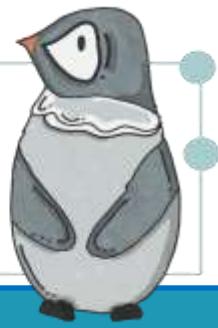


# THE FORERUNNER

## December



A publication of St. John Lutheran Church Williston, Ohio

Volume 0731 Issue 0355  
December 2025

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Just a winter reminder...  
Worship and activities at St. John will be cancelled if there is a LEVEL 3 Snow Emergency declared in Ottawa County. We will hold worship and activities if there is a Level 1 or Level 2, but only venture out if you feel it is safe to do so. Your safety and the well-being of everyone is our top concern!

### Ask the Pastor

#### **“What does incarnation mean?”**

Incarnation literally means "to take on flesh". For Christians it's a way to talk about the mystery of God becoming fully human while remaining fully divine.

But if we take it a step deeper, incarnation means Christmas is about far more than a baby in a manger wrapped in cloth.

It's about God showing up -literally – in the flesh - right here with us. God comes close enough to touch. Close enough to see.

Close enough to hear the beating of a human heart. God's grace stops being an idea floating somewhere out there and becomes something embodied, something alive. That's the beauty of the Incarnation: God choosing to live our life with us, in our world, in our skin.

Yes, we can catch glimpses of grace in nature – a blazing sunset, a bird's song, a mountaintop view. Those moments feel holy, but they come and go. At Christmas, grace doesn't just pass by. Grace puts on flesh and stays. By stepping into our humanity, God makes it unmistakably clear that our lives, our messy, complicated, joyful, and real lives, truly matter. The Incarnation is God's way of saying, "I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. I am with you always." And here's something we don't always say out loud... when God becomes human, it blows up the idea that life is only about getting to heaven someday. In Jesus, God blesses this very life, this very moment. Eternal life doesn't wait until the end – it begins now. Heaven isn't just a future promise; it's something woven into today. Ever since God appeared in flesh, the divine and human have been forever intertwined. It's mysterious, yes. Hard to explain, absolutely. Needs a great deal of faith to understand, undeniably. But when we gather for worship, our goal isn't to figure out the mechanics.

Our call is to live as if it's true – because it is.

*“A child has been born for us, a son given to us.”*  
(Isaiah 9:6)

*“The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.”*  
(Titus 2:11)

*“This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”*  
(Luke 2:12)

*“To live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ..*  
(Titus 2:13-14)





### In Memory of Norma Jean Gast

Terry Gast

### In Memory of Bob Begell

Gary and LisaAnne Gregg

### In Honor of Lowell Hartman's 90th Birthday

Ron and Diane Gerkensmeyer

Doris Titgemeyer

Chad and Jessica Hartman



Thanks!

Grateful thanks to Pastor O'Brien and our St. John Family for your prayers, thoughts, food, cards, phone calls and concerns during my recent SECOND recovery -- from my horrible accident. I'm recovering well, but not quite ready to be out and about....other than for my many doctors' appointments.

I know I'm VERY BLESSED considering the many things it could have been (along with not being here to talk about it!!!!), but I still have some open areas in my wound of 17 stitches that the doctor doesn't want exposed to any source of possible infection.

I'm so very thankful for our caring St. John Family who is supportive in every way. I appreciate each and every one of you!!!! It's been a long uphill road to recovery. God is Good! God is Great! Thank you all so very, very much! May God continue to bless each of you.

Love to All,  
Diane Gerkensmeyer

With Thanksgiving.....

A Very Special Thank You to all who helped with the Community Thanksgiving Worship Service and Meal on Nov. 23rd. Our organist, Beckie Goldstein led the choir in wonderful music and our worship assistants made sure everyone from the community felt welcome. Even our little ones made a joyful noise

to the Lord with bells and laughter! We had many people from different churches in attendance and most stayed for a delicious meal prepared and served by the Ladies of the church.

Thank you, ladies! That was a lot of cooking!

Thanks to those who helped serve and clean up and those who brought dishes and desserts.

What a wonderful way to celebrate Thanksgiving with our neighbors and friends!

St. John-Williston,  
Thank you for your generous donation of \$1000 from your Sack for a Sack Campaign. Thank you for your continued support of our pantry.

Genoa Community Food Pantry

Thanks to our St. John Staff for a wonderful 2025

! As we reflect on the many accomplishments of 2025 here at St. John, we extend an invitation to the congregation to contribute to "Gifts for our Staff" for their hard and dedicated work throughout the year. If you would like to contribute, please mark "Staff Gifts" on an envelope and place it in the offering plate. Thank you!



The *Forerunner* is published monthly by St. John Lutheran Church 21140 W. Toledo Street Williston, Ohio 43468 Corner of Main and Toledo Street

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Cell Telephone:

419-378-1112

pastorobrien

@stjohnwilliston.org

Fall/Winter Worship

Saturday at 5:00 PM

Sunday School-Adult 8:30 AM

Sunday School-3 to 5th grade

9-9:30 AM

Sunday Worship 9:45 AM

Deadline for the January 2026 Forerunner is Monday, December 15th  
Please send articles and/or information to  
office@stjohnwilliston.org.

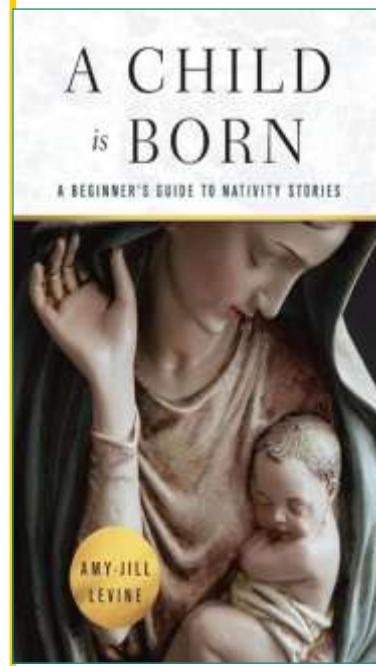


**"Creating and nurturing life changing relationships based on the love of God in Jesus Christ, so that we may grow in faith, serve God and serve our neighbor."**

LisaAnne Gregg  
Office Administrator  
419-836-5514  
office@stjohnwilliston.org



Mon-Tues-Wed 9am—3pm  
Thurs. hours vary  
Closed Friday



## Advent Reading with Pastor O'Brien

This December, I'm going to be reading the book *A Child Is Born: A Beginner's Guide to Nativity Stories* by Amy-Jill Levine, and I'd love for you to join me.

### How we'll read together..

At the very least, I plan to host a discussion on our **St. John Williston – Online Community Facebook group** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3270411673060044>).

This is open to anyone with a Facebook account—no matter your location or mobility. I'll post questions and reflections on a couple of chapters at a time throughout Advent to guide our conversation.

I'm also open to organizing an **in-person discussion group**, similar to what we did last year for *Advent Conspiracy*. We could meet once to discuss the entire book or meet weekly through Advent. We could gather in the church, at a local café, or even someone's home - whatever works best for those interested.

Take a look at the book, maybe read the first chapter, and let me know what kind of gathering you'd enjoy.

The book is available at **AMAZON** or for Kindle. It may also be available at your local library.

## *Ring the Bell!*



**MAKE  
CHANGE  
HAPPEN.**

Join us on **Weds. December 3rd** at Miller's New Market in Genoa as we **RING THE BELL** and fill the kettle for the **SALVATION ARMY!**

There are several two hour time slots to be filled from 10 AM to 6 PM. You can fill the whole two hours or just help when you can. Please sign up next to Pastor's Office.

We can make change happen!

## Adult Luther League

On **December 14** we will carpool to the Rosary Cathedral (2535 Collingwood Blvd, Toledo) for their **“Christmas Carol Sing”**, (Sing favorite Christmas carols accompanied by the majestic E.M. Skinner organ, choir, and instruments.

A special appearance by the NOVA Ensemble will add to the joyful sounds of Christmas!)

After the concert we will have dinner together at **Tony Packo's** (1902 Front St, Toledo)

The concert begins at 3:00p, so we plan on meeting at the church at 2:00p to allow time for travel and parking. The concert is free. Dinner at Packo's is in the \$10-\$20 range.

**If you would like to attend, please sign up near the pastors office. Please indicate if you would like a ride. If you are willing to drive, please indicate how many others you can take in your vehicle. If you have any questions, contact Pastor O'Brien.**



## How many of you are familiar with an Advent Calendar?

The idea dates back to the German Lutherans in the 1800s. It is based on the tradition of writing chalk tally marks on walls or lighting candles to count the remaining days until Christmas. Modern Advent calendars help you count down the days by either moving a little star on a calendar or opening up a little pocket or box to reveal a tiny gift (or moving Hans Gruber down the Nakatomi Plaza). Since they were very little, we have gotten chocolate Advent calendars for our kids. (Actually, that's something we still do.) Each day they can open the numbered window and count down the days until Christmas with a piece of chocolate. One year we even found an Advent calendar filled with dog treats. I doubt Fancy understood the sentiment, but she was glad to have a daily treat.

This year, I would like you to consider participating in a twist on that idea... a Reverse Advent Calendar. Instead of taking something out for yourself, the idea is to put something in or set something aside to give to someone else—thus giving instead of getting. There are boxes and calendars listing different items for each day until Christmas available at the church. Or you can print a calendar from the newsletter or Facebook and use your own box from home. At the end of Advent, the reverse calendar will result in a collection of 24 items that can be dropped off at the church to support a good cause at Christmas time.

The calendar we have created supports the needs pantry at the **Advent Lutheran Center** and the **LIGHT Neighborhood Pantry at Elliston Zion**.

The **Advent Lutheran Center** is one of five day programs operated by Luther Home of Mercy. Here, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities socialize with others, interact with the community and learn new skills. When this site opened several years ago, there was a strong desire by participants to give back to their community through volunteering. However, they discovered many places are not willing or able to accommodate persons with disabilities as volunteers and the offer to help was frequently declined.

That did not deter the Advent participants... instead, they opened their own personal needs pantry. (They believe this to be a first-of-its-kind program in Ohio and a true celebration of the positive community spirit of those they serve.) This project is largely funded by the individuals themselves, their families, and the staff who work there. They are not always able to keep up with the community demand for products. Our help enables the participants to keep the pantry open and keep offering smiles and needed items to others.

The **Light Neighborhood Pantry at Elliston Zion** is open to all residents of Ottawa Country struggling with food insecurity. They are a free local choice food pantry where clients can select the items they want and will use. The pantry can get many food items from the Toledo NWO Food Bank, but hygiene and personal need items are rarely available. Our help enables them to provide these items for the people they serve. On average, the **LIGHT Neighborhood Pantry** serves 35-50 families each month and serves dinner once a month to as many as 85—90 people. The **LIGHT Neighborhood Pantry** is open on the 2nd Weds. of each month from 5-7 PM and is also available in emergency circumstances. They also have a partnership with the Blessing Box here at St. John to share items they have in abundance with our community.

Our Reverse Advent Calendars will support both organizations when they are filled. Also this year our Thanksgiving offering will be designated to support our neighbors as they meet these community needs. You will hear more about these ministries in the season of Advent.

# Supporting our neighbors at

**The Luther Home of  
Mercy Needs Pantry**

**The LIGHT Neighborhood  
Pantry at Elliston Zion**

## REVERSE CALENDAR OF GIVING

## FOR ADVENT

1 Shampoo	2 Deodorant	3 Small pack Toilet paper	4 Hairbrush	5 Body Wash
6 Small Laundry Soap	7 Razors	8 Dish Soap	9 Shaving cream	10 Lotion
11 Feminine Hygiene items	12 Dryer sheets	13 Toothbrushes	14 Body powder (Gold Bond type)	15 Toothpaste
16 Small Laundry Soap	17 Q-tips	18 Dish Soap	19 Deodorant	20 Body Wash
21 Disinfectant (Lysol) Wipes	22 Hand Sanitizer	23 Small pack Toilet paper	24 Shampoo	25 Merry Christmas to all!

### How does it work?

You may take a box or take some bags (located in the Narthex) and fill them up daily, weekly (or whenever you choose) with the items on the list above. You are welcome to bring your items back to the church at any time and place them near the Christmas Tree.



## December Circle Meetings

### Esther Circle

Tuesday, December 2 2:00 PM  
Christmas Sing-a-long!

### Rebekah Circle

Tuesday, December 2 7:00 PM  
“Encouraging One Another”

**Any ladies in the congregation are also cordially invited to join a circle!**



2026 Altar and Chancel Flowers are ready to order! Please see the sign up list on the office door across from the main staircase.

**Altar Flowers are now \$30.00**

**Chancel Flowers are still \$20.00**

***When you sign up on the Flower Chart, please fill out the Flower Order Form and submit it along with your payment to the church office or place it in the offering plate.***

*Flowers are sometimes ordered weeks in advance, so please make sure you have your form and payment in.*

**Please keep in mind that flowers cannot be ordered without both the form and the payment. We don't want to miss any important memorials or events. Thank you!**



If you have a prayer concern or would like to be added to the prayer chain, you have a change in phone number or change in your email address, please let Margaret Berger (419-340-2150) Pastor O'Brien (419-378-1112) or the church office know. (419-836-5514 or email: [office@stjohnwilliston.org](mailto:office@stjohnwilliston.org))

The email prayer chain is distributed via email by Margaret, Pastor O'Brien or the church office. You do not need to do anything but pray. There is no need to respond to the emails.

When phone call prayer chain reaches you, you are asked to call the next person on the prayer list to keep the chain going. We try to keep the information distributed at a minimum to avoid any errors or misinformation.

The prayer chain may be used for medical concerns, special needs or in a time of thanksgiving in your family or friends.. And as always, we prayed for YOU today!



**THRIVENT  
FINANCIAL®**

*Connecting faith & finances for good.®*

***Thrivent Financial --  
Connecting Faith and Finances for Good.....***

Many thanks to the St. John Thrivent members who reached out for their Thrivent Action Team Dollars (\$250). Our Thrivent contributions for 2025 totaled more than \$6,000. These dollars were given to assist our St. John Family in various ways, along with contributions to neighboring and local charities. Thanks so very much to those Thrivent Insurance and Investment policy holders who participated in this program.

These Thrivent Action Team Dollars are available on an annual basis. They will renew as of January 1, 2026. Please let me know --

- 1) if I can help you to apply in 2026;
- 2) if you are applying, so I can track the various projects -- so we don't have duplications for the same purpose; AND,
- 3) if you have any questions.

Many thanks for your participation in this program.

Diane Gerkensmeyer



Shopping with the Stars  
Available now!  
Just pick a star or take a gift list  
from the table located in the  
narthex and purchase a gift for  
one of our neighbors at  
The Luther Home of Mercy



No Wrapping Needed!!  
Return to church  
by Sunday,  
December 7 th.

Most are inexpensive  
but bring great joy to  
the residents.



Join the St. John  
Dartball Team!  
Get those pitching arms  
ready and join us for fun  
on Tuesday nights when  
the Western Ottawa Co.  
Dartball League meets  
for fun and fellowship!

**December games: All at 7:30 PM**  
12/2 AWAY at St. John Rocky Ridge  
12/9— AWAY at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel  
12/16-HOME vs Millbury St. Peter

All are welcome. No experience needed.  
All are welcome to come and cheer  
on our St. John Team, too!  
See or call Jeff Schimming for more info.  
419-356-3552



JOIN US IN WATCHING  
THE CHOSEN SERIES  
SUNDAYS AT 8:30 AM  
IN THE SOCIAL HALL

WE ARE CURRENTLY  
WATCHING SEASON 4 AND  
BEGINNING IN JANUARY,  
WILL START  
SEASON 5

#### Prayer/Contact Cards...

You will see blue Prayer/Contact cards in the pews. Please fill them out if you have a prayer request, a change in your contact information, would like to join the St. John family or to speak with the Pastor. Just place them in the offering plate.



**WREATHS**  
—across—  
**AMERICA**

**REMEMBER the Fallen...  
HONOR those who Serve...  
TEACH our children the value  
of Freedom.**

On **December 13, 2025 at 11:00 am**,  
Wreaths Across America  
will be at **Clay Township Cemetery**,  
**Harris-Elmore Cemetery and**  
**Union Cemetery in Oak Harbor, Ohio**  
and at **12 Noon at Elliston Cemetery** to  
remember and honor our veterans through  
the laying of Remembrance Wreaths on the  
graves of our country's fallen heroes and the  
act of saying the name of each and every  
veteran aloud.

Please join us and help lay these wreaths  
upon the hundred's of graves of our honored  
veterans. You may also sponsor wreaths with  
your financial donations at  
[www.wreathsacrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org)



## **The 9th Annual Williston Community Christmas Tree Lighting & Meal**

**Saturday, December 6th**

**Join us for Saturday worship at St. John at 5 PM  
and then follow us outside to the Christmas Tree  
(just east of the parsonage) where we will celebrate the season together!**

**Following the Christmas Tree lighting, we will join together for a  
Community Meal to be served in the St. John Church basement.  
We will also have games with prizes!**

**Please join the Evangelism Committee, your church family and your  
neighbors to celebrate the beginning of the Advent season.**

**Thrivent Choice Dollars will be donating the cost of the meal.**

**We will be collecting donations of paper products and personal items  
for Nightingale's Harvest.**

**They have a need for certain items such as liquid dish soap, liquid hand  
soap and toilet paper, but all items are greatly appreciated. A box will be  
placed by the elevator for all to donate at any time. Nightingale's Harvest  
provides a food pantry for families with cancer in Northwest Ohio.  
They are located at Our Savior Lutheran Church on Alexis Rd. in  
Toledo. They have received many of our blankets over the years.  
We have invited them to join us.**

# children's program



## ST. JOHN'S ANNUAL CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

WILL BE ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14TH  
DURING THE 9:45AM CHURCH SERVICE

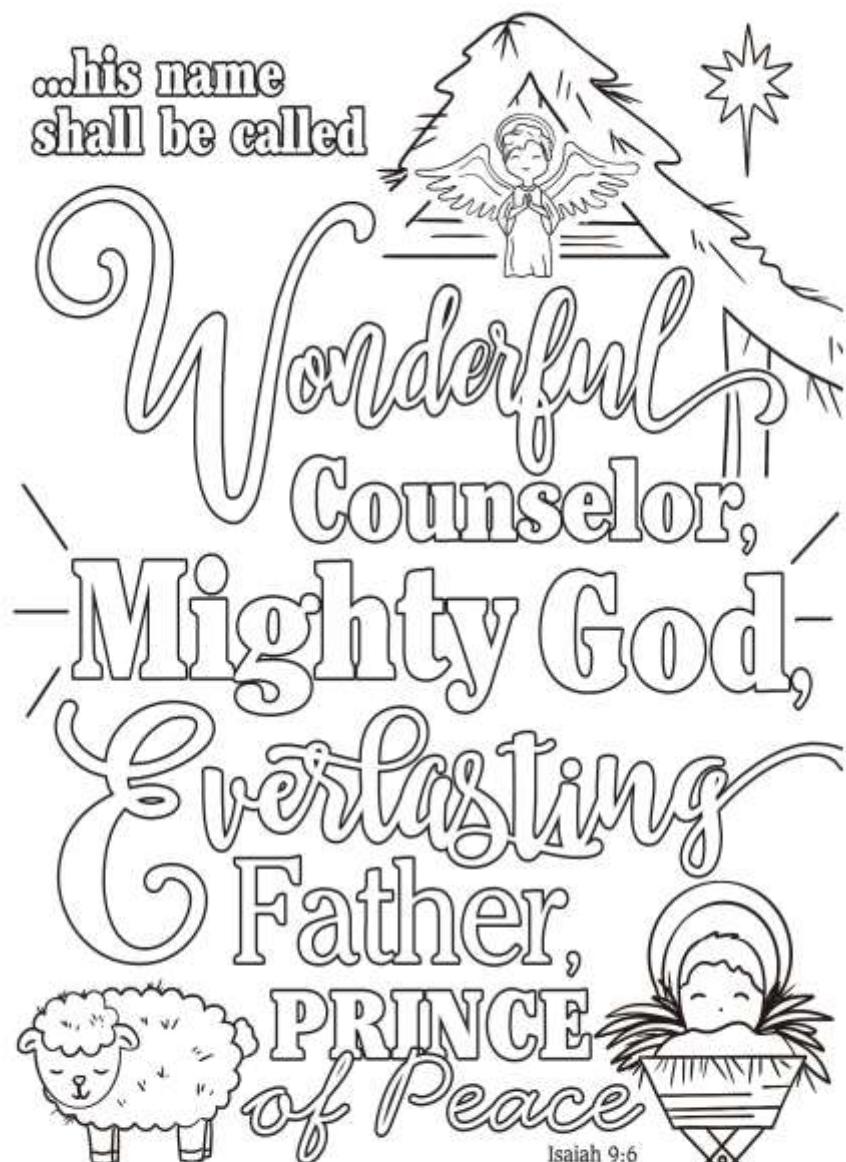
PLEASE CALL TAMMY MAZUR FOR INFORMATION.  
419-266-6491

Confirmation Class  
Every Sunday  
at 8:30a.m.



**We meet  
every Sunday  
from 9:00  
to 9:30 AM  
In the classrooms in the  
mail hallway.**

We enjoy bible stories,  
crafts! (Yes, parents,  
you are welcome, too!)



Isaiah 9:6





### **Worship Assistants are 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!

Please watch your email and the upcoming Forerunners for an updated list of worship assignments.

### **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!

### Are You N E W Here?

**Interested in becoming a member of the St. John congregation?**  
We're excited to welcome you! In **early 2026**, we'll be

hosting a **New Member Gathering**—a special opportunity to meet our church family, learn more about St. John, and discover ways to grow in faith and serve together.

Whether you're new to the area, exploring your faith, or seeking a spiritual home, you'll find a warm and inviting community here.

**More details to come!**

### **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 boxes 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, medicine or glass jars, please)

A special thank you to 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!



### **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!

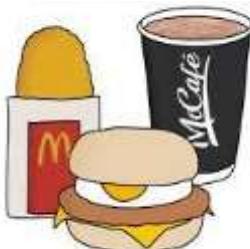
Any bed sheets (preferably queen size) are needed for quilt backings. Donations may be left in the box outside the church office. All are welcome to join us and the coffee is always on!

You only need to know how to tie a knot!



### **Join your St. John Family for Breakfast!**

We meet every Wednesday at 7:00 AM at McDonald's in Genoa. All are welcome to join us for a fun morning of fellowship, breakfast and conversation!





# WORSHIP with us CHRISTMAS EVE

St. John  Lutheran Church  
Williston, Ohio

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

Rev. Shawn O'Brien

[www.stjohnwilliston.org](http://www.stjohnwilliston.org)

FAMILY & FRIENDS ALL WELCOME

Christmas  
Eve  
at St. John  
Williston

3 Services!

4:00 PM-Christmas Eve  
Contemporary Worship  
Service

7:00 PM- Traditional  
Christmas Eve Worship  
Service filled with Carols  
& Candlelight and  
Kid's Bells!

11:00 PM- Christmas Eve  
Christ Mass with  
Candlelight

Watch our   
services on **YouTube**

St. John Lutheran Church  
Williston, OH



# December Stewardship



## Seven Ways to Embrace Generosity this Christmas!

**Christmas is a season of joy, reflection, and hope—a time to celebrate the gift of Jesus and the love He came to share.**

**It's also an opportunity to practice generosity, responding to His example by caring for those around us. Here are seven simple yet meaningful ways to make generosity a part of your Christmas this year:**

### 1. Give the gift of time

Christmas can be an isolating season for those who live alone. A simple visit, heartfelt phone call, or an afternoon spent over tea can make a world of difference. By giving your time, you remind others they are seen and loved—a powerful reflection of God's enduring presence.

**Idea:** Consider making this a regular habit, perhaps starting a friendship with someone who may need regular companionship.

### 2. Bless a ministry or charity

Many Christian organizations rely on donations to continue their work spreading the gospel, feeding the hungry, or supporting those in crisis. A financial gift during Christmas can help them finish the year strong and prepare for the ministry opportunities ahead.

**Prayer prompt:** Before giving, pray for the organization and the people they serve, asking God to multiply the impact of your gift.

### 3. Share a meal

Christmas meals are a wonderful opportunity to build relationships and extend hospitality. Invite a neighbor, an international student, or someone from your church who might otherwise spend the day alone. Sharing food is a timeless expression of love and fellowship, mirroring Jesus' ministry on earth.

**Inspiration:** Consider turning your invitation into a tradition that includes others every year.

### 4. Support a local Food Pantry

For many, Christmas can be a season of struggle rather than celebration. By donating non-perishable goods or volunteering at your nearest food pantry, you can help ensure that no one in your community goes hungry. Remember, your kindness reflects God's care for the most vulnerable among us.

**Tip:** Encourage your church small group or family to join

you. A collective effort can make an even greater impact!

### 5. Pray for others

Prayer is a profound act of generosity, lifting others before God in faith and love. Set aside time during Advent to intercede for your community, missionaries, and those facing hardship. Praying as a family can also help children understand the power of seeking God's help for others.

**Activity:** Create a prayer jar filled with the names of people or causes to pray for during each week of December.

### 6. Give thoughtfully

This year, let your gift-giving reflect the heart of Christ. Choose items that champion justice, compassion, and sustainability—fair trade products, handmade goods, or charitable gifts that empower communities. These thoughtful choices can also be a conversation starter, sharing the message of God's love with the recipient.

**Shop ethically:** Many Christian organizations and small businesses sell gifts with a purpose—look for options that align with your values.

### 7. Show everyday kindness

Generosity doesn't always need to involve grand gestures. Small acts of kindness can have a ripple effect, touching hearts and brightening lives. Pay for a stranger's coffee, write a note of encouragement, or help a neighbor with their Christmas decorations.

**Get Inspired:** Check out [www.randomactsofkindness.org](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org) and watch for the monthly generosity challenge that encourages small, daily acts of giving.

### Let generosity shine

As we celebrate Christmas, let's keep generosity at the heart of the season. Every act of kindness—big or small—reflects the love of Christ and reminds us of the hope He brought to the world. By giving thoughtfully and serving others, we can share His light in ways that make a lasting impact.



How will you choose to embrace generosity this Christmas?

Let's make this season one of love, hope, and giving that glorifies God and draws us closer to Him and each other.

# Bible Scavenger Hunt FOR ADVENT

Prepare for Christmas with this Bible-based Advent activity. Each day in December, look up the answer to one question.



**1** What will God's Son be called?  
(Isaiah 7:14)

**2** Where will Jesus reign?  
(Isaiah 9:7)

**3** Where will Jesus be born?  
(Micah 5:2)

**4** How many generations are between Abraham and the Christ?  
(Matthew 1:17)

**5** Who tells Mary she is having a baby?  
(Luke 1:26-31)

**6** Which relative of Mary is also having a baby?  
(Luke 1:41)

**7** What does Mary say that God has done for her?  
(Luke 1:49)

**8** Until his son John the Baptist is born, what can Zechariah not do?  
(Luke 1:20, 64)

**9** What does Jesus' name mean?  
(Matthew 1:21)

**10** Who issues the decree about a census?  
(Luke 2:1)

**11** From where do Joseph and Mary start their journey to Bethlehem?  
(Luke 2:4)

**12** What does Mary use to wrap up baby Jesus?  
(Luke 2:7)

**13** Who tells the shepherds the good news about Jesus' birth?  
(Luke 2:8-12)

**14** When the shepherds tell others about Jesus, how do people react?  
(Luke 2:8-12)

**15** Who is upset to hear about a newborn King?  
(Matthew 2:3)

**16** On what day is Jesus presented in the temple?  
(Luke 2:21)

**17** From what direction do the wise men (or Magi) come to worship Jesus?  
(Matthew 2:1-2)

**18** What free gift does God give us through Jesus, his Son?  
(1 John 5:11)

**19** What three gifts does Jesus receive from the wise men?  
(Matthew 2:11)

**20** Where do all our gifts come from?  
(James 1:17)

**21** When does Jesus' family return to Israel?  
(Matthew 2:19-21)

**22** In what district does Jesus grow up?  
(Matthew 2:22)

**23** How should we respond to our gifts?  
(2 Corinthians 9:15)

**24** Father of gifts 25 Give thanks to God!

**25** Answers: 1. Innkeeper 2. On David's throne 3. Bethlehem 4. A 2. 5. The angel Gabriel 6. Elizabeth 7. Great things 8. Sheekh 9. He will save his people from their sins 10. Caesar Augustus 11. Nazareth, in Galilee 12. Bethlehem 13. Emmanuel 14. From above, from the sky 15. They are amazed, or in wonder 16. The eighth 17. The east 18. God, the wise ones and myth 20. Egypt 21. After Herod dies 22. Galilee 23. Emmanuel 24. Shepherds 25. Angels 26. Give thanks to God!



# Northwestern Ohio Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Sent by the crucified and Risen Jesus together we:



EQUIP  
LEADERS

STRENGTHEN  
PARISHES



for the renewal of Northwestern Ohio & the world.

To meet our Bishop, find current events, learn about educational and ministry programs or other information about our Synod, visit [www.nwos-elca.org](http://www.nwos-elca.org)



*Daniel Becker*

A Year of Listening for December 2025– To hear the music associated with this tradition “Los Posadas,” visit <https://nwos-elca.church/listening>

## December 2025     *Las Posadas | Luke 2: 1-7*

Week 1

*“In the name of heaven, I beg you for lodging.”*

Many of us ‘are preparing’ by buying Christmas decorations, planning dinner menu, buying gifts. As you take a moment to think about how you prepare, consider this verse: Joseph and Mary have no place to stay during this season. Think about what is happening in the world, think about the homeless, think about the migrants who, for one reason or another, have had to leave their cities and are begging for shelter. Where do you see hope? Write a prayer for the vulnerable.

Week 2

*“This isn’t an inn, go on ahead. I can’t open, lest some scoundrels be here.”*

It’s very common for us to tend to classify or stigmatize people. We hear the narrative that ‘migrants are \_\_\_\_\_.’ Write down the narrative you have about migrants. Jesus invites us to offer help, to offer our arms, our words. What can you do? How can you build peace?

Week 3

*“I don’t care about the name, just let me sleep, for I tell you now, we will not open it.”*

List all the things that are worrying you right now. Now write three things that have made you laugh this week. Write the name of one person you are grateful to have in your life. Turn your worries into prayer. Where do you see joy in your life? When we feel grateful to God, we let go of our grumpy side and are more open to empathizing with those who are suffering. Are you familiar with AMMPARO? It’s the ELCA’s strategy to accompany migrants with protection, advocacy, representation, and opportunities, this is a chance to learn more and share your joy.

Week 4

*“Enter, holy pilgrims, receive this humble dwelling, for though it is poor, I give it to you from my heart!”*

Christmas is not just a date on the calendar; it’s a celebration of God’s tangible love, who takes on the most fragile human form: a vulnerable baby. This demonstrates that when you love, you make yourself vulnerable. God isn’t looking for a ‘perfect place.’ He’s looking for a heart willing to love. What does love mean to you? How do you show it to your family? How do you show it to your friends? How do you show it to strangers and foreigners?

### *“The Posadas”*

The posadas are celebrated daily for the nine days leading up to Christmas, from December 16th to 24th. Their origin dates back to 1587. The litany for asking for lodging is meant to remind people of the long pilgrimage—from Nazareth to Bethlehem—of the Virgin Mary and Joseph to register for one of the provincial censuses ordered by Emperor Caesar Augustus (63 BC–14 AD), which coincided with the birth of Jesus.

### The biblical text that inspired it is Luke 2:1-7

*“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.*

*“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>4</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>5</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>6</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”*

### Lyrics in Spanish and English

#### *Peregrinos / Pilgrims:*

En el nombre del cielo / In the name of heaven,  
os pido posada / I beg you for lodging,  
pues no puede andar / for my beloved wife  
mi esposa amada / can walk no further.

With ELCA Good Gifts,  
you can help fill  
“God’s Global Barnyard”  
with gifts that help grow the  
church, fight hunger and trans-  
form lives!

You may also let someone know  
that you are thinking of them by  
giving a gift in their honor.  
Simply visit  
<https://goodgifts.elca.org>  
and go shopping!





# Christmas Poinsettias

From:

In Memory or in Honor of:

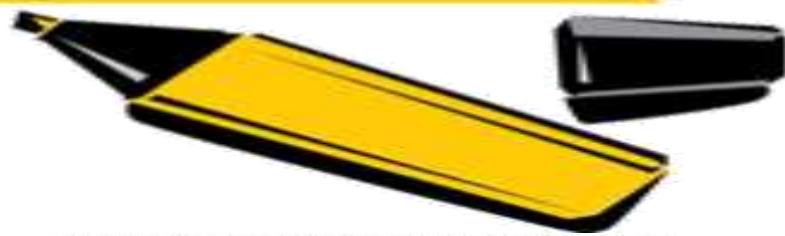
<b>VIRTUAL POINSETTIAS</b>	
Dave & Kris Lee	Dilly Schimming & Ray Lee, Sr.
Carol Vargo	Michelle Maix
Carol Vargo	Joe Vargo
Carol Vargo	Alice Witt
Mary Harmeyer	Loved Ones
Beth Johnson	Loved Ones
Doris Titgemeyer	Carol Titgemeyer
Doris Titgemeyer	Carl and Ella Kopfman
Jim Schimming	Dilly Schimming
Al & Traci Brown	Dilly Schimming
Ron & Diane Gerkensmeyer	Our Parents
Ron & Diane Gerkensmeyer	Our Sisters
Jon & Brenda Keeley	All our loved ones
Donna Mathews	Charles & Mary Mathews
<b>LIVE PLANTS</b>	
Dave & Kris Lee	Our Grandparents
Jerry & Beckie Goldstein	Megan Elizabeth & Arica Grace
Lenore Harmeyer	Richard Harmeyer
Darlene Carstensen & Family	Gary Carstensen & Parents Leonard and Mildred Carstensen
Darlene Carstensen & Family	Roy and Frieda Zunk
Dave & Jennie Hodulik	Loved Ones
Owen & Karolyn Jansen & family	Emerson & Marilyn Fondessy
Owen & Karolyn Jansen & family	Dean Fondessy
Linda Schlievert	Clarence & Helen Schlievert
Paul Beamer	Daniel Beamer
Paul Beamer	Helen Schlievert
Carole Beamer	Dan Beamer
Bob & Diane Kapp	Wade & Audrey Wolf
Bob & Diane Kapp	Dick Armstrong
Bob & Diane Kapp	Earl, Arnold & Grace Johnson
Bob & Diane Kapp	Robert Kapp
Rick & Lori Buhrow	Richard Buhrow
Chuck & Jeri Permar	John, Norma & Joe Rensch
Chuck & Jeri Permar	Robert Permar

From:	In Memory or in Honor of:
Fred & Melissa Lammers	Jane & Norman Lammers
Fred & Melissa Lammers	David Lammers
Tracy, Ashley, Makenna, Rylie & Hudson Carr	Ken Wolf
Lee & Debbie Wehner	Our Parents
Lee & Debbie Wehner	Our Parents
JoElaine Schimming & Family	Kenneth Schimming
Jack & Jill Mathews	Charles & Mary Mathews
Jack & Jill Mathews	Larry & Kate Hohenbrink
Carolyn Lasseter & Marilyn Sandrock	Emory Lasseter
Carolyn Lasseter & Marilyn Sandrock	Ralph & Edna Sandrock
Carolyn Lasseter & Marilyn Sandrock	Frederick & Karen Sandrock
Carolyn Lasseter & Marilyn Sandrock	Rob & Clara Lasseter
Carolyn Lasseter & Marilyn Sandrock	Jennifer Johnson
Larry & Nancy Strohscher	Loved Ones
Jan Sheahan	Jim Sheahan
Jan Sheahan	John Farkas
Jan Sheahan	Irene Farkas
Jan Sheahan	Jayne Traver
Jane Phillips	Loved Ones
Judy Yockey	Allen Yockey
Margaret Berger	Don Berger
Margaret Berger	Tim Berger
Tom H. Sigler	C. Thomas Siglar
Tom H. Sigler	June & Harold Siglar
Bernie Blausey	Loved Ones
Bernie Blausey	Marjorie Blausey
Dennis & Dianne Carstensen	our parents Leonard & Mildren Carstensen and Otis & Eleanor Goulet
Kent Delventhal & Evie Zimmerman	Patricia Delventhal
LisaAnne Gregg	Son, Bob Begell
Name	In Celebration Of
Jerry & Beckie Goldstein	Our Children and Grandchildren
Dave & Vicki Huber	Emily, Lainey, Hadley & Colton
Bob & Diane Kapp	Our Grandkids
Carolyn Lasseter & Marilyn Sandrock	Carol Vargo

Thank you for sharing your Christmas flowers with the congregation. Please pick up your plants following the Christmas Eve Services.



# Council HIGHLIGHTS



## 11-20-2025 Church Council Highlights

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

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

**Devotions** – Pastor O'Brien shared Psalm 46

**Council Meeting Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes as corrected from 10/18/2025 was from Deanna Neuman and Cheryl Berger 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. Motion passed.

**Pastor's Report: Worship Attendance:** In Person average for October 2025-115.0 compared to October 2024-111.5. Online average for October 2025- 75.8 compared to October 2024-79.8.

**Numbers:** 28 hospital/home-bound visits/individual or family meeting-2 committee/group meetings-8 community/youth/fellowship events-7 professional/clergy activities-1 baptism-1 wedding-1 funeral-  
**Baptism**-I presided at the baptism of Izleigh Angelica Velasquez, daughter of Michael Velasquez and Mirandon Goldstein on October 5. **Wedding**-I presided at the wedding of Josh Buhrow and Tori Holmes on October 4. **Funeral**-I presided at the funeral of Rosemary Brimm on October 29.

**Community Thanksgiving Worship**-St. John will again host the Community Thanksgiving Worship Service, Sunday, November 23 at 5:00 p.m. followed by a community meal. We are still in need of an acolyte. We also need volunteers to help clean up following the meal.

**Advent Study**-We will be reading *A Child Is Born: A Beginner's Guide to Nativity Stories* by Amy-Jill Levine. The book is \$16.00 on Amazon, \$9.99 on Kindle. I will make space for discussion in our St. John Facebook Group, and I am also interested in getting together in person if there are people who are interested. Take a look at the book, maybe read the first chapter, and let me know what sort of gathering you would be interested in.

**Reverse Advent Calendar and Christmas Offering**-Pick up a box/calendar for our Reverse Advent Calendar (we will be counting the days to Christmas by putting items IN instead of taking something out). With our donation of personal needs items and our Christmas offering, we will be supporting Luther Home of Mercy's Advent Center and the LIGHT Neighborhood Pantry at Elliston Zion.

**Adult Luther League**-Our next Adult Luther League event will be December 14; we will carpool to the Rosary Cathedral for their "Christmas Carol Sing", and after the concert we will have dinner together at Tony Packo's. There is a signup sheet and more information next to my office door.

**Christmas Eve Offering**-Where the Christmas Eve Offering should go this year was discussed. Pastor made a motion to have the Christmas Eve Offering to be split between the Blessing Box needs, Zion Elliston Light Neighborhood Food Pantry and the Luther Home of Mercy's Advent Center. Cheryl Berger 2<sup>nd</sup> and the motion passed.

**Committee Year-End Reports**-Committee year-end reports are due to the church office by Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Adventure Scout Crew**-We now sponsor an Adventure Scout Crew here at St. John. . This Scout Crew is for ages 14-20.

**Financial Secretary, Treasurer & Finance Committee Report**: Income: We are at 88% of our monthly budget and 99% of our year-to-date budget. Expenses: We are at 102% of the monthly budget and 101% of the year-to-date budget. We have collected \$6150 from the Parsonage Rental House. Budget breakdowns for the committees were distributed. We had discussion about the 2026 Proposed Budget

**Christian Community Life**: Bauman Car Raffle drawing was held on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Name to be announced next month. We had plenty of volunteers signed up for both the pre-packing day on Thursday, 10/16 and the serving at the Food Pantry on Saturday, 10/18. On Thursday during the pre-packing, a trailer of food was delivered at that time. So, in addition to our pre-packing jobs, we also unloaded a trailer full of food into the food pantry. Thanks to everyone who helped on both days. Your help was greatly appreciated. We wrapped 80 pairs of PJ's for the Holiday Bureau. We continue to collect both PJ's and books for the Holiday Bureau for this year. We are signing Christmas Cards to be given to the residents at the Genoa Care Center.

A Welcome Gathering for new members and the members of Calvary joining our church is being discussed

## Council Highlights-Continued

**Evangelism:** Red Cross Blood Drive for November was cancelled due to a scheduling conflict. Plans for the 2026 Blood Drive dates are being finalized. We are coordinating with Elliston Zion Church to host the blood drives with them alternating locations. The menu for the Christmas Tree Lighting will be BBQ beef or pork, chicken sandwiches, mac & cheese, salad and brownies. We will have church service, then dinner, then the tree lighting. Please bring a paper product or a personal needs item to donate to Nightingale's Harvest.

The tree is decorated, and the lights have been put on for the Tree Lighting on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Parish Education:** Please note that the Children's Christmas Program is on Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, during the 9:45 a.m. service.

**Stewardship:** No report

**Worship Life:** Thanksgiving service will be at 5:00 p.m. with the meal at 6:00p.m. on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Sign up for dinner, bringing desserts and cleanup is posted. It was suggested that clean-up assignment duties needed would be a good idea to be listed. Beckie gave a report that the children's bells, Carillion Bells and the choir will sing for Thanksgiving service and, at the 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service. The 11 p.m., Christmas Eve service will have choir but not sure about the bells yet. Choir will be doing songs for Advent candle lighting. All are welcome to join the bell or choir practices after Sunday services. We would like to advertise both 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. Christmas Eve services as being Candlelight Services. Traci Brown is going to be doing the decorating for Christmas after we have Thanksgiving service. Thank you, Traci! Poinsettias will be delivered early this year on Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>. We will be discussing a watering schedule at our next meeting to keep the flowers fresh. They will be stored in the catechism room. It was discussed about placing the poinsettias in the Music Room on tables instead, to keep the tables available for the bell choir cases.

**Property:** Put the snow blade on the lawn mower. Put light switch in the west boiler room. Dimech came out and cleaned all three boilers as part of the service agreement. An Eagle Scout here at St. John is painting the Nativity Set. Had the one tree cut down and other trees trimmed. Tree stumps will be ground up later. Sprayed mold remover on the sandstone brick around the church. Thanks to Gary Johnson

for helping with the east boiler. Also, for fixing the dripping faucet in the upstairs women's bathroom and for cleaning the ductwork for heat under the east steps.

**Old Business:** The Church Rental Agreement is still being revised and updated to allow for the new key code system to be addressed. The Nominating Committee is still looking for 2 Financial people for that committee

**New Business:** Sophia, a St. John Eagle Scout, has painted the Nativity Set for her Eagle Scout Project. Sophia received the paint donated by Sherwin Williams, Pizza for her work crew was donated by Marco's Pizza. She has added reinforcement pieces to the backs. She is hoping to put additional lights on the pieces for more visibility. She also coated the pieces with an exterior polyurethane for better preservation of the wood and paint. Sophia will be putting a plaque on the back of one of the pieces with a list of sponsors of her Eagle Scout Project. This project will be completed for this year's Advent and Christmas season.

January Church Dates: Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>- Committee Night - 7 p.m.; Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>-Budget Review - 11:00 a.m.; Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> Church Council - 7 p.m.; Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>- Annual Meeting - 11:00 a.m.; Jan 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Installation of Officers and Board Member- at both services.

We now sponsor a Venture Scout Crew here at St. John. This Scout Crew is for ages 14-20. Venturing is a youth-led program that provides activities that develop essential skills like leadership, event-planning, organization, communication and responsibility with your friends while having fun. If interested in signing up, contact the office or Diana Lambert.

Jennifer Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Robin Perkins. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Diana Lambert, Council Secretary





Saturdays 5:00pm	Sundays 9:45 am
<b>Ushers</b>	<b>Ushers</b>
6-Jack Mathews	7-The Titgemeyer's
13-Buhrow Family	14-Diana Lambert
20-Donnelly Family	21- Jim Vogelbacher
27-Ron Gerkensmeyer	28-The Titgemeyer's
<b>Lectors</b>	<b>Lectors</b>
6- Beverly Harder	7-Tim Titgemeyer
13-Tracy Orians	14-Jerry Goldstein
20-Amy Schloegl	21-Kellie Ulrich
27-Jonah Danhoff	28-Melissa Lammers
<b>Acolytes</b>	<b>Acolytes</b>
6-Pierce	7-Makenna
13-Nolan D.	14-Rylie
20-Trenton	21-Rylan
27-Jonah	28-Ellie
<b>Communion</b>	<b>Communion</b>
6-Ron Gerkensmeyer	7-Margaret Berger
13- Carol Vargo	14-Dave Neuman
20-JoElaine Schimming	21-Cebie Titgemeyer
27- Al & Traci Brown	28-Diana Pfaff

We will need worship assistants for all three Christmas Eve Worship Services! Please sign up on the list next to the Pastor's Office to serve this Christmas Eve!

Saturdays 5:00pm	Sundays 9:45 am
<b>Ushers</b>	<b>Ushers</b>
3- Jack Mathews	4-Jill Kao
10-Buhrow Family	11-Jim Vogelbacher
17-Ron Gerkensmeyer	18-The Titgemeyers
24-Donnelly Family	25-Diana Lambert
31-Jack Mathews	
<b>Lectors</b>	<b>Lectors</b>
3-Beverly Harder	4-Jerry Goldstein
10-Sandra Toth	11-Kellie Ulrich
17-Amy Schloegl	18-Tim Titgemeyer
24-Jonah D.	25-Melissa Lammers
31-Nancy Strohscher	
<b>Acolytes</b>	<b>Acolytes</b>
3- Liam D.	4-Mila
10-Pierce	11-Makenna
17-Jonah D.	18-Rylan
24-Nolan D.	25-Lauren
31-Trenton	
<b>Communion</b>	<b>Communion</b>
3- Nancy Strohscher	4-Roland Sandrock
10- Carol Vargo	11-Margaret Berger
17-Ron Gerkensmeyer	18-Cebie Titgemeyer
24- JoElaine Schimming	25-Robin Perkins
31-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.*



# december 2025 at St. John

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice	1 6:00pm -8:00pm Cub Scouts Committee Meeting (B)	2 Womem's Circles Esther Circle 2 pm Rebekah Circle 7 PM (Lounge) 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets 7:30pm -9:30pm Dartball at St. John Rocky Ridge	3 Join Us for Breakfast 7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds Ringing the Bell at Miller's	4	5 Office closed	6  Advent Brunch at Rocky Ridge St John 9:30 AM Community Christmas Tree Lighting and Meal 5:00pm Contemporary Worship
7 Hodnett/Wallace Baptism 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice	8	9 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets 7:30pm -9:30pm Dartball at Our Lady of Mount Carmel	10 Join Us for Breakfast 7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds	11  Committee Night 7 PM	12 Office closed	13 5:00pm Contemporary Worship
14  Children's Christmas Program (9:45 worship) 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice	15 NEWSLETTER Deadline	16 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets 7:30pm -9:30pm Dartball-HOME	17 Join Us for Breakfast 7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds	18  Council Meeting 7 PM	19 Office closed	20 Mathews- SH Rental 10-3 5:00pm Contemporary Worship
21 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice	22 Deadline for bills and reimbursements for 2025	23 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets	24  Christmas Eve Services at 4/7/11 PM	25 	26 Office closed	27 Last weekend for 2025 Offering Envelopes 5:00pm Contemporary Worship
28 Last weekend for 2025 Offering Envelopes 8:30am -9:30am Confirmation Class 9:00am -9:30am Sunday School 11:00am -12:00pm Choir practice	29 ANNUAL Committee REPORTS Due today! CCCCCCCCCCCC	30 9:00am -12:00pm Blankets	31 Join Us for Breakfast 7:00am Breakfast Gathering at GENOA McDonalds	1 6:00pm -8:00pm Cub Scouts Committee Meeting (B)	2 Office closed	3 5:00pm Contemporary Worship

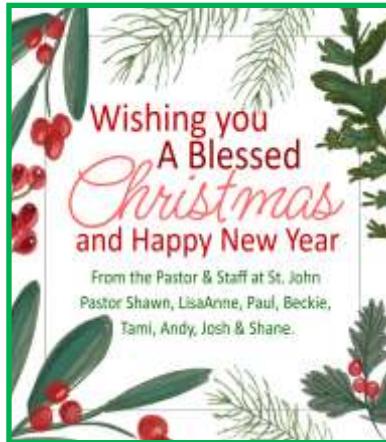
Luther League  
Trip to Carol Sing  
Sunday 2 PM

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

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December 2025



**In person and online on YouTube**  
**Fall/Winter Worship Hours at St. John**  
Saturday- Contemporary Worship 5:00 PM  
Adult Sunday School- 8:30 AM  
Confirmation Class- Sunday 8:30 AM  
Sunday School- Every Sunday 9-9:30 am  
Ages 3 thru 5th grade  
Sunday- Traditional Worship 9:45 AM



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

E-mail address:  
[pastorobrien@stjohnwilliston.org](mailto:pastorobrien@stjohnwilliston.org)

Church Office  
LisaAnne Gregg  
Office Administrator  
M-T-W  
(Thurs. hours vary-church office  
closed on Fridays)  
9:00am-3:00pm

Church: 419-836-5514  
E-mail address:  
[office@stjohnwilliston.org](mailto:office@stjohnwilliston.org)

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