
First St. John Journal

Volume 33, Issue 12

December, 2020

“Silent Night” is a favorite Christmas hymn, if not the most favorite. I know here at First St. John worshippers wait to conclude the Christmas Eve service by joining the choir in singing the hymn. How often does it bring a tear to the eye and a lump in the throat to sing, “Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.” What a wonderful desire, especially during these uncertain times of the COVID virus and all the ways it has disrupted our lives, our families and our communities. Even the church and Christmas worship is affected as outlined in this newsletter (see page 3).

Yet, Christmas still has some wonderful things to give us. But we need the ears of faith to hear them, the eyes of faith to see them, the heart of faith to feel them, and the grace to accept them.

The proclamation of the angels still rings out clearly: “Peace on earth, good will toward all.” Christ is the Prince of Peace. Christ still brings the peace that passes all understanding. Not even the challenges and changes due to the virus are able to silence this great good news. It is just what we need to hear and share in our broken world.



One day very close to Christmas, a young boy was coming down the hallway at church. In his hand was a little ceramic tray he had made in Sunday school. It was his Christmas gift to his mother. He had worked on it for several weeks, and he was so proud of it.

As he ran down the hall, he tripped and fell. The tray crashed to the floor and broke into several pieces. The boy was devastated. He cried loudly and uncontrollably, absolutely heartbroken. People tried to comfort him with all kinds of counsel: “It was just a tray. Not worth much. No big loss. Besides, you can make another one. It’s nothing, forget it. You can give your mother something else. Don’t worry about it.” But nothing helped. The child was inconsolable.

Finally, his mother arrived. Quickly she realized what had happened. Kneeling down beside her crestfallen, distraught son with his broken gift, she hugged him tightly and said,

“Well, now, I think this is fixable... Let’s pick up the pieces and take it all home. We’ll put it back together and see what we can make of it.” The little boy hugged his mom back and smiled.



Isn’t that exactly what the Christmas message is about? The world is broken into many fragments, as are our lives. And God stoops down beside us. He hugs us and says, “Well, now, this is fixable. Let me help you pick up the pieces. We’ll put it back together and see what we can make of it.”

Don’t forget during the Advent time of preparation for Christmas that you and your family include time for church. We will continue to provide recordings of the Sunday services on the church website, and we will soon make it available by live stream on Sunday mornings. As the COVID virus limits our activities, this would be the perfect opportunity to enjoy time together with the family Advent wreath as you have devotions and prayer. 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!”

Don’t forget other opportunities to spread Christmas peace. One of my Seminary professors once shared this: “I think at times we take for granted that people already know the Christmas message, and we mistakenly assume they know what it is all about. When we stand in awe at the manger in Bethlehem and see in truth the precious gift of this child to us, we realize again the gracious gift of the Gospel. It is so important for us to hear, believe, and proclaim this truth during this season.”

This time of year, more than any other, people are receptive to an invitation to attend a service of worship. Don’t miss the opportunity to extend an invitation for someone to join First St. John in praise and worship this Christmas season by going to our website and joining us online.

Even though I may not see most of you in person this Advent and Christmas season, nonetheless you are in my thoughts and prayers. “The Lord look upon you with favor, and give you peace.” Amen.

— Pastor Rayl

ELDERS FOR DECEMBER

We are keeping our Sunday worship schedule of one service at 9:00 am through December.

6th	Ben Hodges Bob Hecklinger
13th	Jeff Ladd Jeff Smith
20th	Darold Henninger Kevin Ruedy
27th	Dick Haar Tom Eppard

160th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE NEWS



In 2021, not that far away, we will begin celebrating 160 years of ministry here at First St. John Lutheran Church. The Anniversary Committee is busy planning activities to celebrate, but we would like your input. If you have any ideas or thoughts about how we can best celebrate this momentous occasion, please call or email committee chairman Bob Haar (see contact information in next paragraph).

Also, if you would like to serve on the committee, please let Bob know by contacting him at either bobhaar36@gmail.com or 419-250-9409. He'd love to hear from you. Thanks.



2021 CALENDARS

Eggleston-Meinert-Pavley once again has donated free calendars to First St. John. You can pick them up in the Narthex or outside the church office or stop by during the week to pick one up.

8th GRADE CATECHISM NEWS

We will meet on December 6th and 20th at 11:30 am before breaking for Christmas. After the holidays, we will begin again on January 3rd, then meet every other Sunday from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

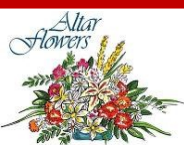
On December 13th, our annual congregational meeting will be held after the 9:00 am worship service. We will vote on the 2021 budget and new council members. If you're a church member, the budget is included in the newsletter this month for your review. Thank you.

BIRTHDAY FOR JESUS PROJECT



Honor the Savior by sharing his story! Join the Gideons International in donating Bibles to people around the world. Twenty-five dollars will provide five Bibles, \$50 for 10 Bibles, etc. Envelopes for this project can be found in the Narthex (lobby).

If you'd like to donate online, please go to www.BirthdayForJesus.org. The more Bibles that are donated, the more ornaments will appear on the Christmas tree in the Narthex. Let's fill it up! If you have questions, call the Gideons International toll free at 1-866-382-4253 or see Mark Ackerman. Thank you!



2021 SIGN UP FOR ALTAR FLOWERS

We still need flowers for the altar for December 6th and 13th. We'll also need to start signing up for altar flowers in 2021.

If you would like to order flowers for the altar for Sunday worship, please call Toni in the church office at 419-691-7222 and she will record your message for the Sunday you choose. Vases are \$15; you can mail your check to the church office.

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

Name _____

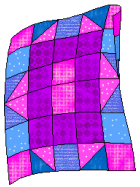
Address _____

City, State Zip _____ Phone _____

WELCA NEWS

At our last board meeting we approved the 2021 budget. The budget is on our clip board in the lounge. Donations were sent to the charities we support, and we are receiving many thank you letters from them. No new or old business was discussed. We will decide later if we are having our Christmas Dinner in January. A date and time will be determined then.

Hope you had a safe and Happy Thanksgiving. The board wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and we hope 2021 will be a better year for all. — *WELCA President, Sue Ann Rogers*



QUILTING GROUP NEWS

Thanks to everyone who quilted this year. We distributed 167 quilts to: Toledo Schools (for the homeless), Dialysis Center, Oregon Dialysis, Monroe Bed Ministry, Mom's House, YWCA shelter, Genacross, Bethany House, The Cocoon Shelter (for domestic abuse victims), the Beach House, and Sleep in Heavenly Peace (Monroe Chapter-supplies beds for children). A BIG thank you goes to Penny DeWitt and Lee Wagner who distributed all the quilts!

Check your *January* newsletter and upcoming December bulletins for information on how we will be quilting next year (due to Covid concerns).

DAY SCHOOL NEWS

The holidays are in full swing here at the Day School! All the classes had small Thanksgiving feasts in their rooms, and they learned about giving thanks for all the gifts in their lives. Here is a link to our Thanksgiving video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeXIGbdzUNc> Hope you enjoy it!



The school age program has restarted in order to accommodate the students who have gone back to virtual classes. We are doing our best to provide services to the families who need it. This year, instead of having our Day School students perform individual Christmas programs, they will all contribute to a video Christmas presentation. When the video is finished, we will share it with our parents, the congregation, and the community.

May God bless you this Christmas and always.

— *Andrea Buckley, Administrator*

CHRISTMAS EVE



Due to rising Covid cases, our Christmas Eve service will be "livestreamed" at 7:00 pm. For those who are not familiar with this term, it means you can log on at 7:00 pm that night to the church's website at www.firststjohn.com and watch the Christmas Eve service in real time from the safety of your home. The Christmas story will still be read, and pastor will give the Christmas message. There will still be music by Dr. Pattin, Annette, Cheri (on hand bells), "socially distanced" praise singers, and perhaps even a duet. The church will still be decorated. We will even provide time to sing Christmas carols, led by Annette. If you miss the broadcast at 7:00 pm, the service will be recorded and placed on our website. We also will record the service on DVD for those without a computer.

If you'd like, you can arrange to place one of your own Christmas quilts or blankets across the back of "your" pew so it will be visible during the service. If you would like to do this, please contact Toni in the church office to arrange a time to come in with your quilt or blanket on December 21st, 22nd, or 23rd.

We're sorry we can't worship together as we always do on Christmas Eve, but this is the safest way for everyone. May God bless you all, and we pray that Christmas Eve of 2021 will be a joyous, beautiful service we can all enjoy in person together.

RECORD A FAMILY GREETING FOR THE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE!

If you'd like to record a video greeting for your family and friends (no more than 10 seconds), you can email it (pastor1@firststjohn.com) or text it (567-395-0143) it to Pastor Rayl, and we will try to include it in our livestream Christmas Eve service. Use this opportunity to wish your family (including your church family) and friends a Merry Christmas.

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2021 envelopes will be available at in-person worship beginning December 6th; just ask for yours when you check in. Or, you can come during office hours to pick them up. If you need to have them delivered, call the office at 419-691-7222 to arrange it. **Reminder:** If you want a contribution included on your 2020 statement, please turn it in to the office by Sunday, December 27, 2020.

THE GIVING PAGE

PAMPER GENACROSS RESIDENTS

Sabrene Clair, a member of First St. John, invites you to join her in pampering a few Genacross residents with Mary Kay products.

On December 11th, the items will be adorned with a festive flare and delivered to the residents. Sixty products are needed, creating 12 sets for 12 residents. Each set contains a pampering hand set, lotion for feet & legs with fuzzy socks, body lotion, fragrance and lipstick. **We hope you can donate monetarily to help purchase these items.**

You can donate to Sabrene by cash, check (payable to Sabrene Clair), credit card, Venmo - SabreneClair-2; or PayPal- brene80@hotmail.com. If you have questions, please contact Sabrene at brene80@hotmail.com or 419-343-3955 (texts are acceptable). Thank you for helping to make a special day for Genacross residents.

ADOPT-A-RESIDENT AT GENACROSS



Genacross asked for our help to “adopt” residents for Christmas by helping to fill gift bags. Items needed: hard candy, sugar-free candy, candy bars (no nuts), puzzle books, coloring books, colored pencils, seasonal window clings, non-slip socks, combs/brushes, stationery, stamps, pens, lip balm, fleece throws, stuffed animals, 2021 calendars, wafer cookies (regular and sugar free), jigsaw puzzles, shampoo, headbands/barrettes, lotion, shaving cream, and shampoo.

Please bring gifts to the facility by Dec. 11th at the main lobby screening table. Place a tag on your gift to indicate whether it's for a man or a woman. Questions? Call Diane Cline at 419-724-1739.



HATS, GLOVES, MITTENS COLLECTION - ALL AGES

The Personal Needs Pantry is collecting hats, mittens and gloves for our clients. **We need items for men, women and children of all ages.** If you can donate, please place your items in the pantry drawer or the green tub located in the Narthex (lobby). We will accept donations throughout the winter. Thank you in advance for your help!

-- Karen Holmes

ADOPT-A-FAMILY FOR CHRISTMAS



Here are the remaining gifts needed for two families this Christmas. We have extended the deadline to Sunday, December 13th. To help ensure safe distancing, gift suggestions are listed here instead of on paper ornaments in the Narthex.

If you can help purchase a gift or two, please contact Toni in the church office at 419-691-7222 or office@firststjohn.com and let her know which gift you plan to buy. This is important in order to avoid double purchasing by someone else.

Then please bring your gift to church and place it in the box in the west alcove of the Narthex OR drop it off at the Educational Building during office hours. Thank you so much for helping make the holidays a little brighter for two families this Christmas.

Here is the remaining gift needed for Family #1

Girl age 6 - Clothes for a baby doll

Here are the needed gifts for Family #2

Mom - Pants, size 18

2 Gift cards for family (WalMart, Meier, Kroger, for example)

COMMUNION NOTICE

Depending on the Covid situation in Lucas County, we will schedule communion for the Sunday before Christmas (December 20th). We will not have communion the remaining Sundays in December.

GIFTS FOR LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICES



We collected for this project last year, and it was a great success. Cindy Cluckey, a member of First St. John, has presented us with an easy opportunity to give to the children of Lucas County Children Services via an Amazon Wish list—totally contactless, with an extensive list of price options. All gifts are sent directly to Lucas County Children Services. To order a gift for these children, please use this link:

<https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3D0X40GC7EOJO/>



First St. John Lutheran Church Prayer Chain
(As of November 24, 2020)

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:*

Arlene (no last name given)
Mary Ann Davies
Olivia & Delaney Dawkins & parents
Delores Heilman
Jessica (no last name given)
Marilyn Richards
Nick Sass & family

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:*

Lynn Balogh
Bennett (no last name given)
Karen Bless
Mitchell Broyles
Scotty Broyles
Lori Capitola
Jeannette Carlo
Pat Christy
Greg Contat
Marjorie Counterman
Nancy Coy
Hannah Culler & family
Chiara Del-Mace
Ann Dudics
Emmalyn (no last name given)
Cory Folk
Jean Fry
Paulette Giaimo
Kathleen Gingrich
Grace Harris Greenbank
Joan & Marty Hanshew
Toni Henline
Karen Huber
Pastor Beth Huener
Dana Justice
Phyllis Kelly
Mark Kieswetter
Bea Kline
Joanne Koch
Ada Kreger
Tom Kohn

Heidi LeGrand
Carol Lorenzen
Darlene Lorenzen
Teresa McFarland
Gail McWatters
Joyce Martin
Donald Meyer
Dave Miller
Sue Moszkowicz
Angie Noe
Joyce Ostapowicz
Liz Perozek
Pam Pirolli
Steven Riegle
Logan Roberts
Norm Schumaker
Skylar (no last name given)
Connie Singlar
Julie Swanson
Becky Thielan
Joan Tilton
Jane Vargo
Jim Vogelsang
Nick Wasserman
Katelyn Weirich
Barb West
Bill Wiener
John & Grace Yard
Raetta Zeisler

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

Prayer Chain Contacts

Carol Abbey 419-351-9795 or
cabbeyrn@aol.com

Lynn Folk	419-309-7977
Donna Koehn	419-705-9560
Darlene Lorenzen	419-351-6293
Gloria Ross	419-836-7166



**OPERATION CHRISTMAS
CHILD WRAP UP**

Thank you to everyone who donated shoeboxes for the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child project. Even with Covid conditions, we still were able to donate 29 shoeboxes for needy children around the world. All boxes were delivered by November 23rd. Thank you again for your generosity.

MEMORIALS

CHOIR FUND

In memory of Butch Ulrich by Joanne Koch.

DEBT FUND

In memory of Lee Antoine by Emily Kruse.

IMPROVEMENT FUND

In memory of Butch Ulrich by Marge Bollinger.

In memory of Lee Antoine by Marge Bollinger.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

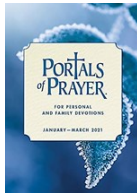
In memory of Butch Ulrich by Susie & Mark Wixsom, Carly Wixsom Scheik, Dean Wixsom & family.

HANNAH CIRCLE NEWS

Since Covid numbers are climbing, the Hannah Circle has canceled its annual Christmas party.

PORTALS OF PRAYER

Portals of Prayer devotional booklets for January—March are here. Ask for yours when you come for in-person worship, or you can stop by the church office during the week. If you need one delivered, please call Toni at 419-691-7222 to arrange it. Thank you!



ATTENTION ALTAR GUILD

Our Christmas party scheduled for December 7th at Beth Hugueley's home has been cancelled.

STARS AND PROMISES CONCERT

ELCA World Hunger presents an online benefit Christmas concert featuring Peter Mayer, a Lutheran and lead guitarist for Jimmy Buffett. It premieres on the ELCA Facebook page on Wed., Dec. 9th at 8:00 pm. This is a gift to you, a way to thank you and provide a place to gather online with the church community as we prepare for the Savior's birth.

Donations to ELCA World Hunger are encouraged and will support our work to respond to hunger and poverty in more than 60 countries. Register on the ELCA's Facebook page or online at <https://community.elca.org/online-registration/peter-mayer-benefit-concert-2020> to receive a free Peter Mayer Christmas album download!

2020 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. If you attend in-person worship, you can place your order in the wooden church where the offering goes. Or, you can mail it to the church office.

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

**Deadline for placing orders is
Sunday, December 6, 2020**

No. of plants @ \$10.00 each _____

Color (circle one) Red White

Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

In Loving Memory of (Deceased):

In Honor of (Living):

