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

Information as of
JUNE & JULY 2026

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"Making Christ Known"
Volume 7, Number 6 & 7

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

Saturday Worship:
5:30 p.m.

Sunday Morning Worship:
8:30 a.m. - *Traditional with Livestream*

10:15 a.m. - *Contemporary with Livestream*

www.stjohnslutheranchurch.com

Pastor Kari Smail
Pastor Beth Clementson

JUNE/JULY 2026

ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HIGHLAND

Through God All Things Are Possible
"Making Christ Known"

JUNE/JULY2026 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

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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
Custodial	Carletta Nichols

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"Making Christ Known"

Current Information as of June & July 2026
Vol. 7 Issue 6 & 7

A NOTE FROM PASTOR KARI

This summer our Vacation Bible School theme is "Road Trip: On the Go With God." I think this is a great theme because so many people end up on the road in the summer, either because the weather is nicer or because they have the time to do so. It is wonderful for us to instill in our children the idea that God is with us wherever we go.

While church is the place that most of us readily associate with God, we know that God is not limited to the confines of our building. We hear in Psalm 95, verses 4-5 that "[4] In [God's] hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. [5] The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed." God is also in the midst of creation because God created the world and all that is in it and God cares for it.

We also hear in Joshua 1:9 to "[9] …Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." As we journey through life, we can take comfort in the fact that God is always with us to guide us along life's way.

As you journey this summer, whether near or far, may you rejoice that God is with you, and may God's presence in your life bring you comfort and hope!

Soli Deo Gloria!
(To God be the Glory!)
Pastor Kari Smail

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Saturdays
5:30p.m. ~ Traditional Service

Sundays
8:30a.m. ~ Traditional service
9:30a.m. ~ Coffee Fellowship
10:15a.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.

Semi-Annual Meeting

Sunday, June 28th in between services starting at **9:30 am.**

We will give thanks for the work of the four council members who are completing their term:

MARCIE EMORY **MATTHEW GALBRAITH** **JODY REMOVCHIK** **LLOYD WHITE**

We will also elect four new council members whose bios will be available prior to the meeting.

In addition, we will discuss a generous bequest from the estate of Denise Bendle. Council is putting forth a motion to the congregation to invest a 10% tithe of the bequest into our Mission Endowment Fund to support ministry within our congregation, community, and ELCA; invest 40% generally for future church and ministry needs; and use 50% for deferred maintenance throughout the building. We are excited for the impact of this wonderful gift!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Sunday, August 16th
- 11:00am Worship at Camp Lutherlyn
Annual Church Picnic following

Tuesday, August 25th
- 7:00pm St. John's Annual Pet Blessing at Beveridge Pavilion in North Park

THIS SUMMER
Come and Be...

June Come and be... Yourself

What does it mean to be 100% accepted? To be unguarded, to be open, to be your true self? To "come as you are," and know that, in spite of (or because of) everything, you are loved?

Or, as Sally Field said when she accepted her 1985 Oscar for *Places in the Heart*, "You like me! Right now, you like me!" What a relief, right? St. John's is a haven in our lives. A port in the storm of whatever else we have going on, whatever other roles we might play. Here, we can "let our hair down" or, in another mid-20th century cultural reference, "Let it all hang out."

This is me! We will be reminded of this every Sunday through June, and during our coffee hours, we will have opportunities to share something about ourselves and to learn more about others. It will be a "trip!"

July Come and be... Community

The definition of community is a long one – go ahead and look it up – and bonus points if you have a physical dictionary! We have tried to summarize as follows:

- a unified body of individuals, such as people with common interests
- a group of people with a shared characteristic within a larger society
- a state or feeling of caring about and wanting to interact with others in a group
- joint ownership or participation

At St. John's, we are a community of believers. We are united by our beliefs, but also by our genuine caring for one another, our desire for closeness and our eagerness to share in the milestones and pitfalls of each other's lives. It's no surprise that "Community" was repeated by many participants in our Come and Be survey.

In July, we will share our sense of community as we welcome members, preschool students, friends and neighbors to our Vacation Bible School. And, as we prepare for the VBS "Road Trip," we will once again call upon our St. John's community to come together in volunteering and providing supplies to make this outreach and introduction to St. John's a success.

Blessed to be a Blessing Reflection for June & July

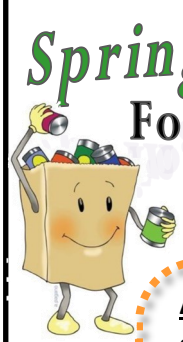
It is that time of year when nature is very active. Flowers are blooming, trees are greening, grass is growing. Birds are singing, deer are playing, and bunnies are grazing.

The other day I got to see a fascinating thing in our back yard. A bunny was getting its nest ready and I was blessed to see it. If you have ever stopped to watch a bunny get a nest ready, they work really hard! The bunny digs out a bowl shaped spot in the ground that is around 4-8 inches wide and around 4-6 inches deep. Then she makes a bed out of leaves and dry grass, and she even adds her own fur to make it warm. Bunnies, like many other animals in the wild, innately know that they are "Blessed to be a Blessing." They give of their time, their talents, and their treasures to care for others.

All year long we have been thinking about how we as disciples of Christ are "Blessed to be a Blessing." We all have been blessed with time and talents and treasures by God that we are not to simply keep to ourselves but we are to use them for the good of those around us as well. God calls us to love one another and a great way to show that love is by using our blessings to bless others.

Just as the beauty and wonder of nature this summer is a blessing to us, may we be blessings as well to all we encounter this summer!

St. John's
Ministry Highlights



Our Social Ministry Committee is sponsoring a food drive for the **Northside Common Ministries**. They will make available brown shopping bags with suggested lists of the types of non-perishable items that are needed most often. Of course, any non-perishable items are welcomed! You can drop off your donations at the church from now until June 14th.

Additional Note: Extra food at this time is important for families with children home from school during the summer for lunch, and snacks. Here are a few suggestions of rarely donated items:

- boxed milk (so they can make Mac&Cheese)
- oil, sugar, flour, sandwich bread
- cake mix and frosting
- stove top stuffing
- salt, pepper & cinnamon.

Thank you in advance for all your help.

St. John's is baking for **Meals-on-Wheels** during the month of **JUNE**.
If you have baked for this ministry in the past, you should receive a post card in the mail with your assigned Sunday.

If you have not baked before, we welcome all new bakers!! Please consider joining us!

Call Eric Kofmehl (412) 860-1585, **Kathy Kofmehl** (412) 527-9842,
or give your name to the office so we can include you in this important ministry.

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 (*Men's*) and the 1st Monday (*Women's*) of the month.

Thank you to the **Bob & Wendy David** for providing **May's meal** to the **Pleasant Valley Men's shelter** and to **Sarah Elewononi** for providing the meal to **Bethlehem Haven.**

In **JUNE**, **Cathy Coudriet** will provide a meal for the **Pleasant Valley Men's shelter** and **Curan & Michelle Bonham** will prepare the meal for the women at **Bethlehem Haven**.

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

The social ministry committee is **seeking volunteers** to prepare and deliver meals to the **BETHLEHEM HAVEN SHELTER** on **Monday, July 6 and Monday, August 3**. The shelter is downtown and serves 60 women.

The church will provide a stipend to pay for the food.

Please contact **Marjorie Mills** at 412-266-8210 or marjii2000@yahoo.com

Come and give us a "TIE"!

SAINTLY SEWERS

We are in need of people to TIE our quilts after they are all put together. We have approximately 25 quilts waiting on our shelves for this last part of construction. Please consider giving us a "TIE" on Tuesdays at 12:30. It's easy to learn and most of the ladies who do it are not sewers. Once you receive instruction, it is also something that can be done at home.

Please continue to watch for our quilt of the week. We are proud to show off our completed quilts.

Also we can use good condition used flat sheets for our backings. Thank you for the support of our Saintly Sewers.

* This picture is "Nana showing her granddaughter how it's done"

Women of the ELCA

Our last meeting of the program year will be the ever-popular potluck supper on **Tuesday, June 16th** at **6:00 pm** in Highland Hall.

Note the time change. Please bring a salad, side dish or dessert to share.

We will not meet in July or August.

Partners in Ministry

Backyard Angels

On Monday a huge truck full of clothing was delivered to St Marks in Brookline, the home of Backyard Angels. This picture is Tuesday morning. Rarely are these tables empty!

Please continue to bring your good condition, in season clothing, shoes and accessories to Highland Hall and fill the table again!

Backyard Angels provides free clothing to anyone who can use it. St. John's provides a large amount of their inventory. Thanks for all of your donations!

Memorials and Honorariums Honor or Memorialize your father and/or Father figure on Father's day by making a contribution to the Pleasant Valley Men' Shelter. Checks should be made out to St John's Lutheran Church of Highland and placed in the collection plate or dropped off at the church office. A list of memorials will be published in the bulletin on Father's Day.

Fathers Day—June 21st

(Please return by 6/14/26)

Your Name _____

In **Memory** of _____

In **Honor** of _____

Amount enclosed $ _____

Things to do at St. John's

St. John's Stampers

The Saint John's Stampers will be getting together on **Saturday**, **June 6th** from **9am-noon** for a final pre-summer card making session. Meaning we won't do this when it's HOT! If you would like to join us, please let Betsy Fackler know by end of day Tuesday, June 2nd.
(Email: pdfeaf@zoominternet.net or text 412 427-2045)

All are welcome, we just ask that you bring your own double-sided adhesive or glue. There is a $5/person fee to help cover the cost of materials. Watch for our return in September!
Happy Summer to all!

It is a Bethlehem year at St. John's and for the past 28 years, we have welcomed over 26,000 people through our walk-through village in Fellowship Hall. This year, we are excited to present a re-imagined version as an original stage production called Bethlehem the Musical. Our new vision will include all of your favorite characters, scenes, and sets as they will return to the stage. The hour-long production will take guests through the town with musical numbers between street scenes. The script will be familiar with only a few tweaks made to bring the story to the stage. More information will be coming in the next few months and we will need your help to be a part of the experience.
It takes a village to create a village and we will need singing characters, speaking characters, non-speaking characters, children, set builders, stage crew, parking attendants, concession stand workers, ushers, a publicity crew, and an audience.
Come and be a part of our new experience where there is a role for everyone.

BASIC TIMELINE:

August 30: Auditions and Sign Up

September 13: Rehearsals begin for Musical Numbers. Rehearsals will be Sundays late afternoons/early evenings.

October 3: Stage Work Begins in Highland Hall. Set work happens almost every weekend.

October 3: Rehearsals continue through November for all cast on Sundays late afternoons/early evenings

October 10-11: Unpacking the Bethlehem Closet and organizing props and sets. We need a lot of people to help.

December 1-3: Dress Rehearsals in the Evenings

December 4: Advent Dinner and 7 PM Opening Night performance

December 5: Performances at 10 AM, Noon, 2 PM and 4 PM

December 6: Performances at 1 PM, 3 PM, and 5 PM.

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.

YOUTH NEWS

Elementary Youth

July 13th - 17th 5:30pm - 8:00pm Vacation Bible School. Come Join us on our Summer Road Trip with our fun Mascot Scout, where we will learn that God is with us wherever we go. To register visit **https://stjohnslutheranchurch.com/vbs** or fill out a registration form in the Church office

RISE Youth

July 13th - 17th 5:30pm - 8:00pm Volunteer at Vacation Bible School. To volunteer let **Anna-Marie** know or sign up at **https://stjohnslutheranchurch.com/vbs**

July 26th North Hills Lutheran Churches Youth Event. Hang out with other Middle and Highschool Youth in the North Hills at Bellevue Pool. Time will be announced closer to the event.

Vacation Bible School

Join us for a fun week of Vacation Bible School

July 13 - 17th from 5:30 - 8:00pm.

We will be joining Scout, an energetic and curious dog, and learn how God is with us in whatever situations we face.

To register or sign up to volunteer please use the following site:
https://www.stjohnslutheranchurch.com/vbs
Any, questions please reach out to Anna-Marie Christian at AnnaMarie@sjhighland.com

2026 Operating Budget

2026 Operating Budget

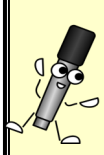
YTD Income vs. Budget –	April 2026
YTD Income Budgeted	$ 242,242.33
YTD Income Received	$ 222,415.75
Over (Under) Budgeted	**($ 19,826.58)**

YTD Expenses vs Budget –	April 2026
YTD Expenses Budgeted	$ 244,909.00
YTD Expenses Incurred	$ 242,705.55
Over (Under) Budgeted	**($ 2,203.45)**

YTD Income Received	$ 222,415.75
YTD Expenses Incurred	$ 242,705.55
YTD Surplus (Deficit)	**($ 20,289.80)**

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



ST. JOHN'S LISTENS!

St. John's Congregation Council members are available to hear your feedback and concerns.

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

Please share your thoughts with:

Sandra Allen	**Marcie Emory**	**Matt McCormack**
Emily Bovan	**Matthew Galbraith**	**Jody Removchik**
Jay Caulkins	**Renee Gotschalk**	**Sam Sesti**
Bob David	**Marsha Logan**	**Lloyd White**
Pastor Kari	**Pastor Beth**	

Some Stewardship Tips from our Stewardship Chairs

This month we are highlighting the importance of protecting your identity and valuable personal information. Millions of Americans are affected every year by fraudsters. Statistics indicate that younger individuals (19 and younger) are twice as likely to report fraud compared to those 80 and older. If you don't recognize the email or call received, delete immediately or hang up the call!! Here are some ideas to make sure you and your family are protected.

Key Protective Measures

- **Credit Freeze:** The most effective step is placing a free freeze on your credit reports, which prevents new accounts from being opened in your name.
- **Fraud Alerts:** Place a fraud alert (good for 1 year) to force lenders to verify your identity before extending credit.
- **Monitor Reports:** Regularly check free credit reports from AnnualCreditReport.com to spot unauthorized activity.
- **Secure Accounts:** Utilize Identity Theft Central (IRS) for tax-related scams and enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) on all financial accounts.

If Identity Theft Occurs

1. **Report to FTC:** File a report at IdentityTheft.gov.
2. **Contact Creditors:** Contact the fraud department at banks or creditors where accounts were compromised.
3. **File Police Report:** File a report with local law enforcement.
4. **Freezes/Alerts:** Ensure a credit freeze is in place.

Top Common Fraud Schemes (FBI/FTC Data)

- **Imposter Scams:** Scammers pretend to be government agencies (e.g., IRS), family members in trouble (grandparent scam), or bank employees to gain trust.
- **Phishing & Spoofing:** Emails, texts, or calls that appear legitimate, aiming to steal passwords, bank PINs, or personal data.
- **Investment Scams:** Promises of high returns with low risk, frequently involving fake cryptocurrency platforms or phony investment opportunities.
- **Online Shopping Scams:** Non-delivery of goods or services after payment is made, often found on social media or fake websites.
- **Romance Scams:** Creating fake online profiles to build a relationship, then asking for money for emergencies or travel.
- **Business Email Compromise (BEC):** Hackers gain control of business email accounts to send fake, urgent wire transfer requests, often targeting companies and professionals.
- **Tech Support Scams:** Claiming there is a virus or issue on your computer to gain remote access and charge for unnecessary services.
- **Charity/Disaster Fraud:** Impersonating legitimate charities to solicit donations, typically after natural disasters or during holidays.

One of the ways that we can be good stewards of the resources we have been given is to be aware of those who seek to misuse or steal those resources so that we can retain those resources for good. We are ***blessed to be a blessing***!