



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

"You belong here."

The Parish Post

Monthly Newsletter

"I'll be Home for Christmas..."

Wikipedia informs me that this popular Christmas standard was written by lyricist Kim Gannon and composer Walter Kent, and it became a top ten hit for Bing Crosby when he recorded it in 1943. Originally, it reflected the desire of overseas servicemen to be away from the battlefields, and to be home with family and friends for the holiday season. The sentiments of this timeless song fit every person who longs for the warmth of family and home, with an oven spreading delicious aromas and with lights in the windows.

In October, I read a book set in Appalachia, Demon Copperhead, by my favorite living author, Barbara Kingsolver. Her character, whose real name is Damon, lacks father, mother, and home, due to the economic struggles that cause many to fall into substance abuse. Damon's childhood and teen years play out in a series of foster homes, surrounded by people both flawed and supportive.

While reading this book, I also visited family in West Virginia, where nephew Ben and his wife Christy have been involved in faith-based recovery programs for several years. They openly testify to the pain in their home due to past substance abuse and feelings of anger, rejection, and inadequacy. In Monday night Recovery Alive meetings, Ben and plays guitar, and Christy leads sessions of praising God, their higher *Power*, with a group of *People* supporting each other, applying a 12-step *Process* to bring healing to their lives. Their newest project has been the restoration and dedication of an old building into the "Victoria House," which will be a home to six women in recovery. Hundreds of people brought muscle and tools to repair the building, and hundreds of boxes from the Amazon wish list carried gifts to furnish the rooms.

As the first two women moved in this week, Christy apologized that the house lacks TV and internet, and she realized that the negative aspects are eclipsed by the benefits of a stable shelter with electricity, heat, kitchen appliances to create warm and wholesome meals. In Victoria House, and in four other Recovery Alive houses, two for women and two for men, the residents will have a safe home away from the battles that interrupted their lives. Our family is proud of the faith, vision, and energy that Christy and Ben have invested in reclaiming peace, love, and trust in their own home, and in extending that hospitality to others in need of a home during recovery.

St. John's participation in the cold-weather Overflow Shelter, "Our Neighbor's Place," is a way that we offer safety and warmth to those who are without a home. Diane is recruiting volunteers to prepare meals and to cover evening shifts at the new location. The organizers of the shelter hope to include social services to help Erie's homeless population find more permanent housing.

As we gather in our own homes, may our generosity be inspired by the life and love of an infant born far from home, in a temporary shelter, yet celebrated each year at Christmas.

Carolyn Sturtevant

#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.

Bethesda Gifts

St. John's once again will make Christmas brighter for residents of Bethesda Lutheran Services. Members are invited to sign up to purchase items from the wish lists of the ten names assigned to our congregation. It is not necessary to complete the entire list. Bethesda also has a generic wish list of clothing, games, and equipment that helps them meet the needs of their young people throughout the year. All items should remain unwrapped, but they may be placed in a seasonal gift bag. Please bring gift bags to the office by Tuesday, December 10th so that residents can receive their gifts before heading home for the holidays.

The Advent of a New Church Year

In the liturgical calendar observed by many Christians, the church year ends on Christ the King Sunday, which occurred in 2024 on November 24th. Thus, Sunday, December 1st is the beginning of a new church year, as well as the beginning of the four-week season of anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ. As we light the Advent candles each week, we can reflect on the traditional themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. Happy New Year!

Congregational Meeting, Sunday, January 19

Please mark your calendars to attend the annual business meeting of our congregation on Sunday, January 19, 2025, following the 10 am worship service. At this meeting, we require a quorum of members to approve a budget and to elect people to Council and certain committees. This year's NWPA Synod Assembly in June will see the selection of Bishop to begin a new term of office, so it is important to identify and register our two voting members to Synod Assembly well in advance. Council welcomes everyone to consider serving our congregation in a variety of positions and committees. Don't be afraid to ask for more information of Council President Roger Olsen or any Council member.

Customized Giving Envelopes

Perhaps you have heard the song "God loves a cheerful giver." In this season of holiday cheer, you may look for a packet of envelopes on a table in the lobby that are tagged with your name and address! These envelopes enable us to give cheerfully in support of the ministries, staff, and facilities of our own congregation, as well as sharing some of our resources with the NWPA Synod and the ELCA. This year's packet includes an envelope to help us restore the Rec Room that was damaged by the flood a few years ago. If you wish to give electronically, please visit the St. John's Erie website and use the Donate button for your cheerful giving!

Scouts Hold Rummage Sale December 7

On Saturday, December 7, the Scouts will host a rummage sale in the Parish Center gym. They welcome donations from the congregation. Please bring items to the gym stage. Then please tell your neighbors and friends about the sale!

Christmas Eve Services for All

Our worship teams are ready to celebrate Jesus' birth with you, whatever time suits you best! Come to hear the Nativity story and to experience the calm beauty of a candlelit "Silent Night" on Tuesday, December 24, at 4:00 pm, 7:00 pm, and 11:00 pm.

Epiphany Service with the Erie Lutheran Conference

Faith Lutheran Church, 5414 East Lake Road, Harborcreek, again will host an Epiphany Service of Holy Communion and Burning of the Greens, Monday, January 6, 7:00 p.m. Jesus is the light of the world! The magi come to adore the Christ child! Worship will conclude outdoors with the burning of the Faith church Christmas greens. Faith church invites members of all eighteen churches of the Erie Lutheran Conference to join them for this celebration that marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Epiphany.

Thank You

A big sweet Thank You to those 7 folks (and you know who you are) who contributed candy for our Project Dignity Neighbors who will be attending and receiving a candy bag at our Christmas Party.



Youth Group will be held on the **FIRST SUNDAY** of each month. All children from PreK – 8th grade are welcome to attend. Lunch will be provided. Bring a friend and come enjoy some fun, games and fellowship with us! ☺

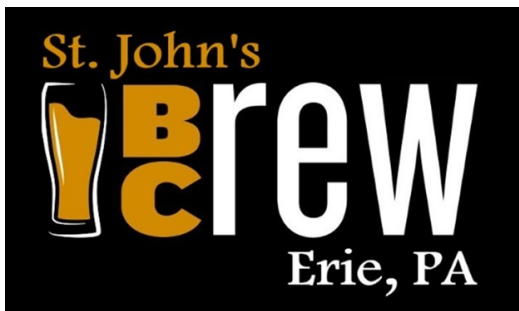
When: Sunday, December 1st & January 5th

Time: 11:00 am (after the 10:00 church service)

Where: We will meet in the St. John's gym

Who: PreK – 8th grade (invite a friend!)

Questions? Contact Leslye Durst 814-323-2134



December 15th following the 10AM service.

Brew a Beer, Bottle a Beer,
Drink a Beer.

No experience necessary!
Contact Tim Durst with questions.

Dear Church Family,

Thank you SO MUCH for the SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY!
I was really surprised, blessed, and filled with joy. It was FUN!

In Christ's love,
~Pastor Ralph

A NOTE OF



“What It Means To Be A Lutheran”



**A Sunday in late March 2025
2:00 to 7:00 PM**

**Congregational Potluck
5:00 PM**

**Pastor Ralph will lead this session
for anyone interested in
becoming a member of St. John's
and for anyone interested in a refresher.**

**For those interested,
please contact Pastor Ralph.**

A firm date will be set soon.

All those in 5th Grade and above are invited to a “Communion Retreat With Pastor Ralph” on Saturday, February 15th 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

There's a sign-up sheet on the church office window. Participants will join in “Affirmation of Holy Communion” during worship on Sunday, February 16th.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS! "Youth Sunday" is March 2, 2025. The entire worship service will be led by the youth: music, Scripture readings, prayers, sermon, etc. under the leadership of Pastor Ralph and Leslye Durst. We will plan the service during Youth Group (first Sunday of the month following worship). At the December 1st meeting, we'll begin to select some of the music.

Music Notes



New Choir Members Welcome

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. General rehearsals are at 9:00 AM on Sunday mornings. Please contact Kathy Swanson for any special rehearsal times during the Advent/Christmas season.

Special Music for December

During December, the Chancel and Bell Choirs will be offering Advent and Christmas music each Sunday. On Sunday, December 22, the Stained Glass Ensemble instrumental group will be playing both the Prelude and Offertory. On Christmas Eve at the 7:00 PM service, the Chancel Choir will be singing to honor the coming of the Christ Child. For the 11:00 PM service, Pastor Mineo will be playing the guitar to celebrate Jesus' birth.





Green Corner NWPAsynod Green Team

Creation Care with Eco-Friendly Wrapping

As Christmas approaches, here are some ideas for earth-friendly wrapping. Consider using alternatives to traditional wrapping, such as:

- Newspaper or brown paper rolls (kids can decorate with markers or Christmas card cut-outs)

- Reusable shopping bags (preferably cotton)

- Re-use gift bags (make it fun - see how many years you can use the same one)

- Christmas cards make great gift tags

- Wrap items in a t-shirt

- Wrap items in a tablecloth or blanket

- Instead of ribbon,

 - Use 100% cotton yarn (such as Sugar and Cream, available in many colors)

 - Use jute twine (100% biodegradable); add a fresh holly sprig for color

- Avoid shiny, glossy wrapping, as it is not recyclable

- If giving multiple gifts to a person/family, place them unwrapped in one (reusable) bag and have the recipient select one at a time. (No peeking inside first!)

Martin Luther, "God is wholly present in all creation, in every corner, behind you and before you." (LW 51:43)

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

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

December 2024 St. John's Lutheran Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Fri.	Saturday
1 10AM WORSHIP 11AM YOUTH GROUP	2	3	4	5	6	7 5PM WORSHIP Boy Scout Rum- mage Sale 8AM- 2PM
8 9AM CHANCEL CHOIR 10AM WORSHIP 11:15AM BELL CHOIR	9	10	11 CONG. COUNCIL 5PM 7PM GEM CITY BAND CONCERT	12 11:30AM WELCA	13	14 5PM WORSHIP
15 9AM CHANCEL CHOIR 10AM WORSHIP 11AM BREW CREW 11:15AM BELL CHOIR	16	17 4PM Dufford Terrace Christmas Party	18	19	20	21 9AM Breakfast with Santa 5PM WORSHIP
22 9AM CHANCEL CHOIR 10 AM WORSHIP 11:15AM BELL CHOIR	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 4PM 7PM 11PM	25 Merry Christmas! <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Office Closed</div>	26	27	28 5PM WORSHIP
29 10AM WORSHIP	30	31				

St. John's Lutheran Church

2216 Peach St., Erie PA 16502

(814) 456-7596 www.StJohnsErie.org

"You Belong Here!"