

The March 2023 Monthly Newsletter of Community of Joy Lutheran Church

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The Neglected Voice of Inclusive Spirituality

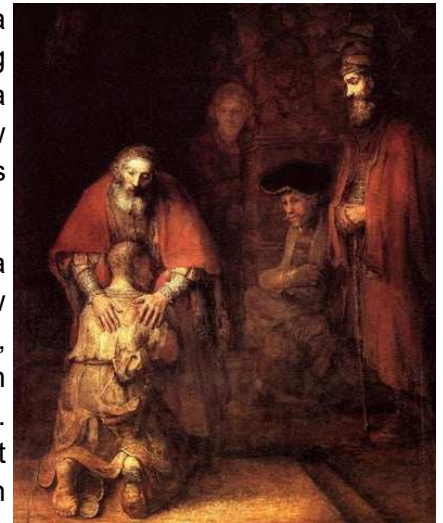
For me, last month has been not only a great experience of ministry happening within our community, but also a wonderful time for experiencing how God's love connects us to relationships beyond COJ.

In one instance, this took the form of a group of us who joined in a Jewish New Year seder meal at a local synagogue, where I and leaders from four faith traditions spoke on faith and ecology. There was so much diversity amongst our traditions and yet also so much harmony in the teachings of our faiths.

Another highlight of outward mission was our souper-bowl collection for Storehouse West, led by Joyful Hearts. Simply put, this effort far exceeded expectations and raised OVER \$1400! (Thank you and thanks be to God!) And then just last week, a number of COJ folks traveled to Santa Fe for the annual Issues Briefing and Luncheon organized by Lutheran Advocacy Ministry. Let me tell you, it is incredible to hear about the amazing lifegiving effect this ministry is having on issues in our state that impact millions.

Along this theme, just last Sunday we enjoyed a wonderful conversation in our parables bible study as we explored the parables of The Lost Sheep and The Lost Coin and pondered how they fit into the larger story of Jesus' ministry. One of the big discussion points was learning about the debate between two schools of Judaism that was happening during Jesus' life, and how he fit into it.

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Join Us this Lent for Agape Feasts – Wednesdays at 6 pm, Starting March 1st

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People Page

March Birthdays

1st: Zach Shotwell	21st: Virginia Upleger
3rd: Melissa Eckelbarger	22nd: Greg Edwards
Paula Thomas	Abigail Lyman
7th: Karyl Upleger	Nicholas Lyman
12th: Neal Shotwell	Warren Sullivan
14th: Izzy Staniszewski	23rd: Rose Gainey-Graham
15th: John Brown	25th: Lynn Sampson
Jayden Walker	26th: Mercedes Marquez
16th: Donna Huxtable	27th: April Mortensen
17th: Michael Eckelbarger	29th: Joe Conner
20th: Pat Luehring	Jay Walker

Wedding Anniversaries in March



March 1st: Karyl & Patricia Upleger



Charlotte Griffith	Coyle family
Donna Doles	Mahrer family
Dick & Peg Tool	Nancy Freeston
Connie White (Stephanie's mom)	Peggy Reed & family
Joan Bouty, Louise Scott	Ron Bencke
Barbara Shotwell	Connie Brock
Warren Sullivan	Gail Phillips
Charles & Suzanne Davis	David Brown
Steve Gamrath	Sherri Bathje
Paul & Jackie Anderson	Cliff Walker
Mike & Helga Woerner	Tiffani Lovell
Norma Gruber	Lynette Schurdevin
Daniel Sauermann	Millie Lyman

If you know of a person or a situation that you would like included in our prayer list, please email them to Earlene (earlene@communityofjoy.com).

COMMUNITY OF JOY

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Jon Shodean jon@communityofjoy.com

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Congregation Council

Lee Glauvitz—President
Chris McGill—Vice President
Karen Lenoski—Secretary
Sandy Edwards
Bill Kostel
Diane Parham

Ministries Leads

- ✦ **Altar Guild:** Debbie Sciortino
- ✦ **Confirmation:** Pr. Paul Schick
- ✦ **F.E.A.S.T.:** Deborah Williams
- ✦ **Fellowship:** Neal Shotwell
- ✦ **Joyful Hearts Women's Ministry:**
Sandy Edwards
- ✦ **Memorial Committee:** Bill Potabi
- ✦ **Sunday School:** Stephanie Schick
- ✦ **Tech Ministry Leader:** Kristen Sillence
- ✦ **Worship Accompanist:** Keith Jordan
- ✦ **Beer Buddies:** Tony Sciortino

For any reports or information, contact the appropriate person listed above

The Season of Lent

Join Us this Lent for Agape Feasts – Wednesdays at 6 pm, Starting March 1st

Description: Each Wednesday, (beginning the week after Ash Wednesday), we will share a potluck meal that will be woven throughout with fellowship, prayers, music, and communion.

Food: For the meals, please feel free bring the traditional Lenten soup, or whatever your favorite potluck dish is- (we're Lutherans, we can be flexible!) Or if you don't have time to bring food- just come!



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR AGAPE FEASTS

Wednesdays at 6pm March 1-Apr 5

The Fellowship Team is looking for volunteers to help set-up/clean-up for the Wednesday Agape Feasts during Lent (March 1, March 8, March 15, March 22, and March 29).

If you are available to help us manage these communal meals, there is a sign up sheet on the table near the sanctuary doors. We will need people to set up on Wednesdays (before 5pm) and people to stay and clean up after the meal/service ends (around 7:15p)



The Journey Begins

Holy Week—Looking Ahead

Maundy Thursday Service—April 6th at 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday Worship service—April 7th 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday—April 9, 2023

- ◆ Easter Sunrise service - 6:30 a.m.—Easter Potluck breakfast to follow
- ◆ Easter Celebration Service—10:00 a.m.

Community of Joy
Beer Buddies



The Next Meeting -
Thursday,
March 16, 2023
at 6:00 p.m.

Announcements

Welcome our Newest Member!

Last month we were overjoyed to welcome **Karen Baldwin** into our COJ community!

I moved to New Mexico in 2009; to Rio Rancho in 2014. Prior to that, I was a gypsy! Even Though I've settled down now, I still love to travel the world and love a good road trip with my pups. When weather permits, you'll find me in my garden. I'm also a musician, knitter, painter and writer. I have one son, two beautiful grandsons, and friends scattered around the world. Life is good.



Meal Train for Charles & Suzanne Davis

I have been diagnosed with stage 3 lung cancer. I will be receiving my first chemotherapy/radiation session on the 21st of February. The treatments lasts six weeks at which time we hope the treatments are a success. Suzanne and I welcome your prayers and well wishes during this time.

<https://mealtrain.com/4r01r6>

In Honor—of YOU!

The COJ Gifts & Memorial fund receives gifts in many ways and for many occasions. Some are given in memory of a loved one, and others to honor or to celebrate a milestone. An honor or tribute contribution is “a unique way to recognize an individual for a noteworthy accomplishment or on a special occasion”. Wouldn't a donation to this fund be a great way to say “Happy Birthday” or “Thank you for all that you do” or even “You're Just Wonderful” to someone? The honoree will receive a card letting them know that a donation had been made in their honor, and by whom. A letter is also sent to the donor in appreciation of their gift.

The Memorial Committee met on February 17th, and a “Wish List” of ways the fund could be used was brainstormed. On the top of the list is transforming our entry doors (all four) into an **ADA compliant Access System** (automatic doors). This would be a wonderful addition to our church, but it is pricey.

Please consider making an Honor donation to COJ's Gifts & Memorial fund and let someone know that they are special, and also help our wish come true!

Would you like to be part of expanding the church's mission through this fund? Contact the office or speak with a committee member (**Bill Potabi, Kristen Sillence, Pat Shodean, Sandy Edwards**) so that we can connect you with more information about this wonderful ministry.



Pastor's Ponderings

The Neglected Voice of Inclusive Spirituality

Continued from page 1



In one group were those who understood the main task of faith to be boundary keeping. This group tended to emphasize Scriptural texts that spoke in terms of rules and judgment. In public life, they were preoccupied with maintaining a strict separation between those who were deemed clean (righteous) and unclean (unrighteous). Indeed, they seem to have been the dominant religious voice in Jesus' time.

But there was another voice that argued that, actually, healing was the primary message of faith. This reform movement leaned on a different set of biblical texts that spoke of inclusion and mercy. In practice, this group focused on healing the sick, welcoming sinners back in, and declaring God's radical forgiveness. Though this was not the dominant voice, it was the one that most defined Jesus' ministry.

Perhaps the best way to say it is that Jesus' ministry was a reform movement within Judaism that sought to recover the image of a loving God and move God's people to a more loving, outward focused mission.

One of the strangest and more challenging stories within the gospels is the story of Jesus' dealings with a Syrophenician woman who is seeking healing for her disturbed daughter. As mentioned above, a core tenet of first century Jewish faith was maintaining boundaries between God's chosen (Jews), and non-Israelites (Gentiles). But when this gentile Syrophenician woman seeks to breach this boundary by asking Jesus to heal her daughter, initially he resists and exemplifies the exclusive voice.

After stating that he "was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," Jesus famously follows it up with the cutting line, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." Amazingly, it is the woman's quick wit and insistence that seems to win the argument as she deftly retorts, "Yes it is, Lord... But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Remarkably, in the next moment, Jesus' tone completely changes as he lauds her faith and grants her request for healing.

Despite the happy ending, scholars and Christians throughout history have debated how to account for Jesus' initial harshness and eventual change of tone. Some have argued that Jesus was only mimicking the arguments of exclusive spirituality so that he could then break them down. Others argue that if humanity really did live within Jesus, then why shouldn't he be capable of learning and growing.

The honest answer is we do not know. But maybe the beauty of the narrative is that the spirituality of inclusion does not come immediately. It's something we discover through experience. The default spiritual voice of human beings is the exclusive voice. And the realization that God's love pushes us outward, beyond our own artificial boundaries, usually hits us as a surprise.

What Jesus offers us is this new spirituality- where the primary question switches from- *How can we protect those of us on the inside?* – to – *How can we welcome in those who are on the outside?*

As we enter into the Lenten journey, let us consider what this spiritual shift might look like for me, for you, and for us. And let us trade the inward focused faith of judging and gatekeeping, for an outward focused faith of loving service and opening the doors of God's house a little wider.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Paul

Worship News

An Adult Ed Series

Parables

Christ's Hidden Wisdom & God's Upside Kingdom



Jesus had an important message to share, and yet the primary way he chose to communicate it was through stories called *Parables*. To this day, the brilliance of Jesus' parables inspire and yet also perplex. They speak of what God is doing and yet also invite our participation. They attract us with God's beautiful vision for life and yet also challenge us to embrace a world that is upside down from the one we know.

Join us as we explore Jesus' parables and how they invite us to experience and embrace God's kingdom here and now!

Sundays after worship, around 11 AM



THANK YOU TO OUR FEBRUARY VOLUNTEERS!

Ushers:

Lee & Jill Glauvitz, Chris McGill, Pat Shodean, Dennis & Kris Simpson

Readers:

Charlie Fiedler, Roci Gainey-Graham, Karen Lenoski, Deborah Williams

Communion Assistants:

Diane Brauer, Melissa Eckelbarger, David & Tracy Lizon, Meghan Lyman, Laura Reu, Pat Shodean, Dennis & Kris Simpson

Altar Guild:

Diane Brauer, Lynette Schurdevin, Pat Shodean, Kris Simpson

Audio/Video Team:

Diane Brauer, Sandy Edwards, Phillip Reu, Zhong Reu, Jim Shotwell

Nursery Attendants:

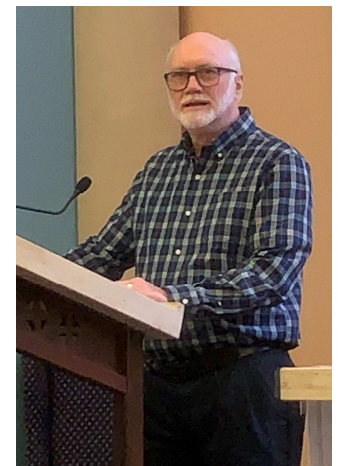
Michaela Lovell, Ava Rousselle, Olivia Rousselle, Ravin Sillence

Counters:

Karen Lenoski, Pat Shodean

Communion Bread Bakers:

Deb Sciortino, Paula Thomas



Youth & Children's Ministry

Sunday School

Sunday mornings from 11:05—11:45 p.m.

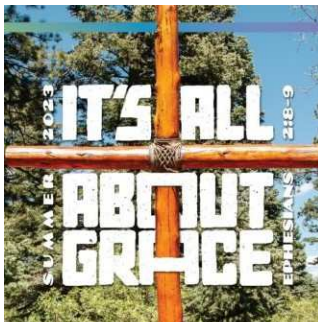
Children's Sunday School is available for preschool to 6th grade. If you are interested in volunteering, have questions about Sunday School, or to register children to participate, please see **Stephanie Schick**. You can register your children for Sunday school in person, or do so beforehand by picking up a registration form online or at the church.

High School: At our monthly FEAST gatherings we will have programming for our high schoolers. Some months we will plan a program tailored to this age group, other months we will invite them to join in with our multigenerational activities.

Confirmation: Seventh and eighth graders are invited to participate in confirmation on most Wednesdays 6:30-7:30 pm. If you have a child of confirmation age not currently involved, please contact Pr. Paul about the meeting schedule.

There is no FEAST Gathering in March
Join us for Agape Feasts on Wednesdays at 6PM!

Mark Your Calendar!



**Community of Joy
Vacation Bible School
June 19-23, 2023**



Assisted Listening System

Community of Joy owns a **Peavey Assisted Listening System**. The equipment pulls signal from the audio system and sends it to wireless receivers that individuals can check out to use each service. This will allow people to hear the scripture readings, the sermon and the music.

We currently own four receivers, four sets of ear buds, and headsets. You are welcome to bring your own ear buds or headsets to use with a receiver.



Joyful Hearts Women's Ministry



Joyful Hearts Meeting

Joyful Hearts will be meeting on **Saturday, March 11th** at **10am** in the Fellowship Hall. We will be discussing plans for upcoming projects and events.

All women are welcome to join us! For additional information, you can contact Sandy Edwards, President, at sandraledwards1957@gmail.com



Community of Joy Partners in ministry are awesome!

A note from Joyful Hearts President Sandy Edwards:

On Souper Bowl Sunday COJ collected **\$1,410.00** to donate to **Storehouse West**. Pat Shodean and I presented COJ's donation to **Storehouse West** on Monday, February 20th! They were extremely grateful for our generosity!

The next project that **Joyful Hearts** will be doing is creating **Homeless Care Kits**. Remember Pastor's sermon a couple of months ago – Juliette was asking about giving something to the homeless? This prompted an idea that I did at our previous church. Two bottles of water, one or two granola bars, and a pair of socks will be placed into a Ziploc bag to be distributed to the homeless. We will have kits available for COJ members to take and hand out to those on street corners if they wish to do so. The items going into the kits will be purchased with a \$250 Community Impact gift card that is available to Thrivent members for outreach projects. Each member is eligible to received two gift cards per year. We would like to put these kits together and include the kids, so we will be doing this on **Wednesday, March 8th** after the Agape Feast. All are welcome to join us!

Another idea that **Joyful Hearts** has been discussing is a rummage/yard sale fundraiser for the church that would be open to the public. We have not set a date yet, but we will be discussing it at our next meeting on **Saturday, March 11th** at **10:00am**.

Beyond Our Walls



Storehouse West

We are doing great with our drive-thru donations for Storehouse West. If you would like to donate, simply swing by the outside church entrance and drop off your **non-perishable** food donations in the cart.

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Hand Soap | Hamburger Helper | Sugar |
| Boxed Cereal (cold) | Canned veggies | Sugar Substitutes |
| Crackers—saltines, club, wheat, any variety | Canned tuna or meat | Coffee |
| Mac & Cheese | Canned fruit | Dog/Cat food |
| Canned tomatoes | Pasta & sauce | |
| | Canned pasta | |

Monetary donations for on-going needs can also be made by check to **Storehouse West** and mailed to:
Storehouse West, 1030 F. Veranda Dr. SE, Rio Rancho, NM 87124

Joyful Hearts collecting toiletries for Albuquerque Healthcare for the Homeless

As you travel this summer, please remember to bring home travel-size personal care items for the hygiene kits distributed by Albuquerque **Healthcare for the Homeless**. Our friend Anita Cordova of ABQHCH reports that the need is great and our donations are much appreciated.



- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Needed Items: | Sunscreen |
| Shaving supplies | Travel size tissues |
| Deodorant (male and female) | Toothbrushes/toothpaste |
| Lip balm | Band aids |

For the hygiene kits, all items need to be smaller size to fit in a gallon Ziplock bag and NO mouthwash, please.

Electronic Prayers Do Work

Community of Joy has a very active prayer community. One of the ways to participate is the **COJ Prayer Chain**. Once a week and as needed, emails are sent to all Prayer Chain members.



Prayer requests can be written on the Welcome Cards, emailed to earlene@communityofjoy.com, or communicated to Pastor Paul. If you would like to join our active **Prayer Chain** community, please email earlene@communityofjoy.com.

SERMON ON THE AMOUNTS

Giving for Year through January 31, 2023

Giving	Actual	Budget	Actual Giving
			more/(less) than Budget
Programs:	\$15,101.00	\$15,450.00	(\$349.00)
Building:	\$3,630.00	\$4,454.00	(\$820.00)
Both Funds:	\$18,731.00	\$19,900.00	(\$1,169.00)

Thank you for your faithful financial stewardship.

Community Connections

In The News (the Rio Rancho Observer)- Local Girl Scout is Top Seller

From the newspaper article: *Last year, Girl Scout and Rio Rancho resident Lillie Parrott (10) was the top seller of all of central and northern New Mexico. "I sold 8,389 cookie boxes," Parrott said,*

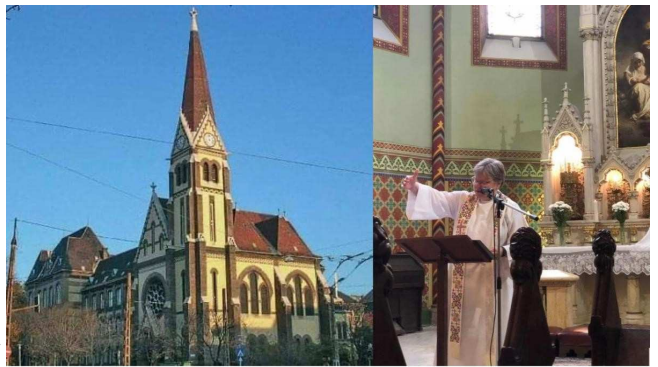
Congratulations Lillie!

You can see the newspaper article on the bulletin board in the Fellowship area.

Global Church Update from Pr. Anne Morawski, serving in Budapest, Hungary

Greetings from Budapest!

I finally wrote another email to Fazor -- the church that has hosted the English congregation in the past -- asking what they would like me to do about the English worship service. Originally we had hoped to start with Advent. The pastor, Aradi Gyorgy, was duly apologetic and said that they were so busy and overwhelmed trying to restart their Hungarian congregation that they cannot do the English congregation right now. Inflation has been so high in Hungary (more than 60% on gas and oil). The churches and meeting rooms are not heated, people aren't coming back in great numbers after COVID, inflation makes everything tight for everyone.



The war in Ukraine looms over everything and especially the older generation is on edge. Elderly people on fixed incomes are truly struggling to pay for food and heating bills. Teachers make only \$700 USD/month, but food prices are the same as in the USA. Pastors have a parsonage, but only make \$500/month. I think maybe in September we might be able to restart the English worship service. We will see. The city is full of tourists because the US Dollar is so strong and the HU forint is so weak.

For now I am working on the English Bible study and reaching out to international students who speak English. Debbi Shoopman and I are having conversations with communities around Hungary that might host English native speaker volunteers in their schools starting next September. The local ecumenical LGBT group includes me in worship and bible study, which is a blessing.

I will meet with Aradi Gyorgy soon and try to get permission to do some English worship experiments at Deak Ter (the big church at the center of town where I lead the Bible study). We could do things there I think after Easter and through the summer, maybe on a weeknight, maybe outside, etc. No one wants to take the English congregation away from Fazor, but maybe we could try something for the summer. Fazor is off the beaten path, so this could be a way to unearth some of the English speakers in Budapest more easily, give global mission some publicity by writing about it in the USA and Canada, and try something fun that could attract more young people. I would like to use "All Creation Sings" and do it with a focus on Creation Spirituality. Deak Ter has an interior courtyard that opens to the street and has a large tree and garden with enough room for chairs, etc. I hope we can do it.

That's all the news that's fit to print. It's a rainy day in Budapest. The cat is sleeping beside me on a chair. All is well. Thanks for keeping in touch!

In Christ our Hope,

Anne