

December
2018

St. John Lutheran Church



Mission Statement

St. John is a living witness to the love of God as shown in Jesus Christ.

*We gather faithfully in His name to **worship** and praise Him; and we go forth in peace to **share** the Good News and to **serve** the world around us.*

St. John Lutheran Church
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*Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song (Psalm 149)
See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare (Isaiah 42.9)
See, I am making all things new. (Revelation 21.5)*

Dear friends in Christ,

As we approach Christmas we begin thinking about "tidings of comfort and joy" as we look forward to celebrating God's breaking into and for the world in Jesus, the Christ. However, when God breaks into the world, the reality is that God continuously disrupts the "normal", and makes things new. The "new things" of God are not always perceived as "comfort and joy" but as uncomfortable, and often disquieting to those that prefer the predictable and unchanging.

The story of God reaching out to God's people is full of the new and disruptive of lives:

God instructing Noah to build a huge boat on dry land while all around him everyone else is happily going about the normal routines of life. Calling Abram to a new home, a new life, even a new name. Responding to the cries of a people who thought they were forgotten and rescuing them from captivity in Egypt. Re-forming those people over a generation in the wilderness despite their protests and a communal case of homesickness for the harsh yet familiar old life in Egypt.

In the birth of Christ, God breaks into the world in a new way - not in power and glory as gods are "expected to do", but as a helpless infant, parented by poor folk from a backwater village. Through Christ, lives were disrupted - changed: the sick healed, the blind received sight, the poor affirmed. Disciples left all they had behind to follow. In the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus, even death and the seemingly inevitable power of sin was disrupted and all was changed for eternity.

In this Advent season we reflect on the many ways God has come, is coming and will come into our lives. When God breaks in, God interrupts. We pray, "Stir up your power and come!" But it is our nature to seek the familiar and comfortable and resist or fear change. May we discern the holy disruption of God breaking into our lives, stirring us to live faithfully in the midst of the new and unexpected. Hearing the words anew, "do not be afraid" as God in Christ does a new thing in and among the people of God.

Carol and I wish you a Holy Advent and Blessed Christmas.

Yours in the newness of Christ,
Pastor Bob

**Congregational Meeting & Vestry Election
Sunday, December 9, 2018**

There will be a brief congregational meeting following both worship services on Sunday, December 9. The congregation will be asked to vote on the slate for the **2019 Vestry**.

Annual Meeting - Sunday, January 20

We will review 2018, vote on a budget, and approve the congregational council for 2019. **There will be one worship service at 10:00 am.**

A Blue Christmas
Community Worship
Saturday, December 15, 3:00 p.m.
St. John Lutheran Church

While Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time. A Blue Christmas service provides a time and place of solace during the often frenetic days surrounding the celebration of Christmas.

Come out, and join with us in sharing and hearing prayers, scripture, and music that acknowledge that God's presence is for those who mourn, for those who struggle - and that God's Word comes to shine light into our darkness. Everyone, regardless of church background (or lack of it) is welcome.

Church Decorating
Sunday, December 23 at 11:30 am

If you are able to help decorate the church for Christmas, please stay after the 10:30 am worship service. Your help will be greatly appreciated.



Christmas Worship Services

**Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve - 3:00 pm & 7:30 pm –
Festival Candlelight Service of Holy Communion**

**Dec. 25 – Christmas Day - One Service at 10:00 am
Service of Holy Communion**

Lessons & Carols
Sunday, December 30
8:00 am & 10:30 am



Join us on the First Sunday of Christmas for a service of Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion to celebrate this joyous season.



Wishing all of the St. John congregation and your families a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas season.



Christmas Program
One Starry Night
Sunday, December 9, 2018
1:00-3:00 pm

Join us at St. John's for this fun, FREE Christmas event filled with stations, crafts, and snacks! You can even get your picture taken in our photo booth. Bring your family, friends and neighbors for this special Christmas event.

Many of us cherish everything about the Christmas season -- except those incessant advertisements telling us to buy this and by that. We ask, "Where's Jesus in all this commercialism?"

This is the right question. Though it asks us to examine every aspect of our lives, stewardship particularly challenges us to question the role money plays in our personal lives and our culture. Christmas presents are wonderful expressions of love that makes both giver and recipient feel good. At the same time, we want to be wary of advertising's lure to make us overspend, or to think that the cost of our gift is proportionate to our love.

Most of all, we need to be sure that the main point of our Christmas is not the gifts *we give*, but the gift *we receive* from God -- Jesus. Here are some ideas:

- Challenge yourself to spend less for presents this year. Set a budget and stick to it.
- Attend worship regularly in Advent and Christmas.
- Give some handmade presents: A scarf or hat, a photo album, a batch of fudge, a card, a poem.
- Prayerfully read Advent daily devotions (Richard Rohr's *Preparing for Christmas* is amazing!).
- Give your time: a concert together, a shared meal, a day at a museum, a walk in the woods
- Use an Advent calendar to help you remember all that God has given you.
- Give service: wash a loved one's car, help clean the garage, paint a room, babysit for an evening.
- Play Christmas music that has religious themes (More "Silent Night," less "Frosty the Snowman.")
- Instead of buying a present, make a donation to a charitable organization in honor of your loved one (or check out ELCA Good Gifts!).
- Make a generous year-end contribution to your congregation.

Our thoughtful practices for Advent and Christmas not only make for good stewardship of our time, talents, relationships and money, they also help us to draw near to Our Lord and experience God's greatest gift to us.

--Rob Blezard

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Angel Tree



During this holiday season, we will once again sponsor an Angel Tree for Glade Run Lutheran Services in Zelienople. Tags are on the tree in the greeting area. **Please return your gift to the greeting area.** If you have any questions, please contact Denise Hager.

Advent Family Breakfast

Join us on Sunday, December 23 for a family breakfast between services. All are welcome!

Ladies Book Group

No meeting in December, we will begin a new book in January.

Quilting Group – December 10 – 6 pm



We will continue to meet at Cindy Knauff's house – 469 Browns Hill Rd., Valencia.

Whether you are a beginner or a novice you are welcome to join us as we make quilts for Lutheran World Relief.

We are in need of blankets for batting and sheets for backing if you would like to donate these items it will be much appreciated.



Kid's Club

No Kid's Club for the month of December. See you in January!

Morning Prayer and Bible Study

Morning Prayer at 11:30 am on Wednesdays, with a brown bag lunch at noon, followed by Bible Study at 12:30 pm on December 5, 12, & 19. We will not meet on December 26.

The Second Sunday of each month is Food Bank Sunday.



May the peace and joy of this season fill your soul.

Christmas Blessings to all.



December Birthdays

- 12/01 Dominic Cardinal
- 12/10 Wanda Weidner
- 12/11 Serafina Julio
- 12/12 Beth McElhinny
- 12/18 Tess Bielo
- 12/24 Christine Dishong
- 12/25 James Hager

Upcoming Events
Dec. 9 – Cong. Mtg./Vestry
Election/Christmas Program
Dec. 15 – Blue Christmas Worship
Dec. 23 – Church Decorating
Dec. 24 – Worship @ 3 & 7:30 pm
Dec. 25 – Worship @ 10 am
Jan. 12 – White Elephant Bingo
Jan. 20 – Annual Meeting

Communion Bread Schedule
December
Denise Hager

Counters for December
Sally Foster & Denise Hager

**December
Worship Helpers**

Assisting Minister
8:00 am Christine Dishong
10:30 am Sally Foster

Usher
8:00 am Robert Dishong
10:30

December Newsletter

Address service requested
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