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

Information as of
NOVEMBER 2025

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"Making Christ Known"

Volume 6, Number 11

Email - sjlutheran@verizon.net

phone - 412-364-1606

Saturday Worship:
5:30 pm - *Traditional*

Sunday Morning Worship:
8:15 am - *Traditional*
with Livestream

Christian Education:
9:30 am - 10:30 am

10:45 am - *Contemporary*
with Livestream

www.stjohnslutheranchurch.com

Pastor Kari Smail
Pastor Beth Clementson

NOVEMBER 2025

ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HIGHLAND

Through God All Things Are Possible

"Making Christ Known"

NOVEMBER 2025 EDITION

Current Church Council Members

President - Cemetery	Sam Sesti
Vice President - MutualMinistry	Jody Removchik
Treasurer - Finance	Lloyd White
Secretary - Social Ministry	Emily Bovan
Senior Pastor	Pastor Smail
Associate Pastor	Pastor Clementson
Youth Ministry&Security	Jay Caulkins
Stewardship	Marcie Emory
Worship & Music	Matt McCormack
Preschool	Jody Removchik
Evangelism & Fellowship	Sandy Allen
Property	Marsha Logan
Staff Support	Matthew Galbraith
Technology	Bob David
Christian Education	Renee Gottschalk

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	Anna-Marie Christian
Building Usage Coordinator	Mike Sheleheda
Custodian	George Tunney

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

Current Information for November 2025
Vol. 6 Issue 11

A Note from Pastor Beth

I don't know about you, but I have been overwhelmed with…. well, pretty much everything that is happening in our nation and in our world these days. And I've been asked by many of you how we can possibly feel like we can make a difference – what can we do when we feel hopeless and helpless amid all this turmoil and chaos?

Often, when I feel overwhelmed, I turn to our hymnal. Hymns have a way of speaking to my soul that other words can't. Many people don't know this, but in the very back of the hymnal, there is a "Topical Index of Hymns." So, when I'm looking for hymns that speak to what I'm experiencing or hungering for, I'll turn to that index. In this case, I went to the "Justice, Peace" category and was drawn toward hymn #708 "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love." It's a familiar hymn to many of us. The refrain says this: "Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you." And the verses then describe the example Jesus has set for us – kneeling at the feet of his neighbors, washing their feet, humbling himself in service to others. The hymn reminds us that Jesus has set the example for how we can move through the world even when it feels like everything is burning around us.

Jesus reminds us that we can make a difference now. Archbishop Desmund Tutu once said, "Do your little bit of good where you are, it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." May we not lose sight of the call to which Jesus has given us – to serve our neighbors in love. This is how we make a difference, by not losing hope, by continuing to love, by reaching out and helping where we can when we can. Maybe that means making donations to causes that are important to you, cooking a meal for a homeless shelter, writing letters to elected officials, packing "blessing bags" and handing them out, or volunteering with organizations that are working with marginalized communities. The possibilities are endless and every little bit of good helps! May we be inspired by the example of Christ and may we be bold enough to answer his call to care for our neighbors in need with compassion, grace, and love.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Beth

Our Worship Opportunities

Saturdays
5:30p.m. ~ Traditional service

Sundays
8:15a.m. ~ Traditional service
10:45a.m. ~ Contemporary service
All Sunday services are now Livestreamed

www.stjohnslutheranchurch.com

Christian Education
We offer Sunday School options for the entire family on Sunday mornings from **9:30a.m. - 10:30a.m.**

~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.

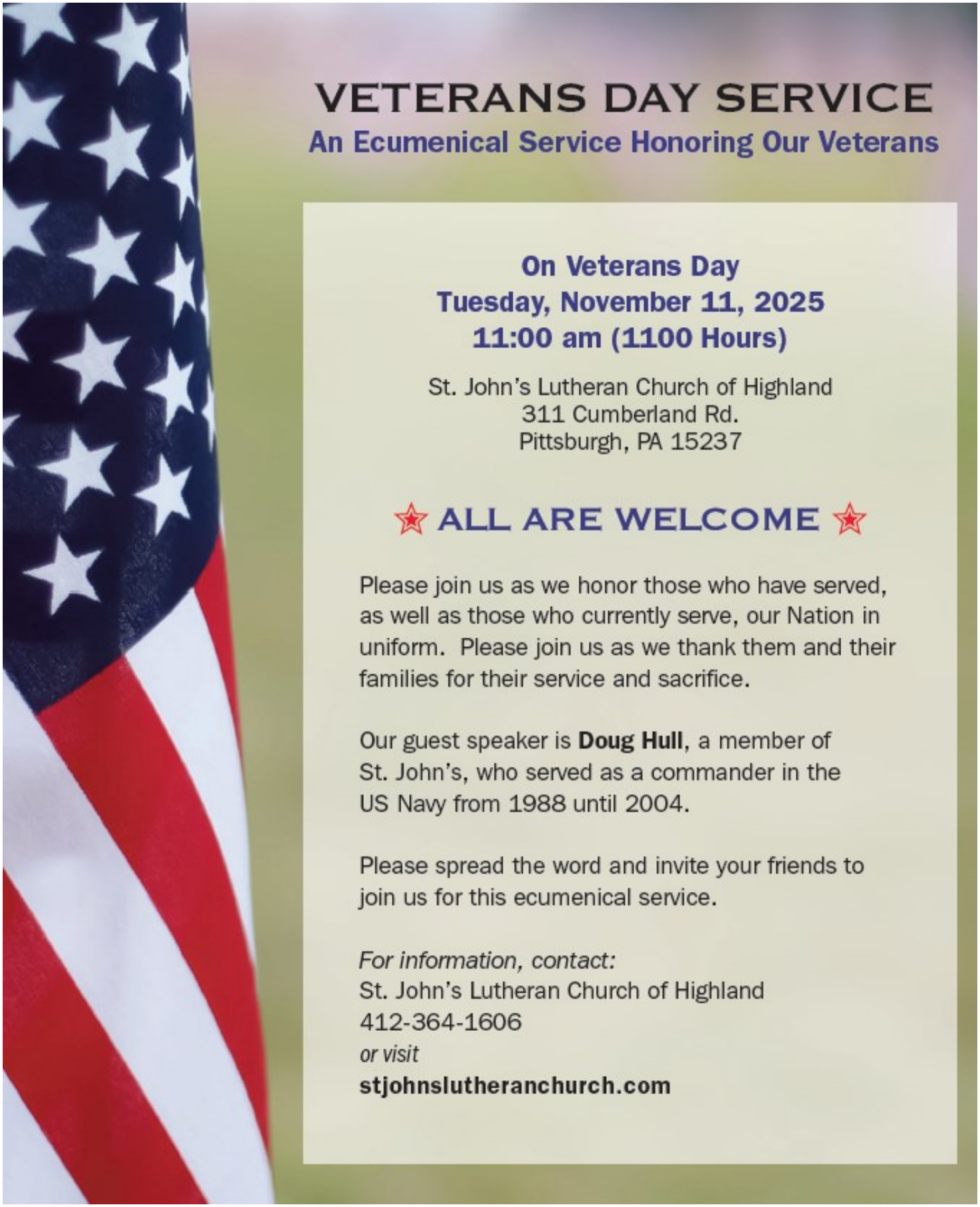
MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP

You are invited to join us this Advent for our Midweek Gatherings which will begin on Wednesday, December 3rd and will continue on December 10th and 17th.

We will begin with dinner at 6:00pm in Highland Hall, followed by an Advent study at 6:45 pm. This year we will be using a study by Amy-Jill Levine entitled, *"A Child Is Born"* It will be looking at the birth stories from the Old Testament and how they foreshadow the birth story of Jesus.

The evening concludes with worship at 7:30 pm in the sanctuary. For worship we will be using the beautiful *Highland Vespers* service by Nancy Galbraith.

We hope that you can join us for any or all of these gatherings as we prepare for Christ's coming!


VETERANS DAY SERVICE
An Ecumenical Service Honoring Our Veterans
On Veterans Day
Tuesday, November 11, 2025
11:00 am (1100 Hours)
St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland
311 Cumberland Rd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
ALL ARE WELCOME
Please join us as we honor those who have served, as well as those who currently serve, our Nation in uniform. Please join us as we thank them and their families for their service and sacrifice.
Our guest speaker is Doug Hull, a member of St. John's, who served as a commander in the US Navy from 1988 until 2004.
Please spread the word and invite your friends to join us for this ecumenical service.
For information, contact:
St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland
412-364-1606
or visit
stjohnslutheranchurch.com

~ Better Together ~

November: *Caring for one another*

In Matthew [25]Jesus teaches the people that when they care for others they care for God. He explains:

"[34]Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, [35]for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36]I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me".[40b]'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'"

Jesus reminds us in this lesson that we are "Better Together." Caring for one another is at the heart of Christian community and it helps the Kingdom of God to grow in our midst. As we give thanks for our many blessings this month, let us also consider ways we can feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit those imprisoned so that others might also feel blessed. And when we do these things for others, may we see the image of Christ in the people we are serving, reminding us that we are "Better Together," and that we are all truly blessed in Christ.

New Members

- Bill & Hana Caye
- Elaine Strobel
- Meghan Walelet & Zachary Montgomery

Some Ministry Highlights

PLEASANT VALLEY MEN'S SHELTER: On the 4th Wednesday of each month, members of our congregation provide a dinner to those men staying at the Pleasant Valley Shelter. Thank you to **Jean Martz and our Social Ministry Committee** (***Sept.***) and **Tom & Linda Nardina** ***(Oct.)*** for providing the monthly shelter meal. If you'd like to be involved in this Ministry outreach project please contact **Emily Bovan** 724-757-7815 or **Jean Martz** 412-364-2894.

Bethlehem Haven Woman's Shelter

Thank you to **Marcie Emory and Mary Eld** (***September***) and **Curan & Michelle Bonham** (***October***) for providing the meals taken to the women at Bethlehem Haven.

For more information about this opportunity to help, contact:
Joumana Driscoll at joumana.driscoll@gmail.com or **Jean Martz** at **412-327-5459.**

St. John's Community Pantry

Our **Free** Community Pantry in the rear parking lot provides personal care, and small household items to those in need. It has been a blessing to many in our community however; the shelves empty quickly. **Please help us restock!**

Please consider purchasing some items or specify a donation to our **Family Emergency Fund** to continue this much needed ministry.

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.

This month we are focusing on SKIN MOISTURIZING PRODUCTS.

Useful items that are always needed:

toilet paper	paper towels	soaps/shampoos
toothpaste	toothbrushes	dental floss
deodorants	feminine products	General cleaning products

First Aid items (*band-aides, ointments, disinfectant wipes, tissues, etc*)

Our Social Ministry Committee is hosting a Food Drive until **November 9th**. Brown paper bags are available at the church. Each bag has a list of suggested food categories that are needed. You can choose which would be easiest for you to donate. Please return the bags to the vestibule or in the bin near our sanctuary coat closet. The donated food will go to Northside Common Ministries who help a large number of people in the greater Pittsburgh area.

The Saintly Sewers

We bid Bon Voyage to our 100 quilts and 40 school backpacks!

We delivered them to St Paul's Lutheran church in Zelienople for the first stop on their trip. Next stop will be Baltimore where they will be ready to ship out as needed.

A very special thank you to those who so generously donated to help ship these quilts and backpacks to their final destination. We greatly appreciate it!

We are busy collecting fabric and purchasing batting (which is our biggest expense) to create hopefully even more quilts this year! You don't need to sew to be a member of this group.

We meet on Tuesdays at 12:30 in Highland Hall.

The Social Ministry Committee will be collecting ***Christmas gifts*** for infants through age 14 that will be distributed through Light of Life to less fortunate families.

Purchase a gift for a boy or girl in the age groups identified (remember, the older children while you are shopping as most of the gifts are geared toward younger children).

Drop off UNWRAPPED gifts **starting November 21st** in the bins marked "Christmas Gifts" that will be placed at the front and back entrances to the church. So that the gifts can be delivered in time for Light of Life to organize their store for the parents to shop, we will need all donations by Sunday, December 7th.

Women of the ELCA

At our October 21st meeting, the group completed a Thrivent action team project called 'Warmup for Winter' for the Pleasant Valley men's shelter. We filled 36 gallon baggies with new socks, personal care items and healthy snacks which will be delivered with the Nov. shelter meal. Thank you ladies and Thrivent! Our Bible study was presented by Elaine Hatfield and delicious pies by Linda Falck.

Our November meeting will be Tuesday, November 21st in the conference room. The Bible study will be presented by Jennifer and Kimberly Singleton, and Kim Sauer will be our hostess.

We hope YOU can join us!

Meals on Wheels

MEALS ON WHEELS

A big thank you to all who baked for the October Meals on Wheels! We had lots of wonderful treats to share and the MOW workers were very appreciative.

We will be baking again in June. **Thank you!!**

If you'd like to join this valuable mission, please call Eric Kofmehl (412-860-1585) or Kathy Kofmehl (412-527-9842) to have us put your name on our list.

Youth News

Elementary Youth November 16th Friendsgiving Event

Elementary Youth will meet in Fellowship Hall and eat lunch and bring a snack or dessert to share. We will be listening to Christmas music and making Christmas cards for our homebound members.

11:45am - 1:30 pm

RISE – Real. Included. Serving. Empowered.

November 9th

Thankful Tree
& NERF or Nothin'
6:30pm - 8:00pm.

6th - 12th Graders will meet in the Youth Room to find out how to show thanks and let off some steam with a NERF Extravaganza all at the same time!

November 23rd

Service Session
6:00pm - 8:00pm

6th -12th Graders will meet in the Youth Room and then move to Fellowship hall to bake for the Cookie Walk. Profits from the walk help fund our Youth Gathering Trip in 2027!

Can't make the date, bake cookies at home - just let us know.

Annual Cookie Walk!

The Annual St. John's Cookie Walk will be **December 7th** in Highland Hall between the Sunday Services.
The youth will be selling cookies they've made to help us all get in the Christmas Spirit. Proceeds from this Sale support our high school Youth's National Youth Gathering Trip which happens every three years. Come kick off the Holidays and support our Youth.

Thanksgiving Holiday Schedules:

- **Cumberland Kids** will not gather on Wednesday - Nov. 26
- **Sunday School** will not meet on Sunday - Nov. 23
- The **office will be closed** on Thursday & Friday Nov. 27 & 28

2025 Operating Budget

YTD Income vs. Budget – SEPT. 2025

YTD Income Budgeted	$537,375.00
YTD Income Received	$527,734.67
Over (Under) Budgeted	**($ 9,640.33)**

YTD Expenses vs Budget – SEPT. 2025

YTD Expenses Budgeted	$537,375.00
YTD Expenses Incurred	$593,732.56
Over (Under) Budgeted	**$ 56,357.66**

YTD Income Received	$527,734.67
YTD Expenses Incurred	$593,732.56
YTD Surplus (Deficit)	**($ 65,997.89)***

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 to direct your contribution 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

* **Includes $1,108 for computer and $20,248 parts and labor to control the zone heating, $1,120 new electrical outlets for drapes and $40,229 for classroom renovation for a total of $62,705 out of the surplus fund for 2025 and the $10,000 donation under World Mission for the SW Synod**

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CONGREGATION FOR THEIR SUPPORT BECAUSE WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER!

Some Stewardship Tips from our Stewardship Chairs

As we continue to ponder how we are "Better Together," we know that all of us make a difference to the ministry of our congregation through the sharing of our time, our talents, and our resources as we seek to "Make Christ Known" together.

What you may not know is that depending on your circumstance, there may be ways to financially support the church while also having a personal tax benefit. In the coming months we would like to share these ideas with you in case it is helpful as you ponder how you want to steward your resources.

As we explore different ways to support your charitable giving, this month we will explore a "Bunching Approach".

A bunching approach is a tax-efficient strategy where you group multiple years of contributions into a single year to surpass the standard deduction. This can also be especially beneficial in a high-income year or during pre-retirement. By surpassing the standard deduction, you may be able to itemize deductions more than the standard deduction and see more of a tax benefit in that tax year. You will also want to let the charity know that you are making multiple years' worth of contributions and to apply it to both the current year budget as well as next year's budget. This will allow them to properly plan out the budget for two different fiscal years.

Here are the current standard deduction rates for 2025.

Filing Status	Standard Deduction
Single	$15,750
Married Filing Separately	$15,750
Head of Household	$23,625
Married Filing Jointly	$31,500
Qualifying Surviving Spouse	$31,500

There are also increases to the standard deduction amounts for 2025 for certain ages (over 65) at various household income levels. Please consult with your tax advisor for more details.

Thank you for all the ways that you support the ministry of our congregation! We are truly ***"Better Together!"***

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.

Partners in Ministry

Backyard Angels

Backyard Angels in Brookline continues to benefit from the many donations our congregation sends every month.

They welcome clothing and accessories in good wearable condition. Cooler weather attire is what is needed now in all sizes from infant to adult.

Please bring your donations to Highland Hall and leave them on the tables designated for Backyard Angels.

Activities

The St. John's Stampers

As we get closer and closer to the fall holidays we stampers will be working on more and more holiday projects from cards to gift card holder cards to boxes to ornaments!

Our next workshop will be Saturday, November 8th from 9am-noon in Fellowship Hall. All are welcome to join us, we just ask that you let Betsy Fackler know by end of day Tuesday, November 4th if you plan to attend so we can be prepared. Please bring your own adhesive or glue. There is a $5/person fee to help cover the cost of materials. You can reply to Betsy at pdfeaf@zoominternet. or text her at 412 427-2045.

Make Some Music with our Choirs!

Bells are 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 is Sunday 10:30-10:45 (directly after Sunday School) - Youth Age 5 through grade 8 are welcome any time!

Having Fun Staying Young!

We are an exercise group that meets on **Mondays and Thursdays at 10:00a.m.** Friends gather at 9:30am to talk, visit and have a cup of coffee together before class. We end by sharing each others names and any prayer concerns that we might have. It is a wonderful group and they are friendly and supportive. Our class has men and women of all ability levels.

Come and join our group of active friends!