

JANUARY 4



ST JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH

THE WEEKLY UPDATE

2026

Welcome to St. John Lutheran Church! **Today is the Second Sunday of Christmas.** We are delighted to have you worship with us. If you'd like to connect with us, share a prayer request, or learn more about St. John, please complete a yellow communication card located on the back of the pews and place it in the offering plate.

PRAYER REQUESTS

When we pray for each other, we demonstrate Christ's love for each of us

For **Darin Pigg**, friend of Bonnie Butterbaugh, diagnosed with a serious illness

For **Alan Ott**, grandson of Michele (Mike) Moore, diagnosed with a tumor at the base of the brain

For **Peggy Smith** and family, as they mourn the loss of Lee Smith

For **Karma Wisecarver**, daughter of Lee & Peggy Smith, having a difficult time as she continues through her cancer journey

For **Brian Fowler**, as he slowly recovers from West Nile Virus

Continued prayers for **Jim Fogle, Jon & Linda Leist, Bill Meyer, Freda Rutter, Linda Miller, and Shirley & Larry West**

If you have a prayer request, please reach out to Sue Mason, who will email our church members. She can be reached at: 614-260-1107 or at susiemase3@hotmail.com.



Scripture for today, Jan 4:

Jeremiah 31:7-14, Psalm 147:12-20,
Ephesians 1:3-14, John 1:10-18

Dear St. John Family,

Thank you so much for the generous remembrance at Christmas - you hit all my favorites with the gift cards. More importantly, thank you for the warm welcome into our church family. I am so blessed to serve Christ with you.

May the love of Christ fill your hearts and homes as we welcome in 2026. May our hearts be open and our hands ready to do His work as He reveals it to us.

Peace,

Amy

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



| | |
|---------------|------------|
| Alan Fisher | January 13 |
| Neva Hornbeck | January 15 |
| Judy Kellett | January 26 |

2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR



THE INSIDE STORY BY SALLY ACTON



Today’s Gathering Song, “Angels, From the Realms of Glory”, is a beloved Christmas carol with roots in an 1816 poem by James Montgomery. The hymn emphasizes the universal call to worship, uniting shepherds, kings, and all humanity, breaking down social barriers to celebrate Jesus’ birth. The carol’s message of universal joy and invitation, coupled with its powerful lyrics and memorable tune, has made it a staple of Christmas celebrations worldwide.

HELP NEEDED THIS SATURDAY: In order to prepare for the upcoming Epiphany season, we will be taking down the Christmas decorations in the church this Saturday, January 10th, at 10:00 am. If you are able, it would be appreciated if you could please come to help. The more people helping...the less time it will take!

Guys & Gals Lunch Bunch will dine at the Olive Garden in Lancaster on **Tuesday, January 13, 2026, 2093 Schorway Dr NW, Lancaster.** Please RSVP to Charlotte Meyer, if possible.



The **Altar Flower** chart is in the Narthex where you may sign up to place flowers on the altar. Flowers are \$35. You may leave the money in the envelope under the chart for Linda Leist. Please be sure to indicate if the flowers are for a special occasion, and let Don Hornbeck know if you would like it posted in the Bulletin.

We all know times have been tough lately, and our local food pantry is seeing more families in need. If you are able, please place your food donation for the **Food Pantry** in the shopping cart. For the **Embassy of Winchester** nursing home, please place your donated items in the collection box located in the Narthex. Every contribution, no matter how small, makes a difference. Together we can help ensure no one goes hungry.



As we step into a new year, we are given a quiet but powerful gift: the chance to begin again. The turning of the calendar reminds us that God’s mercies are new every morning, and that no matter what the past year held—joys or struggles—we are not defined by what is behind us. A new year invites us to pause, give thanks, and listen for where God may be gently leading us next.

This season also brings opportunity. Opportunity to deepen our faith, to care for one another more intentionally, and to serve our community with renewed purpose. We may not know what the year ahead will bring, but we do know who walks with us through it. With hope as our compass and love as our guide, may we step forward together, trusting that God is already at work in the days to come.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)



Lord, we ask that you’d help us to see your blessing in every moment this new year. But more importantly, help us to desire you more than anything you could ever do for us. Help us to keep Jesus in our mind and on our hearts – your love is the biggest blessing we could ever receive. Amen

| 2025 YTD Offerings Summary | |
|---|------------|
| Offerings through: | 12/31/2025 |
| Budget (yearly) | 56,750.00 |
| Budget YTD | 57,841.35 |
| Offerings - Received | 69,866.67 |
| YTD Over(+)/Under(-) | 12,025.32 |
| (Includes prepaid offerings from a member's \$3k RMD) | |

| 2025 Average Attendance Information |
|-------------------------------------|
| Q1= 33, Q2= 36, Q3= 35, Q4= 33 |

| |
|---|
| Thank you for your contributions to <u>pay-off</u> our loan for the new sanctuary ceiling |
| We paid off our 60 month loan in 41 months !!!!! |

Worship Leader

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Today | Amy Lytle, Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) |
| 1/11/2026 | Amy Lytle, Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) |
| 1/18/2026 | Jon Leist |
| 1/25/2026 | Jon Leist |

Happenings

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1/10/2026 | <u>Un-decorate the church</u> this Saturday at 10m |
| 1/14/2026 | <u>Amy's Foot surgery</u> - Pray for a successful outcome |
| 1/18/2026 | <u>Council Meeting</u> immediately after church (With <u>NEW</u> members) |

Opportunities to Serve

Contact Don Hornbeck with information for our weekly Sunday bulletins.

Sunday School & Bible Study

Adults - Sunday mornings 9am-10am upstairs in the Parish Hall

Children - During the church service in the Parish Hall youth room (Jonette Christy)

Weekly Average Attendance by month for 2021 through 2025

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Avg |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2021 | 0 | 15 | 22 | 34 | 29 | 26 | 30 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 30 | 20 | 24 |
| 2022 | 14 | 21 | 26 | 48 | 40 | 32 | 31 | 30 | 38 | 32 | 29 | 34 | 31 |
| 2023 | 24 | 31 | 29 | 35 | 38 | 33 | 33 | 30 | 35 | 26 | 29 | 29 | 31 |
| 2024 | 17 | 23 | 30 | 25 | 46 | 46 | 45 | 39 | 34 | 29 | 30 | 36 | 33 |
| 2025 | 36 | 28 | 37 | 38 | 35 | 36 | 33 | 37 | 31 | 33 | 31 | 35 | 34 |
| Yr-Yr Chg | 19 | 5 | 7 | 13 | -11 | -10 | -12 | -2 | -3 | 4 | 1 | -1 | |

Amy Lytle's email address: amyblytle@gmail.com
 Amy Lytle's cell phone: 614-208-3719
 Council President contacts: 614-286-6175 / alfisher@aol.com
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 St John's mailing address: 133 West South Street, PO Box 206 / Lithopolis, Ohio 43136
 St John's facebook page: https://facebook.com/StJohnLithopolis

Sunday, January 4, 2026

Second Sunday of Christmas: The Epiphany of Our Lord
ELW Holy Communion Setting Ten

GATHERING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

MUSICAL PRELUDE

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (ELW p. 94)

In the name of the Father,
and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are

forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.
Amen.

GATHERING SONG (ELW 275)
Angels, from the Realms of Glory

1 Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Once you sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn king.

2 Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant light.
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn king.

3 Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations,
You have seen his natal star.
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn king.

4 All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To the eternal Three in One.
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn king.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

KYRIE (ELW p. 203)

**Have mercy on us, Lord, and hear our solemn prayer.
We come to hear your living word; it saves us from despair.
Have mercy on us, Christ, and wash away our sin.
Pour out your grace and make us whole
that new life may begin.
Have mercy on us, Lord, make sin and shame depart.
Renew us with your saving pow'r; create in us new hearts!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

**Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of
your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect
your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior
and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.**

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:7-14

God promises to bring Israel back to its land from the most remote parts of exile. In Zion Israel will rejoice over God's gift of food and livestock. Young women will express their joy in dancing; God will give gladness instead of sorrow.

A reading from Jeremiah.

⁷ Thus says the LORD:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel."

⁸ See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor together;
a great company, they shall return here.

⁹ With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back;
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path where they shall not stumble,
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him
and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock."

¹¹ For the LORD has ransomed Jacob
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

¹² They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.

¹³ Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy;
I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

¹⁴ I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 147:12-20

¹² Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem;
praise your God, O Zion,

¹³ **who has strengthened the bars of your gates
and has blessed your children within you.**

¹⁴ God has established peace on your borders
and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

¹⁵ **God sends out a command to the earth,
a word that runs very swiftly.**

¹⁶ God gives snow like wool,
scattering frost like ashes.

¹⁷ **God scatters hail like bread crumbs.
Who can stand against God's cold?**

¹⁸ The LORD sends forth the word and melts them;
the wind blows, and the waters flow.

¹⁹ **God declares the word to Jacob,
statutes and judgments to Israel.**

²⁰ The LORD has not done so to any other nation;
they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:3-14

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

A reading from Ephesians.

¹³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the

foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (ELW p. 205)

Alleluia! Lord and Savior: open now your saving word.

Let it burn like fire within us;

speak until our hearts are stirred.

Alleluia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

GOSPEL: John 1:[1-9] 10-18

John begins his gospel with this prologue: a hymn to the Word through whom all things were created. This Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the world.

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON: NO, BECAUSE...

HYMN OF THE DAY *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* (ELW 276)

1 Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!

2 Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
Praises voicing, greet the morrow:

Christ the child was born for you!
Christ the child was born for you!

APOSTLES' CREED

Let us confess our Christian faith using the words of the Apostles' Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

MINISTER: O God, you reveal yourself wherever two or three are gathered in your name. Be with us now, not only in the infant Jesus and resurrected Christ, but in the beloved people of this assembly. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

READER 1: You reveal yourself in the waters of the womb; in brooks, ponds, and oceans; and in the waters of baptism. Grant us wisdom to tenderly care for the earth as a garden watered by your grace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

READER 2: You reveal yourself in blessed diversity. Help us to look for you in people near and far, in bodies of all kinds, and in kindred young and old. Let us seek you in many places, praising you in many tongues. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

READER 3: You reveal yourself in new life. Support those beginning a new job, a new relationship, or a new living situation, especially those displaced because of tragedy or loss. Be with all others who need your life-giving touch this day, especially Darin Pigg Alan Ott, and all those we name in our hearts.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

READER 4: You reveal yourself in holy communion. Sustain all who provide food and fellowship in this congregation and in the wider community. Make our tables signs of your welcoming presence among us. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

READER 5: You promise to turn mourning into joy and to comfort those who weep. We remember those who have died and look to being united with them in your glory. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

MINISTER: With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

Let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

WE PREPARE FOR COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,
that, beholding the God made visible,
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (ELW p. 207)

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

COMMUNION SONG (ELW p. 208)

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
You suffered death our lives to save:
Have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
You set us free from guilt and grave:
Have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
Eternal peace with God you made:
Give us your peace, we pray.**

**SONG AFTER COMMUNION *Taste and See (Moore)*
(ELW 493)**

Taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord.
Oh, taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.

1 I will bless the Lord at all times.
Praise shall always be on my lips;
My soul shall glory in the Lord;
For God has been so good to me.

Taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord.
Oh, taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.

2 Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us all praise God's name.
I called the Lord, who answered me;
From all my troubles I was set free.

Taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord.
Oh, taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.

3 Worship the Lord, all you people.
You'll want for nothing if you ask.
Taste and see that the Lord is good;
In God we need put all our trust.

Taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord.
Oh, taste and see, taste and see
The goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray together.

Radiant God, with our eyes we have seen your salvation, and in this meal we have feasted on your grace. May your Word take flesh in us, that we may be your holy people, revealing your glory made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
May the Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ grant you peace.
Amen.

SENDING SONG *Let All Together Praise Our God* (ELW 287)

1 Let all together praise our God
Before the highest throne;
Today God opens heav'n again
And sends the only Son, and sends the only Son.

2 From God's right hand the Son descends,
Is born an infant small,
and lies in poverty, his bed
A manger in a stall, a manger in a stall.

3 O tender Child, you veil in flesh
The splendor of your might;
A servant's garb now wraps the one
Who clothed the sky with light, who clothed the sky with light.

4 Your mother feeds you tenderly,
Sings you a lullaby,
While angels, hailing David's heir,
Your glory magnify, your glory magnify.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

Let us sing together:

**God be with you 'til we meet again,
By his counsels guide, uphold you,
With his sheep securely fold you,
God be with you 'til we meet again.
Amen.**

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