

WIND SWEEP

Monthly Newsletter

May 2026

A friend and colleague recently summarized my energy in a way that rings so very true... "You're a do-er, not a be-er." It's true. I dislike a single day sitting alone at home and my default is to do the same to you at Spirit of Joy. More stuff. More energy. If you're not me, it can be exhausting. I'm trying to learn healthier rhythms and root them in the gifts of God, but things have gotten away from me this spring!

"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."
-Matthew 6:31b

Spring at Spirit of Joy is always busy. Last August I told you that your staff and Leadership is not bothered by the seasons of Lent and Advent (an assumption most church folks work with). Instead, our busiest time of the year is the start of the Program Year in August and September. The second busiest is the end of the Program Year in April and May. Easter. Volunteer Appreciation. Endowment Celebration. Earth Day. Confirmation Review and Quiz. 5th Grade Finale. Preschool Program. Children of Joy Wrap Up. Graduation Sunday. Mother's Day. Community Garden Opening. Staff calendar meetings. Summer Worship Schedule Change (May 17 we move to one service at 9:30am).

This year we added the Strategic Visioning Process, the May 17 "We Can Sound Better" Concert, a trip to Guatemala, and Preschool Listening Sessions. It's been hectic, but it's been good. Thank you for joining us in this important work that will help us to move into a clearer and more directed future despite all the busyness!

Inside, you'll see all that is coming our way. Please don't get yourself overwhelmed! Pick and choose the places you want to plug in. Practice generosity of time, talents, and treasures in ways that make sense to you (my family will only participate in one of the two ongoing fundraising campaigns). And, know that we are focusing on rest this summer. Less programming. A breath. A reset. We'll be intentional about frequency of programming and offer you what we hope are fewer, but more meaningful, experiences.

Jesus went again and again away to rest. He reconnected with God and prepared himself for the next step on his journey to the cross. It was authentic to him, how he loved himself so that he could best love his neighbor. Each of us has to discern how God has wired us and give ourselves permission to show up in ways that are authentic and healthy for us. So, if you're up for the busyness, join in. If you need rest, take it. Without guilt or worry. You are loved exactly as you are, no matter how you are!



~ Pastor Eric

Strategic Visioning @ SoJ

May will begin our review and presentation process. More than 70 people took the congregation survey. 25 were interviewed. More than 50 attended Cottage Meetings. Nearly 40 attended the Strategic Visioning Retreat on April 18th. We will take all of that input and begin to craft actionable vision pathways in relationship with our staff and Leadership Team. We present to Leadership on May 21st. From there, we hope to be ready with a first glance for the congregation at the Town Hall Meeting on Sunday, June 7th at 10:30am.

Emerging themes include:

Worship as the Center of our Life Together

Sustainability

Communication

Deeper Relational Ministry

Building Trust



Timeline

December 2025– Team Formation and Information Gathering

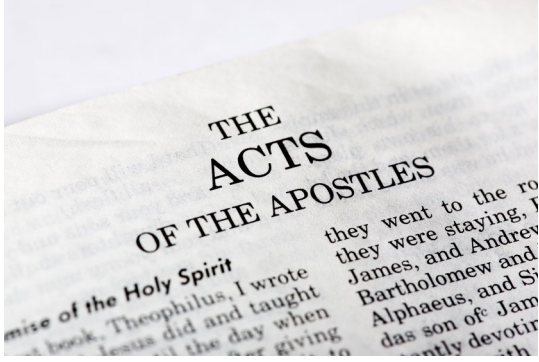
Jan-Mar– Information Gathering (Individual Interviews, Survey, and Cottage Meetings)

Mar-April– Congregation Wide Visioning Retreat

April-May: Formulation of Findings and Recommendations

Summer-Fall 2026: Implementation

What's Happening in Worship @ SoJ



We are ending our sermon series from the Book of Acts in May and turning our attention to Pentecost Sunday and our three part summer series on Lutheranism. The series from Acts has focused on the community of believers as they navigated the first days after Jesus' ascension and began to discover their voices in proclaiming the gospel. Through the season we have been focusing on baptism and Creation Care (see last month's newsletter for more information).

Summer Worship Time
9:30am– Sundays only!
beginning Sunday, May 17



Look for new decorations
in the worship space
coming soon!

We hope to bring a new mobile for Pentecost (no promises!) and will be lighting the Core Value banners in anticipation of this Fall's Core Value sermon series.

WE CAN SOUND BETTER

CONCERT & FUNDRAISER FOR THE SOUND SYSTEM

SUNDAY, MAY 17

9:30 Worship (One Service)

10:30 Concert

11:30 Congregation Meeting

featuring

SoJ Musicians

and

Matthew Whitaker

Grammy winning band leader, composer and arranger
serving as Artist in Residence at Augustana University



Leadership Team calls a Special Meeting of the Congregation

During the “We Can Sound Better Concert”, you’ll hear more information about the sound system. Immediately following the concert will be a special congregational meeting with a time for questions, discussion and vote on the proposal. **One Worship Service at 9:30am followed by Concert and Congregation Meeting at 10:30am.**

Healing Hope Ministries: Walk to Remember

Saturday, May 30 | 10am-12pm @ Spirit of Joy

Along the garden walking path, there will be memorial signs sharing the stories of children gone too soon. Join us as we celebrate the lives of these children and honor the families walking this journey.

For more information: www.healinghopes.com/walk-to-remember

Schedule of Events

- 9:30 Doors open for sign in and raffle sales
- 10:00 Remembrance Ceremony & Memorial Walk
- 10:45-12 Free Will Donation Lunch
- 11:45 Auctions close and winners announced





Faith Formation



Brewed Theology | Monday, 5/18 7PM @ Charlie's Pizza Money Stuff and Generosity

BREW EDTHE OLOGY

Have you heard a list of the things you “don’t talk about in polite company”? Pretty sure “money” and “religion” are on that list, and we’re going to talk about both of them in this Brewed Theology. Money is tricky. Our culture insists on defining the worth of...well, anything...with monetary value. This includes our worth as human beings: we’re valued by our pay, or production value. (And if you disagree, just consider how people talk – or don’t – about their jobs, or why the conversation about minimum wage can be such a hot topic.) Not only is money the biggest and baddest idol, as Martin Luther describes in his Large Catechism, but it also seems to hold (if not be) the reigns in churches, ministry initiatives, or service. It’s quite likely that your faith leader (pastor, priest, etc.) feels this uniquely, given that 1) they know money is touchy, yet 2) Jesus talks about wealth and possessions all the time.

Find more information and the pre-reading at spiritofjoy.net/signups.



June 7th @ 11:00am

ANNUAL *Town Hall Meeting*

Update on Worship Space Sound Fundraising, Ideas for Future Staffing, Strategic Visioning Reports, Staff Updates, and Your Questions



2026 Featured Ministry Partners

Tied to SoJ's Purpose: "...to *SEND* out one another as Jesus' compassionate servants in the world," are its Featured Ministry Partners. Each program year (September-May) is to align with nine Partners. This month, the featured Ministry Partner is



Although **Sharing the Dream** is a new Featured Ministry Partner, their team has had a meaningful relationship with our church for several years – from board members to product sales helpers. The organization began in 1996. Their nonprofit supports such programs as educational workshops, feeding and medical ministries and student scholarships. During Advent we hosted a crowd favorite pop-up to sell our Partner's fair trade crafts; about \$2,200 was raised. All proceeds return to the artisans.

One of our summer trips in 2026 is an immersion experience to Guatemala in Central America with Sharing the Dream. Two mother/daughter partners (Krista & Elsa Ohrtman and Amy & Summer Mark) and Marnie Dahle Backer will be traveling on this exciting adventure. We leave on Sunday, May 24 and return June 2.

An immersion experience is a little different from the more traditional "mission trip". Mission trips are often where groups go and help improve the conditions for a community – build a house, clean up, painting, etc. Immersion might have some of that good work, but the larger focus is walking alongside the people of the community, learning what it is like to be a part of their daily lives and culture. As a part of our time there, we will get to meet with scholarship students, the women and artisans. We will learn about their coffee process and cooking, visit with beading classes, weavers and basket makers. We will be excited to bring back many photos to share with all of you!



Necessities for Neighbors

In the month of May, we will be collecting diapers for our June 7th distribution at Peace Lutheran. Please bring your donations to church by Sunday morning, June 7.

Engage to Change Middle School Camp

May 26-27 @ SoJ



One of the service projects will be with Journey of Hope, an organization that strives to meet people on life's path, providing necessities, connection, and uplifting experiences to take on the journey. They provide hygiene products to those experiencing hygiene insecurity in SD. **For the month of May, we will be collecting full-sized toothpaste and deodorant.** Please join our youth in helping this collection to grow!

Liberia Mission-New Dawn Learning Center Update



The New Dawn Learning Center Advisory Committee meets about once a month to learn of updates and to strategize fund raising opportunities. Brochures are available for further information.

Highlights from the New Dawn Learning Center as this school year is winding down include:

The children continue to learn and grow in body mind and spirit under the guidance of their teachers. All our teachers are trained and licensed in elementary and secondary education. We currently have eight teachers and two support staff members. Our teachers and staff are paid a minimal salary of \$150 a month. Please consider sponsoring at least one teacher with a monthly donation of \$150.

The children receive meals two days a week consisting of rice and beans at a cost of \$20 per week. Rice has been purchased for the remainder of the school year but there is a need for the purchase of beans (\$80 x 3= \$240). Please consider a gift as the school year wraps up.

Education is the key to building a good life—it can never be taken for granted or taken from you.

New Dawn Learning Center Advisory Committee, Larry Schoeszler, chair
Spirit of Joy partners –Larry Schoeszler, Jane Skaar, and Elaine Roberts
Parker Grace Lutheran leaders—Deb VanHove and Gerry Schnabel
Pastor Henrique and Deacon Hannah Fleming

Staffing Update and Forward Thinking

We remain committed to breathing and thinking hard about our future together. As you saw on page 2, Strategic Visioning is moving ahead. We're finishing up our Preschool Listening Sessions and imagining what the future might hold for that mission. And, we begin the staffing discernment process with our staff in light of those findings in the next few days. Leadership Team has designated time in May to brainstorming and dreaming in light of those conversations with the hope of bringing to you a staffing proposal/plan at the June 7 Town Hall meeting (no guarantees!). We're excited for our future and imagine a wide variety of scenarios that equip our community for the proclamation of the gospel and living our core values.

That said, we know that there are some partners who still have questions about recent staffing changes and the health of our community. First, we refer you to the email sent on Thursday, March 5. Second, we invite you to direct conversation with staff and leadership. Christa Henderson is our Congregation President, Mindy Dold our Mutual Ministry Chair, and Eric Ohrtman, our Pastor (contact info available in the Directory or via the church office). All are willing to listen carefully and answer any questions they can. Two final quotes from the March 5 correspondence:

“Any situation involving personnel is necessarily vague as we seek to care for the individuals involved and make wise decisions for our community.”

“Spirit of Joy, we are well. Leadership is well. The staff that is here to serve you is well. We will carry on together building a House of Prayer for All Peoples, a Hospital for Sinners, a Community of Grace.”



WAYS TO GIVE

Did you know there are **SEVEN** different ways you can support Spirit of Joy?

1) TIME and TALENTS

Volunteers give approximately 300 hours per week to all the pieces of our ministry.

16 are on the bread baking team. **13** are on the laundry team. **35** are on the treat team. More than **160** serve to make worship possible. **10** volunteer with the preschool. **18** serve coffee on Sundays. More than **40** are volunteers for Faith Formation.

2) CASH or CHECK

Giving of record is a requirement for active membership at any ELCA congregation - offering envelopes are available.

The first & last Sundays of the month are almost always the largest giving days, and giving has no correlation to attendance.

3) ONLINE GIVING

Via credit/debit card or bank account using Tithely and Simply Giving.

This is set up by the partner and cannot be changed by any member of church staff. This is the fastest growing segment of generosity, and provides the most consistent financial support. Sign up at spiritofjoy.net/give.



Give online & win!



The first 10 partners to give NEW online gifts receive a token for a free cupcake from Oh My Cupcakes! A new gift could be a new recurring gift, an increased recurring gift, or shifting another form of giving to online giving.



4) ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER (EFT)

Bank to bank transfer of funds, setup by Spirit of Joy partner & their bank.

Roughly half a dozen partners choose to give this way.

5) STOCK GIFTS

The single largest General Fund gift in history was received in this way!

It takes 30-60 days to process from receipt at brokerage to deposit into Spirit of Joy's Schwab Brokerage Account, so if you're considering this for a year-end gift, initiate the transfer no later than November 1.

6) THRIVENT

Thrivent Choice & Thrivent Action Teams

Action Teams are micro grants up to \$250 per event (must be education, fundraising, or service focused). At Spirit of Joy, we use Action Teams for **every** Family Fun Night, Milestone, and New Partner Class (nearly \$10,000 in 2025!)

7) LEGACY GIVING

Include Spirit of Joy in your estate plans, impacting future generations at Spirit of Joy.

Spirit of Joy has two documented legacy gifts - one for the Mission Endowment Fund and one for the Building Fund.

Current market value of those gifts: \$1.2 million

We are called to be generous in every way. 2 Corinthians 9:11



A \$50,000 Matching Gift Campaign has been sponsored. The response at Celebration Sunday was incredible! Any donations made to the Mission Endowment Fund (MEF) will be matched until the end of the year, doubling the impact up to \$50,000. A philanthropic challenge that offers a tremendous opportunity to meet our ultimate 2026 MEF goal of \$250,000!

Mission Endowment Fund Balance

Previous YE Balance \$141,606.87
2026 YTD (\$227.21)
Total \$141,379.66



For more information on Mission Endowment Fund, visit:
spiritofjoy.net/mission-endowment-fund-2

Creation Care Corner

**“Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring rain,
from the Lord who makes the storm clouds,
who gives showers of rain to you,
the vegetation in the field to everyone.”
Zechariah 10:1 (NRSVUE)**



Spring is here! How about some good news? A new World Wildlife Federation report shows promising signs of recovery for the endangered migratory eastern monarch butterfly. They have shown a 64% increase in their wintering grounds in Mexico over last year. The WWF states that this is not so much a call for celebration but more of an alert that progress is possible; however, we need to double our efforts if we want to keep seeing progress continue. How can we personally help in Sioux Falls, South Dakota? Plant the following types of milkweed: Common, Swamp, Butterfly, Whorled, and Poke. If you are reading from a different area, put this in your search engine: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/resources/tips/monarch-milkweed-finder/> so you can find the right one for your area.

San Francisco was recently recognized in the Breathe Cities Report as a global leader in decreasing air pollution. They were found to have cut 2 levels of pollution (fine particulate pollution [soot, dust, smoke, fumes, mists] and nitrogen dioxide pollution [coal- and gas-fired power plants and gas engines]) by nearly 25% between 2010 and 2024. They use zero-emission and low-emission fleets for public

transportation and they have made changes which promote walking and biking in the city. Also, 30% of new vehicle registrations have been electric.

In Colorado, they have completed the I-25 Greenland Wildlife Overpass. This is an overpass that spans 6 lanes of interstate traffic and connects 39,000 acres of habitat on both sides of I-25. It will address critical safety concerns for humans and wildlife. Some of the wildlife using the overpass will include deer, elk, bears, moose, pronghorns, and mountain lions.

To quote Katharine Hayhoe (a leading climate scientist and author of the book *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World*), “Animals are amazing: if we protect them, they can protect us.” An example of that locally includes beavers. They fight climate change by generating wetlands which prevent floods, store carbon, and can even reduce wildfire damage. Additionally, bees hold a role in fighting climate change that is massive. They are pollinators, so they are keys to agriculture and natural ecosystems. They support growth of plants that absorb and store carbon. They are essential for our food supply.

Thank you for the world so sweet.

Thank you for the food we eat.

Thank you for the birds that sing.

Thank you, God, for everything.



SPIRIT OF JOY PRESCHOOL

Caring Community • Active Learning • Faithful Hearts

Volunteer Opportunities with Your Preschool!

Social Media: The preschool team is seeking a volunteer to assist with digital media and promotion of the preschool program. Assistance with registration promotion, Instagram/Facebook advertising, and awareness of preschool programs. Contact Amy Cauble for more information.

Van Drivers for a Fieldtrip: A preschool field trip to the Great Bear hiking trails is planned on May 7-8, 8:30am-12:00pm. Preschool classes will hike the trails, explore pond life, and enjoy a picnic lunch. Volunteers will drive students and assist teachers by watching over hikers. Background checks are required. A completed background check from 2025-2026 school year will apply. Contact Amy Cauble if interested.

REGISTER TODAY

Soj website or Contact Amy Cauble (amy.spiritofjoy@gmail.com)

Call or email to schedule your tour today. We love to meet new friends. Share a brochure from the preschool board near the kitchen or Gathering Space kiosk. All are welcome.

April Preschool Stories

Exploring the Easter story was at the top of our April activities. We have experienced the wonder of the story and many emotions that go with it. We learned about Holy Week events using art, drama, science, sensory experiences, music and storytelling. The surprise of new life carried over in activities about new life, especially in signs of spring with plants, nature, and eggs as well. Enjoy a few photos from preschool and visit the facebook page for more: facebook.com/spiritofjoypreschool

Sharing the Story...The resurrection story and the love of Jesus is known and shared by Spirit of Joy preschoolers. Parents have recounted that their children have taken faith home with songs sung, storytelling, and prayers at family events- faith formation for with all ages! A special thank you for the Spark Bibles shared with preschool families- a part of our journey was reading and recording Bible stories!





Keep an eye out for
 Summer High School Events
 beginning in June!

Financials through March 2026

Checking Account:

General Fund	\$39,565.65
Building Fund	(\$902.26)
Donor Restricted	\$129,333.01
Reserve Fund	\$4,360.10
Petty Cash	\$200.00

	March 2024	March 2025	March 2026
Attendance	2140	1439	1321
General Offering	\$ 54,938.66	\$ 80,703.67	\$ 69,781.05
Building Offering	\$ 7,100.81	\$ 3,037.30	\$ 2,442.20

Savings Accounts:

Building	\$171,794.60
<u>Donor Restricted</u>	<u>\$41,433.29</u>
Total Cash Balance	\$385,784.39

Year-to-date Income for Ministry	\$239,737.82
<u>Year-to-date Expenses for Ministry</u>	<u>\$228,819.81</u>
Net Income/Deficit for Ministry	\$10,921.79