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

Information as of
JANUARY 2026

DATED MATERIAL
Please deliver by December 30, 2025

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit 125

"Making Christ Known"

Volume 7, Number 1

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

JANUARY 2026

ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HIGHLAND

Through God All Things Are Possible

"Making Christ Known"

JANUARY 2026 EDITION

Current Church Council Members

President - Cemetery	Sam Sesti
Vice President - Mutual Ministry	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 Accounts Receivable Clerk	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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A Note from Pastor Beth
Worship Opportunities
- Annual Congregation Mtg
- Epiphany Dinner

Christmas/New Year Greetngs
Come & Be
Blessed to be a Blessing
Ministry Highlights
- Pleasant Valley Men's Shelter
- Bethlehem Haven Meals
- Saintly Sewers
- WELCA
- Community Pantry

Youth News
- Winterfest
- R.I.S.E. Olympics
- R.I.S.E. Service Event

Activities at St. John's
- Stampers
- Having Fun Staying Young

2025 Operating Budget
Stewardship Tips

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

Current Information as of January 2026
Vol. 7 Issue 1

A Note from Pastor Beth

Dear Friends in Christ,

Back in October, our Evangelism Committee asked for your help in sharing all of the ways that you feel you can "Come and Be" here at St. John's. We were so thrilled with how many of you shared your thoughts and feelings with us. We've compiled just a sample of the words into this awesome word cloud. Throughout this new year, we will be delving into some of these words even further. Starting in February, we will highlight a new word each month and have various activities to go with it where we can dive into what it means to "Come and Be…loved, accepted, thankful, welcomed, peaceful, joyful, community, blessed, involved, faithful, forgiven, and hopeful" here at St. John's of Highland. Our hope is that through these activities and conversations, we can grow together as a community of faith and welcome others to "Come and Be" a part of it! We're really looking forward to it, and we hope you are too!

Blessings to you in this new year, dear friends!

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.

Annual Congregational Meeting

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25TH

We will gather in Highland Hall for **lunch at noon** and then regroup in the sanctuary for the **meeting at 1:00pm**. A stream link will be available prior to the meeting via email, and hard copies of the annual report will be available at the church.

We hope you can join us as we celebrate another great year of ministry together, and look forward in faith to the year ahead!

Epiphany Dinner For All Ages!

Saturday January 10, 2026 6:30 - 8:00 P.M.

Dinner will be served at 6:30pm with a program to follow our meal.

Menu: Ham, Potato Casserole, Vegetable, Applesauce, Rolls and Dessert

Please RSVP by Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Epiphany Dinner

Name: _____

# of adults: _____ # of children: _____

A Free Will offering will be collected to offset the cost of dinner

Merry Christmas

and

Happy New Year!

During this season where we remember the greatest blessing of all, Emmanuel - God with us, we want to share our sincere appreciation for your partnership in ministry as we work together to "Make Christ Known" through the mission we share. May this coming year bring us new opportunities to support each other in the journey, help our neighbors in need, and share the Good News of our loving, gracious God and Savior.

We also want to thank everyone in our church family for your well wishes, greetings, cards, and gifts! We are grateful for all the ways that you bless us during this Christmas season and the whole year through.

Sincerely,
The St. John's of Highland pastors and staff

Look for more Come and Be activities in 2026!

We will highlight and celebrate a different response each month.

Thanks again to all who participated!

Blessed to be a Blessing ~ January

At the start of each new year, many people have "New Year's Resolutions." These are intended to give the person a new direction for their way of being. For many, they resolve to do things such as lose weight, eat healthy, exercise, get to work on time, pay off debts, spend more time with family, or check things off of a bucket list. Sometimes people are successful with their resolutions, and at other times people have the same New Year's Resolutions the following year.

As we begin a new year of ministry at St. John's of Highland, we start to live into our stewardship emphasis of being "Blessed to be a Blessing." What would it mean for each of us if we made this a "New Year's Resolution"? What would it look like if we were intentional about using our blessings to be a blessing to others? What would that mean for the people around us and even people we might never know? If we all took the task seriously of using our blessings to be a blessing to others, what kind of impact would we make not only as individuals but also as a congregation?

While I would certainly hope that we we would take this "New Year's Resolution" seriously this year, what also would it mean if we made this a "New Year's Resolution" every year? God has blessed each of us in many and various ways. May we use this year to be a blessing to others! Happy New Year!

Some Ministry Highlights

PLEASANT VALLEY MEN'S SHELTER and BETHLEHEM WOMEN'S SHELTER

St. John's members, or organizations of our congregation, provide a meal to the clients of the shelters in our area on the 4th Wednesday evening of the month. Thank you to **Joumana Driscoll** for providing December's **Pleasant Valley Men's shelter** meal and **Dan Ward and family** for preparing December's meal for the women at **Bethlehem Haven**.

In **January**, the **St. John's Church Council** will cook for both Pleasant Valley and Bethlehem Haven Shelters

If you'd like to be involved in either of these outreach Ministries please contact Emily Bovan (724) 757-7812 (Men's Shelter Meal) or Marjorie Mills (412)266-8210 (Women's Shelter Meal).

Our **Saintly Sewers** meet on **Tuesdays at 12:30pm** in Highland Hall.

The Saintly Sewers have hit the ground running. We are cutting, pinning, sewing and designing new quilts. We already have produced about 10 completed quilts. We hope to surpass our total of 100 from this year!

Thanks to Carole for securing us the funds from a Thrivent Grant to allow us to purchase batting which is our biggest expense. If you happen to have Thrivent insurance you could also apply for a grant for the Saintly Sewers.

We welcome anyone who would like to join us. No sewing knowledge is necessary.

There is always lots of lively conversation! ***Come and join us!***

Women of the ELCA

St. John's WELCA group invites all women of St. John's to join us for our January meeting on Tuesday, **January 21**, 2026 at **7:00 pm** in Highland Hall. Our Bible study leader will be Hana Haatainen-Caye.

We hope to see you there for learning and fellowship!

If you are able, can you please help us restock our **St. John's Community Pantry**

This month we are focusing on Diapers & Cleaning Wipes. Please consider purchasing some items or specify a donation to our **Family Emergency Fund** to continue this much needed ministry.

Other 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*)

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.

Youth News

Elementary Youth Event: January 11th "Winterfest".

Youth in Kindergarten - 5th grade are invited to meet in Fellowship hall for a lunch, and winter themed games and activities following the 2nd Sunday Service. Pick up at 1:30pm.

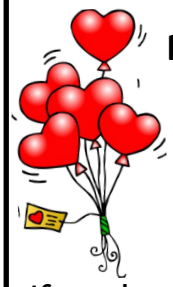
If you know you are coming, please let Anna-Marie know by January 9th. annamarie@sjhighland.com or the Band App

RISE Event January 11th "RISE Olympics"

6:30pm-8:00pm in the Youth Room ***(off the Gym)***
Youth in 6th - 12th grade will play fun themed Winter Olympics in the Gym.

We will also have snacks together in the Youth Room and continue to talk about the upcoming Youth Gathering in Summer 2027.

If you know you can make it please let Anna-Marie know by January 9th annamarie@sjhighland.com or the Band App.



RISE Service Event January 25th

6:30-8:00pm in the Youth Room ***(off the Gym)***

We will have snacks and make Valentines Day Cards for our Older Homebound Members.

If you know you can make it please let Anna-Marie know by January 23rd annamarie@sjhighland.com or the Band App.

Vacation Bible School Save the Date:

Mark your Calendars for VBS Monday July 13th-Friday July 17th in the evening.

VBS is for Youth ages 4 - entering 6th Grade.

Older Youth and any adults wishing to volunteer to be a group leader or run a session can contact Anna-Marie at annamarie@sjhighland.com, formal registration forms will be available soon.

Activities

The St. John's Stampers

Happy New Year to all. The St. John's Stampers will be getting together on Saturday, January 10th (weather permitting) from 9am-noon to get started on greeting cards for the year's events. Our focus will be birthday cards but several will be adaptable to different occasions if preferred. There is a $5/person fee to help cover the cost of materials and we ask that you bring your own double sided adhesive or glue.
All are welcome to join us. If you plan to be there please let Betsy Fackler know by end of day Tuesday, January 6th. Email is: pdfeaf@zoominternet.net or text 412 427-2045.

Having Fun Staying Young!

Come and join this fun group!

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.

2025 Operating Budget

2025 Operating Budget

YTD Income vs. Budget – November 2025

YTD Income Budgeted	$ 656,791.67
YTD Income Received	$ 658,260.95
Over (Under) Budgeted	**$ 1,469.28**

YTD Expenses vs Budget – November 2025

YTD Expenses Budgeted	$ 656,791.67
YTD Expenses Incurred	$ 722,583.89
Over (Under) Budgeted	**$ 65,792.22**

YTD Income Received	$ 658,260.95
YTD Expenses Incurred	$ 722,583.89**
YTD Surplus (Deficit)	**($ 64,322.94)***

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

**Includes $1,108 for computer and $20,248 parts and labor to control the zone heating, $1,120 new electrical outlets for drapes, $40,413 for classroom renovation and $5,156 purchased additional flooring for future projects for a total of $68,045 out of the surplus fund for 2025 and the $10,000 donation under World Mission for the SW Synod.*

Some Stewardship Tips from our Stewardship Chairs

As we consider what Stewardship means in the coming year, every month we will discuss various ways of being a good steward in planning and legacy giving. There are several ways to leave a lasting impact for decades, possibly generations to come!!! One way of doing this is by creating a Beneficiary Designation Gift for those who have applicable funds to do so. It is easy and best of all doesn't cost anything now. You have the ability to use your assets now and direct them to specific charity down the road. This does not have to be an all or nothing type of Scenario You can elect beneficiaries by percentages of the perspective account. Most updates to your beneficiary designations can be done online with a couple clicks. Did You Know…

If you leave your retirement plan or IRA to a person, they will lose a portion to federal income taxes. Non-Profit organizations receive the full amount tax-free because they are income-tax-exempt, making it a highly efficient way to leave a legacy. The entire amount of your gift is tax-free!!

The following assets allow you to designate a beneficiary or beneficiaries:

- Retirement plans
- Individual retirement accounts (IRAs and ROTH IRAs)
- Life insurance policies
- Donor advised funds
- Bank or brokerage accounts

Important Considerations:

- Beneficiary designations override your Will. For example…..If your life insurance policy lists a different person or entity that is different from your Will, the named beneficiary will receive the proceeds regardless of what your Will states.
- Review and update designations after major life events like marriage, divorce, birth of a child, or a death in the family.

This year we are reminded that we are "Blessed to be a Blessing." We give thanks for all the ways that the members of our congregation share their blessings so that our church is able to be a blessing to so many!