



# First St. John Journal



Volume 37, Issue 12

December, 2025

**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 the 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.

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 14th. This will include a 2026 church budget presentation and also a list of new church council candidates to vote on for the 2026 calendar year. Please plan to attend.

## **2026 OFFERING ENVELOPES**

Offering envelopes are available for pick up. They are located in the church lounge. Even if you contribute using Vanco, you will still get envelopes to be used for special services or other donations if requested.



## CIRCLE INFORMATION

The next women's board meeting is Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm in the lounge. All are welcome.

**Ruth Circle Meeting:** Tuesday, December 2nd at 11:30 am at Ralphie's.

**Miriam Circle Meeting:** Wednesday, December 3rd at 9:30 am in the lounge

**Rebecca Circle:** Saturday, December 13th at 11:30 am at the Old Bag of Nails Restaurant

## ELDERS FOR DECEMBER

	<u>8:00 AM</u>	<u>10:30 AM</u>
7th	Tom Gaskins Terry Ruedy	Bob Haar Sherrie Haar
14th	Kevin Ruedy Mike Winslow	Bill Nelson Matt Miller
21st	Ted Hagedorn Jeff Smith	Dick Haar John Roth
28th	Tom Gaskins Terry Ruedy	Bob Haar Sherrie Haar

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



This year 43 shoeboxes were delivered to Samaritan's Purse for Operation Christmas Child. Thank you to everyone who helped reached this goal!

## FOOD DRIVE

Lutheran Social Services is seeing an influx of clients with food insecurity. The Day School children will be collecting for LSS to help earn an ice cream party, so you can donate in their bins to help them out or leave items in the cart located in the back of the church. Some items LSS struggles the most to keep on the shelves our canned vegetables, canned fruits, and shelf-stable or powdered milk, however they will take any canned or shelf-stable goods (just no glass jars or expired items). If you are able to pick up a few extra items this week to donate, every little bit helps.

## PORTALS OF PRAYER

Portals of Prayer devotional booklets for January through March will be ready to pick up on December 15th. They will be in the lounge and in the Narthex (lobby).



## WE ARE HIRING!



FSJ is looking to fill the Office Manager position for the church with Jennifer's departure. They must be proficient in Microsoft Office, and Publisher software specifically is a bonus. Excellent written, verbal, and telephone communication skills is required. The ideal candidate will be a self-starter, very organized, able to work with volunteers and people of all ages and give attention to detail. Competitive salary, full time position (30-35 hours a week). Anyone interested should contact Pastor Rayl and email a resume to [pastor1@firststjohn.com](mailto:pastor1@firststjohn.com).

## FLOWER SIGN UP SHEETS

The 2026 sign up sheets for altar flowers for January through October will soon be placed in the red flower sign up book. This book is located under the main bulletin board in the narthex. We hope to have the new sheets in the book by mid-November. Keep in mind you can also call the church office to add flowers to the schedule on the Sunday you prefer.

## ADDRESS CHANGES/CORRECTIONS

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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



### **Cookie Sale!**

WELCA is hosting a cookie sale fundraiser with proceeds benefitting our very own property management group to help with maintenance and repair of the church. Cookies will be sold on Sunday, December 21st after the 1st and 2nd 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 20th between 10am-12pm. A sign up sheet will be on a clipboard in the lounge.

### **MEMBERSHIP UPDATES**



#### **Births**

None.

#### **Baptisms**

None.

#### **Marriages**

10-18-23 *Kristina Kindle and Paul Meeks.*

#### **Deaths**

10-25-23 Herbert C. Frey

#### **Transfers to/from First St. John**

None.



### **PERSONAL NEEDS PANTRY FOCUS FOR NOVEMBER**

Our December focus items are band aides, disposable razors, and men and women's deodorant. You can deposit items in the bright green bin in the lounge or drop them off at the office during the week. Remember, monetary donations are always welcome. Thank you!



### **CHRISTMAS PARTY**

The church Christmas party sponsored by our church council, will be Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> after second service, food served by noon.

All our invited to attend, but reservations are required. Butch's Country Catering will provide Beef Stroganoff, mac & cheese, salad, and a roll & butter. Desserts and beverages will also be provided by the board. At the Church Christmas Party, there will be a silent auction of Gift Baskets. If you could, we would appreciate if you could donate a gift basket or if you do not have time to put together a basket, please consider donating Gift Cards.

### **MAJESTIC CARE TOLEDO**

Majestic Care Toledo is doing a Secret Santa program again this year. If you would like to adopt a resident for Christmas, we would welcome your help and generosity.

This year we are asking only for gift bags. Gift bags may include:

- |                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Hard Candy/Sugar free candy | Stationery      |
| Candy bars (no nuts)        | Stamps          |
| Puzzle books/Coloring books | Pens/Pencils    |
| Colored pencils/Markers     | Lip balm        |
| Body Wash/Cologne/Perfume   | Fleece throws   |
| Hand lotion/Body lotion     | Stuffed animals |
| Seasonal Window Clings      | Calendars       |
| Shaving Cream               | Cookies         |
| Non Slip Socks              | Puzzles         |
| Combs/Brushes               | Shampoo         |
| Gloves/Hats                 | Headbands       |
|                             | Barrettes       |

The deadline for the gifts to be back at the facility is Monday, December 15, 2025.

We ask that you place a name tag on it to identify whether it is for a man or woman or a particular resident. Please drop off your gift bag to the receptionist in the Main Lobby.



**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES WILL  
BE ON DECEMBER 24TH AT  
7:00 PM & 11:00 PM**

## FIRST ST. JOHN PRAYER CHAIN (as of 12/1/2025)

**Crisis Prayer List:** For those who need prayers in urgent matters such as surgery, emergency medical care (ICU), etc. Will be moved to "Chronic Prayer List" after one month unless we're contacted about special circumstances:

**Family of Martha Everett**  
**Family of Norman Eck**  
**Family of Barbara Meyers**  
**Darlene Lorenzen**  
**Lynn Folk**  
**Bill Nelson**  
**Caroline Trost**  
**Family of Jeff Wilbarger**  
**Rayetta Zeisler**  
**Danielle Riegler**

**On-Going Concerns:** 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 we're contacted about special/continuing circumstances:

**Betty Anderson**  
**Peggy Burke**  
**Patrick Cleough**  
**Marjorie Counterman**  
**Olivia & Delaney Dawkins**  
**Diane Gerkenmeyer**  
**Bob Hecklinger**  
**Holly Henneman**  
**Gary Henningsen**  
**John**  
**Diana McGovern**  
**Mary Ellen Miller**  
**Peyton**  
**Pam Pirolli**  
**Gloria Ross**  
**Connie Singlar**  
**Tiffany**  
**Steve Welling**  
**LeAnn Winslow**

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



**JANUARY NEWSLETTER**  
**DEADLINE: DECEMBER 20TH**

### Toledo Lutheran Dartball Standings as of 12/2/25

Team	W	L
St. Lucas	14	4
St. Mark	12	6
Trinity	10	8
Prince of Peace	9	9
St. Petri	8	10
1st St. John #2	8	10
Messiah	6	12
1st St. John #1	5	13

**Remember in January, we will play games on Monday the 5th and 12th.**



## ADOPT-A-FAMILY CHRISTMAS TREE

This year we are adopting a family with seven children. The Christmas Tree in the church Narthex has paper ornaments with gift suggestions on it. Please note that this year, you can purchase items directly from an Amazon wish list. There's a QR code on the back of many of the paper ornaments that you can use to access the list. You can also use this link:  
[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2Y08AVT81M01C/ref=cm\\_go\\_nav\\_hz](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2Y08AVT81M01C/ref=cm_go_nav_hz)

(NOTE: There are some expensive items on the Amazon wish list. These are not included on the ornaments.)

Please have your gifts returned to church by Sunday, December 14th. There will be boxes in the Narthex (lobby) and lounge for gift collection. If you have any questions, please contact Toni Wilbarger at 419-250-4665.

### DAY SCHOOL NEWS

The holiday season has begun and we are busy at the Day School with holiday parties and events. The students are working hard on holiday songs and practicing for their Christmas programs. As the school progresses each one of the students is learning new things and enjoying new friends and experiences.

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

Now that the feasts are over, the Day School will be planning their Christmas Programs. The children are so excited to share their love of Jesus and the true message of Christmas. We will be asking our church family to donate cookies the week of December 15-18 to welcome our Day School families to the church to see their children share the joy of our Savior's birth.



*Andrea Buckley*

## 2025 POINSETTIA SALE

*Sponsored by the Altar Guild*

Fill in the form below to place your order for poinsettias to be used during worship at Christmas time. You can place this form with payment in the offering plate, drop it off at the church office during the week, or mail it in. Payment must accompany orders. Please make checks payable to: **First St. John Lutheran Church**

**Deadline for placing orders is Sunday, December 14, 2023.**

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):

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

## MEMORIALS

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

In memory of **Alfred Szabo, Jr.** by Annie (Szabo) & Doug Diefenthaler. Suzie (Szabo) & Mark Wixson.

### CEMETERY FUND

In memory of **Jim Fox** by Lucy Fowler, Deborah Johlin Bach, Carey & Lori Likens, Virginia Nissen.

### PERSONAL NEEDS PANTRY

In memory of **Martha Everett** by Terry & Jane Schuetz.

### DEBT RETIREMENT

In memory of **Jim Fox** by Cindy & Eric Johnson, Terry & Jane Schuetz, Kevin & Kathy Fox, Bill & Donna Nelson.

In memory of **Florence Partin** by Jean Garey.

### ALTAR GUILD

In memory of **Martha Everett** by Mark & Debra Ackerman, Jeff & Deb Smith, Esther Bell.

### WELCA

In memory of **Florence Partin** by Chuck & Betty Hyre, Marge Bollinger, Mary Ellen Miller, Bob & Sherrie Haar, Larry & Darlene Paul.

In memory of **Jim Fox** by Larry & Darlene Paul.

### SPECIAL MUSIC FUND

In memory of **Florence Partin** by Louise Diersch, Terry & Jane Schuetz, Elaine & Kathleen Gladieux, Jim & Dianne Schumaker, Cindy & Eric Johnson, Darlene Lorenzen, Donna & Bill Nelson, Carlene Trost, Diana Schreiner, Jodie & John NaAway, Jeanette Reinton & David, Paul Molnar, Emily Kruse, Rebecca Circle.

### ENDOWMENT FUND

In memory of Martha Everett by Gene Hagedorn.

**JAM Sunday School Christmas Program** will be on December 14th during the 2nd worship service. Come and enjoy the play!

## WELCA NEWS

Hello December!

The Family Christmas party will be held on December 7<sup>th</sup>, after 2nd Service in the Fellowship Hall upstairs sponsored by the Church Council. Butch's Country Catering will provide beef stroganoff, mac and cheese, salad, roll and butter, The Board will provide the desserts and beverages.

Our annual gift baskets will also be auctioned off again this year. All circles, choir, bell choir, adult Sunday School, Jam, and church council are welcomed to donate a basket this year or if you just want to donate an item. The food will be served at 12:00 pm.

We will also have a Cookie Sale on December 21<sup>st</sup>, after both services. If you wish to donate cookies, please bring them in on Saturday December 20<sup>th</sup> between 10 am and noon. Let us help take some of the baking off your shoulders.

— President, Sue Ann Rogers

