



The Forerunner

A publication of St. John Lutheran Church
Williston, OH

Volume 0733 Issue 357

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Ask the Pastor

"Does God really 'forgive and forget'?"

I once heard a story about a German family who adopted a boy after the war. When they found him, he was an orphan; dirty, ragged, with shoes full of holes. They gave him new clothes and new shoes, but they kept the old ones on a shelf. Whenever the boy misbehaved, his father would pull them down and remind him how bad things once were, and how much the family had done for him.

When the pastor came to visit, the boy sat in shame. And the pastor thought to himself, *What a blessing it is that God does not continually drag out our old shoes.*

That's the good news. Jesus tells of a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to find the one that was lost, and a woman who sweeps her house to find one coin. And when the lost is found, there is great joy.

Notice something important: in these parables, it isn't the sheep who find the shepherd, or the coin who rolls its way back to the woman. It is the shepherd who searches. It is the woman who seeks. It is God who comes looking for us.

We often think, *If I repent, then God will forgive me.* But Jesus flips that around. We don't repent in order to be forgiven. We repent because we already are forgiven. Repentance isn't the price – it's the response.

That's who we are: forgiven people. Lost and found. Sheep carried home on the shoulders of a joyful shepherd. Coins held high in celebration.

WE are the ones who refuse to forget. We keep dragging down our old shoes. We replay our sins and failures when God has already let them go. We hold others' past against them even though God does not hold ours against us. God doesn't keep score, and neither should we.

Friends, the good news is this: God has searched, God has found, God has forgiven. And all of heaven is rejoicing. God chooses not to remember our sin. That is how completely forgiven we are.

If you would like to submit a question for "Ask the Pastor", Biblical, theological, church related, anything you have been dying to ask a pastor, you can hand me a note, ask me after church, send an e-mail, or sneak into the church after dark and anonymously slide a sealed envelope under my office door. If I answer your question in print, I will not include your name unless you explicitly ask me to.

Pastor Shawn

forgive and forget?

TACKLE

HUNGER



SOUPER BOWL OF CARING Feb. 7th and 8th

Super Bowl of Caring is a youth-inspired movement working to tackle hunger in our nation. St. John will participate in this event by collecting money for the **Genoa Food Pantry**. There will be a soup kettle for donations in the church sanctuary on

February 7th and 8th

You can also drop off or mail your donation to the church office.

Checks may be made payable to St. John.

We will also be taking donations of non-perishable, non-expired food items for the **BLESSING BOX** at St. John.

The greatest needs are: Peanut Butter, Hearty Canned Soup, Canned Pasta (like Ravioli or Spaghetti-Os, side dishes (Lipton sides, stuffing mix), canned fruit, ramen noodles, kid friendly boxes of cereal and snacks. Thank you for being a blessing!

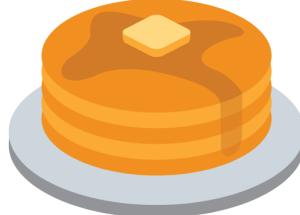
PACK 342 INVITES ST JOHN WILLISTON PANCAKE BREAKFAST

WHEN: FEB 8, 2026

TIME: 8:30AM - 9:30AM

WHERE: CHURCH BASEMENT

**JOIN US FOR PANCAKES, EGGS,
SAUSAGE, COFFEE, & ORANGE JUICE
BEFORE SERVICE AS A THANK YOU FOR
BEING OUR CHARTERED ORGANIZATION**



The Forerunner
is published monthly
by St. John Lutheran Church
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**Pastor Shawn O'Brien
Home Telephone:**

419-378-1112

pastorobrien

@stjohnwilliston.org

**Fall/Winter Worship
Saturday at 5:00 PM**

**Adult Sunday School and
Confirmation Class
Sunday 8:30 AM**

**Sunday School for ages 3 thru 5th
grade every Sunday at 9 AM
Sunday Worship 9:45 AM**

**Deadline for the
March 2026 newsletter is
Monday, February 16th
Please send articles and/or
information to
office@stjohnwilliston.org.**



**"Creating and nurturing life changing
relationships based on the love of God
in Jesus Christ, so that we may grow
in faith, serve God and
serve our neighbor."**



**LisaAnne Gregg
Office Admin.
9am—3pm
M-T-W
Thurs. hours
may vary
Office closed
on Friday,**



In Memory of Madonna Bury

Judy, Doug and David Franck
Janet Lyons
Kevin and Kathy Fox
Dave and Lore Warnke
Arnold and Barbara Brossia
Lloyd and Heidi Lind
The Petroff Family
Kevin and Kris Ruedy
Howard and Jackie Kidd
Mike and Sherry Phillips
Scott and Debra Emmett
Steven and Julie Miller
Ivan and Amie Myers
Carol Miller
Tim and Janet Keefe
Barb, Mark, Kayla and Faye Wolf
Bill and Ginny Mauter
Don Satkowski
Walt and Judy Mehler
Les and Martha Limmer
Jim and Mona Vogelbacher
John and Jessica Farr

If your gift was inadvertently left off the list, please contact the church office.



Thank you to Bob and Todd Kapp and Paul Fredericksen for keeping our parking lot and side-walks clear in this winter season!



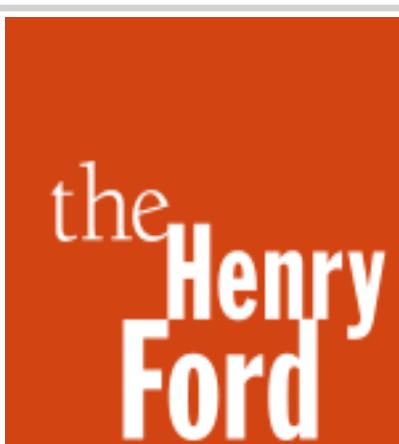
WINTER Worship

CHANGES TO WINTER WEATHER POLICY

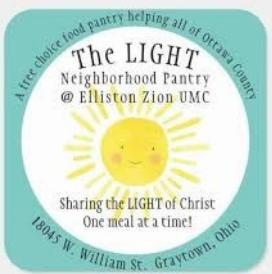
*If Ottawa County is under a **Level 2** or **Level 3** Snow Emergency, we will not have worship or any other church related activities until the emergency has been cancelled.

*If Ottawa County is under a **Level 1** Snow Emergency, we will still hold worship and activities for those who can travel safely. Please consider your safety and the safety of others on the road when you decide to venture out into the weather.

Please be careful out there this winter season!



Mark Your Calendar! Our next Adult Luther League Trip!
On March 10 we will meet at the church at 10:00a to travel to Dearborn, MI for lunch at a local restaurant (TBD – looking for something in the \$15-\$20 range) and spend a few hours exploring the Henry Ford Museum. We will be renting a van for the day that can hold 15 passengers. The cost to ride with us is \$15 (you may also travel in your own vehicle). Entry to the museum is \$34.00 or \$30.50 for seniors (those 62+). If you would like to attend, contact the church office to sign-up. \$15 deposit reserves your spot in the van. Final payment is due by the end of February. Please indicate if you would like a ride and which museum ticket you will need. For more information, please call or see Pastor O'Brien.



Thank You, St. John!

Thank you for your ongoing support of the LIGHT Neighborhood Pantry at Elliston Zion! It has taken a while, but we are pleased to announce that the LIGHT MOBILE Food Pantry is on the road! Our first visit to the Elmore Retirement Village was a great success with 20 new visitors-most who lack transportation to visit the main pantry. The mobile pantry is fully stocked, complete with a refrigerator, fully stocked shelves including milk, bread, eggs, meat and personal hygiene items. **We couldn't have done it without you!**

Watch for more destinations to come!

Circle and Board Meetings FEBRUARY 2026

ESTHER CIRCLE: Tuesday, February 3, 2:00 p.m.
Bible Study: Evalyn Witty

REBEKAH CIRCLE: Tuesday, February 3, 7:00 p.m.
Bible Study: Nancy Strohscher

Coming Up!

WELCA Board will be serving the Lenten Lunch on
Weds. February 25th

The Esther Circle will be serving the Lenten Lunch on
Weds. March 4th

The Rebekah Circle will be serving the Lenten Lunch
on March 11th

WELCOME *New Members*

One January 10th and 11th, we welcome
17 new members into the St. John
Congregational Family.

Welcome to:

Sherry Beucler * Clifford Bury
David Beckman * Carol Corl
Larry Dominique & Gerry Dominique
Patrick Early & Kelly Macwiejczyk
Tim Hepner & Deb Hepner
Charlene Hoot
Bob Joehlin & Mary Jane Joehlin
Gary Lambert * Beverly Marsh
Pat Snider * JoAnne Treier

Welcome to the St. John Family!

It gives us great pleasure that you have
chosen to celebrate the grace of our Lord
with us at St. John! Your presence in our
congregation is truly a blessing and we look
forward to praying, celebrating and
worshipping with you for years to come!



BAKE SALE!!
Sat. Feb. 14h
Sun. Feb. 15th
***(before and
after services)***

***Surprise your Valentine with
something sweet and/or treat
him/her to dinner!***

Surprise your Valentine with something
sweet and/or treat her to dinner.
St. John WELCA is sponsoring a bake
sale the weekend of
February 14 and 15.

We will have pies (by-the-piece);
cookies (many varieties, including heart
sugar cookies); specialty breads
(including zucchini, blueberry, apricot
and more); individual servings of
lasagna and macaroni and cheese; and
added for this year we will have
Cinnamon Rolls and MORE.

Tables will be in the cloister and by the
parking lot doors.

Buy now -- eat now or freeze for later.

The Thrivent Action Team program is
underwriting part of the costs.

A portion of the proceeds will be shared
with local charities.

***ALL Ladies of St. John -- we'd love to
have you join us for baking on
Friday, February 13, at 9:00 a.m.
No need to bring anything.
Lunch will be provided.***

We will also gladly accept any home-
made goodies that you might like to
donate.

Souper Bowl of Caring Chili and Soup Lunch and Annual Ping-Pong Tournament!

Bring your friends and family for an afternoon of fun, food and fellowship...and a great way to support the **LIGHT Neighborhood Pantry at Elliston Zion and the LIGHT MOBILE Pantry, too!**
Sunday, February 8th at 11:30 AM

Elliston Zion UMC 18045 W. William St-Graytown (Elliston) off Elliston-Trowbridge Rd. See LisaAnne for details.

Help us change the game and tackle hunger!

We are always accepting donations of non perishable-un expired, unopened food items! There is a donation box at the front door. Thanks!



On February 14 following worship (6:00p) we will have a Euchre Tournament!

Bring your preferred drink and an appetizer or light snack to share; don't forget to invite a friend. We will have food, fellowship, and the rules of the tournament will be explained. If you would like to attend, sign-up next to Pastor O'Brien's office door. (We need to know how many are playing to plan the bracket). If you have any questions, contact Pastor.

The need for blood
doesn't take a snow day.

HELP PREVENT A
WINTER BLOOD
SH^RGTAGE

DONORS
NEEDED
ALL BLOOD TYPES

Church & Community Blood Drive

St. John Lutheran Church
21140 W. Toledo St. (SR 579)
Williston, Ohio 43468

Friday March 6, 2025 * NOON to 5 PM

Appointments are encouraged! Please make your appointment today
at www.redcrossblood.org
Or by calling 1-800-RED CROSS
This will be a POWER RED Collection site!

Power Red: A Power Red donation collects the red cells but returns most of the plasma and platelets to the donor. These donors must meet specific eligibility requirements and have type A Neg, B Neg, or O blood.

Volunteers to help man the blood drive are also needed!
We can use help in the kitchen, help preparing a light meal or snacks and people to escort and greet our donors.
Please see or call Robin Perkins for more details.

News around St. John!

Join us for SUNDAY SCHOOL!

Kids age 3 through 5th grade are welcome to join us every Sunday morning from 9-9:30 AM!

We meet in the Sunday School rooms in the main hallway.

There is something new every week!

Invite a friend and join us this Sunday!



McDonalds Breakfast

Join us for breakfast and fellowship at the GENOA McDonald's on Wednesdays. We will gather starting at 7:00 AM and if you are available, we would like to invite you to stop by and have breakfast with your St. John friends and family!

Attention Thrivent Members:

If you are Thrivent insurance or investment policy holder, our church may be eligible to earn Thrivent contributions to financially assist the efforts of our St. John congregation. Please contact Diane Gerkensmeyer at rondiangerk@aol.com or 419-276-3800 to learn how you can get Thrivent support for our church and St. John community.



*St. John Prayer Chain is there for you....
"Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive."
Matthew 21:22*

When there is illness, a special need, or a time of thanksgiving in your family, or among friends or neighbors, you may wish to ask for the prayers of your sisters and brothers at St. John. If such a need arises, call Pastor O'Brien (cell phone 419-378-1112) or the church office (419-836-5514) who will begin the prayer chain.

Please keep your message to the minimum to avoid any errors in passing it on. Thank you!



Join the St. John Dartball Team!

Get those pitching arms ready! Join us for fun on Tuesday nights at 7:30 PM as the Western Ottawa County Dartball League continues its season. All are welcome. No experience is needed. All are welcome to come and cheer on our St. John Team, too! See or call Jeff Schimming for more info. 419-224-2374

Upcoming games:

Tues. Feb. 3 at HOME vs. Millbury St. Paul

Tues. Feb. 10 at Elmore St. Paul

Tues. Feb. 17 at HOME vs Oak Harbor St. Paul

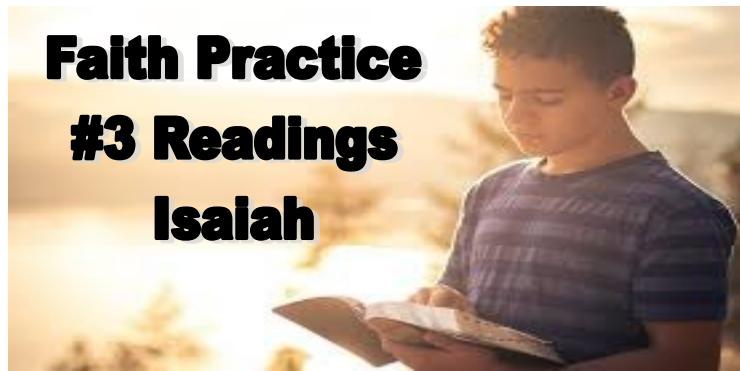
Tues. Feb. 24th BYE

Tues. March 4 at HOME vs St John Rocky Ridge

Faith Practice

#3 Readings

Isaiah



Jan. 5 – Isaiah 1	Sep 7 - Isaiah 36
Jan. 12 – Isaiah 2	Sep 14 - Isaiah 37
Jan. 19 – Isaiah 3	Sep 21 - Isaiah 38
Jan. 26 – Isaiah 4	Sep 28 - Isaiah 39
Feb. 2 – Isaiah 5	Oct 5 - Isaiah 40
Feb. 9 – Isaiah 6	Oct 12 - Isaiah 41
Feb. 16 – Isaiah 7	Oct 19 - Isaiah 42
Feb. 23 – Isaiah 8	Oct 26 - Isaiah 43
Mar. 2 – Isaiah 9	Nov 2 - Isaiah 44
Mar. 9 – Isaiah 10	Nov 9 - Isaiah 45
Mar. 16 – Isaiah 11	Nov 16 - Isaiah 46
Mar. 23 – Isaiah 12	Nov 23 - Isaiah 47
Mar. 30 – Isaiah 13	<i>Advent Break / No Reading</i>
April 6 – Isaiah 14	Jan 4 - Isaiah 48
April 13 – Isaiah 15	Jan 11 - Isaiah 49
April 20 – Isaiah 16	Jan 18 - Isaiah 50
April 27 – Isaiah 17	Jan 25 - Isaiah 51
May 3 – Isaiah 18	Feb 1 - Isaiah 52
May 11 – Isaiah 19	Feb 8 - Isaiah 53
May 18 – Isaiah 20	Feb 15 - Isaiah 54
May 25 – Isaiah 21	Feb 22 - Isaiah 55
June 1 – Isaiah 22	Mar 1 - Isaiah 56
June 8 – Isaiah 23	Mar 8 - Isaiah 57
June 15 – Isaiah 24	Mar 15 - Isaiah 58
June 22 – Isaiah 25	Mar 22 - Isaiah 59
June 29 – Isaiah 26	Mar 29 - Isaiah 60
July 6 – Isaiah 27	Apr 5 - Isaiah 61
July 13 – Isaiah 28	Apr 12 - Isaiah 62
July 20 – Isaiah 29	Apr 19 - Isaiah 63
July 27 – Isaiah 30	Apr 26 - Isaiah 64
Aug 3 - Isaiah 31	May 3 - Isaiah 65
Aug 10 - Isaiah 32	May 10 - Isaiah 66
Aug 17 - Isaiah 33	
Aug 24 - Isaiah 34	
Aug 31 - Isaiah 35	

Our Seven Faith Practices



I will strive to...

1. **PRAY** daily
2. **WORSHIP** weekly
3. **READ** and study the Bible
4. **SERVE** at and beyond St. John
5. **INVITE** others into a loving relationship with Jesus
6. **GIVE** of my time, talents, and resources
7. **ENCOURAGE** spiritual growth in others



Spring Cleaning for the Soul

Ash Wednesday is February 18, 2026, and it marks the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. Lent hints of spring, a time when the earth begins to awaken from a winter's nap, and new growth bursts forth all about us.

More personally, it is an opportunity to enter into a springtime for our spirit. For centuries Christians have used the 40 days of Lent to seek spiritual growth. Sincere repentance, a changing of heart, casting off old sinful practices and seeking to commune with our creator help us go in the right direction. Spending serious time in silence and prayer focuses our attention. Reading spiritual literature, becoming more knowledgeable about the New Testament, meeting in small groups with other Christians to share personal stories of faith can all be immensely stimulating. Joining with others to serve the helpless and hopeless can strengthen our spiritual life.

Lent is a time to let God do "spring cleaning" within us. It's our opportunity to allow God to help us toss out the "stuff" that hinders us and then freshen up the "new creature" we are meant to be as followers of Christ.

Our Blessing Box at St. John can always use your help!

Our Blessing Box is used every day by our neighbors and friends in the Williston Community. It is filled almost everyday with canned food items, snacks, and personal hygiene items. We couldn't do it without you! Our most needed items are: Peanut Butter and Jelly, small boxed of cereal, toothpaste and toothbrushes, canned meat, ready to eat snacks, Ramen noodles, Canned fruit, soup, spaghetti and spaghetti sauce, bathroom tissue.

(Please no expired items, no medicine, or glass jars, please)

A special thank you to ALL those who keep the Blessing Box stocked everyday...especially Carolyn Lasseter and Marilyn Sandrock and Ron and Diane Gerkensmeyer and those who donate items every week! Thank you for helping us serve our neighbors!



You are invited to Join the Choir!

If anyone interested in joining the bell choir and/or singing with the choir this year, please contact Beckie Goldstein or see her after Sunday church services. Practices are After Sunday's service. We also need Saturday Singers! See Tami after Saturday Services.

Worship Assistants *Always Needed Always Appreciated!

We SO appreciate the help we receive every week from our wonderful worship Assistants. Whether you read scripture, serve communion, usher or count the offering...your actions are vital to our worship ministry!

We are in need of additional worship assistants!

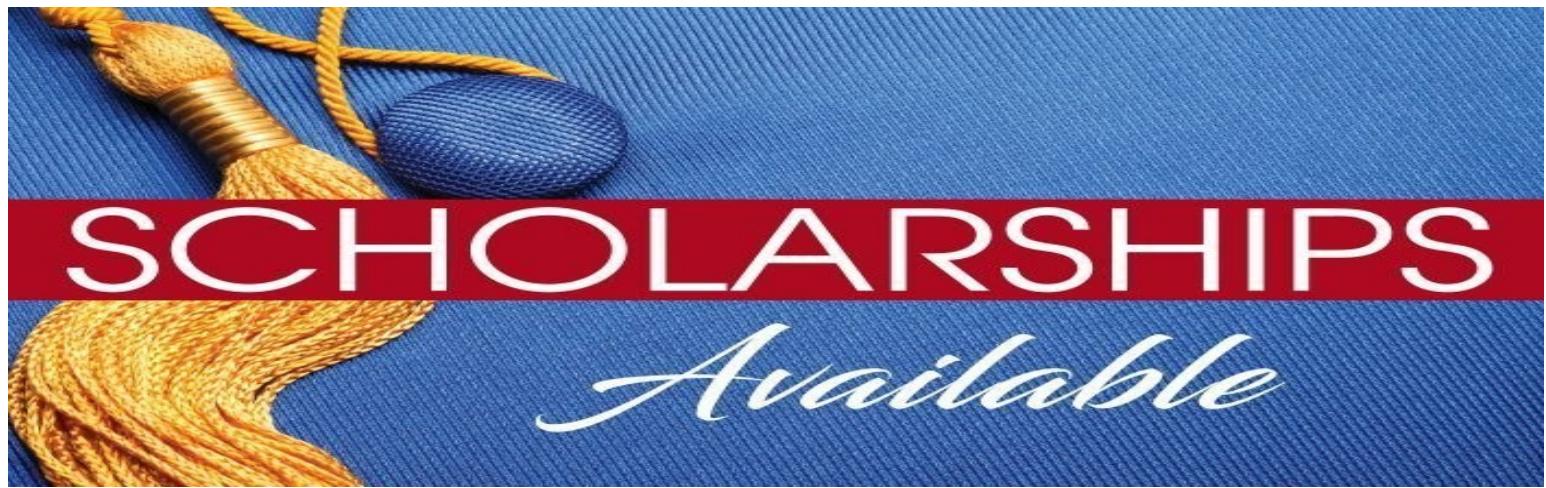
If you would like to be added to the rotation, please call the office and we will gladly fill you in on the details!

**WORSHIP
ASSISTANTS
NEEDED!**



The "Blanket Ladies" gather to make quilts on Tuesday mornings at 9:00 am.

These beautiful blankets are then distributed to those in need all over the country! Come join us! No experience needed! Any bed sheets (preferably queen size) are needed for quilt backings. Donations may be left in the box outside the church office. All are welcome to join us and the coffee is always on! You only need to know how to tie a knot!



SCHOLARSHIPS

Available

Scholarships for continuing education are available from St. John Lutheran Church. Applications are available on the church's website.

The application deadline for all scholarships is March 31st, 2026

The applications can be found online at

www.stjohnwilliston.org

Link:

https://stjohnwilliston.org/news_publications/combined-scholarship-descriptions.html

If you have any questions, please contact a member of the scholarship committee:

Pastor O'Brien, Deanna Neuman, Carol Jensen and Al Brown.

Below is a brief summary of the scholarships available. The scholarship committee recommends that anyone that has graduated high school within the last five years take a close look at the application requirements. All eligible students are encouraged to apply.

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

Tank Scholarship Fund

This scholarship fund was established in 1997 by a gift to St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Williston, Ohio by the late Carol L. Tank and Robert M. Tank.

Any high school graduate who is a three-year confirmed active member of St. John may receive one grant in their first or second year during their attendance at a four-year accredited college or university. Students attending Capital University, Columbus, Ohio may receive a second grant during their fourth year there.

The scholarship value will be \$500.

Phyllis Parks Endowed Scholarship Fund

The Phyllis Parks Scholarship Fund was established in August 2016 from the estate of Martin Parks bequeathed to St. John Lutheran Church.

The scholarship principal and interest distributions of the funds shall be made annually over twenty (20) years with approximately one twentieth (1/20) distributed each year. The maximum individual scholarship will be \$1,000. The applicant must be a confirmed St. John member and active in the life of the church.

Special preference will be given to the applicant's church worship attendance. The applicant must attend an accredited four (4) year college or university seeking a bachelor's degree. The applicant must be a recent high school graduate. Recent shall be defined as within five years of the school year's start date.

Scholarships will be for one year. Prior recipients may reapply.

Earl Johnson Memorial Scholarship Fund

The Earl Johnson Scholarship Fund was established in January 2016 from a portion of Earl's estate bequeathed to St. John Lutheran Church.

The applicant must be a confirmed St. John member and active in the life of the church during their high school years.

Scholarship value will be up to \$1,000 and determined by the applicant's church worship attendance as well as church and community activities.

While the applicant's GPA will be requested and is important, the activities noted above will carry more emphasis in the decision process.

The applicant must attend either a public or private accredited college or university and be degree seeking.

The applicant must be a recent high school graduate. Recent shall be defined as within five years of the school year's start date.

Recipients can apply more than once but can only receive the scholarship once.

Younker Scholarship Fund

This scholarship is funded by an annual gift from Marlin and Linda Younker. Awards are contingent upon receiving these funds.

The applicant will be a confirmed St. John member who is actively involved in the life of the church and who demonstrates their faith.

The opportunity to receive this scholarship is enhanced by the student working at least summers, but also preferably in a part-time position during the school year. Exceptions can be made.

The applicant should maintain at least a "C" or 2.0 grade average.

The applicant will attend either a public or private accredited college or university and be degree seeking.

The applicant must be a recent high school graduate. Recent shall be defined as within five years of the school year's start date.

Recipient of the Younker Scholarship is not eligible for any other church scholarship in the same year.

St. John ELCA Scholarship Fund

Applicant must be a member of St. John Lutheran Church.

The scholarship will be available to all students meeting the requirements of attending an ELCA owned college. The scholarship is \$500 each year and will be considered each additional year up to and including four years. Awards are contingent on fund availability with preference given to first year applicants.

february stewardship

Stewardship is

Loving Hands
Working Together

in Christ



Generosity

It has nothing to do with means and everything to do with desire



There's an old tale of a monk who found a precious gemstone. He picked it up and put it in his knapsack and carried it with his few other belongings. One day he struck up a conversation with a traveler. When the monk opened his knapsack to share some food, the traveler saw the jewel and asked the monk to give it to him. The monk did so readily.

The traveler went on his way, overjoyed by this unexpected gift that would bring wealth and security for the rest of his life.

After a few days, however, the traveler returned in search of the monk. Once he found him, he immediately gave the stone back and begged of the holy man: "Please give me something much more precious than this stone, as valuable as it is. Give me that which enabled you to give it to me."

The particular feature of this monk that captures our attention is his generous spirit. Not his generous *deed* of giving away something precious, but his generous *spirit* that appears to shape his entire outlook on life. I like to distinguish these two aspects of generosity. Any of us is capable of carrying out a kind or charitable deed. All it takes is a soft moment, brought on by a compelling grab at our emotions, and our hands and wallets open wide. But a person who enjoys little spasms of generosity is not the same as one who is generous to the bone.

A life steeped in generosity pours out love unconsciously. This is a person whose instinct for generosity is second nature or, as Jesus put it, reacts in a way that "your left hand [doesn't] know what your right hand is doing" ([Matthew 6:3](#)). These are the righteous ones in the parable of the final judgment, who seem surprised to learn that their reflexive kindness defined them. "When was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you ...?" ([Matthew 25:38](#)).

The most startling dimension of generosity may be the irrelevance of extensive means. Generosity has nothing to

do with means, and everything to do with desire. The poorest of the poor can be as generous in spirit as the richest of the rich. The widow in the temple who gave her last two coins is emblematic of one whose desire runs deep. So are the men whom Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl remembers walking through the barracks comforting others and giving away their last piece of bread.

When 5,000 people sat hungry before Jesus one day, the disciples saw only scarcity. They proposed a go-it-alone strategy for resolving the crisis. Everyone in the crowd was to head home and fend for him or herself. Jesus stepped in to transform their frugal thinking into the mystery of abundance. Breaking open five loaves and sharing two fish would provide enough for all.

It can be hard to see how generosity fuels abundance, especially in a world where doctrines of fairness and reciprocation hold center stage. "There is no free lunch," we hear. "You get what you deserve." So what do you make of people who love you more than you deserve? And what about God who forgives you in more ways than you can comprehend or repay?

A deep generosity in the heart of God easily puzzles. We grouse when others seem to land a better deal in life than we do. There is a payroll manager in Scripture who looks and behaves strangely like God. When he says to his disgruntled friends, "Are you envious because I am generous?" we ought to sit up and pay close attention ([Matthew 20:15](#)).

Anyone can learn to be generous in life. It is, after all, one of the nine fruits of the Spirit in [Galatians 5](#). From those who have cultivated this fruit so well, I have drawn the following conclusions: Truly grateful people tend to be generous people. And generous people tend to be really happy people.

I don't have scientific evidence to prove as much — just a lot of anecdotal evidence to confirm it. I have never met a generous soul who is a grump. Should you ever encounter one, however, take a good second look. You won't want to confuse bursts of charity with bone-deep generosity.



By Dr. Peter Marty

Marty, a pastor of [St. Paul Lutheran Church](#), Davenport, Iowa, and publisher of *The Christian Century*.



St. John Lenten Schedule



Shrove Tuesday

Pancake Supper

St. John Lutheran Church-Williston

Tuesday, February 17th 2025 4:30-6:30 PM

Carry-out available*Free Will Offering

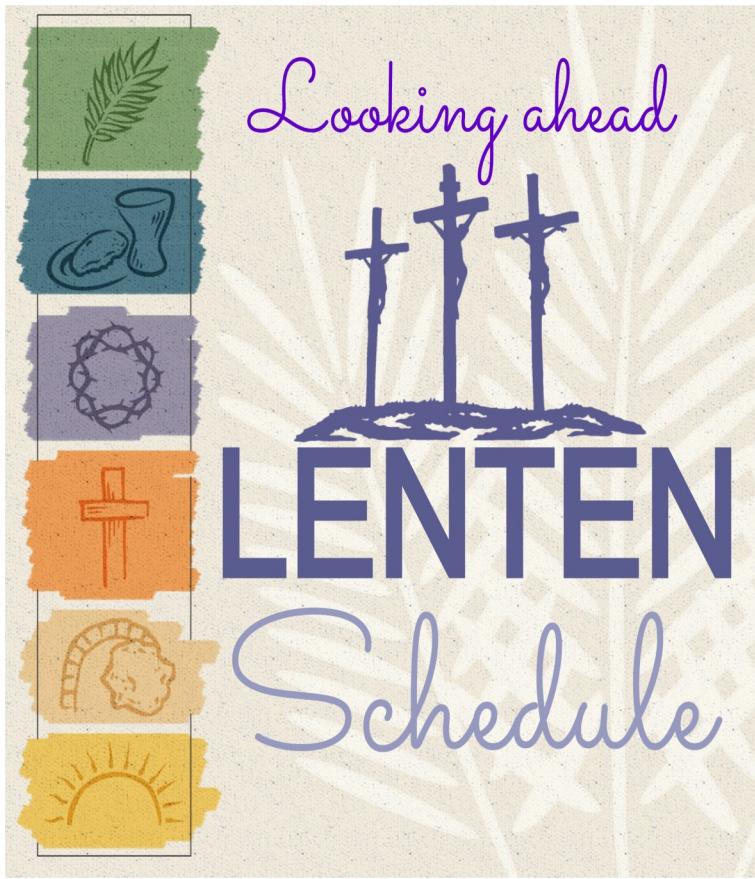
Proceeds will benefit the Blessing Box



Ash Wednesday

February 18th

Services at 11:00 am
& 7:00 pm at St. John



Our Community
Lenten Worship and Lunch Schedule begins
Wednesday February 25th
at 11:00 am.

Every Wednesday during Lent, we will meet
for a time of worship and then
join for a time of food & fellowship in the
basement.

More details will be announced soon.

Here are the groups responsible for each lunch.

2/25- WELCA Board

3/4- Esther Circle

3/11- Rebekah Circle

3/18- Church Council

3/25- Stewardship and Property Committees

St. John Kid's Page

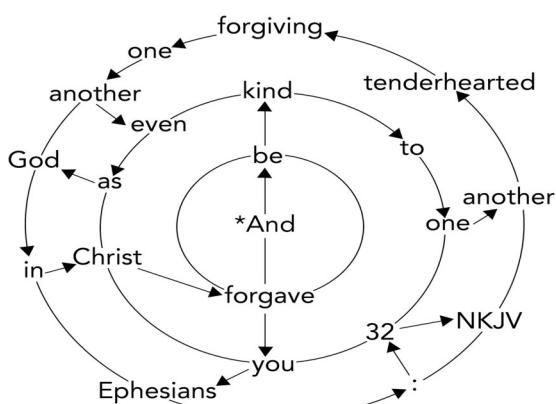


Puzzle!

This Bible verse teaches an important lesson about how we should treat others — and why.



Start with the asterisk in the center circle and follow the arrows. Write the words in order on the blanks below.



"And _____, _____, _____, _____, _____,
 _____, _____, _____, _____, _____,
 _____, _____, _____, _____, _____,
 _____, _____, _____, _____, _____."

Answer: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32, NKJV

Bible Quiz

How many times does Jesus say we should forgive others?

- A. 7
- B. 70
- C. 77
- D. 70 x 7
- E. C or D, depending on the translation

forgive

Answer: E (See Matthew 18:22.)



LOVE IS Action!

Love isn't just a feeling — it's something we do! This simple activity reminds us that acts of love, big or small, can grow and bless others.

What you need:

- Construction paper (brown for the trunk, pinks and reds for hearts)
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Markers or crayons



What you do:

1. Cut a large tree trunk and branches out of brown paper and glue it onto a sheet of paper or poster board.
2. Use colorful paper to cut several hearts — these will be your "leaves."
3. On each heart, write loving actions like "share my toys," "pray for others," or "help clean up."
4. Glue the hearts onto the branches to create a full, love-filled tree.
5. Hang it somewhere visible as a reminder to put love into action every day!



JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

Starting on Ash Wednesday, the church traditionally observes Lent, a 40-day period of repentance and reflection. As we prepare for Easter, families can focus on Jesus' life and ministry, culminating in his death and resurrection.

Use this Lenten Bible Reading Plan, along with a kid-friendly Bible version, for family devotions. With older kids, you can expand the readings to the surrounding paragraph or chapter. Discuss how each reference to Christ ties into God's plan of salvation.



Area Opportunities & Events



Employment Opportunity at Lakeside

(Ottawa County)

JOB TITLE: Religious Life Teen Coordinator
(ages 14-17)

Employment Period: May 25, 2026 – August 21, 2026
(Seasonal Contractor, Approx. 40 hours per week)

Compensation: \$10,000, plus 1 season gate passes, and 1 season auto pass.

Type: Seasonal Employee

Reports to: The Director of Religious Life

Department: Programming

Position Overview

The **Teen Coordinator** (ages 14-17) plays a vital role in fostering a safe, inclusive, and spiritually enriching environment for teens at Lakeside Chautauqua during its summer season. This position has dual responsibilities: to oversee and coordinate scheduling and engagement at “The Underground”—a dedicated youth hangout space for ages 14 and up—and to serve as the primary program lead for teens ages 14–17.

To learn more...go to employment@lakesideohio.com



The retreat will begin at 9 a.m. and will end at 5 p.m. Lunch will be included in the retreat price. The cost of attendance is \$50. Registration max is 50 guests.

A portion of the retreat funds collected will be given to Salem Lutheran Church to support their food ministry. We will also be collecting for The Period Project, a collection drive of feminine hygiene products to support the needs at Salem Lutheran. We ask that each guest consider bringing at least one item to donate to support this ministry.

Registration is required. Cash or checks to Community of Christ Lutheran Church are accepted as payment. Please indicate in memo line of check "Women's Retreat"

Register by using this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/RNs14uginT?origin=lprLink>



Wedding Showcase
A Celebration of new and old Wedding Music presented by members of the Toledo Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and friends

Sunday, February 8th
3:00pm
Solomon Lutheran Church
305 W. Main Street
Woodville, OH 43469
Public welcome.
Free concert.
Reception to follow.

ToledoAGO.org
ToledoAGO419@gmail.com



HopeWood
Outdoors

Become a Camp Hero: Volunteer

Are you looking for a meaningful way to give back? We have a variety of year-round volunteer opportunities to fit your interests and availability, including summer camp roles, maintenance, special events, and office work. Join us in our mission to help campers grow in their faith and connect with God's creation. www.hopewoodoutdoors.org/support/

Peace Be Still: A Women's Retreat at Community of Christ

Saturday, February 21, 2026 6517 Finzel Road, Whitehouse

Calling all ladies!! On February 21st, Community of Christ Lutheran will be hosting a women's retreat called "Peace Be Still." Take some time to pause and enjoy a restful time of bible study, worship, spiritual practices, and fellowship. Doors will open at 8 a.m. for check-in. Breakfast and coffee/tea bar will be available before the start of the retreat.

The retreat will begin at 9 a.m. and will end at 5 p.m. Lunch will be included in the retreat price. The cost of attendance is \$50. Registration max is 50 guests.

A portion of the retreat funds collected will be given to Salem Lutheran Church to support their food ministry. We will also be collecting for The Period Project, a collection drive of feminine hygiene products to support the needs at Salem Lutheran. We ask that each guest consider bringing at least one item to donate to support this ministry.

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Register by using this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/RNs14uginT?origin=lprLink>



Welcome to 2026: The Way of Love!

As our scripture verse for this year reminds us, "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19). As we journey together with Jesus, we have the great opportunity to encourage each other to grow in both our appreciation for, and reflection of, the love of God.

WHAT IS LOVE? By Bishop Daniel Beaudoin

"We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19) What is Love? Love is a gift from God that calls us to imitate the self-giving love of Jesus, which transforms us, to transform the community and the world! In July, 2000, I was blessed to gather with over 35,000 young people for the ELCA Youth Gathering in St. Louis, Missouri. One of the main speakers was Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa. It was at this gathering where I first heard about the South African principle of "Ubuntu" which is translated, "I am because we are." Archbishop Tutu taught us that when the love of God is combined with the power of "we," the result is the healing and transformation of the community and the world. The Apostle John understands both the gift of God's love and the power of "we". In 1 John 4:7-19, John teaches the community of faith that God is love, and as followers of Jesus we are called to imitate God's self-giving love, not only as individuals, but also as a community of faith. Notice that 1 John 4:19, does not begin with a "me", but with a "we". "We" are called to love, in the same way that God, in Christ Jesus, loves us. The love that John writes about is a love that begins with God, a love that we are called to imitate: a love that changes the community and the world. In his book, *Love Is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times*, Episcopal Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, helps us to put God's self-giving love into perspective. He simply asks, "Is this love about me, or is it about we?" Does the decision that I am about to make serve my own self-interest, or might this decision serve the greater good? If the answer is "me, myself, and I," the way of love calls us to reconsider our next step. According to Presiding Bishop Curry, Archbishop Tutu, the Apostle John, and Jesus, we embrace the "we" before the "me," for that is the way of love. And it can be that simple... and also that challenging. But at the end of the day, love is the only way. "We love because He first loved us".

1. In 1 John 4:7-19, the writer reminds the church about the self-giving love of God. How is this self-giving love lived out in your community of faith? .

2. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Apostle John, and Jesus all call us to a love that puts the "we" before the "me". Why do you think this self-giving love is so challenging for us to live out? Can you think of a story of a time you experienced this kind of love in your life? In the life of your parish?

Let us pray:

Gracious and Loving God, we thank you for the gift of Your love, and we seek Your forgiveness, when we fail to love as we are loved. Fill us with Your gentle and self-giving love, so that we might share it with others.

Empower us to forgive, to serve, and to follow you in the way of love. Lead us to share Your love with our neighbor and the world, transforming us from who we are, into the people You long for us to be. In the name of Jesus, crucified and risen for the world. Amen.

Bishop Daniel Beaudoin is a Minister of Word and Sacrament, serving the people of God of Northwestern Ohio as Bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod.

Project Piki-piki UPDATE

We are so very excited to share that our initial North West Ohio Synod gift of \$44,795.80 has been received by our companions in the Dodoma Diocese!

Diocese leadership has contributed additional funding to this gift, and together we have purchased **40** piki pikis (motorbikes) to support Lutheran Evangelists across the Dodoma Diocese in service to many, many parishes and new church plants! Praise God!



In a recent video call with Rodrick Lyimo, General Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Tanzania -Dodoma Diocese, he stated the "ministry and the work of God will be easier" as the evangelists will be able to travel more quickly and in safety. Rodrick emphasized that this project is "a positive injection of energy for the diocese, as people can go faster into different areas, to provide different services to the people, not just Christians." It is this work, he said, that the word of God will "touch many people."

Thank you ALL for your support!!

COUNCIL



HIGHLIGHTS

Council Meeting– January 15, 2026 7 PM

Members Present: Pastor O'Brien Dan Kessler, John Mazur, Diana Lambert, Cheryl Berger, Dave Neuman, Deanna Neuman, Robin Perkins, Jennifer Nelson, Rick Buhrow. Jack Mathews. Members Absent: Kellie Ulrich, Kristina Wildman

Meeting Opened: At 7:00 pm, by Dave Neuman

Devotions-Pastor O'Brien shared Daily Text from Psalms and Revelation for devotions

Council Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes as corrected from 12/18/2025 was from Robin Perkins and Cheryl Berger 2nd the motion. Motion passed.

Pastor's Report: Worship Attendance: In Person average for December 2025-135.5 compared to December 2024- 113.8. Online average for December 2025- 86.8 compared to December 2024- 94.2. **Numbers-** 9 hospital/home-bound visits/individual or family meeting. 2 committee/group meetings. 6 community/youth/fellowship events. 5 professional/clergy activities. 3 special worship services. 2 Baptisms. 1 Funeral. . **Baptisms-** On December 7, I presided at the baptism of Riley Hodnett (daughter of James and Breanna Hodnett) and Gavin Wallace (son of Justin and Taylor Wallace) **Funeral-** On December 10, I presided at the funeral of Madonna Bury.

New Members-On January 10/11, we welcomed 17 new members; Sherry Beucler, Cliff Bury, David Beckman, Carol Coral, Larry and Gerry Dominique, Patrick Early and Kelly Macwiejczyk, Tim and Deb Hepner, Charlen Hoot, Mary Jane and Bob Joehlin, Gary Lambert, Beverly Marsh, Pat Snider and JoAnne Treier. Dave Neuman made a motion to accept these persons as new members of St. John Lunteran Church. Cheryl Berger 2nd. Motion passed.

Annual Meeting-St. John Annual Meeting will January 18 at 11:00 a.m. **Installation.** Installation of Officers and Elected Members will be Saturday and Sunday, January 24 & 25.

Absence- I will not be in worship on Saturday, January 24. Amy Schloegel will be leading worship. Rick Buhrow will lead the installation of elected officers that day.

Adult Luther League- On February 14th following worship, (6:00 ish p.m.), we will have an Euchre Tournament! Bring an appetizer or light snack to share; don't forget to invite a friend. We will have food, fellowship, and the rules of the tournament will be explained. **Lent**- Ash Wednesday is February 18th. Ash Wednesday worship service (11a.m. and 7 p.m.) will be in the sanctuary. Midweek Lenten worship (11:00 am.) is still being planned.

Clergy Housing- Resolved, that of the total compensation paid to Pastor Shawn O'Brien for 2026, and following years

until modified, 32% shall be designated as exempted housing allowance pursuant to section 107 of the Internal Revenue /code. Pastor made a motion for the afore mentioned statement. Jack Mathews-2nd. Motion passed.

Financial Secretary, Treasurer & Finance Committee Report:

Income: We are at 122% of our monthly budget and 102% of our year-to-date budget. **Expenses:** We are at 107% of the monthly budget and 101% of the year-to-date budget. We ended the year with a \$1166 surplus over budget. Jennifer Nelson reported that the Budget Review happened on January 11, 2026. We have about \$5000 income from the interest earned on our CD's that will need to be spent. We will have discussions on how to best spend this money soon.

Christian Community Life: We had refreshments for the reception of New Members. The lunch meal for the Annual Meeting has been planned. The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper will be on February 17 from 4:30- 6:30 p.m.

Evangelism: Nothing new to report currently

Parish Education:

Souper Bowl of Caring will be the weekend of February 7 & 8. Pots will be placed near both the front and rear entrances to the sanctuary for donations

Stewardship: Committee plans to call Tom Cashen to discuss the golf outing for this year.

Worship Life: Welcome Kelsey Miller to the Worship Life Committee! Amy Schlogel has agreed to lead worship on January 24th. Ash Wednesday services will be at 11a.m. and 7 p.m. on February 18th. Wednesday Lenten services will be at 11 a.m. and lead by Pastor O'Brien each week. If anyone is interested in assisting with these services, please let the church office know. Services are in the planning stages with a possible Lord's Prayer theme. Lunches will be after the services in the basement. Maundy Thursday services are in the process of being planned, we may do the Living Last Supper again or look into doing something new.

Property: The Nativity Set has been taken down
Repaired the starter switch on the snowplow

Old Business: None

New Business: We will have a new tenant in the parsonage starting February 1st.

Robin Perkins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. 2nd by John Mazur. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Diana Lambert, Council Secretary

ELECTRONIC GIVING AUTHORIZATION FORM

St. John Lutheran Church PO Box 235 Williston, OH 43468
www.stjohnwilliston.org 419-836-5514 email: office@stjohnwilliston.org



FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		ENVELOPE/DONOR #	DATE
Effective date of authorization: ____ / ____ / ____			
Type of authorization: <input type="checkbox"/> New authorization <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation amount <input type="checkbox"/> Change banking information <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue electronic donation <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation date			
Last Name		First Name	
Address			
City		State	Zip
Email Address		Phone #	
DATE OF FIRST DONATION: ____ / ____ / ____	FREQUENCY OF DONATION: <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly – DAY _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-Monthly – 1 st and 15 th <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 1 st <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 15 th	FUNDS: <input type="checkbox"/> General/Operating <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below) <input type="checkbox"/> Add'l donation to offset fees	AMOUNTS: \$ _____ \$ _____ \$ _____ Total \$ _____
If you would like to designate your giving to another fund not listed: please state your desire here. Thank You.			
CHECKING / SAVINGS	Please debit my donation from my (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Savings Account (contact your financial institution for Routing #) <input type="checkbox"/> Checking Account (attach a voided check below)		
	Routing Number: _____ Valid Routing # must start with 0, 1, 2, or 3 Account Number: _____ 		
I authorize the above organization to process debit entries to my account. I understand that this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.			
Authorized Signature: _____ Date: _____			
CREDIT / DEBIT CARD	Card Brand (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> American Express <input type="checkbox"/> Discover Card		
	Card Number:		Expiration Date:
	Name on Card:		
	Billing Address (if different from above):		
	I authorize the above organization to process transactions in accordance with the information above.		
Signature (as it appears on the card): _____ Date: _____			

If using a checking account, please attach a voided check over the credit/debit card section above.
We do urge you to use a checking or savings account as opposed to a credit card to save transaction fees. Thank you.
Please allow 2-3 business days for processing. Thank you for being a blessing to St. John Lutheran Church.



Saturdays 5:00pm	Sundays 9:45 am
Ushers	Ushers
FEBRUARY 2026	1-Jim Vogelbacher
7-Buhrow Family	8- The Titgemeyers
14-Ron Gerkensmeyer	15-Diana Lambert
21-Donnelly Family	22-Jim Vogelbacher
28-Jack Mathews	
Lectors	Lectors
	1-Deanna Neuman
7- Beverly Harder	8-Cebie Titgemeyer
14-Sandy Toth	15-Jerry Goldstein
21-Amy Schloegl	22-Diana Pfaff
28-Nancy Strohscher	
Acolytes	Acolytes
	1-Rylie C.
7-Liam	8-Makenna
14-Pierce	15-Rylan
21-Jonah	22-Ellie
28-Nolan	
Communion	Communion
	1-Dave Neuman
7- Nancy Strohscher	8-Margaret Berger
14-Carol Vargo	15-Robin Perkins
21-Ron Gerkensmeyer	22-Pam LaRue
28- Al & Traci Brown	



Thank you for serving the Lord!
If you cannot make your assignment,
please make arrangements for a
replacement then let the office know as
soon as possible. Thank you!



Saturdays 5:00pm	Sundays 9:45 am
Ushers	Ushers
	1-Titgemeyer's
	7-Buhrow's
	8-Diana Lambert
	14-Ron Gerkensmeyer
	15-Jim Vogelbacher
	21-Donnelly Family
	22-Titgemeyer's
	28-Jack Mathews
	29-Diana Lambert
Lectors	
	1-Kellie Ulrich
7-Jonah D.	8-Melissa Lammers
14-Beverly Harder	15-Deanna Neuman
21-Nancy Strohscher	22-Cebie Titgemeyer
28-Amy Schloegl	29-Jerry Goldstein
Acolytes	
	1-Rylan
7-Liam	8-Makenna
14-Pierce	15-Rylie
21-Trenton	22-Ellie
28-Jonah	29-Rylan
Communion	
	1-Roland Sandrock
7-Nancy Strohscher	8-Margaret Berger
14-Carol Vargo	15-Kellie Ulrich
21-JoElaine Schimming	22-Tim Titgemeyer
28-Al & Traci Brown	29-Diana Lambert



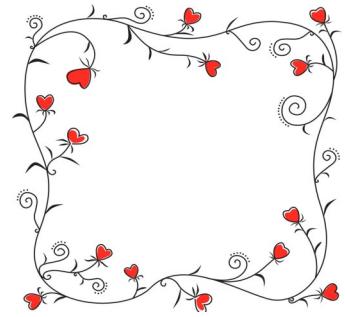
FEBRUARY

at St. John

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 8:30am -9:30am Adult Sunday School-The Chosen 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice 6:00pm -8:00pm Cub Scouts Committee Meeting (B)</p>	<p>2 Faith Practice Reading-Isaiah 5</p>	<p>3  Esther Circle 2 pm Rebekah Circle 7PM 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets 7:30pm -9:30pm Dartball-HOME</p>	<p>4  7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6 Office closed</p>	<p>7 5:00pm Contemporary Worship</p>
<p>8  SCOUT PANCAKE BREAKFAST 8:30 AM 8:30am -9:30am Adult Sunday School-The Chosen 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice</p>	<p>9 Faith Practice Reading-Isaiah 6</p>	<p>10 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets 7:30pm -9:30pm Dartball @ Elmore St Paul</p>	<p>11  7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds</p>	<p>12  Committee Night 7 PM</p>	<p>13  Office closed WELCA Baking Party 9 AM</p>	<p>14  5:00pm Contemporary Worship 5:00pm -7:00pm Valentine's Bake Sale 6:00pm -7:00pm Euchre Tournament</p>
<p>15  8:30am -9:30am Adult Sunday School-The Chosen 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 9:00am -11:30am Valentine's Bake Sale 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice</p>	<p>16 Faith Practice Reading-Isaiah 7 FORERUNNER DEADLINE 9 AM</p>	<p>17  9:00am -12:00pm Blankets 4:30pm -6:30pm Shrove Tuesday Pancakes! 7:30pm -9:30pm Dartball-HOME</p>	<p>18  ASH Wednesday Ash Weds Services 11 AM and 7 PM 7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds</p>	<p>19  Church Council Meeting 7 PM</p>	<p>20 Office closed</p>	<p>21 5:00pm Contemporary Worship</p>
<p>22 8:30am -9:30am Adult Sunday School-The Chosen 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice</p>	<p>23 Faith Practice Reading-Isaiah 8</p>	<p>24 Dartball BYE this week 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets</p>	<p>25  7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds 11:00am -12:00pm Lenten Worship and Lunch</p>	<p>26  Lenten Worship & Luncheons Begin Weds. @11</p>	<p>27 Office closed</p>	<p>28 5:00pm Contemporary Worship</p>

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
21140 W. Toledo Street
P. O. Box 235
Williston, Ohio 43468-0235

Volume 733 Issue 357
February 2026



February 2026



Worship Hours at St. John
Saturday Contemporary Worship 5:00 PM
Sunday School and Confirmation 8:30 AM
Sunday School –Kids through 5th grade 9 AM
Sunday Traditional Worship 9:45 AM

Pastor Shawn O'Brien
419-378-1112 cell ph

E-mail address:
pastorobrien@stjohnwilliston.org

Church Office Hours
M-T-W from 9 to 3
Thurs. hours vary
Closed Friday

LisaAnne Gregg
Office Administrator
Church: 419-836-5514
E-mail address:
office@stjohnwilliston.org

*Visit us on Facebook
*Services are also available on
our YouTube channel