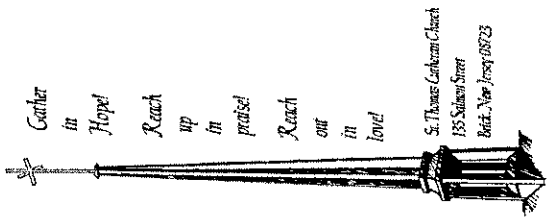


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TOMS RIVER, NJ

The Vine and the Branches
St. Thomas Lutheran Church
135 Salmon Street
Brick, NJ 08723



Return Service Requested

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

FEBRUARY 2019

The Spirit of the Lord
is on me
to preach good news to the poor
to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. **Luke 4:18**

THE NEWSLETTER OF
ST. THOMAS LUTHERAN CHURCH
135 SALMON STREET, BRICK, NJ 08723

St. Thomas Church invites ALL,
As we gather in HOPE,
Reach up in PRAISE,
And reach out in LOVE!

Sunday Worship

9:15 Traditional Service
11:30 Contemporary Service
10:25am-11:20 am Education time (Child and adult).

Saturday Worship

5:30 PM—Informal Spoken Service

The Directory

The Rev. Judith Anderson – Pastor
The Rev. John Anderson – Pastor
Reylene Starego – Deacon-- Director of Music
Lisa Bates, Secretary

St Thomas Church website: www.stlcnj.org
St. Thomas Church e-mail: office@stlcnj.org
Telephone: 732-477-5533

Like us on Facebook: St. Thomas Lutheran Church
St. Thomas Twitter @ stlc08723

We are now on Instagram. Please follow us at: St. Thomas Lutheran Church

The church office is open: Monday — Friday from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

When the office is closed, messages may be left on voice mail. Please leave a message.

FOR PASTORAL CARE

If anyone becomes seriously ill, is hospitalized, is planning to have surgery, or otherwise wishes pastoral care, please call the church office (732-477-5533). In case of emergency or if death seems imminent, call the office first, and if no one is there, please call the emergency number, which is included on the answering machine message.

In case of a death in the family, please make your first call to the church or pastor, and then to a funeral home of your choice for removal of the body. Especially in a time of crisis like this, your pastors stand ready for immediate ministry with you. It does not matter if your deceased family member was a member of St. Thomas or not. It only matters that your church wants to be with you in the time of your loss. We will be available to you for planning an appropriate service of worship, which serves as an important farewell to your loved one, a celebration of his or her life, and which brings the Good News of resurrection through Christ.



It is important to us that our shut-in members are included in the life of our congregation and we want to make sure that they receive Holy Communion. Sometimes people become shut-in and we are unaware. If you are a shut-in or are aware of someone who is also shut-in and are not being visited, please contact the church office (732-477-5533) so that the pastors and members of our visitation team can visit with you and bring you the sacrament.

PRAYER LIST

As the church and disciples of Jesus, it is an important part of our ministry to hold each other up in prayer. Therefore, it is our privilege to pray for those in need and we are glad to do so. If you wish to add someone to the prayer list, please use a **prayer request form**. **Individuals will be left on for 4 weeks**. If they are still in need of prayer, please complete a new form. Thank you for your cooperation. Please note that in addition to the prayer list in the bulletin, there is a more comprehensive list available on the table in the narthex (lobby) for you to use for your individual prayers.

Congregational Council

Pastor Judy Anderson	pastorjudy@stlcnj.org
Pastor John Anderson	pastorjohn@stlcnj.org
President	
Jean Rieker	Jeandrieker@gmail.com
Vice-President	
Colleen Sutton	ColleenS346@aol.com
Secretary	
Angela Gagliardo	angelaandrewsgagliardi@gmail.com
Treasurer	
Norbert Star	Norbert.star@yahoo.com
Linda Cook-Bensen	yeahrightguy@comcast.net
Jen Cubelo	Jensing@aol.com
Judy Ebery	jejm25@gmail.com
Kristin O'Gara	kristinmogara@aol.com
Robert Horn	rhorn@verizon.net
Eileen Allen	allenee@aol.com
Sarah Long	sarah.long1996@yahoo.com

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ST. THOMAS

- Serve Others
- Make Disciples
- Invite All
- Live in Hope
- Embody Christ



MORE

MEMBERSHIP

We are always glad to welcome new people to share in God's mission at St. Thomas. If you are interested in becoming a member of St. Thomas, please speak with one of the pastors.



Are You On Facebook?

Every time you are at St. Thomas, please check in to let people know that you are here. This is a great way to let the community know what we are doing and what God is up to in our midst!

Invite, Invite, Invite

If you are excited by what is happening and what will be happening at St. Thomas, tell someone. Jesus calls us to be disciples, not members. Each one bring one!!!



We welcomed the following children into the Body of Christ
through the sacrament of Holy Baptism

January 12

Weston Paul LaRocca, infant son of Jennifer and Vincent LaRocca

January 19

Noah Daniel Sorokach, infant son of Craig Sorokach and Tammy Surmanow

Join us in a Joyful Noise Christian Worship Service

All Are Welcome!

Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord! Psalm 100:1

This "Joyful Noise" service is for individuals (and their families) with developmental and multiple disabilities including but not limited to Autism, PDD-NOS, ADHD, CP, Down's Syndrome.

When: The 2nd Sunday of each month at 1:15 pm.

Fellowship and snacks will follow each service.
(Please see Pr. Judy if you can help provide snacks)



Expectations of Members of St. Thomas

As we think here at St. Thomas about our redevelopment and our desire to grow as disciples, it's important to know what expected as a church member.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to:

- Pray regularly, study scripture, and listen to God's voice and dream for the congregation.
- Grow in discipleship and in personal financial stewardship practices.
- Promote healthy, Christ-centered relationships and decision making.
- Use God's gifts and find ways to engage the whole baptized people of God in ministry and outreach.
- Be full partners in the task of evangelism: sharing faith and inviting people into a relationship with Jesus.
- Cultivate a climate of intentional hospitality for people new to life in the church.



From the Pastors' pen.....

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Last month we got to thinking about why our newsletter is called "The Vine and Branches." Have you ever wondered about that? Where does that name come from? In gospel of John, Jesus says, "*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:6)



Jesus speaks these words as he prepares to enter the Garden of Gethsemane and ultimately face his death on the cross. In these, some of his final words to his disciples, Jesus is reminding them that they must depend on him. This passage has to do with the disciples' relationship with Jesus, connectedness to him, and how they will be sustained and grow as they move forward.

Even the most awful of gardeners know what happens when a branch is severed from a tree or plant; that branch will die because it no longer receives nutrients from the plant. The same can be said for us. We must be connected to Jesus in order to bear fruit (e.g. serve one another) and to be faithful followers.

So, our newsletter, "The Vine and Branches," helps to keep us, branches, connected to Jesus, the vine. "The Vine and Branches" includes articles, information about upcoming events and worship opportunities, thoughts about stewardship, opportunities for service, etc. All of these things are intended to nurture our faith and to help us to stay connected to Jesus, the vine, and to the community of faith which also helps to nurture our growth as disciples.

In God's never-ending love,

Pastor Judy & Pastor John



Giving is Living

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

1 Peter 4:10



Am I the only one who can't watch the news anymore because it's too scary, too sad, too hard to believe that things in our country have gone so awry. Between the news on TV and the ridiculousness that is spewed on social media, I worry just how bad things are going to get. I joined Facebook when I was blessed with my first grandchild Emma, because I could see pictures of her and see what she was up to. But along with those happy images came posts from people spewing such hatred, bigotry, and violence it made me shudder. And to make matters worse, my own brother's Facebook page regularly posts articles about the foolishness of religion and believing in a higher power. I know he thinks I'm foolish for my beliefs, but I just can't understand why he should have to denigrate something whose basis is the power of grace and love for all. Read some of the lyrics to the hymn "To Be Your Presence" ...

To be your presence is our mission here, to show compassion's face and list'ning ear, to be your heart of mercy ever near ...

To be your presence is our mission bold, to feed the poor and shelter homeless cold, to be your hands of justice, right uphold ...

To be your presence is our mission blest, to speak for all the broken and oppressed, to be your voice of hope, your love expressed ...

Why, even if one doesn't believe in God, would they feel the necessity to bash those of us who believe in the lyrics of that song ... show compassion and mercy, feed and shelter, uphold justice, give hope to those who need it. I just don't understand it. But I get back to him in my own way ... I pray for him!!

Colleen Sutton



Your Year End Giving Statements are available on the table in the narthex. Please take yours.

Thank You!



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING - FEBRUARY 3

Our annual congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, February 4 following the 11:30 am service (12:45 pm). Soup will be provided. Please make every effort to attend this important meeting. New council members will be voted on as well as the budget for 2019.

PIANO BUILDER'S CORNER



The Piano Builders remain on their Thursday and plus schedule as needed. We cleared out the street drain as best we could and kept the water flowing. When we have heavy rains there will be ponding water but it will still drain and eventually clear up. Scott installed several now required CO2 detectors. Prior to the Fire inspection we checked all the exit lights and replaced several burnt-out bulbs. One of our new tasks will be to put any gym tables away as Soccer Shots uses the gym at night. With Christmas over we took the trees apart, threw out the old ones, took down all the wreaths, and put away all the decorations. I found a gouge in a gym floor tile so I cleaned it up and put some floor cement in the hole and will see how it holds up. The Board of Health has required us to install a separate hand washing sink in the kitchen, so we had a plumber install the rough plumbing and we finished the installation. We also installed a outside locked mailbox unit for mail delivery when the office is closed. I think Lenny got a kick out of using my hammer drill. Since the start of the new year Lee Irwin has joined our group and has also helped the food pantry as needed.

There are many small projects that require attention and as usual we look for and find those things that should be improved. We can still use any additional help; even if you can only occasionally join us, your presence would be welcomed. Anyone interested just speak to one of the builders: Scott Long, Lenny Cubelo, John Sutton, or Tony Blanken. If you're not sure who any of us are, just drop a note in Scott Long's mailbox in the hallway.



The Food Pantry is particularly in need of pasta, cereal, tomato soup, vegetable soup as well as any kind of beef noodle. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS!!**



HOLY CONVERSATIONS

HOLY CONVERSATIONS has resumed on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm for the month of February. We are studying *Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers*. Please join us!



Tuesday, March 5 – 6:00pm

Join us for a potluck dinner and a movie (TDB). A sign-up sheet will be available on the bulletin board near the church doors.



Ash Wednesday is Wednesday, March 6

Worship will be held at 10:00 am and 7:00 pm.



Once again we hope to administer ashes in our community for people who may not otherwise have the opportunity to receive them. We will be at Dorado Plaza and outside of Manhattan Bagel early in the morning. If you would like to help, please speak with Pastor Judy or Pastor John.



Tuesdays in Lent – Soup 6:00 pm / Study 6:45 pm

Walking with the “Saints”

More info to follow in the March V&B



St. Thomas Lutheran Church Food Pantry “40 Days, 40 Items Food Drive”

Do something special this Lent: help fight hunger one day at a time! Place one non-perishable food item into a box each day during Lent (40 days = 40 items). **Return the box** and its contents to St. Thomas by Palm Sunday, April 14. All items will be blessed during worship (on April 14) and will be used to stock the shelves of the St. Thomas Food Pantry.

Here are some suggested items:

tuna fish, macaroni and cheese, 2lb bags of rice, peanut butter, jelly, canned fruit, jello, pudding, toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.), soap, shampoo, lotion, toilet paper, paper towels, granola type bars, cereal, oatmeal/grits/oat bran, powdered milk, evaporated milk, juice boxes, canned meat (spaghetti-o's, canned hams, corned beef hash), ketchup, mustard, mayo, canned potatoes, pet food.

*Thank you for walking this **Lenten journey** with us, and helping to feed a neighbor!*

The February Vine & Branches is sponsored by :

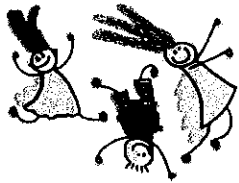
Karen Moriarty

The Sanctuary Candle in February is sponsored by:

The Sutton Family, in memory of Ida

Eileen Allen

If you wish to sponsor the V&B or the Sanctuary Candle, sign-up sheets and envelopes for payment are available on the bulletin board in the narthex.



YOUTH GROUP LOCK-IN – Rescheduled!
Sunday, February 17 thru
Monday, February 18
6:00 pm – 9:00 am

Please bring a sleeping bag, pillow, toiletries, games, movies, etc. There will also be a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for snacks, drinks, etc.

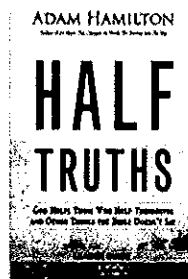


“SOUPER” BOWL SUNDAY

On Saturday, February 2 & Sunday, February 3 our youth will greet you as you come to worship with soup pots. You are invited to make a cash donation or a donation of a boxed or canned good for our Food Pantry.



BOOK STUDY has resumed on **Wednesdays at 6:30 pm** at Atlanta Bread on Cedar Bridge Road. Join us for dinner or a cup of coffee, fellowship and stimulating and informal conversation. We will be looking at *Half Truths: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn't Say* by Adam Hamilton.



The Adult Sunday School is using a video series to study the history of Christian Worship. They meet on Sundays during the Christian Education hour in the Sunday School office.

Don't forget that the 4th Sunday of each month is "Noisy Change Offering" Sunday. Our next noisy change offerings will be used to get the security cameras donated by the Gagliardi family installed and wired properly.



CULTIVATING MISSIONAL CAPACITY WORKSHOPS

Our Next “Highlighted” Ministry

On Sunday February 17, the “highlighted” small group ministry will be the **Usher Ministry**.

MISSION STATEMENT:

"As a host of God, help prepare communicants and guests for worship. Maintain order and promote public relations for all."

PURPOSE OF MINISTRY:

As ushers, we are a very important line of communication, an opportunity to make you feel welcomed and convey the Holy Spirit in the house of the Lord. We hope that each of you will take part in attending one of the three church services at St. Thomas: 9:15 AM and 11:30 AM each Sunday and Saturday 5:30 PM

We would like you to feel that the church is the Lord's House where you can find solitude and peace.

There will be members of the ushering ministry in the narthex on Sunday February 17 to answer any questions you may have concerning this ministry and to sign you up if you feel you can be part of this ministry. Think of it this way - you'll be at church, why not help out!



HELP WANTED IN THESE IMPORTANT MINISTRIES

Are you interested in serving in worship? We are in need of:

- Asst. Minister for 5th Sunday at 9:15 am and 1st Sunday at 11:30 am
 - AV Tech for the 3rd Sunday at 11:30 am
 - Ushers for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays at 11:30 am
 - Altar Guild for the 1st, 4th, and 5th Sundays at 11:30 am
 - Acolytes for the 2nd and 3rd Sundays at 11:30 am

(4th grade and above; please speak with one of the pastors so they can arrange for training.)

To find out if Worship Services have been canceled due to inclement weather, please go to our web page www.stlcnj.org or call the Church office at

732-477-5533 to hear a message.

