

PEW NEWS

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

September 2023

Celebrating Our Place in God's Creation at Work

Restaurants and streets are full again! Children are donning their new outfits and backpacks to return to the classroom. The signs are all around us that summer is quickly coming to an end. We hear all around us "It's time to go back to work." It doesn't matter if those words are heard after a summer vacation or at the beginning of the day they're usually not received well. Work! Ugh!

But work is a gift from a loving God that is meant to be a blessing. After God created Adam and Eve we read "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden *to work it and keep it.*" (Genesis 2:15) We were created to work by taking care of the world that God gave us. Farmers bring forth crops from the earth to feed us. Teachers help us understand the world that God gave us. Police Officers help us live together in a way that is safe for everyone. God has given each of us gifts so that we can bless His creation. The world is better when we work.

But work can be tough. There's a reason that we call it a toil, a drudge, a grind and a sweat. When Adam and Eve sinned against God death entered into the world and impacted everything *including work.* Listen as God describes our work in Genesis 3:17-19. "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you . . . By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." (Genesis 3:17-19) Whether you're planting a garden or baking bread it's difficult. God even tells us why. "Cursed is the ground *because of you.*" Work is difficult because I'm a broken, sinful person working in the midst of broken, sinful people.

Enter Jesus. He came to work. His work took him to the cross where he died for our sins so that we can start over every day with a clean heart. So that just as we have been blessed by Jesus' work we can bless others by our work. As we do that something fantastic happens. In Matthew 25:34-35 Jesus says, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink . . ." As we work to care for our neighbors in need we serve the Son of God and we are blessed by his presence just as Adam and Eve were blessed to walk with God in the cool of the day. In our work we bless others and we are blessed and we find a sense of purpose and fulfillment in taking our place in God's creation.

Mission of the Month for September - Jobs for Life

One out of every four of our neighbors in the Farmville area lives in poverty! That conclusion is based on data from the recent census which struggles to account for people who don't have an address meaning that the actual numbers are probably higher. But you don't need a census to tell you that we have problem. Just come and work in the church office for a week and you'll soon figure it out as you meet the people that come by for help.

St. John's Lutheran Church has been faithfully caring for our neighbors. We distribute food from our food pantry, we help keep the electricity on when people can't pay their bill and we even give people a place to stay when they need one. What a privilege it is to be able to help our neighbors and to learn their stories. Their stories are as different as they are but they have some things in common. They all have gifts and dreams. They are all struggling to realize their dreams for different reasons. Many of them have become dependent on a system that encourages dependency and so they struggle year after year. The poverty rate in our area has

not changed substantially in the last eight years. Handouts are necessary for those in an emergency but they will not help people live their dreams and use their gifts.

That's why Jobs for Life is so important. Jobs for Life is a program that is run out of local organizations like our church. Classes are offered to neighbors that give them soft skills and equip them to pursue their dreams in the workforce. These classes reveal to them God's plan for their lives and show them that they are loved by God. Because these classes are run cooperatively with local businesses graduates of the program are blessed with insight from local business leaders and gain a network that is invaluable as they search for a job. Your financial gifts to support Jobs for Life will stay here in Farmville to pay for our next class including classroom supplies, childcare while they're in class and a cap and gown to celebrate their success.

Here's some more information about Jobs for Life. Established in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1996, JfL addresses the root causes of unemployment, underemployment, and disengagement with work by uniting churches, businesses, and community organizations and facilitating positive transformation within lives and communities.

Mission: Creating pathways to meaningful work and entrepreneurial opportunities through community engagement.

Vision: All people flourishing in their work and relationships.

Motto: Uplifting humanity through the dignity of work - one city, one community, one life at a time.

We're also looking for someone who is interested in working with Pastor to implement this program. That involves applying for grants and working with the mentors and instructors. To learn more please speak to Pastor.

The LWML will meet Sept. 12 at 10 am. We will discuss activities for the remainder of the year. We invite all ladies who are able to attend in the mornings. There is a Blue Ridge Zone Fall workshop in Roanoke Sept. 23, 10am if you are interested in attending.

The Alzheimer's Association Caregiver Support Group

Will meet in Farmville on Wednesday August 2, and new group starting in Crewe on Thursday August 17

The Group meets :

1st Wednesday Each Month 2-3pm at St. John's Lutheran Church 1301 Milnwood Ave. Farmville.

3rd Thursday Each Month 5:30-6:30 pm at Christ Community Church 1012 W Carolina Ave, Crewe

For more information contact Marion Kyner 434.547.7850

Sunday School - We begin a new year on September 10th at 9:15 am. There will be a class for everyone. The adults will continue to meet in the Fellowship Hall. Hope to see you there!

Choir - "Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!" (Psalm 95:2). The choir practices Saturday mornings at 10 am and sings at the 10:30 service. No experience is necessary. We welcome anyone with a passion for making a joyful noise to the LORD!