

quarterly connections

a publication of joy! lutheran church





Are You Ready to Welcome My Mom in the Morning?

by Jenelle Ancona, Relational Ministries Coordinator

There are numerous reasons people seek a church and when they do, are we ready to see (welcome), value (converse with) and celebrate (accept fully) them? Are we willing to stop a conversation with someone we know to greet a face we don't know? Are we afraid to look a fool if we greet someone who has been here for 10 years thinking they were someone newer? Please read the following blog by **Donna Claycomb Sokol**, as I did, and reflect on her mom's need for a church. **Is Joy! ready to welcome her fully this Sunday?** (Used in this article with permission from Donna).

Are You Ready to Welcome My Mom in the Morning?

If you follow me on Facebook, then you're likely aware that I post a PSA about every 90 days. Immediately after I visit the Melanoma and Skin Cancer Clinic, I share how many biopsies were needed or seek to capture my joy for not needing any at all before encouraging all who will read to please have their skin checked by a dermatologist. I've heard the words "skin cancer" multiple times and the dreaded word "melanoma" on four occasions - enough to have a Vitamin D deficiency at this point in my journey.

But my mother just heard the word "melanoma" spoken on the phone for the first time last week. Her primary care physician discovered an odd looking mole on her shin and insisted that it be removed. When the call came from the lab, she heard a sentence that includes "stage 3," "new skin cancer center," "appointment with specialist and plastic surgeon on Monday." She's since done her share of research with the aid of Google, and the results have been enough to keep her body awake at night as her mind ponders the worse case scenario.

I may not have helped today when I shared how she should prepare to spend at least two weeks in a recliner if a complex wound closure is needed. I've then reassured her that her diagnosis is worse than any of the four I've had - reassurance that's not exactly helpful in hindsight. And then I said once this morning and again this afternoon, "Mom, you really need a church."

My mom has always had a church. The child of a Methodist pastor, she was raised to never miss Sunday morning worship. She drug our sorry behinds out of bed every Sunday morning, regardless of where we had been the night before. My family was always at church. Faith was and is central to our lives.

But something has changed in the last few years. My mother moved back to Missouri to be near family, and going to church has become something she dreads. She's now in her 70s and single. An hour in a sanctuary

has turned out to be one of the loneliest hours of the week. She reports how she sometimes only sees couples or families or groups of people who clearly know each other. Often, no one speaks to her even though it's clear she's a visitor. There is no other venue in the community where she feels more alone than in the church.

But she needs a church.

She needs a pastor who will pray for her. She needs a community where someone might feel called to accompany her to her doctor's appointment and where others might show up with a meal - even people she has never met before. She needs to be reminded that she is not alone - that we are never alone - no matter what we're going through.

She's visiting another church tomorrow.

If she comes to your church, are you ready to welcome her? Are there people in your congregation who are more eager to welcome a guest than they are to sit in their familiar spot? Is there someone in your pew who might reach up and simply acknowledge a visitor sitting nearby who they notice is crying? Is there a compassionate team of people who feel called to show up because God shows up and the only way we know God shows up is through us? Are there people in your church who feel called to care for people - and not just those whose names or stories they know? Will someone be with her - really be with her - in the weeks to come?

I hope so. In fact, I'm counting on you to be this kind of church.

Because my mom really needs a church right now.

And as I ponder who might come into our sanctuary, I pray no one goes unnoticed. If there is someone going through a crisis that has kept them up through the night, I pray they feel like they are seen. I pray someone notices their tears or their anxiety. I pray they know they do not have to be alone. And I pray I'll always be the kind of pastor who is eager to show up in the suffering and pain of life - when the darkness is far more visible than the light.

God, will you please help your churches be the fullest expression of your love and light that we can be? And, will you please help my mom find a church family who can journey with her during this season - and every other season of life? God, she's going to church again tomorrow. She's counting on your people showing up for her. Please help that congregation welcome her in the morning. Amen.

Advent 2017 Sermon Series – “God With Us”

by Laura Kline, Director of Worship Arts



With all of the shopping, wrapping, baking, and gathering that takes place in the weeks leading up to Christmas, it's a good thing that the Church provides us with the season of Advent. Advent calls us to get back to the basics and focus our attention on the importance of the season and is a perfect way for us to learn more about ourselves and our God and His plan of salvation in Jesus.

In our instant-gratification world, we want everything to happen right now. Advent teaches us that sometimes we need to wait for the good things to happen in our lives. God's timing is always better than our own, and just as God sent Jesus to save us "in the fullness of time", God's plans for our lives will come at just the right moment.

As we wait for the birth of Jesus on Christmas, we mark the four weeks of Advent by lighting a new candle on the Advent wreath each week. On Christmas Eve, the white Christ candle is lit in celebration of Jesus's birth. Candlelight is a reminder to us that Jesus is the Light of the world, the Light no darkness can overcome. Taking time to light a candle each week is a simple way to bring the Good News that Jesus is coming to overcome the dark powers of death and sin forever.

Please join us for our Advent series "God With Us" We will focus each week on the Advent candle themes – hope, peace, joy, and love as we remember that God went to amazing lengths to build a relationship with us by sending his son, Jesus on Christmas Day.

Sermon Planning

by Laura Kline, Director of Worship Arts



For the past several years, Joy! has put a great deal of effort into planning a yearly sermon calendar. We believe that the Church is the hope of the world which means we need to equip the Church with messages that fill people with the Word of God to send them out to live as Christ followers. This belief drives us to pray for God's direction and plan ahead to implement the crucial messages we feel God wants His Church to hear.



We also believe in the value of collaboration and know that we are better together than any one of us can be on our own.

Therefore, in planning sermon themes for 2018 we held two retreats. The first retreat was a brainstorming session with about 15 congregation members and staff members to brainstorm topics and then vote on the direction we felt God was leading us. We got input from every age group to determine message topics.

At the second retreat, a small group of staff and key worship leaders were present to do the tedious work of putting together a calendar and started writing the key ideas and themes for each series.

I'm so excited for what we have in store for 2018 sermon themes. We will begin the year talking about life balance and prioritizing the things we should say yes to (and the things we should say no to!). Other topics to look for in 2018 include Joy! vision, acceptance, forgiveness, contentment, Jesus, the Bible, and even a deep dive into songs. Thank you to those who participated in our retreats, especially our leader Pastor Mark who believes in the importance of worship and teaching.





Staying Faithful for the Long Haul

by Jenelle Ancona, Relational Ministries Coordinator

“When you’re struggling don’t keep it to yourself. You have to let others know what’s going on.” said Joy! Member, and recent kidney recipient, David Young.

For two years David was in need of a kidney. When David and his wife, Sheryl, first heard the news they thought it was no big deal and that one of their family members or Sheryl herself could just donate their kidney but when that didn’t go as planned panic began to set in. Sheryl admitted she was working diligently to solve the need herself. For the first year, she’d do all she could to find a kidney for David and then each night she’d come home and walk the dog and just cry. In the meantime, David was trying to keep a positive outlook and believe God was looking out for them. David had a brain aneurysm prior to needing a kidney and God responded to their prayers during that time so having been down the path of needing and trusting God before and experiencing that blessing made it easier for David to trust this time around. But Sheryl admitted going into the second year she’d finally submit and turn the need over to God but then take it right back and try harder to find a kidney then submit again and around she went with God. “In the end, David and I had very little to do with the solution. It was all God.” By no suggestion of their own, one of their Joy small group members & friend, Al Caldwell, suggested bringing the Northwestern kidney team to Joy! to see what interest could be stirred up and through that event the donor, Heidi Houdek, was nudged by God and ultimately became the answer to their prayers.

Sheryl and David stated that God gave them just enough to keep moving forward during those long two years. They were amazed by the community around them within and outside of the church. They had people willing to be tested, even their electrician, and people from all walks of life praying



for them and giving them hope. David stated, “Community is so strong and important. You need the support of others holding you up, praying for you, and giving you strength. It’s mind-blowing, humbling and vital.”



Both of them commented on how many good people there are in the world and how through all of this they are closer than ever. Sheryl said “We know without a doubt after all this we are committed to each other for the long haul of marriage.” Sheryl & David are looking forward to a life now with less doctor appointments, more travel and more what people consider “normal life” stuff. Their family hadn’t been able to travel to see David’s family for the last 2 year because it wasn’t near a dialysis center but now they are free to reunite! This family is now a living testimony of the hope we have in God through community. For HE is good, ALL THE TIME!!



So What Ever Happened To Joy's New Vision?



by Mark Borgetti, Lead Pastor

So whatever happened to Joy's new vision? Do we have a new vision? I am so glad you asked! I will COMPLETELY answer that question on **February 11th. That's when Joy! has a single worship service to celebrate what God has done and share the vision God is asking us to embrace!**

In the meantime, let me get you up to speed. The last time the Mobilization Team reported on the process was in June at the annual meeting. We highlighted completing the Discovery Phase (i.e. reviewing focus group results, comparing our demographics to the community, etc.). Since then we have been progressing through the Visioning Phase. We invited a gifted and faithful professional to help navigate this critical step. Thank you, Pastor John Holm!!! John met with us early in November and helped us answer a critical question. What's our Core S.C.O.R.E.? The answer to that question becomes our strategic priorities over the next 3-5 years. Priorities that will get attention and resources. Here are the actual questions the team wrestled with. The answer to these three questions become our three main strategic priorities.

- **<S>ustainability:** What is one current ministry where we must continue to excel and even improve?
- **<C>apabilities:** To achieve our desired future, what is the one new capability we must master, even if we don't have a clue what it looks like yet?
- **<O>utreach:** What is the one most significant external result or outcome that would tell us we are fulfilling our mission?
- **<R>esources:** What new or expanded resources (i.e. money, partnerships, training, personnel, etc.) would be beneficial in supporting our desired future.
- **<E>ngagement:** What should be the primary way the you move your congregation to deeper engagement in your mission work?

These questions lead to wonderful spirited conversations. And we have preliminary answers. But before presenting them, we will use December and January to hone them. And then on February 11th will be the big reveal.

This has been a long process and I applaud the staff and lay leaders commitment and dedication sticking with the process. I am beyond excited where God has been leading us! So I ask you to continue to pray for us as we get ready to announce where God is leading us!





Special Needs Ministry

by Erica Gill

I started attending Joy! in September of 2016 when I felt that my connection with God had diminished after years of not attending church and feeling disconnected with my spiritual self. From the moment that I walked into Joy! I felt a wave of love and support along with a welcoming force that pulled me into worship and allowed me to feel right at home (Surely I'm not the only one who's experienced this). Wouldn't it be nice if we, as a church could extend this welcoming force onto others who are ready to rejoin the church but may be scared or too intimidated to walk through the Joy! doors.

I was raised catholic and my family attended church every weekend until my younger brother was diagnosed with Autism and his behaviors became irrational and unpredictable. The fear of being judged, ridiculed or looked-down upon discouraged my parents from continuing their faith journey in church. From the numerous support groups, therapy sessions and just day-to-day conversation, I know that my family is not the only ones who have experience this form of distress. As a church that focuses on accepting others, encouraging spiritual growth and building relationships, it's a shame that there's community of people that fear of coming to church in fear of rejection, discouragement and segregation.

When Cheryl O'Neil first approached me about starting the Special Needs Ministry at Joy! I jumped at the chance to get involved because I believe that God's love extends to everyone; no matter their shape, size, color or level of cognitive development. My goal for this ministry is to work with the congregation to help welcome families affected by special needs and show our love and support for them, just as how I felt the first day I walked into Joy!

For me, Joy! is a safe place, a comfortable place, where I can feel at home away from home. I hope to help the families that once shied away from the church in fear of rejection, to reconnect with God in a welcoming, joy-filled, Christ-centered community. God is calling our church to open our arms and hearts to the families of those affected by special needs and welcome those to worship beside us every Sunday.

The Special Needs Ministry is looking for people to join our team with ideas on how to help Joy! become a more special-needs friendly community. Anyone who has a passion for helping others in hope for them to experience Joy! the way we all have is welcome to attend one of our next meeting on January 14th or email Cheryl at Cheryl.oneill@joylutheran.org.

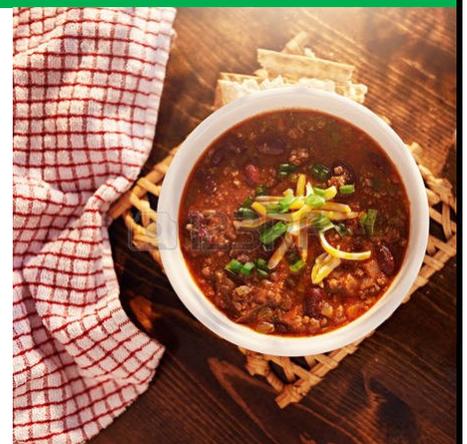
SAVE THE DATE: February 11, 2018 is the Annual Soup and Chili Challenge to support COOL Food Pantry



WANTED: Joy's best soup and chili creators AND Joy's best soup and chili tasters

ENTRY FEE: Just a donation of canned soup or chili for COOL Food Pantry

DETAILS: following a single 9:45 a.m. worship service, tasting and voting takes place from 11 a.m. to Noon and the winners will be announced at 12:15 p.m.



Operation Christmas Child Recap: A Journey into Generosity

by Cheryl O'Neill



On Sunday, November 12th, our church came together to make a difference in the life of a child. Under the amazing leadership of our Kids' Adventure Klub teachers, Ellie Jensen, Robin Flory, Sam Flory, Children's Ministry Team, Kaite Fuko, Maggie & Kelly O'Neill, and the heart and hands of our kids in the 4th/5th Grade 10:30 On Target class... lives were changed!! We came together over food, fellowship and service. I loved watching the smiles on the kids faces as they set up, prepared the meal, served food, prayed, helped fill shoeboxes, and helped clean up. A very special thank you to Ann & Kristi Bowman, for the extra special hands in the kitchen and Dave Bowman for taking pictures all morning. To the people of Joy!... I can't express my gratitude for your unending support of our children. I am so very thankful to be a part of such a wonderful faith family!



**38 Families + 108
People = 127 Boxes**

**127 children's lives
changed around
the world!!!**





Youth Ministry - Rethinking Rummage

by Colin Cranmer, Director of Youth Ministries

Quick notice just to make sure everyone is aware: Student Ministries will not be holding the Joy Rummage Sale in 2018. My planning team has talked and wants to try something new this year to add a little freshness for the kids and congregation. But we also wanted to make sure that you guys knew as soon as possible so you could donate any of the stuff you're hanging onto for us to awesome places like the new Home of the Sparrow Thrift Store in Third Lake, which supports housing and emergency for women and families in need and also does furniture pick up! Check them out here: <https://www.hosparrow.org/sparrows-nest-thrift-stores/third-lake/>

In place of the rummage sale, we will be holding a Silent Auction Night on March 4th, so save the date! It will be a catered dinner and all-church bingo night and we can't wait to have a blast with you all. We will be creating baskets for people to bid on, so if anyone has any tickets, nice items, unused timeshares, lesson, service or fun things that they think would be awesome and enticing for people that you'd be willing to donate, we'd love to know! We're so excited to do this night and support the kids in a new way.

Thanks Joy!



A Time to Be Loud, A Time to Be Quiet

by Nicole Towne

I walk into my nine a.m. class Monday and realize there's a reading quiz. I haven't finished the nearly 200 pages of assigned reading for the week. In truth, I've barely started. Also the quiz isn't really a quiz. It consists of 17 extended responses. I am already in a panic about all the assignments I have to complete for the week including two projects, a six-page paper requiring 10 sources, two projects, a workshop piece to edit for my English class, and a bunch of reading I now feel shamed into completing. Happy Monday.

If you know a college student or have been one yourself this may sound all too familiar. Despite it all, I am grateful to be able to attend University a thousand miles away from Lake County Illinois. Even though it's been difficult, my college experience has shaped me into the person I am today. It has helped me find my voice.

Before I moved west, I spent many Sunday and Wednesday nights in youth group at Joy. I remember carving pumpkins, doodling, playing sardines (ask Colin), singing worship songs quietly to myself, and singing loudly because I felt something real.

Youth group has taught me that there is a time for everything. There is a time to be silly. There is a time to be serious. I laughed as I watched my peers taste canned baby food during a game. I did my best to sit

calmly and listen while Colin or Shay shared an evening message. I still would sneak glances or share smiles with peers in the room. And that was ok.

Youth group was a place I didn't have to pretend to be perfect. I was able to come as I was and participate in ways that felt comfortable. Some of my warmest memories are embedded in the love I received from the adults who made programs like ATF and Crossroads possible. These were the people who helped me feel loved when I didn't feel loved. They sat with me when I cried. They laughed with me when I laughed.

My spiritual life has been anything, but smooth. It's clumsy. It's more taking than giving. It's more questioning than believing. During my time in college, where my givens are no longer guaranteed and my family dynamic is taking a new shape, I remember that it is okay to question. Questioning faith and seeking out answers to those questions will only make me construct a stronger faith foundation. I thank ATF for teaching me that questioning is not only a part of any faith journey, but it is a process I can use to grow.

Thank you to Colin, Shay, Amy, Jill, and Kevin. The love, kindness and support you showed to me during my youth group years means more than you know. And thank you to Joy! for your continued support of youth.

Giving Tree 2017

by Mary Reiling

Each December the congregation of Joy! joins together to live out our mission of reaching out to our neighbors with Christ's love. The women of Amazing Grace are so grateful for your incredibly generous support year after year. We hung 175 client requests on the tree as well as additional gift card requests. This year, like last year, the clients of the Zacharias Center will receive your gifts. Here are some quotes from thank you notes that were written to you from last year's recipients.

... We are going through a difficult time now but it has been a blessing to see how the lord has been providing!...

... I just want to thank you...it was and is the only present I got...

.... Thank you for making a difference in our lives by providing "sanity" and "love"...

... to know that someone cares means more than you can know...

... you made this holiday season memorable and possible...

... I can only hope your holiday was as special as you made mine...

One member of clinical team 2 summed up the staff and clients feelings with this message. "We can't thank you enough for what you all do for our clients. I hope you know the impact your generosity has had. Clients have said thank you over and over again. One client told me, " You don't know what this means to me" with tears in eyes. Often our clients are hurt by loved ones. To receive a helping hand from a stranger and be shown compassion and kindness by one is incredible. "

Thank you Joy!



COOL Thanksgiving Gift Basket Drive

by Becky Valenta



Thank you to everyone at Joy! for the generous support of the Thanksgiving Holiday Gift Basket collections supporting COOL Food Pantry. We collected \$3000 in support of the Gift Baskets which were \$20 each and feed a family of four a holiday meal complete with a 12-16 lb turkey. So Joy! contributed in feeding 150 families their holiday meal! Wonderful!

We can feel proud to be supporting our neighbors in need, during the Holidays and throughout the year. Joy! regularly provides donated food to COOL and out of the total of about 1600 families fed each month by COOL, about 90% of that food is received via donations from churches such as ours and other sources. The majority of the recipients are right here in Lake County, with 75% of them living in Waukegan and North Chicago. We are indeed loving our neighbors!



**\$3,000 = 150
Thanksgiving
Baskets
Thank you, Joy!**



Building Hope, Building Beds

by Amy Bothmann

Last year the Men in Motion group opened up the delivery portion of their bunk bed ministry to families; to women and children and not just the men like it had been in previous years. I thought this was great! Finally they recognized that women, and even teens, were capable of handling 2x4s and plywood and using power tools to tighten the bolts, etc. But then I figured it out... I'm pretty sure they decided to invite the ladies along because none of them knew how to properly make a bed! (wink) Either way, I'm glad they did.



This ministry, now called Building Hope, Building Beds, is a joint project with Love INC and provides bunk beds to children in Lake Country who don't have a bed. But it's really more than that... When I helped deliver beds last year and again this past October,

I saw firsthand just how much these kids don't have! If you have kids, imagine one of their bedrooms... If you don't have kids, imagine your own bedroom when you were young. Go ahead... picture that room in your mind. Now take the bed away. Got that image? OK... but now also take away the desk with the computer on it... take away the TV with the game system hooked up to it... take away the toys scattered on the floor or in a basket in the corner... take away most of the clothes in the closet and the dresser with drawers that barely shut for all the t-shirts and socks shoved in

them. Now look around at the walls and take down the posters of boy bands, puppy dogs, sports teams or Star Wars... take the baseball and dance trophies off the cute shelves that are painted a nice accent color that complements the curtains and the now missing bedspread. Are you getting the picture? What was left? Four walls, maybe a window, a few clothes and possessions... not much. That's what I saw in most of the homes where I helped deliver a bunk bed. It's not just that these kids don't have a bed; they don't have much at all. And to see their faces light up as the beds are being put together in their nearly empty rooms... to watch their eyes get big and their smiles grow as they open the bag with new sheets and blankets and a stuffed animal just for them... It was... humbling and more than worth giving up my Saturday.



The kids couldn't wait to climb up on their new beds and snuggle into something soft and safe and theirs. With a comfortable and warm place to lay their heads, they can get a good night sleep and wake up feeling rested and more confident. What to us was giving up a few hours on a Saturday, to these kids was life-changing.

Building Hope, Building Beds

- continued-

And who knows... maybe someday the guys will figure out that we ladies can be pretty good with a table saw and a tape measure also and we'll be invited to the bed building...?... ;-)

I applaud and want to thank the over 40 volunteers who participated on October 28th and delivered 16 bunks (that's 32 beds) to families from Antioch and Lake Villa to Zion and North Chicago. (And huge thanks also to the I-don't-know-how-many guys who helped build the beds!!) But I'm sure each volunteer would tell you that the experience was as much a blessing to them as the bunk beds were to their recipients! On the morning of delivery as we gathered in the barn for instructions, one veteran of this ministry, Burdette DePauw, said, "Every year I say I'm gonna leave the delivery to the younger guys, and yet, here I am!" And a first-timer, Casandra Slavik, posted on Facebook, "My kids and I had an amazing experience... Tears and genuine appreciation flowed from the recipient. So touching..."

Maybe we can't all go to El Salvador or even get to Texas or Florida or Puerto Rico or California or wherever we hear of people hurting and in need, but we can give a Saturday or an evening to build beds and delivery hope in our own community. From what I've heard, there are extra bed frames in the barn and the potential for another delivery in the coming months!! Keep an eye out for more details.





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