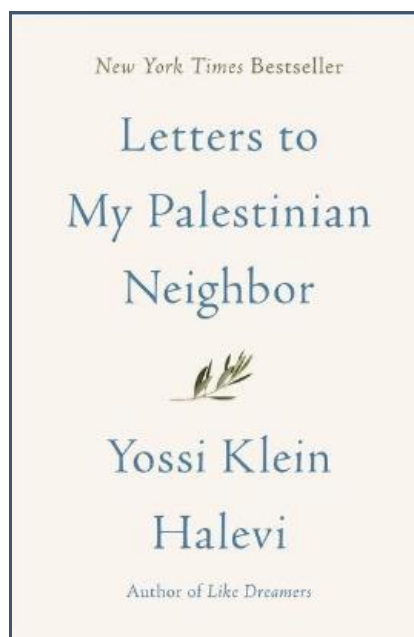
Listening Book Club News



Join us on Thursday, November 9th at 1 pm to discuss Yossi Klein Halevi's *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor*: "One Israeli's powerful attempt to reach beyond the wall that separates Israelis and Palestinians. In a series of letters Yossi Klein Halevi explains what motivated him to leave his native New York in his twenties and move to Israel to participate in the drama of the renewal of a Jewish homeland and help ensure that it succeeds as a morally responsible, democratic state in the Middle East." (Goodreads.) Interestingly the author has generously offered this book in Arabic translation for free downloading.

Listening Book Club seeks to love and understand our neighbor by listening to our neighbor, so we read books written by people who are not like us. Everyone is welcome to join us for one or more of our quarterly discussions.

After tragic events in Israel and Palestine this book is even more relevant and insightful.



WORSHIP, MUSIC, & HOSPITALITY MINISTRY NEWS

Mark Your Calendars:

Sunday, November 5th - All Saints' Sunday

Sunday, November 26th - After worship/coffee hour decorate the sanctuary and fellowship hall for the holiday season.

Sunday December 3rd - First Sunday of Advent



Decorating for Advent and Christmas

On Sunday, November 26, following coffee fellowship, help us decorate the sanctuary and if time allows, the fellowship hall too! Please mark your calendars to join the fun. If you have any décor talents or ideas that you are willing to contribute, please let Nancy Barr know. All ideas and talents are welcome and will be incorporated as possible. To allow for acquisition of any needed supplies, please submit ideas as soon as possible. Thank you!

Worship Assistants Needed

The worship assistant volunteer forms for 2024 are now available. Assistants are needed in all areas: ushers, readers, communion assistants, and especially altar care persons. Brief descriptions of each of these "jobs" is noted on the back of the form. All of these positions are very easy to learn. Please prayerfully consider helping us to enhance our worship services by volunteering to help in one or more of these areas.

The form submission deadline is November 5th so that the schedule can be finished by the beginning of December.

Sign Up to Bring Coffee Hour Treats

If you are interested in bringing treats for coffee hour, there is a sign up sheet on the counter for volunteers to host. Please check the list and sign up to supply treats one week.



Greater Milwaukee Synod Bishop Paul Erickson's Letter on the Israeli and Palestine Conflict

"Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for there is a reward for your work, says the Lord: they shall come back from the land of the enemy; there is hope for your future, says the Lord: your children shall come back to their own country."
(Jeremiah 31:15-17)

Ever since I first heard the news of the violent attacks conducted by Hamas against Israeli citizens and the subsequent response, I have felt like weeping. Weeping for all who have lost their lives, all who have lost their livelihood, all who have lost whatever fragile sense of security they might have had in this deeply troubled part of the world. There is so much that I don't know and will never understand about the causes and dimensions of this conflict, and my heart is filled with conflicting thoughts and emotions. The violence and division and pain seem to be so deep and profound, and our thoughts and prayers for peace and reconciliation seem so insufficient.

The passage from Jeremiah was used by the Gospel writer Matthew (Matthew 2:18) to describe the deep anguish following the slaughter of the innocents by Herod after the birth of Jesus, and it has been used ever since to give voice to the pain and lament so many have felt whenever senseless violence and the loss of innocent life takes place. And yet, there is in the next verse a promise of hope for the future. What does hope look like in this time and in this place? Once a month for the past seven years, I have participated in a breakfast gathering of interfaith religious leaders in Milwaukee. The attendance varies between five and ten leaders, and we simply gather to eat and share our common stories of joy and struggle, building relationships that we hope will provide a foundation for our common work. This past month, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders met in my office, and the Israeli-Hamas conflict was front and center. It was not an easy conversation, as it was clear that the participants had different thoughts, experiences, and opinions, but we shared a common lament for the violence and hatred, and a deep longing that the extreme voices on both sides would give way to the voices urging a peaceful coexistence. The fact that we had been meeting for years and had built a foundation of trust allowed us to explore our differences and find some common ground. As the meeting ended, one of the Muslim leaders sighed, looked deep into the eyes of one of the Jewish rabbis present, shook his hand and simply said, "Shalom, my brother." Shalom; salaam; peace. This is our hope, this is our prayer, this is our calling, to work together to build the relationships that lead to peace.

"Still your children wander homeless; still the hungry cry for bread; still the captives long for freedom; still in grief we mourn our dead. As you, Lord, in deep compassion healed the sick and freed the soul, by your Spirit send your power to our world to make it whole."
(Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service, ELW 712)

Bishop Paul Erickson

ST. JOHN'S GOOD NEWS REPORT

Clayton and Judy Swanton's family farm was among the 28 Town of Ashippun family farms honored that are still in the family for over 100 years. The presentations were awarded at the Ashippun Town Hall on October 8th. Henry J. Swanton purchased our property in 1892.

Call or email the church office to let us know of any "Good News" to include in future newsletters.

WE APPRECIATE ST. JOHN'S COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

Judy Runt, our council president, for supervising the parsonage cleaning and repairs and for her active role in hiring new staff members

For everyone who has brought treats for coffee hour

For our videographers who allow us to have our worship services available online for those who are not able to make it to church



Try A Yummy New Recipe -
Jessie Bohlen's Mother Rose's Apple Coffee Cake Recipe

½ c. sugar
½ c. butter or oil
1 egg
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 c. flour
1 c. buttermilk
apple
cinnamon
sugar

Cream sugar, butter and then egg. Mix dry ingredients. Alternate flour and buttermilk into creamed mixture. Spread in shallow jelly roll pan. Top with thick slices of apple. Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar.

Bake 10 minutes at 400 degrees. Finish at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes.





NOVEMBER READINGS

November 5

Micah 3:5-12 - *Judgment upon corrupt rulers*

Psalms 43 - *Send out your light and truth, that they may lead me.*

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 - *The apostle's teaching accepted as God's word*

Matthew 23:1-12 - *All who humble themselves will be exalted*

November 12

Amos 5:18-24 - *Let justice roll down like waters*

Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16 (alternate) - *Wisdom makes herself known*

Psalms 70 - *You are my helper and my deliverer; O LORD, do not tarry.*

Wisdom of Solomon 6:17-20 (alternate) - *The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 - *The promise of the resurrection*

Matthew 25:1-13 - *The story of the wise and foolish bridesmaids*

November 19

Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18 - *The day of the LORD*

Psalms 90:1-8 [9-11] 12 - *So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.*

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 - *Be alert for the day of the Lord*

Matthew 25:14-30 - *The story of the slaves entrusted with talents*

November 26

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24 - *God will shepherd Israel*

Psalms 95:1-7a - *We are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand*

Ephesians 1:15-23 - *The reign of Christ*

Matthew 25:31-46 - *The coming of the Son of Man; the separation of sheep and goats*

The graphic features a brown rectangular background. On the left side, there is a stylized illustration of an oak leaf and two acorns. To the right of this illustration, the word "NOVEMBER" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the word "NOVEMBER", the text "Birthdays & Anniversaries" is written in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font.

NOVEMBER

Birthdays & Anniversaries

November 8 – Bob Kretschmer
November 9 – Craig & Julie Kutzt
November 11 – John Baumann
November 13 – Julie Kutzt
November 13 - Amanda Fleischman
November 14 – Sharon Keller
November 19 – Lorene McMullen
November 19 – Julie Bohlen
November 23 – Wyatt Cook
November 28 – Scott Lovas
November 28 – Steve Lovas
November 30 – Nancy Kutzt



St. John's Council

President: Judy Runt

Vice President: Nancy Barr

Council Members at Large: Julie Bohlen and Kris Kaptain

Financial Secretary: Judy Swanton

Acting Treasurer: Barb O'Connor

St. John's Music Program

Music Minister: Jim Edgar

Pianist: Lauren Genthe

Choir: Nancy Barr, Ann Greenseth, Oscar Kraft, Shirley Kraft, Bennett Shebesta, Judy Runt

Worship Assistants

Alan Abeld, Carol Baird, Phil Baird, Nancy Barr, John Baumann, Julie Bohlen, Jim Edgar, Ann Greenseth, Kris Kaptain, Jerry Katz, Brigitte Katz, Oscar Kraft, Shirley Kraft, Julie Kuhtz, Nancy Kuhtz, Megan Rollefson, Deb Runt, Judy Runt, Grant Schuldt, Judy Swanton, Cynthia Tobolt

Altar Ministry

Nancy Barr, Brigitte Katz, Julie Kuhtz, Nancy Kuhtz, Anita Olson, Kris Kaptain