



# Epistle

S T . J O H N L U T H E R A N C H U R C H



## Test God!?

Are we allowed to test God? We all recall Jesus' words to Satan as He was tempted in the desert: "Do not put the Lord, Your God, to the test." (*Matthew 4:7; Deuteronomy 6:16*) Is it ever okay to test God? There is at least one area of our life as the people of God, in which He not only allows us to test Him but challenges us to do so: Tithes and offerings supporting the work and mission of His Church.

Money is always a touchy issue. This is especially true in times of inflation or a down economy. Money, we think, is the source—the vehicle—through which we get the things we need. While there is an element of truth to this, it can also become a false perception that leads people to put their trust in something other than God.

In reality, we get the things we need only by the gracious will of our Creator. That is not a license to sit around and do nothing. God wants us to work and be productive if we are able. We are reminded of Paul's admonition to the able-bodied but lazy: "The one who is not willing to work should not eat." (*II Thess. 3:10*). Yet, the reality is that hard work does not guarantee anything. For example, I met a lot of very hard working *and very poor* people in Guatemala. It is God who provides, through economic means, the money needed to "sustain this body and life" (*Small Catechism: 1<sup>st</sup> Article of Apostles' Creed*, p. 15). In reality, the money is all His. He generously gives it to us to use appropriately and to His glory.

For the Christian, this reality creates a 'testing' relationship between God and us regarding *His* money. God tests us in expecting all among us (with exemptions for the poor—*Deuteronomy 14:28-29*), to return 10% (a *tithe*=10%) to Him out of all that He has given us. This is a test for us: Will we trust that there will be enough to provide for us and our families? Will we do this even if it means that some of the luxuries we enjoy might have to be sacrificed as a result? Luxuries like     (fill in the blank)    ? If we are tithing and giving to the mission of Christ's Church, there is nothing wrong with or sinful in spending money on any of the things we might put in that blank. However, if we enjoy these things while saying, "I would tithe, but I just can't afford it." Is that true or is it more a matter of priorities?

### Words of Truth From an Unlikely Source

I remember listening to a sports radio talk show several years ago. The host cited the increase in ticket sales for *Major League Baseball* for the second year in a row. He marveled at the time of this increase because the country's economy had been in a recession. I remember his words like they were spoken yesterday...

"The reality is that people find money for the things that are important to them."

I remember crying out, "Amen!"

His observation is true and reason for Christians to pause. When it comes to supporting the mission of Christ, it is a test for each individual's walk of faith. "How will I spend *God's* money?" (*continues on p. 2*)

When we faithfully give, we are testing God. And He delights in it. Listen to what God tells us in both the Old and New Testament about our tithes and offerings.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

*Micah 3:10*

God's people were not tithing. He was displeased and knew the heart of the matter: They did not trust that God would provide. He challenged them to test Him.

St. Paul also writes to the New Testament Church,

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

*II Corinthians 9:6-8*

"Test me!" says God. See if I won't prove to be trustworthy. See if I won't bless your tithe and provide what you need and then some. For faithful individuals and faithful congregations, God promises that blessings will abound.

We at St. John have financial challenges. As we consider the current state of our facilities, most especially our school building, challenges abound. Yet, it is also an opportunity for us to test our resolve and sacrifice for the sake of the mission of Christ at St. John and in the community of Chester.

Here's a great idea for us as individuals and as a church: Let's test God! Let's tithe and see how He will bless us. Let's commit to sacrificing self to contribute to Lutheran education and the work of His church through the school. Then let's see if God "will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." (*Micah 3:10*)

Pastor Tim Sims

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## 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### **"The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy!" Psalm 12:6**

St. John's 175th Anniversary in Celebration of God's Faithfulness: A theme has been set for the 175th Anniversary Celebration which will begin on the weekend of April 21, 2024 in conjunction with the St. John Lutheran Church founding date of April 22, 1849. The theme for the yearlong celebration will be "Great is Thy Faithfulness." Plans at this point include banners being placed around the blocks of the church and school as well as getting orders set up for t-shirts and other remembrances. Pastor Sims is working on the calendar and guest speakers for specific celebration services. Other plans include a presence in the 2024 October Fall Festival Parade and an open house in the church during the Christmas on the River weekend along with commemorative ornaments. Additionally, the organizations of our church and school will work on special projects connected to the 175th Anniversary. Look for more information to come in the weeks/months ahead. If anyone would like to offer additional ideas, please contact the church office.

## Boards Monthly Updates

### Elders

Pastor Sims continues to visit our members in nursing homes, assisted living, while also reaching out to our members who have not been to worship in a while. If possible, some of the Elders will go on visits with him. The Elders are in the process of updating the members lists and once in updated, we will try to make phone calls to each on the lists.

Ron Dunker has taken over the position of Head Usher. He is in the process of contacting the ushering teams, so he knows who is on each team and is introducing himself to them in case something is needed from him. There will be no changes in the teams or anyone on them. But if someone is willing to help, please contact Ron.

In the coming weeks, there will be some guest preachers. Most of them have been here before. These guest preachers will be here on selected dates because of some mandatory training or conferences that Pastor Sims has coming up. Pastor Sims also has some vacation time he will be using and some of the guest preachers will be filling those times as well.

First Baptist church has reached out to St John to help with "Hoodies for Hope". They are gathering NEW hoodies to pass out to those who may need them to stay warmer when the colder weather comes in.

Please be reminded that Pastor Sims Day off is on Fridays. Unless it is an emergency, please let him enjoy his day off.

And please continue to pray for Pastor Sims, Principal Powley, our teachers, secretaries, and all others who do the work of our Loving and Gracious Lord.

### Youth Report

Our youth group continues to meet on dates that hopefully work for everyone. Our next date is tbd but when one is set, all will be sent a notice.

On August 27th, our youth met over at the Sims residence for some food, fun, mores and a Bible study.

At this point, the youth group will plan on serving a light supper between services during Advent. More on this when the time gets closer.

## NEW FACILITY

St. John Lutheran School draws students of many Christian faiths as well as several unchurched students. This golden opportunity to teach children about Jesus is St. John's most visible evangelism tool. Just think how effective we would be with a new facility! The New Facility Fund was established in May 2007. With the contributions of dedicated donors, we are moving forward, our current total is \$920,497.89. Contributions are tax-deductible and can be given at any time. Set aside a steady amount to give each month or each pay day. Be a part of the future of Christian education in Chester.

## **BROTHERHOOD of the CROSS: StJLC Men's Ministry**

**Join us for a twice-monthly Men's Bible Study Breakfast.**

We will be meeting each 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month beginning October 5<sup>th</sup>.

- What? Men's Bible Study & Breakfast
- When? 6-6:50am 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month (begins October 5<sup>th</sup>)
- Where? Chester Hardee's
- Who? All men of all ages



## We are Celebrating LWML Sunday October 1<sup>st</sup>!!

On this weekend the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) at St. John invites the entire congregation to celebrate together as the Body of Christ under the theme "The King is Coming." We look forward to all praising the Lord for opportunities to share His message and love with people from all walks of life throughout our community and the world. Our mission statement reads – "As Lutheran Women in Mission, we joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions, and equip women to honor God by serving others." The Holy Spirit has been doing this for 80 years through the LWML nationally and here at St. John.



One way to accomplish those purposes is by donating coins and dollars in Mite Boxes. Based on the Biblical account of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1-4), Mite Boxes are intended for regular contributions of "mites" – offerings above and beyond the support given to congregations and the LCMS. Mite Box contributions amount to millions of dollars all across the U.S. that fund district and national mission grants.

Everyone is invited to bring their pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars to put in the big Mite Box found in the narthex. Feel free to take a small one home and fill it regularly to bring back and share.

A group of seven of our own ladies from St. John were privileged to attend the LWML's 40<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention held June 22-25 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Over 3,500 people were welcomed there under the theme "Celebrate the Lord of the Nations." That was when the voting body adopted a \$2,350,000 mission goal for the 2023-2025 biennium. This goal, by the grace of God, will fund 31 mission grants, as women and men respond in prayer and mite offerings during the next two years. The convention was an exciting time of worship, learning from Mites in Action Speakers, Bible study, singing, an LWML banner procession, mission flag presentation, mission walk along the river front, exhibit hall displays, comic interrupters, and more. So much to celebrate there and so much to celebrate with our congregation!

## **Home bound or nursing home person of the week**

Our St. John Lutheran Life Team encourages our members to consider sending a note, picture, or visiting one of our home bound or nursing home residents every week. As fellow members of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ we bear with one another in love as we grow up into Him (Ephesians 4:1-16).

October 1	James June	2121 N Market Street, Sparta, IL 62286
October 8	Shirley Colvis	3030 State St, Chester, IL 62233
October 15	Dorothy Grah	3030 State St, Chester, IL 62233
October 22	Marian Knop	3030 State St, Chester, IL 62233
October 29	Henrietta Stallman	161 Three Springs Rd, Chester, IL 62233

## **Dinner Auction October 14, 2023**

The St. John PTL is planning the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Dinner Auction "Carnival" for October 14, 2023. The Main Event will include fair food snacks, open bar, prize games, a fried chicken dinner, silent and live auction. Admit One tickets can be purchased for \$35. Contact Kelly Walls at the School (618-826-4345) to reserve your seat(s)/table. Payments can be mailed to the school (224 W. Holmes, Chester, IL 62233) or dropped off at the church office (302 W. Holmes). Optional game bands are available for an additional \$5 (before the event or at the door). This exclusive band includes a chance to win \$150 cash and a free spin on the prize wheel. The opening act starts on October 8 at Noon with the Silent Auction going live at <https://shorturl.at/hADG7>. The Main Event starts on October 14 at 4pm with snacks, drinks, and games. Dinner will be served at 6pm and the live auction starts around 7pm. The Silent Auction will close in tiers on October 14 at 7pm, 7:30pm, and 8pm. Join us for this fun fair event in supporting Christian education!

Donations are currently being accepted and are due by September 29th. Items can be dropped off at the church office, or contact Kelly at 618-826-4345 with questions.

This year's Auction Raffle will be FREE Gas and Groceries for a Month.

Winner will get their choice of gas and grocery gift cards. Value of \$800 \$1 EACH OR 6 FOR \$5. Tickets can be purchased at the Church Office or from any SJS Family.

## **51st Annual St. John Lutheran Bazaar**

The 51<sup>st</sup> Annual St. John Lutheran Bazaar will be held December 2, 2023 from 9:00am-2:00pm in the Parish Hall. The PTL is accepting Coffee Cake and Soup pre-orders until November 20. Coffee Cakes will be \$6 each. Flavors will include Cherry, Peach, Crumb, Peanut Butter (no nuts), Carmel Rolls (no nuts), Cinnamon Rolls, and Cinnamon Twists. Quarts of Soup will be available as well: Broccoli Cheddar \$8 and Chicken Noodle \$10. Pre-orders are recommended. You can contact the School Office at 618-826-4345 or fill out an order form at [www.sjshornets.com/upcoming-events](http://www.sjshornets.com/upcoming-events). Donation items for St. Nicholas Attic can be dropped off at the Church Office between October 16 and December 1 by Noon. Craft and Vendor Spaces are available for \$25 each which includes a free lunch. To reserve a vendor space at the event, please contact Mariah Bargman at 618-623-9189 or [Mariah-Design@hotmail.com](mailto:Mariah-Design@hotmail.com).

## **St. John School News**

Just a reminder as the new school year has begun! We sell scrip cards here at St John's to help support the school! You can buy script cards for everyday items such as clothes, household cleaning items, food, gas, and entertainment! They make great gifts too! Stop by the church office and asked Teresa to see the books!



## Stewardship Corner

### It's in the Way that You Use It

Consider the humble baseball bat. It is a simple tool designed for a complex task. The batter needs a tool that can consistently deliver force to a small ball which may be thrown at over 100 miles per hour, but which might also come slanting across the plate as a slow curve. For a game like this, the founders of baseball had to redesign the old cricket bat, which is more of a flat paddle. The tool had to fit the job.

But even a specially-designed tool can be used for a different purpose. It turns out that some years ago in England, the home of cricket, baseball bats suddenly started selling like hotcakes. What were folks across the pond doing with all those baseball bats? Using them as clubs in riots!

A tool can be used, and it can be misused. It's all in the way that you use it.

The same is true with the things of God. The Second Commandment states that we should "not misuse the name of the Lord." In the Small Catechism, Luther goes on to tell us exactly what this misuse is, as well as the proper use:

"We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks." (SC I)

The Lord has given us His name: He has placed it upon us in Holy Baptism and He has invited us to pray to Him as our Father. In this sense, the Lord's name is something for us to use. We should not misuse it ... and we should not fail to use it. The Pharisees of old were so afraid of misusing the name of God that they decided to simply never say the name of God (YHWH, Jehovah) at all! This non-use is just as bad as misuse. The Lord gives His gifts for our use.

A Christian steward is one who is called to use all of God's gifts for His purposes. This includes things like the Name of God, the Sacraments and the Word, and it also includes things like our family and friends, our talents and skills, our money and resources. Everything that God has given to you, He has given to you so that you may be blessed to use it for His kingdom.

It's all in the way that you use it!

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: [lcms.org/stewardship](http://lcms.org/stewardship)

### B I B L E T R E A S U R E H U N T :

**Bible Incomplete:** Fill in the missing letters to complete the passage.

An\_ we \_no\_ th\_t a\_l t\_in\_s w\_rk \_og\_th\_r f\_r g\_od \_o t\_em \_ha\_ lo\_e G\_d, t\_ th\_m w\_o a\_e t\_e c\_ll\_d a\_co\_di\_g t\_ hi\_ pu\_po\_e.

### A N S W E R T O L A S T M O N T H ' S B I B L E T R E A S U R E H U N T :

*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Genesis 12:1-3*

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

If you would like updated financial information please email Kelly at [sjschurchsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:sjschurchsecretary@gmail.com) or call the church office at 618-826-3545.

### ACOLYTES

Sat Sept 30	5:00 pm	Jayden West
Sun Oct 1	7:45 am	Levi Caldwell
	10:00 am	Charlie Dethrow
Sat Oct 7	5:00 pm	Bryce Williams
Sun Oct 8	7:45 am	Addison Coffey
	10:00 am	Jack Luthy
Sat Oct 14	5:00 pm	Preston Abell
Sun Oct 15	7:45 am	Hoyt Walls
	10:00 am	Rhett Creason
Sat Oct 21	5:00 pm	Jenna Buskohl
Sun Oct 22	7:45 am	Duncan Bargman
	10:00 am	Hannah Crow
Sat Oct 28	5:00 pm	Kenndy Norton/Grace Irose
Sun Oct 29	7:45 am	Levi Caldwell/Addison Coffey
	10:00 am	Mallorie Homan/Kale Sprengel

### WEEKEND JANITORS

Sept 30 & Oct 1	Ron Cushman/Lisa Meade
Oct 7 & 8	Gary Kelkhoff
Oct 14 & 15	Ron Cushman/Lisa Meade
Oct 21 & 22	Randy Campbell
Oct 28 & 29	Matt Durham

### RADIO ANNOUNCERS & TECHNICIANS

Oct 1	Jason Coffey/Bob Platt
Oct 8	Brett Klindworth/Charlie Barman
Oct 15	Mardell Granger/Dave Verseman
Oct 22	Tim Lochhead/Tony Young
Oct 29	Dallas Redeker/Bob Platt

### FOOD PANTRY

Oct 3	Wanda Dethrow
Oct 10	Richard Pautler
Oct 17	Larry McDonough
Oct 24	Shirley Roth
Oct 31	Rosemary Oetting

### GREETERS

Sat Sept 30	5:00 pm	Ruby Shirmer
Sun Oct 1	7:45 am	Marilyn Duensing
	10:00 am	Susan McCure
Sat Oct 7	5:00 pm	Amber Cushman
Sun Oct 8	7:45 am	Dwayne & Susan Schwarz
	10:00 am	Diane Kelkhoff
Sat Oct 14	5:00 pm	Virginia Rowold
Sun Oct 15	7:45 am	Barb Fricke

	10:00 am	Shirley Roth
Sat Oct 21	5:00 pm	Janice Dettmer
Sun Oct 22	7:45 am	Sarah Schenk
	10:00 am	Donna Young
Sat Oct 28	5:00 pm	Carolyn Colvis
Sun Oct 29	7:45 am	Brenda Pautler
	10:00 am	Louise Liefer

### USHER TEAMS

Sat Sept 30	5:00 pm	Don Stallman
Sun Oct 1	7:45 am	Ron Rathert
	10:00 am	Rick Casten
Sat Oct 7	5:00 pm	Don Stallman
Sun Oct 8	7:45 am	Gary Duensing
	10:00 am	Don Stallman
Sat Oct 14	5:00 pm	Don Stallman
Sun Oct 15	7:45 am	Dennis Kontz
	10:00 am	Gary Eggemeyer
Sat Oct 21	5:00 pm	Don Stallman
Sun Oct 22	7:45 am	Ron Rathert
	10:00 am	Rick Casten
Sat Oct 28	5:00 pm	Don Stallman
Sun Oct 29	7:45 am	Gary Duensing
	10:00 am	Don Stallman

### ALUMINUM CANS

Oct 1-7	Fred Fricke
Oct 8-14	Larry McDonough
Oct 15-21	Brett Klindworth
Oct 22-28	Steve Stallman
Oct 29- Nov 4	Fred Fricke

### WORSHIP SERVICES

Saturday 5:00 p.m., Sunday 7:45 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.  
Sunday School and Bible Class at 9:00 a.m. Sunday  
Worship Broadcast on KSGM 980 AM / online at [ksgm980.com](http://ksgm980.com)

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Church Office, 302 W. Holmes, Chester, IL 62233  
Phone 618-826-3545  
Internet Address [www.stjohnchester.com](http://www.stjohnchester.com)

### E - MAIL

Rev. Timothy Sims- [timoteosims@hotmail.com](mailto:timoteosims@hotmail.com)  
Teresa Ball- [stjohnchurchsecrtery@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnchurchsecrtery@gmail.com)  
Kelly Walls— [sjschurchsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:sjschurchsecretary@gmail.com)

St. John Ev. Lutheran Church  
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Chester, Illinois 62233

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Jesus Loves

