



St. John's Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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September 2018

To the people of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in West Seneca,

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What a joy it has been to rejoin you in fellowship, service, and worship after these busy summer months that held the youth gathering, camp ministry, spiritual growth, and some much needed rest and quiet in the Adirondacks. Tricia and I are joy filled and so very grateful for your little notes, many gifts, and for your prayers and rejoicing with us upon the birth of Leonard Michael. He is a happy little boy and we are thrilled that his first experiences and memories of a church family will be had and be formed within the community of St. John's. Our little church is and should always be a refuge and a place of peace, in our culture that can be so hateful, hurtful, divisive, and unforgiving.

As I continue to meet the folks of West Seneca and listen to their stories two things are abundantly clear: 1. Jesus message of grace is desperately needed in the lives of the people around us. 2. We followers of Jesus are, on the whole, doing a poor, poor job communicating His message of grace into the diverse community around us. In other words, we struggle to define love, in the context of "you shall *love* your neighbor as yourself" and therefore we are unable to fully live our lives in a way that honors the greatest commandment.

I am convinced that our growth and health as church family hinges upon how well we live into this command to love and Jesus expectation that we are focused on welcoming and loving all people but especially those with the least power and status in our society into our community.

As our children (just one example of those with the least power and status in our culture) return to worship after their summer adventures we will be working to place them in roles of power and purpose in our community. What are other ways we might welcome and empower the least and the last? How would you say you are doing at living into the rich and meaningful life of loving God, Neighbor, and Self?

Thanks be to God for you and your faith! Know that you are in our constant prayers.

In Christ,
Pastor Roger