

WIND SWEPT

Spirit of Joy

Monthly Newsletter

July 2026

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"
-Isaiah 6:8*

As we came through the Strategic Visioning Process we heard a few things loud and clear.

1. Worship. Relationships. And, sustainability are our top priorities for the next few years.
2. Our Core Values, Pillars, Stones, are the center of how we understand our discipleship.
3. We can't communicate too much or too many ways.
4. We're more interested in doing less really well, than doing more.
5. Many of you want to be active and involved partners and could use easy pathways to mission involvement.
6. We have operational systems that could use clarity and communication.

Your Leadership Team has already begun thinking and acting in light of that feedback. The immensely difficult decision of shuttering the preschool, the commitment to a staffing model that looks slightly different, and the return to our practice of giving 20% are each a nod towards sustainability and a recommitment to our values. But, it goes still deeper.

The decision to bring on a Volunteer Coordinator? All about relationships, depth for system development, and partner engagement. The involvement of a seminary student? Sustains our High School ministry and creates room for relational ministry development, worship enhancement, and increased visitation. The growth of the Children's Faith Formation Coordinator? Striving to give time for depth and the search for excellence across all Milestones and impacting the work of each staff person.

I can't speak for others, but , as hard as it's been, for me it feels exciting. The model and work is responsive to your stated desires and it keeps familiar faces around, easing transitions and creating comfort. But, there's still more that I hear and want to share from that work.

First, the work has just begun. Leadership received the priorities from the Strategic Visioning Team, but now they are in process of turning priorities into plans. Staff and Core Ministry Teams will be asked to get involved and pathways/goals will be created that are responsive to all we heard and learned.

Second, we have to communicate all that we are already doing that aligns with those priorities and help you all embrace the fulness of who we are. Look for the Core Value Sermon Series, Adult Sunday School Deep Dive, and worship themes in September and October. Watch as we transform this document and seek to strengthen the podcast and other ways of sharing with you. We've already identified our Purpose Statement as a growth opportunity. No one knows it:

Our Mission/Purpose is to WELCOME people into a community of followers of Jesus Christ; GROW with one another in faith and hope in Him; SEND out one another as Jesus' compassionate servants in the world.

We'll try: "Welcome everyone. Grow everyday. Send everywhere." So that we can embrace it as a community.

And, there's one more thing I heard that I'd like to share. Another tagline to go along with "A House of Prayer for All People" and "A Hospital for Sinners". "Always a Mission Church." That means we need you to join your voice to Isaiah's. As we do this work. As we seek deeper involvement, shout, "Here am I."



~ Pastor Eric

Strategic Visioning @ SoJ

We are entering the planning phase of our Strategic Visioning Process. While the team pictured below helped us identify our three priorities (Worship, Relationships, Sustainability), it is now up to the Leadership Team, Core Ministry Teams, and Staff to determine how it is that we live into those priorities while reflecting our Core Values and committing to continued excellence and improvement in communication. At its June meeting the Leadership Team began to outline the process by which we'll arrive at those targets. Staff is in conversation with their Core Ministry Team Leads and in August will work with entire teams to identify what we anticipate are 5-9 targets. But, it's not just those targets.

Pr. Eric is working with Chad Fickbohm and the Extravagant Generosity Team to outline a process for the development of a Campus Use Plan that reflects the Strategic Visioning Process and aligns with Strategic Planning.

The work of a Debt Reduction Campaign will kick off in earnest over the next 45 days and you'll hear more throughout the fall as we look to launch the campaign with the start of 2027.

All of your staff is taking into consideration these three priorities (Worship, Relationships, Sustainability), already with new positions and development of others specifically targeting some of your desired practices as we lift up those three areas of focus...improved communications, depth over breadth, the expansion of shared ownership, intentional engagement pathways, and more.



Staff Update

Michele Vogel announced her retirement in early June. July 2nd will be her last day. Her blessing and celebration will be during Family Fun Night on July 15. Join us at 6:30pm. She will step into Mary Tranberg's shoes with Little Lambs as a volunteer.

Bella Tooley will begin her seminary journey with Wartburg Seminary this fall. Her role will grow on August 14th. She will still be High School Faith Formation Coordinator, but she will also begin to move into pastoral roles including small group creation, worship planning, and visitation.

Eric Gohl has returned to 20 hours per week and will continue to grow our communication strategy.

Miranda Stahl will replace Michele Vogel as Children's Faith Formation Coordinator. In that role she will also assume responsibility for milestones from birth through 5th grade. And, she will be our Volunteer Coordinator, creating a single point of contact for partners and ministry partners alike.

What's Happening in Worship @ SoJ

The Five *Solas*

adapted from an essay by Matthew Barrett at gospelcoalition.org

Summary: These five statements of the evangelical faith lay at the center of what distinguished the theology of the Reformation. The five *solas* form the nucleus of the evangelical faith. They not only capture the gospel and explain how it takes root in the sinner, but also define where the authority of that gospel resides and to what end that gospel is proclaimed. Although the phrase “five *solas*” may be more recent in its usage, the concepts are rooted in the 16th century Reformation.

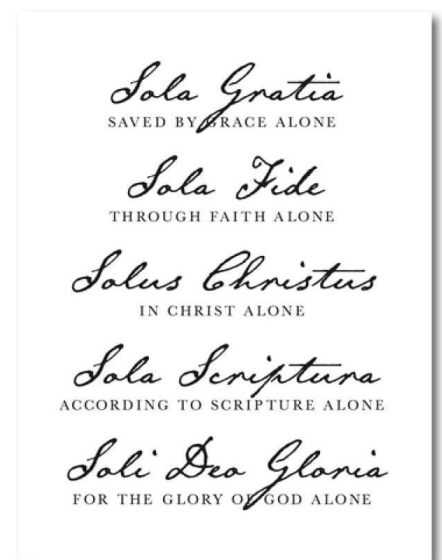
Sola Scriptura: *Sola scriptura* is the belief that “only Scripture, because it is God’s inspired Word, sufficient, and final authority for the church” (*God’s Word Alone*, 23). Notice, the basis of *sola scriptura* is Scripture’s inspired nature. As Paul says, “All Scripture is breathed-out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). That cannot be said of church tradition, councils, or church leaders, as important as they all may be. While Scripture may have many human authors, it has one divine author. The Holy Spirit, Peter tells us, carried along the biblical authors so that what they said, God himself said (2 Pet. 1:21), down to the very words. *Sola Scriptura* teaches us, in the end, that all other authorities in the Christian life serve underneath Scripture, while Scripture alone rules, for it alone is God’s inspired and sufficient word.

Solus Christus: Scripture, as the Christian’s final authority, is a gift from God. It is a gift because in Scripture we are given Jesus Christ himself. God would have been perfectly just and holy to leave us in our sin and condemnation. But our great God stooped down so low as to speak a saving word to us lost sinners, a word that reached its pinnacle in the living Word, the Lord Jesus himself (John 1:1). Our temptation is to think, however, that there is something in ourselves, even in the slightest, that can contribute to our redemption. Perhaps it’s obedience to the law, or perhaps it’s good works that spring from faith itself. But Scripture counters: “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10). God alone can save.

Sola Fide: But how does the believer receive the redemption Christ has accomplished? Through faith and faith alone. Rather than trusting in ourselves, we trust in another: Jesus Christ. That means, then, that God declares us right with him not because of something in us but on the basis of a righteousness that is *extra nos*, outside ourselves. The righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Faith, then, is the instrument through which we receive this alien righteousness. Hence Paul warns that none will be justified but through faith in Christ (Gal 2-3).

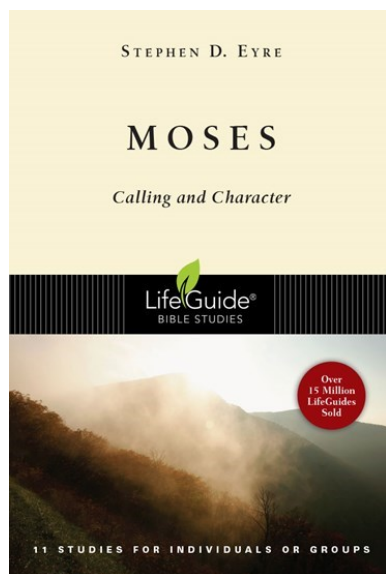
Sola Gratia: If the work of Christ is the basis of our right standing before God, and if we are justified by God not because of our works but through faith in the works of Jesus, then it follows that salvation is by grace alone. “But wait a minute,” you might say, “Surely my will and my choice must be the determining factor.” Not according to Paul: God’s election “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (Rom. 9:16) His choice, in short, is not conditioned on us; that would give us reason to boast. Rather, his electing grace is unconditional. And if his grace in eternity is so free, then so too must his grace be unconditional when applied by the Holy Spirit. The God who has chosen us by grace alone, is the one who alone can call us out of darkness into the light of his own Son (effectual calling; John 6) and raise us from spiritual death to spiritual life (regeneration; John 3).

Soli Deo Gloria: Only if our salvation is by grace alone will God alone receive all the glory. If there is something of our own we can claim, then we no longer boast in Christ alone. But if he is the author and finisher of our salvation then he alone is to be magnified for his sovereign grace. As Christians, these *solas* should cultivate an attitude of total humility. Whether it is in our secular vocations or our praise on a Sunday morning, to God alone be the glory.



Fall 2026 Women's Bible Study

Thursday, 9am beginning Sept. 10



As the one called by God to lead his people out of Egypt, Moses faced some significant challenges: a stubborn ruler, a fierce army, a vast desert to cross, a people prone to complaint and idolatry. But through it all, God was faithful to guide and provide for Moses as well as shape his character in powerful ways. This eleven-session LifeGuide® Bible studies by Stephen D. Eyre will open our hearts to the same God and help us serve with strong character in the roles he's called us to.

Sign up begins August 1. Invite friends.

Books cost \$15. Payable to SoJ

CONTENTS

- 1 The Burning Bush: Hearing God's Call - Exodus 3:1--4:17
- 2 Red Sea: Standing Firm - Exodus 14:10-31
- 3 Mount Sinai: Meeting with God - Exodus 19:1-25
- 4 Tent and Cleft: Alone with God- Exodus 33:7-23
- 5 Fire and Incense: The Cost of Serving God - Leviticus 10:1-20
- 6 Jubilee: Planning for Rest- Leviticus 25:8-28
- 7 Quail: Sharing the Burden - Numbers 11:4-35
- 8 Rebellion: Trusting God Against All Odds - Numbers 14:1-25
- 9 Striking the Rock: The Temptations of Leadership - Numbers 20:1-13
- 10 Valley Floor: Memo for the Future - Deuteronomy 4:5-24
- 11 On the Verge: Passing the Baton - Deuteronomy 31:1-13

The Protestant Reformation

Wednesday, 7pm beginning Sept. 16

Join Rev. Lars Olson as he brings his beloved Reformation Course to the adults of Spirit of Joy this fall 2026. Martin Luther. His wife, Katarina von Bora. His best friend, Phillip Melancthon. His prince and protector, Frederick. His mentor, Johann von Staupitz. The theology. The scripture. The history. The grace.



Don't miss it! Sign up opens August 1.

family fun night

6:30-8PM

ON THE ROAD...

TO SERVICE

Wednesday, July 15



* Camp-Style Worship * * Bounce House *
* Ice Cream * Craft *

Michele's Retirement Celebration: Help us celebrate Miss Michele at Family Fun Night on Wednesday, July 15. A blessing in worship and special treats as we move into the rest of the night.



SPIRIT OF JOY
PRESCHOOL

Preschool Blessing & Celebration

Sunday, July 12th

Join us for
popsicles after
the service.



FOOD TO YOU

THURSDAY, JULY 23

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN

1912 W 13TH ST

Sign up: spiritofjoy.net/signups



LEVITT

JEFF THOMSON W/
ANDY YOST & TOM
LIKELY

Date	08.01.2026
Time	7:00pm
Seats	Near "Big Blue"

GATE ROW SEAT

01 02 03



TICKET NUMBER: 0123456789



Calling All Families

Help us welcome people to Spirit of Joy this summer!

Provide smiles, open doors, and welcome partners and guests to worship
No previous experience required

More info and sign up online: spiritofjoy.net/signups

Summer Children's Message

Take turns bringing a mystery item for Pastor Eric to use to proclaim God's good news!



13 spots available for the summer series!
Sign up: spiritofjoy.net/signups



A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is a simple agreement that allows you to make a gift to support SoJ while receiving fixed income for life. You may contribute cash, securities or other assets in exchange for fixed payments. After your lifetime, the remaining funds strengthen the mission of SoJ. For donors age 70 ½ or older, there is also an opportunity to make a one-time transfer of up to \$55,000 from an IRA to fund a CGA. Please consider investing now in SoJ's future!

Mission Endowment Fund Balance

Previous YE Balance \$141,606.87
2026 YTD \$57,470.82
Total \$199,077.69



For more information on Mission Endowment Fund, visit:

spiritofjoy.net/mission-endowment-fund-2



Creation Care Corner

We are about to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America on July 4th, 2026. We are also coming upon the Dog Days of Summer (July 3-August 11). Maybe you already feel like summer is going by too fast.

Well, listen to this. Did you know that July 22nd is National Hammock Day? What a wonderful way to slow down and listen to the sounds of God's creation, listen to music, read a book, or take a nap.

Did you know there is a genre of books called "Cli-Fi"? These are climate change fiction books. If you're interested in reading some while taking it easy in a hammock, here are a few suggestions:

- *Wild Dark Shore* by Charlotte McConaghy
- *Vigil* by George Saunders
- *Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir

If you prefer nonfiction, here are a few suggestions:

- *Leave the Lights on: How Joyful Decisions Can Save Our Species* by Jiaying Zhao, Elizabeth Dunn
- *Elemental* by Arthur Snell
- *Plastic Inc: The Secret History and Shocking Future of Big Oil's Biggest Bet* by Beth Gardiner

Read the Psalms – lots of poetry and praise to God for his creation!

You could also listen for birds with your Merlin app or identify the trees and flowers you see while lounging in the hammock.



"i thank You God for most this amazing" by e.e. cummings

**i thank you God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes**

**(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)**

**how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any-lifted from the no
of all nothing-human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?**

**(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)**



JULY WITH SPIRIT OF JOY HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

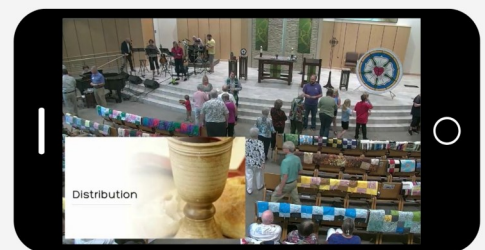
WEDNESDAY THE 8TH

BONFIRE AND GAME NIGHT @ SOJ 8-9PM

WEDNESDAY THE 29TH

HAMMOCKING @ LAUREL OAK PARK 1-4PM
BEHIND THE TENNIS COURTS

**No Sunday Livestream
July 5th & 12th**



There will be no Sunday worship livestream on July 5th & July 12th because of outdoor worship and the new audio/video system installation. We are hoping to be back online by the July 19th worship service.

Spirit of Joy Garden Appreciation Sunday

Sunday, July 26 after worship

Where: Prairie Garden, Prayer Garden, Community Garden

Why: To recognize the beauty and the bounty as well as the dedication and upkeep from SoJ volunteers. We will also learn a little something while enjoying all the gardens have to offer.

Extras: Cookies will be served along with fun activity ideas for kids.

- Led by Creation Care and Gardening Teams



Choir Sectionals Continue

We're singing "Hallelujah Chorus" Easter 2027

Join us this summer for sectional work on "Hallelujah Chorus"! Rehearsals are 6-7PM on Wednesdays. We'll work on Hallelujah Chorus and another song to sing in worship. No sign up needed – all are welcome. **Questions?** Contact Heather (heather.spiritofjoy@gmail.com).

- **Tenors** – July 22 & August 12; sing during worship August 16
- **Basses** – July 29; August 12; sing during worship August 16





Financials through May 2026

Checking Account:

General Fund	\$39,703.10
Building Fund	\$2,503.10
Donor Restricted	\$140,254.06
Reserve Fund	\$4,360.10
Petty Cash	\$200.00

Savings Accounts:

Building	\$143,122.66
Donor Restricted	\$41,435.33
Total Cash Balance	\$371,578.35

	May 2024	May 2025	May 2026
Attendance	829	633	1073
General Offering	\$ 38,669.60	\$ 83,826.31	\$ 61,963.94
Building Offering	\$ 8,283.19	\$ 5,088.59	\$ 2,503.10

Year-to-date Income for Ministry	\$371,320.16
Year-to-date Expenses for Ministry	\$360,153.37
Net Income/Deficit for Ministry	\$11,166.79