

Third Sunday in Lent March 23, 2025

St. John's Lutheran Church 1000 Helena Ave. Helena, MT 59601 406-442-6270

"Growing in Grace, Walking by Faith, Serving in Love"

(Please be aware that as we stream this service to a live audience you may appear on camera when you are worshiping with us. We welcome those who attend online and are part of our worshiping community! Please respond with the words in **bold** print and stand, as you are able at the places marked with an *.)

Prelude:

Welcome and Announcement:



Psalm 63:1-8:

O God, you are my God; eager- ly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

² Therefore I have gazed upon you in your | holy place, that I might behold your power | and your glory.

³ For your steadfast love is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise.

⁴ So will I bless you as long | as I live and lift up my hands | in your name.

⁵ My spirit is content, as with the rich- est of foods, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

⁶ when I remember you up- | on my bed, and meditate on you in | the night watches.

⁷ For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

⁸ My whole being | clings to you; your right hand | holds me fast.

*Confession and Forgiveness:

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding love.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Compassionate One,

you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but our lives do not always reflect you and your love for the world. We do not show others the tender compassion you have shown to us. We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality you grant to all people. We oppress others, even though you have set us free again and again. We squander the abundant gifts of the earth. Transform our lives and guide us again in the way of the cross.

Beloved in Christ, God's arms are always stretched open wide to welcome the wandering ones home. In Christ + your sins are forgiven. You have a place in God's house forever..

Amen.

*Opening Hymn:..... "Before the Waters Nourished Earth" ACS # 1049

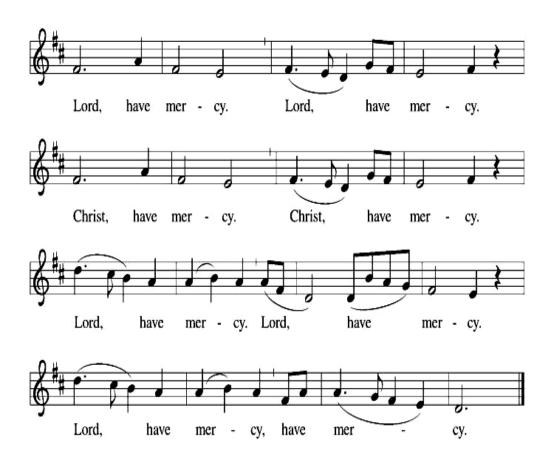
- Before the waters nourished earth or night imagined morning, a Love conceived the universe and reveled in its forming.
- This Love remained as time revealed the loss of Eden's glory and, grieving, holds in memory each tragic human story.
- 3 Despair, so deep it bears no name, or sorrows paralyzing cannot revoke Love's faithful claim to dwell within our dying.
- 4 The Love that called creation good all goodness still is bringing. This Love turns death again to life and silence into singing.

*Apostolic Greeting:

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

<u>*Kyrie:</u>.....ELW # 152



*Prayer of the Day:

Let us Pray. Eternal God,

Your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9:

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.

¹ Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Word of God, Word of Life. Thanks be to God.



*Gospel: Luke 13:1-9:

Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the thirteenth chapter, beginning with the first verse.

Glory to you, o Lord.

¹ At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² [Jesus] asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴ Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Si loam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." ⁶ Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree plant ed in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' ⁸ He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

This is the Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Cinuren 8 Time:	Pastor Keith Weatherford
Sermon:	Pastor Keith Weatherford

Silence for reflection

*Hymn of the Day:Light Dawns on a Weary World" ELW # 726

Light dawns on a weary world when eyes begin to seeall people's dignity.Light dawns on a weary world: the promised day of justice comes.

Refrain

The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs; the hills and mountains shall break forth with singing! We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace, as all the world in wonder echoes shalom.

- Love grows in a weary world when hungry hearts find bread and children's dreams are fed.
 Love grows in a weary world: the promised feast of plenty comes. *Refrain*
- 3 Hope blooms in a weary world when creatures, once forlorn, find wilderness reborn.

 Hope blooms in a weary world: the promised green of Eden comes. *Refrain*

Presentation of New Members:

Dear friends, we give thanks for the gift of baptism and for these people, one with us in the body of Christ, whom we welcome as new members into the life and ministry of this congregation.

Bill, Jean, Tom, Susan, Ken, Carol, Karin, Craig, and David come to Saint John's from various congregations in Helena and other communities.

Apostles' Creed:

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.* On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven. he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

In baptism, we are welcomed into the body of Christ and sent to share in the mission of God. We are called to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, do you intend to continue in the covenant of your baptism among God's people in this place?

I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.

People of God, do you promise to support and pray for *these* new *members* in *their* life in Christ?

We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.

Let us welcome these siblings in Christ to this community of faith.

We rejoice with you in the life of baptism. Together we will give thanks and praise to God and proclaim the good news to all the world.

*Prayers of Intercession:

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*Prayer Response: (Each portion of the prayers ends with these words.)

God, in your mercy,

Receive our prayer.

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

Amen.

*The Peace is Shared:

(...Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19))

As Christ welcomed everyone, let us open our hearts and lives and be like Christ to everyone we meet. The peace of the Lord be with you

And also with you.

(The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace and may say "Peace be with you" or similar words.)

Offering:

(An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need and the communion table is set.)

Please use the code here for a mobile device online giving.



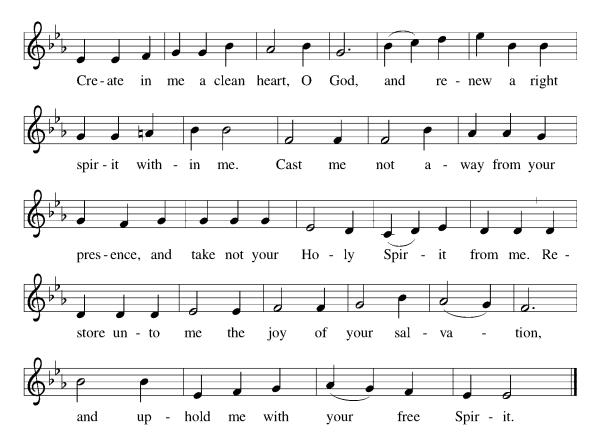
Offertory Hymn: "As the Deer Runs to the River" ELW # 331

1 As the deer runs to the river, parched and weary from the chase, we have come from hurt and hurry, thirsting for your healing grace.

Refrain: Jesus, source of Living water, may we drink of you and live

- When your Israel crossed the desert where no stream or spring was seen, Moses struck the rock, and water flowed for them, refreshing, clean. *Refrain*
- 3 "Come and drink," Isaiah summoned, "all who for God's mercy plead! God's forgiveness, like a fountain, flows to satisfy your need." *Refrain*
- 4 Christ, we come from desert places, deepest thirst unsatisfied. Lead us to the waters flowing from the cross on which you died. *Refrain*

Create in Me a Clean Heart



Offering Prayer:

Let us pray, Gracious Provider,

you set your immense treasures among us, opening your heart to the world. As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love, deepen our commitment to sharing those treasures with others, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

*Great Thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

*Holy, Holy, Holy:ELW # 190



*Words of Institution:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal: you we praise and glorify, you we worship and adore.

You formed the earth from chaos; you encircled the globe with air; you created fire for warmth and light; you nourish the lands with water. You molded us in your image, and with mercy higher than the mountains, with grace deeper than the seas, you blessed the Israelites and cherished them as your own.

That also we, estranged and dying, might be adopted to live in your Spirit, you called to us through the life and death of Jesus.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Together as the body of Christ, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

*Lords Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen.

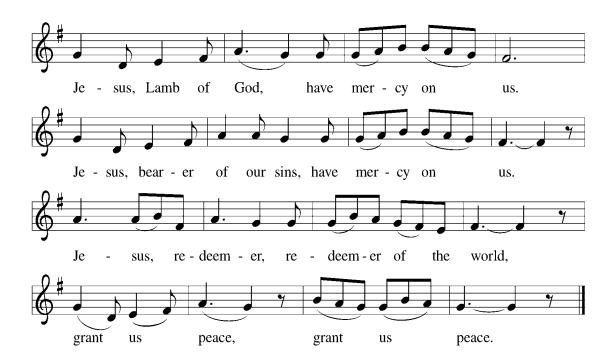
*Invitation to Communion:

(We celebrate this meal together at Christ's table, and all are welcome and encouraged to receive the forgiving and gracious presence of Christ in communion. Ushers will invite you forward starting from the rear of the sanctuary. Wine is the darker liquid on the outer portion of the tray. Gluten-free wafers and white grape juice are available. Those who prefer not to commune are invited to come forward to receive a blessing.)

All who are hungry, come!

The feast of Grace is spread.

<u>Jesus, Lamb of God:</u>ELW# 199



Communion Music:Connie Conley

*Prayer after Communion:

Let us pray. Generous Host, you have shared your feast with us and made us new. Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities, that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom, in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*Blessing:

God our tender parent, God the crucified one, God the reconciling Spirit, + bless you now and forever.

Amen.

*Sending Hymn: "Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer" ELW#618

- 1 Guide me ever, great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak, but you are mighty; hold me with your pow'rful hand. Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore, feed me now and evermore.
- 2 Open now the crystal fountain where the healing waters flow; let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through. Strong deliv'rer, strong deliv'rer, shield me with your mighty arm, shield me with your mighty arm.
- When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside; death of death and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side. Songs and praises, songs and praises, I will raise forevermore, I will raise forevermore.

*Dismissal:

Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

Thanks be to God.

New Members:



<u>Carol Jones</u>; I grew up in Montana and moved to California where I got my degree in accounting. I moved to Oregon and worked as a CPA for 40 years. I decided to come back to Montana to be closer to my family. I enjoy sharing my knowledge of accounting with others, especially nonprofit groups that cannot afford that service. My favorite Bible story is Jesus on the cross and the new beginnings after that.



<u>William "Bill" Puknat</u>; Born in New York, I worked all my life and am now retired. I worked in the mobile phone industry, and at Montana DEQ after leaving Dallas, Texas. I am a retired Petty Officer, having served in the Naval Reserve for 22 years. I enjoy brewing beer and wine, and look forward to traveling.

<u>David Baldwin</u>; I am retired military and Adult Education teacher. I enjoy traveling, care giving, and volunteering at senior centers. My only granddaughter brings me joy along with my favorite hymn, "Let All Things Now Living", and my favorite Bible passage, the 23rd Psalm.



<u>Susan Hammell</u>; I am a former court reporter, and preschool teacher, but now retired. I also served in the U.S. Army, and Army Reserve. My hometown is Helena and I enjoy reading to children, singing, spending time with friends and hiking in the mountains. My favorite book in the Bible is Acts.

Kenneth J. Hammell; I am a retired High-Speed Manufacturing Technician from Detroit. Fishing, dirt bike riding and camping are my favorite activities. I like reading about Jonah and the whale in the Bible.



Karin Steenberg; I was born in Berlin Germany, worked in sales and have been a lifelong homemaker. My favorite passage in the Bible is when Jesus said to let the little children come to him. I like people, entertaining, mountains, music and my family.

<u>Craig Steenberg</u>; I am from New Ulm, Minnesota. My favorite subject in school was mathematics. I have four wonderful children and I enjoy singing and driving around Montana. The golden rule story is my favorite passage in the Bible.



<u>Jean Olson</u>; I lived in Augusta until I attended Montana State University. I met my husband there, we married and went to San Francisco for our honeymoon. I got a job at a bank in the financial district. When Tom got a job at Montana Power, we jumped at the chance to return to Montana and we have lived in Colstrip and Laurel. We have three children and eight grandchildren.

<u>Tom Olson</u>; I am a Montana Native. I attended MSU and attained a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering. I met Jean and we were married shortly after graduation. We have 3 children and 8 grandchildren. My work career has been involved in the design and operation of coal fired power plants. My work has brought me to San Francisco, Butte, Colstrip and Billings.



IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, March 23, New Member Sunday

9:30 am -Worship with Holy Communion 10:30 am -Fellowship with Peter Elverum

10:45 am -Bible Study

Monday, March 24

10:00 am— Staff Meeting 6:00 pm- Celebration Ringers Rehearsal

Wednesday, March 26

9:00 am-Quilting

5:15 pm-Bells of St. John's Rehearsal

5:30 pm- Lenten Soup; Donations to Cruzando Fronteras

6:30 pm Midweek service, Space of Grace

7:00 pm- First Communion Class

Thursday, March 27

7:00 pm-Choir Practice

Sunday, March 30

9:30 am- Worship with Holy Communion,

10:30 am-Fellowship

10:45 am-Bible Study

Lenten Soup Supper Collections:

3/26: Cruzando Fronteras

4/2: Global Refuge

4/9:Lutheran Social Services

<u>First communion Instruction:</u> First communion classes for students and their parents will be held <u>March 26th, April 2nd, and April 9th.</u> Classes will take place during the regularly scheduled Faith Formation time during Wednesday Midweek Connection at 7:00pm. The celebration of First Communion with students, families, and the congregation will take place during regular church service on Palm Sunday April 13th at 9:30 am. Please talk to Pastor Keith or email him at <u>pastorkeith@helenastjohns.org</u> or call the church office at 406-442-6270 with any questions.

Prayers for SJLC Flock:

Prayer is a vital part of our faith journey, a practice that deepens and transforms our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with one another. This year, the council members at St. John's Lutheran Church have chosen to focus on discipleship as a key aspect of our shared ministry.

In response to this, the council and ministry team have decided to engage in a special prayer initiative over the next 12 to 18 months. Each month, they will randomly select a member or family from our congregation to lift up in prayer. As part of this, you may receive a phone call or a letter asking for any specific prayer requests you might have.

I have also invited the council members to share any prayer requests with me so that I, too, can include you in my prayers and the prayers of the church. It is always comforting to know we are held in prayer, and it can be a powerful experience to hear our prayers voiced by others.

May we continue to support one another in prayer as we "walk in faith, grow in grace, and serve in love."

In Christ Love Pastor Keith

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. Luke 6:12

<u>Family Promise of Greater Helena:</u> Comfort Food Challenge on Sunday <u>March 23rd from 3:00 pm to 6:00pm</u> at the Lewis and Clark Fairgrounds. Tickets are \$25 per person or \$45 per family. In person tickets are available from the church office, Randal Rake, randalrake@gmail.com.

Curious About the Legislative Session?

On Sunday, March 23rd, following the 9:30 AM worship service, Saint John's member Peter Elverum will be sharing his experience as a freshman legislator during the 2025 legislative session. Join us in the Fellowship Hall for coffee, cookies, and a time

Easter Lily/Spring Flowers:

Order forms are available to purchase a lily or spring flowers to decorate the altar for Easter. The forms are due April 6th and can be dedicated to thanksgiving or memory of a loved one. The plants are \$10.00 each.

Coffee and Chocolate Order:

An order of Equal Exchange coffee, tea, and chocolate has arrived and awaits your purchase to take home and enjoy. Organic French roast drip ground coffee is available in two sizes. The smaller bag would be ideal as a hostess gift for friends or to take for a weekend at the cabin. Packages of Rooibos tea, caffeine-free and delicious, have vanilla and citrus flavor notes. Don't forget to pick up a can of hot cocoa or grab some dark chocolate caramel crunch candy bars before they are gone. So while you are enjoying the fellowship blend Equal Exchange coffee downstairs after church service, buy some fair trade products to enjoy at home.

Women's Book Club: April 10, at noon, the book is "This Tender Land" by William Kent Krueger. The story follows four orphans in 1932 who flee a boarding school for Native American children. They are on a quest for not only safety, but also for family, a home, and themselves.



In our prayers:

Linda McDonald, Susan Olson, Mike McDonald, Paula Blessinger, Diane Evans, Tammy Tetrault, Susan Boettcher, Ken Downing, Rosita Moe, Bruce Gottwig, Bob Sorensen, Deb Berg, Meg Biggs and family, Richard Bomar, Jeff Shirley, Jeremy Stockstad, Tatiana Ceaicovschi, Randy Holmes, Kamila Ruth Baker, Vicki Alpiner, Brent Bushnell, Tom Andersen, Sally Indreland, Jana Clark, Ann Hadley, Mary Lou Hadley, Dan Jacobson, Irene Hanson, Jean Branscum, Todd Branscum, Mildred Twingley

For those in residential living centers, extended care or homebound:

Mary Marty, Rev. Wayne Olsen, Rosita Moe, Esther Fuehrer, Julie Wolff, Adeline Rasmussen, Susan DeBree, Jimmie McGee

For those who are deployed and getting ready to deploy:

Evan Ceaicovschi

For those who have died and now rest in God's merciful care:

All the Saints in Heaven

For Missionaries: Missionaries around the world; Willie Langdji in Cameroon

For World Leaders: We pray for the health and recovery of Pope Francis.

Midweek Lent Services:

Wednesdays during Lent we will begin the evening with soup supper at 5:30 PM (signups downstairs); Holden Evening Prayer at 6:30 PM; Faith Formation for All Ages at 7:00 PM. There is something for everyone!

Holy Week and Easter:

Easter will be here before we know it! I am looking for youth aged volunteers to help 'strip the altar' (removing everything on and around the altar) during the Maundy Thursday service at 6:30 PM on April 17th. It's not a hard job, but it is an important part of the end of the service during Holy Week as we move from Jesus' Last Supper into the Crucifixion on Good Friday.

One of our big youth fundraisers that we do each year is to serve breakfast after the Easter Service. On the menu is pancakes, ham, and fruit. I need to know who is available to help prep on Saturday, April 19th (Time TBA based on volunteers) and who is available to prep and flip pancakes during the service (9:30 AM) on Easter Sunday.

Social Ministry for March: Helena Area Refugee Resettlement Team to help purchase lambs/food

WELCA:

May 13, Luncheon at 12, Noon May 16-18, Women's Spring Retreat at FLBC July 20, Summer Social at 2 pm at Spring Meadow Pavilion September 9, Fall Luncheon at 12, Noon September 20, Synod Gathering November 16, Thank Offering December 6, Festival of Angels

St. John's Lutheran Church Staff

Pastor:

Keith Weatherford 406-442-6270

pastorkeith@helenastjohns.org

Choir Director/Music Coordinator:

Connie Conley 406-431-6835 connieconley@yahoo.com

Youth and Family Ministry:

Gretchen Mundinger 917-439-0093 youthandfamily@helenastjohns.org

Church Office:

Bonnie Stevens 406-442-6270

Worship Assistants

Presiding: Pastor Keith Weatherford

Cantor: Frederick Frey

Head Usher: Gail Vennes

Communion: Paul Hilchen, Lorrie Vennes, Gail Vennes, Laura

Nachtsheim

Lector:

Streaming/Power Point: Angela Conley

Pianist/Organist: Connie Conley

Prayer Station: John Mundinger

Altar Guild: Laura Nachtsheim, Kari Christensen, Annette Jacobson

Sacristan: Kari Christensen

Acolyte:

Greeter/Coffee Servers: Holy Grounds Coffee Bar is closed for

Lent

Church Council

<u>President:</u> Paul Hilchen —406-202-8988 — paulwithstjohns@gmail.com

<u>Vice President</u>: Lee Rhodes— 406-366-2089 — lee.rhodes3032@gmail.com

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