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# First St. John Journal

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Volume 37, Issue 12

December, 2024

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## Dear fellow members of God's family at First St. John Lutheran,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Giving is the language of love, and Advent begins a celebration of God's awesome love and giving to us. God knew what we needed the most, so, at this time approximately 2,000 years ago, God gave us the most indescribable gift: *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons and daughters"* (Galatians 4:4).

God's gift of his son is the greatest gift that we will ever receive. God's gift truly keeps on giving for, through Jesus, we receive full rights as children of God. As God's children, we know that Jesus is the reason for the season. We rejoice knowing that God gave us his son. God sent Jesus into the world to be the only gift that we need. Jesus took on our own flesh and walked among us, and he willingly laid down his life in order to save our lives for eternity.

How do we respond to what God has given us? Shouldn't we be asking, "What have I given to him?" Certainly, we don't go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) to shop for Jesus, but we do know that we please him by our faithful acts of love and obedience. The best gift that we can possibly give him is our hearts and to show him our love by faithfully and obediently doing what he expects of us. Our heavenly Father is pleased when we seek to please him by doing his will. In fact, we do his will by merely allowing him to work in and through us.

For many of us, one of the forms this takes is our financial gifts supporting the congregation's ministry. Advent arrives at the end of the calendar year and the end of our yearly giving. As such it can be a great opportunity to do something extra in financial stewardship. At the moment the congregation is around \$21K behind the budget. For those who are able, please give prayerful

consideration toward your giving in response to God's inestimable Christmas Gift. What a wonderful witness to even begin 2025 with a surplus to carry-over.

As the Apostle Paul writes: *"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Advent is a season of renewal, giving and joy. Remember that even though we don't giftwrap gifts for Jesus, we can give him the gifts of our love and obedience.

May God's blessings be upon all of you as you rejoice and celebrate the most indescribable gift ever given, the gift of Jesus!

Father in Heaven, ... increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in love and giving, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth.

~ Pastor Rayl

## **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

We will hold a congregational meeting after both services on Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>. This will include a 2025 church budget presentation and also a list of new church council candidates to vote on for the 2025 calendar year. Please plan to attend.

## **2025 OFFERING ENVELOPES**

The 2025 envelopes will be available for pick up starting Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>. They will be on the long white tables in the lounge. Even if you contribute using Vanco, you will still get envelopes to be used for special services or other donations if requested.

**Reminder:** If you want a contribution included on your 2024 statement, please turn it in to the office by Sunday, December 29, 2024.

## HOLIDAY SERVICE TIMES

Christmas Eve falls on Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> this year we will have two evening services at 7:00 pm and 11:00 pm. On December 25<sup>th</sup> and New Years there will be NO worship service as they fall mid-week.



## 2025 ALTAR FLOWERS

The flower sign up sheets for January through November of 2025 are available in the sign up book. The book is under the main bulletin board in the Narthex (lobby). You also can call the office at 419-691-7222 to sign up.

Envelopes for payments are also in the flower book, or you can place your payment in the offering plate on Sunday or mail it to the church.

Altar flowers are a great way to honor or remember a loved one and also help to beautify our church each Sunday!

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD WRAP UP



Thank you to all who donated to the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child project. We collected 54 boxes, which were delivered to the local drop off location. Thanks to your generous hearts, 54 children around the world will receive a gift to open at Christmas! We have been participating for over 15 years!



## ALTAR GUILD MEETING

Our next meeting will be held on Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 pm at Beth Hugueley' home.

## DECEMBER CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

The December church council meeting has been moved up one week to **Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>** and will be held in the lounge.

## ELDERS FOR DECEMBER

	<u>8:00 AM</u>	<u>10:30 AM</u>
1 <sup>st</sup>	Ben Hodges Matt Miller	Bob Haar Sherrie Haar
8 <sup>th</sup>	Tom Gaskins Terry Ruedy	Dick Haar John Roth
15 <sup>th</sup>	Kevin Ruedy Mike Winslow	Bill Nelson Bob Hecklinger
24 <sup>th</sup>	Volunteers needed 7, and 11 pm service.	
29 <sup>th</sup>	Dick Haar John Roth	Tom Gaskins Terry Ruedy

## ADOPT-A-FAMILY FOR CHRISTMAS



Each year, we participate in the Adopt -A-Family program sponsored by the East Toledo Family Center. This year we are adopting a family of 8 for Christmas who recently lost everything in a house fire. The children in the family range from ages 2 months to 14 years old. Dad also lost all his fishing gear in the fire, and mom is in need of basic cleaning supplies. To help with this we are collecting Kroger and Amazon gift cards. A Christmas tree is also in the narthex with paper ornaments on them. If you'd like to purchase a gift, select an ornament with the gift you'd like to provide. Keep the top ornament for yourself and then on the ornament behind it write your name and phone number. Then place the ornament with your name on it in the small box next to the trees. No need to wrap the gift. The deadline to return any gifts will be **Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup>**. You can place your gift under the tree or bring it to the church office during the week M-F 9am-4pm. Thank you for helping bring joy to a family in need this year!

## FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

We will meet on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at Woodville Diner at 8:30 am. All are invited and we hope to see you there!

## 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

Wow!! Can you believe it is December already? Just remember, Jesus is the Reason for The Season!

We would like to thank Joyce Yard for attending our meeting. Love to have all the input from the ladies of First St. John. A "BIG" thank you goes out to Mark Ackerman for getting our new chairs in the lounge from his brother, Paul, at Alliance Church. They really dress up the lounge and are very comfortable. Mark, Paul and our President Dave Wilbarger picked them up, unloaded them, set them around the tables, and took the old ones up to the Fellowship Hall in our storage room. These three gentlemen went way above and beyond for our Church. Thank you so much!!

Please plan to join us for the Family Christmas Dinner on December 1<sup>st</sup>. There will be a silent auction on the many donated raffle baskets that will be on display during the dinner to bid on. The winners will be announced that evening and you can take them home. We are asking all groups of the church, Altar Guild, Choir, Sunday School, Circles, Bell Choir, just to name a few to donate an item, or items to be included in a basket if possible. They can be dropped off in the church office or given to Sue Ann Rogers.

Our very own DJ, Bob Haar will be getting your request for karaoke that night and you will get to perform for us all! So, warm up your voices!!! We will be serving fried baked chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, rolls with butter, salad, and dessert. Social time will start at 5:30pm with dinner starting at 6:00pm. Hope to see you there!

WELCA will meet next on January 6<sup>th</sup> at Applebee's in Northwood for our Christmas dinner and meeting.

Merry Christmas to everyone and Happy New Year!!

— WELCA President, Sue Ann Rogers

## TIME FOR QUILTING!



The Quilting Group will begin meeting on Monday, January 6<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am. Most of the help needed involves tying layers of a quilt together (you just need to know how to tie a knot). Bring a sack lunch. If there is bad weather, they follow Oregon Schools for cancellations.

Many of the quilts will be donated to local charities. If you have any questions, please call Jane Neal 419-276-5057. Thank you.



## CIRCLE CHRISTMAS GATHERINGS

**Rebecca Circle:** Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am at the Old Bag of Nails. If interested in participating in the gift exchange, please bring a \$10 gift with you

**Ruth Circle:** will meet on Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 11:30 am at Applebee's in Northwood.

**Miriam Circle:** will meet on Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am at the Oregon Inn.

**Hannah Circle:** will meet on Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 at Debbie Smith's house for a Christmas Party.

## HOMEBOUND COMMUNION

If you or a loved one would like a homebound communion visit please call the church office. Bob Haar is temporarily communing the homebound at their request and he will call you to setup an appointment.

## DAY SCHOOL NEWS

December has arrived, and the Day School is in full holiday mode. We were so happy to welcome friends and family to our Thanksgiving feasts, and we would like to send out a big thank you to all the volunteers that made it possible.



Now that the feasts are over, the Day School will be working on the Christmas programs for each class which will take place December 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup>. The children are so excited to share their love of Jesus and the true message of Christmas to their families!

We are also in need of Christmas cookie donations for our family receptions after each program. If you are able to donate a dozen or two, please reach out to Andrea Buckley in the school office or drop off in the lounge on December 4<sup>th</sup> labeled for the Day School. Thank you in advance!

— Andrea Buckley, Administrator

## PORTALS OF PRAYER

Portals of Prayer devotional booklets for January through March will be ready to pick up on December 15<sup>th</sup>. They will be in the lounge and in the Narthex (lobby). You also can stop by the church during the week.





**SCOUTING TROOP # 58**

Our FSJ Scouting ministry is in full swing and gaining some momentum. We now officially have our pack number (58)! At our most recent church council meeting, Mike Joseph presented the new flag. Now we just need a few more dedicated adult volunteers to hopefully get the necessary planning and organization done so we can start welcoming scouts! If you are interested in joining the scouting ministry, they meet on the first Monday of the month in room 204 (Catechism room) of the educational building. The next scheduled meeting is Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7pm. If any questions, please contact Mike @ (419) 262-7583.



**MONTHLY MINISTRY  
FOCUS:**



***ISAIAH 117 HOUSE***

***“Changing how Foster Care Begins”***

This month’s monthly ministry focus will be the Isaiah 117 House in Lucas County. The Isaiah 117 project exists to reduce trauma on removal day for children who are being placed in the foster care system. The house helps lighten the load for caseworkers and ease transition into foster care by creating a ‘home’ environment where children on removal day can go instead of an office while caseworkers work on placement. This home provides the comforts of home and lessens the impact.

**Even better, an Isaiah 117 home is planned for Oregon / East Toledo!** Genacross Lutheran Services has donated a half-acre of land in Oregon, Ohio, and the surveying of the land is being donated. The general contractor, Jim Moline with Moline Builders is actively reaching out to suppliers and subcontractors. But, we need your help! FSJ is joining other Lutheran churches in the area on taking up a collection to help fund the home’s creation. Please consider donating by placing your offering in the yellow envelopes in your pew during offering.

**2024 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 and Christmas Day. You can place your order in the offering plate or mail it to the church office. Payment must accompany orders, with checks made out to: **First St. John**

**Deadline for placing orders is  
Sunday, December 15, 2024**

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No. of plants @ \$15.00 each \_\_\_\_\_

Color (circle one)    Red        White

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

In Loving Memory of (Deceased):

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

In Honor of (Living):

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

## **First St. John Lutheran Church Prayer Chain** (As of November 27, 2024)

**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:*

**Angela**  
**Peggy Burke**  
**Carol Crosser**  
**Dick Crouse**  
**Doris**  
**Ann Dudics**  
**Duke**  
**Norman Eck**  
**Martha Everett**  
**Linda (Stieben)Hagedorn**  
**Jody**  
**Kaitlyn**  
**Deborah Kidwell**  
**Kaylea Kochanski**  
**Rebecca Kohn**  
**Helen K.**  
**Paul Lambrecht**  
**Marc LeDuc**  
**Family of Judy Lepiarz**  
**Rick Lepiarz**  
**Diana McGovern**  
**Chad Milner**  
**John Puhl**  
**Shonna**  
**Skylar**  
**June Smarkel**  
**Traci Spencer**  
**Marilyn Ulrich**  
**Steve Welling**  
**Dave Wilbarger Sr.**  
**Family of Arlene Wilbarger**  
**Donna Winslow**  
**Eileen Young**  
**Anne Zielinski**

**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:*

Deb Ackerman  
 Bennett  
 Elizabeth Bland  
 Karen Bless  
 Amy Brumley  
 Debbie Campbell  
 Brenda Chambers  
 Marjorie Counterman  
 Olivia & Delaney Dawkins  
 Isaac Evans  
 Brian Everett

Janet Fern  
 Joe Frobase  
 Grace Harris Greenbank  
 Holly Henneman  
 Gary Henningsen  
 Katrin Howard  
 Kathy Johnson  
 Linda Joshi  
 Sharon Kassay  
 Cindy Knavel  
 Tom Kohn  
 Eleanor Lang  
 Darlene Lorenzen  
 Tina McQuilin  
 Bonnie Meier  
 Patty Meyer  
 Deborah Miller  
 Donna Miller  
 Janet Mooney  
 Mary Bell Moore  
 Karen Morrison  
 Logan Murphy  
 Bill Nelson  
 Teresa Nye  
 Pam Pirolli  
 Janet Quiroga  
 John Ranchan  
 Sherry Reamsnyder  
 Steven Riegle  
 Rhonda  
 Sandra  
 Laura Scherer  
 Bill Shedron  
 Mary Alice Sheehan  
 Shelley Sherman  
 Connie Singlar  
 Jim Sommers Jr  
 James Spenthoff  
 Julie Swanson  
 Tom Tedrow  
 Joyce Trowbridge  
 Terry Vogalsang  
 Deb Dusseau Warnke  
 Katelyn Weirich  
 Jean Wilson  
 John Yard  
 Ruth Zasada  
 Raetta Zeisler  
 Bernie Zielinski

Please check the list and notify any prayer chain contact if a name can be removed.

### **Prayer Chain Contacts**

Carol Abbey 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



## Cookie Sale!

WELCA is hosting a cookie sale fundraiser. Cookies will be sold on Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup> after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> service.

**Baked Goods Needed:** If you can help by donating cookies for our sale, we'd greatly appreciate your help! All types of cookies, fudge, bars, or bark accepted. Please plan to bring your baked cookies on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup> between 10am-12pm.



## KROGER COMMUNITY REWARD PROGRAM

Did you know you can support First St. John just by shopping at Kroger! This past quarter we earned \$86.80 in rewards donated to the church!

This program makes fundraising easy by donating to local organizations based on the shopping you do every day. Once you link your Kroger Card to an organization, all you have to do is shop at Kroger and swipe or enter your Shopper's Card. Here's how it works:

1. Create or sign into your online rewards account on Kroger.com or through your app. Select 'Rewards' from the menu and then 'Community Rewards'.
2. Make sure your Kroger Reward Card account is attached to your online account.
3. Under the Kroger Community Rewards Screen, search for First St. John Lutheran, or enter the NPO # WM368.
4. Select the organization and click 'Save'. You are all set! The selected organization will now show on the Kroger Community Rewards Page!

## DECEMBER DARTBALL

The Dartball Season is underway with games hosted in the gym. All game start at 7:30pm. Upcoming dates for December are:

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>:** St. Lucas @ 1st St. John #1  
Messiah @ 1st St. John #2

**December 16<sup>th</sup>:** 1st St. John #2 @ St. Petri  
1st St. John #1 @ Messiah

Please mark your calendars. If any questions, reach out to Bill Nelson (419) 836-4165, or Bob Haar (419) 250-

## MEMBER UPDATES:



New Address:  
Bob & Sherrie Haar  
2425 McKivett Dr.  
Toledo, Ohio 43615



## SPECIAL MUSIC IN DECEMBER

We have two special music guests in December. On Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at both services, Patricia McCauley, soprano, will join us again to sing for the Advent season. On Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup> during both services, Dana Baker, baritone, will join us again to sing music for the Christmas season. This will be Dana's last time with us as he is moving back to Los Angeles in January. Please make sure not to miss these opportunities which have been provided in part by our congregation's generous donations to the new Special Music Fund. If you are also interested in sponsoring music from special guest throughout the year, please consider donating to the newly established fund by placing an offering on Sunday's in the collection plate designated to Special Music. It is a joy to hear our church filled with beautiful music!

## J.A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The children of J.A.M. Sunday School will present "The Story of Christmas"

on Sunday, December 15th at the 10:30 am service.

The children will be working extra hard over the next few Sundays to learn the music. All children are invited to participate by attending J.A.M. Sunday School at 9:15 am every Sunday in the church basement. Also, please plan on attending on Dec. 15th to support the kids! A dress rehearsal will be held on Saturday, December 15th at the church from 10-noon. Pizza will be provided.



**JANUARY NEWSLETTER  
DEADLINE: December 23<sup>rd</sup>**



## PERSONAL NEEDS PANTRY NOVEMBER UPDATE

In November, we served 69 adults and 19 children as we were not open on November 27<sup>th</sup> for the holiday. 9 FSJ volunteers served 18 hours of time this past month to make sure the pantry ran smoothly. Thank you to all who donated! The need is great and you help keep us running!

### NOVEMBER STATS:

**239 - TOTAL PRODUCT DONATIONS**  
**\$324 - TOTAL ESTIMATED SAVINGS**  
**88 - TOTAL PEOPLE SERVED**  
**9 - TOTAL VOLUNTEERS**  
**18 - VOLUNTEER HOURS**  
**1,049 - TOTAL PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTED**  
**\$846 - TOTAL COST TO FUND PANTRY**

**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE DONATED ITEMS OR TIME! WE ARE SERVING AN IMPORTANT NEED IN OUR COMMUNITY!**



### FSJ PNP VOLUNTEER MEETING

We will have a meeting for all current PNP volunteers and anyone interested in volunteering on Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am in the church basement. Please plan to attend if you can. Make sure to bring any conflicts for the 2025 schedule as well. Let Jennifer know if any questions, 419-691-7222.

### CALL COMMITTEE INSTALLED

During the Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup> services, we welcomed and installed our new call committee who will be tasked with the search for a Associate Pastor. We are thankful for the dedication and involvement of these members as we seek to fill an important position in our congregation. The committee members are:

- Mark Ackerman
- Karen Frey
- Bob Haar
- Cindy Johnson
- Bob Kinsey
- Jessica Miller
- Dave Wilbarger



Please join us for praying diligently for them throughout this process!



### WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

There is still time to donate to help place a wreath on a veteran's grave in our cemetery. Please reach out to Bob Haar for more information. The cost to lay a wreath is \$17 each or 3 for \$34. If you would like to donate to Wreaths Across America, please make a check out to First St John Lutheran and indicate in the memo line it is for Wreaths Across America.

### MISSION SUNDAY UPDATE!

Our November Mission Sunday took place on Sunday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. We again collected canned goods and items for the LSS Food Pantry and also personal needs items for our very own pantry. We collected 85 items for the food pantry and 39 items for the FSJ Personal Needs Pantry! The next collection will be on Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup> but feel free to drop items off all month in the bins in the church or at the church office. Thanks for your generosity!

### NURSERY OPEN!

The church nursery is now available during the 10:30 am service. The nursery is in the church basement in the kindergarten classroom and will be staffed with 1-2 volunteers each week. Parents/Guardians can fill out a quick release form for children aged 5 and under and feel free to return to service. We will use text messages to communicate with you if a need arises (please keep phones on vibrate only so as not to disrupt service). For more information, or if you have any questions, please feel free to stop down during second service, or reach out to Darlene Paul. We are also still looking for a few more volunteers! Talk to Darlene or call the church office at 419-691-7222.



### PERSONAL NEEDS PANTRY NEWS

Our focus items for December are band aids and disposable razors. Please deposit your items in the green bin in the lounge, or the pull-out drawer by the main bulletin board in the Narthex.

