St. John's Lutheran Church
of Highland
311 Cumberland Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Information as of
DECEMBER 2024

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"Making Christ Known"
Volume 5, Number 11

Email - sjlutheran@verizon.net
phone - 412-364-1606

Saturday Worship:
5:30 p.m.

Sunday Morning Worship:
8:15 a.m. - *Traditional with Livestream*

Christian Education
9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

10:45 a.m. - *Contemporary with Livestream*

www.stjohnslutheranchurch.com

Pastor Kari Smail
Pastor Beth Clementson

DECEMBER 2024

ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HIGHLAND

Through God All Things Are Possible

"Making Christ Known"

DECEMBER 2024 EDITION

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THANK YOU

Current Church Council Members

PRESIDENT - CHRISTIAN ED.	STEVE GOTTSCHALK
VICE PRESIDENT - CEMETERY	SAM SESTI
TREASURER - FINANCE	JESSICA GAMACHÉ
SECRETARY - EVANGELISM	WENDY WEST HICKEY
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ASSOCIATE PASTOR	PASTOR CLEMENTSON
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YOUTH MINISTRY	JAY CAULKINS
STEWARDSHIP	MARCIE EMORY
SOCIAL MINISTRY	TONY GOOD
WORSHIP & MUSIC	MARSHA LOGAN
PRESCHOOL	JODY REMOVCHIK
FELLOWSHIP	SANDY ALLEN
EVANGELISM	LLOYD WHITE

St. John's Current Staff

SENIOR PASTOR	KARI SMAIL
ASSOCIATE PASTOR	BETH CLEMENTSON
DIR. OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC	RON BALING
ORGANIST & DIR. OF CHOIRS	JOSEPH TUTTLE
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR	MARY LYNNE MARTIN
OFFICE ASSISTANT	ANDREA MILLER
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE CLERK	RICH VOLPE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	LAURA COOMBS
DIR. OF ST. JOHN'S PRESCHOOL	JENNIFER BOLINDA
YOUTH MINISTRY COORDINATOR	LINDA MEYERDIERKS
BUILDING USAGE COORDINATOR	MIKE SHELEHEDA
CUSTODIAN	GEORGE TUNNEY

St. John's Lutheran Church
"Making Christ Known"

Current Information as of Decmeber 2024
Vol. 5 Issue 11

Note from Pastor Beth

Dear Siblings in Christ,

I don't know about you, but to me it feels like time is flying by! We're deep into the holiday seasons, and it is our tendency to want to jump to the main event – Christmas! However, when we do so, we miss out on one of the most beautiful seasons of the church year – Advent. The season of Advent is all about preparing, waiting, and watching in hope and anticipation. Most of us love Christmas carols (some even love them so much they started listening to them before Halloween!), but forget that there are a ton of wonderful Advent hymns out there too. And all of those hymns focus on the hope and anticipation of the coming Christ child.

There's one hymn that stands out to me is called "He Came Down" (it's hymn #253 in our hymnal). Here's what it has to say about Jesus: "He came down that we may have love, light, peace, and joy. Hallelujah forevermore!" Another hymn, "All Earth is Hopeful" (ELW #266), expresses how hopeful the world is that Jesus is arriving, and that with his presence God's truth and justice will set everyone free. Did you know that "Joy to the World" is an Advent hymn?? This familiar song tells us that we should rejoice and be joyful for Christ's arrival!

Advent is important because it reminds us that Christ's arrival and presence matters. We're reminded to let Christ's love and hope fill us as we make our preparations. It reminds us not to lose sight of why we're celebrating in the first place. It gives us a moment to slow down in one of the busiest seasons of the year to live into the excitement and anticipation of the arrival of Christ's saving presence and peace.

Let's not rush to Christmas yet, dear friends! Enjoy the Advent season. Look for Christ's approaching light with joy and love. And share that love and light with all whom you encounter in this busy season – the world needs so much more of it and we are well equipped to take on that task!

Peace,

Pastor Beth

Worship Opportunities

Saturdays
5:30p.m. ~ Traditional Service

Sundays
8:15a.m. ~ Traditional service
9:30a.m. ~ Christian Education
10:45a.m. ~ Contemporary service
All Sunday services are now Livestreamed
www.stjohnslutheranchurch.com

~Communion~
We offer a hybrid style of receiving our Lord's Supper. Those attending services in person may choose to come up to the Altar to receive bread and wine, or remain in their seat and participate with our current no touch method. For those who are more comfortable still worshiping at home, consecrated cups are available for pickup in the vestibule at the main entrance of the church office area 9a.m. Friday – Sunday morning to be used while participating with the Sunday Livestream worship.

Make Some Music with our Choirs!

Bells meet Thursdays in the Sanctuary from 6:15-7:15p.m.
(*still welcoming new ringers*)

Chancel Choir meets Thursdays in Highland Hall 7:30-8:30p.m.
All voices welcome!

Youth Choir
gathers on Sundays in Fellowship Hall 10:30-10:45
(*directly after Sunday School*)
Youth Age 5 through grade 8
~ are welcome any time ~

Preparing for Jesus' Birth

DURING THIS ADVENT SEASON, we will gather in Highland Hall on Wednesday evenings for supper at **6:00pm**, followed by a bible study entitled

"An Unlikely Advent: Extraordinary People of the Christmas Story"

by Rachel Billups at **6:45pm**, and concluding with worship at **7:30pm**.

Our first gathering will be on **December 4th**
and will continue on **December 11th**
and **December 18th**.

We hope you can join us!

Plan a Visit to Bethlehem This Year

December 7, 8, 14 and 15th
from **1:00** to **4:00**p.m.

Explore the true meaning of Christmas this holiday season. Come to St. John's this December to walk through the streets of this ancient village and experience the holiest of nights with the people who live there.

And NEW this year…

Candlelight Processional Concert, Friday, December 6th
following our Advent Dinner.

After the concert, those in attendance will be the first to visit Bethlehem.

Dinner will begin at **5:45 pm**, followed by the **choral and orchestra concert** at **7:00 pm**.

A small number of concert tickets are available for those not attending the Advent Dinner and can be obtained after church services or by contacting **bryansworld8@gmail.com**.

Our Altar Guild will be decorating the church with poinsettias for Christmas. Please consider sponsoring one or more plants to honor or memorialize loved ones. The requested donation amount is **$20** per potted plant. We will list the memorials and honorariums in our Christmas Eve service bulletins. You may take your sponsored plant home following our Lessons and Carols service on Sunday, December 29th at 9:30am.

Please return this completed slip to the church office **by Monday, Dec. 16th**

Your Name: _____

In Loving Memory of: _____

_____

In Honor of: _____

_____

Amount Enclosed: $ _____

THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND, WE WILL HAVE ONE WORSHIP SERVICE ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, AT 9:30AM - A SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS

Ministry Highlights

The Saintly Sewers

The Saintly Sewers recognized Pastor Beth and Pastor Kari in October, during Pastor Appreciation Month, with the presentation of handmade stoles to be used on Good Friday. One of our talented members sewed the beautiful stoles.

We have begun production on our quilts for this year. We already have six completed with several in the works. We have received some very nice and much appreciated fabric donations. We meet on Tuesdays at 12:30. We recently have added some new members to our group who are working on tying quilts. It's a great way to contribute and spend a nice afternoon in conversation with some fun ladies! All are welcome.

Meanwhile our quilts are on their way to their destinations in the US and all around our world. We took them to Zelienople and then they were inspected and packed for their final destinations.

We will not meet November 26th, December 24th and 31st.

ALL are welcome to come and join us.

WELCA is updating our contacts! If you would like to keep receiving monthly updates about meeting times and topics, please send your current email to the church office sjlutheran@verizon.net.

You can also let us know if you would like your email removed from our group email list.

St. John's Community Pantry

*You may also make a monetary donation to our **Family Emergency Fund**.*

The only **RESTRICTIONS** to our pantry are *food* items, medicines, used and/or open packaged items or things that can melt or freeze in outdoor weather conditions.

PLEASANT VALLEY MEN'S SHELTER

Thank you to Our St. John's Chancel Choir for providing the October meal to the men staying at the Pleasant Valley Shelter. Each month members or organizations of our congregation provide a meal to the clients of the shelter on the 4th Wednesday evening of the month.

If you'd like to be involved in this Ministry outreach project please contact Jean Martz (412) 364-2894.

Backyard Angels

Take a look at the mountain of clothing on the tables designated for **Backyard Angels** in Highland Hall! At least once a month these wonderful donations are transported to **St Mark's Lutheran Church in Brookline**. The home of Backyard Angels distributes clothing for children and adults of all ages. They are currently accepting clothing suitable for fall and winter.

This clothing collection site in Highland Hall serves as a constant visual reminder to bring in your donations for those in need! It is truly amazing how quickly donations fill the tables and need to be transported.

Your donations are so appreciated!!!

Ministry Highlights continued…

The Social Ministry committee wants to say a big **THANK YOU** to all of you for the abundance of food donated during the Food Drive. Many people will have better days because of the food they will now have to eat. North Side Common Ministry has more and more people coming to their pantry for food these days. Thank you again!!

It's that time of year again!

The **Social Ministry committee** is sponsoring a children's gift collection for infants through age 14. These gifts will be distributed through Light of Life to less fortunate families.

Purchase a gift for a boy or girl in the age groups listed and drop it off (UNWRAPPED) in the containers in vestibule or coat room (in back of the sanctuary). It is helpful to tape a note on the gift stating who you intend to receive it - boy or girl and the age range.

If you are wondering what to get, we suggest purchasing something for an older child because most of the gifts are for very young children.

Please drop your donations off by Sunday, December 15th

Partners in Ministry

"I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Matthew 25: 35

The North Hills Refugee Ministry (NHRM) has continued to assist with the Syrian family of six who reside in the Avalon community. Partnering with the Jewish Federation of Community Services, we have helped our new neighbors to become more and more independent of us and it is rewarding to see how their presence enriches their community. They are working, paying taxes, going to school, and supporting local businesses. God has blessed this and all of us are grateful.

On December 5, six months since our new friends arrived at Pittsburgh International Airport, our official role as co-sponsors ends. However, that does not mean we are not continuing to help out when needed. We will consider ourselves to be in a neighborly relationship and we will continue to keep in touch and support them when needed. And soon we will decide when we will be ready to start helping another refugee family to find a home here in Pittsburgh.

This ministry is possible because of support from members of St. John's, Trinity and Perry Highway Lutheran Churches and a generous grant awarded to the NHRM from the Southwestern PA Synod's Ethel L. Verney Endowment Fund. If you are interested in learning more about this ministry, please contact **Pastor Beth** at the church office (beth@sjhighland.com) or **Cris Ruffolo** at 412-721-8422 or ruffonews@gmail.com.

2024 Operating Budget

2024 Operating Budget

YTD Income vs. Budget –	October 2024
YTD Income Budgeted	$565,515.83
YTD Income Received	$567,393.12
Over (Under) Budgeted	**($ 1,877.29)**

YTD Expenses vs Budget –	October 2024
YTD Expenses Budgeted	$565,515.83
YTD Expenses Incurred	$567,168.08
Over (Under) Budgeted	**$ 1,652.25**

YTD Income Received	$567,393.12
YTD Expenses Incurred	567,168.08**
YTD Surplus (Deficit)	**($ 225.04)**

We accept credit payments for a variety of missions. **Scan the QR code,** indicate the amount you would like to donate then click the dropdown arrow and choose the specific fund you would like it directed to. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.

Please note: If you currently choose to have your monthly contribution automatically withdrawn from your checking account, this method of contributing does not replace the ACH-Auto Debit

** Expenses Incurred include $7,000 to finish the extra lines to the Generator, $5,118 for the Refrigerator, $6,330 for the pump to fix the water pressure and $1,705 for lock system on new door for a total of $20,153 paid out of the surplus funds in the General Fund.

Good Things to Know..

ST. JOHN'S LISTENS!

You can **email** the Congregation Council at listeningconcerns@stjohnslutheranchurch.com.

St. John's Congregation Council members are available to hear your feedback and concerns. **Please share your thoughts with:**

Sandy Allen
Jay Caulkins
Marcie Emory
Matthew Galbraith
Pastor Kari
Jessica Gamache
Tony Good
Steve Gottschalk
Wendy West Hickey
Pastor Beth
Marsha Logan
Jody Removchik
Sam Sesti
Lloyd White

PROMOTE YOUR EVENT!

Holding an event through St. John's that you'd like to promote on our website?

⇒ Fill out a paper form at the church office, or
⇒ complete the online form found at
www.stjohnslutheranchurch.com/mediarequest

Please note, web postings for church events are subject to staff approval.

Activities at St. John's

Having Fun Staying Young!

A Silver Sneakers sponsored exercise group that meets on **Mondays and Thursdays at 10:15a.m.** in Highland Hall. Having Fun Staying young is growing in numbers each week. Why don't you come and join us? This is a friendly group that comes to exercise and helps each other and we continue to have fun while trying to stay fit.

We meet at 9:30 for coffee and our class has men and women of all ability levels.

Come and join this fun group!

The AARP Safety Drivers course

sponsored by Social Ministry in October. Eight people attended the refresher session with six people attending the beginner course. Renewal of these courses are required every three years to maintain the car insurance discount. We are considering holding an evening course for those who are still working. Please contact a member of the Social ministry if you're interested.

AARP Driver Safety

The St. John's Stampers

will not be meeting again until January 11th.

Want to tell people about your group's ministry? Need volunteers for a service event? Have a special announcement about at event through St. John's? Put it in the newsletter! Deadline for submissions is the **15th of each month**. Please email your information to Lori Elgin at lelgin2001@yahoo.com

Please note, newsletter articles and announcements are subject to staff approval.

Youth News

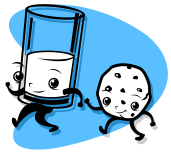
Cumberland Kids!!!!

Due to the Christmas Celebration,
We will not be meeting December 25th and January 1st

Please contact the church office for more information or a registration form!

Youth Event activities will resume in January!
For December: Don't Forget A Visit to Bethlehem!
If you want to participate please sign up in Highland Hall.

Cookie Walk



What is it?

For those who do not particularly like slaving in the kitchen to make all different kinds of cookies, a cookie walk is the perfect solution. You get to leisurely *walk* through the fellowship hall and choose from many assortments of cookies to put together however many dozen you would like.
Bring your favorite cookie tin or if you forgot it, we will have containers provided.

Where is it?
Highland Hall

When is it?
December, 14th - 5pm – 6:45pm
December, 15th – 8am – 4pm

How much does it cost?
$10.00 per dozen

What is if for?

The cookie walk profits will go towards our youth attending the National Youth Gathering/Youth Work service projects/trips & Youth Events.

What kinds of cookies will there be?
Oreo balls, thumbprints, peanut butter blossoms and buckeyes just to name a few.

The cookie walk gives you a chance to put together a fresh from the bakery cookie assortment with a simple stroll around Highland Hall.

*A Special Thanks to **Kim Gettemy** for making **20** NEW beautiful **Red bows** for our Christmas Eve Candelabras this year!*