



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

*"You belong here."*

# The Parish Post

Monthly Newsletter

## Looking Back, Moving Forward Well

Pastor Ralph Mineo

As a guest writer for St. John's January newsletter, I want to begin by saying that I'm grateful that God's Spirit led Jo and me to this congregation. It's been an honor and a blessing to worship with you, as well as present our "Butterflies and Penguins" program here. We look forward to worshipping with you in the coming year.

January is a time for looking back, a time to summarize and reflect on the previous year. What God has done in our lives? What were the struggles, mistakes, and sins of the past year? How did God bless us in 2023?

January is also a time to look forward, a time to make plans for the coming year. How will we live as disciples of Jesus in 2024? How will we serve and love others? How will we grow spiritually? How will we participate in our church family in the coming year?

Looking back is an important part of the process of moving forward well. To paraphrase Paul, our calling is to be connected to Christ Jesus, to live our lives in him. When we do this, we become a new creation. The past is gone. We don't live in the past. A new life begins. In Christ, we have a fresh start. In Christ, we live! May it be so for us all.

As you know, I end my sermons with prayer. As part of that prayer, I invite us to "listen to the voice of God."

So, let us pray... and listen...

"Lord God, we thank for you all the blessings you showered upon us in 2023. We ask you for forgiveness for our failings and sins." Listen to the voice of God answering this prayer: "I love you. I forgive you."

"Lord God, we thank you for all the blessings you will shower upon us in 2024. We ask for your Holy Spirit to lead and guide us." Listen to the voice of God answering this prayer: "I will love you. I will forgive you. I will guide you."

"Lord God, move us forward well." Listen to the voice of God answering this prayer: "I love you. I love you. I love you."

**#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.

## Chartering Scout Troop #9

Boy Scout Troop #9 and Cub Scout Pack #9 of the French Creek Council, Boy Scouts of America, approached St. John's council late in 2023, asking our church to "charter" their groups. Scout troops operate as discreet organizations, but they need to have a relationship with a larger body, such as a church, where they hold activities and participate in some events. You may have seen David Haffley and his sons wearing scout uniforms during church services. In addition, scouts and their family members have assisted with St. John's Halloween event and Breakfast with Santa, running games for children of our church and guest students from Jefferson School. It's refreshing to have these youngsters under our roof.

## Erie Conference Epiphany Service with Burning of the Greens

**Saturday, January 6, 2024, 6:00 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church, 5414 East Lake Road.** All are welcome! We'll celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord together with a candlelight Eucharist, with Pastor Jay Mitchell (Luther Memorial) preaching, followed by an outdoor burning of the Christmas greens. The Scandinavian rite has become a beloved local tradition. Refreshments and fellowship will follow in the social hall. Be sure to dress warm for the bonfire; you may also watch from the comfort of the social hall if you prefer. A simple house blessing liturgy will be available for you to take and use at home this Epiphany season.

## Youth Winter Retreat at Camp Lutherlyn

Camp Lutherlyn invites 4th-12th graders to a retreat, January 19-21. Campers will be divided by age groups and stay in cabin with cabin leaders from the summer staff. 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! For more information visit [www.lutherlyn.com/winter](http://www.lutherlyn.com/winter). Registration deadline is January 8.

## Congregational Notes

Family gatherings bring many distant family members back to Erie for the holidays. St. John's Christmas Eve services are brightened by family groups holding candles as we all sing Silent Night. We ask for blessings and safety for all who travel, and for all whose winter health issues prevented them from joining us in the sanctuary.

## Our Neighbors' Place, the Overnight Shelter

St. John's will open its doors to those who need overnight shelter beginning Wednesday, January 31, and continuing to Tuesday, February 13. Diane and Bob Bestvina will continue recruitment this month, asking volunteers to take one or two 4-hour shifts to help offer basic hospitality to our guests. The main shift time is 7 until 11 pm, with quieter hours 11 pm until 3 am, and 3 am until 7 am.

## Dufford Terrace/St. John's Celebrations

The Dufford Terrace Board entertained its residents and members of St. John's in a dinner and bingo party on December 13<sup>th</sup>. Food and fellowship pleased the crowd. Butch Karnes, recovering from recent knee replacement surgery, did not let his limited mobility stand in the way of his role as bingo caller!

Sharyn Roberts, now residing in Dufford Terrace, invited Kathy Swanson and St. John's members to lead a Christmas carol sing at Dufford Terrace in December. Mark Eller, Nancy Durst, Marj Quinn and Sharyn Roberts herself represented the St. John's choir. Kathy Swanson prepared song sheets and delighted the carolers with her holiday-themed stories and jokes. Cookies, eggnog, and hot chocolate sweetened the day!

## ICM Grateful for Coats for Kids

The Inter Church Ministries coordinator sent a note of thanks to St. John's for donating coats and other warm items to their campaign. Donors from our church and many other groups provided 400 coats to be distributed through United Way, Bethany Outreach, Erie City Mission, Men's shelter, and the Islamic Community Center.

## Bethesda Gifts

Your generosity made the Christmas season brighter for students at Bethesda. In recent months, members of WELCA collected items on the generic wish list. Combined with the gifts for individual students, once again, we have contributed to the needs of those served by Bethesda Lutheran Services. Thank you for participating in this annual campaign!

## Record-breaking Crowd for Gem City Concert!

The December 13<sup>th</sup> Christmas Extravaganza lived up to its name! Over 220 musicians and audience members filled the gym to hear the Gem City Jazz Ensemble and Gem City Concert Band ring in the holiday season. The Gem City groups, who rehearse and store equipment at St. John's, present concerts in a type of "artist-in-residence" agreement with our congregation. Individual musicians and small groups enhance our worship services from time to time, as Diane Gehrlein did on Christmas Eve with her Euphonium. Watch for the next season of Gem City concerts!

## 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

An official quorum depends on your participation!

## International Outreach

ELCA programs support communities around the world. Our gifts for specific items on the tree ornaments in the lobby, and our gifts throughout the year address the needs of brothers and sisters we have never met. This year, St. John's council also granted a modest gift to support travel of the David Godoy family, to Baitoa, Dominican Republic. They are not affiliated with ELCA, but are a real live, local family with personal connections to a school in DR. We learned of the Godoy family's mission trip through David's visits to our Project Dignity as a dietician with Second Harvest Food Bank. On his return from Baitoa, David reported on the activities to Council. His family taught classes, built benches, and counseled on healthy eating to individuals and community members. They handed out coloring books, Spanish gospels, and toiletry items. The school they visited, *Colegio: Un Lugar de Esperanza* (A Place of Hope), embodies the "community school" model adopted by some Erie schools. The Godoy family thanks our congregation for our prayers and support.

## Project Dignity Festivities

When neighbors arrived at Project Dignity days on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of December, they found the gathering room ringed with tables of Christmas goodies. In addition to the food and personal care they receive every month, they were treated to free items such as cookies, candy, calendars, tote bags, holiday décor, pump soaps, hats, gloves, slipper socks and a good-for-your-health bag that was enjoyed by all 41 households who attended! A ticket auction added to the fun. Diane Bestvina and her enhanced Project Dignity crew wished everyone the best for the holiday season.

### January Pulpit Supply Schedule

1/7/2024	Rev. Ralph Mineo
1/14/2024	Rev. Ralph Mineo
1/21/2024	Rev. Jerry Gray
1/28/2024	Rev. Ralph Mineo

Pastor Ralph Mineo is offering a First Communion Class January 13th. 10 AM - 4 PM. Lunch will be included.

We will celebrate First Communion on Sunday, January 14th at 10 AM worship.

Students 4th grade and up who have not yet received their First Holy Communion are welcome to attend.

Please RSVP to Rachel in the church office by Wednesday, January 10th.



**Thank You** – St. John’s Music program would like to thank all the musicians that helped make our services more meaningful this past year. We deeply appreciate all the vocalists, instrumentalists, instrumental ensembles and choirs that added to our worship in 2023.

**Choir members needed** – Why not make a New Year’s resolution to be a part of St. John’s music program this year? If you are a singer, ringer, or instrumentalist, there is a place for you in our worship. You can join a choir for a liturgical season or all year - whatever fits in your schedule. If you want to do one selection for special music that would be great. For the New Year, choir rehearsals will start on January 7<sup>th</sup> with the Chancel Choir on Sunday at 9:00 AM and the Bell Choir at 11:15 AM. We look forward to seeing both faithful members and new faces in 2024!



**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).



Thank  
YOU!

Thank you for partnering with Gridley Chapter #324, Order of the Eastern Star on December 2nd at our Breakfast with Santa. Over 80 total breakfasts were served and over 120 church and chapter members, youth and adult volunteers, Dufford Terrace residents and others were in attendance. It was an excellent outreach project.



*Erie's Public Schools does not endorse nor sponsor this activity or program.*

# Book BINGO

- When:** Thursday, January 18
- Where:** St. John's Lutheran Church  
2216 Peach Street  
Erie, PA 16502
- Time:** Doors open at 5:30 pm  
BINGO from 6:00-6:45 pm
- Details:** \*FREE dinner and BINGO event  
\*5:30-6:00 pm: Enjoy a pizza dinner  
\*6:00-6:45 pm: Multiple BINGO games to win free children's books  
\*RSVPs appreciated, but not required



Questions and RSVPs: Call/Text Leslye Durst at 814-323-2134

## Green Corner NWPA Synod Green Team

### Waste Not – Reduce Your Waste with a Waste Audit

The waste that we generate, individually and as congregations, has a big impact on the world around us. Part of caring for creation is being responsible for the waste that we generate and taking steps to eliminate as much waste as possible. A good way to get started, either at home or at church, is to conduct a waste audit.

Step one in a waste audit is very simple – look in the trash. What is being thrown away? What makes up the largest bulk of the trash? What is thrown away most often, maybe even daily?

Step two: After you have identified what's in the trash, brainstorm some ways to throw away less. Ask yourself some of these questions:

- Are there disposable items that you could replace with reusable items? (ie: single-use water bottles replaced with re-fillable water bottles, or paper towels replaced with washable cloth rags)
- Are there things you currently throw out that you could recycle?
- Are there items you could clean and re-use instead of throwing away? (ie: zip-lock bags)
- Could you or someone else upcycle any of your items or use it for another purpose after initial use? (ie: for crafts or other projects)
- Is there anything you could donate instead of throwing away? (Use caution – don't donate items that are unwanted or in poor condition)
- What food waste could you compost? You could start with just one or two types of food waste to compost, like coffee grounds, vegetables or fruits.
- What packaging can you eliminate? Maybe you can buy a different brand of the same item that uses less packaging or paper packaging instead of plastic.
- Do you use take-out containers? Can you take your own container instead?
- Do you have non-perishable items that you buy frequently? Buying in bulk can reduce the amount of packaging you throw away.
- Are there things you regularly have too much of or frequently end up not needing? Think about ways to reduce how much you purchase.

Every little bit of waste reduction helps us be better stewards of God's creation!

The Green Team's purpose is to "raise awareness of and advocate for the care of creation." Our mission is to support and encourage creation care ministries, raise awareness, model creation care advocacy consistent with ELCA teachings in our faith communities and public life.

[nwpasynodgreenteam@gmail.com](mailto:nwpasynodgreenteam@gmail.com)

<https://www.northwesternpasynodelca.org/nwpa-green-team.html>

January 2024 (article is 'recycled' from January 2022)

## January 2024 St. John's Lutheran Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Fri.	Saturday
	<b>1</b> Happy New Year!  Office Closed	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 5PM WORSHIP
<b>7</b> 9AM CHANCEL CHOIR 10AM WORSHIP 11:15AM BELL CHOIR	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 7PM CONG. COUNCIL	<b>11</b> 11:30AM WELCA	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 5PM WORSHIP 10AM FIRST HOLY COMMUNION RE-TREAT
<b>14</b> 9AM CHANCEL CHOIR 10AM WORSHIP 11:15AM BELL CHOIR 12PM Brew Crew	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 7PM Dufford Terrace Board	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 5:30 PM BOOK BINGO	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 5PM WORSHIP
<b>21</b> 9AM CHANCEL CHOIR 10 AM WORSHIP 11:15AM BELL CHOIR Annual Meeting Following Worship	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 5PM WORSHIP
<b>28</b> 9AM CHANCEL CHOIR 10AM WORSHIP 11:15AM BELL CHOIR	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 5PM Our Neighbor's Place Warming Shelter begins			

### St. John's Lutheran Church

2216 Peach St., Erie PA 16502

(814) 456-7596 [www.StJohnsErie.org](http://www.StJohnsErie.org)

"You Belong Here!"