



**ST. JOHN'S**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
OF THE ERIE LUTHERAN PARISH

*"You belong here."*

# The Parish Post

Monthly Newsletter

## Advent—Something's Coming!

The dictionary entry for "advent" says that it comes from the Latin "to come," through Old French and Middle English to our current understanding as the coming birth of Christ. It may also speak of Christ's Second Coming. Advent also marks the beginning of the liturgical church year. Happy New Year!

Christians observe the season of Advent for four weeks preceding Christmas. Beginning on Sunday, December 3, we will light one additional Advent wreath candle each week until we reach the birthday of the Christ child. Lighting these four candles, hanging greens in the church, singing certain hymns, and changing the paraments to the color blue are all traditions adopted by St. John's, following the customs of generations of Lutheran and Christian congregations.

The world outside our sanctuary observes their own "advent" beginning at least in October, before the Halloween decorations and candy go on sale. Truckers deliver the goods of the season, and shelf stockers at the stores make room for toys, clothing, candy, music, and decorations. Something's coming, and the arrival of Santa is a joyful tradition celebrated even more widely than the arrival of a babe in a manger. Yes, we too like our trees and Christmas stockings!

Advent comes early also for musicians. We can't wait until December first to smooth out the sixteenth note runs in Handel's *Messiah*. Georg Friedrich Handel's popular work was performed for the first time 281 years ago, in 1742. Preparing and attending a performance of the *Messiah* is another beloved tradition of the season. Although Handel's composition reflects the musical style of his time, his oratorio uses Old and New Testament texts that Christians value as timeless accounts of God's work among God's people.

Isaiah, writing in times as politically trying as our own, prophesies the coming of the Messiah, "Immanuel, God with us." Singers proclaim "Comfort ye my people" and "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." God's promises are fulfilled, "For unto us a child is born," "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth." "Hallelujah, he shall reign forever and ever, King of Kings," and "Worthy is the Lamb" who comes as our Savior, "Amen."

Something's coming! In our favorite and familiar customs, we claim God's gift of a Messiah son, bringing grace and love. Come light a candle and sing "Silent night" with us on Christmas Eve.

**#youbelonghere@StJohnsErie**

† ST JOHN'S VISION STATEMENT †

Loved by God, alive in Christ Jesus, and guided by the Holy Spirit, St. John's unconditionally serves God's people and shares Christian love.

## Congregational Notes

Lucas Jordan Pollock, son of Lane and Vanessa Pollock, was baptized on Sunday, November 26 by Pastor Mineo. Prior to the service, the Pastor related to the couple that this is the first baptism he has done since retiring. It was clear that Pastor Mineo enjoyed holding the comfortable little Lucas even after the baptismal rites, then returning the baby to his mother. Cake and punch in the gym for proud family members, friends, and the congregation followed the church service.

Erie News Now's camera featured Michelle Schrimper and the tree she decorated for the Festival of Trees. The Dr. Seuss book, "Oh, the Places You'll Go" provided the theme, with a baby doll gazing up at the tree, representing a lifetime of future experiences. Nicely done, Michelle!

## Christmas Gifts for Bethesda Students

Ten ornaments hang on a tree in the narthex, each with a name and the wish list of a student in the Bethesda programs. As in past years, church members may choose an ornament, sign the clipboard, and shop for some of the listed items. The treasures should be returned to the church office by Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, in bags marked with the recipient's name, but not gift-wrapped. Thanks again to Darlene Smith for coordinating this project and creating attractive ornaments for each name.

## Hanging of the Greens

At St. John's, we don't expect magical elves to decorate our sanctuary, so we recruit volunteers and do advance planning. Council approved the purchase of a new pre-lit Christmas tree. "Some assembly required," is the phrase that marked each of the greening activities. Our dedicated crew included Diane and Bob Bestvina, Sue Carlson, Nancy Durst, Sue and Mark Eller, Janet Heubel, Marj and Bob Quinn, Roger Seman, and Carolyn Sturtevant. We welcome additional crew members when the Christmas season ends, and we gently stow décor for another year.

## Good Gifts Support World Hunger and other ELCA Programs

When the Mall Santa asks a child "What do you want for Christmas?" it's unlikely that the answer would be "a piglet" or "chicks" or "a goat." For many children and families in the world, such gifts represent needed nutrition. We may fulfill wishes for some of our brothers and sisters by choosing an ornament from the tree in the lobby, and sending a financial gift as directed by the link: [ELCA.org/goodgifts](http://ELCA.org/goodgifts). Hang the ornament on your own tree, or share it with someone as a gift that you have made in their honor.

## Cookies!

December events need treats! Leslye Durst and Nancy Durst would be pleased to have cookies for the Breakfast with Santa on December 2nd. Bake another batch for the Gem City Band Concert on December 13<sup>th</sup> and bring them to the church office—or better yet—attend the concert where Sue Eller, Carolyn Sturtevant, and other volunteers will be serving refreshments.

## **Songs and Warm Fuzzies!**

Dozens of teens participating in the Footsteps weekend retreat opened our worship service with lively music on Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. Following their songs, they brought hugs and “warm fuzzies” (yarn necklaces) to worshipers. Michelle Flaherty and Butch Karnes both serve on the team of adult leaders for this event featuring faith formation and fellowship. Thank you all for your enthusiasm!

## **Epiphany Service January 6<sup>th</sup>**

On Saturday, January 6, 2024, 6:00 pm, Faith Lutheran Church (5414 E. Lake Rd, Erie) will host an Epiphany Service as a joint worship event for the Erie Conference of NWPAs Synod, of which St. John’s is a part. In Christian tradition, Epiphany commemorates the revealing of Jesus as Christ to the Gentiles, in the persons of the three wise men. It is also a celebration of the Baptism of Jesus. Light is the chief symbol of Epiphany. Following the service of Holy Communion, they will hold a “Burning of the Greens,” to burn this season’s Christmas trees in an outdoor fire. What a way to bring light into darkness!

## **Annual Congregational Meeting:**

- Sunday, January 21, 2024-- Following the 10 am service
- Sunday, January 7 2024 –Official notice of the meeting should be sent
- Wednesday, December 27<sup>th</sup>, deadline for Committee Annual reports to Rachel
- Council welcomes candidates for election/appointment to various positions.

## **First Communion Retreat Rescheduled**

The First Holy Communion Retreat being hosted by Rev. Mineo has been rescheduled for Saturday, January 13th with First Holy Communion being held on January 14th. This retreat is intended for students in 4th grade and above who have not yet received communion.

## **November 2023 Parish Post—Corrections**

St. John’s welcomed Connie Smith Leretsis into membership on Sunday, October 29. Connie is renewing her historic connections to St. John’s, and to the Chancel Choir. Another candidate for membership, Janel Anderson, was unable to join us on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and will be received at a future date.

## **Trunk or Treat—Fun for All!**

A superhero, a firefighter, a unicorn fairy, and a dinosaur walked into a gym—not the start of a joke, just the start of an afternoon of games, food, and candy! Most of the guests learned about the event through notes sent to families in Jefferson School. It is our goal to foster a relationship with the school as part of our community outreach, and an educational element was included. Each child received a free book provided by Hooked on Books. The revival of St. John’s Trunk or Treat tradition is thanks to the creativity and efforts of Leslye Durst and her crew. David Haffley brought Boy Scouts and their parents to assist St. John’s members with decorating, food prep and serving, running the kids’ games, and cleanup.

### December Pulpit Supply Schedule

12/3/2023	Gray, Rev. Jerry
12/10/2023	Rhodes, Rev. Owen
12/17/2023	Gray, Rev. Jerry
12/24/2023	Mineo, Rev. Ralph
12/31/2023	Rhodes, Rev. Owen



*Sunday, December  
24th Christmas Eve*

*Service Schedule:*

*10:00 AM Traditional  
Sunday Worship*

*Candlelight Services at  
4:00 PM, 7:00 PM, and  
11:00 PM*

Holiday Greetings to All!

Bob and I have volunteered again this year to be the coordinators of ONP, Our Neighbors' Place, an evening shelter for those that are homeless. It will be right here in our church. Last year we opened our doors for one week, but this season it will be for the two weeks of January 31<sup>st</sup> thru February 13<sup>th</sup>.

As we enter into this joyful season of giving and rejoicing in the birth of our Lord Jesus, I'm going to ask you to please prayerfully consider volunteering four hours of your time or even two 4 hour shifts. The positions are not difficult to carry out as we provide water, hot beverages, snacks, a shower, and a warm cot to sleep on. The main shift time is 7 until 11 p.m. Some shifts of 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. and 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. will be available.

Beginning this week, I will be asking many of you to please sign up to help us help others with a most basic need, shelter from the cold. We pray these sheltered guests will see our warm hearts.

Peace,

*Diane Bestvina*

**Prayer Requests:** Do you have someone or something to pray for? Use the “Prayer Request” link on our church website (<http://stjohnserie.org/prayer-request/>). Enter your request and we will publish it in the Parish Post as well as be able to petition it during the prayers in worship. Prayer Requests/Names will be removed on the 1st of each month unless otherwise requested. If you would like a name on the prayer list, please use the “Prayer Request” link on our church website, email or phone the church office.

**Just a Reminder:** If you would like anything put in the *Parish Post*, please have it submitted to the church office no later than the 20th of the month prior. The office email is: [office@stjohnserie.org](mailto:office@stjohnserie.org) or call the office at (814) 456-7596.

**Check In for Worship:** As you attend worship with us virtually or in person, please remember to check in. Record your attendance through the app on our “Worship With Us” web page. Or you can check in via email, letting us know where you were, who you were with, and what worship you attended, by texting or emailing that information to [attendance@stjohnserie.org](mailto:attendance@stjohnserie.org).

Check in for WORSHIP >

### Music for Advent/Christmas at St. John’s!

- \* On December 3<sup>rd</sup> and December 10<sup>th</sup>, the Bell Choir and Chancel Choir will offer Advent Selections (Bell Choir – December 3 and Chancel Choir – December 10<sup>th</sup>)
- \*On December 17<sup>th</sup>, the Bell Choir will present musical offerings for the Advent/Christmas Season at the 10:00 AM service.
- \*At the 10:00 AM service on December 24<sup>th</sup>, there will be special instrumental music.
- \*On Christmas Eve, there will be special instrumental music at the 4:00 PM service and the Chancel Choir will sing at the 7:00 PM service. At the 11:00 PM service there will be a prelude of Christmas music starting at 10:45 PM.

**St. John’s Choirs Need You!** - If you are interested in joining the Chancel Choir just for the Advent and Christmas Season you would be more than welcome. Let’s make a joyful noise to the Lord for the Holidays. Please contact Kathy Swanson or call the Church office for rehearsal times over the Holidays. Choir rehearsals for 2024 will begin on Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> with the Chancel Choir rehearsing on Sunday at 9:00 AM and the Bell Choir at 11:15 AM.



GEM CITY BANDS PRESENT A

# CHRISTMAS

*Extravaganza*

MUSIC BY

**GEM CITY JAZZ ENSEMBLE**  
**GEM CITY CONCERT BAND**

DECEMBER 13 | 7:00-9:00 PM | DONATIONS ACCEPTED

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH • 2216 PEACH STREET ERIE, PA

[www.gemcitybands.org](http://www.gemcitybands.org)



### **Poinsettia Garden Order Forms Due Soon!**

Suggested donation is \$10 per plant.  
Forms and payment are due by Monday,  
December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Please call or email the  
church office if you need an order form.

## I Can See the Manger from Here

J Gray Reflections on Advent 2022

Looking out from my dining room window across another back yard and further onto the next street, I see someone has put up a manger scene. It is one that many residents have on display in yards all over the area;—mass produced and on sale almost everywhere. I can see that manger from my house.

I don't have to leave my home to see the first home of Jesus. How convenient! I need not wander the streets looking for Christmas. I don't have to "follow a star"; I don't have to make a long distance journey over hill and dale, from country to country. In the warmth of my home I can gaze upon the scene that prompts the season—a place where a new infant with bedraggled parents lays utterly dependent among farm animals.

I am struck by the incongruity of this scene. Is that baby a Savior, a Messiah, an Emmanuel? Does the manger convey any message of new life and hope? Am I forgetting the story being introduced at this birth moment? Does the ease with which I can see the manger from my dining room diminish the profound impact of God breaking into history?

We need symbols and reminders of what God has done and is doing in our world. We need images that carry deep meaning and prompt our reflection and wonder. I don't want the birth narrative of Jesus to dissolve into a yard display. I want more than that. I'm hungry for a bigger impact that grabs the attention of our numbed minds and pushes them to awe.

Can the manger teach me something about God before the season ends and the neighbors remove the yard decoration to their garage or attic? Will I allow this visual reminder to pass like a fleeting memory or will I invest something of myself to participate in the activity of God in my world? I really want to "see the manger" in all its fullness, let it change my life, and renew my adoration and worship of that profound symbol of Incarnation - God with us!



## December 2023 St. John's Lutheran Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Fri.	Saturday
					1	2 9AM BREAK-FAST WITH SANTA 5PM WORSHIP
3 10AM WORSHIP	4	5	6 7PM CONG. COUNCIL	7	8	9 5PM WORSHIP
10 10AM WORSHIP 12PM Brew Crew	11	12	13 6PM GEM CITY BAND CONCERT	14 11:30AM WELCA 6PM CHRISTMAS PARTY 7PM Dufford Terrace Board	15	16 5PM WORSHIP
17 10 AM WORSHIP	18	19	20	21	22	23 5PM WORSHIP
24 10AM WORSHIP 4PM WORSHIP 7PM WORSHIP 11PM WORSHIP  Christmas Eve	25 Merry Christmas!  Office Closed	26	27	28	29	30 5PM WORSHIP
31 10AM WORSHIP						

### St. John's Lutheran Church

2216 Peach St., Erie PA 16502  
 (814) 456-7596 [www.StJohnsErie.org](http://www.StJohnsErie.org)  
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