

December
2022

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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Advent is an odd season. We are simultaneously waiting and preparing for the coming of Christ as an infant (which has already happened), and we are waiting for Christ to come again to fulfill all things (which has not yet happened). Advent leans deeply into Luther's concept of God's "now and not yet." Christ is with us now. And Christ is going to come (again).

And in preparing for this already and not yet, the now and not yet of Christ's presence among us, we often get tied up in all the logistical planning of the season. Do we have the supplies we need? Are we ready for the gatherings and worship services that will happen? Do we have it all under control? But Advent is more about preparing ourselves to be disrupted and surprised. Our first Sunday in Advent has Jesus telling us that we do not know when he will come again. Christ's coming will come as a surprise to us. It will interrupt and disrupt the world. Christ's arrival disrupts injustice, sin, and brokenness in a society in which we are deeply embedded. We do not always appreciate the ways that God breaks into our lives and disrupts the world around us.

But Christ has already done that. God's love was born among us. The Word incarnate came to this earth and disrupted everything in the person Jesus Christ.

Advent is all about coming to terms with the way that Christ's presence in this world is already disrupting and breaking into our lives... and preparing for the way the Christ will come again and disrupt and break into our lives anew. God is now and not yet among God's people. This Advent, as we pray for Christ to come to us, as he has, as he is, and as he will, is a prayer asking for Christ to interrupt our lives, to disrupt patterns of injustice, sin, and brokenness, and to bring us back to God's love and grace for ourselves, for our neighbors, and for the whole world. So this Advent, as we prepare for this already, now, and not yet, may we welcome God's presence in our lives, no matter how surprising it might be.

*Peace,
Pastor Katie*

Online Sunday Worship

Join Zoom for service: <https://zoom.us/j/5663185411> Meeting ID: 566 318 5411 PW: Luther
Available on our YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC35PpgMPeMgDRNmKsYKssxvQ>
and in the church Facebook group: [St John Lutheran Church Mars PA](#) later in the day

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING NOTICES

Vestry Election - Sunday, December 11, 2022

Vestry elections will take place following the worship service on Sunday, December 11. The congregation will be asked to vote on the slate for the 2023 Vestry.

Annual Meeting - Sunday, January 22, 2023

We will review 2022, vote on a budget, and approve the congregational council for 2023. The congregational meeting will be held after the worship service on January 22.

Worship News

Blue Christmas Worship Service – December 21

While Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Many feel the stress of expectations around Christmas. **A Blue Christmas service provides a time and place of solace.**

Join us **at Mars United Presbyterian Church** (232 Crowe Ave) in sharing and hearing prayers, scripture, and music that acknowledge that God's presence is for those who mourn and struggle this time of year. **Worship is on December 21, the longest night of the year, at 7:00 pm.**

Christmas Eve Worship Services – December 24

Join us for our **traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight worship services** filled with beloved hymns and carols, prayers, and scripture readings. **All are welcome as we come to celebrate Christ's coming** into the world.

Worship is at 3:00 pm and at 7:30 pm.

Christmas Day Worship Service – December 25

We will come together to celebrate Christ's presence in this world and **experience the story of his birth through songs and storytelling.**

Worship will be at 9:00 am. There is **no Sunday School on Dec. 25.**



Service of Lessons and Carols – January 1

A service of Lessons and Carols is an opportunity to **dwell in the richness of God's Word** and the promise of God's Word incarnate, Jesus Christ. **Worship will be at 9:00 am.**

Worship Helpers

We love having our young worshippers helping with worship leadership! If you are unable to be present for your scheduled service, please try to find someone to cover and tell the office of the change.

	Acolyte	Offering	Offering
4-Dec	Nathan K	Jules K	Anna K
11-Dec	Ava N	Eva K	Luca K
18-Dec	Emma N	Olivia C	Nick C
24-Dec (3:00p)	TBD	TBD	TBD
24-Dec (7:30p)	Abigail C	Ava N	Ella N
25-Dec		TBD	
1-Jan		TBD	

Serving Others

Angel Tree



Sign up for a tag and help **make Christmas special for kids served by Glade Run Lutheran Services!** On the Tree in the Gathering Area are **tags with information for kids who need gifts** this Christmas. Gift cards should be placed in an envelope with Glade Run's tag attached. Please write the amount on the tag or on the card itself. Donated items should be unwrapped. **Attach Glade Run's tag to your donation** so it is visible. **Gifts are due by December 11th.** Beyond the gifts under the tree, donated items received through Glade Run's annual drive provide joy, relief, and comfort all year long.

Meals on Wheels Cookie Baking – December 3

Get ready for an **epic baking party!** We will be baking enough cookies to for the participants in the Meals on Wheels program to enjoy throughout December. It's going to be an **all-hands-on deck affair!** We **start baking at 9:30 am.** To **bake goodies at home to share,** sign up in the Gathering Area at the church.



St. John Food Pantry

Our **food pantry has been seeing an increase in usage,** particularly our outdoor location. If you notice that the outdoor pantry is looking empty, **feel free to move some stuff from the inside shelves.** As the weather drops below freezing more regularly, **please be aware of how any items might store in freezing temperatures.** People who use our pantries have asked that we focus our offerings on **toiletries, cleaning supplies, and paper products as well as easy-to-make meals** (e.g., soups or other microwaveable meals).

October, November, December Mission Emphasis

During the fourth quarter of the year, **our mission emphasis is an organization called Always B Smiling.** From their website: "Always B Smiling strives to support children, families, and caregivers with life challenges by offering support and experiences that will inspire as many smiles as possible.



Always B smiling will be there to **encourage as many smiles as possible by offering support services to children, families, and caregivers with long term health challenges at Children's Hospital.** Always B Smiling will address the many gaps outside of educational based programs by **creating community-based activities for children and families with special needs."** To support this organization with your offering, please mark your envelope "Mission Emphasis." To learn more about this organization, visit their website at <https://alwaysbsmiling.org/>.

ELCA Good Gifts

Each year, the ELCA runs a campaign to help our global neighbors through ELCA Good Gifts. ELCA Good Gifts are a **creative, meaningful way to support the ministries of the ELCA** that mean the most to you and your loved ones. These gifts are real examples from projects currently supported through ELCA churchwide ministries. Each of these programs is a long-term, partnership-based ministry **that focus on the needs identified by local congregations and global companion churches and their communities.** To learn more or to purchase a gift, visit <https://goodgifts.elca.org/> or see the catalog in the Gathering Area.

Around the Community

Light Up Mars – November 26

Join the community of Mars on the eve of our First Sunday in Advent during Light Up Mars! Shop the Holiday Market 4:00 – 8:00 pm, watch the lighting of the tree at 5:30 pm, and/or watch the parade at 7:30 pm. The **borough will be filled with vendors to celebrate the season**. And be sure to say hi to Pastor Katie if you see her around! For more information, visit <http://marsborough.com/light-up-mars/>.

Living Nativity – December 9 and 10

Come check out the Nativity Story brought to life at Mars United Presbyterian Church (232 Crowe Ave) on December 9th and 10th. **The program will run every thirty minutes between 6:00 and 8:00 pm each night**. St. John folks will be participating in the scene on Friday night.

Faith Formation

Advent Bible Study



We will be diving into some **Advent themes and scripture stories** as we get ready to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child. **We will meet on the Thursdays in Advent (Dec 1, Dec 8, Dec 15, Dec 22) at 7:00 pm**. A Zoom link will be available for those unable to join us in person; **sign up with the church office to receive emails with notes and the zoom link** each week of the session.

Lutherlyn Youth Winter Retreat – January 20-22

4th-12th graders are invited to **experience camp in the winter!** Campers will be divided by age groups and stay in cabin with cabin leaders from the summer staff. There will be GAGA ball in the snow, Bible study, the bouldering room, songs, worship, friends, indoor and outdoor games, lots of your summer camp favorites, and fun in the wonderful winter weather! **(Registration Required)**
For more information, visit lutherlyn.com/winter.



Trip Opportunity



Hope Lutheran in Cranberry is exploring the possibility of taking a bus trip to see **Moses at Sight and Sound Theater in Lancaster, PA in October 2023**. The cost is estimated to be around \$500 per person. The typical trip has an overnight, breakfast at the hotel, dinner, and a show one night, lunch and time for shopping, and another dinner and the big show the next night. **If you are interested in this trip, please contact Pastor Katie.**

Did You Know?

Advent used to be associated with purple because it was connected to royalty as the church awaits the newborn king (Roman Catholics currently use purple for this reason and associate the solemnity and penance of purple with Advent.). But many years ago, **Advent became associated with blue** because blue relates to a sense of hope. This association began in Scandinavia, probably because purple dye was too expensive for many churches. The ELCA later adopted blue as the color of Advent, in 1978.

Around the Church

Welcome New Members – December 4

We are excited to welcome Beth and David as new members of the St. John congregation! **Plan to join us after worship for some fellowship time to continue to get to know them.**

Youth Group and Kids' Club Christmas Party – December 18

The Joint Youth Group and Kids Club will be having a combined **Christmas Party on December 18, 1:00 – 2:30 pm.** There will be lots of **games and snacks and other fun Christmas** activities! Know a kid in grades 2-12 who hasn't been to Kids Club or Youth Group yet? Invite them to join us for the party! **All are welcome!** While no reservations are required, **it's helpful to have an idea of who to expect so that we can prepare supplies.**

Greening of the Sanctuary – December 18

Help us with our final preparations for Christmas as we **prepare the sanctuary by putting up decorations.** If you are able to help decorate the church for Christmas, please stay after the worship service. Your help will be greatly appreciated. **Many hands will make light work!**



Time Capsule Additions

We had so much fun anticipating the opening of the time capsule and opening it during our 125th anniversary (and some laughs getting to it!). So now it's time to pass along the joy to those who will be celebrating St. John's 150th anniversary! **If you have any ideas or items that you'd like to contribute to the time capsule, contact the Deacons or the office. We'd like to "bury" the time capsule by early January.**

The Advent Wreath

From our liturgical resources, Sundays and Seasons: "One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting in the midst of growing darkness **strengthen some of the Advent images** found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly **an image of everlasting life**, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that **Christ reaches into our time to lead us to everlasting life.** The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its **evergreen branches lead to the evergreen Christmas tree.**"



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

November News and Updates

Trunk or Treat

We had a great time handing out candy to the neighborhood kids. With six cars and an abundance of candy, we were able to bring smiles all evening long!

Family Game Night

Game night was a blast! We had an abundance of games and pizza and good times! If you're bummed that you missed out on this fellowship opportunity, you can be rest assured that there will definitely be more game nights!

Youth Led Worship

Our Youth Group and Kids Club did a great job putting together and leading us through a worship service focusing on how God is always looking to bring us home in God. The Youth Group was involved in a number of readings and crafting the prayers for the day. The Kids Club brought us the gospel message through a skit as well as participating in worship as acolytes and collecting the offering. This is a wonderful way for us to celebrate these joint ministries with Mars United Presbyterian. In the spring we will be having another youth-led worship service, this time hosted by Mars United Presbyterian. Thanks to all who support our children and youth!

Homeless Sleepout

Homelessness affects far more people than we often realize. And not all homelessness looks the same. To help our youth connect with the challenges and prevalence of homelessness, we had a "Homeless Sleepout." We started the evening with games to help the youth learn facts about homelessness, then they were invited outside to build shelters out of cardboard boxes and duct tape. Despite the very cold weather, the youth slept out all night!

Kids Club MHY Family Services Kits

Our Kids Club spent a meeting talking about different ways that we can help and serve other people. One of the ways that we can help is by supporting the work that other people do. MHY Family Services serves a number of kids with different needs in the area. To help support their work, the Kids Club made snack bags to be distributed among the kids receiving care from MHY Family Services. These kits included a hot cocoa kit as well as other snacks.

Confirmation

The celebration of a confirmation in the church is always an exciting event. In this service, the confirmand is asked to take on the promises made on their behalf at their baptism. Students spend the years leading up to this event in preparation. They learn a lot about the Bible as well as Lutheran theology. And they learn to ask questions and to lean on the support of their church. Congratulations Serafina on choosing to affirm your baptism in and with the congregation in November!

December 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 Advent Bible Study 7 pm	2	3 Cookie Baking - Meals on Wheels 9:30 am
4 New Members Worship 9:00 am Sunday School Youth Group 1pm Kids Club 1 pm	5	6	7	8 Advent Bible Study 7 pm	9	10 Living Nativity (MUP) 6:00 - 8:00 pm
11 Angel Tree Gifts Due Worship 9:00 am Sunday School Congregational Meeting 10:15 am	12	13 All Vestry Meeting 7 pm	14	15 Advent Bible Study 7 pm	16	17 Confirmation Class 9:30 - 11:30
18 Worship 9:00 am Sunday School Church Decorating Youth/kids Christmas Party	19	20 Newsletter Articles Due	21 Blue Christmas Service - MUP 7 pm	22 Advent Bible Study 7 pm	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 3:00 & 7:30 pm
25 Worship 9:00 am (no Sunday School)	26	27	28	29	30	31



- 12/01 Dominic Cardinal
- 12/07 Nathan Kramer
- 12/11 Serafina Julio
- 12/24 Christine Dishong
- 12/25 Jim Hager



Serving in Worship

Assisting Minister
Denise Hager

Ushers
TBD

Counters
Cindy Knauff & TBD

Bread Baker
Denise Hager

December Newsletter

Address service requested

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