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# First St. John Journal

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Volume 29, Issue 12

December, 2016

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**T**oday marks the beginning of the season of Advent—a time of preparation, of going toward the coming again of the Messiah, of great expectation and great anticipation. But exactly what is it we anticipate? What are we getting ready for? What do we expect to happen? Do we anticipate the end of the world, as some religious cults always do at this time of year? Are we preparing our hearts and spirits to receive again the coming of the Christ child into the world?

Or are we preparing for yet another month-long shopping spree that some have called "economic first-degree murder"—willfully and with malice aforethought murdering our bank accounts? Or maybe we're getting ready for the seven to ten pounds the average American will gain during the season (Lord, please let me be an underachiever this year!)? Or are we preparing for the suicidal traffic jams at the mall or the general atmosphere of surliness and desperation? (A couple of years back I remember hearing on the local news in West Tennessee that shoppers were actually coming to blows over buying a Holiday Barbie doll!)

Are we getting ready for the depression, the anxiety, and even the rage that accompanies the secular holiday season? If we allow ourselves to get caught up in the consumer Christmas-- and I firmly believe we in America celebrate two separate events on December 25-- we can easily find that instead of preparing to sing "O Holy Night," we will find ourselves living out one holy nightmare.

For the many who faithfully observe the consumer Christmas, Advent is the inevitable prelude to disappointment. For the majority of these folks, Christmas somehow hardly ever measures up to their fantasies. Even for those who manage to have some of their Christmas wishes fulfilled the season is over so quickly, and the need to make New Year's resolutions to lose those added pounds bears down on them even before the decorations come down.

But the Advent we celebrate in the church— the one that has nothing at all to do with the number of shopping days left until Christmas— is altogether different. The hanging of the greens, the placement of the poinsettias, the lighting of the first Advent candle – all these invite us to dream dreams of a better world, to allow expectant visions that have nothing to do with sugar-plum fairies dancing in our heads. Advent invites us to fill the cup of today with a full measure of tomorrow in the Christian hope for a different, brighter future.

Don't forget during this Advent time of preparation for Christmas to include time in church for yourself and your family. Doing so will bring you into the true and eternal celebration of the life-changing event from God: "For unto you this day is born a Savior who is Christ the Lord!"

*(continued on page 3)*

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Our annual congregational meeting is Sunday, December 11th at both services. We'll vote on the 2017 budget and new council members. A copy of the proposed 2017 budget is included with this newsletter. If you have questions about the budget, please call Julie Gallaher at 419-250-4143.

## HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

**Christmas Eve:** 7:00 pm & 11:00 pm

**Christmas Day:** 9:00 am

**New Year's Day:** 10:00 am

No Sunday School on December 25th or January 1st. The church office will be closed on Monday, December 26th and on Monday, January 2nd. We resume our regular Sunday schedule on January 8th. Merry Christmas, everyone!



## MEMBERSHIP UPDATES



### Births

None of which we are aware.

### Baptisms

10-30-16 *Joseph Wayne Williams* and his son, *Finnegan Theodore Williams*. Finnegan was born April 26, 2016 to Joseph and Morgan (Mabry) Williams. Sponsor for Joe is Jan Murphy. Sponsors for Finnegan are Katelynn Conley, Paige Mabry, and Ryan Schumaker.

### Marriages

11-12-16 Holly Hecklinger and Alex Reif

### Deaths

11-4-16 William Wegman

11-16-16 Larry Grant

### Transfers To First St. John

Mary Gillespie from Lutheran Church of Our Savior in Toledo.

### Transfers From First St. John

None

## THANK YOU FOR HATS, GLOVES, MITTENS & SOCKS



A HUGE THANK YOU to all who donated hats, gloves, mittens and socks to our annual program for needy children in our area. We received many handmade donations, also. Thank you for helping area school children to keep warm and dry this winter. God bless all of you.

## CHICKEN & HAM DINNER UPDATE

Thank you for making our dinner a great success. We served over 670 dinners (including children's plates) and made a profit of approximately \$4,800. Also, many thanks to First St. John's bakers who contributed to the bake sale. The delicious goodies were greatly appreciated! Thanks to everyone who worked in any way to help with this event.

ELDERS FOR DECEMBER		
	<u>7:45 am</u>	<u>10:15 am</u>
4th	Dick Haar Jeff Ladd	Jeff Smith Tom Eppard
11th	Ryan Hugueley Linda Yenrick	Darold Henninger Mike Winslow
18th	Tom Gaskins Terry Ruedy	Sherrie Haar Bob Haar
24th	Christmas Eve	— TBA
	<u>9:00 am</u>	
25th	Volunteers Needed	



## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD UPDATE

Thank you very much to everyone who filled a shoebox this year for the Operation Christmas Child program. Our final collection total was 76 shoeboxes, and they were delivered to our drop-off point on November 19th. Great job, everyone!

## ADDRESS CHANGES/CORRECTIONS

To keep current information for the office, if your name, address or phone number changes, please notify us by faxing (419-691-7220), or mailing this form to: 2471 Seaman St./ Toledo, OH 43605 or email: [office@firststjohn.com](mailto:office@firststjohn.com)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_



## FAMILY CHRISTMAS PARTY

If you sent an RSVP for the Family Christmas party, please remember to join us in the gym on Sunday, December 4th at 4:30 pm. See you there!

## HELP FOR LOCAL BENEVOLENCES

During Advent, we offer the opportunity for members to help fund our local benevolences, such as the East Toledo Ministry, Lutheran Social Services, Feed Your Neighbor, and Genacross Lutheran Services (formerly known as the Lutheran Home). Special Christmas envelopes can be found in the pews if you wish to donate. You can place your donation in the offering plate or mail it back to the church. Thank you.

## ALTAR GUILD NEWS



The last day to accept poinsettia orders is Friday, December 9th. Please turn your order in to the church office by then. You can order poinsettias in the Narthex after church on November 27th and December 4th.

The Altar Guild will meet Monday, December 5th at 6:30 pm at Cousino's Steakhouse on Woodville Rd. for their year-end meeting and Christmas dinner. All new members for 2017 are invited to join us.

## WOMEN'S CIRCLE CELEBRATIONS

**Ruth Circle:** We will celebrate on Tuesday, December 6th at 11:00 a.m. at the Oregon Inn.

**Miriam Circle:** We will celebrate on Wednesday, December 7th at 10:00 a.m. at the Bayberry Clubhouse. Please bring a dish for brunch.

**Rebecca Circle:** We will meet on Saturday, December 10th at 11:30 am at Ruth Ziethlow's place. Please bring a dish to share for potluck.

**Hannah Circle:** Due to hectic holiday schedules, our celebration will be on Monday, January 9th at 6:00 pm at Karen Holmes' house. Please bring a snack to share.

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

(continued from page 1)

Last October, First St. John did something momentous. During October 2015, we conducted a month-long stewardship emphasis that culminated with the first ever Consecration Sunday. We were blessed to have Pastor Peter Martyn as our leader. Hopefully, we still remember and are grateful for the positive impact of Pastor Martyn who sadly passed away this year.

Many folks worked very hard to make our first Consecration Sunday a success. As a result of our members giving prayerful and faithful consideration in making a commitment to return a portion of the resources God has blessed them with, First St. John has experienced an increase in the level of stewardship expressed in weekly individual and family giving.

To continue this momentum, we will conduct a modified, mini-Consecration Sunday during December. During worship services on Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, Consecration Commitment Cards will be distributed to everyone present. People will be invited to fill them out and return them with their offering at the service, or they may take them home, fill them out, and return them on the next Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>. On that Sunday, a CC card will be provided to those who did not receive one the previous Sunday; it can be filled out and returned during the worship that day.

We hope everyone will again this year give prayerful consideration to making a proportional commitment in response to God's generosity by providing for the Lord's ministry at First St. John Lutheran Church.

**2 Corinthians 9:7-8.** "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."

— Pastor Rayl

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**First St. John Lutheran Church Prayer Chain**  
(As of November 22, 2016)

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**Crisis Prayer List:** *For those who need prayers in urgent matters such as surgery, emergency medical care (ICU), etc. Will be moved to the Chronic list after the first month unless someone is contacted about special circumstances:*

**Ken Abbey  
Family of Lola Abbey  
Lee Antoine  
David Cummerow  
Family of Larry Grant  
Connie Koch  
Ralph & Ethel Mae Vogtsberger**

**On-going Concerns Prayer List:** *For those who need prayers for ongoing serious situations such as cancer treatments, medical struggles, recovery and/or personal situations. Will be moved off the list after 3 months unless someone is contacted about special/continuing circumstances:*

**Nancy Aysh  
Mike Barhite  
Pastor Blohm  
Jeannette Carlo  
Todd Colburn  
Greg Contat  
Jackie Curtis  
Teresa Ellis  
Dorothy Felderman  
Marion Fouty  
Phyllis Frey  
Patty Gable  
Elaine Gardner  
Michael Goolsby & family  
Heather (no last name given)  
Ed & Susan Klawitter  
Robin Kovesdi  
Maureen Kraft  
Ilean Labuhn  
Kate Lajti  
Mares family  
Jeanette Miller  
James Moore  
Beth Myers  
Donald Nelson, Sr.**

**Pam Pirolli  
Sheryl Rayl  
Olivia & Delaney Reamsnyder  
Michael Rheinbolt & family  
Dr. Steve Rowe  
Phyllis Schuffenecker  
Norm Schumaker  
Carolyn Schwierking  
Lois Seymour  
John Spoerl  
Joan Tilton  
John Tsaousidis  
Julie Woodrum  
Steve Uzi  
Ruth Zasada  
Olivia Zeisler  
Olga Zimmerman**

Please check the above list and let any of the prayer chain contacts--listed in the next column--know if individuals can be moved off the list.

**Prayer Chain Contacts**

Carol Abbey 419-351-9795 or  
cabbey@jcrinc.com

Lynn Folk	419-309-7977
Donna Koehn	419-693-5030
Ada Kreger	419-693-1549
Gloria Ross	419-836-7166

**SECRET SANTAS  
NEEDED!**



Genacross Lutheran Services (formerly the Lutheran Home at Toledo) is seeking people to adopt a resident for Christmas. If you are interested, call Diane Cline at 419-724-1739 to get a resident's name and their wish list. Please wrap your gift, place a name tag on it, and drop it at the Activity Department. The deadline for bringing gifts is Thursday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. Thanks for helping to make a resident's holiday a little brighter.





Feeding the Community

## ***VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR PERSONAL NEEDS PANTRY***

We need two volunteers who would like to work together in the pantry. The time commitment is small; you would work every sixth Wednesday from 9:30-12:30 at the Lutheran Homes Society, located next door to the church, distributing items to the clients who are scheduled that day. The other volunteer teams are very flexible and often will trade Wednesdays if their time to serve falls on a vacation day. We also have substitutes who can be called to cover for you, if needed. That makes it very easy to serve!

If you can help, you would need to start in January of 2017. The other volunteers tell how gratifying it is to them to be able to help people who live in our church neighborhood. Please call Karen Holmes at 419-691-3225 to volunteer or if you would like more information.

## **HIGH SCHOOL GROUP EVENTS**

All high school kids and their friends are invited to join us on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> (Nightingales Harvest) and Friday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> (ice skating at BGSU). We also meet each Sunday at 9:00 am (we'll be off on Christmas Day and New Year's Day). Please call Nick or Kristine Miller at 419-206-1689 if you have questions. Come check it out!

## ***MEN'S MINISTRY NEWS***

Our next men's breakfast will be Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 8:00 am at Bob Evans Restaurant on Navarre Ave. If you need a ride, please call Bob Haar at 419-250-9409.



**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23<sup>rd</sup>  
AT NOON (no later, please)**

## **GERMAN CHRISTMAS SERVICE**



A traditional German church service in the Christmas spirit will be Sunday, December 18th at 3:00 p.m. here at First St. John. The Teutonia Mannerchor and Damenchor choirs will perform during this service. The Bavarian Holzacher children's choir will also perform. Please join us for wonderful fellowship and Christmas spirit.

## ***2017 OFFERING ENVELOPES***

Offering envelopes for 2017 will be in the lounge in December through January. They will be in alphabetical order on tables along the wall by the double doors. Envelopes are issued to confirmed and contributing members and, upon request, friends who worship with us. If a husband and wife share offering envelopes, the designation "M/M" and the husband's name will appear on the box. (The computer allows only one name per assigned envelope number.)

If you would like to receive envelopes or if there is a correction to your address or name, please call the church office at 419-691-7222. ***Reminder:*** Please do not use your 2017 envelopes until January 1st. If you want a contribution included on your 2016 statement, you must turn it in to the office by Sunday, December 25, 2016.



## **ADOPT A FAMILY**

Once again, we will help an area family in need this Christmas. We ask for your support in providing gifts for this family. A Christmas tree filled with paper ornaments is in the Narthex. Each ornament has a gift description along with gender and age to help you choose the appropriate gift. Please tear off the front stapled ornament, write your name and number on the other paper ornament, and leave it on the tree.

Please return your UNWRAPPED gift by noon on Sun., December 18<sup>th</sup>. It is our prayer that as a church we will do these blessings throughout our lives as believers. Thanks for your help!



## MEMORIALS

### ROOF FUND

In memory of **Elinor & Jerry Ehram** by their children: Carol Brown, Jerry Ehram and Cathy Martin and their families.

In memory of **Mary Kay Smith** by Louise & Jim Sommers.

In memory of **Luke R. Partin** by Louise & Jim Sommers, Terry & Jane Schuetz, Larry Partin, Betty Crandall, J.K. Hubbs, Barbara Weir, Reed Boothby, Russ & Chris Hunsaker, Ada Kreger.

In memory of **Barbara Sabin** by Louise & Jim Sommers.

In memory of **June Schober** by Karen & John Rowley.

In memory of **Virginia Ford** by Gloria Ross.

In memory of **Mike Bodnar** by Darlene Lorenzen.

In memory of **Bill Wegman** by Jean DeWitt, Esther Bell.

### CEMETERY FUND

In memory of **Elinor & Jerry Ehram** by their children: Carol Brown, Jerry Ehram and Cathy Martin and their families.

### DINNER WITH FRIENDS

In memory of **Luke Partin** by Winnie Wohlgamuth.

### ALTAR GUILD

In memory of **Sheehy & Cheryl Null** by Bob & Sherrie Haar.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



Join us on Sunday, December 18th at the 10:15 service for the JAM Sunday School Christmas program.

All participants will rehearse on Saturday, December 17th at 10:30 am until noon in the church. On the day of the program, please have your children here at 9:00 am for a quick practice before the service at 10:15. Questions? Call either Morgan Williams at 419-261-0431 or Darlene Paul at 419-691-1068.

## 2016 POINSETTIA SALE

*Sponsored by the Altar Guild*

Fill in the order blank below to place your order for poinsettias to be used during worship services on Christmas Eve. Place your order form in the offering plate or mail it to the church office.

Payment must accompany orders. Please make checks payable to: **First St. John Altar Guild**

**Deadline for placing orders is  
Friday, December 9, 2016**

No. of plants @ \$9.00 each \_\_\_\_\_

Color (circle one)    Red        White

Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

In Loving Memory of (Deceased):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of (Living):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Day School News



*But Mary kept all these things,  
pondering them in her heart. Luke 2:19*

Season's Greetings! We say, "Jesus is the reason for the season." What exactly does that mean? Do we fill our days with baking, shopping and partying? Are we celebrating the season of giving? Obviously, retailers love it!

Are we thinking about how Christmas all began? Obviously, we were lost and did not have a clue. Like our earthly father, our heavenly Father was looking out for us. He sent His son, Jesus, to earth to rescue us since we do not have the power to save ourselves. Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, was a carpenter who was probably able to provide a comfortable life for his family. Yet Jesus, who had it all as one might say, chose to take on a life of poverty in comparison.

In Luke we read about the angel's visitation to Mary. She was troubled as she knew one did not have a child without a husband. Then when she was pregnant, she visited her relative and found out that in her old age, she too was pregnant. She learned that Zechariah had a vision in the temple. Then the new census came along and she had to travel to Bethlehem with Joseph. I am sure she was exhausted by the time they reached Bethlehem and disappointed when she found there was no place for them to stay. Then she gave birth to her Son, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger. Probably wanting only sleep, she was very surprised when shepherds arrived telling how the angels announced this wonderful event.

With all this, Mary had many things to ponder in her heart. This miraculous birth of the Son of God to a human seems unbelievable, but with God all things are possible. To me, Christmas is part of God's miracle of forgiveness. We need to share His love with all we meet. Take advantage of some of the Advent church services to learn more about what the holiday really means, and wish others a "Merry Christmas."

**Thank You!**

Thank you to all who participated in our fundraising efforts, whether that was at the Craft Show, the

Chicken and Ham dinner, or our Thanksgiving Feasts. We all know every little bit helps! We continue to collect the Big G Box Tops and Campbell's Labels for Education (must have the LFE logo on the UPC). We know you will see lots of these throughout the holiday as you bake and make other purchases. For a complete list of the products, go to their websites. These donations continue to help us throughout the year.

### Christmas Programs

Everyone is welcome to attend the children's Christmas programs on the evenings of December 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup>. All programs are at 7:00 pm in the church sanctuary. Come and have your spirits lifted after a hectic day at home or work. Sometimes you just need a little extra time with God to get you in the Christmas spirit.

Merry Christmas from all the staff at First St. John Dayschool.

— Carol Felderman



### 2017 CALENDARS

Thrivent Financial and Eggleston-Meinert-Pavley have donated 2017 calendars to us. They are free, and you can pick one up in the lounge and Narthex until supplies run out.

### CATECHISM CLASSES

No catechism classes on December 25th or January 1st. The 7th graders will resume classes on January 8th. Pastor Rayl will notify the 8th graders of their January schedule.

### 2017 FLOWER SIGN UP SHEETS AVAILABLE



Altar flower sign up sheets for January through November are in the red flower book located on the shelf under the main bulletin board in the Narthex, to the left of the main doors when you come into the church.